

## GKT ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS TEST BLUEPRINT

The FTCE General Knowledge English Language Skills (ELS) test will assess your ability in the areas of language structure, vocabulary application, and knowledge of standard English conventions.

**Language structure.** This skill includes being able to correct sentence fragments, punctuation errors, modifier errors, and parallel structure errors. This section also includes skills in the area of rhetoric. These test items require you to read a small passage and identify patterns of organization. Most standardized English exams (ACT, SAT, FTCE, etc.) have a rhetorical section.

**Vocabulary application.** This skill includes being able to use vocabulary in context. These questions will often ask you to choose the correct vocabulary word to be inserted into a sentence.

**Knowledge of standard English conventions.** This skill includes being able to identify and correct errors in English grammar: subject/verb agreement, pronoun/antecedent, verb tense, pronoun case, spelling, punctuation, etc.

Competency		Approximate percentage of subtest questions	
1	Knowledge of language structure	25%	<p>A pie chart illustrating the distribution of subtest questions across three competencies. The chart is divided into three segments: a large light gray segment on the left representing 'Comp 3' at 50%, and two smaller dark gray segments on the right representing 'Comp 1' at 25% (top right) and 'Comp 2' at 25% (bottom right).</p>
2	Knowledge of vocabulary application	25%	
3	Knowledge of standard English conventions	50%	

## **GKT ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS TEST SPECIFICATIONS**

### **I. Knowledge of language structure**

1. Evaluate correct placement of modifiers.
2. Apply knowledge of parallelism, including parallel expressions for parallel ideas.
3. Apply knowledge of a variety of effective structures (e.g., recognizing fragments, comma splices, run-on sentences, syntax errors).
4. Determine patterns of organization in a written passage (i.e., modes of rhetoric).

### **II. Knowledge of vocabulary application**

1. Determine the meaning of unknown words, multiple-meaning words, and phrases in context.
2. Determine and select the correct use of commonly confused words, misused words, and phrases.
3. Determine diction and tone appropriate to a given audience.

### **III. Knowledge of standard English conventions**

1. Determine and select standard verb forms.
2. Determine and select inappropriate shifts in verb tense.
3. Determine and select agreement between subject and verb.
4. Determine and select agreement between pronoun and antecedent.
5. Determine and select inappropriate pronoun shifts.
6. Determine and select clear pronoun references.
7. Determine and select pronoun case forms (e.g., subjective, objective, possessive).
8. Evaluate the correct use of adjectives and adverbs.
9. Determine and select appropriate comparative and superlative degree forms.
10. Demonstrate command of standard spelling conventions.
11. Demonstrate command of standard punctuation.
12. Demonstrate command of standard capitalization.

## COMPETENCY 1 KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE STRUCTURE

1. Evaluate correct placement of modifiers.
2. Apply knowledge of parallelism, including parallel expressions for parallel ideas.
3. Apply knowledge of a variety of effective structures (i.e., recognizing fragments, comma splices, run-on sentences, syntax errors).
4. Determine patterns of organization in a written passage (i.e., modes of rhetoric).

### 1. Evaluate the placement of modifiers

A misplaced modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that is improperly separated from the word it modifies or describes. The separation causes an error that makes the sentence confusing.

For example, in the sentence below, the modifier is misplaced.

***Yolanda realized too late that it was a mistake to walk the neighbor's dog in high heels.***

In this sentence, the phrase *in high heels* modifies *the neighbor's dog*. The dog is not in high heels; Yolanda is.

To correct the error, rearrange the sentence so the modifying clause is close to the word it should modify.

***Yolanda realized too late that she shouldn't have worn high heels while walking the neighbor's dog.***

This is how misplaced modifiers are presented on the exam.

**DIRECTIONS:** Choose the sentence in which the modifiers are correctly placed.

- A. While attending the political town hall, new laws were opposed by demonstrators that would negatively impact the city.
- B. New laws were opposed by demonstrators while attending a town hall that would negatively impact the city.
- C. While attending the political town hall, demonstrators staged a sit-in to oppose a new law that would negatively impact the city.
- D. New laws that would negatively impact the city were opposed while attending a political town hall by demonstrators.

#### **Correct Answer: C**

In this test item, the modifier is *while attending the political town hall*. Notice that in choice C, the modifier *while attending the political town hall* is modifying the demonstrators.

In choice A, *while attending the town hall* is modifying *new laws*. That makes it sound like the new laws are attending the town hall.

In choice B, *while attending the town hall* is modifying *negatively impact the city*, making it sound like the town hall would negatively impact the city.

In choice D, *while attending the town hall* is modifying *new laws*, making it sound like the new laws are attending the town hall.



**TIP**

Place the modifier next to the portion of the sentence it is modifying.

The demonstrators are attending the town hall.

While attending the political town hall, demonstrators staged a sit-in to oppose a new law that would negatively impact the city.

**2. Apply knowledge of parallelism, including parallel expressions for parallel ideas**

Parallelism refers to the same pattern of words or repetition of a chosen grammatical form within a sentence. Parallel structure is when a sentence follows the same grammatical pattern.

For example, read the sentences below and notice the difference in the pattern in the lists.

- The superintendent on the job was delighted to see that the crew had finished the job, cleaned up the site, and some were organizing the tools.
- The superintendent on the job was delighted to see that the crew had finished the job, cleaned up the site, and organized the tools.

Notice the list in the second sentence is parallel; the verbs are all past tense and followed by nouns.

This is how parallelism is presented on the exam.

**DIRECTIONS:** Choose the correct word or phrase that provides parallel structure to the sentence.

After the party, we cleaned the patio, swept the stairs, washed the dishes, and \_\_\_\_\_ to bed.

- A. were finally able to go
- B. and after went
- C. was going
- D. went

The correct answer is **went**. In the list in the sentence, there are past tense verbs followed by noun(s). *Were finally able to*, *and after went*, and *was going*, breaks the parallel structure in the sentence. The word *went* is most appropriate.



**TIP**

In grammar, using the least amount of words to make a point is always best. If there is an answer choice that is shorter than the others and if it works in the sentence, it is most likely your answer.

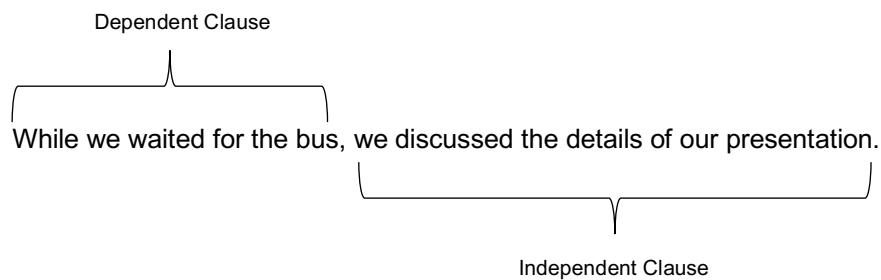
### 3. Apply knowledge of a variety of effective structures

This English language skills assessment of the General Knowledge Test requires you to understand sentence structure and to have the ability to identify and correct fragments, comma splices, run-on sentences, and syntax errors.

The best approach to this part of the assessment is to understand the difference between independent clauses and dependent clauses.

- An **independent clause** contains a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought. An independent clause can stand on its own as a sentence.
- A **dependent clause** contains a noun and a verb but does not express a complete thought. A dependent clause cannot be a sentence on its own.

