

Rule 1. Single Commas Do Not Separate a Subject From a Verb

Our first concept is relatively straightforward. Each sentence in a passage contains a **subject** (the person, place, or thing performing an action) and a **verb** (the action that is being performed). *We must not separate those two parts of the sentence with a single comma.* As we'll learn later, there are circumstances in which a sentence will contain two commas between the subject and verb, but let's focus on the basics of the rule for now.

Before we go any further, let's do a quick exercise to determine the subject and verb of each of the below sentences.

Exercise 1.1

Underline the subject, and circle the verb.

1. My dog likes to chase small animals in the backyard.
2. Looking outside, Anthony was upset that he was stuck working rather than enjoying the beautiful day.
3. A durable backpack should be made of a wear resistant nylon material.
4. Some people prefer a lighter bag that is easier to carry.
5. When shopping for a car, you are making a very significant decision that will have an effect on your life for a long time.

If you understand the concept of identifying a subject and verb in these simple sentences, we can move on. Note that none of the sentences above has a comma between the subject and the verb. It would be rather clumsy to say "My dog, likes to chase small animals in the backyard". The comma creates an unnecessary pause and breaks up an idea. In the next exercise, we aim to eliminate this awkward comma placement.

Exercise 1.2

Remove the comma between the subject and the verb of each sentence, if necessary. If the sentence is correct as it stands, write "Correct"

1. We, are not sure why cats enjoy sitting in boxes as much as they do.
2. Google, is the world's foremost search engine.
3. In fact, "Googling" has become synonymous with doing quick online research on a topic.
4. Before Google, Altavista, was the preeminent search engine.
5. Many others, existed as well.
6. Some survive to this day, but they are far less frequently used than Google.
7. Millions of users, use Google's innovative algorithm and simple interface to find videos of cats sitting in boxes daily.

The use of commas between subjects and verbs is a very easy mistake to avoid, particularly if the sentences are relatively simple. We will add more complex structures later. Let's do a few ACT style questions to ensure that we have a firm grasp on this concept:

Exercise 1.3

Select the best replacement for the underlined portion of the passage. If the sentence is fine as it is, select *NO CHANGE*.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p><u>Newport, Rhode Island, is</u> only a short 45-minute drive from the capital city of Providence.</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. Newport, Rhode Island is C. Newport Rhode Island is D. Newport, Rhode Island is, E. Newport Rhode Island, is</p> |
| <p><u>However, the two settings, are vastly different.</u></p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. However, the, C. However the, D. However the E. How, ever the</p> |
| <p><u>While Providence is a</u> bustling, albeit small, city,</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. While, Providence is a C. While Providence, is a D. While Providence is, a E. While, Providence, is a</p> |
| <p><u>Newport, is a throwback</u> to old-world charm and luxury on the Atlantic Coast.</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. Newport is a throwback C. Newport is a throwback, D. Newport, is a throwback, E. Newport is, a throwback</p> |
| <p><u>Grandiose mansions, evoke feelings</u> of the extravagant wealth that once made Newport exclusive and unattainable to most.</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. Grandiose, mansions evoke feelings C. Grandiose mansions evoke, feelings D. Grandiose mansions evoke feelings, E. Grandiose mansions evoke feelings</p> |
| <p><u>Now, although it is still</u> an undeniably upscale vacation destination, <u>Newport, is a welcoming</u> community for visitors of all social classes.</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. Now although it is still C. Now, although, it is still D. Now, although it, is still E. Now, although it is still,</p> |
| | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. Newport is a welcoming, C. Newport is, a welcoming D. Newport is a welcoming, E. Newport is a welcoming</p> |

The first two pages feature simple examples where the subject and verb are not separated by anything. These are very simple sentence structures, and most sentences aren't quite so straightforward. The most common interjection we have to deal with is the prepositional phrase.

Prepositions are words that provide a frame of reference, including location. Here is a list of some common prepositions: *of, on, in, under, between, such as, below, above, by, with*. Of course, there are others, but this list should give you an idea of what to look for. Prepositions are always followed by a direct object; together the preposition and the object form a prepositional phrase.

Example: Pilots for major airlines can frequently earn six figures and enjoy additional perks, including complimentary travel and a relatively unburdened work schedule.

In this example, the subject is "Pilots" and the verb is "can". Note that between the subject and verb we have the prepositional phrase "for major airlines". At this point you may be wondering how this relates to the topic of this rule. The answer is that the presence of a prepositional phrase has no effect on our rule. In other words, just because there is other stuff (the prepositional phrase or something else) between the subject and the verb, we shouldn't add a single comma between the subject and the verb.

Here is the above example with a comma that appears to belong because we want to pause, but it still breaks our rule: don't separate a subject from a verb with a single comma.

Example: Pilots for major airlines, can frequently earn six figures and enjoy additional perks, including complimentary travel and a relatively unburdened work schedule.

When it comes to our first rule, nothing has changed. The subject is still "Pilots" and the verb is still "can". So, even though we have some additional information about the pilots, we shouldn't add a comma between the two.

Let's try an exercise to identify the subject and the verb with other "stuff" in between.

Exercise 1.4

Identify the subject and the verb of each sentence. Underline the subject, circle the verb.

1. Careful analysis of the suspect's facial expressions during the interrogation provided valuable information for the FBI's investigation of his motives.
2. The restaurant by the lake offers a fantastic view on a clear day.
3. A recent poll conducted by Gallup indicates that fewer Americans identify with a political party than ever before.
4. A volatile combination of pure potassium and water produced the small but loud explosion.
5. The annual report for Apple shows no end in sight for the popularity of the iPhone and iPad.

