

# Writing Section



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## Writing Section

This new section is designed to test your writing ability. You will **not** have to write an actual essay, but you will have to **assess examples of writing**, identifying errors in composition and making suggestions for better structure. The errors you will be dealing with include verb tense, subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, misplaced and dangling modifiers, idioms, parallelism, coordination and subordination, double negatives, and sentence structure (fragments and run-ons). You will need to know about the grammatical structure of our language so that you can choose the best way to compose a sentence, though you will **not** be asked to define grammatical terms.

This test will measure your ability

- to express ideas effectively in standard written English
- to recognize faults in usage and structure
- to use language with sensitivity to meaning
- to use punctuation marks such as commas and semicolons in certain situations.

The format for questions on the test is likely to be very different from that which you usually find in the classroom. In order to get prepared for the test, you will need to become familiar with the test format so that you don't have to worry about the directions. You can then concentrate on providing the best answer.

### Improving Sentences

One type of question will test your ability to identify an error and to select the best **revision** of an underlined portion of the sentence. For each question you will have five suggestions for revising the underlined portion. You will choose from these five choices the **best** way to restructure that sentence so that no error exists. Here is an example.

#### EXAMPLE:

James Allison crossed the Atlantic and he was fifteen years old then.

- (A) and he was fifteen years old then.
- (B) when he was fifteen.
- (C) at age fifteen years old.
- (D) upon the reaching of fifteen years.
- (E) at the time when he was fifteen.

#### SAMPLE ANSWER

- (A)  (B)  (C)  (D)  (E)

## Identifying Sentence Errors

Another type of question will test your ability to detect an error in underlined portions of sentences. This type of question will consist of a sentence in which four short portions are underlined and lettered A, B, C, and D, followed by a fifth choice, "No error," lettered E. For each question, you must decide which of the underlined portions must be changed in order to make the sentence correct according to the rules of standard written English. It is possible that the sentence will be correct as it is. In that case, you would mark choice (E), "No error." Look at the directions and the example below.

**Directions:** The following sentences test your knowledge of grammar, usage, diction (word choice), and idiom.

Some sentences are correct.

No sentence contains more than one error.

You will find that the error, if there is one, is underlined and lettered. Elements of the sentence that are not underlined will not be changed. In choosing answers, follow the requirements of standard written English.

If there is an error, select the one underlined part that must be changed to make the sentence correct and fill in the corresponding oval on your answer sheet.

If there is no error, fill in answer oval E.

### EXAMPLE:

The other members and him quickly rejected the proposal

A B C

drafted by the committee. No error

D E

### SAMPLE ANSWER

A  B  C  D  E

## Improving Paragraphs

The third type of question you will have on the PSAT will ask you to revise sentences that appear in the first draft of a student essay. You will be given an essay and will be asked questions about the best ways to revise parts of it. These revisions should be similar to the revisions you make in your own writing in preparing your final draft.

Some questions will be about particular sentences and will ask you to make decisions about structure, word choice, and usage. Other questions will ask you to consider organization, development, and appropriateness of language. In all cases, you must follow the rules of standard written English.

You can expect some of the questions to be phrased like these that follow.

*In the context of the passage, what is the best version of the underlined portion of sentence 2?*

*In the context of the passage, what is the best way to revise and combine the underlined portions of sentences 3 & 4?*

*Which of the following best replaces the word "They" in sentence 9?*

*Which sentence would be most appropriate to follow sentence 12?*

*Which of the following is the best way to revise the underlined portions of sentences 2 & 3 so that the two sentences are combined into one?*

*Which of the following sentences, if added after sentence 3, would best link the first paragraph with the rest of the essay?*

*Which of the following would be the best replacement for "And" at the beginning of sentence 5?*

In this section of the test, you will have only six questions. You will likely have only one essay from which to work because of the limited number of questions. If you have been in the habit of revising your essays, looking for the best phrasing and being certain you have good organization, you will not experience too much difficulty on this section. However, we still need to practice in order to become familiar with the testing format.

# Verb Tense



## Verb Tense

If you enjoy reading books, you have probably developed a “sense” for what is correct and what isn’t, merely from having been exposed to the standard written English used by fine writers. If you do not spend a lot of time reading, you may find yourself at a disadvantage in this section. The test is designed to measure skills that you have developed over many years, specifically, skills gained through extensive experience with language, especially written language.

Several aspects of verb tense will be on the test in this new section. You will be required to recognize shifts in tense, to use the past perfect tense, and to use the historical present tense.

## Consistency of Tense

*The tense of verbs must remain consistent within the sentence.* If the sentence begins in the present tense, it should remain in the present tense. If it begins in the past tense, it should remain in the past tense. Later we will see some variations to this rule, but for now, try to stick to it. Look at these examples.

**Incorrect:** Because she **sang** so beautifully, she **wins** the contest.

Rule: The verbs of the sentence must remain in the same tense.  
*Sang* is past tense, but *wins* is present tense.

**Correct:** Because she **sang** so beautifully, she **won** the contest.

Rewrite the following sentences, correcting the verb tenses.

1. The child walked to school, and on the way he drops his books.

2. As the cake was delivered, all the children sing “Happy Birthday.”

3. The concert finally ended, but all the taxis are busy.

4. The hero of the story tries to rescue the child, but he was not successful.

5. The main character has good intentions, but he also had some bad traits.

### Answers

1. The child walked to school, and on the way he **dropped** his books.
2. As the cake was delivered, all the children **sang** "Happy Birthday."
3. The concert finally ended, but all the taxis **were** busy.
4. The hero of the story tries to rescue the child, but he **is** not successful.
5. The main character has good intentions, but he also **has** some bad traits.

## Past Perfect Tense

A more sophisticated problem in verb tense deals with the use of the **past perfect tense**. This is the tense that always uses the helping verb *had* with the main verb. This tense is used to indicate a time that *precedes* another time mentioned in the sentence.

**Example:** I *had seen* the movie before I *saw* Janet at the store.

The action of seeing the movie occurred *before* the action of seeing Janet. The first action to happen requires past perfect tense (**Remember: The past perfect tense must always use the helping verb *had* with the main verb: had run, had seen, had laughed, etc.**). The last action to happen requires **past tense**. Using these two tenses keeps the time reference clear in written English.

These next problems deal specifically with the use of the past perfect tense. To find the correct tense, always ask yourself which action happened first. *The first action* must use the past perfect tense.

Rewrite the following sentences, correcting the errors in the past perfect tense.

1. Until last Friday, we thought we lost the book.

---

2. By the time Kelly left, Mary ate the whole cake.

---

3. David probably saw the error long before he corrected it.

---

4. Jenny told us that she changed her mind before coming to class.

---

5. After finding her absent, I knew that she went to the concert.

---



**Answers:**

1. Until last Friday, we thought we **had lost** the book.
2. By the time Kelly left, Mary **had eaten** the whole cake.
3. David probably **had seen** the error long before he corrected it.
4. Jenny told us that she **had changed** her mind before coming to class.
5. After finding her absent, I knew that she **had gone** to the concert.

## Historical Present Tense

A third type of error in tense deals with the use of the **historical present**. Part of the sentence ~~may be in the past tense, but another part might be in the present tense~~ *that second part is something that is always true.*

For instance, we know as a fact that light travels faster than sound. Since this is always true, we state the fact in the present tense, regardless of what happens in the rest of the sentence. Look at the example below.

**Incorrect:** His research was based on the concept that light traveled faster than sound.

**Correct:** His research was based on the concept that light *travels* faster than sound.

## Present Tense When Discussing Literature

Another time we consistently use the **present tense** is when discussing literature: the accepted convention is to discuss the actions in fiction in terms of present tense.

Look at the following incorrect sentence and then at the corrected version.

**Incorrect:** The main character of the story disregarded his father's wishes.

**Correct:** The main character of the story *disregards* his father's wishes.

Rewrite the following sentences, correcting the tense of the verbs.

1. Tom realized that San Francisco sat on the western coast of America.

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
Jerry said that Newton's third law of physics stated that for every action there was an equal and opposite reaction.  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Through experience Janet learned that red and yellow produced orange.

4. Our elementary teacher taught us that blue and yellow made green.

5. In the novel, the hero stressed his love for the woman.

**Answers:**

1. Tom realized that San Francisco sits on the western coast of America.
2. Jerry said that Newton's third law of physics states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.
3. Through experience Janet learned that red and yellow produce orange.
4. Our elementary teacher taught us that blue and yellow make green.
5. In the novel, the hero stresses his love for the woman.

