

MULTIPLE-CHOICE SECTION

Think about it. What's doing the rising? The subject is plural, and so the verb should be *rise*.

Usage Drill 1

Underline the italicized verbs in the sentences that contain errors in subject-verb agreement. (Answers are at the end of the chapter.)

1. According to a noted meteorologist, there *is* various explanations for the accelerating rate of global warming.
2. In this critically acclaimed film, there *is* a well-developed plot and an excellent cast of characters.
3. Through the locks of the Panama Canal *passes* more than fifty ships each day.
4. There *are* a number of state legislatures currently debating strict environmental laws.
5. If there *is* competing proposals, your idea may not be acted upon until next week.
6. There *is* at least five types of climbing rose and a unique variety of small fir in the Botanical Gardens.
7. Despite numerous professed sightings, there *is* still no conclusive evidence of extraterrestrial beings.



Verbs First

When you're checking subject-verb agreement, remember that the subject doesn't always come before the verb.

Subject-Verb Agreement Problem when Subject and Verb Are Separated

The test makers have another way to complicate a simple thing like subject-verb agreement. They'll insert some additional information about the subject before the verb appears. Expect to see at least one question of this type on the Writing Test.

The local congressman, a reliable representative of both community and statewide interests, *are* among the most respected persons in the public sector.

Once again, the way to determine whether the verb agrees with the subject is to identify the subject of the sentence. You see the plural *community and statewide interests* right in front of the verb, but that's not the subject. It's part of the modifying phrase that's inserted between the subject *congressman*, which is singular, and the verb, which should also be singular—*is*. Don't let intervening phrases fool you. In this example, the commas are a tip-off that the verb is separated from the subject. Another tip-off is a preposition like *of*:

USAGE QUESTIONS

The collection of paintings entitled "Matisse in Morocco" *are* one of the most widely traveled exhibits in recent years.

Again, you should first find the subject of the sentence. It's *collection*. The phrases that follow the subject, *of paintings* and *entitled "Matisse in Morocco"* merely modify the subject. The true subject is singular and so the verb should be *is*. The writers of the Writing Test like this type of question because the intervening modifying phrases or clauses may cause you to lose sight of the subject and its number. These phrases simply modify the subject they follow, without changing its number. Don't be fooled by the placement of these phrases.

Usage Drill 2

Underline the verb that agrees with the subject. (Answers are at the end of the chapter.)

1. Multipurpose vehicles, which can be very useful on rough terrain, (is/are) now banned in many states.
2. The level of chemicals and other air pollutants (is/are) now monitored in many offices.
3. The fundamental hitting skills of Rick Reuschel (goes/go) largely unnoticed by the average fan.
4. A community as diverse as Los Angeles (attracts/attract) immigrants from many countries.
5. One-way tickets for domestic travel (is/are) often more expensive than round-trip fares.
6. So-called bullet trains from Tokyo to Osaka (completes/complete) the 300-mile trip in about two hours.
7. Donations to the church-sponsored orphanage (is/are) up by 50 percent over last year.
8. Einstein's theory of relativity (ranks/rank) with the most developed hypotheses involving space and time.

Subject-Verb Agreement Problem when the Subject Seems Plural

Sometimes the sentence in a Usage question includes what appears to be, but in fact is not, a plural subject. This is another situation in which subject-verb agreement can be tricky. Here's an example.

Neither country music nor heavy metal *were* a part of mainstream listening habits in the United States ten years ago.



Comma Trick

Commas often signal that the verb is separated from the subject. And you can learn to recognize groups of words that can come between the subject and verb.



Separation Anxiety

It's harder to recognize intervening phrases and clauses when they're not set off by commas, but if you remember to check each sentence carefully for such things, you'll be

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Be Suspicious

When the subject seems plural, check for an agreement problem.

This sentence is tricky because it has two subjects, but these two singular subjects do not add up to a plural subject. When the subject of a sentence is in the form *neither _____ nor _____* or in the form *either _____ or _____* and the nouns in the blanks are singular, the verb should be singular. In the sentence above, it's as if *country music* and *heavy metal* act as subjects one at a time, and so the verb should be the singular *was*. If the nouns in a *neither-nor* or *either-or* construction are plural, then a plural verb is correct.

Here are some other constructions that seem to make plural subjects, but actually don't.

- _____ *along with* _____
- _____ *as well as* _____
- _____ *in addition to* _____

In these constructions, the noun in the first blank is the true subject and what follows is, grammatically speaking, just an intervening modifying phrase. If the first noun is singular, the verb should be singular. Look at this sentence.

Poor pitching, along with injuries and defensive lapses, *are* among the problems that plague last year's championship team.

The phrase *along with injuries and defensive lapses* is a modifying phrase that separates the subject *poor pitching* from the verb. This sentence is tricky because there seem to be three problems that plague the baseball team. But in fact, phrases like *along with*, or *in addition to*, do not work in the same way as the conjunction *and* does. If the above sentence had begun *Poor pitching, injuries, and defensive lapses* the plural verb *are* would have been correct. As written, however, the sentence has only one subject, *poor pitching*, and its verb should be *is*. Beware those pseudocompound subjects!

Usage Drill 3

Underline the verb that agrees with the true subject. (Answers are at the end of the chapter.)

1. The fishing industry, along with railroad safety issues, (is/are) of great concern to the state assembly.
2. Either the manager or one of his coaches usually (removes/remove) a pitcher from the mound.
3. Both the word *scuba* and the word *radar* (is/are) acronyms.
4. Auto exhaust, in addition to industrial pollution, (is/are) a cause of smog in southern California.
5. It is said that neither poor weather nor poor health (keeps/keep) a postman from making his rounds.

Confusion of Simple Past and Past Participle

A typical error tested on the Writing Test is confusion between the simple past and the past participle forms of a verb. A past participle form may erroneously substitute for the simple past form, as in this sentence.

Several passersby *seen* the bank robber leaving the scene of his crime.

The verb form *seen* is the past participle and should be used only with a helping verb *have* or *be*. This sentence requires the simple past form *saw*.

