

# Subject/Verb Agreement

Subject/verb agreement is the most common type of ACT writing question. The key to these questions is to trust your ear. You know the error when you hear it. If something sounds wrong, it probably is. If something is difficult to read, it's probably wrong. The purpose of good grammar is to make a passage easy to read and understand. So if it's not, if it trips up your tongue, or if you can't get its meaning, don't say, "Boy, that sounds kinda funny, but I must be wrong." Say, "I can't understand this, so **it** must be bad grammar." Trust yourself. Notice where your tongue gets tied up, where you have to pause and say, "What the . . .?" That's where the error is.

In the drills that follow we will train your ear. In a sentence, the subject and the verb must match. There is no fancy rule that I need to teach you; you already know this stuff, just from speaking and reading. What I need to teach you is to train and then trust your ear and, when in doubt, to identify the subject of the verb. In this Skill, we'll look at some straightforward questions. In the next Skill, we'll look at the one trick that the ACT tries.

Let's take a look at this on the Pretest.

It was a Monday morning in 2006, and I am Kyle Tucker the politician and intellectual, the defiant liberal embarking on his first day of what would be an illustrious political career.

1. A. NO CHANGE
- B. was
- C. were
- D. have been

**Solution:** Trust your ear. "It was a Monday morning in 2006, and I am Kyle Tucker" does not sound correct. "It was Monday" implies that the "I am" should be the past tense, "I was." You can hear that if you know to listen for it. That's our goal, to train you to listen for it.

**Correct answer:** B.



### ACT Mantra #1

**When a verb is underlined, trust your ear. When in doubt, identify its subject and make sure singular/plural and tense match the subject.**

# Subject/Verb Agreement Drills

There is something delightfully bizarre in the art of improvisational theater. Not only being it<sup>1</sup> completely unexpected and full of anxious excitement, but oftentimes, the material that emerges is utterly ridiculous.

For me, improv was<sup>2</sup> hard at first. And scary. I been<sup>3</sup> in organized productions since I was seven and had since then conquered stage fright. However, before my first improv performances, my heart would race as it did when I were<sup>4</sup> seven.

The nervousness that came from not knowing what I would say<sup>5</sup> resulted in me groping about wildly. This, I learned, will not earn you the laughter of the audience. What will work, however, are<sup>6</sup> disregarding any preconception you have about having to be funny all the time, and letting yourself actually be listening and react<sup>7</sup> to those around you.

- 1 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) being  
(C) is it  
(D) it

- 2 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) were  
(H) began to be  
(J) had being

- 3 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) had been  
(C) will have been  
(D) was

- 4 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) would have been  
(H) have been  
(J) was

- 5 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) said  
(C) would have said  
(D) would have been saying

- 6 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) being  
(H) is  
(J) has been

- 7 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) listen and react  
(C) listens and reacts  
(D) listen and be reacting

# The One Subject/Verb Agreement Trick

Usually the ACT does not try to be very tricky, but they do love this one subject/verb agreement trick. Every test uses it at least once. And since we expect it, it's not tricky for us.

Did you catch it on the Pretest?

I, with several other interns, were arriving at the "Bermuda Government Offices."

2. F. NO CHANGE

G. had been arrived

H. was arriving

J. were being arriving

**Solution:** I love these, they are tricky, but we know they are coming! The trick is that "interns" might look like the subject of the underlined verb, but "I" is the subject. "Interns **were** arriving" sounds correct, but the subject of the verb is "I," so it should be "I **was** arriving."

**Correct answer:** H.

"How can I ever tell that?" you say. Ahh, my friend, easy. A prepositional phrase, such as "with several other interns," NEVER counts as the subject. Prepositional phrases always begin with a preposition ("on," "above," "below," "with," "by," "during," "until," . . . just Google "prepositions" for a full list) and end with a noun, such as "interns." Here are a few more prepositional phrases: "of awards," "with six kids," or "on the table."

So when you are identifying the subject of an underlined verb, if there is a prepositional phrase, cross it out! Then subject/verb agreement is obvious, and a "tricky question" becomes "easy"!

Jimmy ~~with his friends~~ walks  
The number ~~of awards~~ proves  
Billy ~~along with six kids~~ goes

## ACT Mantra #2

**When a verb is underlined, identify the subject and cross out any prepositional phrases; a prepositional phrase NEVER counts as the subject of the verb.**



# The One Subject/Verb Agreement Trick Drills

Cross out any prepositional phrases between the subject and verb, and underline the subject of the **bold verb** in each of the following sentences.

- ① Margarita, with her sisters, currently **runs** a marketing firm.
- ② The way of all samurai **is** a strict path.
- ③ The boys, with their dog Alfred, **walk** to school.
- ④ The PTA, through generous donations, **is** building a new school building.

Now, let's see this trick on a few ACT questions.

Grandma's procedure for baking cookies have been written in my mind with dough and colored sugar.

After the sticks of butter have softened, mix with one cup of sugar. Next, crack two eggs over the edge of the bowl and toss the shells into the compost bin.

Add one teaspoon of vanilla. Then, one-half cup of brown and white sugars is added, and stir. Add two cups of flour, one teaspoon of salt, and one teaspoon of baking soda, and stir. Then place the dough in the freezer for one hour to harden. When the cookies, baking on the middle rack of the oven,

becomes ready, your nose will tell you.

- ① (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) cookies; have  
(C) cookies has  
(D) cookies being
- ② (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) has softened  
(H) were soft  
(J) has been softened
- ③ (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) is being  
(C) will have been  
(D) are
- ④ (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) become ready  
(H) had become ready  
(J) was

# Pronoun Clarity and Agreement

When a pronoun (such as “he,” “she,” “it,” “they,” “them,” “him,” or “her”) is underlined, we must be totally sure what noun it is referring to. If it is unclear, in any way, it is incorrect. You’re smart, so you might be able to figure out which noun a pronoun refers to, but ask yourself, If Borat were translating this sentence, what would he think? If it’s at all unclear, it’s wrong. Also, once you know what the pronoun refers to, make sure that it matches—singular or plural.

Let’s see this on the question from the Pretest.

I approached the bulletin board that held your summer destiny. Jostling amongst other eager students, my eyes

- 3. A. NO CHANGE
- B. one’s
- C. my
- D. whose

**Solution:** We cannot be sure who “your” refers to, so it’s wrong. Also, on the ACT, only use “you” or “your” if it is used consistently throughout the essay, and never switch between “you” and “one.”

**Correct answer:** C

As you learn the English Skills, use them to analyze each underlined word. If the underlined word is a verb, ask, What is its subject? If it’s a pronoun, ask, What does it refer to and does it match?

**ACT Mantra #3**

**When a pronoun is underlined, we must be totally sure what noun it is referring to. If it is unclear in any way, it is incorrect. The underlined pronoun must also match (singular or plural) the noun that it refers to.**

Here Are Most of the Pronouns That the ACT Uses		
All	I	Some
Both	It	Them
Each	Many	These
Few	Neither	They
He	Nobody	We
Her	None	Who
Him	One	You
His	She	Me

# Pronoun Clarity and Agreement Drills

My grandma begins to flatten the dough with a wooden roller coated with flour. I devote my energies to the cookie cutters. It is all heaped together in an old plastic shopping bag. I become overwhelmed by my options and lay them all out. I love the simplicity of the star, but am also intrigued by the complexity of the Santa. There's also the reindeer, the Christmas tree, and the sleigh. I select those cookie cutter that we will use and realize I have chosen mostly stars and Santas.

My next task it to decorate the newly born shapes with sugar. She takes a step back from the table and watches my eyes widen with excitement. I begin to sprinkle red and green sugar arbitrarily across the top of each cookie. I release the crystals from my hand and wherever it ends up is fine with me. When I finally finish, my grandma tells me that they are "just perfect" and places them in the oven.

- ① (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) It  
(C) They being  
(D) They are
- ② (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) it  
(H) each one  
(J) those
- ③ (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) their  
(C) each  
(D) these
- ④ (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) My grandma  
(H) He  
(J) Who
- ⑤ (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) each and every  
(C) this  
(D) which
- ⑥ (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) those end  
(H) they end  
(J) those released crystals ends

# Correct Transition Word

## 4

When a transition word (such as “although,” “since,” “but,” “therefore,” or “however”) is underlined, see if it works in the flow of the sentence. Words like “therefore” express a direct cause and effect. Opposition words like “but” express a cause and effect where the second part opposes the first. For example:

Brian is funny; therefore, he makes you laugh.