These are a bit more difficult, but if we break each sentence down to the subject and the verb, we still get the core of the sentence, and we should see that no comma is required between the two. Consider the same sentences, but with commas placed after the

prepositional phrase. Read each of the below sentences with a long, drawn out pause where each comma is.

1. Careful analysis of the suspect’s facial expressions, during the interrogation provided valuable information for the FBI’s investigation of his motives.
2. The restaurant by the lake, offers a fantastic view on a clear day.
3. A recent poll conducted by Gallup, indicates that fewer Americans identify with a political party than ever before.
4. A volatile combination of pure potassium and water, produced the small but loud explosion.
5. The annual report for Apple, shows no end in sight for the popularity of the iPhone and iPad.

We call this method of testing for commas the Long Pause Test. Most of us are capable enough readers to recognize oddly placed commas inherently. Now, you should understand fully why they don’t belong there. Let’s try another short ACT style passage with questions on this topic. While attempting these questions, think about the sentences you’ve just read. Think about the usage of commas in those sentences and how you would use (or choose not to use) them in a similar fashion here. Finally, use the Long Pause Test. You will find it remarkably effective at weeding out bad answers in complex comma questions.

Exercise 1.5

Select the best replacement for the underlined portion of the passage. If the sentence is fine as it is, select NO CHANGE.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Located approximately 150 miles Northeast of Newport, <u>the town of Kennebunkport, Maine has</u> its own rich history as a vacation destination for New Englanders.</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. the town of Kennebunkport, Maine, has C. the town, of Kennebunkport, Maine has D. the town of Kennebunkport, Maine has, E. the town of, Kennebunkport, Maine has</p> |
| <p>Unlike that of its Rhode Island counterpart, <u>Kennebunkport’s main claim to fame is not</u> the ghost of lavish lifestyles of past generations.</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. Kennebunkport’s main claim to fame, is not C. Kennebunkport’s main claim to fame is, not D. Kennebunkport’s main claim, to fame, is not E. Kennebunkport’s main claim to fame is not,</p> |
| <p><u>The small town on the coast of Maine, is rumored</u> to be the birthplace of the lobster roll.</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. The small town, on the coast of Maine, is rumored C. The small town on the coast, of Maine is rumored D. The small town on the coast of Maine is rumored E. The small town on the coast of Maine, is rumored</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Multiple well-weathered restaurants <u>on the coast of the Atlantic, all stake</u> their claims as the first to serve the New England delicacy.</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. on the coast of the Atlantic all stake C. on the coast, of the Atlantic, all stake D. on the coast of the Atlantic all, stake E. on, the coast of the Atlantic all stake</p> |
| <p>It is likely that even longtime <u>residents of the town, can't</u> pinpoint the dish's origins with certainty.</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. residents, of the town, can't C. residents of the town can't D. residents, of the town can't E. residents of, the town can't</p> |

By now, you've likely noticed a pattern. *The answers with less commas tend to be correct more frequently than the ones with more commas.* While this is true for questions that deal with the comma types we have in this question, it's not necessarily true throughout the test. However, it is information worth considering. As we stated in the preface to this book, grammar is fundamental in clarity of answers, and the ACT, SAT, and other tests that check your knowledge of grammar have a bias toward simple answers. In the case of commas, frequently less is more. We'll expand upon this in the next few rules, but there is a good general rule to follow: **If you can't think of a reason to put a comma somewhere, don't.**

Rule 3. Commas May Be Used To Set Off Descriptive Phrase

In the prior two rule sections, you learned that single commas should not be used between a subject and a verb or between a verb and a direct object. You may have noticed that we stressed the term “single” commas. There is a very common situation in which we might use two commas between a subject and a verb. Two commas can be used to set off a descriptive, or parenthetical, phrase.

Let’s take a look at a couple of examples:

Example: The city of Quahog, the setting of the animated series Family Guy, is based on Providence, Rhode Island.

In this case, the subject is “The city” or “The city of Quahog”, and the verb is “is”. The phrase in the middle describes the city or gives us additional details about it. We can just as easily place parentheses around the phrase “the setting of the animated series Family Guy” instead of commas, and the meaning of the sentence wouldn’t change. You may also know this as an appositive phrase or appositive clause. We prefer the term descriptive because it covers a broader range of phrases that could be isolated in such a way. It is important to note that we could remove this clause as it is not essential to the meaning of the sentence. This is noteworthy because we can’t simply remove any phrase that is surrounded by commas – it has to be non-essential to the sentence, which would generally make it a descriptive clause. To determine whether something is essential to the sentence, remove it.

Example: The city of Quahog, ~~the setting of the animated series Family Guy~~, is based on Providence, Rhode Island.

The sentence now reads as follows: The city of Quahog is based on Providence, Rhode Island.

The sentence still contains a subject and a verb, and it still expresses a complete idea. Sure, some context is lost, but grammatically and logically, the sentence still works. This identifies the clause that we removed as non-essential.

Exercise 3.1

Identify and underline the descriptive (non-essential) clause in each sentence.

1. Smart TVs, which contain processors and memory, are more closely related to computers than to older models of televisions.
2. Over the past half-century, jeans, which were originally designed for farm workers, have become somewhat of a fashion statement.
3. Evergreen trees, which remain green throughout the year, are very prevalent in Northern forests due to their hardiness.
4. Raspberries, though traditionally red, are actually available in a multitude of colors, ranging from yellow to dark blue.
5. Wall Street, despite being frequently demonized by politicians, actually provides essential risk-management markets for many people, ranging from farmers to insurance brokers.