Just about every edition of the Writing Test includes a Usage question in which the simple past is used erroneously with a helping verb, or in which the past participle is used erroneously without a helping verb. For regular verbs the simple past and past participle are identical, ending in *-ed*. But irregular verbs like *see* usually have two different forms for simple past and past participle. The following is a partial list of irregular verbs. These are the simple past and past participle forms that are most often confused. Instead of listing them alphabetically, we have grouped them by pattern.

IRREGULAR VERBS

Infinitive	Simple Past	Past Participle
break	broke	broken
speak	spoke	spoken
freeze	froze	frozen
forget	forgot	forgotten
get	got	gotten
ride	rode	ridden
rise	rose	risen
arise	arose	arisen
drive	drove	driven
write	wrote	written
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
give	gave	given
take	took	taken
shake	shook	shaken
see	saw	seen
ring	rang	rung
sing	sang	sung
sink	sank	sunk
shrink	shrank	shrunk
drink	drank	drunk
begin	began	begun
swim	swam	swum
run	ran	run
come	came	come



Irregular Customers

Familiarize yourself with the different irregular verbs in this chart. It's quite possible that you might see one of them on test day.

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Trust Your Ear

Don't be afraid to trust your ear. Sometimes that's all there is to finding a mistake.

become	became	become
do	did	done
go	went	gone
blow	blew	blown
grow	grew	grown
know	knew	known
throw	threw	thrown
fly	flew	flown
draw	drew	drawn

Note the patterns. Verb forms that end in *-oke, -oze, -ot, -ode, -ose, -ove, -ote, -ang, -ank, -an, -an, -am, -ame, -ew, or -ook*, are simple past. Verb forms that end in *-en, -wn, -ung, -unk, -un, -um, -ome, and -one*, are past participles. But finally, the best method is simply to train your ear for irregular verb forms that aren't already second nature to you.

Confusion of Infinitive and Gerund

Some Writing Test questions test your sense of idiomatic use of English. That is, they test whether you know what combinations of words *sound* right, or which words sound right in particular contexts. For example, there is generally at least one Usage question in which the infinitive is used where a gerund would be appropriate, or vice versa.

Team officials heralded Cap Day as an attempt *at attracting* a larger turnout of fans.

This sentence is unidiomatic. There's no grammar rule that explains why it's wrong to say an *attempt at attracting*. If you have a good sense of idiom, your ear tells you it should be *an attempt to attract*. This sentence confuses the *-ing* gerund form with the *to + verb* infinitive form. Here's another sentence that should sound wrong:

Surveillance cameras are frequently placed in convenience stores to prevent customers to *shoplift*.

After *prevent* you don't use the infinitive but rather the word *from* plus the gerund. The sentence should end *to prevent customers from shoplifting*. Why? There's no real grammatical reason. That's just the way we say it in English. You have to train and to trust your ear on these. There's no way to list definitively all the infinitive/(preposition +) gerund combinations that could possibly appear on the Writing Test. But don't worry. You don't need to see every possible combination in advance. Just remember to prick up your ears whenever an infinitive or gerund is underlined on the test.

Usage Drill 4

Identify and correct the sentences that confuse gerund and infinitive. Write the correct form of the italicized verb on the line under the sentence. (Answers are at the end of the chapter.)

1. The International Olympic Committee does not allow professional tennis players over 21 years of age *to competing* in the Games.

2. Our directors plan *increasing* the number of workers in the plant by 500.

3. Any parent would see the value *to set* a curfew for his or her child.

4. Questioning a store owner's right *of carrying* a gun is not the purpose of this City Council meeting.

5. The trade agreement is designed to prevent Japan *from limiting* the amount of its imports.

6. Through this new ad campaign, we hope *for tripling* our gross income by the end of the year.

7. Widespread resistance to the councilman's proposed reforms did not succeed *to discourage* his innovative thinking.

8. The teachers' union is eager to resolve the contractual disagreement with the school board.

Non-Idiomatic Preposition After Verb

Here's another type of mistake that will give your ears a workout. The Writing Test also tests your recognition of the particular prepositions that combine idiomatically with certain verbs. Here's a sentence that uses the wrong preposition.

City Council members frequently meet until the early morning hours in order to *work in* their stalemates.

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Winning Combinations

Certain prepositions follow certain verbs. Get to know the verbs and prepositions in the list on this page.

It's not always wrong to write *work in*. You might use *work in* to speak about the field one works in, or the place one works in. But this combination does not correspond to the meaning of this sentence. The writer means to say *work through* or *work out*, that is, overcome the stalemates.

Here's another sentence with the wrong preposition:

The local band's new album was *frowned at* by many parents because of its suggestive lyrics.

That's just not the way we say it in English. The preferred verb-preposition combination is *frowned upon*. That's the idiomatic expression. Once again, this is an area where you'll have to trust your ear. Just remember to pay attention and think for a moment when you see an underlined preposition after a verb.

Here are some more verb-preposition idioms.

Commonly Tested Verbs and Prepositions

abide by	consist of	object to
abide in	contribute to	participate in
accuse of	count (up)on	pray for
agree to	cover with	prevent from
agree with	decide (up)on	prohibit from
agree on	depend (up)on	protect from
apologize for	differ from	provide with
apply to	differ with	recover from
apply for	differ over	rely (up)on
approve of	differ about	rescue from
argue with	discriminate against	respond to
argue about	distinguish from	stare at
arrive at	dream of	stop from
believe in	dream about	subscribe to
blame for	escape from	substitute for
care about	excel in	succeed in
care for	excuse for	thank for
charge for	forget about	vote for
charge with	forgive for	wait for
compare to	hide from	wait on
compare with	hope for	work with
complain about	insist (up)on	worry about

Wrong Word

The English language contains many pairs of words that sound alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings. Expect to encounter one or two Usage questions that test your ability to distinguish between these problematic word pairs. Here are some examples.

USAGE QUESTIONS

ACCEPT/EXCEPT To *accept* is to take or receive something that is offered: "Dad said he would *accept* my apology for putting a dent in his new car, but then he grounded me for two weeks."

To *except* is to leave out or exclude: "The soldier was *excepted* from combat duty because he had poor field vision." *Except* is usually used as a preposition meaning, "with the exception of, excluding." "When the receptionist found out that everyone *except* him had received a raise, he demanded a salary increase as well."