The second part results from the first part.

Brian is funny, but sometimes he is tired and dull.

The second part opposes the first part.

When a transition word is underlined, check if it's the right transition word for the sentence. These are great. If you didn't know to look for them, you might miss 'em. You might think, “That was weird, but I guess it's okay.” But it's not okay.

Let's take a look at the one from the Pretest.

“No, No, No!” I thought. Nevertheless, I got angry—blood rushed to my head and my knees went weak.

4. F. NO CHANGE

G. But,

H. Still

J. OMIT the underlined portion.

**Solution:** “I got angry” follows the flow of the paragraph, rather than opposes it. But “nevertheless” implies opposition, so we want a different transition word, such as “therefore.” All the choices are opposition words, so choice J (OMIT the underlined portion) is correct.

**Correct answer:** J

If we weren't looking for this, we might miss it, but we expect it and we catch it. This is where my job is easy; I just tell you what to look out for. Then you get them right, and it makes me look good!

### ACT Mantra #4

When a transition word (such as “although,” “since,” “but,” “therefore,” or “however”) is underlined, see if it works in the flow of the paragraph.

Direct Cause-and-Effect Words			Opposition Words		
Therefore	Thus	So	However	Although	But
Ergo	And	Since	Still	Though	
Because			Nevertheless	Even though	



# Correct Transition Word Drills

Catherine the Great became empress of Russia in 1769. She guided Russia in a Golden Age for 34 years. Otherwise,<sup>1</sup> this Golden Age was indeed a time of prosperity for many, for others it was a time of oppression.

To many it appeared that Catherine was guiding Russia into prosperity, though,<sup>2</sup> underneath the surface, she disregarded the underprivileged. She took away their land and made it difficult for them to acquire an education. Since<sup>3</sup> Catherine is known as a just ruler, under her reign the peasantry actually suffered greatly.

Whereas<sup>4</sup> Catherine effected many advancements during her reign, such as founding the Russian Academy; however, these achievements targeted the nobility. For example,<sup>5</sup> the schools she founded were private with very expensive tuition. While Catherine did bring the Renaissance to Russia, peasants were too busy working to benefit from it. In truth, Catherine the Great took advantage of many to benefit the few, therefore.<sup>6</sup>

- 1 (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) Therefore
- (C) Although
- (D) And,

- 2 (F) NO CHANGE
- (G) for
- (H) therefore
- (J) moreover

- 3 (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) While
- (C) Because
- (D) Thus,

- 4 (F) NO CHANGE
- (G) Since
- (H) Considering
- (J) DELETE the underlined portion.

- 5 (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) Yet,
- (C) Because of
- (D) But,

- 6 (F) NO CHANGE
- (G) few
- (H) few of them
- (J) few, yet



# Relaxing Commas

Most kids see commas as a great mystery. But commas follow rules. They just indicate a pause; they are very relaxing. So when a comma is underlined on the ACT, ask yourself, Should there be a pause here? Use your ear—read it with and without a pause and see which works.

When you need to double-check your ear, here are the comma rules for the ACT:

- ① Use a comma to set off a side note.

**Example:** This book, as you know, is quite excellent.

You can hear the pause before and after the side note “as you know.”

**Example:** You, Matt, are a great pianist.

You can hear the pause before and after the side note “Matt.”

These sentences would sound bizarre if you read them without the pauses.

- ② Don't use a comma if a phrase is essential to the sentence, because then it's not a side note.

**Example:** The word “facile” comes from the Spanish word for easy.

No commas because the word “facile” is essential, not a side note. If we took it out, the sentence would lose its meaning.

Plus, if you try pausing before and after, it sounds weird.

There's one more rule that we need, which we'll do in Skill 6.

Let's take a look at the question from the Pretest.

Not me, the budding politician, an assistant to the assistant of the assistant?

5. A. NO CHANGE

B. me the budding politician an

C. me the budding politician an,

D. me the budding politician; an

**Solution:** Try it with and without pauses. With pauses it sounds clear, and without pauses it sounds confusing and jumbled. “The budding politician” is a side note, inessential to the meaning of the sentence, so we need the commas.

**Correct answer:** A

## ACT Mantra #5

When a comma is underlined on the ACT, ask yourself, Should there be a pause here? Read it with and without a pause and see which works. Commas (and pauses) are used to set off a side note.



# Relaxing Commas Drills

## My Room

My room,<sup>1</sup> is always there for me. All my things are there: the pictures, the books, the folders from fourth grade. The walls are covered with memories<sup>2</sup> from my three-year-old birthday poster to faded paintings done in seventh grade.

The rugs underfoot being<sup>3</sup> always dusty, always comforting, are a multicolor patchwork of irregular<sup>4</sup> shapes.<sup>4</sup> Out the window is a familiar landscape, always there, like an old friend that won't let me down. The colors of the wall blue<sup>5</sup> and red, are deep rich colors that warm me and keep me safe.

Sometimes, though<sup>6</sup> like on hot days, the deep colors keep me cool.

The most special place in the whole room, my bed.<sup>7</sup> It's a place to relax and just be, a reassuring face in a sometimes unfriendly world. The cozy blankets are always ready to warm me; the pillow is a fluffy cloud. My room is a special world all of my own.

- ① (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) room,  
(C) room is,  
(D) room is
- ② (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) memories;  
(H) memories,  
(J) memories, and
- ③ (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) underfoot, really  
(C) underfoot are  
(D) underfoot,
- ④ (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) of, irregular, shapes  
(H) of, irregular shapes  
(J) of irregular, shapes
- ⑤ (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) wall is blue  
(C) wall, blue  
(D) wall, being blue
- ⑥ (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) therefore,  
(H) though;  
(J) though,
- ⑦ (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) room is my bed  
(C) room, being my bed  
(D) room; my bed

# Are You Independent?

I told you in Skill 5 that there was one more comma rule for the ACT. Here it is. When a phrase in a sentence does not complete a thought and leaves you waiting for the rest, you separate it from the rest of the sentence with a comma (or a dash or parentheses). When the phrase is a complete thought that could stand on its own, and does not leave you hanging, you separate it with a semicolon or a comma with “and.”

The fancy term for a phrase that cannot stand alone is “dependent,” and the fancy term for one that can is “independent.” That makes sense, like when you have a job and learn to cook and can stand on your own, you are independent.

## Commas, Dashes, Parentheses

He thought, as soon as he woke up, that he'd like to go back to sleep.

He thought—as soon as he woke up—that he'd like to go back to sleep.

He thought (as soon as he woke up) that he'd like to go back to sleep.

In all these examples, the phrase “as soon as he woke up” is dependent—it would not be a complete sentence alone. Therefore it is separated by commas, dashes, or parentheses. Technically, each of these has a subtly different use, but the ACT uses them interchangeably and **never** tests the differences between commas, dashes, and parentheses.

## Semicolon

He woke up; he decided to go back to bed.

He woke up, and he decided to go back to bed.

He woke up. He decided to go back to bed.

Both parts of each of these sentences are independent and could stand alone, so they are separated by a semicolon, comma with “and,” or a period.

Let's take a look at the question from the Pretest.

I found my department, and I was immediately given a list of mundane tasks.

6. Which of the following alternatives to the underlined portion would NOT be acceptable?

F. department: and I was

G. department; I was

H. department and was

J. department. I was

**Solution:** “I found my department” and “I was immediately . . .” are both complete thoughts that could stand alone; they are independent. Therefore, they must be separated by a semicolon, comma with “and,” or a period. Using the process of elimination, choice F is the answer. I did not teach you about colons yet, so here goes: colons are used to separate a list or a clause that explains. Choice F would work if the second part of the sentence expounded on the first and did not have the “and,” for example, “I found my department: it was the filing room.”

**Correct answer:** F

### ACT Mantra #6

Phrases that can stand alone are separated with a semicolon, comma with “and,” or a period.

# Are You Independent? Drills

Jean Piaget popularized a theory of intellectual development; he taught that all children moved through a set pattern of development in a fixed order. He called the four stages of development; the sensorimotor, the preoperational, the concrete operational, and the formal operational.

