PART V

The Heart Of The Test: Multiple-Choice Questions

- What You Need to Know About Grammar
- Recognizing Flaws in Style and Expression
- Identifying Problems in English Usage
- Fixing Faulty Sentences
- Troubleshooting a Weak Essay

Introduction

This chapter will prepare you to answer the three types of multiple-choice questions on the SAT Writing Test.

A solid grounding in basic English grammar will help you succeed. But if grammar mystifies you or your grammar skills are rusty, there is something you can do about it. For one thing, you can study!

To begin, read this chapter. Read it slowly, absorbing a little bit at a time. Like any complex system of rules, grammar takes time to learn. Perseverance helps. But don't get bogged down trying to memorize every detail. Instead, save your energy for the exercises and practice tests.

You could also borrow a grammar book from your English teacher or from the library. Or go online (www.webgrammar.com, or www.refdesk.com/factgram.html) and spend many profitable hours browsing and reading. If time is short between now and test day, read and absorb as much of this chapter as you can. Learn the suggested strategies for answering the questions, do the exercises, and take the practice tests in Part VI. At the very least, become familiar with the format of the test questions.

Improving Sentences Questions

More than half of the multiple-choice sections of the SAT Writing Test are Improving Sentences questions that ask you to recognize two types of errors:

1. Errors in standard English usage and grammar

2. Errors in style and expression

All the sentence-improvement questions on the SAT begin with a sentence in which a part, or sometimes the entire sentence, is underlined. Then you are given five different ways of phrasing the underlined part. Your job is to choose the version that makes use of clear and concise standard English and is free of errors in grammar and usage.

The first choice of the five choices always repeats the original. If you think the original version is better than any of the alternatives, mark choice A on your answer sheet. Otherwise, choose the best version from the remaining choices, but steer clear of any sentence that changes the essential meaning of the original.

TIP

The Difference Between Usage and Grammar

Although the words are often used interchangeably, usage describes actual spoken and written language. "Standard" usage is the level of usage accepted by literate people who, in a general way, occupy positions of leadership and influence in society.

Grammar, on the other hand, is a set of rules that are followed when you speak and write "correctly."

SAMPLE SENTENCE IMPROVEMENT QUESTIONS

Type 1: Sentences Containing Errors in Grammar or Usage

Because Lucy was furious, she speaks loudly.

(A) she speaks

(B) and speaking

(C) and she spoke

(D) as she spoke

(E) she spoke

The underlined segment of the sentence contains the subject of the sentence, *she*, and the verb *speaks*. By using *speaks*, a verb in the present tense, rather than *spoke* (past tense), or *will speak* (future tense), or some other tense of the verb, the writer is saying that the action is taking place at the present time.

A basic rule of English grammar is that the tense of verbs in a sentence must remain logically consistent. For example, it is nonsense, to say *Mike walked to school after he gets out of bed*, but it is perfectly acceptable to say *Mike walked to school after he got out of bed*.

Choice A uses *speaks*, a present tense verb. The sentence, however, begins in the past tense, saying that *Lucy was furious*. The shift from past to present tense makes the sentence incorrect. Choice A, therefore, is not a good answer.

In choice B, the phrase *and speaking* makes little sense because it has no grammatical connection to the words *Because Lucy was furious*.

Choice C has another kind of problem. The words *Because Lucy was furious* suggests that the rest of the sentence will explain what happened as a result of Lucy"s anger. But the words *and she spoke* fail to do that.

Choice D is wrong because it has the same problem as choice C. In addition, *as she spoke* turns the construction into a sentence fragment—an incomplete sentence.

Choice E is the best answer because the verbs *was* and *spoke* are both in the past tense, and *she spoke loudly* accurately describes what happened when Lucy lost her cool.

Type 2: Sentences Containing Errors in Style or Expression

Great enjoyment was experienced by me at the wedding of my sister.

(A) Great enjoyment was experienced by me at the wedding of my sister

(B) The experience of my sister"s wedding was greatly enjoyed

(C) Being at my sister"s wedding was an experience of great enjoyment

(D) I greatly enjoyed my sister"s wedding

(E) A greatly enjoyable experience for me was the wedding of my sister

Here the whole sentence is underlined. Because the original and all the choices are grammatically correct, you must analyze the writing style. Effective writing should be clear and brief its ideas gracefully expressed. Of the five choices, only choice D has those qualities.

Choice A is a passive sentence, one in which the subject of the sentence is the receiver of the action. Because *enjoyment* is the subject of this sentence, it receives the primary emphasis, leaving *me* in a secondary, or passive, role.

Choice B leaves the reader uncertain about who had enjoyed the wedding.

Choice C includes the awkwardly-worded phrase *an experience of great enjoyment*.

Choice E contains many more words than are necessary. Compare it to the correct answer, choice D, which expresses the idea succinctly.

(For help in making informed decisions about effective style and expression, read "Problems in Style and Expression".)

Type 3: Sentences Containing Errors in Standard English Usage

Cape Canaveral was renamed Cape Kennedy shortly after JFK <u>was assassinated, its original name was given back to it ten years later.</u>

(A) was assassinated, its original name was given back to it ten years later

(B) was assassinated and it got back its original name ten years later

(C) was assassinated; its original name was restored ten years later

(D) was assassinated, it was restored to its original name ten years later

(E) was assassinated; however, with the restoration of its original name ten years later

The underlined text of the original sentence has three problems. The first is punctuation. A comma improperly separates two individual sentences. To avoid this so-called *comma splice*, use (1) a semicolon, or (2) a period and a capital letter for the second sentence. A third option is to keep the comma and add an appropriate conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, yet*, or *so*).

The second problem is wordiness. The underlined text, which contains thirteen words, is less concise than any of the other choices.

And the third problem is awkwardness. The phrase *was given back to it* has a decidedly ungraceful sound.

Which, then, is the best choice?

Choice A repeats the original. Reject it.

Choice B adds the conjunction *and* but omits the comma ordinarily placed between the two parts of a compound sentence. In addition, *it got back its original name* is awkward, due in part to the use of *it* and *its* in the same phrase.

Choice C avoids the problems of the other choices. It is the best answer.

Choice D contains a comma splice. Also, like choice B, it awkwardly repeats the pronoun *it*.

Choice E contains a sentence fragment. That is, the construction beginning with *however* is an incomplete sentence.

It probably took you a few minutes to read the explanations of the three sample sentences. On the SAT, under the pressure of time, you are expected to do a similar but far quicker analysis. Some questions will have definite right and wrong answers; others require judgment. Sometimes two or more choices may be grammatically correct, but the best answer will be the most graceful and effectively expressed sentence. Some items may contain multiple errors, others just one. Some assess your knowledge of standard English usage. Others test your understanding of sentence structure and writing style.

In short, sentence-correction questions deal with dozens of writing problems. The majority, however, relate to one of the following:

Problems in Style and Expression

Wordiness

Awkwardness

Faulty word choice

Faulty idiom

Problems in Sentence Structure

Sentence fragments

Run-on sentences

Semicolon errors

Comma splices

Mismatched sentence parts

Faulty coordination

Faulty subordination

Faulty parallelism

Mixed construction

Shifts in grammatical subject

Shifts in verb tense

Shifts from active to passive construction

Misplaced modifiers

Dangling modifiers

Problems in Standard English Usage

Subject–verb agreement

Faulty verb forms

Use of pronouns

Faulty pronoun case

Shift in pronoun person

Pronoun–antecedent agreement

Faulty pronoun reference

Faulty comparisons

PROBLEMS IN STYLE AND EXPRESSION

Roughly 25 percent of the sentence-improvement questions on the SAT test your ability to pick out the best, clearest, and most cogently written sentences. To answer the questions you need to apply such basic principles of good writing as:

✔ Omit needless words.

✔ Avoid redundancies.

✔ Choose precise words.

✔ Use the natural order of English idiom.

✔ Avoid awkward and clumsy expression.

In the pages that follow, common errors in style and expression are spelled out and illustrated. Read the material and answer the sample questions. And for more details turn to Part III, which fully discusses these and other principles of effective writing.

Wordiness

Sentences cluttered with unnecessary words are less effective than tightly written sentences in which every word matters. Some sentence-correction questions will contain words and phrases that needlessly repeat what has already been stated or implied. Look also for clauses that can be shortened to phrases and phrases that can be recast as single words.

Here are two examples:

1. During the months of July and August last summer, I had a wonderful summer vacation.

Because July and August are the names of months that occur in the summer, this sentence contains words that can be deleted:

Last July and August I had a wonderful vacation.

2. As you continue down the road a little further, you will be pleased and delighted with the beautiful and gorgeous views of the scenery that you”ll be seeing.

The sentence contains too many words. Revise it by reducing the initial clause to a phrase and eliminating the redundancies:

Continuing down this road, you”ll be delighted with the beautiful scenery.

Sample Questions Containing Wordiness

1. Among the many numerous threats in the contemporary world in which we live are both the threat of global warming and the threat of terrorism.

(A) Among the many numerous threats in the contemporary world in which we live are both the threat of global warming and the threat of terrorism

(B) Among the many threats we face in the contemporary world in which we live are global warming and the threat of terrorism

(C) Both global warming and terrorism are two of the many threats faced by today"s world

(D) Today"s world faces, among many other threats, global warming and terrorism

(E) We live in a contemporary world facing, among many other threats, the threats of global warming and terrorism

Choice A, in addition to repeating threat, contains two redundancies. The first is many and numerous; the second is contemporary world and in which we live. (After all, where else do we live except in the contemporary world?)

Choice B contains the redundant phrases contemporary world and in which we live. See choice A.

Choice C contains the redundant words both and two.

Choice D is free of excess words and redundancies. It is the best answer.

Choice E unnecessarily repeats threat and contains a variation of the redundancy in choice B.

2. Because of her gender was the reason why Emma felt she was deprived of a place playing on the varsity football team.

(A) Because of her gender was the reason why Emma felt she was deprived of a place playing on the varsity football team

(B) Emma felt that her gender kept her from playing on the varsity football team

(C) Because of her gender, Emma gave it as a reason why she was deprived of a place to play on the varsity football team

(D) Emma, a girl, feeling the reason why she was deprived of a place on the varsity football team

(E) As a girl, Emma, felt that she could not play on the varsity football team

Choice A contains the redundancy the reason why. Use either the reason or why, not both. In addition, the phrase place playing is awkwardly expressed.

Choice B economically expresses the idea of the original sentence. It is the best answer.

Choice C contains the wordy phrase of a place to play. Delete to play.

Choice D contains the same redundancy as choice A. In addition, the construction is a sentence fragment.

Choice E, while economically written, significantly alters the meaning of the original sentence.

Awkwardness

Awkward and clumsy are vague words that cover a great many writing weaknesses, including poor grammar and flawed sentence structure. Most often, though, awkwardness occurs when the words sound peculiar, jarring, or out of tune. Awkwardness is difficult to define, but you know it when you hear it. Much of the time you must rely on your ear to detect odd and clumsily worded sentences because there are no specific rules that can explain their defects except that they fail to conform to standard English idiom.

Sample Questions Containing Awkward Construction

1. Inside the cave, Justin"s eyes did not adjust to the dark as quickly as Ellie"s did, this is being why she found the skull and not he.

(A) did, this is being why she found the skull and not he

(B) did, therefore Ellie and not him found the skull

(C) did; therefore she found the skull and not he

(D) did, which being the reason why she found the skull and not him

(E) did, being the reason why she found the skull and not him

Choice A contains this is being, an awkward, nonstandard usage.

Choice B uses him, an object pronoun, instead of he, a subject pronoun.

Choice C is standard usage and is properly punctuated. It is the best answer.

Choice D contains which being, an awkward, nonstandard usage. It also uses the pronoun him instead of he.

Choice E contains the redundancy the reason why. Use either the reason or why, but not both. Also him should be he.

2. Vertical take-off and landing aircraft get their fixed-wing capability from high-speed air pumped from slots in the trailing edges of their rotors, in which it increases the airflow over them to create lift.

(A) rotors, in which it increases the airflow

(B) rotors, which increases the airflow

(C) rotors, therefore it increases the airflow

(D) rotors, the end result being it increases the airflow

(E) rotors, consequently which increases the airflow

Choice A is awkwardly worded, partly because the pronoun it fails to refer to a specific noun or other pronoun.

Choice B eliminates the awkwardness and is concise. It is the best answer.

Choice C is not awkward but it contains a comma splice.

Choice D contains the redundancy end result and leaves the pronoun it without a specific referent.

Choice E is awkward and ungrammatical.

Faulty Word Choice

Problems in word choice occur when writers ignore word connotations, fail to draw fine distinctions between synonyms, or simply don”t know the precise meaning of words. For example:

The poem contains illusions to Greek mythology.

This sentence contains an error in diction because the writer meant allusions.

The boys ran a fowl of the law when they shoplifted the DVD.

Here the writer confused a fowl (a chicken or duck) with the word afoul.

Sample Questions Containing Faulty Word Choice

1. Marissa holded her father in disrespect by throwing a book at him during their argument last week over her curfew.

(A) Marissa holded her father in disrespect by

(B) Marissa showed disrespect for her father by

(C) Marissa disrespects her father by

(D) Disrespecting Marissa"s father by

(E) Having shown disrespect for her father by

Choice A uses the incorrect past tense of the verb to hold. Use held instead of holded.

Choice B uses the correct words in the correct order. It is the best answer.

Choice C uses the incorrect tense of the verb. Because the argument occurred last week, the past, not the present, tense of the verb must be used.
Use disrespected instead of disrespects.

Choices D and E are sentence fragments.

2. Another quality common to fire fighters is their reliability on their fellow fire fighters.

(A) to fire fighters is their reliability on

(B) of fire fighters is to depend on

(C) to fire fighters is they must rely on

(D) to fire fighters is their reliance on

(E) to fire fighters is his reliability for

Choice A uses reliability instead of reliance, an example of faulty diction.

Choice B contains mismatched sentence parts; in standard usage a noun (quality) may not be defined with a verb (to depend) but only with another noun.

Choice C contains mismatched sentence parts; in standard usage a noun (quality) may not be defined by a clause (they must rely …) but only with another noun.

Choice D correctly conveys the meaning of the sentence. It is the best answer.

Choice E contains faulty idiom. The phrase his reliability for is not standard English.

Faulty Idiom

An idiom usually consists of a group of words that seems absurd if taken literally. When you "have a ball," the experience has nothing to do with a spherical object used on the basketball court or soccer field. The expression "that"s cool" is not

related to temperature, and so on. Such idioms often puzzle speakers of other languages, but to native speakers of English, they are as natural as breathing.

On the SAT, the word idiom refers not only to such expressions but also to idiomatic usage—that is, to the selection and sequence of words used to convey a meaning. The italicized words in the following sentence are examples of faulty idiom:

The general was unwilling to pay the price for victory.

Nancy has a negative opinion towards me.

As regards to her future, Tina said she”d go to college.

The meaning of each sentence is clear, but the italicized sections don”t conform to standard English idiom. Revised, the sentences would read:

The general was unwilling to pay the price of victory. Nancy has a negative opinion of me.

With regard to her future, Tina said she”d go to college.

Sample Questions Containing Faulty Idiom

1. Stopping at a dime is what the engineers were after when they designed brakes for the high-speed train.

(A) Stopping at a dime is what the engineers were after when

(B) To stop at a dime is what the engineers were after when

(C) Stopping at a dime is what the engineers sought

(D) Stopping on a dime is what the engineers sought as

(E) The engineers wanted to stop on a dime while

Choice A contains faulty idiom. The expression is on a dime, not at a dime.

Choices B and C use the same non-standard idiom.

Choice D uses the correct idiom. It is the best answer.

Choice E uses the correct idiom but changes the meaning by saying that the engineers, not the train, wanted to stop on a dime.

2. Einstein”s theory of relativity is, for most of us, one that is with difficult understanding.

(A) with difficult understanding

(B) difficult for understanding

(C) having difficulty being understood

(D) understood only by difficultly

(E) difficult to understand

Choices A, B, and D fail to adhere to standard English idiom.

Choice C is idiomatic but it fails to relate logically to the previous part of the sentence.

Choice E uses correct English idiom to convey the idea. It is the best answer.

PROBLEMS IN SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Sentence Fragments

Broadly speaking, a sentence is a group of words that begins with a capital letter and ends with an end mark of punctuation. It also conveys a more or less complete thought and is grammatically whole, which means that it has a subject and a verb.

Partial sentences, sentence fragments, often look remarkably like complete sentences but are not because of one or more grammatical defects.

The bicycle that Martha often borrowed.

This non-sentence seems to have all the characteristics of a complete sentence. It starts with a capital letter and ends with a period. It conveys a complete thought (*Martha often borrowed the bicycle* is a complete thought), and it appears to contain a subject and a verb. What makes it a fragment, though, is that the subject *bicycle* and verb *borrowed* don"t fit together. As an inanimate object, a bicycle can"t borrow or, for that matter, do much of anything else on its own. It was Martha who did the borrowing, but the noun *Martha* cannot be the subject of the sentence because it is part of the subordinate clause, *that Martha borrowed*. Therefore, *bicycle* needs a verb of its own.

The bicycle that Martha often borrowed was stolen.

With the addition of *was stolen*, the sentence is now complete.

Sentence fragments usually occur when writers fail to distinguish between dependent and independent clauses, when they confuse phrases and clauses, or when they attempt to use verbals as verbs. To determine whether a sentence is complete,

uncover its bare bones. That is, deconstruct the sentence by eliminating dependent clauses, phrases, and verbals. If what remains does not have a subject and a verb, it"s probably a fragment.

To identify the subject of long sentences may take some doing, but the "bare bones" strategy usually works. Using this approach, you"ll strip away everything in a sentence but its subject and verb, a task that may be easier said than done. It"s not very formidable, though, if you remember that the grammatical subject can never be in (1) a prepositional phrase, (2) a dependent clause, or (3) a phrase that interrupts the flow of the sentence.

Frankly, identifying the bare bones of a sentence is often a more complex process than that suggested in the following examples. Sometimes the bare bones are buried deep within long and complicated sentences. But by carefully peeling away sentence parts that cannot contain the subject or verb, you"ll eventually find them.

To find the "bare bones" of a sentence:

Step 1: Look for prepositional phrases, such as *up the wall, around the corner, to the beach, over the counter,* and cross them out. For example, if you were to eliminate all the prepositional phrases in these sentences, only the subject and the verb—the "bare bones"—will remain.

Complete sentence:	In the middle of the night, Pricilla slept.
Bare bones:	Pricilla slept
Complete sentence:	Several of the sentences are in the book.
Bare bones:	Several are
Complete sentence:	One of Frida"s friends is in need of help.
Bare bones:	One is

Step 2: Locate all the dependent clauses—those parts of sentences containing a noun and a verb but don"t qualify as complete sentences because they begin with words and phrases like *although, as, as though, because, before, even though, if, in spite of, regardless of, since, so that, unless, whenever, whether*, and *while*. Another group of dependent clauses are statements (not questions) that start with *when, where, which, who,* and *what.*

After deleting the dependent clauses in the following sentences, only the main clause will remain. That"s where to find the bare bones of each sentence.

