

Punctuation and Grammar Review

Punctuation

Many of the rules for punctuation are changing—flexibility in the use of the comma, for example. Some basic principles remain, however, and questions on the exam may involve recognizing incorrect or poor use of various punctuation marks.

Periods

Use periods to end complete sentences that are statements, commands, and requests, or mild exclamations.

He spends winters in Florida and summers in Maine.

Please don't feed the bears.

How strange to see a clown driving a van.

Don't use periods at the end of groups of words that are **not** complete sentences (phrases or dependent clauses). These errors are called *sentence fragments*.

When the boy threw open the door and ran into the yard. (**incorrect:** sentence fragment)

Running up and down the stairs ten times during the day. (**incorrect:** sentence fragment)

Always keep periods within quotation marks whether or not they are part of the quotation.

Katie said, "Let's go to the movies."

He referred to his friend as "the cheapskate."

Question Marks

Question marks end sentences that are questions. They follow the question immediately, even when the question interrupts or comes after a statement.

Who knows where Joe is?

You should have discussed this with me first, but can't we work it out between us?

An exception to this rule occurs when the question is followed by a phrase or clause that modifies it. Then put the question mark at the end of the statement: *How can we be mad at him, considering all the trouble he went through to get here?*

After a question mark, don't use a period or a comma, even if the sentence would normally call for one: *Later I understood what Jason meant when he said, "Why me?"*

In quotations, if the material being quoted is a question, put the mark within the quotation marks. If not, put the question mark outside the quotation marks.

The councilman looked around and asked, "Can we count on your help?"

Who was it that said, "All that glitters is not gold"?

For indirect questions (that is, questions that are being reported rather than directly asked), use a period rather than a question mark.

Ethan asked what made the sky so bright.

The manager of the store asked us what we would accept as a settlement.

Exclamation Points

Exclamation points follow words, phrases, or clauses that express a burst of emotion.

Oh, no! Bravo! Hey!

What a terrible mess!

Fantastic job, Carol!

Exclamation points may also be used to lend force to a command: *Leave that thermostat alone!*

Omit commas and periods after exclamation points: *"You adorable thing!" he gushed.*

The biggest problem with exclamation points is that they tend to be overused, which dulls their effect and also indicates an immature writing style.

*The film's last scene was touching—**not**—The film's last scene was touching!*

Commas

Commas present a special problem because the rules for them are changing and are often flexible. Don't overuse commas. The best guideline is to consider the meaning of the sentence and decide whether a pause is necessary or desirable.

Generally, when you join *independent clauses* with a *coordinating conjunction*, use a comma before the coordinating conjunction. (The coordinating conjunctions are *and*, *but*, *for*, *nor*, *or*, *so*, and *yet*. An independent clause is one that can stand alone as a sentence.)

Miguel won the prize, but he gave it to his friend.

We wanted to go to the party, and Sam wanted to go with us.

If the independent clauses being joined are very short, you may omit the comma.

He ate fish and he drank wine.

We laughed and we cried.

He's a pest but we like him.

Remember that if you use a comma between independent clauses **without** the conjunction, you create a *run-on sentence* (also known as a *comma splice*). A run-on sentence is an error.

Wolves are basically social animals, they travel in packs. (incorrect: run-on sentence)

Wolves are basically social animals, and they travel in packs. (correct)

Use a comma after an introductory *adverbial clause*. Adverbial clauses begin with words like *because*, *unless*, *if*, *when*, and *although*.

Because the hurricane had diminished in force, the town was spared.

If you decide to fly next week, you will be able to buy a cheaper ticket.

If clauses like these don't **introduce** the sentence, don't use a comma.

The town was spared because the hurricane had diminished in force.

You will be able to buy a cheaper ticket if you decide to fly next week.

Use commas with *participial phrases*. A participial phrase begins with an *-ing* or *-ed* verb.

Smiling and shaking hands, the senator made her way to the podium.

Trapped by the storm, the passengers decided to play cards.

Use a comma after any introductory phrase if there is a possibility of misunderstanding a sentence without one, or if the phrase is long and complex.

Before eating, Jack always runs on the beach.

At the beginning of the year before the first game of the season and after practice, you can feel the excitement in the air.

Use commas to set off interrupting elements in a sentence.

As you get towards the end of the novel, of course, you will guess who the masked man is.

Don't expect, for example, that the product will remove all stains.

Use commas with *nonrestrictive elements*. A nonrestrictive element is one that doesn't restrict or limit the subject but instead adds information. It isn't essential to the reader's understanding.

My brother, who is thirteen, watches television every night.

The television show, which is in its fifth season, is my father's favorite.

Do **not** use commas with *restrictive elements*. A restrictive element is one that limits the subject and is therefore essential to the reader's understanding.

People, who are over 65, are entitled to Medicare. (incorrect)

People who are over 65 are entitled to Medicare. (correct)

The man, who robbed the bank, was spotted on Main Street. (incorrect)

The man who robbed the bank was spotted on Main Street. (correct)

Use commas between items in a series: *He ordered five strips of bacon, three eggs scrambled, two pieces of wheat toast, and a large glass of orange juice.* The comma before *and* is optional, but it is usually safer to include it if there is any possibility of confusion.

Some other uses of the comma are as follows:

- in dialogue with *he said, she muttered, etc.*: *She said, "Let's go to the early show." ; "Let's go to the early show," she said.*
- between items in dates and addresses (except between state and zip code): *December 14, 2004; 1328 Say Road, Santa Paula, CA 90266*
- between cities and counties, cities and states, states and countries: *Boise, Idaho; Madrid, Spain*
- after salutations and closings in letters: *Dear Maria,*
- to enclose a title or degree: *Jeff Nelson, M.D., is a renowned doctor of gerontology.*

Semicolons

Semicolons are like periods in that they divide independent clauses when the clauses aren't joined by *and, but, or, nor, for, and yet*.

You can prevent run-on sentences by using a semicolon instead of a comma.

I expect you to finish the work by three, however, if it takes longer, call me. (incorrect)

I expect you to finish the work by three; however, if it takes longer, call me. (correct)

We discussed the upcoming elections, therefore, the discussion was heated. (incorrect)

We discussed the upcoming elections; therefore, the discussion was heated. (correct)

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They never expected to be invited, they plan to be out of town. (incorrect)

They never expected to be invited; they plan to be out of town. (correct)

When deciding whether to use a semicolon or a period to divide independent clauses, you should choose a semicolon only when the clauses are closely related.

Don't forget to bring a jacket; the weather is cold at this time of year. (correct)

Don't forget to bring a jacket; Mary is also coming with us. (poor use of semicolon)

Semicolons, instead of commas, can be used in a series, especially when the series items themselves contain commas.

Mr. Parker arrived with a basket of apples, all of them ripe and ready to eat; a bag of freshly picked corn; three loaves of French bread; and two pies, both baked by his wife.

Don't create sentence fragments by using semicolons. Remember: they are more like periods than commas.

The judge decided to postpone the trial; because the defendant was ill. (incorrect)

The judge decided to postpone the trial because the defendant was ill. (correct)

My friend insisted on talking during the movie; making everyone mad. (incorrect)

My friend insisted on talking during the movie, making everyone mad. (correct)

Semicolons go outside quotation marks:

He asked me to correct my "atrocious manners"; I told him I'd behave any way I chose.

Colons

Use a colon after the words *following* or *as follows* when these words introduce a list.

The titles chosen are as follows: Moby Dick, The Great Gatsby, and The Old Man and the Sea.

Some items are not allowed in carry-on baggage, including the following: knives, scissors, screwdrivers, fireworks.

You will probably be expected to answer the following questions: Where were you born? Where do you currently live? Have you left the country in the last six months?

Don't use a colon when the listed items immediately follow the verb:

Our service club sent food, clothing, and gifts for the children.

You may use a colon to introduce a formal statement or quotation. An independent clause should precede the colon. After the colon, use a capital letter.

Remember this: Honesty is always the best policy.

This is what he said to us: "You may not turn in your assignments late."

Other uses of the colon are

- to separate hours and minutes when writing the time: *4:14 p.m.*
- to separate volume and number or volume and page number of a magazine: *Entertainment Weekly VI:4*
- to separate chapter and verse numbers for biblical passages: *Matthew 4:16*
- to introduce a subtitle: *John Wayne: An Actor for the Ages*
- to end the salutation of a business letter: *Dear Dr. Aginaldo:*

Colons go outside quotation marks: *The article was called "The Last Word"; it presented his latest opinion.*

Dashes

A dash or a pair of dashes can be used to interrupt a sentence. Other punctuation marks, such as commas or parentheses, serve the same purpose. Dashes call more attention to the interruption. Commas, on the other hand, are more neutral. Parentheses usually enclose information that is clearly incidental. When using dashes as an interruption, be sure to omit the commas.

She was very tall—the tallest woman I had ever seen. (correct)

She was very tall, the tallest woman I had ever seen. (correct)

The manager of the department—the same man who had hired me—was promoted to vice president. (correct)

The manager of the department (the same man who had hired me) was promoted to vice president. (correct)

Like a colon, a dash can be used to introduce an explanation or restatement in place of expressions such as *that is*, *in other words*, or *namely*. Begin the clause after the dash with a lowercase letter:

The reporter pursued the actress—he was determined to get a statement.

When using dashes instead of commas, be sure to omit the commas.

I saw her—the woman who had given us the puppy—when I went to the grocery store. (correct)

I saw her, —the woman who had given us the puppy—, when I went to the grocery store. (incorrect)

Don't use dashes too often. They are more noticeable than commas and should be reserved for specific effects.

Parentheses

Parentheses may be used to set off incidental information, such as a passing comment, a minor example or addition, or a brief explanation. Whether to use them is a judgment call, and like dashes they shouldn't be overused.

Some of the local store owners (Mr. Kwan and Mrs. Lawson, for example) insisted that the street be widened. (correct)

Some of the local store owners—Mr. Kwan and Mrs. Lawson, for example—insisted that the street be widened. (correct)

Some of the local store owners, Mr. Kwan and Mrs. Lawson, for example, insisted that the street be widened. (correct)

Use parentheses to enclose a date or citation.

Thomas Logan (1932–2004) was mayor during our town's longest period of growth.

According to his critics, Roger Bellamp was a mediocre travel writer (Travis, 261–62).

Don't put any punctuation mark before parentheses, and put a comma after the closing parenthesis only if the sentence would call for the comma anyway.

Use a pointed stick (a pencil with the lead point broken off works well) or a similar tool. (no comma should be used)

Banging the wall and screaming (unrestrained by his father, I might add), Sam was acting like a spoiled child. (comma follows closing parenthesis because the sentence would normally take a comma)

If parentheses enclose a sentence-within-a-sentence, don't use a period within the parentheses. Do, however, use a question mark or an exclamation point if it is called for.

Dr. Benton's anger (it was fierce) frightened the medical students.

He finally asked (why couldn't he have done so earlier?) whether she wanted to go.

The wedding reception (what a fiasco!) ended abruptly.