Piaget's stages are often contrasted with those of Erik Erikson. Erikson focused on how children come to understand themselves. And, the world around them. His theory has eight stages, beginning at birth and ending in late adulthood.

The first four stages of Erikson's theory cover the same ages as Piaget's four stages; however, other than age of experience, the stages do not have an obvious relationship to each other.

- 1 Which of the following alternatives to the underlined portion would NOT be acceptable?
- (A) development. He taught that
  - (B) development—that
  - (C) development; teaching that
  - (D) development, teaching that
- 2
- (F) NO CHANGE
  - (G) development the
  - (H) development, the
  - (J) development; as the
- 3
- (A) NO CHANGE
  - (B) themselves; and
  - (C) themselves,
  - (D) themselves and
- 4
- (F) NO CHANGE
  - (G) stages; and begins
  - (H) stages, it begins
  - (J) stages; beginning
- 5
- (A) NO CHANGE
  - (B) stages, however, other
  - (C) stages, however. Other
  - (D) stages, however; other

# Correct Preposition

The ACT calls this topic “correct idiom.” I love their term; you just don’t hear people using the word “idiom” nearly enough. It makes me think of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* when Sir Lancelot receives a call of distress from the singing Prince of Swamp Castle. Lancelot’s squire wants to come along for the daring rescue, but Lancelot says that he must rush the castle “in his own particular . . . idiom.”

Instead of “correct idiom,” which I can’t say without laughing, I call it “correct preposition.” I do this for two reasons:

- ① I’m not sure if I’d have to pay the ACT to use their term.
- ② The words that we are looking for are always prepositions, so it’s much easier than looking for the “correct idiom.”

Remember from Skill 2 that prepositions are words like “up,” “above,” “of,” “into,” “on,” “below,” “with,” “by,” “during,” “until.” You can Google “prepositions” for a full list. When a preposition is underlined, ask yourself if it’s the correct preposition. How do you know? The correct one will make sense and sound smooth. The wrong one will sound weird or jarring. This is another great place to practice trusting your ear. If it sounds jarring, it’s probably wrong. We’ll train on the drills.

Here are some examples:

Correct:	Incorrect:
Zann went <u>to</u> the movies.	Zann went <u>onto</u> the movies.
Giancarlo sat <u>on</u> the couch.	Giancarlo sat <u>in</u> the couch.
Malaria is a threat <u>to</u> travelers.	Malaria is a threat <u>of</u> travelers.
Focusing <u>on</u> your studies will bring you success.	Focusing <u>with</u> your studies will bring you success.

Let’s practice on the question from the Pretest.

I was young, but I understood every aspect in the government.

7. A. NO CHANGE
- B. the government offered
- C. of the government
- D. for the government

**Solution:** “But I understood every aspect in the government” sounds weird. The aspects are not literally **in** the government; they are aspects **of** the government. “Every aspect of the government” sounds great. Trust your ear. This is a great Skill; knowing to watch for the correct preposition turns a hard question into easy points!

**Correct answer:** C

### ACT Mantra #7

When a preposition is underlined, ask yourself if it is the right preposition to use.



# Correct Preposition Drills

Feeling out of place at school and needing something new, last January, I started helping out on Miss Kelly's study halls. Every Tuesday and Thursday, I'd read novels to eighth graders. If I continued in reading the same page over and over again, enough times, they'd understand it.

One day the science teacher told me, beaming, that one of my students had received a B on his ecosystems and biomes test.

That student, Nick, never said a word on it to me, even though he and I had spent a long time studying the material together. Truthfully, I don't know if he even cared for the grade, but I had never been prouder.

Tutoring those kids turned out on being one of the most rewarding experiences I had ever had. I still felt a little out of place at school, but I had a purpose, and I was excited when I woke up every day, especially on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

- 1 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) out to  
(C) out in  
(D) out into

- 2 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) to read  
(H) on reading  
(J) the reading of

- 3 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) with  
(C) about  
(D) in

- 4 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) by  
(H) for  
(J) about

- 5 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) about  
(C) what  
(D) on

- 6 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) in being  
(H) for  
(J) to be



The ACT tests two special pronouns. If there were a million of these special rules, we might be in trouble; but there are two. Memorize the rules for these two special pronouns and you gain points!

The ACT likes “me.” They also love “I.” They love to ask you if “I” or “me” is correct in a sentence. That’s great, because we have an incredibly easy and effective way to determine which is correct. If “I” is underlined, test it by putting it first or dropping the other person and then trusting your ear. You can also use this trick for “who” versus “whom,” “he” versus “him,” etc.

The second special pronoun that the ACT loves to test is “its” versus “it’s.” Usually, apostrophe s (’s) means possession, as in “Brian’s book.” But “it’s” is a special case and means the contraction for “it is,” while “its” is possessive, like “its color is red.”

“It’s” means “It is.”

“Its” is possessive, like “that tree is nice, and I like **its** colorful leaves.”

That’s it. Drill and memorize these, and you’ll gain points.

Let’s try this on the question from the Pretest.

At some point before midday, I began thinking seriously about quitting. “The Assistant’s office, its right downstairs,” I thought.

8. F. NO CHANGE  
G. office; its  
H. office, it’s  
J. office

**Solution:** First, this is a great review of Skill 6. “The assistant’s office” is not complete; it cannot stand alone. So it must have a comma instead of a semicolon. Second, “its” is possessive, but we want the contraction for “it is,” so choice H is correct.

**Correct answer:** H

#### ACT Mantra #8

If “I” or “me” is underlined, test it by putting the I/me first or drop the other person and trust your ear. If “its” or “it’s” is underlined, remember that “it’s” means “it is,” and “its” is possessive, like “that tree is nice; I like its colorful leaves.”

Our “Put the I/me first or drop the other person and trust your ear” strategy also applies to

I vs. Me  
He vs. Him  
She vs. Her  
We vs. Us  
They vs. Them  
Who vs. Whom



# It's Me Drills

Sometime in college, Manuel and me had heard that an enlightened person is so relaxed that their eyes are always half closed. I doubt its true, but at the time we believed it.

A few years later we were traveling and met a guru, a very advanced yoga teacher. "The key to a yoga practice," he said, "is to follow its call." We all sat together awhile and talked.

The scene was perfect. Someone brought tea to Manuel and I. The guru wore all white and sandals and spoke in wise aphorisms.

I was listening to a story about he and his student, when I realized that the guru's eyes were half closed. "Wow," I thought, "he is enlightened."

Later, about to leave, I said, "I'd love to attend one of your yoga classes." "That would be wonderful," he responded, "except, I'm not teaching this month.

I just had eye surgery, and who can see with these darn drops in their eyes!"

- 1 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) Manuel and I,  
(C) Manuel and I  
(D) me and Manuel
- 2 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) if there is truthfulness to this  
(H) it's true  
(J) its the truth
- 3 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) it's  
(C) their  
(D) they're
- 4 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) Manuel and myself  
(H) Manuel and, I  
(J) Manuel and me
- 5 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) his student and himself  
(C) him and his student  
(D) his student and he
- 6 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) whom  
(H) which person  
(J) whose



# A Few More Rules

Each of the eight Skills that you've learned so far appears on every single ACT. The four topics in this Skill appear less often, but often enough that you should memorize them.

## ① Apostrophe s

Examples:     the teacher's book—one teacher has a book  
                   the teachers' book—more than one teacher possesses the book

Remember from Skill 8 that "its" is possessive and "it's" means "it is."

Also "who's" means "who is," and "whose" is possessive.

## ② ly

Sometimes, the ACT adds an "ly" when we don't need it. It's tough to spot if you're not watching for it, easy if you are! "Nasty, tricky" ACT makers, but we know and expect their tricks, so we get the questions right!

## ③ "Which" is for things; "who" is for people.

Examples:     Sierra is a girl **who** runs everyday.  
                   Computers are things **which** people love or hate.

## ④ Certain words go together, such as

Neither . . . nor  
 Either . . . or  
 Not only . . . but also

Example:     I like **neither** ham **nor** venison.

Now, let's look at the example from the Pretest.

I saw my mom's eyes and heard both of my uncles' laughter.

