

# WRITING & LANGUAGE CORE CONCEPTS

## \*AVOID

- Answer choices that are long
- Answer choices that contain words ending in -ing
- Answer choices that contain the words *it/was/being*

*TIP: only pick an answer choice that has one of these problems if there is something obviously grammatically wrong with all of the other answer choices*

## COMMAS

- subject + verb, and subject and verb
- dependent clause, independent clause
  - dependent clauses start with coordinating conjunctions: before, after, unless, until, when, because, etc.

- non essential words/phrases,
- used to separate items in a list
- after introductory words or phrases
- to separate adjectives whose order could be reversed

*TIPS: Commas should not be used:*

- before or after "that"
- before prepositions (very rare)
- between a subject and verb (when there is only one of each)
- with a parenthesis or dash

## COLONS

Precede lists, explanations, or quotations

*TIP: avoid using colons with words like for example*

## DASHES

Set off material for emphasis, indicate non-essential phrases (similar to a pair of commas), create a pause, introduce a list/explanation (similar to a colon)

## SEMICOLON

- Separates two complete sentences (subject + verb ; subject + verb)
- Used with conjunctive adverbs when they are used in the middle of a sentence
  - Ex: words ; however, more words

*CLUE: ; = , and = .*

*If all three options appear in the answer choices then you know that none of them can be correct since they are all grammatically equal*

## APOSTROPHES

Indicate possession or omission

- Possession
  - singular nouns, add apostrophe + S
  - plural nouns, add S/ES + apostrophe
  - pronouns, don't need an apostrophe
- Omission
  - contractions: can't, they're, etc.
  - missing letters/numbers: 1999 = '99

## RHETORIC

Questions that ask you to

- choose a transition
- add/delete a sentence
- move a sentence

are actually asking you to identify the meaning of the information

*TIP: Determine the relationship that the info has to the rest of the passage (read before and after the information) and then pick an answer choice that reflects that relationship*

## MODIFIERS

Check to make sure what comes after the comma following an introductory phrase is logical

*CLUE: words, followed by comma + words*

## CONSISTENCY

Keep pronouns consistent (you....you or one....one)

*TIP: make what is underlined match what is not underlined*

## PARALLELISM

Parallel sentence structure (-ing, -ing, -ing, .... to, to, to... noun, noun, noun)

*TIP: look for parallelism when there is a list separated by commas*

## REDUNDANCY

Be concise and avoid redundancy by

- picking short answer choices
- Avoid overly wordy phrases
- Combine simple sentences

*TIP: look for redundancy in the paragraph before selecting no change*

## WORD PAIRS

neither....nor  
either....or  
not only....but also  
as.....as

*TIP: these word pairs always occur together*

## PREPOSITIONS

Memorize common prepositions

- above, across, against, along, among, around, at, before, behind, below, beneath, beside, between, by, down, from, in, into, near, of, off, on, to, toward, under, upon, with and within

## PRONOUNS

- Pronouns must be clear in reference and number
  - Plural: they, them, their, themselves
  - Singular: it, she, him, + collective nouns
- TIP: always check what noun an underlined pronoun is referring to*

## PICK ONE

who vs. whom

- who + verb (*who* does things)
- whom + preposition (*whom* is lazy and never does anything)

who's vs. whose

- who's = who is
- whose = possessive

than vs. then

- than for comparison
  - also check to make sure that the comparison is logical when you see the word *than*
- then relates to time

they're, their, there

- they're = they are
- their = possessive
- there = refers to a place

accept vs. except

- accept = to receive
- except = to exclude

affect vs. effect

- affect = to influence (usually a verb)
  - affect as a noun refers to feelings/emotions

- effect = the impact (usually a noun)
  - effect as a verb means to bring about change

I vs. me

- I = the subject (does the action)
- me = the object (lazy and doesn't do anything)

its vs. it's vs. its'

- its = possessive
- it's = it is
- its' = does not exist

like vs. as

- never pick *like* if *as* is an option

## VERBS

- Subject and verb agreement (eliminate prepositional phrases)
- Whenever you see a time reference (1800s, summer, etc.), make sure the verb is in the right tense
  - present perfect = has + verb
    - action began at an indefinite time in the past
    - action began in the past and continued to the present
  - past perfect = had + verb
    - action was completed in the past
    - used for the action that came first
    - must be used with the phrase "by the time"

*TIPS:*

- look for the subject whenever a verb is underlined and eliminate prepositional phrases that separate the subject from the verb
- make the verb tense match the rest of the paragraph or look for contextual clues in the sentence