

BASIC STRATEGIES

LESS IS MORE

Go with the shortest answer possible. Ignore this rule if the shortest answer makes no sense.

The original (NO CHANGE) answer may already be the shortest.

CROSS OUT THE CRAP

Whenever you are hunting down the subject, or whenever you think a grammar question is tricky, **CROSS OUT THE CRAP.**

Crap includes: prepositional phrases, non-essential phrases, and descriptions

READ VERTICALLY

Use the answer choices to help you determine the skill being tested.

More than one skill can be tested at a time.

WHEN IN DOUBT

If there is a **NO CHANGE** option, it is right 25% of the time.

If there is an "OMIT" option, that is right 50% of the time.

SENTENCES

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Subjects agree with their verbs in number (singular or plural).

EXAMPLE: The friends are robbing banks.

Subjects can be nouns or pronouns.

EXAMPLE: They are terrorizing the Midwest.

Watch out for prepositional phrases!

COMPLETE SENTENCES

A complete sentence has three requirements.

A **subject**: The *dog* sought shelter from the storm.

A **verb**: Manny proudly *carried* his bucket of lobsters.

A **complete thought**: Kyle seemed *lost in thought*.

A **complete thought** is a collection of words that is fully understandable.

TRANSITION WORDS

Read the previous sentence.

Two agreeing sentences: **consequently, thus, therefore, because of, furthermore, in fact, indeed, moreover**

EXAMPLE: He studies; **thus**, he gets good grades.

Two disagreeing sentences: **conversely, despite, ironically, however, still, though, yet, nonetheless, in spite of, nevertheless**

EXAMPLE: Sam interviewed for the job; **however**, he did not get called back.

SENTENCES (cont)

EXAMPLE: The butterfly *with the bright colors* is beautiful.

A **complete thought** could also just be one subject and one verb, as long as it makes sense.

Other transitions: ****in closing, generally, as, after, while, until, before**

COMPOUND SENTENCE

Two complete sentences joined together to create one sentence.

COMMA+FANBOYS: **for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**

EXAMPLE: Savannah likes soccer and tennis, but she loves pro-wrestling more.

SEMICOLON: No comma or FANBOYS needed

EXAMPLE: Savannah likes soccer and tennis; she loves pro-wrestling more.

COMPLEX SENTENCE

One incomplete sentence and one complete sentence joined together to create one sentence.

COMMAS are only used if the incomplete sentence comes first.

EXAMPLE: *Because Savannah loved pro-wrestling*, she went to Buffalo Jim's Wrestling School.

PARALLEL STRUCTURE

IF YOU START ONE WAY, YOU KEEP IT THAT WAY

Verbs: He was **walking, talking, and smiling**.

Punctuation: He smiled -- roguishly, strangely -- at the woman in the coffee shop.

Voice: One will find that the library is a great place for one to study.



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MODIFIERS

MODIFIERS ARE ADJECTIVES/ADVERBS/DESCRIPTIVE PHRASES

EXAMPLE: **Elegantly dressed**, the queen floated into the room.

SUPERLATIVES

Superlatives are just modifiers that distinguish differences between things or ideas.

A MODIFYING CLAUSE GOES NEXT TO WHAT IT MODIFIES

When comparing two things, use **-er/-ier, more, or less**.

EXAMPLE: **Driving home late after work**, he proceeded cautiously.

When comparing three or more things, use **-est/iest, most, least**.

BAD EXAMPLE: **Racing through the red light**, the police officer pulled Liam over.

EXAMPLE: I like chocolate ice cream **more** than vanilla, but peanut butter chocolate ice cream is my **most** favorite.

COMMAS

SEPARATE ITEMS IN A LIST

Millie remembered to bring her toothbrush, face wash, and sword.

INTRODUCTORY PHRASES

Over the weekend, Millie slayed many a demon.

NON-ESSENTIAL PHRASES

Millie, smart and brave, was soon praised by all in the town.

APOSTROPHES

CONTRACTIONS

When checking whether a word is a contraction or not, try pulling it apart into two words.

EXAMPLES: **it's (it is), you've (you have), you're (you are), they've (they have), we've (we have), he's (he is), it's (it is), who's (who is)**

POSSESSION

If one owner: **'s**

If more than one owner: **s'**

WEIRD POSSESSIONS:

its, whose, your, their, ours

SEMICOLONS, COLONS, AND LONG DASHES

SEMICOLONS

Semicolon = ;

They can only be used to **CONNECT TWO COMPLETE SENTENCES**.

Often, they are used to connect transitions as well.

EXAMPLE: Mike was very worried about Will; **in fact**, he couldn't even sleep because of it.

COLONS

Colon = :

A **COMPLETE SENTENCE** must come **BEFORE** the colon.

Colons are used to set off: lists, explanations, definitions, quotes, etc.

EXAMPLE: Papa could often be heard singing his favorite song: "You are My Sunshine."

LONG DASHES

Long Dash = --

If using a single long dash, a **COMPLETE SENTENCE** must go **BEFORE** it.

If you want to add some drama, you can replace two commas with two long dashes for effect.

EXAMPLE: The Rainbow Room -- **deadly quiet, hauntingly still** -- was not as empty as it seemed.



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COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

Then/Than	Its/It's	Two/To/Too	There/Their/They're
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Then refers to time.	Its is possessive pronoun.	Two is a number, as in 2.	There usually refers to a place, like <i>here and there</i> .
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EXAMPLE: He went to the store; then he went home.	EXAMPLE: I love its color!	To is a preposition or the beginning of an infinitive.	Their is a possessive pronoun.
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Than is a comparison.	It's is a contraction that means <i>it is</i>	Too means also or to indicate a large amount.	They're is a contraction <i>they are</i>
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EXAMPLE: She like big dogs more than little ones.	EXAMPLE: It's (It is) so good to see you!	EXAMPLE: Two monsters went to Tokyo to destroy it, but Tokyo was too far away, and they had bellyaches, too .	EXAMPLE: They're (They are) going over there to get their money back.
--	--	--	--

PRONOUNS

PRONOUNS MUST BE CLEAR	WHO VERSUS WHOM
It needs to be obvious what the pronoun is referring to.	Who is a subject. Subjects get to do things.

PRONOUNS (cont)

EXAMPLE: Bob and John went shopping and they bought too much junk food.	EXAMPLE: Who will be singing for us tonight?
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PRONOUNS MUST AGREE IN NUMBER/GENDER BASED ON ITS ANTECEDENT (THE NOUN THAT COMES BEFORE IT)	EXAMPLE: I know this guy who will eat anything for a dollar.
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EXAMPLE: The new store sits between buildings more than twice its height.	Whom is an object. Objects get stuff done to them.
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EXAMPLE: The first chair trombonist from Pea Ridge was very happy with his/her contest score.	EXAMPLE: To whom are you speaking?
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IRREGULAR VERBS

Today, I...	Yesterday, I...	For years, I...
begin	began	have begun
break	broke	have broken
bring	brought	have brought
build	built	have built
choose	chose	have chosen
go	went	have gone
lead	led	have led
ring	rang	have rung
rise	rose	have risen
run	ran	have run
see	saw	have seen
seek	sought	have sought

IRREGULAR VERBS (cont)

shrink	shrank	have shrunk
sing	sang	have sung
sink	sank	have sunk
speak	spoke	have spoken
swim	swam	have swum

THESE ARE NOT WORDS -- SO, STOP USING THEM

irregardless, funner, where at, its', could of, kinda, boughten

PREPOSITIONS



CAN A SQUIRREL DO THIS WITH A TREE?

PREPOSITIONS

about	above	across	after	against	around
along	among	at	behind	before	beneath
beside	between	beyond	by	down	during
except	for	from	in	near	of
off	on	opposite	out	outside	over
past	regarding	round	since	to	through
under	until	up	with	within	

The squirrel and tree metaphor doesn't always work, but it's still helpful.



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