

College Panda

NEWEST EDITION

WRITING

Egyptian Scholastic Test

EST TEST

Full Preparation



EST Writing Guide

All lessons are based on official exams The College Board has released. Nothing else. Because there are only 44 questions on the writing test, how often each topic shows up can vary widely.

1. **Relative Clauses** (foundational knowledge)
2. **Prepositional phrases** (foundational knowledge)
3. **Idioms** (0-5%)
4. **Subject-Verb Agreement** (2-7%)
5. **Modifiers** (0-5%)
6. **Run-ons** (5-7%)
7. **Fragments** (0-5%)
8. **Redundancy** (5-9%)
9. **Parallelism** (2-5%)
10. **Pronoun Reference** (5-7%)
11. **Tenses** (0-5%)
12. **Commas, Dashes, and Colons** (9-20%)
13. **Apostrophes** (2-5%)
14. **Word Choice** (7-16%)
15. **Transitions** (2-11%)
16. **Topic, Conclusion, and Transition Sentences** (0-9%)
17. **Supporting Evidence and Examples** (2-9%)
18. **Relevance and Purpose** (9-22%)
19. **Placement** (5-7%)
20. **Point of View** (0-2%)
21. **Comparatives vs. Superlatives** (hasn't shown up directly, but you should know it)
22. **Who vs. Whom** (0-2%)
23. **Combining Sentences** (5%)
24. **Data Interpretation** (2-5%)—mostly practice questions, only available in the paperback guide
25. **Odds and Ends**

Relative Clauses



Many chapters in this guide redefine or reexplain previous grammar terms so that those jumping from chapter to chapter still get a good sense of what's going on. But to get the full value out of this guide, it's best that we learn a few basic things about sentences and their structures before moving on. We start by learning to identify the nonessential parts of a sentence, the ones that aren't needed for a sentence to be complete.

Take the following sentence:

The tiger ate my aunt earlier today.

Let's add something:

The tiger that was hungry ate my aunt earlier today.

By adding the underlined phrase to the sentence, we've described the tiger in more detail. These phrases are called **relative clauses** because they start with a relative pronoun—*who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, or *that*. While some relative clauses can be essential to the meaning of a sentence, they are never essential to the sentence being a complete sentence. In other words, they aren't important grammatically even though the resulting sentence can sound awkward when they are removed.

Let's add some more phrases:

After escaping, the tiger that was hungry ate my aunt, who was nice and juicy, earlier today.

Now these additional phrases are called **comma phrases** because they're set off by a pair of commas. Note that the second underlined phrase is also a relative clause. Some relative clauses require commas and some don't—we'll delve into those rules in a future chapter. Either way, comma phrases and relative clauses are not essential to the sentences they're in.

A crucial part of doing well on the EST Writing section is knowing how to strip away all these secondary phrases to get back to the essence of the sentence:

The tiger ate my aunt earlier today.

None of the underlined phrases we added above can stand alone as complete sentences themselves. Yes, they add valuable details, but at the end of the day, what's left is the sentence that CAN stand alone by itself, the main idea. To trick you, the EST will constantly throw long boring phrases at you left and right like a boxer jabbing at you with one hand to disguise the big punch he's planning with the other. Don't be fooled. Learn to strip away the unnecessary phrases and you'll get through questions more quickly and accurately. In future chapters, you'll learn to deconstruct other parts of sentences and develop a way of reading them that will help you get directly to the answer.

Practice:-

Cross out all the comma phrases and relative clauses. What's left should still be a grammatically complete sentence (subject and a verb), even though the meaning may come off as incomplete. The first one is done for you.

1. Bathed in balsamic and dressed in basil, ripe tomatoes and soft mozzarella bask in the light of the lamp ~~that is never turned off.~~
2. Jack's grandfather suffered from polio, a crippling and potentially fatal infectious disease.
3. She tiptoed through the cubicle, examining the dusty wooden chair, and made her way past her boss, who was on the phone with a contractor.
4. As an environmental researcher, I study the effects of global warming, which has been a hot topic in recent years.
5. The group of nearly ten executives, under the leadership of Senator Aldrich, enjoyed the secrecy and placidity of the luxurious Jekyll Island.
6. According to the article, the train that had crashed into the wall had no conductor on board.

Answers:-

1. ~~Bathed in balsamic and dressed in basil,~~ ripe tomatoes and soft mozzarella bask in the light of the lamp ~~that is never turned off.~~
2. Jack's grandfather suffered from polio, ~~a crippling and potentially fatal infectious disease.~~
3. She tiptoed through the cubicle, ~~examining the dusty wooden chair,~~ and made her way past her boss, ~~who was on the phone with a contractor.~~
4. As an environmental researcher, I study the effects of global warming, ~~which has been a hot topic in recent years.~~
5. The group of nearly ten executives, ~~under the leadership of Senator Aldrich,~~ enjoyed the secrecy and placidity of the luxurious Jekyll Island.
6. According to the article, the train ~~that had crashed into the wall~~ had no conductor on board.



Prepositional Phrases

Most prepositions are direction/position words. Here's a list of common prepositions:

aboard	about	above	across	after	against	along	amid	among	around
as to	at	before	behind	below	beneath	beside	between	beyond	by
circa	despite	down	due to	during	except	for	from	in	into
like	near	of	off	on	onto	out	over	past	since

through **to** toward under until up upon **with** within without

Now do you have to memorize these? Certainly not. Just familiarize yourself, especially with the bolded ones. Some words are prepositions in some cases and something else in others. Just remember that a preposition almost always has a noun following it. Take a look at these two sentences:

- Throughout the living room was the scent of fatty crabs that had expired weeks ago.
- I put my sister on the diet after it worked so well for me.

The preposition + noun combinations are underlined. These preposition and noun combinations are called **prepositional phrases**.

Prepositional Phrase = Preposition + Noun + Any Attached Describing Phrase

= of + fatty crabs + that had expired weeks ago

If you think a word is a preposition and there's a noun following it, chances are it's a preposition. Even if it's not, don't worry about being 100% on which words are prepositions; the **EST** doesn't test you on them directly. For example, *after it* is not a prepositional phrase in the second sentence because it's part of a larger phrase—*after it worked so well*. If the sentence were *After school, I put my sister on a diet*, then *After* would act as a preposition. But again, as long as you get the general idea, you'll be fine. This just helps you later when you learn about subject verb agreement.

Here's the most important takeaway: prepositional phrases are **not essential** to the sentence they're in. While they may supply important details, sentences can stand alone grammatically without them (there will still be a subject and a verb).

Practice:-

Cross out all prepositional phrases in the following sentences.

1. Bathed in balsamic and dressed in basil, ripe tomatoes and soft mozzarella bask in the light of the lamp that is never turned off.
2. Jack's grandfather suffered from polio, a crippling and potentially fatal infectious disease.
3. She tiptoed through the cubicle, examining the dusty wooden chair, and made her way past her boss, who was on the phone with a contractor.
4. As an environmental researcher, I study the effects of global warming, which has been a hot topic in recent years.
5. The group of nearly ten executives, under the leadership of Senator Aldrich, enjoyed the secrecy and placidity of the luxurious Jekyll Island.
6. According to the article, the train that had crashed into the wall had no conductor on board.

ANSWER:-

1. Bathed in balsamic and dressed ~~in basil~~, ripe tomatoes and soft mozzarella bask ~~in the light of the lamp~~ that is never turned off.
2. Jack's grandfather suffered ~~from polio~~, a crippling and potentially fatal infectious disease.

3. She tiptoed ~~through the cubicle~~, examining the dusty wooden chair, and made her way ~~past her boss, who was on the phone with a contractor~~.
4. As an environmental researcher, I study the effects of ~~global warming~~, which has been a hot topic ~~in recent years~~.
5. The group of ~~nearly ten executives~~, under the leadership of Senator Aldrich, enjoyed the secrecy and placidity ~~of the luxurious Jekyll Island~~.
6. According to the article, the train that had crashed ~~into the wall~~ had no conductor ~~on board~~.



Idioms

Idioms are phrases that are correct just because that's the way we say them. On the **EST** idiom errors come in the form of an incorrect preposition.

Example 1

Wrong: He is regarded **to be** an awesome speaker.

Correct: He is regarded **as** an awesome speaker.

Example 2

Wrong: That painting is similar **with** the red one.

Correct: That painting is similar **to** the red one.

Example 3

Wrong: She is suspicious **towards** me.

Correct: She is suspicious **of** me.

Example 4

Wrong: I have an interest **to** fishing.

Correct: I have an interest **in** fishing.

Example 5

Wrong:	The winner was awarded of a gold medal.
Correct:	The winner was awarded of a gold medal.
Example 6	
Wrong:	The company was accused to donate millions of dollars to the President's campaign.
Correct:	The company was accused of donating millions of dollars to the President's campaign.

There's no rhyme or reason behind these phrases and the right preposition can depend on the meaning of the sentence. Some are downright obvious because they sound so unnatural but some can be tough to spot, especially if you haven't encountered the idiom before. Practice will expose you to the most common ones, but sometimes, you'll have no choice but to rely on your instincts. Fortunately, the new **EST** won't go out of its way to test you on obscure idioms.

Practice:-

- His speech was meant at inciting conflict within the other party.
 - NO CHANGE
 - in inciting of
 - to incite
 - inciting
- He wrote to the President in the hope to persuade him to veto the bill.
 - NO CHANGE
 - to hope to persuade
 - in the hope of persuasion
 - in the hope of persuading
- The architecture of the building is based for the elaborate designs of the Persians.
 - NO CHANGE
 - after
 - on
 - by
- The couch made a temporary place to sleep while the bed was being replaced.
 - NO CHANGE
 - made for
 - made as
 - was made to
- I was assigned a seat across the table to a young boy who was fiddling with his pencil.
 - NO CHANGE
 - at

- (C) from
- (D) with

6. When working in a nuclear power plant, one must be careful of exposure to radiation.
- (A) NO CHANGE
 - (B) careful from exposure of radiation.
 - (C) careful of exposure from radiation.
 - (D) careful about exposure with radiation.
7. The violence in that neighborhood points at the failure of existing public safety measures.
- (A) NO CHANGE
 - (B) to
 - (C) on
 - (D) out
8. Joanna's parents are so lenient that they allow her buying anything she wanted.
- (A) NO CHANGE
 - (B) to buy
 - (C) in buying
 - (D) OMIT the underlined portion.
9. In preparation for Valentine's Day, the restaurant workers lined both sides of the walkway between candles and flowers.
- (A) NO CHANGE
 - (B) along
 - (C) with
 - (D) around
10. The general ordered his officers watching over the prisoners.
- (A) NO CHANGE
 - (B) watching
 - (C) to watch at
 - (D) to watch over
11. When her cousins were in town, Angela urged them to visit the local zoo.
- (A) NO CHANGE
 - (B) visiting
 - (C) to visit
 - (D) their visiting
12. She managed to get a position in the director of the engineering department.
- (A) NO CHANGE
 - (B) for
 - (C) as
 - (D) into
13. The law will hold on him accountable for his actions.

- (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) hold for him accountable with
- (C) hold him accountable to
- (D) hold him accountable for

Answers:-

- 1. C
- 2. B
- 3. C
- 4. A
- 5. C
- 6. D
- 7. B
- 8. B
- 9. C
- 10. D
- 11. A
- 12. C
- 13. D



Subject-Verb Agreement

You know how you have to conjugate the verb to match the subject in foreign languages? We have the same thing in English, and it can get tricky even though the simple cases seem so natural and obvious to us:

Example 1	
Wrong:	You is smart.
Correct:	You are smart.
Example 2	
Wrong:	Everyday the alarm clock goes off and we wakes up to confront our lives.
Correct:	Everyday the alarm clock goes off and we wake up to confront our lives.

The subject is a noun (person, place, or thing) that is the “doer” or “main feature” in the sentence. A verb is an action word. Think about the simple sentences above and how awkward it would be to have verbs that don’t agree with the subject. You don’t even have to know what the subject and verb of

each sentence is to know that it's awkward. Now the **EST** won't make it that easy on you; they'll intentionally try to trick your ear. Let's do an example:

Investigations into the scandal (*shows/show*) a lot more than we want to know.

To pick the right verb, we must first find the subject. Let's start by applying what we learned in a previous chapter and cross out the prepositional phrases:

Investigations ~~into the scandal~~ (*shows/show*) a lot more than we want to know.

What's left is the subject—investigations! Now the second step is to ask yourself whether *investigations* is singular or plural. Well, it's plural because of the *s*, meaning there's more than one. Therefore, we need the plural verb *show*. And that's the whole process! Cross out the prepositional phrases and you'll be able to pick the subject from the nouns that are left. It's usually the remaining noun closest to the verb.

If you're ever unsure of whether a verb such as *show* is singular or plural, test it by putting *he* and *they* in front and then asking yourself which sounds more correct:

He show... OR *They show...*

Hopefully, *They show...* sounds more correct to you, which means *show* is the plural form (since *they* is obviously plural).

Let's try some more difficult ones. Note that in the following example, we can cross out both a prepositional phrase and a comma phrase.

Example 3

Question: Films by Miyazaki and Itami, including Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*, (*excites/excite*) the imagination.

Step 1: Cross out the prepositional phrases/comma phrases/relative clauses:
Films ~~by Miyazaki and Itami, including Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*~~, (*excites/excite*) the imagination.

Step 2: What is the subject? *Films*

Step 3: Is *Films* singular or plural? Plural.

Answer: Films by Miyazaki and Itami, including Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*, **excite** the imagination.

Example 4

Question: Her jewelry, in addition to her pokemon cards, (*was/were*) stolen by the robber.

Step 1: Cross out the prepositional phrases/comma phrases/relative clauses:
Her jewelry, ~~in addition to her pokemon cards,~~ (*was/were*) stolen by the robber.

Step 2:	What is the subject? <i>Her jewelry</i>
Step 3:	Is <i>Her jewelry</i> singular or plural? Singular.
Answer:	Her jewelry, in addition to her pokemon cards, was stolen by the robber.

You might think that the verb should be plural because the sentence mentions both jewelry and cards, but because of the comma phrase, the subject is just the jewelry.

Example 5	
Question:	Beside the bins, where one could smell the stench of rotten eggs, (<i>was/were</i>) a pack of philosophy majors gathering cans for recycling.
Step 1:	Cross out the prepositional phrases/comma phrases/relative clauses: Beside the bins, where one could smell the stench of rotten eggs, (<i>was/were</i>) a pack of philosophy majors gathering cans for recycling.
Step 2:	What is the subject? <i>a pack</i>
Step 3:	Is <i>a pack</i> singular or plural? Singular.
Answer:	Beside the bins, where one could smell the stench of rotten eggs, was a pack of philosophy majors gathering cans for recycling.

Again, make sure you can identify that *was* is singular whereas *were* is plural. Everyone uses the correct form in simple conversation, but some students have trouble identifying the correct form in a grammar test setting.