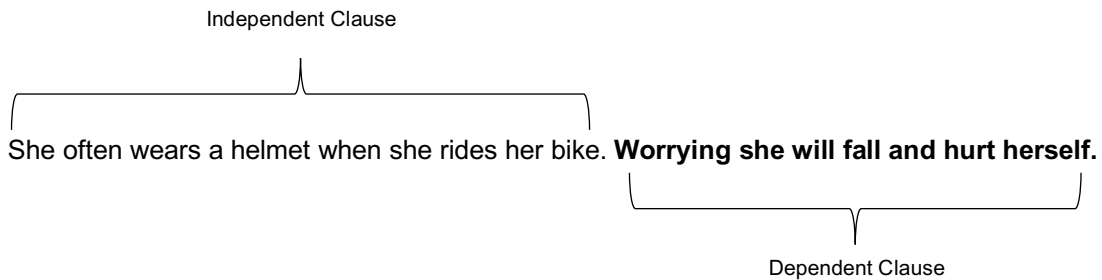
For example, the sentence below contains an independent clause and a dependent clause punctuated appropriately with a comma.



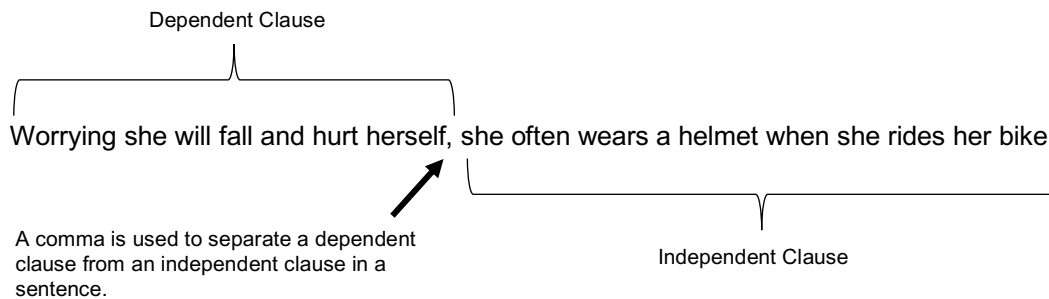
#### FRAGMENTS

Dependent clauses, without the independent clause in a sentence, are fragments. Fragments are not sentences.

For example, in the sentences below, the bolded portions are fragments and are not correct.



#### Correction:



Notice that you can take the fragment and add it to the independent clause as long as you place a comma, separating them appropriately.

This is how fragments will be presented on the exam.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

She is constantly checking her work. Making sure she didn't make any mistakes.

- A. work, making
- B. work; making
- C. work making
- D. No change is necessary

**Correct answer:** She is constantly checking her work, making sure she didn't make any mistakes.

In this case, *Making sure she didn't make any mistakes* is a fragment; it is just the verb phrase. Therefore, it cannot be a sentence on its own as it is originally presented, making the option "No change is necessary" incorrect.

The semicolon is incorrect because semicolons separate two independent clauses (this will be covered in the punctuation section of the book). The clause *making sure she didn't make any mistakes* is not an independent clause.

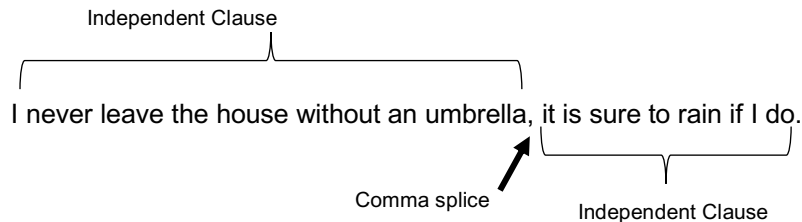
Having no punctuation between the two clauses makes the sentence to be a run-on and, therefore, incorrect.

### COMMA SPLICE

When commas are incorrectly used to separate two independent clauses, it is called a comma splice. On the exam, you will be required to identify and correct comma splices.

Commas are used to separate an independent from a dependent clause. Commas are NOT used to separate two independent clauses.

The sentence below is an example of a comma splice.



This is how the comma splice will be presented on the exam.

**DIRECTIONS:** Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

The teacher stood confidently to accept her award, among those in the audience were some of her former students.

- A. award. Among
- B. but among
- C. and among
- D. No change is necessary

**Correct answer:** The teacher stood confidently to accept her award. Among those in the audience were some of her former students.

This sentence contains a comma splice, making "No change is necessary" incorrect.

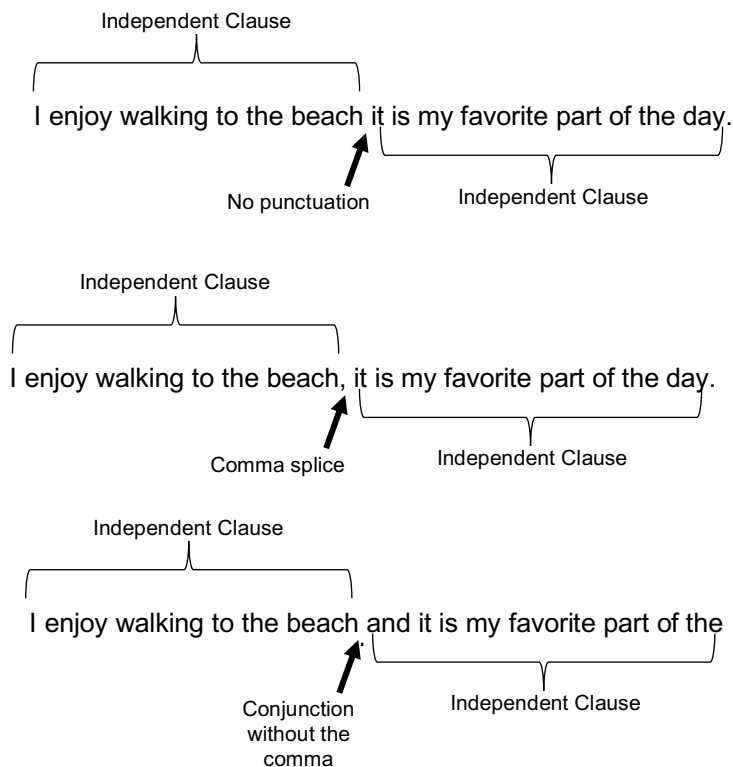
Removing the comma and inserting either the conjunction *but* or the conjunction *and* causes the sentence to be a run-on.

### RUN-ONS

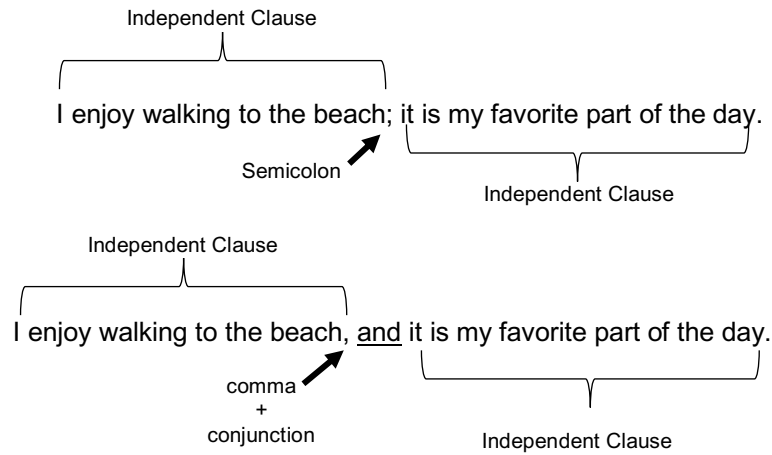
A run-on sentence occurs when two or more independent clauses are not joined correctly. There are several ways to punctuate two or more independent clauses in a sentence. A comma splice, as mentioned above, will cause a sentence to be a run-on.

For example, the sentence below is a run-on sentence, and in all cases, it is punctuated incorrectly.

#### Incorrect



**Correct**



**NOTE:** A comma + a conjunction can separate two independent clauses. However, a comma alone or a conjunction alone cannot separate two independent clauses.

This is how run-ons will be presented on the exam.

**DIRECTIONS:** Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

The book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is part of the high school English curriculum but many schools have banned the book.

- A. The book: *To*
- B. *Mockingbird* is
- C. curriculum, but
- D. No change is necessary

**Correct Answer: C**

This sentence, as it is presented, is a run-on sentence because there is no comma before the conjunction, *but*. This sentence contains two independent clauses:

4. The book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is part of the high school English curriculum
5. Many schools have banned the book.

