

SAT Prep

Standard English Conventions 1



Standard English Conventions 1

Content Domain	Skill/Knowledge Testing Points	Operational Question Distribution
Information and Ideas	Central Ideas and Details Inference Command of Evidence Textual & Quantitative	≈26% /12–14 questions
Craft & Structure	Words in Context Text Structure and Purpose Cross-Text Connections	≈28% /13–15 questions
Expression of Idea	Rhetorical Synthesis Transitions	≈20% /8–12 questions
Standard English Conventions	Boundaries Form, Structure, and Sense	≈26% /11–15 questions



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Topics

- **Pronouns**
- **Plurals and Possessives**
- **Subject-Verb Agreement**
- **Subject-Modifier Placement**
- **Its and Their**



Standard English Conventions 1

Pronoun Antecedent Agreement

What is the Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement?

The Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement is a convention of Standard English that requires a Pronoun (a word that stands in for another noun like he, she, it, etc.) and antecedent (the noun, pronoun standing in for) to *agree in person and number*.

Find Error:

Cranberries are both sour and bitter, so people rarely eat it unsweetened.

The Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement may be tested in one of the Form, structure, and sense questions that you encounter on test day.



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How to identify Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement questions

When approaching form, structure, and sense questions, it's important to identify which Standard English conventions are being tested.

You'll know to look for Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement errors if

- one choice uses a singular pronoun (like "it") while another choice uses a plural pronoun (like "they")
- a pronoun outside the blank refers to a noun contained within the choices

If you don't notice either of these features, then the question doesn't deal with the Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement.

Example: It is hard to live in Antarctica. The cold, dry environment provides the continent's soil-dwelling microbes with few nutrients, little water, and almost no sunlight. In a 2017 study of these organisms, microbiologist Belinda Ferrari reported that _____ able to survive on a diet of atmospheric gases found in the soil.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. it is
- B. this is
- C. either is
- D. they are



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* What can make Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement errors difficult to spot?

In simple sentences, the connection between a pronoun and its antecedent is often very clear. However, as sentences become more complex, errors in the Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement can be much more difficult to identify.

Be extra cautious when you notice any of the following:

Distance between pronoun and antecedent

The further apart a pronoun and its antecedent are in a sentence, the harder agreement errors are to spot. Extra phrases and clauses interfere with our ability to work off instinct.

Errors in these cases are less likely to just "sound wrong". So, if you notice a pronoun way out on its own, track down its antecedent and check for agreement.

Find Error:

The record player largely fell out of style in the 1980s and 90s, but there has since been a revival in their popularity.



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Multiple nouns before the pronoun

When multiple nouns appear before a pronoun in a sentence, identifying the correct antecedent can be tricky.

Errors in the Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement will be difficult to identify in these cases, especially if some of the nouns are plural and others are singular.

When you notice multiple nouns before the pronoun, take the time to identify the most logical antecedent.

Find Error:

The cougar, the largest of all North American cats, has lost most of their range in the eastern United States.

Pronoun before the antecedent

"Antecedent" literally means *what comes before*, but sometimes this relationship gets flipped. And when a pronoun comes before its antecedent, we're less likely to notice an agreement error.

If you see a pronoun towards the beginning of the text, track down the noun it refers to and double-check for agreement.

Find Error:

While it may not be widely associated with long life, ocean clams have been known to live for over 500 years.



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Tips and Strategies

Find the antecedent

To recognize pronoun agreement errors, we must be able to identify the antecedent of the pronoun in question—*the noun that the pronoun logically refers to*. Read carefully! Antecedents can be hard to find when multiple singular and plural nouns are present.

Plug in the antecedent

If you're not sure you've identified the correct noun as the antecedent, try plugging it in where the pronoun goes. If the sentence still makes sense, you've found the antecedent!

Example:

The survival of the orangutan is threatened by the destruction of **its** habitat.

