



Complete

SAT[®] & ACT[®]

Grammar Rules

e-book

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I. Apostrophes

A. Apostrophes with Nouns

Apostrophes make nouns possessive.

To make **singular** noun possessive, add *apostrophe* + *-s*.

- The **boy's** coat = the coat belonging to the boy

This rule holds true even when a singular noun ends in *-s*.

- The **dress's** buttons = the buttons on the dress

To make a **plural** noun possessive, add *-s* + *apostrophe*.

- The **books'** pages = the pages of the books

If the singular form of a noun ends in *-s*, add *-es* + *apostrophe* to the make the plural form possessive.

- The **dresses'** buttons = the buttons on the dresses

Some nouns are irregular—that is, their plural versions are not formed by adding *-s* to their singular forms, e.g., *foot*, *feet*; *goose*, *geese*; *child*, *children*.

To form the possessive of such nouns, add *apostrophe* + *-s*. Because the plural form is already different from the singular form, the two types of possessives can be easily distinguished.

- The **goose's** feathers = the feathers of the goose (sing.)
- The **geese's** feathers = the feathers of the geese (pl.)

- The **child's** game = the game the child is playing (sing.)
- The **children's** game = the game the children are playing (pl.)

B. Apostrophes with Pronouns

No apostrophe = possessive

It's vs. Its

It's = it is

Its = possessive of *it*; followed by a noun

Its' & its's = do not exist

Incorrect: London is a city known for **it's** (it is) many tourist attractions.

Correct: London is a city known for **its** many tourist attractions.

Incorrect: London is a popular tourist attraction; in fact, **its** among the most visited cities in the world.

Correct: London is a popular tourist attraction; in fact, **it's** among the most visited cities in the world.

Note that on the ACT, the correct answer is almost always *its* because this is the form students tend to misuse most frequently.

They're vs. Their vs. There

They're = they are

Their = possessive of *they* and plural of *its*; followed by a noun

There = a place

Correct: London and Paris are two of the most famous cities and Europe, and **they're** (they are) known for having many tourist attractions.

Correct: London and Paris, two of the most famous cities in Europe, are known for **their** many tourist attractions.

Correct: In the nineteenth century, Paris was considered the capital of the art world because so many famous painters lived and worked **there**.

Who's vs. Whose

Who's = Who is

Correct: Barbara McClintock is a scientist who's (*who is*) best known for her discovery of "jumping" genes.

Whose = Possessive of *who*; followed by a noun

Correct: Barbara McClintock is a scientist whose discovery of "jumping" genes helped earn her the 1983 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

Note that *whose*, unlike *who*, can be used for both people and things/places.

Correct: London is a city whose many museums, palaces, and monuments make it a popular tourist destination.

II. Semicolons and Periods

A. Semicolon = Period

Semicolons and periods are used:

1. Between two complete sentences

Correct: London is an old city; it was first settled around 47 A.D.

2. Before conjunctive adverbs such as *however*, *moreover*, and *therefore* when they are used to begin a clause.*

Correct: London is an old city; however, it has many new buildings.

Correct: London is an old city; therefore, it has buildings from many different eras.

*ACT grammar questions testing conjunctive adverbs normally use a semicolon in the correct version, whereas rhetoric questions use a period.

Important: make sure to read through every sentence all the way through to the period; otherwise, you might not notice when there are two sentences.

In particular, watch out for “sentence boundary” questions, in which the beginning of one sentence appears to be part of the previous sentence. If you don’t read to the end of the sentence, you can easily overlook the error.

Incorrect: Barbara McClintock is a scientist whose discovery of “jumping” genes helped earn her the Nobel Prize in 1983, she won the award in Physiology or Medicine.

Correct: Barbara McClintock is a scientist whose discovery of “jumping” genes helped earn her the Nobel Prize. In 1983, she won the award in Physiology or Medicine.