Notice how both clauses can stand on their own as sentences. They are independent clauses; therefore, the conjunction by itself is incorrect. There needs to be a comma + conjunction as indicated in choice C.

**It is helpful to remember the coordinating conjunctions.**

While conjunctions link words and groups of words, subordinating and coordinating conjunctions connect clauses (a group of words containing a subject and a verb).

## Coordinating Conjunctions

These are the seven words that combine two sentences (independent clauses that can stand alone as they state a complete thought) with the addition of a comma. These are the **ONLY** seven words used to combine two sentences using a comma.

The 7 coordinating conjunctions (**FANBOYS**):

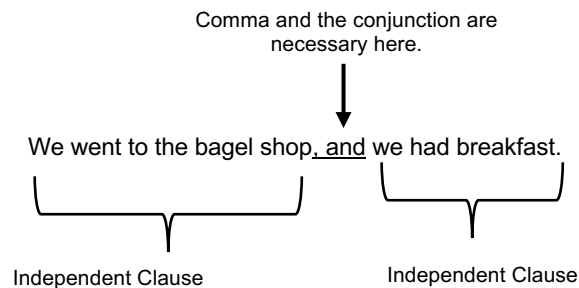
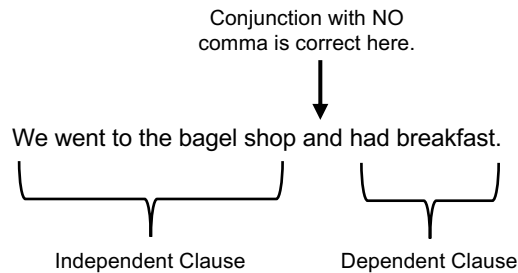
1. for      **F**
2. and     **A**
3. nor     **N**
4. but     **B**
5. or      **O**
6. yet     **Y**
7. so      **S**

### IMPORTANT

A conjunction alone can separate an independent clause and a dependent clause.

A comma + a conjunction must be used when separating two independent clauses.

### Example - Independent Clause with a Dependent Clause



## Subordinating Conjunctions

These are all the other conjunctions used to combine clauses.

These commonly include:

- Since
- Because
- Although
- While
- Due
- Though
- Whenever
- When
- If
- Therefore

### Quick Tip!

**YES**, you can start sentences with subordinating conjunctions.

- **While** I was watching TV, I did my homework.
- **Since** it was cold, I wore a jacket.
- **Whenever** I go to Canada, I stop in Seattle.
- **Because** I was on the committee, I voted on the issue.

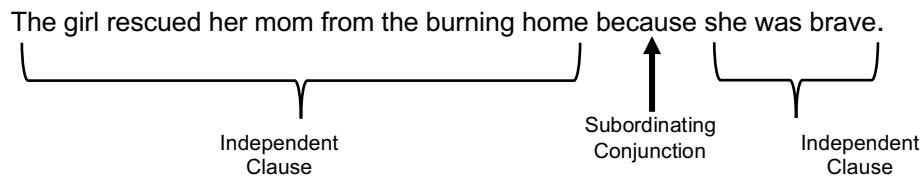
\*When a subordinating conjunction starts a sentence, a comma will always follow.

Grammatically, there are two patterns for these subordinating conjunctions:

### Pattern 1

Independent Clause + Subordinating Conjunction + Clause (independent, dependent, or prepositional)

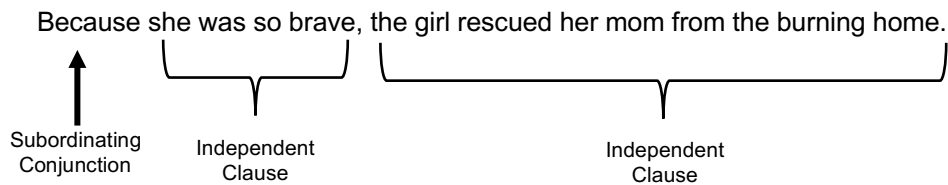
**Example:**



### Pattern 2

Subordinating Conjunction + Clause (independent, dependent, or prepositional) + Comma + Independent Clause

**Example:**



This is how you will see subordinating conjunctions presented on the exam.

**DIRECTIONS:** Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

He rarely slept because he was always traveling through different time zones.  
A B C

- A. rare
- B. slept, because
- C. threw
- D. No change is necessary

**Correct Answer: D**

Because is a subordinating conjunction and does not need a comma before it. The way the sentence is presented originally is correct. Therefore, no change is necessary.

## SYNTAX ERRORS

Syntax errors make the writing confusing and difficult to read. Syntax errors include the errors previously discussed—misplaced modifiers, errors in parallelism, fragments, comma splices, and run-ons. To be successful on the FTCE General Knowledge ELS subtest, you must be able to quickly spot errors in syntax presented in a variety of ways. One of the most important ways to spot errors in syntax is to identify the independent clause(s) and dependent clause(s) and determine the proper punctuation.

### TIP



People will often decide on answer choices depending on whether or not the sentence sounds correct. That is not the best approach. Because we often speak incorrectly, going with what we think sounds correct is often not grammatically correct. Instead, it is best to locate the independent clauses and dependent clauses and use the rules discussed above to guide you.

This is how syntax will be presented on the exam.

**DIRECTIONS:** Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

He claims to be an environmentalist as he expressed in his writing, but that contradicts how he lives in  
A B C  
real life.

- E. environmentalist, as
- F. writing but
- G. live in
- H. No change is necessary

**Correct Answer: A**

This sentence has a dependent clause, *as he expressed in his writing*, after the independent clause, *he claims to be an environmentalist*. As it is presented, it is incorrect because a comma is needed to separate the independent clause from the dependent clause. In answer choice A, the comma is used correctly.

In the underlined portion for B, the comma plus conjunction is correct because *He claims to be an environmentalist, as expressed in his work* is an independent clause, and *that contradicts how he lives in real life* is also an independent clause. Therefore, the sentence needs both the comma and the conjunction.

Finally, there is nothing to correct in the underlined portion for C.

#### 4. Determine patterns of organization in a written passage (modes of rhetoric)

Determining patterns of organization in a written passage requires you to understand modes of rhetoric. Rhetoric refers to the study and uses of written, spoken and visual language. Test questions on this part of the exam will often require you to read a small passage and determine the best placement of a sentence or the best arrangement of the sentences. All of the sentences are grammatically correct. However, you will be tasked with making sure the organization of information makes sense.

Most standardized grammar assessments test rhetorical skills.

This is how modes of rhetoric will be presented on the exam.

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the entire passage carefully and then answer the question.

(1) In the Roaring Twenties, a booming economy made way for an era of mass consumerism. (2) This spending was short lived, however. (3) The stock market crash in 1929 spurred the onset of The Great Depression that lasted until 1939.

Which is the best placement for the following sentence?

*For the first time, people had disposable income.*

- A. Immediately before sentence 1
- B. Immediately after sentence 1
- C. Immediately after sentence 2
- D. Immediately after sentence 3

**Correct Answer: B**

The sentence should be placed after sentence 1 because sentence 1 talks about consumerism. Placing the sentence in any other place would make the sentence organization confusing.

## COMPETENCY 1 PRACTICE PROBLEMS

- DIRECTIONS: Choose the sentence in which the modifiers are correctly placed.
  - While away on vacation, Jill's neighbors helped her by collecting her mail.
  - Jill's neighbors collected her mail while she was away on vacation.
  - While away on vacation, Jill's mail was collected by her neighbors.
  - Jill's neighbors, while away on vacation, collected her mail.
- DIRECTIONS: Choose the correct word or phrase that provides parallel structure to the sentence.

Before we were able to leave for the amusement park, we had to be sure we cleaned the house, boarded the dog, and \_\_\_\_\_.