Here are some additional sentences for practice. All four problems dealing with tense are in these sentences. Find the errors in verb tense and correct them.

1. The police finally arrested the man after he robbed the bank twice in one year.

2. By the climax, the central character in the novel accepted his responsibility gladly.

3. The letter arrived praising the girl for the work she did to that point.

4. Mt. McKinley was the highest point in the U.S.

5. In *The Bell*, the author presented the theme of love in various ways.

6. John's report indicated that the largest continent in the world was Asia.

7. Sally decided to take the trip only after she spoke with the travel agent.

8. When we went to the park, Larry wants to play on the swing set.
- 
9. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huck rescued Jim several times.
- 
10. Alex went to the show, and then he sits in his living room and complains.
- 

**Answers**

1. The police finally arrested the man after he **had robbed** the bank twice in one year.
2. By the climax, the central character in the novel **accepts** his responsibility gladly.
3. The letter arrived praising the girl for the work she **had done** to that point.
4. Mt. McKinley **is** the highest point in the U.S.
5. In *The Bell*, the author **presents** the theme of love in various ways.
6. John's report indicated that the largest continent in the world **is** Asia.
7. Sally decided to take the trip only after she **had spoken** with the travel agent.
8. When we went to the park, Larry **wanted** to play on the swing set.
9. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huck **rescues** Jim several times.
10. Alex went to the show, and then he **sat** in his living room and complained.

**Practice Test**  
**Verb Tense**

Now try answering some questions in one of the formats you will see on the actual test. Decide which underlined portion of the sentence contains the error.

1. At that point Mary reads her final report but refused to make any additional comments about the procedure she had followed.  
a b c  
d e
2. Kelly hesitated, made some offhand remark, and then rushes out of the room.  
a b c d e
3. The doctor is not visibly disturbed when the nurse opened the door and leads a patient into his office.  
a b c d  
e
4. The principal expressed a preference for the green yearbook cover, but she does not indicate disapproval of the gold cover.  
a b c  
d e

5. When John was at the job for a week, he decided to ask his boss for a raise.  
a b c d e
6. David made his choice because he knew that honesty was the best policy.  
a b c d e
7. By the time the alarm rang, the robber already escaped and had disappeared.  
a b c d e
8. She thought that Kyle went home hours ago, but he had been there all along.  
a b c d e
9. He was glad to know that the world's highest mountains were in Asia.  
a b c d e
10. The character in the story showed his strongest traits when he makes that speech.  
a b c d e

**Answers:**

1. A At that point Mary **read** her final report but refused to make any additional comments about the procedure she had followed.
2. D Kelly hesitated, made some offhand remark, and then **rushed** out of the room.
3. C The doctor is not visibly disturbed when the nurse **opens** the door and leads a patient into his office.
4. C The principal expressed a preference for the green yearbook cover, but she **did** not indicate disapproval of the gold cover.
5. A When John **had been** at the job for a week, he decided to ask his boss for a raise.
6. D David made his choice because he knew that honesty **is** the best policy.
7. D By the time the alarm rang, the robber already **had escaped** and had disappeared.
8. B She thought that Kyle **had gone** home hours ago, but he had been there all along.
9. D He was glad to know that the world's highest mountains **are** in Asia.
10. B The character in the story **shows** his strongest traits when he makes that speech.

# Subject-Verb Agreement



## Subject-verb agreement

Several rules have been created to apply to subject-verb agreement; however, the kinds of questions ETS has traditionally asked on similar tests have dealt with only a few of these rules. You can expect questions

- with a simple subject followed by a prepositional phrase
- with a subject following the expletive *there*
- with the subject **following** the verb
- with a compound subject whose parts are joined by *or* or *nor*.

The concept of subject-verb agreement is relatively simple: the subject and the verb of each sentence must agree with each other in number. If a subject is singular, then the verb must also be singular. If the subject is plural, then the verb must also be plural. When an error in subject-verb agreement occurs, the verb must be changed to agree with the subject.

### Subject followed by a prepositional phrase

When the subject of the sentence is followed by a prepositional phrase, be sure you do not mistake the object of the preposition for the subject of the sentence. Look at the example.

- Incorrect:** One of the boats are sinking.  
**Correct:** One of the boats *is* sinking.

The subject of the sentence is *one* (*boats* is the object of the preposition). Since *one* is singular, then the verb must also be singular. In order to decide whether or not a verb is singular, simply remember that **singular verbs end in s**. In the incorrect sentence, the verb *are* is plural. To make the sentence correct, the verb must be singular (end in s). *Are* must be changed to *is*. If you will eliminate prepositional phrases before you look for the subject of the sentence, you may avoid confusing the object of the preposition with the subject. A few common prepositions are *of, with, at, on, for, to, under, over, from, by, between, beneath, below, above, along, against, since, before, after, beside, behind*. The object of the preposition is the first noun after the preposition. A prepositional phrase begins with the preposition and ends with the object of the preposition.

Draw a line through the prepositional phrases and correct the verbs in the following sentences so that they agree with the subjects.

Both the subjects and the verbs in these sentences are underlined.

1. The man with the two dogs are walking down the street. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The two girls in the gymnasium is going to be in my class. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The boys in my science class tries every day to get to class on time. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The ladies beside that red car is my mom's best friends. \_\_\_\_\_
5. One of the pictures of the mountains are lost. \_\_\_\_\_

**Answers:**

1. The man with the two dogs is walking down the street.
2. The two girls in the gymnasium are going to be in my class.
3. The boys in my science class try every day to get to class on time.
4. The ladies beside that red car are my mom's best friends.
5. One of the pictures of the mountains is lost.

Deciding whether or not the verb agrees with the subject is sometimes difficult because of the nature and **placement** of the subject. The following examples deal with the particular problem of the placement of the subject.

**Subject following the expletive *there***

- Incorrect:** There is always two men on guard at this post.  
**Correct:** There **are** always two men on guard at this post.

The subject of this sentence is *men*. The word *there* can **never** be the subject of any sentence. Since *men* is plural, the verb must also be plural. You must always remember that the **singular verbs end in s**. The word *is* ends in *s*; therefore, it must be singular. For the sentence above, you need a plural verb. The plural form of *is* is *are*. (He *is*; they *are*). You may want to simplify the issue and put the sentence in normal word order with the subject at the beginning of the sentence. *Two men are always on guard at this post.*

Correct the verbs in the following sentences to reflect their agreement with the subjects. First copy the subject of the sentence. Then write the correct form of the verb to agree with the subject.

	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>
1.	There goes the three leaders of the program.	_____
2.	There seem to be a strong odor in this room.	_____
3.	There were never a harder decision to make.	_____
4.	There was only two men at the door to greet us.	_____
5.	There was no results listed on the board.	_____

**Answers**

- |    |          |       |
|----|----------|-------|
| 1. | leaders  | go    |
| 2. | odor     | seems |
| 3. | decision | was   |
| 4. | men      | were  |
| 5. | results  | were  |

## Subject after the verb

The third type of error you are likely to see regarding subject-verb agreement deals with the placement of the subject **after** the verb. This is an unusual construction and is often confusing to students.

Example:           Down the road in a bright red car came the two girls.

The subject of this sentence is *girls*. The verb is *came*. If you can recognize *down the road* and *in a bright red car* as prepositional phrases, you will do well. Subjects can **never** be part of a prepositional phrase. In a sentence like this, your biggest problem will be finding the subject, since it is placed in an unusual position. Remember that subjects generally tell who or what is doing the action in the sentence. Once you find the subject, making sure the verb agrees with it will be the simple part. Look at the following examples:

**Incorrect:**   Far away from the rest of the crowd **stands** the three men.

**Correct:**       Far away from the rest of the crowd **stand** the three men.

*Men* is the subject of the sentence. It is plural and requires a plural verb. *Stands* (ending in *s*) is singular. *Stand* (no *s*) is plural and agrees with *men*, also plural.

Correct the verbs in the following sentences to reflect their agreement with the subjects. First copy the subject of the sentence. Then write the correct form of the verb.

- |  | Subject | Verb  |
|--|---------|-------|
| 1. Beneath those pictures on the wall are the artist's name. | _____   | _____ |
| 2. Around the corner from my house lives the old men.        | _____   | _____ |
| 3. Under the beds in his room were the dog.                  | _____   | _____ |
| 4. Along the bank of the river flows the logs.               | _____   | _____ |
| 5. Without his hat or his coat stand the man.                | _____   | _____ |

Answers:	Subject	Verb
1.	name	is
2.	men	live
3.	dog	was
4.	logs	flow
5.	man	stands



## Compound subjects joined by *or* or *nor*

Several possibilities exist when we have a compound subject, but we are concerned only with the sentences that have the parts of the compound subject joined by *or* or *nor*. In that particular situation we look at the **subject that sits closest to the verb** and let that subject determine the number. If that subject is singular, then the verb must be singular. If that subject is plural, then the verb must be plural. Here are some examples.