If the parentheses enclose a complete sentence that stands alone, keep the period within them: (*Her father was the only person who spoke up about the problem.*)

Quotation Marks

Use quotation marks at the beginning and end of direct quotations.

"You are the person we selected," the chairperson said.

When quoting from another source, use quotation marks.

According to Brian Greene in his book The Elegant Universe, "Einstein came up with his explanation by puzzling over something known as the photoelectric effect."

Use single quotation marks within double ones to indicate a quotation within a quotation.

"My father says 'Jim, you can achieve whatever you want,'" Jimmy told the teacher.

For other purposes, use quotation marks sparingly. However, following are some possible uses:

- to distance yourself from an offensive term: *The body builder blamed the "big oafs" who judged the contest.*
- to refer to a word as a word: *Does anyone know what "inane" means?*
- to indicate a nickname as part of a formal name: *Hubert "Buddy" Wilson was elected chairman.*
- to set off titles of poems, essays, and articles that are part of a longer work. *The poem "Trees" will be included on the exam.*

An *ellipsis* is a mark consisting of spaced periods. It indicates an omission from a quotation.

A three-dot ellipsis is used when you are omitting something from a sentence that continues after the omission:

"The wise collector should probably . . . acquire both paintings."

The phrase *mortgage the house and* has been omitted from this quotation.

A four-dot ellipsis is used when you are omitting the last part of a quoted sentence but what remains is still a complete thought:

The author advises, "In analyzing nonverbal signals, look at the total behavior rather than just one symbol. . . ."

The phrase *before making a decision*, which ended the sentence, has been omitted from the quotation.

Following is a brief review of the general rules regarding punctuation marks with quotation marks:

- Periods and commas belong inside quotation marks whether or not they are part of the quotation.
- Question marks, exclamation points, and dashes belong inside quotation marks if they are part of the quotation, and outside if they are not.
- Colons and semicolons belong outside quotation marks.

Grammar: Parts of Speech

Grammar is a big subject. This review focuses on the issues that might be covered by questions on the exam. Don't be intimidated by the terminology that is used to explain grammar. On the exam, you won't be expected to name the parts of speech, types of phrases and clauses, and so on. You will be expected to use standard English correctly and to recognize errors.

Nouns and Verbs

Nouns and verbs are the basic building blocks of sentences.

Nouns

Nouns name persons, places, and things (concrete things like *dog* and abstract things like *courage*). Singular nouns stand for one person, place, or thing: *dog, child, man, goose*. Plural nouns stand for more than one: *dogs, tables, projects, children, men, geese*. Although most nouns form the plural with an *-s*, there are many exceptions (for example, *children, men, and geese*).

One of the most important functions of a noun is to act as the subject of a sentence. Nouns also act as objects of verbs and prepositions.

The *chair* stood next to the *door*. (*Chair* and *door* are nouns. *Chair* acts as the subject and *door* acts as the object of the preposition *to*.)

Success requires hard *work*. (*Success* and *work* are nouns in this sentence. *Success* acts as the subject and *work* is the object of the verb *requires*.)

Notice that the way a word is used determines whether or not it is a noun. For example, in the sentence *Success requires hard work*, *work* is a noun. But *work* can also be a verb: *I work very hard*.

Proper Nouns and Common Nouns

If a noun names a specific person or place, or a particular event, it is called a **proper noun** and is capitalized: *Harry Truman, Disneyland, the Great Depression*. If a noun isn't specific in this way, it is called a *common noun*.

Uncle Robert drove us to *South Carolina* last summer. (*Uncle Robert* and *South Carolina* are both capitalized because they name a specific person and a specific place.)

My *uncle* drove us *south* last summer. (Here, because *uncle* and *south* do not specifically name a person or place, they are not capitalized.)

Collective Nouns

A collective noun is a noun that stands for a group of people, places, or things.

The *group* decided to go to the movies.

We joined the health *club* because it provided good exercise equipment.

The *herd* of cattle was spotted on the hill.

I hear that the *jury* is asking for clarification.

Usually, a collective noun is treated as a singular noun: "The *group remembers* when *it* was much smaller."

Gerunds

A noun that is formed from the *-ing* form of a verb is called a *gerund*. Like other nouns, a gerund can be the subject or object in a sentence.

Swimming strengthens my arms and legs.

I love *swimming*.

Visiting my friends is something I look forward to. (This is a gerund phrase that acts as a noun and the subject of the sentence.)

Possessive Case of Nouns

When nouns show ownership, they are in the *possessive case*: *Allan's car*, *the committee's recommendation*, *the animals' cages*. What causes problems with possessive nouns is where to put the apostrophe. The easiest rules to follow are:

- For singular nouns add -'s to form the possessive even if the noun ends in an -s or -z sound: *dog's bone*, *Jess's car*. Make an exception when an added -s would lead to three closely bunched s or z sounds: *Ulysses'*, *Jesus'*. In these cases, add just an apostrophe.
- For plural nouns add an apostrophe alone: several *months' bills*, the *Rolling Stones' travel plans*, the *dogs' leashes*. If the plural doesn't end in -s, add -'s, as you would with a singular noun: the *children's toys*, *women's hats*.
- When a possessive noun sounds awkward, use an *of* construction: the *top of the page* instead of *the page's top*.
- To indicate joint ownership, give the possessive form only to the final noun: *John and Terry's garage*.

Verbs

Verbs convey the actions performed by persons, places, and things: "The dog *barks*." Some verbs don't actually express action but complete statements about the subject by describing or identifying it. This type of verb is called a *linking verb*. Some common linking verbs are *appear*, *be*, *become*, *feel*, *grow*, *look*, *remain*, *seem*, *smell*, *sound*, and *taste*.

Action verbs:

Ron *voted* for the first time.
The choir *sings* every Sunday.
Marty *had dreamed* of this day.
Can you believe it?

Linking verbs:

Joe *appeared* angry.
The boys *are* late.
He *seems* interesting.
The dog *smells* bad.
The orange *tastes* sour.

Verb Tenses

Tense refers to time. When is the action of the verb taking place? Although there are more, six tenses are commonly used in English.

Present: the action is going on now (*I walk down the street*)

Past: the action is over (*I walked down the street*)

Future: the action has yet to take place (*I will walk down the street*)

Present Perfect: action in past time in relation to present time (*I have walked down the street for years—and I am still walking down the street*)

Past Perfect: action in past time in relation to another past time (*I had walked down the street many times before I noticed the garden*)

Future Perfect: action that will be completed in the future before another future action (*By next year, I will have walked down the street thousands of times*)

The explanation of the tenses can be confusing, but what you need to recognize is that time sequences should be logical. Sometimes the choice of a tense clearly affects meaning:

Esther *worked* at the department store for a year. (The past tense indicates a completed action. Esther no longer works at the store.)

Esther *has worked* at the department store for a year. (Use of the present perfect tense indicates that a past action is continuing in the present. Esther still works at the store.)

Esther *had worked* at the department store for a year. (Use of the past perfect tense indicates that something else happened after Esther's year. For example, Esther had worked at the store for a year when she took over the sporting goods section.)

Esther *will have worked* at the department store for a year by next summer. (Use of the future tense indicates that by next summer—a future time—Esther will have worked at the store for a year. As of today, she hasn't worked there for a year.)

Be consistent in your use of the tenses. Don't switch from past to present, for example, and do use the perfect tenses when appropriate.

I *walk* into the classroom, *take* my seat, and *picked* up my notebook (**incorrect**)

I *walk* into the classroom, *take* my seat, and *pick* up my notebook (**correct**: verbs are consistent because they are all in the present tense)

I *walked* into the classroom, *took* my seat, and *picked* up my notebook. (**correct**: verbs are consistent because they are all in the past tense)

Everything you *told* me I *had heard* before. (**correct**: use of past perfect with past tense to indicate an action taking place in the past before another action in the past)

The car wash *stood* where the library *was*. (**incorrect**)

The car wash *stood* where the library *had been* (**correct**: without using the past perfect tense, it sounds as if the car and the library were in the same spot at the same time)

Contrary-to-Fact or Hypothetical Statements

Usually, the verb is in the *indicative mood*, with the tenses formed as shown above. However, some statements are hypothetical or contrary-to-fact. For these, the verb should be in the *subjunctive mood*. What this means is that the tenses are formed differently. Notice the examples below.

If I were a millionaire, *I would buy* a mansion. (This statement is contrary-to-fact, that is, I am not a millionaire. Therefore the subjunctive mood of the verb is called for, and the present subjunctive of *to be* is *were*, not *was*. **The present subjunctive is the same as the past indicative.**)

If he had worked, he *could have earned* high wages. (This statement is also hypothetical, or contrary-to-fact. He didn't work. **The past subjunctive is the same as the past perfect indicative.**)

You can recognize a hypothetical statement because the first clause usually begins with *If*:

If I were king; If you had called; If the plan had been approved.

Not all *If* clauses are subjunctive, however. The key is whether the statement is contrary-to-fact:

If I *want* the job, I *must submit* my resume. (**indicative**: not contrary-to-fact. I want the job.)

If I *wanted* the job, I *would submit* my resume. (**subjunctive**: contrary-to-fact. I don't want the job.)

For the second (or consequence) clause of the statement, the *conditional* is used. It is formed with *could* or *would*.

If I *had practiced* (past tense of the subjunctive mood), I *could have won* the race (past tense of the conditional)

A common error is to use the conditional (*would have*, *could have*) in both clauses of a contrary-to-fact statement.

If I *would have wanted to*, I *would have made* cookies. (**incorrect**: the subjunctive, not the conditional, should be used in the *If* clause.)

If I *had wanted to*, I *would have made* cookies. (**correct**: the subjunctive is used in the *If* clause, and the conditional is used in the consequences clause.)

Irregular Verbs

Even when you understand the correct uses of tenses, you can run into trouble with verbs. The major culprit is the large group of irregular verbs, which form the past tense and past participle in a variety of ways, not by adding *-d* or *-ed* as regular verbs do. Following is a list of some frequently used irregular verbs. When you aren't sure about the correct past and past participle forms of a verb that isn't on the list, check the dictionary.