  - got gas for the car
  - went to the gas station
  - fueled the car
  - put gas in the car
- DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

We couldn't understand why she was upset. She had everything she wanted: a beautiful home, exciting

A

B

job, and a family that loved her.

C

- was upset, she
  - wanted. A
  - loving family
  - No change is necessary.
- DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

During the celebration, the teacher allowed her students to eat candy, this was a treat for all their hard work.

    - candy; this
    - candy: this
    - candy and
    - No change is necessary



DIRECTIONS: Read the entire passage carefully and then answer the questions.

(1) Young people are staying married longer than their parents, or at least that's what a recent study says. (2) According to the study, people are waiting later in life to get married, which has resulted in fewer divorces and longer marriages. (3) Many sociologists attribute this decrease in divorce to the fact that people are waiting to tie the knot until after they are established with degrees and careers. (4) More research is needed to support these findings; however, this study is good news for those who still believe in happily ever after.

9. Where would be the best placement for the sentence below?

*In fact, in the U.S., divorce is down from 50% to 43%.*

- A. After sentence 1
- B. After sentence 2
- C. After sentence 3
- D. After sentence 4

10. Which of the following sentences can be deleted without impacting the overall meaning of the paragraph?

- A. Sentence 1
- B. Sentence 2
- C. Sentence 3
- D. Sentence 4

Number	Answer	Explanation
1.	B	This is a modifier question, so be sure the modifier is connected to the appropriate person or thing it is modifying. In this case, <i>while away on vacation</i> should be modifying Jill. In answer choices A and D, the phrase <i>while away on vacation</i> is modifying neighbors. In answer choice D, the phrase <i>while away on vacation</i> is modifying the mail.
2.	C	For the sentence to be parallel, the verbs and the nouns in the list should match. In this case, we have <i>cleaned</i> (past tense) and <i>boarded</i> (past tense). Also, in this case, a noun follows the past tense verb. The only answer that fits is <i>fueled</i> (past tense verb) the car (noun). All the other choices are unparallel.
3.	C	This question is testing parallel structure. The last item in the list at the end of the sentence is not parallel to the rest of the list. In this case we have <i>beautiful home</i> (adjective and noun), <i>exciting job</i> (adjective and noun), and <i>a family that loved her</i> (noun, verb and pronoun). The correction to this would be to switch out the last portion of the list to match the adjective and noun progression in the sentence. In this case, <i>loving</i> (adjective) and <i>family</i> (noun) are parallel.  The period is used correctly in answer choice A, and the colon is also used correctly in answer choice B.
4.	A	This item presents a comma splice—there are two independent clauses incorrectly separated by a comma. Therefore, answer choice D is incorrect. The correct ways to separate two independent clauses is by using:  <b>a semicolon:</b> The teacher allowed her students to eat <u>candy</u> ; <u>this</u> was a treat for all their hard work.  <b>a period followed by a capital letter:</b> The teacher allowed her students to eat <u>candy</u> . <u>This</u> was a treat for all their hard work.  <b>Using a comma plus a coordinating conjunction.</b> The teacher allowed her students to eat <u>candy</u> , <u>and this</u> was a treat for all their hard work.
5.	B	This is a comma splice—two independent clauses incorrectly separated by a comma. The correct answer is B because the comma plus the conjunction is required here. Answer A just has the conjunction, which is incorrect. Answer choice C has a semicolon with the conjunction. Semicolons should never be followed by coordinating conjunctions—for, and, nor, but, or, yet, or so.
6.	A	This is a comma splice question. The comma is incorrectly separating two independent clauses. The semicolon is needed.
7.	D	The sentence is correct as it is. The comma + conjunction is correctly separating two independent clauses.
8.	B	In this case there are two independent clauses: <i>The team members wanted to do something nice for their coach, and they got him a gift certificate to his</i>

		<i>favorite restaurant</i> . Therefore, the comma conjunction (comma + so) is needed here.
9.	B	This is a rhetoric question, and it requires you to determine the best placement for the sentence given. The sentence, <i>In fact, divorce is down in the U.S. from 50% to 43%</i> , is best placed after sentence 2 to reinforce the introductory sentence of the paragraph.
10.	C	The only sentence that can be removed without making the paragraph confusing is sentence 3. Read sentences 1, 2, and 4 together, and you will see that the paragraph still makes sense. If any of the other sentences are removed, the paragraph does not make sense.



This is how determining the meaning of unknown words will be presented on the exam.

DIRECTIONS: Read the question and select the best response.

Which of the following means the same as the underlined word in the given sentence?

His austere appearance matched his serious approach to how he conducted his class.

- A. pleasant
- B. steadfast
- C. desperate
- D. stern

**Correct Answer: D**

The word *matched* indicates a synonymous relationship between the underlined word and the following words or phrases. The synonym used is serious. The answer choice closest to serious is *stern*.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the most effective word or phrase within the context suggested by the sentence.

Jane may not have been the best student; however, she become quite \_\_\_\_\_ at business.

- A. adept
- B. unskilled
- C. overzealous
- D. amateurish

**Correct Answer: A**

*Adept* means skilled. The term *however* indicates the opposite. In this case, Jane lacks skills as a student, but has skills in business. Therefore, answers B and D can be eliminated. *Overzealous* means fanatical or obsessive, which doesn't relate to the sentence.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the most effective word or phrase within the context suggested by the sentence.

The world completely changed with the \_\_\_\_\_ of the cell phone.

- A. anniversary
- B. advent
- C. anomaly
- D. apex

**Correct Answer: B**

This item uses an inference clue. There are no synonyms or antonyms. However, because we know the world changed when cellphones were invented, *advent*, which means arrival, is the best answer choice. *Anniversary* is incorrect because the world did not change on the anniversary of the invention of the cellphone. *Anomaly* means irregularity, which is incorrect. *Apex* means summit or peak. In this case, it does not fit.

## 2. Determine and select the correct use of commonly confused words, misused words, and phrases.

Most standardized English exams will test your ability to distinguish among commonly confused words. These are usually homophones—words that sound the same but that are spelled differently and that have different meanings. Below are some commonly confused words used on English language skills assessments.

**accept** - to agree to receive or do  
**except** - not including

**adverse** - unfavorable, harmful  
**averse** - strongly disliking; opposed

**advice** - recommendations about what to do  
**advise** - to recommend something

**affect** - to change or make a difference to  
**effect** - a result; to bring about a result

**aisle** - a passage between rows of seats  
**isle** - an island

**all together** - all in one place, all at once  
**altogether** - completely; on the whole

**along** - moving or extending horizontally on  
**a long** - referring to something of great length

**aloud** - out loud  
**allowed** - permitted

**altar** - a sacred table in a church  
**alter** - to change

**amoral** - not concerned with right or wrong  
**immoral** - not following accepted moral standards

**assent** - agreement, approval  
**ascent** - the action of rising or climbing up

**bare** - naked; to uncover  
**bear** - to carry; to put up with

**bated** - in phrase *with bated breath*; in great suspense  
**baited** - with bait attached or inserted

**censure** - to criticize strongly  
**ensor** - to ban parts of a book or film

**cereal** - a breakfast food  
**serial** - happening in a series

**coarse** - rough  
**course** - a direction; a school subject; part of a meal

**complement** - an addition that improves  
**compliment** - to praise or express approval; an admiring remark

**council** - a group of people who manage or advise  
**counsel** - advice; to advise

**elicit** - to draw out a reply or reaction  
**illicit** - not allowed by law or rules

**ensure** - to make certain that something will happen  
**insure** - to provide compensation

**foreword** - an introduction to a book  
**forward** - onwards, ahead

**principal** - most important; the head of a school  
**principle** - a fundamental rule or belief

**sight** - the ability to see  
**site** - a location

**stationary** - not moving  
**stationery** - writing materials

**allusion** - indirect reference  
**illusion** - false idea

**allude** - to make indirect reference to  
**elude** - to avoid

**capital** - major city, wealth, assets  
**capitol** - government building

**conscience** - sense of morality  
**conscious** - awake, aware

**eminent** - prominent, important  
**imminent** - about to happen

**everyday** - routine, common  
**every day** - each day, all the day

This is how commonly confused words and misused words and phrases will be presented on the exam.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

He wasn't sure how the drug would effect his patient, but he went through with the trial anyway.

