

SAT Apostrophes, Parentheses, Quotations Exercises Answer Key

Choose the correct answer from the following options

1. As more and more colleges emphasize the importance of volunteer work, high school students must find creative ways to give back. One group of students is doing just that: traveling to Thailand to help build and maintain a sanctuary for elephants (a place of refuge or safety) for the dwindling elephant population of 400,000.
 - a. NO CHANGE
 - b. to help construct and keep clean a sanctuary for elephants
 - c. looking to build and maintain a sanctuary for elephants
 - d. **to help build and maintain an elephant sanctuary**

Choice D is the best answer because it correctly places the word “sanctuary” directly before the parenthetical information that defines it to prevent any confusion. The other choices are wordy and do not have the word “sanctuary” immediately in front of the parenthetical definition. In this sense, a question with parentheses may actually be testing a potentially misplaced modifier. See our section on modifiers for more questions like this.

2. The wild hare that the hunter caught was so large and fluffy that, the local newspaper, commented “This is most definitely the biggest bunny that our city has witnessed, and will probably ever witness.”
 - a. NO CHANGE
 - b. fluffy, that the local newspaper commented
 - c. **fluffy that the local newspaper commented,**
 - d. fluffy that the local newspaper, commented

Choice C is the best answer. No comma is necessary before “commented,” and the comma after “commented” appropriately separates the first clause and the quotation it introduces. We use a comma before a quotation when it is a direct quotation of words someone said and follows a verb such as “said” or in this case “commented.”

3. On the first day of instruction, the history professor told his class, “in order to get an A on your essay, you must strictly follow the instructions on the syllabus, with zero deviation from the prompt.”
 - a. NO CHANGE
 - b. **prompt.”**
 - c. prompt”
 - d. prompt.

Choice B is the correct answer. In American English, and on the SAT, punctuation should always come inside the quotation marks. (Yes, you can break this rule in the UK!).

4. After visiting his cousin at Cornell Law School, Cole told his two best friends that “he wanted to study law in college, too.” and thereafter he began to research on top law schools.
- a. NO CHANGE
 - b. that he wanted to study law in college,**
 - c. that: “he wanted to study law in college,”
 - d. that: he wanted to study law in college,

Choice B is the best answer because this sentence does not require quotation marks. If the sentence had said “Cole told his two best friends, “I, too, want to study law in college,” then quotation marks would be appropriate as the sentence is directly telling us what Cole said. However, because the sentence is indirectly telling us what Cole said and not necessarily using his exact words, (i.e. Cole would never say “he” to refer to himself), then the quotation marks should not be used.

5. “I want to eat ice cream!”, the spoiled toddler shouted as she marched around the kitchen.
- a. NO CHANGE
 - b. cream!,” the spoiled toddler
 - c. cream”! the spoiled toddler
 - d. cream!” the spoiled toddler**

Choice D is the correct answer because the toddler’s direct quote ends with an exclamation mark, so a comma is not necessary to separate the quotation from the rest of the sentence. Generally, you don’t need to “double up” on punctuation when you have quotations. There are a few dicey situations in which you might need to, namely when the item in quotations is part of a title that includes a punctuation mark in the title, and a comma is necessary to end a non-essential clause that includes that quotation... but I’ve never seen this on an SAT. (And maybe have seen it on one ACT ever.) So let’s not go there.

6. When Sean told us that “he was going to the car to bring in some stew.” we knew dinner was going to be great.
- a. NO CHANGE
 - b. “he was going to the car to bring in some stew”
 - c. “he was going to the car to bring in some stew”,
 - d. he was going to the car to bring in some stew,**

Choice D is the best answer because quotation marks are only needed for direct quotations. In this case, quotation marks are being incorrectly used for an indirect quotation from Sean.

7. In small doses, which one could drink as a beverage during dinner), red wine has been shown to contain antioxidants that are believed to have heart benefits.
- a. NO CHANGE
 - b. doses (which**
 - c. doses which
 - d. doses; (which

Choice B is the best answer because in this sentence, we are setting off unimportant information in a set of parentheses as there is a “planted” closing parenthesis later in the sentence. It is also possible to set off nonessential information in a pair of dashes or commas.