ADAPT/ADOPT To *adapt* is to change oneself or change something to become suitable for a particular condition or use: "Fred tried to *adapt* his Volkswagen for use as a submarine by gluing the windows shut and attaching a periscope to the roof."

To *adopt* is to make something one's own: "My neighbors decided to *adopt* a child."

AFFECT/EFFECT To *affect* is to have an influence on something: "Al refused to let the rain *affect* his plans for a picnic, so he sat under an umbrella and ate potato salad."

To *effect* is to bring something about or cause something to happen: "The young activist received an award for *effecting* a change in her community." An *effect* is an influence or a result: "The newspaper article about homeless animals had such an *effect* on Richard that he brought home three kittens from the shelter."

AFFLICT/INFLICT To *afflict* is to torment or distress someone or something. It usually appears as a passive verb: "Jeff is *afflicted* with severe migraine headaches."

To *inflict* is to impose punishment or suffering on someone or something: "No one dared displease the king, for he was known to *inflict* severe punishments on those who upset him."

ALLUSION/ILLUSION An *allusion* is an indirect reference to something, a hint: "I remarked that Sally's boyfriend was unusual looking; this *allusion* to his prominent tattoos did not please Sally."

An *illusion* is a false, misleading, or deceptive appearance: "A magician creates the *illusion* that something has disappeared by hiding it faster than the eye can follow it."

EMIGRATE/IMMIGRATE To *emigrate* is to leave one country for another country, and is usually used with the preposition *from*: "Many people *emigrated* from Europe in search of better living conditions."

To *immigrate* is to enter a country to take up permanent residence there, and is usually used with the preposition *to*: "They *immigrated* to North America because land was plentiful."

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EMINENT/IMMINENT Someone who is *eminent* is prominent or outstanding: "The *eminent* archeologist Dr. Wong has identified the artifact as prehistoric in origin."

Something that is *imminent* is likely to happen soon, or is impending: "After being warned that the hurricane's arrival was *imminent*, beachfront residents left their homes immediately."

LAY/LIE To *lay* is to place or put something, and this verb usually does have a "something," a direct object, following it. One form, *laid*, serves as the simple past and the past participle of *lay*. "Before she begins her pictures, Emily *lays* all of her pencils, brushes, and paints on her worktable to avoid interruptions while she draws and paints."

To *lie* is to recline, to be in a lying position or at rest. This verb never takes a direct object: you do not *lie* anything down. The simple past form of *lie* is *lay*; the past participle is *lain*. Notice that the past form of *lie* is identical with the present form of *lay*. This coincidence complicates the task of distinguishing the related meaning of *lay* and *lie*. "Having *laid* the picnic cloth under the sycamore, they *lay* in the shady grass all last Sunday afternoon."

LEAVE/LET To *leave* is to depart, or to allow something to remain behind after departing, or to allow something to remain as it is. One irregular verb form serves as the simple past and the past participle: *left*. "I boarded my plane and it *left*, *leaving* my baggage behind in Chicago." When *leave* is used in the third sense—to allow something to remain as it is—and followed by alone, this verb does overlap with *let*: "If parents *leave* (or *let*) a baby with a new toy alone, she will understand it as quickly as if they demonstrated how the toy works."

To *let* is to allow, or to rent out. These are the verb's core meanings, but it also combines with several different prepositions to produce various specific senses. *Let* is irregular. One form serves as present, past, and past participle. "The French border police would not *let* the Dutch tourist pass without a passport."

RAISE/RISE To *raise* is to lift up, or to cause to rise or grow, and it usually has a direct object: You *raise* dumbbells, roof beams, tomato plants, children. *Raise* is a completely regular verb. "The trade tariff on imported leather goods *raised* the prices of Italian shoes."

To *rise* is to get up, to go up, to be built up. This verb never takes a direct object: You do not *rise* something. The past and past participle forms are irregular; *rose* is the simple past, *risen* the past participle. "Long-distance commuters must *rise* early and return home late."

SET/SIT The difference between *set* and *sit* is very similar to the difference between *lay* and *lie*, and the difference between *raise* and *rise*. To *set* is to put or place something, to settle or arrange it. But *set* takes on other specific meanings when it combines with several different prepositions. *Set* is an irregular verb in that one form serves as present, past, and past participle.

USAGE QUESTIONS

Set usually takes a direct object: You *set* a ladder against the fence, a value on family heirlooms, a date for the family reunion. "The professor *set* the students' chairs in a semicircle in order to promote open discussion."

To *sit* is to take a seat or to be in a seated position, to rest somewhere, or to occupy a place. This verb does not usually take a direct object, although you can say, "The usher *sat* us in the center seats of the third row from the stage." The irregular form *sat* serves as past and past participle. Usually, no direct object follows this verb: "The beach house *sits* on a hill at some distance from the shoreline."

Wrong Tense

An error typically tested on the Writing Test is the use of a verb in the wrong tense. Here's a sentence in which the verb is in the wrong tense.

Over the last half-century, the building of passenger airliners *had grown* into a multibillion-dollar industry.

In a one-verb sentence like this one, time-descriptive phrases help you determine what the time frame of a sentence is. The action being described is a process which began during *the last half-century*, and which is continuing to the present day. Any action starting in the past and continuing today is expressed by a verb in the present perfect tense. The present perfect form of this verb is *has grown*. Using the verb *had* makes it seem that passenger airliners aren't being made anymore. That can't be what the sentence is trying to say. With practice, you'll be able to spot mistakes like this with confidence.

Another type of sentence testing verb tense might have two verbs in it. Here's an example.

Many superb tennis players turn professional at an alarmingly early age, but because of their lack of physical stamina, *suffered* early in their careers.

When there are two verbs in a sentence, first study the time relation between the verbs, and determine whether it is logical as presented. In this sentence, the verb in the first clause of this sentence is *turn*, a present tense verb. The action is not occurring at any specified occasion, but in the general present. The verb *suffered* is in the simple past, but it should remain in the general present, even though the phrase *early in their careers* may suggest a past time. Be sure that there is a logical relation between the verbs when two are presented in the same sentence.



Perilous Pairs

Learn to distinguish these commonly confused words. You're likely to see at least one of them on your test, and knowing the correct word could raise/rise your score.