III. Commas

Commas should be used:

1. Before a coordinating (FANBOYS) conjunction to join two full sentences

Coordinating conjunctions, aka FANBOYS: **For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So**

And and *but* are the two most popular conjunctions; *so* and *yet* are tested rarely. *Or* and *nor* could theoretically be tested, but in practice this is almost never the case.

Correct: Bison were once hunted to near extinction in the United States, but they have experienced a resurgence because of both conservation efforts and commercial demand.

Correct: The snakehead fish has an extraordinarily voracious appetite, and it can destroy entire ecosystems when placed outside its native habitat.

Tip: Remember that *comma + and/but* = period = semicolon, so if these constructions appear in different answers, all those options can be eliminated.

2. Between a dependent phrase/clause and an independent clause

Dependent clauses cannot stand on their own as full sentences. They may begin with subordinating conjunctions, e.g., *because* or *although*; with relative pronouns such as *who(se)* or *which*; or with nouns.

- **because** the train was delayed (subordinating conjunction)
- **which** was hardly a surprise (relative pronoun)
- **an invention** that revolutionized communication (noun)

A dependent clause can be placed either before or after an independent clause to form a complete sentence.

Correct: **Because London is a very old city**, it has buildings from many different eras.

Correct: London was founded on the banks of the Thames, **the longest river in England**.

Correct: Among London's most famous landmarks is Buckingham Palace, **which serves as the headquarters of the British monarchy**.

3. Around non-essential words and phrases

Non-essential elements can be removed from a sentence without affecting its essential meaning. When the information between the commas is crossed out, the sentence still makes grammatical sense.

Incorrect: London **which is a very old city**, has some extremely modern sections.

Incorrect: London, **which is a very old city** has some extremely modern sections.

Correct: London, **which is a very old city**, has some extremely modern sections. (London...has some extremely modern sections.)

The same goes for single words, often transitions:

Incorrect: London is a very old city. It does, **however** have some very modern sections.

Incorrect: London is a very old city. It does **however**, have some very modern sections.

Correct: London is a very old city. It does, **however**, have some very modern sections.

Note: Names and titles with commas around them can be treated like other non-essential clauses. Cross out the name or title, and see whether the sentence makes sense in context without it.

4. To separate items in a list (note that the comma before *and* is optional and is not tested)

Incorrect: Like today's astronauts, future space colonists must have **natural resistance to radiation high bone density** and strong immune systems.

Correct: Like today's astronauts, future space colonists must have **natural resistance to radiation, high bone density, and** strong immune systems.

5. To separate adjectives whose order could be reversed, or that could be separated by the word *and*

Incorrect: Restaurant menus are **subtle sophisticated** marketing tools designed to nudge customers towards certain choices.

Correct: Restaurant menus are **subtle, sophisticated (subtle and sophisticated)** marketing tools designed to nudge customers towards certain choices.

6. After introductory words or phrases, e.g., *however*, *at first*, *in fact* (not normally tested)

Commas should NOT be used:

1. Between two full sentences

When two stand-alone sentences are joined by a comma, the result is known as a comma splice. Comma splices are always incorrect.

Tip-off: comma + pronoun (*it, they, s/he, one, you, I*)

Incorrect: London is a very old city, it has some extremely modern sections.

Correct: London is a very old city. It has some extremely modern sections.

Correct: London is a very old city; it has some extremely modern sections.

2. Before a FANBOYS conjunction + verb

Incorrect: London is a very old city, but has many modern buildings.

Correct: London is a very old city but has many modern buildings.

Shortcut: *comma + and/but = period*, so plug in a period. If two sentences are present, the comma is correct; if two sentences are not present, the comma should be removed.

For example, *London is a very old city. Has many modern buildings* is not correct, so no comma should be used before *but*.

3. Between subjects and verbs

This rule holds true even when the subject is very long.

Incorrect: The oldest surviving bridge in London, is Richmond Bridge, completed in 1777.

Correct: The oldest surviving bridge in London is Richmond Bridge, completed in 1777.

4. Between compound items (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. linked by *and*)

Incorrect: Many tourists travel to London and Paris to visit museums, and monuments that are known throughout the world.

