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Writing Section Multiple-Choice Questions

The Writing Multiple-Choice Questions

Recall that there are 3 types of writing multiple choice questions: Improving Sentences, Improving Paragraphs and Identifying Sentence Errors. I will cover each type of questions in turn. The key is to remember that your writing score is made up of more than just the essay. The essay accounts for 30% of your score, and the multiple-choice questions account for 70% of your writing score.

The Writing Multiple Choice Break Down

Type of Question	# of Questions
Improving Sentences	25
Identifying Sentence Errors	18
Improving Paragraphs	6

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Since you are looking for errors, even the slightest misread can cause you to get these problems wrong. Read carefully and re-read often.

The writing multiple choice questions will be in two separate sections. Somewhere between section 2 and 7 there will be a 25-minute section which contains 35 questions. It will contain 15 Improving Sentences questions, all 18 Identifying Sentence Error questions, and all 6 Improving Paragraph questions. The 10th and last section of every test will be a 10-minute section with 14 improving Sentences questions.

The Writing Section

Section	Type of Question	Duration	# of Questions
Section 2–7	All	25	35
Section 10	Improving Sentences	10	14

Improving Sentences

Improving Sentences questions will give you a sentence in which some part or the entire sentence is underlined. You will then be given five answer choices. The first, (A), will be identical to the underlined part of the sentence. The rest of the answer choices will be alternate versions of the underlined part of the sentence. Your job is to pick the answer choice that contains the best way of wording the underlined portion of the sentence. Choosing (A) indicates that the sentence is best the way it is written.

How Common Are They?

There will be 25 Improving Sentences questions per test. They make up about half of the writing multiple choice questions.

EXAMPLE

Improving Sentences

A. The man was for a fishing.

- (A) was for a fishing
- (B) were fishing
- (C) was fishing
- (D) fishing was went
- (E) was for to fishing

B. Mandarin and Cantonese are the languages spoken by most people in China.

- (A) are the languages spoken by most people
- (B) is the languages spoken by most people
- (C) are spoken mostly by people of the people language
- (D) is the languages of most people speaking
- (E) are languages spoke by people most

Approaching Improving Sentences Problems

To solve Improving Sentences problems, first read the sentence all the way through, and re-read it until you understand it, looking specifically at the underlined portion to figure out what the underlined portion is trying to express. Often the underlined portion will be written so awkwardly or will be so wordy that it will be difficult to determine what it is trying to convey. Once you have an idea of what the sentence and underlined portion are saying, start looking for errors in the answer choices. Go through the following Improving Sentences Checklist looking for any errors in the answer choices.

1. **Read the sentence through** - Read the sentence all the way through and try to understand it. Re-read if you need to, and pay close attention to the underlined portion.
2. **Eliminate the wrong answer choices** - Use the process of elimination and your grammar check list on the answer choices.
3. **Re-read the entire “best” sentence** - Before selecting an answer choice, re-read the entire sentence with the best answer choice replacing the underlined portion.

DYSLEXIA or ORGANIZATIONAL DIFFICULTIES

When you are trying to read poorly written sentences, it is far more likely that you will have reading errors because your mind expects things to be written correctly, and might not register mistakes.

Read and Understand the Sentence First

While you might want to go straight to the answer choices looking for errors, it is important to first take the time to figure out exactly what the sentence is trying to say before moving on the trying to figure out the best way to say it.

Process of Elimination

Few types of problems are better suited to the process of elimination than Improving Sentences, because it is impossible to decide the best way to write a sentence, but it is easy to decide a bad way. Go through the answer choices first to see if they are awkwardly written or overly worded. It is usually easier to determine these errors, since they do not involve detailed rules. For the answer choices that remain, use your Grammar Error Check List on the next page to spot grammar errors.

Order for Eliminating: Awkward/Wordy then Ungrammatical

There are really two different types of errors, as I highlighted in Chapter 15—awkwardness/wordiness and violations of specific rules of grammar. Awkward or overly wordy elements say things in an unclear manner, or use more words than they need to. Grammar errors violate specific rules of grammar. Since it is easier to spot awkward/wordy answer choices, eliminate those first.

1. Eliminate Wordy and Awkward answer choices.
2. Eliminate answer choices which are ungrammatical.

Awkwardness and Wordiness

Both of these were covered in depth in Chapter 15. I will review them briefly here.

Wordiness

Wordiness means that more words are used than need to be used.

Fewer Words Is Generally Better

It is usually better to express something using fewer words, as opposed to more words. This does not mean that the shortest answer choice is always correct, but if you are stuck with two answer choices remaining, it is usually best to pick the shorter one.

How Common Are They?

Every Improving Sentences questions will probably have at least one answer choice which is wrong because of **wordiness** and one which is wrong because it is **awkward**.

Awkwardness

If something is awkwardly worded, it means that the words are all there, but they are not in the right order. Also, it will usually not clearly express the idea that it is trying to get across.

If It Does Make Sense it is Probably Wrong

These sentences are not like the Critical Reading or Sentences Completion Sentences. They are generally straightforward sentences which should be easy to understand. If you can not understand an answer choice, then it is probably awkwardly written and therefore wrong.

Tell Yourself A Better Way to Say Things

When you decide that an answer choice is wordy or awkward, do your best to determine and actually say to yourself the better way of putting something. This will confirm that the answer choice is indeed wordy or awkward. If it is wordy, how could you say it with fewer words? If it is awkward, how could you say it more clearly?

Awkward/Wordy Questions

Ask and answer the following questions.

1. Is it awkwardly written? Is there a better way to get the idea across?
If so, what is a better way of stating the same thing?
2. Is it too wordy? Could the answer choice say the same thing with fewer words?
If so, how could you say the same thing with fewer words?

Finding Grammatical Errors

Once you have eliminated all of the answer choices which are wordy or awkward, you can go about looking for the ones which are grammatically incorrect. Finding grammatically incorrect answer choices is more difficult, and will require greater care because the errors will generally be less obvious.

What Errors They Have

You will come across all of the grammatical errors discussed in Chapter 15 in the Improving Sentences questions.

