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CHAPTER 32

Proofreading and Preparing for Standardized Grammar Tests

SECTION 32.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter has three objectives: improving your proofreading skills; providing a review of many grammatical concepts presented in this text; and helping you prepare for standardized grammar tests.

Taking standardized tests is an inescapable part of the modern world. Many standardized tests taken by applicants for college admission, scholarships, and various occupations contain a section on grammar. For example, there is a grammar section on the PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test) taken by applicants for National Merit Scholarships. There is also a grammar section on the ACT (American College Testing Program) taken by college admission applicants. Furthermore, the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test), which is likewise taken by college admission applicants, has an optional grammar section.

If you have completed all the exercises in the previous chapters, you should be able to score well on such tests with the knowledge of grammar that you have acquired. But if you are one of those people who become nervous when they face tests, your nervousness may cause you to make errors on material that you actually understand. A useful remedy for this problem is to practice answering the types of questions found on grammar tests. Such practice familiarizes you with the format of the questions on the tests and builds your confidence to handle the questions.

The following exercises are similar to many of the questions found on the PSAT, SAT II, ACT, and other standardized tests. Doing the exercises and then checking your answers at the end of each section will help you prepare for standardized grammar tests.

But the following exercises do more than just help you prepare for standardized tests. They provide a review of the grammatical principles that you learned in the previous chapters. And they also strengthen your proofreading skills. Whenever you have finished writing a paper or report, you should reread it from beginning to end — at least once, and several times if possible. You should look for sentences that can be written more clearly or smoothly. If new ideas come to mind that can strengthen the paper, they should be added. In addition, you should look for spelling and grammatical errors. However, catching grammatical errors takes a little practice. A writer can be so focused on the ideas in a paper that grammatical errors slip by. Yet grammatical errors can detract from the impression that a paper makes on readers, even if the ideas are good. The following exercises provide practice in catching grammatical errors. Such exercises help to ensure that by the time your papers reach readers, they will be as polished and near perfect as possible.

SECTION 32.2 FINDING SENTENCE ERRORS

One format for questions on standardized tests asks you to find errors in sentences. Try this sample exercise.

Sample Exercise

Instructions: The sentence below contains an error. Decide which of the underlined words or phrases is incorrect and write its letter in your notebook.

Even if you are a good swimmer, one should never dive into an unfamiliar body of water because it may be
A B C D
shallow or may contain hazardous objects.

Answer Explanation

Alternative B contains the error. The first part of the sentence speaks to you. It says, “Even if you....” Therefore, the rest of the sentence should continue to address you. It should not shift to the third person pronoun *one*. Doing so is considered an incorrect shift in person, an error discussed in Chapter 30, Section 30.4. Now that the error has been found, write the complete sentence correctly.

Exercise Set A

Instructions: Each of the sentences below contains an error. For each sentence, decide which of the underlined words or phrases is incorrect and write its letter in your notebook.

When you have completed all the exercises in this set, check your answers with a partner if possible and discuss any differences. Also, check your answers with the key at the end of this set. Finally, rewrite each sentence with the error corrected.

1. The beautiful sunrises and sunsets of New Mexico has been praised by not only Georgia O’Keefe but also
A B C
many less famous artists.
D
2. Phil usually drives careful, but he caused an accident last week when he was driving to work while talking
A B C D
on his cell phone.
3. The food in the new restaurant was cooked poorly and tasted badly.
A B C D
4. Many families are buying vans instead of cars, according to a recent published article in *Transportation*
A B C D
News.

5. The color and design of the shirt my son gave me for Christmas is fine, but the shirt is large enough for me to wear as an overcoat.
A B C D
6. The company decided to lease the trucks it needs rather than buying them.
A B C D
7. Because of a concern that traditional fuels might ran out, the government is funding research on alternative sources of energy.
A B C D
8. A student's familiarity in standard written English influences his or her ability to answer a question such as this one.
A B C D
9. Whenever my high-strung husband Harry feels himself becoming overly worried or psychologically stressed, he immediately exercising vigorously for ten minutes.
A B C D
10. The author's latest novel is even more funnier than his earlier novels.
A B C D
11. Jack ordered the largest, tastier, most expensive steak on the menu.
A B C D
12. Of the three sisters, the older was the most ambitious and therefore had the best job.
A B C D
13. Neither your savings account nor your checking account contain any money.
A B C D
14. Our team's last game of the season was its worse game of the season.
A B C D
15. Elvis Presley's records sell better than Frank Sinatra.
A B C D
16. Your chili will win first prize because its the tastiest and hottest in the contest.
A B C D
17. The Mercury Grand Marquis is similar as the Ford Crown Victoria but a little more luxurious.
A B C D
18. My brother Bob he is hoping to become a professional baseball player.
A B C D
19. Jack can't barely remember Madrid because he was only three years old when his family visited the city.
A B C D
20. Paul had cooked his dinner and had ate half of it when he recalled that he had made a date to eat out with friends that night.
A B C D