You can also think of the rule this way: *comma + and = period*, so plug in a period and see whether there are two sentences.

Plug in: Many tourists visit London and Paris to visit museums.
Monuments that are known throughout the world.

Clearly, this does not make sense as two sentences, so no comma is needed before *and*.

Correct: Many tourists travel to London and Paris to visit museums and monuments that are known throughout the world.

5. Before or after a preposition (frequently tested)

Most common prepositions: *of, to, by, from, about, with, in, on, at*

Incorrect: Frida Kahlo is among the most famous artists, of Latin American origin.

Correct: Frida Kahlo is among the most famous artists of Latin American origin.

6. Before or after the word *that*

Incorrect: London is a city, that has many old buildings and monuments.

Incorrect: London is a city that, has many old buildings and monuments.

When *that* is optional and does not appear, no comma should replace it.

Correct: The **snow that is used** to build an igloo must have enough strength to be cut and stacked correctly.

Correct: The **snow used** to build an igloo must have enough strength to be cut and stacked correctly.

Incorrect: The **snow, used** to build an igloo must have enough strength to be cut and stacked correctly.

7. Between two adjectives when the first modifies the second, or whose order cannot be reversed

Incorrect: The Caribbean Sea contains a variety of **stunning, coral** reefs.
(= The Caribbean Sea contains a variety of **coral, stunning** reefs.)

Correct: The Caribbean Sea contains a variety of **stunning coral** reefs.

8. Between adjectives and nouns

Incorrect: The Caribbean Sea contains some of the world's most stunning **coral, reefs**.

Correct: The Caribbean Sea contains some of the world's most stunning **coral reefs**.

9. Before or after parentheses*

Incorrect: The Caribbean Sea contains some of the world's most stunning coral reefs, **(home to thousands of species of marine life)**, as well as some of the world's clearest waters.

Correct: The Caribbean Sea contains some of the world's most stunning coral reefs **(home to thousands of species of marine life)** as well as some of the world's clearest waters.

*When a comma is necessary after a close-parenthesis for another reason, one may be used.

IV. Colons

Colons are used to introduce lists and explanations.

A colon must be preceded by a sentence that can stand on its own as a complete thought and that logically sets up the information that follows.

For example *I think* is a complete sentence, but it cannot stand by itself.

In contrast, *I like to think about many things* is a statement that logically introduces an explanation of the person likes to think about.

Unlike a semicolon, a colon can be followed by a full sentence or a fragment.

1. Before a list

Incorrect: Silica, which appears most often in nature as either sand or quartz, is known for its: hardness, strength, and durability.

Correct: Silica, which appears most often in nature as either sand or quartz, has several important qualities: hardness, strength, and durability.

2. Before an explanation

Correct: When the Manchus took control in China 1644, the Great Wall ceased to have military significance: the empire now extended well north of the wall, and China's new enemies came from across the sea.

Note that when a colon, a semicolon, and a period are all grammatically acceptable, you will not normally be asked to choose between them.

In the rare instance that you are asked to decide between a semicolon and a colon, check whether the second statement explains the first. If it does, a colon can be used; if not, the semicolon is correct.

V. Dashes

1. To indicate non-essential statements within a sentence

Grammatically, dashes are identical to commas when used this way.

Correct: A new type of vaccine, **which could become available over the next few years**, is made by growing viruses in cultures of animal cells rather than in chicken eggs.

Correct: A new type of vaccine—**which could become available over the next few years**—is made by growing viruses in cultures of animal cells rather than in chicken eggs.

The only exception involves transitional words and phrases. When these elements are used non-essentially, dashes should not be used. (Note that this exception has been tested on the SAT only.)

Incorrect: London is a very old city. It does—**however**—contain modern sections.

2. Before a list or an explanation, or to create a deliberate pause

Grammatically, dashes are identical to colons when used this way. They must be preceded by a complete, standalone sentence but can be followed by either a sentence or a fragment.