Example 6	
Question:	Inside heaven's kingdom (<i>rests/rest</i>) Charlie and his angels.
Step 1:	Cross out the prepositional phrases/comma phrases/relative clauses: Inside heaven's kingdom (<i>rests/rest</i>) Charlie and his angels.
Step 2:	What is the subject? <i>Charlie and his angels</i>
Step 3:	Is <i>Charlie and his angels</i> singular or plural? Plural.
Answer:	Inside heaven's kingdom rest Charlie and his angels.
Example 7	

Question:	There (<i>is/are</i>) many other examples to support my point.
Step 1:	Cross out the prepositional phrases/comma phrases/relative clauses: There aren't any to cross out. Note that <i>to support</i> is not a prepositional phrase because it doesn't end in a noun. It's an infinitive.
Step 2:	What is the subject? <i>many other examples</i>
Step 3:	Is <i>many other examples</i> singular or plural? Plural.
Answer:	There are many other examples to support my point.

These last three examples show that the subject can appear after the verb, something the **EST** loves to do to trip students up.

Another question variation you'll come across deals with helping verbs, which are necessary to form certain tenses. Examples of helping verbs are bolded below:

has seen
was forgotten
is watching
have been

When you see these verb forms, it is the helping verb that must agree with the subject.

Example 8	
Question:	The few ideas that I've come up with last night (<i>has/have</i>) given my team enough to work with.
Step 1:	Cross out the prepositional phrases/comma phrases/relative clauses: The few ideas that I've come up with last night (<i>has/have</i>) given my team enough to work with.
Step 2:	What is the subject? <i>The few ideas</i>
Step 3:	Is <i>The few ideas</i> singular or plural? Plural.
Correct:	The few ideas that I've come up with last night have given my team enough to work with.
Example 9	
Question:	The forks and knives are in the kitchen, and the jar with the thai peanut sauce (<i>has/have</i>) been sitting in the refrigerator.

Step 1:	Cross out the prepositional phrases/comma phrases/relative clauses: The forks and knives are in the kitchen, and the jar with the thai peanut sauce (has/have) been sitting in the refrigerator.
Step 2:	What is the subject? <i>the jar</i>
Step 3:	Is <i>the jar</i> singular or plural? Singular.
Answer:	The forks and knives are in the kitchen, and the jar with the thai peanut sauce has been sitting in the refrigerator.
Example 10	
Question:	The players on our all-star tennis team (is/are) taken on luxury cruises every year.
Step 1:	Cross out the prepositional phrases/comma phrases/relative clauses: The players on our all-star tennis team (is/are) taken on luxury cruises every year.
Step 2:	What is the subject? <i>The players</i>
Step 3:	Is <i>The players</i> singular or plural? Plural.
Answer:	The players on our all-star tennis team are taken on luxury cruises every year.

Another question variation you might see is one in which the verb is in a phrase or clause you would normally cross out. For example,

I visited my aunt, who (is/are) a panda caretaker, earlier today.

Note that the underlined portion is a comma phrase. To find the subject if the verb is located in a phrase or clause like the one above, just ask yourself what it's describing. In this case, the phrase is obviously describing *my aunt*, which is singular. Therefore, we need the singular verb *is*.

I visited my **aunt**, who **is** a panda caretaker, earlier today.

Example 11	
Question:	Where are the cookies that (was/were) in the cookie jar?
Answer:	Where are the cookies that were in the cookie jar?

In Example 11, we have a relative clause that describes *cookies*, which is plural.

Example 12	
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Question:	I have no interest in luxury products, which (<i>caters/cater</i>) only to the wealthy.
Answer:	I have no interest in luxury products, which cater only to the wealthy.

Now let's walk through a really tricky example that combines everything we've learned so far in this chapter:

Mastery of magic tricks that truly (*surprises/surprise*) the audience (*requires/require*) lots of time.

Here, we have to figure out the subjects for two verbs. Cross out the prepositional phrases and relative clause:

~~Mastery of magic tricks that truly (*surprises/surprise*) the audience (*requires/require*)~~ lots of time.

Now it's easy to see that *mastery* is the main subject of the sentence. *Mastery* is singular so we need the singular verb *requires*. After all, it's the *mastery* that *requires* a lot of time. But let's get back to the first verb, which is crossed out within the relative clause, and ask ourselves what that relative clause is describing. What is truly surprising the audience? Magic tricks! *Magic tricks* is plural so we need the plural verb *surprise*.

Mastery of magic tricks that truly **surprise** the audience **requires** lots of time.

Now, a few more rules you should know:

Example 13	
Question:	<i>The Simpsons</i> (<i>is/are</i>) the longest running American sitcom.
Answer:	<i>The Simpsons</i> is the longest running American sitcom.
Rule:	Names of books, TV shows, bands, and movies are all singular.
Example 14	
Question:	Charles and Kate (<i>was/were</i>) at the ball last night.
Answer:	Charles and Kate were at the ball last night.
Rule:	Subjects joined by <i>and</i> are always plural.
Example 15	
Question:	Everybody (<i>loves/love</i>) Raymond.
Answer:	Everybody loves Raymond.

Rule:	<i>Everybody, everything, every, anybody, anyone, no one</i> are all singular subjects.
Example 16	
Questions:	Each of the candidates (<i>has/have</i>) two minutes to respond. Neither of the candidates (<i>wants/want</i>) to respond.
Answers:	Each of the candidates has two minutes to respond. Neither of the candidates wants to respond.
Rule:	<i>Each, neither, and either</i> are all singular subjects.

Before we go to the exercises, you probably have quite a few grammar rules swirling around in your head. Let's go over a few common errors that students make when they start thinking about subjects and verbs. Take a look at the following sentence:

He likes to sway to R&B music instead of rocking to AC/DC.

On the **EST** you must be able to identify which words are verbs before you can check for their subjects. Some students mistakenly think that *to sway* and *rocking* are verbs in that sentence. However, *to sway* is called an **infinitive** (*to be, to hate, to run, ...*) and *rocking* is called a **gerund** (*running, cooking, exploding, ...*). You've probably heard of infinitives in French or Spanish class, where it's the root form of a verb before you conjugate it. It's the same in English. Infinitives and gerunds are **not verbs so there's no need to check for subject-verb agreement**. The only actual verb in this example is *likes*. Again, gerunds and infinitives are **never verbs**. Don't waste time checking for their subjects.

Lastly, the **EST** loves to throw in more than one verb in the same sentence. That way, one of the verbs can be buried deeper into the sentence to fool your ear. In these questions, split the sentence into two and make sure both verbs agree.

Example 17	
Wrong:	John and Harry studied computer science and was recruited by Google to develop new services.
Sentence 1:	John and Harry studied computer science. <i>Correct</i> .
Sentence 2:	John and Harry was recruited by Google to develop new services. <i>Wrong</i> .
Correct:	John and Harry studied computer science and were recruited by Google to develop new services.
Example 18	
Wrong:	Poisonous traps that attracts and then kills off rats are spread throughout this office.

Sentence 1:	Poisonous traps that attracts rats are spread throughout this office. <i>Wrong.</i>
Sentence 2:	Poisonous traps that then kills off rats are spread throughout this office. <i>Wrong.</i>
Correct:	Poisonous traps that attract and then kill off rats are spread throughout this office.
Example 19	
Wrong:	I was walking down the street and were chatting with my friend about his day.
Sentence 1:	I was walking down the street. <i>Correct.</i>
Sentence 2:	I were chatting with my friend about his day. <i>Wrong.</i>
Correct:	I was walking down the street and (was) chatting with my friend about his day.

In Example 19, the second *was* is unnecessary because the first *was* serves as a helping verb for both *walking* and *chatting*. If we stripped out all the details of the sentence, it would read, *I was walking and chatting...*, which is a grammatically fine sentence

Practice:-

Fix the subject-verb agreement error. Some may be correct.

1. New economic policy in a few states have brought wealth to some industries, such as manufacturing, but most industries remain unaffected.
2. The scientists trying to replicate the results of the experiment realized that the speed of explosive chemical reactions were too fast to accurately measure.
3. The paper formed from organically grown trees tends to be more sturdy than that made from trees in the wilderness.
4. Above the desk in his bedroom hangs shiny silver medals and a large gold trophy, each adorned with a small plaque and signed by the young athlete.
5. At any given moment, there is likely to be more than a million websites being visited

Answers:-

1. New economic policy in a few states **has brought** wealth to some industries, such as manufacturing, but most industries remain unaffected.
2. The scientists trying to replicate the results of the experiment realized that the speed of explosive chemical reactions **was** too fast to accurately measure.
3. The paper formed from organically grown trees tends to be more sturdy than that made from trees in the wilderness. **CORRECT**
4. Above the desk in his bedroom **hang** shiny silver medals and a large gold trophy, each adorned with a small plaque and signed by the young athlete.

5. At any given moment, there **are** likely to be more than a million websites being visited

Modifiers



Try to recognize what's funny about this sentence:

After being beaten and deflated, the baker shaped and seasoned the dough.

The sentence is ridiculous because of the comma phrase at the start—it seems like the baker is being beaten before he goes off to work on the dough. *After being beaten and deflated* is called a **modifier** because it modifies or describes someone or something in the same sentence. Here, the modifier is misplaced. Instead, it should go right next to the thing it's supposed to modify:

After being beaten and deflated, the dough was shaped and seasoned by the baker.

A modifier is like a describing phrase. How do you know if a phrase is a modifier? Usually it comes at the beginning of the sentence and is separated off by a comma (but not always). If all you read was *After being beaten and deflated*, your natural thought would be, "**Who** or **What** is being beaten?" Having that thought is how you know you're dealing with a modifier. Without the rest of the sentence, it leaves you wondering what's being talked about. When correcting sentences that have this error, you want to make sure there is a sensible noun that is right next to the modifier.

Let's do a couple examples so you can see how modifiers are tested.

Example 1

Wrong: I bought a house from the local bakery made of gingerbread.

Correct: I bought a house made of gingerbread from the local bakery.

Modifiers don't necessarily have to be at the start of the sentence. Here, *made of gingerbread* should be placed next to the *house* it's describing. Otherwise, it seems like the local bakery is the thing that's made of gingerbread.

Example 2

Wrong: Watching the end of the world, our lives flashed before our eyes.

Correct: While we were watching the end of the world, our lives flashed before our eyes.

In this example, the sentence makes no sense because *our lives* don't have eyes to watch the end of the world with. The modifier *Watching the end of the world* needs to modify *we* even though that word's not even in the sentence. Therefore, the correct version puts in the subject *we* and re-words the sentence.

The phrase *While we were watching the end of the world* is an example of a **dependent clause**, which contains a subject and a verb but can't stand alone as its own complete sentence. Dependent clauses are NOT modifiers. Note the difference between the wrong and correct versions. The wrong version uses a modifier whereas the correct version uses a dependent clause. Dependent clauses don't leave us wondering *who* or *what* like a modifier does. Reading just the first part of the correct version, we already know the subject is *we*. With dependent clauses, we don't have to worry about modifier errors, because again, they aren't modifiers.

Rule

Keep modifiers right next to the thing they're supposed to describe.

Example 3

Wrong: Running fiercely to the bathroom, John's pants dropped.

Correct: Running fiercely to the bathroom, John dropped his pants.

Understanding this example is SUPER IMPORTANT. On rare occasions, the **EST** will try to trick you by putting the modifier *Running fiercely to the bathroom* right next to *John*. But here, it's not *John* but *John's pants* that's actually being modified. And of course, pants can't by themselves run to the bathroom. So be extremely careful when there's an apostrophe s.

Example 4

Wrong: Spotted dealing cocaine, the police arrested the drug dealers.

Correct: The police arrested the drug dealers, who were spotted dealing cocaine.

Example 5

Wrong: Though cooked and seasoned to perfection, the taste of ketchup-covered octopus was revolting.

Correct: Though cooked and seasoned to perfection, the ketchup-covered octopus had a revolting taste.

Correct: The taste of ketchup-covered octopus, though cooked and seasoned to perfection, was revolting.

In this case, the modifier should modify the food itself, not the *taste* of it.

Note

English is a weird language. Don't be confused by constructions like the one below:

The magician walked across the stage, dazzling the crowd with card tricks.

This sentence is grammatically correct and does not contain a modifier error—it's understood that *dazzling the crowd with card tricks* applies to the subject, *the magician*, even though it's placed next to *the stage*. Modifier errors will typically occur when the describing phrase is at the start of the sentence, as in the examples above, so don't overanalyze these types of sentences. Note that the comma is important; without it, there WOULD be a modifier error.

Run-ons

Most students think they know what a run-on is based on their 6th grade English class. So when I ask students whether the following is a run-on sentence, almost all students say yes:

I took the ESTs, and I scored a 36, and I applied to MIT, and I got in!

Now this sentence may be long, wordy, and awkward, but the sentence is actually NOT a run-on sentence—it's grammatically correct. The reason it's correct is the use of the word *and*, which connects all the parts together.

I took the ESTs, I scored a 36, I applied to MIT, I got in!

Now this IS a run-on sentence because several **complete sentences are being mashed together with just commas**.

The basic form of a run-on is this:

complete sentence	,	complete sentence
-------------------	---	-------------------

A run-on also occurs when there is nothing between the two complete sentences:

complete sentence		complete sentence
-------------------	--	-------------------

There are four main ways to fix a run-on. Let's go over them one by one with a simple run-on example:

He was hungry, he bought a Chipotle burrito.

Two complete sentences connected only by a comma—definitely a run-on that needs to be fixed.

1. Use periods:

complete sentence. complete sentence.

He was hungry. He bought a burrito.

2. Use a conjunction

complete sentence, *conjunction* complete sentence.

He was hungry, **so** he bought a burrito.

Note that a comma, if necessary, comes **before** the conjunction (we'll learn more about commas in a future chapter). Most students have learned the acronym FANBOYS to memorize the list of conjunctions:

For	And	Nor	But	Or	Yet	So
------------	------------	------------	------------	-----------	------------	-----------

Memorize this list because it's super important.

Now here's a really important point: if two sentences are connected by a word that's not from the FANBOYS list, IT'S STILL A RUN-ON. This is how the **EST** tricks you:

He was hungry, **therefore**, he bought a Chipotle burrito.

This sentence is wrong because *therefore* is not a conjunction—it's not a member of FANBOYS. Instead, it's a transition word pretending to be a conjunction. Other words the **EST** might use include *however*, *moreover*, *in addition to*, *nevertheless*, and *furthermore*. These words cannot be used as conjunctions.

3. Use the semicolon ;

complete sentence; complete sentence.

He was hungry; he bought a burrito.

Semicolons are the simplest way to edit run-ons, but in everyday speaking and writing, conjunctions are more common because they better express how two connected sentences are related. The **EST** will test you on both ways. Note that this is also correct:

He was hungry; therefore, he bought a Chipotle burrito.

