

# **The SAT and PSAT Multiple Choice Writing Section**

## **(P)SAT Writing Section**

- The writing section is designed to test students' knowledge of the elements of good composition and to give colleges an idea of their writing ability.
- On the PSAT you will have 30 minutes to answer 39 questions. On the SAT, you will have 25 minutes to answer 35 multiple choice questions in one section and 10 minutes to answer 14 questions in another section.

## **(P)SAT Writing Section**

The questions will be of three types:

- \* **identifying sentence errors**--these questions ask you to detect an error within a sentence or indicate that there is not error

- \* **improving sentences**--these questions ask you to choose the best, most effective form of a sentence

- \* **improving paragraphs**--these questions ask you to make choices about improving the logic, coherence, or organization in a flawed passages.

## **(P)SAT Writing Section--Multiple Choice**

Writing Skills questions focus on common problems associated with characteristics of effective writing.

- Being consistent
  - \* Sequence of tenses
  - \* Shift of pronoun person
  - \* Parallelism
  - \* Noun-number agreement
  - \* Pronoun-number agreement
  - \* Subject-verb agreement

## **(P)SAT Writing Section--Multiple choice**

Writing Skills questions focus on common problems associated with characteristics of effective writing.

- Expressing ideas logically
  - \* Coordination and subordination
  - \* Logical comparison
  - \* Modification and word order
- Being clear and precise
  - \* Ambiguous and vague pronouns
  - \* Diction
  - \* Wordiness
  - \* Missing subject
  - \* Weak passive verbs

## **(P)SAT Writing Section--Multiple Choice**

Writing Skills questions focus on common problems associated with characteristics of effective writing.

- Following conventions

- \* Adjective and adverb confusion
- \* Double negative
- \* Pronoun case
- \* Idiom
- \* Comparison of modifiers
- \* Sentence fragment
- \* Comma splice or fused sentence

- Also, students are asked to recognize effective writing. The questions will focus on writing strategies.

## **(P)SAT Writing Section Strategies**

### **In the Identifying Sentence Errors Section**

- Read the entire sentence carefully but quickly.
- Look at choices (A) through (D) to see whether anything needs to be changed to make the sentence correct.
- Don't waste time searching for errors. Mark (E) No Error on your answer sheet if you believe the sentence is correct as written.
- Move quickly through this section. The other kinds of questions (Improving Sentences and Improving Paragraphs) will probably take more time.
- Mark questions that seem hard and return to them later.

## PSAT Writing Section Strategies

**In the Identifying Sentence Errors Section the questions look like this:**

EXAMPLE:

The other delegates and him immediately accepted the  
A B C  
resolution drafted by the neutral states. No error  
D E

## **(P)SAT Writing Section Strategies**

### **In the Improving Sentences Section**

- Read the entire sentence carefully but quickly.
- Remember that the portion with no underline stays the same.
- Mark choice (A) if the underlined portion seems correct.
- Think of how you would revise the underlined portion if it seems wrong.
- Replace the underlined portion of the sentence with choices (B) through (E) if you don't find your revision.

## **(P)SAT Writing Section Strategies**

**In the Improving Sentences Section, the questions look like this:**

**EXAMPLE:**

Laura Ingalls Wilder published her first book and she was sixty-five years old then.

- (A) and she was sixty-five years old then
- (B) when she was sixty-five
- (C) being age sixty-five years old
- (D) upon the reaching of sixty-five years
- (E) at the time when she was sixty-five.

## **(P)SAT Writing Section Strategies**

### **In the Improving Paragraphs Section**

- Read the entire essay quickly to determine its overall meaning. The essay is meant to be a draft, so don't be surprised if you notice errors. Don't linger over these errors.
- Make sure that your answer about a particular sentence or sentences makes sense in the context of the passage as a whole.
- Choose the best answer from among the choices given, Even if you can image another correct response.

## **The (P)SAT Writing Section--Princeton Review**

This section contains sections on

- error identification
- improving sentences
- improving paragraphs

Work on the first two types of questions before preparing for the third type. You must practice for this section of the test, not just review grammar and usage.

This questions in this section are not arranged in order of difficulty.

## The (P)SAT Writing Section--Princeton Review

- Do Error Identification first. They are quick and you can use process of elimination.
- Do Improving Sentence questions next, but plan to skip ones in which the entire sentence is underlined.
- Do Improving Paragraph questions last because you are dealing with an entire passage for 6 questions.

In the Error Identification section remember

- There is never more than one error per sentence.
- If there is an error, it is always underlined.
- Know that 20% of all questions are correct as written.
- Guess on any that you do not know.

## The (P)SAT Writing Section--Princeton Review

In the Improving Sentences section remember

- Answer choice A is a reprint of the underlined section.

Selecting A means the sentence contains no error

- 20% of the questions will be correct
- Eliminate A if you see an error; also eliminate any other choice that does not correct that error
- Concise answers are preferable
- The writing section tests 5 basic grammatical concepts:
  - \* verbs
  - \* prepositions
  - \* nouns
  - \* “other little things”
  - \* pronouns

## The (P)SAT Writing Section--Princeton Review

- Look at the sentence one piece at a time. Pause after each underlined segment and decide if there is an error. In your mind, think verb-noun-pronoun-preposition problem. If the answer is no, cross out that segment and move on.
- Cross out nonessential parts of the sentence--prepositional phrases, phrases offset by commas, etc. This lets you deal with the subject-verb relationship.
- With verbs, ask does it **agree** with the subject? Is it **parallel** in structure to the other verbs in the sentence? Is it in the proper **tense**.

## The (P)SAT Writing Section--Princeton Review

- Remember which pronouns are singular--*either, neither, none, each, anyone, no one, everyone*.
- The only thing to check with nouns is agreement.
- With pronouns, ask do they **agree**? are they **ambiguous**? do they have the right **case**?
- ETS prefers active rather than passive voice.

## The (P)SAT Writing Section--Princeton Review

- With prepositions, certain idiomatic phrases should be learned, such as *plan to*, *disagreement with*, etc.
- In the Improving Sentences section, not only should you run through these grammar checks, but also you must correct the error. Once you recognize that there is an error, you can then eliminate choice A.
- If you are unsure whether there is an error, scan the answers to see what is being altered in the choices.

## The (P)SAT Writing Section--Princeton Review

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## **The (P)SAT Writing Section--Princeton Review**

- A correct revision will be concise and unambiguous.
- One warning on Revision questions: There is normally no such thing as “No Error” on improving paragraph questions. Do not assume that A is merely a repeat of the given sentence.
- You may still need to go back to the passage to gain some context when revising a sentence.

## The (P)SAT Writing Section--Princeton Review

- In Combination questions you are working with two sentences. Usually you can answer these without going back to the passage.

- \* If the sentence seems to be flowing in the same direction, look for an answer with words like *and*, *since*, *as well as*.

- \* If the sentences seem to be flowing in opposite directions, look for trigger words such as *but*, *however*, etc.

## The (P)SAT Writing Section--Princeton Review

- The Improving Paragraph questions will ask questions such as these: *Which sentence should immediately follow or precede the passage? Which sentence should be inserted into the passage? What is the best description of the passage as a whole?*
- If you are asked the third question, you will need to skim the whole passage. For the other two, you will need to read the relevant paragraph.

## **The (P)SAT Writing Section--Princeton Review**

- Since this is the end of a 30 minute section, you may not finish all of the Improving Paragraph questions. Re-order the six. The shorter, easier ones are the combination questions and the revision questions that reprint the sentences you need to edit. Do the questions that require you to go back to the passage last.