Correct: London has many tourist **attractions**—**museums**, palaces, and monuments, to name a few.

Correct: After driving for eight hours, we finally arrived **home**—**and** that was when we discovered we had forgotten to close the windows.

VI. Shorter is Better

Avoid wordiness and redundancy (repetition). When multiple answers are grammatically correct and express the same essential information, the shortest one will virtually always be correct. Note that many questions can be answered visually: you can start with the assumption that the shortest answer is correct and then check it out to be safe.

The banana is native to tropical South and Southeast Asia and was initially domesticated for the first time in Papua New Guinea. Today, it is cultivated in hot climates throughout the world.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. initially domesticated at first
- C. initially domesticated at the beginning
- D. initially domesticated

The correct answer, D, can be determined with near certainty simply from its length.

VII. Parallel Structure

1. All lists should be presented in the same format: noun, noun and noun; -ING, -ING, and -ING; verb, verb, and verb.

Incorrect: Deception expert Pamela Meyer has collaborated with a team of researchers to survey and analyze existing research on lying from **academics, law enforcement officers,** and **working as psychologists.**

Correct: Deception expert Pamela Meyer has collaborated with a team of researchers to survey and analyze existing research on lying from **academics, law enforcement officers,** and **psychologists.**

2. Two items joined by a conjunction, e.g., *and* or *but*, must be kept parallel as well. Note that when parallel structure involves infinitives (*to + verb*), it is not necessary to repeat the word *to* before the second verb.

Incorrect: Deception expert Pamela Meyer has collaborated with a team of researchers **to survey and analyzing** existing research on lying from academics, law enforcement officers, and psychologists.

Correct: Deception expert Pamela Meyer has collaborated with a team of researchers **to survey and (to) analyze** existing research on lying from academics, law enforcement officers, and psychologists.

VIII. Subject-Verb Agreement

- Singular verbs end in *-s* (*it works*); plural verbs do not (*they work*).
- Most common irregular verb = *to be*. Know the singular/plural forms of this verb in both the present (*is/are*) and the past (*was/were*).

Prepositional phrases are often placed between subjects and verbs to distract from disagreements.

Incorrect: Illegal **logging in Mexican forests** **have** resulted in the destruction of the monarch butterfly's habitat.

Correct: Illegal **logging in Mexican forests** **has** resulted in the destruction of the monarch butterfly's habitat.

Also be on the lookout for compound subjects: two nouns connected by *and*.

Incorrect: **The Monarch and the Red Admiral** **is** among the most common butterfly species in North America.

Correct: **The Monarch and the Red Admiral** **are** among the most common butterfly species in North America.

Non-essential clauses can also be placed between subjects and verbs.

Incorrect: **The cochineal**, a small insect identified by Hernán Cortés in present-day Mexico in 1519, **were** commonly used as a colorant in painting, sculpture, furniture and textiles from the mid-sixteenth through the mid-nineteenth century.

Correct: **The cochineal**, a small insect identified by Hernán Cortés in present-day Mexico in 1519, **was** commonly used as a colorant in painting, sculpture, furniture and textiles from the mid-sixteenth through the mid-nineteenth century.

Other subject-verb agreement errors to know:

- Collective nouns (*group, country, team, government, etc.*) = singular.
- *Each, every, and (n)either* = singular.
- Gerunds (-ING words) are singular, e.g., **eating apples improves health**.
- Normal word order can be flipped so that the verb precedes the subject (e.g., *beyond the valley lies a house and lake*), although this construction is not normally tested.

IX. Pronoun Agreement

- Singular = it, its, itself
- Plural = they, their, them, themselves
- Singular nouns = singular pronouns; plural nouns = plural pronouns.

The noun to which a pronoun refers (**antecedent** or **referent**) will not always appear in the same sentence; you may need to look at the sentence before.

Incorrect: Painter Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) was best known for her **portraits**. **Its** bright colors and dramatic symbolism revealed the influence of indigenous Mexican culture on her work.