Neither the **girl** nor the two **boys** want to go eat breakfast.

The compound subject is *girl* and *boys*. The subject closest to the verb *want* is *boys*. Since *boys* is plural, the verb must be plural. Now let's reverse the order of the subjects.

Neither the two **boys** nor the **girl** wants to go eat breakfast.

Now the subject closest to the verb is *girl*, which is singular. Therefore, we must have a **singular** verb— *wants*.

Choose the correct form of the verb for the following sentences.

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. Neither the maid nor the butler (know, knows) the problem.                | _____ |
| 2. Either Jane or Sally (seem, seems) to be quieter than usual.              | _____ |
| 3. The man on the roof or the boys in the pasture (was, were) singing.       | _____ |
| 4. The kittens or the cat (has, have) spilled the milk.                      | _____ |
| 5. The lantern or the street lights on the road (is, are) shining brightly.  | _____ |
| 6. Neither the book nor the paper (was, were) disturbed on the desk.         | _____ |
| 7. Either the purse or the coins inside the purse (is, are) missing.         | _____ |
| 8. Either the kite or the strings hanging from the tail (is, are) red.       | _____ |
| 9. Neither Jim nor the man with the black boots (was, were) happy.           | _____ |
| 10. Either Sam or the girls in the green car (ask, asks) a lot of questions. | _____ |

### Answers

	<b>Verb</b>	<b><i>Closest Subject</i></b>
1.	knows	<i>butler</i>
2.	seems	<i>Sally</i>
3.	were	<i>boys</i>
4.	has	<i>cat</i>
5.	are	<i>lights</i>
6.	was	<i>paper</i>
7.	are	<i>coins</i>
8.	are	<i>strings</i>
9.	was	<i>man</i>
10.	ask	<i>girls</i>

## Practice Test

### Subject-Verb Agreement

**Directions:** Identify the underlined portion that contains an error.

1. His father always told him that there is several ways to solve a problem. No error  
a                                  b                                  c                                  d                                  e
2. Neither the secretaries nor their boss have left the office before six o'clock for the  
a                                  b                                  c                                  d  
last six weeks. No error  
e
3. In the living room, behind the two chairs with fringe on their backs sit the fright-  
a                                  b                                  c                                  d  
ened mouse. No error  
e
4. The girls living in that apartment is planning to return to school next semester  
a                                  b                                  c  
after winter vacation. No error  
d                                  e
5. Either Paul or the boys in the other room was responsible for the disturbance in the  
a                                  b                                  c  
halls yesterday. No error  
d                                  e
6. Under the large purple bush beside the deserted road sits the three little kittens  
a                                  b  
waiting patiently for their mother to return. No error  
c                                  d                                  e
7. There appear before him a problem of great magnitude that he must solve before  
a                                  b                                  c  
he can get any sleep. No error  
d                                  e
8. Neither the girl nor the boys has completed their assignments for the project which  
a                                  b                                  c                                  d  
is due next week. No error  
e

#### Answers:

	Subject	Verb
1. c	ways	are
2. c	secretaries nor boss	has left
3. d	mouse	sits
4. b	girls	are planning
5. b	Paul or boys	were
6. b	kittens	sit
7. a	problem	appears
8. b	girl nor boys	have completed

# Pronoun Usage



## Pronoun Usage

The most common errors in standard written English are found in the usage of pronouns. ETS usually focuses on five particular problem areas: agreement with the antecedent, correct case with compound elements, ambiguous reference, the distinction between *who* and *which*, and a shift in person. We will look at each of these areas to familiarize you with the problems and to show you how to correct them.

### Pronoun Antecedent Agreement

A pronoun is a word that substitutes for a noun. The noun that the pronoun replaces or to which it refers is called the **antecedent**. Look at the sentence below.

**Mary** went home because **she** was not feeling well.

In the sentence, the pronoun *she* is a substitute for the noun *Mary*. *Mary* is the antecedent of *she*. The antecedent of a pronoun is merely the word to which the pronoun refers. We use pronouns so that we do not create boring sentences using the same nouns over and over again. (Mary went home because Mary was not feeling well.) However, when we **do** use pronouns, we must be sure that they **agree with the antecedent**. If the antecedent is singular, the pronoun must also be singular. If the antecedent is plural, then the pronoun must also be plural. Look at the example below.

**Incorrect:** If someone calls, tell **them** I left early.

**Correct:** If someone calls, tell **him** I left early.

The word *someone* is actually singular. Any pronoun referring to that word must also be singular. In the incorrect version of this sentence, the pronoun *them* refers to *someone*, but *them* is plural, not singular. To correct this error, change *them* to a singular pronoun...*him* ...so that it agrees with its antecedent.

Rewrite the following sentences, correcting the errors in pronoun antecedent agreement.

1. We wanted each of the men to do their share of the work.

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
Everyone should bring their books when they come to class.

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
Neither of the girls brought their uniforms .

4. \_\_\_\_\_  
Neither Dorothy nor Janice had washed their face.

5. \_\_\_\_\_  
Each player must put their own clothes in the locker.

**Answers**

1. We wanted each of the men to do **his** share of the work.
2. Everyone should bring **his** books when **he comes** to class.
3. Neither of the girls brought **her** uniforms .
4. Neither Dorothy nor Janice had washed **her** face.
5. Each player must put **his** own clothes in the locker.

**Pronoun as a Compound Element**

When pronouns are used as part of a compound element, students really get confused. The solution is quite simple. You do not change your language just because you are suddenly talking about more than one person. Look at these examples and all the variations when we substitute pronouns for the names of the people.

Tom and Sally went to the movies. Tom went to the movies. Sally went to the movies.  
Tom and **she** went to the movies. Tom went to the movies. **She** went to the movies.  
**He** and Sally went to the movies. **He** went to the movies. Sally went to the movies.  
**He** and **she** went to the movies. **He** went to the movies. **She** went to the movies.

If you will break the sentence apart and read it twice, once for each word in the compound element, you will quickly recognize the correct answer.

Dad gave Tom and Sally the gifts. Dad gave Tom the gifts. Dad gave Sally the gifts.  
Dad gave **him** and Sally the gifts. Dad gave **him** the gifts. Dad gave Sally the gifts.  
Dad gave Tom and **her** the gifts. Dad gave Tom the gifts. Dad gave **her** the gifts.  
Dad gave **him** and **her** the gifts. Dad gave **him** the gifts. Dad gave **her** the gifts.

Remember the critical rule: *you do not change your language just because you are suddenly talking about more than one person.*

Choose the correct pronoun for the following sentences *only* after you have read each sentence twice, once for each compound element, just as we have done in the examples.

1. David told Jerry and (I, me) that block printing began in China. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Betty went to the store for Susan and (I, me). \_\_\_\_\_
3. Janet and (I, me) read the book. \_\_\_\_\_
4. You and (he, him) can continue reading later. \_\_\_\_\_
5. If Gerry and (she, her) had waited, the park would have opened. \_\_\_\_\_
6. The manager gave the book to Don and (she, her). \_\_\_\_\_
7. The movie surprised Darlene and (he, him). \_\_\_\_\_
8. The movie surprised Darlene and (I, me). \_\_\_\_\_

**Answers**

- |    |     |  |
|----|-----|--|
| 1. | me  | David told <b>me</b> that block printing began in China. |
| 2. | me  | Betty went to the store for <b>me</b> .                  |
| 3. | I   | <b>I</b> read the book.                                  |
| 4. | he  | <b>He</b> can continue reading later.                    |
| 5. | she | If <b>she</b> had waited, the park would have opened.    |
| 6. | her | The manager gave the book to <b>her</b> .                |
| 7. | him | The movie surprised <b>him</b> .                         |
| 8. | me  | The movie surprised <b>me</b> .                          |

**Ambiguous Reference**

The third area of pronoun usage that will be tested on the PSAT concerns the ambiguous reference of pronouns. Earlier we saw that all pronouns must have an antecedent. When that antecedent is not clear, we have an ambiguous reference to the antecedent. Look at the example below.

- Incorrect:** They say in that magazine that scores have dropped rapidly.  
**Correct:** In that magazine, **an authority** states that scores have dropped rapidly.