A note about gendered pronouns

The SAT won't ask you to choose between a gendered pronoun ("he" or "she") and the non-gendered singular pronoun "they" when referring to a single person.

When checking for Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement, you'll only need to determine

- A. if the noun is singular or plural
- B. if the noun is a person or a thing.



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1. Before a jury trial begins, lawyers for each side interview potential jurors closely, _____ questions intended to reveal any biases.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. asking him or her
- B. asking them
- C. asking it
- D. to ask him or her

2. Thanks to _____ long legs, giraffes are very fast, running as quickly as 35 miles per hour in short bursts.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. its
- B. one's
- C. their
- D. his or her



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3. You're up to your knees in mud and weeds, getting bitten by things you can't identify. _____ seem to grow more hostile by the minute. Meanwhile, you search for a creature that probably ran away hours ago and couldn't care less about communing with you. And as you open your notebook, the sky opens & drenches the pages. Welcome to the world of nature writing.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. Your's surroundings
- B. You're surroundings
- C. Your surroundings
- D. Their surrounding's

4. According to author Nadine Gordimer, the process of writing fiction is unconscious, emerging from what people learn and how they live. Gordimer, who was born in South Africa in 1923, was an authority on that subject. _____ received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1991, having attained international recognition for her work.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. Her
- B. This
- C. One
- D. She



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5. Yesterday when Pedro was in his calculus class, Amir's snoring and Beverly's bubble gum smacking were so loud that _____ distracted the poor boy from Dr. Armour's lecture.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. he
- B. she
- C. he or she
- D. they

6. Tony refuses to eat at Burger Chief because _____ onions make his breath stink so badly that his girlfriend won't kiss him for three days.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. his
- B. his or her
- C. its
- D. it's



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7. During the pep rally, not only the cheerleaders but also Dr. Stover, the principal, shouted as loudly as _____ could to inspire the basketball team to win.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. she
- B. them
- C. it
- D. they



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8. Despite a gathering of media outside Atteridgeville Correctional Centre, Pistorius was not seen leaving the prison or returning home on Friday. A police van was pictured Friday morning outside _____ uncle Arnold Pistorius's home in the affluent Pretoria suburb of Waterkloof.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. her
- B. his
- C. whose
- D. who's

9. On the edge of a dark, suburban park in Brisbane, teams of volunteer toad-catchers gather around Gary King as _____ shoves another twisting specimen into a cooler box.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. they
- B. she
- C. he
- D. it

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10. The Aditya-L1 spacecraft safely arrived at Lagrange Point L1, the position in space with unobstructed views of the sun located about 1.5 million kilometers (almost a million miles) from Earth, paving the way for scientists to enhance _____ study of the Sun-Earth System.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. its
- B. his
- C. there
- D. their

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Pronoun Clarity

What is Pronoun Clarity?

Pronoun Clarity is the idea that a pronoun must clearly refer to a logical **antecedent**.

An **antecedent** is a noun that a pronoun replaces.

Find Error:

One difference between apples and oranges is that they have a peel.

What's on the test?

On your official SAT, you're likely to see **1** question that requires you to identify and avoid a **Pronoun Clarity error** in the underlined portion of a sentence.



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You'll need to identify when a pronoun has

Multiple possible antecedents

If multiple nouns in the sentence agree with a pronoun in number, it may not be clear which noun the pronoun refers to.

Find Error:

Alice and Mary couldn't find her tennis racket.

No possible antecedents

If no nouns in a sentence could logically replace the pronoun, then the pronoun may be unclear.

Find Error:

When the school baseball team won, their parents threw a party to celebrate.

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Tips and strategies

Find the antecedent

To recognize Pronoun Clarity errors, we must be able to identify the **antecedent** of the pronouns in question.

Ask yourself: *what noun is this pronoun logically replacing?*

If you find multiple possible antecedents, or if you find no possible antecedents, then you've found a Pronoun Clarity error.

Get specific

Pronoun Clarity errors often show up in questions that ask you to revise the underlined portion of a sentence.

