

**Official SAT Practice**

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# Lesson Plans

for Teachers by Teachers

## LESSON 17

## Writing and Language— Punctuation

**Subscore:** Standard English Conventions**Focus:** Revising and editing for punctuation

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**Objective:**

Students will identify and explain common errors of punctuation that appear on the SAT<sup>®</sup> Writing and Language Test.

**Before the Lesson:**

- Preview the tutorial videos on Official SAT Practice: Grammar.
- Preview and print (if necessary) the student materials.

## Opening Activity | 25 minutes

1. Remind students that in the Writing and Language Test, there are three overall categories of questions that fall under the umbrella of “Conventions”: sentence structure (Lesson 7), conventions of usage (Lesson 8), and conventions of punctuation, which is the topic of this lesson. Ask students to look over the types of punctuation addressed on the test; this list is found in the student materials for this lesson.
2. As a class, read the two passages in the student materials; both are taken from texts they have likely read before. As they read, ask students to pay close attention to the punctuation in the underlined sentences. What, if any, errors do they notice? Then, discuss Questions 9 and 10 and try to categorize, from the list in their student materials, the type of punctuation errors. The rationales are here:

### Rationale #9:

**Explanation:** Choice A is the best answer because “who pursue careers in transportation planning” is, in context, a restrictive clause that should not be set off with punctuation. “Who pursue careers in transportation planning” is essential information defining who the “people” are.

Choice B is not the best answer because it incorrectly sets off the restrictive clause “who pursue careers in transportation planning” with commas as though the clause were nonrestrictive or not essential to defining who the “people” are.

Choice C is not the best answer because it incorrectly sets off the essential sentence element “in transportation planning” with commas as though the phrase were not essential to the meaning of the sentence. “In transportation planning” is essential information defining what the “careers” are.

Choice D is not the best answer because it introduces an unnecessary comma after the word “planning,” incorrectly setting off the subject of the sentence (“people who pursue careers in transportation planning”) from the predicate (“have a wide variety of educational backgrounds”).

## Rationale #10:

**Explanation:** Choice B is the best answer because the colon after “parts” effectively signals that what follows in the sentence further defines what the “two parts” of Kingman’s name are and because the comma after “man” properly indicates that “‘king’ and ‘man’” and “Cantonese for ‘scenery’ and ‘composition’” are nonrestrictive appositives.

Choice A is not the best answer because the semicolon after “man” incorrectly joins an independent clause and a phrase. Moreover, the comma after “parts” is arguably a weak form of punctuation to be signaling the strong break in the sentence indicated here.

Choice C is not the best answer because the semicolon after “man” incorrectly joins an independent clause and a phrase and because the absence of a comma after “parts” fails to indicate that “two parts” and “‘king’ and ‘man’” are nonrestrictive appositives.

Choice D is not the best answer because the semicolon after “parts” incorrectly joins an independent clause and phrases and because the absence of a comma after “man” fails to indicate that “‘king’ and ‘man’” and “Cantonese for ‘scenery’ and ‘composition’” are nonrestrictive appositives.

## Pair/Group Application | 10 minutes

1. Ask students to work through the examples of punctuation topics with a partner or in a small group. Each example contains an error labeled by type. The rationales and explanations of each are found here by clicking on the “fix it” link:  
<https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat/new-sat-tips-planning/sat-writing-and-language-test-strategies/a/solving-standard-english-conventions-questions-on-the-sat-writing-and-language-test>
2. Based on how students do with each of the examples and depending on your students’ needs, you may want to show them one or more of these tutorials, available through Khan Academy®, that focus on very specific punctuation topics:
  - ◆ Within-sentence punctuation: <https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat/sat-reading-writing-practice/new-sat-writing-grammar/v/unnecessary-punctuation>
  - ◆ Items in a series: <https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat/sat-reading-writing-practice/new-sat-writing-grammar/v/items-series-harder>
  - ◆ Nonrestrictive information: <https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat/sat-reading-writing-practice/new-sat-writing-grammar/v/nonrestrictive-parenthetical-elements-harder>
  - ◆ Possessive pronouns: <https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat/sat-reading-writing-practice/new-sat-writing-grammar/v/possessives-harder>

## Individual Application | 10 minutes

1. Ask students to read the three passages and focus on punctuation in the underlined sentences. Students should answer Question 29 (possessive nouns and pronouns); Question 43 (items in a series); and Question 12 (nonrestrictive information). Discuss the rationales below as needed:

### Rationale #29:

Choice C is the best answer because it provides the grammatically correct option for a possessive singular noun. The editor belongs to, or is affiliated with, the almanac. Choices A, B, and D are incorrect because each fails to provide a grammatically correct possessive noun. There is only one almanac, the “Old Farmer’s Almanac,” to which the editor belongs.

### Rationale #43:

Choice A is the best answer because it provides items in a series that are whole discrete items, each one an example of a dessert from the Szathmary collection. Each item in the series is presented in standard English with the adjective preceding the main noun, for example, “summer mince pie.” Choices B, C, and D are incorrect because each one scrambles the names of the dessert items by separating the parts of their names by commas.

### Rationale #12:

Choice C is the best answer because it provides the appropriate punctuation for the nonrestrictive modifying clause “including honeybee pollination.” Because the clause is not essential to the sentence, it should be offset with commas (or other matching punctuation). Since a comma is used before the clause, a comma must be used after it as well. Choices A and D are incorrect because the punctuation does not match the comma that sets off the nonrestrictive modifying clause “including honeybee pollination.”

