



## SAT Writing Packet- Grammar Rules

**The writing section of the SAT is extremely repetitive. The test makers ask the same grammar mistakes on every test. Master these grammar rules and feel confident on test day.**

For students using The Official SAT Study Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition by the College Board: next to each rule you will see a list of page and question numbers that coincide with this book.

p. 602 #27, p. 659 #19, p. 660 #26, p. 721 #24, #26, #29, p. 776 #19, p. 777 #24, #27, p. 839 #20, #27, p. 894 #14, p. 895 #18, #21, #23, p. 956 #12, #14, #16, p. 957 #29

### **Subject-Verb Agreement**

The most common grammar mistake that students are tested on is subject-verb agreement. Here is an example:

The committee, made up of several women, are deciding on the school budget next week. No error.  
A B C D E

**The mistake is choice "C".**

The subject of this sentence is "committee", which is singular and therefore needs a singular verb. "Is" should replace "are" in this sentence.

This sentence contains a clause. The clause is the fragment of the sentence between the two commas, and it separates the subject from the verb. Therefore, you are tricked to think that the verb ("are") should agree with "women". In this case, read the sentence and eliminate the clause, so that the subject and the verb come directly after each other. By doing this, you will be able to tell if the subject does not agree with the verb.

**Here is a second example:**

We enjoyed the brilliant sunshine of the beach so much that day that when  
we left there was only one couple and one lifeguard still there. No error.  
A B C D E

**The mistake is in choice "C".**

"One couple and one lifeguard" is an example of a compound subject. A compound subject is when there is more than one person in the subject. A compound subject must always go with a plural verb. "Was" is a singular verb; "were" is a plural verb and should be used instead.



## Proper Verb Tense

The SAT also tests students on proper verb tense. Here is a sentence that contains an improper verb tense:

The three coaches decided not to pick the team right after practice  
that day, but they do talk on the phone and made the final  
decisions that night. No error.

**Choice C contains the mistake because "do" is in the present tense. "Do" should be changed to "did."**

This entire sentence is written in the past tense. For example, "decided" is a verb used when something happened in the past.

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p. 601 #12 #18, p. 658 #12 #16, p. 659 #22, p. 777 #21, p. 838 #13, p. 839 #21, p. 894 #12, p. 895 #20, #25, p. 956 #13, #17, p. 957 #20, #24

## Incorrect Comparisons

The SAT loves to test students on incorrect comparisons. Here is an example:

Sam felt extremely confident going into the final round of interviews, because his list of credentials  
was far more impressive than his competitor. No error.

The mistake here is in choice D because Sam's list of credentials is being compared to his competitor rather than his competitor's list of credentials. Even though we may understand the sentence, "his competitor's" or "his competitor's list" needs to be used so that there is a proper comparison.

p. 410 #21, p. 660 #27, p. 720 #14; p. 777 #28

## Comparative/Superlative

When comparing **two** things, use what's called the comparative: **more** or a word that **ends in -er**, such as smarter:

Example: Of the two runners, he was the faster.

When comparing **three or more than three** things, use what's called the superlative: **most** or a word that **ends in -est**, such as smartest:

Example: Of the three runners, she was the fastest.

p. 659 #18 #24, p. 660 #29, p. 896 #27

## **Diction Error**

Another grammar concept that is repeatedly asked on the SAT is called diction. Diction basically means word choice. Here is a sentence that contains a diction error:

When the opera finally came to a conclusion at nine, we still had not eaten dinner  
A  
and wanted to decide quick what type of food everyone would be happy with. No error.  
B C D E

**The mistake here is in choice B.**

“Quickly” should be used instead of “quick.” If a verb, such as decide, is used in a sentence, an adverb is needed to describe how somebody is going to decide. “Quickly” is an adverb. Adverbs very frequently end in “-ly.” In this example, an adjective, “quick,” was used in a place where an adverb should have been. This is a common mistake used on the SAT that students should really look out for.

**A second type of diction error** is when a slang type of expression is used instead of a more formal type of expression. Since there is some gray area between what is considered slang and what is considered formal, the SAT tends to stick to fairly cut and dry examples. Here is a sentence with an error of this type:

The reason for the poor attendance at today’s annual party is because the weather has been  
A B C  
highly unpredictable all week. No error.  
D E

**The mistake here is in choice C.**

The phrase “is because” is not grammatically correct in this sentence. The word “because” should not be used after the word “reason.” Instead, the phrase “is that” should be used.

p. 721 #22, p. 776 #13, p.838 #12, #14, p. 956 #15

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## Proper Number Agreement

The writing section of the SAT will frequently test students on number agreement. This means that if a sentence has a plural subject then any phrases that describe the subject must be plural as well. Here is an example:

The travel tour through Italy is intended for families  
A B C  
with a young child. No error.  
D E

**The mistake here is in choice D** because the noun in the second part of the sentence, "families," is plural and the phrase "with a young child" is singular. The phrase "with young children" should be used instead.

p. 839 #26;  
p. 957 #26

p. 409 #19

## Unclear Pronouns

An unclear pronoun refers to a pronoun found in a sentence where it is unclear as to what the pronoun is referring to.

Sarah and Karen were enjoying the hike up the mountain until she felt ill and they  
A B C  
had to turn back for home. No error.  
D E

**The mistake in this sentence is choice "C"** because it is unclear as to whether the pronoun "she" is referring to Sarah or Karen.

## Subject/Object of Sentence

This is an important grammar rule, because it consistently appears on the SAT.

The teacher asked Harry and I if we could, due to the upcoming  
A B  
exams, attend her review class after school. No error.  
C D E

**The mistake in this sentence is choice "A"**. In this sentence, "Harry and I" is the object of the sentence, which means "Harry and I" should be changed to "Harry and me". If this was the subject of the sentence, then "Harry and I" would be correct

p. 602 #21, #26,  
p. 721 #27,  
p. 776 #14,  
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### Words that go together

Here are some words that always go together:

When you use **preoccupation**, you always use **with**: "He has a **preoccupation with** something."

When you use **inconsistent**, you always use **with**: "His words were **inconsistent with** something." |

When you use **regarded**, you always use **as**: "She was **regarded as** the best."

When you use **between**, you always use **and**: "She was making a choice **between** this **and** this."

When you use **either**, you always use **or**.

When you use **neither**, you always use **nor**.

When you use **each**, you always use **its**.

p. 602 #25, p. 896 #26, p. 777 #26, p. 839 #29, p. 601 #14,  
p. 409 #18, p. 721 #28, p. 956 #18, p. 720 #16