The easiest way to fix an error like this is usually to replace the **unclear pronoun** with the **specific noun** it was meant to represent.

Find Error:

When Ana set the vase down on the glass table, it shattered.



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11. Though both typewriters and computers can be used for word processing, few people used _____ by the end of the 20th century.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. them
- B. one
- C. that
- D. typewriters

12. The industrial processing of orange juice—which involves pasteurization and up to a year of storage—results in a product with very little flavor, so _____ add “flavor packs” just prior to bottling.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. they
- B. manufacturers
- C. they have to
- D. consumers



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13. Paula and Mildred laughed it off when they both showed up at the office Halloween party as the villainous Queen of Snows from their favorite video game series. However, _____ told her family later that her costume had been more accurate.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. she
- B. one
- C. the woman
- D. Paula

14. Cameron and his half-brother looked very different; _____ had much higher cheekbones.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. he
- B. Cameron
- C. the boy
- D. a brother



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15. Although vacuuming and skydiving burn an equal number of calories, _____ is arguably more fun.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A.it
- B.the activity
- C.that one
- D.skydiving

16. The yellow duck and the black duck dove deep into the dark water, but _____ did not come up with a fish.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A.the yellow duck
- B.it
- C.he
- D.the duck



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Plurals and Possessives

What are Plurals and Possessives?

Plurals are nouns and pronouns that refer to more than one thing.

Possessives are nouns and pronouns that show possession.

There are similarities and differences in how Plurals and Possessives are formed that can cause confusion. In particular, confusion can arise over when to use or not use *apostrophes*.

Find Error:

One cannot overstate the importance of bee's to the pollination of Michigans blueberry crop.



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How to form Plurals and Possessives

To succeed on questions about plural and possessive nouns, you'll need to know the rules for using apostrophes in the following cases:

Plural Nouns

Plural nouns do not require an apostrophe.

Example: The **plants** in the greenhouse are thriving.

Singular Possessive Nouns

Singular Possessive Nouns require an apostrophe *followed* by an "s".

Example: The **company's** most popular products include shampoo and moisturizer.

Note: This rule applies even if the singular noun already ends in "s" (e.g., the **rhinoceros's** horn).

Plural Possessive Nouns

Plural Possessive Nouns that end in "s" require an apostrophe *after* the "s".

Example: On many superhero teams, the **heroes'** costumes are each a different color.

Note: If a plural noun *doesn't* end in "s", then an "s" should be added after the apostrophe (e.g., the **men's** swim team).

Possessive Pronouns never use apostrophes. His and Hers don't use apostrophes. Yours, Ours, and Theirs are in the same category.

Example: **His** favorite food is the same as **hers**.



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How to identify questions about plurals and possessives

When we approach *form, structure, and sense* questions, it's important to identify which Standard English conventions are being tested.

Make sure to look for errors with genitives and plurals if

- the choices add or remove apostrophes
- the choices change the placement of apostrophes

If you don't see one or both of these features, then the question likely doesn't deal with plurals and possessives.



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Tips and Strategies

Check all the nouns

SAT questions that ask us about plural and possessive nouns may include *two* nouns in the underline. The choices will include variations where one, both, or neither of the two are made plural or possessive.

Be sure that the answer you choose uses (or doesn't use) apostrophes correctly in *both* nouns.

Beware "its" and "their"

"Its" and "their" follow the same rule as other possessive pronouns: **they don't require an apostrophe.** However, these pronouns are frequently confused with the contractions "it's" and "they're".