- **Parallelism** – When lists or comparisons do not include similar elements
- **Pronoun misuse** – When the wrong pronoun is used
- **Pronoun position** – When a pronoun is placed in the wrong part of the sentence
- **Subject and verb agreement** – When the subject and the verb do not agree
- **Improper comparisons** – When the wrong word is used to make a comparison.
- **Verb tense** – When the verb is in the wrong tense.
- **Adverb vs. adjective** – When an adverb or adjective is used in place of the other.

For More Information

To learn more about the various types of grammar errors, see Chapter 15

Finding Grammatical Errors Using the Grammar Checklist

The key to finding grammatical errors in the underlined portion is to look at the words one at a time. For each word, determine the type of errors it could have, based on its part of speech. For each possible type of error, determine if that error exists. Ask yourself these questions:

Is there a verb?

Remember that verbs must agree with the subject that is taking the action or being described. In addition, verbs must be properly conjugated to agree with the time. Finally, verbs that are part of list or comparisons must be correctly conjugated. If there is a verb in the underlined portion, ask yourself the following questions:

1. What is the subject that the verb must agree with?
Is the verb properly conjugated to agree with its subject?
2. When is the action taking place?
If so, is the verb in the right tense for the time frame of the sentence?
3. Is the verb part of a list or comparison?
If so, are all of the verbs similarly conjugated?

Is there a pronoun?

In order for a pronoun to be grammatically correct, it must be the appropriate replacement for the noun that it is replacing. What pronoun you must use depends on the noun that is being replaced, and whether the pronoun is a subject or an object. If there is a pronoun in the list, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is it clear what noun the pronoun is replacing?
2. What noun does it replace?
Is the pronoun the correct pronoun to replace that type of noun with regards to 1st, 2nd and 3rd person, as well as singular and plural?
3. Is the pronoun a subject (is it doing the action) or an object (is the action being done to or for it)?
Is it the correct pronoun to be a subject or an object?

Is there a description?

Whether you use an adjective or an adverb depends on whether you are describing a thing, an action or another description. If there is a description in the underlined portion, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is the describing word describing a thing (person, place, or thing)?
If so, is the description an adjective? It should be.
2. Is the describing word describing an action or other description?
If so, is the describing word an adverb? It should be.

REMEMBER

Adverbs are generally Adjectives with an "ly" added to the end.

Is there a list?

Lists have to be similarly structured. Verbs need to be conjugated in the same way, and phrases should have the same structure.

1. If verbs are in the list are they conjugated in the same way?
2. If phrases are in the list, do they have the same structure?

Is there a Comparison?

There are two things to look for with any comparison, that the things being compared have the same structure, and that the correct comparison term is being used.

1. If verbs are being compared, they should have the same structure.

2. If the things being compared are in phrases, they should have the same structure.
3. Does the term that expresses the relationships, “and”, “but”, “nor”, etc. expressing the correct relationship?

Read the “Correct” Sentence

Once you decide which answer choice is correct, read the sentence all the way through with your answer choice inserted in place of the underlined portion of the sentence. Listen to how the sentence sounds, and see if it sounds as good as you thought it would when you chose it as the correct answer choice.

EXAMPLE**Solving an Improving Sentences Question**

- A. We all liked it was that the country was our going.

- (A) it was that they country was our going
- (B) going to the country we were
- (C) that we were going to the country
- (D) that we was going to the country
- (E) that the country we were going

WHAT YOU DO

1. Read the sentence all the way through and try to make sense of it.
2. Eliminate the awkward/wordy answer choices.
3. Eliminate the ungrammatical answer choices.
4. Re-read the sentence with the correct answer choice inserted.

WHAT YOU THINK

1. The sentence is saying that the people are happy to be going to the country.

2. Eliminate Awkward/Wordy Answer Choices

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------|
| (A) wordy | eliminate |
| (B) awkward | eliminate |
| (C) OK | keep |
| (D) OK | keep |
| (E) awkward | eliminate |

Continued on the Next Page

3. Go through the Grammar Check List

(C) that we were going to the country.

(D) that we was going to the country.

WHAT YOU THINK

(C)

Is there a verb? Yes "were"

- Does it match the subject "we?" Yes
- Is the tense correct? Yes
- Is the verb part of a list? No

Is there a pronoun? yes "we"

- What noun is it replacing? "We" doesn't have to replace a noun.
- Is it a subject? Yes, and "we" is the correct form to be the subject. "Us" is the wrong form.

Is there a description, list or comparison?

No

Keep Answer Choice (C)

3. Go through the Grammar Check List

(C) that we were going to the country

~~(D)~~ that we was going to the country

WHAT YOU THINK

(D)

Is there a verb? Yes "was"

- Does it match the subject "we"? No

ELIMINATE (D)

4. Re-Read The Sentence with the Correct Answer Choice Inserted

WHAT YOU THINK

"We all liked that we were going to the country."

This sounds good, and makes sense.

(C) is the correct answer

- B.** Although most people are aware of what comprises good fitness habits, we do not use this knowledge to improve people's fitness and become healthier.
- (A) we do not use this knowledge to improve people's fitness and become healthier.
 - (B) they do not use this knowledge to improve fitness and become healthier.
 - (C) they however used them not to improve their fitness or to become healthy.
 - (D) but do not use them to make improvements to their health or make themselves more fit.
 - (E) too few used this knowledge to improve. their fitness or for becoming healthier.

SAMPLE SAT PROBLEMS

1. For many months, his search for writing gigs were so unfruitful that he figured he should take up carpentry.

(A) were so unfruitful that he figured he should take up
(B) was so unfruitful, so that he figured he should be taking up
(C) was so unfruitful; he figured he should take up
(D) were unfruitful to the point he figured he should take up
(E) was so unfruitful that he figured he should take up

2. The long list of activities that parents feel their kids must participate in—ballet, baseball, hockey, soccer, and theater—leaving, them with little time to relax at home.

(A) leaving them with
(B) leave them with
(C) have left them
(D) leaves them
(E) are leaving them

3. Because of it taking so horribly long to get to the front of the crowd, we didn't get to see any of the mime's performance in front of the cathedral.