Complete sentence:	Because she missed the bus, Marnie wept.
Bare bones:	Marnie wept

Complete sentence:	While Willie waited for the bus, he studied vocabulary.
Bare bones:	he studied
Complete sentence:	Andy helps out whenever he has the time.
Bare bones:	Andy helps out

Step 3: Look for and delete interrupters—those parts of sentences that impede the smooth flow of the main idea. Interrupters may be just one word, such as *however* and *nevertheless*, or dozens. They"re often set off by commas.

Complete sentence:	Ellen, regardless of the look on her face, rejoiced.
Bare bones:	Ellen rejoiced
Complete sentence:	The boat, a sleek white catamaran, sank.
Bare bones:	boat sank
Complete sentence:	Marty, who got ticketed for doing 60 in a 30 MPH zone, paid the fine.
Bare bones:	Marty paid

Sample Questions Containing Sentence Fragments

1. During the night, the stars that came out like diamonds on black velvet.

(A) stars that came

(B) stars coming

(C) stars, which are coming

(D) stars came

(E) stars, which came

Start your analysis of this sentence by deleting all the prepositional phrases, namely *During the night, like diamonds* and *on black velvet*. Now delete any dependent clauses; there is only one: *that came out*. The only words left are *the stars,* clearly not a complete sentence.

Choice A, therefore, is wrong because it is a sentence fragment.

Choice B is wrong because the *–ing* form of a verb may not be the main verb of a sentence unless it is accompanied by a helping verb, as in *is singing, has been raining, will be arriving*.

Choices C and E are also wrong because *which*, like *that*, introduces a dependent clause.

By the process of elimination, then, choice D is the best answer. *Stars* is the subject of the sentence, and *came* is the verb.

2. A belief among superstitious people that birthmarks are caused by influences on the mother before the child is born.

(A) A belief among superstitious people that

(B) Superstitious people believe that

(C) Superstitious people believing that

(D) Among superstitious people the belief that

(E) Among beliefs of superstitious people are that

Analyze the sentence with the same technique used in question 1—by deleting all prepositional phrases and dependent clauses. Then search the remaining words for a subject and a verb.

Choice A has a grammatical subject, *belief*, but the construction is a fragment because it lacks a main verb. Although *are caused* and *is born* are verbs, neither can be the main verb because they are in the dependent clause, *that birthmarks….*

Choice B contains both a subject, *people*, and a verb, *believe*. It is a complete sentence and is the best answer.

Choice C contains a subject, *people*, but no verb. The *–ing* form of a verb may not be the main verb of a sentence unless it is accompanied by a helping verb, as in *is singing, has been raining, will be arriving*.

Choice D has neither a subject nor a verb because the construction is made up only of phrases and a dependent clause.

Choice E has a verb, *are*, but no subject because all the nouns are either in prepositional phrases or in the dependent clause.

Run-on Sentences

A run-on sentence consists of two independent clauses separated by neither a conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, yet,* or *so*) nor an appropriate mark of punctuation, as in:

Birthstones are supposed to bring good luck mine has never brought me any.

A conjunction or a mark of punctuation is needed between *luck* and *mine*.

Birthstones are supposed to bring good luck, *but* mine has never brought me any.

Adding *but* solves the problem. A comma has also been added because sentences made up of two or more independent clauses joined by a conjunction usually require a comma. Another possibility is writing two separate sentences:

Birthstones are supposed to bring good luck. Mine has never brought me any.

Separating the sentences with a semicolon is also an acceptable alternative. In effect, the semicolon functions like a period. Note, however, that the initial letter of the second sentence is not capitalized:

Birthstones are supposed to bring good luck; mine has never brought me any.

Sample Questions Containing a Run-on Sentence

The campers hated the taste of powdered <u>milk they drank</u> water instead.

(A) milk they drank

(B) milk; preferring to drink

(C) milk drinking

(D) milk, so they drank

(E) milk so they drank

Choice A is a run-on. A period or a semicolon is needed between *milk* and *they*.

Choice B is not a good alternative because a semicolon functions like a period, and the second clause is now a sentence fragment.

Choice C needs a comma and is awkwardly worded.

Choices D has a conjunction *so*, preceded by a comma. It is the best answer.

Choice E lacks the comma required before the conjunction *so*.

Semicolon Errors

Misuse of a semicolon is a common error in sentence-improvement questions. Remember that a semicolon is a substitute for a period, not for a comma. Correctly used, a semicolon must lie between two independent clauses.

Incorrect: On the test Lucy got a 90; which raised her final average.

The clause *which raised her final average* is not an independent clause.

Correct: On the test Lucy got a 90; this grade raised her final average.

Sample Questions Containing a Semicolon Error

Mending a fracture takes from four weeks to a year; depending on the size of the bone, the location, and the age of the person.

(A) year; depending

(B) year; all depending

(C) year depending

(D) year, it depends

(E) year, depending

Choices A and B consist of an independent clause and a sentence fragment—in this case a participial phrase—improperly separated by a semicolon.

Choice C needs a comma to be correct.

Choice D is a comma splice (see discussion that follows).

Choice E properly uses a comma to separate the two parts. The first part is an independent clause, the second a participial phrase.

Comma Splices

A form of run-on sentence is the comma splice, a construction in which a comma is used between two independent clauses instead of a period or a semicolon.

Sample Questions Containing a Comma Splice

Toni Morrison is one of America"s outstanding authors, she is known for her critical essays, her novels, and her frequent appearances on television.

(A) authors, she is known

(B) authors; she is known

(C) authors famous

(D) authors since known

(E) authors being that she is known

Choice A is a comma splice. It uses a comma to join two independent clauses.

Choice B is correct because it uses a semicolon to separate two independent clauses. It is the best answer.

Choice C needs a comma to be correct.

Choices D and E are awkwardly expressed and ungrammatical.

Practice in Writing Correct Sentences

Directions: Some of the following are sentence fragments, others are run-ons, and still others contain comma splices. Use the spaces provided to write complete and correct sentences.

1. Although Elizabeth is stressed out about the SAT.

2. She asked the teacher for an extension on the assignment, the teacher agreed.

3. My grandmother is eighty-six years old therefore she walks very slowly.

4. Many other examples that I could choose to show who I am, many of them not vivid images of memorable moments, but everyday aspects of my life.

5. I woke up, having slept for the four shortest hours of my life, I force open my eyes and I crawl to the shower then my brain begins to function.

6. For me to believe that the crucial time has arrived when I will leave the protective world of high school and enter the world of college.

7. The large brown garage door creaks open slowly, out into the morning sunshine a rider on a road bike emerges.

8. What are the rules which we all must follow what might happen if we break them.

9. A biologist working in the field of genetic engineering and involved in the controversy surrounding cloning.

10. Using the space below, telling one story about yourself to provide the admissions committee, either directly or indirectly, with an insight into the kind of person you are.

Mismatched Sentence Parts

Sentences work best when their components fit together harmoniously and grammatically. Errors occur when two clauses are incompatible, or a sentence begins in the active voice and ends in the passive. A breakdown in logic or clear thinking may also account for an error, as when two ideas expressed in a compound sentence are unrelated. The material that follows explains, first, the specific kinds of errors to watch for and, second, how to make corrections.

FAULTY COORDINATION

In everyday conversation people often use lengthy compound sentences made up of several short sentences joined by *and, so*, or other conjunctions:

In school on Tuesday the lights went out, *and* we were in the dark for more than an hour, *and* the electricity was off, *so* we couldn"t use the computers, *and* we heard that a car had hit a utility pole, *and* the driver was killed, *and* they let us go home early.

This sentence tells a story without breaking a single rule of usage or grammar. Yet, it is stylistically flawed, not because it"s monotonous but because each idea appears in an independent clause, suggesting that all the ideas are equally important. Clauses of equal rank in a sentence are called coordinate clauses and are usually joined by the conjunctions *and, but, or, nor, yet,* or *so*. Faulty coordination occurs (1) when it is illogical or inappropriate to assign equal importance to two or more coordinate

clauses, or (2) when the connecting word fails to create a reasonable relationship between the clauses.

Tom was away at summer camp, and his parents decided to split up after twenty years of marriage.

The two coordinate clauses state seemingly unrelated ideas, obviously of unequal importance. In the following sentence, as well as in most other complex sentences, the contents of the independent clause are assumed to contain more important information than the contents of other clauses. In other words, making clauses dependent reduces the significance of the information they contain, thereby changing the effect of the sentence:

While Tom was away at summer camp, his parents decided to split up after twenty years of marriage.

What follows is a sentence in which the conjunction *and* fails to convey a meaningful relationship between the ideas in the two clauses.

Ms. Sheridan has become the new assistant principal, and she has never been a classroom teacher.

Making the second clause dependent by using *although* creates a more sensible connection between the ideas:

Ms. Sheridan has become the new assistant principal, although she has never been a classroom teacher.

For the sake of unity and coherence, it is usually better not to shift from one grammatical subject to another between clauses. Maintaining the subject helps readers glide easily from one clause to the next without realigning their focus.

Faulty: The plan will be a great success, or great failure will be the result.

Plan is the subject of the first clause; *failure* is the subject of the second.

Unified: The plan will be a great success, or it will be a great failure.

The pronoun *it* keeps the subject in focus from one clause to the next.

Sample Questions Containing Faulty Coordination

1. Elizabeth hopes to attend Ohio Wesleyan, and she has not yet sent in her application.

(A) and she has not yet sent in her application

(B) and she hasn"t sent her application in yet

(C) but her application hasn"t as yet been sent in by her

(D) yet the sending of the application has not yet been done

(E) but she hasn"t yet sent in her application

Choice A is incorrect because the conjunction *and* fails to express a reasonable relationship between the two coordinate clauses.

Choice B has the same problem as choice A.

Choice C expresses an apt relationship by using the conjunction *but*, but then it switches subjects and changes from active to passive construction.

Choice D switches subjects and is awkwardly worded.

Choice E conveys the relationship between the clauses and is consistent. It is the best answer.

2. My weekend job at The GAP will help me as a marketing major, and I am learning about retail selling.

(A) My weekend job at The GAP will help me as a marketing major, and I am learning about retail selling

(B) Learning about retail selling, my weekend job at The GAP will help me as a marketing major

(C) My weekend job at The GAP, where I am learning about retail selling, will help me as a marketing major

(D) Helping me as a marketing major is learning about retail selling in my weekend job at The GAP

(E) My weekend job at The GAP will help me as a marketing major; I am learning about retail selling

Choice A is a sentence that gives equal weight to its two clauses even though the content of the first clause is probably more important than the content of the second.

Choice B properly changes the second clause into a phrase, but the change results in a dangling participle.

Choice C properly subordinates the second clause and embeds it in the independent clause. It is the best answer.

Choice D turns two clauses into one, but the subject *helping* and the predicate nominative *learning* make an awkwardly worded combination.

Choice E, despite the revision, fails to correct the original problem.

FAULTY SUBORDINATION

By means of subordination, writers are able to convey not only the interrelationship of ideas but also the relative importance of one idea to another. Here, for instance, are two statements:

Joe rushed to school. He ate a tuna sandwich.

The relationship between the two ideas is not altogether transparent, but it can be clarified by subordinating one of the ideas.

While he rushed to school, Joe ate a tuna sandwich.

or

While he ate a tuna sandwich, Joe rushed to school.

In each sentence, the more important idea appears in the main clause instead of in the subordinate clause. The subordinate clause in both sentences begins with *while*, one of many common subordinating conjunctions. Others include *after, although, as if, as though, because, before, if, in order to, since, so that, that, though, unless, until, when, whenever, where, whereas, wherever*, and *whether*. The presence of one of these conjunctions in a sentence-improvement question should alert you to the possibility of faulty subordination. The sentences that follow illustrate typical problems:

While she is a mature young woman, she is afraid of the dark.

The subordinating conjunction *while* usually refers to time, as in *while he was away in Boston*. Here, however, *while* obscures both the meaning of the sentence and the relationship between the two statements.

Although she is a mature young woman, she is afraid of the dark.

A new subordinating conjunction clarifies the meaning.

I read in the paper *where* the fleet is coming back to Norfolk.

The meaning may be clear, but in this context *where* is not standard usage.

I read in the paper *that* the fleet is coming back to Norfolk.

Another problem concerns the placement of emphasis. The conjunction *and* in the following sentence gives equal emphasis to unequal ideas.

I arrived home from school *and* I received my acceptance letter from Ohio State.

Stating the more significant event in the main clause places the emphasis where it belongs:

When I arrived home from school, I received my acceptance letter from Ohio State.

Sample Questions Containing Faulty Subordination

1. <u>Pedro is a new student in the school, and he comes from Portugal</u>.

(A) Pedro is a new student in the school, and he comes from Portugal

(B) Pedro, being from Portugal, is a new student in the school

(C) Pedro, a new student in the school, comes from Portugal

(D) Pedro, a new student in the school and a native of Portugal

(E) Pedro is a new student from Portugal in the school

Choice A is grammatically correct, but it would be more effective if one clause were subordinated to the other.

Choice B subordinates a clause, but the use of *being* oddly suggests that Pedro"s presence in the school is related to his nationality.

Choice C properly subordinates one idea and embeds it in the main clause. It is the best answer.

Choice D is a sentence fragment.

Choice E alters the meaning of the original sentence.

2. When he suddenly started to grin like an imbecile, I was walking with him in the park.

(A) When he suddenly started to grin like an imbecile, I was walking with him in the park

(B) While I walked with him in the park, he suddenly started to grin like an imbecile

(C) Suddenly starting to grin like an imbecile, he was walking in the park with me

(D) He grinned suddenly like an imbecile and walked in the park with me

(E) Walking in the park with me and suddenly grinning like an imbecile

Choice A is incorrect because it places the more important idea in the subordinate clause.

Choice B places the main idea in the main clause. It is the best answer.

Choice C is wrong because it puts the major idea into a phrase.

Choice D is wrong because it changes the meaning of the original sentence.

Choice E is a sentence fragment.

FAULTY PARALLELISM

Faulty parallelism occurs most often when an item in a series is not grammatically parallel to the others, when a sentence is constructed of mixed, or unrelated parts, and when the subject or tense of a verb changes from one part of a sentence to another.

For example, a series of sentence elements—clauses, phrases, verbs, and even nouns joined by *and, but, or, nor*, or *for*—should be worded in parallel form. That is to say, their structure should be repeated using the same parts of speech in the same order.

Parallel structure creates a sense of rhythm and order. Without parallelism, you get jumbles such as this:

Today a television newscaster must be attractive and a lot of charm.

The word *attractive* is an adjective modifying *newscaster*; *charm* is a noun. Revise the sentence by making both words nouns or both words adjectives that modify nouns, as in

Today a television newscaster must have good looks and charm.

or

Today a television newscaster must be attractive and charming.

Another example:

Eighteen-year-olds are too young to sign contracts, but they may have been driving for years.

The first clause states an idea in the present tense. The second clause, however, takes an unexpected and perplexing turn by changing the verb to the past perfect. With the verbs in parallel form the sentence is:

Eighteen-year-olds may drive, but they are too young to sign contracts.

Or written more concisely:

Eighteen-year-olds are permitted to drive but not to sign contracts.

Sample Questions Containing Faulty Parallelism

1. Students lacking financial resources can still go to college because they can borrow money from banks, <u>hold part-time jobs, and scholarships are available</u>.

(A) hold part-time jobs, and scholarships are available

(B) jobs are available, and scholarships are available

(C) hold part-time jobs, and win scholarships

(D) holding part-time jobs and winning scholarships

(E) holding part-time jobs and win scholarships

Choice A contains *scholarships are available*, a construction that is not parallel to *borrow money from banks* and *hold part-time jobs*.

Choice B contains constructions that are not parallel to the structure of *borrow money from banks.*

Choice C contains phrases parallel in form to *borrow money from banks*. It is the best answer.

Choices D and E contains phrases that are not parallel to the structure of *borrow money from banks.*

2. When buying a piece of clothing, smart consumers consider how much the item costs, how good it looks, and <u>its durability</u>.

(A) its durability

(B) if it is durable

(C) the durability of it

(D) the ability of the item to last

(E) how durable it is

The sentence contains three elements that must be in parallel form. Two of the three begin with *how*, followed by an adverb or adjective and then by a verb. Only choice E follows this pattern; therefore, choice E is the best answer.

Mixed Construction

A variation of faulty parallelism is mixed construction, which occurs when the beginning of a sentence doesn"t fit grammatically or logically with the end. Mixed sentence parts suggest that the writer, in finishing a sentence, ignored how it had begun:

Maggie"s goal is to be a nurse and is hoping to go to nursing school after graduation.

The grammatical subject *goal* appears to have been forgotten in the second half of the sentence because the verb *is hoping* lacks an appropriate subject.

Maggie aspires to be a nurse, and she is hoping to go to nursing school after graduation.

With a compound sentence containing two subjects and two verbs, the problem is solved. But subordinating one of the clauses is an even better solution to the problem:

Maggie, who aspires to be a nurse, hopes to go to nursing school after graduation.

Another example:

When Lana came to school with a black eye was a signal that she is an abused child.

The verb *was* needs a subject.

Lana"s coming to school with a black eye was a signal that she is an abused child.

The problem has been solved by using *coming* as the grammatical subject.

Sample Questions Containing Mixed Construction

1. The next morning, after Christie"s car was found abandoned, <u>there was a nationwide search for the missing author had started</u>.

(A) there was a nationwide search for the missing author had started

(B) there was the beginning of a nationwide search for the missing author

(C) a nationwide search for the missing author will have began

(D) there begun a nationwide search for the missing author

(E) a nationwide search for the missing author began

Choice A is wrong because it contains a subject, *search*, with two verbs of different tenses, *was* and *had started*.

Choice B deletes one of the extra verbs in choice A but changes the grammatical subject to *beginning*, a weak alternative.

Choice C contains an error in verb form—*will have began* instead of *will have begun*.

Choice D contains an error in verb form—*begun* instead of *began*.

Choice E, a clause that grammatically and logically fits the previous part of the sentence, is the best answer.

2. The story is about how loyalty to a friend can create a moral crisis, but where it challenges conventional values.

(A) crisis, but where it challenges conventional values

(B) crisis, whereas conventional values are challenged

(C) crisis in which conventional values are challenged

(D) crisis, and the reason is that their challenge of conventional values

(E) crisis because in it there are challenged conventional values

Choice A uses the conjunction *but*, which has no logical meaning in the context of the entire sentence.

Choice B uses *whereas*, a word that lacks a logical relationship with the rest of the sentence.

Choice C completes the sentence grammatically and logically. It is the best answer.

Choice D is a sentence fragment.

Choice E is an awkwardly worded and almost meaningless construction.

SHIFTS IN GRAMMATICAL SUBJECT

Still another type of faulty parallelism occurs when the grammatical subject of a sentence is changed from one clause to another. For example:

To fix a flat tire, I jack up the car, and then the damaged tire is removed.

The subject of the first clause is *I*. In the second clause the subject is *tire*, a shift to the passive voice that weakens the effectiveness of the whole sentence.

To fix a flat tire, I jack up the car and then remove the damaged tire.

When the grammatical subject is maintained, parallelism is restored, and the sentence is active and concise.

Sample Questions Containing a Shift in Grammatical Subject

The board recognizes the school"s troubles and <u>now a giant fund-raising drive was being undertaken by them</u>.

(A) now a giant fund-raising drive was being undertaken by them

(B) it had undertaken a giant fund-raising drive now

(C) has now undertaken a giant fund-raising drive

(D) now they have taken a giant fund-raising drive

(E) now, having undertaken a giant fund-raising drive

Choice A switches the grammatical subject from *board* in the first clause to *drive* in the second, resulting in a long-winded, passive sentence.

