Key to Circled Numbers in the graded “Toast” Assignment

Following Instructions:
1. Either your procedure or your assumptions were missing.
2. You expanded on given instructions (using margarine, eating/enjoying the toast, adding jam, making the toast to your or someone else’s preferences, talking to someone, cleaning up afterward, having a guest, etc.).
3. You did not actually serve the toast once it was made and buttered.
4. You thought the toast was for you, and/or ate or “enjoyed” the toast yourself. That was not specified in the instructions.

Format:
5. You wrote your name in the wrong format or place, or did not write it on all sheets.
6. You did not staple the sheets together in the upper left-hand corner.
7. You did not double-space.
8. You wrote on both sides of the paper.
9. You did not hand-write the assignment, or you did not write it in black or blue ink.

Unlisted or Problem Assumptions:
10. You assumed the reader is able-bodied and can see.
11. You assumed the reader can read and understand English competently.
12. You assumed the readers will be in your kitchen or their own kitchen, so specific or assumed directional and location (e.g., “silverware drawer”) instructions apply. (Further note: Can toast be made in places other than a kitchen?)
13. You assumed ingredients and utensils are already on hand; and/or assumed they are the same type, in the same container, and/or stored where you imagined. (If they aren’t, will your procedure fail?)
14. You assumed the reader already has, and will be using, the same type of toasting device as you imagine (popup toaster, toaster oven, oven, campfire, flamethrower, …). If they have a different type, will the procedure fail?
15. You assumed the reader knows how to use the toasting apparatus you specified.
16. You assumed all toasters/devices work the same, have controls in the same place, etc. If the reader’s is different from your imagined one, can your procedure be used?
17. You assumed the toaster/device is plugged in/lit/etc.
18. You assumed the reader has – and/or must use – a “butter knife” and/or some other specific type of cutlery or dinnerware.
19. You used very general terms in assumptions, e.g., “basic understanding of the toaster”. (What can you expect a person with a “basic understanding” to be able to do unassisted?)
20. You had an inconsistent level of detail in assumptions (e.g., reader knows how to operate a toaster, but not how to spread butter).
21. Your assumptions are based on what you wrote, rather than the writing reflecting them.
22. You thought you listed every assumption that you made(!) and/or listed too few.
23. You thought you had eliminated some or all assumptions. (You can’t eliminate assumptions; all you can do is change what you’re assuming.)

Alignment of the Finished Procedure with the Assumptions
24. Your stated assumptions did not support your choice of steps or the level of detail (too much or too little) in the steps.

Effectiveness/Clarity/Usability of the Procedure:
25. You omitted the procedure’s title or a heading, or used a non-specific and/or non-descriptive title/heading that doesn’t tell the readers what they’re about to read and/or do (so they know they have the right document). This goes for “Assumptions:” too.
26. You used paragraphs – not numbered steps – for tasks that must be done in order.
27. You had inconsistent levels of detail in your procedure (e.g., told them exactly how to slice butter, but didn’t say how to operate the toasting device).
28. You combined several tasks into one numbered step. This makes it hard or impossible to follow (e.g., “Repeat Step 4” fails when reader should repeat only part of the step.)
29. You over- or under-specified actions or conditions (exact size of butter pat/pad, type of bread, etc.), or implied something had to be specific without providing details (e.g., “appropriate”) or justification (e.g., “carefully”).
30. You changed the name of something in a later use (e.g., “loaf” became “bag”), or did not change the name when the item itself changed (e.g., “bread” did not get called “toast” after toasting).
31. You did not use specific action verbs to direct the reader’s performance.

Overall Writing Style:
32. You used many more words, details, or more complex terms than your reader would want to see – this can bore or intimidate. Especially egregious: using “fluff” words or sentences that add absolutely nothing but bulk.
33. You wrote far more — or used fancier language – than your assigned/assumed audience needed to get a task done.
34. You used many words when a picture or drawing would have been more helpful.
35. You used the informal and rather ugly language “Grab,” “stick,” “shove,” “stuff in your face,” etc. Unless specifically required, don’t use casual language in technical writing.
36. You used “your,” which only applies to items/characteristics actually possessed by the reader. Use “the” or “a” instead of personal pronouns unless absolutely necessary.
37. You used “take,” “retrieve,” “procure,” “locate,” “find,” “obtain,” “gather,” “need,” “acquire,” etc. in a non-literal sense. (These words have specific meanings.)
38. You misused “it’s” for “its,” “their” for “there,” etc., or made other very common WR95-WR121-taught grammar/spelling/punctuation/sentence structure errors.