A

B

C

- A. affect
- B. patient but
- C. trial: anyway
- D. No change is necessary

**Correct Answer: A**

*Affect* and *effect* are commonly confused words. *Affect* is the verb, and *effect* is the noun. In this case, the drug may affect (v) the patient. In the underlined portion for B, the comma is used correctly. The underlined portion for C is correct as well.

TIP! When you see the word affect or effect, slow down and determine if the sentence calls for a noun or a verb. Then make your choice.

Remember, *effect* is a noun, so it will be preceded by *the* or *an*.

Example: *The effect* of the drug made me sleepy.

Example: *An effect* of the drug is drowsiness.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the correct word or phrase that provides parallel structure to the sentence.

The storm was \_\_\_\_\_. All we could do was head to the basement and wait until it was over.

- A. eminent
- B. imminent
- C. prominent
- D. blatant

**Correct Answer: B**

*Eminent* and *imminent* are commonly confused words. *Imminent* is the correct choice because it means looming or about to happen. *Eminent* means well-known, which is the same as prominent, so both answer choices A and C should be eliminated. *Blatant* means deliberate, which doesn't fit here.

### 3. Determine diction and tone appropriate to a given audience.

Diction and tone are stylistic word choices authors use to convey an attitude or overall feeling in writing. Diction and tone are used in different ways depending on the audience. That's why audience awareness is key when answering these types of questions on the exam. For example, you would write differently to your best friend than you would to a potential employer.

In these questions, you will be given a scenario, and you will be asked to choose the best response. For these questions, always go with the most positive, professional language.

This is how diction and tone will be presented on the exam.

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the question and select the best response.

At a job interview, a candidate is asked to describe her ideal working environment. Which of the following responses would be the most appropriate?

- A. I am so excited to get to speak with you. It's so hard to get an interview these days.
- B. My ideal working environment is one where I can use my talents effectively for the company while also learning new skills.
- C. From past experience, I can tell you I'm smarter than most people, so my ideal environment is working on my own.
- D. I have goals related to work and goals related to life. My ideal working environment would consider those two things.

**Correct Answer: B**

The only response that answers the question in a professional, objective manner is answer choice B. Answer A is very informal and not appropriate for a job interview. Answer C is not aligned to the audience because a potential employer wants to hear a candidate say she would be a team player. Answer choice D doesn't even answer the interview question.

If the candidate is aware of her audience, she should use the response in answer choice B.

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the question and select the best response.

A teacher needs to inform parents of a new dress code policy the school will be adopting. Which of the following would be the most appropriate conclusion to a letter home to parents about the policy?

- A. We all know that most kids dress inappropriately, so your help in this matter is greatly appreciated.
- B. Finally, the school is doing something about all of the inappropriately dressed students.
- C. I don't think it's a big deal how students dress, but the school obviously does.
- D. Let me know if you have any questions about the policy, and it will be my pleasure to clarify.

**Correct Answer: D**

If the teacher is aware of her audience, answer choice D is the most appropriate choice. Answer choice A generalizes all children and not every parent thinks most students dress inappropriately. Answer choice B is subjective and is not an appropriate tone to set with parents. Answer choice C is too informal and does not set an appropriate tone with parents.

## COMPETENCY 2 PRACTICE PROBLEMS

1. DIRECTIONS: Read the question and select the best response.

Which of the following means the same as the underlined words in the given sentence?

She was oblivious to the long-term consequences of her actions. She was only concerned about the immediate rewards.

- A. aware
- B. careless
- C. forgetful
- D. alert

2. DIRECTIONS: Read the question and select the best response.

Which of the following means the same as the underlined words in the given sentence?

The scientists attribute the surge in illness to a bacterium found in the water in the southeast region of the Philippines.

- A. characterize
- B. denounce
- C. link
- D. communicate

3. DIRECTIONS: Choose the most effective word or phrase within the context suggested by the sentence.

Her \_\_\_\_\_ toward her boss was obvious; she rolled her eyes whenever he entered the room.

- A. antipathy
- B. apathy
- C. candor
- D. conduct

4. DIRECTIONS: Read the question and select the best response.

Which of the following means the same as the underlined words in the given sentence?

Because his family was rich and powerful, he had a lot of clout when it came to local policy.

- A. stature
- B. interest
- C. emotion
- D. influence

5. DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

Jane has been positively affected by the surge in tourism, and her business is booming.

A                      B                      C

- A. positive
- B. effected
- C. tourism and
- D. No change is necessary

6. DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

The students were not aloud to play on the playground because there was no supervision.

A

B

C

- A. allowed
- B. playground, because
- C. their
- D. No change is necessary
7. DIRECTIONS: Choose the most effective word or phrase within the context suggested by the sentence.
- The police were trying to \_\_\_\_\_ information from the suspect, but he wasn't giving up a thing.
- A. elicit
- B. illicit
- C. conjecture
- D. suppress
8. DIRECTIONS: Choose the most effective word or phrase within the context suggested by the sentence.
- The medical condition was an anomaly; rarely had the doctors seen these symptoms.
- A. regularity
- B. ordinary
- C. abnormality
- D. indiscretion
9. A student is writing an essay to be reviewed by a committee for an academic scholarship. Which of the following concluding sentences to the essay would be most appropriate for this task?
- A. I've always succeeded in my life, so giving me this scholarship is a good investment.
- B. I'm grateful for the opportunity to apply for this scholarship and will continue to help others along the way.
- C. I'm not sure I am worthy of this scholarship, but I promise to use the funds wisely.
- D. This scholarship would help me in so many ways, like allow me to pay for my dorm and books for classes.
10. An employee is resigning her position at her current job to move to another company and a better position. Which of the following would be the most appropriate way to conclude her resignation letter?
- A. I loved working here. Hopefully our paths will cross again.
- B. I hope I can count on you for a good reference since I worked so hard for this company.
- C. Thank you for the opportunity to work at this organization.
- D. You have taught me so much. I will take that with me.

Number	Answer	Explanation
1.	B	This example uses a simile or restatement clue. In relation to the word in question, <i>oblivious</i> , the phrase, <i>she was only concerned about the immediate rewards</i> , indicates that she didn't care about long-term goals. Therefore, B is the best answer here.
2.	C	This example uses an inference clue. The scientists are figuring out the cause of the illness. Therefore, they <i>link</i> the surge to a bacterium. The word <i>attributed</i> can also mean characterize, as in answer A. However, in this context, <i>link</i> is the better definition.
3.	A	This example uses a restatement clue. The phrase <i>she rolled her eyes whenever he entered the room</i> reinforces the negative feelings she has toward her boss. Antipathy means a strong feeling of dislike. It also has the prefix <i>anti</i> , which means against. This is negative like the restatement clue. Apathy is means indifference. Candor means openness. Conduct means behavior.
4.	D	This example uses an inference clue. People do not <i>stature</i> , interest, or emotion <i>policy</i> . Rather, they <i>influence</i> policy. Sometimes it helps to replace the underlined word with the answer choices and determine which one makes the most sense.
5.	D	This example assesses your knowledge of commonly confused words <i>affect</i> and <i>effect</i> . Remember, <i>affect</i> is the verb, and <i>effect</i> is the noun. The <i>ed</i> ending belongs with verbs as in <i>walked</i> , <i>talked</i> , <i>stopped</i> . Therefore, <i>affected</i> is used correctly in this sentence as it is. When checking the other underlined portions, <i>positively</i> is the correct use of the adverb for the verb <i>affected</i> . In addition, the comma + conjunction is used correctly in sentence.
6.	A	This example assesses your knowledge of commonly confused words <i>aloud</i> and <i>allowed</i> . <i>Aloud</i> means out loud, and <i>allowed</i> means permitted. In this case, <i>aloud</i> is used incorrectly and should be changed to <i>allowed</i> .
7.	A	This example assesses your knowledge of commonly confused words <i>elicit</i> and <i>illicit</i> . <i>Elicit</i> means to draw out, and that is what the police were trying to do. <i>Illicit</i> means illegal. While the suspect may have done something illegal or illicit, it is the wrong choice for the underlined portion of the sentence. <i>Conjecture</i> means an estimation. <i>Suppress</i> means to subdue.
8.	C	This example uses a simile or restatement clue. After the semicolon, the phrase <i>rarely had the doctors seen these symptoms</i> indicates that anomaly means rare. Something that is rare is also <i>abnormal</i> .
9.	B	Answer B is the most positive and professional ending for the intended audience.
10.	C	Resignation letters should be succinct and free of emotion. Answer C is the best for the intended audience.

