

# **1. Conventions of Standard Written English**

# **Breakdown of the Test**

**1. Conventions of Standard Written English (10%)**

**2. Revision Skills (40%)**

**3. Ability to Use Source Materials (25%)**

**4. Rhetorical Analysis (25%)**

# Breakdown of the Test

## 5. The Essays

There are two essays that have to be written. One of them will be about two sources, which have to be cited.

# **Conventions of Standard Written English**

**Now we will study different  
syntactical and  
grammatical aspects of the  
English language, and  
what kind of mistakes the  
CLEP exam purposefully  
puts in their test to see if  
you can recognize them.**

# Conventions of Standard Written English

The sections in this unit are:

**1.1. Syntax (parallelism, coordination, subordination)**

**1.2. Sentence boundaries (comma splice, run-ons, sentence fragments)**

**1.3. Recognition of correct sentences**

**1.4. Concord/agreement (pronoun reference, case shift and number; subject-verb; verb tense)**

**1.5. Diction**

**1.6. Modifiers**

**1.7. Idiom**

**1.8. Active/passive voice**

**1.9. Lack of subject in  
modifying word group**

**1.10. Logical comparison**

**1.11. Logical agreement**

**1.12. Punctuation**

# **1.1 Syntax (Parallelism, Coordination, Subordination)**

# Syntax

**We will look at these types of sentences:**

- **Simple**
- **Compound**
- **Complex**
- **Compound-complex**



# Simple Sentences

**Simple sentences consist of a subject and a predicate (verb):**

*Jane went to the store.*

*I like my new house.*

*She sells clothes online.*

# Clauses

A clause is a subject and a predicate. When it can stand alone it's an independent clause:

*Bill is a poet.*

# Clauses

When it can't stand alone,  
it's a dependent  
(subordinate) clause:  
*who lives in Madrid.*

# Compound Sentences

**Compound sentences are two independent clauses joined together by a conjunction (or, and, but, for, so, yet, not).**

# Compound Sentences

*Bill is a poet and Jane is an architect.*

*You are very tired so you should go home.*

# **Complex Sentences**

**A complex sentence is made up of an independent clause with one or more dependent clauses:**

# Complex Sentences

*When I called my parents,  
they were eating dinner.*

*She is the one who helped  
me fix the car when I broke  
down.*

# Complex Sentences

The independent clause can be linked by the relative pronouns *who*, *whoever*, *that* or *which* to link the dependent clause to the main clause. This creates an adjective clauses that is attached to the main clause or can be found in the middle of it:



# Complex Sentences

*The professor who teaches the class is German.*

*People who speak other languages understand other cultures.*

# Complex Sentences

The independent clause can also be linked by conjunctions to create adverb clauses and other types of clauses. Some of these conjunctions are: *before, after, if, because, unless, as.*

# Complex Sentences

*If we smoke we go outside.*

*Unless she helps me, I  
won't get it done.*

*She is trilingual because  
she lived abroad.*

*After eating, I will go back  
to work.*

# **Compound-Complex Sentences**

**A compound-complex sentence has two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses:**

# Compound-Complex Sentences

*She studies a lot and she spends a lot of time in the library because she wants to get good grades.*

# Parallelisms

**A parallelism is when a word or phrase that is repeated in a sentence functions in the same way in another part of the sentence. It is considered a parallelism because it should not change when it is repeated.**

# Parallelisms

**Wrong:** *You should either go to the store or beginning your homework now.*

**Right:** *You should either go to the store or begin your homework now.*

# Parallelisms

Some of the conjunctions in which parallelisms should be monitored are:

- *not only...but also*
- *whether...or*
- *either...or*
- *neither...not*
- *the more...the more*
- *both...and*



# Parallelisms

Some more examples:

**Wrong:** *Whether you decide on staying here or to go there, you will need to tell us soon.*

**Correct:** *Whether you decide on staying here or going there, you will need to tell us soon.*

# Parallelisms

Some more examples:

**Wrong:** *After you write the letter, collecting the envelopes and addressing them, please send them on.*

**Correct:** *After you write the letter, collect the envelopes and address them, please send them on.*

# **1.2 Sentence Boundaries (Comma Splice, Run-Ons, Sentence Fragments)**

# Sentence Boundaries: Comma Splice

We want to avoid  
improperly connecting two  
independent clauses.