Common Irregular Verbs		
<i>Present Tense</i>	<i>Past Tense</i>	<i>Past Participle</i>
be	was, were	(have) been
beat	beat	(have) beaten, beat
begin	began	(have) begun
blow	blew	(have) blown
break	broke	(have) broken
bring	brought	(have) brought
catch	caught	(have) caught
choose	chose	(have) chosen
come	came	(have) come
dig	dug	(have) dug
dive	dived, dove	(have) dived
do	did	(have) done
draw	drew	(have) drawn
dream	dreamed, dreamt	(have) dreamed, dreamt
drink	drank	(have) drunk
drive	drove	(have) driven
eat	ate	(have) eaten
fly	flew	(have) flown
forget	forgot	(have) forgotten
freeze	froze	(have) frozen
get	got	(have) gotten
go	went	(have) gone
grow	grew	(have) grown
hang (an object)	hung	(have) hung
hang (a person)	hanged	(have) hanged
lay	laid	(have) laid
lead	led	(have) led
lend	lent	(have) lent

<i>Present Tense</i>	<i>Past Tense</i>	<i>Past Participle</i>
lie (recline)	lay	(have) lain
light	lighted, lit	(have) lighted, lit
ride	rode	(have) ridden
ring	rang	(have) rung
run	ran	(have) run
see	saw	(have) seen
set	set	(have) set
shake	shook	(have) shaken
shine (emit light)	shone	(have) shone
shine (make shiny)	shined	(have) shined
sing	sang	(have) sung
sink	sank, sunk	(have) sunk
slay	slew	(have) slain
speed	sped	(have) sped
spring	sprang, sprung	(have) sprung
steal	stole	(have) stolen
swear	swore	(have) sworn
swim	swam	(have) swum
take	took	(have) taken
tear	tore	(have) torn
wake	waked, woke	(have) waked, woke, woken
wear	wore	(have) worn

Active and Passive Voices of the Verb

The term *voice* refers to the form of a verb indicating whether the subject performs an action (*active voice*) or receives the action (*passive voice*).

Mary *smashed* the ball over the net. (active voice)

The ball *was smashed* over the net by Mary (passive voice)

An important clue to good writing is to use the active voice whenever you can; it conveys more energy than the passive voice and also results in more concise writing.

The crafts fair *was put on* by the eighth graders. (passive voice)

The eighth graders *put on* the crafts fair. (**better:** active voice)

The award *had been presented* to the team by the city council. (passive voice)

The city council *had presented* the award to the team. (**better:** active voice)

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The flat-screen television set *had been delivered* by the store that day, and the football game *was watched* by all the neighbors. (passive voice)

The store *had delivered* the flat-screen television that day, and all the neighbors *watched* the football game. (better: active voice)

Use the passive voice, however, when you don't know the actor or when you want to emphasize the person or thing acted upon rather than the actor. Examples of possible uses of the passive voice are as follows:

When we returned, the car had been towed.

Gold was discovered there early in the last century.

A change in structure was found in the experimental group.

Agreement of Nouns and Verbs

In sentences, verbs and nouns must agree, which means that a singular noun requires a singular verb, and a plural noun requires a plural verb.

The *dog jumps* up and down. (singular noun, singular verb)

The *dogs jump* up and down. (plural noun, plural verb)

Agreement can be tricky. Read sentences carefully to see whether the subject of the verb is singular or plural. Note the examples below.

Statistics is the class I like best. (singular)

Statistics are sometimes misleading. (plural)

The *number of people coming is* surprising. (singular)

A number of people are coming. (plural)

Usually, collective nouns are treated as singular:

Congress is in session.

Your furniture fits into the room nicely.

The team is going on the bus.

But for some collective nouns, when you want to emphasize the individual parts of a group, you may use the plural:

The team are arguing among themselves about the game.

Pronouns

Pronouns are words that stand for nouns.

- **Personal pronouns.** The personal pronouns [*I, you, he, she, it, we, you* (plural), *they*] stand for one or more persons or things. They differ in form depending on their case, that is, how they are used in a phrase, clause, or sentence:

We enjoy going to the games.

The games interest us.

- **Reflexive pronouns.** These words combine some of the personal pronouns with *-self* or *-selves* to reflect nouns or pronouns, as in *He hurt himself*, or to add emphasis, as in *I myself don't believe it*. Don't use reflexive pronouns as subjects or objects.

Tom and *myself* don't like it. (incorrect)

Tom and *I* don't like it. (correct)

Bob doesn't like Harold or *myself*. (incorrect)

Bob doesn't like Harold or *me*. (correct)

- **Demonstrative pronouns.** These pronouns (*this, that, these, those*) single out what you are talking about:
These are the ones we want, but this is the most economical choice.
- **Relative pronouns.** These pronouns (*who, whom, which, that*) introduce clauses that describe nouns or pronouns:
The professor who wrote the book is teaching the class.
The storm that caused the blackout has moved east.
- **Interrogative pronouns.** These pronouns (*who, whom, whose, which, what*) introduce questions:
Which is the best one to choose?
To whom does this belong?
- **Indefinite pronouns.** These pronouns don't specify the persons or things they refer to. There are many words used as indefinite pronouns. Among the most frequent are *all, any, anybody, anyone, both, each, either, everybody, everyone, few, many, neither, nobody, none, no one, one, several, some, somebody, someone*:
Nobody likes a cheater.
Many are called but few are chosen.
Either is all right with me.

Pronoun Case

When a pronoun is the subject of a verb, it is in the *subjective case*. When it is an object, it is in the *objective case*. When it possesses something, it is in the *possessive case*.

With nouns, the subjective and objective cases aren't a problem because nouns have the same form whether they are subjects or objects: The *frog* ate the *bee*. The *bee* stung the *frog*. Regardless of what's happening to the frog and the bee, the nouns *frog* and *bee* don't change form.

Some pronouns, however, change depending on whether they are subjects or objects.

<i>Subjective case</i>	<i>Objective case</i>
I	me
he, she	him, her
we	us
they	them
who, whoever	whom, whomever

In the sentence *Tension existed between Franklin and Winston*, there is no confusion about what case to use for Franklin or Winston. But what about this sentence? *Tension existed between Franklin and him*. Is *him* right? Or should it be *he*? Because the pronoun is the object of a preposition (*between*), *him* is correct here.

Use of the Subjective Case

Use the subjective case of the pronoun when it is the subject of a verb.

I drive to work.

He enjoys dancing.

We bought the lodge.

They are fighting over nothing.

The man *who won the game* was the guest of honor.

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When there are compound subjects (more than one actor), don't be confused. Pronouns should still be in the subjective case.

Janet and he (not Janet and him) enjoy dancing.

The Wilsons and they (not The Wilsons and them) are fighting over nothing.

Pronoun case errors are frequent. In sentences with compound subjects, drop the subject that is a noun and read the sentence with the pronoun alone. You would never say *Him enjoy dancing* or *Them are fighting over nothing*. You'll see immediately that the subjective forms *he* and *they* are correct.

You should also use the subjective case of pronouns after forms of the verb *to be*.

It is I who chose the location.

The real criminals *are we ourselves*.

The man who called the police *was he*.

Sometimes using the subjective pronoun after *to be* may sound unnatural or awkward, but it is still correct. In informal speech and writing, modern usage allows *It's me* or *It is me*, but it's best to stay with the established rule in other cases.

Use of the Objective Case

Use the objective case of pronouns when the pronoun is an object of a verb or an object of a preposition.

Gilbertson *nominated me* for secretary. (direct object of *nominated*)

The news *hit them* hard. (direct object of *hit*)

Jennifer *gave him* the house and car. (indirect object of *gave*)

Watch out for pronoun case when you have a compound object. Remember that when an object is more than one person, it is still an object.

The award will be given to *Lee, Sandy, and me (not I)*.

Without *Kate and me (not I)* the party wouldn't have been a success.

The teacher talked to *Nelson, Robert, and me (not I)*.

If you read the sentence with the pronoun alone, you will see the correct case. You wouldn't say *The award will be given to I*; *Without I the party wouldn't have been a success*; or *The teacher talked to I*.

Between You and Me Versus Between You and I

Some people incorrectly believe that subjective pronouns are more correct than objective ones—for example, that *I* is more “refined” than *me*. The phrases *between you and I* and *for you and I* are common mistakes probably due to overrefinement. The pronouns are objects of prepositions here, and therefore *for you and me* and *between you and me* are correct.

Just *between you and me (not I)*, John is the best choice for captain.

The tour guide promised that *for you and me (not I)* he'd include the garden tour.

There is tension *between them and us (not they and we)*.

He had a difficult time choosing *between him and me (not he and I)*.

Pronoun Case with Appositives

An *appositive* is a word or group of words that restates or identifies the noun or pronoun it is next to:

My sister Debbie

John, the gardener

Our friend Carlos

The presence of an appositive doesn't change the rule for pronoun case. Use the subjective case for subjects and the objective case for objects:

The decision to close the pool was a setback *for us* (not *we*) swimmers.

Possessive Case and Problems with *Its*, *Whose*, and *Their*

Personal pronouns and the pronoun *who* don't form the possessive case by adding 's, as nouns do. Instead, they change their forms to indicate possession: *My, mine; your, yours; his; hers; its; our, ours; their, theirs; whose*.

Some possessive pronouns are confused with other words.

- The possessive of *it* is *its*, not *it's*. *It's* is a contraction of *it is*.
The dog wagged *its* tail, not The dog wagged *it's* tail.
It's time to leave for school. (*It's* = *It is*)
- The possessive of *who* is *whose*, not *who's*. *Who's* is a contraction of *who is*.
We talked to the man *whose* car it was, not We talked to the man *who's* car it was.
Who's the one that took your photo? (*Who's* = *Who is*)
- The possessive of *they* is *their*, not *they're* or *there*. *They're* is a contraction of *they are*, and *there* refers to a place (*We don't go there*).
They lost *their* dog, not They lost *they're* dog or They lost *there* dog.

Pronoun Reference (Antecedents)

Remember that pronouns stand in for nouns, and an *antecedent* is the noun that a pronoun refers to: "Kelly lifted *Mickey* into the air and then set *him* down."

In this sentence, *Mickey* is the antecedent of *him*.

Sometimes the antecedent of a pronoun is unclear. In the following sentences locate the antecedents of the pronouns:

The counselor was speaking to Dave, and *he* looked unhappy. (Who looked unhappy—the counselor or Dave?)
After the girls left the hotel rooms, the maids cleaned *them*. (Did the maids clean the rooms or the girls?)

Avoid unclear pronoun references. Rewrite sentences so that the meaning is clear, even if you have to eliminate the use of the pronoun.

The counselor was speaking to Dave, who looked unhappy.
After the girls left, the maids cleaned the hotel rooms.

Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number (singular or plural) and gender (masculine or feminine).

Harold, after saying good-bye to *his* family, discovered *he'd* lost *his* wallet. (*Harold* is the antecedent of *his*, *he'd*, and *his*.)

Until *they* buy the house, the *Garcias* are staying in a hotel. (*Garcias* is the antecedent of *they*, even though it follows the pronoun.)

Indefinite pronouns cause many agreement problems. Some of these pronouns (*several, few, both, many*) are clearly plural and take plural pronouns and verbs: "*Several are* expected to give up *their* rooms"; "*Both tell their* parents the truth." But other indefinite pronouns, though they may "feel" plural, are singular and take singular verbs and pronouns.

Each is responsible for *her* own ticket, **not** *Each* is responsible for *their* own ticket.

Everyone wants to get *his* name in the paper, **not** *Everyone* wants to get *their* name in the paper. (Note: Because *everyone* can include both males and females, the plural is now sometimes acceptable: *Everyone* wants to get *their* name in the paper. However, it would be best, when in doubt, to stick to the singular. You can take into account both sexes and still use the singular as follows: *Everyone* wants to get *his or her* name in the paper.)