(A) Because of it taking so horribly long to get to the front of the crowd,
(B) Because it takes so horrible long to get to the crowd's frontal area,
(C) Because it took so horrible long to get to the crowd's front,
(D) Because of it having took so horribly long to get to the front of the crowd,
(E) Because it took so horribly long to get to the front of the crowd,

4. For the longest time, Randy couldn't understand why no one showed up at the party, but after another look was taken at the invitation, it was clear that he had given out the wrong date.

(A) but after another look was taken at the invitation, it was clear
(B) but after taking another look at the invitation, he saw
(C) but looking again at the invitation, to have the clarity
(D) but taken another look at the invitation, it was clear
(E) but having took another look at the invitation, he was to see

SAMPLE SAT PROBLEMS

5. The great thing about sailing is that it requires no fuel with all of the energy is harvested from the wind.

- (A) fuel with all of the energy
- (B) fuel, due to all of the energy
- (C) fuel; all of the energy
- (D) fuel whereas all of the energy
- (E) fuel; since the energy for it all

6. The first astronauts demonstrated their amazing

ability to remember procedures, their incredible skill in managing the controls, and quite simply, how much of the right stuff they had.

- (A) and quite simply, how much of the right stuff they had.

come

- (B) and moreover, how much of the right stuff they had.

- (C) and quite simply, they truly had the
- (D) and quite simply, their impressive possession of the right stuff.

- (E) and moreover, really having the right stuff.

7. With global warming and the dwindling supply of fossil fuels at hand, cars that run entirely on electricity is often a dream of the automakers.

- (A) is often a dream of the automakers.
- (B) are often a dream of the automakers.
- (C) have increasingly become a dream of the automakers.
- (D) are often dreamed of by the automakers.
- (E) is dreamed of often by the automakers.

8. As with computer memory, the demand for bandwidth has grown exponentially, unfortunately outpacing the supply by at least double.

- (A) exponentially, unfortunately outpacing the supply
- (B) exponentially, furthermore it has outpaced the supply
- (C) exponentially; outpacing the supply
- (D) exponentially with it outpacing the supply
- (E) exponentially, it unfortunately has outpaced

the supply

9. A lot of people become disgusted by negative campaigns, which causes their not voting come election day.

- (A) campaigns, which causes their not voting

election day.

- (B) campaigns and not voting come election day

is the result.

- (C) campaigns; they therefore don't vote come election day.

- (D) campaigns; which is causing them not to vote come election day.

- (E) campaigns, then they not vote come election day.

- (E) campaigns, then they not vote come

10. The financial policy leaders from the large industrial countries agreed to meet and they would restructure the entire world economy.

- (A) agreed to meet and they would restructure
- (B) agreed to meet in order to restructure
- (C) agreed to meeting and thereby restructuring
- (D) agreed to be having met and then would restructure
- (E) agreed to the meeting of a restructuring

ANSWERS

1. E 2. D 3. E 4. B 5. C 6. D 7. D 8. A 9. C 10. B

Identifying Sentence Errors

In these problems, you will be given a sentence with four short sections underlined. Beneath each line will be a letter, A through D. After the sentence there will be the words “No error,” also underlined, with the letter E beneath it. Your goal with these problems is to determine which underlined portion contains an error, and choose the letter under that portion of the sentence. You might also determine that there is no error. In that case, the correct answer is E.

How Common Are They?

There will be 18 Identifying Sentence Error problems per test.

EXAMPLE

Identifying Sentence Errors

A. Clearly, most students feels that when they study
A B
hard enough, they should do well on their tests.
C D
No error
E

B. For the majority of trees, the long winter was
A B
helpful in their attempts to recover from the
C D
string of unusually dry summers. No error.
E

There are Only Grammar Errors

The errors in these questions will be almost exclusively grammar errors. As such, you do not have to focus on whether or not the sentences are wordy or awkwardly written. You can rely almost exclusively on your Grammar Error Check List.

Solving Identifying Sentence Error Problems

First read the sentence all the way through to figure out what it is saying. Re-read it if you need to. Next, re-read the sentence listening to the underlined portions very carefully. Listen for anything that sounds wrong. If you find something that sounds off, start looking for errors there. Go through the Grammar Error Checklist to see if you can determine what about it is wrong. If nothing sounds wrong when you read the sentence, you must use the process of elimination on the answer choices. Use the earlier Grammar Error Checklist on each answer choice to determine which if any of the answer choices are wrong. Once you have decided that an answer choice is wrong, try to determine what would be the correct version of the underlined portion. This will help you be sure that the answer choice is in fact grammatically incorrect.

REMEMBER

Even if you think an answer choice is wrong, use your Grammar Error Checklist to identify exactly what is wrong with it.

Steps to Solving Identifying Sentence Error Problems

1. Read and understand the sentence.
2. Re-read for errors. Listen to the underlined portions to see if any of them sound wrong.
3. Use the Grammar Error Checklist on the underlined portions you believe are ungrammatical.

4. Use the Grammar Error Checklist on all of the underlined portions.

EXAMPLE

Solving Identifying Sentence Error Problems

- A. Rasheed was so cautious that he chose to
participate in neither, skiing or surfing. No error.
A B C D E

WHAT YOU DO

1. Read and understand the sentence.
2. Re-read listening for errors.
3. Use the Grammar Error Checklist on the underlined portions you believe are ungrammatical.
4. Use the Grammar Error Checklist on all of the underlined portions.

WHAT YOU THINK

1. It is saying Rasheed is timid and didn't ski or surf
2. After re-reading, nothing sounds wrong.
3. Nothing specific to check.

See the solution on the next page

- A. Rasheed was so cautious that he chose to
participate in neither, skiing or surfing. No error.
A B C D E

WHAT YOU THINK

4. Using the Grammar Error Checklist

(A) **cautious** is a description.

Is it describing a thing? Yes, it is describing Rasheed.

Is an adjective not an adverb? Yes

(A) has no error **Eliminate**

(B) **chose** is an action.

Does it match the subject? "Chose" is in the singular third person, and Rasheed is a single person, so the verb matches its subject.

"Chose" is past tense. The sentence says Rasheed "was cautious", which is also in the past, so "chose" is in the correct tense.