Verify that each of your answers is, in fact, not essential to the sentence by reading the sentence with the clause or phrase eliminated. If it still makes logical and grammatical sense, you've made a good choice. If it doesn't, then reconsider your selection.

You should also have noticed that these descriptive clauses provide a range of useful functions. They may range from a single word (though this was not the case in any of the above examples) to long, drawn out descriptions.

Let's try a brief ACT-style passage with some questions.

Exercise 3.2

Select the best replacement for the underlined portion of the passage. If the sentence is fine as it is, select *NO CHANGE*.

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Public <u>companies, especially those</u> listed on the</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. companies especially those C. companies, especially those, D. companies especially, those E. companies, especially, those</p> |
| <p>New York <u>Stock Exchange</u> are <u>heavily</u> scrutinized by the public.</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. Stock Exchange are, heavily C. Stock Exchange, are heavily D. Stock Exchange, are heavily, E. Stock Exchange. Are heavily</p> |
| <p>It is worth <u>noting, however, that</u> much of the scrutiny is simply a waste of time and energy.</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. noting however that C. noting however, that D. noting, however that E. noting, however that,</p> |
| <p>Each <u>corporation, that is</u> listed on a public <u>market regardless of its size, must</u> undergo a rigorous vetting process by the exchange and federal regulators.</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. corporation that, is C. corporation that is, D. corporation that is E. corporation, that, is</p> |
| <p>The Securities and Exchange <u>Commission</u> a <u>federal agency investigates</u> each company's records, looking for unscrupulous practices or shady business connections. The agency does all of the necessary legwork that most of the public does not have the means to do.</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. market, regardless of its size, must C. market regardless of its size must D. market, regardless of its size must E. market. Regardless of its size, must</p> |
| <p>The Securities and Exchange <u>Commission</u> a <u>federal agency investigates</u> each company's records, looking for unscrupulous practices or shady business connections. The agency does all of the necessary legwork that most of the public does not have the means to do.</p> | <p>A. NO CHANGE B. Commission, a federal agency, investigates C. Commission, a federal agency investigates D. Commission. A federal agency investigates E. Commission a federal agency, investigates</p> |

Simply put, anyone who chooses to investigate a public corporation's records, should choose to do so only to make investment decisions, as the likelihood of a layperson uncovering something scandalous is incredibly small.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. corporation's records should,
- C. corporation's records should
- D. corporation's records should,
- E. corporation's records, should,

Rule 6. Commas Do Not Follow Prepositions

This is a very simple rule that works a lot like Rule 2 (no commas between verbs and direct objects). In this case, though, we're addressing the overuse of commas after prepositions. As we've discussed before, the problem that most students have with commas isn't not knowing when to use them; it's using them too much. One place where a lot of students place commas is after prepositions. To recap, a preposition is a word that relates one thing to another – frequently in terms of location.

Some examples of prepositions are **of, on, in, under, between, with, by, such as**. Of course, this isn't a complete list, but it does cover the most frequently used ones. The idea here is very simple – commas do not belong between the preposition and the direct object.

Let's take a look at an example.

Example: Jared was standing on top of, the mountain, which overlooked the entirety of Acadia National Park.

In this example, we have the preposition *of* followed by a direct object. There shouldn't be a comma there. The word *mountain* is the direct object of the preposition *of*. It is important to note that the second comma is properly placed, as it separates the independent clause "Jared was standing on top of the mountain" from the subordinate clause "which overlooked the entirety of Acadia National Park".

In summary, virtually every preposition is followed by a direct object. Thus, we generally shouldn't place commas after prepositions as the comma would separate the direct object from the preposition and break up a simple idea, such as "on top of the mountain".

Exercise 6.1

Circle the prepositions and underline the direct objects of the preposition in each sentence.

1. Did you see all the murky water under the bridge?
2. While hiking the Appalachian Trail, Erica spotted a black bear behind a large oak tree.
3. When I get pizza, I must choose between a regular slice and a square slice.
4. Developed for military applications, Plexiglas has found plenty of other uses in construction and entertainment.
5. For example, the glass in hockey rinks is made of 5/8" thick Plexiglas.
6. Other similar products, such as Lexan, are used to reinforce weight bearing structures while providing flexibility.
7. One major advantage of these polycarbonates is their flexibility.
8. Unlike regular glass, polycarbonates are impact resistant while maintaining near complete transparency. They are made of specific plastic blends that allow for this useful combination.

Exercise 6.2

In the following passage, adapted from J. Martin Miller's Discovery of the North Pole (1909), we have added a few extraneous commas. Identify which commas are incorrectly used or unnecessary and remove them. This exercise incorporates some work from prior rules.

Among the many explorations, of the unknown regions in recent centuries, none have been more fascinating and engrossing, than those for discovery within the polar circles. Despite man's utmost endeavors, a veil of mystery has hitherto enveloped the immediate vicinity, of both, geographical poles. In consequence there have been offered, to the world various hypotheses. Some declare, that they are located on an ice-clad ocean; others that they are, on glacier-covered plateaus. Again the polar regions are declared to be the abodes of great herds of polar, and hibernating animals, while their opponents assert, that even the white polar bear shuns the highest latitudes. While for the most part the polar countries are believed to be uninhabited, except in the lower parts of the Arctic circle, there are those who have thought it possible, that there are habitable areas, where unknown tribes and strange peoples live, far separated from the rest of the world.