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17. Slam poet Elizabeth Acevedo’s debut novel *The Poet X*, winner of the 2018 National Book Award for Young People’s Literature, is composed of _____ protagonist, fifteen-year-old Xiomara Batista.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. poem’s putatively written by the novel’s
- B. poem’s putatively written by the novels’
- C. poems putatively written by the novels’
- D. poems putatively written by the novel’s

18. Whether or not you care about the babies of celebrities and royalty is _____ choice.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. yours
- B. your
- C. you’re
- D. you

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19. " _____ only as sick as your skin is slick," the doctor said, which I thought was a terrible diagnosis.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. Your
- B. Their
- C. You're
- D. There

20. British authorities have stepped up _____ response to climate and environmental protestors in recent years, especially when protests become disruptive, including blocking roads and slow walking tactics.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. their
- B. they're
- C. there
- D. theirs

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21. Free Comic Book Day is _____ favorite day of the entire year.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. mine
- B. my
- C. me
- D. it's

22. Basketball players are known for _____ agility and hand-eye coordination.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. they're
- B. their
- C. its
- D. there

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23. Serena Williams and Stan Wawrinka are both French Open tennis champions who take great pride in _____ training.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. they're
- B. their
- C. her
- D. there

24. Vanessa and Henrietta lost _____ licenses for independent space travel when the government learned of their plan to build a waterpark on the moon.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. they're
- B. their
- C. her
- D. there

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25. When Andy said he wanted cold hard cash for his birthday, his _____ response was to give him a block of ice with dollar bills frozen inside.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. mothers
- B. mother's
- C. mother
- D. mother is

26. A full-grown boa _____ skin sheds every three to six months.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. constrictors
- B. constrictor's
- C. constrictors'
- D. constrictor is

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27. Stephen King was so poor when his first novel sold that he couldn't afford medicine for his sick children; _____ first purchase with his book earnings was medicine.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. King's
- B. Kings
- C. Kings'
- D. King

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Subject-Verb Agreement

What is a Subject-Verb Agreement?

Subject-Verb Agreement is a convention of Standard English that requires a subject (the thing doing an action) and verb (the action being done) to *agree in number*.

Find Error:

Apples is different from oranges.

This same logic must be applied to all subject-verb pairings.

Subject-Verb Agreement may be tested in one of the *Form, structure, and sense* questions that you encounter on test day.



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How to identify Subject-Verb Agreement questions

When approaching form, structure, and sense questions, it's important to identify which Standard English conventions are being tested.

You'll know to look for Subject-Verb Agreement errors if **different choices contain singular and plural forms of the same verb.**

If you don't see this difference among the choices, then the question doesn't deal with Subject-Verb Agreement.

Example: When a fire burns red or green or blue, the color of its flames _____ the chemical composition of the combustible material.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. indicate
- B. indicates
- C. have indicated
- D. are indicating



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What can make Subject-Verb Agreement errors difficult to spot?

When a verb follows directly after its subject, agreement is pretty easy to verify. However, when sentence structures become more complex, Subject-Verb Agreement errors can be much harder to spot. Be extra cautious when you notice any of the following:

Extra words between the subject and verb

When additional words, especially other nouns, come between a subject and verb, agreement errors are much easier to miss.

Find Error:

Istanbul, the most populous of all European cities, were founded in the first millennium BCE.

Inverted sentences

Sometimes a subject will come *after* the verb. When this is the case, agreement errors are trickier to identify.

Find Error:

Separating the roads were a concrete median.
If you notice a subject that comes after its verb, try flipping the sentence and reading the subject straight into the verb.



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Tips and Strategies

Place subject and verb side-by-side

Any time you're not sure if a subject and verb agree, place them next to each other and see how they sound together. This tip helps cut through complex sentence structures and tends to make Subject-Verb

Agreement errors much more obvious.

Look out for prepositions

Prepositions like "with", "of", and "from" are often used to start phrases that describe the subject of a sentence. These phrases can cause confusion, as the object of the prepositional phrase ends up closer to the verb, and it's often a noun with a different number.

Find Error:

"The sound of the trumpets was deafening."

Plurals and the letter 's'

If you're a fluent speaker of English, you'll often be able to pair plural nouns with plural verbs based purely off of instinct and sound. But if that doesn't work, you need to be able to identify singular and plural verbs.