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Don't Get Tense

Verb tense errors are common on the Writing Test. Be on the lookout for them.

Usage Drill 5

Are the underlined words in the following sentences grammatically correct? Mark the incorrect phrase and replace it with the correct phrase in the blank. (Answers are at the end of the chapter.)

1. Scientists have noted how coastlines change subtly and land masses will shrink _____ infinitesimally as the polar ice caps begin to melt.
2. Accounts of their voyages reveal that some of the first Europeans to travel to the North American continent think _____ they had landed in Asia.
3. At art auctions during the last few years, paintings by some acknowledged masters will have brought _____ prices in the millions.
4. The country's land reform law is _____ first proposed by a coalition government in 1945, and included farmers who lost their farms during collectivization.
5. As a result of the recent economic recession, many graduating law students have had _____ difficulty finding jobs even in large, well-established firms.
6. The Port Huron Statement, an outline of the values and goals of the Students for a Democratic Society, was having _____ a major impact on social protest in the decade following its 1962 publication.
7. To get to the theater, which is on the East Side, wait at the corner until the express bus came _____.
8. As the ninth inning began, his manager reminded "Doc" Gooden that he has hit _____ the lead-off batter in the first inning.

Number Agreement Problems

The Writing Test also tests a particular error of modification involving number; for instance, a noun may be plural while a phrase describing the noun belongs with a singular noun. That sounds complicated, but fortunately, you don't need to be able to explain the grammar involved: You just need to be able to spot this type of mistake. Here's an example of what you need to look out for.

The advertisement in the newspaper requested that only persons with a high school diploma apply for the position.

USAGE QUESTIONS

Nouns in a sentence must have logical number relations. The noun in question, the subject of the second clause of this sentence, is *persons*, a plural noun. However, the noun *diploma* is singular. Because the phrase is singular, it seems to say that this group of people shares one diploma, when in fact each person should have his or her own diploma. The underlined phrase should read *with high school diplomas*.

Here's an example of number disagreement in which a singular noun is coupled with a plural subject:

The economies of Romania and Albania are considered by many to be a *symbol* of the failure of the command market structure.

Again, identify the subject of the sentence, *economies*. The noun which corresponds to the subject is *symbol*, a singular noun. There is no agreement in number between *economies* and *symbol*. Each individual economy is a symbol; both economies wouldn't be a single symbol. The plural form, *symbols*, makes this sentence grammatically correct. Make sure that the nouns in a sentence that logically should agree in number do agree.

Usage Drill 6

Put a check mark next to any the following sentences that contains an error in number agreement. (Answers are at the end of the chapter.)

- 1. Rising stock value and capital liquidity are considered by financiers to be a *requirement* for healthy investment.
- 2. The two-piece bathing suit is considered by many to be a *throw-back* to the 1960s.
- 3. The rubble of Berlin and the division of Germany were a *reminder* of the defeat of the Axis powers in World War II.
- 4. Many question the validity of laws that do not allow people *with a child* to rent certain apartments.
- 5. Students *in a college T-shirt* will be admitted to the concert for free.
- 6. Few could foresee the Model T and Model A, produced by Ford in the early twentieth century, *as the prototype* of today's automobile.
- 7. Armed *with their bank account*, corporate raiders schemed to overtake many of America's leading industries.
- 8. One of the eels of the Muraenidae family, the moray is feared *as a lethal aquatic vertebrate*.

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Pronoun in the Wrong Number

You'll be tested on your ability to tell whether a noun and the pronoun that refers to that noun agree in number. A singular pronoun should be used to refer to a singular noun; a plural pronoun should be used with a plural noun. In these examples, the pronoun does not match its antecedent in number.

The typical college student has difficulty adjusting to academic standards much higher than those of *their* school.

The subject of the sentence is *student*, a singular noun. The pronoun *their* should refer to a plural noun, but in this sentence it refers back to *student*. Therefore, the pronoun should be the singular form *his*, and not the plural form *their*. Look for the same kind of mistake in the next sentence.

Most infants, even unusually quiet ones, will cry with greater intensity when it begins teething.

The error in this sentence is just the opposite from that in the first example. The subject is *infants*, a plural noun. But the pronoun that refers back to this plural noun is *it*, a singular form. The correct form of the pronoun is *they*, referring back to the plural subject. Be sure that a pronoun agrees with its antecedent in number.



Beware of Pronouns

If you see a pronoun underlined in a Usage question, be very suspicious. Here are some of the pronoun errors that you'll be tested on:

- Errors in number
- Errors in case
- Shifts in person or number
- Ambiguous references

Usage Drill 7

Are the following sentences grammatically correct? Mark the incorrect sentences and replace the underlined words with the correct forms using the blank lines. (Answers are at the end of the chapter.)

1. The appreciation shown to the dance troupe was a symbol of the school's gratitude for their _____ hard work.
2. The mayor welcomed the foreign delegation by presenting them _____ with a key to the city.
3. Crowds of tennis fans love his style of play, because the tennis star frequently appeals to them _____ for support.
4. The Internal Revenue Service is annually derided by critics who claim that their _____ instruction manuals for filing taxes are too cryptic.
5. A typical bank will reject an application for a loan if their _____ credit department discovers that the applicant is unemployed.
6. Investors who lost money in the stock market crash generally recouped his _____ losses over the next 18 months.

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7. The committee asserts that the venture capitalist has not proven quite as philanthropic as *their* _____ public relations campaign suggests.
8. The waitresses in this elegant restaurant can receive up to eighty percent of *her* _____ salary in tips.



Case Study

To decide whether the subjective case form or the objective case form of a pronoun is correct, check how the pronoun is used in the sentence.

Pronoun in the Wrong Case in Compound Noun Phrases

Errors of pronoun choice in sentences with compound noun phrases are also favorites of the people who make the Writing Test. These are errors of the "between you and I" variety. Can you identify the compound in the sentence below, and the error in the choice of pronoun?

Him and the rest of the team stopped by the malt shop for milkshakes after the game.

In this sentence, the compound subject is *Him and the rest of the team*. To identify the error, you should isolate the pronoun from the compound. Take away the second part of the compound, and you are left with *him*. The pronoun *him* is the object form of the pronoun in the third person singular. This form is incorrect, because, as you can see from the sentence's word order, the pronoun is the subject of the sentence. The correct form for this sentence is *he*, the subject form.

