## Basic Skills Test - Language Arts Study Guide

## **Grammar & Usage**

## Subject-verb agreement

Singular subjects need singular verbs; plural subjects need plural verbs.

My **brother is** a nutritionist.

My sisters are mathematicians.

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/sv\_agr.htm

Quiz on Subject-verb agreement

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/cgi-shl/quiz.pl/sv\_agr\_quiz.htm

#### Verb tense

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/601/01/

English has three time frames: past, present, and future

Past- Last year I went on vacation to Disney World.

Present- Right now I am on Spring vacation in Mexico.

Future- Tomorrow I will go on vacation to Mexico.

Quiz/Tutorial on verb tense http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/verbtenseintro.html

### **Consistency of verb tense**

http://www.towson.edu/ows/tenseconsistency.htm

Keep tenses consistent within sentences.

Do not change tenses when there is no time change for the action.

During the movie, Sam stood up and then dropped his popcorn.

#### Pronouns

http://www.towson.edu/ows/pro\_antagree.htm

Generally (but not always) pronouns stand for (pro + noun) or refer to a noun, an individual or individuals or thing or things (the pronoun's antecedent) whose identity is made clear earlier in the text.

Pronouns are words like *I*, *me* (personal pronouns) or *my*, *mine* (possessive pronouns) which take the place of a noun. In the following sentence, instead of repeating President Lincoln, the pronoun his takes its place.

President Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address in 1863.

### **Pronoun-antecedent agreement**

http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/agreement\_pa.htm

An **antecedent** is a word for which a pronoun stands. (*ante* = "before")

Pronoun antecedent agreement is when the pronoun agrees in number (referring to singular or plural) and person (referring to first, second, or third person) with its antecedent.

When an employee does not agree with his boss's decision, the employee should not support that decision.

Antecedent (Employee) is singular therefore the Pronoun (his) agrees with it in number.

## **Possessive pronouns**

http://englishplus.com/grammar/00000023.htm

Certain pronouns called **possessive pronouns** show **ownership.** Some are used alone; some describe a noun.

That computer is **hers**.

It belongs to me, it's mine.

More examples: <a href="http://a4esl.org/q/h/vc-pronouns-lb.html">http://a4esl.org/q/h/vc-pronouns-lb.html</a>

Quiz on possessive pronouns http://a4esl.org/q/h/vc-pronouns-lb.html

## **Relative pronouns**

http://www.englishclub.com/grammar/pronouns-relative.htm

A relative pronoun is a pronoun that introduces a relative clause. It is called a "relative" pronoun because it "relates" to the word that it modifies. Here is an example:

• The person **who** phoned me last night is my teacher.

In the above example, "who":

- relates to "person", which it modifies
- introduces the relative clause "who phoned me last night"

Quiz on relative pronouns

http://www.englischhilfen.de/en/exercises/pronouns/relative pronouns.htm

#### **Demonstrative pronouns**

http://www.englishclub.com/grammar/pronouns-demonstrative.htm

A demonstrative pronoun represents a thing or things:

- near in distance or time (this, these)
- far in distance or time (that, those)

#### Examples:

- This tastes good.
- Have you seen **this**?
- **These** are bad times.
- Do you like **these**?

#### Demonstrative pronoun quiz

http://www.mcwdn.org/grammar/prodemonquiz/prodemonquiz.html

#### Adverbs

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/adverbs.htm

Adverbs are words that modify

- a verb (He drove slowly. How did he drive?)
- an <u>adjective</u> (He drove a <u>very</u> fast car. How fast was his car?)
- another adverb (She moved <u>quite</u> slowly down the aisle. How slowly did she move?)

Adverb Quiz <a href="http://www.softschools.com/quizzes/grammar/adverb/quiz200.html">http://www.softschools.com/quizzes/grammar/adverb/quiz200.html</a>

## **Adjectives**

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/adjectives.htm

Adjectives are words that describe or modify another person or thing in the sentence. The  $\frac{\text{Articles}}{\text{Articles}}$  — a, an, and the — are adjectives.

