

# Chapter 8

## ABOUT IMPROVING SENTENCES

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Your goals for this chapter are to

- Learn how to recognize different problems with sentences and how to improve sentences
- Practice identifying and improving sentences

The Sentence Improvement section on the SAT I Writing test evaluates you on many of the problem areas already discussed in earlier chapters. You will find sentences with errors in usage, style and expression, or structure. This chapter concentrates on problems with sentence structure. However, the questions in the Sentence Improvement section will ask you to revise many different kinds of flaws in addition to problems with sentence structure. Be sure to review the other chapters about style and grammar to help you with improving sentences.

The questions about sentence improvement ask you to choose the best of five answers. Because answer choice (A) always repeats the original sentence or sentence part, choose it if you think that no change is needed. Some of the sentences will have one clearly right answer, but other may have several grammatically correct answer choices. In those cases, you must decide which is the most effective restatement of the original sentence. There may also be sentences that contain several errors, but you only need to be concerned about errors that are underlined. There will only be one *underlined* error per sentence, and you will have to read the sentences carefully to identify and correct it.

Never pick an answer that changes the meaning of the sentence, even if the choice is grammatically correct and elegantly written. Your answer will be marked wrong. The correct answer has to retain all the information in the original sentence and the same meaning.

### USING THE PRACTICE ITEMS

After the explanations of potential sentence problems, there are sets of Check Your Writing Skills exercises. Complete each set. If you are unsure of how to improve a sentence, you may look at the

explanations. Be sure to read all explanations in the Answers and Explanations sections. You may find a piece of information that will help you on test day with a real question.

## REVISING INCOMPLETE AND RUN-ON SENTENCES

In most languages, the basic unit of thought used to express meaning is the sentence. You will recall that, in English, a sentence is a group of words with two main parts: a complete subject and a complete predicate. Jointly, the subject and the predicate express a complete thought. In some sentences, the subject *you* may be understood as in “Do your homework now.”

### FRAGMENTS

If a group of words does not contain a complete subject and predicate, it is a *sentence fragment*. A fragment does not and cannot express a complete thought. Do not be deluded into thinking that a long series of words and phrases is a sentence. Always check to see that the series has a subject (which may be implied) and a verb. You will most certainly encounter a question about sentence fragments on the test.

To correct an item that involves a sentence fragment, you must choose the answer that rewrites the fragment, adding the missing part. Notice how the fragments below have been corrected.

Correcting Sentence Fragments		
Fragment	Error	Complete Sentence
The tall man wearing the colorful aloha shirt.	Noun fragment	The tall man wearing the colorful aloha shirt <u>has traveled to many South American countries.</u> (predicate added)
In spite of all the road blocks to her success has finished her course work and will graduate in June.	Verb fragment	In spite of all the road blocks to her success, <u>Eleanor</u> has finished her course work and will graduate in June. (subject added)
In the alpine meadow, full of sunlight, inhaled the fragrance of wildflowers.	Gerund fragment	In the alpine meadow, full of sunlight, <u>the backpackers</u> inhaled the fragrance of wildflowers. (subject added)
Peeling the vegetable, broiling the steak, and preparing the sauce.	Participial fragment	<u>All of us</u> pitched in with the tasks of peeling the vegetable, broiling the steak, and preparing the sauce. (subject and predicate added)
On a hot, humid evening on the island of Molokai.	Prepositional fragment	On a hot, humid evening on the island of Molokai, <u>everyone was plagued</u> by biting insects. (subject and predicate added)
When I departed, looking at my family's faces and seeing the tears.	Clause fragment	When I departed, looking at my family's faces and seeing the tears, <u>I almost returned then and there.</u> (independent clause added)

## RUN-ONS

A *run-on sentence* is two or more sentences punctuated as one. To correct a run-on sentence, you will need to choose the answer that uses punctuation, conjunctions, or other means to join or separate its parts.

## Fused Sentences

One kind of run-on, called a *fused sentence*, consists of two or more sentences that are not separated or joined by any punctuation at all.

**Flawed:** The storm surf crashed against the rocks gulls squawking flew into the gray skies.

**Improved:** The storm surf crashed against the rocks, and squawking gulls flew into the gray skies.

## Comma Splices

Another kind of run-on, the *comma splice*, consists of several sentences separated only by commas.

