STUCK IN SAT
Your Trusted Ally

FREE BOOTCAMP · SAT ENGLISH · SESSION 1 OF 3

BEFORE THE 5 DECEMBER SAT

Stop Trusting Your Ear

Punctuation, grammar rules, transitions and notes questions: the rules that replace "which one sounds right?"

4	10	24	4
question types, fully decoded	named traps you will catch	Module 2 level questions	cheat sheets to keep

Rashmi Sharma
SAT READING & WRITING · STUCK IN SAT

A NOTE FROM RASHMI

Why "Stop Trusting Your Ear"?



WELCOME

Most students answer grammar and transition questions by asking one thing: "Which one sounds right?" That works on easy questions. On Module 2 the SAT writes the wrong answers to sound right on purpose.

Today you will replace your ear with rules. They are few, they are fixed, and once you see them you can't unsee them.

Rashmi Sharma

SAT ENGLISH · STUCK IN SAT

TODAY'S 90 MINUTES

MINUTES	PART	WHAT YOU GET
0–5	The hook	One question that shows how your ear tricks you
5–27	1 · Punctuation	8 rules on the SAT train · top 5 traps · 3 hard questions
27–52	2 · Grammar rules	The 6-box chart with the most repeated rules · 10 hard questions
52–70	3 · Transitions	13 relationships · star words from real data · the trick · 5 traps · 5 questions
70–85	4 · Notes questions	Why students lose them · 5 strategies · 5 questions
85–90	The hook, again	Proof of what changed · homework · cheat sheets

BEFORE WE BEGIN

Five things you will do today.

This is a free session, but treat it like the real test. These five habits are half of the score jump.

1 **Grab a notebook and a pen**

You will write every trap name and the rule that beats it. Writing it is how you remember it on test day.

2 **Listen carefully, and don't rush**

Speed comes from knowing the rule, not from hurrying. Today we go slowly so that on 5 December you can go fast.

3 **Put your phone on silent**

Ninety minutes, no notifications. The test gives you no breaks inside a module, so practise that focus today.

4 **Tick Sure, 50/50 or Guess after every question**

A right answer you guessed is luck, and luck won't come with you to the test. We are turning your 50/50s into Sure.

5 **Answer first, then ask**

Commit to a letter before I explain. Then ask anything in the chat. No question is too small. If you have it, someone else does too.

THE SECRET MAP

College Board tells you which rules separate 600 from 700+.

College Board publishes a document called Skills Insight. It shows the score band where students typically master each skill. Almost no student reads it. Here is the part that covers today's four topics:

R&W SCORE	GRAMMAR & PUNCTUATION	TRANSITIONS	NOTES
below 370	No punctuation between a preposition and its object	however, for example	—
420–480	Tense across two times · possessive or plural of one noun	as a result (implied)	Emphasize a similarity or difference
490–540	Semicolon between two simple sentences · agreement with nouns in between	moreover, furthermore	Identify or describe something
550–600	Commas around an interrupter · an opening modifier must fit its subject	specifically, in some instances	Make a point to a particular audience
610–670	No punctuation between a long subject and its verb · colon for an explanation · ; however,	in other words, that is, admittedly	Summarize the steps of an experiment
680–800	Agreement when the subject's number is hidden · essential vs. extra information · colon before a full sentence	what's more, beyond that	Make and support a generalization · present one result from a study with several

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

The 700+ rules are not fancy. Most are about when NOT to use punctuation, where "however" belongs, and subjects that hide. That is exactly what today covers. Find your score row, and aim for the row below it.

Source: College Board, Skills Insight for the Digital SAT Suite (simplified).

THE HOOK · 60 SECONDS

Answer it the way you normally would.

Don't think too hard. Pick what sounds right, tick how sure you are, and keep your answer. We come back to it at the end.

MODULE 2 LEVEL · THE HOOK

My answer

In the decades after the 1755 earthquake, Lisbon's chroniclers focused almost entirely on the destruction of palaces and churches. The collection of private letters that historian Inês Duarte recently uncovered in the archive of a merchant family from the city's Alfama _____ a far less familiar picture: residents trading food, sheltering strangers, and rebuilding entire streets without royal help.

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

(A) district, offers

(B) district offers

(C) district; offers

(D) district, offer

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

KEEP YOUR ANSWER

Write your letter in the box and circle Sure, 50/50 or Guess. By the end of today you will be able to name the exact rule behind this question.

01

PART 1 · PUNCTUATION · BOUNDARIES

Punctuation is a coupling, not a pause.

Count the engines. Then choose the coupler.

THE SAT TRAIN · THINK OF EVERY SENTENCE AS A TRAIN

Engine	A full sentence: a subject + a real verb, able to stand alone. The test is hard.
Trolley	A part that cannot stand alone: because it was late · which surprised everyone · walking home · a title like “biologist”.
Coupler	The punctuation. Some couplers are strong enough to join two engines. Some are not.
Welded parts	Pieces of one engine that are never separated: subject and verb, verb and object.

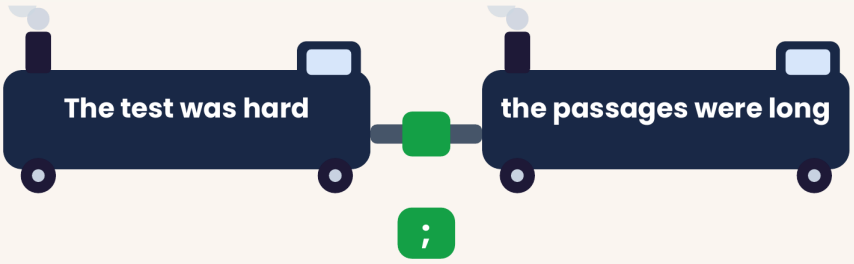
THE ONE QUESTION

Every punctuation question asks one thing: how many engines are here, and is this coupler allowed between them?

PUNCTUATION · THE 8 RULES

Rules 1–2: joining two engines.

RULE 1 Period or semicolon between two engines



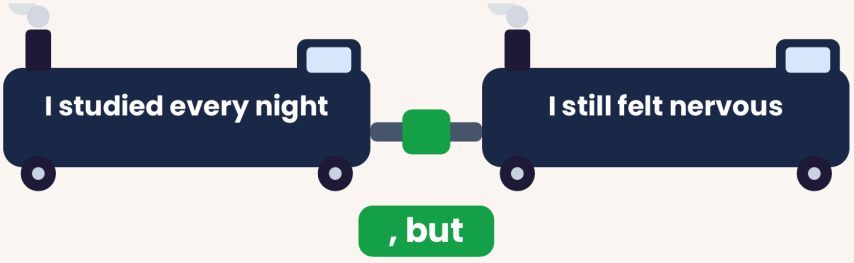
A semicolon is a period in disguise. Both sides must be complete sentences. If you could not put a period there, you cannot put a semicolon there either.

× WRONG
The test was hard; because the passages were long.

✓ RIGHT
The test was hard; the passages were long.

Check: cover each side of the semicolon. Can each side stand alone? Both must say yes.

RULE 2 Comma + FANBOYS between two engines



A comma alone is too weak to hold two engines: that is a **comma splice**. A FANBOYS word alone (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) without a comma creates a run-on. Together, they are a legal coupler.

× WRONG
I studied every night, I still felt nervous.

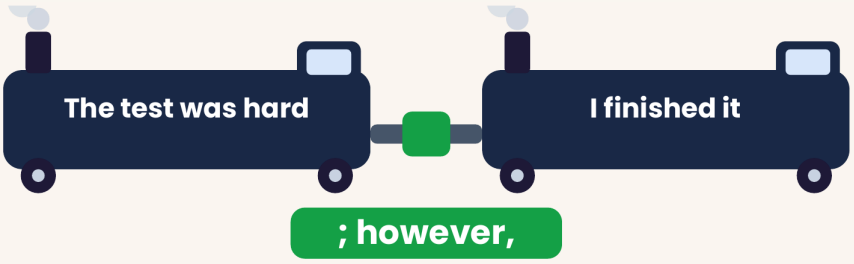
✓ RIGHT
I studied every night, **but** I still felt nervous.