In addition to *each* and *everyone*, the following pronouns fall into this group: *either*, *neither*, *everybody*, *no one*, *nobody*, *anyone*, *anybody*, *someone*, *somebody*. Only when the use of a singular form would lead to a statement that doesn't make sense should you use a plural form: "*Everyone* left the lecture because *they* heard the fire alarm." Here, the singular *he* wouldn't make sense.

A few indefinite pronouns (*none*, *any*, *some*, *all*, *most*) fall into an "either/or" category, depending on meaning. Sometimes the distinction is subtle.

None of the men was hurt. (*not one* = singular)

None of the men were hurt. (*no men* = plural)

Some is better than none. (*some* = a quantity = singular)

Some are delicious. (*some* = a number of things = plural)

All is well. (*all* = the sum of all things = singular)

All are well. (*all* = a number of people = plural)

Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs describe or limit other words. An *adjective* modifies a noun or pronoun, and an *adverb* modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.

He has a *sad* smile. (*sad* = adjective modifying *smile*)

He smiles *sadly*. (*sadly* = adverb modifying *smiles*)

It was an *immediate* success. (*immediate* = adjective modifying *success*)

The success *came immediately*. (*immediately* = adverb modifying *came*)

Adverbs often end in *-ly* (*quickly*, *happily*, *slowly*, *sweetly*) but not always (*fast*, *late*, *hard*, *here*, *there*). Some adjectives also end in *-ly* (*a lively child*, *a friendly dog*, *a hilly area*). The key to whether a word is an adjective or an adverb is the way the word is used in a sentence. If it describes a noun or pronoun, it is an adjective: *This is hard work*. If it answers a question about a verb (such as how, how much, when, where, and why), it is an adverb: *He works hard*.

It's natural to associate adverbs rather than adjectives with all verbs. But linking verbs, such as forms of *to be*, *become*, *smell*, *taste*, *seem*, and *look*, use adjectives, which are called *predicate adjectives*. With a linking verb, the modifier is actually telling you about the noun or pronoun, not the verb.

The berries *taste sweet*, **not** *sweetly*.

They were *happy*, **not** *happily*.

Notice the use of adjectives or adverbs in the following sentences, depending on whether a verb is functioning as a linking verb or an action verb.

Flowers *grow beautifully* in that climate. (adverb describing how the flowers grow)

Bronze *grows beautiful* as it ages. (adjective describing bronze)

The dog *smells bad*. (adjective describing the dog's odor)

The dog *smells badly*. (adverb indicating that something is wrong with the dog's sense of smell)

Good Versus Well

Good is always an adjective (*good bread, good vibrations, dinner was good*). Don't use *good* as an adverb.

She *sings well*, **not** She *sings good*.

He *tells* a story *well*, **not** He *tells* a story *good*.

While *good* is always an adjective, *well* can be either an adjective or an adverb, depending on how it is used. *Well* as an adjective refers to being in good health.

After the antibiotic took effect, he *felt well*. (adjective following a linking verb)

To see the distinction between *well* and *good* as adjectives, look at the following sentences:

Jerome *looked good* at the party tonight. (Jerome looked attractive.)

Jerome *looked well* at the party tonight. (Jerome looked to be in good health.)

Bad Versus Badly

Bad is an adjective and *badly* is an adverb. They are often used incorrectly for each other.

I *feel bad* about losing the election, **not** I *feel badly* about losing the election. (Here *feel* is a linking verb and should be followed by an adjective, **not** an adverb.)

The soccer team *played badly* in the game, **not** The soccer team *played bad* in the game. (*Badly* is an adverb describing how the team played; an adjective would be incorrect.)

Most Versus Almost

Most is an adjective meaning *the greatest in number*: *Most crimes* go unreported. *Almost* is always an adverb meaning *nearly*. It modifies the adjectives *every* and *all*. Don't use *most* for *almost*.

Almost everyone agreed, **not** *Most everyone* agreed.

Almost all the people came, **not** *Most all* the people came.

Forming the Comparative and Superlative Degrees of Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs change to show degree.

Positive Degree	Comparative Degree	Superlative Degree
sweet (adj.)	sweeter	sweetest
sweetly (adv.)	more sweetly	most sweetly

Use the comparative degree when you are comparing two things, the superlative degree when you are comparing more than two.

The *strawberries* are *sweeter* than the *apples*, but the *oranges* are *sweetest* of all.

Most one-syllable and some two-syllable adjectives form the comparative and superlative by adding *-er* or *-est*. Sometimes the adjective's final consonant is doubled and sometimes a *-y* is changed to *-i*.

tall, taller, tallest

smart, smarter, smartest

dry, drier, driest

happy, happier, happiest

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There are a few exceptions, such as *good, better, best* and *bad, worse, worst*.

If an adjective has two or more syllables, the comparative and superlative degrees are usually formed with *more* and *most*.

intelligent, more intelligent, most intelligent
difficult, more difficult, most difficult

Most adverbs form the comparative and superlative with *more* and *most*.

slowly, more slowly, most slowly
gracefully, more gracefully, most gracefully

There are a few exceptions, such as *hard, harder, hardest; fast, faster, fastest; soon, sooner, soonest*.

Be careful not to double your comparisons when you form degrees of adjectives.

Funny, funnier (not more funnier), funniest (not most funniest)

To use the *-er, -est* forms with *more* and *most* is incorrect.

Prepositions

Prepositions are words that show the relationship between nouns/pronouns and other nouns/pronouns.

The cat **under** the *fence*
The cat **between** the *fence* and the *house*
Everyone **except** the *girl in* the *blue dress*
A letter **about** *us*

The words in bold type are prepositions. The italicized words are called *objects of the prepositions*. When the object of the preposition is a pronoun, it should be in the objective case.

Between *him and me*, **not** **Between** *he and I*
For *Jane and me*, **not** **For** *Jane and I*

Prepositions are not as easy to spot as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Look for a word that establishes a certain kind of relationship between other words. For example, in *the cat under the fence*, how is the cat related to the fence? He is *under* it.

Words Commonly Used as Prepositions

about	before	down	off	under
above	behind	during	on	underneath
across	below	except	out	until
after	beneath	for	over	unto
against	beside	from	past	up
along	between	in	since	upon
among	beyond	into	through	with
around	by	like	to	within
at	concerning	of	toward	without

Some prepositions, called *compound prepositions*, are made up of more than one word, such as *according to*, *because of*, *in front of*, *instead of*, and *next to*.

Be careful not to use a preposition when it isn't needed:

Where have you *been*? **not** Where have you *been at*?

I don't know *where he's gone*, **not** I don't know *where he's gone to*.

Also, don't use two prepositions when you only need one.

Don't go *near the water*, **not** Don't go *near to the water*.

The book *fell off the table*, **not** The book *fell off of the table*.

A traditional rule about prepositions is that you shouldn't end a sentence with one. This is no longer strictly adhered to. (Notice that the last sentence ends with a preposition.) Sometimes it is simply more natural for a preposition to come at the end of a sentence. You may use your own judgment.

It is a letter *to which I will not respond*, **compared to** It is a letter *I will not respond to*.

Grammar: Sentences, Phrases, and Clauses

Moving from parts of speech to sentences is like moving from building materials to a building. The sentence is the basic structure of English, and while you may forget the difference between an adjective and an adverb, you'll usually recognize a sentence when you see it, just as you recognize a building even if you don't know the names of all its components. But a group of words pretending to be a sentence may occasionally fool you. Understanding how sentences are built will help you avoid errors.

The Sentence

Subject and Predicate

A sentence is a group of words containing a subject and a predicate that expresses a complete thought.

The *simple subject* is the noun or pronoun (what or who the sentence is about). The *complete subject* is this noun or pronoun and the words that modify it: *The angry child in the red-striped pajamas*.

The *simple predicate* is the verb or verb phrase that tells what the subject does or is or what is done to the subject. The *complete predicate* is the verb and the words that complete it: *stood stubbornly on the old porch*.

Putting the subject and predicate together makes a sentence: *The angry child in the red-striped pajamas stood stubbornly on the old porch*.

A Complete Thought

In addition to a subject and predicate, a group of words must express a complete thought to be a sentence. The group of words *The angry child in the red-striped pajamas stood stubbornly on the old porch* expresses a complete thought, and is therefore a sentence.

A sentence can be very short: *He jumped; She cried; The students sat down*.

A sentence can also be very long: *The argument that money is a burden probably originated with a rich man who was trying to counter the envy of a poor man*. Do not use the length of a group of words to determine whether or not it is a complete sentence.

The following groups of words are not complete sentences.

When he jumped

When he jumped high into the air

Because they are older than we are

After they returned from the football game at the local high school

They are not complete sentences because although they all have a subject and a predicate, they do not form a complete thought. We don't know what happened when he jumped. We don't know what it means that they are older than we are. And we don't know what happened after they returned from the football game.

When he jumped, he knocked over a lamp.

When he jumped high into the air, he broke a school record.

Because they are older than we are, they can get into the nightclub.

After they returned from the football game at the local high school, they watched television.

Now, these groups of words have been made into complete thoughts. They are sentences.

The Phrase

A phrase is any group of related words that, unlike a sentence, has no subject-predicate combination.

Types of Phrases

You won't be expected to differentiate between the types of phrases (*prepositional, participial, gerund, infinitive*), but you will be expected to recognize that a phrase is not a complete sentence. When a phrase is treated as if it were a complete sentence, it is a *sentence fragment*, and this is a basic writing error: *Looking at the photos; the photos in the album.*

Also, correct use of phrases can help you turn short, choppy sentences into more mature ones:

The boy was thin. He wore old clothes. He sat down. He was hungry. He ate everything. He left a clean plate.
(short, choppy sentences)

The thin boy, wearing old clothes, sat down at the table and hungrily ate everything on his plate. (one longer sentence using phrases)

Prepositional Phrases

These are the most common phrases. They include a preposition and a noun or pronoun as the *object of the preposition*. The object of the preposition can have its own modifiers, which are also part of the prepositional phrase. Following are examples of prepositional phrases. Remember not to mistake any prepositional phrase for a complete sentence.

in the room; in the smoky, crowded room

of the people; of the twenty-five thousand people

by the river; by the deep, rushing river

from the teacher; from the tired and frustrated teacher

for the party; for the midnight victory party

When a pronoun is the object of a preposition, it should be in the objective case (*between him and me; from them and us*).

Participial Phrases

A participial phrase begins with a past or present participle of the verb and is followed by its object and its modifiers. These phrases are used as adjectives.

Sniffing the fresh air, Jim realized he had found the place he wanted to live.

The soldiers, *trapped by the enemy*, threw down their guns.

Sniffing in the first sentence and *trapped* in the second are both participles. The participial phrase *trapped by the enemy* is actually an example of a phrase within a phrase; *by the enemy* is a prepositional phrase that acts as modifier for *trapped*. Don't worry about being asked to recognize this on the test. The important rule to remember is that participial phrases used alone are sentence fragments, not sentences.

