



The Writing and Language Test

The Basics

- 35 Minutes
- 4 Passages (One with a graph)
- 44 Questions

Goal: Find and fix the errors in different writing samples

First and Always

- Check what's being changed in the answer choices
- Use Process of Elimination
- Keep things consistent

What is changing in the answers?

Verb-Tense

EXAMPLE:

listens, listened, will be listening, has been listening, is listening,

- Check the subject first
- Subjects and verbs must be consistent with other verbs in the sentence and in the surrounding sentences

Transitions

EXAMPLE:

therefore, conversely, subsequently, accordingly, simultaneously, consequently

- Decide whether the two ideas being connected agree or contrast
- POE wrong direction
- Keep things consistent

Pronouns

EXAMPLE:

they, them, those, she, her, his

- Check the consistency with the noun it refers to
- Make sure your answer is as PRECISE as possible
- If it could refer to more than one thing, pronouns must be eliminated.

Vocabulary

EXAMPLE:

solitude, isolation, withdraw, alone

- Check if the word given is consistent with ideas in sentence
- Eliminate any words with opposite meanings
- Must provide the most precise meaning in context

What is changing in the answers?

Concision

EXAMPLE:

Maria and Janie are kind of alike, and enjoy riding their bike to school.

- a) similar
- b) similarly alike
- c) alike and similar
- d) **DELETE THE UNDERLINED PORTION**

- whenever there are short and long answers with the same meaning, it is testing concision.
- Try "Delete the Underlined Portion" FIRST to check if it is grammatically correct without.

Modifiers

EXAMPLE:

Wrong: A popular guy, his classmates offer sympathy when Ferris stays home sick.

vs.

Correct: A popular guy, Ferris has the sympathy of all his classmates when he stays home sick.

- whenever word order changes, but still provides similar meanings, it is testing modifiers.
- **The modifier ALWAYS needs to be right next to the noun it refers to!**

Parallelism

EXAMPLE:

Molly loves walking, runs, and sprinting.

- a) ran
- b) running
- c) **is running**

- Whenever there is a list of two or more things with different forms it is testing parallelism.
- Every item in a list should be in the same form to be consistent.

Comparison

EXAMPLE:

Wrong: I prefer the novels of Charles Dickens to Mark Twain.

vs.

Correct: I prefer the novels of Charles Dickens to the novels of Mark Twain.

- Remember everything must be consistent.
- Comparisons must be parallel and made between two things of the same type.

Remember:

When the words are changing in the answer choices, make sure those words are

- **Consistent:** verbs, nouns, and pronouns all agree
- **Precise:** clearly communicates ideas and events
- **Concise:** When everything else is correct, the shortest answer choice is correct!

PUNCTUATION RULES

Stick to the strategy!

What is changing in the answer choices?

Does this punctuation need to be here?

* On the SAT it must have a specific role in the sentence. Otherwise, just let the words do their thing!

Punctuation Types:

Stop

Period (.)

Semi-colon (;)

Comma (,) + FANBOYS

Question (?)

Exclamation (!)

Half-Stop

Colon (:)

Long dash (-)

Go

Comma (,)

No Punctuation

The Vertical Line Test

You have heard of this with math, but it can be an effective tool for grammar as well. Draw a line where the punctuation is. Read up to the vertical line and decide if it is a complete idea, then read after the vertical line to decide if that is a complete idea. Decide if it's STOP, HALF-STOP, or GO punctuation. Use Process of Elimination.

Stop Punctuation:

Stop punctuation can ONLY separate two complete ideas. All stop punctuation can replace each other. The main thing to remember is with commas, they must be accompanied by FANBOYS (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, and So) to remain a complete idea.

Half-Stop Punctuation:

Half-Stop punctuation must be preceded by a complete idea. The second half does not need to be a complete idea, but it can be. Half-stop punctuation can be used in place of stop punctuation, as long as the first section of your vertical line test is a complete idea.

Go Punctuation:

Go punctuation can separate anything EXCEPT two complete ideas. It can be used in place of half-stop, but cannot be used in place of stop punctuation.

STOP PUNCTUATION: SPECIFICS

Stick to the strategy!

USE THE VERTICAL LINE TEST

Does this punctuation need to be here?

* On the SAT it must have a specific role in the sentence. Otherwise, just let the words do their thing!

STOP Punctuation: can ONLY link two complete ideas.

- Stella studied all night. ← - Complete Idea -
- Stella studied all night. | She ended up doing really well on the exam. ← - Two Complete Ideas -

Important

The nice thing about punctuation is that you can use any punctuation from the same list (Ex: STOP) to accomplish the same goal.

- Stella studied all night; she ended up doing really well on the exam. - Semi-Colon -
- Stella studied all night, and she ended up doing really well on the exam. - Comma + FANBOYS -

Practice:

- Mario wanted to go to the lake, and camp on the shore.
 - NO CHANGE
 - lake and
 - lake.
 - lake; and
- Mary left her basketball at practice; her mom was furious.
 - NO CHANGE
 - practice, but her
 - practice, her
 - practice her
- Have you read the new Stephen King book; I heard it's pretty good.
 - NO CHANGE
 - book. I
 - book, I
 - book? I
- Look out for, rocks and snakes on this trail.
 - NO CHANGE
 - for rocks and snakes on
 - for rocks, and snakes on
 - for rocks and snakes, on

HALF-STOP PUNCTUATION: SPECIFICS

Stick to the strategy!