(B) has no error **Eliminate**

(C) **or** is a comparison. The sentence has "neither" in it, so it should be "nor" not "or."

(C) **ERROR!** **Keep**

(D) **surfing** is part of a list. It must be in the same format as "skiing." They both end in "ing."

(D) has no error **Eliminate**

The answer is C

SAMPLE SAT PROBLEMS: Identifying Sentence

1. With their ^Arespective playfulness and seriousness the characters of Mercutio and Tybalt creates ^Bcounterpoint themes, echoing ^Cthe more dominant ^Dthemes of love and hate in Romeo and Juliet. No error ^E
2. High school curriculum designers are beginning ^Ato choose to require ^Bfreshmen to take ^Ca semester-long ^Dmedia awareness course. No error ^E
3. For over five years, banks seemed to ^Agive out loans to anyone who claimed ^Bto have a job, and ^Clending standards suddenly tightened up when ^Dthe real estate market crashed. No error ^E
4. When you ^Acompare road fatalities ^Bto the number of people who die in commercial airline crashes, you realize ^Cwhat a surprisingly small risk you take when ^Dwe board a plane. No error ^E
5. Once ^Awe realized how we were manipulated ^Bby the advertisements to always want the best and newest MP3 player, we ^Cat least began to consider holding on to ^Dour older ones. No error ^E
6. Both Nastia Lukin and Shawn Johnson will be ^Aforever remembered as the star ^Bof the supremely talented ^C2008 American women's Olympic gymnastics team. No error ^E
7. The Bald Eagle, unlike ^Athe grand and majestic California Condor, is now ^Bthriving ^Cenough to be removed ^Dfrom the endangered species list. No error ^E
8. Incessant noise from the speeding trucks ruin ^Athe sense of place one ^Bwould otherwise ^Cfeel when walking ^Dbetween the old olive orchard and the ripening vineyard. No error ^E
9. The synergy created between Internet search companies and advertisers have ^Achanged the retail ^Blandscape, creating ^Cgreat opportunities for those companies ^Dthat learned early on how to adapt. No error ^E

ANSWERS

1. B 2. E 3. C 4. B 5. E 6. B 7. E 8. A 9. A

Improving Paragraphs

In the Improving Paragraphs section, you will be asked to read a passage and answer questions on various ways that the paragraph could be improved, or occasionally, the purpose of various parts of the paragraph. These questions will be testing your ability to write in that they will be asking you to make improvements to various parts of a passage. It is important to note that not all of the questions will be grammatical. Some questions will ask about the clearest way to express information.

How common are they?

There will be 6 improving Paragraphs problem per set.

EXAMPLE

Improving Paragraphs

Don't try to answer these now, we will go over them later in this chapter.

(1) It could be the boogieman in the closet or the dinosaur under the bed. (2) I do not care what monster was there. (3) I only cared that the monsters were coming to get me. (4) Though it was the lights and the lights only that were saving me. (5) As a child, I was constantly afraid when the lights were out.

(6) Once when I was five, my father had a talk with me. (7) He explained that nothing changed when the lights turned off. (8) If there were no monsters when the lights were on, then there weren't any after the lights went off. (9) After explaining this to me, my father checked in the closet, looked under the bed and the laundry hamper.

(10) As soon as I was alone and with the lamp in the dark room, it changed. (11) Before my eyes, it grew sharp claws and a mouth with chomping teeth. (12) Thankfully, my father returned to bring me a glass of water, forcing it to turn back into a lamp.

- A. In the context of the passage what should be done with sentence 5 (reproduced below)?

As a child, I was constantly afraid when the lights were out.

- (A) Leave it as it is
- (B) Delete it
- (C) Delete “constantly”
- (D) Replace “constantly” with “constant”
- (E) Move it to the beginning of the first paragraph

- B. In the context of the passage, which is the best revision to make to the underlined portion of sentence 10 (reproduced below)?

As soon as I was alone and with the lamp in the dark room, it changed.

- (A) Leave it as it is
- (B) was alone in the dark room with the lamp, it changed.
- (C) could be with the lamp in the dark room, the lamp was changing.
- (D) could be in the dark room; the lamp changed.
- (E) was alone, there was a change in the dark room lamp.

Where Will They Be?

Improving Paragraphs questions will always be the last question in the long Writing multiple-choice section. There will always be one passage, just a few paragraphs, and 6 Improving Paragraphs questions referring to that passage. They will always be questions 30 through 35.

What Will They Ask?

As there are only 6 Improving Paragraphs questions, there are not too many types of questions that they can ask. The main focus of the questions will be on grammar and clarity of writing. You will most likely see questions asking you to revise an underlined portion of a sentence, revise an entire sentence, combine sentences, insert text, delete text, and possibly be asked about the purpose of certain parts of the passage. It is also possible that you will see other types of questions, but these are the common types that you should expect to see.

- **Revise a whole sentence** – asks you to modify, move or delete an entire sentence.
- **Revise an underlined portion** – almost identical to Improving Sentences questions.
- **Combine sentences** – ask for the best way to combine two sentences.
- **Inserting sentences** – ask the best text to insert to improve the paragraph.
- **Delete sentences** – ask what text should be removed from the paragraph.
- **What's the purpose** – similar to Sectional Passage Based Reading questions.

Read the Passage First

Do not bother with the questions until you have read the passage all the way through just to understand it. These passage are not complicated like the Critical Reading passages. They express simple ideas, and are written in a very straightforward manner. The only problems you should have should be with the parts that are poorly written or ungrammatical. Do not try to spot errors or make improvements while reading. Simply read and try to understand.

Remember

Just try to understand the passage at first. Don't look for any errors.

Don't Try to Fix the Errors While Reading

There will be many different errors in the paragraph, and only some of them will be addressed by the questions. There is no point in trying to fix the paragraph unless you are going to get some points on the test for doing so. You will notice that the sentences are numbered. Don't worry about the number while you are reading.

Answering the Questions

These questions will ask you to make improvements to the passages either in terms of grammar, or in terms of writing clarity. It is important that you know how to answer each type of questions.

