



### Overview:

- The ACT English section is composed of 75 multiple-choice questions. Time = 45 min.
- The SAT English section is composed of 44 multiple-choice questions. Time = 35 min.
- The ACT English section presents you with five passages, each with various sentences or portions of sentences underlined. The SAT English section presents you with 4 passages and charts and graphs will be included within some of the passages.
- The English questions can be grouped into “rhetoric” (style questions) and “mechanics”(grammar questions). (The charts/graphs on the SAT are considered rhetoric questions)
- The rhetoric questions ask that you rearrange paragraphs, insert or delete various sentences, choose the most logical transitions throughout the passage, and analyze how data connects to a passage. Rhetoric questions focus on the cohesiveness and fluidity of the passage as a whole.
- Mechanics questions assess one’s understanding of punctuation, sentence composition and sentence structure.
- The passages tend to get more difficult as you progress.

### Strategy:

- Complete grammar questions **FIRST** within a passage. Skip rhetoric questions (circle so you know what questions you have not answered). Next, go back and skim the passage thinking about structure and general idea of passage. After skimming, answer all saved rhetorical questions.
- Always look at mechanics **answer choices** **FIRST**. What is the question asking? Is it a Punctuation, pronoun, tense, subject/verb, parallelism or other question? Then go to the passage and look at underlined phrase/words/sentence.
- **SHORT AND SWEET!**
  - Always check the shortest answer first
  - Look at the answer with OMIT- omitting words makes the sentence shorter
- Transitions are really RHETORIC (style) questions. Skip transition questions and answer once you skim the passage and are answering the other rhetoric questions. Transitions connect ideas together.
- Underline the key word or phrases in STYLE questions.
- As you skim passage (intro, topic sentences, conclusion) think what the general focus of the passage.



# Mechanics (Grammar)

## Punctuation Rules:

The key to punctuation perfection is to constantly ask yourself, “Where is the sentence?” If it is not a sentence, is it a phrase? Then, ask yourself, “HOW can I turn it into a sentence?” Punctuation questions are a THIRD of the grammar section!

**Comma List** – not on the ACT unless a question has two adjectives together that need a comma separating them.

- *The young, immature student skipped school.*

**Conjunction** - If you have a conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) separating two complete sentences, then you need a comma before the conjunction. If you don’t have a complete sentence on both sides of the conjunction, NO comma is required

- *The movie was hilarious, and the tickets were on sale*
- *She can ride a bike to work, or she can take the bus*

**Semi-colon** -Semicolons act like a period by separating two (complete!) sentences.

- *The hour is over; it is time to put down your pencils and stop working*

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**Comma Sandwich** - Two commas are used to surround, or “sandwich” clauses, phrases, or words that are not essential to the sentence’s meaning. You can remove everything between the “sandwiched” commas

- *Jack, who likes to read, won the essay contest– “Jack won the essay contest” still makes sense*

**ONE comma rule:** Beginning and Ending with Phrases (and Clauses) - One comma is used to separate a phrase or clause from the beginning or ending of a sentence.

- An introductory phrase or clause must modify the subject
- Clauses or phrases that come at the end of the sentence must modify the object.
- *She went to see her grandma, a nice lady*– A nice lady (one comma) modifies her grandma
- *A clumsy girl, Sarah didn’t like wearing heels*– A clumsy girl (one comma) modifies Sarah

**Colon:** A colon separates a sentence from either a phrase or another sentence

Colons are used to indicate that an explanation is to follow.

- *I have been working since I was 16: I need to pay for college and wanted to start saving early. (sentence:sentence)*
- *The town reminded me of my childhood vacations: both were on the beach (sentence:phrase)*

Colons are used to indicate a definition or example.

- *I have several favorite games: Pictionary, Rummy, Monopoly. (example)*
- *This house has everything I need: two bedrooms, a backyard, and a garage.*

**Dash:** A dash is a strong comma. Dashes often “blanket” a phrase on the ACT/SAT. A dash can never be paired with a comma.