But this one is INCORRECT:

He was hungry; and he bought a Chipotle burrito.

Do not use both a conjunction and a semicolon. **Semicolons require complete sentences on either side.** By putting in a conjunction, the second part is no longer a complete sentence.

4. Change the wording so that you no longer have two complete sentences

This last method encompasses a number of run-on fixes. The best way will usually depend on the sentence we're working with. We'll go over the most common ways of revising the wording.

A. Dependent clause

incomplete sentence, complete sentence.

Because he was hungry, he bought a burrito.

By inserting *because* in front, the first half is no longer a complete sentence, and we're no longer mashing two complete sentences together. As a result, we don't need anything more than the comma. *Because he was hungry* is a **dependent clause—it doesn't make sense by itself**. An **independent clause** is just another term for a complete sentence or thought like *he bought a Chipotle burrito*. **It makes sense by itself**. A dependent clause with an independent clause is not a run-on and therefore does not require a conjunction or a semicolon.

When it comes to rewording the burrito example, using a dependent clause turns out to be the best solution, but let's take a look at some examples where other solutions work better.

B. Relative clause (who, which, that)

Example 1

Wrong: The teacher yelled at Alicia, she had left her homework at home.

Correct: The teacher yelled at Alicia, who had left her homework at home.

Example 2

Wrong: The hackers copied the company's central databases, these contain sensitive data on

customers.

Correct:

The hackers copied the company's central databases, which contain sensitive data on customers.

C. A noun phrase set off by commas

Example 3

Wrong:

Yesterday, Russia deployed troops on the border, this is a clear violation of the peace agreement.

Correct:

Yesterday, Russia deployed troops on the border, a clear violation of the peace agreement.

Example 4

Wrong:

The Burj Khalifa is the tallest building in the world, it attracts thousands of tourists each year.

Correct:

The Burj Khalifa is the tallest building in the world, attracting thousands of tourists each year.

D. Modifier

Example 5

Wrong:

People named it after inventor Nikola Tesla, the tesla coil is used in radio transmitters and electrotherapy.

Correct:

Named after inventor Nikola Tesla, the tesla coil is used in radio transmitters and electrotherapy.

Example 6

Wrong:

He is reflecting on the meaning of life, Henry tried to find philosophical answers to life's problems.

Correct:	Reflecting on the meaning of life, Henry tried to find philosophical answers to life's problems.
----------	--

E. Use and to join verbs

Example 7	
Wrong:	James turned up the music, he danced like there was no tomorrow.
Correct:	James turned up the music and danced like there was no tomorrow.

Let's recap what we've learned so far with some examples that are revised in several different ways.

As a side note, the conjunction *for* is rarely used in conversation.

Example 9	
Wrong:	I love the game of basketball, however, I don't play it myself.
Correct:	I love the game of basketball, but I don't play it myself.
Correct:	I love the game of basketball; however, I don't play it myself.
Correct:	I love the game of basketball, even though I don't play it myself.

After reading the third correct version, you might be wondering why *even though* is correct and *however* is incorrect. What's the difference? Well, with *however*, you still have two independent clauses on either side of the comma. With *even though*, you have an independent clause with a dependent clause, which is not a run-on:

Wrong:	I love the game of basketball,	however, I don't play it myself.
	Independent clause	Independent clause
Fine:	I love the game of basketball,	even though I don't play it myself.
	Independent clause	Dependent clause

Example 10

Wrong:	Nightmares keep me awake at night; yet I oddly feel energized in the morning.
Correct:	Nightmares keep me awake at night; however, I oddly feel energized in the morning.
Correct:	Nightmares keep me awake at night, yet I oddly feel energized in the morning.
Correct:	Although nightmares keep me awake at night, I oddly feel energized in the morning.

Again, don't use semicolons and conjunctions (like *yet* in this example) together. Semicolons require two complete sentences on either side.

Example 11

Wrong:	One of my idols is Michael Jackson, he was one of the best performers of his time.
Correct:	One of my idols is Michael Jackson, who was one of the best performers of his time.
Correct:	One of my idols is Michael Jackson, one of the best performers of his time.

The first correct version uses a relative clause. The second uses a noun phrase.

Example 12	
Wrong:	When I try to go to sleep, nightmares keep me awake at night, after brushing my teeth, I oddly feel energized in the morning.
Correct:	When I try to go to sleep, nightmares keep me awake at night, yet after brushing my teeth, I oddly feel energized in the morning.
Correct:	When I try to go to sleep, nightmares keep me awake at night; after brushing my teeth, however, I oddly feel energized in the morning.

Despite all the clauses in example 12, we have two complete thoughts being mashed together:

1. When I try to go to sleep, nightmares keep me awake at night.
2. After brushing my teeth, I oddly feel energized in the morning.

The **EST** will try to trick you in this way by putting in a lot of relative clauses and comma phrases to keep you from realizing something's a run-on. When that happens, read carefully and look for where a complete thought ends and where another one begins.

Reminder 1

If there's already a conjunction or if we're not connecting two complete sentences in the first place, then there's NO error. For example:

Although the plan was perfect, the clumsy criminals, who by now would have been millionaires, are locked in jail cells, slowly waiting out their sentences.

Looking at where the commas are, at no point are we trying to combine two complete sentences on either side, so the sentence is perfectly fine.

Reminder 2

Never use more than one way of correcting a run-on within the same sentence. Don't use a semicolon with a conjunction. Don't use a conjunction with a dependent clause, etc. The following examples are all incorrect:

- Jerry ran away last summer; and I haven't seen him since.
- Even though the coffee in Rome is amazing, but I still like Starbucks coffee more.
- Every year my brother visits New York City; which he considers the greatest city in the world.
- Henry tripped over the rock, and falling head first into the water.
- Running through the finish line, and Donna leaped for joy.

Fragments

A sentence fragment is a piece or part of a sentence. It's an incomplete sentence, one that's missing a subject or a verb. For example:

Floating on the river.

Of course, that one's easy to spot. The **EST** will give you sentence fragments so long that by the time you've read to the end of them, you'll have forgotten where you started. You'll commonly see fragments in which the entire sentence is a relative clause (e.g. *who, which, that, where*), a dependent clause (e.g. *although, while, when*), or a gerund phrase (e.g. *being, walking, singing*). If you read a sentence out loud and it lacks a sense of completion or the whole thing just sounds weird by the end, chances are it's a sentence fragment.

Example 1

Wrong: People who have a sense of entitlement and feel absolutely no sympathy for those less fortunate even when they take advantage of their services.

Correct: People who have a sense of entitlement and feel absolutely no sympathy for those less fortunate even when they take advantage of their services **make me sick**.

Example 1 is a relative clause sentence fragment.

Example 2

Wrong: Because my broken heart, which you have left hardly beating in my chest, is the reason for my endless suffering.

Correct: **My broken heart**, which you have left hardly beating in my chest, is the reason for my endless suffering.

Example 2 is a dependent clause sentence fragment.

Example 3

Wrong: Russell Brand, the English comedian, being one of the funniest celebrities alive.

Correct: Russell Brand, the English comedian, **is** one of the funniest celebrities alive.

Example 3 is a gerund phrase sentence fragment.

There is no one absolute way to fix a sentence fragment. On the **EST** the simpler ones are easy to spot and fix. Often times, the trickier ones will involve removing words like *who, which, although, because, since, and despite* as in Example 2.

Redundancy

Redundancy questions involve removing unnecessary words. On the **EST** you'll encounter two types of redundancy:

- Words that essentially repeat or unnecessarily define previous words (Examples 1 and 2)
- Inflated and useless phrases that could be omitted or condensed into fewer words (Example 3 and 4)

Example 1	
Wrong:	Our problem is that we're too self-aware of ourselves.
Correct:	Our problem is that we're too self-aware.

Self-aware already implies *ourselves*, so we don't need *of ourselves* in the sentence.

Example 2	
Wrong:	I once believed and had faith in the power of love.
Correct:	I once believed in the power of love.

The phrase *had faith in* repeats the same meaning as *believed*.

Example 3	
Wrong:	Joey bought a super-sized hamburger due to the fact that he was really hungry.
Correct:	Joey bought a super-sized hamburger because he was really hungry.

Example 4	
Wrong:	The legal documents were reviewed in a way that was deemed thorough.
Correct:	The legal documents were reviewed thoroughly .

Inflated phrases like *due to the fact that* and *in a way that was deemed* must be made concise.

Example 5	
Wrong:	The reason why red pandas have ringed tails is because they are relatives of both the giant panda and the raccoon.
Correct:	Red pandas have ringed tails because they are relatives of both the giant panda and the raccoon.
Correct:	The reason red pandas have ringed tails is that they are relatives of both the giant panda and the raccoon.

This specific redundancy error is very common. It has three words that essentially mean the same thing—*reason*, *why*, and *because*, all of which point to the cause of something. You only need one of those words.

Example 6

Wrong:	After hearing the spy's information, the general knew that an attack was imminent in the future.
Correct:	After hearing the spy's information, the general knew that an attack was imminent.

Imminent by definition means *in the future*.

Example 7

Wrong:	It's only on the night before the test that I wish my notes had been more clearer.
Correct:	It's only on the night before the test that I wish my notes had been more clear .

It's unnecessary to use both *more* and the *-er* ending because they convey the same thing.

Example 8

Wrong:	The last to sing, Jason and Jesse made sure to amaze the crowd with a full range of vocals at the end of the performance.
Correct:	The last to sing , Jason and Jesse made sure to amaze the crowd with a full range of vocals.
Correct:	Jason and Jesse made sure to amaze the crowd with a full range of vocals at the end of the performance .

Example 9

Wrong:	We should evacuate the building immediately in the hypothetical event that a fire occurs.
Correct:	We should evacuate the building immediately if a fire occurs .

The phrase *in the hypothetical event that a fire occurs* is too wordy and awkward. How much a certain phrase can be shortened can be a matter of style. Luckily for you, the answer choices will be very clear-cut on the **EST**. You'll definitely know from the answer choices when they're testing wordiness.

Example 10

Wrong:	The Black Friday deals attracted hordes of shoppers. These shoppers rampaged through the doors as the stores opened.
Correct:	The Black Friday deals attracted hordes of shoppers, who rampaged through the doors as the stores opened.
Example 11	
Wrong:	The commander's charge into the opposing army was fearless, an act of bravery.
Correct:	The commander's charge into the opposing army was fearless, an act of bravery.
Example 12	
Wrong:	Generic drugs are usually cheaper than when buying name-brand ones.
Correct:	Generic drugs are usually cheaper than when buying name-brand ones.

Parallelism

You probably know from math that parallel lines are two lines that go in the same direction. The concept is similar in English in the way we structure certain things together.

I like flying planes, riding trains, and driving automobiles.

Notice the same format for each of the things in the list: gerund (word ending in *ing*)-noun, gerund-noun, gerund-noun. It sounds nice and fluid when the sentence is put together that way. It would be awkward and incorrect to say:

I like flying planes, riding trains, and to drive automobiles.

Here's another correct version:

I like to fly planes, to ride trains, and to drive automobiles. (infinitive-noun pattern)

It's also correct to leave out the *to*'s because they're implied to carry over to all three items in the list:

I like to fly planes, ride trains, and drive automobiles.

But again, you must be consistent—it would be incorrect to write:

I like to fly planes, ride trains, and to drive automobiles.

The *to* is used again after being left out in the second item. Let's walk through some examples so you see what sentences need to be parallel on the **EST**:

Example 1	
Wrong:	In chess, remember these three goals: get your pieces to the center, capture the opposing pieces, and attacking the opposing king.
Correct:	In chess, remember these three goals: get your pieces to the center, capture the opposing pieces, and attack the opposing king.
Example 2	
Wrong:	Fans of Teresa admire her ability to sing, her passion for performance, and she has good looks.
Correct:	Fans of Teresa admire her ability to sing, her passion for performance, and her good looks .
Example 3	
Wrong:	The baby crawled quickly, sleeps softly, and cried loudly.
Correct:	The baby crawled quickly, slept softly, and cried loudly.

Parallelism requires the verb tenses to be the same.

Example 4	
Wrong:	The fashion designer was praised for her creative, comfortable, and her having innovative clothing.
Correct:	The fashion designer was praised for her creative, comfortable, and her having innovative clothing.

Parallelism most often shows up in a series or a list of things as in the examples above, but it can also come up when pairing two phrases together, especially with *and* or *or*.

Example 5	
Wrong:	I respect his eloquence and that he is brave.
Correct:	I respect his eloquence and his bravery .
Example 6	

Wrong:	Hunting under the moonlight and to howl on top of the mountains were instinctual when the full moon appeared above the werewolves.
Correct:	Hunting under the moonlight and howling on top of the mountains were instinctual when the full moon appeared above the werewolves.

Example 7

Wrong:	I like singing more than dance.
Correct:	I like singing more than dancing .

Example 8

Wrong:	To learn what it means to love someone is accepting the flaws of others.
Correct:	To learn what it means to love someone is to accept the flaws of others.

Example 9

Wrong:	The school was designed to be a place where creativity would be celebrated and hard work was rewarded there.
Correct:	The school was designed to be a place where creativity would be celebrated and hard work (would be) rewarded .

Note that *would be* can be left out because it's implied to carry over.

Example 10

Wrong:	The principal planned to improve teacher training and clearer rules for student conduct should be established.
Correct:	The principal planned to improve teacher training and (to) establish clearer rules for student conduct .

Example 11

Wrong:	The people who ride the bus or have taken the train can't afford to drive to work.
Correct:	The people who ride the bus or take the train can't afford to drive to work.

Example 12	
Wrong:	Traveling the world has given me the pleasure of meeting new people, to explore different ways of life.
Correct:	Traveling the world has given me the pleasure of meeting new people, of exploring different ways of life

Pronoun Reference

Take a look at this sentence:

To avoid a ticket, Alice told the police that Alice didn't realize Alice was pressing harder on the accelerator pedal because Alice had gained 40 pounds in two months.

Hopefully, reading that shows you why we need pronouns, which are words that represent other nouns. If we didn't have pronouns, everything would sound repetitive and confusing.

Here's the better version:

To avoid a ticket, Alice told the police that **she** didn't realize **she** was pressing harder on the accelerator pedal because **she** had gained 40 pounds in two months.

Here are some examples of pronouns:

	Singular	Plural
Subject Pronouns	<i>He, She, It</i>	<i>They</i>
Object Pronouns	<i>Her, Him, It</i>	<i>Them</i>
Possessive Pronouns	<i>Hers, His, Its</i>	<i>Theirs</i>
Possessive Adj. Pronouns	<i>Her, His, Its</i>	<i>Their</i>
Relative Pronouns	<i>This, That, Which</i>	<i>These, Those</i>
Reflexive Pronouns	<i>Himself, Herself, Itself</i>	<i>Themselves</i>

Don't worry about memorizing the names or types—just familiarize yourself with the words so that you can tell whether something's a pronoun or not.