Check: comma between two engines? Look for a FANBOYS word right after it.

PUNCTUATION · THE 8 RULES

Rules 3–4: fake joiners and colons.

RULE 3 However, therefore, thus are NOT couplers



Conjunctive adverbs (however, therefore, thus, consequently, moreover, nevertheless, instead) look like joiners but are not. Between two engines they need a semicolon or a period before them.

× WRONG
The test was hard, however, I finished it.

✓ RIGHT
The test was hard; however, I finished it.

Check: commas on both sides of "however" are only legal when it sits inside ONE engine: *The test, however, was fair.*

RULE 4 Colon or dash: only after a full engine



A colon announces what comes next: a list, an explanation, or another sentence. The part BEFORE the colon must be a complete sentence. Words like "the following" or "three things" are a colon alarm.

× WRONG
The kit includes: a map, a torch, and water.

✓ RIGHT
The kit includes three things: a map, a torch, and water.

Check: cover everything after the colon. Is what is left a full sentence? A single dash follows the same rule.

PUNCTUATION · THE 8 RULES

Rules 5–6: engines and trolleys.

RULE 5 Opening trolley → comma



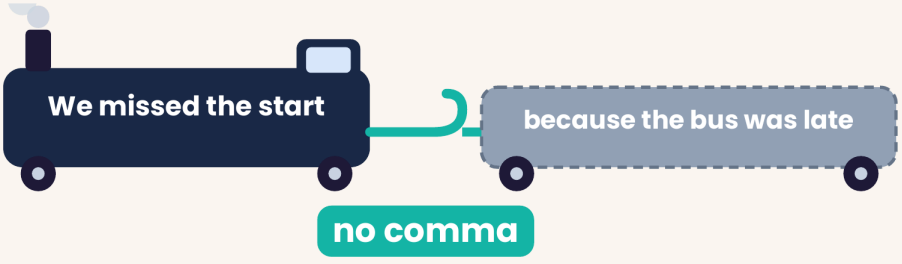
When a trolley comes first (After the storm..., Because it rained..., Raised in Ohio...), put a comma before the engine. Never a semicolon or period: a trolley cannot stand alone.

× WRONG
Because the bus was late; we missed the start.

✓ RIGHT
Because the bus was late, we missed the start.

Check: what comes before the comma cannot stand alone, so it can never take a semicolon or period.

RULE 6 Glue-word trolley at the end → usually no comma



When a trolley starting with **because, when, if, until, before, after, whenever** comes AFTER the engine, it usually takes no comma. It is glued on.

× WRONG
We missed the start, because the bus was late.

✓ RIGHT
We missed the start because the bus was late.

Careful: although, though and whereas often do take a comma. Decide with the other options, not with your ear.

PUNCTUATION · THE 8 RULES

Rules 7–8: fences and welds.

RULE 7 Fences: extra information needs a matching pair

Extra (non-essential) information in the middle of a sentence is fenced off with a matching pair: **, ... ,** or **— ... —** or **(...)**. Open with a comma, close with a comma. Never open with a dash and close with a comma.

× WRONG
My sister—a doctor in Pune, visited us.

✓ RIGHT
My sister, a doctor in Pune, visited us.

Test: remove the fenced part. If the sentence still makes sense and still tells you WHICH one, it was extra. Fence it.

RULE 8 Welded parts: never put a mark between them

Some parts belong to one engine and are welded together. No punctuation between: subject ↔ verb (however long the subject) · verb ↔ object · preposition ↔ object · title ↔ name (“biologist Hana Ito”) · two verbs sharing one subject · a noun ↔ its essential description (“the book that changed my life”).

× WRONG
The students who finished early and checked every answer, scored higher.

✓ RIGHT
The students who finished early and checked every answer scored higher.

Why it matters: this is a 610–670 skill on College Board’s map. College Board’s own sample punctuation question is answered with NO punctuation.

THE ONE-LINE SUMMARY

Two engines → **. ; , + FANBOYS ; however,** · Engine + explanation → **: or —** · Trolley + engine → **,** · Extra info → **matching fence** · Welded parts → **nothing**.

PUNCTUATION · TRAP 1 OF 5

01 The Pause Trap

Your ear wants a breath. The SAT punishes it.

HOW IT GETS YOU

After a long subject, your voice naturally pauses, so a comma "sounds right". Question writers make the subject very long on purpose: a "that..." clause, a "who..." clause, a list.

HOW TO CATCH IT

Find the main verb first. Then check: is a single mark sitting right before it? Cross that option out. The only exception is a matching pair of fences.

✗ **The collection of letters that the historian found in the attic, reveals new details.**

Subject and verb are welded. The comma cuts them apart.

✓ **The collection of letters that the historian found in the attic reveals new details.**

No punctuation. Also check agreement: collection (one) → reveals.

WHERE IT HIDES

Long science and history subjects; titles before names; "that" clauses. College Board's own sample Boundaries question is answered with no punctuation.

QUICK CHECK
30 seconds

Fix it: *The new library that the city built near the river last spring, has already welcomed 50,000 visitors.*

Answer: Remove the comma: the subject (library) and its verb (has welcomed) are welded.

PUNCTUATION · TRAP 2 OF 5

02 The "However" Owner

Both options are legal. Only one is logical.

HOW IT GETS YOU

The options give you "; however," and ", however;". Both are correct punctuation, so grammar alone cannot decide. Students pick the one they have seen most often: "; however,".

HOW TO CATCH IT

Ask: what is "however" contrasting with? If the contrast is with the PREVIOUS sentence, "however" belongs to the first clause, and the stop goes after it.

✗ **Critics hated the film. Its sales told another story; however, it sold out for weeks.**

"Sold out for weeks" does not contrast with "told another story". It explains it.

✓ **Critics hated the film. Its sales told another story, however; it sold out for weeks.**

"However" contrasts the sales with the critics. The second clause explains.

WHERE IT HIDES

Two-sentence passages where the second sentence pushes back on the first. Watch for "though" too: at the end of a clause it means "however".

QUICK CHECK
30 seconds

Right or wrong? *Most experts predicted a mild winter. The old farmers' almanac disagreed, however; it forecast weeks of heavy snow.*

Answer: Right. "However" contrasts the almanac with the experts, so it belongs to the first clause; the second clause explains.

PUNCTUATION · TRAP 3 OF 5

03 The Colon Test

No full engine before it, no colon.

HOW IT GETS YOU

Colons look smart, and lists feel like they need one. Students put a colon after "includes", "such as", "are", or "was".

HOW TO CATCH IT

Cover everything after the colon. What is left must be a complete sentence. If it is, a colon (or a single dash) can introduce a list, an explanation, or a second engine.

✕ **The study measured: sleep, mood, and memory.**

"The study measured" is not complete. It needs an object.

✓ **The study measured three things: sleep, mood, and memory.**

"The study measured three things" is complete. The colon delivers the list.

WHERE IT HIDES

Hard Module 2 items where a colon introduces a full sentence that explains the first one: a 680–800 skill on College Board's map.

QUICK CHECK
30 seconds

Fix it: *The recipe requires: flour, sugar, and eggs.*

Answer: "The recipe requires" is not complete. Remove the colon, or write "requires three ingredients: flour, sugar, and eggs."

PUNCTUATION · TRAP 4 OF 5

04 The Fence Trap

Open and close the same way. And not every phrase needs a fence.