Rule 8. Commas Alone Never Separate Two Independent Clauses

In the last section, we discussed the fact that an independent clause is one that can stand alone as a complete sentence. Of course, to separate two complete sentences, we'd use a period. A very common question on the ACT involves determining whether we should use a comma, a period, or a semicolon. We'll go more in depth on semicolons in the next section. Here we'll focus on not using a comma to separate two complete sentences.

Example: The expensive SUV came with a defective battery, it left its driver stranded at a shopping mall.

You should notice right away that, even with the comma indicating a pause, the above sentence reads like a run-on. In fact, it has two complete sentences separated by a comma, which is called a comma splice.

There are many ways to correct this comma splice. The first way is obvious. Since both the clause before the comma and the one after it are capable of being standalone complete sentences, you can simply separate it into two sentences.

Correction using a period: The expensive SUV came with a defective battery. It left its driver stranded at a shopping mall.

This is not the best way to correct the sentence, but it eliminates the run-on and is technically grammatically correct. Since the ideas in the two clauses are obviously related, a better way to correct the comma splice would be using a semi-colon

Correction using a semicolon: The expensive SUV came with a defective battery; it left its driver stranded at a shopping mall.

You can also correct the comma splice by adding what is known as a coordinating conjunction, or a FANBOYS conjunction. The FANBOYS conjunctions are listed below:

For
And
Nor
But
Or
Yet
So

Of course, we need to choose the most appropriate such conjunction for the context. Because the first statement (The expensive SUV came with a defective battery) is the cause of the second statement (It left its driver stranded at a shopping mall), "so" would be the most appropriate conjunction.

Correction using a conjunction: The expensive SUV came with a defective battery, so it left its driver stranded at a shopping mall.

If we tried using any of the other FANBOYS conjunctions, the sentence wouldn't make logical sense. There are other words that could be used in place of "so", such as "therefore" and "consequently", but these occur less frequently than our FANBOYS. There is one other method we can use to correct the comma splice in the original sentence, which is to modify the first clause and make it subordinate (incapable of being a standalone sentence).

Correction using a subordinate clause: Because the expensive SUV came with a defective battery, it left its driver stranded at a shopping mall.

You can also use the word "since", or even a phrase like "due to the fact that" in place of because, but the premise remains the same: You have made the first clause incapable of being a logical complete sentence on its own, thereby eliminating the run-on sentence.

Let's try an exercise.

Exercise 8.1

Correct each comma splice four different ways. You may use semicolons, periods, conjunctions, or change a clause to a subordinate clause.

1. The growth of crowdfunding platforms has created the opportunity for inventors to get funding for projects, they are often in early stages of development and unable to get traditional loans.

Correction 1:

Correction 2:

Correction 3:

Correction 4:

2. Many people see crowdfunding as a direct result of the "social economy", the social economy refers to the growth of direct, individual transactions instead of the traditional banking system and corporate hierarchy.

Correction 1:

Correction 2:

Correction 3:

Correction 4:

3. Slow growth has forced many computer manufacturers to trim down their offerings, additionally, companies that couldn't keep up with changing market conditions shut down altogether.

Correction 1:

Correction 2:

Correction 3:

Correction 4:

Rule 10. A Semicolon and a Period are Interchangeable

Before we start this rule, we should point out that the concept expressed here is crudely simplified. In some applications, semicolons and periods are NOT interchangeable. However, for the ACT and SAT, we can consider them essentially the same.

A semicolon separates two independent clauses. Each independent clause can stand alone as a complete sentence. We also know that we can use a period between two complete sentences, so for our purposes they are going to be the same thing.

In broader context, a semicolon is used if we want to connect two independent clauses that are related. However, the ACT and SAT don't test the difference in context; in other words, there is not going to be a situation where a period would be good and a semicolon wouldn't due to the two clauses being unrelated.

Now that we're done with the pretext, let's take a look at the full rule.

The semicolon is a form of punctuation that is frequently misused; simply put, it serves the same purpose as a period. Note the semicolon in the previous sentence. If you were to replace it with a period, both sides of the semicolon should read as complete sentences. It is important to note that the subject for the second portion of the sentence is the word *it*. While *it* is ambiguous, it does serve as a perfectly sufficient subject in the grammatical sense. Now, we can't necessarily use semicolons everywhere we would normally use periods; the two sentences do have to be related. However, for the purposes of the standardized tests, they are used interchangeably.

Let's check out a couple examples:

1. The American sports landscape is dominated by football, baseball, and basketball; hockey and soccer serve niche markets.

In this example, if we were to replace the semicolon with a period, both sides of the semicolon would still read as complete sentences. Therefore, the semicolon is acceptable.

2. While there are many regions where other sports enjoy strong pockets of popularity; football enjoys a strong following nationwide.

Here, the first portion "*While there are many regions where other sports enjoy strong pockets of popularity*" is not an independent clause (that is, it cannot stand as a sentence). Therefore, we cannot use a semicolon (or a period). Instead, we should use a comma.

There are many different ways to identify correct and incorrect usage of a semicolon, but the simplest is to replace it with a period. If the period works, then so does the semicolon. If one of the sentences produced by the period is not an independent clause, then we cannot use a semicolon.

Let's try an exercise to test this concept.

Exercise 10.1

Each of the sentences below contains a semicolon. Some are improperly used. Cross out the ones that are.