9. A. NO CHANGE

B. moms eyes and heard both of my uncles

C. mom's eyes and heard both of my uncle's

D. mom's eyes and heard both of my uncles

**Solution:** Since there are two uncles, "uncles' laughter" is correct. "Mom's" is also correct. So there is no error.

**Correct answer:** A

### ACT Mantra #9

"My uncle's books" means one uncle has books, and "my uncles' books" means that two or more uncles have the books. Watch for an unneeded "ly." "Who" is for people, and "which" is for things. Watch for pairs of words such as "not only . . . but also" and "either . . . or."



# A Few More Rules Drills

*The Boredoms* is one noise band which<sup>1</sup> I've actually listened to. I can't say that I constantly walk around with them in my earphones, but I'm somewhat familiarly<sup>2</sup> with their sound and have identified certain moments when they are just the thing.

What I admire about their project is that they can not only deconstruct, and<sup>3</sup> also reconstruct a song at will. Sometimes the sound devolves into arrhythmic mutterings, and other times the disparate pieces find one another and form something their own,<sup>4</sup> and a throbbing, perplexing song emerges.

While their sound is every bit as difficult as most grind groups sounds,<sup>5</sup> they are special for not taking themselves so seriously. If you're going to do crazy stuff like this, I'd say you should do it for fun.

- ① (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) who  
(C) whom  
(D) whose

- ② (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) familiarity  
(H) familiar  
(J) recognizable

- ③ (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) but  
(C) yet  
(D) while

- ④ (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) it's own;  
(H) his own:  
(J) whose own,

- ⑤ (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) group's sounds  
(C) groups' sounds  
(D) groups sound's

# 10

# Direct, to the Point, Not Redundant

"Named must your fear be before banish it you can."

Jedi Master Yoda

Great advice. True for Jedi training. True for the ACT. But unless you're an 800-year-old Jedi Master, don't try speaking or writing in the passive voice; the ACT always favors the active voice. "Active voice" is just fancy grammar language for "be direct and to the point."

The ACT is not testing to see if you are the next Jedi, nor is it testing to see if you are the next William Shakespeare. They are merely testing to see if you can write a clear and concise memo from your cubicle at Dandar Mifflin Corporation. So the secret rule for English ACT questions is to choose the answer that is most clear, concise, direct, and nonredundant.

Let's see this on the Pretest.

What I said to my neighbor intern who worked next to me,

10. F. NO CHANGE

G. neighbor intern next to me,

H. neighbor intern

J. neighbor, the intern next to me

**Solution:** The word "neighbor" implies the person "who worked next to me," so the other words are redundant and unneeded. Ax them. The ACT likes crisp and clear. We always want the answer that is most clear, concise, direct, nonredundant, and of course grammatically correct.

**Correct answer:** H

### ACT Mantra #10

The ACT likes crisp and clear; we always want the answer that is most clear, concise, direct, and nonredundant.



# Direct, to the Point, Not Redundant Drills

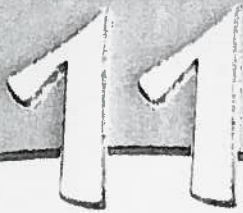
Begin to take deep relaxed breaths, breathing in a relaxed way. Mentally scanning your body,<sup>1</sup> consciously relax your muscles, one at a time, from your toes to the top of your head. Stress and tension are breathed out with each exhalation.<sup>2</sup> With each inhalation,<sup>2</sup> breathe in relaxation.

After your muscles have become relaxed, and less tight, allow your mind to relax. Notice anxieties and mental tensions.<sup>3</sup> Visualize the incoming breath dissolving buried mental tensions. Then, imagining that your mind is like a clear blue sky, it is that you see the thoughts as slowly floating clouds.<sup>4</sup>

Relax here awhile. Then, when you are ready and all set, gently stretch your body in the way that feels most natural for you.<sup>5</sup> Notice how you feel and make the intention to return to this feeling whenever you need some stress relief. Then, open your eyes and with open-eyes slowly sit up.<sup>6</sup>

- 1 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) breaths, and breathing in a relaxed way.  
(C) breaths, in a relaxed way.  
(D) breaths.
- 2 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) Let stress and tension be the things breathed out  
(H) Breathe out stress and tension  
(J) In the breathing, let it be stress and tension that are breathed out
- 3 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) relaxed  
(C) relaxed, with less tension  
(D) relaxed, and are less tight
- 4 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) it being that you are imagining that your mind is like a clear blue sky,  
(H) imagining that your mind is like a clear blue sky, you  
(J) imagine that your mind is like a clear blue sky and
- 5 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) set and ready  
(C) all ready and set  
(D) ready
- 6 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) with opened-eyes  
(H) with eyes being open  
(J) OMIT the underlined portion

# Misplaced Phrases



Look at this sentence:

A beloved children's story, Ethel read *The Three Little Pigs* to her son.

The sentence makes it sound like Ethel is a beloved children's story. That's how Borat would read it. "A beloved children's story" is misplaced. It should be closer to the thing it's describing, "*The Three Little Pigs*." On the ACT, a descriptive phrase should always be very close to the thing that it describes. The ACT uses this type of question **several times** per test.

Let's see this on the Pretest.

Climbing the metal stairs, the intern supervisor's cubicle was two flights up.

11. A. NO CHANGE  
 B. the cubicle of the intern supervisor  
 C. I made a beeline to the intern supervisor's cubicle which  
 D. the intern supervisors cubicle which

**Solution:** The way the sentence is set up, it seems that "Climbing the metal stairs" is describing the intern supervisor's cubicle. Of course it is not; you're smart and know that, but someone translating the sentence would be misled. That's the point of good grammar, to make writing completely clear. So "Climbing the metal stairs" should be as close to the thing that it describes ("I") as possible, and choice C is the best. Choice C also makes the sentence more clear and direct.

This question is a great place to use the process of elimination. If ever you are confused by a question, identify an error that needs fixing and eliminate choices that don't fix the error. Choices A, B, and C all have a misplaced phrase. Even if you can't identify choice C as the right answer, you can get it by the process of elimination!

**Correct answer:** C

### ACT Mantra #11

**A descriptive phrase on the ACT must be clearly associated with (and usually placed right next to) the noun described.**



# Misplaced Phrases Drills

My grandparents' farm was the opposite of my apartment in the city, with the fresh air of its open pasture. I remember eating early morning corn flakes with brown sugar and advising on Grandpa's game of solitaire. This was followed by midmorning breakfast with Grandma of Rice Krispies and toast with plenty of jam.

Grandma and I would go to the neighborhood ladies' brunch, but first, we'd bring lunch pails in the fields baling hay out to the workers. Those summers I learned to knit. I remember Grandma's limitless repertoire of knitting, embroidery, crochet, and sewing projects.

I savored the familiar smell of Grandpa's work shirt. I remember his enormous hands and the lines that told the stories of decades of satisfying hard work. With rhythm and simplicity, the memory of the time I spent with Grandma and Grandpa gives me a sense of security, nurturing, and calm.

- 1 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) farm was like the opposite to my city apartment, and the fresh air of the open pasture  
(C) farm, was the opposite of my apartment in the city with the fresh air of the open pasture  
(D) farm, with the fresh air of its open pasture, was the opposite of my apartment in the city
- 2 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) of Rice Krispies and toast with plenty of jam of Grandma's.  
(H) with Grandma; we ate Rice Krispies and toast with plenty of jam  
(J) and Grandma's eating Rice Krispies and toast with plenty of jam
- 3 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) in the fields' hay baling out to the workers  
(C) out to the workers baling hay in the fields  
(D) out in the fields baling hay to the workers
- 4 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) With its familiar smell, I savored  
(H) With its smell, I familiarly savored  
(J) The familiar smell, I was always savoring
- 5 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) The memory of the rhythm and simplicity of the time  
(C) With rhythm and simplicity, the time of the memory  
(D) With rhythm and simplicity, I remember the time

In ninth grade my best friend got hold of a thesaurus. Trying to impress our English teacher, he replaced a bunch of the words in his essay with fancier words. The problem was that the fancier words didn't always quite fit, and the essay sounded crazy.

The ACT loves to do that too. They just click on the thesaurus button and substitute a word that means nearly the same but does not fit in the sentence. This is definitely another "trust your ear" topic. If it sounds crazy, it is. Don't say, "That sounds kinda funny, but I must be wrong." Say, "That sounds weird, so let's see if the choices give something that sounds better."

