

English Test Example Questions

Usage/Mechanics

Punctuation

1. On his way home from work, Michael stopped for gas bought a newspaper, and purchased some groceries.
 - A. NO CHANGE
 - B. stopped for gas, bought a newspaper,
 - C. stopped for gas; bought a newspaper,
 - D. stopped for gas bought a newspaper

Grammar

2. The collection of newspapers, bundled and ready for recycling, are on the front porch.
 - F. NO CHANGE
 - G. recycling are
 - H. recycling, is
 - J. recycling is

Sentence Structure

3. Walked to school. Bob remembered that he had left his biology notebook at home.
 - A. NO CHANGE
 - B. Walked to school,
 - C. While walking to school,
 - D. Walked to school—

Rhetorical Skills

Strategy

Scientists have proposed three different theories for how dinosaurs became extinct. I believe that evidence for two of the theories is weak. Thus, in the following sections, I will only discuss the merits of the third theory. 4

4. The author could strengthen the ideas in the paragraph by
 - A. listing the disadvantages of the third theory
 - B. providing the reader with some information about each of the three theories
 - C. not criticizing the other two theories
 - D. introducing an additional topic

Organization

[1] Michael planned to study for his English test all night. [2] First, he reviewed the notes he had taken in class. [3] Finally, he took a practice examination. [4] Then, he reread certain portions of the text. 5

5. For the sake of clarity, sentence 3 should be
 - A. placed after sentence 4
 - B. placed before sentence 2
 - C. placed before sentence 1
 - D. left where it is

Note: Questions 6 & 7 are illustrations of items that refer to an entire English passage. As such, there is no correct answer to these two questions.

The following paragraphs may or may not be in the most logical order. Each paragraph is numbered, and item 6 will ask you to choose the best ordering of the paragraphs.

6. The most logical ordering of the paragraphs in this passage would be
 - F. 1,2,3,4
 - G. 1,3,2,4
 - H. 1,4,3,2
 - J. 2,1,3,4

Style

7. This passage would most likely be encountered in a collection of articles dealing with
 - A. problems of today's adolescents
 - B. an historical analysis of families in the nineteenth century
 - C. the history of business in America
 - D. the problems of the sixties
8. At first, he initially thought that he would be elected captain of the team.
 - F. NO CHANGE
 - G. At first, he thought
 - H. At first, he originally thought
 - J. At first he initially thought

Standard Written English Checklist

Punctuation

1. Commas

- a. Commas are used to set off parenthetical words or phrases.

Example: Mel Gibson, arguably one of the most attractive men living today, has starred in numerous movies.

- b. Commas are used to set off introductory clauses and long phrases.

Example: Before buying an automobile, Susan reviewed several comparisons conducted by consumer groups.

- c. Lists of words should be separated by commas.

Example: Nancy, Susan, Charlie, and Steven all agree with me that Sylvester Stallone should take acting lessons.

- d. Avoid the comma splice! Do not link two main clauses with just a comma.

Incorrect: He was late for class, he missed the pop quiz.

Correct: He was late for class; he missed the pop quiz.

Correct: He was late for class. He missed the pop quiz.

Correct: He was late for class and he missed the pop quiz.

2. Colons

Colons are generally used to indicate that some sort of list will follow.

Example: The following people, however, disagree with me: Danielle, Deborah, Kathy and Karen.

3. Semicolons

Semicolons separate phrases which are linked by meaning but which could stand on their own grammatically.

Example: The Joneses couldn't wait to get home; their trip to Europe had been nothing but trouble from start to finish.

4. Dashes/Parentheses

Dashes and parentheses are both used to offset some piece of information.

Example: Boring, frustrating, tedious—all of these describe studying for the ACT (American College Test).

5. Apostrophes

Apostrophes are often used to indicate either possession or the omission of letters (as in contractions).

Example: The dog's tail wagged, showing the pet's excitement.

Example: The dogs' tails wagged, showing the pets' excitement.

Example: It's too late to turn in the extra assignment.

Grammar

1. Subject/Verb Agreement

Verbs should agree in number with their subject.

Example: The team members were sad to see the coach go.

Example: The team was sad to see the coach go.

Example: Everyone, including the members of the opposing team, is invited to the party.

Example: The bus, full of children, has finally arrived at the theater.

2. Adjective/Adverb Agreement

Adjectives are used to modify nouns or pronouns.

Adverbs are used to modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.

Example: We made a quick search. We searched quickly.

Example: She has good handwriting. She writes well.

3. Noun/Pronoun Agreement

When a pronoun is used, there is generally a “noun referent,” that is, a noun which has already been used and to which the pronoun is referring. The pronoun should always agree in gender and in number with this referent.

Incorrect: Bob often asks intelligent questions. They are alert in class.

Correct: Bob often asks intelligent questions. He is alert in class.

4. Verb forms

Present	Past	Past Participle
arise	arose	arisen
beat	beat	beaten
climb	climbed	climbed
drink	drank	drunk
fly	flew	flown
go	went	gone
hang (to place)	hung	hung
hang (on a noose)	hanged	hanged
lay (to place)	laid	laid
lie (to recline)	lay	lain
ride	rode	ridden
ring	rang	rung
rise	rose	risen
shine	shined/shone	shined/shone
set (to place)	set	set
sit (to be seated)	sat	sat
slay	slew	slain
sneak	sneaked	sneaked
sting	stung	stung
swear	swore	sworn
tear	tore	torn
write	wrote	written

Sentence Structure

1. Sentence fragments

Sentence fragments are incomplete sentences that are missing either a subject, a predicate, or both.

Incorrect: Susan won first place in the science fair. And placed second in the math contest.

Correct: Susan won first place in the science fair and placed second in the math contest.

2. Fused sentences

Don't place two or more sentences together without proper punctuation.

Incorrect: John left school early Mary stayed late for a meeting.

Correct: John left school early. Mary stayed late for a meeting.

3. Dangling modifiers

Dangling modifiers are misplaced words or phrases that do not refer clearly and logically to other words or phrases in the sentence.

Incorrect: Running swiftly, the race was completed in less than a minute.

Correct: Running swiftly, Kathy completed the race in less than a minute.

Incorrect: Waiting for the bus, rain poured down on Bob's head.

Correct: While Bob was waiting for the bus, rain poured down on his head.