Choice B is wrong because sentence is cast in the present tense but shifts improperly to the past perfect.

Choice C maintains the subject and is concisely worded. It is the best answer.

Choice D contains the plural pronoun *they*, which fails to agree with its singular antecedent, *board*.

Choice E is a sentence fragment.

SHIFTS IN VERB TENSE

Sentences lose their effectiveness and sometimes their meaning when an inappropriate shift in the tense of verbs occurs from one part to another, as in

Before it went out of business, the video store puts its flat-screen TVs on sale.

The sentence begins in the past tense, then shifts to the present. When cast in the past tense from start to finish, the sentence reads:

Before it went out of business, the video store put its flat-screen TVs on sale.

The English language offers writers and speakers six basic tenses that convey information about the time when an event or action took place:

Present:	I *eat* pasta every day.
Past:	She *ate* pasta every day.
Future:	Phil *will eat* pasta every day.
Present Perfect:	Monica *has eaten* pasta every day.
Past Perfect:	Enid *had eaten* pasta every day.
Future Perfect:	They all *will have eaten* pasta every day.

All verbs also have a progressive form, created by adding *–ing*, so that you can say things like:

They are swimming. (Present Progressive)

Rose was swimming. (Past Progressive)

The dog will be swimming. (Future Progressive)

I have been swimming. (Present Perfect)

Charles had been swimming. (Past Perfect)

They will have been swimming. (Future Perfect)

Each of these tenses permits you to indicate time sequence very precisely. Someone not attuned to the different meaning that each tense conveys may say something like this:

When her little brother was born, Sarah was toilet trained for six months.

Perhaps the writer"s intent is clear enough, but because precision is important, the sentence should read:

When her little brother was born, Sarah *had been* toilet trained for six months.

The revised version, using the past perfect verb *had been*, indicates that the action (Sarah"s toilet training) had taken place prior to her brother"s birth. The original sentence actually says that her brother"s birth and Sarah"s toilet training took place at the same time—a physical impossibility, since potty training usually takes weeks or even months.

Notice also the difference in meaning between these two sentences:

There was a condo where the park was.
There was a condo where the park had been.

The meaning of the first sentence may be clear, but it says that the condo and the park were in the same place at the same time. The revision more accurately conveys the idea that the condo replaced the park.

These are subtle differences, perhaps explaining why the SAT frequently includes questions containing errors in verb tense. Such items help to distinguish between students who use English precisely and those who don"t.

Sample Questions Containing a Shift in Verb Tense

1. Jay had been working out in the weight room for months before the wrestling coach <u>invites him to try out</u> for the team.

(A) invites him to try out

(B) has invited him to try out

(C) invited him to try out

(D) had invited him to try out

(E) inviting him for trying out

Choice A, with a verb in the present tense, is inconsistent with the past perfect tense of the verb *had been working*.

Choice B uses the present perfect tense instead of the past perfect tense.

Choice C correctly conveys the sequence of events. The use of the past tense (*invited*) indicates that Jay"s workouts occurred not only prior to the coach"s invitation but that they were in progress at the time the coach invited Jay to try out.

Choice D uses only the past perfect tense. Therefore, it fails to convey the precise sequence of events, as expressed by choice C.

Choice E uses faulty idiom.

2. The report said that years ago city planners had envisioned building a facility that turns salt water into fresh <u>water, and financial woes make that impossible</u>.

(A) water, and financial woes make that impossible

(B) water, and that is becoming impossible due to financial woes

(C) water, but that it will have been made impossible by financial woes

(D) water, but financial woes made that impossible

(E) water, however, financial woes had made it impossible

Choices A and B contain coordinate clauses with an illogical sequence of verb tenses. Present financial woes are unrelated to plans made years in the past.

Choice C contains the pronoun *it* that fails to refer to specific antecedent.

Choice D uses an appropriate and logical sequence of verb tenses. It is the best answer.

Choice E contains a comma splice between *water* and *however*.

SHIFTS FROM ACTIVE TO PASSIVE CONSTRUCTION

Use active rather than passive construction except when: (1) the person or thing performing the action is unknown or insignificant, or (2) the sentence is meant to emphasize that the subject has been acted upon. For instance, in the following passive sentence, the action (scoring touchdowns) is given greater emphasis than the performer of the action (the team):

Three touchdowns were scored by the team.

Stated actively, the sentence emphasizes who performed the action:

The team scored three touchdowns.

On the SAT, sentences that shift from active to passive, and sometimes vice-versa, often need revision, as in:

After Dan worked all day in the hot sun, a shower was taken to cool off.

A shift from active to passive construction has occurred between the subordinate clause and the main clause.

After Dan worked all day in the hot sun, he took a shower to cool off.

Now both clauses are active; in addition, the grammatical subject has been maintained between the clauses.

Throughout the sentence-improvement sections of the SAT, stay alert for passive sentences. Consider them faulty unless you see a clear necessity for constructing them in the passive voice.

Sample Questions Containing a Shift
from Active to Passive Construction

1. For the Thanksgiving weekend, Julie went to Richmond; however, for Christmas a trip to Syracuse was made by her.

(A) Richmond; however, for Christmas a trip to Syracuse was made by her

(B) Richmond, however, for Christmas a trip to Syracuse was made by her

(C) Richmond but for Christmas a trip to Syracuse was made by her

(D) Richmond, but however, she took a trip to Syracuse for Christmas

(E) Richmond, but for Christmas she went to Syracuse

Choice A switches from active to passive construction for no logical reason.

Choice B is like A, but it also contains a comma splice
between *Richmond* and *however*.

Choice C switches from active to passive construction for no logical reason.

Choice D maintains active construction but includes the redundancy *but however*.

Choice E is consistently active and is free of other errors. It is the best answer.

2. Because the factory owners and their employees worked together to improve efficiency, a big profit was earned.

(A) a big profit was earned

(B) the result were earning a big profit

(C) the factory owners had earned big profits

(D) earning big profits were the result

(E) resulting in a big profit

Choice A is a passive construction that appropriately emphasizes the result of an action rather than who performed it. It is the best answer.

Choice B is active but the plural verb *were* fails to agree with the singular subject *result*.

Choice C is active but contains an improper shift in verb tense.

Choice D is passive and contains a singular subject with a plural verb.

Choice E is a sentence fragment.

Misplaced Modifiers

For clarity, modifiers should be placed as close as possible to the word or words they are meant to modify. When they are far apart, sentences like this may result:

The fellow in the blue SUV with the long hair must be on his way to the concert.

The prepositional phrase *with the long hair* is meant to modify *fellow*, but it modifies *SUV* instead. With the misplaced phrase in its proper place, the sentence reads:

The fellow with the long hair in the blue SUV must be on his way to the concert.

For still further clarity, be sure that the word being modified is included in the sentence. Otherwise, you may have a dangling modifier on your hands, as in:

Rushing to open the door, the rug slipped and sent Kyle sprawling.

According to this sentence, the rug slipped as it rushed to open the door—not a likely scenario. To fix this so-called dangling modifier, the object being modified (in this case, the person rushing to the door) must be included in the main clause.

Rushing to open the door, Kyle slipped on the rug and went sprawling.

The grammatical subject, *Kyle*, is now properly modified by the participle, *Rushing to open the door.*

TIP 

Dangling Modifiers

The term *dangling modifier* refers to a clause or phrase that appears to modify a word in a sentence but doesn"t. For example:

Dangling: Climbing the ladder, Pete"s head knocked over the paint can.

At first, this sentence may not strike you as bizarre. But look again, and you"ll notice that it says Pete"s head climbed a ladder.

Revised: Climbing the ladder, Pete knocked over the paint can with his head.

Adding the noun *Pete* eliminates the dangling modifier.

Sample Questions Containing Misplaced
and Dangling Modifiers

1. <u>The plaque was presented to the actor that was engraved with gold letters</u>

(A) The plaque was presented to the actor that was engraved with gold letters

(B) The plaque that was presented to the actor engraved with gold letters

(C) The plaque was presented to the actor who was engraved with gold letters

(D) The plaque, engraved with gold letters, and presented to the actor

(E) The plaque presented to the actor was engraved with gold letters

Choice A is wrong because the clause *that was engraved with gold letters* modifies *actor* instead of *plaque*.

Choice B contains the same misplaced modifier as choice A and is also a sentence fragment.

Choice C is a variation of choice A.

Choice D is a sentence fragment.

Choice E has its modifiers in the right place and is a complete sentence. It is the best answer.

2. <u>Driving to Litchfield</u>, the freezing rain made the road slippery and hazardous.

(A) Driving to Litchfield

(B) While we drove to Litchfield

(C) En route to Litchfield

(D) To drive to Litchfield

(E) We drove to Litchfield and

Choice A contains a dangling modifier. The phrase *Driving to Litchfield* modifies *rain* instead of the person who did the driving.

Choice B contains *we*, the subject who performed the action. It is the best answer.

Choice C contains the same dangling modifier as choice A.

Choice D makes no sense grammatically or logically.

Choice E is a sentence consisting of coordinate clauses that would be more effectively expressed if one clause were subordinated to the other.

PROBLEMS IN STANDARD USAGE

Subject–Verb Agreement

Sentence-improvement questions on the SAT always include items that test your command of the following rule: Subjects and verbs must agree in number. A singular subject must have a singular verb, and a plural subject must be accompanied by a plural verb. That"s easy enough to remember, but in the following circumstances it is not so easy to apply.

1. When intervening words obscure the relationship between the subject and verb, as in:

Delivery (singular subject) of today"s newspapers and magazines *have been* (plural verb) delayed.

The prepositional phrase *of today"s newspapers and magazines* blurs the relationship between subject and verb. The plural noun *magazines* can mislead the writer into using a plural verb. With a singular subject and verb properly matched, the sentence reads:

Delivery of today"s newspapers and magazines *has been* delayed.

Or with matched plural subject and verb:

Deliveries of today"s newspapers and magazines *have been* delayed.

A writer can also err when words and phrases such as *including, in addition to, along with,* and *as well as* come between the subject and verb.

One of his paintings, in addition to several photos, *is* on display at the library.
The *bulk* of English poetry, including the plays of Shakespeare, is written in iambic pentameter.

2. When subjects are composed of more than one noun or pronoun. For example,

a. Nouns, both singular and plural, when joined by *and*, are called compound subjects, which need plural verbs.

The *picture and the text* (compound subject) *fit* (plural verb) inside this box.
Several *locust trees and a green mailbox stand* outside the house.

b. Compound subjects thought of as a unit need singular verbs.

Green *eggs and ham* (compound subject as a unit) *is* (singular verb) Sam"s favorite breakfast.
The parents" *pride and joy* over the birth of their baby *is* self-evident.

c. Singular nouns joined by *or* or *nor* need singular verbs.

A Coke *or* a Pepsi (two nouns joined by *or*) *is* (singular verb) what I thirst for.
Neither my history teacher *nor* my economics teacher *plans* to discuss the crisis.

d. When a subject consists of a singular noun and a plural noun joined by *or* or *nor*, the number of the verb is determined by the noun closer to the verb.

Either one pineapple or a few oranges were on the table.
Neither the linemen nor the quarterback was aware of the tricky play.

e. When a subject contains a pronoun that differs in person from a noun or another pronoun, the verb must agree with the closer subject word.

Neither Meredith nor *you are* expected to finish the work today.
Either he or *I am* planning to work late on Saturday.

f. When the subject is singular and the predicate noun is plural, or vice-versa, the number of the verb is determined by the subject.

The *extent* of Wilkinson"s work *is* two novels and a collection of stories.
Two *novels and a story are* the extent of Wilkinson"s work.

3. When singular subjects contain words that sound plural, use singular verbs. The names of books, countries, organizations, certain diseases, course titles, and other singular nouns may sound like plurals because they end in *–s*, but most of the time—although not always—they require a singular verb.

The *news is* good.

Measles is going around the school.

4. When the subject is sometimes singular and sometimes plural, the number of the verb depends on the context. Collective nouns sound singular but may be plural. A family, for example, is singular. But if you are referring to separate individuals, *family* takes a plural verb.

The *family* (members) *are* arriving for the wedding at different times.

Other collective nouns include *group, crowd, team, jury, audience, herd, public, dozen, class, band, flock, majority, committee, heap,* and *lot.* Other words and expressions governed by the same rule are units of time, money, weight, measurement, and all fractions.

The *jury is* going to decide today.

The *jury are* returning to their homes tomorrow.

5. When the subject word is an indefinite pronoun, such as *everyone, both,* and *any*, choosing the correct verb poses a special problem. Some indefinite pronouns must be matched with singular verbs, some with plural verbs, and some with one or the other, depending on the sense of the sentence. There"s no getting around the fact that you need to know which number applies to which pronoun.

a. These words, although they sound plural, get singular verbs: *each, either, neither*, the "ones" (*anyone, no one, everyone, someone*), and the "bodies" (*anybody, everybody, nobody, somebody*).

Each man and woman in the room *gets* only one vote.
Everyone who works hard *is* going to earn an "A."

b. These words get plural verbs: *both, many, few, several.*

In spite of rumors to the contrary, *both are* on the verge of a nervous breakdown. *Several* in the band *are* not going on the trip to Boston.

c. The following words get singular verbs when they refer to singular nouns and plural verbs when they refer to plural nouns: *any, none, some, all, most*.

Some of the collection is valuable.

In this sentence, *some* is singular because it refers to *collection*, a singular noun.

Some of the bracelets are fake.

Here *some* is plural because it refers to *bracelets*, a plural noun.

6. When the subject comes after the verb. When the subject of a sentence follows the verb, the verb takes its number from the subject, as usual.

Behind the building *was* an *alley* (singular subject).

Behind the building *were* an *alley and a vacant lot* (compound subject).

Sample Questions Containing an Error in Subject–Verb Agreement

1. After thinking it over, the solution to most people"s problems with unwanted phone calls are stricter laws and Caller ID.

(A) the solution to most people"s problems with unwanted phone calls are

(B) people"s problems with unwanted phone calls can be solved with

(C) people"s problems with unwanted phone calls are to be solved by

(D) I believe that the solution to most people"s problems with unwanted phone calls is

(E) I think that the solution to most people"s problems with unwanted phone calls are

Choice A is incorrect because the subject *solution* is singular and the verb *are* is plural.

Choices B and C are wrong because they contain dangling modifiers. In each sentence *thinking it over* lacks an appropriate noun or pronoun to modify.

Choice D contains a singular subject and verb and is grammatically correct. It is the best answer.

Choice E has the same problem as choice A.

2. In some of the big state universities the problem <u>of giving scholarships and other rewards to good athletes have gotten out of hand</u>.

(A) of giving scholarships and other rewards to good athletes have gotten out of hand

(B) of giving scholarships and granting rewards for good athletic ability have gotten out of hand

(C) of scholarships and other rewards for good athletes has gotten out of hand

(D) has become out of hand when scholarships and rewards for good athletes

(E) of rewarding good athletes with scholarships are out of hand

Choice A is wrong because it uses a plural verb, *have*, that fails to agree with the singular subject, *problem*.

Choice B is a variation of A.

Choice C contains a verb that agrees in number with the subject. It is the best answer.

Choice D is an incomplete construction.

Choice E is wrong because it uses a plural verb, *are*, that doesn"t agree in number with the singular subject, *problem*.

Practice in Establishing Noun–Verb Agreement

Directions: In some of the following sentences, nouns and verbs do not agree. Locate the error and write the corrected version in the space provided. Some sentences may be correct.

1. Tucker"s talent in chess and weight lifting, two of our school"s most popular teams, prove his mental and physical strength.

2. The book told stories of thirteen young heroes, each a member of a firefighting team, who dies fighting forest fires.

3. At the end of the season, the team, regardless of whether they win the championship, are splitting up.

4. Either Don or you is going to lead the class discussion on Tuesday.

5. Jane and Mark, who began their yard cleanup business last spring, have decided to hire two new helpers.

6. There is many levels on which a reader will be able to enjoy this book.

7. Admission proceeds from the concert is going toward rebuilding the gazebo, burned down by vandals during the summer.

8. The newspaper reports that a rescue team experienced in climbing rugged mountains are expected to arrive at the site of the crash tomorrow morning.

9. Before they were laid off by the company, neither the assistant managers nor Mr. McCallum were told that their jobs were in danger.

10. Many Democratic senators contend that reforms in the tax system has not brought about the economic growth that had been predicted.

11. Learning to read the daily box scores printed in the newspaper is a desirable thing to do by any fan who expect to develop a deep understanding of baseball.

12. Politics on both the national and local level have always been one of Dave"s passions.

13. Charles Darwin, along with his contemporary, Abraham Lincoln, are among the most impressive figures in nineteenth-century history.

14. Katie Green, one of the hottest jazz pianists in town and known for something she calls "3-D playing," and her accompanist Lenny is planning to tour the South in May.

15. Nancy, along with her friend Sluggo, appear to be coming down the escalator.

16. The sale of computers in a market that has nearly a billion potential customers have created enormous hope for the company"s future.

17. Here"s the two statutes to which the defense lawyer referred during the trial.

18. The commissioner"s insistence on high ethical standards are transforming the city"s police force.

19. No one in the drum corps, in spite of how they all feel about the issue, want to participate in the rally.

20. According to school policy, there is to be two security guards stationed in the playground during recess to protect the children.

Faulty Verb Forms

Verb tenses convey information about when an action occurs. To express past action, add *-ed* to the present form: *walk/walked, cry/cried, type/typed*. To express future action, add *will* before the present tense: *will walk, will cry, will type*. For present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect forms, add *have, has, had,* or *will have*, as in *have walked, has cried, had typed*, and *will have arrived*.

A problem arises, however, with irregular verbs—those verbs that don"t follow the usual pattern. The verb *to choose*, for example, is *choose* in the present, *chose* in the past, and *chosen* in its participle, or "perfect" form. Sentence errors occur when the wrong form is used.

Another error—usually a sentence fragment—occurs when a writer tries to use an *-ing* form of a verb as a sentence"s main verb, as in:

Julie, at the box office, *selling* movie tickets to the 7:00 show.

The problem is that the *–ing* form cannot be used as the main verb unless accompanied by a helping verb, as in:

Julie, at the box office, *has been selling* movie tickets to the 7:00 show.

The addition of the helping verb *has been* corrects the error. Other helping verbs include *is, was, will be*, and other forms of the verb *to be*.

Sample Questions Containing Faulty Verb Forms

1. In spite of the cold and discomfort of the journey, Max was glad to have underwent the experience of seeing the northern lights.

(A) to have underwent the experience of seeing

(B) having underwent the experience of seeing

(C) to have undergone the experience of seeing

(D) to see during the experience of

(E) undergoing the experience of seeing

Choice A is wrong because it uses *have underwent*, a nonstandard form of the verb *to undergo*. Use *have undergone* instead.

Choice B is a variation of choice A.

Choice C uses the verb in its proper form. It is the best answer.

Choice D uses faulty idiom and makes little sense.

Choice E improperly uses an *–ing* form of a verb without a helping verb.

2. Brian Williams, the TV anchor man, skillfully probing his guest"s knowledge of the scandal, but showing great tact because he didn"t want to jeopardize his chance for a news scoop.