With nouns, plurals are usually formed by adding an 's' to the end of the word:

elephant → **elephants**

With verbs, though, the pattern is exactly the opposite. Typically, we form a plural verb by *removing* an 's':

- The elephant **runs**.
- The elephants **run**.



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28. A Neapolitan pizza made with San Marzano tomatoes _____ considered more traditional than one made with any other type of tomatoes.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. are
- B. have been
- C. is
- D. were



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29. The sum of money one donates to registered nonprofit organizations _____ a deduction that can be made from one's taxable income.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. represent
- B. represents
- C. are representing
- D. have represented

30. Called *embouchure*, the shape of a skilled trumpet player's lips _____ for playing a wide range of notes with a clear tone and without muscle strain.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. allows
- B. are allowing
- C. allow
- D. have allowed



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31. Ever since scientists discovered that the fingerprints of each person on earth _____ unique, fingerprinting has played an important role in law enforcement. Modern fingerprinting has come a long way from the time when police officers lift prints from a crime scene and check them manually.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. was
- B. is
- C. are
- D. being

32. National Coffee Theme Park, an amusement park located just south of the town of Montenegro. The Park, which can be reached by cable cars, _____ a global coffee garden, a roller coaster, coffee-based food stalls, and many examples of Colombian folk architecture.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. features
- B. feature
- C. having featured
- D. have featured



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33. Binyelum and Somadina and the other neighborhood children used to sit under this tree and _____ to the birds—Chekeleke, give me one white finger, they screamed skyward. Every evening, the birds erupted in noise as though, having returned from wherever they had traveled since morning, they could not wait to regale one another with stories about their day.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. sang
- B. sing
- C. would sing
- D. had sung

34. Colourful narrative illustrations and legendary heroes from Japanese folklore _____ their surfaces. Every region of the country has its own distinct kite design, with more than 130 varieties in all. For this reason, there is no single design that are typical of Japanese kites.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. decorates
- B. decorate
- C. decorating
- D. has decorated



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35. For my first trip, I _____ a “super-dose” of ketamine intravenously while having my brain scanned in a 3-Tesla fMRI machine. Unless I was lucky, in which case it would be a high dose of dimethyltryptamine (DMT), lying between the large rings of a PET (positron emission tomography) scanner.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. have received
- B. had been receiving
- C. would receive
- D. can receive



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36. The miniseries adaptation of Holly Ringland’s bestselling debut novel, *The Lost Flowers of Alice Hart*, is streaming now on Prime Video. The story follows Alice Hart (Alycia Debnam-Carey and Alyla Browne), who _____ on her grandmother’s (Sigourney Weaver) flower farm after losing her parents to a mysterious fire—and the answers she finds after a two-decade journey for the truth.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. grows up
- B. grow up
- C. will grow up
- D. is growing up



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37. *The Cosmic Library* explores massive books in order to explore everything else. Here, books that can seem overwhelming—books of dreams, infinity, mysteries— _____ to be intensely accessible, offering so many different ways to read them and think with them. Season one considered *Finnegans Wake*; in season two, it was *1,001 Nights*; season three, the Hebrew Bible. **Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?**

- A. turns out
- B. turn out
- C. are turning out
- D. were turned out



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Subject-Modifier Placement

What is Subject-Modifier Placement?

Subject-Modifier Placement refers to a convention of Standard English that requires a Modifier (a word or phrase used to describe a noun) and its subject (the noun being described) to *be next to one another*.

Find Error:

Consumed in the form of sugars and starches, the human body uses carbohydrates as its primary source of energy. Subject-Modifier Placement may be tested in one of the Form, structure, and sense questions that you encounter on test day.



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How to identify Subject-Modifier Placement questions

When approaching form, structure, and sense questions, it's important to identify which Standard English conventions are being tested.

You may want to look for Subject-Modifier Placement errors if

- the blank is longer than a few words
- the choices rearrange words or phrases into different orders

If you don't see one or both of these features, then the question likely doesn't deal with Subject-Modifier Placement.