You need to know only two rules for pronouns, but they're really important:

Rule 1

A pronoun must clearly stand for ONE and ONLY ONE other NOUN.

Rule 2

A singular noun must be referred to by a singular pronoun. Likewise, a plural pronoun must be referred to by a plural pronoun.

Example 1

Wrong: Whenever Jason and Alexander sit down at a buffet, **he** eats way more food.

Correct: Whenever Jason and Alexander sit down at a buffet, **Jason** eats way more food.

This example violates rule 1 because we don't know who eats more. *He* could refer to either Jason or Alexander.

In conversation, we might say something like "*He eats way more food,*" and that's grammatically fine because we know from the context of our conversation who *he* is. But on the **EST** a pronoun with no clear reference is an error.

Example 2

Wrong: Even if a student gets in early, **they** still have to maintain good grades during senior year.

Correct: Even if a student gets in early, **he or she** still **has** to maintain good grades during senior year.

In this example, rule 2 is being violated. We know that *they* obviously refers to *student*, but *they* is a plural pronoun while *student* is a singular noun. *He or she* is the singular pronoun we must use (yes, it's singular). Again, we must use singular pronouns for singular nouns and plural pronouns for plural nouns.

Example 3

Wrong: At the police station, **they** found a pile of cash stashed in her bra.

Correct: At the police station, **the inspectors** found a pile of cash stashed in her bra.

Who's *they*? Here, *they* doesn't even have a reference—it doesn't represent any noun that we can see in front of us. Sure, we could assume that *they* refers to the police, but *police* is not a noun in this sentence—it's an adjective. Remember that a pronoun **MUST** stand for an existing noun somewhere.

Example 4	
Wrong:	My teammate deleted my part of the essay. The next day, I confronted him about this .
Correct:	My teammate deleted my part of the essay. The next day, I confronted him about this deletion .
Correct:	My teammate deleted my part of the essay. The next day, I confronted him about his reasons for doing so .

In this example, it's not explicit what *this* stands for. The easiest way to fix reference errors involving *this*, *that*, *these*, or *those* is to either add the noun right after or replace the pronoun altogether with something else. By inserting the word *deletion* into the sentence, we essentially define what *this* is.

Think of pronouns as shortcuts or aliases for other files on your computer. The original file must exist for there to be a shortcut. Furthermore, the shortcut must match the file it represents. You wouldn't want to click on a shortcut only to open something other than what you were expecting.

Note
The pronoun <i>it</i> can be used in the following way:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was a dark and stormy night. • It took 10,000 years for the star's rays to reach us.
These are completely fine sentences where you shouldn't worry at all about pronoun errors.

Here are a few more questions and answers so you get the hang of it:

Example 5	
Wrong:	Drunk with beer bottles in both hands, Michael slid and dropped it on the rug.
Correct:	Drunk with beer bottles in both hands, Michael slid and dropped them on the rug.
Example 6	
Wrong:	The senior class has organized their school trip to the Antarctic.
Correct:	The senior class has organized its school trip to the Antarctic.
Example 7	
Wrong:	Because the restaurant was amazingly successful, they hired more employees to run it.

Correct:	Because the restaurant was amazingly successful, it hired more employees to run it.
Example 8	
Wrong:	I got so much in the mail today. I've been opening all those since noon.
Correct:	I got so much in the mail today. I've been opening all those letters since noon.
Example 9	
Wrong:	Everyone wished that they had cheaper textbooks rather than the rip-offs that were required.
Correct:	Everyone wished that he or she had cheaper textbooks rather than the rip-offs that were required.
Example 10	
Wrong:	A good chef always takes good care of their equipment.
Correct:	A good chef always takes good care of his or her equipment.
Example 11	
Wrong:	Because the blankets got torn in the wash, we must replace it before the customer gets back.
Correct:	Because the blankets got torn in the wash, we must replace them before the customer gets back.
Example 12	
Wrong:	The lion and the tortoise were about to get into a fight when it fell down a ditch.
Correct:	The lion and the tortoise were about to get into a fight when the tortoise fell down a ditch.
Example 13	
Wrong:	Few chairs are as comfortable as that made by the Herman-Miller company.

Correct: Few chairs are as comfortable as **those** made by the Herman-Miller company.

In this last example, *those* refers to *chairs*. Because *chairs* is plural, we need *those* instead of *that*, which is singular. It's easy to remember because you would always say *that car*, *that jet*, *that book* and *those cars*, *those jets*, *those books* rather than the other way around.

Tenses

There are a lot of different tenses but here are some of the ones you'll encounter:

Tense	Verb		
	To Hug	To Swim	To Be
Present	<i>He hugs...</i>	<i>He swims...</i>	<i>He is...</i>
Past	<i>He hugged...</i>	<i>He swam...</i>	<i>He was...</i>
Future	<i>He will hug...</i>	<i>He will swim...</i>	<i>He will be...</i>
Present Perfect	<i>He has hugged...</i>	<i>He has swum...</i>	<i>He has been...</i>
Past Perfect	<i>He had hugged...</i>	<i>He had swum...</i>	<i>He had been...</i>

Don't worry about when to use the present perfect and the past perfect. They are no longer tested directly on the **EST**. You'll see them as answer choices, but you won't need any knowledge of their uses to get those questions correct. **In fact, answer choices containing the present perfect or past perfect tenses are almost always wrong.**

So if you see the following answer choices:

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) connects
- C) connected
- D) had connected

You can be almost certain the answer won't be D. See the tip later in this chapter for another example.

The most common verb-related error you'll see on the **EST** is tense inconsistency. You need to ensure that the tenses in a sentence make sense. **Most of the time, that means changing everything to either past tense or present tense.**

Example 1

Wrong:	Whenever we stopped by the market, my mom always tries to negotiate the prices.
Correct:	Whenever we stop by the market, my mom always tries to negotiate the prices.
Correct:	Whenever we stopped by the market, my mom always tried to negotiate the prices.
Example 2	
Wrong:	After winning Wimbledon in 2012, Federer regained the top ranking and declares himself the best in the world.
Correct:	After winning Wimbledon in 2012, Federer regained the top ranking and declared himself the best in the world.
Example 3	
Wrong:	The end of World War II came when German forces surrender in Berlin and Italy.
Correct:	The end of World War II came when German forces surrendered in Berlin and Italy.
Rule:	Often times, dates or historical events in the question tell you the past tense is needed.
Example 4	
Wrong:	Although the cheetah holds the record for fastest land animal, many other mammals outlasted it.
Correct:	Although the cheetah holds the record for fastest land animal, many other mammals outlast it.
Rule:	Statements of fact or of the way things are (things that are always true and will continue to be true) must be in present tense.

There are some cases where verbs don't have to be consistent because of the meaning of the sentence. Sometimes we DO want to talk about two actions that happened in different time periods.

Example 5	
Correct:	When I was young, I hated vegetables, but now I love them.
Correct:	Because he was late for the anniversary dinner, she is thinking about leaving him.

Both of the sentences above are correct because the meaning **intends** for the verb tenses to be inconsistent. As you're checking for tenses on the **EST**, make sure you take the meaning of the sentence into consideration. Don't be too robotic.

As a side note, answer choices with *would* or *would have* are typically correct only when dealing with hypotheticals:

- If I were rich, I **would** buy a Ferrari.
- If she had done her homework, she **would have** gotten an "A" this semester.

Tip

related questions will almost always be the shortest ones. If you had the following answer choices, for instance:

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) jumped
- C) had jumped
- D) begun to jump

The answer would most likely be **B**. The reason this tip works is that most of the passages are in simple past or simple present, which means most of the verbs should be in simple past or simple present. In fact, you can usually guess the tense from the title of passage. Is it a history passage? Simple past. A narrative? Simple present. If the choices include both the simple past and the simple present, you'll have to look for the correct tense in the surrounding context.

Commas, Dashes, and Colons

In this chapter, we'll go over all the rules you need to know for each punctuation mark and give you examples and exercises that cover the full range of ways they can be tested. Just so we're on the same page, we'll first review the semicolon (covered in the *Run-ons* chapter).

The Semicolon

A semicolon is used to join two independent clauses.

Examples:

- I love the game of basketball; however, I don't play it myself.
- The tribe was left without food for weeks; the members had no choice but to resort to cannibalism.
- Bats are nocturnal creatures; they come out only during the night.

Anytime a semicolon isn't being used for this purpose, it's incorrect. The **EST** loves to use semicolons to do dirty things they're not supposed to:

Example 1

Wrong:	The platter was filled with berries, crackers; and cheese.
Correct:	The platter was filled with berries, crackers, and cheese.
Example 2	
Wrong:	Ready for the journey of a lifetime; the boy hopped on the spaceship.
Correct:	Ready for the journey of a lifetime, the boy hopped on the spaceship.

The Comma

Of all the punctuation marks, the comma has the most uses. We'll only go through the ones that are tested.

1. Use a comma after an introductory clause, phrase, or modifier.

Example 3	
Wrong:	Although he is lactose intolerant he likes to eat pizza for lunch.
Correct:	Although he is lactose intolerant, he likes to eat pizza for lunch.
Example 4	
Wrong:	Trapped in a mine the victims found it hard to see and breathe.
Wrong:	Trapped in a mine, the victims found it hard to see and breathe.
Example 5	
Wrong:	At the end of the rainbow we saw a bowl of Lucky Charms cereal.
Correct:	At the end of the rainbow, we saw a bowl of Lucky Charms cereal.

Example 6	
Wrong:	When I turn 16 I'm going to buy a car.
Correct:	When I turn 16 , I'm going to buy a car.
Example 7	
Wrong:	Because she's been so busy I haven't seen her in a month.
Correct:	Because she's been so busy , I haven't seen her in a month.

2. Use commas to separate three or more items in a series.

Example 8	
Wrong:	His hobbies included jumping off planes, crashing helicopters and eating jellyfish.
Correct:	His hobbies included jumping off planes, crashing helicopters , and eating jellyfish.
Example 9	
Wrong:	After college, James had three options: get a job, apply to graduate school or become a criminal.
Correct:	After college, James had three options: get a job, apply to graduate school , or become a criminal.

The comma between the last two items is sometimes called the serial or Oxford comma. Although some style guides make it optional, most require it. On the **EST** the Oxford comma is required.

3. Use commas to set off nonrestrictive/nonessential elements.

I will elaborate on the terms *nonrestrictive* and *nonessential* after a few examples, but just keep in mind they mean the same thing.

Example 10	
-------------------	--

Wrong:	Great white sharks the most fearsome creatures of the sea are actually less dangerous than they appear.
Correct:	Great white sharks, the most fearsome creatures of the sea , are actually less dangerous than they appear.

The phrase *the most fearsome creatures of the sea* is **nonessential** because it just adds additional description to the sentence. **If we take it out, what's left is still a sentence that makes sense grammatically.** This is the first part to understanding nonessential elements. The following examples illustrate the second part.

Example 11	
Wrong:	The guy, cleaning the room , is the janitor.
Correct:	The guy cleaning the room is the janitor.

The phrase *cleaning the room* is an **essential** element because it specifies which guy. In other words, there are multiple guys in the room, and we need a restrictive phrase to limit the scope of who or what we're talking about.

The best method of determining whether something is restrictive or non-restrictive is to ask yourself this question: *Does the phrase narrow down what we're talking about?*

If yes, the phrase is essential and SHOULD NOT be set off by commas. If no, the phrase is not essential and SHOULD be set off by commas. Take, for instance, the following two examples:

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Example 14	
Wrong:	Stephen King's first novel <i>Carrie</i> was a surprise success.
Correct:	Stephen King's first novel, <i>Carrie</i> , was a surprise success.
Example 15	
Wrong:	The poem, <i>The Road Not Taken</i> , is one of Robert Frost's most famous works.
Correct:	The poem <i>The Road Not Taken</i> is one of Robert Frost's most famous works.

In Example 15, the title of the poem is an essential element because it narrows down which poem is being referred to. If you took out the title, the sentence would lose its meaning. In Example 14, *Carrie* is nonessential because *Stephen King's first novel* already designates which book it is and doesn't narrow anything down further. In other words, *Stephen King's first novel* was already enough to get us down to one book. Yes, *Carrie* is an important piece of information, but that's not relevant when deciding what is essential vs. nonessential.

The **EST** loves to test this concept with people's occupations:

Example 16	
Wrong:	Crowds stood in line to see author, J.K. Rowling , at the bookstore in London.
Correct:	Crowds stood in line to see author J.K. Rowling at the bookstore in London.

J.K. Rowling narrows down what author we're talking about.

Example 17	
Wrong:	The man at the front of the line scientist, John Willard , wouldn't stop complaining about the rain.
Correct:	The man at the front of the line, scientist John Willard , wouldn't stop complaining about the rain.

John Willard is essential to *scientist*, so there shouldn't be a comma between them. However, the phrase *scientist John Willard* is nonessential to *man at the front of the line* because it doesn't narrow down who we're talking about any further. Therefore, the phrase as a whole should be set off by commas.

If that was a lot to take in, take a deep breath and review this section until you truly understand essential vs. nonessential elements. Because if you do, you'll fly through questions that most other students get stuck on.

Moving on, when the word *that* is used, it's always for restrictive/essential elements (commas are unnecessary) whereas *which* is usually used for nonrestrictive/nonessential elements (commas are necessary).

Example 18

Wrong: Runners around the world participate in the Boston Marathon which is 26 miles long.

Correct: Runners around the world participate in the Boston **Marathon**, which is 26 miles long.

Example 19

Wrong: The path, **that we took yesterday**, is 15 miles long.

Correct: The path that we took yesterday is 15 miles long.

Example 20

Wrong: Next to the Japanese restaurant, **I like**, is the ice cream place.

Correct: Next to the Japanese restaurant I like is the ice cream place.

The essential phrase *I like* is just the shortened version of *that I like*. The word *that* is sometimes omitted.

Example 21

Wrong: Lions are carnivorous or meat-eating mammals.

Correct: Lions are carnivorous, **or meat-eating**, mammals.

Phrases that help define a previous term in this manner are nonessential.

4. Use commas to set off transitions and intervening phrases.

This rule piggybacks off the previous one since most transitions and intervening phrases are nonessential to the sentences they're in, but more examples never hurt anyone.

Example 22

Wrong:	Some animals are nocturnal; for example the coyote hunts during the night.
Correct:	Some animals are nocturnal; for example , the coyote hunts during the night.
Example 23	
Wrong:	When I told my parents I was pregnant, they were to my relief supportive and understanding.
Correct:	When I told my parents I was pregnant, they were, to my relief , supportive and understanding.
Example 24	
Wrong:	Penguins unlike most other birds cannot fly.
Correct:	Penguins, unlike most other birds , cannot fly.
Example 25	
Wrong:	Most bats are blind. Their sense of hearing however is amazing.
Correct:	Most bats are blind. Their sense of hearing, however , is amazing.