Talking and laughing all the way to the dance recital. (fragment)

Talking and laughing all the way to the dance recital, the girls didn't act worried. (complete sentence)

Gerund Phrases

The gerund phrase may look like a participial phrase because it also begins with the *-ing* form of a verb. But a gerund phrase always acts like a noun in a sentence. Like other nouns, it can be a subject of a sentence, the object of a verb or preposition, or the complement of a linking verb.

Riding the black stallion terrified Justin. (acts as subject of the verb *terrified*)

The police reported *seeing the suspect*. (acts as object of the verb *reported*)

He made his reputation by *talking loudly and vigorously*. (object of the preposition *by*)

You are *asking for trouble*. (complement of the linking verb *are*)

Even when a gerund phrase is long, don't mistake it for a complete sentence.

Seeing him get off the bus and run into the station. (sentence fragment)

Seeing him get off the bus and run into the station made me nervous. (complete sentence)

Infinitive Phrases

An infinitive phrase contains the infinitive of a verb (for example, *to sleep, to have slept, to eat dinner, to swim, to decide*) and its objects and modifiers. These phrases usually act as nouns, though they can be used as adjectives and adverbs.

To sleep all night was his only wish. (acts as subject of the verb)

The mayor didn't want *to take an unpopular stand*. (acts as object of the verb *want*)

He had plenty of money *to spend foolishly*. (acts as an adjective modifying *money*)

After the meeting, she drove miles *to clear her mind*. (acts as an adverb modifying *drove*)

Don't mistake an infinitive phrase for a complete sentence.

To plan a large party for them during Christmas vacation. (sentence fragment)

To plan a large party for them during Christmas vacation is probably a mistake. (complete sentence)

Splitting Infinitives

Breaking up an infinitive with one or more adverbs is called *splitting an infinitive*. Splitting an infinitive isn't the grammatical sin it used to be, but most careful writers don't split infinitives without a good reason.

They taught her *to spend money wisely*. **not** They taught her *to wisely spend money*.

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Sometimes not splitting an infinitive is almost impossible: “We expect the population *to more than double* over the next twenty years.” Other times, not splitting an infinitive causes ambiguity or sounds unnatural. In these cases, don’t worry about the rule. Clarity and smoothness take precedence over the unsplit infinitives.

We wanted *to discuss further Russian efforts* to modernize.

Not splitting the infinitive *to discuss* causes ambiguity. Does the adverb *further* modify *Russian efforts* or *discuss*? With a split infinitive, the sentence is clearer: We wanted *to further discuss Russian efforts* to modernize.

He planned *to take quickly* the children to another room.

Not splitting the infinitive makes the sentence stilted and unnatural. Splitting the infinitive improves the sentence: He planned *to quickly take* the children to another room.

The Clause

Like a phrase, a clause is a group of related words, but unlike a phrase, a clause has a subject and predicate. An *independent* (or *main*) *clause*, along with having a subject and predicate, expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a sentence. A *subordinate* (or *dependent*) *clause* doesn’t express a complete thought and is therefore not a sentence. A subordinate clause that stands alone is a sentence fragment.

Independent Clauses

He saw her. The Browns hurried home. Free speech has a price. These are all complete sentences. When they are joined with other groups of words to make longer sentences, they are referred to as independent, or main, clauses.

Two or more independent clauses can be joined by using *and*, *but*, *for*, *nor*, *or*, *so*, and *yet*.

He saw her, *and* he stopped to ask her how her brother was.

The Browns hurried home, *but* they arrived too late.

Free speech has a price, *for* nothing that valuable is really free.

Any of these clauses could stand alone as sentences. An old rule says that you shouldn’t begin a sentence with *and*, *but*, *for*, *nor*, *or*, *so*, or *yet*. But today, doing so is widely accepted.

The Browns hurried home, *But* they arrived too late.

Independent clauses can also be joined by a semicolon, but they cannot be joined by a comma.

Free speech has a price; nothing that valuable is really free. (correct)

Free speech has a price, nothing that valuable is really free. (incorrect: using a comma here creates a *run-on sentence* or *comma splice*)

Subordinate (Dependent) Clauses

A subordinate clause, like an independent clause, has a subject and predicate, but it cannot stand by itself as a sentence. It *depends* on something else to express a complete thought. Some subordinate clauses are introduced by *relative pronouns*:

who	which
whom	what
that	whose

Some are introduced by *subordinating conjunctions*. Some words that can act as subordinating conjunctions are as follows:

<i>after</i>	<i>before</i>	<i>than</i>	<i>whenever</i>
<i>although</i>	<i>even if</i>	<i>that</i>	<i>where</i>
<i>as</i>	<i>if</i>	<i>though</i>	<i>wherever</i>
<i>as if</i>	<i>in order that</i>	<i>till</i>	<i>while</i>
<i>as long as</i>	<i>provided (that)</i>	<i>unless</i>	
<i>as though</i>	<i>since</i>	<i>until</i>	
<i>because</i>	<i>so (that)</i>	<i>when</i>	

Types of Subordinate Clauses

A relative clause begins with a relative pronoun and acts as an adjective.

- The novel *that won the Pulitzer prize* didn't sell well when it was first published.
- The ceremony, *which several celebrities attended*, received intense media coverage.
- The Rosales went to the airport to meet Janet, *who had flown in from New York*.

A noun clause serves as a noun in a sentence.

- What I want for dinner* is a big juicy hamburger.
- The captain told us *how he survived the shipwreck*.
- A vacation is *what I need most*.
- Give it to *whoever needs it most*.

Adverbial clauses begin with subordinating conjunctions. What these conjunctions have in common is that they make the clauses that follow them unable to stand alone. The clauses act as adverbs, answering questions like *how*, *when*, *where*, *why*, *to what extent*, and *under what conditions*.

- Because we wanted to arrive before noon*, we left at the crack of dawn.
- Unless the payment arrives before Friday*, we will have to leave.
- I can promise you the best seats in the house *if you buy the tickets by Monday*.
- You can take the dog out for a walk *when you get home this afternoon*.
- They came to the party, *although they had initially refused*, *because the famous singer had promised to appear*.
(one main clause, two subordinate clauses)

What all subordinate clauses have in common is that they cannot stand alone as complete sentences. When they end with periods or question marks, they become sentence fragments. A semicolon is also an incorrect punctuation mark with a subordinate clause.

- Although you promised to come and visit me when you came to Los Angeles. (**incorrect**)
- Although you promised to come and visit me when you came to Los Angeles, you chose to visit Disneyland instead. (**correct**)
- While his father was in Europe; he took a job at the mill. (**incorrect use of semicolon**)
- While his father was in Europe, he took a job at the mill. (**correct**)
- He chose one of the new hybrid cars. Because he was sure gas prices would continue to rise. (**incorrect**)
- He chose one of the new hybrid cars because he was sure gas prices would continue to rise. (**correct**)

Problems with Sentence Construction

On the exam, you may be asked to recognize sentence errors like fragments, run-on sentences, lack of subject-predicate agreement, misplaced modifiers, or faulty parallel structure.

Run-on Sentences (Comma Splice)

When two independent clauses are run together without proper punctuation, the error is called a *run-on sentence* or a *comma splice*. An independent clause standing alone should end in a period, question mark, or exclamation point. If you want to join independent clauses, you should use a semicolon or one of the seven coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet*) between them. A comma should precede the conjunction, but a comma without a conjunction isn't sufficient.

He drove off in the Mercedes, Erica watched him go. (**incorrect**)

He drove off in the Mercedes, Erica watched him go. (**correct**)

He drove off in the Mercedes; Erica watched him go. (**correct**)

He drove off in the Mercedes, and Erica watched him go. (**correct**)

Some words, called *conjunctive adverbs*, look like conjunctions but aren't. These "imposters" account for many run-on sentences. When a clause begins with one of them, it should be treated as an independent clause and should be followed by a period or semicolon, not a comma.

The following words are conjunctive adverbs:

<i>also</i>	<i>moreover</i>
<i>besides</i>	<i>nevertheless</i>
<i>consequently</i>	<i>otherwise</i>
<i>further, furthermore</i>	<i>similarly</i>
<i>hence</i>	<i>then</i>
<i>however</i>	<i>therefore</i>
<i>indeed</i>	<i>thus</i>
<i>likewise</i>	

Notice the incorrect and correct uses of the conjunctive adverbs in the following sentences.

They came from South America, however they spoke English perfectly. (**incorrect: run-on**)

They came from South America; however, they spoke English perfectly. (**correct**)

Marilyn sold more tickets than anyone else, therefore she wins the prize. (**incorrect: run-on**)

Marilyn sold more tickets than anyone else. Therefore, she wins the prize. (**correct**)

The committee must decide, otherwise the project won't be completed. (**incorrect: run-on**)

The committee must decide; otherwise the project won't be completed. (**correct**)

Sentence Fragments

Sentence fragments have been described in the sections covering sentences, phrases, and clauses. On the exam, you may be asked to recognize fragments, and at first glance, one may look like a sentence because it begins with a capital letter and ends with a period. Don't be fooled.

Unless you want to pay for the motorcycle over time. (**incorrect: fragment**)

Unless you want to pay for the motorcycle over time, you can't afford it. (**correct**)

Whoever left the windows open in the new house on Saturday night. (**incorrect**: fragment)

Whoever left the windows open in the new house on Saturday night should pay for the articles that were damaged by the storm. (**correct**)

Giving the set of china to her niece and the tools to her nephew. (**incorrect**: fragment)

Rose left, giving the set of china to her niece and the tools to her nephew. (**correct**)

Subject-Predicate Agreement

Within a sentence, sometimes there are distractions that can make you misidentify subject and predicate, leading to an agreement problem. Remember that a predicate (verb) must agree in person and number with its subject, regardless of other elements in the sentence. First, locate the subject of the sentence—who or what the sentence is about. Then ask yourself, “Is the subject first, second, or third person (*I/we; you; he, she, it/they*)? Is it singular or plural?” When you’ve answered these questions, you will know which form the verb should take.

Drinking a glass of milk and soaking in the tub help (not helps) me fall asleep.

This sentence has a compound subject: *drinking* and *soaking*. Because of the two subjects, a plural verb is used: *help*.

The decision of the judges *was (not were)* overruled.

The subject of the sentence is *decision*, not *judges*. Therefore, the verb should be singular (*was*).

The following words are usually singular: *anyone, no one, nobody, someone, somebody, each, either, neither, everyone, everybody*.

Each of the girls has (not have) a suitcase.

Each, not *girls*, is the subject of the sentence. Therefore, a singular verb is correct.

Either Mr. Holloway or Mrs. Sandoval is (not are) planning to pick us up.

The subject of the verb is *Either*, and therefore the verb should be singular (*is*).

The pronouns *all, some, and most* may be singular or plural, depending on whether they refer to a quantity of something (singular) or a number of things (plural). Also, the words *any* and *none* can take a singular or plural verb, depending on whether the writer is thinking of one thing or several.