In the incorrect version of this sentence, the pronoun *they* is vaguely referring to someone, but we have no clear picture of who it is. In order for the sentence to be correct, we must know clearly the antecedent of that pronoun. *If the antecedent is not clear, you can't use the pronoun.* You must rewrite the sentence or put a noun into the sentence as we have done in the corrected version.

Rewrite the following sentences, correcting the errors of ambiguous reference.

- The manager told her secretary that **she** must pay the filing fee.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- The teacher told the student that **he** should close the door.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Bobby bought ice cream for John and **his** sister.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Mary informed Sally that **she** was becoming unpopular.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- It** surprised me when you came home.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Suggested Answers** ( may vary)

1. The manager told her secretary that **she** must pay the filing fee.  
The manager told her secretary to pay the filing fee.
2. The teacher told the student that **he** should close the door.  
The teacher told the student to close the door.
3. Bobby bought ice cream for John and **his** sister.  
Bobby bought ice cream for John and John's sister.
4. Mary informed Sally that **she** was becoming unpopular.  
Mary said to Sally, " I am becoming unpopular."
5. **It** surprised me when you came home.  
Your coming home surprised me.

**Who vs. Which**

Another area we will look at concerns the distinction between the pronouns *who* and *which*. The pronoun *who* refers to people. *Which* refers to things. That's all there is to it.

Choose the correct pronoun for the sentences below.

1. He sat in a chair (who, which) was painted red.
2. He is the boy (who, which) is the editor of the school newspaper.
3. The students (who, which) ride the bus make too much noise.
4. This is a math problem (who, which) is extremely difficult.
5. Those are the girls (who, which) were officers in the club.
6. I spoke with the officer (who, which) made the report.
7. Were you able to see the editor (who, which) wrote the story?
8. This is the newspaper (who, which) won the award.
9. We visited the mayor (who, which) wants to run for re-election.
10. At the zoo we saw a tiger (who, which) looked mighty dangerous.

**Answers**

- |     |       |                         |
|-----|-------|-------------------------|
| 1.  | which | A chair is a thing.     |
| 2.  | who   | A boy is a person.      |
| 3.  | who   | A student is a person.  |
| 4.  | which | A problem is a thing.   |
| 5.  | who   | A girl is a person.     |
| 6.  | who   | An officer is a person. |
| 7.  | who   | An editor is a person.  |
| 8.  | which | A newspaper is a thing. |
| 9.  | who   | A mayor is a person.    |
| 10. | which | A tiger is a thing.     |

## Shift in person

The last kind of problem we will discuss regarding pronoun usage is the problem of shifting person in the sentence. You have heard "person" discussed when your teachers talked about point of view in stories. First person uses *I*. Second person is *you*, and third person is *he/she/it*. These pronouns have several forms, and you must be familiar with all of them. Here is a list of the forms for you to study.

**1st person** I, me, my, mine, we, us, our, ours

**2nd person** you, your, yours

**3rd person** he, him, his she, her, hers it, its they, them, their, theirs

The rule in standard written English is that you may not shift from one person to another within the sentence. Look at the example below.

**Incorrect:** I think **I** will be okay, but **you** have to be prepared for the unexpected.

**Correct:** I think I will be okay, but **I** have to be prepared for the unexpected.

In the incorrect version of the sentence the first pronoun (*I*) is in 1st person. Later in the sentence we see a shift to 2nd person (*you*). In order for the sentence to be correct, those pronouns have to be in the same person. Actually, this is another form of pronoun antecedent agreement. Look at this next example.

**Incorrect:** A **person** has to study hard if **you** want to do well in school.

**Correct:** A **person** has to study hard if **he** wants to do well in school.

The antecedent of the pronoun is *person* (3rd person); the pronoun *you* (2nd person) has to agree with it. The pronoun, then, must also be a 3rd person pronoun.

Try changing the underlined pronouns in the sentences below so that there is no shift in person.

1. If you intend to go to college, one should try to do well in high school. \_\_\_\_\_
2. One should be nice to others if you expect kindness in return. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I tried to fill the order, but one can do only so much. \_\_\_\_\_
4. If you want to study, one should find a quiet place. \_\_\_\_\_

### Answers

1. you
2. you
3. I
4. you



## Practice Test Pronoun Usage

Choose the letter of the underlined section that contains an error.

1. Jane and me have decided to go to the store before we go to the movies, but later she and I will drive to the beach. No error  
a b c d e
2. Gary and I saw the students which were responsible for all the damage you and she discovered. No error  
a b c d e
3. If you want to learn how to drive in the large cities, one should consider taking drivers' education classes like Sam and I did. No error  
a b c d e
4. The new boss wanted every employee to sign their name on the contract which he had prepared, but John and she decided they would rather quit. No error  
a b c d e
5. Mary worked with Sue and I on the re-election campaign for the governor a few months after she had finished the campaign for the senator. No error  
a b c d e
6. I asked Tom and her to answer my phone so that if anyone called, they could tell them that Sally and I had gone to the concert. No error  
a b c d e
7. The two leaders of the hike through the wilderness saw Bob and I marching along without our gear, but they said nothing to either Bob or me. No error  
a b c d e
8. I was excited when Dad decided to divide the money between you and I, but Mother and he had talked for hours before making the decision. No error  
a b c d e
9. The new mayor said that the governor and she would try to reach a decision which would make both you and I happy. No error  
a b c d e
10. The advertisements said that Coke was better than Pepsi, but you couldn't tell until you had drunk it. No error  
a b c d e

**Answers** 1. a 2. b 3. b 4. b 5. b 6. c 7. a 8. b 9. d 10. d

## Cases of Personal Pronouns

	Nominative	Possessive	Objective
1st person	I	my, mine	me
2nd person	you	your, yours	you
3rd person	he, she, it	his, her, hers, its	him, her, it
1st person	we	our, ours	us
2nd person	you	your, yours	you
3rd person	they	their, theirs	them

You need to know the uses of each case. This will help you to know which case to use. Memorize both the chart and the uses of the cases.

<b>Nominative Case</b>	subjects, predicate nominatives
<b>Possessive Case</b>	shows possession
<b>Objective Case</b>	direct objects, indirect objects, objects of prepositions

## Indefinite Pronouns

### Singular

each  
 either  
 neither  
 one  
 someone  
 somebody  
 something  
 no one  
 nobody  
 nothing  
 everyone  
 everybody  
 everything  
 anyone  
 anybody  
 anything

### Plural

both  
 few  
 many  
 several

### Singular or Plural

all  
 some  
 more  
 most  
 none  
 any

**These singular indefinite pronouns must be memorized.**

# Double Negatives



## Double Negatives

A double negative is **two** negative expressions applied to the **same idea**. The following terms are negative expressions: *no, not, nothing, none, no one, never, hardly, scarcely, nowhere, nobody, neither*. These terms should not be used together to discuss the same idea.

Incorrect: I haven't (have **not**) seen nobody.

Correct: I haven't seen anybody.

Incorrect: We don't have **hardly** any.

Correct: We have hardly any.

Incorrect: I don't want **no** help.

Correct: I don't want any help.

Incorrect: I can't **scarcely** see.

Correct: I can scarcely see.

The PSAT will not spend much time with this particular error, but you will have at least one question dealing with double negatives.

Rewrite the sentences below so that the double negative is eliminated from the sentence.

1. He hasn't got none of the answers right.

2. They don't have scarcely any food to eat.

3. I don't never want to hear those words again.

4. Nobody didn't miss him until last night.

5. Hardly nobody came to the party.

6. I didn't get no sleep last night.

7. It wasn't hardly worth the trip.

8. Won't nobody help you?

### Answers (two possibilities)

1. He hasn't got **any** of the answers right.

2. They don't **have any** food to eat.

3. I don't **ever** want to hear those words again.

4. Nobody **missed** him until last night.

5. Hardly **anybody** came to the party.

6. I didn't get **any** sleep last night.

7. It **was hardly** worth the trip.

8. Won't **anybody** help you?

He **got none** of the answers right.

They **have scarcely** any food to eat.

I **never** want to hear those words again.

We **didn't** miss him until last night.

**Almost nobody** came to the party.

I **got no** sleep last night.

It **wasn't** worth the trip.

**Will nobody** help you?

# Idioms



## Idioms

An idiom is an expression in which the words have developed a special meaning in relation to each other. This meaning is destroyed if some part of the related group of words is omitted, or if some word not commonly a part of the idiom is introduced. Most idioms you will see on the test will consist of a key word and one or more prepositions. The trick is to choose the right preposition.