Now check your answers with a partner if possible and discuss any differences. Also, check your answers with the key below. Finally, REWRITE each sentence with the error corrected. Rewriting these sentences will help to improve your writing skills and your scores on grammar tests.

Set A Answer Key

The section number listed for each question indicates where the grammatical principle underlying the question is discussed.

1. B. Section 16.10

Since the subject (*sunrises and sunsets*) is plural, the plural form of the helping verb *have* is required. *Has* should be changed to *have*.

2. A. Section 5.2

The adjective *careful* should be changed to the adverb *carefully* because an adverb is needed to modify the verb *drives*.

3. D. Section 5.11

Badly should be changed to *bad* because *tasted* is a linking verb, not an action verb. Therefore, an adjective is required to describe the noun *food*.

4. C. Section 5.6

Recent should be changed to *recently* because an adverb is needed to modify the participle *published*, playing the role of an adjective.

5. A. Section 2.4

The plural subject *color and design* requires the plural verb *are*.

6. D. Section 31.2

Buy rather than *buying* should be used so that it is parallel with *lease*. *Buy* is part of the infinitive *to buy*, with *to* carried over from *to lease*.

7. B. Section 15.2

The base form of the verb (*run*) should be used after the modal *might*.

8. B. Sections 6.1 - 6.7

Alternative B contains an error in the choice of the preposition. In the context of this sentence, it is not idiomatic (customary in the language) to follow the noun *familiarity* with the preposition *in*. Instead, the idiomatically correct expression is *familiarity with*. There is no general rule for deciding which preposition to use in a particular context. This knowledge can only be acquired through extensive reading.

9. D. Section 31.3

The independent clause lacks an appropriate verb. The verb *exercises* should be substituted for *exercising*.

10. B. Section 4.19

More should be deleted. *Funnier* is the comparative form of the adjective *fun*. *More* can be placed before some adjectives to create a comparative form, but it should never be placed before an adjective that is already in the comparative form.

11. B. Section 4.16

Largest is the superlative form of the adjective *large*. Its use implies that there were more than two steaks on the menu. Therefore, the superlative form of *tasty* is needed: *tastiest*.

12. B. Section 4.14

Because three things are being compared, the superlative form *oldest* is required rather than the comparative form *older*.

13. D. Section 29.10

When two singular subjects are joined with *neither...nor*, a singular verb is required. Change *contain* to *contains*.

14. D. Section 4.17

Because more than two things are being compared, the superlative form *worst* is needed rather than the comparative form *worse*.

15. D. Section 4.22

This sentence involves an incorrect comparison: records are compared to a person (*Sinatra*). *Sinatra* should be changed to *Sinatra's records* or *Sinatra's*.

16. B. Section 8.24

The contraction for *it is* (*it's*) is required rather than the possessive pronoun *its*.

17. B. Sections 6.1 - 6.15

The idiomatically correct preposition following *similar* is *to*, not *as*.

18. B. Section 8.13

The pronoun *he*, which refers to the subject, is totally unnecessary. It should be deleted because it is a type of redundancy considered stylistically weak and incorrect.

19. A. Section 18.6

Can't and *barely* are both negative words. Using them together when only one negative word is needed is called a double negative error. *Can't* should be deleted and *remember* should be changed to *remembers*.

20. B. Section 16.4

The correct form of the verb *eat* after the helping verb *had* is the past participle *eaten*.

SECTION 32.4 REVISING SENTENCES

The previous sections provide practice with two formats used for questions on standardized tests. Another format asks you to decide how part or all of a sentence should be revised to eliminate an error. This format is illustrated in the next sample exercise.

Sample Exercise

Part of the sentence below is underlined. After the sentence are four alternative ways to express the underlined material. Decide which answer is best for making the sentence clear and grammatically correct. Then write the letter of the best alternative.

Hanging alone on the back wall of the gallery, Mr. Johnson liked the painting and asked its price.