Let's take a look at the question from the Pretest.

I remember staring at the man sitting there expectantly, the curiously look on his face, and then down at my hands, then at the Ministry exit doors.

12. F. NO CHANGE  
 G. quizzical  
 H. stormy  
 J. questionable

**Solution:** Your ear can definitely tell that "the curiously look" sounds weird and is wrong. This is actually a nice review of Skill 9, "Sometimes the ACT adds an "ly" that does not belong." Tough to catch for someone who wasn't expecting it, but easy for us! So now that we know it sounds weird, let's see how the answers sound. Only choice G makes sense in the context of the paragraph. The man does not have a stormy (violently angry) or questionable (disputed) look on his face; he has a quizzical (inquiring) look.

**Correct answer:** G

**ACT Mantra #12**

**Make sure that the underlined word fits into the context of the sentence.**



# Word Choice Drills

The hit TV show *Entourage* demonstrates<sup>1</sup> a young movie star navigating life in Hollywood. In the show, the main character, Vince, faces<sup>2</sup> contests from other actors to get the best roles. Yet, he remains grounded and calm.

In one episode, when he was known<sup>3</sup> to go on a late night talk show, his advisors told him to prep interesting topics to discuss. But he just decided to go on the show and be present. It's this very attitude that makes him so successful with so much<sup>4</sup> loyal fans. He is present to opportunity as it arises.

Vince is not inefficient<sup>5</sup>, he just listens to his gut rather than being sucked into the games of Hollywood. In another episode, he turned down a movie deal that he did not really want in hopes of a long-shot<sup>6</sup> deal. He did this because waiting for the long-shot<sup>6</sup> felt energizing and right and gave him a huge trickle<sup>7</sup> of excitement, whereas taking the sure-thing movie felt wrong.

- 1 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) teaches  
(C) portrays  
(D) proves

- 2 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) competition  
(H) trials  
(J) disputing

- 3 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) agreed to  
(C) scheduled to  
(D) apparently to

- 4 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) much a number of  
(H) many  
(J) fully many

- 5 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) indifferent  
(C) absent  
(D) caring

- 6 (F) NO CHANGE  
(G) lengthy-shot  
(H) full of unsureness  
(J) elongated shot

- 7 (A) NO CHANGE  
(B) tweak  
(C) reaction  
(D) surge



Flow questions test you on the flow of an essay. They ask about the logical progression and organization of ideas in the essay, including questions about the introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, transition sentences, concluding paragraph, order of sentences, and order of paragraphs. These are the same Skills that we'll review later when we discuss writing the essay. We'll go into tons of depth for each of these topics in that section. For now, let's see how the questions in this section show up.

Here's the question from the Pretest.

I tried to will myself toward the glass doors. "Now," I thought. But I couldn't. Freedom was just twenty quick steps away, but I couldn't do it.

13. If the writer were to delete the underlined sentence, the paragraph would lose
- A. an important detail
  - B. a transition from one sentence to the next
  - C. some of its personal tone
  - D. nothing at all, since this sentence is out of place

**Solution:** Read the sentences before and after the underlined portion. Then use the process of elimination on the choices:

- A. ~~an important detail~~—Nope, it's not an important detail.
- B. ~~a transition from one sentence to the next~~—No, it does not transition from one thing to another.
- C. some of its personal tone—Yes, he tells the reader his thoughts, very personal.
- D. ~~nothing at all, since this sentence is out of place~~—Nope, the underlined sentence is not out of place. It fits into the flow of the paragraph very well.

**Correct answer:** C



**ACT Mantra #13**

For "flow" questions, use the process of elimination.

# Flow Drills

Every July, my family spends a few weeks on a “clothing-optional” beach on Martha’s Vineyard.

<sup>1</sup> This section of Lucy Vincent Beach is the final stop on a half-mile stretch of sand, and it’s the place my family has been planting their multi-colored beach umbrellas since the 1970s. 2

As a little kid, I played happily, unconcerned about the nudity. My attitude toward the nude beach changed when I was twelve. Nothing around me made me feel that going to a nude beach was anything other than weird, and I abandoned my family’s beach community. I kept away for three <sup>3</sup> years, but the summer when I was fifteen, on the third day of our vacation (I still do not remember how it happened), it just felt right to get up and start walking down to the far end of the beach.

Everyone loves the beach. <sup>4</sup> Fifty yards before my family’s rainbow-colored beach umbrella, I ran to my “clothing-optional” family.

- 1 Which choice would best tie the introduction of this essay to the essay’s concluding sentence?
- (A) NO CHANGE
  - (B) special beach
  - (C) the Lucy Vincent Beach
  - (D) multi-colored blanket
- 2 At this point, the writer is considering adding the following true statement:  
The 1970s saw an oil crisis and the growth of the environmental movement. Should the writer make the addition here?
- (F) Yes, because the sentence provides more information about the 1970s.
  - (G) Yes, because the sentence provides important background information about the author.
  - (H) No, because the sentence is not supported by evidence to back it up.
  - (J) No, because the sentence distracts from the paragraph’s focus.
- 3
- (A) NO CHANGE
  - (B) (Begin new paragraph) In keeping away
  - (C) (Begin new paragraph) I kept away
  - (D) (Do NOT begin new paragraph) In keeping away
- 4
- (F) NO CHANGE
  - (G) Most people love the beach.
  - (H) Everyone’s love is the beach.
  - (J) DELETE the underlined portion.

Several questions per test ask you to decide which answer choice would best accomplish a certain goal. I have seen this type of question boggle students. Usually, all the choices sound pretty good. **The key to this type of question is to choose the one choice that achieves the very specific goal stated in the question.** All the answers might sound pretty good, but only one will meet the **goal**. Let's take a look at this on the Pretest. Once you know to look for the one choice that meets the specific goal stated in the question, these are easy!

Let's take a look at the goal question on the Pretest.

I turned and walked back down the hall.

14. The writer wishes to add details that emphasize his trip back to his filing. Which would best accomplish this?
- F. hall, down the harsh metal stairs, straight to the Filing Room, then to my filing.
  - G. hall, feeling the approval of my family.
  - H. hall, knowing that one day I would do more than just file.
  - J. hall, once again angry, yet perhaps more humble.

**Solution:** The specific goal for the question is to "add details that emphasize the writer's trip back to his filing." Choice F adds details about his walk back, and choices G, H, and J do not. They are interesting and refer to details in the essay, but do not meet the **goal** specifically stated in the question. I love this strategy; once you know to look for the goal, these questions are easy!

**Correct answer:** F

**ACT Mantra #14**

**For "goal" questions, choose the one answer choice that achieves the very specific GOAL stated in the question.**



# Goal Questions Drills

Frederick Douglas was born on February 14, 1818.

**1** This “Sage of Anacostia” is one of the most influential figures in African-American history. He was an ardent activist and reformer of human rights.

Douglas was born into slavery. In 1838, at the age of 20, he successfully escaped his Maryland plantation and settled in Massachusetts. There he told his story and became a respected anti-slavery lecturer.

Douglas’ most famous written work is his autobiography *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, an American Slave*. **2** The book’s vivid account informed the public and fueled the anti-slavery movement.

Douglas went on to publish several newspapers, including the *North Star* whose motto was “Right is of no Sex—Truth is of no Color—God is the Father of us all, and we are all brethren.” **3**

- 1** At this point the writer wants to add a sentence that links the first two sentences. Assuming all are true, which of the following would best accomplish this?
- A** Doing some of his most influential work from his home in Anacostia, Washington DC.
  - B** Born a slave, he wound up a revered reformer.
  - C** Because he lived for the last 20 years of his life in Anacostia, Washington DC, he is associated and often nicknamed for that place.
  - D** The exact date of his birth is not known.
- 2** In this paragraph, the writer intends to briefly describe the content of the autobiography. Which one of the following best accomplishes the writer’s intention?
- F** He went on to revise and republish the autobiography two times.
  - G** The book details Douglas’ life from birth to escape from slavery.
  - H** The book received positive reviews and became an immediate bestseller.
  - J** Critics doubted its authenticity, skeptical of such eloquent language from someone who had not received a formal education.
- 3** Which of the following true statements, if inserted here, would best conclude the essay as well as maintain the tone established in the introduction?
- A** Douglas also published *The New National Era*.
  - B** These publications affected many readers and helped advance the anti-slavery movement.
  - C** This “Sage of Anacostia” overcame great obstacles to become one of the most important reformers of United States history.
  - D** And, truly, Douglas lived this motto.