1. Many schools and businesses use laser printers; because they are fast and efficient.
2. Inkjet printers are cheap; however, they tend to be slow and unreliable.
3. Whiteboards have replaced blackboards in classrooms; they are far more pleasant to write on.
4. Most people think of Colorado as the epicenter of North American skiing; but there are larger and more challenging mountains North of the border in British Columbia.
5. The capitol building in Madison, Wisconsin is one of the most beautiful legislative buildings in the United States; it bears a strong resemblance to the Capitol in Washington, D.C.
6. Computing technology has improved exponentially in the last decade; which has seen processing power increase tenfold.

If you are having trouble with this concept, review Rule 7 – Independent clauses. Once you fully understand what makes a clause independent or dependent/subordinate, you should understand what makes a sentence a complete sentence. That understanding should make the proper use of semicolons very easy.

Here are a couple notes that may help:

- Singular clauses that begin with a *w-word* (who, which, while, etc.) tend to not be independent clauses as they don't express complete ideas.
- Pronouns **can** act as subjects. Just because the words *it, they, she, he*, and other pronouns, don't necessarily refer to a definite subject, doesn't mean they aren't acceptable subjects in an independent clause. Usually, of course, these words prefer to nouns featured earlier in a passage (most likely, in the previous sentence).

Rule 12. Colons Can Only Follow Independent Clauses

In the previous rule, we discussed the three main uses of colons: preceding a list, introducing a definition, or introducing a clarification. In this section, we are going to explain a few situations where you shouldn't use a colon, even if it meets the above criteria.

We should be careful not to use colons immediately preceding a direct object of a verb or of a preposition. Let's take a look at a few examples.

1. My dog likes to chase rabbits, cats, and squirrels.

Here, we wouldn't use a colon because the list (rabbits, cats, and squirrels) is composed entirely of direct objects of the verb *chase*.

2. My dog will chase anything: rabbits, cats, squirrels, beached sharks.

Here, we need to use a colon to identify the list because the list (rabbits, cats, squirrels, beached sharks) is a clarification of the term *anything*, which is actually the direct object of the verb *chase*.

3. After our trip to the beach, we found sand on the carpets, the patio, and the couch.

There is no colon in this sentence because the list (the carpets, the patio, and the couch) is the object of the preposition *on*.

4. After our trip to the beach, we found sand everywhere: the carpets, the patio, and the couch.

In this case, the list clarifies the term *everywhere*.

5. The westward expansion of the United States hit an apex in 1850: the year when California officially became a State.

This time, the colon is used for a clarification. The clause *the year when California officially became a State* clarifies the significance of 1850. It should be noted that a comma would also be acceptable here.

6. The westward expansion of the United States hit an apex in 1850 with California's entry into the Union.

Here, there is no distinct break in the sentence that signifies a shift to a clarification or explanation. Further, the preposition *with* effectively acts in place of the colon by opening up a prepositional phrase.

Now, look back at the six examples above. In example 1, it may be tempting to place a colon after the verb **chase** (before the list). In example 3, it may appear that we should place a colon after the preposition **on** (before the list). In example 6, some may want to place a colon after the preposition **with** (before the clarification). Draw a vertical line at each of those points, then read the part of the sentence that comes before the break. You should notice that in the sentences where the colon is properly used (Examples 2, 4, and 5), the first part of the sentence (before the colon) is an independent clause – that is, it can stand alone as a sentence. If you read the first part of Examples 1, 3, and 6, you'll find that

those are *not* independent clauses. Thus, we can conclude that, for the most part, we should only use colons after independent clauses.

Exercise 12.1

Remove improperly used colons.

1. Many people who are new to politics aren't aware that there are several alternates to the major political parties: the Libertarian Party, Green Party, and Constitution Party all offer differing perspectives on how the United States should be governed.
2. When I looked outside, I noticed: a large crowd of kids, three dogs, and the Loch Ness Monster.
3. When you visit Los Angeles, be certain to explore the surrounding beaches: Redondo Beach, Long Beach, and Hermosa Beach.
4. Other popular tourist attractions include: Marina Del Rey, the Hollywood sign, and the Walk of Fame.
5. Over six thousand people turned out to the ribbon-cutting ceremony for: the school's new synchronized swimming center.
6. Most NBA players are well over six feet tall, but there is one position that seems to suit smaller players: point guard.

Writing and Language Test

35 MINUTES, 44 QUESTIONS

Turn to Section 2 of your answer sheet to answer the questions in this section.

DIRECTIONS

Each passage below is accompanied by a number of questions. For some questions, you will consider how the passage might be revised to improve the expression of ideas. For other questions, you will consider how the passage might be edited to correct errors in sentence structure, usage, or punctuation. A passage or a question may be accompanied by one or more graphics (such as a table or graph) that you will consider as you make revising and editing decisions.

Some questions will direct you to an underlined portion of a passage. Other questions will direct you to a location in a passage or ask you to think about the passage as a whole.

After reading each passage, choose the answer to each question that most effectively improves the quality of writing in the passage or that makes the passage conform to the conventions of standard written English. Many questions include a “NO CHANGE” option. Choose that option if you think the best choice is to leave the relevant portion of the passage as it is.

Questions 1-11 are based on the following passage.

Whey to Go

Greek yogurt—a strained form of cultured yogurt—has grown enormously in popularity in the United States since it was first introduced in the country in the late 1980s.

From 2011 to 2012 alone, sales of Greek yogurt in the US increased by 50 percent. The resulting increase in Greek yogurt production has forced those involved in the business to address the detrimental effects that the yogurt-making process may be having on the environment. Fortunately, farmers and others in the

Greek yogurt business have found many methods of controlling and eliminating most environmental threats. Given these solutions as well as the many health benefits of the food, the advantages of Greek yogurt **1** outdo the potential drawbacks of its production.