HOW IT GETS YOU

Version 1: the extra information opens with a dash and closes with a comma. Version 2 (harder): a perfect pair of commas around information that is essential.

HOW TO CATCH IT

Match the marks. Then remove the fenced part: if the sentence no longer tells you WHICH person or thing, the information was essential. No fence.

✕ **Marine biologist, Hana Ito, studies coral reefs.**

A title right before a name is essential: it tells you which biologist.

✓ **Marine biologist Hana Ito studies coral reefs.**

No commas between a title and a name.

WHERE IT HIDES

Science passages that introduce a researcher: “economist Ji-woo Han”, “historian Lena Park”. Also “the book that…” (essential) vs. “, which…” (extra).

QUICK CHECK
30 seconds

Fix it: *The author—who grew up in Kerala, writes about the monsoon.*

Answer: Close the fence the way it opened: “The author—who grew up in Kerala—writes…” (or commas on both sides).

PUNCTUATION · TRAP 5 OF 5

05 The Hidden Boundary

No punctuation in the options. It is still a punctuation question.

HOW IT GETS YOU

The options are verbs (were shipped / shipped / are shipped). Students treat it as a tense question and pick the verb that sounds most complete.

HOW TO CATCH IT

Look at the passage: is a comma already printed before the blank? If you add a real verb after it, you build a second engine, and that is a comma splice.

✕ **The lamps sold everywhere, the finest of them were shipped to temples.**

Two engines joined by a comma alone: a splice.

✓ **The lamps sold everywhere, the finest of them shipped to temples.**

The second part stays a trolley (a phrase), so the comma is legal.

WHERE IT HIDES

Long sentences ending in “, the best of them…”, “, most of which…”, “, each one…”. A favourite at the end of Module 2.

QUICK CHECK
30 seconds

Fix it: *The team tested ten designs, the strongest of them was chosen for the bridge.*

Answer: Comma splice. Write “the strongest of them chosen for the bridge” (a phrase), or use a semicolon before “the strongest”.

PUNCTUATION · SOLVE LIVE

Question 1 of 3.

Count the engines before you look at the options. Then name the trap.

1 MODULE 2 LEVEL · BOUNDARIES

My answer

Early reviewers dismissed the composer's final symphony as derivative, a pale imitation of the works he had written decades before. Modern listeners _____ the symphony's unusual harmonies, long overlooked, now strike many critics as decades ahead of their time.

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

(A) disagree, though;

(B) disagree; though,

(C) disagree, though,

(D) disagree though

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

MY WORKING

Engines I found	Main verb	Trap

PUNCTUATION · SOLVE LIVE

Question 2 of 3.

Count the engines before you look at the options. Then name the trap.

2 MODULE 2 LEVEL · BOUNDARIES

My answer

During the fourteenth century, merchants moved salt from inland mines to the coast along a narrow canal that had been dug largely by hand. Barges loaded with salt crept through more than a dozen locks, the journey _____ nearly three weeks even in good weather.

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

(A) took

(B) had taken

(C) it took

(D) taking

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

MY WORKING

Engines I found	Main verb	Trap

PUNCTUATION · SOLVE LIVE

Question 3 of 3.

Count the engines before you look at the options. Then name the trap.

3 MODULE 2 LEVEL · BOUNDARIES

My answer

Photographer Elena Vidal produced more than forty portraits in 1867 alone, and one of them changed how critics viewed the medium. Vidal's _____ used a deliberately soft focus to suggest that a photograph could interpret its subject rather than merely record it.

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

(A) portrait, The Gardener,

(B) portrait, The Gardener

(C) portrait The Gardener

(D) portrait—The Gardener,

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

MY WORKING

Engines I found _____ Main verb _____ Trap _____

02

PART 2 · GRAMMAR RULES · FORM, STRUCTURE, AND SENSE

The SAT tests exactly six grammar things.

Not sixty. Six. Learn the boxes and every question fits into one.

HOW TO SPOT A GRAMMAR QUESTION

Question line	"Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?" (the same line as punctuation)
Options change WORDS	is / are · its / their · -ing / -ed · has / had → grammar
Options change MARKS	, / ; / : / — → punctuation
Where it sits	Grammar and punctuation are mixed and sorted easy → hard. The last one in Module 2 is the hardest grammar question on the test.
Stop studying	who / whom · I / me · affect / effect-type confused words · idioms. Confused words were removed from the digital SAT.

START WITH THE VERB

About two in three grammar questions in College Board's public question bank are about verbs. Start every grammar question by finding the verb.

GRAMMAR · THE 6-BOX CHART

The six boxes, and the rules that repeat.

1 Real verb (finiteness)

Every sentence needs a real, conjugated main verb. Words ending in -ing, "to + verb", and "having + verb" cannot be the main verb on their own.

2 Subject-verb agreement

The verb matches its real subject, not the noun closest to it.

3 Tense

The verb's time must fit the sentence. The clue is always in the passage.

4 Modifier placement

An opening phrase describes the FIRST noun after the comma. That noun must be the one doing the action.

5 Pronoun agreement

A pronoun matches the noun it replaces. Groups and organisations are singular.

6 Plurals & possessives

An apostrophe shows ownership, never just "more than one".

THE 10-SECOND ROUTINE

1. Do the options change words or marks? 2. Find the subject (cross out the middle). 3. Has the real verb arrived? 4. Look for time words: since, in 1950, now, would.

Testing points: College Board, Assessment Framework for the Digital SAT Suite.

GRAMMAR · BOXES 1–2

Real verbs and agreement.

BOX 1 Real verb (finiteness)

Every sentence needs a real, conjugated main verb. Words ending in -ing, "to + verb", and "having + verb" cannot be the main verb on their own.

- **Find the subject, then ask: has its real verb arrived yet?**

× WRONG	✓ RIGHT
The designers, who studied three countries, developing a base.	The designers, who studied three countries, developed a base.

- **After who / which / that, the clause needs a real verb.**

× WRONG	✓ RIGHT
a document that describing the journey	a document that describes the journey

BOX 2 Subject-verb agreement

The verb matches its real subject, not the noun closest to it.

- **Cross out "of…" phrases, who/which clauses and anything inside fences.**

× WRONG	✓ RIGHT
The list of names are long.	The list of names is long.

- **each, every, one of, either, neither = singular. "The number" = singular; "a number of" = plural.**

× WRONG	✓ RIGHT
Each of the paintings show a lighthouse.	Each of the paintings shows a lighthouse.

- **Inverted sentences: the subject comes AFTER the verb.**

× WRONG	✓ RIGHT
Beneath the floor was a capsule and a letter.	Beneath the floor were a capsule and a letter.

GRAMMAR · BOXES 3–4

Tense and modifiers.

BOX 3 Tense

The verb's time must fit the sentence. The clue is always in the passage.

- **Match the neighbouring verbs.**

× WRONG
She returns home and discovered the change.

✓ RIGHT
She returns home and discovers the change.

- **"since / so far / over the past" → has / have + verb.**

× WRONG
Since 2010, the number doubled.

✓ RIGHT
Since 2010, the number has doubled.

- **"would / could / will" carries over after "and".**

× WRONG
would reduce flooding and protects beaches

✓ RIGHT
would reduce flooding and protect beaches

BOX 4 Modifier placement

An opening phrase describes the FIRST noun after the comma. That noun must be the one doing the action.

- **Ask "who was ___?" The answer must come right after the comma. A possessive does not count.**

× WRONG
Raised in Ohio, the author's novel describes farms.

✓ RIGHT
Raised in Ohio, the author describes farms in her novel.

GRAMMAR · BOXES 5–6

Pronouns, plurals and possessives.

BOX 5 Pronoun agreement

A pronoun matches the noun it replaces. Groups and organisations are singular.