## COMPETENCY 3 KNOWLEDGE OF STANDARD ENGLISH CONVENTIONS

1. Determine and select standard verb forms.
2. Determine and select inappropriate shifts in verb tense.
3. Determine and select agreement between subject and verb.
4. Determine and select agreement between pronoun and antecedent.
5. Determine and select inappropriate pronoun shifts.
6. Determine and select clear pronoun references.
7. Determine and select pronoun case forms (e.g., subjective, objective, possessive).
8. Evaluate the correct use of adjectives and adverbs.
9. Determine and select appropriate comparative and superlative degree forms.
10. Demonstrate command of standard spelling conventions.
11. Demonstrate command of standard punctuation.
12. Demonstrate command of standard capitalization.

### 1. Determine and select standard verb forms.

There are 5 main forms of verbs: simple or base form, third-person singular present (also called s form), past tense form, *ing* form, and past participle form.

Verb form	Definition	Example
Simple or base form	The simple form of the verb is the main verb in the present tense and the past tense.	I <b>danced</b> at the wedding. The boys <b>walk</b> to school. I <b>buy</b> clothes at my favorite store.
Third person singular present (s form)	Most verbs in English form the third-person singular by adding -s or -es to the simple or base form of the verb. These actions are in the present tense.	She <b>dances</b> after school. The boy <b>walks</b> to school. The child <b>watches</b> TV.
Past tense form	This is the basic past tense of the verb. For regular verbs, add -ed to the root form of the verb (or just -d if the root form already ends in an e). However, some past tense verbs are irregular and do not have -ed attached to the end.	She <b>danced</b> in yesterday's competition. The kids <b>watched</b> the ballgame last night. The contest <b>was</b> held in the auditorium. The works <b>built</b> the house quickly.
Ing form	A verb ending in <i>-ing</i> is either a present participle or a gerund. These two forms look identical. The difference is in their functions in a sentence.	<b>Present Participle:</b> He is <b>painting</b> in class. She was <b>dancing</b> in the street. I see the kids <b>playing</b> in the yard.
		<b>Gerund – When the verb is the subject and functions as a noun.</b> <b>Painting</b> is a fun activity. <b>Eating</b> people is a bad idea. <b>Walking</b> to school is easier than driving.
Past participle form	The past participle is also used with <i>had</i> or <i>have</i> to form the past perfect tense.	I <b>have driven</b> that route before. She <b>had tried</b> to call him before the party. I <b>have completed</b> my homework.

Typically, verb form is assessed on the exam as questions that test your ability to spot and correct errors in incorrect form use.

This is how verb forms will be presented on the exam.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

She was unable to pick up her prescription after work. She drive as fast as she could and still didn't make it.

A

B

C

- A. were
- B. drove
- C. could, and
- D. No change is necessary.

**Correct Answer: B**

In this case, the verb *drive* is not the proper verb form. This sentence is past tense. Therefore, *drive* should be changed to *drove*.

## 2. Determine and select inappropriate shifts in verb tense.

Writing should maintain verb tense throughout a sentence or paragraph. For example, if a sentence is present tense, it should not suddenly shift to past tense. Similarly, if a sentence or paragraph begins in past tense, it should remain in past tense throughout the entire work.

Typically, verb form is assessed on the exam as questions that test your ability to spot and correct errors in maintaining consistent verb tense throughout the sentence or paragraph.

The following is how verb forms will be presented on the exam.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

She drove quickly and still didn't make it. The professor locks her out because she was five minutes late.

A

B

C

- A. quick
- B. locked
- C. out because
- D. No change is necessary.

**Correct Answer: B**

In this case, the verb *locks* does not match the verb tense of the rest of the sentence. This sentence is past tense. Therefore, *lock* should be changed to *locked*. The adverb *quickly* is used correctly. For answer choice C, you should not use a comma before the word *because*.

### 3. Determine and select agreement between subject and verb.

Subject verb agreement simply means the subject and verb must agree in number. This means both need to be singular or both need to be plural.

For example, the sentence below has subject verb agreement.

One person (singular)  
┌───┐  
Diane walks to the store.  
    ↑  
singular verb

Two people (plural)  
┌───┐  
Diane and Jane walk to the store.  
          ↑  
plural verb

This is easy enough. However, test makers will often test this skill by using a sneaky prepositional phrase so that the subject's form, either singular or plural, may be difficult to determine. Look at the test question below.

**DIRECTIONS:** Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

The use of cellphones and other recording devices are banned from the museum.

A

B

C

- A. cellphones, and
- B. is
- C. out because
- D. No change is necessary.

**Correct Answer: B**

In this case, the subject is *the use* (singular). The phrase *of cellphones and other recording devices* is also plural, but it is not your subject. Instead, it is a prepositional phrase. You can essentially remove the prepositional phrase and the sentence would read:

The use **is** prohibited.

Watch out for those sneaky prepositional phrases.

Another way this is presented is when using neither and nor, and either and or. These words make the subject of the sentence singular, as in the following example.

Neither Jane nor Diane walks to the store.

In this case the neither separates each subject as one.



The following test question is how you will see this concept presented on the exam.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

The board of directors had their meeting and decided to postpone the event until after the holidays.  
A B C

- A. its
- B. meeting, and
- C. Holidays
- D. No change is necessary.

**Correct Answer: A**

In this case, there is a sneaky prepositional phrase and collective noun to navigate. *The board* is a collective noun and therefore singular. To have pronoun antecedent agreement, the pronoun *its* is appropriate for the singular board. The phrase *of directors* is a prepositional phrase and can be taken out. Then the sentence would read: *The board had its meeting*. This is correct.

In answer B, there is no need for the comma + conjunction because the *and* is only separating a dependent and independent clause, so the conjunction *and* by itself is correct. Finally, the term *holidays* is not a proper noun and does not need to be capitalized.

#### TIP



Whenever you see any one of the pronouns *their*, *them* or *they*, slow down and check the subject of the sentence. This is a classic grammar assessment trick, where the test makers check your ability to maintain pronoun antecedent agreement and pronoun number case. If your subject is singular, you should use a singular pronoun or change the subject to plural as in the case below.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

A student should only go to their locker before school, during lunch, or after school.

- A. Students should only go their locker
- B. A student should go to their lockers
- C. Students should only go to their lockers
- D. No change is necessary

**Correct Answer: C**

The way the sentence is written, the subject is singular (a student), and the pronoun is plural (their). Therefore, the best thing to do is change the subject to plural (students). Also, because we have multiple students, there are multiple lockers. Therefore, *locker* should be changed to a plural noun as well. Otherwise it reads as though there are multiple students using one locker.

## 6. Determine and select clear pronoun references.

Sometimes it is unclear what antecedent the pronoun is referring to. In that case, you will be tasked to identify that in a sentence. For example, in the sentence below, it is unclear what the pronoun is referencing.

My **sister** brought her **dog** on the road trip and **she** chewed the seats.

There are two antecedents in this sentence and therefore it is not clear who the pronoun **she** is referring to. Is **she** referring to the sister or the dog? The correction is below.