(A) skillfully probing his guest"s knowledge of the scandal, but showing

(B) who skillfully probed his guest"s knowledge of the scandal, but showing

(C) skillfully probed his guest"s knowledge of the scandal, showed

(D) he was skilled in probing his guest"s knowledge of the scandal, and showed

(E) skillfully probing his guest"s knowledge of the scandal, showed

Choices A and B are sentence fragments. Neither has a main verb.

Choice C is an incomplete construction. It lacks a conjunction before the verb *showed*.

Choice D is a mixed construction. The construction *he was skilled* lacks a grammatical relationship to the earlier part of the sentence.

Choice E is free of grammatical errors. It is the best answer.

Still other errors involving verbs occur when the writer uses the wrong tense.

Use of Pronouns

A dozen common English pronouns—*I, me, he, she, him, her, it, they, them, we, us,* and *you*—cause more trouble than almost any other words in the language. Almost as troublesome—but not quite—are the possessive pronouns *my, mine, his, her, hers, your, yours, our, ours, their,* and *theirs*.

Faulty usage results most often:

• When pronouns in the wrong "case" are chosen

• When pronouns in the wrong "person" are chosen

• When pronouns fail to agree in number or gender with their antecedents

• When the pronoun reference is unclear or ambiguous

FAULTY PRONOUN CASE

Most of the time you can probably depend on your ear to tell you what"s right and wrong. For example, you"d never say to the bus driver, "Let *I* off at the corner." But when you can"t depend on the sound of the words, it helps to know that those twelve pronouns fall into two groups.

Group 1	Group 2
I	me
he	him
she	her
it	it
they	them
we	us
you	you

In grammatical terms, the pronouns in Group 1 are in the **nominative case** (sometimes called *subjective case*); pronouns in Group 2 are in the **objective case**.

Remember that you mustn"t mix pronouns from different cases in the same phrase. You may not, for example, use such pairs as *she and them* or *they and us*. Any time you need a pair of pronouns and you know that one of them is correct, you can easily pick the other from the same group. If you"re not sure of either pronoun, though, substitute *I* or *me* for one of the pronouns. If *I* seems to fit, you"re in Group 1; if *me* fits better, use Group 2.

Elvis asked that (he, him) and (she, her) practice handstands.

If you insert *me* in place of one of the pronouns, you"ll get:

Elvis asked that *me* practice handstands.

Because no one would say that seriously, *I* must be the word that fits. So the pronouns you need come from Group 1, and the sentence should read:

Elvis asked that *he* and *she* practice handstands.

Now, if you can remember a few more rules, you"ll be well prepared to deal with pronoun errors on the SAT.

1. Use nominative case pronouns for the subject of sentences and for predicate nominatives.
The term *predicate nominative* refers to words not in the subject of the sentence that identify, define, or mean the same as the subject.
Then he and I went home. (*he and I* = subject) The instructors in the course were Donald and he. (*instructors* = subject; *Donald and he* = predicate nominative)

2. Use objective case pronouns in phrases that begin with prepositions, as in:

between *you* and *me*
to Sherry and *her*
among *us* women
at *us*
from *her* and *him*
with *me* and *you*

3. Use objective case pronouns when the pronoun refers to a person to whom something is being done:

Terry invited *him* to the prom.
The waiter gave *her* and *me* a piece of cake.

4. To find the correct pronoun in a comparison, complete the comparison using the verb that would follow naturally:

Jackie runs faster than *she* (runs).
My brother has bigger feet than *I* (do).
Carol is as tough as *he* (is).
A woman such as *I* (am) could solve the problem.

5. When a pronoun appears side by side with a noun (*we* boys, *us* women), deleting the noun will help you pick the correct pronoun:

(*We, Us*) seniors decided to take a day off from school in late May.
(Deleting *seniors* leaves *We decided to* …).

This award was presented to (*we, us*) students by the faculty.
(Deleting *students* leaves *award was presented to us by the* …).

6. Use possessive pronouns (*my, our, your, his, her, their*) before a *gerund*, a noun that looks like a verb because of its *–ing* ending.

Her asking the question shows that she is alert. (*Asking* is a gerund.)
Mother was upset about *your* opening the presents too soon. (*Opening* is a gerund.)

What Is a Gerund?

A gerund is a verb form that ends in *-ing* and is used as a noun.

Fishing is my grandpa"s favorite pastime.
He started *fishing* as a boy in North Carolina.
As a result of all that *fishing*, he hates to eat fish.

In all three sentences the gerund is derived from the verb to *fish*. Don"t confuse gerunds with the participle form of verbs, as in:

Participle: *Fishing* from the bank of the river, my Grandpa caught a catfish.

Gerund: *Fishing* from the bank of a river is my Grandpa"s greatest pleasure.

Not every noun with an *–ing* ending is a gerund. Sometimes it"s just a noun, as in *thing, ring, spring*. At other times, *–ing* words are verbs, in particular, they"re participles that modify pronouns in the objective case.

I hope you don"t mind *my* intruding on your conversation. (Here *intruding* is a gerund.)
I hope you don"t mind *me* intruding on your conversation. (Here *intruding* is a participle.)

Sample Question Containing Faulty Pronoun Choice (Case)

The registration fee in New York is higher <u>than the amount paid by Rosemary and I</u> in Vermont.

(A) than the amount paid by Rosemary and I

(B) in comparison to the fee paid by Rosemary and I

(C) than that which Rosemary and me pay

(D) than the fee Rosemary and me paid

(E) than the one Rosemary and I paid

Choices A and B are incorrect because each contains a phrase beginning with the preposition *by,* which calls for pronouns in the objective case. Use *me* instead of *I*.

Choices C and D call for pronouns in the nominative case. Use *I* instead of *me*.

Choice E uses the proper pronoun. It is the best answer.

Practice in Choosing the Case of Pronouns

Directions: Circle the correct pronoun in each of the following sentences.

1. Judith took my sister and (I, me) to the magic show last night.

2. We thought that Matilda and Jorge would be there, and sure enough, we saw (she, her) and (he, him) sitting in the front row.

3. During the intermission, Jorge came over and asked my sister and (I, me) to go out after the show.

4. Between you and (I, me) the magician was terrible.

5. It must also have been a bad evening for (he, him) and his assistant, Roxanne.

6. Trying to pull a rabbit out of a hat, Roxanne and (he, him) knocked over the table.

7. When he asked for audience participation, my sister and (I, me) volunteered to go on stage.

8. He said that in my pocket I would find $10 in change to split between (I, me) and my sister.

9. When the coins fell out of his sleeve, the audience laughed even harder than (we, us).

10. If I were (he, him), I"d practice for a long time before the next performance.

SHIFT IN PRONOUN PERSON

Pronouns are categorized by person:

First-person pronouns: *I, we, me, us, mine, our, ours*
Second-person pronouns: *you, your, yours*
Third-person pronouns: *she, he, it, one, they, him, her, them, his, hers, its, their, theirs, ours*

Indefinite pronouns such as *all, any, anyone, each, none, nothing, one, several,* and *many* are also considered to be in the third person.

Pronouns must be in the same person as their antecedents—the words they refer to. When a sentence is cast in, say, the first person, it should stay in the first person throughout. Consistency is the key.

Inconsistent: When you (second person) walk your (second person) dog in that park, I (first person) must carry a pooper-scooper.

Consistent: When you (second person) walk your (second person) dog in that park, you (second person) must carry a pooper-scooper.

The need to be consistent applies also to the use of indefinite pronouns, particularly when a writer switches from singular to plural pronouns in mid-sentence:

Inconsistent: If *someone* tries to write a persuasive essay, *they* should at least include a convincing argument.

Consistent: If *one* tries to write a persuasive essay, *one* should at least include a convincing argument.

Sample Questions Containing Switch in Pronoun Person

The more you travel around the country, the more our horizons and outlook expand.

(A) The more you travel around the country

(B) The more we travel around the country

(C) The more one travels around the country

(D) As more traveling is done around the country

(E) As they travel more around the country

Choice A is incorrect because the second-person pronoun *you* shifts to the first-person pronoun *our* in the second clause.

Choice B consistently uses two plural pronouns in the first person. It is the best answer.

Choice C switches from the singular pronoun *one* to the plural pronoun *our* in the second clause.

Choice D uses the pronoun *our* that fails to refer to a specific noun or other pronoun.

Choice E improperly uses the third-person pronoun *they* to refer to the first-person pronoun *our*.

PRONOUN–ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT

Singular pronouns must have singular antecedents; plural pronouns, plural antecedents. Errors occur when antecedents are indefinite, as in *each, neither, everyone* (also *no one, someone, anyone*), and *everybody* (also *nobody, somebody,* and *anybody*). Note the problem of pronoun-antecedent agreement in these sentences:

Everybody is sticking to *their* side of the story.
Anybody can pass this course if *they* study hard.
Neither teacher plans to change *their* policy regarding late papers.

Properly stated, the sentences should read:

Everybody is sticking to *his* side of the story.
Anybody can pass this course if *she* studies hard.
Neither teacher plans to change *his* policy regarding late papers.

Some people, objecting to the use of specific gender pronouns, prefer the cumbersome and tacky phrase "he or she," but most good writers avoid using it.

Still other words may sound singular but are plural in certain contexts:

The audience showed *its* respect for the queen by withholding applause until the end of her speech.
The audience was asked to turn off *their* cell phones during the performance.

The senior class posed for *its* picture.
The senior class had *their* portraits taken for the yearbook.

Sample Question Containing Faulty Pronoun–
Antecedent Agreement

The Army, which paid soldiers large bonuses to re-enlist when their tours of duty were over, <u>changed this policy beginning when their budget was cut</u>.

(A) changed this policy beginning when their budget was cut

(B) begins to change this policy when their budget was cut

(C) began to change this policy when its budget was cut

(D) it changed this policy when their budget was cut

(E) beginning to change its policy, the budget was cut

Choice A is wrong because it uses the plural pronoun *their* to refer to the singular noun *Army*.

Choice B contains a shift in verb tense from past to present.

Choice C uses the singular pronoun *it* to refer to the singular noun *Army*. It is the best answer.

Choice D contains a comma splice.

Choice E contains two parts that lack both a grammatical and a logical relation to each other.

Practice in Recognizing Pronoun Shift
and Pronoun Agreement

Directions: Some of the following sentences contain shifts in pronoun person or errors in agreement between pronouns and antecedents. Make all appropriate corrections in the spaces provided. Alter only those sentences that contain errors.

1. The English teacher announced that everyone in the class must turn in their term papers no later than Friday.

2. When you are fired from a job, a person collects unemployment.

3. The library put their collection of rare books on display.

4. Each of my sisters own their own car.

5. In that class, our teacher held conferences with us once a week.

6. In order to keep yourself in shape, one should work out every day.

7. The teacher dictates a sentence in French, and each of the students write it down in English and hand it in.

8. Each horse in the procession followed their riders down to the creek.

9. The school"s chess team has just won their first match.

10. When one is visiting the park and you can"t find a restroom, they should ask a park ranger.

FAULTY PRONOUN REFERENCE

Sentences in which a pronoun fails to refer specifically to a noun or another pronoun, called an *antecedent*, can cause confusion or fail to convey the writer"s

intention. Some references are ambiguous because the pronoun seems to refer to one or more antecedents:

The teacher, Ms. Taylor, told Karen that it was *her* responsibility to hand out composition paper.

Who is responsible? The teacher or Karen? It"s impossible to tell because the pronoun *her* may refer to either of them. Revised, the sentence might read:

Ms. Taylor told Karen that it was *her* responsibility as the teacher to hand out composition paper.

A sentence containing two or more pronouns with ambiguous references can be especially troublesome and unclear:

Mike became a good friend of Mark"s after *he* helped *him* repair *his* car.

Whose car needed fixing? Who helped whom? To answer these questions, the sentence needs to be rewritten:

Mike and Mark became good friends after Mark helped Mike repair *his* car.

This version is better, but it"s still uncertain who owned the car. One way to set the meaning straight is to use more than one sentence:

When Mark needed to repair his car, Mike helped him do the job. Afterwards, Mike and Mark became good friends.

To be correct, a pronoun should refer directly and clearly to a specific noun or another pronoun, or it should refer by implication to an idea. Such implied references frequently involve the pronouns *it*, *they*, and *you*, and the relative pronouns *which*, *that*, and *this*, and cause trouble mostly when the pronoun is used to refer to rather general or ambiguous ideas, as in:

Homeless people allege that the mayor is indifferent to their plight, *which* has been disproved.

What has been disproved? That an allegation was made? That the mayor is indifferent? The intended meaning is unclear because *which* has no distinct antecedent. To clear up the uncertainty, the sentence might read:

Homeless people allege that the mayor is indifferent to their plight, but the allegation has been disproved.

Sample Question Containing an Ambiguous
Pronoun Reference

Ricky, Marti, and Steve were driving nonstop from New York to Chicago when, falling asleep at the wheel, he drove the car off the road.

(A) when, falling asleep at the wheel, he drove the car off the road

(B) and then he drove the car off the road after falling asleep at the wheel

(C) when Ricky drove the car off the road after falling asleep at the wheel

(D) when Ricky drove the car off the road, since he fell asleep at the wheel

(E) and, since Ricky has fallen asleep at the wheel, he drove the car off the road

Choices A and B are incorrect because in each sentence the pronoun *he* fails to refer to a specific noun or other pronoun.

Choice C avoids the pronoun-reference problem by using the *Ricky* instead of *he*. It is the best answer.

Choice D contains an error in verb tense. Because Ricky had fallen asleep before he drove the car off the road, use *had fallen* instead of *fell*.

Choice E, a compound sentence, would be more effectively expressed with one independent clause and two subordinate clauses.

Practice in Identifying Faulty Pronoun Reference

Directions: Each of the following sentences suffers from a pronoun problem. Please eliminate the problem by revising each sentence. Use the blank spaces to write your answers.

1. When we teenagers loiter outside the theater on Friday night, they give you a hard time.

2. I answered the test questions, collected my pencils and pens, and handed them in.

3. Barbara told Ken that she wanted only a short wedding trip to Florida, which lies at the root of their problem.

4. His father let him know that he had only an hour to get to the airport.

5. During Dr. Rice"s tenure in office, she traveled more than any other secretary of state.

6. Henry, an ambulance driver, disapproved of war but drove it to the front lines anyway.

7. After the campus tour, Mike told Todd that he thought he"d be happy going to Auburn.

8. Peggy"s car hit a truck, but it wasn"t even dented.

9. Within the last month, Andy"s older brother Pete found a new job, broke his leg skiing, and got married to Felicia, which made their parents very happy.

10. Eddie grew fond of the novels of John Steinbeck because he had lived in California.

Faulty Comparisons

The sentence-improvement questions on the SAT will almost certainly test your understanding of the rules governing the use of comparisons. In addition to knowing about comparative degrees, you need to know that comparisons (1) need to be complete, (2) must be stated in parallel form, and (3) must pertain to things that may logically be compared.

Most comparisons are made by using different forms of adjectives or adverbs.

The degree of comparison is indicated by the ending (usually *–er* and *–est*) or by the use of *more* or *most* (or *less* and *least*). The English language offers three degrees of comparison, called *positive*, *comparative*, and *superlative.*

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
tall	taller	tallest
dark	darker	darkest
handsome	handsomer *or* more handsomest	handsomer *or* most handsome
graceful	more graceful	most graceful
prepared	less prepared	least prepared
happily	more happily	most happily

Some words deviate from the usual pattern. For example:

good	better	best
well	better	best
bad	worse	worst
little	less	least
much	more	most
many	more	most

Use the following guidelines to hunt down errors in comparative degree:

1. To form the comparative and superlative degree of one-syllable words, add *–er* or *–est* to the positive form (*brave, braver, bravest; late, later, latest*).

2. To form the comparative and superlative degrees of most two-syllable words, use *more* or *most*, or *less* and *least* (*more famous, most nauseous, less skillful, least jagged*). Some two-syllable words follow the guidelines for words of one syllable (*pretty, prettier, prettiest*), although you wouldn"t err by applying the rule for two-syllable words (*more pretty, most pretty*).

3. To form the comparative and superlative degree of three-syllable words and of all words ending in *–ly*, use *more* and *most*, or *less* and *least* (*beautiful, more beautiful, most beautiful; gladly, more gladly, most gladly*).

4. To compare two things use the comparative degree, but to compare three or more things use the superlative degree.

My *younger* sister takes dancing lessons. (The writer has two sisters.)

My *youngest* sister takes swimming lessons. (The writer has at least three sisters.)

5. Never create a double comparison by putting words like *more, most, less*, and *least* in the same phrase with words in the comparative or superlative degrees. For example, avoid *more friendlier, less prouder, most sweetest, least safest*. Such usages are both ungrammatical and redundant. Instead, use adjectives and adverbs in the positive degree: *more friendly, less proud, more sweet, least safe*.

INCOMPLETE COMPARISONS

In everyday speech, people give emphasis to their opinions by saying things like "We had the best time" and "That was the worst accident!" Neither statement is complete, however, because technically the "best" time must be compared to other times, and the "worst" accident must be compared to other accidents.

An incomplete comparison made colloquially may suffer no loss of meaning, but standard written usage calls for unmistakable clarity. On the SAT you may find sentences that omit some words needed to make a comparison clear:

Mimi visited her aged aunt longer than Kathy.

This could mean either that Mimi spent a longer time with her aunt than Kathy did, or that Mimi spent more time with her aunt than she spent with Kathy. To eliminate the ambiguity, simply complete the comparison:

Mimi visited her aged aunt longer than she visited Kathy.

A comparison using *as* usually requires a repetition of the word: as good *as* gold, as fast *as* a speeding bullet, as high *as* a kite.

Incomplete: On the exam, Nicole expects to do as well if not better than Nat.

Complete: On the exam, Nicole expects to do as well *as*, if not better than, Nat.

For the sake of completeness, when you compare one thing to a group of which it is a part, be sure to use *other* or *else*.

Lieutenant Henry was braver than any pilot in the squadron.

This suggests that Henry may not have been a member of the squadron. If he belonged to the squadron, however, add *other* to complete the comparison:

Lieutenant Henry was braver than any *other* pilot in the squadron.

Similarly, notice the difference between these two sentences:

Diana talks more nonsense than anyone in the class.
Diana talks more nonsense than anyone *else* in the class.

Only the second sentence makes clear that Diana is a member of the class.

ILLOGICAL COMPARISONS

Logic breaks down when two or more unlike things are compared.

Boston”s harbor is reported to be more polluted than any city in the country.

This sentence is meant to compare pollution in the Boston harbor with pollution in the harbors of other cities. Instead, it compares Boston"s harbor with a city, an illogical comparison. Properly expressed, it would read this way:

Boston"s harbor is reported to be more polluted than the harbor of any other city in the country.

Similarly, note the difference between these two sentences.

Unlike most cars on the block, Ellie has her Toyota washed almost every week.
Ellie"s Toyota, unlike most cars on the block, is washed almost every week.

The first sentence is intended to compare Ellie"s car with the other cars on the block. But it nonsensically compares Ellie to the other cars.

Sample Questions Containing Faulty Comparisons

1. A more easier and direct route exist between Mt. Kisco and Pleasantville than the one we took.

(A) A more easier and direct route exist

(B) An easier and direct route exist

(C) An easier and more direct route exists

(D) Easier and directer routes exist

(E) A both more easy and a more direct route exists

Choice A contains the phrase *more easier*, which is both a redundancy and an example of faulty diction.