USE THE VERTICAL LINE TEST

Does this punctuation need to be here?

* On the SAT it must have a specific role in the sentence. Otherwise, just let the words do their thing!

HALF-STOP Punctuation: MUST be preceded by a complete idea.

- Stella studied all night: all three sections. - One Complete Idea -
- Stella wanted to do well - high scores in all subjects.

Important

The nice thing about HALF-STOP punctuation is that you can use it as STOP punctuation!
BE CAREFUL: You cannot use stop punctuation for HALF-STOP or GO.

- Stella studied all night: she ended up doing really well on the exam. - Colon -
- Stella studied all night - she ended up doing really well on the exam. - Long Dash -

Practice:

- My dog - ate my homework.
 - NO CHANGE
 - dog ate
 - dog, ate
 - dog. Ate
- Don't ask me about that sensitive subject.
 - NO CHANGE
 - that: sensitive
 - that, it is a sensitive
 - that. Sensitive
- My piano was out of tune: so, I took it to the shop.
 - NO CHANGE
 - tune:
 - tune, so
 - tune so
- The watering hole attracts all sorts of animals: zebras, elephants, and lions.
 - NO CHANGE
 - animals zebras
 - animals, zebras
 - animals; zebras
- I ate all of my vegetables. Except for the broccoli.
 - NO CHANGE
 - vegetables; except
 - vegetables except
 - vegetables - except

GO PUNCTUATION: SPECIFICS

Stick to the strategy!

USE THE VERTICAL LINE TEST

Does this punctuation need to be here?

* On the SAT it must have a specific role in the sentence. Otherwise, just let the words do their thing!

GO Punctuation: Separates anything EXCEPT two complete ideas

- Stella studied all night, all three sections. - One Complete Idea -
- Stella wanted to do well, high scores in all subjects.

Important

The nice thing about GO punctuation is that you can use it as STOP or HALF-STOP punctuation! BE CAREFUL: You cannot use stop OR half-stop for GO.

- Stella studied all night, she ended up doing really well on the exam. - Comma -
- Stella studied all night and she ended up doing really well on the exam. - No Punctuation -

Practice:

- My aunt hosts Thanksgiving every year she always burns the turkey.
 - NO CHANGE
 - year, she
 - year because she
 - year, and she
- Mark took the test in April again in July.
 - NO CHANGE
 - April. Again
 - April, and again
 - April and again
- The pack tumbled over the edge. I watched it fall.
 - NO CHANGE
 - edge, and I
 - edge I
 - edge, I
- Priscilla mounted the horse, and rode into the sunset.
 - NO CHANGE
 - horse. And
 - horse.
 - horse and
- A pained howl erupted from the garage, I didn't stop running.
 - NO CHANGE
 - garage; and
 - garage, but
 - garage and

COMMA SPECIFICS

Stick to the strategy!

USE THE VERTICAL LINE TEST

Does this punctuation need to be here?

* On the SAT it must have a specific role in the sentence. Otherwise, just let the words do their thing!

IF YOU CAN'T IDENTIFY A REASON TO USE A COMMA, DON'T USE IT!

The only reasons used on the exam:

Examples:

Stop Punctuation with FANBOYS

Stella studied all night, and she ended up doing very well on her exam.

GO Punctuation to separate incomplete ideas

Stella studied for the math test, all three sections.

In a sentence with unnecessary information

Stella, at the age of fifteen, was able to visit Paris .

In a list of 3 or more things

Stella studied for the spelling, reading, and math tests she has this week.

After introductory clause, phrase, or modifier

Although Stella is tall, she is afraid of heights.

Strategies

Stick to the strategies!

Does this punctuation need to be here?

* **PUNCTUATION MUST HAVE PURPOSE**



USE THE VERTICAL LINE TEST

Is the first part a complete sentence? Is the second part? THAT'S ALL YOU NEED TO DETERMINE AN ANSWER

What is changing in the answer choices?

- Verb-Tense** Check subject and other verbs in sentence
- Punctuation** Vertical Line Test! Find the PURPOSE, and determine whether you need STOP, HALF-STOP, or GO.
- Transitions** Do ideas agree or contrast? Use Process of Elimination
- Pronouns** Check consistency with noun it refers to, determine if a proper noun is needed instead (this is usually correct for CONCISENESS)
- Vocabulary** Determine if a change is needed. Eliminate opposite words.
- Concision** Do all the answers mean the same thing? Which one is the most clear and precise?
- Modifiers** ALWAYS choose the answer with the noun next to the Modifier.
- Comparison** When comparing two things, the words used must be as parallel and consistent as possible.
- Parallelism** Everything must be CONSISTENT to be correct.