### Apostrophes:

- With singular nouns not ending in s, add an apostrophe and "s" (*girl's book*)
- With plural nouns ending in s, add an apostrophe after the "s" (*girls' books*)
- With plural nouns not ending in "s", add an apostrophe and "s" (*women's books*)
- MEMORIZE THESE EXCEPTIONS:

It's = it is	its=ownership
Who's=who is	whose=ownership
You're= you are	your=ownership
There's= there is	theirs=ownership

### Important to Remember:

- Can't use a comma to separate two complete sentences!
- "Blanketed" in commas= can remove everything in between (same for dashes)
- One comma indicates a modification question - a phrase at the beginning or end that modifies the sentence. *A pretty girl, Julie went to the dance.* A pretty girl (one comma) modifies Julie. *Joe went to the store, a big place.* A big place (one comma before phrase) modifies store.
- **Tests favor choices with NO COMMAS or TWO COMMAS.** Look at these answer choices first!

### Tense AND Subject/Verb Agreement

- Keep tenses the SAME throughout a paragraph. In order to answer TENSE questions you MUST read a sentence or two above and below and circle the other tenses. Then, keep consistent! For subject/verb questions you MUST think "Strip phrases." 90% of the time a prepositional phrase will come between the SUBJECT and VERB. This prepositional phrase will make a verb sound correct, but it will NOT be correct. When you strip the prepositional phrase you WILL hear the correct verb agreement.
- Tense and Subject/Verb are grouped together because you should always look at the answer choices first. When you see any type of verb within the answer choices, say, "Oohhhh! I must look at the sentence above, and I must strip!"

### Clauses (also called relative pronouns)

- **Which** = Dressed. Must have a comma or preposition before the clause. (WHICH is considered a non-essential clause)
- **That** = Naked. NEVER have a comma or preposition before "that." (THAT is considered an essential clause)
- **Who vs. Whom** = Can go either way – naked or dressed – depending on the sentence. You should be able to substitute he/she/they for "who" and him/her/them for "whom." Always use "who" before a verb and "whom" after a preposition.

**Pronouns** = Agreement questions = Plural/Singular and Vague Pronouns that need to be replaced with a noun. Be specific. We do not like vague pronouns! 3 pronouns and a noun? Pick the noun.

**Parallelism** - using elements in sentences that are grammatically similar or identical in structure, sound, and meaning. Walking by the store AND running to the gym.

## Rhetoric (Style)

For Style questions skim passage to find the general focus and structure of the subject being discussed.

Two strategies:

- Complete all grammar questions per passage and THEN go back and skim the passage, answering STYLE questions
  - Complete all grammar questions per paragraph and THEN answer style questions. Move to next paragraph and repeat.
- Focus on TITLE
  - Circle key words in the style questions
  - If a question asks about DETAIL, SPECIFIC, ILLUSTRATION, then pick the most concrete, descriptive answer. Answer choice is often the longest answer. Transition questions are considered STYLE questions because you must go back to sentences above to understand the transition that is needed

**Types of organization style/structure questions:**

- Determining if a word, sentence, or paragraph should be **added or deleted** from the passage.
  - *“The writer is considering adding the following clause at the end of the preceding sentence...”*
- Picking a sentence or phrase that **adds the best detail** to a paragraph.
  - *“The writer wishes to add a sentence that adds a visual image...”* (Trick for this type of question: pick the answer choice that is the most specific.)
- Determining the **purpose** of the passage (main idea).
  - *“Suppose the writer had intended to write a brief essay about... Would this essay fulfill that purpose?”* (Will be the last question of the 15 question passage.)
- Examining which sentence best fits the **style** of the rest of the essay.
  - *“Given that all of the choices are true... which of the following...”*
- Ordering sentences and paragraphs. Paragraph order usually appears at the end of the passage.
  - *“Which of the following sequences of sentences makes Paragraph 2 most logical?”*
- Including and changing **transitions** between sentences and paragraphs.
  - *“Which of the following statements, if added here, would provide the most effective transition from Paragraph 3 to Paragraph 4?”*
- (Yes/No Questions) – Many of the STYLE questions are worded in a Yes/No style:
  - *“If the writer wanted to conclude the essay with the following sentence, should the sentence be included?”*

(Yes will be two of the choices and No will be two of the choices. First decide “Yes or No” and then look at the choices.)