[1] The main environmental problem caused by the production of Greek yogurt is the creation of acid whey as a by-product. [2] Because it requires up to four times more milk to make than conventional yogurt does, Greek yogurt produces larger amounts of acid whey, which is difficult to dispose of. [3] To address the problem of disposal, farmers have found a number of uses for acid whey. [4] They can add it to livestock feed as a protein **2** supplement, and people can make their own Greek-style yogurt at home by straining regular yogurt. [5] If it is improperly introduced into the environment, acid-whey runoff **3** can pollute waterways, depleting the oxygen content of streams and rivers as it decomposes. [6] Yogurt manufacturers, food **4** scientists; and government officials are also working together to develop additional solutions for reusing whey. **5**

1

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) defeat
- C) outperform
- D) outweigh

2

Which choice provides the most relevant detail?

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) supplement and convert it into gas to use as fuel in electricity production.
- C) supplement, while sweet whey is more desirable as a food additive for humans.
- D) supplement, which provides an important element of their diet.

3

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) can pollute waterway's,
- C) could have polluted waterways,
- D) has polluted waterway's,

4

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) scientists: and
- C) scientists, and
- D) scientists, and,

5

To make this paragraph most logical, sentence 5 should be placed

- A) where it is now.
- B) after sentence 1.
- C) after sentence 2.
- D) after sentence 3.

6 Though these conservation methods can be costly and time-consuming, they are well worth the effort. Nutritionists consider Greek yogurt to be a healthy food: it is an excellent source of calcium and protein, serves 7 to be a digestive aid, and 8 it contains few calories in its unsweetened low- and non-fat forms. Greek yogurt is slightly lower in sugar and carbohydrates than conventional yogurt is. 9 Also, because it is more concentrated, Greek yogurt contains slightly more protein per serving, thereby helping people stay

6

The writer is considering deleting the underlined sentence. Should the writer do this?

- A) Yes, because it does not provide a transition from the previous paragraph.
- B) Yes, because it fails to support the main argument of the passage as introduced in the first paragraph.
- C) No, because it continues the explanation of how acid whey can be disposed of safely.
- D) No, because it sets up the argument in the paragraph for the benefits of Greek yogurt.

7

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) as
- C) like
- D) for

8

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) containing
- C) contains
- D) will contain

9

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) In other words,
- C) Therefore,
- D) For instance,

10 satiated for longer periods of time. These health benefits have prompted Greek yogurt's recent surge in popularity. In fact, Greek yogurt can be found in an increasing number of products such as snack food and frozen desserts. Because consumers reap the nutritional benefits of Greek yogurt and support those who make and sell **11** it, therefore farmers and businesses should continue finding safe and effective methods of producing the food.

10

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) fulfilled
- C) complacent
- D) sufficient

11

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) it, farmers
- C) it, so farmers
- D) it: farmers

Questions 12-22 are based on the following passage and supplementary material.

Dark Snow

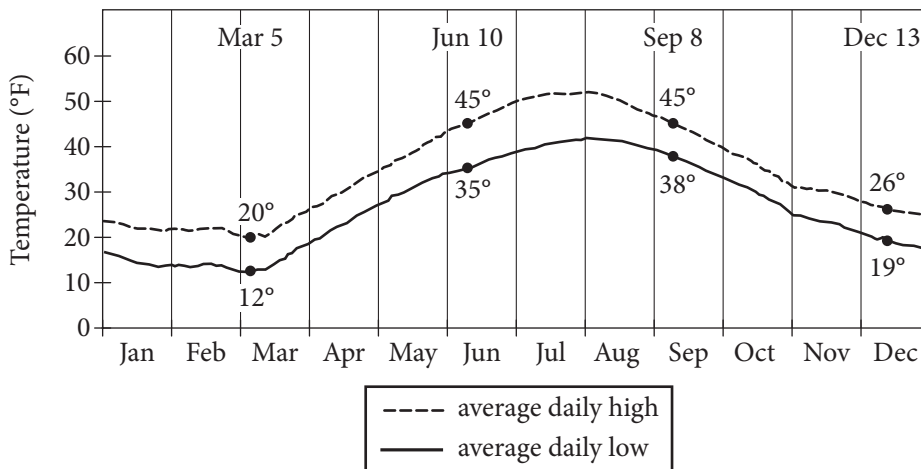
Most of Greenland's interior is covered by a thick layer of ice and compressed snow known as the Greenland Ice Sheet. The size of the ice sheet fluctuates seasonally: in summer, average daily high temperatures in Greenland can rise to slightly above 50 degrees Fahrenheit, partially melting the ice; in the winter, the sheet thickens as additional snow falls, and average daily low temperatures can drop **12** to as low as 20 degrees.

12

Which choice most accurately and effectively represents the information in the graph?

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) to 12 degrees Fahrenheit.
- C) to their lowest point on December 13.
- D) to 10 degrees Fahrenheit and stay there for months.

Average Daily High and Low Temperatures Recorded at Nuuk Weather Station, Greenland (1961—1990)



Adapted from WMO. ©2014 by World Meteorological Organization.

