

PERSONAL BEST TEST TRAINING

EDITING STUDY GUIDE

ACT and PSAT/SAT and Other Standardized Tests



SAMPLE PAGES

YOU CONTROL—

- 1) Level and intensity of advance preparation
- 2) Your personal scoring goals
- 3) Attack strategy for each type of question
- 4) Sequence of questions as you choose to answer them
- 5) Mental attitude before and during the test

Do not surrender control of the factors you can control.

GOAL: To help you achieve your PERSONAL BEST on the ACT or SAT Editing questions

Your personal “highest-possible score” depends on your academic ability in each subject area tested. When you take the ACT or SAT, there are a number of factors that can lower your score. The goal of test preparation is to minimize the effects of those negative factors.

OBJECTIVE 1: To demystify the Editing questions

In order to reach your personal best on an Editing Test, you need to know as much as possible about it. This program will give you insights into how the tests are constructed. It will expose you to the types of questions you can expect to see on the test, the difficulty levels you should expect, and the content you need to master.

OBJECTIVE 2: To reduce test anxiety and its negative effects on your scores

College-admissions tests are guaranteed to create as much anxiety as possible. Although we can't change the testing situation, we can help you take control of it. These study materials will help you know what to expect so that you will find the situation more familiar. And when the test actually begins, your preparation will reduce your overall anxiety. You will be less likely to panic during the test because you will have a variety of strategies to employ when you don't know the answer to a question.

OBJECTIVE 3: To teach you both general and specific strategies for taking multiple-choice tests

This *Study Guide* covers numerous strategies for taking tests. Some of these methods will become tools that you may apply to any multiple-choice test. Other strategies are specific to the types of items that appear on an Editing Test.

The emphasis of this book is on what to do when you don't immediately know the correct answer to a question. The main strategy, called *ZAPPING*, teaches you to identify and eliminate incorrect choices before selecting an answer. This strategy is modified slightly for each type of question. *ZAPPING* is a technique you can transfer to every multiple-choice test that you take in high school or college.

To Punctuate or Not to Punctuate?

If a transition word or phrase serves as an introduction to a sentence, it's often followed by a comma. *For example*, the first two words in this sentence serve as an introduction and are followed by a comma. When the same words are used in the middle of a sentence, *instead*, the transition will often be preceded and followed by a comma. A transition used at the end of a sentence may simply be preceded by a comma, *however*.

Make sense? Give it a try. Write three sentences using transitions and punctuate them correctly.

Beginning: _____

Middle: _____

End: _____



Match pronouns to nouns in gender and number.

The antecedent is the noun or subject to which the pronoun refers. For example, in the sentence "Joe went to the store because he needed some milk," the pronoun is *he*, and the pronoun's antecedent is *Joe*. In simple terms, *he* is *Joe*. Whenever you see a pronoun, be sure to track its antecedent—draw lines in the text from the pronoun to the noun if you need to.

The point of doing this is that the pronoun needs to match the noun it refers to both in number (one or more than one) and gender (male, female, or neutral). If it doesn't, it's wrong, and you'll need to select the answer choice that corrects it.

When the antecedent (the noun that the pronoun refers to) appears in an earlier sentence, sometimes it's difficult to keep track of the subject to which the pronoun refers. This is another case where verbalizing each sentence will help you. When you say a sentence in your head, you will often be able to hear whether or not a pronoun matches its antecedent.

Here's an example of incorrect pronoun-antecedent agreement:

Marketing studies show that when people see an attractive person using a product, **he** identifies with the person and may consequently purchase the advertised item.

Here's the same sentence with the correct pronoun-antecedent agreement:

Marketing studies show that when people see an attractive person using a product, **they** identify with the person and may consequently purchase the advertised item.

In relatively plain speech, the first sentence begins with *people*, a neutral-gender, plural noun, as its subject, then shifts incorrectly to *he*, a male-gender, singular noun. The second sentence is correct. *They* is a neutral, plural noun that refers to the neutral, plural word, *people*. Make sense?

4. **To separate independent clauses:** An independent clause is a string of words that can stand alone as a sentence; it contains both a subject and a predicate. When two independent clauses are joined by a comma and a conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for*), you have a *compound sentence*.

John, Paul, and George all played guitar, Ringo played the drums.

This sentence needs a conjunction.

John, Paul, and George all played guitar but Ringo played the drums.

This sentence needs a comma.

- ✔ **John, Paul, and George all played guitar, but Ringo played the drums.**

This sentence has both a comma and a conjunction.

Write a sentence using a comma(s) correctly:

Semicolons

Semicolons are also used to link independent clauses, but *without* the use of a conjunction. A semicolon acts much like a period; everything on both sides of the semicolon must be able to stand alone as a sentence. A semicolon links two ideas more closely than a period does.

- ✔ **LaMarcus Aldridge is a powerful player; his size and strength make him a formidable obstacle on the court.**

Everything on both sides of the semicolon can stand alone as a sentence.

LaMarcus Aldridge is a powerful player; and his size and strength make him a formidable obstacle on the court.

No conjunction is needed.