Some of the apples were rotten.

Some of the money was for Barry.

Any of the books is appropriate. (*Any one* is appropriate.)

Any of the books are appropriate. (*All* are appropriate.)

Some phrases within a sentence suggest that a plural verb is correct, but these phrases do not, as a rule, affect the number of the subject.

The *principal*, as well as the teachers, *believes (not believe)* the plan is good.

The *cost*, in addition to the time it will take, *makes (not make)* the project unfeasible.

The *president*, accompanied by the committee head, *visits (not visit)* the site.

With the constructions *there is* and *there are*, *there is never* the subject: *There are (not there is or there's) millions of people who have second jobs*. The subject of the sentence is *millions*.

Part II: Reviews

With the constructions *either . . . or* and *neither . . . nor*, use the singular if both elements are singular. If one of the elements is singular and one plural, choose the verb to agree with the element closest to it.

Either the director or the assistant director is (not are) responsible.

Neither the director nor the actors are (not is) coming today.

Misplaced Modifiers

A common mistake in sentence construction is poor placement of modifiers. If it isn't clear what term a modifier applies to, it is misplaced. Any kind of modifier can be misplaced: an adjective or adverb, phrases acting as modifiers, and clauses acting as modifiers.

He saw a truck in the driveway *that was black and red.* (**incorrect**)

Unless the driveway was black and red, this is a misplaced modifier.

He saw a *red and black* truck in the driveway. (**correct**)

This is more likely:

Perhaps anticipating what modern science would discover, Anna Anderson, who claimed to be the missing Anastasia, requested she be cremated *before her death.* (**incorrect**)

It is doubtful that Anna wanted to be cremated before she died, but the placement of the phrase suggests that's just what she wanted.

Perhaps anticipating what modern science would discover, Anna Anderson, who claimed to be the missing Anastasia, *requested before her death* that she be cremated. (**correct**)

Remember that the placement of even a simple modifier can change the meaning of a sentence.

Not all the home-team players were available.

All the home-team players were not available.

In the first sentence, maybe the home team could still limp along through a game. But the second sentence would mean the game would have to be canceled.

Among the most common misplaced modifiers are participial phrases.

Advancing across the desolate plains, the hot sun burned the pioneers. (**incorrect**: the modifier suggests that the sun is advancing across the plain)

You can rewrite the sentence in various ways to ensure that the modifier is properly placed.

Advancing across the desolate plains, the pioneers felt the burning sun. (**correct**)

The hot sun burned the pioneers as they advanced across the desolate plains. (**correct**)

Check the following examples of poorly placed modifiers:

The buildings on the hillside constructed of wood shingles burned first. (**poor placement of modifier**)

On the hillside, the *buildings constructed of wood shingles* burned first. (**better**)

He wore a wide leather belt around his *waist, which he had bought in New Mexico.* (**incorrect**)

Around his waist he wore a wide leather *belt, which he had bought in New Mexico.* (**correct**)

The editor at the newspaper promised to *check the article when I finished it for accuracy.* (**incorrect**)

The editor at the newspaper promised to *check the article for accuracy when I finished it.* (**correct**)

Dangling modifiers are similar to misplaced modifiers except that the modifier isn't just separated from the word it modifies—the word it modifies is actually missing. When the modifier is a participial phrase, it is often referred to as a *dangling participle*.

Having eaten dinner, the idea of a cheeseburger was unappealing. (**incorrect**)

Having eaten dinner, I found the idea of a cheeseburger unappealing. (**correct**)

Studying the lecture notes, the ecosystem became clearer. (**incorrect**)

The ecosystem became clearer to me *when I studied the lecture notes*. (**correct**)

To win the election, money is essential. (**incorrect**)

To win the election, a candidate must have money. (**correct**)

Faulty Parallelism

Parallelism in sentences refers to matching grammatical structures. Elements in a sentence that have the same function or express similar ideas should be grammatically parallel, or grammatically matched.

A failure to create parallel structures when they're appropriate is called faulty parallelism. Notice the difference between correct parallel structure and faulty parallelism.

The President promises to *reform* health care, *preserve* social security, and *a balanced budget*. (**incorrect**)

The President promises to *reform* health care, *preserve* social security, and *balance* the budget. (**correct**)

He described *skiing* in the Alps, *swimming* in the Adriatic, and *the drive* across the Sahara Desert. (**incorrect**)

He described *skiing* in the Alps, *swimming* in the Adriatic, and *driving* across the Sahara Desert. (**correct**)

He spoke more *of his term as ambassador* than *of being president*. (**incorrect**)

He spoke more *of being ambassador* than *of being president*. (**correct**)

It doesn't matter what grammatical structure you choose as long as you remain with it consistently.

What counts is not *how you look* but *your behavior*. (**incorrect**)

What counts is not *how you look* but *how you behave*. (**correct**)

What counts is not *your looks* but *your behavior*. (**also correct**)

In some constructions, something is true of one thing but not of the other. *But not* and *rather than* are used to set up these constructions. The parts should be parallel.

The administration approved the student's right to *drop the class* *but not meeting* with the professor. (**incorrect**)

The administration approved the student's right to *drop the class* *but not to meet* with the professor. (**correct**)

The committee chose to *table* the motion *rather than voting* on it. (**incorrect**)

The committee chose to *table* the motion *rather than to vote* on it. (**correct**)

Errors in parallel structure often occur with *either . . . or*; *neither . . . nor*; and *not only . . . but also*.

Either I will like the job *or not*. (**incorrect**)

Either I will like the job *or I won't*. (**correct**)

I have neither the patience to finish the book *nor do I desire to finish it*. (**incorrect**)

I have neither the patience to finish the book *nor the desire to finish it*. (**correct**)

Not only does he swim well *but also biking* is one of his strong points. (**incorrect**)

Not only does he swim well *but also he bikes well*. (**correct**)

Part II: Reviews

We expected *not only to be late but also we expected to be tired.* (**incorrect**)

We expected *not only to be late but also to be tired.* (**correct**)

Verbs should be parallel, too. When you have more than one verb in your sentence, don't shift tenses unnecessarily. Also, don't shift from an active to a passive voice.

Yesterday he *tells* me I *didn't apply* in time. (**incorrect**)

Yesterday he *told* me I *didn't apply* in time. (**correct**)

Kate *prepared* the speech on the plane, and *it was delivered by her* at the meeting. (**incorrect**: shift from active voice to passive voice)

Kate *prepared* the speech on the plane and *delivered* it at the meeting. (**correct**)

Words

There are words that sound alike but are spelled differently, words that aren't acceptable usage but are mistakenly used for other words, words that should be used in some situations but not in others, and words that are close but not the same in meaning. The list below is a sampling of these troublemakers.

a, an Use the article *a* before words that begin with a consonant sound and words that begin with a "yew" sound: *a bag, a plan, a historic building, a one-armed man*, (*one* is pronounced as if it began with a *w*), *a united group*. Use *an* before words that begin with a vowel sound: *an advertisement, an executive, an hour* (the *h* is silent).

accept, except *Accept* means *to receive or agree with*: *I accept the gift; I accept your proposal.* *Except* as a preposition means *leaving out*: *Everyone except you is invited.*

advice, advise *Advice* is a noun: *His advice was good.* *Advise* is a verb: *I advise you not to go.*

affect, effect Usually, *affect* is a verb and *effect* is a noun: *Music affects me a lot. The effect of music is to calm me down.*

among, between In general, use *between* for two items or people and *among* for more than two items or people. *The money was divided between John and Jim. The property was divided among John, Jim, and Julie.*

amount, number Use *amount* to refer to a bulk or mass: *No amount of candy would be enough.* *Number* refers to individual countable items: *He took a large number of pennies.*

beside, besides *Beside* means *next to, at the side of*. *Besides* means *in addition to*. *Besides, I don't want to live beside the freeway.*

capital, capitol Use *capital* when referring to the city that is the seat of government. Use *capitol* when referring to the building where a legislature meets. *The capital of California is Sacramento. When we arrived there, we toured the capitol and other government buildings.*

cite, site, sight *Cite* means *to summon before a court of law, to mention by way of example, or to officially mention in a positive way*: *I am citing you for dumping trash on the highway; I cited the first chapter of the book as proof of my argument; The young police officer was cited for bravery.* *Site* means *location or scene*: *We drove quickly to the site of the new house.* *Sight* means *the ability to see or something seen*: *The ocean was a beautiful sight. His sight returned after the operation.*

conscious, conscience *Conscious* means *aware of, able to think and feel*: *I was conscious of the tension in the room. After the accident, he was shaken up but still conscious.* *Conscience* is an inner voice, a sense of right and wrong. *It bothered my conscience that I had lied to the teacher.*

disinterested, uninterested *Disinterested* means *impartial, not taking sides*. *Uninterested* means *lacking interest*. *A jury that is disinterested can be fair. Jury members that are uninterested aren't desirable because they may fall asleep during the trial.*

fewer, less Use *fewer* for individual countable items or people and *less* for bulk or quantity. *We expected fewer people to come; The children ate less food than she had brought.*

imply, infer *Imply* means to suggest something indirectly. *Infer* means to conclude from facts or indications. *If I imply by yawning that I'm tired, you might infer that I want you to leave.* Think of *implying* as done by the actor, *inferring* as done by the receiver.

irregardless, regardless There is no such word as *irregardless*. The correct word is *regardless*.

its, it's *Its* is the possessive form of *it*: *The tree lost its leaves.* *It's* is a contraction of *it is*: *It's too bad we can't come.*

lay, lie If you mean *repose*, use *lie*. If you mean to *set or put down*, use *lay*: *I lie down to rest; I lay the book down on the table.* *Lie* doesn't take an object, while *lay* does.

like, as Both words can be used as prepositions: *He sleeps like a baby; We see this as an alternative.* But only *as* should be used as a subordinating conjunction, so when you are introducing a dependent clause, don't use *like*: *The storm came in right after lunch just as (not like) I said it would.*

loose, lose *Lose* means to be unable to find. *Loose*, an adjective, means *unrestrained, inexact, not close fitting*: *I lose my keys frequently; This jacket is too loose.*

passed, past *Passed* is a verb: *I passed the test.* *Past* is either a noun, an adjective, or a preposition, but never a verb: *The past haunts me; His past actions impressed us; The lake lies past the barn.*

peak, peck *Peak* as a noun means a *pointed end or top*. *He climbed to the peak of the roof.* *Peek* as a verb means to *glance or look quickly*. As a noun, it means a *glance or look*. *She wanted to peek around the corner.*

precede, proceed *Precede* means to *go before in time, place, rank, etc.*: *The speech preceded the other festivities.* *Proceed* means to *move forward*: *You may proceed to the main entrance.*

principal, principle *Principal* as an adjective means *first in importance*. As a noun, it means *the head of a school*. *The principal reason that Nelson was chosen to be principal of our school was his dedication.* *Principle* is a noun that means *a fundamental truth or law or a rule of conduct*: *One of my principles is to withhold judgment until I hear all the evidence.*

sit, set *Sit* doesn't usually take an object: *I sit down.* *Set* usually does: *I set the book down.*

stationary, stationery *Stationary* means *still, at rest*. *Stationery* is paper used for writing letters.

than, then Don't use *then* (which means *at that time*) in comparisons. Use *than*: *He is wiser than (not then) his father was then.*

their, there, they're *Their* is the possessive form of *they*: *That is their boat.* *There* usually refers to a place or is used in impersonal construction (*there is, there are*): *We went there to see him.* *They're* is a contraction of *they are*: *They're ready to leave now.*

themselves, theirselves *Themselves* is correct. *Theirselves* is not a word.

to, too *To* has several meanings, the first being *toward*. *Too* means *also or more than enough*: *I walked to the river, which was too wild for me to swim in. My father thought so, too.*

weather, whether *Weather* is the state of the atmosphere. *Whether* is a functional word that introduces an indirect question involving alternatives: *Whether we go or not depends on what the weather is like.*

whose, who's *Whose* is the possessive of *who*. *Who's* is a contraction of *who is*: *Who's going to tell me whose jacket this is?*

your, you're *Your* is the possessive form of *you*. *You're* is a contraction of *you are*: *You're certain that this is your jacket?*

Errors to Look For

The following errors are common on the CAHSEE English-Language Arts and other multiple-choice grammar and usage exams. Reviewing these sentences will help you spot and correct the common errors.