## 15

Several questions per test ask you to decide if a passage accomplished a certain intention. This is a great opportunity for the process of elimination. Decide if it did or did not, and then decide which reason is most correct. Every ACT has several of these questions, and many kids consider them the hardest type. But when you are used to the language, they are easy!

Did you catch it on the Pretest?

15. Suppose the writer had been assigned to write a brief essay about internship opportunities in Bermuda. Would this essay fulfill the assignment?
- A. Yes, because the essay describes his reaction to his assignment.
  - B. Yes, because the essay indicates the effect of internships on young people in Bermuda.
  - C. No, because the essay restricts its focus to the writer's internship experience.
  - D. No, because the essay does not describe how the writer learned from his internship.

**Solution:** Would the essay fulfill an assignment about internship opportunities in Bermuda? It did mention an internship in Bermuda, but only one. It was not about various opportunities, just about Kyle's one internship. It was a great essay, but it was not about internship opportunities.

Once you know the answer is no, decide which reason is better. Choice C is perfect; it did not meet the assignment because it restricts its focus to the writer's internship. Choice D is incorrect because he did describe what he learned from his internship, but that does not matter to the assignment. Make sure that the answer you choose meets the whole assignment (all the words), and not just the first few.

**Correct answer:** C

**ACT Mantra #15**

**For a yes/no question, choose an answer that applies to the entire question and not just a few words of it.**



# Yes or No Drills

**1** Many actors devote themselves entirely to studying Shakespeare, and there are schools explicitly for this purpose. These schools work to produce Shakespearean actors. But, ironically, we do not know what training an actor actually received in Shakespeare's time.

The truth is that there is very little known about the techniques used to train Shakespearean actors. We do not know the curriculum used. Nor do we know the duration of training. **2**

We do know that Shakespeare's plays include sword fights, brawls, dances, and music. We therefore conclude that actors needed to be familiar with and were trained in swordplay, stage combat, dancing, and music.

The theater even incorporated realistic bloodshed. For example, sheep's or pig's organs were used in murder scenes, and sheep's blood was slashed about on swords and wounds. **3**

- 1** Suppose the writer had decided to write an essay that summarizes the curriculum at the top three schools for studying Shakespearean acting. Would this essay fulfill the writer's goal?
- A** Yes, because the essay describes the training required of Shakespearean actors.
  - B** Yes, because the essay includes the techniques and courses that these schools teach.
  - C** No, because the essay argues that we know almost nothing about the training of Shakespearean actors.
  - D** No, because the essay limits its focus to a general overview and does not go over the training at the top three schools.
- 2** The writer is considering deleting the phrase "The truth is that" from the first sentence of this paragraph. If the writer were to delete this phrase, would the meaning of the sentence change?
- F** Yes, because the reader might doubt the validity of the assertion.
  - G** Yes, because the sentence would become much weaker.
  - H** No, because the phrase is an example of wordiness and is unneeded in the sentence.
  - J** No, because the following paragraph disproves the statement anyway.
- 3** Suppose the author had intended for the final paragraph to serve as a conclusion for the essay. Would the paragraph fulfill this goal?
- A** Yes, because the reader learns new information about stage combat.
  - B** Yes, because the paragraph is full of powerful details.
  - C** No, because the paragraph does not wrap up the essay as a whole.
  - D** No, because the paragraph lacks sufficient details to back up its claim.

# Soluti

## English Skills

### Skill 1 (page 19)

#### Subject/Verb Agreement

1. Ⓒ Trust your ear. "Being it" sounds terrible. Try the choices. "Is it" is the only choice that sounds good. Choice B sounds very awkward, especially when you read the whole sentence. Choice D sounds weird because it's missing a verb.
2. Ⓕ No change. The underlined verb "was" sounds fine in the sentence. It makes sense for the verb to be past tense. To be certain, try the choices. All the choices sound worse than "was."
3. Ⓓ "I been in organized productions since I was . . ." sounds very slangy. Try the choices. "I had been in organized productions since . . ." sounds great. Choices C and D don't make sense in the context of the sentence. Your ear can hear this: "I will have been in organized productions since I was . . ." doesn't sound right because it doesn't make sense; it starts in the future and ends in the past. These drills train your ear, so you can trust it.
4. Ⓐ "When I were" sounds weird because it doesn't match. It should be "when I was."
5. Ⓐ No change. "What I would say" sounds great. To be certain, try the choices, and trust your ear. Choices B, C, and D sound awkward, since they are past tense which does not fit in for the underlined words.
6. Ⓕ "What will work . . . are" sounds weird; "are" is for a group, while "what" is usually one thing. "What will work . . . is" sounds great. Choice J, "What will work . . . has been," sounds okay at first, but not with the rest of the sentence; it's talking about something that used to happen in the past, while the sentence is talking about what works all the time.

7. Ⓑ The two underlined verbs must match. "Be listening and react" sounds weird because the two verbs don't match. The verbs in choices B and C match, but only choice B sounds smooth in the sentence.

### Skill 2 (page 21)

#### The One Subject/Verb Agreement Trick

1. Margarita, ~~with her sisters~~, currently runs a marketing firm.
  2. The way of ~~all samurai~~ is a strict path.
  3. The boys, ~~with their dog Alfred~~, walk to school.
  4. The PTA, ~~through generous donations~~, is building a new school building.  
(Notice that "PTA" is singular and gets the singular verb "is." Organizations or groups, like "the corporation," "the 12th grade," or "My Chemical Romance" are singular. Even though the group has more than one member, the group itself is considered singular.)
1. Ⓐ When you see a verb underlined, ask, "What is the subject?" Cross off prepositional phrases and notice what is doing the action of the verb. It looks like "cookies have been" is correct, but the subject of the underlined verb "have been written" is "procedure," not "cookies," so it should be "procedure . . . ~~cookies~~ has been written." Your ear can hear this anyway, but now you can prove to yourself what your ear already knew.
  2. Ⓕ No change. Your ear hears that the underlined words sound good, but here's the proof. It might seem that "butter have softened" should be "butter has softened," but "butter" is not actually the subject of the underlined verb "have softened." Cross out the prepositional phrase and "sticks" is the subject: "sticks ~~of butter~~ have softened."
  3. Ⓐ No change. When you see a verb underlined, ask yourself, What is the subject? Cross off prepositional phrases and notice what is doing the action of the verb. In this case,

what is doing the “is-ing”? Not the “sugars,” but the “one-half cup.” “One-half cup ~~of brown and white sugars~~ is added.” I love these, they are tricky, but we expect them and get them right!

4. Ⓒ “Cookies” is the subject and “~~on the middle rack~~” and “~~of the oven~~” are prepositional phrases, so “becomes ready” should be “become ready.” “Cookies, ~~baking on the middle rack of the oven~~, become ready, . . .”

### Skill 3 (page 23)

#### Pronoun Clarity and Agreement

1. Ⓓ When you see a pronoun underlined, identify the noun that it refers to. “It is” refers to the plural “cookie cutters” and should be “they are.”
2. Ⓕ No change. The pronoun “them” correctly refers to “options.”
3. Ⓒ This is a great example of our most important English section strategy. Make sure to read what is really written; don’t correct it in your mind. The pronoun “those” refers to “cookie cutter,” but “those” is plural and “cookie cutter” is singular. So “those” should be “each.” It’s easy to accidentally read “cookie cutter” as “cookie cutters” to make the underlined pronoun “those” work; make sure to read what’s really written and not accidentally change something to make it correct!
4. Ⓒ The pronoun “she” is unclear. Even though we are smart and know that it can only refer to “my grandma,” technically in the paragraph it’s not clear. Usually, a pronoun refers to the nearest important noun, which here would be “shapes.” Ask yourself, What would Borat think if he translated this sentence? He would think that “she” refers to “shapes,” so we must replace it with something clearer.
5. Ⓐ No change. The pronoun “each” refers to “cookie” and matches perfectly. Choice C is

incorrect because “this” should refer to a cookie we are already talking about. And choice B is redundant (Skill 10 Preview); “each and every” is used in slang speech, but “every” is implied by “each” and is unneeded. The ACT always favors clear, concise, and not redundant.