Correct: Painter Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) was best known for her **portraits**. **Their** bright colors and dramatic symbolism revealed the influence of indigenous Mexican culture on her work.

X. Verb Tense

Keep verb tense consistent within sentences and paragraphs, unless there is a clear reason to switch. Paragraphs in the present should stay in the present, and paragraphs in the past should stay in the past.

Always start by checking the tense of the verbs in the sentence in question, as well as the surrounding sentences (before and after); these verbs will tell you the correct tense of the underlined verb.

Incorrect: Painter Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) **was** best known for her portraits. She **is** strongly influenced by indigenous Mexican culture, as revealed by her use of bright colors and dramatic symbolism. In her paintings, she **combined** elements of the classic Mexican tradition with surrealist techniques.

Correct: Painter Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) **was** best known for her portraits. She **was** strongly influenced by indigenous Mexican culture, as revealed by her use of bright colors and dramatic symbolism. In her paintings, she **combined** elements of the classic Mexican tradition with surrealist techniques.

Correct answers are usually in the simple past (e.g., *was*, *did*, *ran*) or the present. More complex tenses (e.g., *would have done*, *will have gone*) are virtually always wrong and essentially serve as "distractor" answers.

2. Present Perfect & Past

Present perfect – *has/have* + *verb*

Describes an action beginning and the past and continuing into the present.

Tip-offs: *for*, *since*, *over*.

Incorrect: Scientists **knew** that the moon experiences quakes since the first astronaut set foot on its surface in 1969.

Correct: Scientists **have known** that the moon experiences quakes since the first astronaut set foot on its surface in 1969.

Past perfect – *had + verb*

When a sentence describes two completed actions in the past, the past perfect can be used to describe the action that came **first**.

Often, either the simple past or the past perfect can be used. In such cases, you will not be asked to choose between these two tenses.

Correct: **Before Mae Jemison became** an astronaut, she **studied** science for many years.

Correct: **Before Mae Jemison became** an astronaut, she **had studied** science for many years.

However, the past perfect must be used with the phrase *by the time*.

Incorrect: **By the time** Mae Jemison became an astronaut, **she studied** science for many years.

Correct: **By the time** Mae Jemison became an astronaut, she **had studied** science for many years.

XI. Adjectives vs. Adverbs (ACT only)

Adjectives modify nouns and other adjectives:

- A **red** apple
- Some **ancient** rocks
- The **exciting** trip

Adverbs modify verbs and usually end in *-ly*:

- The deer ran **quickly**.
- The tent toppled **suddenly**.
- The inventor relied **heavily** on assistants.

1. Adjective vs. Adverb

On the ACT, adjectives and adjectives are switched.

Incorrect: The monkey, a traditional Mexican symbol, **appears frequent** in Frida Kahlo's paintings.

Correct: The monkey, a traditional Mexican symbol, **appears frequently** in Frida Kahlo's paintings.

2. Comparatives and Superlatives

Comparative: *adjective + -er or more + adjective* (e.g., *clearer, more colorful*)

Superlative: *adjective + -est or most + adjective* (e.g., *clearest, most colorful*)

Do not use both *-er/-est* and *more/most*.

Incorrect: Mexican folk art exerted a **more stronger** influence on Frida Kahlo's paintings than contemporary European art did.

Correct: Mexican folk art exerted a **stronger** influence on Frida Kahlo's paintings than contemporary European art did.

XII. Word Pairs

- (N)either...(n)or
- Not only...but (also)
- As...as

When one half of a word pair is used, the other must appear as well.

Incorrect: **Not only** did Mae Jemison study science as a girl growing up in Chicago, **and** she studied ballet.

Correct: **Not only** did Mae Jemison study science as a girl growing up in Chicago, **but** she **(also)** studied ballet.

XIII. Who, Which & Whom

1. *Who(m)* = people; *which* = things

Incorrect: Frida Kahlo was an artist **which** earned renown for her portraits.

Correct: Frida Kahlo was an artist **who** earned renown for her portraits.