Examples:

- <u>a six-year-old</u> child
- the unhappiest, richest man

Adjectives Quiz: http://www.softschools.com/quizzes/grammar/adjective/quiz219.html

#### **Prepositional phrases**

http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/prepositionalphrase.htm

A prepositional phrase will function as an <u>adjective</u> or <u>adverb</u>. As an adjective, the prepositional phrase will answer the question *Which one?* 

#### **Examples:**

The book *on the bathroom floor* is swollen from shower steam.

Which book? The one on the bathroom floor!

Preposition review quizzes

http://aliscot.com/bigdog/prep exercise.htm

http://www.softschools.com/quiz\_time/language\_arts/preposition/theme156.html

## **Conventions**

#### Comma splice

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/runons.htm

When two independent clauses are connected by *only* a comma, they constitute a run-on sentence that

is called a **comma-splice**.

Example: The sun is high, put on some sunblock.

When you use a comma to connect two independent clauses, it must be accompanied by a little conjunction (and, but, for, nor, yet, or, so).

Quiz on comma splices <a href="http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/quizzes/nova/nova4.htm">http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/quizzes/nova/nova4.htm</a>

#### **Punctuation marks**

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/marks/marks.htm

#### Period:

 $\underline{http://www.infoplease.com/cig/grammar-style/period-question-mark-exclamation-mark-end-line.html}$ 

Use a period after a complete sentence.

Example: A hangover is the wrath of grapes.

Use a period after a command.

*Example*: Please close the door behind you.

Use a period after most abbreviations.

Examples: Dr., Ms., Jr.

Don't use a period after the individual letters in an acronym. For example, write NATO, not N.A.T.O.

Use a period after an initial.

Example: John F. Kennedy

Use a period after each Roman numeral, letter, or number in an outline.

Example: 1.

Always place a period inside a quotation mark that ends a sentence.

Example: The sign read, "A pest is a friend in need."

#### **Question Mark:**

 $\underline{\text{http://www.infoplease.com/cig/grammar-style/period-question-mark-exclamation-mark-end-line.html}$ 

Use a question mark after a question.

*Example*: Isn't the Mason-Dixon line what separates y'all from youse guys?

Place the question mark inside of closing quotation marks if it is part of the quotation.

Example: In a dream, I heard someone asking, "Isn't atheism a nonprophet organization?"

Place the question mark outside of the closing quotation marks if it is *not* part of the quotation.

*Example*: Was it your mother who said, "The Lord prefers common-looking people; that's the reason he made so many of them"? (In such a circumstance, it's okay to drop the period from the quotation.)

#### **Exclamation Point:**

 $\underline{\text{http://www.infoplease.com/cig/grammar-style/period-question-mark-exclamation-mark-end-line.html}}$ 

Use an exclamation mark after an exclamatory sentence even though it is far more convincing to create emphasis by the force of your words rather than the force of your punctuation.

Example: "Apparent" is a large, old bossy person who tortures youth!

#### Colon:

http://grammar.about.com/od/c/g/colon.htm

used after a statement that introduces a quotation, an explanation, an example, or a series.

Examples:

"The airplane plip-plopped down the runway to a halt before the big sign: WELCOME TO CYPRUS."

(Leon Uris, *Exodus*, 1958)

"A liberal arts education creates citizens: people who can think broadly and critically about themselves and the world."

(William Deresiewicz, "Faulty Towers." *The Nation*, May 23, 2011)

"I have never made but one prayer to God, a very short one: 'O Lord, make my enemies ridiculous.' And God granted it."
(Voltaire)

"There are three choices in this life: be good, get good, or give up." (Dr. House, *House*, *M.D.*)

#### **Semicolon:**

http://theoatmeal.com/comics/semicolon

#### Hyphen:

http://www.enchantedlearning.com/grammar/punctuation/

A hyphen is used between parts of a compound word or name. It is also used to split a word by syllables to fit on a line of text.