2. Ask students to evaluate their current abilities with punctuation.

## Homework | 20 minutes

- Review these rules for punctuation and continue practicing in either the Writing section or the Grammar and Usage section.  
<https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat/new-sat-tips-planning/sat-writing-and-language-test-strategies/a/quick-punctuation-rules>

## Student Materials—Lesson #17

### Introductory Activity

- **Conventions of Punctuation:** Observing standard punctuation practices, including:
  - *End-of-sentence punctuation:* Using the correct form of ending punctuation (period, question mark, or exclamation point) when the context makes the writer’s intent clear
  - *Within-sentence punctuation:* Correctly using and recognizing and correcting misuses of colons, semicolons, and dashes
  - *Possessive nouns and pronouns:* Recognizing and correcting inappropriate uses of possessive nouns and pronouns and deciding between plural and possessive forms
  - *Items in a series:* Using commas and sometimes semicolons to separate elements in lists
  - *Nonrestrictive and parenthetical elements:* Using punctuation to set off nonessential sentence elements and recognizing and correcting cases in which punctuation is wrongly used to set off essential sentence elements
  - *Unnecessary punctuation:* Recognizing and eliminating unneeded punctuation

## Excerpt #1 About Traffic

**9** People who pursue careers in transportation planning have a wide variety of educational backgrounds. A two-year degree in transportation technology may be sufficient for some entry-level jobs in the field. Most jobs, however, require at least a bachelor's degree; majors of transportation planners are **10** varied, including fields such as urban studies, civil engineering, geography, or transportation and logistics management. For many positions in the field, a master's degree is required.

## Excerpt #2 About Painter Dong Kingman

named after it. [4] The young boy who had been Dong Moy Shu became Dong Kingman. [5] The name Kingman was selected for its two **14** parts, “king,” and “man”; Cantonese for “scenery,” and “composition”. [6] As Kingman developed as a painter, his works were often compared to **15** paintings by Chinese landscape artists dating back to CE 960, a time when a strong tradition of landscape painting emerged in Chinese art. [7] Kingman, however, **16** vacated from that tradition in a number

**9**

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) People, who pursue careers in transportation planning,
- C) People who pursue careers, in transportation planning,
- D) People who pursue careers in transportation planning,

**14**

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) parts: “king” and “man,”
- C) parts “king” and “man”;
- D) parts; “king” and “man”

## Pair/Group Practice

**End-of-sentence punctuation:** Use the correct form of ending punctuation (period, question mark, or exclamation point) when the context makes the writer's intent clear.

- **Example:** *Andrés wondered if he should save his money for a rainy day or go to an amusement park instead?*

**Within-sentence punctuation:** Correctly use, as well as recognize and correct misuses of colons, semicolons, and dashes.

- **Example:** *I can't wait for this weekend, my friends and I are going river rafting.*

**Possessive nouns and pronouns:** Recognize and correct inappropriate uses of possessive nouns and pronouns and decide between plural and possessive forms.

- **Example:** *My dogs' favorite treat is his milk bone.*

**Items in a series:** Use commas and sometimes semicolons to separate lists of items.

- **Example 1:** *Tina got a car wash; went to the pharmacy, and bought a sled.*
- **Example 2:** *Juan has been to Paris, France, Venice, Italy, and Kyoto, Japan.*

**Nonrestrictive and parenthetical elements:** Use punctuation to set off nonessential sentence elements and recognize and correct cases in which punctuation is wrongly used to set off essential sentence elements

- **Example 1:** *Ari's Candy Corn Emporium, located off Highway 12 is a popular tourist attraction.*
- **Example 2:** *The Boston Symphony a world-renowned orchestra—played Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture.*
- **Example 3:** *The bat—a type of small mammal, can glide and fly.*

**Unnecessary punctuation:** Recognize and eliminate unneeded punctuation

- **Example:** *Emily can't decide if she wants a pet unicorn, or a pet griffin.*

## Individual Application

**27** Nature has been around forever. First-century Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder stated in his *Natural History* that the Moon “replenishes the Earth; when she approaches it, she fills all bodies, while, when she recedes, she empties them.” Chinese and Egyptian people performed agricultural tasks according to the lunar calendar for millennia, and, to this day, the vaunted *Old Farmer’s Almanac* includes regional lunar calendars and advice on **28** when to conduct farm chores. The **29** almanacs editor, Janice Stillman, says. “That information is of value to our readers who practice these traditional methods—and claim great success.”

**29**

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) almanacs’s
- C) almanac’s
- D) almanacs’

[1] The library is working hard to publicize the project and encourage the public to try the recipes. [2] It has formed a club dedicated to cooking manuscript recipes. [3] Some recipes don’t fare well in the twenty-first century (one club member called her 1800s gingerbread a “molasses-laden brick”), while others **42** had worked just fine. [4] In another instance of library outreach, a competition at the 2013 Iowa State Fair, contestants baked desserts in three categories—**43** almond cheesecake, summer mince pie, and Marlborough pie—using recipes from the Szathmary collection. **44**

**43**

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) almond, cheesecake summer, mince,
- C) almond cheesecake summer, mince
- D) almond, cheesecake, summer, mince,

Honeybees play an important role in the agriculture industry by pollinating crops. An October 2006 study found that as much as one-third of global agriculture depends on animal pollination, including honeybee **12** pollination—to increase crop output. The importance of bees **13** highlights the potentially disastrous affects of an emerging, unexplained crisis: entire colonies of honeybees are dying off without warning.

**12**

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) pollination: this is
- C) pollination,
- D) pollination;