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Tips and Strategies

Double-check introductory modifiers

When modifying phrases come at the beginning of a sentence, our brains will often do the work of connecting the modifier to whichever noun it logically describes. But these modifying phrases don't apply to the whole sentence: they still need to be placed right next to their subjects.

Find Error:

Wearing (modifier) high boots, the snake failed to injure the supervisor.

Beware possessive nouns

When a noun phrase starts with a possessive noun, it can make modifier placement extra confusing.

Remember that possessive nouns really function as adjectives: the noun that follows the possessive is the actual focus of the noun phrase. *That's* the noun the modifier needs to describe.

Find Error:

Exhausted from running home in the rain, Erin's jacket was soaking wet.



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38. Born in Italy in 1853, Maria Spelterini emigrated to the United States as a young woman and quickly became known for her breathtaking stunts. In 1876, the 23-year-old Spelterini became the only woman ever to cross the Niagara Gorge _____. On July 12th, she made her first attempt while wearing peach baskets strapped to her feet. Balancing on a two-and-a-quarter inch wire, she crossed the Falls just north of the lower suspension bridge.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. over a period of 18 days on a tightrope.
- B. on a tightrope, accomplishing that feat over a period of 18 days.
- C. over a period of 18 days, she did this on a tightrope.
- D. over a period of 18 days and, furthermore, doing this on a tightrope.



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39. Astounded, _____.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. the sunken ship they had encountered was inspected closely by the divers as they swam closer
- B. an inspection was needed as the divers swam closer to the sunken ship they had encountered
- C. the divers swam closer to inspect the sunken ship they had encountered
- D. the encounter with the sunken ship led the divers to swim closer and inspect

40. The problems that plastic bags cause are well known. Unable to break down in landfills, _____
They also contain toxic dyes that contaminate water and soil. As a result, an increasing number of cities are banning their use.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. the bags harm the animals that consume them.
- B. animals are harmed when they consume the bags.
- C. animals are harmed by consuming them.
- D. harm is caused to animals that consume them



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41. Initially launched in 1930 as *The Nancy Drew Mystery Stories*, _____

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. the book series has cultivated a following across generations.
- B. fans have followed the book series across generations.
- C. generations of fans have followed the book series.
- D. the following of book series has grown over the generations with a solid fan base.

42. Having returned from the ocean to the stream where it was born, _____ after which its offspring start the cycle anew.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. an adult salmon's life cycle ends when it spawns and dies,
- B. an adult salmon spawns and dies, completing its life cycle,
- C. the spawning and death of an adult salmon complete its life cycle,
- D. the life cycle of an adult salmon is complete when it spawns and die,



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43. While popular depiction might characterize surfing as a summer sport, the reality is that winter conditions are considered better for surfing. Generated by seasonal storms far off the coast, _____
- Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?**
- A. surfers highly prize the large, predictable sets of waves that are created by winter swells.
 - B. winter swells reach the shore as large, predictable sets of waves that are highly prized by surfers.
 - C. the shore causes large winter swells to break in predictable sets of waves highly prized by surfers.
 - D. winter is highly prized by surfers for large swells that break in large, predictable sets of waves.



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44. For decades, plastic bags have been a favorite _____ two cents per bag, in contrast to five cents for a paper bag. The bags have been used widely since the 1970s, and environmentalists now estimate that nearly a trillion plastic bags are produced worldwide each year.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. around the world of store owners because of their low cost
- B. around the world because of the low cost of store owners
- C. of store owner around the world, this is because of their low cost
- D. of store owners around the world because of their low cost



Standard English Conventions 1

45. *Rabinal Achí* is a precolonial Maya dance drama performed annually in Rabinal, a town in the Guatemalan highlands. Based on events that occurred when Rabinal was a city-state ruled by a king, _____ had once been an ally of the king but was later captured while leading an invading force against him.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. *Rabinal Achí* tells the story of K'iche' Achí, a military leader who
- B. K'iche' Achí, the military leader in the story of *Rabinal Achí*,
- C. there was a military leader, K'iche' Achí, who in *Rabinal Achí*
- D. the military leader whose story is told in *Rabinal Achí*, K'iche' Achí,

Standard English Conventions 1

"Its" and "Their"

What's on the test?