Re-Read the Extended Section for Each Question

Since the questions are always related to the passages, be sure to re-read two sentences before the referenced sentence, the referenced sentence and two sentences after the referenced sentence.

Know Your Grammar Checklist

As many of these questions will ask you about grammar, be sure they you have read and learned Chapter 15, and are comfortable using your Grammar Check List.

Revise a Whole Sentence

These questions are quite common, but include aspects of many other types of problems. As such, I will cover these types of problems last, since solving them will involve various techniques I will cover here. These are very common questions, so be sure to read the section of answering these questions on page 29.

Revise an Underlined Portion Questions

These questions should look familiar. They are similar too, if not identical to, Improving Sentences questions. These questions will take a sentence from the passage, underline a portion of it, and ask you to determine the best revision of the underlined portion, or if it is best not to revise it at all; just like an Improving Sentences question.

How common are they?

There will be between 0 and 3 Revising Underlined Portion questions per test.

EXAMPLE

Revising Underlined Portions

- A. Of the following, which is the best revision of the underlined portion of sentence 9 (reproduced below)?

Whatever the reason, they seemed to be headed in the direction of the fort.

- (A) (Leave it as it is)
- (B) they were headed in, regardless of the reason,
- (C) headed in, without knowing the reason
- (D) without a known reason, they headed apparently in
- (E) Whatever their reason, they apparently headed in

- B. In the context of the passage, which is the best revision to make to the underlined portion of sentence 7 (reproduced below)?

As soon as I was alone and with the lamp in the dark room, it changed.

- (A) (Leave it as it is)
- (B) was alone in the dark room with the lamp, it changed.
- (C) could be with the lamp in the dark room, the lamp was changing.
- (D) could be in the dark room; the lamp changed.
- (E) was alone, there was a change in the dark room lamp.

Solve These like Improving Sentences Questions

If you do not remember the advice for Improving Sentences questions, go back and review it now. The one modification is that you read the extended section around the sentence first, and then go try to solve the questions. Follow these steps when faced with a Revising Underlined Portions question:

1. **Re-Read the Extended Section** - Re-read two sentences before the referenced sentence, the referenced sentence, and two sentences after the referenced sentence.
2. **Read the italicized sentence through** - Read the sentence all the way through and try to understand it. Re-read if you need to, and pay close attention to the meaning of the underlined portion.
3. **Eliminate the wrong answer choices** - Use the process of elimination and your grammar check list on the answer choices.
4. **Re-read the entire “best” sentence and extended section** - Before selecting an answer choice, re-read the entire sentence with the best answer choice replacing the underlined portion. Then, re-read the entire extended section.

DYSLEXIA or ORGANIZATIONAL DIFFICULTIES

When you are trying to read poorly written sentences, it is far more likely that you will have reading errors because your mind expects things to be written correctly, and might not register mistakes.

Read the Extended Section: Context Matters

While you are looking for wordiness, awkwardness and grammatical mistakes, the context of the passage matters, especially with transitions or comparisons like, “however”, “although”, “on the other hand,” etc. For example, how can you figure out if a sentence should begin with “In addition,” or “For the most part” unless you know the context in which the sentence is being used?

Eliminating the Wrong Answer Choices

As with Improving Sentences, first eliminate based on wordiness or awkwardness, then use your Grammar Check List to find grammatical errors. Remember, it is usually easier to spot answer choices that are just poorly written, as opposed to finding specific grammar errors.

Re-Read the “Correct” Sentence

Once you have decided on the answer choice that you think is correct, re-read the new sentence with the underlined portion inserted. This will let you hear the new sentence and allow you to catch any errors that you might have missed.

Re-Read the “Correct” Extended Section

Once you have re-read the sentence, re-read the extended section. Be sure that it fits in correctly in the context of the passage.

EXAMPLE

Revising an Underlined Portion

(1) It could be the boogiemon in the closet or the dinosaur under the bed. (2) I do not care what monster was there. (3) I only cared that the monsters were coming to get me. (4) Though it was the lights and the lights only that were saving me. (5) As a child, I was constantly afraid when the lights were out.

(6) Once when I was five, my father had a talk with me. (7) He explained that nothing changed when the lights turned off. (8) If there were no monsters when the lights were on, then there weren’t any after the lights went off. (9) After explaining this to me, my father looked under the bed, checked in the closet and the laundry hamper.

(10) As soon as I was alone and with the lamp in the dark room, it changed. (11) Before my eyes, it grew sharp claws and a mouth with chomping teeth. (12) Thankfully, my father returned to bring me a glass of water, forcing it to turn back into a lamp.

A. Which of the following is the best way to revise the underlined portion of sentence 9 (reproduced below)?

After explaining this to me, my father looked under the bed, checked in the closet and the laundry hamper.

- (A) (As it is now)
- (B) the closet and laundry hamper was the next to be examined by him.
- (C) the closet but the laundry hamper was last.
- (D) the closet and my laundry hamper was examined.
- (E) the bed and searched the laundry hamper.

WHAT YOU DO

1. Read the extended section: sentences 7 through 11.
2. Read the italicized sentence.
3. Eliminate the wrong answer choices.
4. Re-read the sentence with the correct answer choice inserted.

See the solution on the next page

Answer Choice (A)

(A) There is a list: "my father looked under the bed, checked in the closet and the laundry hamper." The construction is not consistent. The first two elements in the list had verbs "looked" and "checked," but the last element has no verb. **ELIMINATE**

A. Which of the following is the best way to revise the underlined portion of sentence 9 (reproduced below)?

After explaining this to me, my father looked under the bed, checked in the closet and the laundry hamper.

- ~~(A)~~ (As it is now)
- ~~(B)~~ the closet and laundry hamper was the next to be examined by him.
- ~~(C)~~ the closet but the laundry hamper was last
- ~~(D)~~ the closet and my laundry hamper was examined
- (E) the bed and searched the laundry hamper

Answer Choice (B)

(B) Wordy **ELIMINATE**

Answer Choice (C)

(C) There is a conjunction "but." "But" implies conflict or opposites. There are no opposites, so "but" is wrong. **ELIMINATE**

Answer Choice (D)

(D) The list is not consistent. The first two elements in the list have the father doing something, but in the last, the hamper was described. The last element has the hamper as a subject not the father. **ELIMINATE**

Answer Choice (E)

(E) The list is consistent. "And" is also the right conjunction to use with this list because the elements are similar. **KEEP**

Combining Sentences

These questions will ask you to combine two references sentences in the passage. The sentences will be references by line number, and will be reproduced in italics below the question.