For instance, we are angry **with** a person....not angry **at** him.

We comply **with** a request, not comply **to** a request.

The list below illustrates the usage of prepositions in some idiomatic expressions. These idioms should be memorized.

agree **with** a person  
agree **to** a proposal  
agree **on** a plan of action  
aim **at** a target  
aim **for** perfection  
part **with** a thing  
part **from** a person

differ **from** something else  
differ **with** someone  
overrun **by** a tank  
overrun **with** ants  
wait **for** a person

Now look at some other common mistakes and their corrected versions.

### Faulty Form

among each other  
bank on  
could of  
in back of  
leave us go  
off of, off from  
in contrast to  
concerned in  
working at (plastics)  
prevent something to move  
in appreciation about  
in regards to  
being that  
kind of  
different than  
filled up with

### Correct Form

among themselves  
depend on, rely on, count on  
could have  
behind  
let us go  
off (omit *of* and *from*)  
in contrast with  
concerned with  
working with (plastics)  
prevent something from moving  
in appreciation of  
in regard to  
since  
rather  
different from  
filled with

Rewrite the sentences below, correcting the faulty idiomatic expressions.

1. Jerry differed from Don on many questions.

---

2. Her blue dress is different than the red one.

---

3. After the game he was kind of sad.

---

4. After hearing the story, Jane was concerned in the problem.

---

5. The three girls talked quietly among each other.

---

6. My father would not leave us go to the show.

---

7. You could of listened more carefully to the teacher.

---

8. Being that you were late, I marked you tardy.

---

**Answers**

1. Jerry differed **with** Don on many questions.
2. Her blue dress is different **from** the red one.
3. After the game he was **rather** sad.
4. After hearing the story, Jane was concerned **with** the problem.
5. The three girls talked quietly among **themselves**.
6. My father would not **let** us go to the show.
7. You could **have** listened more carefully to the teacher.
8. **Since** you were late, I marked you tardy.

Choose the letter of the underlined section that contains an error.

1. Jerry did not agree with the proposal that had been presented to him.

a                                  b                                  c                                  d

2. John and he were trying to find a new job of working at telecommunications.

a                                  b                                  c                                  d

3. Those people standing in the crowd seem to be indifferent from one another.

a    b                                  c                                  d

4. I wanted to send her some roses in appreciation about the work she had done.

a                                  b    c                                  d

5. Please do not go in back of the auditorium unless you are properly supervised.

a                                  b    c                                  d

**Answers**                  1. b                  2. d                  3. d                  4. c                  5. b

# Passive Voice





## Passive Voice

Remember that the PSAT/SAT writing section tests your knowledge of FORMAL, Standard English. Understand that the writers of this test have preferences. They prefer active voice to passive voice. This is a very simple concept, but one you may not have studied in your classroom settings. Simply put, active voice occurs in a sentence when the subject of the sentence *performs* the action. Passive voice occurs when the subject *receives* the action. Here is an example.

**Active Voice:** **Tom hit the ball.**

Try to envision Tom on a baseball field as he swings at a ball and actually hits it. He is performing an action. He is hitting the ball. Because Tom (the subject of the sentence) is performing an ACTION, the sentence is in ACTIVE voice.

**Passive Voice:** **Tom was hit by the ball.**

Tom is still the subject of the sentence, but he is not performing an action. Instead, he is being passive. He is standing on the field doing nothing, and the ball hits *him*. He *receives* the action. Because Tom, (the subject of the sentence) is being PASSIVE and is receiving the action, the sentence is in PASSIVE voice.

You will simply have to remember that these test makers hate passive voice. While passive voice is not *wrong*, it is not as desirable in sentence construction as active voice is. When you take the test, you will find several questions that have both active and passive voice in the answer choices. Be sure that you remember that passive voice is the weaker structure. Avoid choosing it.

Label the following sentences as Active Voice or Passive Voice.

1. Jeremy stood beside the road. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Jeremy was seen beside the road. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Mary cooked a delicious meal. \_\_\_\_\_
4. A delicious meal was served by the waitress. \_\_\_\_\_
5. The man was told not to utter a sound. \_\_\_\_\_

Answers:

1. active

2. passive

3. active

4. passive

5. passive

# Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers



## Misplaced modifiers

Modifying phrases should be placed as near as possible to the words they modify. Otherwise, they sometimes distort the meaning of the sentence and add unintended humor.

**Incorrect:** The boy saw the red car looking out the window.

**Correct:** Looking out the window, the boy saw the red car.

In the incorrect version, the phrase *looking out the window* modifies *car*. Thus, the car was looking out the window. To correct this error, simply move the phrase so that it sits near the word it truly modifies (*the boy*).

Remember that the placement of a single modifying word changes the meaning of the sentence. Look at the three possibilities when the word *only* is placed in different positions.

I *only* saw Janet. (I did not speak to her.)

*Only* I saw Janet. (No one else saw her.)

I saw *only* Janet. (I saw no one else.)

Rewrite the following sentences, correcting the errors in misplaced modifiers.

1. John stopped and parked the car looking at the scenery.

2. Lying on the desk, Jerry read the letter.

3. Braided in bright colors, Daniel picked up the rope.

4. The man saw the car swimming in the lake.

5. The woman reported the accident interviewing for a job.

6. Singing in the treetops, I saw a bird.

7. He enjoyed watching the cloud formation lying on the lawn.

8. My dad only gave me five dollars for the trip.

9. The speaker said that we only get twenty-five percent of the profits.

10. Covered with cream gravy, the waitress served the potatoes.

**Answers**

1. **Looking at the scenery**, John stopped and parked the car .
2. Jerry read the letter **lying on the desk**.
3. Daniel picked up the rope **braided in bright colors**.
4. The man **swimming in the lake** saw the car .
5. The woman **interviewing for a job** reported the accident.
6. I saw a bird **singing in the treetops** .
7. **Lying on the lawn**, he enjoyed watching the cloud formation .
8. My dad gave me **only** five dollars for the trip.
9. The speaker said that we get **only** twenty-five percent of the profits.
10. The waitress served the potatoes **covered with cream gravy**.

Misplaced modifiers will usually appear in the test format that asks you to revise the sentence. Look at the sentences below. Decide which of the four choices is the **best revision** of the sentence.

1. I saw the United Nations Building walking up the street.
  - a. I, when I was walking up the street, saw the United Nations Building.
  - b. The United Nations Building was seen by me walking up the street.
  - c. Walking up the street, I saw the United Nations Building.
  - d. I, seeing the United Nations Building, walking up the street.
2. Filled with a delicious snack, the television entertained the small child.
  - a. The television, filled with a delicious snack, entertained the child.
  - b. The child was entertained by the television filled with a delicious snack.
  - c. The child was filled with a delicious snack, the television entertained him.
  - d. The television entertained the small child filled with a delicious snack.
3. At the age of five, my mother took me to visit the animals at the zoo.
  - a. My mother, at the age of five, took me to visit the animals at the zoo.
  - b. When I was five, my mother took me to visit the animals at the zoo.
  - c. My mother took me to visit the animals at the age of five at the zoo.
  - d. When my mother was five, she took me to visit the animals at the zoo.
4. Sally bought a new coat for her husband with a pin stripe.
  - a. Sally bought a new coat with a pin stripe for her husband.
  - b. Sally, with a pin stripe, bought a new coat for her husband.
  - c. A new coat with a pin stripe is what Sally bought for her husband.
  - d. What Sally bought was a new coat for her husband with a pin stripe.

**Answers**

1. c      2. d      3. b      4. a

## Dangling modifiers

A dangling modifier is a phrase or clause that does not clearly modify any word in the sentence. This kind of error makes the meaning of a sentence absurd. Look at these examples.

**Incorrect:** Listening closely, no sound could be heard.

**Correct:** Listening closely, he could hear no sound.

In the incorrect sentence, we have no idea **who** was listening. Because the phrase sits next to the word *sound*, it should modify *sound*, theoretically, but that is absurd. Sound cannot listen. In order to correct the sentence, we must insert a word the phrase can logically modify. By adding the word *he*, we have a correct sentence.

Before we practice correcting these errors, let's look at three more examples.

Digging in the garden, an old rag doll was discovered.

(The sentence implies that the rag doll was digging in the dirt.)

Solving the case, one important clue was overlooked.

(Who solved the case . . . the clue?)

Climbing the tree, a bird's nest was found.

(Did the nest climb the tree?)

Rewrite the following sentences, correcting the dangling modifiers. You must **add words** to make these sentences correct.