- **company, city, team, museum, committee, government = it / its.**

× WRONG
The museum announced their new wing.

✓ RIGHT
The museum announced its new wing.

BOX 6 Plurals & possessives

An apostrophe shows ownership, never just "more than one".

- **Possessive pronouns never take an apostrophe: its, their, whose. it's = it is · they're = they are.**

× WRONG
The bird lost it's feather.

✓ RIGHT
The bird lost its feather.

- **Count the owners: one → 's · many ending in s → s'.**

× WRONG
the snail's shells (from hundreds of snails)

✓ RIGHT
the snails' shells

Helper-word alarm: in verb questions, wrong options often add extra helper words (has, will, to, having). Check the plain form first, but always confirm it with a rule.

GRAMMAR · SOLVE LIVE

Ten Module 2 questions.

For each one, write the box number (1–6) before you choose.

4 MODULE 2 LEVEL · FORM, STRUCTURE & SENSE · BOX: ___ My answer ☐

Beneath many forests lies a vast web of fungal threads connecting the roots of neighboring trees. The network of threads that links these roots, which some researchers have nicknamed the "wood wide web," _____ water and nutrients between trees of different species, sometimes from older trees to younger ones growing in shade.

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

(A) transferring
(B) transfer
(C) transfers
(D) having transferred

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

5 MODULE 2 LEVEL · FORM, STRUCTURE & SENSE · BOX: ___ My answer ☐

Linguist Amara Okafor spent a decade recording the last fluent speakers of a language spoken in a handful of mountain villages. In 2019, she published a dictionary that _____ more than 9,000 words, many of which had never before appeared in print.

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

(A) documenting
(B) documents
(C) to document
(D) having documented

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

6 MODULE 2 LEVEL · FORM, STRUCTURE & SENSE · BOX: ___ My answer

The cathedral's dome, completed in the fifteenth century, remains one of the largest brick domes ever built. Neither the architect's surviving drawings nor the city's construction records from the period _____ how workers raised it without the wooden supports that were standard at the time, a gap that has puzzled engineers for centuries.

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

(A) explains
(B) has explained
(C) is explaining
(D) explain

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

7 MODULE 2 LEVEL · FORM, STRUCTURE & SENSE · BOX: ___ My answer

The 2018 excavation uncovered pottery, tools, and the remains of several houses. Among the most valuable of these finds _____ a set of carefully calibrated bronze weights, which suggest that the settlement once served as a regional trading hub.

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

(A) was
(B) were
(C) are
(D) have been

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

8 MODULE 2 LEVEL · FORM, STRUCTURE & SENSE · BOX: ___ My answer

Most invertebrates rely on simple, inborn behaviors to find food and escape predators. The octopus, however, can solve puzzles, open screw-top jars, and carry coconut shells to use as shelters, and some researchers now argue that _____ problem-solving abilities rival those of certain mammals.

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

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

9 MODULE 2 LEVEL · FORM, STRUCTURE & SENSE · BOX: ___ My answer

Ground-based telescopes have always been limited by Earth's atmosphere, which blurs and absorbs starlight. By the time the Hubble Space Telescope was finally launched in 1990, astronomers _____ for years to place a large telescope above the atmosphere.

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

(A) have campaigned
(B) are campaigning
(C) had been campaigning
(D) campaign

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

10 MODULE 2 LEVEL · FORM, STRUCTURE & SENSE · BOX: ___

My answer

Most histories of the mill towns relied on company records and newspaper reports. Having spent two years interviewing more than two hundred former factory workers, _____

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

(A) historian Ruth Adeyemi reconstructs daily life in the mill towns of the 1930s in her new book.

(B) historian Ruth Adeyemi's new book reconstructs daily life in the mill towns of the 1930s.

(C) daily life in the mill towns of the 1930s is reconstructed in historian Ruth Adeyemi's new book.

(D) the new book by historian Ruth Adeyemi reconstructs daily life in the mill towns of the 1930s.

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

11 MODULE 2 LEVEL · FORM, STRUCTURE & SENSE · BOX: ___

My answer

To learn how warming water affects marine life, biologist Ravi Menon collected hundreds of snail shells from tide pools along a single bay in southern India. Chemical analysis of the _____ shells showed that the _____ water had grown warmer by nearly two degrees over the past century.

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

(A) snail's / bays'

(B) snails / bay's

(C) snails' / bays'

(D) snails' / bay's

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

12 MODULE 2 LEVEL · FORM, STRUCTURE & SENSE · BOX: ___

My answer

The planning committee spent eight months reviewing proposals for the new riverside park and praised several designs for their creativity. Although the members were enthusiastic about the winning plan, _____ final report recommended delaying construction until engineers had tested the soil along the riverbank.

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

(A) the committees'
(B) the committee's
(C) the committees
(D) the committee

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

13 MODULE 2 LEVEL · FORM, STRUCTURE & SENSE · BOX: ___

My answer

Some desert beetles survive in places where rain almost never falls by harvesting moisture from fog. At dawn, a beetle tilts its body into the wind, and the tiny droplets that condense on its back _____ down grooves in its shell toward its mouth.

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

(A) rolls
(B) rolling
(C) roll
(D) to roll

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

03

PART 3 · TRANSITIONS

A transition names a relationship.

Not a topic. Not a mood. A relationship.

WHAT A TRANSITION QUESTION REALLY ASKS

Question line	"Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?"
What it tests	How the sentence with the blank relates to the sentence before it.
Why students miss it	They choose the word that "sounds smooth". The SAT writes three smooth options and one precise one.
Where it sits	Near the end of each module, just before the notes questions.
Your new habit	Name the relationship in plain words BEFORE you look at the options.

ONLY 13

There are only 13 relationships. Learn them on the next page, and every transition question becomes a matching exercise.

TRANSITIONS · THE MAP

Thirteen relationships.

★ = often right on hard questions.

RELATIONSHIP	WORDS	USE IT WHEN…
Contrast	**however · by contrast ★ · on the other hand**	The second idea opposes the first.
Concession	**that said ★ · nevertheless · still · even so**	The second idea is true despite the first.
Admission	**granted · admittedly**	The writer admits a point against their own claim, then turns.
Replacement	**instead · rather**	The second idea replaces what was expected.
Cause → effect	**therefore · thus · hence ★ · consequently · accordingly · as a result**	The second idea happens because of the first.
Purpose	**to that end ★**	The second idea is the action taken to reach a goal.
Specification	**specifically ★ · in particular**	The second idea names THE exact thing.
Example	**for example · for instance**	The second idea is one case of many.
Restatement	**in other words · that is**	The second idea says the same thing again, more clearly.
Emphasis	**in fact ★ · indeed ★**	Same direction, but stronger.
Similarity	**similarly · likewise**	A new case that works the same way.
Addition	**moreover · in addition · furthermore**	One more separate point.
Sequence	**later · subsequently · then**	Time order only. No cause.

TRANSITIONS · WHAT THE DATA SAYS

Not all transition words are equal.

Across every transition question in College Board's public question bank (173 questions, 692 answer choices), some words were right again and again on medium and hard questions, and some of the most familiar words almost never were.

STAR WORDS · OFTEN RIGHT		
★★★	specifically	9 / 20
★★★	by contrast	7 / 13
★★★	in fact	4 / 5
★★★	indeed	4 / 6
★★	hence	3 / 7
★★	to that end	3 / 6
★★	that said	3 / 8
★★	ultimately	3 / 3

TRAP WORDS · OFFERED A LOT, RARELY RIGHT	
for example / for instance	0 / 41
in other words	1 / 20
however	2 / 15
nevertheless	3 / 20
in conclusion · in sum · to conclude	never
next · meanwhile · subsequently	never

Numbers are times correct / times offered.