How common are they?

There will be between at most 1 Combining Sentences question.

EXAMPLE

Combining Sentences

- A. In the context of the passage, what is the best way to revise and combine sentences 4 and 5 (reproduced below)?

Everyone should be aware of the problems. These problems are not always adequately reported.

- (F) Everyone should be aware of the problems, since these problems are not always adequately reported.
- (G) These problems should be know by everyone, as they are not adequately reported.
- (H) Everyone should be aware of the problems, but they are not always adequately reported.
- (I) Everyone should be reported on about these problems so that they will know about them.
- (J) The problems are not adequately know, but the everyone should know about the problems.

- B. In context of the passage, which of the following is the best version of the underlined portions of sentences 8 and 9 (reproduced below)?

A CD I found had songs from three members of a band. The Vandels who split up four years before the CD was made.

- (A) (Leave it as it is)
- (B) a band; The Vandels split up
- (C) the Vandels, a band which split up
- (D) a band named the Vandels and split up
- (E) the Vandels, the band that split up

Read the Extended Section: Determine the Relationship

The key to solving these questions is to work out the exact relationship between the sentences. When you read the extended section (two sentences before and two sentences after the referenced sentences), look specifically for the relationship between the two sentences. Recall the ways that ideas connect:

- One causes the other
- One is an example of the other
- Different action/descriptions of the same subject
- Different subjects, but same action/description
- They contradict one another

Once you have an idea about the ways that the ideas connect, you can attack the answer choices. Find the one the most clearly represents the relationship between the two ideas. Pay close attention to the terms that express the relationship, like “because,” “although,” “in addition to,” “even though,” etc.

Pronoun Use

When combining sentences, you will often replace a noun with a pronoun. If the answer choices included pronouns, ask yourself your pronoun questions to ensure that it is clear what they replace, and that the pronoun is the correct pronoun to replace the noun it replaces.

Inserting Sentences Questions

These questions will ask you which sentence would be the best to insert into the passages at a specified location.

EXAMPLE

Inserting Sentences

- A. Which of the following is the best sentence to add before sentence 5?
- (A) The least likely outcomes is often the one that occurs.
 - (B) No one expected to find the treasure, but we did.
 - (C) Which is more likely, the thing you least expect, or the thing you expect to happen actually happening?
 - (D) That was the first time that we saw the show for what it was.
 - (E) None of the event staff was able to see properly, or the events might not have occurred.
- B. Which of the following is the best sentence to insert at the end of the first paragraph?
- (A) The journey was the reward after all.
 - (B) Sailing is now a sport.
 - (C) We all believe that there are ways to explore our world freely.
 - (D) It did not astound the crew to see their captain with such miraculous luck.
 - (E) The sea was known to all of them.

Not Grammatical, Logical

These are not grammatical questions, but more closely related to Passage Based Reading questions. These questions will ask you to place a sentence at the beginning or end of a paragraph or passage—they are asking you to either summarize a paragraph or passage, to properly transition from one paragraph to another, or to introduce a passage.

Answering Insertion Questions

To answer these questions, you will have to figure out the best possible sentence to insert into the passage. To do this you must first re-read the passage, paying specially attention to the area in which you will be adding the sentence. Then go through the answer choices to determine which would fit into the passage and improve it most. Once you have chosen an answer choice, tell yourself how it improves to passage, and finally re-read the passage with the new sentence inserted.

1. Re-read the passage.
2. Go through the answer choices.
3. Tell yourself how the insertion improves the passage.
4. Re-read the passage with the sentence inserted.

Position Matters

Answering these questions involves fitting the sentence into the context of the passage. To properly answer these questions, you must first recognize where the sentence is being added, and therefore what job the sentence must play. Here is the goal of each sentence insertion:

- **At the start of the passage** – introduces the passage, which means it will tell you any information that you need to know in order for the passage to make sense.
- **At the end of the passage** – summarizes the passage or the final paragraph.
- **At the end of a paragraph** – summarizes the paragraph and/or transition to the next paragraph.
- **At the beginning of a paragraph** – introduces the paragraph and/or transition from one paragraph to the next.

Re-Read the Passage

While re-reading, remind yourself about the passage, and look for specific information related to the main point to figure out what the author is trying to say. If you are inserting a sentence at the beginning of the passage, figure out the main point of the passage, and see if there is anything that you think should have been included at the beginning of the passage that would help it make more sense. If you are adding a sentence at the end of the passage, figure out the main point of the passage. If you are inserting a sentence at the beginning of a paragraph, figure out both the main point of that paragraph, and of the paragraph before it. If you are putting a sentence at the end of a paragraph, figure out the point of both that paragraph, and of the paragraph that follows it.

Go Through the Answer Choices

Read each answer choice while looking to see if it would improve the passage based on the position in which it is being inserted. While doing so, ask yourself the following questions:

Beginning of the Passage

- What is the main point of the passage?
- How does this introduce the passage?
- How does inserting this information help make the passage make more sense?

End of the Passage

- What is the main point of the passage?
- How does this conclude or summarize the passage?
- How does inserting this information help bring the passage to a close?

Beginning of a Paragraph

- What is the main point of the paragraph? How about the paragraph before it?
- How does this introduce the paragraph?
- How does this sentence transition from the previous paragraph to this one?

End of a Paragraph

- What is the main point of the paragraph? How about the paragraph which follows?
- How does this concluded or summarize the paragraph?
- How does this sentence transition from one paragraph to the next?

Tell Yourself Why the Insertion is an Improvement

Once you have selected an answer choice, be sure to ask yourself how the insertion improves the passage. Tell yourself what was missing from the passage before, and how the inserted sentence solves that problem. If nothing was missing, at least tell yourself what improvement was made by inserting the sentence.