Punctuation Errors

I left for Japan on Monday; after I graduated from junior college. (**incorrect**)

I left for Japan on Monday after I graduated from junior college. (**correct**)

She asked me "if I wanted to accompany her on the trip." (**incorrect**)

She asked me if I wanted to accompany her on the trip. (**correct**)

She asked me, "Do you want to accompany me on the trip?" (also **correct**)

Women, who are under thirty-five, may not participate. (**incorrect**)

Women who are under thirty-five may not participate. (**correct**)

Problems with Parts of Speech

Nouns

My eighth-grade Teacher was very helpful. (**incorrect**)

My eighth-grade teacher was very helpful. (**correct**)

The legislature are meeting this week. (**incorrect**)

The legislature is meeting this week. (**correct**)

We studied the civil war in my class. (**incorrect**)

We studied the Civil War in my class. (**correct**)

She forgot to return Nancys' book. (**incorrect**)

She forgot to return Nancy's book. (**correct**)

Verbs

He done everything I asked. (**incorrect**)

He did everything I asked. (**correct**)

If I was rich, I would buy a fancy car. (**incorrect**)

If I were rich, I would buy a fancy car. (**correct**)

She bought groceries and pet supplies and carries them inside. (**incorrect**)

She bought groceries and pet supplies and carried them inside. (**correct**)

If I would have thought of it, I would have called you earlier. (**incorrect**)

If I had thought of it, I would have called you earlier. (**correct**)

I drunk three bottles of water after the race. (**incorrect**)

I drank three bottles of water after the race. (**correct**)

The dress had been bought by my sister. (**poor**)

My sister had bought the dress. (**better**)

Pronouns

Everyone was invited except he and I. (**incorrect**)

Everyone was invited except him and me. (**correct**)

Ask Mr. Jones and he to come early. (**incorrect**)

Ask Mr. Jones and him to come early. (**correct**)

Maggie and him are going to the movies. (**incorrect**)

Maggie and he are going to the movies. (**correct**)

Talk to the counselor, whom will advise you what to do. (**incorrect**)

Talk to the counselor, who will advise you what to do. (**correct**)

Us boys decided we'd discuss it with the coach. (**incorrect**)

We boys decided we'd discuss it with the coach. (**correct**)

It is her who wants to take the trip. (**incorrect**)

It is she who wants to take the trip. (**correct**)

Jonathan told Brad that he was too young to see the movie. (**confusing**)

Jonathan told Brad that Brad was too young to see the movie. (**clearer**)

We unpacked our clothes from the suitcases and then stored them in the garage. (**confusing**)

After we unpacked our clothes, we stored the suitcases in the garage. (**clearer**)

Adjectives and Adverbs

The people in the chorus sang real good. (**incorrect**)

The people in the chorus sang well. (**correct**)

After he ate the whole pie, his stomach felt badly. (**incorrect**)

After he ate the whole pie, his stomach felt bad. (**correct**)

Rick is much more funnier than his brother. (**incorrect**)

Rick is much funnier than his brother. (**correct**)

My grandfather moves quick, even though he's over eighty. (**incorrect**)

My grandfather moves quickly, even though he's over eighty. (**correct**)

Problems with Sentences

Fragments

After the game was over. (**incorrect**)

After the game was over, we drove home. (**correct**)

Running down the road as fast as we could. (**incorrect**)

Running down the road as fast as we could, we managed to catch the dog. (**correct**)

Although we had promised to take her to the carnival. (**incorrect**)

Although we had promised to take her to the carnival, she still pouted. (**correct**)

The man who was climbing the tallest building in the city. (**incorrect**)

The man who was climbing the tallest building in the city looked scared. (**correct**)

Run-on Sentences

They found the old wagon, it was behind the barn. (**incorrect**)

They found the old wagon; it was behind the barn. (**correct**)

I liked the movie, however, it was too long. (**incorrect**)

I liked the movie. However, it was too long. (**correct**)

He spoke for an hour, it seemed much longer. (**incorrect**)

He spoke for an hour, but it seemed much longer. (**correct**)

Subject-Predicate Agreement

He don't enjoy sports the way he used to. (**incorrect**)

He doesn't enjoy sports the way he used to. (**correct**)

Where's Robert and Stan? (**incorrect**)

Where are Robert and Stan? (**correct**)

Paul, along with Jane and Miguel, are going to the concert. (**incorrect**)

Paul, along with Jane and Miguel, is going to the concert. (**correct**)

Not one of your plans are acceptable. (**incorrect**)

Not one of your plans is acceptable. (**correct**)

Neither the junior high school nor the high school have a swimming pool. (**incorrect**)

Neither the junior high school nor the high school has a swimming pool. (**correct**)

Misplaced Modifiers

Watching the sunset, the ocean looked red to me. (**incorrect**)

When I was watching the sunset, the ocean looked red to me. (**correct**)

I met my friend who I hadn't seen for five years at the mall. (**incorrect**)

At the mall, I met my friend, whom I hadn't seen for five years. (**correct**)

Being beautiful, people are attracted to my sister right away. (**incorrect**)

Because she is beautiful, my sister attracts people right away. (**correct**)

Faulty Parallelism

He promised to drive to the lake, open the cabin, and he would clean it, too. (**incorrect**)

He promised to drive to the lake, open the cabin, and clean it, too. (**correct**)

A cool day is better for the race than bright sunshine. (**incorrect**)

A cool day is better for the race than a bright sunny one. (**correct**)

My parents came to America with hopes of making a good living and to be free. (**incorrect**)

My parents came to America with hopes of making a good living and being free. (**correct**)

Common Prefixes, Suffixes, and Roots

Charts to Help You Understand Unfamiliar Words

The following charts should help you to arrive at definitions of unfamiliar words on the CAHSEE English-Language Arts. These prefixes, suffixes, and roots apply to thousands of words. Review this list carefully and become familiar with the prefixes, suffixes and roots. A more comprehensive list is included for reference, in the appendix.

Prefixes		
<i>Prefix</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Example</i>
ad-	to, toward	advance
anti-	against	antidote
bi-	two	bicycle
com-	together, with	composite
de-	away, from	deter
epi-	upon	epilogue
equi-	equal, equally	equivalent
ex-	out of	expel
homo-	same, equal, like	homogenized
hyper-	over, too much	hyperactive
hypo-	under, too little	hypodermic
in-	not	insufficient
in-	into	instruct
inter-	between	interstate
mal-	bad	malfunction
mis-	wrong	mistake
mono-	alone, one	monolith
non-	not	nonentity
ob-	against	objection
omni-	all, everywhere	omniscient
over-	above	overbearing
poly-	many	polymorphous
pre-	before	precede
pro-	forward	propel

(continued)

Prefixes (continued)

<i>Prefix</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Example</i>
re-	back, again	regress
retro-	backward	retrograde
semi-	half, partly	semicircle
sub-	under	submarine
trans-	across, beyond	transcend
un-	not	unneeded

Suffixes

<i>Suffix</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Example</i>
-able, -ible	able to	usable
-er, -or	one who does	competitor
-fy	to make	dignify
-ism	the practice of	rationalism
-ist	one who is occupied with	feminist
-less	without, lacking	meaningless
-logue	a particular kind of speaking or writing	prologue
-ness	the quality of	aggressiveness
-ship	the art or skill of	statesmanship
-tude	the state of	rectitude

Roots

<i>Root</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Example</i>
arch	to rule	monarch
belli	war, warlike	belligerent
bene	good	benevolent
chron	time	chronology
dic	to say	indicative
fac	to make, to do	artifact
graph	writing	telegraph
mort	to die	mortal
port	to carry	deport
vid, vis	to see	invisible

Analyzing Prose and Poetry

The following may help you understand a passage, article, or poem.

Analyzing Prose

You will be asked questions about prose on the CAHSEE English-Language Arts. They might deal with the issues of genre (the kind of work, such as short story or essay), narrator, content or subject, structure, and style.

Genre

From what kind of work is the selection taken? Is it fiction or nonfiction?

If you're dealing with a work of fiction, chances are you'll have to think about the character or characters in the passage, while a work of nonfiction probably focuses on an issue, on an idea, or on the author him- or herself.

Narrator/Author

Whether the passage is from a work of fiction or nonfiction, you must be aware of who is speaking and what his or her attitudes are toward the characters or the subject of the passage. If you can, identify *who* is speaking, *where* and *when*, *why*, and *to whom*.

Subject

What is the purpose of the passage? Is it to present an argument or to introduce a character? To coax or entertain or to stir to action? If you can define an author's purpose clearly, most of the questions on the interpretation of meaning will fall neatly into place.

Structure

The normal units of prose are the sentence and the paragraph. As with a poem, try to see how each part advances the progress of the whole. How are the sentences and paragraphs related to each other and to the passage as a whole?

Style

The style of prose is determined by language (both literal and figurative), imagery, grammar and sentence structure—all matters you will deal with in the analysis of poetry. In addition, the analysis of prose is certain to raise questions about the rhetoric of a passage, that is, its use of words to persuade or influence a reader.

Analyzing Poetry

To prepare yourself for the kind of questions that may be asked, try going through each poem and asking the following questions in an order similar to this on the following page.

What is the dramatic situation?

To determine the dramatic situation, ask yourself these questions: Who is the speaker? Or who are the speakers? Is the speaker male or female? Where is he or she? When does this poem take place? What are the circumstances?

Sometimes you'll be able to answer all of these questions, sometimes only a few. It doesn't matter. You've already begun to understand the poem.

What is the structure of the poem?