THE SURPRISE

On medium and hard questions, "for example" and "for instance" were never the right answer in 41 appearances. Summary words like "in conclusion" were never right in all 173 questions. The SAT rewards the **most specific** word that fits, not the most familiar one.

These are trends, not guarantees: always confirm with the relationship.

TRANSITIONS · THE TRICK

Name the relationship with your hand over the options.

1 **Cover the options**

Literally. Your hand or a sticky note. The options are written to pull your ear.

2 **Read two sentences**

The sentence before the blank and the sentence with the blank. Not just the words next to the blank.

3 **Say the link in plain words**

“but” · “so” · “one example” · “the exact one” · “same idea again” · “same, but stronger” · “and also” · “then”.

4 **Uncover and match**

Check the sharpest relationships first: contrast → cause → example / specific → sequence → emphasis / similarity → addition last. “Moreover” fits loosely almost everywhere, so it is your last resort.

5 **Check for twins**

If two options mean exactly the same thing (therefore / thus), neither can be the only right answer.

STUCK IN SAT
Your Trusted Ally

TRANSITIONS · TRAP 1 OF 5

01 The Familiar-Word Trap

The word you know best is usually the trap.

HOW IT GETS YOU

However, nevertheless, for example and as a result appear in almost every set of options. Because they are familiar, they "sound right".

HOW TO CATCH IT

Name the relationship first. If a more specific word (specifically, by contrast, in fact) fits exactly, it beats the familiar one.

✕ **The council approved only one request. For example, it moved the closing time.**

"Only one" means there is no list of examples to choose from.

✓ **The council approved only one request. Specifically, it moved the closing time.**

Specifically names THE one.

WHERE IT HIDES

Hard Module 2 sets where three options are everyday words and one is precise.

QUICK CHECK
30 seconds

Fill the blank: *The recipe has only one secret ingredient. _____ it uses a pinch of cardamom.*

Answer: Specifically, (the exact one, not one of many)

TRANSITIONS · TRAP 2 OF 5

02 Example vs. Specification vs. Restatement

One of many · the exact one · the same thing again.

HOW IT GETS YOU

All three continue the same idea, so they feel interchangeable.

HOW TO CATCH IT

For example = one case among several. Specifically = the exact one meant. In other words = the same idea, rephrased, with nothing new.

✕ **The dialect is "conservative." For example, it has kept old sounds.**

Keeping old sounds is not one example of being conservative. It is what conservative means here.

✓ **The dialect is "conservative." That is, it has kept old sounds.**

The second sentence defines the first.

WHERE IT HIDES

Passages that quote a term ("conservative", "thin market") and then explain it.

QUICK CHECK
30 seconds

Fill the blank: *The town's economy is "seasonal." _____ most jobs exist only during the summer tourist months.*

Answer: That is, / In other words, (the second sentence defines "seasonal")

TRANSITIONS · TRAP 3 OF 5

03 Emphasis Mistaken for Contrast

In fact and indeed keep going in the same direction.

HOW IT GETS YOU

Students expect a turn after a negative statement, so they reach for "however".

HOW TO CATCH IT

Ask: is the second sentence a stronger version of the first? Few → none, good → remarkable. Then it is emphasis: in fact or indeed.

✕ **Few critics reviewed her books. However, not one newspaper reviewed her first novel.**

Nothing opposes anything.

✓ **Few critics reviewed her books. In fact, not one newspaper reviewed her first novel.**

Few → none: same direction, stronger.

WHERE IT HIDES

Biography passages about overlooked artists and scientists.

QUICK CHECK
30 seconds

Fill the blank: *The new phone sold well in its first week. _____ every store in the city had sold out by Friday.*

Answer: In fact, (same direction, stronger)

TRANSITIONS · TRAP 4 OF 5

04 The Nearest-Sentence Trap

The blank connects two sentences, not two halves of one.

HOW IT GETS YOU

A contrast word INSIDE the blank's sentence (while, although, despite) makes the whole thing feel like contrast.

HOW TO CATCH IT

Cover the inside contrast. Compare the previous sentence with the main clause of the blank's sentence only.

✕ **Sales fell in 2020. However, although stores closed, online orders also dropped.**

The "although" pulled you to contrast. But sales fell and online orders dropped: same direction.

✓ **Sales fell in 2020. Moreover, although stores closed, online orders also dropped.**

One more point in the same direction.

WHERE IT HIDES

Long sentences with a built-in "although" or "while" right after the blank.

QUICK CHECK
30 seconds

Fill the blank: *Rainfall dropped sharply in 2021. _____ although farmers planted more seeds than ever, the harvest was the smallest in a decade.*

Answer: As a result, (ignore the inside "although": less rain caused a small harvest)

TRANSITIONS · TRAP 5 OF 5

05 Contrast vs. Concession vs. Replacement

However · that said · instead are not the same word.

HOW IT GETS YOU

All three "turn" the sentence, so students treat them as synonyms.

HOW TO CATCH IT

However / by contrast = simple opposite. That said / nevertheless / still = true despite the first point. Granted = I admit a point against me. Instead / rather = this replaces that.

✗ **The battery stores twice the energy. Instead, it takes ten hours to charge.**

Nothing was replaced.

✓ **The battery stores twice the energy. That said, it takes ten hours to charge.**

A strength, then a drawback that is true despite it.

WHERE IT HIDES

Technology and policy passages: a benefit followed by a limitation.

QUICK CHECK
30 seconds

Fill the blank: *The museum had planned to build a new wing. _____ it renovated two old galleries.*

Answer: Instead, (the renovation replaced the plan)

TRANSITIONS · SOLVE LIVE

Five Module 2 questions.

Cover the options. Say the link in plain words. Then match.

14 MODULE 2 LEVEL · TRANSITIONS

My answer

In ecology, a "keystone species" is one whose influence on its environment is far greater than its numbers would suggest. _____ removing even a small population of such a species can transform an entire ecosystem, as happened when sea otters disappeared from parts of the Pacific coast and the sea urchins they ate destroyed vast kelp forests.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

(A) That is,

(B) For instance,

(C) Nevertheless,

(D) Similarly,

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

15 MODULE 2 LEVEL · TRANSITIONS

My answer

The results of the vaccine trial exceeded even the researchers' most optimistic predictions. _____ the vaccine proved so effective that an independent review board halted the trial early so that participants who had received a placebo could be offered the real vaccine.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

(A) Likewise,

(B) Still,

(C) Accordingly,

(D) Indeed,

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

16 MODULE 2 LEVEL · TRANSITIONS

My answer

In most bird species, males compete for the attention of females, often by displaying bright feathers or performing elaborate songs. Among phalaropes, a group of small shorebirds, _____ these roles are reversed: females are more brightly colored and compete for mates, while males incubate the eggs and raise the chicks.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

(A) for example,
(B) by contrast,
(C) in turn,
(D) likewise,

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

17 MODULE 2 LEVEL · TRANSITIONS

My answer

Critics of the study have noted that it included only forty participants, all of them students at a single university, and that it lasted just six weeks. _____ its central finding, that a brief daily walk improves short-term memory, has since been confirmed by several larger studies conducted in different countries.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

(A) Consequently,
(B) In other words,
(C) Still,
(D) Moreover,

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

18 MODULE 2 LEVEL · TRANSITIONS

My answer

The ink used in many medieval manuscripts contained iron salts that slowly react with moisture in the air to form acids. _____ pages written with this ink can, over the centuries, develop holes where the letters once were, as the ink gradually eats through the parchment.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

(A) Nevertheless,

(B) For instance,

(C) Meanwhile,

(D) Thus,

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

BEFORE YOU CHECK THE KEY

For each answer, say the relationship out loud in plain words. If you cannot name it, mark it as a guess, even if it turns out right.