The Dash

The dash (—) serves two purposes:

1. To set off and emphasize interrupting phrases or in-between thoughts, often for dramatic effect

Examples:

- All our kitchen equipment—from the steel pans used for sauces to the premium-grade oven—had to be sold to cover our losses.
- The Loch Ness Monster—a sea creature that is rumored to exist but has never been found—supposedly comes out only during the winter.
- When my teacher found the cookies I was hiding—all 154 of them—she ate them all herself.
- My cousin was a world-class wrestler—he still is—but now he focuses on coaching others.

Dash Rule 1

When dashes are used this way, they must be paired up, much like commas when setting off nonessential phrases. In fact, dashes can take the place of those commas when a dramatic effect is appropriate.

Dash Rule 2

Once dashes are paired up, the sentence must still make sense on its own if the interrupting phrase between the dashes is taken out. Take a look at this example:

The homerun ball smashed through—the neighbor's window—and rolled into the living room.

This sentence is incorrect because it doesn't make sense if *the neighbor's window* is taken out. *Smashed through what?* The correct version would not use dashes at all:

The homerun ball smashed through the neighbor's window and rolled into the living room.

If you just keep this first purpose of dashes in mind, you'll be fine on the **EST** because the second purpose is just a more specific version of the first one.

2. To signal a list, restatement, or additional detail

Examples:

- The city is full of people you would never meet in my hometown—bums, actors, models, the crazy, the oddly dressed.
- Consider the amount of paper that's wasted by unnecessary printing—a hundred thousand pages, three times as much as what our competitors use.
- I like to walk everyday—not for exercise, but for alone time.
- Everywhere we traveled in Kyoto there were vending machines—some served green tea while others carried only juice.
- Frank took the goldfish from the bowl, carried it to the bathroom, put it in the toilet—and dropped it.

The Colon

First, some examples:

- A classic eggs benedict breakfast should include the following ingredients: poached eggs, english muffins, bacon, and hollandaise sauce.
- Tokyo is one of the cleanest cities in Asia: the street cleaners sometimes have no work to do.
- Cambridge is home to two of the best universities in the world: MIT and Harvard.
- I had no choice but to utter the truth in front of the judge: my brother was guilty.

Colons are used after an independent clause to direct attention to a list, a noun phrase, or another independent clause that summarizes or clarifies the first. But wait a second! A dash can do the same

thing! Yes, a dash can do the same thing, but don't worry. You'll never be tested on ambiguous cases where a colon is interchangeable with a dash. You do, however, need to know two rules:

Colon Rule 1

A colon can only come after an independent clause. Therefore, all of the following are incorrect, even though they may seem like correct uses of the colon:

- The dangerous animals you have to watch out for are: lions, tigers, and pythons.
- The evidence consists of: emails, text messages, and phone calls.
- The local bakery sells many delicious desserts such as: cheesecake, lemon tarts, and brownies.

None of the examples above need the colon.

Colon Rule 2

While a dash can often times replace a colon, a colon cannot always take the place of a dash. When dashes need to be paired up, for example, colons cannot be used instead:

Wrong: *My cousin was a world-class singer—he still is: but now he focuses on teaching others.*

Correct: *My cousin was a world-class singer—he still is—but now he focuses on teaching others.*

Common Punctuation Misuses

Before we get to some exercises, it'll be helpful to review some frequently tested punctuation misuses.

1. *Don't use punctuation before prepositional phrases (typically at, for, in, of, on, to, with).*

There are definitely exceptions, so don't be too automatic with this rule, but on the **EST punctuation before a preposition is almost always wrong**. This rule especially holds when the preposition is one that usually goes with its preceding words (e.g. the *of* in *consists of*). Some examples will clarify:

Example 26

Wrong: She was **waiting**, at the train station.

Correct: She was waiting at the train station.

Example 27

Wrong:	The police investigation, of the crime scene , didn't turn up any clues.
Correct:	The police investigation of the crime scene didn't turn up any clues.
Example 28	
Wrong:	Robert wants to make changes; to the essay before we submit it.
Correct:	Robert wants to make changes to the essay before we submit it.
Example 29	
Wrong:	Rolex watches are designed: with elegance, style, and luxury in mind.
Correct:	Rolex watches are designed with elegance, style, and luxury in mind.
Example 30	
Wrong:	Andy Murray, of Great Britain, competed intensely , for the gold medal in tennis.
Correct:	Andy Murray of Great Britain competed intensely for the gold medal in tennis.
Example 31	
Wrong:	The runner was surprised— by the number of people who showed up to cheer him on.
Correct:	The runner was surprised by the number of people who showed up to cheer him on.

2. Don't use any punctuation after such as, like, or including

Example 32	
Wrong:	The Thai restaurant serves noodle dishes such as: pad thai, pad see ew, and kua gai.
Correct:	The Thai restaurant serves noodle dishes such as pad thai, pad see ew, and kua gai.
Example 33	

Wrong:	When I tried frog legs for the first time, I thought it tasted like: chicken.
Correct:	When I tried frog legs for the first time, I thought it tasted like chicken.

3. Don't use any punctuation before that

Example 34	
Wrong:	The report indicates, that the pollution above Beijing has reached an all-time high.
Correct:	The report indicates that the pollution above Beijing has reached an all-time high.

There are exceptions, but this rule will serve you well much more often than not, especially on the EST

4. Don't put semicolons, dashes, or colons where commas should be used

Example 35	
Wrong:	The officer took aim at the target, a life-like image of Kim Kardashian —before he pulled the trigger.
Correct:	The officer took aim at the target, a life-like image of Kim Kardashian , before he pulled the trigger.

Example 36	
Wrong:	The patient lifted up his sleeve; revealing a deep scar on his forearm.
Correct:	The patient lifted up his sleeve, revealing a deep scar on his forearm.

Apostrophes

Apostrophes serve two purposes—possession and contraction.

Possession

To show possession, always add an 's unless the noun is plural and ends in s, in which case add only the apostrophe.

Example 1

Wrong: The cats hat is on the floor.

Correct: The **cat's** hat is on the floor.

Example 2

Wrong: Louis' scarf is 3 feet long.

Correct: **Louis's** scarf is 3 feet long.

Example 3

Wrong: A giraffes' neck is quite long.

Correct: A **giraffe's** neck is quite long.

Example 4

Wrong: Both players's jerseys were soaked with sweat.

Correct: Both **players'** jerseys were soaked with sweat.

Example 5

Wrong: Because he was hungry, the babysitter ate all the childrens' ice cream.

Correct: Because he was hungry, the babysitter ate all the **children's** ice cream.

Example 4 is plural and ends in s. Example 5 is plural but *children* doesn't end in s. Note the difference.

The **EST** loves to test apostrophes by unnecessarily attaching them to plural nouns, as in the following examples.

Example 6	
Wrong:	The couple ordered several dishes' to satiate their appetite for the chef's food.
Correct:	The couple ordered several dishes to satiate their appetite for the chef's food.
Example 7	
Wrong:	The restaurant owner's target high-class diners who can appreciate the subtlety of their dishes.
Correct:	The restaurant owners target high-class diners who can appreciate the subtlety of their dishes.

Contraction

Apostrophes can also be used to take the place of missing words or letters. For example, *it's* is short for *it is* and *can't* is short for *cannot*. The following is a table of common contractions:

Contraction	stands for...
it's	it is
they're	they are
who's	who is
could've	could have
he's	he is
I've	I have
you're	you are
that's	that is

As you probably know, there are quite a few words that get commonly confused with possessives and contractions that sound the same. Here are the ones you need to know for the **EST**

it's vs. its

it's (contraction for *it is*) — He told me that **it's** an alien from outer space.

its (possessive) — The poster fell from **its** spot on the wall.

they're vs. their vs. there

they're (contraction for *they are*) — **They're** going to meet us at the restaurant.

their (possessive) — The students passed in **their** homework late.

there (location) — Jacob put the water bottle over **there**.

who's vs. whose

who's (contraction for *who is*) — **Who's** that person sitting by himself?

whose (possessive) — I have a friend **whose** mother is an accountant.

Whenever you're on a question that deals with contractions, ALWAYS read the sentence with the uncontracted version to see if it makes sense.

Example 8

Wrong: The book has a cool picture on it's cover.

Correct: The book has a cool picture on **its** cover.

Would the uncontracted phrase *it is cover* make sense in Example 4? Nope. We need the possessive *its*.

Example 9

Wrong: He is the actor whose most known for his role in *Batman*.

Correct: He is the actor **who's** most known for his role in *Batman*.

In Example 5, we mean to say *who is* and can do so using the contracted version, *who's*.

Word Choice

One of the most commonly tested concepts is word choice, choosing the most appropriate word in context. Unfortunately, it's impossible to cover the infinite number of ways this concept can show up. After all, there are hundreds of thousands of words and no formulaic rules for why one word should be chosen over the other. Although you'll have to rely on your fluency in English for a lot of them, the **EST** does not make these questions difficult. In fact, the answer must be clear enough so that it's not up to opinion.

Example 1

Mark worked on a farm for many years to sponsor his wife and kids, who stayed at home.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) compensate
- C) fund
- D) provide for

The answer choice that best fits is D. The other choices might make sense in a business context, but not in a family context.

Sometimes, the **EST** will throw you a word choice question with tougher vocabulary:

Example 2

The immigration office could not handle the amalgamation of applicants trying to escape tyranny in their home country.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) diffusion
- C) prevalence
- D) influx

Amalgamation means a combination or mixture of something. *Diffusion* means a spreading out or distribution. *Prevalence* means being widespread or common. *Influx* means the arrival or entry of large numbers of people or things. The answer is D, *influx*.

On some questions like the ones above, you just have to "know it." On others, a few general guidelines will help.

1. Avoid exaggerated, overly dramatic, or high-sounding language

Don't choose overly complicated words when simple words are enough to express the intended meaning. But don't think that an answer choice is high-sounding just because you don't know what it means.

Example 3

The startup didn't become financially beneficial until it reached a critical mass of customers using the app on a daily basis.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) profitable
- C) commercially rewarding
- D) worthy of great compensation

The answer is B, the simplest choice. All the other choices are high-sounding ways of saying *profitable*.

Example 4

The employees put forth a plan to cut spending by fifty percent but their boss rejected their audacious scheme.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) brash industrial action.
- C) bold proposal.
- D) spirited counsel.

The answer is C. All the other choices are overly dramatic and exaggerated.

2. Avoid casual or informal language

Example 5

Tired from the 20 mile hike, Yasmine retired to her tent and snoozed.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) hit the sack.
- C) slept.
- D) dozed off.

The answer is C. The other answers are too informal.

Example 6

A recently passed law requires that public transportation meet new safety standards, forcing state governments to foot the bill for the construction of new railroads.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) pick up the tab
- C) pay
- D) shell out

The answer is C. Again, the other answers are too conversational.

3. *Avoid vague and wordy language*

Vague words to look out for include *people, things, something, stuff, matters, aspects, tons of*.

Example 7

In anticipation of Black Friday, store owners are making sure they have a wide variety of products in stock.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) items for customers
- C) stuff to sell
- D) things that can be purchased

The answer is A. The other answers are unnecessarily vague and wordy.

4. *Be aware of commonly confused words*

Example 8

Ketchup is a better compliment to french fries than mustard.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) compliment to french fries than
- C) complement to french fries then
- D) complement to french fries than

The answer is D. A *complement* is something that goes well with something else, whereas a *compliment* is something nice you say to someone. *Than* is used for comparisons; *then* is used to mean *at that time* or *next*.

Here's a list of commonly confused words you should know:

- accept vs. except
- affect vs. effect

- allusion vs. illusion
- ascent vs. assent
- cite vs. sight vs. site
- complement vs. compliment
- advice vs. advise
- council vs. counsel
- elicit vs. illicit
- altar vs. alter
- eminent vs. imminent
- precede vs. proceed
- access vs. excess
- fair vs. fare
- than vs. then
- allude vs. elude
- waive vs. wave
- respectfully vs. respectively
- discreet vs. discrete
- adverse vs. averse

Keep in mind that the guidelines above are just guidelines. Every question is different and not all of them will apply to every one. Your own judgment will be your best weapon once you've done enough practice.

Transitions

To demonstrate what transitions are and how they're used, let's consider the following sentence:

May's cookies are sweet and sugary. Sam eats them all the time.

In this sentence, it's understood that Sam eats May's cookies *because* they are sweet and sugary. Despite the implied cause and effect relationship here, the reader can't be completely sure. It could be that the two sentences represent two totally independent ideas: May's cookies are sweet and sugary, and it just so happens that Sam eats them all the time. To make the cause-and-effect relationship absolutely clear, we could insert a transition:

*May's cookies are sweet and sugary. **Therefore**, Sam eats them all the time.*

This is a bit of an extreme example, but it illustrates an important point—transitions have meaning. They express how two sentences or paragraphs relate to one another, and they make that connection explicit, even if it's a bit unnecessary to do so. In this case, the *therefore* is probably not needed, but suppose we wanted to imply that sweet and sugary were bad qualities:

*May's cookies are sweet and sugary. **Nevertheless**, Sam eats them all the time.*

With one word, we're able to shift the meaning entirely. Now, sweet and sugary cookies are unhealthy snacks to be avoided.

How sentences connect to one another comes naturally to most students. The hard part is staying aware of the full context. In this one made-up example, we can't be completely sure what the author's intended meaning is, but on the **EST** the author's intention will always be clear. Your job on **EST** transition questions is to read the context, figure out the author's meaning, and choose the transition word that conveys that meaning. Always read the sentence before and the sentence after the one in question.

Although you'll typically see transitions at the start of sentences, they can also be inserted into the middle of a sentence:

*Every culture holds on to its own myths and superstitions. Many Chinese people, **for example**, believe the number "4" to be unlucky.*

And while there are many transitions out there, as long as you are familiar with the ones in the table below, you shouldn't need to memorize anything. In fact, this table includes almost all the transitions that have shown up on released past exams. The best way to get better is to practice and review, practice and review.