6. Ⓓ The pronoun “it” refers to “crystals” and should be the plural “they.” When you see a pronoun underlined, identify the noun that it refers to. Choice J is wordy and should say “end,” not “ends.”

### Skill 4 (page 25)

#### Correct Transition Word

1. Ⓒ Trust your ear. “Otherwise” sounds weird and makes the sentence hard to understand. When you don’t understand a sentence, don’t say, “Well, I can’t do this one.” Say, “I don’t understand that, so there must be an error!” Try the choices. Choices B and D do not clear things up, but choice C makes the sentence work. The two parts of the sentence oppose each other, so the opposition word “although” works.
2. Ⓕ No change. The transition word “though” works because the two parts of the sentence oppose each other, and “though” is an opposition word. All of the other choices are direct cause-and-effect words, not opposition words.
3. Ⓕ “Since” is a direct cause-and-effect transition word, but the two parts of the sentence oppose each other. So “since” is wrong, and we need an opposition word. The only one in the choices is “while.”
4. Ⓓ The transition word “whereas” actually sounds fine and seems to work, until you get to the word “however” in the same sentence. The two transitions are redundant and make the sentence very confusing. “However” is not underlined, so we cannot eliminate it, and we must delete “whereas.”



5. Ⓐ No change. "For example" is a direct cause-and-effect word that fits well here, since the example in the sentence demonstrates the previous statement.
6. Ⓒ Trust your ear. The transition word "therefore" sounds very awkward because it's redundant with "in truth."

### Skill 5 (page 27)

#### Relaxing Commas

1. Ⓓ We don't need a pause between "room" and "is." In fact, a comma should never be sandwiched between the subject and verb of a sentence.
2. Ⓗ Try this with and without a pause. Without a pause the sentence gets jumbled; it incorrectly sounds like the memories are from the three-year-old birthday poster. So which pause do we need? A comma is correct since the phrase after the pause could not stand on its own. Skill 6 Preview: If it could stand alone, then a semicolon or a comma with "and" would work.
3. Ⓓ "The rugs underfoot being always dusty" sounds awkward. We need a pause. Choice D is correct since "always dusty, always comforting," are side notes, inessential to the sentence, and therefore need commas. The "really" in choice B is slangy and unneeded, and the "are" in choice C is redundant with the "are" several words later.
4. Ⓕ No need for any pauses here. Trust your ear. You can hear it.
5. Ⓒ You can hear that we need a pause between "wall" and "blue." The phrase "blue and red" is a side note, inessential to the sentence, so we use commas. Choice D almost works, but "being" is awkward and unneeded.
6. Ⓙ Transition words, like "though," are usually surrounded by commas. Choice G is incorrect because it's the wrong transition, direct instead of opposition. Choice H is incorrect because we would only use a semicolon to separate two parts of a sentence that could each stand alone.

7. Ⓑ This sentence is missing a verb, so choice B is correct.

### Skill 6 (page 29)

#### Are You Independent?

1. Ⓒ A comma or dash is used to separate two parts of a sentence when one of the parts could not stand alone. So choices B and D are okay, since the second part of the sentence has been changed in these choices to be dependent. A period or a semicolon is used when both parts could stand alone. Therefore, choice A works, but choice C does not, since "teaching that . . ." has no subject for the verb and could not stand alone.
2. Ⓔ We do not need a pause here. Try it with and without a pause, and your ear can hear that we don't need one.
3. Ⓓ We don't need a pause here. We would only use a period (choice A) or a semicolon (choice B) if both parts of the sentence could stand alone, but "and the world around them" cannot stand alone. It does not need a comma because it's not a side note, it goes with "understand themselves."
4. Ⓕ No change. The comma is correct, since the second part of the sentence "beginning at birth . . ." could not stand alone.
5. Ⓙ No change. Transition words, like "however," are usually surrounded by commas or a semicolon and a comma. We use commas if they separate a dependent clause, and we use a semicolon and a comma if they separate two independent clauses. "However" divides this sentence into two independent clauses, so "stages; however," is correct.

### Skill 7 (page 31)

#### Correct Preposition

1. Ⓒ "Helping out on Miss Kelly's study halls" sounds strange; it should be "helping out in Miss Kelly's study halls." That makes sense if

you think about it; he literally helped "in," not "on," the study hall.

2. Ⓒ "In reading" sounds weird; it should be "to read."
3. Ⓐ No change. "On his . . . test" sounds great. The other choices sound awkward.
4. Ⓓ "Never said a word on it to me" sounds very slangy; it should be "never said a word about it to me." This is great practice. You actually might use "word on it" or another of the answer choices in a slang way, but for formal use, only "about" works. That makes sense, since Nick literally spoke "about" it, not "on," "by," or "for" it.
5. Ⓑ "Cared for the grade" sounds weird; it should be "cared about the grade."
6. Ⓙ "On being" sounds weird and slangy; it should be "to be."

### Skill 8 (page 33)

#### It's Me

1. Ⓒ To test if "I" is correct, just drop "Manuel." Then it reads "Sometime in college, me had heard" which sounds terrible, so it should be "Sometime in college, I had heard." Choice B does not need the comma (a comma is never sandwiched directly between a subject and verb), and choice D is wrong because it just swapped the order of the words "Manuel" and "me."
2. Ⓗ "Its" is possessive, and "it's" means "it is." So we need "it's," and choice H is best. Choice G also corrects the "its" problem, but is too wordy.
3. Ⓐ No change. "Its" is possessive and "it's" means "it is." So we need "its," and there is no change. Also, the singular pronoun "its" correctly refers to "a yoga practice."
4. Ⓙ To test if "I" is correct, just drop "Manuel." Then it reads "Someone brought tea to I" which sounds terrible, so it should be "Someone brought tea to me."

5. Ⓒ To test if "he" is correct, just drop "his student." Then it reads "I was listening to a story about he" which sounds terrible; so it should be "I was listening to a story about him," which sounds better.
6. Ⓔ No change. "Who" versus "whom" is probably harder for your ear to pick up, so just plug in "I" versus "me" instead of the "who" versus "whom" and trust your ear. "I can see" sounds good, and "me can see" sounds terrible. Since "I" corresponds to "who" and "me" corresponds to "whom," it should read "who can see."

### Skill 9 (page 35)

#### A Few More Rules

1. Ⓐ No change. "Who" is used for people, and "which" is used for things. The "band," though composed of people, is considered a thing, so "which" is correct.
2. Ⓗ Because we are watching for it, this seems ridiculously easy. But that's the key, to know that sometimes the ACT throws in an unneeded "ly." If you watch for it, it's easy!
3. Ⓑ "They can not only deconstruct and also . . ." sounds awkward. "Not only" should be followed by "but also."
4. Ⓕ No change. "Their" correctly refers back to "disparate pieces." Use the process of elimination. "It's" means "it is," and the other choices sound terrible.
5. Ⓒ "Groups" is plural, so the possessive is "groups'."

### Skill 10 (page 37)

#### Direct, to the Point, Not Redundant

1. Ⓓ All answers besides choice D are redundant; they say the same thing twice. The ACT likes clear and concise and not redundant.
2. Ⓗ "Stress and tension are breathed out" is passive voice. The ACT likes active voice (no offense, Yoda). Choice H is most direct and

active. Your ear can hear it; it's the most clear and direct, and the most powerful of all the choices.

3. Ⓐ The ACT loves to use this type of question. "And less tight" basically defines "relaxed," so "relaxed, and less tight," is redundant. Choice B is the only one that corrects this.
4. Ⓙ The underlined portion of the sentence is very wordy and muddled. Choice J is clear, direct, and concise, and it uses active voice. Your ear can hear that it is the best choice. Also, notice that choice J is the only choice that is a direct instruction, like the rest of the passage.
5. Ⓓ "Ready and all set" is redundant, since "all set" pretty much defines "ready." So we don't need "all set," and choice D corrects that best.
6. Ⓚ No need to say "open your eyes and with open-eyes." It's redundant. We can omit "with open-eyes." You're probably pretty bored by now of this redundancy strategy, but that's great. Every ACT has several of these questions, and now you know to watch for them, and you'll get them right!