- A. Hanging alone on the back wall, Mr. Johnson of the gallery liked the painting
- B. Mr Johnson, hanging alone on the back wall of the gallery, liked the painting
- C. Mr. Johnson liked the painting hanging alone on the back wall of the gallery
- D. Hung alone on the back wall of the gallery, Mr. Johnson liked the painting

Answer Explanation

Answer C is correct. The original sentence contains a dangling participle, an error discussed in Chapter 24. An introductory participial phrase followed by a comma modifies the noun immediately after the comma. Therefore, the original sentence suggests that Mr. Johnson is hanging on the wall. In Answer C, the participial phrase is placed next to the noun that it is meant to modify (*painting*).

Now write the sentence correctly.

Exercise Set E

Instructions: Part or all of each sentence below is underlined. After each sentence are four alternative ways to express the underlined material. Decide which answer is best in making the sentence clear and grammatically correct. Then write the letter of the best alternative.

When you have completed all the exercises in this set, check your answers with a partner if possible and discuss any differences. Also, check your answers with the key at the end of this set. Finally, rewrite the sentences with the correct alternatives substituted for the underlined material.

Exercises

1. The board decided to fire the current president, appoint the vice president as interim president, and that it would begin a search for a new president.
 - A. beginning a search for a new president.
 - B. to begin a search for a new president.
 - C. begin a search for a new president.
 - D. they would begin a search for a new president.
2. A violent sport, professional football players experience many injuries, ranging from broken bones to brain concussions.
 - A. Because football is a violent sport,
 - B. Being a violent sport,
 - C. Because a violent sport,
 - D. Played violently,
3. Elvis Presley is not only popular in the United States but also in countries around the world.
 - A. not popular only
 - B. only popular not
 - C. only not popular
 - D. popular not only

4. The reason I quit is because the job prevented me from studying.
- A. The reason is I quit because
 - B. Because
 - C. The reason is because
 - D. I quit because
5. There isn't no easy way to get to Williamsport, Pennsylvania.
- A. ain't no
 - B. is no
 - C. is none
 - D. are no
6. Carla wrote her sister often when she visited Spain.
- A. She wrote her sister often when she visited Spain.
 - B. When Carla visited Spain, she wrote her sister often.
 - C. When Carla's sister visited Spain, Carla writing her often.
 - D. When she visited Spain, Carla wrote her sister often.
7. One of the parents who wants to be math tutors is on the phone.
- A. wants to be math tutors are
 - B. want to be math tutors are
 - C. wants to be math tutors were
 - D. want to be math tutors is
8. Professor Pauline Chavez a marine biologist at the University of Miami has been doing research on the destruction of coral reefs.
- A. Chavez, a marine biologist at the University of Miami, has been
 - B. Chavez: a marine biologist at the University of Miami has been
 - C. Chavez. a marine biologist at the University of Miami has been
 - D. Chavez; a marine biologist at the University of Miami; has been
9. A cloverleaf allows vehicles to move safely on one interacting highway in another.
- A. from one intertwining highway on another
 - B. from one intersecting highway to another
 - C. onto one intersecting highway into another
 - D. off one intersecting highway on another
10. Bring the following items to the math test two sharpened pencils a calculator and a rested prepared brain.
- A. test. two sharpened pencils, a calculator, and a rested, prepared brain.
 - B. test: two sharpened pencils a calculator, and a rested, prepared brain.
 - C. test: two sharpened pencils. a calculator. and a rested prepared brain.
 - D. test: two sharpened pencils, a calculator, and a rested, prepared brain.
11. An automobile should be chosen not for its looks but also for its performance.
- A. chosen not only for its looks but only for its performance.
 - B. chosen not also for its looks but also for its performance.
 - C. not only chosen for its looks but also for its performance.
 - D. chosen not only for its looks but also for its performance.