Common Transition Words

Example	Transition...	Similar Transitions
I love eating vanilla ice cream. However , too much of it makes me sick.	presents an opposing point or balances a previous statement	fortunately, on the other hand, conversely, whereas, while, in contrast, on the contrary, yet
Math trains you to approach problems more analytically. Furthermore , it helps you calculate the minimum tip when you eat out.	adds new and supporting information	in addition, also, moreover, and, too, as well, additionally, not to mention
Pandas are rapidly becoming extinct. In fact , some experts predict that pandas will die out in 50 years.	gives emphasis to a point by adding a specific detail/case	as a matter of fact, indeed, to illustrate, for instance, for example
The state is facing a flu epidemic. Consequently , all hospital rooms are filled at the moment.	shows cause and effect	as a result, because, hence, therefore, thus, accordingly, so, for this reason
Granted	concedes a point to make way for your own point	nevertheless, although, regardless, despite, even if, nonetheless, still, even so
Place the bread on an ungreased baking sheet. Finally , bake in a preheated oven for 10 minutes.	shows order or sequence	subsequently, previously, afterwards, next, then, eventually, before
Social security numbers uniquely identify citizens. In the same way , IP addresses identify computers.	shows similarity	similarly, likewise, by the same token
In conclusion , the world would be a happier place without nuclear weapons.	gives a summary or restatement	in summary, to sum up, in short, in other words

Some other transitions that didn't quite fit in the table are *meanwhile*, *instead*, and *otherwise*. If you understand all these transitions and how they're used, you should have no problem answering these questions on the EST

Tip

The most commonly tested transition is **however** and it's not even close. It also turns out to be the correct answer most of the time. Know this transition well.

Topic, Conclusion, and Transition

Sentences

In the previous chapter, we reviewed transition words such as *furthermore* and *however* and how they're used to explicitly connect ideas. Transitions, however, can be more than just one or two words—they can be entire sentences that guide the reader from one thought to another. The more complex ideas get and the more subtle the relationships between them become, the longer the transitions will tend to be. Take a look at the following paragraphs:

By the time *Heart of Darkness* was published in 1902, a movement was already underway to expose the large-scale theft and murder occurring in the Congo. Dozens of missionaries had begun sending reports, including photographs, to bear witness to the violence. William Sheppard, an African-American Presbyterian, was one of these missionaries. He sent out shocking testimony of lands seized by force, of people living under a reign of terror, and of soldiers cutting off the hands of women and children.

An Englishman named E.D. Morel gathered the many reports and photographs and published them. He gathered crowds to listen to eyewitness accounts of colonial atrocities. He lobbied the British Parliament to denounce the Belgian king's horrifying practices. This became the first modern humanitarian movement, and it successfully exposed the horrendous violence in the Congo. Historians estimate, however, that, by that time, between 10 million and 20 million Congolese people had lost their lives.

Take note of the bolded sentence. This sentence serves as a transition between the two paragraphs, but how do we know? **A good transition sentence references key terms or ideas preceding it and key terms or ideas following it.** It brings together what comes before with what comes after. In this case, the transition brings up not only *E.D. Morel*, who is the primary focus of the second paragraph but also the *many reports and photographs* that were the focus of the first paragraph.

When you're asked to choose the best transition between two paragraphs or even between two sentences within the same paragraph, always read above and below where the transition will be. The best transition will be the one that brings together the main elements on either side, leading from the previous topic to the next.

A few more examples:

Lambert confirmed that we as humans have a finite amount of mental energy and attention. Tough decision making, such as that used when following a diet, saps us of our ability to exercise the same discipline later on. **Based on this research, Lambert designed a diet that minimizes the need for discipline and protects against regression.** Her program has been used by everyone from celebrities to world-class athletes who vouch for its effectiveness.

The bolded sentence is an amazing transition between two topics in the same paragraph. The opening phrase *Based on this research* refers back to the statements on mental energy. In particular, the word *this* makes that reference explicit. The *diet* that Lambert designed leads into the focus of the next sentence: the *program*. In short, this transition guides us from the research she did to the diet program she developed.

A professor at Harvard and an advocate of human rights, Dr. Joseph remains skeptical of charities that donate haphazardly to impoverished African communities, and **his position has gained traction among other scholars.** Many economists believe that these donations disrupt the local economy and potentially jeopardize businesses that would have to compete against the items being donated.

The bolded phrase is a transition that guides us from Dr. Joseph to other economists, explicitly laying out what the relationship is between them.

Now here's an important concept: **topic and conclusion sentences are just specific types of transition sentences.** The job of a topic sentence is to introduce a paragraph, guiding you from the previous one if necessary. The job of a conclusion sentence is to wrap up a paragraph, guiding you to the next one if necessary. These are transition sentences! The example on the first page of this chapter was a topic sentence.

There is, however, a slight nuance. Though they are just transition sentences, **topic and conclusion sentences are typically more general and less specific than sentences in the middle of a paragraph.** That's because a topic sentence usually tries to capture the entire scope of the paragraph it leads into, and a conclusion sentence encompasses the paragraph that led to it. Note the topic sentence of the paragraph you're reading right now. It's pretty general and even a bit mysterious, isn't it? That's what a topic sentence does. It doesn't tell you everything—it just leads into it.

The following two examples will show topic and conclusion sentences in action:

Zero population growth was an idea espoused by Dr. Ehrlich at Stanford in the 60's. His argument was that the Earth's resources would soon be exhausted and that everyone would suffer unless measures were taken to slow the rate of population growth. By the 70's, the idea had become mainstream. Everyone knew what zero population growth meant and its implications. People even took to the streets to raise awareness of the impending doom. **Despite the movement's popularity, the predicted apocalypse never happened.**

The world today manages to support over 7 billion people and counting. Through ingenuity and innovation, the human race has developed such improved agricultural practices that increasingly more can be maintained with increasingly less. Technological developments such as the internet have allowed humans to be more efficient in both production and distribution.

The first paragraph talks about the rise of the zero population growth idea whereas the second paragraph talks about the world today. Notice how the bolded sentence serves not only as a conclusion sentence that resolves the first paragraph but also as a transition between the two paragraphs, bridging them together. If you took this sentence out, the shift in topic between the paragraphs would be jarring and confusing for the reader, who would wonder why the writer is suddenly talking about the world supporting 7 billion people right after talking about protests in the streets.

Computer science is more than just working with computers. It involves computational thinking and algorithms, step-by-step solutions to complex problems. For example, calculating the shortest way from one location to another like a GPS would requires an algorithm. The subject requires patience and extreme attention to detail, especially when it comes to tracking down bugs and cleaning up code.

From an early age, I knew I wanted to study computer science and so all of my college planning revolved around it. I asked my math and science teachers to write me recommendations for all the top universities that offered this major. My college essays focused on the applications that I had built and the fun I had on the robotics team. I talked extensively about my passion for problem solving in my interviews. Now I just have to wait for decisions to roll in.

The bolded sentence serves as a transition between what computer science is and the author's personal experience with college planning. Note that this sentence is also a great topic sentence. It's broad and leads directly into the more specific details in the rest of the second paragraph. Hopefully by now, you're really seeing how these transitions work. Bad transitions will either miss the connection altogether or fail to relate both sides in a logical way.

Tip

When you're asked to insert the best transition between two sentences, look for words such as *this*, *that*, and *these*. These reference words must point to other nouns that exist in the surrounding context, which means the transition sentence itself may need to include them. In the last example, the second sentence of the second paragraph contains the words *this major*

Now on the **EST** you'll know you're being tested on these transition concepts when you see questions like this:

- The writer wants to link the first paragraph with the ideas that follow. Which choice best accomplishes this goal?
- Which choice best connects the sentence with the previous paragraph?
- Which choice provides the most appropriate introduction to the passage?
- Which choice provides the most logical introduction to the sentence?
- Which choice most effectively sets up the information that follows?
- Which choice most effectively concludes the sentence and paragraph?
- Which choice most smoothly and effectively introduces the writer's discussion of... in this paragraph?
- Which choice most effectively sets up the paragraph?

Supporting Evidence and Examples

If topic, conclusion, and transition sentences are the glue, then statements and their supporting evidence, examples, and details are the meat. Last chapter, we talked about choosing the right transitions that lead smoothly to and from certain statements and details. In this chapter, we'll talk about the statements and details themselves and how to choose the right ones.

Whereas previously, we dealt with questions like

Which choice most effectively sets up the information that follows?

Now we're dealing questions like

Which choice provides information that best supports the claim made by this sentence?

It's like we're going in reverse. Instead of setting up the claim, this chapter deals with supporting it. Other questions of this type will look like the following:

- Which choice gives a second supporting example that is most similar to the example already in the sentence?
- Which choice best supports the statement made in the previous sentence?
- Which choice most logically follows the previous sentence?
- At this point, the writer wants to further reinforce the paragraph's claim about.... Which choice most effectively accomplishes this goal?
- Which choice results in a sentence that best supports the point developed in this paragraph?
- Which choice provides the most specific information on...?
- Which choice gives an additional supporting example that emphasizes...?

So how do we handle these types of supporting evidence questions? Let's illustrate the steps with an example:

A liberal arts education is no longer viewed as a practical one. More and more students are choosing majors that lead directly to employment: engineering, computer science, and business. What was once touted as a well-rounded curriculum to develop culturally literate members of society is now denounced as inapplicable to the workplace. Companies have found that graduates from liberal arts schools—especially those with philosophy, history, and language arts degrees—require more training in order to be effective once they're hired. In light of these findings and trends, many liberal arts programs are expanding their offerings to include more professional development courses, positioning themselves to be more relevant to whatever career paths their students choose to follow.

Which choice results in a sentence that best supports the point developed in this paragraph?

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) tend to eat lunch and go to outings as a group.
- C) express their opinions more openly and eloquently during meetings.
- D) possess a wide array of technical skills they've developed outside of school.

1. Underline or work out in your head the claim that you're trying to support

Whatever you're trying to support, whether it be a claim, statement, or point (they're all the same thing), you have to figure out what it is. Sometimes it's as simple as reading the previous sentence,

which spells it out for you. Sometimes, it's spelled out in the question! In these cases, don't be lazy—underline it. Other times, you'll have to jump back to the topic sentence or infer the main point from the entire paragraph, in which case you should formulate the main point in your own words.

A main point, however, is NOT a one word answer like “napping” or “pandas.” A main point is a sentence or phrase that expresses an argument or opinion. For example,

“Napping during work is good for the productivity of the employees.”

“Pandas are rare creatures that we need to save from extinction.”

Keep this in mind when you're figuring out the main point yourself. Make it a complete sentence.

Lastly, do this before you look at the answers. Especially on the tougher questions, you don't want the answers to sway your idea of what the paragraph's main point is. If you come up with it independently, you can be that much more confident in choosing an answer that supports what you have in your head.

In our main example, the main point is well expressed by the topic sentence, “A liberal arts education is no longer viewed as a practical one.” An even better version might be one you come up with yourself:

A liberal arts education is not seen as useful for jobs today.

2. Eliminate answers that are off-topic

If the question asks for a reinforcement of a claim about the safety of nonorganic food, don't choose answers dealing with organic food. And don't choose answers dealing with all crops in the United States. Choose an answer specific to nonorganic food.

In our example, answer B is off-topic. Eating lunch and company outings aren't really related to the discussion of job performance and liberal arts degrees.

Answer D is also off-topic because it shifts the focus away from the usefulness of what students learn in a liberal arts school to what they learn “outside of school.”

3. Eliminate answers that are on-topic but don't support the point

On these questions, remember that you're not trying to add tangential facts or another claim. You're supporting a point. So just because a passage deals with napping doesn't mean any answer related to napping will be the right one. For example, if the main point is that napping during work boosts productivity, an answer that mentions what time most employees nap at is on-topic but not on-point. Instead, the right answer might state, “Employees who take naps meet their deadlines more often.” This is on-topic and on-point.

In our example, answer C is on-topic but doesn't support the point we came up with in step 1. In fact, it counters the point. Remember that the main point is that a liberal arts education is not helpful for today's jobs. Answer C implies that it is, in fact, helpful, at least in meetings.

The correct answer is A, which clearly relates to the topic of job performance and supports the point that a liberal arts education is not as useful as others are for today's jobs

Relevance and Purpose

Relevance

While the past few chapters dealt with questions that test you on relevance implicitly—after all, topic sentences, transitions, and supporting details all have to be relevant to the passage in context—you'll encounter quite a few questions that test you on relevance explicitly, as well as questions that test you on both relevance and purpose, in other words, *how* something is relevant. Not only will you have to figure out which answer fits the best, you'll also have to know *why* it fits.

On the **EST**, these questions look like the following:

- Which choice provides the most relevant detail?
- The writer is considering deleting the underlined sentence. Should the writer do this?
- The writer is considering deleting the underlined sentence. Should the sentence be kept or deleted?
- At this point, the writer is considering adding the following sentence. ... Should the writer make this addition here?
- The writer is considering revising the underlined portion of the sentence to read.... Should the writer add this information here?

A full example might look like this:

At this point, the writer is considering adding the following sentence:

Joe then confronted Jane about the money she owed him.

Should the writer make this addition?

- A) Yes, because the information clarifies Joe's reasoning for his actions.
- B) Yes, because the information helps explain how Joe and Jane originally met.
- C) No, because the additional information distracts from the main point of the passage.
- D) No, because it's unclear whether Joe wanted to argue with Jane.

When tackling these types of questions, always answer the yes or no part first. Is it relevant? Should it be added or deleted? Yes or no? Don't even read the rest of the words in the answer choices. In your mind, just answer yes or no. That way, you've halved the number of choices under consideration. Usually it's pretty obvious whether a sentence is relevant.

Only after you have answered yes or no should you think about the why (why or why shouldn't the sentence be added?). The reason for doing this is to prevent the answer choices from influencing your reasoning, because once you answer yes or no, you instinctively develop your own reason which you can then compare with the two remaining answer choices. Letting the reason you thought up yourself guide you to the correct answer choice is extremely effective—your instincts are often right. Reading the full answer choices before you've had time to think for yourself has a way of playing with your mind.

If your reason doesn't line up with the reasons in the two remaining answer choices, it's a sign you need to reconsider the yes or no part.

Most irrelevant sentences come in the form of random facts that come out of nowhere. Here are some examples (irrelevant parts are italicized):

- Last Monday, I went to my high school reunion. I was excited about meeting old acquaintances and friends. *Afterwards, I went back home with my wife.* I had lost touch with them after so many years.
- My dad runs a bakery in Boston's Chinatown, *but there's also a Chinatown in Toronto.* He sells freshly baked pork buns, egg tarts, and cakes to the locals everyday.
- Because *All the King's Men* was released as a movie before I could read the book, *which is often available in used book stores,* I decided to watch the movie first. I wish I hadn't though because the book turned out to be far more entertaining.
- Since its inception, Cathay Pacific airlines has served millions of customers worldwide. *Obviously, flying is faster than driving.* The company continues to offer world class service, comfortable seating, and delicious meals on all flights.

The best way to spot irrelevance is to evaluate the key words in the sentence in question. If those key words aren't referred to in some way in the previous sentence or the following sentence, chances are that it's irrelevant. Notice in the respective examples above that:

- There is no reference to *home* or *wife* in the surrounding sentences.
- There is no reference to *Toronto* in the surrounding sentences.
- There is no reference to *used book stores* in the surrounding sentences.
- There is no reference to *driving* in the surrounding sentences.

Also notice how the italicized portions interrupt the flow of the passage; they are abrupt shifts in topic. Relevant content will stay on topic; irrelevant content will not.