STUCK IN SAT Your Trusted Ally

04

PART 4 · NOTES QUESTIONS · RHETORICAL SYNTHESIS

The goal decides. The notes only supply.

Read the last line first.

ANATOMY OF A NOTES QUESTION

1 · The notes	4–6 bullet points about one topic: a person, a study, two places. Usually facts, numbers and dates.
2 · The goal	"The student wants to emphasize a similarity…", "introduce … to an unfamiliar audience", "present the finding…". This line is the whole question.
3 · The question	"Which choice most effectively uses relevant information from the notes to accomplish this goal?"
4 · The options	Four smooth sentences. Usually three do a different job than the goal asks.
Where it sits	At the very end of every module. Tired students rush them, so they are the most expensive points to lose.

THE LAST 5 SECONDS

You can often answer a notes question without reading a single bullet. But the last 5 seconds should always go to checking your answer against the notes.

NOTES · WHY STUDENTS LOSE THEM

Six mistakes that cost the easiest points.

1 **You read the notes first.**
You spend a minute on details, then fall for the option that uses the most "interesting" fact. Read the goal first.

2 **You pick the option that uses the MOST notes.**
More information is not better. The right answer uses only what the goal needs, and leaves the rest out.

3 **You pick a true, beautiful sentence that does a different job.**
Right topic, wrong goal = wrong answer. Every option sounds good on purpose.

4 **You skip the small words in the goal.**
"both", "two", "specific", "unfamiliar audience", "while acknowledging a limitation": each one deletes options.

5 **You pick an option that names both things but compares nothing.**
"X is in Chile, and Y is in Namibia" mentions both but shows no similarity or difference. College Board's own sample uses this trap.

6 **You believe "every option is true".**
Myth. A College Board research report found students were ignoring the notes, so some questions now include options that misstate the notes. Others add a cause or an "always" that the notes never say.

NOTES · THE 5 STRATEGIES

Goal first. Notes second. Always.

STRATEGY 1 Read the goal first

Jump straight to "The student wants to...". Everything else is decided by this line.

> **Example:** Goal: "emphasize a similarity between the two deserts." Before reading anything else, you already know the answer must mention BOTH deserts and show how they are ALIKE.

STRATEGY 2 Circle the verb and the small words

The verb tells you the job (emphasize, introduce, present, explain, contrast). The small words narrow it (both, two, specific, unfamiliar, familiar, while acknowledging).

> **Example:** "Introduce the album to an audience unfamiliar with Kalpana Rao" → the answer must say who Rao is.

STRATEGY 3 Predict what the answer must contain

Before reading the options, write a 3-word prediction. Use the table on the next page.

> **Example:** Difference → both things + while / whereas / unlike.

STRATEGY 4 Eliminate by goal, then verify with the notes

Cross out every option that does a different job, however true it is. Then spend 5 seconds checking the survivor: wrong numbers? an added cause? an "always"?

> **Example:** "Bees produced more honey because wildflowers are more nutritious" → the notes say the cause is unknown. Out.

STRATEGY 5 Check where the emphasis sits

What the goal wants to emphasize must be in the main clause, not hidden in a side clause.

> **Example:** Goal: present the finding. "Weber, who found 40% less biofilm, tested a coating" hides the finding. "Weber found 40% less biofilm" puts it first.

GOAL → WHAT THE RIGHT ANSWER MUST CONTAIN

IF THE GOAL SAYS…	THE ANSWER MUST HAVE…
emphasize a similarity	both things + like / both / similarly / also
emphasize a difference	both things + while / whereas / unlike / by contrast
present a finding or result	the result as the MAIN clause, with the numbers
introduce to an UNFAMILIAR audience	a short identifier: who or what it is
present to a FAMILIAR audience	no definitions: go straight to the point
explain an advantage or a cause	the benefit or the reason, clearly stated
summarize a study / its method	aim + method, in order
make and support a generalization	a general claim + one specific example from the notes

NOTES · SOLVE LIVE

Five Module 2 questions.

Goal first. Circle the verb and the small words. Predict. Then eliminate.

19 MODULE 2 LEVEL · NOTES

My answer

While researching a topic, a student has taken the following notes:

- In 2016, biologist Lena Park studied how city noise affects songbirds.
- Park compared recordings of birds living in city parks with recordings of birds living in nearby forests.
- In 2021, biologist Omar Haddad studied how artificial light affects songbirds.
- Haddad also compared recordings of birds in city parks with recordings of birds in forests.
- Park found that city birds sang at higher pitches; Haddad found that city birds began singing earlier in the morning.

The student wants to emphasize a similarity between the two studies' methods.

Which choice most effectively uses relevant information from the notes to accomplish this goal?

(A) Like Park, Haddad compared recordings of songbirds living in city parks with recordings of songbirds living in forests.

(B) Park and Haddad both studied how city conditions affect songbirds, though Park focused on noise and Haddad on light.

(C) While Park found that city birds sang at higher pitches, Haddad found that city birds began singing earlier.

(D) Park's 2016 study and Haddad's 2021 study both found that city birds sing differently from forest birds.

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

MY WORKING

The goal's verb	Small words	My prediction

20 MODULE 2 LEVEL · NOTES

My answer

While researching a topic, a student has taken the following notes:

- Kalpana Rao is a sound engineer based in Mumbai.
- Her 2023 album Ice Speaks is built entirely from recordings of melting glaciers.
- She made the recordings with underwater microphones in Greenland.
- A major music magazine named Ice Speaks one of the year's best experimental albums.
- Critics have praised the album's "eerie, crackling textures."

The student wants to introduce Ice Speaks to an audience unfamiliar with Rao and her work.

Which choice most effectively uses relevant information from the notes to accomplish this goal?

(A) Built entirely from underwater recordings of melting glaciers, Ice Speaks was named one of the year's best experimental albums.

(B) Kalpana Rao's album Ice Speaks has been praised by critics for its "eerie, crackling textures."

(C) Rao, who is based in Mumbai, recorded melting glaciers in Greenland using underwater microphones.

(D) Ice Speaks, a 2023 album by Mumbai-based sound engineer Kalpana Rao, is built entirely from underwater recordings of melting glaciers in Greenland.

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

MY WORKING

The goal's verb _____ Small words _____ My prediction _____

21 MODULE 2 LEVEL · NOTES

My answer

While researching a topic, a student has taken the following notes:

- Biofilm is a thin layer of bacteria that sticks to surfaces.
- Biofilm on ship hulls increases drag, which raises fuel costs.
- Researcher Tomas Weber tested a new hull coating on 12 cargo ships.
- Another 12 cargo ships of the same size received no coating.
- After six months, ships with the coating had 40% less biofilm than ships without it.

The student wants to present Weber's finding to an audience already familiar with biofilm.

Which choice most effectively uses relevant information from the notes to accomplish this goal?

(A) Biofilm, a thin layer of bacteria that increases drag on ship hulls, was reduced by 40% on cargo ships treated with Weber's coating.

(B) Weber, who found a 40% reduction in biofilm, tested his new hull coating on 12 cargo ships over six months.

(C) After six months, cargo ships treated with Weber's new hull coating had 40% less biofilm than untreated ships.

(D) To study biofilm, which raises fuel costs by increasing drag, Weber compared 12 coated cargo ships with 12 uncoated ones.

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

MY WORKING

The goal's verb _____ Small words _____ My prediction _____

22 MODULE 2 LEVEL · NOTES

My answer

While researching a topic, a student has taken the following notes:

- In 2022, researchers studied honeybees in 30 hives.
- Half of the hives were placed near fields of wildflowers.
- The other half were placed near fields of a single crop.
- Over one summer, bees near wildflowers produced 25% more honey.
- The researchers say more studies are needed to explain why.

The student wants to accurately present the study's main result.