Typically, the ice sheet begins to show evidence of thawing in late **13** summer. This follows several weeks of higher temperatures. **14** For example, in the summer of 2012, virtually the entire Greenland Ice Sheet underwent thawing at or near its surface by mid-July, the earliest date on record. Most scientists looking for the causes of the Great Melt of 2012 have focused exclusively on rising temperatures. The summer of 2012 was the warmest in 170 years, records show. But Jason **15** Box, an associate professor of geology at Ohio State believes that another factor added to the early **16** thaw; the “dark snow” problem.

13

Which choice most effectively combines the two sentences at the underlined portion?

- A) summer, following
- B) summer, and this thawing follows
- C) summer, and such thawing follows
- D) summer and this evidence follows

14

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) However,
- C) As such,
- D) Moreover,

15

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) Box an associate professor of geology at Ohio State,
- C) Box, an associate professor of geology at Ohio State,
- D) Box, an associate professor of geology, at Ohio State

16

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) thaw; and it was
- C) thaw:
- D) thaw: being

According to Box, a leading Greenland expert, tundra fires in 2012 from as far away as North America produced great amounts of soot, some **17** of it drifted over Greenland in giant plumes of smoke and then **18** fell as particles onto the ice sheet. Scientists have long known that soot particles facilitate melting by darkening snow and ice, limiting **19** it's ability to reflect the Sun's rays. As Box explains, "Soot is an extremely powerful light absorber. It settles over the ice and captures the Sun's heat." The result is a self-reinforcing cycle. As the ice melts, the land and water under the ice become exposed, and since land and water are darker than snow, the surface absorbs even more heat, which **20** is related to the rising temperatures.

17

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) soot
- C) of which
- D) DELETE the underlined portion.

18

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) falls
- C) will fall
- D) had fallen

19

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) its
- C) there
- D) their

20

Which choice best completes the description of a self-reinforcing cycle?

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) raises the surface temperature.
- C) begins to cool at a certain point.
- D) leads to additional melting.

[1] Box's research is important because the fires of 2012 may not be a one-time phenomenon. [2] According to scientists, rising Arctic temperatures are making northern latitudes greener and thus more fire prone. [3] The pattern Box observed in 2012 may repeat

21 itself again, with harmful effects on the Arctic ecosystem. [4] Box is currently organizing an expedition to gather this crucial information. [5] The next step for Box and his team is to travel to Greenland to perform direct sampling of the ice in order to determine just how much the soot is contributing to the melting of the ice sheet. [6] Members of the public will be able to track his team's progress—and even help fund the expedition—through a website Box has created. **22**

21

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) itself,
- C) itself, with damage and
- D) itself possibly,

22

To make this paragraph most logical, sentence 4 should be placed

- A) where it is now.
- B) after sentence 1.
- C) after sentence 2.
- D) after sentence 5.

Questions 23-33 are based on the following passage.

Coworking: A Creative Solution

When I left my office job as a website developer at a small company for a position that allowed me to work full-time from home, I thought I had it made: I gleefully traded in my suits and dress shoes for sweatpants and slippers, my frantic early-morning bagged lunch packing for a leisurely midday trip to my refrigerator. The novelty of this comfortable work-from-home life, however,

23 soon got worn off quickly. Within a month, I found myself feeling isolated despite having frequent email and instant messaging contact with my colleagues. Having become frustrated trying to solve difficult problems,

24 no colleagues were nearby to share ideas. It was during this time that I read an article **25** into coworking spaces.

23

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) was promptly worn
- C) promptly wore
- D) wore

24

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) colleagues were important for sharing ideas.
- C) ideas couldn't be shared with colleagues.
- D) I missed having colleagues nearby to consult.

25

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) about
- C) upon
- D) for

The article, published by *Forbes* magazine, explained that coworking spaces are designated locations that, for a fee, individuals can use to conduct their work. The spaces are usually stocked with standard office **26** equipment, such as photocopiers, printers, and fax machines. **27** In these locations, however, the spaces often include small meeting areas and larger rooms for hosting presentations. **28** The cost of launching a new coworking business in the United States is estimated to be approximately \$58,000.

26

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) equipment, such as:
- C) equipment such as:
- D) equipment, such as,

27

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) In addition to equipment,
- C) For these reasons,
- D) Likewise,

28

The writer is considering deleting the underlined sentence. Should the sentence be kept or deleted?

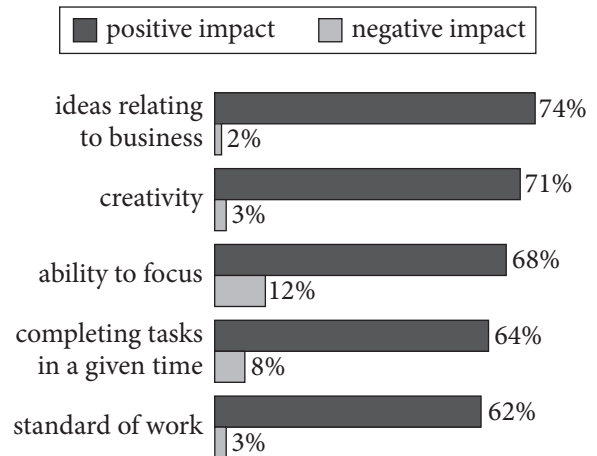
- A) Kept, because it provides a detail that supports the main topic of the paragraph.
- B) Kept, because it sets up the main topic of the paragraph that follows.
- C) Deleted, because it blurs the paragraph's main focus with a loosely related detail.
- D) Deleted, because it repeats information that has been provided in an earlier paragraph.