**Wrong:**

*Andy didn't have any  
money, he couldn't go to  
the show.*

# **Sentence Boundaries: Run-on Sentences**

**A run-on sentence also  
improperly connects two  
sentences:**

**Wrong:**

***Susan is in charge of the  
department she has a good  
understanding of how  
things work.***

# Sentence Boundaries: Fragments

In order to avoid fragments, we should have a subject and predicate that contains a verb. We don't want examples like these:

# **Sentence Boundaries: Fragments**

*Brings it to the store.*

*A boomerang that doesn't  
come back.*

*Doing what is asked of me,  
without delay.*

# **1.3 Recognition of Correct Sentences**



# **Recognition of Correct Sentences**

**This is a general category that refers to being able to recognize if what is shown is a correct sentence.**

**Studying all the sections in this unit will help you prepare for this. Examples:**

# Recognition of Correct Sentences

**Wrong:** *She doesn't  
understood what I was  
saying.*

**Right:** *She didn't  
understand what I was  
saying.*

# Recognition of Correct Sentences

**Wrong:** *Its not how you see  
it's outer shell Its what you  
don't see on the inside that  
is important.*

**Right:** *It's not how you see  
its outer shell; it's what  
you don't see on the inside  
that is important.*

# **1.4 Concord/Agreement (Pronoun Reference, Case Shift, and Number; Subject- Verb; Verb Tense)**

# Agreement

**You also want to make sure there is agreement in a sentence. There are different types of agreement:**

- **Pronoun reference**
- **Case shift and number**
- **Subject-verb**
- **Verb tense**

# Pronoun Reference

**Agreement in person refers to the relationship between the pronoun/subject and the corresponding verb.**

# Pronoun Reference

**Wrong:** *The professor and she is going.*

**Correct:** *The professor and she are going.*

**Wrong:** *If you want to do it, one has to do it right.*

**Correct:** *If you want to do it, you have to do it right.*

**Wrong:** *He always tell me that I am right.*

**Correct:** *He always tells me that I am right.*

# Pronoun Reference

**We have to be careful to always be aware of the demonstrative pronouns (this, that, these, those) and pronouns in the sentences. The reference can be confusing, like with these examples:**



# Pronoun Reference

*When Suzy saw Jill, she was angry about class.*

*There are situations in which children don't have proper access to education. These bother me more than anything you can imagine.*

# Agreement in Case

Agreement in case has to do with the correct use of a noun or pronoun in a sentence.

*I want to find the cat.*

*The ladder is leaning against my house.*

*My sister gave me a dollar to buy the candy.*

# Agreement in Case

You want to make sure things are in order with the case in question:

**Wrong:** *Andy and me went to the store.*

**Right:** *Andy and I went to the store.*

**Wrong:** *This is for you and I.*

**Right:** *This is for you and me.*

# **Agreement in Gender**

**Agreement in gender  
refers to being gender  
neutral when you write.**

# Agreement in Gender

**Wrong:** *Mankind is worried about Earth's future.*

**Right:** *Humanity is worried about Earth's future.*

**Wrong:** *Everyone must do his part.*

**Right:** *Everyone must do his or her part.*

# **Agreement in Number**

**Agreement in number refers to the relationship of different parts of speech in a sentence and whether they are singular or plural.**

# Agreement in Number

**Wrong:** *If someone wants a key, they have to go to the front desk.*

**Right:** *If someone wants a key, he or she has to go to the front desk.*

**Wrong:** *The students should open their book.*

**Right:** *The students should open their books.*

# Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement refers to using the correct subject with the correct verb (I run, you run, he runs, we run, you (all) run, they run). It's the third person singular form that we have to watch. This is more complicated with irregular verbs.



# Subject-Verb Agreement

**Wrong:** *She said she go for a run every morning.*

**Right:** *She said she goes for a run every morning.*

**Wrong:** *She said that you was tired.*

**Right:** *She said that you were tired.*

# Verb Tense Agreement

**This refers to inappropriate changes in time frames in a sentence without proper cues.**

# Verb Tense Agreement

**Wrong:** *She take the subway home and then met with her friend in the café.*

**Right:** *She took the subway home and then met with her friend in the café.*

# Verb Tense Agreement

**Sometimes, however, there are understood changes, and a tense shift is OK:**

***They are riding in the car that she bought last week.***

# 1.5 Diction

# Diction

**Diction refers to word choice. Consider these:**

- **Effect/ Affect**
- **Farther/ Further**
- **Than/ Then**
- **Who/ That/ Which**
- **Who/ Whom**

# Diction

**Diction refers to word choice. Consider these:**

- **There/ Their/ They're**
- **Lie/ Lay (Lain/ Laid)**
- **Accept/ except**
- **Capitol/ Capital**
- **Principal/ principle**
- **Stationery/ Stationary**