**Flawed:** Alexandra finished her homework early, after that she drove to Maria’s house.

**Improved:** Alexandra finished her homework early; after that, she drove to Maria’s house.

**Improved:** After finishing her homework early, Alexandra drove to Maria’s house.

When you are asked to correct a run-on, look for the choice that adds punctuation and conjunctions or that rewrites the sentence.

**Flawed:** My uncle and aunt vacationed with our family, my cousins also joined us.

**Improved with capitals and end mark:** My uncle and aunt vacationed with our family. My cousins also joined us.

**Improved with comma and conjunction:** My uncle and aunt vacationed with our family, and my cousins also joined us.

**Improved with semicolon:** My uncle and aunt vacationed with our family; my cousins also joined us.

**Improved by rewriting:** When my uncle and aunt vacationed with our family, my cousins also joined us.

## A Word about Semicolon Errors

The SAT I Writing test may have an item about semicolon misuse. A *semicolon* can be substituted for a period to connect two independent clauses that contain similar or contrasting ideas. Generally, a semicolon must not be substituted for a comma.

**Flawed:** During his final physical fitness test, Mateo scored an amazing 97 percent; which was the best in the class.

**Improved:** During his final physical fitness test, Mateo scored an amazing 97 percent, which was the best in the class. (The clause *which was the best in the class* is not an independent clause.)

Remember, a semicolon can be used to avoid confusion when independent clauses or items in a series already contain commas.

**Example:** His concerts took place in Austin, Texas; Little Rock, Arkansas; Augusta, Georgia; and Oxford, Mississippi.

**CHECK YOUR WRITING SKILLS**

Find the error in each of the following sentences.

- Write the letter of the correct answer choice on the line marked “Answer.”
- Correct the error on the lines marked “Correction.”
- Explain the reason for the your answer choice and correction on the lines marked “Reason.”

You will not need to write out steps 2 and 3 on the real test, but you cannot pick the correct answer without recognizing the error. Having to write out all three steps here will help you become accustomed to recognizing the error.

1. This year’s legislative committee being more involved than last year’s.
- (A) being more involved than last year’s  
 (B) was more involved than last year’s.  
 (C) which was more involved than last year’s.  
 (D) that was more involved than last year’s.  
 (E) having been more involved than last year’s.

Answer \_\_\_\_\_  
 Correction \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Reason \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Writing a novel takes nine to twelve months; depending upon the author’s experience, knowledge, and speed.

- (A) months; depending  
 (B) and depending  
 (C) months, depending  
 (D) months depending  
 (E) months. Depending

Answer \_\_\_\_\_  
 Correction \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Reason \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3. George played football with power; Hakeem finesse.
- (A) George played football with power; Hakeem finesse.
  - (B) George played football with power; Hakeem, finesse.
  - (C) George played football with power, and Hakeem played it with finesse.
  - (D) George played football with power Hakeem finesse.
  - (E) George played football with power— Hakeem finesse.

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

Correction \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

4. The moon cast silver light on the beach the storm had finally passed the island.

- (A) on the beach the storm had finally passed
- (B) on the beach, the storm had finally passed
- (C) on the beach and the storm had finally passed
- (D) on the beach the storm was finally passed
- (E) on the beach; the storm had finally passed

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

Correction \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

5. Rarely did Lilliana come to work late, on Saturday she arrived late because her car broke down.

- (A) come to work late, on Saturday she arrived late
- (B) come to work late but on Saturday she arrived late
- (C) come to work late on Saturday she arrived late
- (D) come to work late, but on Saturday she arrived late
- (E) come to work late on Saturday she had arrived late

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

Correction \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

## REVISING AMBIGUOUS AND CONFUSING SENTENCES

There are a number of different types of ambiguous and confusing sentence structures that you may find on the test. You may be asked to correct mixed and illogical constructions such as faulty parallelism, faulty coordination and subordination, and a variety of faulty modifier problems.

### MIXED AND ILLOGICAL CONSTRUCTIONS

Correctness and clarity are essential elements in good writing. Illogical sentence structure can obstruct clarity of expression.

#### Faulty Parallel Structure

*Parallel structure* is the placement of equal ideas in words, phrases, or clauses. Parallel grammatical structures can be two or more words of the same part of speech, two or more phrases of the same type, or two or more clauses of the same type. (This last sentence is an example of parallel nouns modified by prepositional phrases.) Faulty parallelism occurs when a sentence does not employ equal grammatical structures to express related ideas. Faulty parallel structures can involve words, phrases, and clauses in a series as well as in comparisons. You correct faulty parallelism by ensuring that a series contains like elements—all nouns, all adjectives, all prepositional phrases, and so forth—or some combination of nouns, adjectives, and so on, that are equal. The second sentence in this paragraph repeats nouns and prepositional phrases in the same construction.

Notice in the table how errors in parallel structure not only disrupt the natural flow of sentences but also make the meaning of the sentence difficult to understand.

Correcting Faulty Parallel Structure		
Sentences with Nonparallel Structure	Nonparallel Elements	Improved Sentence
The musical was unique, exciting, and kept us laughing.	Adjectives and a prepositional phrase in a series	The musical was unique, exciting, and <u>funny</u> .
The rabbit hopped across the grass, under the tree, and its hole was the final stop.	Prepositional phrases and a clause in series	The rabbit hopped across the grass, under the tree, and <u>into its hole</u> .
My piano teacher says that I make few mistakes, but I play without feeling.	A noun clause and an independent clause in series	My piano teacher says that I make few mistakes but <u>that</u> I play without feeling.

Coordinating conjunctions such as *and*, *but*, *nor*, and *or* often connect items in a series. When you see them in a question item on the test, check for errors in parallel structure.

## Faulty Coordination and Subordination

When two or more independent clauses that are not related or that are of unequal importance are connected by *and*, the result is *faulty coordination*. To be joined by *and* or another coordinating conjunction, two independent clauses must contain related ideas of equal importance. Faulty coordination is easily corrected by

- Putting unrelated ideas into separate sentences

**Flawed:** The junior class built a homecoming float, and it had lights and a sound system that worked amazingly well.

**Improved:** The junior class built a homecoming float. It had lights and a sound system that worked amazingly well.

- Putting a less important or subordinate idea into a subordinate clause or phrase

**Flawed:** Denee is one of our school's most popular actors, and she starred in last year's spring musical.

**Improved:** Denee, one of our school's most popular actors, starred in last year's spring musical.

- Reducing an unimportant idea to a phrase by changing the compound sentence into a simple sentence

**Flawed:** The *Dune* books are my favorite science-fiction series, and I have read them all three times.

**Improved:** I have read all of the *Dune* books, my favorite science-fiction series, three times.

The main device for showing the difference between major and minor ideas is *subordination*. When a sentence contains proper subordinate coordination, the independent clause includes the main idea while the dependent clauses, phrases, or single words convey the subordinate idea. Faulty subordination can happen in two ways:

- Two ideas of equal rank are joined by a subordinate conjunction.

**Flawed:** Alan Brown is a professor, and he is the dean of the science department, while he teaches at the local junior college, too.

**Improved:** Alan Brown is a professor who is the dean of the science department at a local junior college.



- When there is upside-down subordination—the independent clause containing the minor idea and the dependent clause, the main idea.

**Flawed:** Although he easily finished the Iron Man Triathlon, he showed some signs of exhaustion.

**Improved:** Although he showed some signs of exhaustion, he easily finished the Iron Man Triathlon.

## Sentence Shifts

*Mixed constructions* are frequently the result of some sort of shift in a sentence. This occurs when a sentence begins with one type of structure and then changes to another. Usually, a sentence with mixed construction may be improved in several ways. To correct sentence shifts, you must either rewrite or rearrange the sentence. Let's look at some examples:

**Flawed:** By attending the party as a guest rather than as a maid was a new experience for her.

**Improved:** By attending the party as a guest rather than as a maid, she enjoyed a new experience.

**Improved:** Attending the party as a guest rather than as a maid was a new experience for her.

The preposition *by* introduces a modifying phrase, as shown in the flawed sentence. A modifying phrase cannot be the subject of a sentence.

Here is another example:

**Flawed:** Rick realized that during the company meeting how inattentive he had been.

**Improved:** Rick realized that during the company meeting he had been inattentive.

**Improved:** Rick realized how inattentive he had been during the company meeting.

This sentence is confusing because *that* as used in the flawed sentence is a subordinating conjunction and should introduce a noun clause. However, the *that* construction is incomplete. Further in the sentence, another subordinating conjunction, *how*, introduces a noun clause. Thus, the sentence contains two words that introduce a noun clause, but only one word is required.

Other types of sentence shifts have been discussed in earlier chapters. Go back and review them now: shifts in verb tense, pronouns shifts, subject shifts, and passive or active voice shifts.

## FAULTY MODIFIER PLACEMENT

Generally, modifiers should be placed as close as possible to the words they modify. If a modifier is misplaced or left dangling, it will seem to be modifying the wrong word or no word.

### Misplaced Modifiers

A *misplaced modifier* seems to modify the wrong word in a sentence. Any phrase or clause functioning as an adjective or adverb can be misplaced in a sentence. When a modifier is placed too far from the word it should modify, the sentence can become confusing. To correct the flaw, place the modifier close to the word it modifies or restructure the sentence.

**Flawed:** George and Liam argued about football while I tried to study loudly.

**Improved:** George and Liam argued loudly about football while I tried to study.

A *relative clause*—a clause introduced by a relative pronoun—should normally follow the word that it modifies.

**Flawed:** The composition was played at the concert which was composed of dissonant chords.

**Improved:** The composition, which was composed of dissonant chords, was played at the concert.

### Ambiguous Modifiers

When a modifier is placed between two elements of a sentence so that it could modify either item, the modifier is *ambiguous*. The meaning of the sentence is, therefore, unclear. To correct an ambiguous modifier, choose the answer that places the modifier as close as possible to the word it modifies.

**Flawed:** The automobile that had been driving south erratically entered the intersection.

**Improved:** The automobile that had been driving south entered the intersection erratically.

**Improved:** The automobile that had been erratically driving south entered the intersection.

## Dangling Modifiers

The meaning of a sentence can become clouded when the word that a phrase or clause logically modifies does not appear in the sentence. Such modifiers are said to *dangle*. Correct a dangling modifier by choosing the answer that adds the modifier right before or right after the word the phrase should modify.

**Flawed:** Wrapped in my towel, the sun was not a problem.

**Improved:** Wrapped in my towel, I found that the sun was not a problem.

## Awkward Constructions

Awkwardness is an umbrella category of writing flaws that includes incorrect grammar, faulty sentence structure, and misplaced modifiers. In other words, awkwardness can result from the errors discussed throughout these pages. Most often, however, awkwardness occurs when a sentence is clumsily or carelessly constructed. The words do not seem to make much sense, and there is no flow to the sentence. Poor diction or flawed use of idiom may produce an *awkward* sentence. Although your own sense of correctness is your best tool for identifying and correcting awkward sentences, the following rules review good diction:

- Choose the simple word over the long word if the simple word says the right thing.
- Choose the precise and concise word to eliminate wordiness and redundancies.
- Replace a worn-out phrase (trite expression or cliché) with a fresh restatement.
- Replace excessive, preachy, or illogical statements with reasonable ones.
- Replace jargon or slang with standard words.
- Choose vigorous action verbs to improve force and clarity.

Review the 10 rules of effective writing in Chapter 5. You will find that the same rules that apply to making your writing effective help you improve sentences in the multiple-choice section.

**CHECK YOUR WRITING SKILLS**

Find the error in each of the following sentences.

- Write the letter of the correct answer choice on the line marked “Answer.”
- Correct the error on the lines marked “Correction.”
- Explain the reason for your answer choice and correction on the lines marked “Reason.”

You will not need to write out steps 2 and 3 on the real test, but you cannot pick the correct answer without recognizing the error. Having to write out all three steps here will help you become accustomed to recognizing the error.

1. At her brother’s birthday party, Rosa’s job was to set the table, to vacuum the living room carpet, and running errands for her dad.

- (A) to set the table, to vacuum the living room carpet, and running errands  
 (B) to set the table to vacuum the living room carpet and running errands  
 (C) to set the table, to vacuum the living room carpet, and to run errands  
 (D) setting the table, vacuuming the living room carpet, and to run errands  
 (E) to set the table, to vacuum the living room carpet, and having run errands

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

Correction \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. The islands out at sea from the ship looked very small.

- (A) The islands out at sea from the ship looked very small.  
 (B) Out at sea the islands from the ship looked very small.  
 (C) Very small were the way the islands out at sea looked from the ship.  
 (D) Out at sea from the ship the islands looked very small.  
 (E) The islands out at sea looked very small from the ship.

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

Correction \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Martha did not do well on the exam, and it was very easy.

- (A) Martha did not do well on the exam, and it was very easy.
- (B) Martha did not do well on the exam even though it was very easy.
- (C) Martha did not do well on the exam, but it was very easy.
- (D) Martha did not do well on the exam; it was very easy.
- (E) It was a very easy exam and Martha did not do well.

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

Correction \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. The students sought to matriculate at the forums of higher education, for they realized the inherent value of education.

- (A) The students sought to matriculate at the forums of higher education, for they realized the inherent value of education.
- (B) The students sought to matriculate at the forums of higher education realizing the inherent value of education.
- (C) Because the students realized the inherent value of education, they sought to matriculate at the forums of higher education.
- (D) The students tried to get into college because they knew the value of education.
- (E) Matriculating at their choice of college was important to the students.

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

Correction \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Because of accepting more responsibility at work was a stressful time for Jeremy.

- (A) Because of accepting more responsibility at work was a stressful time for Jeremy.
- (B) Accepting more responsibility at work caused stress for Jeremy.
- (C) By accepting more responsibility at work, was a stressful time for Jeremy.
- (D) Accepting more responsibility at work totally stressed Jeremy out.
- (E) A stressful time for Jeremy because he accepted more responsibility at work was.

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

Correction \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Ling hopes to visit Peru this summer, and she has not applied for her visa yet.

- (A) Ling hopes to visit Peru this summer, and she has not applied for her visa yet.
- (B) Ling hopes to visit Peru this summer; she has not applied for her visa yet.
- (C) Ling hopes to visit Peru this summer, and she hasn't yet applied for her visa.
- (D) Ling hopes to visit Peru this summer, but a visa has not been applied for by her.
- (E) Ling hopes to visit Peru this summer, but she has not applied for her visa yet.

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

Correction \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. When he was 85 years old, Mr. Combs' son taught him to fly.

- (A) When he was 85 years old, Mr. Combs' son taught him to fly.
- (B) Mr. Combs' son taught him to fly when he was 85 years old.
- (C) When Mr. Combs was 85 years old, his son taught him to fly.
- (D) At 85 years old, Mr. Combs' son taught him to fly.
- (E) When he was 85 years old, his son taught him to fly.

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

Correction \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. To go to the premier of the new film, seats must be reserved.

- (A) To go to the premier of the new film, seats must be reserved.
- (B) Going to the premier of the new film, seats must be reserved.
- (C) To attend the premier of the new film, seats must be reserved.
- (D) To go to the premier of the new film, you must reserve seats.
- (E) To go to the premier of the new film, seats must be reserved ahead of time.

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

Correction \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

9. I relaxed while lying in the shade, and soon I fell asleep.

- (A) I relaxed while lying in the shade, and soon I fell asleep.
- (B) I relaxed while lying in the shade, falling asleep.
- (C) I relaxed while lying in the shade, soon I fell asleep.
- (D) Lying in the shade, soon I fell asleep.
- (E) I relaxed while lying in the shade, yet soon I fell asleep.

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

Correction \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

10. Although she is a young, vigorous female, my dog Murphy is a golden retriever.

- (A) Although she is a young, vigorous female, my dog Murphy is a golden retriever.
- (B) My dog Murphy, a golden retriever, she being young and vigorous and female.
- (C) Young, vigorous female, I have a golden retriever, Murphy.
- (D) My dog Murphy is a golden retriever, and she is a young, vigorous female.
- (E) Being a young, vigorous female, my dog Murphy is a golden retriever.

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

Correction \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

## ANSWERS AND EXPLANATIONS

Quick-Score Answers				
1. B	2. D	3. C	4. E	5. D
1. C	2. E	3. B	4. D	5. B
6. E	7. C	8. D	9. A	10. D

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- The correct answer is (B).** This is the only choice that corrects the problem of a sentence fragment.

Choice (A) The selection is a sentence fragment.

Choice (C) The use of the pronoun *which* does not correct the sentence fragment.

Choice (D) The use of the pronoun *that* does not correct the sentence fragment.

Choice (E) The shift in the verb tense to *having been involved* neither corrects the sentence fragment nor makes the author's thought complete.
- The correct answer is (D).** The prepositional phrase requires no punctuation to separate it from the balance of the sentence.

Choice (A) A semicolon should not be used to separate an independent clause from a prepositional phrase.

Choice (B) The use of a conjunction reduces clarity and makes the sentence meaningless.

Choice (C) A comma should not be used to separate an independent clause from a prepositional phrase.

Choice (E) The prepositional phrase is a sentence fragment and cannot be separated from the independent clause.
- The correct answer is (C).** Elliptical sentences should be avoided.

Choice (A) This is an elliptical sentence and should be avoided.

Choice (B) The comma is used properly to designate the missing words; however, choice (C) is better because it makes the sentence nonelliptical.

Choice (D) Improper punctuation is the problem with this sentence.

Choice (E) The use of the dash is incorrect. To punctuate the sentence properly, a semicolon and comma are required as shown in choice (B).



4. **The correct answer is (E).** The semicolon corrects the fused or run-on sentence.
- Choice (A) The run-on sentence needs to be corrected with a semicolon or a comma and conjunction.
- Choice (B) The comma without a conjunction does not correct the run-on sentence.
- Choice (C) The conjunction without a comma does not correct the run-on sentence.
- Choice (D) The change in the verb fails to correct the run-on sentence.
5. **The correct answer is (D).** The sentence has a comma splice. It is best corrected by the insertion of the conjunction *but*.
- Choice (A) The sentence has a comma splice.
- Choice (B) The insertion of the conjunction requires a comma.
- Choice (C) The sentence requires a semicolon if there is no conjunction.
- Choice (E) The change in the verb does not correct the comma splice.

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1. **The correct answer is (C).** The sentence lacks parallel construction. The change from *running* to *to run* corrects the problem.
- Choice (A) The sentence does not have parallel construction.
- Choice (B) Commas are needed to separate items in a series.
- Choice (D) This is the reverse of choice (A); it also lacks parallel construction.
- Choice (E) The change in the tense of the verb does not correct the lack of parallel construction.
2. **The correct answer is (E).** This choice creates a coherent sentence by placing the modifiers near the words that they modify.
- Choice (A) The modifiers are misplaced, making the sentence unclear.
- Choice (B) The modifiers are misplaced, making the sentence unclear.
- Choice (C) The modifiers are misplaced, making the sentence unclear.
- Choice (D) The modifiers are misplaced, making the sentence unclear.

3. **The correct answer is (B).** To correct faulty coordination, the second clause is properly subordinated.
- Choice (A) The second clause is not subordinated as it should be.
- Choice (C) The change in the conjunction does not correct the problem with coordination.
- Choice (D) The elimination of the conjunction and insertion of the semicolon does not correct the coordination problem.
- Choice (E) The sentence lacks coordination, and a comma is required before *and*.
4. **The correct answer is (D).** The sentence is awkwardly worded, but it is correct in this choice. Choice (D) uses simple words to convey the author's meaning without losing any of the key points.
- Choice (A) The sentence has very awkward wording.
- Choice (B) The sentence has very awkward wording.
- Choice (C) The sentence has very awkward wording.
- Choice (E) The sentence is not as awkward; however, it sacrifices some of the author's points.
5. **The correct answer is (B).** This alternative eliminates the sentence shift.
- Choice (A) The original sentence has a severe sentence shift, almost to the point of making the sentence incomprehensible.
- Choice (C) This alternative does not correct the shift and exacerbates the problems by incorrectly adding a comma.
- Choice (D) While this answer corrects the shift, it contains slang, *totally stressed out*.
- Choice (E) This one makes more sense, but unfortunately it is not a complete sentence.

6. **The correct answer is (E).** This answer corrects the problem created by the faulty use of the coordinating conjunction *and*.
- Choice (A) In the original sentence, the clauses are related in content, but the relation between them is incorrectly expressed.
- Choice (B) The use of the semicolon does not correct the faulty coordination of the original.
- Choice (C) Not only is a contraction not acceptable in formal English, but this alternative also does not correct the faulty coordination.
- Choice (D) This choice corrects the coordination problem, but the awkwardly worded subordinate clause is in the passive voice.
7. **The correct answer is (C).** This choice corrects the ambiguous modifier. Now you know who is 85 years old—Mr. Combs, not his son.
- Choice (A) In the original sentence it is not clear who is 85 years old.
- Choice (B) This alternative rearranges the clauses but does not rectify the ambiguousness of the sentence.
- Choice (D) The question here is the same. The change to a prepositional phrase still does not make clear who is 85 years old.
- Choice (E) This alternative makes the sentence worse. The pronouns have no antecedents.
8. **The correct answer is (D).** This choice corrects the dangling infinitive phrase.
- Choice (A) The problem here is with the main verb. Correct it by adding a pronoun and the active voice of the verb: *To go to the premier of the new film, one must reserve tickets.*
- Choice (B) This alternative makes the sentence even more confusing because it now has a sentence shift.
- Choice (C) Changing *go* to *attend* does not correct the dangling modifier.
- Choice (E) This alternative does not correct the dangling infinitive phrase, and it creates a redundancy. *Reserve* and *ahead of time* mean the same thing.

9. **The correct answer is (A).** The sentence is correct.
- Choice (B) This version contains a dangling participle, *falling asleep*.
- Choice (C) This alternative is marred by a comma splice.
- Choice (D) While grammatically correct, this choice changes the meaning of the sentence.
- Choice (E) This alternative contains faulty subordination.
10. **The correct answer is (D).** This response corrects the faulty subordination.
- Choice (A) Being a young vigorous female and a golden retriever are of equal weight, so the sentence should have a coordinating conjunction.
- Choice (B) This alternative is not a complete sentence.
- Choice (C) This version contains an ambiguity. It is unclear who is a young, vigorous female. Is it the owner or the dog?
- Choice (E) This alternative is illogical. Being a young, vigorous female does not make the dog any special breed.

## MORE PRACTICE

After you have corrected your answers, see if you can find any pattern in the kinds of mistakes that you made. If you can, then you need to work on your area(s) of weakness as you study for the SAT I.

Choose one of the practice essays you wrote when working through Chapter 4. Check it for incomplete and run-on sentences. Underline any you find.

- What kind of sentence error(s) have you made?

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- Did you make the same error repeatedly in the essay?

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- Rewrite any incomplete or run-on sentences below.

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Choose another one of your practice essays. Check it for incomplete and run-on sentences. Underline any you find.

- What kind of sentence error(s) have you made?

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- Did you make the same error repeatedly in the essay?

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- Rewrite any incomplete or run-on sentences below.

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Choose another one of your practice essays. Check it for ambiguous and confusing sentences. Underline any you find.

- What kind of sentence error(s) have you made?

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- Did you make the same error repeatedly in the essay?

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- Rewrite any ambiguous or confusing sentences below. When you rework sentences, always make sure that you are not losing some of your original meaning. This is true in choosing answers for the multiple-choice questions, too.

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PART II: PRACTICING STANDARD ENGLISH FOR WRITING

Choose another one of your practice essays. Check it for ambiguous and confusing sentences. Underline any you find.

- What kind of sentence error(s) have you made?

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- Did you make the same error repeatedly in the essay?

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- Rewrite any ambiguous or confusing sentences below. When you rework sentences, always make sure that you are not losing some of your original meaning. This is true in choosing answers for the multiple-choice questions, too.

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Do you see any pattern in your writing in regard to problems with sentence structure? If so, describe it here. Then, decide how you can keep from continuing to make the same errors in your own writing.

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## CHECK OFF

Before you move on to the next chapter, can you

- Identify ways to improve sentences that you missed in answering the Improving Sentences multiple-choice questions?
- Identify ways to improve sentences in your own writing that you repeatedly overlook?
- Develop a plan to identify and correct these areas of weakness as you answer the multiple-choice questions and write practice essays?