What most caught my interest, though, was a quotation from someone who described coworking spaces as “melting pots of creativity.” The article refers to a 2012 survey in which **29** 64 percent of respondents noted that coworking spaces prevented them from completing tasks in a given time. The article goes on to suggest that the most valuable resources provided by coworking spaces are actually the people **30** whom use them.

29

At this point, the writer wants to add specific information that supports the main topic of the paragraph.

Perceived Effect of Coworking on Business Skills



Adapted from “The 3rd Global Coworking Survey.” ©2013 by Deskmag.

Which choice most effectively completes the sentence with relevant and accurate information based on the graph above?

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) 71 percent of respondents indicated that using a coworking space increased their creativity.
- C) respondents credited coworking spaces with giving them 74 percent of their ideas relating to business.
- D) respondents revealed that their ability to focus on their work improved by 12 percent in a coworking space.

30

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) whom uses
- C) who uses
- D) who use

[1] Thus, even though I already had all the equipment I needed in my home office, I decided to try using a coworking space in my city. [2] Because I was specifically interested in coworking's reported benefits related to creativity, I chose a facility that offered a bright, open work area where I wouldn't be isolated. [3] Throughout the morning, more people appeared. [4] Periods of quiet, during which everyone worked independently, were broken up occasionally with lively conversation. **31**

I liked the experience so much that I now go to the coworking space a few times a week. Over time, I've gotten to know several of my coworking **32** colleagues: another website developer, a graphic designer, a freelance writer, and several mobile app coders. Even those of us who work in disparate fields are able to **33** share advice and help each other brainstorm. In fact, it's the diversity of their talents and experiences that makes my coworking colleagues so valuable.

31

The writer wants to add the following sentence to the paragraph.

After filling out a simple registration form and taking a quick tour of the facility, I took a seat at a table and got right to work on my laptop.

The best placement for the sentence is immediately

- A) before sentence 1.
- B) after sentence 1.
- C) after sentence 2.
- D) after sentence 3.

32

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) colleagues;
- C) colleagues,
- D) colleagues

33

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) give some wisdom
- C) proclaim our opinions
- D) opine

Questions 34-44 are based on the following passage.

The Consolations of Philosophy

Long viewed by many as the stereotypical useless major, philosophy is now being seen by many students and prospective employers as in fact a very useful and practical major, offering students a host of transferable skills with relevance to the modern workplace. **34** In broad terms, philosophy is the study of meaning and the values underlying thought and behavior. But **35** more pragmatically, the discipline encourages students to analyze complex material, question conventional beliefs, and express thoughts in a concise manner.

Because philosophy **36** teaching students not what to think but how to think, the age-old discipline offers consistently useful tools for academic and professional achievement. **37** A 1994 survey concluded that only 18 percent of American colleges required at least one philosophy course. **38** Therefore, between 1992 and 1996, more than 400 independent philosophy departments were eliminated from institutions.

34

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) For example,
- C) In contrast,
- D) Nevertheless,

35

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) speaking in a more pragmatic way,
- C) speaking in a way more pragmatically,
- D) in a more pragmatic-speaking way,

36

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) teaches
- C) to teach
- D) and teaching

37

Which choice most effectively sets up the information that follows?

- A) Consequently, philosophy students have been receiving an increasing number of job offers.
- B) Therefore, because of the evidence, colleges increased their offerings in philosophy.
- C) Notwithstanding the attractiveness of this course of study, students have resisted majoring in philosophy.
- D) However, despite its many utilitarian benefits, colleges have not always supported the study of philosophy.

38

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) Thus,
- C) Moreover,
- D) However,

More recently, colleges have recognized the practicality and increasing popularity of studying philosophy and have markedly increased the number of philosophy programs offered. By 2008 there were 817 programs, up from 765 a decade before. In addition, the number of four-year graduates in philosophy has grown 46 percent in a decade. Also, studies have found that those students who major in philosophy often do better than students from other majors in both verbal reasoning and analytical **39** writing. These results can be measured by standardized test scores. On the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), for example, students intending to study philosophy in graduate school **40** has scored higher than students in all but four other majors.

These days, many **41** student's majoring in philosophy have no intention of becoming philosophers; instead they plan to apply those skills to other disciplines. Law and business specifically benefit from the complicated theoretical issues raised in the study of philosophy, but philosophy can be just as useful in engineering or any field requiring complex analytic skills.

42 That these skills are transferable across professions

39

Which choice most effectively combines the sentences at the underlined portion?

- A) writing as
- B) writing, and these results can be
- C) writing, which can also be
- D) writing when the results are

40

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) have scored
- C) scores
- D) scoring

41

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) students majoring
- C) students major
- D) student's majors

42

At this point, the writer is considering adding the following sentence.

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato, for example, wrote many of his works in the form of dialogues.

Should the writer make this addition here?

- A) Yes, because it reinforces the passage's main point about the employability of philosophy majors.
- B) Yes, because it acknowledges a common counterargument to the passage's central claim.
- C) No, because it blurs the paragraph's focus by introducing a new idea that goes unexplained.
- D) No, because it undermines the passage's claim about the employability of philosophy majors.

43 which makes them especially beneficial to twenty-first-century students. Because today's students can expect to hold multiple jobs—some of which may not even exist yet—during 44 our lifetime, studying philosophy allows them to be flexible and adaptable. High demand, advanced exam scores, and varied professional skills all argue for maintaining and enhancing philosophy courses and majors within academic institutions.

43

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) that
- C) and
- D) DELETE the underlined portion.

44

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) one's
- C) his or her
- D) their

STOP

**If you finish before time is called, you may check your work on this section only.
Do not turn to any other section.**