

## Final Summary of All the Rules

This is your cheat sheet. It's just a summary, so it leaves out a lot of details. But if you know these rules by heart, then you'll be equipped with the vast majority of what you need for the writing section.

After this summary you'll find a quiz on precisely these rules. Go back and forth—keep studying the summary and keep trying the quiz until you can answer every question from memory. Then revisit it every few days to ensure you haven't forgotten.

### Verb Form

- ⦿ If the choices have two verbs in the same tense, one singular and one plural, then the question is testing subject-verb agreement.
- ⦿ Nothing inside a prepositional phrase can ever be a subject.
- ⦿ If a question is testing verb tense, use logic and look at the nearby sentences for context clues.

### Pronouns & Nouns

- ⦿ A pronoun must have the same number (singular or plural) as its antecedent.
- ⦿ *He or she* and *his or her* are always wrong.
- ⦿ A pronoun must have a clear antecedent. If you are given the choice between using a pronoun and repeating the noun, you probably want the noun.
- ⦿ *Its, their,* and *whose* are possessive.
- ⦿ *It's, they're,* and *who's* are contractions.
- ⦿ Sometimes logic dictates that nouns must agree in number.

### Parallelism & Comparisons

- ⦿ Look for parallel structure when you see a list or two things joined by a conjunction.
- ⦿ Use the second or third item in a list of three to determine the proper format for the other items.
- ⦿ Any time you compare or contrast two things, they have to be logically parallel.
- ⦿ Phrases like *that of* and *those of* are frequently used to create logical comparisons.

- ⦿ A weird-looking *do* or *did* after the word *than* and before a subject is often correct. Find the verb it stands for and put it after the subject to see if the comparison sounds more natural.

### Punctuation

- ⦿ A semicolon is the same as a period.
- ⦿ A colon needs a full sentence before it. What follows the colon could be a list, a word, or another full sentence.
- ⦿ Don't ever use a colon after *such as* or *including*.
- ⦿ A pair of dashes acts like parentheses.
- ⦿ A single dash acts like a colon.
- ⦿ Make a singular noun possessive by adding an apostrophe + *s*.
- ⦿ Make a plural noun possessive by adding an apostrophe after the *s*.
- ⦿ A possessive is appropriate when it would make sense to say "the second noun **of the** first noun."
- ⦿ If quotation marks set up as a full, separate sentence of directly quoted speech or writing, use a comma before the quotes.
- ⦿ If the stuff inside the quotation marks flows as part of the grammar of the sentence, a comma isn't required.
- ⦿ Parentheses come in pairs, and the sentence should still be properly punctuated if the parenthetical were removed.
- ⦿ Direct questions need question marks, but embedded questions don't.
- ⦿ Coordinate adjectives need commas (if you could put *and* between the adjectives).
- ⦿ Cumulative adjectives don't need commas (if the adjective closest to the noun creates a single thing that gets further modified).
- ⦿ If a title or job comes before a name, you don't need commas. If the title comes after the name, use commas.
- ⦿ You can't use a comma alone to join two clauses. This is the hideous comma splice.

## Sentence Structure

- ⦿ A coordinating (FANBOYS) conjunction can join two clauses. Use a comma before the conjunction.
- ⦿ A subordinating conjunction can join two clauses. Use a comma when the conjunction precedes the first clause; if it's between them, you don't need a comma.
- ⦿ A relative pronoun such as *which*, *that*, or *who* can join two clauses. A relative clause modifies the noun that it refers to.
- ⦿ A semicolon, colon, or dash can join two clauses.
- ⦿ A conjunctive adverb such as *however* cannot join two clauses.
- ⦿ Modifiers should be as close as possible to the thing they modify. Be on the lookout for introductory modifiers and make sure they're next to the right noun.
- ⦿ Verbals are not verbs. A gerund is a noun. A participle is an adjective. An infinitive is often a noun. Verbals do not have a tense.
- ⦿ A participial phrase at the end of a sentence can modify the whole situation.
- ⦿ *Being* is usually wrong.
- ⦿ When combining sentences, consider grammar, modifiers, transitions, redundancy, and everything else.

This is just a summary. Lots of details are left out, and some of the rules are oversimplified here. This list is useful, but it's not a substitute for reading and studying the full chapters.