Can you identify and isolate the incorrect pronoun in the following sentence?

Uncle John and Aunt Rosie join my parents and I for dinner every Thursday.

In this sentence, the compound noun phrase in question is *my parents and I*, the object of the verb. Ignoring the phrase *my parents*, you can now read the sentence: *Uncle John and Aunt Rosie join I for dinner every Thursday*. The pronoun *I* is the incorrect form of the personal pronoun; the correct form is *me*, the object form. For the following exercise questions, single out the pronoun from the rest of the compound. Then determine what role the pronoun plays in the sentence, and put the pronoun into the correct form.

Usage Drill 8

Underline the pronoun that makes the sentence grammatically correct. (Answers are at the end of the chapter.)

1. The other drivers and (I/me) pulled over until the heavy rains passed.

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Pick One

Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in person. Watch for shifts from *one* to *you*, and so on.

2. I did not receive the final draft of the report until it was approved by my supervisor and (he/him).
3. (We/Us) and the high school band accompanied the team to the stadium on the chartered bus.
4. Our professor forgot to distribute the new Bunsen burner kit to my lab partner and (I/me).
5. (She/Her) and her parents set off yesterday on a three-week cruise of the North Atlantic.
6. It was surprising to hear the minister address my new wife and (I/me) as "Mr. and Mrs. Murphy."
7. The legal authorities questioned (she/her) and the other students involved in the incident for two hours before dropping the charges.
8. (We/Us) and the other team combined for 16 runs and 23 hits in the seven-inning game.

Pronoun Shift

Here's another way in which your knowledge of the correct way to use pronouns will be tested. "Pronoun shift" is a switch in pronoun person or number within a given sentence. Here's an example.

One cannot sleep soundly if *you* exercise vigorously before retiring to bed.

The sentence above is typical of errors in this category. The subject in the first clause is *one*, and the subject in the second clause is *you*. These two pronouns refer to the same performer of two actions, so they should be consistent in person and number. If you see the pronoun *one* in one part of a sentence, then elsewhere in the sentence, look for either *one*, or *he* or *she*, or *a person*—all in the third person singular form. The sentence should not shift to the second person, *you* form.

Look for another kind of pronoun shift in the next sentence.

If someone loses his way in the airport, *they* can ask any employee for directions.

This pronoun shift is as glaring as the last. The subject is *someone* in the first clause, but *they* in the second clause. Clearly, both pronouns refer to the same agent; the performer(s) of both actions, *losing* and *asking*, is the same. This switch in number from singular to plural is not grammatical. In creating such a sentence, the Writing Test writers play on a common logical confusion. In English, singular words like *one*, *someone*, and *a person* can represent people in general. So can plural words like *people* or *they*. Be on the lookout when general statements use pronouns, and consider whether these pronouns are consistent.

Usage Drill 9

Identify the sentences that include a pronoun shift and replace the incorrect italicized words with the correct forms, using the blanks. (Answers are at the end of the chapter.)

1. When we gather during the Thanksgiving holidays, *you* _____ cannot help appreciating family and friends.
2. One cannot gauge the immensity of the Empire State Building until *you* _____ stand atop the building.
3. As you arrive in New York City's Grand Central Terminal, *one* _____ can easily imagine that station as the most elaborate in all of the United States.
4. You may not be fond of Shakespeare, but the theater company guarantees *you* _____ will be impressed with the quality of acting in this production.
5. You should not even attempt to pass your driving test unless *one* _____ has learned to parallel park.
6. When they grew up in my grandfather's neighborhood during the Great Depression, *you* _____ could feel the despair that gripped the nation.
7. Whenever we read about a plane crash, even as an infrequent flyer, *one* _____ becomes concerned about air safety.
8. When one considers the vastness of the universe, one cannot help being struck by *your* _____ own insignificance.

Pronoun with Ambiguous Reference

There are two ways the Writing Test might test your ability to recognize ambiguous pronoun reference. First, a sentence may be given in which it is impossible to determine to what noun the pronoun refers. Take a look at this example.

The United States entered into warmer relations with China after *its* compliance with recent weapons agreements.

To which country does the pronoun *its* refer? Grammatically and logically, either country could be the antecedent of the pronoun. With the limited information provided by this sentence alone, the reader simply can't determine which country the pronoun stands in for; its reference is ambiguous.

Pronoun reference can also be ambiguous if the pronoun's antecedent is not explicitly stated in the sentence.



Pronoun

A *pronoun* is a word that is used in place of a noun.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE SECTION

After the derailment last month, *they* are inspecting trains for safety more often than ever before.

The question to ask about this sentence is, Who is *they*? There is no group of people identified in this sentence to whom the pronoun could refer. You can logically infer that *they* refers to agents of a railroad safety commission, but because these inspectors are not explicitly mentioned in the sentence, the personal pronoun cannot be clear. Be sure to locate the antecedent of any pronoun in Writing Test Usage sentences.

Usage Drill 10

Read the following sentences and circle the pronouns with ambiguous reference. (Answers are at the end of the chapter.)



Antecedent

The noun that the pronoun stands for is called the *antecedent* of the pronoun.



Relationship Problems

Many of the pronoun problems on the Writing Test result from a faulty relationship between the pronoun and the antecedent. So checking the relationship between those two words will help you to catch many of the pronoun errors that you'll see on the test.

1. The company chairman contacted the marketing director after he failed to attend the sales meeting.
2. Temporary loss of hearing is a common occurrence at rock concerts where they sit too close to the mammoth speakers.
3. The small claims court lawyer won the case for the defendant once she proved her innocence with legal documents.
4. Jurors are told to disregard the race of the participants in a trial when they come into the courtroom.
5. When an old friend came to town last week, he asked what plays they were presenting on Broadway.
6. The manager benched the star player after he criticized the pitcher's lack of intensity.
7. Dozens of students rallied against administration officials to protest the music they were playing on the college radio station.
8. When the painters work on your neighbors' laundry room, make sure that they do not get paint on their clothes.

Faulty Comparison

Most faulty comparisons occur when two things that logically cannot be compared, are compared. A comparison can be faulty either logically or grammatically. Look for the faulty comparison in the sentence below.