A semicolon also separates items in a list, much like a comma does. Use semicolons to make a list less confusing when there are already commas separating things within the list.

- ✔ **Please find the following items for the party: a CD player; a birthday cake, but not the kind with icky-sweet icing; a location that has a kitchen, folding tables, chairs, and air conditioning; and plenty of invitations.**

A semicolon is never interchangeable with a colon or a dash.



Practice Set 117

The Ballad Roots of Country Music

[1]

The history of American country music begins not in the hills of North Carolina, nor in the recording studios of Nashville, but thousands of miles away in a most unlikely **1** place: the court of the British monarch James I. Early in the seventeenth **2** century when James, in an effort to curb the power of certain Celtic chieftains in the Irish province of Ulster, made numerous grants of Irish land to English and Scottish **3** planters, willing to **4** leave and emigrate from their native regions. The clannish **5** Scots, which settled in Ulster, found themselves despised by the Gaelic-speaking Irish. **6** They despised the English. So they kept to themselves, clinging to their native language and culture. **7**

- 1** A) NO CHANGE
B) place,
C) place, in
D) places, namely

- 2** A) NO CHANGE
B) century is when
C) century was when
D) century,

- 3** A) NO CHANGE
B) planters who were
C) planters such as were
D) planters, that were

- 4** A) NO CHANGE
B) emigrate, and go
C) emigrate by going
D) emigrate

- 5** A) NO CHANGE
B) Scots who settled in
C) Scots, upon settling in
D) Scots which settled in

- 6** A) NO CHANGE
B) The Scots for themselves despised the English. So they
C) For themselves, the Scots despised the English, so they
D) The Scots, in turn, despised the English and

7

Which of the following would be the most effective way to strengthen the point of the previous sentence?

- A) Mentioning that James I was himself a Scotsman
B) Describing the independence of the Scottish community in Ulster during the period mentioned
C) Describing the economic conditions which affected Ulster at that time
D) Explaining the differences between the English, Irish, and Gaelic languages

- 11 C Choice A is a comma-spliced run-on sentence. B looks all right, but it is no better than D. Both can't be right, so B and D can be ZAPPED. C is a correctly punctuated compound sentence. No comma is necessary in D, and the word *therefore* is unnecessary since the idea is clearly implied by the rest of the sentence.
- 12 A No punctuation is required between *dialect* and *sustained*. All of the other choices create sentence fragments and are clearly wrong.
- 13 A Choice A states the idea simply and is punctuated correctly. The commas used to set off *and the oral tradition* are wrong in B. C uses a plural verb form (*lives*) where a singular form (*live*) should be used. D is a tempting choice, but it is not as good as A because it uses extra words and punctuation for no apparent reason.
- 14 B Be sure to learn the meanings of the easily confused *their*, *they're*, and *there*. *Their* is the possessive form of *they*, so B and D are the only possible correct choices. The extra words *those who are* in D are unnecessary, making B correct.
- 15 C A singular possessive form is called for. C is the only choice that has the proper ending.
- 16 A Choice A is the shortest and best answer. B uses *like* with a verb form where *as* should be used. C introduces the noun *it* without an accompanying verb. D gives *it* the passive verb form *is believed to be*, but the expression is awkward and confusing compared to A.
- 17 A Choice A is a simple and clear way to state the intended idea. B and C use the pronoun *you*, but it is not clear to whom *you* refers. D is awkward and wordy.
- 18 C No comma is called for, so B and D can be ZAPPED. A careful reading of the sentence indicates that the action took place in the past, so the form *would have been* should be used instead of *will have been*.
- 19 D No comma is needed between *ballads* and *sung*. The past participial phrase *sung in the Scottish lowlands in the days of James I* acts as an adjective, modifying the noun *ballads*. The formation is no different grammatically than the expression *bicycle built for two*. Therefore, A and B can be ZAPPED. The past participle of *sing* is *sung*. Therefore, D is the correct choice.
- 20 B Paragraph 2 mentions the frontier life of the Scots-Irish; therefore, it is the best place to discuss their reputations as pioneers. Paragraph 1 is mostly about their origins in Europe and paragraph 3 is about their modern descendants. A new paragraph at the end would disrupt the chronology of the passage.

Practice Set 118

- 1 B No punctuation is needed between *game* and *after*. Choice A makes no sense. Choices C and D create fragments.
- 2 A Kennedy enrolled at Harvard, which is one university, correctly referred to with the singular possessive pronoun *its*. B is a plural pronoun. If you chose C, you probably confused *it* with *their*. The word *it's* is a contraction, not a pronoun; you can expect to be tested on the use of *it's* and *its* or similar homophones.
- 3 C The sentence as it appears (choice A) and choice D are sentence fragments. Choice B doesn't clarify the writer's intent but instead muddles it with clunky construction. Choice C eliminates the comma and the pronoun *who*, which clarifies the intent of the sentence.
- 4 B *So* (choice A) and *so that* (choice C) imply that Nixon's lack of success at football was due to his education. Choice D implies a contrast between clauses of the sentences, but there is no contrast. Choice B creates the proper relationship to suggest that while Nixon played college football, he wasn't very good at it.