1. To unlock the door, a key must be used.

2. Before going outside, your overshoes must be put on.

3. While talking to the officer, a dog ran between his legs.

4. After eating all those pears, dinner was served.

5. Without giving it a second thought, the incident was forgotten.

**Suggested Answers** (may vary)

1. To unlock the door, **you must use a key.**
2. Before going outside, **you should put on your overshoes.**
3. While **I was talking** to the officer, a dog ran between his legs.
4. After eating all those pears, **she served the dinner.**
5. Without giving it a second thought, **I forgot the incident.**

Now try answering some questions in the format you will see on the PSAT test. In each of the following sentences, part of the sentence or the entire sentence is underlined. Choose the answer that best expresses the meaning of the original sentence through revision of the underlined portion. **Choice A is always the same as the underlined part; the other four choices are different.**

1. Failing to get approval from his parents, depression overwhelmed the young man.
  - a. depression overwhelmed the young man
  - b. depression overwhelming the young man
  - c. overwhelmingly depressed was the young man
  - d. the young man was overwhelmed by depression
  - e. the man, young and overwhelmed was depressed
  
2. Having moved often, the new surroundings did not hamper the child's activities.
  - a. the new surroundings did not hamper the child's activities
  - b. not hampering the child's activities were the new surroundings
  - c. the child's activities were not hampered by the new surroundings
  - d. the child not being hampered by activities in the new surroundings
  - e. the child, unhampered by his new surroundings, continued his activities
  
3. To sing in the choir, music must be studied.
  - a. music must be studied
  - b. one must study music
  - c. it is necessary to study music
  - d. it is a must that music be studied
  - e. studying music is a necessity
  
4. Turning his lights on dim, the car sped down the highway.
  - a. the car sped down the highway
  - b. speeding down the highway
  - c. the man in the car sped down the highway
  - d. the man speeding down the highway in his car
  - e. speeding down the highway was the car of the man

5. To dance well, proper shoes must be worn.
- proper shoes must be worn
  - wearing proper shoes is a must
  - you can only do it if you wear proper shoes
  - requiring the wearing of proper shoes
  - dancers must wear proper shoes
6. Coming home last night from the movies, the car had a flat tire.
- the car had a flat tire
  - a flat tire was had on the car by us
  - we had a flat tire on the car
  - having a flat tire on the car
  - the car's flat tire delayed us
7. Before reaching home, a long detour had to be taken.
- a long detour had to be taken
  - having to take a long detour
  - we had to take a long detour
  - a long detour had to be taken by us
  - taking us a long detour
8. After moving to Alabama, Harry's dream was fulfilled.
- Harry's dream was fulfilled
  - dreaming by Harry was fulfilled
  - it was the dream that was fulfilled by Harry
  - fulfilling Harry's dream
  - Harry saw his dream fulfilled
9. Running from the house, the keys on the desk were grabbed.
- the keys on the desk were grabbed
  - grabbing the keys on the desk
  - the keys were grabbed by her on the desk
  - she grabbed the keys on the desk
  - and from the desk she grabbed the keys
10. While visiting in Paris, Napolean's tomb was found especially interesting.
- Napolean's tomb was found especially interesting
  - I found Napolean's tomb especially interesting
  - of especial interest was Napolean's tomb
  - I was especially interested by Napolean's tomb
  - finding the tomb of Napolean especially interesting

**Answers**

- |      |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. d | 2. e | 3. b | 4. c | 5. e  |
| 6. c | 7. c | 8. e | 9. d | 10. b |

# Parallelism





## Parallelism

Maintaining parallel structure in sentences is very important, but for the undisciplined writer, it can also be very difficult. Parallelism is about consistency. If a sentence begins with one construction and suddenly shifts to another, it is lacking in parallel structure. These shifts may occur in the person, number, voice, or tense of the verb, or in the kind of verbal phrase, or in the type of modifier used. The following example shows a shift in the type of verbal phrase used.

- Incorrect:** He likes hiking, boating, and to run.  
**Correct:** He likes hiking, boating, and running.  
**Correct:** He likes to hike, to boat, and to run.

As you can see, the incorrect sentence begins a list with two gerunds, but concludes it with an infinitive phrase. In order to correct the sentence all three items must be the same: they can be gerunds, or they can be infinitives. They cannot be mixed.

Rewrite the following sentences, correcting the underlined portions so that the sentences are parallel.

1. Tell me his name and where he lives.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. He is tall, red-headed, and has freckles.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. I decided to go home, to get my gear, and later I went fishing.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. I saw how he held the bat, how he hit the ball, and then he ran to first base.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. We danced all night, laughed all day, and during the morning all we did was cry.  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Answers

1. Tell me his name and **his address**. (two nouns)
2. He is tall, red-headed, and **freckled**. (three adjectives)
3. I decided to go home, to get my gear, and later **to go fishing**. (three infinitive phrases)
4. I saw how he held the bat, how he hit the ball, and then **how he ran to first base**. (three subordinate clauses)
5. We danced all night, laughed all day, and **cried all morning**. (three verb phrases)

Parallelism is also important when expressing compared and contrasted ideas. Study the following examples.

**Incorrect:** **Dancing** no longer interests me as much as **to go skiing**.  
(a gerund paired with an infinitive)

**Correct:** **Dancing** no longer interests me as much as **skiing**.

**Correct:** **To go dancing** no longer interests me as much as **to go skiing**.

**Incorrect:** The woman was praised more for **her beauty** than for **the way she behaved**. (noun paired with a clause)

**Correct:** The woman was praised more for **her beauty** than for **her behavior**.

For the following sentences choose the answer that best expresses the meaning of the original sentence through revision of the underlined portion. **Choice A is always the same as the underlined part; the other four choices are different.**

1. To maintain a sound organization, we must recognize the leadership of our president, and it is necessary to follow a policy of integrity.
  - a. it is necessary to follow a policy of integrity
  - b. following a policy of integrity
  - c. the necessity to have a policy of integrity to follow
  - d. necessarily to follow a policy of integrity
  - e. we must follow a policy of integrity
2. To accept false criticism, explained the counselor, is giving up one's self esteem.
  - a. giving up one's self-esteem
  - b. bad because you give up your self-esteem
  - c. to give up one's self-esteem
  - d. one's way to give up your self-esteem
  - e. the same as giving up one's self-esteem
3. The women baked the cookies, but the kitchens were cleaned by the husbands.
  - a. the kitchens were cleaned by the husbands
  - b. the husbands cleaned the kitchens
  - c. the cleaning was done by the husbands
  - d. the kitchens being cleaned by the husbands
  - e. the husbands were the cleaners of the kitchen
4. One patient had a broken arm, a fractured skull, and two of her ribs were broken.
  - a. two of her ribs were broken
  - b. ribs of which two were broken
  - c. along with having two broken ribs
  - d. two broken ribs
  - e. she had two broken ribs

5. Before continuing the program, we considered expense, convenience and how easy it would be to implement it.
- how easy it would be to implement it
  - how to implement it easily
  - ease of implementation
  - implementing it easily
  - we wondered how easily we could implement it
6. The surgeon had a kind voice, a steady hand, and was good at bedside manners.
- was good at bedside manners
  - good bedside manners
  - being good at bedside manners
  - he had good bedside manners
  - manners that were good at the bedside
7. To the immature person, war may be an exciting adventure, but a brutal and horrible experience is how the wise person sees it.
- a brutal and horrible experience is how the wise person sees it
  - experiencing it is brutal and horrible to the wise person
  - how a wise person sees it is that it is brutal and horrible
  - to the wise person, it is a brutal and horrible experience
  - it is brutal and horrible to the wise person who experiences it
8. The city was expecting high winds, heavy rain, and possibly it would hail.
- possibly it would hail
  - hail could possibly come
  - they also expected it to hail possibly
  - possibly they thought it could hail
  - possible hail
9. Her gym instructor told her to suit out and that she should practice slowly.
- that she should practice slowly
  - to practice slowly
  - begin practicing slowly
  - practicing slowly
  - slowly is how she should practice
10. The actors wore yellow hats while yellow shoes were worn by the actresses.
- yellow shoes were worn by the actresses
  - yellow shoes were being worn by the actresses
  - the actresses were wearing yellow shoes
  - the actresses wore yellow shoes
  - wearing yellow shoes was done by the actresses

## Answers

1. e two clauses:  
we must recognize the leadership of our president  
we must follow a policy of integrity
2. c two infinitive phrases:  
to accept false criticism  
to give up one's self-esteem
3. b two independent clauses:  
the women baked the cookies  
the husbands cleaned the kitchens
4. d a series of adjectives modifying a noun:  
a broken arm  
a fractured skull  
two broken ribs
5. c a series of nouns:  
expense  
convenience  
ease (of implementation)
6. b a series of adjectives modifying a noun:  
a kind voice  
a steady hand  
good bedside manners
7. d introductory prepositional phrase, subject, verb, predicate nominative:  
to the immature person, war may be an exciting adventure  
to the wise person, it is a brutal and horrible experience
8. e series of adjectives modifying a noun:  
high winds  
heavy rains  
possible hail
9. b two infinitive phrases:  
to suit out  
to practice slowly
10. d two independent clauses:  
the actors wore yellow hats  
the actresses wore yellow shoes

# Sentence Structure



## Sentence Structure

The questions that you will find the easiest are the ones dealing with sentence structure. They will deal with fragments and run-on sentences. You will probably have three or four questions in this area.