*Example:* The sixteen-year-old girl is a full-time student.

#### Dash:

http://www.lousywriter.com/punctuation\_dash.php

The *Dash* is generally confined to cases where there is a sudden break from the general run of the passage. Of all the punctuation marks it is the most misused.

- 1. It is employed to denote sudden change in the construction or sentiment: "The Heroes of the Civil War,—how we cherish them." "He was a fine fellow—in his own opinion."
- 2. When a word or expression is repeated for oratorical effect, a dash is used to introduce the repetition: "Shakespeare was the greatest of all poets—Shakespeare, the intellectual ocean whose waves washed the continents of all thought."

- 3. The Dash is used to indicate a conclusion without expressing it: "He is an excellent man but—"
- 4. It is used to indicate what is not expected or what is not the natural outcome of what has gone before: "He delved deep into the bowels of the earth and found instead of the hidden treasure—a button."
- 5. It is used to denote the omission of letters or figures: "J—n J—s for John Jones; 1908-9 for 1908 and 1909; Matthew VII:5-8 for Matthew VII:5, 6, 7, and 8.
- 6. When an ellipsis of the words, *namely, that is, to wit,* etc., takes place, the dash is used to supply them: "He excelled in three branches—arithmetic, algebra, and geometry."
- 7. A dash is used to denote the omission of part of a word when it is undesirable to write the full word: He is somewhat of a r——l (rascal). This is especially the case in profane words.
- 8. Between a citation and the authority for it there is generally a dash: "All the world's a stage."—*Shakespeare*.
- 9. When questions and answers are put in the same paragraph they should be separated by dashes: "Are you a good boy? Yes, Sir.—Do you love study? I do."

#### **Parentheses:**

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/marks/parentheses.htm

USE PARENTHESES [()] TO INCLUDE MATERIAL THAT YOU WANT TO DE-EMPHASIZE or that wouldn't normally fit into the flow of your text but you want to include nonetheless. If the material within parentheses appears within a sentence, do not use a capital letter or period to punctuate that material, even if the material is itself a complete sentence. (A question mark or exclamation mark, however, might be appropriate and necessary.) If the material within your parentheses is written as a separate sentence (not included within another sentence), punctuate it as if it were a separate sentence.

- Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost (we remember him at Kennedy's inauguration) remains America's favorite poet.
- Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost (do you remember him?) remains America's favorite poet.
- Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost remains America's favorite poet. (We remember him at Kennedy's inauguration.)

#### **Brackets:**

You can use them to include explanatory words or phrases within quoted language:

*Example:* Lew Perkins, the Director of Athletic Programs, said that Pumita Espinoza, the new soccer coach [at Notre Dame Academy] is going to be a real winner.

If you are quoting material and you've had to change the capitalization of a word or change a pronoun to make the material fit into your sentence, enclose that changed letter or word(s) within brackets:

*Example*: Espinoza charged her former employer with "falsification of [her] coaching record."

## **Ellipsis:**

A series of marks that usually indicate an intentional omission of a word, sentence or whole section from the original text being quoted. An ellipsis can also be used to indicate an unfinished thought or, at the end of a sentence, a trailing off into silence (aposiopesis). It can also be used at the end of a sentence to emphasize a statement. When placed at the beginning or end of a sentence, the ellipsis can also inspire a feeling of melancholy longing.

*Example*: Let's take the sentence, "The ceremony honored twelve brilliant athletes from the Caribbean who were visiting the U.S." and leave out "from the Caribbean who were":

The ceremony honored twelve brilliant athletes ... visiting the U.S.

#### **Apostrophe:**

WE USE AN APOSTROPHE [ '] TO CREATE POSSESSIVE FORMS, CONTRACTIONS, AND SOME PLURALS (SEE <u>BELOW</u>). The apostrophe shows where a letter or letters have been left out of a contracted verb:

am = I'm	you are = you're	she is = she's	it is = it's
do not = don't	she would = she'd	he would have = he would've	
let us = let's	who is = who's	she will = she'll	they had = they'd

In **possessives**, the placement of the apostrophe depends on whether the noun that shows possession is singular or plural

Generally, if the noun is singular, the apostrophe goes before the s.