My **sister** brought her **dog** on the road trip, and **the dog** chewed the seats.

**7. Determine and select pronoun case forms (e.g., subjective, objective, possessive).**

Just like verbs, pronouns have cases. Pronouns can be either subjective (occurring in the subject of the sentence), objective (occurring as the direct object in the predicate of the sentence), or possessive (showing ownership).

Below are examples of each pronoun case.

**Subjective Pronoun Case happens in the subject of the sentence.**

Subject pronouns
I
he
she
they
we
you
who

*She* went to the store to buy milk.  
↑  
*She* is the subject of the sentence and therefore a subjective pronoun.

*They* rode bikes to school.  
↑  
*They* is the subject of the sentence and therefore a subjective pronoun.

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**Objective Pronoun Case**

Object pronouns
me
him
her
them
us
you
whom

Jane went to the store to buy *him* some clothes.  
↑  
The pronoun *him* is the direct object of the sentence and therefore the objective pronoun.

Sally came over to the house to see *me*.  
↑  
The pronoun *me* is the direct object of the sentence and therefore the objective pronoun.

---

## Possessive Pronoun Case

Possessive pronouns
my
his
her
their
our
your
whose

She went to get **her** clothes from the house.



The pronoun **her** is the possessive pronoun.

We realized that it was **their** car in the parking lot.



The pronoun **their** is the possessive pronoun.

On the exam, pronoun case can be tricky because the test makers will often intermingle subject and object pronouns.

The following test questions is how you will see this concept presented on the exam.

**DIRECTIONS:** Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

I was excited when the university professor came over to speak with my son and I.

A

B

C

- A. University
- B. come
- C. and me.
- D. No change is necessary

### Correct Answer: C

A lot of people have difficulty spotting this error. In fact, many people think, erroneously, that using the pronoun *I* in this way is grammatically correct. However, *I* is a subject pronoun. In the case above, *I* is used incorrectly as a direct object pronoun. The appropriate pronoun should be *me*.

**TIP:** If you are ever confused as to which pronoun to use, take the other person out of it. In this case, the sentence as is would read:

*I was excited when the university professor came over to see I.*

However, the sentence should read:

*I was excited when the university professor came over to see me.*

Another way you may see this presented on the exam is by switching the subject pronouns with object pronouns as shown in the following example.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

Her and I were very close when we were younger, but we grew apart when I moved away.

A B

C

- A. She
- B. and me
- C. younger but
- D. No change is necessary

**Correct Answer: A**

In this case, *her*, an object pronoun is used, erroneously, as a subject pronoun. If I take out the *I* in the sentence, it reads:

**Her** was very close...

It should be:

**She** was very close...

Finally, the test makers will also test your skills in using *who* vs. *whom* as shown in the following example.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

My mother said I can go to the play with whoever I want.

- A. with whomever
- B. with whosever
- C. with who
- D. No change is necessary

**Correct Answer: A**

Remember, *who* is a subject pronoun and *whom* is an object pronoun. In this case, the subject is *I*, as in "I can go with..." Therefore, an object pronoun (*whomever*) is needed.

**TIP:** If you are stuck on *who* vs. *whom*, remember that *whom* follows the prepositions *with* and *of*. So, if you see *with* or *of*, *whom* is the correct pronoun.

Another trick is to answer the question. In the case above, the speaker can go with whomever because she can go with *him*, *her* or *them*. These are all direct object pronouns and match *whom*.

## 8. Evaluate the correct use of adjectives and adverbs.

**Adjectives** modify or describe nouns or pronouns. They are either attributive adjectives (before the noun) or predicate adjectives (after a verb of being):

**EXAMPLE:** The brave girl rescued her mom from the burning home. She is a hero.

In this case, the adjective—brave—is describing the noun—girl.

**EXAMPLE:** The girl is so brave. She looks brave, too.

In both cases, the adjective—brave—is describing the noun—girl.

**Adverbs** modify or describe **verbs, adverbs or adjectives**.

**EXAMPLE:** The girl bravely rescued her mom from the burning home. She acted heroically.

Many times, adding an **ly**, **ally** or **i + ly** to an adjective, forms an adverb:

- brave + ly = bravely  
She **bravely** walked into battle.
- beautiful + ly = beautifully  
She **wrote** her name **beautifully** on the paper.
- gentle + ly = gently (drop the e)  
She **pets** the sick dog **gently** on the head.
- easy + i + ly = easily (drop the y and add the i to words that end in y)  
She **worked** through the math problems **easily**.

Of course, there are exceptions to the **ly** rule. Some adjectives and adverbs cannot be morphed by adding or taking away endings. Some examples are:

Common adjective-adverb combinations: notice that there are some common exceptions to the **-ly** pattern. Also, notice the verb participle forms acting as adjectives.

Adjectives	Adverbs
good	well
fast, quick	fast, quickly
slow, deliberate, lethargic	slowly, deliberately, lethargically
tired	tiredly
needless	needlessly
sick, sickly	(sickly can be a verb or adj.; never an adverb)
super, superb	superbly
responsible	responsibly
drunk, drunken	drunkenly
near, far	nearly, far

You will see adjectives and adverbs assessed many ways on the exam. Below is an example.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

She was moving along slow because she had not driven down that road before.

- A. slow, because
- B. slowly because
- C. slowly, because
- D. No change is necessary

**Correct Answer: B**

In this case, the adverb is needed because it is describing the verb *moving*. Also, there is no comma needed between *slowly* and *because*.

### 9. Determine and select appropriate comparative and superlative degree forms.

Comparatives and superlatives compare things. Comparatives compare two things while superlatives compare three or more things.

For example, the word better is a comparative. It compares only two things.

Steve is **better** than Joe at baseball.

The word *tallest* is a superlative. It compares three or more things.

Out of everyone in the class, Jody is the **tallest**.

When answering these questions, pay attention to words like *more* and *most* and *better* and *best*. People often use these incorrectly in everyday speech.

The following example is how comparatives and superlatives will be presented on the test.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

Out of all the hundreds of dresses in the store, Kelly liked the red sequence dress more.

- A. most
- B. better
- C. more better
- D. No change is necessary

**Correct Answer: A**

Because there are more than two dresses being compared, the comparative *more* is incorrect and should be replaced with the superlative *most*.

It is also important to be aware that when comparing two things, use the subjective pronoun NOT the objective pronoun.

For example, in the sentence below, the use of the pronoun *me* is incorrect. Instead of *me*, it should be *I*.

**Incorrect:** John is taller than **me**.

**Correct** John is taller than **I**.

The reason you do not use *me* is because the sentence is really saying:

John is taller than **I am tall**.

### 10. Demonstrate command of standard spelling conventions.

There are an infinite amount of spelling patterns that could be presented on the exam. Spelling is sometimes assessed by using commonly confused words, like in the example question below.

**DIRECTIONS:** Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

We were looking forward to receiving the funds, but we need some advise on how to spend them.

- A. forwards                      A                                      B                                      C
- B. funds but
- C. advice
- D. No change is necessary

**Correct Answer: C**

The correct word here is *advice*, the noun. *Advise*, as used in the original sentence, is a verb.

### 11. Demonstrate command of standard punctuation.

Standard punctuation is assessed many ways on the exam. It is best to understand commas, semicolons, apostrophes, and colons.

#### Commas ( , )

No other punctuation mark is misused as often as the comma. Its use in items in a series is also hotly debated right now. The traditional Oxford comma separates items in a series of three items or more, including the item before the coordinating conjunction.

#### **Example:**

- I went to the store to buy milk, eggs, cheese, and bread.
- I went to the store to buy milk, eggs, cheese and bread.

In the first example, the Oxford comma is used before *and* in the sentence; in the second example, the Oxford comma is not used before *and* in the sentence. It is important to understand that you will not be asked on a grammar test to choose between using the Oxford comma and not using the Oxford comma because both are considered correct. The choice is a stylistic one.