To figure out a poem's structure, ask yourself the following questions: What are the parts of the poem and how are they related to each other? What gives the poem its coherence? What are the structural divisions of the poem?

In analyzing structure, your best aid is the punctuation. Look first for complete sentences indicated by periods, semi-colons, question marks, or exclamation points. Then ask how the poem gets from the first sentence to the second and from the second to the third. Are there repetitions such as parallel syntax or the use of a simile in each sentence?

Answer these questions in accordance with the sense of the poem, not by where a line ends or a rhyme falls.

Think about the logic of the poem. Does it ask questions then answer them? Or develop an argument? Or use a series of analogies to prove a point? Understanding the structure isn't just a matter of mechanics. It will help you to understand the meaning of the poem as a whole and to perceive some of the art, the formal skills, that the poet has used.

What is the theme of the poem?

You should now be able to see the point of the poem. Sometimes a poem says something as simple as "I love you"; sometimes the theme or the meaning is much more complex. If possible, define what the poem says and why. A love poem usually praises the loved one in the hope that the speaker's love will be returned. But many poems have meanings too complex to be reduced to single sentences.

Are the grammar and meaning clear?

Make sure you understand the meaning of all the words in the poem, especially words you thought you knew but which don't seem to fit in the context of the poem. Also make sure you understand the grammar of the poem. The word order of poetry is often skewed, and in a poem, a direct object may come before the subject and the verb. ("His sounding lyre the poet struck" can mean the poet was hit by a musical instrument, but as a line of poetry, it probably means the poet played his harp.)

What are the important literal images and figures of speech?

What are the important literal sensory objects—the images, such as a field of poppies or a stench of corruption? What are the similes and metaphors of the poem? In each, exactly what is compared to what? Is there a pattern in the images, such as a series of comparisons in which men are compared to wild animals? The most difficult challenge of reading poetry is discriminating between the *figurative* ("I love a rose"—that is, my love is like a rose, beautiful, sweet, fragile) and the *literal* ("I love a rose"—that is, roses are my favorite flower). The list of literary devices that a writer might use is enormous. Terms you should definitely know include *metaphor*, *simile*, and *personification*.

What is the tone of the poem?

Tone is a slippery word, and almost everyone has trouble with it. It's sometimes used to mean the mood or atmosphere of a work. Or it can mean a manner of speaking, a tone of voice, as in "The disappointed coach's tone was scornful." Its most common use as a term of literary analysis, however, is to denote the inferred attitude of an author. When the author's attitude is different from that of the speaker—as is usually the case in ironic works—the tone of voice of the speaker, which may be calm, businesslike, even gracious, may be very different from the satiric tone of the work, which reflects the author's disapproval of the speaker.

Literature Key Terms

Following are terms often used in multiple-choice test questions concerning literature. Such questions don't generally ask you to directly define the terms, but you must be familiar with their meaning in order to answer the question that is asked. In addition, understanding and using the terms when appropriate, can strengthen an essay written in response to a literature selection.

Allegory A story in which people, things, and events have another meaning. An example of allegory is Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

Alliteration The repetition of the same sound. This is usually a consonant at the beginning of two or more words immediately succeeding each other or in short intervals. An example is: "Friends feared forever."

Allusion A reference in a work of literature to something outside the work, especially to a well-known historical or literary event, person, or work. In *Hamlet*, when Horatio says, "ere the mightiest Julius fell," the allusion is to the death of Julius Caesar.

Ambiguity Multiple meanings a literary work may communicate, especially two meanings that are incompatible.

Attitude A speaker's, author's, or character's opinion of a subject. For example, Hamlet's attitude toward Gertrude is a mixture of affection and revulsion, changing from one to the other within a single scene.

Autobiography An author's account of his or her own life.

Biography An accurate history of a single person.

Climax Normally the point of highest interest in a novel, short story, or play. As a technical term of dramatic composition, the climax is the place where the action reaches a turning point; where the rising action (the complication of the plot) ends and the following action (the resolution of the plot) begins.

Comedy A dramatic form intended to amuse the audience. Usually, a comedy moves from an unhappy situation to a happy resolution. The word *comedy* is now also applied to genres other than drama, such as the novel, film, or television show.

Connotation The implications of a word or phrase, as opposed to its exact meaning (*denotation*).

Convention A device of style or subject matter so often used that it becomes a recognized means of expression. For example, a lover observing the literary love conventions cannot eat or sleep and grows pale and lean.

Denotation The dictionary meaning of a word, as opposed to *connotation*.

Diction Word choice. Essay questions on a passage of prose or a poem could ask you to talk about diction or about techniques that include diction. Any word that is important to the meaning and the effect of a passage can be used in your essay. These words are also *details*.

Digression The use of material unrelated to the subject of a work. Departing from the subject; going off-topic.

Euphemism A figure of speech that uses indirection to avoid offensive bluntness, such as *deceased* for *dead* or *remains* for *corpse*.

Figurative language Writing that uses figures of speech (as opposed to literal language or that which is actual or specifically denoted) such as metaphor, simile, and irony. Figurative language uses words to mean something other than their literal meaning. "The black bat night has flown" is figurative, with the metaphor comparing night and a bat. "Night is over," says the same thing without figurative language. No real bat is or has been on the scene, but night is like a bat because it is dark.

Part II: Reviews

Genre A literary form, such as essay, novel, or poem. Within genres like the poem, there are also more specific genres based upon content (love poem, nature poem) or form (sonnet, ode).

Grotesque Characterized by distortions or incongruities; misshapen or bizarre. The fiction of Poe is often described as grotesque.

Hyperbole Deliberate exaggeration, overstatement. As a rule, hyperbole is self-conscious, without the intention of being accepted literally. "The strongest man in the world" or "a diamond as big as the Ritz" are examples of hyperbole.

Imagery The images of a literary work; the sensory details of a work; the figurative language of a work. Imagery has several definitions, but the two that are paramount are the visual, auditory, or physical images evoked by the words of a literary work or the images that figurative language evokes.

Irony A figure of speech in which intent and actual meaning differ—characteristically praise for blame or blame for praise; a pattern of words that turns away from direct statement of its own obvious meaning. The term *irony* implies a discrepancy. In *verbal irony* (saying the opposite of what one means), the discrepancy is between statement and meaning. Sometimes, irony may simply understate, as in "Men have died from time to time. . . ."

Jargon The special language of a profession or group. The term *jargon* usually has negative associations, with the implication that jargon is evasive and not understood by outsiders.

Literal Not figurative; accurate to the letter; matter of fact or concrete.

Lyrical Songlike; characterized by emotion, subjectivity, and imagination.

Metaphor A figurative use of language in which a comparison is expressed without the use of a comparative term like *as*, *like* or *than*. A simile would say, "night is like a black bat"; a metaphor would say, "the black bat night." When Romeo says, "It is the east, and Juliet is the sun," his metaphors compare her window to the east and Juliet to the sun.

Narrative techniques The methods involved in telling a story; the procedures used by a writer of stories or accounts. *Narrative techniques* is a general term that asks you to discuss the procedures used in the telling of a story. Examples of the techniques you might use are point of view, manipulation of time, dialogue, or interior monologue.

Novel A fictional narrative in prose of considerable length. Shorter works are called novellas, and even shorter ones are called short stories.

Omniscient point of view The vantage point of a story in which the narrator can know, see, and report whatever he or she chooses. The narrator is free to describe the thoughts of any of the characters, to skip about in time or place, or to speak directly to the reader.

Oxymoron A combination of opposites; the union of contradictory terms. Romeo's line "feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health" contains four examples of the device.

Parable A story designed to suggest a principle, illustrate a moral, or answer a question. Parables are allegorical stories.

Paradox A statement that seems to be self-contradicting but may, in fact, be true.

Parody A composition that imitates the style of another composition normally for comic effect. A contest for parodies of Hemingway draws hundreds of entries each year.

Personification A figurative use of language that gives the nonhuman (ideas, inanimate objects, animals, abstractions) human characteristics.

Plot The interrelated actions of a play or a novel that move to a climax and a final resolution.

Point of view Any of several possible vantage points from which a story is told. The point of view may be omniscient, limited to that of a single character, or limited to that of several characters, as well as other possibilities. The teller may use the first person and/or the third person.

Rhetorical question A question asked for effect, not in expectation of a reply. No reply is expected because the question presupposes only one possible answer.

Satire Writing that seeks to arouse a reader's disapproval of an object by ridicule. Satire is usually comedy that exposes errors.

Setting The background to a story; the physical location of a play, story, or novel. The setting of a narrative will normally involve both time and place.

Simile A directly expressed comparison; a figure of speech comparing two objects usually with *like*, *as*, or *than*. It is easier to recognize a simile than a metaphor because the comparison is explicit; my love is like a fever; my love is deeper than a well; my love is as dead as a doornail.

Soliloquy A speech in which a character who is alone speaks his or her thoughts aloud. A monologue also has a single speaker, but in a monologue the speaker talks to others who do not interrupt. Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" and "O! what a rogue and peasant slave am I" are soliloquies.

Strategy (or rhetorical strategy) The management of language for a specific effect. The strategy or rhetorical strategy of a poem is the planned placement of elements to achieve an effect. The rhetorical strategy of most love poems, for example, is deployed to convince the loved one to return the speaker's love. By appealing to the loved one's sympathy ("If you don't return my love, my heart will break."), or by flattery ("How could I not love someone as beautiful as you?"), or by threat ("When you're old, you'll be sorry you refused me."), the lover attempts to persuade the loved-one to love in return.

Structure The arrangement of materials within a work; the relationship of the parts of a work to the whole; the logical divisions of a work. The most common principles of structure are series (A, B, C, D, E), contrast (A versus B, C versus D, E versus A), and repetition (AA, BB, AB). The most common units of structure are play (scene, act), novel (chapter), and poem (line, stanza).

Style The mode of expression in language; the characteristic manner of expression of an author. Many elements contribute to style, and if a question calls for a discussion of style or of "stylistic techniques," you can discuss diction, syntax, figurative language, imagery, selection of detail, sound effects, and tone, using the ones that are appropriate.

Syllogism A form of reasoning in which two statements are made and a conclusion is drawn from them. A syllogism begins with a major premise ("All tragedies end unhappily.") followed by a minor premise ("*Hamlet* is a tragedy.") and a conclusion ("Therefore, *Hamlet* ends unhappily.").

Symbol Something that is simultaneously itself and a sign of something else. For example, winter, darkness, and cold are real things, but in literature they are also likely to be used as symbols of death.

Theme The main thought expressed by a work.

Thesis The theme, meaning, or position that a writer undertakes to prove or support.

Tone The manner in which an author expresses his or her attitude; the intonation of the voice that expresses meaning. Tone is described by adjectives, and the possibilities are nearly endless. Often a single adjective will not be enough, and tone may change from chapter to chapter or even line to line. Tone may be the result of allusion, diction, figurative language, imagery, irony, symbol, syntax, and style.

Tragedy Now defined as a play with a serious content and an unhappy ending. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or Miller's *Death of a Salesman* are examples.