Choice B contains an error in parallelism. *Easier*, an adjective in the comparative degree, is not parallel in form to *direct*. Use *more direct*.

Choice C accurately and grammatically conveys the meaning of the sentence. It is the best answer.

Choice D uses *directer*, not a standard English word, instead of *more direct*.

Choice E is wordy. *Both* and the repetition of *more* are unnecessary.

2. Elton John combines various techniques of singing and piano playing as effortlessly as any pop star ever has.

(A) as effortlessly as any pop star ever has

(B) as effortlessly as any other pop star ever has

(C) effortlessly, as any pop star has

(D) as effortlessly like any other pop star ever has

(E) as effortlessly, if not more so, than any pop star ever has

Choice A is incorrect because it omits *other*, a word that must be used when comparing one thing with a group of which it is a member. Use *as any other*.

Choice B expresses the comparison correctly. It is the best answer.

Choice C uses awkward language that obscures the meaning of the sentence.

Choice D uses *like* instead of *as*. Use *like*, a preposition, to introduce a phrase; use *as* to introduce a clause.

Choice E fails to complete the comparison because it omits the second *as*. Use *as effortlessly as*.

A Review

While looking for errors in sentence-improvement questions, use this checklist as a guide.

✔ Verbs. Check the tense, agreement with the subject, and parallelism.

✔ Nouns. Check the number, agreement with the verb, parallelism, and word choice.

✔ Pronouns. Check the case, number, agreement with antecedent, reference to a noun or another pronoun, agreement with verb, and parallel structure.

✔ Adjectives. Check the modification and comparative degree.

✔ Adverbs. Check modification of verbs.

✔ Phrases. Check parallel structure and sentence structure.

✔ Clauses. Check completeness, coordination, and subordination.

✔ Participles. Check modification.

✔ Punctuation. Check use of commas and semicolons. Also sentence structure, including run-ons, fragments, and comma splices.

Identifying Sentence Errors

In this section of the SAT, you are given eighteen sentences, most of which contain an error in grammar, usage, or style. Your job is to identify which underlined portion of each sentence contains the error. Some sentences have no error.

Sample Question

After reading (A) the two stories, the class decided (B) that the the second one (C) was best. (D) No error. (E)

The sentence contains an error in comparison. When you compare two things, use words in the comparative degree, such as better, lighter, and more able. But when you compare more than two things, use words in the superlative degree, such as best, lightest, and most able. In the sentence, two stories are being compared. Therefore use better instead of best. Choice D is the right answer.

Although Identifying Sentence Errors questions are shorter and less involved than those in the sentence-improvement sections of the exam, they deal with an equally wide range of grammar and usage problems.

The sentence errors you are most likely to meet in this section of the SAT are:

Errors in Expression and Style

Faulty idiom

Faulty diction

Wordiness and redundancies

Faulty parallelism

Incomplete comparisons

Errors in Grammar and Usage

Noun–verb agreement

Pronoun–antecedent agreement

Faulty pronoun reference

Shift in pronoun person

Faulty pronoun case

Faulty verb tense

Faulty verb form

ERRORS IN EXPRESSION AND STYLE

Faulty Idiom

English is crammed with words, expressions, and phrases whose usage cannot be rationally explained. We say “three-foot ruler” when we mean “three-feet.” A building “burns down,” a piece of paper “burns up,” and a pot of stew just “burns.” Both flammable and inflammable mean the same thing—easily set afire. When you don”t understand something, you might say it”s “over my head,” an expression that also means deep in debt. We accept these and many other linguistic quirks because they are simply part of our language. Likewise, native speakers of English say go to the moviesand arrive at the movies. For someone just learning English, though, “arrive to the movies” would make perfect sense. But we don”t say it because it”s not idiomatic English.

On the SAT, you may find sentences containing faulty idiom. To identify errors in idiom you must, to a certain extent, follow your instincts and your ear for language. There are no specific guidelines to help untangle problems in idiom. An awkward-sounding word or phrase may be the only evidence.

The First Amendment is invoked in those times when journalists are asked to disclose their sources.

The phrase in those times is awkward. Replace in with at, a preposition that often refers to time—at four o”clock, at the turn of the century. Or better still, discard the phrase entirely:

The First Amendment is invoked when journalists are asked to disclose their sources.

Here is another example:

A knight was faithful to his king, to his church, and to his lady, and he would gladly die in the name of them.

The phrase in the name of them is grammatical but awkward.

A knight was faithful to his king, to his church, and to his lady, and he would gladly die in their name.

Although many errors in English idiom on the SAT involve the faulty use of prepositions, you"re just as likely to find problematic verbs, adverbs, and other parts of speech.

Sample Questions Containing Faulty Idiom

1. In appreciation (A) about (B) her dedicated service to the Safe Rides program, the local Lion"s Club presented her (C) with a scholarship at graduation (D). No error (E).

In standard English, the phrase In appreciation about should read In appreciation for. Choice B is the correct answer.

2. Mr. Andrews, the store manager, feels (A) grateful that (B) every weekend this summer Phil and George are ready for working (C) at a moment's (D) notice. No error (E).

Faulty idiom results from the misuse of a verb. Instead of for working, use to work. Choice C is the correct answer.

3. Speaking as (A) a member of the scholarly panel, Dr. Muller told (B) a story filled up with allusions to (D) to Norse mythology. No error (E).

Faulty idiom results from the use of up, an unnecessary preposition.
Use filled instead of filled up. Choice C is the correct answer.

Practice in Identifying Faulty English Idiom

Directions: Identify the errors in English idiom in the following sentences. Write revised versions in the spaces provided. Some sentences may contain no error.

1. It was an honor to die at battle for their religion.

2. After the ceremony, the newlyweds ascended up the stairs.

3. I hope that the admissions office will comply to my request for an extension.

4. Bronze was used by primitive people before either iron and tin.

5. Because of his preoccupation in classical music, Justin bought a subscription to Symphony Hall concerts.

6. Most rock climbers are lured by either danger and love of adventure.

7. When Lucy returned home, she felt as though she"d never been away.

8. The posse went in pursuit after the horse thieves.

9. The new security system uses electronic eye scans in the identifying of employees.

10. Work-study programs offer opportunities to both students and the business community.

11. No new plans were developed in respect to the environment.

12. Columbus sailed west in search for a way to the Indies.

13. The wounded marine could not endure that kind of a pain without passing out.

14. The children were waiting on the bus to arrive.

15. Generic drugs are not nearly as expensive than brand-name drugs.

16. Billy Collins is regarded to be one of the most popular contemporary American poets.

17. Artists must often make a choice between teaching or devoting their time to creating art.

18. Most people who travel at Thanksgiving prefer driving more than flying.

19. Because the boat"s engine had failed, the sailor was never far away from harm during the storm.

20. Although Jackie"s term paper was neither well written or fully researched, its grade was A+.

Faulty Diction

Faulty diction means faulty word choice. It occurs, say, when good is used instead of well after a certain verb, or when where is used instead of when, as in "the time where he took the bus to Jersey." The English language offers abundant opportunities to choose incorrect words, but on the SAT the range is limited to commonly misused words. For instance, use who instead of which when referring to people:

Brian was one of several journalists who were killed during the war in Iraq.

Use which when referring to animals and nonliving things, as in:

Censors bleeped obscenities out of the film"s TV version, which disturbed free-speech advocates.

That may be used to refer to people as well as to animals and nonliving things:

Pedestrians that jaywalk put their lives at risk.
It may look harmless, but poison oak is a plant that infects the skin with severe rashes and itching.

Sometimes, the choice of words is a toss-up. It"s fine to say "Those are the geese who are damaging the grass," but it"s also acceptable to say "Those are the geese that are damaging the grass." Because both usages are standard, the SAT won"t ask you to make decisions about issues like that.

Sample Questions Containing Faulty Diction

1. Although $\frac{\text{best known}}{\text{A}}$ for being a crooner of old songs, Tony Bennett $\frac{\text{also paints}}{\text{B}}$ watercolors, $\frac{\text{whereas he has}}{\text{C D}}$ enjoyed considerable success. $\frac{\text{No error.}}{\text{E}}$

The word whereas, meaning "although" or "considering that" is improperly used in the context. Because the writer probably meant to say with which or perhaps whereby, choice C is the correct answer.

2. Schoolteachers $\frac{\text{which need}}{\text{A}}$ to keep themselves up-to-date $\frac{\text{on}}{\text{B}}$ educational technology $\frac{\text{are being}}{\text{C}}$ encouraged $\frac{\text{to attend}}{\text{D}}$ in-service courses and workshops. $\frac{\text{No error.}}{\text{E}}$

The writer has improperly used which instead of who to refer to schoolteachers. Although some may regard schoolteachers as something other than human, on the SAT they should be considered people. Choice A is the correct answer.

3. A "fault" in tennis $\frac{\text{is when}}{\text{A}}$ the ball $\frac{\text{being served}}{\text{B}}$ to the opposing player lands outside the lines $\frac{\text{that mark}}{\text{C}}$ the $\frac{\text{boundary}}{\text{C}}$ of the service box. $\frac{\text{No error.}}{\text{E}}$

The construction is when is an error in diction because you can"t define a noun with a clause but only with another noun. In standard English, the sentence might read something like "A "fault" in tennis is a stroke that falls outside … ."

Another common error in diction occurs when an adjective is used where an adverb is needed. The reverse—using an adverb where an adjective belongs—also occurs, but less often. Part of your preparation for the SAT should include practice in using adjectives and adverbs properly.

To begin, identify the errors in these two sentences:

Children addicted to television often behave violent in the classroom.

I feel badly that Randy performed bad on the test.

If you spotted the errors, you should have no trouble with similar items on the SAT. And if you knew why violent should be violently and that bad and badly should switch places, you"re probably up to par on adjective and adverb usage. But if you didn"t notice or couldn"t explain the errors, you should definitely read on.

Adjectives are words that describe, or modify, nouns and pronouns. Good is an example, as in good apple, good book, and good night. That"s easy enough, but good, along with some other adjectives, sometimes causes trouble when used after a verb. Good should not be used after most verbs, so avoid talks good, drives good, writes good, and so on.

Here"s the catch: Good may be used after some verbs, called linking verbs, among them look, smell, taste, feel, appear, stay, seem, remain, grow, become, and all forms of to be. Therefore, it"s correct to say sounds good, feels good, and is good. (Notice that linking verbs often refer to the senses.)

And to complicate matters still more, linking verbs are sometimes used as active verbs. Look is a linking verb when it refers to the appearance of things, as in The day looks good for jogging. But it is an active verb when it refers to the act of looking, as in Margie looked sadly at her sick dog. If you"re not sure whether a verb is used as a linking verb or as an active verb, substitute a form of the verb to be. If the sentence retains its basic meaning, the verb is probably a linking verb, as in The juice tastes good/The juice is good. If the meaning is lost, it is an active verb, as in He feels badlyabout your loss. Because you wouldn"t say He is badly about your loss, feels is an active verb in that sentence.

Adverbs are words that describe, or modify, verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs, and can often be identified by their –ly endings. Most of the time they answer such questions as How? When? How much? Where? In what sequence? To what extent? In what manner? For example:

How does the grass look? It looks mostly brown. (The adverb mostly modifies the adjective brown.)

When does Roger run? He usually runs in the morning. (The adverb usually modifies the verb runs.)

How much did it rain? It rained enough to flood the cellar. (The adverb enough modifies the verb rained.)

When you need to choose between an adjective and an adverb on the SAT, follow this procedure: Find the verb and determine whether it is a linking verb. If it is, use the adjective; if it isn"t, use the adverb. More often than not, the verb is likely to be one of those that is sometimes active and sometimes linking. So, check it by substituting a form of to be, as described earlier. You can also check its modification. If it modifies an adjective or another adverb, use the adverb. If it modifies a noun or pronoun, use the adjective.

TIP

Note to the Reader

If any of this seems unduly complex, you"ll catch on if you re-read this material two or three times and do the practice exercises.

Sample Questions Regarding Adjective/Adverb Use

1. Alan, our trusty mechanic, studied $\underset{A}{\text{the overheated engine}}$ $\underset{B}{\text{careful}}$ and with patience before $\underset{C}{\text{declaring}}$ that he $\underset{D}{\text{hadn't}}$ a clue what to do about it. $\underset{E}{\text{No error.}}$

The word careful is an adjective. In the context of the sentence, it modifies the verb studied. Therefore, it should be carefully, an adverb. Choice B is the correct answer.

2. $\underset{A}{\text{Results}}$ of the survey $\underset{B}{\text{show}}$ a $\underset{C}{\text{frightening pattern}}$ of $\underset{D}{\text{constant}}$ melting glaciers in the northern part of Canada and the Arctic. $\underset{E}{\text{No error.}}$

The word constant is an adjective. Because it is used to modify the adjective melting, it should be an adverb—constantly. Choice D is the correct answer.

Practice in Using Adjectives and Adverbs

Directions: Check each sentence for faulty use of adjectives and adverbs. Write the correct words in the spaces provided. Some sentences are correct.

1. The nurse felt bitterly that she had contracted the flu from a patient.

2. There is simply no justification for the judge”s ruling.

3. Meredith”s bike is old, but it rides smooth.

4. In spite of her head cold, the soprano sang the aria beautiful.

5. The tenor”s singing could only be described as horribly.

6. The black Mercedes drove slow up the gravel driveway.

7. The colonel looked down cynical on the people assembled in the plaza.

8. Agnes played the part of the mother superficially.

9. No other basketball team blends as smooth as the Lakers.

10. Mark always feels good after a long run and a hot shower.

11. He walked down the hall completely obliviously to the train of papers he left behind.

12. Be sure the door is shut secure because it often swings open by itself.

13. The coach talked slow about the team”s decline during the second half of the season.

14. The audience remained calmly, even when the hall began to fill rapidly with smoke.

15. No problem; I can do both jobs easy.

16. When the phone rang, Bob picked it up, optimistically that it was Sheila calling.

17. When they carried Terry off the field, everyone thought he was hurt bad.

18. Unfortunately, John never feels shyly about reading his poems aloud in public.

19. Amy spoke sincere when she promised to repay the money.

20. Jill looked mischievous at Jack as they secretly walked up the hill.

Wordiness and Redundancies

A sentence needs revision when it includes words and phrases that don”t add meaning or that repeat or reiterate what has already been stated. For example:

A necessary requirement for applying to most colleges is the SAT.
An important essential ingredient of a hamburger is meat.
You should read Lust for Life, the biography of the life of Vincent van Gogh.

All three sentences contain a needless word or phrase. In the first sentence, omit necessary because necessary by definition implies requirement. Therefore, necessary requirement is redundant. In the next sentence, an ingredient described as essential must by definition be important, so delete the word important. And in the last sentence, the phrase of the life should be removed because a biography cannot be anything other than the story of someone"s life.

Sample Questions Containing Wordiness and Redundancies

1. The commission"s report mentions (A) the contributions made by (B) both big corporations as well as (C) small businesses (D) to the growth of the nation"s economy. No error. (E)

The word both and the phrase as well as are redundant. Substitute and for as well as. Choice C is the correct answer.

2. For (A) as many as (B) twenty years or more Florence Nightingale fought to bring about (C) new standards to (D) cleanliness in hospitals. No error. (E)

The phrase as many as is unnecessary. Therefore, choice A is the correct answer.

Practice in Detecting Wordiness

Directions: Revise the following sentences for economy of expression.

1. She constantly irritates and bothers me all the time.

2. He spoke to me concerning the matter of my future.

3. Is it a true fact that the ozone layer is being depleted?

4. I thought that if I didn"t take chemistry that I couldn"t go to a good college.

5. Consequently, as a result of the election, the state will have its first female governor.

6. My father"s habitual custom is to watch the sun set in the West.

7. Harold picked up a brush at the age of ten years old and hasn”t stopped painting since.

8. Research shows that avid sports fans not only suffer fewer depressions, but they are also generally healthier, too, than those not interested in sports.

9. His field of work is that of a chemist.

10. For the second time, the cough recurred again.

Faulty Parallelism

Orderly construction of a sentence keeps parallel ideas in the same grammatical form. For example, a sentence describing the contents of a school locker might read this way:

The locker held a down jacket, aromatic sweatpants, three sneakers, two left-handed gloves, an unused tuna sandwich, a broken ski pole, a hockey puck, six overdue library books, a disposable camera, and a hiking boot.

Every item listed is an object, each expressed in the same grammatical form: a noun preceded by one or two adjectives. When the owner of the locker wrote a list of favorite pastimes, though, the sentence lost its balance:

I like skiing, hiking, to take pictures, and running.

The message is clear, but the phrase “to take pictures” is not parallel with the other phrases. To revise it, write “taking pictures.”

To recognize faulty parallelism in SAT sentences, you should know that:

1. Ideas in a series should be in the same grammatical form, even when the series consists of only two items:

The neighbors objected to the noisy parties on Friday nights and to the trash on the lawn on Saturday mornings.

The parallel ideas are expressed as prepositional phrases, to the noisy parties and to the trash.

After graduation, Nan promised to turn the volume down and to come home earlier.

Each parallel idea consists of an infinitive followed by a noun and an adverb.

2. In comparisons, parallel ideas should be in the same grammatical form.

Going out to eat no longer thrills me as much as to cook at home.

The gerund going may not be paired with the infinitive to cook.

Going out to eat no longer thrills me as much as cooking at home.

The ideas are now stated in parallel form.

3. Parallel ideas are often signaled by pairs of words like either/or, neither/nor, whether/or, both/and, and not only/but also. A usage error to watch out for is the misuse of one word in the pair, as in:

Alice will attend neither NYU or Columbia.

Revise by changing neither to either, or changing or to nor.

Still another error occurs when one of the words in the pair is situated too far from the parallel ideas, as in:

Jake both started on the basketball and the volleyball teams.

The signal word both is too far removed from the parallel phrase, basketball and volleyball teams. Its placement misleads the reader into thinking that the verb started is one of the parallel ideas. Correctly worded, the sentence reads:

Jake started on both the basketball and the volleyball teams.

Sample Questions Containing Faulty Parallel Structure

1. One of the world's (A) greatest musicians, Leonard Bernstein was (B) a composer, a conductor (C), a teacher, and played the piano brilliantly (D). No error (E).

The phrase played the piano brilliantly should be a brilliant pianist in order to be parallel in form to the other items in the series. Choice D is the correct answer.

2. It is far simpler (A) to swim the breast stroke than explaining (B) to a beginning swimmer in words (C) how to do it (D). No error (E).

The phrase than explaining should be to explain in order to be parallel in form to the infinitive to swim. Choice B is the correct answer.

Incomplete Comparisons

Sentences used to make comparisons usually follow a familiar pattern that requires the items being compared to be stated in parallel form. All words essential to

completing the comparison must be present in order to avoid ungrammatical or illogical comparisons.

Sample Questions Containing Incomplete Comparisons

1. A: According to some historians, the quality of FDR"s presidency B: was on a par C: with or better D: than Wilson but not Lincoln"s. E: No error.

The sentence illogically compares quality with Wilson instead of with Wilson"s presidency. Therefore, choice is the correct answer.

2. Jon Stewart, the comedian,

is A: funnier and B: more satirical than C: any comedian D: on television. E: No error.