The following sample question is how the test assesses colons.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

We were waiting on several of our items such as: books, scissors, and pencils.

- A. items: books, scissors, and pencils.
- B. Items like our: books, scissors, and pencils.
- C. items, books, scissors, and pencils.
- D. No change is necessary

**Correct Answer: A**

Correct use of a colon requires an independent clause before the colon and a list or definition after the colon. The phrase *such as* should be removed from the sentence. Doing so creates an independent clause before the colon.

## Apostrophes ( ' )

There are two main reasons to use apostrophes:

1. To form a contraction such as do + not = don't. In this case, the apostrophe replaces or stands in for the letter that is taken out when the words are combined.
2. To show possession. When the noun is singular or plural but does not end in **s**, add '**s** to show possession. When the noun is singular or plural but does end in **s**, add the apostrophe **after the s** to show possession.

Below are some examples for using the apostrophe to show possession.

### **Correct Apostrophe Usage Examples:**

- Please bring **Lisa's** book when you come to class tomorrow.

**Lisa** is a singular proper noun (there is only one Lisa here); therefore, the '**s** is appropriate.

- We will be going to the **women's** soccer tournament on Wednesday.

**Women** is a plural noun that does NOT end in s; therefore, the '**s** is appropriate.

- Please bring all the **girls'** books when you come to class tomorrow.

**Girls** is a plural noun that ends in s; therefore, the **s'** is appropriate.

- We will be going to the **ladies'** luncheon on Friday.

**Ladies** is plural and ends in -s, and the ladies own the luncheon. Therefore, the **s'** is appropriate.

On the exam, apostrophes can be tricky because they are assessed in ways with which you may not be familiar, like in the sample question below.

**DIRECTIONS:** Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

I am not excited about tomorrows meeting.

- A. tomorrow
- B. tomorrow's
- C. tomorrows'
- D. No change is necessary

**Correct Answer: B**

In cases like this, the meeting belongs to tomorrow. Therefore, it should be **tomorrow's meeting**.

## 12. Demonstrate command of standard capitalization.

Capitalization for standard English follows a few basic rules.

### Rule One: Always capitalize the first word of a sentence.

The key here is to recognize where the sentences start and stop. For example, semicolons connect two sentences together as one; therefore, they do not need capitalization except at the beginning (unless the second sentence starts with a proper noun).

#### Example:

- Capitalization can be tricky; there are several rules.

Notice that the **C** in *capitalization* is capitalized, but the **t** in *there* is not.

### Rule Two: Always capitalize proper nouns and their titles as well as the abbreviations of these.

Names of specific people and places are capitalized.

#### Examples:

- During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln was president of the United States.

*Civil War* is a specific name of a war. *President* is the title of *Abraham Lincoln* in the subject. However, *president* is a common noun in the predicate.

- Today, Congress passed a law banning congressional pay raises even though the Senate had to vote on it three times.

*Congress* and the *Senate* are, in this case, names.

### Rule Three: Capitalize the main words in a multiword title.

Here, the emphasis is also on what **not** to capitalize: articles (other than the first word), conjunctions, and prepositions.

#### Examples:

He works at the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington, DC.

Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* is one of my favorite collections.

Notice that the articles and prepositions—is, in, of, and—are not capitalized in the title.

On the test, you will often be assessed on your ability to identify when NOT to capitalize, like in the example question below.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

I wait every year for the Fall; it's my favorite holiday.

- A. fall; it's
- B. Fall, its
- C. fall, its
- D. No change is necessary

#### Correct Answer: A

The seasons are not capitalized unless they are attached to a proper noun as in the annual Fall Festival or Winter Dance.

Also, in this question, *it's* is the proper conjunction for *it is*. Finally, the semicolon is used correctly, separating an independent clause and dependent clause.

## COMPETENCY 3 PRACTICE PROBLEMS

1. DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

Jose loved to play baseball so much he drives 5 hours to see almost every game.

- A. drive
- B. drived
- C. drove
- D. No change is necessary.

2. DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

Neither the team nor the coach has any idea how to get to the away game.

A                      B                      C

- A. or
- B. have
- C. getting
- D. No change is necessary

3. DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

Sally was excited to see her sister, Diane, as she was leaving town.

A                      B                      C

- A. were
- B. sister Diane
- C. Sally
- D. No change is necessary

4. DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

The team decided they would help out during the fundraiser and wash cars.

- A. it
- B. he or she
- C. them
- D. No change is necessary

5. DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

Aunt Judy was happy to see that my mom was sitting with my sister and me.

A

B

C

- A. were  
B. mom  
C. I  
D. No change is necessary
6. DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

I wasn't sure who to ask about the accident because it was a sensitive subject.

A

B

C

- A. whom  
B. accident, because  
C. Subject  
D. No change is necessary
7. DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

Out of all the teachers in the school, students loved Ms. Jackson more.

A. better

B. more better

C. most

D. No change is necessary

8. DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

I always wondered why she did so much better in school than me.

A. then me.

B. then I.

C. than I.

D. No change is necessary

9. DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary."

I haven't seen uncle Dave in fourteen years. I wondered if he has changed.

A. hasn't

B. Uncle Dave

C. have

D. No change is necessary.

10. DIRECTIONS: Choose the option that corrects an error in the underlined portion(s). If no error exists, choose "No change is necessary"

She wasn't sure how her husband would feel about the new car; he doesn't like surprises.

- A. car, he
- B. car, because
- C. car; and
- D. No change is necessary

Number	Answer	Explanation
1.	C	In this case the tenses in the sentence should match. The sentence starts in the past tense and then jumps to the present. Therefore, <i>drives</i> should be changed to <i>drove</i> .
2.	D	No change is necessary because <i>the neither</i> in this sentence makes the team (a collective singular noun) and the coach (singular noun) separate subjects. Therefore, the team <i>has</i> no idea and the coach <i>has</i> no idea.
3.	C	The way the sentence is written, it is unclear who the antecedent for the pronoun <i>she</i> is; it could be <i>Sally</i> or <i>Diane</i> . To make that clear, the correction would be to replace <i>she</i> with <i>Sally</i> , so we know Sally is leaving town.
4.	A	<i>The team</i> is a collective singular noun. Therefore, <i>it</i> is the appropriate pronoun.
5.	D	All of the underlined portions are correct. The verb <i>was</i> is used correctly with <i>Judy</i> . The underlined phrase, <i>my mom</i> , is correct. Choice B is incorrect because if <i>my</i> is removed, <i>mom</i> becomes a name and a proper noun, so it would need to be capitalized. Finally, the objective pronoun <i>me</i> is the correct pronoun. If you were to take <i>my sister</i> out of the sentence, it would read: Aunt Judy was happy to see that my mom was sitting with my and <b><i>me</i></b> .
6.	A	<i>Who</i> is a subjective pronoun, but in this case, it is being used as the objective pronoun. The subject of the sentence is <i>I</i> . Therefore, <i>who</i> should be replaced with <i>whom</i> . In addition, if you were to answer the question <i>whom I should ask</i> , you would answer with <i>I should ask him</i> , or <i>her</i> , or <i>them</i> —all direct objects.
7.	C	Because there are more than three teachers being compared, the comparative <i>more</i> is incorrect and should be replaced with the superlative <i>most</i> .
8.	C	In this case, <i>there</i> is a comparison. So, the sentence is really saying, she did so much better <i>than I did</i> . Watch out the words <i>then</i> and <i>than</i> . Test makers will often use them in questions. <i>Then</i> indicates time; <i>than</i> indicates a comparison.
9.	B	In this case Uncle Dave is a proper noun. If the sentence said, I haven't seen my uncle Dave, uncle would be lowercase.
10.	D	The semicolon is used correctly here as it separates two independent clauses. Answer choice A is incorrect because it has a comma splice. Answer choice B is incorrect because there is a comma before because. Answer choice C is incorrect because you do not use semicolons with coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS)