
SAT 2018: WRITING & LANGUAGE

THE 8 PARTS OF SPEECH

1. NOUN

- A noun is **the name of a person, place, thing, or idea.**

2. PRONOUN

- A pronoun is a **word used in place of a noun.**
 - Refers to something mentioned elsewhere in the discourse: *he, she, it, this, that*
 - Refers to the participants in the discourse: *I, you*

3. VERB

- A verb expresses **action or being.**
 - Main and helping verbs: *'She can (helping verb) sing (main verb).'*

4. ADJECTIVE

- An adjective **modifies or describes a noun or pronoun.**
 - Articles (*a, an, the*) are classified as adjectives.
 - Adjectives answer the following questions:
 - ◆ Which one
 - ◆ What kind
 - ◆ How many

5. ADVERB

- An adverb **modifies or describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.**
 - Adverbs answer the following questions:
 - ◆ When
 - ◆ Where
 - ◆ How
 - ◆ Why
 - ◆ Under what conditions
 - ◆ To what degree
 - Adverbs often end in '-ly'
 - *"The young girl brought me a **very** long letter from the teacher, and **then** she **quickly** disappeared. Oh my!"*

6. PREPOSITION

- A preposition is a word **placed before a noun or pronoun to form a phrase modifying another word in the sentence.**
 - The prepositional phrase functions as an adjective or as an adverb.

- *The young girl brought me a very long letter **from the teacher**, and then she quickly disappeared. Oh my!*

7. CONJUNCTION

- A conjunction **joins words, phrases or clauses**.
 - Grammatically equal elements: *but, for, nor for, so, yet*
 - Clauses that are not equal: *because, although, while, since*
 - *“The young girl brought me a very long letter from the teacher, **and** then she quickly disappeared. Oh my!”*

8. INTERJECTION

- An interjection is a word **used to express emotion**
 - *“The young girl brought me a very long letter from the teacher, and then she quickly disappeared. **Oh my!**”*

7 THINGS NOT TO WORRY ABOUT

1. SPLIT INFINITIVES

- Split infinitives happen when you put an adverb between *to* and a verb, for example:
 - She used to **secretly** admire him.
 - You have to **really** watch him.
- ‘Un-split’ infinitives unless it destroys the tone/meaning of the sentence.

2. WHO VS. WHOM

- The *who/whom* distinction is the same as the *they/them* and *he/him* distinction.
- If still stuck, just go with *who*.

3. THAT VS. WHICH

- If a modifying clause is “restrictive” (that is, it conveys defining information about the noun), it should use *that*.
- Alternately, if the clause is “nonrestrictive” (that is, it conveys incidental or nondefining information about the noun), it should use *which*.
- Helpful tip: nonrestrictive modifying clauses are almost always preceded by a comma, as in *“The speech, which lasted only three minutes, secured her reputation as a master orator.”*

4. STARTING SENTENCES WITH BECAUSE, AND OR BUT

- It is perfectly fine to start a sentence with *because, and* or *but*.

5. DISAPPEARING ‘THAT’S

- *I really love the sweater you gave me.*
*I really love the sweater **that** you gave me.*
- Don’t worry about missing ‘*that’s*’, as long as the resulting sentence still makes sense.

6. 'PARALLEL ELLIPSIS'

- The Republicans reacted to the speech with sustained applause; the Democrats, however, reacted to it with studied silence.
The Republicans reacted to the speech with sustained applause; the Democrats, studied silence.
- The parallel structure of the two clauses allows the reader to “fill in” the missing words.
- The comma in this sentence suggests the ellipsis, holding the place of the missing words (*however, reacted to it with*).

7. GOOD VS. WELL, BAD VS BADLY

- A – *Peter performed* (verb) **good** (adverb) vs. B – *Peter performed* (verb) **well** (adverb)
 - Here, *performed* is an action verb.
 - *Good* cannot function as an adverb – choice B is correct.
- A – *I don't feel* **good** (verb) vs. B – *I don't feel* **well** (verb)
 - Here, *feel* is a linking verb
 - BOTH *good* and *well* function as adjectives – both choices are correct
- A – *I feel* **bad** (verb) *for you* vs. B – *I feel* **badly** (verb) *for you*
 - *Badly* can only function as an adverb – choice A is correct.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Every sentence contains at least one **clause**, which consists of a **subject** and a **predicate**.

- The subject is the **noun** or **pronoun** that is “doing” the verb
- The predicate consists of a **verb** and its **complements** (such as direct objects, indirect objects, verb modifiers, or predicate adjectives)
- The **subject-verb** unit of any clause conveys the **core idea** of that clause.

Most basic sentence structure: [Subject][Verb/Predicate]

- *As the sun slowly set, the desperation of the sailors revealed itself in their sullen glances.*
→ ~~*As the sun slowly set, The desperation of the sailors revealed itself in their sullen glances.*~~
- [Although] [*generally regarded as the most daunting course in the undergraduate science curriculum*], [**Introduction to Organic Chemistry**] [*not only*] [**provides a necessary foundation in the principles of physical chemistry**], [*but also*] [**introduces students to important experimental methods at the heart today's most promising areas of medical research.**]
→ [Subordinating conjunction] [participial phrase], [subject], [conjunction part 1] [predicate 1] [conjunction part 2] [predicate 2]

Trim every sentence to analyse its core:

My chief [adjective] *concern* ~~*with this budget*~~ [prepositional phrase], ~~*which has otherwise been well considered*~~ [interrupting modifier], *are the* ~~*drastic*~~ [adjective] *cuts* ~~*in school funds*~~ [prepositional phrase].

→ *My concern* [Subject] *are the cuts* [predicate].

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>	<u>Correct Sentence</u>
<i>bacterium</i>	<i>bacteria</i>	The <i>bacteria</i> are multiplying rapidly.
<i>continuum</i>	<i>continua</i>	The <i>continua</i> of space and time are related.
<i>criterion</i>	<i>criteria</i>	Your <i>criteria</i> are hard to meet.
<i>curriculum</i>	<i>curricula</i>	The competing <i>curricula</i> were scrutinized.
<i>datum</i>	<i>data</i>	The <i>data</i> on the drive have been corrupted.
<i>medium</i>	<i>media</i>	The <i>media</i> have largely ignored this story.
<i>phenomenon</i>	<i>phenomena</i>	Such <i>phenomena</i> are surprisingly common.

INVERTED CLAUSES

An inverted clause, where the verb comes before the subject, usually begins with the dummy subject *there*, as in *There is* or *There are*, or is preceded by a prepositional phrase.

Inverted: [*There*] [*are*] [*over twenty applicants*] [*applying for the job*].

Un-inverted: [*Over twenty applicants*] [*are*] [*applying for the job*].

Inverted: [*Behind every successful work of art*] [*lie*] [*countless hours of toil and trial*].

Un-inverted: [*Countless hours of toil and trial*] [*lie*] [*behind every successful work of art*].

LAW OF PROXIMITY

If a subject takes the form *a or b*, it is assumed to take the number of *b*. The essential noun (that is, not one in a prepositional phrase) that is closer to the verb gets priority.

One or two of my classmates has a strong chance of winning an award.

→ *One or two* [noun] ~~has~~ **have** a strong chance [verb].

Note: Determiners like *each*, *every*, *every one*, *anybody*, *either*, *neither*, *no one*, *many a*, etc. are followed by a **singular noun** and a **singular verb**.

- ✓ *“Many a man lost **his** life at sea.”*
- ✓ *“Neither candidate is fit for the job”*

PARTICIPIAL PHRASES

Participles are verb forms, like *broken* and *thinking*, that cannot stand by themselves as verbs. They are only part of the verb, hence the name “participle”. Notice, for instance, that we can’t say

- *She **broken** the plate.*
- *We **thinking** about you.*

Each participle requires a helping verb to complete the verb phrase and make a sensible clause:

- *She **has broken** the plate.*
- *We **were thinking** about you.*

When a **participial phrase** begins a sentence, its subject should be the subject of the main clause that follows. Otherwise, it is called a **dangling participle**.

When participles appear without their helping verbs, they act as adjectives, and their phrases are called **participial phrases**. Here are some more examples:

- *When **designing a user interface**, software engineers [subject] should focus on simplicity.*
- ***Although pleased with her victory**, Anna [subject] knew that she still had more work to do.*

PARALLEL STRUCTURE

The Law of Parallelism: When a sentence includes a list, contrast, or comparison, the items being listed, contrasted, or compared should have the **same grammatical form**.

Standard Parallel Constructions (where X and Y are parallel):

<i>rather X than Y</i>	<i>X more than Y</i>	<i>neither X nor Y</i>	<i>X is like Y</i>
<i>prefer X to Y</i>	<i>either X or Y</i>	<i>both X and Y</i>	<i>the more X, the more Y</i>
<i>less X than Y</i>	<i>not so much X as Y</i>	<i>not X but Y</i>	<i>the better X, the better Y</i>

If a sentence equates two things, those things should have the **same number**. This means that singular pronouns should be used with singular antecedents, and plural pronouns should be used with plural antecedents.

- ✗ *The **problem** with this plan is all of the **permits** we would have to file before starting the project.*
- ✓ *The **problems** with this plan are all of the **permits** we would have to file before starting the project.*
- ✓ *Filing all of the permits required by this plan will probably delay the project.*

MODIFIERS

A modifier changes, clarifies, qualifies, or limits a particular word in a sentence in order to add emphasis, explanation, or detail.

LAW OF PROXIMITY

Any modifier or modifying phrase should be placed as close (or “proximate”) as possible to the word it modifies without disrupting the sentence.

- ✘ *In an emergency, I am amazed at how calm Marco can be.*
- ✓ *I am amazed at how calm Marco can be in an emergency.*

- ✘ *A splendid example of synthetic cubism, Picasso painted Three Musicians in the summer of 1924.*
- ✓ *Picasso painted Three Musicians, a splendid example of synthetic cubism, in the summer of 1924.*

- ✘ *To illustrate his point, we watched Mr. Genovese take out a giant boa constrictor.*
- ✓ *We watched Mr. Genovese take out a giant boa constrictor to illustrate his point.*

ADJECTIVES VS. ADVERBS

Adjectives are strictly **noun** modifiers. To modify a verb/adjective/adverb, only an **adverb** will do.

- ✘ *I was impressed by how poised he was and how **cogent** his argument was **presented**.*
- ✓ *I was impressed by how poised he was and how **cogent** his **argument** was.*
- ✓ *I was impressed by how poised he was and how **cogently** he **presented** his argument.*

	Adjective	Adverb
very	<i>I drove that very car.</i>	<i>It is very hot.</i>
well	<i>The cat is not well.</i>	<i>She performed well.</i>
fast	<i>She is a fast reader.</i>	<i>Don't go so fast.</i>
straight	<i>It was a straight shot.</i>	<i>I can't shoot straight.</i>
just	<i>It was a just decision.</i>	<i>She just arrived.</i>
late	<i>We had a late lunch.</i>	<i>It happened late in the day.</i>
low	<i>You have set a low bar.</i>	<i>Don't sink so low.</i>

	Adjective	Adverb
<i>high</i>	<i>I have high standards.</i>	<i>I can't jump very high.</i>
<i>hard</i>	<i>That test was hard.</i>	<i>Don't push so hard.</i>

COMPARITIVE VS. SUPERLATIVE ADJECTIVES

If a sentence compares two things at a time, it must use a **comparative adjective**, that is, one that use *-er* or *more*. If the sentence singles out one thing from a group of three or more, it must use a **superlative adjective**, that is, one that uses *-est* or *most*.

If an adjective has just one or two syllables, it usually takes the *-er* suffix (e.g., *faster, stronger, sillier*), but if it has more than two syllables, it usually takes *more* (e.g., *more beautiful, more outrageous, more desperate*).

However, monosyllabic past participles, when used as adjectives, also tend to take *more* rather than *-er*: we say *more set in his ways* rather than *setter in his ways*, *more shocked* rather than *shockeder*, and *more tired* rather than *tireder*.

Don't modify absolutes like *perfect, unique, singular, or obliterated* (e.g. *more perfect* and *more unique* is wrong)

COMPARISONS

Examples of illogical comparisons:

- ✗ Not only is **Anna** the captain, but she also practices harder than **anyone** on the track team.
- ✓ Not only is **Anna** the captain, but she also practices harder than **anyone else** on the track team. (Anna can't practice harder than herself)
- ✗ The **turnout for this year's art festival** was even better than **last year**.
- ✓ The **turnout for this year's art festival** was even better than the **turnout for last year's festival**.

UNCOUNTABLE VS. COUNTABLE QUANTITIES

The terms *less, much, and amount* apply generally to **uncountable or continuous quantities** like *traffic, money, and food*.

The terms *fewer, many, and number* apply generally to **countable and discrete quantities** like *cars, dollars, and pizzas*.

BETWEEN VS. AMONG

We use *between* to refer to two things which are clearly separated. We use *among* to talk about things which are not clearly separated because they are part of a group or crowd or mass of objects:

- ✓ Our holiday house is **between** the mountains and the sea.
- ✓ The ancient fountain was hidden **among** the trees.
- ✓ The year-end bonus was equally divided **between** Parker and Alyssa
- ✓ The year-end bonus was equally divided **among** Parker, Alyssa, and me.

PRONOUNS

Every **definite pronoun** like *it*, *him*, *herself*, and *their* takes the place of a noun or pronoun called the **antecedent**. Every definite pronoun must **agree** in number (singular or plural) and category.

- ✗ Our financial **team** strictly maintains the confidentiality of **their** clients.
- ✓ Our financial **team** strictly maintains the confidentiality of **its** clients.
- ✓ Our financial **counselors** strictly maintain the confidentiality of **their** clients.

INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

Interrogative pronouns are the pronouns we use to ask questions, like *who*, *what*, *where*, and *when*. When these pronouns are not used to ask questions, they serve as **definite pronouns** that refer to the nouns that immediately precede them.

<i>Interrogative Pronoun</i>	<i>Antecedent Category</i>
<i>where</i>	<i>place</i>
<i>who</i>	<i>person</i>
<i>when</i>	<i>time</i>
<i>how</i>	<i>explanation</i>
<i>why</i>	<i>reason</i>
<i>what</i>	<i>thing or concept</i>

- ✗ The **filibuster** is a strategy **where** senators can extend debate in order to prevent a vote.
- ✓ The **filibuster** is a strategy **in which** senators can extend debate in order to prevent a vote.

PRONOUN CASES

The **case** of a pronoun refers to its relationship to the verb. If a pronoun serves as or is equated with the **subject** of a verb, it takes the **subjective case**.

If it serves as the **direct or indirect object** of the verb, it takes that **objective case**.

If the **object** of the verb has the same referent as the **subject**, then it takes the **reflexive case**.

If it indicates possession, it takes the **possessive case**.

Subjective case	Objective case	Reflexive case	Possessive case
<i>I, he, she, we,</i>	<i>me, him, her, us,</i>	<i>myself, himself, herself</i>	<i>my/mine, his, her/hers,</i>
<i>they, who</i>	<i>them, whom</i>	<i>ourselves, themselves</i>	<i>our/ours, their/theirs</i>

A **reflexive pronoun** should only be used as:

- the object of a verb when it is identical to the subject:

e.g., *I did it all by myself. She cut herself.*

- an emphatic **appositive**: *I myself would never do such a thing.*

Special Case (Possessive Pronoun)

- There is no point in (**our/us**) delaying the tests any longer.
- I am concerned about (you/**your**) taking so much time off work.

In this case, the subject is *your taking so much time off work* (not *you*).

VERBS

Habitual, Progressive, and Compulsive Aspects

I eat. = I am in the habit of eating. (Habitual aspect)

I am eating. = I am in the process of eating. (Progressive aspect)

I have to eat. = I feel compelled to eat. (Compulsive aspect)

I have eaten. = My current status is the consequence of previous eating. (Consequential or "perfect" aspect)

I have been eating. = My current status is the consequence of previous eating, and I am still eating. (Consequential and progressive aspects)

CONSEQUENTIAL ASPECT

I have eaten. = My **current status** is the **consequence of previous eating**.