2. *Whom* before a verb = WRONG

Incorrect: Frida Kahlo was an artist **whom earned** renown for her portraits.

Correct: Frida Kahlo was an artist **who earned** renown for her portraits.

3. Preposition + *whom*

Incorrect: Frida Kahlo is a painter **to who** many artists owe their inspiration.

Correct: Frida Kahlo is a painter **to whom** many artists owe their inspiration.

XIV. Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

Always place modifiers as close as possible to the nouns they modify.

1. Dangling Modifier

When a sentence begins with a phrase that describes the subject, the subject must appear immediately after. If it does not, a dangling modifier is created.

Incorrect: **Born in Mexico City in 1907**, self-portraits were what **Frida Kahlo** was best known for. (Who was born in Mexico City in 1907? Frida Kahlo, not self-portraits.)

Correct: **Born in Mexico City in 1907**, **Frida Kahlo** was best known for her self-portraits.

2. Misplaced Modifier

Misplaced modifiers can appear anywhere in a sentence and often create meanings that are illogical or absurd.

Incorrect: The Great Wall of China was constructed was by thousands of **workers that originally consisted of separated military fortifications**. (The implication is that the *workers* originally consisted of separated military fortifications.)

Correct: **The Great Wall of China, originally consisting of separated military fortifications**, was constructed by thousands of workers. (This version makes it clear that the Wall originally consisted of separated military fortifications.)

XV. Pronoun Case (ACT only)

When pronoun case is tested, it will always be plural: usually proper name + pronoun (e.g., *John and me*) or two pronouns (e.g., *him and me*).

- If *name/noun + pronoun*, cross out the proper name or noun.
- If there are two pronouns, cross out each pronoun in turn.

Incorrect: Last year, my **mother and me** attended the Gathering of Nations, the largest annual meeting of Native Americans in the United States.

Cross out: Last year, ~~my mother and~~ me attended the Gathering of Nations, the largest annual meeting of Native Americans in the United States.

Correct: Last year, **my mother and I** attended the Gathering of Nations, the largest annual meeting of Native Americans in the United States.

Know: *between* must be followed by an object pronoun (*me, her, him, us, them*), e.g., *between John and me*, NOT *between John and I*.

XVI. Idioms and Diction

1. Preposition-Based Idioms

Some diction questions test preposition-based idioms—fixed phrases that have evolved to be considered correct for no logical reason. As a result, these questions must be answered by ear.

Incorrect: The Great Wall of China might have been more effective **with** keeping people in than keeping invaders out.

Correct: The Great Wall of China might have been more effective **at** keeping people in than keeping invaders out.

2. To vs. -ING

Idioms involving infinitives ("to") and gerunds (-ING) may also be tested. Like preposition-based idioms, these questions are based on standard usage, not rules or logic, and must be answered by ear.

Incorrect: The Great Wall of China might have been more effective **to keep** people in than keeping invaders out.

Correct: The Great Wall of China might have been more effective **at keeping** people in than keeping invaders out.

3. Connotation

Other question test connotation and frequently involve verbs. Essentially, these are vocabulary questions: the answers all have similar or identical literal meanings, and you must choose the option that is most appropriate in context.

For example:

Some people claim that The Great Wall of China was really built to amuse the Emperor's love of grandiose projects.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. satisfy
- C. please
- D. comfort

Although all of the choices have generally similar meanings, only *satisfy* can be used idiomatically to indicate that the Great Wall was built to accommodate the Emperor's preferences.

3. Commonly Confused Words

Know:

- Could/should/would/might HAVE, not OF
- Than = comparison; then = next
- Affect = verb; effect = noun (frequently tested on the SAT)

Incorrect: Although there are many beneficial health **affects** associated with apples, several types of allergies have been linked to various proteins found in the fruit.

Correct: Although there are many beneficial health **effects** associated with apples, several types of allergies have been linked to various proteins found in the fruit.

4. Register

Register questions test formal vs. informal language.

