

Official SAT Practice

Lesson Plans

for Teachers by Teachers

LESSON 8

Writing and Language— Conventions of Usage

Subscore: Standard English Conventions**Focus:** Revising for conventions of usage**Objective:**

Students will recognize how errors in usage are addressed on the SAT[®].

Before the Lesson:

- Preview and print (if necessary) the student materials.

Introductory Activity | 20 minutes

Introduce students to the types of usage errors addressed on the SAT:

- 1. Pronoun clarity:** "James gave Bill his book." Whose book is it?
- 2. Possessives:** Common mistakes are words like it's/its, they're/their/there, and you're/your.
- 3. Agreement:** "Alfredo and Julia became a doctor after many years of study." Who became the doctor? Both?
- 4. Frequently confused words:** Sometimes words sound alike, but are spelled differently and have different meanings, such as affect/effect, than/then, and accept/except.
- 5. Logical comparison:** Recognizing and correcting cases in which unlike terms are compared.
- 6. Conventional expression:** Recognizing and correcting cases in which, for no good rhetorical reason, language fails to follow conventional practice.

7. Ask students to practice each type of error with the samples on their student handout. You can review explanations and corrections with students here:
<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>.
8. Assign students to one of the six errors listed above and have them create at least two examples of the error in a sentence of their own creation, using the practice ones as models, and then have them give their sentences to another student to correct.

Group/Pair Discussion/Activity | 15 minutes

1. In groups or pairs, students should read through the passages on their student handout (all are excerpts they have read before), looking specifically for any of the six types of usage errors. When they locate an error, they should identify it by type and try to correct it.
2. Ask students to answer Questions 2, 15, 13, and 21. Afterward, be sure to help them to understand the rationales behind the correct answers. Be sure that you take the time to note that unlike other SAT items, there are no questions being asked for this; students just have to correct them (or acknowledge that no change is needed).

Rationale #2:

Explanation: Choice D is the best answer because it maintains agreement between the pronoun (“it”) and the antecedent (“any one”) and between the subject (“any one”) and the verb (“occurs”).

Choice A is not the best answer because the plural verb “occur” does not agree with the singular subject “any one.”

Choice B is not the best answer because the plural verb “occur” does not agree with the singular subject “any one” and because the plural pronoun “they” does not agree with the singular antecedent “any one.”

Choice C is not the best answer because the plural pronoun “they” does not agree with the singular antecedent “any one.”

Rationale #15:

Explanation: Choice A is the best answer because it creates a comparison between like terms: “works” by Kingman and “paintings by Chinese landscape artists.”

Choice B is not the best answer because it creates a comparison between unlike terms: “works” by Kingman and “Chinese landscape artists.”

Choice C is not the best answer because it creates a comparison between unlike terms: “works” by Kingman and “painters of Chinese landscapes.”

Choice D is not the best answer because it creates a comparison between unlike terms: “works” by Kingman and “artists.”

Rationale #13:

Choice B is the best answer because the verb “highlights” grammatically corresponds with the singular noun “the importance of bees.” Additionally, “effects” is the correct noun to describe outcomes. Choices A and D are incorrect because “affects” is the incorrect word in this context. Choice C is incorrect because there is no subject-verb agreement between the singular noun “the importance of bees” and the verb “highlight.”

Rationale for #21:

Choice C is the best answer because it provides the correct possessive form of a plural noun, the farmers who are the main subject of the sentence. Choices A and B are incorrect because neither is the correct possessive form of “they.” Choice A is a contraction of the subject “they” and the verb “are,” while Choice B is an adverb that refers to a place or a particular point in time. Choice D is incorrect because it is the possessive form of a singular, not a plural, noun.

Individual Application | 10 minutes

1. Ask students to write a paragraph that correctly uses the following words: *accept, than, affect, farther, further, less, fewer, its*. They should read their paragraphs to a partner who will confirm that the words are used properly.
2. Ask students to identify their strengths and weaknesses with errors in conventions.

Homework | 20 minutes

- As students continue to practice on the Writing portion of Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy®, they should make note of the questions that ask about conventions of usage and identify their own strengths and weaknesses.