Always Re-read the Passage with the Sentence Inserted

Once you have decided on an answer choice, always re-read the entire passage with the sentence inserted. Read looking specifically for the improvement that the sentence has made.

Deleting a Sentence

These questions will ask which sentence can be completely deleted from the passage. They are asking you to determine which sentence in the passage is unnecessary or useless.

Redundant or Unrelated

There will be two reasons for deleting a sentence: either because it gives information that is unrelated to the passage, or because it restates information that has already been provided.

Finding the Sentence to Delete

Follow these steps to delete a sentence from the passage:

1. Re-read the passage.
2. Go through the answer choices.
3. Tell yourself how deleting your sentence improves the passage.
4. Re-read the improved passage.

How common are they?

Deleting Sentences questions are very rare. There will be at most 1 per test.

EXAMPLE

Deleting A Sentences

A. Which of the following sentences should be deleted from the essay?

- (A) sentence 4
- (B) sentence 5
- (C) sentence 6
- (D) sentence 7
- (E) sentence 8

To figure out which sentence needs to be deleted, you first need to understand the passage and the section from which you will remove sentences. First, re-read the passage. Pay close attention to the sentences that you will have to delete. See which one gives information which is unrelated to the passage, or gives information which has already been stated. Go through the answer choices looking for a sentence which is redundant or unrelated to the passage. A redundant sentence is one which says something that has already been stated in the passage. An unrelated sentence is one which gives information that is not related to the passage. Once you have chosen a sentence to delete, tell yourself how the removal of that sentence improves the passage as a whole. If you think a sentence is redundant, tell yourself which sentences give the same information. If you think a sentence is unrelated, tell yourself why it is not related to the passage. Once you choose an answer choice, re-read the entire passage with your answer choice removed and listen to hear if the passage is improved by the removal of the sentence.

Revise an Entire Sentence

These questions will ask you which is the best revision or rewrite of an entire sentence taken from the passage. The sentence will be referenced by number and written in italics below the question.

How common are they?

There will be between 0 and 3 Revising Entire Sentence questions per test.

EXAMPLE

Revision Question

- A. In the context of the passage what should be done with sentence 5 (reproduced below)?

As a child, I was constantly afraid when the lights were out.

- (A) (Leave it as it is)
- (B) Delete it entirely.
- (C) Delete “when.”
- (D) Replace “constantly” with “constant.”
- (E) Move it to the beginning of the first paragraph.

- B. In context, which of the following revisions would most improve sentence 5 (reproduced below)?

The level of praise seemed overly given, and did not correlate with his achievement.

- (A) Insert “however” at the beginning of the sentence.
- (B) Replace “overly given” with “excessive.”
- (C) Replace “did not” with “does not.”
- (D) Delete “with.”
- (E) Replace “his achievement” with “to achieve.”

Types of Revisions

There will be five main types of revisions that you will be asked to assess: spot changes, deletion of words, insertion of words, deletion of the entire sentence and movement of the entire sentence.

- **Term Replacement** – Replace one word or phrase with another.
- **Term Deletion** – Delete a single term of phrase.
- **Term Insertion** – Insert a single term of phrase.
- **Sentence Deletion** – Delete the sentence all together.
- **Sentence Moving** – Move the sentence to a different location in the passage.

Term vs. Whole Sentence Answer Choices

There are two types of revisions that you will be asked to evaluate. Some answer choices will ask you to evaluate changes to individual terms within the sentence, like answer choices (C) and (D) in example A, and all of the answer choices in example B. Notice that these might replace, insert or delete terms. Other answer choices will ask you to make adjustments to the sentence as a whole, generally by moving it as in answer choice (B) in example A or by moving it, as in answer choice (E) in example A.

Term answer choices are about making the sentence work better. Whole Sentence answer choices are about making the passage work better. When evaluating each type of answer choice, be sure to keep in mind the effect that a Term and Whole Sentence answer choice can have.

Approaching Term Answer Choices

When approaching Term answer choices, you should focus on finding the best way to get the sentence to express the ideas which it is supposed to express. You have to think about them much like you do Improving Sentences and Revising an Underlined Portion questions. Follow these steps when evaluating a Term answer choice

1. Re-read the extended section, focusing on the portion of the sentence in which the answer choice is changing.
2. See if the sentence is wordy or awkward and if the answer choice fixes the problem.

3. Use your Grammar Error Check List to evaluate the change that the answer choice is asking you to evaluate.
4. Whether you decide to eliminate or keep the answer choice, state to yourself why the sentence is better either way.

DYSLEXIA, VISUAL PROCESSING or MEMORY DIFFICULTIES

When evaluating a term revision, it may be helpful to rewrite the sentence with the revisions inserted. That way you can look at the sentence while trying to evaluate it.

Term Revision Answer Choices

These answer choices will ask you to replace one term with another, like answer choice (D) in example A. When re-reading the extended section, pay attention to the area that will be revised. See if the sentence is awkward or wordy in that area. Also, use your Grammar Error Check List to determine if the part that will be revised is ungrammatical. If it is, determine if the answer choice's revision will repair the problem.

Term Deletion Answer Choices

These answer choices will ask you to eliminate a term from the sentence, like answer choice (C) in example A. The key to evaluating these answer choices is to determine if the term which is to be deleted is making the sentence wordy, awkward or grammatically incorrect. When re-reading the extended section, pay close attention to the term to be deleted. Re-read the extended section with the term deleted too.

Term Insertion Answer Choices

These answer choices will ask you to evaluate the insertion of a term into a sentence, like answer choice (A) in example B. Oftentimes, the term being inserted is a comparative term. When re-reading the extended section, pay attention to the relationship between the previous sentence and the sentence in which the term is being inserted. Look at the type of comparative term that is being inserted, and see if that works well with the relationship between the previous sentence, and the sentence being revised.

Evaluating Your Chosen Term Revision

Once you have decided that a term answer choice is the correct answer choice, be sure to determine if the revision creates an awkward or wordy sentence. Use your Grammar Error Check List on the new sentence by telling yourself what the problem with the sentence was, and how the revision fixed it. Finally, re-read the extended section with the new sentence inserted.