As written, the sentence compares Stewart with all comedians on television, but Stewart cannot be funnier than himself. Moreover, it remains unclear whether Stewart is or is not a television comedian. To make a proper comparison, use "any other comedian." Choice C is the correct answer.

Practice in Completing Comparisons

Directions: Find the errors in comparison in the following sentences. Write the correct version of the sentence in the space provided. Some sentences may be correct.

1. Jane is more efficient than any member of the committee.

2. Andy looks more like his father than his brother.

3. In The Great Gatsby, I disliked Daisy as much as Tom.

4. Phil works faster than George does on most jobs.

5. Oscar was as tired if not more tired than Pete.

6. To do the research for my term paper, I read books more than searching the Web.

7. Although she"s younger, Lillian looks as old if not older than Dorothy.

8. They talked more about Chekhov"s stories than his plays.

9. Allen"s canoe was destroyed in the rapids, just like his partner.

10. After reading Siddhartha, I admire Hesse more than any author.

11. I am more interested in rap music than Pete.

12. Experts say that walking is better for you than to jog the same distance.

13. Biology is more popular than any science.

14. The students respect Ms. Scotch"s teaching style more than Mr. Green.

15. His ears were bigger than Dumbo.

16. It took us longer to reach Trenton than Camden.

17. Which is cheaper—flying to Washington or to take the train?

18. The lawyer insisted that her job took more hours than a teacher.

19. Carrying iPods is more common among students than cell phones.

20. Cindy has applied to as many colleges if not more than Joanne.

ERRORS IN GRAMMAR AND USAGE

Noun–Verb Agreement

Nouns and verbs must agree in number. That is, singular nouns must have singular verbs; plural nouns must be accompanied by plural verbs.

The Identifying Sentence Errors section of the SAT almost always includes questions that expect you to recognize agreement errors. Sometimes the error occurs when the subject of the sentence fails to agree with its verb. Just as often, though, the error exists between some other noun and verb in the sentence. Errors occur most often when:

1. Intervening words obscure the relationship between the noun and verb.

2. A singular noun sounds as though it is plural.

3. The noun is one that can be either singular or plural, depending on its use.

4. The noun comes after the verb in the sentence.

Sample Questions Containing Noun–Verb Agreement Errors

1. Ian"s achievement as a chef, (A) in addition to his skills (B) as a speaker, make (C) him a popular figure (D) on television cooking shows. No error. (E)

The subject of the sentence is the singular noun achievement. The verb make is plural. Because the noun and verb don"t agree, choice is the correct answer. Note

that words and phrases coming between a subject and a verb rarely affect the number of the verb.

2. Behind the house $\underset{A}{\text{there is}}$ $\underset{B}{\text{just}}$ one broken-down shed and one pile of rubble $\underset{C}{\text{that}}$ need $\underset{D}{\text{to be carted}}$ to the town dump. $\underset{E}{\text{No error.}}$

In this sentence, the subject words (shed and pile) come after the verb (is). Because the subject is a compound subject (two nouns joined by and), it is considered plural and must be accompanied by a plural verb. Instead of is, use are. Choice A is the correct answer.

3. $\underset{A}{\text{About}}$ a million and a half dollars $\underset{B}{\text{have been spent}}$ on repairing the road, but only recently $\underset{C}{\text{has}}$ the shoddy construction methods $\underset{D}{\text{become}}$ evident. $\underset{E}{\text{No error.}}$

The plural noun methods fails to agree with the singular verb has … become. Because has should be have, choice C is the correct answer.

Pronoun–Antecedent Agreement

Like nouns and verbs, pronouns and antecedents must also agree in number. Singular pronouns need singular antecedents; plural pronouns, plural antecedents. The Identifying Sentence Errors section on the SAT almost always includes one or more questions that test your ability to recognize errors in agreement between pronouns and their antecedents.

Sample Questions Containing Errors in Pronoun–Antecedent Agreement

1. In some cultures a woman $\underset{A}{\text{is assigned}}$ a role in life and is $\underset{B}{\text{constantly}}$ reminded of $\underset{C}{\text{their}}$ duties $\underset{D}{\text{to}}$ men. $\underset{E}{\text{No error.}}$

The plural pronoun their refers to the singular antecedent woman. Use her instead of their. Because the pronoun and antecedent don”t agree, choice C is the correct answer.

2. The branches of the university, $\underset{A}{\text{which}}$ $\underset{B}{\text{long adhered to}}$ a “no-layoff” policy, began changing $\underset{C}{\text{its procedures}}$ $\underset{D}{\text{under}}$ the pressure of financial losses. $\underset{E}{\text{No error.}}$

The singular pronoun its fails to agree with its antecedent branches.
Because their should be its, choice C is the correct answer.

Practice in Recognizing Pronoun–Antecedent Agreement

Directions: Check the following sentences for errors in agreement between pronoun and antecedent. Use the space provided after each sentence to write your corrections. Some sentences contain no errors.

1. The coach said that everyone on the girls" basketball team will be required to get their physicals by the start of practice on Tuesday.

2. All of his male relatives live in their own condos.

3. Not one of us girls likes to have their schedule changed so late in the term.

4. By October the maple trees will be wearing its fall colors.

5. All those who want to go on the trip must bring his money tomorrow.

6. The library is again displaying their collection of rare books.

7. The senior class was proud of the way they conducted themselves at the graduation ceremonies.

8. Not a boy or a girl in the class was willing to donate their time and energy to such a frivolous undertaking.

9. When teachers retire, the yearbook is often dedicated to them.

10. These potter"s wheels are relics of the past, but it still can be turned easily.

Faulty Pronoun Reference

Another common error occurs when pronouns fail to refer clearly to their antecedents. When the reference is unclear or ambiguous, the meaning of the sentence suffers.

Sample Question Containing Pronoun Reference Errors

Sarah and her colleague, Kate, $\underset{A}{\text{received}}$ equal bonuses from $\underset{B}{\text{their}}$ boss last Christmas but $\underset{C}{\text{she}}$ got a bigger one this year $\underset{D}{\text{because of}}$ her outstanding work. $\underset{E}{\text{No error.}}$

Because the pronoun she may refer to Sarah or to Kate, the reference is ambiguous. To fix the problem, use Sarah or Kate in place of she. Choice C is the correct answer.

Practice in Identifying Faulty Pronoun Reference

Directions: The following sentences contain faulty pronoun references. Write a revised version of each sentence in the space provided.

1. Mrs. Parker loves to knit and spends most of her time doing it.

2. At the end, with all the questions on the test answered, I handed them in.

3. Peggy told Eileen that she was sure that she had handed in the homework.

4. Bill let his father know that he had only ten minutes left on the parking meter.

5. During Truman"s presidency, he sent troops to fight in Korea.

6. Henry, a helicopter pilot, regularly flies it on rescue missions.

7. In Fitzgerald"s The Great Gatsby, he wrote about the American Dream.

8. She decided to buy a high-definition television, which is just what he wanted.

9. The agreement between Joan and Jane fell apart after she failed to show up for the meeting.

10. After the interview, Mike told Tom that he would probably like spending the next four years at Dartmouth.

Shift in Pronoun Person

Pronouns must also agree in person throughout a sentence. A sentence cast in first person, for example, should remain so from start to finish. On the SAT, you may find sentences containing improper shifts from one person to another.

Sample Question Containing Shift in Pronoun Person

Although one <u>may hope</u> (A) that <u>your education</u> (B) is going to be excellent preparation for life, <u>what</u> (C) one actually experiences does not always <u>live up to</u> (D) expectations. <u>No error</u>. (E)

The sentence begins using one, a pronoun that should be followed by one or by such third-person pronouns as he, she, himself, and herself. Because the pronoun your is in the second person, an improper shift has occurred, making choice B the correct answer.

Faulty Pronoun Case

Pronouns must be in the proper case. Nominative case pronouns are reserved for grammatical subjects and predicate nominatives. Objective case pronouns are used

everywhere else. Problems arise when writers fail to identify grammatical subjects or when they mix pronouns from different cases in the same phrase.

Sample Questions Containing Errors in Pronoun Case

1. I learned to my great regret (A) that (B) the speeches given by George and I (C) could barely (D) be heard at the back of the auditorium. No error. (E)

Because the construction by George and I is a prepositional phrase, the pronoun must be in the objective case. Use me instead of I. Choice C is the correct answer.

2. Having made a most (A) persuasive proposal, Carl, Mack, and him (B) were awarded (C) the job of redesigning (D) the school cafeteria. No error. (E)

Because the phrase Carl, Mack, and him is the subject of the sentence, the pronoun should be in the nominative case. Use he instead of him. Choice B is the correct answer.

Practice in Recognizing Shifts in Pronoun Person
and Errors in Pronoun Case

Directions: Find the pronoun errors in the following sentences. Write the correct pronoun in the space provided. Some sentences contain no errors.

1. The biggest difference between her and I is our view on gun control.

2. My aunt sent Sam and I a calendar for the new year.

3. We"re going to ask Gert and he to go to the movies on Saturday.

4. When employees are laid off a job, you collect unemployment.

5. Us women take sexual harassment very seriously.

6. Are you expecting Jonathan and he to call tonight?

7. If you are scheduled to deliver the speech to the class, one should expect to take your turn on Monday.

8. Him and I plan to drive to Danbury tonight.

9. If you really want to get better at the piano, one really needs to practice.

10. Them singing at the top of their lungs disturbed the quiet neighborhood.

11. Tim is more interested in applying to Oregon State than her.

12. The group asked us guys to pitch in on the drive for canned goods.

13. Most runners say they have to run every day in order to keep yourself in shape.

14. The last time I saw him, he was as tall as me, if not taller.

15. I never spoke with them, neither she nor her sister.

Faulty Verb Tense

Verb tense indicates when an action takes place. When a sentence contains a verb in the wrong tense or when an improper shift in tense occurs from one part of the sentence to the other, the meaning of the sentence suffers.

Sample Question Containing Faulty Verb Tense

1. The scene involves both Macbeth and Banquo $\underset{A}{\text{on horses}}$ riding across the heath $\underset{B}{\text{where}}$ they $\underset{C}{\text{encountered}}$ the three witches, $\underset{D}{\text{often called}}$ the three hags or three weird sisters. $\underset{E}{\text{No error.}}$

The main verb of the sentence is involves, a verb in the present tense. Having been cast in the present tense, the sentence should remain so throughout, but the verb encountered is in the past tense. A shift has occurred, making choice C the correct answer.

2. State laws $\underset{A}{\text{say}}$ that bicyclists shall wear $\underset{B}{\text{their}}$ helmets and $\underset{C}{\text{shall have obeyed}}$ all traffic signs $\underset{D}{\text{that apply}}$ to automobile drivers. $\underset{E}{\text{No error.}}$

The verb shall wear casts the sentence in the future tense. The verb shall have obeyed, however, is in the future perfect tense. Therefore, C is the correct answer.

Practice in Identifying Faulty Verb Tenses

Directions: In these sentences, many of the underlined verbs are in the wrong tense. Write the revised verbs in the spaces provided. Some sentences contain no error.

1. They biked to the top of the mountain and then come back down in time to eat lunch.

2. The garage mechanic thinks that Mrs. Murphy has brought her car in last night.

3. For anyone with enough brains to have thought about the problem, now is the time to work out a solution.

4. When Washington was sworn in as president, he rode to New York from his home in Virginia.

5. If the wagon train would have reached Salt Creek in time, the massacre would have been prevented.

6. The aircraft controller expects to have spotted the plane on radar before dusk last night.

7. The family already finished dinner when the doorbell rang.

8. First he built a fire, then dragged a log over to use as a seat, and finally collected enough wood to keep the fire going all night.

9. Rose kept the promise she has given to Charles last year in India.

10. When he talks with Horatio, Hamlet began to suspect foul play in the kingdom.

11. As they drove to Vermont, they had stopped for lunch at Bucky"s Bagel Shop.

12. On Route 684, a trooper pulls him over and gave him a speeding ticket.

13. Working all year to improve her writing, Debbie got a story published in the newspaper.

14. That night at the show we met many people that we saw that afternoon.

15. Once the drought had hit eastern Africa, the Somalis have suffered terribly.

Faulty Verb Form

Every verb has several forms, among them (1) the present, as in laugh; (2) the past, formed by adding –ed to the present, as in laughed; and 3) the participle, formed by adding has, had, or have to the verb"s past tense, as in has laughed and had laughed. The vast majority of English verbs follow this pattern. But some verbs, called irregular verbs, don"t follow it. Examples include break (break, broke, has broken), begin (begin, began, has begun), and rise (rise, rose, has risen).

On the SAT a question relating to a verb form, especially to an irregular verb form, appears occasionally.

Sample Question Containing Faulty Verb Form

1. When (A) Dave went to dinner at the professor"s home, he combed his hair, dressed himself (B) in a jacket and tie, and brang (C) the hostess a bouquet of flowers. (D) No error. (E)

Having begun in the past tense, the sentence requires other verbs to be in the past tense. The verbs went, combed, and dressed are in the proper form. The word brang is not. The past form of the verb to bring is brought. Therefore, choice C is the correct answer.

2. Ms. Barnes suspected that (A) the paper may have been plagiarized, but Ray insisted that he had wrote (B) it himself (C) and that (D) he could prove it. No error. (E)

The sentence contains five verbs. Only one, had wrote, is not in the proper form. Because the past participle of the verb to write is had written, choice B is the correct answer.

Practice in Identifying Faulty Verb Forms

Directions: In these sentences, the underlined verbs may not be in the proper form. Write the correct form in the spaces provided. Some verbs may be correct.

1. Brian use to arrive late to class almost every day.

2. Conflicts between loggers and environmentalists have regularly arose in the Northwest and other areas of the country.

3. Given the choice of Monday, Wednesday, or Friday for her talk, Gwen demanded to speak on Thursday.

4. After dinner, Sarah cleared the table and blowed out the candles.

5. They had began practice on their own before the coach arrived.

6. When the engine overheated, the radiator hose had bursted.

7. To get a front-row seat, you should have went to the play earlier than you did.

8. The chorus messed up that song because they had never sang it before.

9. Halfway to town I realized that the front tire of my bike had sprang a leak.

10. The novels of Judy Blume have managed attracting millions of adolescent readers.

A Review

While answering Identifying Sentence Error questions, use this checklist as a guide.

✔ If a verb is underscored, search for errors in tense, form, agreement with the subject or other noun, and parallel structure.

✔ If a noun is underscored, search for errors in number and agreement with a verb, parallelism, and word choice.

✔ If a pronoun is underscored, search for errors in case, number, gender, agreement with antecedent, reference to a noun or another pronoun, and agreement with verb and parallel structure.

✔ If an adjective or an adverb is underscored, search for errors in word choice, modification, and comparative degree.

✔ If a phrase or clause is underscored, search for errors in parallel structure and sentence structure.

✔ If a participle is underscored, search for an error in modification.

Improving Paragraphs Questions

This section of the SAT asks six questions about how to revise a draft of a short essay. A question or two may ask about deleting or changing the location of a sentence. Another may ask which revision of a poorly written sentence is best. Still others may ask how to best combine a pair of sentences or to re-write a sentence in order to clarify the essay's main idea.

The wording of paragraph-improvement questions illustrates several of the matters you must deal with:

1. In context, which of the following revisions is necessary in sentence 3?

2. In context, which of the following phrases most logically replaces "them" in sentence 9?

3. The primary effect of sentence 11 is to …

4. Which of the following is best to add after sentence 13 as a concluding sentence?

5. Which of the following, if inserted before sentence 1, would make a good introduction to the essay?

6. In context, which is the best way to revise and combine sentences 4 and 5?

7. Which of the following sentences, if inserted before sentence 10, would best improve the fourth paragraph?

8. The best way to describe the relationship of sentence 4 to sentence 5 is that….

9. All of the following strategies are used by the writer of the essay EXCEPT….

10. In the second paragraph (sentences 5–9), the author tries to….

Improving Paragraphs questions occasionally concern grammar and usage, but most of them apply to broader issues of writing, such as the purpose of the essay, organization, unity, development of ideas, the relationship between sentences, and the writer's intentions. You may also be questioned on the structure and function of certain paragraphs as well as the role of individual sentences within paragraphs.

TIP 

Reading the Essay

How well you answer the questions may depend in part on how you go about reading the essay. Try each of the following methods to find the one that produces the best results:

Method 1: Read the essay carefully from beginning to end. By having a firm grasp of the essay's meaning, you'll save time while answering the questions. Because you won't have to re-read the entire essay, you can focus only on those portions singled out by the questions.

Method 2: Read the essay quickly—faster than you normally would. A thorough reading at this point wastes time and may distract you from your goal—to answer six questions correctly. Ignoring its flaws, therefore, read the essay just carefully enough to catch its drift. Then turn to the questions.

Method 3: Skim the essay for its general meaning; then read it again, but more slowly. After two readings, one quick and one slow, you'll know the essay intimately. Then you can concentrate on the questions instead of worrying about what the essay says.

Which of the three methods works best for you can be determined only by experience. As you read on and take the practice tests in Part VI, try each method. Stick to the one that works best for you and practice it over and over.

None of these concerns are unique to this section of the exam. In fact, they should sound familiar because they are related to matters of essay writing discussed earlier in this ebook. That's why you'll be referred repeatedly to previous pages to review and master selected skills of writing.

ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS

Improving Paragraphs Questions follow the progress of the passage. Although it makes sense to answer the questions in order, you may answer them in any order you wish. If you are good at spotting faulty sentences, answer the sentence-error questions before tackling the others. If you have a knack for answering specific questions, deal with those before coping with more general ones—those, say, that deal with relationships between paragraphs or with the passage as a whole. If a question stumps you, go on to the next one, but don"t forget to come back later and give it another try.

Sample Essay and Questions

[1] On the water, sailboats and motorboats go faster than canoes. [2] They also go faster in stores. [3] People are buying them in greater numbers than ever before. [4] Not only are they more fashionable but they give status to their owners. [5] Yet, I"ll take a canoe any time.

[6] For one thing, a canoe can last for more than thirty years. [7] Even if you get tired of it, you can sell it for a fairly large fraction of its original cost. [8] For example, a new aluminum canoe may cost about $600, but a used one costs about $500 or less. [9] In addition, a canoe has no moving parts to wear out. [10] Requiring almost no care at all, you only have to paint it every few years or bang out some dents if you ride it through rapids. [11] Some high-end canoes are made of canvas covering a sturdy wood frame, caned seats and copper and brass trim.

[12] Besides being economical, a canoe can be used in a variety of ways. [13] In the first place, you can use it in the ocean as well as on a tiny lake. [14] One can use it on rivers, too. [15] Marshes and small streams are fine for using a canoe. [16] As a result, wherever you go, there is bound to be a place for canoeing. [17] Not only can you take it anywhere, but you can go canoeing for a few hours or for weeks at a time. [18] In contrast to other boats, canoes don"t depend on wind or fuel. [19] Furthermore, you don"t have to waste time setting up or taking down a canoe. [20] Simply grab a paddle, and you"re off on your own.

1. In the first paragraph the author"s primary purpose is to

(A) inform the reader about several kinds of boats

(B) provide evidence that boating is a popular pastime

(C) poke fun at those who prefer sailboats to canoes

(D) tell a personal story about boating

(E) prepare the reader for an unexpected disclosure

Choice A is not a good answer because the paragraph is more about boaters than about boats. Eliminate choice B because the paragraph provides no real evidence that boating is a popular pastime. Neither choice C nor D is justified by the contents of the paragraph. Only choice E offers a reasonable answer. In fact, the paragraph deals favorably with sailboats and motorboats but ends with a slightly surprising statement—that the author prefers canoes. Choice E, therefore, is the best answer.

2. Sentence 2 differs from other sentences in the first paragraph because it

(A) emphasizes a major point of the essay

(B) changes the meaning of words taken from a previous sentence

(C) presents the writer"s personal opinion

(D) changes the tone of the essay

(E) provides an important transition between the sentences that precede and follow it

Eliminate choice A because the sentence is unrelated to the essay"s main point. Choice C is wrong because sentence 2 states a fact that can be proved, not an opinion. Choice D is wrong because the tone of the essay has not yet been established, and choice E does not accurately describe the function of sentence 2. An analysis of the paragraph shows that the phrase *go faster* is used in both sentence 1 and sentence 2. In sentence 1, the phrase refers to the speed of boats on water. In sentence 2, it refers to the popularity of boats among consumers. Therefore, choice B is the best answer.

3. Of the following, which is the best version of the following underlined portion of sentence 10?

Requiring almost no care at all, you only have to paint it every few years or bang out some dents if you ride it through rapids.

(A) As it is now

(B) Requiring little care, canoes need only to be painted

(C) Requiring little care, paint is all it needs

(D) Caring for it easily, you only have to paint it

(E) Only paint it

The sentence needs revision because it contains an error in modification. Choice A is wrong because the phrase *Requiring almost no care at all* is a dangling participle that modifies *you* instead of *canoes*. Choice C is a variation of A. Choices D and E, although grammatically correct, make little sense in the context. Choice B, the only remaining choice, is the best answer.

4. Which of the following should be done with sentence 11 (reproduced below)?

Some high-end canoes are made of canvas covering a sturdy wood frame, caned seats and copper and brass trim.

(A) Insert the phrase "Speaking of costs" at the beginning.

(B) Delete it; the sentence is irrelevant.

(C) Insert it between sentence 8 and sentence 9.

(D) Combine it with sentence 4.

(E) Move it to the end of paragraph 1 (after sentence 5).

Because the sentence contains information about the materials used to build canoes, it does not fit logically anywhere in the essay. The phrase suggested in choice A attempts to establish a link between the sentence and the second paragraph, but the writer is not discussing costs at that point in the essay. Therefore, choice B is the best answer.

5. In context, which is the best way to revise and combine sentences 14 and 15 (reproduced below)?

One can use it on rivers, too. Marshes and small streams are fine for using a canoe.

(A) One can use it on rivers, too, as well as marshes and small streams.

(B) You can use it on rivers, too, and marshes and small streams are fine for using a canoe.

(C) You can use it on rivers, marshes, and small streams.

(D) Using it for rivers and paddling on marshes and small streams in a canoe.

(E) One can use it on rivers and small streams and in marshes, which are fine for using a canoe.

Because the two sentences appear in a paragraph that uses the second-person pronoun (*you*), eliminate choices A and E. Choice D is a sentence fragment. Choice B is ineffective because its two coordinate clauses are not in the same grammatical form. Therefore, choice C, a concise and clear revision of the original sentences, is the best answer.

6. The primary effect of the final paragraph (sentences 12–20) is to

(A) summarize the ideas introduced in the previous paragraph

(B) reconsider a point made in the first paragraph

(C) support the validity of the essay"s main idea

(D) explain a contradiction within the essay

(E) provide an additional example

Almost every sentence in the final paragraph adds another dimension to the writer"s appreciation of canoes. Because the essay"s intent is to prove that canoes excel other small vessels in several ways—cost, maintenance, versatility, ease of use—choice C is the best answer.

TIP

After you"ve read the essay, jot down its main point or purpose.

HOW TO ANSWER IMPROVING PARAGRAPHS QUESTIONS

Short of asking you to actually write an essay, Improving Paragraphs Questions can test almost any aspect of your knowledge about writing, from grammar and usage to matters of style and expression.

Defining the Essay"s Purpose

Once you"ve read the given essay, quickly jot down the essay"s main idea in your test booklet. By keeping the main idea constantly in mind, you can more readily judge whether the essay has achieved its purpose.

Writers often have multiple purposes and complex attitudes toward their subject. The essay you"ll be asked about on the SAT, however, will be short and simple. Don"t look for subtleties, sophisticated techniques, or hidden meanings. The essay will have a purpose that can be easily and simply articulated. For example:

To inform readers about the progress of America"s fight against terrorism.

To give an informed and entertaining account of the misadventures of a literary character.

To dispense helpful advice about how to use the Internet.

Such statements of purpose will establish the boundaries of the essay. Any material that oversteps the boundaries is fodder for Improving Paragraphs questions.

Organization of the Essay

If a question asks you about the organization of the essay, check the opening paragraph first. Be sure it introduces, limits, and makes clear the purpose of the essay. A good opening, often stated in a single sentence, points readers in a particular direction and names their destination. Subsequent paragraphs set up signposts along the way to remind readers where they"ve been and where they are headed. If readers lose sight of the goal, the essay"s organization may be at fault.

Say, for example, that a writer deplores the vast amount of cheating by high school students. The outline of such an essay might look this way:

Introductory paragraph:	A brief description of the cheating problem
Second paragraph:	Common types of cheating
Third paragraph:	Reasons that students cheat
Fourth paragraph:	What schools must to do discourage cheating
Concluding paragraph:	The harmful impact of cheating on society.

In the outline, each paragraph discusses an important aspect of the cheating problem. The organization is logical and clear. If the writer, however, had included a paragraph

on teenage shoplifting or had compared the amount of cheating between girls and boys, the essay"s sensible organization would have been violated.

Organizational breakdowns occur for all sorts of reasons, but usually because the writer has lost focus. An unfocused essay contains distractions and irrelevancies. Whole paragraphs may fail to contribute to the development of the main idea. Or worse, the essay"s conclusion may undermine or contradict its introduction.

On the SAT, you may be asked to identify or revise sentences that don"t fit the essay"s organization. A question may ask you how to revise such a sentence or whether to move or delete it. As you answer the question, always keep the essay"s purpose in mind.

Paragraph Structure, Unity, and Coherence

Knowing the qualities of well-written paragraphs and recognizing paragraphing weaknesses will help you answer some questions.

STRUCTURE OF PARAGRAPHS

Each paragraph of a well-written essay is, in effect, an essay in miniature. It has a purpose, an organizational plan, and a progression of ideas. By scrutinizing a paragraph in the same manner as you would a complete essay, you can discern its main idea and identify its development.

TOPIC SENTENCES AND SUPPORTING SENTENCES

Most paragraphs are made up of two kinds of sentences: A **topic sentence**, which states generally the contents of the paragraph, and **supporting sentences**, which provide the particulars that support and develop the topic sentence. Sometimes supporting sentences themselves need support, provided by minor, or secondary, supporting sentences. The paragraph that follows contains examples of each kind of sentence:

[1] Children with IQs well below average represent an almost insoluble problem for educators. [2] Such children often feel inadequate, rejected by teachers and peers in a school environment that values and rewards academic success. [3] Failure in school is the number one cause of poor behavior in school and of juvenile delinquency in general. [4] The best that schools can do for children with low IQs is to teach them how to get by in the world and to teach them a vocation. [5] But vocational training is very limited in many schools. [6] Those that provide such training usually do so only for older adolescents.

Sentence 1 is the topic sentence of the paragraph. To be convincing, it needs the support of sentences 2–5. Each supporting sentence adds a piece of evidence to prove the point of the paragraph—that children with low IQs create a problem for schools. Sentence 5 is a supporting sentence that requires additional support, provided by sentence 6.

Location of Topic Sentences. A topic sentence may be anywhere in a paragraph, but it usually appears at or close to the beginning. It isn"t always a separate and independent sentence; it may be woven into a supporting sentence as a clause or phrase. (In the paragraph you are now reading, for example, the main idea is stated in the first clause of the initial sentence.) Writers vary the location of topic sentences to avoid monotony. They could, for example, save the topic sentence for the end, letting it stand out boldly as the climax of the paragraph. Or they might omit the topic sentence, letting an accumulation of telling details imply the paragraph"s main idea.

Note the location of the topic sentence in each of the following paragraphs:

[1] It is pitch dark and very chilly. [2] No one in his right mind wants to pry open their eyes and leave the cozy warmth of bed and blanket. [3] No one wants to walk in bare feet across the frigid floor to peer out the window at the icy rain slanting down in the early morning gloom. [4] The thought of damp clothes and cold feet keeps you where you are, at least for a few more minutes. **[5] It"s torture to get up on dark winter mornings.**

The supporting details in sentences 1–4 lead inevitably to sentence 5, the topic sentence, which summarizes the point of the paragraph.

[1] For a long time about 50,000 people were killed annually in automobile accidents on the nation"s roads. [2] Reduced speed limits, seatbelt requirements, and increased police patrols had almost no effect on changing the number of fatalities. **[3] The most promising way to reduce fatalities, however, proved to be making cars safer.** [4] Front and side airbags were installed in all new models. [5] Special seats and restraints were designed for children. [6] Stronger steel frames enabled people to survive crashes that would certainly have killed them before.

Sentence 3 is the topic sentence. It serves as the pivotal point between the description of the problem (sentences 1 and 2) and some effective solutions (sentences 4, 5, and 6).

The key to unlocking a paragraph"s purpose lies in the topic sentence, and the effectiveness of a paragraph depends on how tightly the topic sentence is linked to its supporting details. On the SAT, you may be asked to improve a paragraph by tightening that link.

Or you may be asked to choose the best transition between ideas or paragraphs. A *transitional sentence* links the ideas in one paragraph with those in a previous or subsequent paragraph. In effect, it is a bridge between two different ideas. In short essays it"s rare to find full transitional sentences. Instead, bridges are usually built with transitional words and phrases, such as *in addition, in like manner, however, as a result,* and *finally*.

UNITY AND COHERENCE IN PARAGRAPHS

When a paragraph deals with more than one main idea, it lacks unity. When its sentences skip from topic to topic, it lacks coherence. The Paragraph Improvement questions often ask about alien sentences—sentences that undermine unity or weaken coherence. Notice, for instance, how sentence 4 has no business being between sentences 3 and 5:

[1] Like many other leaders throughout history, George Washington established his authority through the force of his personality. [2] Almost everyone who met him thought that he was charming, dignified, charismatic. [3] Some people of the time referred to him as a "superior being." [4] Yet the Father of Our Country had been soundly defeated in 1755, when he first sought elective office. [5] At six-feet two-inches in his stockings, he was taller and more impressive than most men of his time. [6] His frame was padded with well-developed muscles, indicating great strength, and his blue-grey eyes could sparkle with humor at one moment and grow hard and determined at the next. [7] John Adams described him as a "gentleman whose great talents and excellent universal character … would command the respect of all the Colonies."

The paragraph"s purpose is to describe the power of Washington"s personality. Because sentence 4 fails to contribute to this laudatory portrait of our first president, it should be deleted.

COHERENCE THROUGH SENTENCE COMBINING

Disjointed paragraphs force readers to slow down or even stop dead at the end of each sentence. Instead of a smooth journey through a paragraph, readers experience mental bumps and jolts, often inflicted by a series of short, choppy sentences.

On the SAT, you may be asked to improve a paragraph"s coherence by choosing a revision that effectively combines two or three disconnected or repetitive sentences. The following paragraph is an example:

[1] Colored balloons decorated the gym. [2] It was the annual spring dance. [3] Four men in black tuxedos stood on the stage. [4] Their shiny brass instruments were in

their hands. [5] They provided the musical entertainment. [6] All the girls were dressed in pastel shades. [7] The girls talked in groups. [8] They were deciding which boys they would ask to dance. [9] Couples went onto the dance floor. [10] Soon it was full.

No doubt the paragraph is unified in thought—it"s all about the annual spring dance. But it suffers from incoherence because each detail, no matter how important or trivial, is stated in a separate sentence. For the sake of greater coherence, the sentences need to be combined:

[1] For the annual spring dance, the gym had been decorated with colored balloons. [2] Four men in black tuxedos stood on the stage and provided the musical entertainment with their shiny brass instruments. [3] Wearing dresses in pastel shades, the girls talked in groups deciding which boys they would ask to dance. [4] Soon the floor was filled with dancing couples.

Ten sentences have become four. Some words have been deleted or changed. Key ideas have been emphasized, secondary ideas played down. Overall, the revision exemplifies more skilled, more mature writing.

On the SAT, you may be asked to combine two or three short sentences within a longer paragraph. As you weigh the five choices given by a sentence-combining question, keep in mind that the most concise or cleverest revision may not always be the best one. Instead, the best revision is likely to be the one that fits most logically and stylistically into the context of the paragraph.

Practice in Combining Sentences

Directions: Use the spaces provided to combine the sentences in each of the following groups. Because any group can be combined in numerous ways, write at least two versions. If necessary, add, delete, and/or alter words. Try alternatives; that"s the best way to discover the possibilities and to improve your skill.

1. She is only thirteen. She is an expert gymnast. She has won recognition.

2. An accident occurred. The accident was a hit and run. Broken glass lay on the street.

3. Aunt Ellen went to the grocery store. She bought tomato juice. The tomato juice was in a glass bottle. The bottle was in the grocery bag. Aunt Ellen dropped the grocery bag. The bottle broke. Aunt Ellen had a mess. The mess was on her hands.

4. The baseball hit the picture window. The picture window belonged to Mr. Strickman. The glass shattered. The glass shattered in a thousand pieces.

5. There was a storm. The snow fell. Snow fell on the roads. It was two feet deep. I could not go out. I had nothing to do. I watched TV. I worked on a jigsaw puzzle. Time passed slowly.

6. The Earth revolves around the sun. It takes about 365 days for a revolution. The Earth rotates on its axis. One rotation occurs every 24 hours. The revolution determines the length of the year. The rotation determines the duration of a day.

7. Euripides lived more than 2,000 years ago. He lived in ancient Greece. He wrote plays. The plays were tragedies. The plays are still performed.

8. Music has a unique power. Music often transports people"s minds. People dream and think while listening to music. People often feel refreshed after listening to music.

9. Human beings have skulls. Skulls are made up of bones. The skull has twenty-two bones. Eight bones make up the cranium. The cranium protects the brain. Fourteen bones are used to form the face and jaw.

10. The Hopi Indians value peace and contentment. The word *Hopi* means peaceful and happy. The name reflects the culture. The culture lacks tension. The people lack competitiveness. Material possessions are unimportant. Self-discipline is important. So is restraint. So is concern for the welfare of others. The family is the highest value. The family is the whole Hopi tribe.

Paragraph Development

Like an essay, each paragraph should have a recognizable plan. A paragraph may consist of little more than a collection of facts that support the topic sentence. Or it may take the form of a brief narrative, its events spelled out in the order they occurred. Another paragraph may be organized to compare and contrast two people or conditions, still another to define a term or explain a process.

Depending on the paragraph"s purpose, details that support the main idea may be arranged spatially, chronologically, in order of importance, from general to specific or vice-versa—or in any arrangement that develops the topic.

On the SAT, you may be asked to identify a paragraph"s organizational plan. Therefore, you should know the most common patterns of paragraph development. Don"t bother memorizing them for the exam, but your ability to recognize each pattern when you see it could be helpful.

1. **Argument and proof.** In this organizational plan, a paragraph"s supporting sentences consist of arguments or examples meant to prove the validity of the topic sentence.

In wartime, the military develops a way of speaking that disguises meaning and makes the horrors of battle less dirty and gruesome. Euphemisms enable both soldiers and civilians to keep a psychological distance and turn war into an antiseptic, clinical abstraction. In Vietnam, for example, when our own troops were shelled by mistake, the event was called an "accidental delivery of ordnance equipment." In the Gulf War, as well as the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, "friendly fire" became the phrase of choice. Similarly, when wayward bombs killed innocent civilians, "incontinent ordnance" was responsible for causing "collateral damage." Arms and legs are not blown off in combat; they are severed in a "traumatic amputation." Such euphemisms, according to language experts, can be protective, but at the same time, they put us in danger of losing the real sense of war"s ghastliness.

The first sentence is the topic sentence. The rest of the paragraph consists of examples that illustrate the "way of speaking."

2. **Definition.** Paragraphs of definition do more than simply offer a dictionary meaning of a word or idea. Broad, abstract concepts such as loyalty, beauty, evil, success, and countless others are better defined by *example*, by *analogy*, or by *comparison and contrast*. For instance, the following defines the word *utopia* by describing a utopian society and explaining the word"s origin.

Utopia is the name often given to a society in which everything is thought to be perfect. Everything in the society, from its economic policies to its social practices, is designed to keep the society functioning without difficulty. In Utopia all people are happy, wise, equal, prosperous, and well-educated. Utopia is an appropriate name. It comes from the Greek word meaning "no place."

3. **Definition by analogy.** A spider"s web is defined in the following paragraph by comparing a web and a fine musical instrument.

A spider"s web is an exquisite musical instrument. It is constructed of many strings of different lengths under various degrees of tension. It is played upon by the rain and the wind, by other insects, and by the master musician herself, the spider. So sensitive is the spider"s sense of touch that from one corner of the web she can locate a struggling victim, determine its size, and, by the rhythms and tempo of vibrations, judge it to be a moth, a hapless mosquito, housefly, or other insect.

4. **Comparison and contrast.** In the paragraph that follows the personalities of two men—one real and one fictional—are defined by comparing and contrasting some of their traits.

Albert Perry may have been the model for Hal Roet in Thayer"s new novel. Thayer calls Roet an "unpredictable farmer." The real-life Perry was a tobacco farmer for years and was known throughout Piedmont County as Peripatetic Perry. At 30, he unexpectedly left his wife and went to New York to become a rock-and-roll singer. Roet, too, left his farm in the hands of his wife and traveled around the country with a rodeo. But the similarity ends there. Perry was compulsively self-revealing; Roet was quiet and unassuming. Perry was indifferent to his family, while Roet was torn, anguished, and guilt-ridden about abandoning Marion and the three children. Finally, Perry craved fame. Roet, in contrast, didn"t care a nickel about becoming a famous bronco rider. He was in it for the thrill of doing something dangerous.

5. **Cause and effect.** The details of a cause-and-effect paragraph explain or demonstrate how one event or set of circumstances leads to, or causes, another event or set of circumstances. The following passage describes the effects of one-sixth gravity.

Because the moon has only one-sixth the gravity of the Earth, people on the lunar surface weigh a fraction of their normal weight. They walk easily, each step evolving into a rhythmic, bounding motion that feels like a stroll on a trampoline. At the same time, starting and stopping require unusual bursts of energy. To stop forward motion, they must dig their heels into the ground and lean backward. If they fall, they descend in slow motion, and the impact is no harder than falling onto a feather bed. Getting up again is difficult and enervating, however.

6. **Process analysis.** A paragraph analyzing a process explains how to perform the steps of a process or procedure.

When repainting a room, it"s best to remove as much furniture and carpeting as possible. Be sure to cover everything left behind with a tarpaulin or plastic sheet. Using a roller, paint the ceiling first. While the ceiling dries, paint windows, doors, and trim, except for baseboards. Then paint the walls. Try to avoid changing paint cans part way through a wall because the paint color from two different cans may not match exactly. If you expect to finish a can before you finish a wall, pour the paint from two cans into a large bucket and mix well. One coat of paint is usually not enough, so be prepared to apply a second coat to all surfaces. Paint the baseboards last.