Student Materials—Lesson 8

Introductory Activity

The usage errors addressed on the SAT generally are:

- 1. Pronoun clarity:** “James gave Bill his book.” Whose book is it?
- 2. Possessives:** Common mistakes are words like it’s/its, they’re/their/there, and you’re/your.
- 3. Agreement:** “Alfredo and Julia became a doctor after many years of study.” Who became the doctor? Both?
- 4. Frequently confused words:** Sometimes words sound alike, but are spelled differently and have different meanings, such as affect/effect, than/then, and accept/except.
- 5. Logical comparison:** Recognizing and correcting cases in which unlike terms are compared.
- 6. Conventional expression:** Recognizing and correcting cases in which, for no good rhetorical reason, language fails to follow conventional practice.

Practice correcting the following types of errors:

- 1. Pronoun clarity:** *Recognize and correct ambiguous or vague pronouns (pronouns with more than one possible antecedent or no clear antecedent at all).*
 - ◆ **Example:** Molly and Saira had tea and sandwiches at her house yesterday afternoon.
- 2. Possessive determiners:** *Distinguish between and among possessive determiners (“its,” “your,” “their”), contractions (“it’s,” “you’re,” “they’re”), and adverbs (“there”).*
 - ◆ **Example:** Al’s Cake Shop is known for it’s old-fashioned glazed donuts.
- 3. Agreement:** *Ensure grammatical agreement between subject and verb, between pronoun and antecedent, and between nouns.*
 - ◆ **Example:** Rita and her friend Jorge has decided to join the swim team.
- 4. Frequently confused words:** *Distinguish between and among words that are commonly mistaken for one another (e.g., “affect” and “effect”).*
 - ◆ **Example 1:** Maria was in shock as she climbed the stage to except her award for Best Actress.
 - ◆ **Example 2:** The movie Colonel Justice had a profound affect on me.
 - ◆ **Example 3:** Kelsey chose a blue sweater that would compliment the color of her eyes.
- 5. Logical comparison:** *Recognizing and correcting cases in which unlike terms are compared.*
 - ◆ **Example:** The cost of living in the city differs from the suburbs.
- 6. Conventional expression:** *Recognize and correct cases in which word choice doesn’t conform to the practices of Standard writing English.*
 - ◆ **Example 1:** Trevor realized, after Suki failed on responding after six weeks for daily text messages, that she would never fall on love at him.
 - ◆ **Example 2:** Clara arrived at San Francisco three days ahead on schedule.
 - ◆ **Example 3:** After she sat with the bubble gum for her new skirt, she was next to herself.
 - ◆ **Example 4:** I never thought I would run from office, but I hope for you will vote on me.

Pair/Group Activity

Read the following excerpts from texts you have likely already read, and look closely for errors in usage that you practiced with earlier.

Passage #1

A subway system is expanded to provide service to a growing suburb. A bike-sharing program is adopted to encourage nonmotorized transportation. **1** To alleviate rush hour traffic jams in a congested downtown area, stoplight timing is coordinated. When any one of these changes **2** occur, it is likely the result of careful analysis conducted by transportation planners.

Passage #2

[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

Passage #3

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.

Passage #4

Given the role that honeybees play in agriculture, the impact of this loss of hives on fruit, vegetable, seed, and nut crops **19** is not to be scoffed at. A reduction in bee numbers leads to less pollination, which in turn leads to smaller harvests and higher food prices. Some farmers have resorted to renting hives from beekeepers to pollinate their **20** crops; when there is a shortage of bees this being an expensive proposition. Other farmers have increased **21** they're dependence on costly hand-pollination by human workers. Furthermore, there may be sociological repercussions. Agroecologist Alexandra-Maria Klein has suggested that rising produce prices could lead to an increase in obesity as people turn to cheaper, less wholesome fare.

Answer the following and explain why you chose the answer you did.

Question for Passage 1

2

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) occur, they are
- C) occurs, they are
- D) occurs, it is

Question for Passage 2

15

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) Chinese landscape artists
- C) painters of Chinese landscapes
- D) artists

Question for Passage 3

13

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) highlights the potentially disastrous effects
- C) highlight the potentially disastrous effects
- D) highlight the potentially disastrous affects

Question for Passage 4

21

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) there
- C) their
- D) its

Individual Practice

Write a paragraph that uses each of the following words correctly: *accept, than, affect, farther, further, less, fewer, its*.