### Fragments

A fragment is a part of a sentence that does not express a complete thought. It can be a thought cut off from another sentence to which it belongs, it can be a subordinate clause written as a sentence, it can be a verbal phrase written as a sentence, it can be an appositive phrase written as a sentence, or it can be any number of other things that are parts of sentences but which do not constitute a complete thought in themselves.

**Examples:** The mailman rang the doorbell and set something on the porch.  
*Probably a package.* (cut off from preceding sentence)

I opened the door and saw the package. *Which had been left by the postman.* (a subordinate clause cut off from preceding sentence)

*Having been left sitting on the porch by the postman.* (a verbal phrase trying to stand alone)

I was introduced to his uncle. *The man who left the package sitting on my front porch.* (an appositive phrase separated from the preceding sentence)

Correct the following sentence fragments by rewriting them as complete sentences.

1. Before you get into your car to come to my house.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Never knowing what the young man would say to the girl about marrying her.

3. Being almost six feet tall and enabling him to play basketball.

4. After changing the tire on the car and resuming our trip.

5. The man in the gray suit smiling broadly under that elm tree in the park.
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Suggested answers** (may vary)

1. Before you get into your **car**, **come** to my house.
2. **I never knew** what the young man would say to the girl about marrying her.
3. Being almost six feet tall **enabled** him to play basketball.
4. After changing the tire on the car, **we resumed** our trip.
5. The man in the gray suit **smiled** broadly under that elm tree in the park.

When you see fragments on the PSAT test, they will be in the test format for revising sentences. Here are some practice questions. Choose the answer that best expresses the meaning of the original sentence.

1. By including us girls in the plan, the teacher pleasing all the students.
  - a. the teacher pleasing all the students
  - b. all the students were able to be pleased by the teacher
  - c. the teacher pleased all the students
  - d. the teacher being able to please all the students
  - e. it happened that the teacher could please all the students
2. Having requested Dolly to manage the project, the boss planning to go home.
  - a. the boss planning to go home
  - b. going home was now possible for the boss
  - c. planning to go home was what the boss did
  - d. the boss was planning to go home
  - e. the boss, being that he could now plan to go home
3. Advanced and beginning students having had sufficient training.
  - a. having had sufficient training
  - b. having been sufficiently trained
  - c. sufficient training having been provided for them
  - d. being trained sufficiently
  - e. have had sufficient training
4. Longfellow telling us this beautiful story in a poem.
  - a. Longfellow telling us this beautiful story in a poem
  - b. Longfellow tells us this beautiful story in a poem
  - c. Longfellow in a poem telling us this beautiful story
  - d. This beautiful story being told to us in a poem by Longfellow
  - e. Us being told this beautiful story in a poem by Longfellow
5. Many words in English having been borrowed from another language.
  - a. having been borrowed
  - b. from another language having been borrowed
  - c. borrowed from another language
  - d. have been borrowed from another language
  - e. being that they were borrowed from another language

**Answers**

- 1. c By including us girls in the plan, the teacher pleasing all the students.  
By including us girls in the plan, the teacher **pleased** all the students.
- 2. d Having requested Dolly to manage the project, the boss planning to go home.  
Having requested Dolly to manage the project, the boss **was planning** to go home.
- 3. e Advanced and beginning students having had sufficient training.  
Advanced and beginning students **have** had sufficient training.
- 4. b Longfellow telling us this beautiful story in a poem.  
Longfellow **tells** us this beautiful story in a poem.
- 5. d Many words in English having been borrowed from another language.  
Many words in English **have** been borrowed from another language.

**Run-on Sentences**

Another type of error you must be able to recognize is the run-on sentence. A run-on sentence is actually two separate sentences that fail to be separated by the proper punctuation (a period usually comes at the end of a sentence). A run-on can be created by putting a **comma** between the two sentences or by having **no punctuation** at all between the two sentences.

- Incorrect:** I saw the man in the **store he** was very handsome.
- Incorrect:** I saw the man in the **store, he** was very handsome.
- Correct:** I saw the man in the **store. He** was very handsome.
- Correct:** I saw the man in the **store; he** was very handsome.
- Correct:** I saw the very handsome man in the store.

Notice from the examples above that a run-on sentence can be corrected in several ways. A period or a semicolon can separate the two sentences, or one sentence can be reduced to modifiers and incorporated into the other sentence.

**Directions:** Rewrite the sentences below so that the run-on sentence is eliminated.

- 1. Last year I saw the Grand Canyon, this year I will see Niagara Falls.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. My dog is my best friend, he has been with me for ten years.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Mary made the honor roll last semester, she can join the National Honor Society.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4. The man in the store is my uncle, he will drive us home.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5. John plans to mow the lawn this morning, he will go to the movies later.  
\_\_\_\_\_



**Answers** (may vary)

1. Last year I saw the Grand **Canyon**. **This** year I will see Niagra Falls.
2. My dog is my best **friend**; **he** has been with me for ten years.
3. Mary made the honor roll last **semester**. **She** can join the National Honor Society.
4. The man in the store is my **uncle**. **He** will drive us home.
5. John plans to mow the lawn this **morning**; **he** will go to the movies later.

All sentences may end with a period. If the sentences are *closely related in idea*, they may be separated by a semicolon.

Another error you will be asked to recognize deals with the use of a semicolon. In the example below we use a *semicolon with a conjunctive adverb* **and** a comma to join the two separate sentences. If a comma precedes the conjunctive adverb instead of a semicolon, a run-on sentence is created.

**Incorrect:** I tried to finish the exam before the **bell**, **however**, I couldn't do it.

**Correct:** I tried to finish the exam before the **bell**; **however**, I couldn't do it.

Some conjunctive adverbs that commonly appear with semicolons are *however, consequently, moreover, therefore, nevertheless, otherwise, for example, that is, and furthermore*.

**Note:** These words must be preceded by a semicolon and followed by a comma.

Rewrite the following sentences so that the run-on sentences are eliminated.

1. Margaret wanted to travel abroad, however, she could not afford the trip.

- 
2. He wanted to stay another day, otherwise he would have left long ago.

- 
3. Kyle didn't like the man moreover he had lost all respect for him.

- 
4. Tom needed new tires for his bike, therefore, he went to the store to buy some.

- 
5. I intend to study, consequently, you must leave me alone.
- 

**Answers**

1. Margaret wanted to travel **abroad**; **however**, **she** could not afford the trip.
2. He wanted to stay another **day**; **otherwise**, **he** would have left long ago.
3. Kyle didn't like the **man**; **moreover**, **he** had lost all respect for him.
4. Tom needed new tires for his **bike**; **therefore**, **he** went to the store to buy some.
5. I intend to **study**; **consequently**, **you** must leave me alone.

One thing you must remember about using a semicolon is that *you must have a complete sentence on both sides of the semicolon*. If you don't, you will have a complete sentence on one side, and a fragment on the other side. This is the same as having a fragment. You are very likely to see a question on the test based on this rule. It will probably be presented like the example below.

**Incorrect:** David has studied for three days for his science test; the purpose being to pass the test with the highest grade in the class.