They had never smoked. = Their **status at that point in the past** was the **consequence of previous non-smoking.**

By Friday, we will have completed the project. = Our **status next Friday** will be the **consequence of the fact that we completed the project.**

PUNCTUATION

COMMAS

The primary job of the comma is as a separator. It is used to separate:

- items in a list (e.g., *He was fat, dumb, and lazy.*)
- coordinate adjectives (e.g., *She gave a droning, uninspired speech.*)
- modifying phrases from the main clause (e.g., *In summary, I am appalled.*)
- dependent clauses that precede independent clauses (e.g., *Whenever I try, I fail.*)
- (with a conjunction) independent clauses from other independent clauses (e.g., *I think, therefore I am.*)

It can also be used to:

- introduce a quotation (e.g., *Tom said, "I ain't goin' where I ain't needed".*)
- format an address or date (e.g., *Saturday, July 19, 2014; Cleveland, Ohio*)
- to signal an addressee in dialogue or colloquial prose (e.g., *Get going, buster!*)

Substantial modifying phrases in the middle of a sentence are called **interrupting modifiers** and should be separated from the main clause by commas. Remember that **a sentence should read properly even when the interrupters have been removed.**

When a comma follows a title or phrase in quotes, the comma must precede the end quote.

The use of the **serial comma** (the second comma in the phrase *A, B, and C*) in Standard American Usage is still a matter of debate and therefore will almost certainly not be tested on the SAT.

EXAMPLE QUESTION

1. What is wrong with these sentences?

- A. The subject that intimidates me the most, is calculus.
- B. I could not help Justine with her project, I had just begun a new job.
- C. As we passed through Springfield, Massachusetts we stopped at the Basketball Hall of Fame.
- D. We will be discussing my favorite poem, "Leaves of Grass", next semester.

E. I would like to thank my parents, God and Ayn Rand.

Solution:

Sentence A suffers from the **stray comma syndrome**. Simply put, the comma doesn't belong. Chuck it.

Sentence B commits a **comma splice**. Two independent clauses cannot be joined with just a comma. Either change the comma to a colon or semicolon, or insert a conjunction:

I could not help Justine with her project, because I had just begun a new job.

Sentence C omits the comma after the state name. It should read

As we passed through Springfield, Massachusetts, we stopped at the Basketball Hall of Fame.

Notice that this treats *Massachusetts* as an **interrupter**, which is fine because the sentence reads correctly even when it is omitted.

In sentence D, the title of the poem works the same way as the state name in sentence C. It is a specifying modifier and requires commas before and after:

We will be discussing my favorite poem, "Leaves of Grass", next semester.

Sentence E omits the **serial comma**, the comma that separates the second-to-last item in a list from the conjunction *and*. The serial comma is almost universally accepted as proper and necessary in Standard American English, because without it sentence E becomes absurd. In this apocryphal dedication of a course, the lack of a serial comma makes it seem like the author believes she is the offspring of a deity and a childless woman. Of course, the author intends her dedication as a list of four, not two:

I would like to thank my parents, God, and Ayn Rand.

Two notable authorities that do not accept this rule are the *New York Times* and the *AP (Associated Press) Stylebook*, which recommend against the Oxford comma except to prevent an ambiguity such as that in sentence E.

DASHES

The punctuation on the two sides of an interrupter must be identical: either both dashes or both commas.

EXAMPLE QUESTION

1. What is wrong with this sentence?

A. The best that they could do—at least without a splint, was to set the broken bone and wait for help to arrive.

Solution:

The **dash** (or, as it is sometimes known, the **em dash**) is used to insert an abrupt break in thought in the middle or at the end of a sentence. If the break comes in the middle, then two dashes signify the

beginning and the end of the interruption. In this case, the end of the interruption is indicated by a comma, where it should be a dash:

The best that they could do—at least without a splint— was to set the broken bone and wait for help to arrive.

If the interruption is not much of a departure from the main idea, then commas will work also:

The best that they could do, at least without a splint, was to set the broken bone and wait for help to arrive.