

Grammar Cheat Sheet (All the Rules on Two Pages)

Read contractions as TWO words

It's = it is Who's = who is

Should OF, Could OFG, Would OF (INCORRECT)

Should HAVE, Could HAVE, Would HAVE (CORRECT)

Comma Pattern is 0 or 2! Always check “0” comma answer choices first. Then check if a blanket comma (2 commas) works. Simply cross off the words in between the commas and see if you are left with a sentence that makes sense. Think of the words between the commas as words in parenthesis.

Example of 2 commas (blanket comma):

Our coach, whom we honored at last night's banquet, is retiring after 25 years.

[Blanket comma works here because the words in between are non-essential to the meaning of the sentence.

Also note the “whom” usage, not “who”]

Yes, you can use 2 commas around “however”

I will not post my political views on Facebook. I am, however, a firm believer of the First Amendment.

We also see “however” after a semi-colon:

I don't share my political views on social media; however, I am a firm believer of the First Amendment.

Example of 0 commas (“continuous flow”)

The coach for the girls' basketball team was honored last night at a school banquet. (CORRECT)

The coach, for the girls' basketball team, was honored last night at a school banquet. (INCORRECT)

[NO commas here because 'for the girls' basketball team' is essential to the meaning of this sentence.]

We like 1 comma when separating a sentence from a phrase.

Although I enjoyed chicken for years, I became a vegetarian when I was a college student. (Phrase, Sentence)

Some of my favorite dishes are vegetarian, such as mushroom burgers, black bean tacos and eggplant parmesan.

[Sentence, Phrase....also note the listing comma in the phrase. Do NOT put a comma after “such as”!]

Be careful for **Dangling Modifiers**: A phrase that modifies **incorrectly** a sentence

A hungry girl, Susan went to the store, a big place. (CORRECT)

A big place, Susan went to the story. (INCORRECT)

Don't forget that comma + AND/comma + BUT join two sentences. A **semicolon** also joins two sentences.

No commas around “self” words

I myself designed our new kitchen. (CORRECT)

He himself took full responsibility. (CORRECT)

I, myself, designed our new kitchen.

(INCORRECT)

Comma needed between two adjectives, but often NO comma if sentence contains a color.

The man wore a charcoal gray suit. (CORRECT) The man wore a charcoal, gray suit.

(INCORRECT)

Often NO comma separating names (unless name is not essential to understanding the sentence)

Team leader Riley Crane explained the plan (CORRECT)

Team leader, Riley Crane, explained the plan (INCORRECT because name is essential to understanding the sentence)



Apostrophes: ('s) is used for singular nouns: **Mike's hat**. One apostrophe (') is used for plural nouns that end in s: **The guys' night out**. ('s) for plural nouns that do not end with an s (women, children): **The women's room is closed**. Do NOT use an apostrophe if a verb follows an apostrophe: **My best friend's agreed to try out for the school play**. (INCORRECT!)

ITS and WHOSE are Possessive. Use the words "belonging to" or think ownership.
The chair has a hole in **its** cushion. (CORRECT) **Whose** lunch is on the table? (CORRECT)

There must be a full sentence before a colon and a phrase OR sentence after the colon:
The soccer player was offered three full scholarships to: University of Alabama, Wisconsin and Michigan. (INCORRECT)
The soccer player was offered three full scholarships to these colleges: **Tulane, U of Wisconsin and Elon**. (CORRECT) Colons are also used to provide a definition or more information. For more information usage put in the words, "why, because" to confirm colon is correct. She laughed: **the joke was funny**. (why..because it was funny)

Then/Than

Use *than* to compare

Use *then* to show sequence of events

Diction: Effect (result)/Affect (to influence)

Irregular Verbs:

Had or has begun/Began (CORRECT)

Begun or had began (INCORRECT)

Helping Verbs – Is, are, was, were, has, have = indicate subject/verb. STRIP prepositional phrases/interrupters BEFORE helping verb.

Shortest is Sweetest! When you scan the answer choices, keep your eye out for the shorter answers!

Exception: If three answer choices contain a pronoun (he, they, it, etc.), and the fourth contains a specific noun, pick the noun.

THAT/WHICH: No comma before THAT/Comma or preposition before WHICH

KNOW these key prepositions: **OF, AT, FOR, FROM, WITH, BY, IN, ON, BETWEEN, ALONG**.
Cross off the preposition and the words that follow. STOP when you get to the verb.

Adverb modifies a verb and usually contains "ly": Joe walked **carefully** on the icy street. (CAREFULLY modifies the verb - walked)

Adjective modifies a noun: Joe walked carefully on the **icy** street. (ICY modifies the noun – street)

Parallelism/Comparison questions often contain the pronouns THAT or THOSE in the answer choices. THAN within a question indicates a comparison is needed.

That = singular

Those = plural

Little Tricks:

Who = **He** Whom = **Him**

Can't remember if plural? Put "he" or "they" before the verb: **He walks, They walk**

Don't know if a word is a noun? Put "the" or "a" before the word: **The dog...a table**

Don't know if a word is a verb? Put "to" before the word: **to go...to run**

Hate answers choices with the word BEING

Comma needed between two adjectives, but often **NO** comma if sentence contains a color:

If a question is asking for a comparison, the answer choice will probably contain a "that" or a "those"