On your official SAT, you're likely to see **1-2** questions in which the possessive pronouns "**its**" and "**their**" are confused with their homophones (words that sound the same but mean different things).

Use the following tables to keep things straight!

Its

its belongs to it

it's "It is"

Their

their belongs to them

they're "They are"

there that place

Note: You will be offered variations of both "they" and "it" in each question of this type, so you'll also need to pay attention to *pronoun agreement*.

· Is the noun being referred to as singular? **Use a version of "it"**.

· Is the noun being referred to as plural? **Use a version of "they"**.

"Its" and "their" follow the same rule as other possessive pronouns: **they don't require an apostrophe**.

However, these pronouns are frequently confused with the contractions "it's" and "they're".

Any time you see a form of "it's/its" or "there/their/they're" appear in the choices, double-check that you're using the appropriate form.



Standard English Conventions 1

Tips and strategies:

Read out contractions

Homophones are only dangerous if they sound the same. Any time you see an apostrophe, read out "**it is**" instead of "**it's**". Do the same with "**they are**" for "**they're**". Errors in logic will be much more obvious this way.

Find Error:

When it was released in 1939, "The Wizard of Oz" was a commercial disappointment, barely making back its budget at the box office.

Identify the antecedent

Determining whether a possessive pronoun or a contraction is more appropriate is only half the battle! We also need to make sure that the pronoun we choose *agrees in number* with its antecedent (the noun it refers to).

When you see a question that tests you on **its/it's**, take an extra moment to identify the antecedent and be sure that we shouldn't change that **it** to a **they**.

Find Error:

While their connection to major league sports is only a few decades old, the bobblehead doll has origins that stretch back centuries.



Standard English Conventions 1

46. Despite _____ name, vitamin D is not technically a vitamin because it is produced by the body.
Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?
- A. it's
 - B. its
 - C. they're
 - D. their
47. While pumpkins, squash, and zucchini may look and taste different, _____ actually all the same species of plant.
Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?
- A. their
 - B. its
 - C. it's
 - D. they're



Standard English Conventions 1

48. David Leonhardt is a senior writer at The New York Times, where he writes _____ flagship newsletter, “The Morning.” He has also been the newspaper’s Washington bureau chief, an op-ed columnist, a staff writer for The New York Times Magazine, and the founding editor of “The Upshot.” He has won the Pulitzer Prize for commentary.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. its
- B. it is
- C. his
- D. their

49. Binyelum ran to Somadina’s house, waving the newspaper and saying, Look! It was evening, the sun, huge and yellow, rolling into the belly of the sky. Somadina followed him outside, to the dogonyaro tree across their yard under which _____ often sat, watching birds. Binyelum caressed the pictures, his eyes like a dreamer’s. One day, he said, he too would fly, and he would not fall.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. they’re
- B. they
- C. there
- D. there’re



Standard English Conventions 1

50. The Supreme Court justices will rule later today, but for now, _____ decision is pending.
Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?
- A. their
 - B. they're
 - C. there
 - D. theirs
51. Basketball players are known for _____ agility and hand-eye coordination.
Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?
- A. they're
 - B. their
 - C. its
 - D. there



Standard English Conventions 1

52. Strontium is a stable isotope created when the mineral rubidium, an extremely reactive metal, breaks down. _____ a slow process with a half-life of 4 billion years, Rowe said. As rubidium breaks down, it first turns to radiogenic strontium 87 and, many years later, stable strontium 86.

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- A. They're
- B. Their
- C. It's
- D. There





Thank you