### Skill 11 (page 39)

#### Misplaced Phrases

1. Ⓓ The sentence makes it sound like "the city" had "the fresh air of its open pasture," which makes no sense. "With the fresh air of its open pasture" should be as close to "farm" as possible, since it is describing it. So choice D is best. Seems like a picky thing? It is, but at least we know to watch for it and we can catch it every time. If there were a million of these picky things, that'd be tough, but there are only a few.
2. Ⓜ The sentence makes it seem that "of Rice Krispies" describes "Grandma," when of course it describes "breakfast." Choice H is the best revision. You might even be able to think up a better way to phrase it, but of the choices, H is best. Use the process of elimination; cross out

choices that violate a rule, and pick the best of what is left.

3. Ⓒ The sentence makes it very unclear to what the descriptive phrase "in the fields baling hay" applies. It applies to "the workers," so it should be as close to them as possible. Remember, when you read a sentence and it does not make any sense, that's because it's wrong. So read the choices and see which one makes most sense.
4. Ⓕ No change. The sentence sounds fine, and all of the choices are wordy or have misplaced phrases. For example, choice G makes it seem that "with its familiar smell" refers to "I" rather than "Grandpa's work shirt."
5. Ⓑ The sentence makes it seem that "the memory" has "rhythm and simplicity" when it should be the "time I spent." Choice B is the clearest revision. Choice C sounds good at first, but "the time of the memory" does not make sense. That's a great reminder to read the whole answer choice, and not just the first few words.

### Skill 12 (page 41)

#### Word Choice

1. Ⓒ "Demonstrates" sounds a bit strange in the sentence. Try the choices and trust your ear. Choice C sounds perfect, "The hit TV show *Entourage* **portrays** a young movie star . . . ."
2. Ⓒ "Contests" sounds a bit strange in the sentence. Try the choices and trust your ear. Choice G sounds perfect: "the main character, Vince, **faces competition** from other actors . . . ."
3. Ⓒ "Known to" sounds terrible in the sentence. Try the choices and trust your ear. Choice C sounds perfect: "when he was **scheduled to go** on a late night talk show . . . ."
4. Ⓜ "Much" sounds a bit weird in the sentence. Try the choices and trust your ear. Choice H sounds perfect, "with so **many** loyal fans." In fact, "much" is used to describe something that cannot be counted or numbered, like "this

much rain,” and “many” is used to describe something that can be counted, like “this many inches of rain.”

5. Ⓐ “Inefficient” sounds a bit off in the sentence. Try the choices and trust your ear. Choice B sounds perfect: “Vince is not **indifferent** . . . .” “Indifferent” would mean he does not care. “Absent” would not make sense, and “caring” means the opposite of what the sentence intended.
6. Ⓕ No change. “Long shot” sounds fine in the sentence. Try the choices and trust your ear. None of the choices sounds better.
7. Ⓓ “Trickle” does not sound quite right in the sentence. Try the choices and trust your ear. Choice D sounds better. He pursues the long-shot because it gives him a “huge **surge**” of excitement, not a “huge trickle” or “huge tweak” of it.

### Skill 13 (page 43)

#### Flow

1. Ⓐ No change. The sentence as it is ties to the conclusion, since the phrase “clothing-optional” is used in both. Choice D is also in both, but does not make sense in this sentence. Skill 14 Preview: These questions often confuse students until they realize that they just have to meet the **goal** stated in the question. Several answers look like valid substitutions for the underlined words, but only one answer meets the specific **goal** stated in the question.
2. Ⓓ Adding the sentence “the 1970s saw an oil crisis and the growth of the environmental movement” would distract from the purpose of the paragraph. The purpose is to introduce the essay topic, which is a person’s experience with his or her family’s “clothing-optional” beach. So more info about the 1970s is not relevant and would be distracting in the paragraph. Skill 15 Preview: For a yes/no question, choose an answer that applies to the entire question and not just a few words of it.

3. Ⓒ Each paragraph should focus on a single main idea. “I kept away” begins a new main idea, the writer returning to his or her family’s beach, while the previous paragraph was about leaving the beach.
4. Ⓓ The underlined sentence is unnecessary to the paragraph and distracts from its flow and focus.

### Skill 14 (page 45)

#### Goal Questions

1. Ⓒ Choice C is the one that best meets the specific **goal** of linking the first two sentences, birth to nickname. Choice A mentions Anacostia but is not a complete sentence.
2. Ⓒ All of the sentences are interesting and would add to the paragraph, but only choice G meets the specific **goal** to “briefly describe the content of the autobiography.” These questions often confuse students until they realize that they have to meet the **goal** stated in the question. Several answers look valid, but only one answer meets the **goal**.
3. Ⓒ Choices B, C, and D are all good conclusions. But choice C best meets the **goal** to “maintain the tone established in the introduction,” since it refers to the language of the intro with “Sage of Anacostia.” Choice B is second-best, but has no direct reference to the introduction.

### Skill 15 (page 47)

#### Yes or No?

1. Ⓓ The essay does not summarize “the curriculum at the top three schools.” The essay just provides a general overview. Yes/no questions are a type of goal question, and we need to meet the specific goal stated in the question. Make sure to choose an answer that applies to the entire question and not just a few words of it. Choice C is incorrect because the passage says that we know “little”—not “almost nothing”—about their training; the

third paragraph even mentions what we do know about their training, but not about “the top three schools.”

2. Ⓐ The statement “The truth is that” is redundant. The writer would not make a statement in this kind of factual essay unless it were true, so we do not need “The truth is that.”
3. Ⓒ A conclusion should wrap up an essay and bring some closure. It might restate the thesis or main idea of the essay, it might use language that reminds us of the introduction, and it might recap the main points of the essay. This paragraph does none of these and is not a conclusion.

### Skill 16 (page 50)

#### How to Think Like a Grammar Genius

1. Ⓒ “Well known” defines “famous,” so “famous well known” is redundant. Choice C, deleting “well known,” is the best correction.
2. Ⓐ “Different times of history” sounds weird. Try each choice and trust your ear. “Different times **in** history” sounds great. The “times” are literally **in**, not **of**, history. Choice J is too slangy.
3. Ⓓ The word “originally” and the verb “married” tell us that the sentence relates to the past, so the underlined verbs should also be past tense “lived . . . and depended.” The other choices are not past tense.
4. Ⓒ Try this one with and without the pause. No pause sounds strange, jumbled, and rushed. We need a comma after “easier.” We use a comma, not a semicolon, since the first part of the sentence is dependent.
5. Ⓑ The “its” used here means “it is” and should be “it’s.” Remember that “its” is possessive, like “a bear defends its cubs.”
6. Ⓕ No change. Most people find it very hard to hear when “who” or “whom” is correct, so we make it easy, and use “I” versus “me” instead. “I” corresponds to “who” and “me” corresponds

to “whom.” In this sentence, “I complete them” sounds fine, and “me complete them” sounds weird. So “I” is correct, which means “who” is correct. Notice that choice J is not correct, since “which” is used with things, and “who” or “whom” is used with people.

7. Ⓒ The clause “the person that makes them feel at ease” is dependent—it could not stand alone. It leaves you waiting for the action. Choice C is correct. Choices A and B are incorrect because a period or semicolon is used to separate two independent clauses that could stand alone. Choice D is incorrect because, without a pause, the sentence sounds jumbled.

## Reading Skills

### Skill 17 (page 53)

#### Bold Introductions

1. The passage is **prose fiction** so it will definitely be followed by questions about characters’ feelings and relationships. This bold intro actually gives us a short plot summary, “The story is set in the mid-1990s in Hoboken, New Jersey, where the narrator and her friend have moved after graduating college.” And we can assume that a tuna casserole, mentioned in the title, will be significant in the story.
2. The passage is **social sciences** so it will be followed by questions about details in the passage and about the writer’s beliefs. The title tells us that the passage will be about Martin Luther King, Jr., as a hero.
3. The passage is **humanities** so it will be followed by questions about details in the passage and about the writer’s beliefs. It appeared in a University Review so it will probably be analytical. Judging by the title, the paper will analyze Will Farrell and examine if he is a jester or a genius.
4. The passage is **natural science** so it will be about sciency stuff, but it will NOT expect you to know any science; everything will be