

# SAT Grammar Rules Guide

Complete Writing & Language Reference

## ■ SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

**Rule:** Subjects and verbs must agree in number (singular/plural)

**Singular subjects** take singular verbs:

- The student *writes* every day. ✓
- The student *write* every day. X

**Plural subjects** take plural verbs:

- The students *write* every day. ✓
- The students *writes* every day. X

**Common Traps:**

- **Prepositional phrases** don't affect agreement:  
- The box of cookies *is* on the table. ✓
- **Compound subjects** with 'and' are plural:  
- The teacher and student *are* here. ✓
- **Indefinite pronouns** (everyone, somebody) are singular:  
- Everyone *has* finished. ✓

## ■ PRONOUN RULES

### Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

- Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in number and gender
- **Each student** brought *his or her* book. ✓
- **Each student** brought *their* book. X (traditional rule)

### Pronoun Case

Subject	I, you, he, she, it, we, they	She went home.
Object	me, you, him, her, it, us, them	Give it to me.
Possessive	my, your, his, her, its, our, their	That's her book.

## ■ PUNCTUATION RULES

### Commas

Use commas to:

- Separate items in a list: I bought apples, oranges, and bananas.
- After introductory elements: Before the test, I studied hard.

- Set off nonessential information: My friend, who lives nearby, visits often.
- Between independent clauses with FANBOYS: I studied, but I was still nervous.

## Semicolons

- Join two related independent clauses: I studied hard; I got an A. ✓
- Separate complex list items: I visited Paris, France; Rome, Italy; and Berlin, Germany.

## Colons

- Introduce a list: Bring three items: pencil, calculator, and ID.
- Introduce an explanation: There's one reason: hard work pays off.
- **Note:** What comes before the colon must be a complete sentence.

## ■ SENTENCE STRUCTURE

### Run-on Sentences

**Wrong:** I studied hard I passed the test. *X*

**Fix with period:** I studied hard. I passed the test. *✓*

**Fix with semicolon:** I studied hard; I passed the test. *✓*

**Fix with comma + FANBOYS:** I studied hard, so I passed. *✓*

### Sentence Fragments

Every sentence needs a subject and verb:

• **Fragment:** Because I studied hard. *X*

• **Complete:** Because I studied hard, I passed. *✓*

### Parallel Structure

Items in a list should have the same grammatical form:

• **Wrong:** I like swimming, to run, and biking. *X*

• **Right:** I like swimming, running, and biking. *✓*

## ■ MODIFIER PLACEMENT

Modifiers should be placed next to what they modify:

• **Misplaced:** I saw a dog running down the street in my pajamas. *X*

• **Clear:** In my pajamas, I saw a dog running down the street. *✓*

### Dangling Modifiers

• **Dangling:** Walking to school, the flowers were beautiful. *X*

• **Fixed:** Walking to school, I saw beautiful flowers. *✓*

## ■ COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

their/there/they're	Possessive / Location / They are
its/it's	Possessive / It is
your/you're	Possessive / You are
affect/effect	Verb (influence) / Noun (result)
then/than	Time sequence / Comparison
who/whom	Subject / Object

## ■ TOP TIPS FOR SAT WRITING

- ✓ Read the entire sentence before choosing an answer
- ✓ Trust your ear, but verify with grammar rules
- ✓ Shorter, simpler answers are often correct
- ✓ Watch for common error patterns (subject-verb, pronouns, punctuation)
- ✓ Eliminate answers with obvious errors first