Another sign that something is irrelevant is a sudden shift in scope—how general or specific something is. The last example above starts out by talking about one specific airline, Cathay Pacific, but all of a sudden, it jumps into something extremely general, that flying is faster than driving. Be wary of these sudden shifts in scope.

At the end of the day, there is no magic formula for determining whether something is relevant. After lots of practice, your intuition will be your best guide.

Purpose

Ok, so now you've determined whether something is relevant or not. More often than not, you'll have to know why.

Here are some typical reasons for adding/not deleting something:

- because it provides specific examples of...
- because it defines a term that is important to the passage
- because it provides a detail that supports the main topic of the paragraph
- because it helps explain why...
- because it provides context for...
- because it provides support for the claim made in the previous sentence
- because it establishes the relationship between...
- because it elaborates on...
- because it provides a logical introduction to the paragraph
- because it serves as a transitional point in the paragraph
- because it adds a relevant research finding
- because it introduces a new idea that will become important later in the passage
- because it acknowledges a common counterargument to the passage's central claim

- because it sets up the main topic of the paragraph that follows

Here are some typical reasons for not adding/deleting something:

- because it blurs the paragraph's main focus with a loosely related detail
- because it blurs the paragraph's main focus by introducing a new idea that goes unexplained
- because it interrupts the flow of the sentence by supplying irrelevant information
- because it provides background information that is irrelevant to the paragraph
- because it interrupts the paragraph's description of...
- because it interrupts the discussion of...
- because it fails to support the main argument of the passage
- because it repeats information that has been previously provided
- because it introduces a term that has not been defined in the passage
- because it would be better placed elsewhere in the passage
- because it makes a claim about... that is not supported by the passage
- because it does not provide a transition from the previous paragraph
- because it does not logically follow from the previous paragraph
- because it contradicts the claim made in the previous paragraph
- because it contradicts the passage's claim about...

You don't need to memorize any of these. Just familiarize yourself with them.

Tip

The most common reason by far for not adding/deleting something is irrelevance. If the question asks whether to add a given sentence and your answer is no, the reason will likely be that it blurs the paragraph's main focus or supplies irrelevant information, so gravitate towards that answer choice first.

The three most common reasons for adding something are defining a term, offering specific examples, and adding supporting detail to a claim. As you go through practice questions, familiarize yourself with what these questions and answers actually look like so that you develop an intuition for how they're tested.

When you encounter purpose questions, always read the surrounding sentences and determine what function the given sentence plays. If possible, try to make this determination before you actually read the answer choices. The purpose of a given sentence or phrase will usually fall under one of the following categories:

- an explanation of a certain term or phenomenon
- further description
- introduction of a topic
- emphasis of a previous point
- effective transition
- specific evidence or supporting detail
- conclusion of a paragraph or passage

Again, there is no magic formula for consistently determining what the purpose of a sentence is. A lot of it comes down to logic and judgment, which is best improved through practice.

Placement

Every sentence and every paragraph has its place. Sure, sometimes the order in which you present your thoughts might not matter, but more often than not, it will impact the meaning and clarity of what you have to say.

Let's first talk about sentence placement. On the **EST** you'll encounter questions that read like this:

- *To make this paragraph most logical, sentence 4 should be placed...*
- *Where is the most logical place in this paragraph to add the following sentence?*
- *The writer wants to add the following sentence to the paragraph. ... The best placement for the sentence is...*

And then your answer choices will consist of the number labels of the sentences in the passage.

The most important thing is to read the sentences before and after the insertion point. So if you're considering inserting the given sentence after sentence 5, make sure to read sentences 5 and 6. Those sentences will often be the deciding factor. If they support the given sentence or clearly transition to or from it, you know you've arrived at the answer.

Handling these types of questions is a lot like selecting the best transition, except you're now working backwards. Instead of choosing which sentence to insert, you're figuring out the best place to insert a given sentence. All the same thinking you exercised back in those transition chapters carries over to these questions.

In particular, look for these cues:

1. this, that, these, those

Example 1

[1] During a visit to my son's school, I was able to eat lunch in the cafeteria. [2] When I went there at noon, students were lined up single file to pick out their meals. [3] There were four counters, each serving something different. [4] I picked up a side of salad at the first, some rice at the second, and a chicken sandwich at the third. [5] At that point, I was eager to find a seat and enjoy my meal. [6] What made me upset, however, was the fourth counter, which was serving cake, ice cream, and cookies. [7] I called up the school office to file a complaint, but nobody would listen to me. [8] The fourth counter was the most popular one in the cafeteria.

Where is the most logical place in this paragraph to add the following sentence?

Desserts like these are bound to make students unhealthy.

- A) After sentence 2
- B) After sentence 3
- C) After sentence 4
- D) After sentence 6

When you read the sentence in question, your first thought should be *Desserts like what? What are these?* The sentence only makes sense if it's placed next to another sentence that defines what *these* are. The only sentence that does so logically is sentence 6 (*cake, ice cream, and cookies*), answer **D**.

Example 2

[1] After a year of living on futons and eating ramen, the founders at Hourglass decided that antique watches weren't profitable enough to sustain a business. [2] Instead, they decided to invest in modern designs, create new watches, and market them at a discount online. [3] Hourglass soon skyrocketed to success. [4] Within a year, it broke ten million dollars in revenue and announced its intent to expand overseas. [5] A lot of existing watch companies are now looking to buy out this company that was once on the verge of bankruptcy. [6] With those plans in place, the company began to attract the young and fashionable crowd, as well as celebrities looking for the next trend.

To make this paragraph most logical, sentence 6 should be placed

- A) where it is now.
- B) after sentence 1.
- C) after sentence 2.
- D) after sentence 4.

Note that sentence 6 refers to *those plans*, so your natural thought should be *What plans?* Sentence 6 only makes sense if it's placed next to another sentence that defines what *those plans* are. The only sentence that does so logically is sentence 2 (*invest in modern designs, create new watches, and market them at a discount online*), answer **C**.

2. Nouns or pronouns in need of clarification

Example 1

[1] The Large Hadron Collider, the most powerful particle collider in the world, was built to test theories of particle physics. [2] In particular, it was used to prove the existence of the Higgs Boson, a new type of particle that helps explain why things have mass. [3] The Collider is based at the CERN Laboratory and contains four types of detectors. [4] Having more than one detector carry out the same tests gives scientists the ability to cross-check results and identify any anomalies in the data they generate.

Where is the most logical place in this paragraph to add the following sentence?

Two of them, the ATLAS and CMS detectors, are very similar and can run the same class of experiments.

- A) After sentence 1

- B) After sentence 2
- C) After sentence 3
- D) After sentence 4

The key word is *them*—what’s *them*? Detectors, obviously. So we must put this sentence after one that brings up detectors, sentence 3. The answer is **C**. The important take-away here is that *them* was a pronoun in need of a clarifying reference.

The first cue in this chapter—*this, that, these, those*—is just a more specific version of this second cue. After all, *this, that, these, and those* are all pronouns that are in need of a reference that clarifies them.

Example 2

[1] Hong Kong has long been criticized for its citizens’ taste for rare ocean delicacies, especially shark fin soup. [2] People pay hundreds of dollars to enjoy one bowl of the soup, which symbolizes wealth and power. [3] But overfishing and a love for seafood have disrupted many underwater habitats in Asia, endangering much of the marine life, including local sharks. [4] Last October, the Hong Kong government decided to prohibit all imports of shark fin. [5] Biologists are closely monitoring the shark population to see if it recovers.

Where is the most logical place in this paragraph to add the following sentence?

Environmental activists praised the ban as a crucial step towards protecting the underwater ecosystem in Asia, but more should be done.

- A) After sentence 2
- B) After sentence 3
- C) After sentence 4
- D) After sentence 5

The noun that needs clarification here is *the ban*. Reading the sentence by itself, we’re not sure what *the ban* refers to. That’s why we need to place this sentence next to one that provides that clarification, sentence 4, which specifies that it’s a shark fin ban. The answer is **C**.

3. Chronological order

Example 1

[1] The Mongols tried to conquer Vietnam at various points in the second millennium. [2] The first time, they were repelled by the unknown landscape and intemperate climate. [3] When they came back better prepared, the Vietnamese scared them off by setting fires to their encampments. [4] The Mongols finally succeeded twice in the late 13th century, but mysteriously left each time. [5] It wasn’t until the 19th century that the Vietnamese were fully conquered—by the French. [6] On their third return, they were

routed by the genius of the Vietnamese generals at the battle of Bach Dang.

To make this paragraph most logical, sentence 6 should be placed

- A) where it is now.
- B) after sentence 1.
- C) after sentence 2.
- D) after sentence 3.

This is an example of putting things in chronological order, from first to last. Sentence 6 begins with *On their third return*, which means that it should be placed after the narrator has talked about the first and second times. The second time the Mongols tried to conquer Vietnam is discussed in sentence 3, so the answer is **D**.

Example 2

[1] John dusted himself off and returned to the tractor for a flashlight and a length of rope. [2] We tied the end of the rope to the rear of the tractor. [3] I lead the line for John while he went down for a look around. [4] He had discovered one of the largest cave systems in all of New York State. [5] It would take years to map and would be an adventure even more profitable than the original goal that had lead us to discover it.

Where is the most logical place in this paragraph to add the following sentence?

When John returned to the surface, he was grinning ear to ear.

- A) After sentence 1
- B) After sentence 2
- C) After sentence 3
- D) After sentence 4

Consider the logical sequence of events. The sentence in question states that “John returned to the surface,” which means he had to have gone below the surface sometime before that point. Sentence 3 is the only place where that event is stated. The answer is **C**. Why not place it later, after sentence 4, for example? Because placing the sentence after sentence 3 then allows sentence 4 to explain why John was “grinning ear to ear.” Also note that the first half of the paragraph is action, whereas the latter half is more reflection. The given sentence belongs in the “action” half.

4. Lead/Topic sentences

Example 1

[1] Clinical studies have shown that squatting is better than any other lower-body movement for muscle hypertrophy. [2] In fact, the rate of muscle growth can be up to three times as fast if squats are done correctly as part of a regular workout routine. [3] The back-squat is considered the king of all bodybuilding movements. [4] Most injuries in the gym, however, stem from accidents caused by poor form. [5] As a result, runners will rarely use squats as part of their training.

To make this paragraph most logical, sentence 3 should be placed

- A) where it is now.
- B) before sentence 1.
- C) after sentence 4.
- D) after sentence 5.

Sentence 3 is a good example of a lead sentence—a more general sentence that leads into more specific details or supporting evidence, sort of like a topic sentence. It sets the stage for the more specific reasoning in sentences 1 and 2. The answer is **B**.

The only reason I like to call it a lead sentence rather than a topic sentence is that most students think a topic sentence must start a paragraph. Lead sentences, however, can be in the middle of the paragraph. Take a look at the following example:

Example 2

[1] My freshman year of college was quite intimidating. [2] Not only did I have to adjust to a new setting, but I also had to make sure I did well in my classes. [3] Professor Kwok always had a weird experiment to illustrate the concept of the day. [4] To teach us about speed and rates of change, he swung a bowling ball from the ceiling until it collided with the door. [5] Another time, he made explosives out of liquid nitrogen so that we could apply the Gurney equations to them. [6] He was fired after that.

Where is the most logical place in this paragraph to add the following sentence?

I had many teachers, but my favorite was my math professor.

- A) After sentence 1
- B) After sentence 2
- C) After sentence 4
- D) After sentence 6

The sentence in question is a lead sentence—it introduces what the author will talk about next, his math professor. Because everything after sentence 2 talks about Professor Kwok, after sentence 2 is exactly where the sentence should be inserted. The answer is **B**. This lead sentence is essentially a transition sentence.

5. Supporting sentences

A supporting sentence is the opposite of a lead sentence. It offers additional details and specific facts or examples in support of a more general statement that comes before it. Let's take a previous example and change the question:

Example

[1] My freshman year of college was quite intimidating. [2] Not only did I have to adjust to a new setting, but I also had to make sure I did well in my classes. [3] I had many teachers, but my favorite was my math professor. [4] Professor Kwok always had a weird experiment to illustrate the concept of the day. [5] One time, he made explosives out of liquid nitrogen so that we could apply the Gurney equations to them. [6] He was fired after that.

Where is the most logical place in this paragraph to add the following sentence?

To teach us about speed and rates of change, he swung a bowling ball from the ceiling until it collided with the door.

- A) After sentence 1
- B) After sentence 3
- C) After sentence 4
- D) After sentence 5

The sentence in question is a supporting sentence—it provides an example that backs up some point made before it. Because it's an example of one of Professor Kwok's "weird experiments," it belongs after sentence 4. The answer is **C**. Note that sentence 4 serves as a lead sentence. Writing can be funny that way. Sentence 4 is a supporting sentence to sentence 3, but it's a lead sentence to the one we're inserting.

6. Transition words

Example

[1] Barbary falcons are a particular kind of hunting bird used in the desert kingdom of Saudi Arabia. [2] Their nimble flight mechanics make them the perfect predators for hunting smaller birds. [3] Although they live in dry open hills and deserts, they make their nests on cliffs and breed throughout the year. [4] The Barbary falcon is often mistaken for the peregrine falcon, even though the former has a smaller wingspan.

Where is the most logical place in this paragraph to add the following sentence?

However, they are less valuable for catching land based mammals like foxes or mice, as their larger size

often warns potential prey of their approach.

- A) After sentence 1
- B) After sentence 2
- C) After sentence 3
- D) After sentence 4

Note the word *However*. This indicates that wherever the sentence is placed, it must serve to offset or counter the sentence before it. The best insertion point is after sentence 2, answer **B**. While barbary falcons are the “perfect predators for hunting smaller birds,” they are “less valuable for catching land based mammals.” Side by side, the two sentences offer a strength and then a weakness, which makes the *However* fit quite logically.

Paragraph placement questions—you’ll encounter at most one in the entire section—deal with putting a paragraph in the right place within a passage. The approach is very much the same as in sentence placement questions, except you’ll be looking for the cues on a paragraph-to-paragraph level, rather than a sentence-to-sentence level.

For example, each paragraph will have its own distinct focus, but you’ll still be looking for transitions that guide the reader from one to another in a logical way. You’ll still be looking for dates and time words like *before*, *now*, and *finally* to place paragraphs in chronological order. You’ll still have to be conscious of the relationships between paragraphs, whether one leads into the next one or supports the one before it. If you get good with sentence placement questions, you’ll be well prepared for paragraph placement questions.

Example

[1]

Fred went up first to make sure none of the carabiners had come loose or overly worn under the weather. Scott couldn’t wait to harness up and start the climb. The others weren’t so enthusiastic. I told them we could make the two day hike back the way we came or climb up and be at the clubhouse within a few hours. Before we knew it, we were celebrating at the clubhouse.