A Nobel Peace Prize winner and the author of several respected novels, Elie Wiesel's name is still less well known than last year's Heisman Trophy winner.

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In every sentence, you should first identify what things or actions are being compared. In this sentence, *Elie Wiesel's name* is compared to *last year's Heisman Trophy winner*. This comparison is faulty because a person's name is compared to another person. If the first item were *Elie Wiesel*, then the comparison would be valid.

Try to identify the faulty comparison in the next sentence.

To lash back at one's adversaries is a less courageous course than attempting to bring about a reconciliation with them.

The comparison in this sentence is logically correct in that two actions are compared. But the problem lies in the grammatical form of the words compared. An infinitive verb, *to lash*, expresses the first action, but a gerund, *attempting*, expresses the second action. These verb forms should match in order to make the comparison parallel. If *lashing* replaced *to lash*, the comparison would be grammatically parallel and logically valid. Check comparisons in Writing Test Usage questions for logic and grammatical consistency.

Usage Drill 11

Which of the following sentences contain faulty comparisons? Correct the phrases that contain errors of comparison, using the lines below the sentences. (Answers are at the end of the chapter.)

1. Like many politicians, the senator's promises sounded good but ultimately led to nothing.

Rewrite:

2. As a manager and a problem solver, the Governor was considered as creative as, or more creative than, writing and painting.

Rewrite:

3. Marine zoologists who have trained porpoises maintain that porpoises have powers of attention more sustained than chimpanzees.

Rewrite:

4. The United States scientist's assumption, unlike Germany's Professor Heisenberg, was that the release of atomic energy would be sudden and violent.

Rewrite:



Comparison Checklist

When you encounter a comparison on the Writing Test, ask yourself: Is the comparison logical? Are the things being compared expressed in similar grammatical forms?

MULTIPLE-CHOICE SECTION

5. Although some traditionalists still prefer typewriters to computers, most people agree that word processors are a great boon.

Rewrite:

6. The nonviolent resistance philosophy of Thoreau, Ghandi, and King holds that it is better to go to jail than submitting to an unjust law.

Rewrite:

7. The cost of a year at college these days is greater than a house was when my father was a boy.

Rewrite:

8. According to some medievalists, women were treated with far greater respect during the Middle Ages than many countries in the twentieth century.

Rewrite:



Grammar Reference

An adjective modifies, or describes, a noun or pronoun. An adverb modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Most, but not all adverbs end in *-ly*.

Misuse of Adjective or Adverb

Questions in this category are designed to test your ability to recognize misuses of one-word modifiers. Keeping in mind that adjectives modify nouns, and adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs, ask yourself what the *underlined* word is intended to modify as you look at the sentence below.

The applicants for low-interest loans hoped to buy *decent* built houses for their families.

The word *decent* is an adjective. However, a word in this position should describe how the houses were built. A word that modifies an adjective like *built* is an adverb. So the word needed in this sentence is an adverb, *decently*. Notice also that this adverb ends in *-ly*, the most common adverbial ending.

Now take a look at the second sentence:

The critics who reviewed both of Amy Tan's novels like the second one *best*.

The word *best* is a superlative modifier. (It's an adverb in this sentence, but *best* can also be an adjective.) Superlative adverbs and adjectives (adverbs and adjectives ending in *-est*, such as *biggest*, *loudest*, *fastest*) should express comparisons between three or more things or actions. This sentence compares critics' responses to two novels by Amy Tan. Comparative adverbs

USAGE QUESTIONS

and adjectives (ending in *-er*, such as *bigger*, *louder*, *faster*) should express comparisons between two things or actions. Instead of *best*, this sentence needed the comparative modifier *better*. Remember that some adjectives and adverbs, usually those of two or more syllables, form the comparative with *more* instead of the *-er* ending. And *most* instead of the *-est* ending converts some modifiers to superlatives.

Trust your ear to distinguish adjectives from adverbs in Writing Test Usage questions, but do “listen” carefully. Pay close attention when you decide whether a sentence needs a comparative or superlative modifier.

Usage Drill 12

Underline the option that makes the sentence grammatically correct. (Answers are at the end of the chapter.)

1. Global warming would increase more (gradual/gradually) if solar energy sources were more fully exploited.
2. Eliminating (commercial/commercially) prepared sauces and seasonings is a good way to reduce the amount of sodium in your diet.
3. Although many people feel that parapsychology, the study of psychic phenomena, is completely frivolous, others take it very (serious/seriously).
4. Among the many problems facing the nation’s schools today, the high dropout rate may be the (more/most) distressing.
5. The reading list for the course included short stories by five American authors, but most students found those by Poe (more/most) effective.
6. Archaeologists excavating the ancient Inca site removed soil very (slow/slowly) to protect any buried artifacts.
7. Although Delacroix is best known for the drama of his large canvases, many of his smaller works capture heroic themes just as (forceful/forcefully).
8. When movies were cheaper to produce than they are now, young directors were able to make films (easier/more easily).

Double Negative

A quick tip: Don’t use no double negatives on the Writing Test! In standard written English, it is incorrect to use two negatives together unless one is intended to cancel out the other. That is, one negative word is enough to express a negative sense. Notice the two negative words in this sentence.

James easily passed the biology exam *without hardly* studying his lab notes.



No-Nos

Watch out for double negatives on Usage questions. Be sure to count less obviously negative words like *hardly*, *barely*, and *scarcely*.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE SECTION

Without is a negative, as is any word which indicates absence or lack. *Hardly* is a less familiar negative; it also denotes a scarcity of something, but perhaps not a total absence.

Now look at the next sentence.

In the history of the major leagues, *barely no one* has maintained higher than a .400 batting average for an entire season.

Clearly, *no one* is a negative, but so is *barely*. Just as *hardly* does, this word indicates a scarcity of something, almost a total absence. In Usage questions, be on the lookout for negatives which are not obviously negative, such as *hardly*, *barely*, and *scarcely*.

Usage Drill 13

Which of the following sentences contain inappropriate double negatives? Underline the double negatives.

