



SAT/ACT basic overview:

SAT Grammar

The SAT Writing and Language Test focuses on:

1. **Standard English Conventions:** Grammar, punctuation, and usage.
2. **Expression of Ideas:** Improving clarity, style, and tone.
3. **Words in Context:** Understanding how word choice affects meaning and tone.
4. **Command of Evidence:** Interpreting and using evidence to support claims.

ACT Grammar

The ACT English Test covers:

1. **Usage/Mechanics:** Grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.
2. **Rhetorical Skills:** Strategy, organization, and style.

Key Grammar Topics to Review

For both SAT and ACT:

- **Subject-Verb Agreement:** Ensuring subjects and verbs agree in number.
- **Pronoun Usage:** Correct use of pronouns, including agreement and case.
- **Verb Tenses:** Correct and consistent verb tense usage.
- **Sentence Structure:** Avoiding fragments and run-ons, understanding clause structure.
- **Punctuation:** Correct use of commas, semicolons, colons, dashes, and apostrophes.
- **Modifiers:** Placing modifiers correctly to avoid confusion (e.g., misplaced and dangling modifiers).

Tips for Studying

1. **Practice with Real Tests:** Use official SAT and ACT practice tests to familiarize yourself with the format and question types.
2. **Review Grammar Rules:** Make sure you understand the underlying grammar rules. Resources like "The Elements of Style" by Strunk and White can be helpful.
3. **Timed Practice:** Practice under timed conditions to improve your speed and accuracy.
4. **Analyze Mistakes:** Review your mistakes to understand why you got a question wrong and how to avoid similar errors in the future.



SAT and ACT grammar sections test similar concepts but have some differences in their approach and emphasis. Here's a comparison to highlight those differences:

Similarities

1. **Grammar Rules:** Both tests cover fundamental grammar rules, including subject-verb agreement, pronoun usage, verb tense, and punctuation.
2. **Sentence Structure:** Both focus on sentence fragments, run-ons, and correct placement of modifiers.
3. **Punctuation:** Both require knowledge of commas, semicolons, colons, dashes, and apostrophes.

Differences

1. **Question Format:**
 - **SAT:** Questions are embedded in longer passages, and you need to improve sentences within the context of the passage. The SAT often combines grammar with questions about the overall flow and clarity of the passage.
 - **ACT:** Questions are more straightforward and are often presented independently, focusing more on grammar and punctuation without as much context from surrounding sentences.
2. **Types of Errors Tested:**
 - **SAT:** Greater emphasis on rhetoric and effective language use, such as improving sentence structure, word choice, and paragraph organization.
 - **ACT:** More straightforward and focused on correcting clear grammatical and usage errors, with additional questions on rhetorical skills such as strategy, organization, and style.
3. **Content Distribution:**
 - **SAT:** Mix of grammar and rhetoric questions is more balanced.
 - **ACT:** Slightly heavier focus on grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure, with rhetorical skills playing a significant role but to a lesser extent than on the SAT.

SAT Question

"Neither the manager nor the employees understand the new procedures clearly, but they are expected to implement it immediately."

- A) Neither
- B) understands
- C) procedures
- D) they
- E) it

Correct Answer: E) it

Explanation: The pronoun "it" is incorrect because it refers to the plural noun "procedures." The correct pronoun should be "them." The corrected sentence is: "Neither the manager nor the employees understand the new procedures clearly, but they are expected to implement them immediately."



ACT Question

"After several months of intense rehearsals, the orchestra was ready for the concert, and the conductor, who had worked tirelessly, _____."

- A) looked forward to seeing the hard work pay off.
- B) was looking forward to seeing the hard work pay off.
- C) had looked forward to seeing the hard work pay off.
- D) would look forward to see the hard work pay off.

Correct Answer: A) looked forward to seeing the hard work pay off.

Explanation: The sentence is in past tense ("was ready"), so the correct answer should also be in past tense to maintain parallel structure. "Looked forward" fits best. The corrected sentence is: "After several months of intense rehearsals, the orchestra was ready for the concert, and the conductor, who had worked tirelessly, looked forward to seeing the hard work pay off."

Set 1: Articles, Nouns, Pronouns, and Determiners

1. **Identify the error in the sentence:** "The project required not only a extensive knowledge of the subject but also an ability to communicate complex ideas clearly."

- A) The project
- B) a extensive
- C) knowledge of the subject
- D) an ability
- E) No error

2. **Identify the error in the sentence:** "Each of the students in the class must submit their homework by the end of the week."

- A) Each
- B) in the class
- C) must submit
- D) their
- E) No error

Set 2: Relative Clauses, Relative Pronouns, and Adverbs

3. **Identify the error in the sentence:** "The committee, whom was formed last year, has made significant progress in its research."

- A) The committee
- B) whom
- C) was formed
- D) has made
- E) No error



4. **Identify the error in the sentence:** "She is one of those people who always tries to find a solution, no matter how difficult the problem is."

A) She is
B) one of those
C) who always tries
D) no matter
E) No error

Set 3: Auxiliary Verbs, Conjunctions, and Clauses

5. **Identify the error in the sentence:** "Had he known about the traffic, he would have left earlier, yet he still arrived on time."

A) Had he known
B) about the traffic
C) he would have left
D) yet he still arrived
E) No error

6. **Identify the error in the sentence:** "She studies hard so she can get into a good college, she realizes that her future depends on her education."

A) She studies hard
B) so she can get
C) into a good college
D) she realizes
E) No error

Set 4: Infinitives, Modals, Modifiers, and Gerunds

7. **Identify the error in the sentence:** "The most important thing is to thoroughly plan your work before beginning the project."

A) The most important
B) to thoroughly plan
C) your work
D) before beginning
E) No error

8. **Identify the error in the sentence:** "He advised to take a break when feeling overwhelmed."

A) He advised
B) to take
C) a break
D) when feeling
E) No error



Set 5: Parallelism, Punctuation, and Comparisons

9. **Identify the error in the sentence:** "Her hobbies include reading, to paint, and cycling."
- A) Her hobbies
 - B) include
 - C) reading
 - D) to paint
 - E) cycling
10. **Identify the error in the sentence:** "He is not only intelligent but also he is hardworking."
- A) He is
 - B) not only
 - C) intelligent
 - D) but also
 - E) he is

Set 6: Subjunctives, Past Perfect, and Future Perfect Tenses

11. **Identify the error in the sentence:** "If he were to have known about the meeting, he would have attended."
- A) If he were
 - B) to have known
 - C) about the meeting
 - D) he would have attended
 - E) No error
12. **Identify the error in the sentence:** "By the time she graduates, she will have been studied for over ten years."
- A) By the time
 - B) she graduates
 - C) will have been studied
 - D) for over ten years
 - E) No error

Set 7: Subject-Verb Agreement

13. **Identify the error in the sentence:** "The team of researchers, which includes experts from various fields, are working on a groundbreaking project."
- A) The team
 - B) which includes
 - C) experts from various fields
 - D) are working
 - E) No error



14. **Identify the error in the sentence:** "Neither the manager nor the employees wants to change the schedule."

- A) Neither
- B) the manager
- C) nor the employees
- D) wants
- E) to change

Breakdown of when to use commas with "and" and "but"

Comma with "And"

1. In a list of three or more items (Oxford Comma)

- Use a comma before **"and"** when listing three or more items. This is known as the Oxford comma, which is often preferred for clarity but is sometimes omitted.
 - **With Oxford comma:**
Example: "I bought apples, oranges, and bananas."
Explanation: The comma before "and" separates the last item in the list from the rest.
 - **Without Oxford comma:**
Example: "I bought apples, oranges and bananas."
Explanation: Some style guides allow omitting the comma before "and" in lists. However, in some cases, it can lead to ambiguity.

2. Between two independent clauses

- Use a comma before **"and"** when joining two independent clauses. Each clause should be able to stand alone as a complete sentence.
 - Example: "She went to the store, and she bought some fruit."
Explanation: "She went to the store" and "she bought some fruit" are both independent clauses (complete sentences), so a comma is used before "and."
 - Example: "I will go to the party, and I will bring a gift."
Explanation: Both clauses can stand alone, so the comma is needed.

3. No comma when connecting two verbs, adjectives, or subjects

- When **"and"** joins two elements in the same clause, like subjects, verbs, or objects, you don't use a comma.



- **No comma before "and" in subjects:**
Example: "Sarah and Jane went to the movies."
Explanation: "Sarah" and "Jane" are compound subjects, so no comma is needed.
 - **No comma before "and" in verbs:**
Example: "She dances and sings every day."
Explanation: "Dances" and "sings" are compound verbs, so no comma is needed.
 - **No comma before "and" in compound objects:**
Example: "I bought apples and oranges."
Explanation: "Apples" and "oranges" are compound objects, so no comma is needed.
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Comma with "But"

1. Between two independent clauses

- Use a comma before **"but"** when joining two independent clauses. Just like with "and," both clauses should be complete sentences that can stand alone.
 - Example: "I wanted to go to the park, but it started raining."
Explanation: "I wanted to go to the park" and "it started raining" are both independent clauses, so the comma is required before "but."
 - Example: "He loves pizza, but he doesn't like pasta."
Explanation: Both clauses are complete sentences, so the comma is necessary.

2. No comma when connecting two parts of the same clause

- When **"but"** joins two parts of a single clause, like two verbs, adjectives, or nouns, no comma is used.
 - **No comma with verbs:**
Example: "She is trying but failing."
Explanation: "Trying" and "failing" are compound verbs, so no comma is needed.
 - **No comma with adjectives:**
Example: "He is smart but lazy."
Explanation: "Smart" and "lazy" are compound adjectives, so no comma is needed.
 - **No comma with nouns:**
Example: "She is a teacher but also a writer."
Explanation: "Teacher" and "writer" are compound nouns, so no comma is needed.

3. No comma if the second clause is not independent

- If the second clause after **"but"** is dependent (i.e., it cannot stand alone as a complete sentence), do not use a comma.



- Example: "He wanted to go but couldn't leave early."
Explanation: "He wanted to go" is an independent clause, but "couldn't leave early" is dependent, so no comma is used.
- Example: "She studied hard but failed the test."
Explanation: The second part "failed the test" is dependent on the first part, so no comma is used.

4. No comma is needed before "but" when it connects an independent clause (a complete sentence) with a sentence fragment (an incomplete sentence that lacks a subject, verb, or complete thought).

A **sentence fragment** is a clause that doesn't have enough information to stand alone as a complete sentence. It could be missing a **subject**, a **verb**, or the **complete idea**.

Here are some examples:

Example 1: Missing the Subject

- **Without comma:**

"She wanted to join the team but couldn't find the time."

- **Explanation:** "She wanted to join the team" is an independent clause, but "couldn't find the time" is a sentence fragment because it is missing a subject (who couldn't find the time). Since the second part is not a complete sentence, there is **no comma** before "but."

Example 2: Missing the Verb

- **Without comma:**

"He applied for the job but didn't get it."

- **Explanation:** "He applied for the job" is a complete sentence, but "didn't get it" is a fragment because it lacks a subject. The subject "He" is understood but not repeated. No comma is used because the second part is dependent on the first and doesn't stand alone as a complete sentence.

Example 3: Incomplete Thought

- **Without comma:**

"She wanted to travel but only to nearby cities."

- **Explanation:** "She wanted to travel" is an independent clause, but "only to nearby cities" is a sentence fragment. It doesn't contain a verb and cannot stand on its own. Therefore, no comma is needed before "but."



Example 4: Missing both Subject and Verb

- **Without comma:**

"They tried to solve the problem but without much success."

- **Explanation:** "They tried to solve the problem" is an independent clause, while "without much success" is a sentence fragment (it lacks both a subject and a verb). Since the second part doesn't form a complete thought, there is **no comma** before "but."

Example 5: Missing the Subject, Verb Implied

- **Without comma:**

"She wanted to cook dinner but didn't know how."

- **Explanation:** "She wanted to cook dinner" is an independent clause, and "didn't know how" is a sentence fragment. The subject "she" is implied in the second part, but because the subject is missing, no comma is needed before "but."

General Guidelines and Exceptions

1. **Use commas with conjunctions (like "and" or "but") to separate independent clauses.**

- "We finished the project, and we celebrated afterward."

2. **Do not use commas if the second part of the sentence cannot stand alone.**

- "We finished the project and celebrated afterward."

3. **Comma placement can affect meaning.**

- Consider:

"I saw my friend, and the professor left." (Two separate actions)

Versus:

"I saw my friend and the professor left." (Could suggest these actions are connected)

Special Cases:

- **Coordinating adjectives:** When two or more adjectives independently modify a noun, they should be separated by commas. But if they work together, they are not separated by commas.

- Example: "It was a long, tedious, and difficult journey." (Commas separate independent adjectives)
- Example: "She wore a bright red dress." (No comma between "bright" and "red" as they work together to describe the dress).



Answers with Explanations

1. **B) a extensive**
Explanation: "a" should be "an" because "extensive" starts with a vowel sound. Correct: "an extensive knowledge."
2. **D) their**
Explanation: "Each" is singular, so the pronoun should be "his or her." Correct: "Each of the students in the class must submit his or her homework."
3. **B) whom**
Explanation: "whom" should be "which" or "that" because it refers to a non-human subject (the committee). Correct: "which was formed."
4. **C) who always tries**
Explanation: "who always try" is correct because it refers to "people," which is plural. Correct: "who always try."
5. **E) No error**
Explanation: The sentence is correct as it stands.
6. **D) she realizes**
Explanation: The two independent clauses should be separated by a semicolon or connected by a conjunction. Correct: "so she can get into a good college; she realizes..."
7. **B) to thoroughly plan**
Explanation: Splitting the infinitive "to plan" is less formal. Correct: "to plan thoroughly."
8. **B) to take**
Explanation: The verb "advised" should be followed by a gerund, not an infinitive. Correct: "advised taking."
9. **D) to paint**
Explanation: The list should be parallel. Correct: "reading, painting, and cycling."
10. **E) he is**
Explanation: The structure should be parallel. Correct: "but also hardworking."
11. **B) to have known**
Explanation: The correct form is "had known." Correct: "If he had known."
12. **C) will have been studied**
Explanation: The correct form is "will have been studying." Correct: "will have been studying."
13. **D) are working**
Explanation: "The team" is singular, so the verb should be "is working." Correct: "is working."
14. **D) wants**
Explanation: "employees" is closer to the verb and is plural. Correct: "want to change."