- Choices:**
- a. test; the purpose being to (fragment after the semicolon)
  - b. test and the purpose is to (no comma before the conjunction)
  - c. test, the purpose is to (run-on — two complete sentences)
  - d. test, being to (fragment after the comma)
- Correct:** e. **test to** (revised with infinitive phrase)

Let's try some more sentence like this. Choose the answer of the revision that best expresses the meaning of the original sentence. **Choice A is always the same as the original statement.**

1. The exterminators came to our house; pouring poison beneath our porch.
  - a. house; pouring poison
  - b. house and pouring poison
  - c. house, the purpose being to pour poison
  - d. house to pour poison
  - e. house; to pour
2. Tonight I am going to a concert with my parents; preferring to play chess with you.
  - a. parents; preferring to play
  - b. parents and I prefer to play
  - c. parents, although I prefer playing
  - d. parents to play
  - e. parents being that I prefer to
3. Those seniors will be attending college; being that they received scholarships.
  - a. college; being that they
  - b. college and they
  - c. college, the reason is that they
  - d. college since they
  - e. college, they
4. When she saw the accident, she looked for help; telephoning the police.
  - a. help; telephoning
  - b. help and then she telephoned
  - c. help being that she needed to telephone
  - d. help, and to telephone
  - e. help and then telephoned

**Answers**

1. d                      2. c                      3. d                      4. e

# **Coordination & Subordination**



## Coordination

Coordination has to do with joining ideas of equal rank in sentences. Generally we use the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *but*, *or*, *for*, *nor*, and *yet* to join these ideas. Below are two sentences whose ideas are equal in emphasis. Notice how we can join the two sentences with different conjunctions and get a variety of meanings.

I spoke to Jim. He spoke to me.

I spoke to Jim, **and** he spoke to me.

I spoke to Jim, **but** he did not speak to me.

I spoke to Jim, **or** he spoke to me.

I spoke to Jim; **therefore**, he spoke to me.

*and* indicates addition

*but* indicates contrast

*or* indicates choice

*therefore* indicates result

The problem we face with coordination is making sure that the relationship between the two ideas is accurately expressed. The solution rests on which conjunction we use.

*Food is adequate in the summer, **and** in the winter a good supply is not available.*

The conjunction *and* is **not** the right word to use for this sentence. We need a word that expresses **contrast**. Look at the two suggestions below.

Food is adequate now, **but** in the winter a good supply will not be available.

Food is adequate now; **however**, in the winter a good supply will not be available.

Read the sentences below and provide a conjunction which will properly join the clauses making the relationship between the two parts absolutely clear.

1. This recording studio produces the best sound in recordings, \_\_\_\_\_ it is a financial failure and is losing money.
2. My teacher was evaluating me on neatness; \_\_\_\_\_, I put forth extra effort to avoid being messy.
3. James played flute, \_\_\_\_\_ Tommy played bass in the orchestra.
4. The heater had not been turned off; \_\_\_\_\_, the house was cold the next morning.

### Suggested Answers

1. but

2. therefore

3. and

4. however

## Subordination

If two **unequal ideas** are joined as though they should have equal emphasis, we have a problem with coordination. Here is an example.

John Blair was a native of Texas, and he was the guest speaker for the meeting.

Since these two ideas are not really related and are certainly not of equal importance, they should not be joined with a coordinate conjunction that suggests that they **are** equal.

One way to correct this problem is through subordination. That is, we take the sentence of lesser importance and make it into a subordinate clause. Subordinate clauses begin with a subordinate conjunction. A few of them are *after, as, before, since, until, when., while, because, that, in order that, so that, although, if, unless, and even though*. Relative pronouns *who, whose, whom, which, and that* may also begin subordinate clauses.

John Blair, **who was a native of Texas**, was the guest speaker for the meeting.

The problem could also be corrected by making the clause of lesser importance into an appositive.

John Blair, **a native of Texas**, was the guest speaker for the meeting.

Correct the sentences below which have faulty coordination by using subordinate clauses, appositives, or modifying phrases.

1. Sue cannot pay her credit card bill, and she still charges merchandise to her account.

- 
2. Mary Van was a doctor as well as a mathematician, and she discovered a new virus.

- 
3. Many teachers love to travel to Europe, and they do it during the summer months.

- 
4. Our visitor was a world renowned poet, and he had a strong background in law.
- 

### Suggested Answers

1. Although Sue cannot pay her credit card bill, she still charges merchandise to her account.
2. Mary Van, a doctor as well as a mathematician, discovered a new virus.
3. Many teachers love to travel to Europe during the summer months.
4. Our visitor, who was a world renowned poet, had a strong background in law.

Now let's practice using coordination and subordination in the test format you will see on the PSAT.

Choose the answer that best expresses the meaning of the original sentence. **Answer (A) is always the same as the original sentence.**

1. Mr. Johnson is the president of our company, and he came to this country only four years ago.
  - a. Mr. Johnson is the president of our company, and he came to this country only four years ago.
  - b. Mr. Johnson coming to this country only four years ago and being the president of our company.
  - c. Mr. Johnson, who came to this country only four years ago, is the president of our company.
  - d. Being that he is the president of our company, Mr. Johnson came to this country only four years ago.
  - e. Since he came to this country only four years ago, Mr. Johnson is the president of our company.
  
2. Don Lane was nominated by our secretary, and he is the only man who is really qualified for this position.
  - a. Don Lane was nominated by our secretary, and he is the only man who is really qualified for this position.
  - b. Since Don Lane was nominated by our secretary, he is the only man who is really qualified for this position.
  - c. The only man who is really qualified for this position and who was nominated by our secretary is Don Lane.
  - d. Don Lane, being that he is the only man really qualified for this position, was nominated by our secretary.
  - e. Don Lane, nominated by our secretary, is the only man who is really qualified for this position.
  
3. This new vitamin tablet is an energy builder, and it can be bought at any grocery store.
  - a. This new vitamin tablet is an energy builder, and it can be bought at any grocery store.
  - b. This new vitamin, which can be bought at any grocery store, is an energy builder.
  - c. Since this new vitamin tablet is an energy builder, it can be bought at any grocery store.
  - d. Being able to be bought at any grocery store is this new vitamin, an energy builder.
  - e. An energy builder, able to be bought at any grocery store, is this new vitamin.

4. Our new principal has such strong experience handling discipline problems, and we should see a dramatic improvement in the behavior of our students.
- a. Our new principal has such strong experience handling discipline problems, and we should see a dramatic improvement in the behavior of our students.
  - b. We should see a dramatic improvement in the behavior of our students, but our new principal has such strong experience handling discipline problems.
  - c. Since we should see a dramatic improvement in the behavior of our students, our new principal has such strong experience handling discipline problems
  - d. Because our new principal has such strong experience handling discipline problems, we should see a dramatic improvement in the behavior of our students.
  - e. Having such strong experience handling discipline problems, we should see a dramatic improvement in the behavior of our students because of our new principal.
5. The Callahans became extremely prosperous, yet they decided to build a mansion.
- a. The Callahans became extremely prosperous, yet they decided to build a mansion.
  - b. Deciding to build a mansion, the Callahans became extremely prosperous.
  - c. To become extremely prosperous, the Callahans decided to build a mansion.
  - d. After the Callahans became extremely prosperous, they decided to build a mansion.
  - e. After they decided to build a mansion, the Callahans becoming extremely prosperous.
6. The seamstress had only a pair of dull scissors, and she made a garment fit for a king.
- a. The seamstress had only a pair of dull scissors, and she made a garment fit for a king.
  - b. With only a pair of dull scissors, the seamstress made a garment fit for a king.
  - c. Making a garment fit for a king, was the seamstress who had only a pair of dull scissors.
  - d. Since she had only a pair of dull scissors, the seamstress made a garment fit for a king.
  - e. The seamstress, with only a pair of dull scissors, making a garment fit for a king.

**Answers**

1. c      2. e      3. b      4. d      5. d      6. b

# Punctuating with Colons





## Punctuating with Colons

You are accustomed to seeing colons used to introduce lists. However, we have in our language a use reserved for rather sophisticated style. Simply put, a colon is appropriate to use for separating two sentences when the second sentence is an explanation of the first. ETS will very likely test you on this rule. Let's look at an example.

Example      I was unhappy to hear that you had left town so early: I was hoping we would be able to spend more time together.

An easy way to recognize whether or not a colon is appropriate in this kind of construction is to ask the question *WHY* between the two sentences. If the second sentence answers that question, then it is an explanation of the first sentence.

I was unhappy to hear that you had left town so early.

*WHY?*

*(BECAUSE)* I was hoping we would be able to spend more time together.

Here are more examples to study.

1.      The young boy was excited about visiting his grandmother: she had promised to take him to the amusement park.
2.      The reasons for his success are obvious: he is intelligent, personable, and responsible.
3.      Jonathan felt compelled to rewrite the speech: it lacked the intensity and humor necessary to hold an audience's attention.

Another appropriate time to use a colon is before a **long, formal statement or quotation**. In this situation you should note that quotation marks are NOT required.

Example:      The famous words of Patrick Henry are relevant even today: Is life so dear, or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but, as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