# 1.6 Modifiers



# **Modifiers: Adjectives**

**With count nouns (bird, child, lemon) and non-count nouns (milk, dust, food) we need to be aware of the corresponding adjectives we use.**

# Modifiers: Adjectives

Some adjectives, such as *enough*, *some*, and *any* can be used with both:

*I have some birds in my yard.*

*I need some milk with these cookies.*

# Modifiers: Adjectives

Watch the words *many*,  
*much*, *few*, *little*, which can  
only be used with:

# Modifiers: Adjectives

Count nouns:

*There are many people here.*

*There are few choices in this.*

Non-count nouns:

*I don't have much time.*

*He has little experience in this field.*

# **Modifiers: Adverbs**

**Adverbs modify verbs,  
adjectives, other adverbs  
or entire clauses.**

# Modifiers: Adverbs

*I am good* (in character) as opposed to *I am well* (state of being now).

Wrong: *I'll do it quick.*

Right: *I'll do it quickly.*

# Floating Modifiers

Depending on where it's located in the sentence, a word could change the semantics (meaning) of what the sentence is conveying. Look at these two examples:

# Floating Modifiers

*Only I want to understand  
what she said.*

*I only want to understand  
what she said.*



# 1.7 Idiom

# Idiom

**An idiom is a set expression or phrase that has a figurative meaning and that is not interpreted literally. Some examples are:**

# Idiom

**“All ears”**

**“Call it a day”**

**“Keep in touch”**

**“Off the hook”**

**“See eye to eye”**

**“Take it easy”**

**“Wet behind the ears”**

## **1.8. Active/Passive Voice**

# **Active/Passive Voice**

**The active voice is when the subject has a direct relationship to the verb.**

**The passive voice is when that subject become the agent of the action. Some examples are:**

# Active/Passive Voice

*The student wrote the paper*  
(active)

*The paper was written by the student* (passive)

*She is taking the test.*  
(active)

*The test is being taken by her.* (passive)

# **1.9 Lack of Subject in Modifying Word Group**

# Lack of Subject in Modifying Word Group

This section could be found in many of the categories we have already seen.

*Wrong: I smoked behind the garage. And then got in trouble for it.*

*Right: I smoked behind the garage, and then I got in trouble for it.*



# Lack of Subject in Modifying Word Group

**Wrong:** *My sister, the  
smartest in the family.*

**Right:** *My sister is the  
smartest in the family.*

# **1.10 Logical Comparison**

# Logical Comparison

A logical comparison can be missed when the corresponding form is incorrect or missing. Here are some examples:

**Wrong:** *My sister's car is faster than your sisters.*

**Right:** *My sister's car is faster than your sister's.*

# Logical Comparison

**Wrong: *Julie's collection has more stamps than Bob does.***

**Right: *Julie's collection has more stamps than Bob's does.***

# **1.11 Logical Agreement**

# Logical Agreement

This is another broad category that overlaps with much of what has already been seen. To review this, here are some examples:

***Wrong: Andy like sports because it makes him feel good.***

# Logical Agreement

***Wrong: A teacher should use a lesson plan that they alone prepare.***

***Right: A teacher should use a lesson plan that he or she alone prepares.***

# 1.12 Punctuation



# Punctuation:

## Semicolons

Semicolons are used:

- To separate two independent clauses:

*I can't do this any more;  
instead, we should share  
the cost.*

# Punctuation: Semicolons

Semicolons are used:

- To make lists of extended words:

*What you can do is: a) finish your work; b) ask your professor if you can do it at home; c) ask for an extension and do it next class; d) leave now and take the zero.*

# Punctuation: Colons

Colons can be used in many different ways after an independent clause. For example:

Explanations: *She was the doctor: she knew what to do in the situation.*

# Punctuation: Colons

Quotations: *Sally was in a rough state when she said: “The candidate has no idea what is going on.”*

Lists: *My mom said I could do one of three things: study, get a job, or move out.*

# **Punctuation:**

## **Commas**

**There are many ways a comma is used.**

**It is used to separate a dependent clause from an independent clause:**

***When you leave the house, make sure that you turn the light off.***

# Punctuation:

## Commas

It is used to separate  
nonrestrictive clauses:

*My sister, who is an expert,  
teaches high school.*

# **Punctuation:**

## **Commas**

**It is used to separate two independent clauses:**

***I was really tired after the show, but I was willing to stay on for a while longer.***

# **Punctuation:**

## **Commas**

**It is used to separate  
modifiers:**

***The day was welcomed  
after the long, dark night.***