Example: The witch's broom.

If the noun is plural, the apostrophe goes after the s

Example: The witches' brooms

## **Quotation marks**

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/capitals.htm

USE **QUOTATION MARKS** [ " "] TO SET OFF MATERIAL THAT REPRESENTS QUOTED OR SPOKEN LANGUAGE. Quotation marks also set off the titles of things that do not normally stand by themselves: short stories, poems, and articles. Usually, a quotation is set off from the rest of the sentence by a comma; however, the typography of quoted material can become quite complicated.

Example: The phrase "lovely, dark and deep" begins to suggest ominous overtones.

My father always said, "Be careful what you wish for."

#### Comma:

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/commas.htm

Use a comma to separate the elements in a series (three or more things), including the last two.

Examples: "He hit the ball, dropped the bat, and ran to first base."

Use a comma + a little conjunction (and, but, for, nor, yet, or, so) to connect two <u>independent</u> clauses.

Example: "He hit the ball well, but he ran toward third base."

## Use a comma to set off introductory elements

Example: "Running toward third base, he suddenly realized how stupid he looked."

## Use a comma to set off parenthetical elements

Example "The Founders Bridge, which spans the Connecticut River, is falling down."

### **QUIZ ON PUNCTUATION MARKS:**

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/quizzes/quotes\_quiz.htm

#### Capitalization

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/592/1/

### The first words of a sentence

*Example*: When he tells a joke, he sometimes forgets the punch line.

## The pronoun "I"

Example: The last time I visited Atlanta was several years ago.

## Proper nouns (the names of specific people, places, organizations, and sometimes things)

Example: Worrill Fabrication Company

Golden Gate Bridge

Supreme Court

Livingston, Missouri

Atlantic Ocean

Mothers Against Drunk Driving

## Family relationships (when used as proper names)

Example: I sent a thank-you note to Aunt Abigail, but not to my other aunts.

Here is a present I bought for Mother.

Did you buy a present for your mother?

## The names of God, specific deities, religious figures, and holy books

Example: God the Father

the Virgin Mary

the Bible

the Greek gods

Moses

Shiva

Buddha

Zeus

## Titles preceding names, but not titles that follow names

Example: She worked as the assistant to Mayor Hanolovi.

I was able to interview Miriam Moss, mayor of Littonville.

## <u>Directions that are names (North, South, East, and West when used as sections of the country, but not as compass directions)</u>

Example: The Patels have moved to the Southwest.

Jim's house is two miles north of Otterbein.

## The days of the week, the months of the year, and holidays (but not the seasons used generally)

Examples: Halloween

October

Friday

winter

spring

fall

## **Exception: Seasons are capitalized when used in a title.**

Example: The Fall 1999 semester

## The names of countries, nationalities, and specific languages

Example: Costa Rica

Spanish

French

English

### The first word in a sentence that is a direct quote

*Example*: Emerson once said, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds."

# The major words in the titles of books, articles, and songs (but not short prepositions or the articles "the," "a," or "an," if they are not the first word of the title)

*Example*: One of Jerry's favorite books is *The Catcher in the Rye*.

## Members of national, political, racial, social, civic, and athletic groups

Example: Green Bay Packers

African-Americans

Anti-Semitic

**Democrats** 

Friends of the Wilderness

Chinese

## Periods and events (but not century numbers)

Example: Victorian Era

**Great Depression** 

**Constitutional Convention** 

sixteenth century

Trademarks

Pepsi

Honda

IBM

Microsoft Word

## Words and abbreviations of specific names (but not names of things that came from specific things but are now general types)

Examples: Freudian

**NBC** 

pasteurize UN french fries italics

## Spelling

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/660/01/