12. I don't like cold weather, therefore, I never go skiing.
- A. weather therefore; I never
 - B. weather; therefore, I never
 - C. weather, therefore I; never
 - D. weather; therefore; I never
13. A young man swimming in the pool when the thunderstorm began.
- A. man is swimming
 - B. man was swimming
 - C. man were swimming
 - D. man swimmmed
14. Raised in Philadelphia, New York is where Bill Cosby found the audiences he needed to perfect his skills as a comedian.
- A. New York, raised in Philadelphia, is where Bill Cosby
 - B. Although raised in Philadelphia, New York is where Bill Cosby
 - C. Although Bill Cosby was raised in Philadelphia, New York is where he
 - D. Being raised in Philadelphia, New York is where Bill Cosby
15. The new evening security guard at our college library was told that once every hour he should verify that the burglar alarm is operating properly, the outside doors should be checked for being locked, and walk through the entire library to be sure that the books are not being damaged by something like a sprinkler system leak.
- A. check that all the outside doors are locked
 - B. all the outside doors should be checked and locked
 - C. all outside doors locked
 - D. all doors are locked outside and checked

Check your answers with a partner if possible and discuss any differences. Also, check your answers with the key below. Then rewrite the sentences with the correct alternatives substituted for the underlined material.

Set E Answer Key

1. C. Section 31.2

Ideas in a series should be expressed in parallel form. Answer C starts with a verb (*begin*) just as the earlier items in the series do (*fire* and *appoint*).

2. A. Sections 10.1 - 10.3, 24.9, and 26.3

The original sentence is incorrect because an introductory noun phrase followed by a comma should modify the noun phrase immediately after the comma. However, *a violent sport* does not modify *players*.

3. D. Sections 29.11 and 31.2

When using *not only...but also*, be sure the ideas after *not only* and *but also* are grammatically similar. You can see that the word arrangement presented in D has parallel structure whereas the original sentence does not by noting where the word *popular* appears in the two versions written as follows:

Original Version

Elvis Presley is *not only* popular in the United States
but also in countries around the world.

Alternative D

Elvis Presley is popular *not only* in the United States
but also in countries around the world.

Note that with alternative D, *not only* is followed by a prepositional phrase beginning with the preposition *in*, and *but also* is likewise followed by a prepositional phrase beginning with *in*. There is parallel structure.

4. D. Section 10.3

The construction *the reason...because* is redundant and awkward. The conjunction *because* introduces a reason, so it is not necessary to state that a reason is being presented. Answer D shows one correct way to write the sentence. Here is another: The reason I quit is that the job prevented me from studying.

5. B. Section 18.6

Isn't and *no* are both negative words. Using two negative words together in this way is considered a double negative error. B shows one way to write the sentence correctly. Here is another: There isn't *any* easy way to....

6. B. Section 8.6

The antecedent of *she* is unclear. Did Carla or her sister visit Spain? Alternative B presents one interpretation. Here is another interpretation: When Carla's sister visited Spain, Carla wrote her often.

7. D. Section 11.8 - 11.9

The reason D is correct can be seen by decomposing the sentence into two simpler sentences:

One of the parents is on the phone.

The parents want to be math tutors.

In combining these sentences, the relative pronoun *who* replaces *the parents*. Therefore, *who* is plural and the verb (*want*) in the relative clause must be plural. However the verb in the main clause (*is*) must agree with the singular subject of the main clause (*one*).

8. A. Section 12.1

An appositive is generally enclosed in commas.

9. B. Sections 6.1 - 6.7

Prepositions are discussed in Chapter 6. Familiarity with preposition usage develops through general

reading and studying. The prepositions (*from...to*) and the adjective (*intersecting*) in answer B express the ideas clearly and correctly.

10. D. Sections 4.2-4.3 and 13.4

What follows the word *test* is a list, so a colon is appropriate. A comma is needed after *pencils* to separate it from the next item in the list. A comma is also needed between *rested* and *prepared* because they both modify *brain*.

11. D. Section 29.11

Not only...but also is a structure (called a correlative conjunction) used for joining parts of a sentence. Both components (*not only* and *but also*) should be included in a sentence.

12. B. Section 14.5

When a conjunctive adverb such as *therefore* is used to join two sentences, it is preceded by a semicolon and followed by a comma.

13. B. Section 2.9

The original sentence does not contain an appropriate verb. B uses the past progressive tense. The singular verb *was* agrees with the singular subject, and the past tense agrees with the time frame established by "when the thunderstorm began."

14. C. Section 10.10 and 24.9

A participle phrase at the beginning of a sentence modifies the noun it precedes. Therefore, the original sentence says that New York was raised in Philadelphia.

15. A. Section 31.2

A series of phrases in a sentence should be as grammatically similar as possible; they should have "parallel structure." The first and third phrases begin with the base form of a verb (*verify* and *walk*). Therefore, the middle phrase should also (*check*). The base forms are used because the modal *should* precedes *verify* and establishes the pattern for the other two phrases.

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