The vast majority of SAT and ACT passages are written in a moderately serious tone (although occasionally a passage may be written in a slightly informal style). Incorrect answers to these questions tend to be excessively slangy and casual, although they can sometimes be overly formal as well.

For example:

Globally, foods have become more alike and less diverse. As the amount of food around the world has shrunk to just a handful of crops, regional and local varieties have hit the road or even disappeared altogether.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. taken a hike
- C. disappeared
- D. gotten out

A, B, and D are all far too informal and slangy. Only C is consistent with the prevailing tone of the passage.

Preposition-Based Idioms

Be curious about
Be particular about
Bring about
Complain about
Set (ab)out
Think about
Wonder about
Worry about

Known as/to be
Recognized as
Serve as
Translate as

Accompanied by
Amazed by
Assisted by
Awed by
Confused by
Encouraged by
Followed by
Impressed by
Obscured by
Outraged by
Perplexed by
Puzzled by
Shocked by
Stunned by
Surprised by

Celebrated for
Compensate for
Criticize for
Endure for
Famous for
Known for

Last for
Look (out) for

Named for/after
Necessary for
Prized for
Recognized for
Responsible for
Strive for
Wait for
Watch for

Across from
Apparent from
Defend
from/against
Differ(ent) from
Protect
from/against
Refrain from

In itself

Adept in/at
Confident in
Engage in/with
Firm in
Interested in
Involved in
Succeed in/at
Take pride in

Enter into
Insight into

A native of
Native to
Appreciation of
Aware of
Characteristic of
Consist of
Convinced of
Devoid of
(Dis)approve of
Family of

In recognition of
In the hope(s) of
(In)capable of
Knowledge of
Mastery of

Offer of
Principles of
Proponent of
Source of
Suspicious of
Take advantage of
Typical of
Understanding of
Use of

Based on
Confer on
Depend on
Draw (up)on
Dwell on
Focus on
Insist on
Reflect on
Rely on

Control over
Power over

Central to
Critical to
Devoted to

Explain to
Exposed to
In contrast to
Listen to
Native to
Point to
Prefer x to y
Recommend x to y

Relate to

Similar to
Threat(en) to
Unique to

Biased toward
Tendency toward

Take up

Contrast with
Correlate with
Identify with
(In)consistent with
(Pre)occupied with
Sympathize with
(Un)familiar with

XVII. Transitions

Questions testing transitional words and phrases are generally more focused on meaning than on grammar. As a result, **answers that are grammatically acceptable may still be incorrect.**

Tip: whenever you encounter a transition question, **take your pencil and physically cross out the transition in the passage** so that you do not develop an unconscious bias toward that option. Then, state the relationship between the sentences/clauses (similar, different, cause-and-effect) **before** you look at the answer choices.

Incorrect: The obvious reason for the construction of the Great Wall of China was protection, **and** China had no powerful enemies at the time construction first began.

The two halves of the sentence express opposing ideas, so a contradictor is needed.

Correct: The obvious reason for the construction of the Great Wall of China was protection, **but** China had no powerful enemies at the time construction first began.

Important: if there is an OMIT/DELETE option, or an option that does not include a transition, check it **first** because it will usually be correct (at least on the ACT).

Also: when two transitions have the same meaning (e.g., *however* and *nevertheless*) and are grammatically acceptable in context, both can be eliminated because no question can have more than one right answer.

Transitions

Continuers

And
Also
Finally
Furthermore
In addition
In conclusion
In fact Indeed
Likewise
Moreover
Next
Of course
Similarly
Subsequently
That is
Then

Contradictors

(Al)though
But
Despite
Even so
Even though
However
In contrast
In spite of
Instead Meanwhile
Nevertheless
On the contrary
On the other hand
Otherwise
Rather Regardless
Still
Whereas
While
Yet

Cause-and-Effect

Accordingly
As a result
As such
Because
Consequently
For
Hence
Since
So
Therefore
Thus

Test prep?
You've got this!



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