Which choice most effectively uses relevant information from the notes to accomplish this goal?

(A) In a 2022 study of 30 hives, bees kept near wildflower fields produced 25% more honey over one summer than bees kept near single-crop fields.

(B) Bees kept near wildflower fields produced 25% more honey, a result the researchers attribute to the greater variety of nectar.

(C) In the 2022 study, bees kept near single-crop fields produced 25% less honey than bees kept near wildflowers.

(D) A 2022 study found that wildflowers increase honey production by 25% in bee colonies.

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

MY WORKING

The goal's verb _____ Small words _____ My prediction _____

23 MODULE 2 LEVEL · NOTES

My answer

While researching a topic, a student has taken the following notes:

- The Akashi Kaikyo Bridge in Japan opened in 1998.
- Its central span is 1,991 meters long.
- The 1915 Çanakkale Bridge in Türkiye opened in 2022.
- Its central span is 2,023 meters long.
- Both are suspension bridges.

The student wants to emphasize the difference between the lengths of the two bridges' central spans.

Which choice most effectively uses relevant information from the notes to accomplish this goal?

(A) The 1915 Çanakkale Bridge, which opened in 2022, has a central span of 2,023 meters.

(B) The central span of the 1915 Çanakkale Bridge is 2,023 meters long, 32 meters longer than that of the Akashi Kaikyo Bridge.

(C) Although both are suspension bridges, the Akashi Kaikyo Bridge opened in 1998, while the 1915 Çanakkale Bridge opened in 2022.

(D) The Akashi Kaikyo Bridge and the 1915 Çanakkale Bridge both have central spans of roughly two kilometers.

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

MY WORKING

The goal's verb _____ Small words _____ My prediction _____

SELF-CHECK

Of today's 23 numbered questions, how many did you mark **Sure** ____ **50/50** ____ **Guess** ____ ?

THE HOOK, AGAIN

Now try it in 20 seconds.

Same question as the start of the session. Use the rules, not your ear.

MODULE 2 LEVEL · THE HOOK

My answer

In the decades after the 1755 earthquake, Lisbon's chroniclers focused almost entirely on the destruction of palaces and churches. The collection of private letters that historian Inês Duarte recently uncovered in the archive of a merchant family from the city's Alfama _____ a far less familiar picture: residents trading food, sheltering strangers, and rebuilding entire streets without royal help.

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

(A) district, offers

(B) district offers

(C) district; offers

(D) district, offer

Trap: _____ How sure? ☐ Sure ☐ 50/50 ☐ Guess

DID YOUR ANSWER CHANGE?

Find the main verb: **offers**. Its subject is "collection" (one), not "letters" or "family". Subject and verb are welded: no punctuation between them (Rule 8, the Pause Trap). The answer is **B**. If you are now Sure, today worked.

WHAT YOUR EAR DID

It heard "letters … offer" and wanted a pause after the long subject. Both are traps the SAT builds on purpose. That is why we stop trusting it.

SESSION 1 · RECAP

Tick every trap you can now catch.

PUNCTUATION

- ☐ 01 The Pause Trap
- ☐ 02 The “However” Owner
- ☐ 03 The Colon Test
- ☐ 04 The Fence Trap
- ☐ 05 The Hidden Boundary

TRANSITIONS

- ☐ 01 The Familiar-Word Trap
- ☐ 02 Example vs. Specification vs. Restatement
- ☐ 03 Emphasis Mistaken for Contrast
- ☐ 04 The Nearest-Sentence Trap
- ☐ 05 Contrast vs. Concession vs. Replacement

MY SCORE TODAY

__ / 3	__ / 10	__ / 5	__ / 5
PUNCTUATION	GRAMMAR	TRANSITIONS	NOTES

MY TRAP LOG

The trap that caught me most today: _____

The rule I will use first on 5 December: _____

STUCK IN SAT
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HOMEWORK · REAL QUESTIONS, FREE

Practise on real SAT questions before Session 2.

College Board's SAT Suite Question Bank is free and uses real SAT-style questions. Do the set below before 30 November, and tick Sure / 50-50 / Guess on every question.

SKILL (CHOOSE IN THE FILTER)	DIFFICULTY	HOW MANY	SCORE
Boundaries	Hard	5	__ / 5
Form, Structure, and Sense	Hard	5	__ / 5
Transitions	Hard	5	__ / 5
Rhetorical Synthesis	Hard	5	__ / 5

How: search "SAT Suite Question Bank" → Reading and Writing → choose the skill → difficulty Hard → start. Write the trap name next to every question you miss.

NEXT · SESSION 2 · 30 NOVEMBER **The Answer Must Be Proven**

Quote questions · graphs & data · complete-the-text. Bring your homework score.

CHEAT SHEET · KEEP THIS PAGE · PRINT IT, STICK IT ON YOUR DESK

Punctuation • count the engines

Two engines? Engine + trolley? One engine? The answer decides the coupler.

BETWEEN…	USE	NEVER
engine + engine	**. ; , + FANBOYS ; however,**	a comma alone (splice) · however with commas only
engine + explanation / list	**: or — with a full engine BEFORE it**	a colon after includes / such as / are
opening trolley + engine	**,**	; or . after the trolley
engine + because / when / if…	**usually nothing**	a reflex comma
extra info in the middle	**a matching pair: , … , — … — (…)**	a comma + a dash
essential info (title + name, "that…")	**nothing**	a fence of commas
subject ↔ verb (any length)	**nothing**	any single mark

1. Pause Trap

Long subject? Find the verb. Nothing goes right before it.

2. "However" Owner

Attach "however" to the clause that contrasts with the previous sentence. The stop goes on the other side.

3. Colon Test

Cover what follows the colon. A full sentence must be left.

4. Fence Trap

Open = close. A title + name gets no fence.

5. Hidden Boundary

Verb options + a printed comma: don't build a second engine.

6. Twin Rule

Two options doing the same job? Neither is the only answer.

CHEAT SHEET · KEEP THIS PAGE · PRINT IT, STICK IT ON YOUR DESK

Grammar • only 6 things are tested

Options change words → grammar. Find the subject. Has the real verb arrived?

1 • Real verb

Needs a real (finite) verb. -ing / to + verb / having + verb cannot be the main verb. After who / which / that → a real verb. The most common grammar type.

2 • Agreement

Cross out "of…", fences and who/which clauses. each / every / one of = singular. A and B = plural. Inverted → subject after the verb. "The number" = singular.

3 • Tense

Match the neighbours. since / so far → has / have. Earlier past → had. Novels and poems → present. would … and + base verb.

4 • Modifier

The first noun after the opening phrase's comma must be the doer. A possessive does not count.

5 • Pronoun

company / city / team / museum = it / its. Find the noun it replaces.

6 • Possessive

its / their / whose: no apostrophe. it's = it is. One owner → 's · many → s'.

10-SECOND ROUTINE

1. Words or marks change? 2. Find the subject. 3. Real verb yet? 4. Time words?

DON'T STUDY

who / whom · I / me · affect / effect · idioms. Not official testing points on the digital SAT.

CHEAT SHEET · KEEP THIS PAGE · PRINT IT, STICK IT ON YOUR DESK

Transitions • name it, then match it

Cover the options. Read two sentences. Say the link in plain words. Then match.

IF THE LINK IS…	WORDS	DON'T CONFUSE WITH
a simple opposite	however · by contrast ★	concession
true despite that	that said ★ · nevertheless · still	simple contrast
I admit…, then turn	granted · admittedly	however
this replaces that	instead · rather	however
so / because of that	therefore · thus · hence ★ · consequently · accordingly	sequence (then)
action to reach a goal	to that end ★	as a result
THE exact one	specifically ★	for example
one case of many	for example · for instance	specifically / in fact
the same idea again	in other words · that is	for example
same direction, stronger	in fact ★ · indeed ★	contrast
a new case, same idea	similarly · likewise	indeed
one more point	moreover · in addition	use only if nothing sharper fits

FROM THE DATA

Hard questions: for example / for instance **0 right in 41** · in other words 1 in 20 · summary words never right · however 2 in 15. Star words: specifically, by contrast, in fact, indeed.

