

STRATEGY SUMMARY

ENGLISH STRATEGIES

My Notes

1. After you have memorized the directions, they can be safely ignored; therefore, do not waste valuable test time by re-reading instructions.
2. Read the entire selection for comprehension of the overall meaning. Look for possible errors. Mentally note how to correct possible errors.
3. Study the answer choices, looking for one that matches your anticipated answer.
4. Compare the answer choices. What makes them different from one another?
5. Do not choose answer choices that introduce new errors or change the meaning of the selection.
6. Use the additional strategies presented below when searching for errors.

STRATEGIES FOR USAGE AND MECHANICS CONTENT AREA

My Notes

Check for Grammatical Errors

- a) Look for obvious subject-verb agreement problems. The test-writers may try to obscure agreement by inserting material between the subject and the verb, inverting the sentence structure so that the verb precedes the subject, or introducing compound subjects.
- b) Check for proper pronoun usage. Remember that all pronouns must have antecedents. The pronoun must clearly refer to the antecedent and must agree in case, number, and person.
- c) Be alert to the proper usage of adjectives and adverbs. Note that adjectives modify nouns, while adverbs modify verbs. Also, adjectives, not adverbs, follow linking verbs. Lastly, watch out for adjectives posing as adverbs. Sometimes, adjectives can be

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transformed into adverbs by adding “-ly,” so it is important to identify whether the modifier is an adjective or an adverb.

d) Watch for double negatives. Even though double negatives are sometimes used colloquially, they are not grammatically correct.

e) Check for proper noun clause introductions. A noun clause is a group of words that functions as the subject of a sentence and must be introduced with “that.” Note that “because” and “why” should not be used to introduce noun clauses.

f) Watch for illogical comparisons. Comparisons can only be made between similar objects. Be alert to the use of the comparative form of an adjective (for comparing two objects) and the superlative form of an adjective (for comparing three or more objects). Remember that some adjectives and adverbs express the highest degree of quality; therefore, they cannot be improved upon.

g) Check for improper verb and mood shifts. The same verb tense and mood should be used within a sentence or paragraph unless there is a valid reason for a change. Also, be alert to the improper usage of verb tenses in general. Make sure that the verb tense within a sentence or a paragraph is logical.

h) Make sure that the choice of verb tense in a sentence reflects the sequence and the duration of the events described.

i) Check for diction errors such as wrong prepositions, improper word choice, and gerund-infinitive switching.

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Check for Sentence Structure Errors

- a) Check to see if the sentence is a run-on.
- b) Be aware of comma splice errors in sentences.
- c) Check to see if the sentence is a fragment.
- d) Make sure the sentence contains logical coordinating conjunctions.
- e) Watch for faulty parallelism in a sentence. Note that whenever elements of a sentence perform similar or equal functions, they should have the same form.
- f) Be alert for sentence structures in which a thought that is interrupted by intervening material is completed later in the sentence. Check that the interrupted thought is correctly completed. A simple way to check for this type of error is to read the sentence without the intervening material—the sentence should make sense, be grammatically correct, and represent a complete thought.
- g) Look for misplaced modifiers. Modifiers should be placed as close as possible to what they modify. Errors in placement of modifiers create ambiguous and illogical constructions.
- h) Be alert to misplacements or omissions of certain elements of a sentence. These errors lead to unintended meanings. Make sure the intended meaning of the sentence follows from its logical structure.

Check for Punctuation Errors

- a) Check to see if commas are used correctly in the sentence. The following list summarizes the most important uses and misuses of commas:
 - (1) Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction joining two clauses.
 - (2) Use commas for clarity.
 - (3) Use commas to separate words in a series.

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- (4) Use commas to mark the end of an introductory phrase.
- (5) Use pairs of commas to set off appositive, parenthetical, and nonrestrictive elements.
- (6) A comma should not be used to separate a subject from its verb.
- (7) Commas should not be used to set off restrictive or necessary clauses or phrases.
- (8) A comma should not be used in place of a conjunction.

b) Check for correct semicolon usage. The following list summarizes the appropriate uses of semicolons:

- (1) Use a semicolon to separate two complete ideas.
- (2) Use a semicolon to separate a series of phrases with commas.
- (3) Use a semicolon to separate independent clauses.
- (4) Do not use semicolons to separate dependent clauses.

c) Check for correct end-stop punctuation. Make sure that any material that has a period is a complete sentence.

d) Check for correct usage of dashes. The following are the rules for situations requiring the use of a dash:

- (1) Use a dash for emphasis or to set off an explanatory group of words.
- (2) Use a dash before a word or group of words that indicates a summation or reversal of what preceded it.
- (3) Use a dash to mark a sudden break in thought that leaves a sentence unfinished.

e) Check for correct apostrophe usage. Apostrophes are most commonly used to show possession. They are also used when a noun is used to modify another noun or a gerund.

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f) Check to see if a punctuation mark is needed to clarify the selection.

STRATEGIES FOR RHETORICAL SKILLS CONTENT AREA

My Notes

Check to See if the Strategy Used by the Writer Is Appropriate

- a) Make sure that all supporting material is appropriate to the selection.
- b) Be alert to opening, transitional, and concluding sentences. Check to see if they are effective or if they need improvement.
- c) Read the selection for the main ideas and identify the main purpose of the entire passage.
- d) Look for diction, purpose, and tone clues that identify the writer's audience.

Check for Organization Errors

- a) Check the sentence-level structure. Sentences should be in logical and appropriate order within the paragraph.
- b) Check the paragraph-level structure. Paragraphs should be divided logically and unified around a central theme.
- c) Check the passage-level structure. Passages should follow an identifiable pattern of development, with paragraphs appearing in a logical order.

Check for Stylistic Problems

- a) Make sure that the sentences are concise and to the point.
 - (1) Look for awkward sentences or weak passive verbs.
 - (2) Look for needlessly wordy sentences.

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- b) Check for ambiguous sentences. Such sentences run two or more ideas together and require further clarification to separate and connect the disparate ideas.
- c) Check for idiomatic usage.