Approaching Whole Sentence Revision Answer Choices

Since these questions will ask you to move or remove an entire sentence, they are asking you to make a change that affects the entire passage. When thinking about these answer choices, think about the effect the change will have on the entire passage. For these, you must re-read the entire passage to get a feel for the role that the sentence is playing in the passage.

Sentence Moving Answer Choices

If you are asked to evaluate the movement of an entire sentence, it is important to determine the role that the sentence will play depending on its position, as was covered in Inserting Sentences questions on page 25. Here is a brief review:

- **At the start of the passage** – introduces the passage, which means it will tell you any information that you need to know in order for the passage to make sense.
- **At the end of the passage** – summarizes the passage or the final paragraph.
- **At the end of a paragraph** – summarize the paragraph and/or transition to the next paragraph.
- **At the beginning of a paragraph** – introduces the paragraph and/or transition from one paragraph to the next.

Note where the answer choice is suggesting that the sentence be moved. Tell yourself the role that the sentence would play in that new position, and why the sentence would or would not work in this new position.

Sentence Deletion Answer Choices

These sentences ask if the sentence should be deleted. Recall from Sentence Deletion Questions on page 28. that if a sentence should be removed it must be redundant or unnecessary. This answer choice is asking you to determine if the sentence is redundant or unnecessary. When re-reading the passage, pay attention to what role the sentence is playing in the passage. Look at the subject and action/description of the sentences to help you see what idea the sentence is trying to convey. Have some other sentences already expressed this idea? Is the idea related to the rest of the passage? These are the questions you need to ask yourself when evaluating whether or not the sentence should be deleted.

Evaluating Your Chosen Whole Sentence Revision

If you determine that a Whole Sentence Revision answer choice is correct, re-read the entire passage with the sentence removed or moved to ensure that the passage has been improved. Tell yourself what the problem with the passage was, and how the revision fixes it.

SAMPLE SAT PROBLEMS: Improving Paragraphs Questions

(1) Few people would recognize the Osborne 1 as a predecessor to our contemporary laptop. (2) This first commercially successful “portable” computer was released in 1981. (3) The date it was released was four months before the release of the first IBM PC. (4) The Osborne attracted many buyers. (5) It was the first microcomputer to come with a valuable, bundled software package, but its primary allure was its portability, or, more accurately, its “luggability” as it soon came to be known. (6) The Osborne was the size and shape of a medium-sized suitcase. (7) It weighed 23.5 pounds, which is as much as a fully stuffed, large suitcase. (8) The clunky IBM Selectric typewriters that the reporters were carting around at the time weighed only 16 pounds. (9) It was allowed on board commercial airplanes, and then it was criticized in a competitor’s commercial for not fitting under the seat. (10) Referring to portability, by today’s standards, it would fail. (11) We sure had come a long way 26 years later, when Steve Jobs unveiled Apple’s newest laptop by sliding it out of a manila envelope.

(12) The Osborne wasn’t really much smaller than other microcomputers in 1981. (13) It was, however, uniquely transportable for the time. (14) The six-inch screen was integrated into the main box, and the keyboard was in the hinged lid. (15) You would close it up the same way you do a common toolbox, with its screen and keyboard folding upon each other. (16) Of course, the small size of the screen limited which games you could play on it. (17) The screen and keyboard folding upon each other is a design feature our laptops have retained. (18) For people who needed a computer for work out in the field—at large construction projects or ocean exploration sites, or for surveying—it must have offered improved convenience. (19) On the other hand, I don’t think many Osbornes found their way onto café tables.

1. Which of the following is the best way to revise the underlined portions of sentences 2 and 3 (reproduced below) to combine the sentences?

This first commercially successful “portable” computer was released in 1981. The date it was released was four months before the release of the first IBM PC.

- (A) 1981 was four
- (B) 1981, which was the date that was four
- (C) 1981; this date was four
- (D) 1981, four
- (E) 1981 being the date four

-
2. Which of the following is the best way to revise and combine sentences 4 and 5 (reproduced below)?

The Osborne attracted many buyers. It was the first microcomputer to come with a valuable, bundled software package ...

- (A) (As it is now)
- (B) The Osborne attracted many buyers, and it was the first microcomputer to come with a valuable, bundled software package ...
- (C) Considering how the Osborne attracted many buyers, it was the first microcomputer to come with a valuable, bundled software package ...
- (D) Explaining how the Osborne attracted many buyers, it was the first microcomputer to come with a valuable, bundled software package ...
- (E) The Osborne attracted many buyers by being the first microcomputer to come with a valuable, bundled software package ...

SAMPLE SAT PROBLEMS: Improving Paragraphs Questions

3. Which is the best way to revise sentence 9 (reproduced below)?

It was allowed on board commercial airplanes, and then it was criticized in a competitor's commercial for not fitting under the seat.

- (A) (As it is now)
- (B) Though it was allowed on-board commercial airplanes, but it was criticized in a competitor's commercial for not fitting under the seat.
- (C) It was allowed on-board commercial airplanes, and it was criticized in a competitor's commercial for not fitting under the seat.
- (D) Though it was allowed on-board commercial airplanes, it was criticized in a competitor's commercial for not fitting under the seat.
- (E) Having been allowed on commercial airplanes, a competitor's commercial criticized it for not fitting under the seat.

4. In sentence 10, the phrase "Referring to portability" is best replaced by

- (A) In terms of portability,
- (B) Portability as such,
- (C) Considering portability,
- (D) Namely portability,
- (E) Despite its portability,

5. Which of the following sentences should be omitted to improve the unity of the third paragraph?

- (A) sentence 14
- (B) sentence 15
- (C) sentence 16
- (D) sentence 17
- (E) sentence 18

-
6. The author's intention in sentence 19 (reproduced below) is to suggest what?

On the other hand, I don't think many Osbornes found their way onto café tables.

- (A) Using computers in cafés used to be discouraged.
- (B) The Osborne wasn't used the way we now use laptops.
- (C) Surveillance was typically conducted in cafés.
- (D) Common people in cafés couldn't afford computers.
- (E) Our laptops now are more resistant to coffee spills.

Answers

1. D 2. E 3. D 4. A 5. C 6. B