

Scholastic Aptitude Test: **Writing**

**test basics and
testing strategies**

SAT Writing

questions

- essay
- improving sentences
- improving paragraphs
- identifying sentence errors

sections

- 1 section of *essay*
25 minutes
- 1 section of M-C
25 minutes, 35 minutes
- *improving sentences, identifying sentence errors, and improving paragraphs*
- 1 section of M-C
10 minutes, 14 minutes
- *improving sentences*

SAT sentence-error strategies

- Familiarize yourself with common errors.
- Read each sentence quickly but carefully.
- Identify subject and action first.
- Consider each question as a cluster of true-false questions, each to be judged separately.

identifying sentence-error sample

Although the number of firms declaring bankruptcy keep growing, the mayor claims that the city is thriving. No error

Sentence Errors Types

1. basic grammar
2. sentence structure
3. diction (choice of words)
4. idiomatic expressions

Identifying Sentence Errors

Common Mistakes

Common Mistake 1: Subject-Verb Agreement

- Singular subjects require singular verbs; plural subjects need plural verbs.
- *Despite an intensive campaign to encourage conservation, there is many Americans who have not accepted recycling as a way of life.*
- *High above the Hudson River rises the gleaming skyscrapers of Manhattan.*

Common Mistake 2:

Subject-Verb Agreement (separated)

- Information may be inserted between subject and verb.
- *The local congressman, reliable representative of both community and statewide interests, are among the most respected persons in the public sector.*
- *The collection of paintings entitled “Modern Mona Lisas” are one of the most widely traveled exhibits in recent years.*

Common Mistake 3: Subject-Verb Agreement (false plural)

- These words are singular: *either . . . or, neither . . . nor, every.*
- *Neither ambient techno nor trance were a part of mainstream listening habits in the United States ten years ago.*
- *Poor pitching, along with injuries and defensive lapses, are among the problems that plagued last year's championship team.*

Common Mistake 4: Simple Past and Past Participle

- *Several passersby seen the bank robber leaving the scene of his crime.*

Common Mistake 5: Infinitive and Gerund

- *Surveillance cameras are frequently placed in convenience stores to prevent customers to shoplift.*
- *Team officials heralded Cap Day as an attempt at attracting a larger turnout of fans.*

Common Mistake 6: Nonidiomatic Preposition after Verb

- *City Council members frequently meet until the early morning hours in order to work in their stalemates.*
- *The rapper's new CD was frowned at by many parents because of its violent lyrics.*

Common Mistake 7: Wrong Word

Pay attention to words that are commonly confused:

- *sit and set, lie and lay, rise and raise.*
I am working so hard that my grade point average raises every semester.
- *many VERSUS much*
- *few VERSUS little*
- *accept VERSUS except*
- *affect VERSUS effect*

Common Mistake 8: Wrong Tense

- *Over the last half-century, the building of passenger airliners had grown into a multibillion-dollar industry.*
- *Many superb tennis players turn professional at an alarmingly early age, but because of their lack of physical stamina, suffered early in their careers.*

Common Mistake 9: Number Agreement Problems

- *The advertisement in the newspaper requested that only persons with a high school diploma apply for the position.*
- *Mary's rose gardens are considered by many to be the symbol of beauty in the neighborhood.*

Common Mistake 10: Pronoun in the Wrong Number

- *The typical college student has difficulty adjusting to academic standards much higher than those of their school.*
- *Most infants, ,even unusually quiet ones, will cry with greater intensity when it begins teething.*

Common Mistake 11: Pronoun in the Wrong Case in Compound Nouns Phrases

- Pronoun errors are of the common *between you and I* variety. Determine whether pronouns are subjects or objects and choose the correct verb.
- *Him and the rest of the team stopped by the malt shop for milkshakes after the game.*
- *Uncle John and Aunt Rosie join my parents and I for dinner every Thursday.*

Common Mistake 12: Pronoun Shift

- Maintain consistency with pronouns.
- *One cannot sleep soundly if you exercise vigorously before retiring to bed.*
- *If someone loses his way in the airport, they can ask any employee for directions.*

Common Mistake 13: Pronoun with Ambiguous Reference

- Maintain consistency with pronouns.
- *The United States entered into warmer relations with China after its compliance with recent weapons agreements.*
- *After the derailment last month, they are inspecting trains for safety more often than before.*

Common Mistake 14: Faulty Comparison

- Beware of two entities being compared when they cannot be compared.
- *A Nobel Peace Prize winner and the author of several respected novels, Elie Wiesel's name is still less well known than last year's Heisman Trophy winner.*
- *To lash back at one's adversaries is a less courageous course than attempting to bring about reconciliation with them.*

Common Mistake 15: Misuse of Adjective or Adverb

- Adjectives must modify nouns; adverbs may modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.
- *The applicants for low-interest loans hoped to buy decent built houses for their families.*
- *The critics who reviewed Dave Eggers's novels like the second one best.*

Common Mistake 16: Double Negative

- Two negatives cancel out each other and thus should not be used together.
- *James easily passed the biology exam without hardly studying his lab notes.*
- *In the history of the major leagues, barely no one has maintained higher than a .400 batting average for an entire season.*

SAT improving sentences strategies

- Familiarize yourself with common errors.
- Read each sentence carefully, listening for a mistake.
- Identify error or errors.
- Eliminate the choices that don't address the error, and choose the most *correct, concise, and relevant*.

Improving Sentences

Common Mistakes

Common Mistake 1: Run-on Sentences

- A run-on sentence is two or more independent clauses, each of which could stand alone as a sentence, are erroneously joined together.
- *The decrease in crime can be attributed to a rise in the number of police officers, more than 500 joined the force in the last year.*

Common Mistake 2: Sentence Fragments

- Sentence fragments contain no independent clauses.
- *Whereas many office managers are growing more and more dependent on facsimile machines, others resisting this latest technological breakthrough.*
- *In the summertime, the kindergarten class that plays on the rope swing beneath the crooked oak tree.*

Common Mistake 3: Misplaced Modifiers

- A modifier needs to be positioned so that it is clear which word is being modified.
- *Flying for the first time, the roar of the jet engines intimidated the small child, and he grew frightened as the plane roared down the runway.*
- *An advertisement was withdrawn by the producer of the local news program that was considered offensive by the city's minority communities.*

Common Mistake 4: Faulty Parallelism

- Parallelism requires that words share the same grammatical construction.
- *My hobbies include swimming, gardening, and to read science fiction.*
- *Nineteenth-century nihilists were concerned with neither the origins of philosophical thought nor how societal laws developed.*

Common Mistake 4: Faulty Coordination/Subordination

- Know the difference between coordinating conjunctions (*and, or, nor, for, but, yet, so*) and subordinating conjunctions (*because, since, although, if*).
- *Ben Franklin was a respected and talented statesman, and he was most famous for his discovery of electricity.*
- *Since the small electronics industry is one of the world's fastest growing sectors, because demand for the computer continues to be high.*

Improving Paragraphs

Improving Paragraphs questions

1. organizing
2. revising sentences
3. combining sentences

improving paragraphs strategies

- Read the passage; listen for any possible errors.
- Read the question; if necessary, reread the relevant portion and identify the error.
- Eliminate the choices that don't address the error.
- Choose the most correct, concise, and relevant.