1. Until Copernicus proposed his theory, scarcely no one believed that the sun was the center of the universe.
2. The decline of outmoded industries has resulted in an unstable economy, since no easy way of retraining workers has never been found.
3. Many submarine volcanoes lie at such great depth that eruptions occur without hardly any release of gas or steam.
4. Charles Dickens had not written fiction for scarcely three years when he became a bestselling novelist.
5. Practically no big-time college football team has enjoyed success on the gridiron without increasing overall athletic department revenues.
6. Because consumer electronics are so affordable today, hardly no college student needs to go without a personal stereo.
7. Last summer's extended drought means there may not be scarcely enough wheat to satisfy the growing demand.
8. The author's latest work is so powerfully written and emotionally charged that hardly any commentators have criticized it.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE SECTION

5. The volunteer librarian is extremely concerned
 A B
in the appallingly low rate of adult literacy in
 C
his community. No error
 D E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
6. The wrestlers knew that fasting could be
 A
 dangerous, but them and their teammates
 B
 were desperate to lose weight before the
 C D
 championship match. No error
 E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
7. Artifacts from Sumerian Ur, though less well
 A
known than other archaeological discoveries,
 B C
is sophisticated in both design and execution.
 D
No error
 E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
8. Whenever we travel abroad, a sense of
 A B
 excitement and an anticipation of being
 in a foreign land overtake you. No error
 C D E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
9. My older brother and me shared a ten-speed
 A B
 bicycle until he passed his driver's examination
 C D
 and received his license. No error
 E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
10. The chairwoman felt that she could not give in
 A
with his demands, which she thought were
 B C
completely unreasonable. No error
 D E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
11. One can learn more about new computers by
 A B
 actually working with them than one can by
 C
merely reading the instruction manual.
 D
No error
 E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
12. To expand the newspaper's coverage of
 A
 local politics, they transferred a popular
 B C
 columnist to the City Desk. No error
 D E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
13. As one roams the halls of the National Gallery
 A B
 of Art, you should appreciate not only the
 C
displays of art, but the grandeur of the
 D
 building's architecture. No error
 E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
14. Before he drunk the poison, Socrates joked
 A B
gently with his distraught and grieving
 C D
 followers. No error
 E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

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15. In recently constructed concert halls, there is
 usually at least two sets of stairs at the rear of
 the balcony. No error
 A B C D E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
16. Many foreign electronics companies have
 learned to build machines at lower cost by
 using inexpensive produced components.
No error
 A B C D E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
17. Although ecological awareness is
international, there are few if any countries
on the rise in which no native species are
 endangered. No error
 A B C D E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
18. The clean cars and spacious stations of the
 new subway system is a tribute to the
 project's thousands of laborers. No error
 A B C D E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
19. Some settlers move to new countries simply
 because of the compelling natural beauty
 found in them. No error
 A B C D E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
20. The Soviet Union had not hardly developed a
 spaceship suitable for lunar travel when the
 first United States astronaut landed on the
 moon in 1969. No error
 A B C D E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
21. The police officer noticed the wanted suspect
 only after he removed his sunglasses and
sat down at the counter. No error
 A B C D E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
22. Babar was created over 60 years ago in a
 suburb of Paris but is the most popular
 elephant in children's literature. No error
 A B C D E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
23. Unemployment compensation was developed to
 aid those people between jobs or otherwise
 temporarily without a position of employment.
No error
 A B C D E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
24. The triathlete had swam three miles before leg
 cramps caused her to withdraw from the
 competition. No error
 A B C D E
 (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

MULTIPLE-CHOICE SECTION

25. The speaker whom the graduating class chose
A B
to deliver their commencement address was
C
an imminent authority on international
D
diplomacy. No error
E
 A B C D E
26. The jazz band was forced to return the gate
A B
receipts after they had arrived at the arena one
C
hour late. No error
D E
 A B C D E
27. By the time today's freshmen complete their
A B
engineering degrees, the job market
in their field has become quite robust.
C D
No error
E
 A B C D E
28. On the executive board of the publishing
A B
company sits five women and four men.
C D
No error
E
 A B C D E
29. Today, when Indian leaders sue to regain
A
ancestral lands, the government often offered
B C
to settle the disputes out of court. No error
D E
 A B C D E
30. Borges, probably the most innovative writer of
A B
the twentieth century, brought to literature a
C
fresh concept of the nature of fiction. No error
D E
 A B C D E

Answers and Explanations

Usage Drills

Usage Drill 1

1. are 2. are 3. pass 4. correct 5. are 6. are 7. correct

Usage Drill 2

1. are 2. is 3. go 4. attracts 5. are 6. complete 7. are 8. ranks

Usage Drill 3

1. is 2. removes 3. are 4. is 5. keeps

Usage Drill 4

1. to compete 2. to increase/on increasing 3. of setting 4. to carry 5. correct
6. to triple 7. in discouraging 8. correct

Usage Drill 5

1. shrink 2. thought 3. have brought 4. was 5. correct 6. had 7. comes 8. had
hit

Usage Drill 6

1. requirements 2. correct 3. reminders 4. with children 5. in college T-shirts
6. as prototypes 7. with their bank accounts 8. correct

Usage Drill 7

1. its 2. it 3. correct 4. its 5. its 6. their 7. his/her 8. their

Usage Drill 8

1. I 2. him 3. We 4. me 5. She 6. me 7. her 8. We

Usage Drill 9

1. we 2. one/she/he (stands) 3. you 4. correct 5. you (have) 6. they 7. (as
infrequent flyers,) we (become) 8. one's/her/his

Usage Drill 10

1. he 2. they 3. she/her 4. they 5. they 6. he 7. they 8. they/their

MULTIPLE-CHOICE SECTION

Usage Drill 11

1. faulty, *Like those of many politicians* 2. faulty, *than he was as a writer and painter* 3. faulty, *than chimpanzees'* 4. faulty, *unlike Germany's Professor Heisenberg's* 5. correct 6. faulty, *than to submit to an unjust law* 7. faulty, *than the cost of a house* 8. faulty, *than they are in many countries*

Usage Drill 12

1. gradually 2. commercially 3. seriously 4. most 5. most 6. slowly 7. forcefully 8. more easily

