ACT/SAT Review

**Part 1: Sentence Structure**

1. **Fragments, Fun-Ons/Fused sentences, and Comma splices**

**COMMA SPLICE (CS)**

A comma splice occurs whenever two main clauses are linked with only a comma. Correct this error in any one of four ways: 1) Change the comma to a period and start a new sentence; 2) substitute a semicolon for the comma; 3) add a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, or yet) after the comma; 4) add a subordinating conjunction (when, because, since, if, or although) to one of the clauses.

Comma Splice: Tom took them to the airport, Sally stayed home.

Corrections: Tom took them to the airport . Sally stayed home.

Tom took them to the airport; Sally stayed home.

Tom took them to the airport, but Sally stayed home.

When Tom took them to the airport, Sally stayed home.

**RUN-ON/FUSED SENTENCE (RO/FS)**

A fused sentence occurs whenever two independent clauses (two “sentences”) are linked without punctuation or a conjunction. Correct by 1) making two sentences with a period; 2) linking the two clauses with a semicolon ; 3) adding a coordinating conjunction.

Fused Sentence: Tom took them to the airport Sally stayed home.

Corrections: See examples above.

SENTENCE FRAGMENT (FRAG)

A sentence fragment is a dependent clause or phrase punctuated as if it is a sentence. Thus, it lacks a subject or verb or fails to state a complete thought.

Fragment: I’ll pay your way to the show. If you’ll wash the car.

Corrections: I’ll pay your way to the show. First, however, you must

wash the car.

I’ll pay your way to the show if you’ll wash the car.

Other Helpful Rules

1. Use a comma before but, or, nor, for, and yet when they join

independent clauses.

2. Use a colon to mean “note what follows” or before long quotations.

(ex) We visited three states last year: Nevada, Kentucky, and Ohio.

3. Use a semicolon between independent clauses joined by for example,

therefore, and however.

4. Use a semicolon to separate independent clauses if there are commas

within clauses. (ex) My parents bought our home, a Cape Cod

cottage, ten years ago; but since they now need more room, they have

decided to sell it.

5. Use a semicolon to join a series if commas are used anywhere in any

of the items listed. (ex) A board is elected from each of three general

categories: a judge or lawyer; a professor of art, literature, or one of

the humanities; and a social worker or clergyman.

1. **Misplaced Modifiers**

A modifying phrase should be near what it modifies. When a sentence begins with a modifying phrase followed by a comma, determine if the noun being modified immediately follows.

Problem: Sweeping up the shards of glass, the missing key to the jewelry box was found by Aunt Sally.

Solution: Sweeping up the shards of glass, Aunt Sally found the missing key to her jewelry box.

Problem: An ugly poster attracts the visitor’s eye on the east wall.

Solution: An ugly poster on the east wall attracts the visitor’s eye.

**\*Dangling Modifier** (a noun or pronoun must be added which the modifying phrase describes)

Problem: Although only a small boy, my father expected me to do a man’s work.

Solution: Although I was only a small boy, my father expected me to do a man’s work.

Problem: Ecstatic and relieved, Aunt Sally’s key opened the jewelry box for the first time in weeks.

Solution: Ecstatic and relieved, Aunt Sally was able to use her key to open the jewelry box for the first time in weeks.

Test format:

1. Walking to the pawnshop, Bob’s watch dropped into the sewer.
2. No change
3. Bob’s watch dropped in the sewer.
4. Bob dropped his watch into the sewer.
5. Bob’s dropped his watch into the sewer.
6. Stepping to avoid the large puddle, I carefully tripped and fell.
7. No change
8. Stepping carefully over the puddle I tripped and fell.
9. Stepping over the puddle I tripped and carefully fell.
10. Stepping over the puddle I tripped and fell carefully.
11. **Parallel Construction**

**Note lists of verbs and decide if they are parallel/consistent in tense.**

Problem: When Tom finally came home, Aunt Sally kissed him, hugged him, and gives him his favorite dessert after dinner.

Past tense—came, kissed, hugged present tense—give

Solution: Make verbs the same tense, not only consistent within the sentence but also within the paragraph/passage.

Problem: Ruth argued while her brother discusses the problem.

Solution: Ruth argued while her brother discussed the problem.

**Note lists of nouns and decide if they are parallel.**

Problem: Three explanations for Sid’s locking himself in his room were a desire to do his homework, a sense that he needed to hone his college essays, and hating his brother, Tom, who always blames Sid when Tom gets into trouble.

Solution: Change “hating” to “hatred”

Problem: To see the beauty of a sunset in Venice is experiencing perfection.

Solution: To see the beauty of a sunset in Venice is to experience perfection.

Problem: We are not so much what we eat as the thoughts we think.

Solution: We are not so much what we eat as what we think.

**Shifts in person**

Problem: If a person is going to improve, you should work harder.

Solution: If a person is going to improve, he or she should work harder. (NOT they)

1. **Wordiness/Needless Repetition**

Problem: In the early part of the month of August, a hurricane was moving threateningly toward Florida.

Solution: In early August, a hurricane threatened Florida.

Problem: Cheap and inexpensive gifts can be found in the shopping district.

Solution: Inexpensive gifts can be found in the shopping district.rf

Problem: was of the opinion that Solution: believed

Problem: because of the fact that Solution: because

Problem: in this day and time Solution: today

**Part II: Grammar and Usage**

1. Pronoun/Noun Agreement

Problem: Any young boy who watched the first moon landing probably spent the next few years wishing that they could become an astronaut.

Solution: Any young boy who watched the first moon landing probably spent the next few years wishing that he could become an astronaut.

1. Case of Pronouns

Review subject pronouns: I, we, you, he, she, it, they, and who

Review object pronouns: me, us, you, him, her, it, them, and whom

Problem: Before the moon landing, the TV announcer gave some additional background on the astronauts, about who we were all quite interested.

Solution: Change who to whom.

Problem: The students, whom had been studying the space program, were thrilled to witness the lunar landing.

Solution: Change whom to who.

1. Agreement

Subject-Verb Agreement

The following are correct:

An understanding of computers is needed.

A series of natural disasters has occurred recently.

Scientists are puzzled. (Not “Scientist are puzzled.”)

When used as subjects, each, either, neither, one, everybody, anyone take singular verbs.

Neither likes the friends of the other.

Each of them has political ambitions.

Everybody in the office has tickets.

Every one of my cousins, including Sam, has brown eyes.

1. Apostrophe

For singular nouns, add apostrophes and s. (ex) Sue’s joke

For plural nouns ending in s, add only an apostrophe. For plurals not ending in s, add apostrophe and s.

Her sons’ room (the rom of more than one son)

The Joneses’ home

Men’s watches

Children’s rights

For compounds, add apostrophe and s only to last word. (ex) his father-in-law’s job

Individual ownership of 2 apartments—Joan’s and Sam’s apartments

Joint ownership of an apartment—Joan and Sam’s apartment

Contractions

Didn’t=Did Not

It’s=It Is

The dog ate its food. (possessive but without an apostrophe)

**Part III: Rhetorical Skills**

The following questions are often asked:

1. Which transition is best?
2. Which of the following answers best summarizes the main point of the passage?
3. Is the use of formal English appropriate in the context of the passage?
4. If the passage were revised to present conflicting viewpoints, which of the following changes would best represent the other side of the author’s arguent?
5. Which of the following ordering of sentences will make the paragraph most logical? Which of the following ordering of paragraphs will make the passage most logical?