CHEAT SHEET · KEEP THIS PAGE · PRINT IT, STICK IT ON YOUR DESK

Notes questions • goal first

They come last in every module. Never leave them blank.

1. Goal first

Read "The student wants to…" before any bullet.

2. Circle

The verb (emphasize, introduce, present) + the small words (both, two, specific, audience).

3. Predict

Use the table: what MUST the answer contain?

4. Eliminate, then verify

Cut every option doing another job. Then a 5-second check: wrong numbers? an added cause? "always"?

5. Main clause = main point

What the goal emphasizes belongs in the main clause.

6. Save time for them

Move fast on grammar so you reach the notes questions.

GOAL SAYS	ANSWER MUST HAVE
emphasize a similarity	both things + like / both / similarly / also
emphasize a difference	both things + while / whereas / unlike / by contrast
present a finding or result	the result as the MAIN clause, with the numbers
introduce to an UNFAMILIAR audience	a short identifier: who or what it is
present to a FAMILIAR audience	no definitions: go straight to the point
explain an advantage or a cause	the benefit or the reason, clearly stated

MYTH BUSTER

"All options are true" is no longer safe. College Board now writes some options that misstate the notes. Goal first, then a quick fact check.

ANSWER KEY · CHECK AFTER THE SESSION

All 24 answers, and why the others fail.

Every wrong option breaks a rule you met today. If you can name the rule, the answer is yours.

Hook	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
B	A	D	C	C	B
Q6	**Q7**	**Q8**	**Q9**	**Q10**	**Q11**
D	A	B	C	A	D
Q12	**Q13**	**Q14**	**Q15**	**Q16**	**Q17**
B	C	A	D	B	C
Q18	**Q19**	**Q20**	**Q21**	**Q22**	**Q23**
D	A	D	C	A	B

Hook
B

Main verb **offers**; subject "collection" (one). Subject and verb are welded, so nothing goes between them. Rule 8 · Pause Trap

A a comma cuts the subject from its verb. **C** a semicolon needs a full sentence on both sides. **D** "offer" is plural; the subject is one collection.

Q1
A

"Though" contrasts modern listeners with the early reviewers in the previous sentence, so it closes the first clause. The second clause explains why they disagree, so a semicolon joins the two engines. "However" Owner

B puts the contrast on the second clause, but the harmonies sentence explains the disagreement; it does not oppose it. **C** comma splice. **D** run-on.

Q2
D

A comma is already printed, so the part after it must stay a trolley: "the journey taking nearly three weeks". Hidden Boundary

A, **B** a real verb makes a second engine → comma splice. **C** "it took" adds a subject and verb → splice.

Q3
C

Vidal made more than forty portraits, so "Vidal's portrait" alone does not tell you which one. The title is essential: no fence. Fence Trap

A commas mark the title as extra, as if she made only one portrait. **B** one comma splits the subject from "used". **D** opens with a dash, closes with a comma.

Q4
C

Cross out "of threads that links these roots" and the which-clause: the subject is **network** (one) → transfers. Box 2

A, **D** not real verbs. **B** agrees with "roots"/"threads", the nearest nouns, not the subject.

Q5
B

After "that", the clause needs a real verb: a dictionary that **documents**. Box 1

A, **C**, **D** -ing, to + verb and having + verb cannot be the clause's verb.

Q6 **D**

With neither … nor, the verb agrees with the nearer subject: "records" (plural) → **explain**. Box 2

A, **B**, **C** are all singular.

Q7 **A**

Inverted sentence: the subject comes after the blank, "a set" (one) → **was**. Past tense matches "uncovered". Box 2

B, **C**, **D** are plural; they agree with "weights", which sits inside the "of" phrase.

Q8 **B**

The pronoun replaces "the octopus" (one) and shows ownership → **its**. Box 5–6

A plural. **C** it's = it is. **D** they're = they are.

Q9 **C**

"By the time … was launched in 1990": the campaigning happened before another past event and kept going → **had been campaigning**. Box 3

A present perfect ties to now. **B**, **D** present tense in a 1990 story.

Q10 **A**

The person who "spent two years interviewing" must come right after the comma: **historian Ruth Adeyemi**. Box 4

B a possessive does not count: the book did not interview anyone. **C** daily life, **D** the book: neither did the interviewing.

Q11 **D**

Hundreds of snails own the shells → **snails'**. One single bay owns the water → **bay's**. Box 6

A one snail; many bays. **B** "snails" shows no ownership. **C** "bays'" means many bays, but the text says a single bay.

Q12 **B**

One committee owns the report → **the committee's**. Box 6

A many committees. **C** plural, no ownership. **D** no ownership at all.

Q13 **C**

Cross out "that condense on its back": the subject is **droplets** (many) → roll. Box 1–2

A singular, agrees with "back". **B**, **D** not real verbs, so the clause after "and" has no verb.

Q14 **A**

The second sentence spells out what "influence far greater than its numbers" means in practice: lose a few, and the whole ecosystem changes. That is restatement. Trap 2

B the sentence is a general claim, not one case; the otter case comes later, inside it ("as happened when"). **C** nothing is true despite anything. **D** not a new, parallel case.

Q15 **D**

Same direction, stronger: the results were so good the trial was stopped early → **Indeed.** Trap 3

A not a new, similar case. **B** no concession. **C** the vaccine's success is the same fact as the great results, not a result of them.

Q16 **B**

Phalaropes reverse the normal pattern described first → **by contrast.** Trap 5

A phalaropes are not an example of males competing. **C** "in turn" is sequence or exchange. **D** says "the same", the opposite of the truth.

Q17 **C**

The study has weaknesses, yet its finding was confirmed anyway: true despite the first point → **Still.** Trap 5

A the weaknesses did not cause the confirmation. **B** not the same idea again. **D** not one more criticism.

Q18 **D**

Acids form, so the pages develop holes: cause → effect → **Thus.** Map: cause

A no contrast. **B** the holes are a result, not an example. **C** "meanwhile" is time only.

Q19 **A**

Goal: similarity in METHODS. Only A gives the shared method: both compared city-park and forest recordings.

B similar topic, then a difference. **C** a difference in findings. **D** a similarity in findings, not methods.

Q20 **D**

Unfamiliar audience: say what Ice Speaks is AND who Rao is (Mumbai-based sound engineer).

A never mentions Rao. **B** names Rao but not who she is or what the album is. **C** is about Rao's recording, not the album.

Q21 **C**

Familiar audience, present the finding: the result with numbers in the main clause, no definition.

A defines biofilm for people who already know it, and "reduced by 40%" changes the comparison (coated vs. uncoated ships, not before vs. after). **B** hides the finding in a side clause. **D** describes the method, not the finding.

Q22 **A**

Accurate main result, with the comparison the notes give.

B adds a cause; the notes say the reason is unknown. **C** wrong number: if single-crop hives made 100, wildflower hives made 125, and 100 is 20% less than 125, not 25%. **D** turns one study into a general cause.

Q23 **B**

Difference in LENGTH: 2,023 − 1,991 = 32 meters. Only B compares the two spans.

A one bridge only. **C** a difference in opening dates. **D** a similarity.

BETWEEN SESSIONS

Keep going with us.

Bring your questions to the next session, or drop them in our Discord any time before 5 December. Rashmi and Ronak answer there.

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Stuck on one question type?

Send us a DM on Instagram with the word **HELP** and the question. We reply ourselves.

HELP

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