[2]

The answer came quite quickly during the first hike. It was clear these kids—Tony, Lisa, Scott, Sara, Tim—did not want to be there. They grudgingly made their way through the trails, throwing rocks and breaking branches. The pace could not have been slower. After many hours of whining and complaining about being tired and hungry, the first day finally came to an end.

[3]

As part of a new program, our state decided to give first time offenders the choice of a three day hike through the mountains or a month of detention. Because my partner Fred and I give guided hiking tours through the mountains, we were chosen to be the tour guides for this program. Three days in the wilderness with five juvenile delinquents was not exactly what we had in mind when we started our

hiking business. Then again, how hard could it be?

[4]

A few months later I asked the kids to see if our little hiking trip in the mountains had changed anything. I was pleased to hear that no one has been in trouble since. I can't wait to take on the next batch.

[5]

Over the course of the next day, their attitudes started to change. With each step, the children began to realize that their lives were in our hands. After all, they would have to rely on us for help if they got lost or fell. They had to either listen or risk serious injury. Towards the end of the hike, we presented the final challenge—the wall. There were other paths we could have taken, but we like to challenge our guests with a little mountain climbing. The cliff is only twelve feet high, so even an inexperienced climber can easily reach the top.

The most effective and logical ordering of the paragraphs in the passage is:

- A) 3, 1, 2, 4, 5
- B) 3, 2, 5, 1, 4
- C) 3, 1, 2, 5, 4
- D) 1, 3, 2, 5, 4

you won't get a question exactly like this, but you'll get questions that ask you where to place a certain paragraph. By the time you get to those questions, you will have read most of the passage. You'll have some idea of what each paragraph is about, which will make it much easier. But for learning purposes, let's say we haven't read this passage at all. The first thing I would do is scan the first sentence of each paragraph, which typically provides some clue of where it should be placed. Looking at paragraph 2, we read *The answer...*, which indicates it should be placed after a paragraph that ends in a question or dilemma: paragraph 3.

Paragraph 5 starts with *Over the course of the next day...*, which implies the previous paragraph should discuss the previous day. The paragraph that does this turns out to be paragraph 2, which ends with the words *the first day finally came to an end*. So far, we have 3, 2, and 5.

If you look at paragraph 4, *A few months later* is a sign that whatever's in that paragraph happened last, so it should be placed at the end. Paragraph 1 starts with *Fred went up first* and goes on to discuss the details of climbing, which means it should be placed after a paragraph that mentions that activity, paragraph 5. Finally, we have 3, 2, 5, 1, 4: answer **B**.

Point of View

Keep the point of view the same within sentences and within paragraphs.

Example 1

Wrong: If one does not believe, you will not succeed.

Correct:	If one does not believe, one will not succeed.
Correct:	If you do not believe, you will not succeed.
Example 2	
Wrong:	If someone wants to play tennis, you should know how to serve.
Correct:	If someone wants to play tennis, he or she should know how to serve.
Correct:	If you want to play tennis, you should know how to serve.

Comparatives vs. Superlatives

Example 1	
Wrong:	Between the lion and the tiger, the tiger is the most fierce and the most strong. Between the lion and the tiger, the tiger is the fiercest and the strongest.
Correct:	Between the lion and the tiger, the tiger is the fiercer and the stronger . Between the lion and the tiger, the tiger is more fierce and more strong .
Example 2	
Wrong:	Among all the bears in the world, the panda bear is stronger. Among all the bears in the world, the panda bear is more strong.
Correct:	Among all the bears in the world, the panda bear is most strong . Among all the bears in the world, the panda bear is strongest .

Rule 1

Comparing two things requires the *-er* ending or *more*.
Comparing three things or more requires the *-est* ending or *most*.

Rule 2

Between is used only for comparing two things. Use *among* to compare more than two things.

Who vs. Whom

Now's a good time to introduce an error you'll probably encounter just once on the **EST** but probably hundreds of times in your life: *who* vs. *whom*.

Rule

Use **whom** after a preposition (*to, for, of, ...*). Use **who** for all other cases. Note that this rule is not always correct

Example 1

Wrong: Jane is the girl for **who** I brought these gifts.

Correct: Jane is the girl for **whom** I brought these gifts.

Correct: Jane is the girl **whom** I brought these gifts for.

Note the exception to the rule in the second correct version. Sometimes, the preposition (*for*, in this case) is moved to someplace later in the sentence, so just watch out. Here's another example of this:

Example 2

Wrong: The chaperones **who** the students were assigned to made sure they walked in a single file.

Correct: The chaperones **whom** the students were assigned to made sure they walked in a single file.

Correct: The chaperones **to whom** the students were assigned made sure they walked in a single file.

In the example above, the preposition to look out for is *to*. Notice that the preposition can be moved back in front of the *whom*.

Example 3

Wrong: The boys **whom** robbed the store should be thrown in jail.

Correct: The boys **who** robbed the store should be thrown in jail.

Example 4	
Wrong:	To who should I send these flowers?
Correct:	To whom should I send these flowers?
Example 5	
Wrong:	The librarian yelled at the boy whom never returned his books.
Correct:	The librarian yelled at the boy who never returned his books.
Example 6	
Wrong:	He is the man who I love.
Correct:	He is the man whom I love.

This is an example of an exception to the rule. Because *the man* is the object of your love, we have to use *whom*. These cases pretty much never come up on the **EST** so just trust in the rule above. However, knowing this exception will give you added confidence on the small chance it actually comes up.

Combining Sentences

You'll typically get two questions that ask you to choose the best way of combining two sentences. Below are examples of the most common ways of doing so. Of course, the best strategy will depend on the sentences you're working with. You've seen a lot of these before in previous chapters.

Use a trailing phrase

This method is by far the most commonly tested.

Example 1	
Before:	To get the gun-control law passed, the President pointed out the numerous shootings that happen every year. He illustrated the dangers of having few restrictions.
After:	To get the gun-control law passed, the President pointed out the numerous shootings that happen every year, illustrating the dangers of having few restrictions .

Example 2	
Before:	Students often see the complex theorems of physics as useless and tiresome. They don't know that every piece of modern technology is founded on the discoveries of quantum physics.
After:	Students often see the complex theorems of physics as useless and tiresome, not knowing that every piece of modern technology is founded on the discoveries of quantum physics.
Example 3	
Before:	The monkey was tied down because other animals were distracted by its eating habits. It was not because of its tendency to escape.
After:	The monkey was tied down because other animals were distracted by its eating habits, not because of its tendency to escape.
Example 4	
Before:	Inside the dusty cabinet was a map of the Underground Railroad. It was a network of underground tunnels slaves once used to escape from the South.
After:	Inside the dusty cabinet was a map of the Underground Railroad, a network of underground tunnels slaves once used to escape from the South.

2. Use a preposition

Example 5	
Before:	Joseph finished his homework. His teacher helped him.
After:	Joseph finished his homework with the help of his teacher.
Example 6	
Before:	He is one of the fastest runners in the world. His accomplishments are demonstrated by his numerous world records.

After:	He is one of the fastest runners in the world as demonstrated by his numerous world records .
--------	--

3. Turn one of them into a dependent clause or modifier

Example 7	
Before:	Jacob has decided to avoid snacks and soda. The reason for the diet is that he wants to lose weight.
After:	Because he wants to lose weight , Jacob has decided to avoid snacks and soda.
Example 8	
Before:	The giant panda is the rarest bear in the world today. It has large, distinctive, black patches around its eyes, strong jaw muscles, and a long tail.
After:	The rarest bear in the world today , the giant panda has large, distinctive, black patches around its eyes, strong jaw muscles, and a long tail.

4. Use a conjunction

Example 9	
Before:	On the surface, Seinfeld is most famous for its light-hearted dialogue. Included among the many episodes is an assortment of comments on racism, homosexuality, and death.
After:	On the surface, Seinfeld is most famous for its light-hearted dialogue, but included among the many episodes is an assortment of comments on racism, homosexuality, and death.

5. Link two verbs with and

Example 10	
Before:	The people sitting in front of me on the train were talking throughout the ride. They

would not turn their cell phones off even after being told to do so.

After: The people sitting in front of me on the train were talking throughout the ride **and** would not turn their cell phones off even after being told to do so.

6. Use a relative clause

Example 11

Before: John Durgin worked as an accountant for ten years and then became a math teacher. He first learned to calculate in his head by reciting multiplication tables at home.

After: John Durgin, **who worked as an accountant for ten years and then became a math teacher**, first learned to calculate in his head by reciting multiplication tables at home.

Example 12

Before: Every car is powered by an engine. The engine converts fuel and heat into mechanical motion.

After: Every car is powered by an engine, **which converts fuel and heat into mechanical motion**.

7. Use an infinitive to express purpose

Example 13

Before: The little boy happily ran home. He would tell his mom he had found the last golden ticket.

After: The little boy happily ran home **to tell** his mom he had found the last golden ticket.

Here are some tips and guidelines:

1. The less pronouns, the better (especially this, these, they, it)

Note the pronoun *it* in the following example.

Example 14

The arctic owl's coat of snow-white feathers acts as camouflage. It keeps the owl hidden by blending the animal in with its surroundings.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) camouflage, and it keeps
- C) camouflage; it keeps
- D) camouflage, keeping

Answer D is the best because it avoids using the unnecessary pronoun *it*.

Nearly all the examples in the strategy section above involve unnecessary pronouns.

2. Keep the intended meaning

Don't combine sentences in such a way that the intended meaning is altered.

Example 15

Chinese families get ready for Mid-Autumn Festival by doing several things. They light lanterns, prepare mooncakes, and arrange flowers.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) Chinese families get ready for Mid-Autumn Festival to light lanterns, prepare mooncakes, and arrange flowers.
- C) Chinese families get ready for Mid-Autumn Festival by lighting lanterns, preparing mooncakes, and arranging flowers.
- D) Chinese families get ready for Mid-Autumn Festival for lighting lanterns, preparing mooncakes, and arranging flowers.

Notice how answers B and D change the intended meaning. Chinese families don't get ready for the Festival **in order to** light lanterns, prepare mooncakes, and arrange flowers. That would be backwards. They get ready for the Festival **by** lighting lanterns, preparing mooncakes, and arranging flowers. Those activities are HOW they get ready, not WHY they get ready. The answer is C.

3. Avoid repeated words

Alarm bells should go off anytime you see repeated words.

Example 16

The restaurant was highly recommended by the food critics. These critics stayed there for four hours to savor every dish.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) critics, who
- C) critics, and these critics
- D) critics after the critics

The answer is B because it doesn't repeat *critics*.

4. The less words, the better

This is a general rule of thumb. More words imply complexity and when you're combining sentences, you're trying to make things less complicated, not more.

Example 17

The new hardware runs at a faster rate when compared to the old one. This increased speed reduces costs in our technology department, where we have the most overhead.

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) When compared to the old one, the new hardware runs at a faster rate, which reduces costs in our technology department, where we have the most overhead.
- C) The new hardware runs at a faster rate when compared to the old one, and this increased speed reduces costs in our technology department, where we have the most overhead.
- D) The new hardware runs at a faster rate when compared to the old one; by increasing the speed, we reduce costs in our technology department, where we have the most overhead.

Answers A, C, and D are all wordy compared to answer B. The words *increased speed* are unnecessary and should be cut out.

In general, the answer will usually involve the fewest number of words and the least amount of effort, which means you should be eliminating words, not adding them. This is the over-arching guideline that all the above guidelines fall under—take it to heart.

Odds and Ends

1. Avoid the passive voice

Here's an **active** sentence:

I ate chicken wings.

Here's the **passive** version:

Chicken wings were eaten by me.

Notice how the passive version is a not only wordier but also more awkward. Passive sentences usually contain the word *by*.

On the **EST** you want to **choose active sentences over passive ones**. To make a sentence active, move the "main actor" to the front.

Example 1	
Passive:	Eye contact with the raging bull was avoided by me.
Active:	I avoided eye contact with the raging bull.
Example 2	
Passive:	There is a wide variety of cuisine cooked by the chef.
Active:	The chef cooked a wide variety of cuisine.
Example 3	
Passive:	It was decided by the jury that the defendant was innocent.
Active:	The jury decided that the defendant was innocent.
Example 4	
Passive:	We were invited by our coworkers to attend the dinner party.
Active:	Our coworkers invited us to attend the dinner party.

The passive voice, however, is NOT grammatically incorrect. Many students think that a passive sentence is always wrong. That's not the case. It's just that the passive voice is usually not the best way to express your thoughts. If you're given three grammatically incorrect answer choices and one

that is passive, choose the passive one. Most of the time though, there will be an answer choice in the active voice.

2. Beware of double main verbs

Example 5

Wrong: One of our school's students, came from India, was awarded the national scholarship.

Correct: One of our school's students, **who** came from India, was awarded the national scholarship.

Example 6

Wrong: The dire warnings serve as reminders of our purpose in life is survival.

Correct: The dire warnings serve as reminders of our purpose in **life**: survival.

If you're lazy and just read the second half of the sentence, *our purpose in life is survival*, you might think the sentence is fine. Don't fall victim to such trickiness.

Example 7

Wrong: The central train stations, which service thousands of people each day, need to expand tracks, are undergoing construction.

Correct: The central train stations, which service thousands of people each day, need to expand tracks **and** are undergoing construction.

3. Not only... but (also)

Not only is always paired up with *but*. The *also* is optional.

Example 8

Wrong: The college experience is not only an exciting time to meet new people and also a stressful one because of the level of independence required.

Correct: The college experience is **not only** an exciting time to meet new people **but also** a stressful one because of the level of independence required.

Example 9	
Wrong:	Not only were the books the most widely read, they influenced much of the philosophical thought during that time.
Correct:	Not only were the books the most widely read, but they also influenced much of the philosophical thought during that time.

4. Whereby and Thereby

These two words aren't used very often in conversation, but they get thrown onto the **EST** from time to time. Make sure you understand them.

Thereby means *as a result of that* or *because of that*:

Students practice hard everyday, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the music.

Though they're used differently, *thereby* has a similar meaning to *therefore*.

Whereby means *by which* or *in which*. It's typically used to express the method through which something is done:

The government set up a system whereby people could vote using the Internet.

5. Prepositions with Multiple Idioms

Example 10	
Wrong:	I am interested and familiar with graphic design.
Correct:	I am interested in and familiar with graphic design.
Example 11	
Wrong:	He always complains yet insists on my presence.
Correct:	He always complains about yet insists on my presence.
Example 12	
Wrong:	The son of immigrant parents, Jacob felt a need to reconnect and learn from the past.

Correct:	The son of immigrant parents, Jacob felt a need to reconnect with and learn from the pa
Example 13	
Wrong:	Ironically, the movement was both a revolt and a celebration of our cultural values.
Correct:	Ironically, the movement was both a revolt against and a celebration of our cultural values.

The following example is correct because both idioms take on the preposition *of*. In this case, the preposition does not need to be written twice.

He is both a supporter and critic of the new law