7. **Classification.** A paragraph of classification breaks a general category into its component parts.

Vegetables can be classified according to climate and growing requirements. Early vegetables like leaf lettuce, spinach, radishes, and peas grow best in cool weather and are planted shortly before the last frost. Moderately hardy vegetables, including potatoes and onions, should also be grown before the intense heat of summer. Late spring is the time to start hardy vegetables like carrots, beets, cabbage, and cauliflower because they easily endure the summer sun"s heat. Some vegetables are extremely sensitive to cold and, therefore, can be planted only weeks after the last frost. These include soybeans, cucumbers, summer squash, and watermelons. Such plants as tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant are usually started indoors and transplanted outside in late spring or early summer.

Because purpose dictates structure, an effective paragraph can be developed in more than one way. To prove a point or make a persuasive argument, for instance, a writer may combine facts with definition and the analysis of a process. Although writers rarely follow a formula to develop paragraphs, most abide by a rule of thumb that says a paragraph of one or two sentences is too skimpy. To develop an idea thoroughly often takes several sentences. Since the overall effectiveness of a paragraph may depend on its organization, SAT questions may ask you to add a sentence to a paragraph, delete a sentence, or even relocate an existing sentence by moving it within a paragraph or to a different paragraph.

Most sentences contain clues that assign them to a place—and only one place—in a paragraph. Meaning is the primary clue, but such words and phrases as *for example, also, but,* and *on the other hand* also serve to put sentences into a particular order. In the following, for instance, observe how the italicized words and phrases determine the sequence of sentences:

[1] Part-time jobs for high school students are a mixed blessing. [2] *They* help young people learn the value of money. [3] It is *also* satisfying for young people to help with their family"s finances. [4] *On the other hand*, jobs often distract students from their schoolwork. [5] *Moreover*, many jobs are so boring that students get the idea that work and boredom go hand in hand.

Sentence 1 expresses the most general idea in the paragraph and serves as the topic sentence. The pronoun *they*, which begins sentence 2, refers to *jobs*, a noun in the first sentence. Sentence 3 contains the connecting word *also*, indicating that a new thought is being added to one expressed in the previous sentence. Sentence 4 begins with *On the other hand*, a common transitional phrase used to indicate that a contrasting idea will follow. The last sentence begins with *Moreover*, another common transition that signals the addition of still another idea in the same vein. Because of these linking elements, these five sentences cannot be arranged in any other sequence without destroying the paragraph"s coherence.

Practice in Arranging Sentences

Directions: The sentences in each group make up a paragraph. But they are not in the proper order. In the blank spaces write the number that represents the proper place of each sentence in the paragraph.

1. ___ a. In the end, morale got so low that members started quitting the team.

___ b. Whether you were a polevaulter, a sprinter, or a distance runner, practices were the same for everyone.

___ c. He was forcing the team to work out the same way every day.

___ d. Mr. Reese, the track coach, had been acting like a tyrant.

2. ___ a. First, put in the large, firm, and heavy items that won"t be crushed or damaged by putting something on top of them.

___ b. Meanwhile, think of all the items that can be easily bruised, crushed, or broken, such as eggs, packages of bread, fruit, and light bulbs.

___ c. To fill up a paper bag with groceries usually takes about fifteen seconds if you do it right.

___ d. Immediately after that, put in light but firm items such as crackers, cereal, and butter.

___ e. Canned goods and bottles fit the bill perfectly.

___ f. Those should be saved for last.

3. ___ a. Then, too, I started feeling comfortable talking with adults.

___ b. Most people think of "maturity" in terms of responsibility, but I think it has more to do with learning to control one"s actions.

___ c. I could actually talk to them instead of shutting up like a clam and just standing there like a dummy.

___ d. For example, I knew that I was more mature than others when I didn"t laugh out loud in science class when the teacher talked about reproduction.

4. ____ a. As blood circulates, it cleans out body waste, like the collector who cruises the neighborhood picking up trash.

____ b. In return, it deposits oxygen and food in every body part, from the top of the head to the little toe.

____ c. Yet human life depends on those four quarts of blood that are pumped from the heart, flow to every cell in the body, and return to the heart to be pumped again.

____ d. If you drained the blood from the body of a girl weighing about 125 pounds, you would fill little more than a gallon milk container.

5. ____ a. The essay was to be handed in on Monday morning.

____ b. The first part of the exam was a take-home essay in which we were to answer one of three questions.

____ c. On Friday night I settled myself down with my textbook and took exceptionally detailed notes.

____ d. Four weeks ago, I, like many other eleventh graders, worked hard to prepare for an American History midterm exam.

____ e. The next day, determined to have more information than I could use when I began to write the essay, I went to the public library to do further research.

6. ____ a. His mistake was corrected fifty years later by Carl Blegen of the University of Chicago.

____ b. He figured out that every few centuries a new city had been built upon the ruins of the old.

____ c. In the 1870s, the archeologist Heinrich Schliemann dug in the correct spot and discovered nine ancient cities of Troy, one lying on top of the other.

____ d. But without realizing it, Schliemann had dug right past the layer he had been seeking, the layer containing the ruins of the famous city of the Trojan Horse.

____ e. By then, it was too late for Schliemann, who had been dead for fifty years.

7. ____ a. For months at a time Jerry"s fans would devotedly follow his group around the country wherever it played in concert.

____ b. Just two years after its debut, Jerry and his band left an indelible mark on millions of young fans.

____ c. In spite of his family, who told him that he would never be a successful professional singer, Jerry decided to take up guitar and form a musical group.

____ d. He not only created a whole new subculture but developed a following.

8. ____ a. He felt terribly anxious about his wounded leg.

____ b. The slightest movement of his knee caused a sudden and intense pain, unlike anything he had ever felt before.

____ c. He could not sleep, in spite of the sedative administered to him by the British nurse.

____ d. In Milan, the lieutenant lay in a hospital bed.

____ e. It was even worse than the pain he recalled when, as a child, he had pulled a pot of steaming water over on himself.

9. ____ a. Each layer is another page that tells the story of volcanic eruptions, massive floods, and the advance and retreat of the Ice Age.

____ b. Unfortunately, it also tells of the present day"s pollution of the earth"s air and lands.

____ c. If you can read its language, the sediments contain a record of all the dramatic and catastrophic events that have occurred through the earth"s history.

____ d. The ocean floor is a diary of the earth.

10. ____a. He became blind in 1652 and used his daughter as an instrument to write some of his finest poems.

____ b. His daughter, with her quill pen in hand, sat with her father to record his thoughts, to read them back, to make revisions in whatever way Milton wanted.

____ c. The first poet to use a word processor was John Milton.

____ d. The actual processing of words went on in Milton"s head.

11. ____ a. After winning two Critics" Circle awards and the Pulitzer Prize for drama, Tennessee Williams earned fame and lots of money.

____ b. Usually, he"s named with Eugene O"Neill and Arthur Miller as one of the leading American dramatists of the twentieth century.

____ c. They flocked to Broadway to see his plays and later swarmed to the movies to see filmed versions of his works.

____ d. All of a sudden, the public began to view him as one of the best of the modern playwrights.

Functions of Paragraphs

A paragraph-improvement question may single out a paragraph or one of its parts and ask you to identify its role in the essay. To answer the questions, you should understand how paragraphs function in an essay. Part III, on essay writing, offers a thorough discussion of this topic, but here is a brief overview.

The First Paragraph. An effective opening paragraph introduces the essay and makes the intent of the essay clear to the reader. Because the essay you"ll scrutinize on the SAT won"t be more than three or four paragraphs long, its introduction will be succinct and straightforward. SAT questions often refer to sentences in the first paragraph that are irrelevant to the essay"s main idea.

The Last Paragraph. The final paragraph should give the reader a sense of completion. A weak or irrelevant conclusion may dilute or even obliterate the effect of the essay. No ending is as effective and emphatic as one that grows logically out of a thoughtful arrangement of the writer"s ideas. A good last paragraph, for example may suggest a solution to a problem discussed in the essay. Or it may call on the reader to think about an issue or perform an action. On the SAT any concluding paragraph that seems to end the essay very abruptly, that dissolves into irrelevancy, or that fits the essay too loosely is fair game for a multiple-choice question.

Developmental Paragraphs. Paragraphs usually perform more than one function in an essay"s development. For example, a paragraph may carry forward the main point of the essay by contributing a solution to the problem being discussed. At the same time, it may reinforce an idea proposed earlier and also supply background information for the next paragraph.

On the SAT, you may be asked to identify the main function of a particular paragraph. Function has little to do with meaning. Rather, it pertains to the role the paragraph

plays in the journey from the beginning to the end of the essay. Developmental paragraphs can perform myriad functions, among them:

- Reinforce an idea with a telling example
- Evaluate an opinion stated earlier
- Add new ideas
- Cast doubt on a common misconception
- Tell a brief anecdote that illustrates a point
- Continue the discussion begun in an earlier paragraph
- Provide a contrasting point of view
- Explain or define a term
- Persuade readers to change their opinions
- Summarize the argument made thus far
- Turn the essay in a new direction
- Describe the relationship between ideas presented earlier
- Provide background material
- Justify or explain contradictions within the essay
- Ask a hypothetical or rhetorical question about the topic

A common question on the SAT may be worded something like this: *"Which of the following sentences, if inserted after sentence 6, would best improve the third paragraph?"* Knowing how paragraphs function in an essay will give you a leg up in finding the correct answer.

A Review

While looking for errors in Improving Paragraphs Questions, use this checklist as a guide. Always keep in mind:

✔ The strategies used to answer both the Sentence Improvement and Identifying Sentence Error questions.

✔ How topic sentences signal the purpose and organization of each paragraph and of the essay as a whole.

✔ Potential contradictions, breakdowns in logic, and shifts in emphasis throughout the essay.

✔ The unity and coherence of each paragraph and of the whole essay.

✔ The relationship of each sentence to those that precede and follow it.

✔ Transitional words and phrases.

✔ The functions of opening, closing, and developmental paragraphs.

Answer Key to Practice Exercises

Writing Correct Sentences

Answers will vary. No doubt some of your sentences will be better than these.

1. Although Elizabeth is stressed out about the SAT, she won't let it get her down.

2. The teacher agreed to her request for an extension on the assignment.

3. At eighty-six years old, my grandmother walks very slowly.

4. I could choose many other examples to show who I am, not all of them vivid images of memorable moments but rather everyday aspects of my life.

5. I woke up, having slept for the four shortest hours of my life. I force my eyes open and crawl to the shower. Only then my brain begins to function.

6. I can't believe that I'll soon leave the protective world of high school and enter the world of college.

7. The large brown garage door creaks open slowly. Out into the morning sunshine emerges a rider on a road bike.

8. What are the rules? What happens if we break them?

9. Phyllis, a biologist in the field of genetic engineering, is involved in the cloning controversy.

10. Use the space below to tell one personal story to provide the admissions committee, either directly or indirectly, an insight into the kind of person you are.

Establishing Noun–Verb Agreement

1. talent … proves

2. heroes … die

3. team … is

4. Correct

5. Correct

6. are … levels

7. proceeds … are

8. team … is

9. neither … was

10. reforms … have

11. fan … expects

12. Politics … has

13. Darwin … is

14. Katie Green … and accompanist … are

15. Nancy … appears

16. sale … has

17. Here are … statutes

18. insistence … is

19. No one … wants

20. are … guards

Choosing the Case of Pronouns

1. me

2. her, him

3. me

4. me

5. him

6. he

7. I

8. me

9. we

10. he

Recognizing Pronoun Shift and Pronoun Agreement

Answers may vary.

1. The English teacher announced that everyone in the class must turn in his term paper no later than Friday.

2. When fired from a job, one collects unemployment.

3. The library put its collection of rare books on display.

4. Each of my sisters owns her own car.

5. Correct

6. In order to stay in shape, you should work out every day.

7. The teacher dictates a sentence in French. Then each student writes it down in English and hands it in.

8. Each horse in the procession followed its rider down to the creek.

9. The school's chess team has just won its first match.

10. When you visit the park, ask a park ranger if you can't find a rest room.

Identifying Faulty Pronoun Reference

These are suggested answers. Yours may be different but equally valid.

1. When teenagers loiter outside the theater on Friday night, the police give them a hard time.

2. Before collecting my pencils and pens, I handed in the test questions I had answered.

3. At the root of Barbara and Ken's problem is that she wanted only a short wedding trip to Florida.

4. With only an hour to get to the airport, his father was in a rush and told him so.

5. During her tenure in office, Dr. Rice traveled more than any other secretary of state.

6. Although he disapproved of the war, Henry drove his ambulance to the front lines.

7. After the campus tour, Mike told Todd, "I'd be happy going to Auburn."

8. Peggy's car wasn't even dented after it hit a truck.

9. Within the last month, Andy's older brother Pete broke his leg skiing and got a new job. He also married Felicia, which made his parents very happy.

10. Because he had lived in California, Eddie grew fond of John Steinbeck's novels.

Identifying Faulty English Idiom

1. in battle

2. ascended the stairs

3. comply with

4. either iron or tin

5. preoccupation with

6. either danger or love

7. Correct

8. in pursuit of

9. to identify employees

10. Correct

11. with respect to

12. in search of a way

13. that kind of pain

14. for the bus

15. as expensive as

16. regarded as

17. between teaching and devoting

18. driving to flying

19. far from harm

20. neither well written nor fully researched

Using Adjectives and Adverbs

1. bitter

2. No error

3. smoothly

4. beautifully

5. horrible

6. slowly

7. cynically

8. No error

9. smoothly

10. No error

11. oblivious

12. securely

13. slowly

14. calm

15. easily

16. optimistic

17. badly

18. shy

19. sincerely

20. mischievously

Detecting Wordiness

Answers may vary.

1. She constantly bothers me.

2. He spoke to me about my future.

3. Is it true that the ozone layer is being depleted?

4. I thought that without chemistry I couldn't go to a good college.

5. As a result of the election, the state will have its first female governor.

6. My father habitually watches the sun set.

7. Harold hasn't stopped painting since picking up a brush at age ten.

8. Research shows that avid sports fans suffer fewer depressions and are generally healthier than those not interested in sports.

9. He is a chemist.

10. The cough recurred twice.

Completing Comparisons

These are suggested answers. Other answers may also be correct.

1. Jane is more efficient than any other member of the committee.

2. Andy looks more like his father than his brother does.

3. In *The Great Gatsby*, I disliked Daisy as much as I disliked Tom.

4. Correct

5. Oscar was as tired as, if not more tired than, Pete.

6. To do the research for my term paper, I read books more than I searched the Web.

7. Although she's younger, Lillian looks as old as, if not older than, Dorothy.

8. They talked more about Chekhov's stories than about his plays.

9. Allen's canoe was destroyed in the rapids, just like his partner's was.

10. After reading *Siddhartha*, I admire Hesse more than any other author.

11. I am more interested in rap music than Pete is.

12. Experts say that walking is better for you than jogging the same distance.

13. Biology is more popular than any other science.

14. The students respect Ms. Scotch's teaching style more than Mr. Green's.

15. His ears were bigger than Dumbo's.

16. It took us longer to reach Trenton than to reach Camden.

17. Which is cheaper—flying to Washington or taking the train?

18. The lawyer insisted that her job took more hours than a teacher's job.

19. Carrying iPods is more common among students than carrying cell phones.

20. Cindy has applied to as many colleges as, if not more than, Joanne.

Recognizing Pronoun–Antecedent Agreement

1. … her physical

2. No error

3. … her schedule

4. … their fall colors

5. … their money

6. … its collection

7. … it conducted itself

8. … donate his or her time

9. No error

10. … they can

Identifying Faulty Pronoun Reference

These are suggested answers. Other answers may also be correct.

1. Doing what she loves, Mrs. Parker spends most of her time knitting.

2. At the end, having answered all the questions, I handed the test in.

3. Peggy was sure she had handed in the homework and told Eileen.

4. Bill had only ten minutes left on the parking meter and told his father.

5. During his presidency, Truman sent troops to fight in Korea.

6. Henry, a pilot, regularly flies a helicopter on rescue missions.

7. In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald wrote about the American Dream.

8. Because he wanted a high-definition television, she decided to buy him one.

9. The agreement between Joan and Jane fell apart after Joan failed to show up for the meeting.

10. After his interview, Mike thought he would probably like spending the next four years at Dartmouth and told Tom.

Recognizing Shifts in Pronoun Person and Errors in Pronoun Case

1. between her and me

2. Sam and me

3. Gert and him

4. they collect

5. We women

6. Jonathan and him

7. you should expect

8. He and I

9. you really need

10. Their singing

11. than she

12. No error

13. keep themselves

14. as I

15. her nor her sister

Identifying Faulty Verb Tense

1. came

2. brought

3. No error

4. had ridden

5. had reached

6. expected

7. had finished

8. No error

9. gave

10. begins

11. stopped

12. gives

13. Having worked

14. had seen

15. suffered

Identifying Faulty Verb Forms

1. used to arrive

2. arisen

3. Correct

4. blew

5. had begun

6. had burst

7. should have gone

8. had never sung

9. had sprung

10. to attract

Combining Sentences

Because many different answers are possible, these are suggestions only. As you compare your answers to these, be sure that you have included all the information from each group of sentences.

1. At thirteen, she has already won recognition as an expert gymnast.

2. After the hit-and-run accident, broken glass lay on the street.

3. Aunt Ellen had a mess on her hands after she dropped a bag containing a glass bottle of tomato juice that she had bought at the grocery store.

4. The baseball hit Mr. Strickman's picture window, shattering it into a thousand pieces.

5. Since the storm dumped two feet of snow on the roads, I could not go out. I had nothing to do but watch TV and assemble a jigsaw puzzle. The time passed slowly.

6. The Earth revolves around the sun every 365 days. At the same time, it rotates on its axis every twenty-four hours. The Earth's revolution around the sun determines the length of a year just as its rotation determines the duration of a day.

7. The 2,000-year-old tragedies of Euripides, an ancient Greek playwright, are still performed today.

8. Music has the unique power to transport people's minds. While listening, people often dream and think, and afterwards feel refreshed.

9. The skulls of humans consist of twenty-two bones: eight in the cranium, which protects the brain, and fourteen in the face and jaw.

10. The culture of the Hopi Indians, whose name means "peaceful and happy," exemplifies peace and contentment. Lacking competitiveness, Hopis rarely feel tense. What they value instead are self-discipline, restraint, and the welfare of others. But the highest value is the family, consisting of the entire Hopi tribe.

Arranging Sentences

1. a. 4 b. 3 c. 2 d. 1

2. a. 2 b. 5 c. 1 d. 4 e. 3 f. 6

3. a. 3 b. 1 c. 4 d. 2

4. a. 3 b. 4 c. 2 d. 1

5. a. 3 b. 2 c. 4 d. 1 e. 5

6. a. 4 b. 2 c. 1 d. 3 e. 5

7. a. 4 b. 2 c. 1 d. 3

8. a. 3 b. 4 c. 2 d. 1 e. 5

9. a. 3 b. 4 c. 2 d. 1

10. a. 2 b. 4 c. 1 d. 3

11. a. 1 b. 4 c. 3 d. 2