## Word Choice

- ⦿ *Affect* is a verb. *Effect* is a noun.
- ⦿ *Site* means a location or a website. To *cite* means to refer to something. *Sight* is vision.

## Redundancy

- ⦿ If you see three long choices and a short choice, look for redundancy or wordiness.
- ⦿ If a question is testing redundancy, the shortest choice is almost always right.

### **Introductions, Transitions & Conclusions**

- ⦿ Read everything and follow the flow of ideas.
- ⦿ Examine the ideas before and after a transition and figure out their relationship yourself before you look at the choices.
- ⦿ If you have the option to delete the transition word, that’s probably right.

### **Specific Tasks**

- ⦿ Stay focused on the task.

### **Organization**

- ⦿ Each sentence must “hook in” to the sentence before and the sentence after it.
- ⦿ Don’t pick a location for the sentence until you’ve found concrete reasons for why it must be there and not anywhere else.

### **Adding & Removing Information**

- ⦿ Evaluate the reasoning in each answer choice before deciding whether you prefer *yes* or *no*.
- ⦿ The reasoning provided in the correct choice must be both true and relevant.

### **Figures and Tables**

- ⦿ Ignore the figure until a question asks about it.
- ⦿ When you see a question about a figure, get a good careful reading of the figure before you worry about what the question is asking.
- ⦿ Try to absorb all the details of the figure. Look for trends in the data, visualize the situation, and tell the story of what the data reveals.

*This summary is an excerpt from the StudyLark Guide to SAT Writing and Language — The Essential Guide for Highly Motivated Students.*

**Drill: Final Summary of All the Rules**

*Can you remember the rules summary from the last four pages? If you can't, feel free to look back and check. Keep doing this drill until you can recall all the rules automatically.*

1. How can you tell if a question is testing subject-verb agreement?
2. What can never be a subject?
3. How can you figure out the right verb tense?
4. What's important about a pronoun's number?
5. Tell me about *he or she*.
6. What's something every pronoun must have? Is it wise to restate a noun when you could use a pronoun?
7. What was that list of possessive pronouns?
8. What was that list of contractions?
9. What is noun number agreement?
10. What occasions call for parallel structure?
11. How can you figure out the right structure for listed items?
12. What's the primary concern when you see a comparison?
13. Which phrases often help to create logical comparisons?
14. What should you do with a strange-looking *do* or *did* after *than*?
15. What's the rule for semicolons?
16. What's the rule for colons?
17. When should you never use a colon?
18. What's the rule for a pair of dashes?
19. What's the rule for a single dash?
20. How do you make a singular noun possessive?
21. How do you make a plural noun possessive?
22. When is a possessive appropriate?
23. When do you need a comma before quotes?
24. When do you not need a comma before quotes?
25. What's the rule for parentheses?
26. Do all questions need question marks?

27. What's the rule for coordinate adjectives?
28. What's the rule for cumulative adjectives?
29. Do you need commas around an appositive that gives someone's job or title?
30. What is the monstrous comma splice, and is it OK?
31. What are the coordinating conjunctions and how are they used?
32. What are some subordinating conjunctions and how are they used?
33. What are relative pronouns, and what do they do?
34. What punctuation is allowed to join clauses?
35. What are conjunctive adverbs not allowed to do? Which one is the primary offender?
36. What should modifiers do? What about introductory modifiers?
37. What are verbals, and what should you not treat them as?
38. What can a participial phrase do at the end of a sentence?
39. Do we like *being*?
40. What topics are fair game when it comes to combining sentences?
41. Explain *affect* vs. *effect*.
42. Explain *site* vs. *cite* vs. *sight*.
43. What's the pattern that should alert you to look for redundancy?
44. What's the rule for redundancy questions?
45. What's the most important thing to do for transition questions?
46. What should you read and do before looking at transition answer choices?
47. Do you always need a transition word?
48. What is your one job when you're given a weirdly specific task to accomplish?
49. What determines the proper order of the sentences?
50. What should you do when determining the organization in a paragraph?
51. What should you do first when deciding whether to add or remove information?
52. What are the two things the correct add/remove justification must do?
53. Should you look at a figure right away?
54. When you see a question about a figure, then what?
55. What should you be trying to get out of a figure before attempting the question?