Usage Drill 13

1. scarcely no one 2. no easy way has never been found 3. without hardly 4. had not written fiction for scarcely three years 5. correct 6. hardly no college student 7. may not be scarcely enough wheat 8. correct

Usage Practice Quiz

1. (D)—The comparison between Mt. Hood and any mountain is illogical. Mt. Hood is itself a mountain, so it cannot be contrasted with every member of its own class of things, mountains. The underlined phrase should be *any other mountain*.
2. (D)—Apparently, the plural pronoun *they* refers to the subject of this sentence. But the subject is *athlete*, a singular noun even though it represents a whole class of athletes. A singular form of the personal pronoun, *he* or *she*, corresponds to the subject in number. Of course, with a singular pronoun, the verb *begin* also changes, to *begins*.
3. (B)—*Reduce* is a plural form of the verb, *to reduce*. But the subject of this verb is *bicycling*, a gerund, and a gerund is always singular. The phrase between commas, *as well as walking and jogging*, may seem to make the subject plural. But a phrase following a subject, set off by commas, and introduced by a compound preposition like *as well as*, or *in addition to*, is not treated as part of a sentence's subject. *Bicycling* remains the singular subject requiring a singular verb, *reduces*.
4. (E)—There is no error in this sentence. The comparison here is both logical and idiomatic.
5. (C)—In this context, the adjective *concerned* requires a different preposition, *about* instead of *in*. By itself, the word *concerned* can take three different prepositions, *about*, *in*, or *with*, but each combination produces a different meaning.
6. (B)—*Them* is the object form of the personal pronoun that could refer to the wrestlers. But the pronoun serves as a subject in this sentence—*them . . . were desperate*—so it should be in subject form, *they*.
7. (D)—The only verb in the sentence is the singular *is*. However, the subject of the sentence is *artifacts*, a plural noun. A long phrase separating the

USAGE QUESTIONS

subject and its verb makes it harder to “listen” for agreement, but the verb should be plural, *are*.

8. (D)—*We* and *you* are not interchangeable in this sentence, though either one could be grammatical. But when two pronouns within one sentence refer to the same performer of actions, the pronouns should be consistent. Here, because it’s underlined, *you* can change to match *we*.

9. (A)—*Me* is part of the subject of this sentence; the position of the pronoun makes that obvious. But the form of the pronoun signals that it’s an object. To be part of the subject, the pronoun should have the subject form, *I*. It’s *I shared*, not *me shared*.

10. (B)—The idiomatic verb-preposition combination *give in to* means “submit to,” and that is the meaning of the verb in this sentence. The preposition *with* is simply unidiomatic in this usage.

11. (E)—There is no error in this sentence. The parallel construction in this sentence balances perfectly.

12. (B)—*They* has no antecedent in this sentence. A personal pronoun cannot refer to an unstated noun.

13. (C)—*One* and *you* are not interchangeable in this sentence. Either *one* and *he*, or *you* could be used, but both *one* and *you* cannot refer to the same performer of actions within one sentence. Because *you* is underlined, it can change to be consistent with *one*.

14. (A)—This sentence requires the simple past of the verb *to drink*, that is, *drank*. The form given in this sentence is the past participle.

15. (B)—The only verb in the sentence is the singular *is*. The subject of the sentence is *sets*, a plural noun. The word *there* preceding *is* serves to delay the subject *sets*. The subject is no longer in the position where we expect to find it, before the verb. Nevertheless, the verb should be plural—*are*—to agree with the plural subject.

16. (C)—*Inexpensive* seems to modify the word *produced* and to describe how the components were produced. But adverbs describe how an action is done, so the adjective *inexpensive* needs an adverbial ending. The word needed at (C) is the adverb *inexpensively*.

17. (E)—There is no error in this sentence.

18. (C)—The only verb in the sentence is the singular *is*. But this sentence has two plural subjects, *cars* and *stations*. The verb should be plural, *are*, to correspond with the plural subjects.

19. (E)—There is no error in this sentence.

20. (A)—*Hardly* is a modifier that negates the word it modifies. In this sentence, it negates *developed*. *Not* also negates *developed* and creates a double negative construction where only one negation is intended. Such double negatives are substandard usage in modern English.

21. (B)—It is unclear to whom the pronoun *he* refers. Because the singular pronoun *he* could agree with either noun, *officer* or *suspect*, the pronoun’s reference is unclear and the noun should be restated.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE SECTION

22. (C)—This sentence is grammatically correct, but logically faulty. The conjunction *but* expresses a contrast, but the two predicates express no contrast. Babar's great and lasting popularity is not at odds with his creation in France over 60 years ago. So, the *but* is not a logical way to link the two predicates.
23. (D)—The singular noun *position* should be the plural noun *positions*. As the phrase stands in the given sentence, *people . . . without a position of employment* seems to say that many persons lack the same position of employment, while of course, many unemployed people lack many different positions.
24. (A)—*Swam* is the simple past tense of the verb *to swim*. But the required verb tense in this sentence is the past perfect because the triathlete *had swum* before *cramps caused her to withdraw*. The past perfect is formed with an auxiliary verb, *had*, and the past participle, *swum*, not *swam*.
25. (D)—The words *imminent* and *eminent* are easily confused. *Imminent* means "likely to occur at any moment"; it is familiar and appropriate in the phrase "imminent disaster." But *eminent*, the word this sentence needs, means "highly regarded."
26. (C)—*They* seems to refer to the first subject, *jazz band*. But *jazz band* is a singular noun, although a band is made up of several musicians. The band must be singular because it acts as a unit, arriving late and disappointing the audience together. The pronoun referring to the band should be *it*.
27. (D)—The verb phrase in the second clause is *has become*, a verb in the present perfect tense. The present perfect should express recently completed, or past but continuing action: "times have changed" (and they still do). But the future time established in the first clause requires a future perfect verb in the second clause: *the job market . . . will have become*.
28. (C)—The verb *sits* is singular, but the subject of the sentence is plural, *five women and four men*. The subject appears in an unusual position following the verb. Nevertheless, the correct verb is the plural, *sit*.
29. (C)—The verb *offered* is in the past tense. But the first word of the sentence, *today*, indicates that the action takes place in the present. Therefore, the verb should be in the present tense, *offers*.
30. (E)—There is no error in this sentence.