1. Lists

Use a comma to separate items on a list.

Snowball prefers songs with a regular, funky beat.

Regular and *funky* are both describing *beat*. If you would say *regular and funky* then you can say *regular, funky*.

Snowball seems to like best the music of The Backstreet Boys, Lady Gaga, and Queen.

Whenever you have three or more items on a list, always use a comma before the "and" preceding the final item. This is a rule that not everyone agrees on, but if you apply the 4 C's, the extra comma makes your meaning *Clear*. On the ACT, always use the comma before the "and."

2. Introductory Clause

A comma can link an incomplete idea to a complete idea, in either order.

After Snowball stopped dancing, the trainer gave the bird another treat.
Although they may be ugly, your toes look strong.
Though his breath was so stank, he still found a date to the prom.

Commas work like blinking yellow lights: They slow down but do not stop ideas. Since the goal is to be concise, use a comma only for a specific reason. On the ACT, there are only four reasons to use a comma.

3. Separation of 2 Complete Sentences

A comma by itself can't come in between two complete ideas, but it can when it's paired with what we call FANBOYS: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.* A comma plus any of these is the equivalent of Stop punctuation. These words also impact direction, which might influence the correct answer.

I am smart. I am cool. Yes, ok.

I am smart; I am cool. Yes, ok. **Semi-colon = Period**

I am smart, I am cool. **No Can Do. Needs one of the FANBOYS!**

I am smart, FOR I am cool. Yes, ok.

I am smart, AND I am cool. Yes, ok.

I am smart, NOR I am cool. Yes, ok.

I am smart, BUT I am cool. Yes, ok.

I am smart, OR I am cool. Yes, ok.

I am smart, YET I am cool. Yes, ok.

I am smart, SO I am cool. Yes, ok.

For the record, all conjunctions link things, but coordinating conjunctions—that is, FANBOYS—specifically come in between two ideas and are never a part of either idea.

4. Unnecesssary Info in Middle or End of Sentence

Use a pair of commas around unnecessary information.

Further research has shown that parrots, including cockatoos, can dance in perfect synch to music.

If information is necessary to the sentence in either meaning or structure, don't use the commas. If the meaning would be exactly the same but the additional information makes the sentence more interesting, use a pair of commas—or a pair of dashes—around the information.

I drove my car.
I drove my car to the store.
I drove my car, which was a black Cadillac.
I drove my car, which was a big Cadillac, to the store.
I drove my car - which was a big Cadillac - to the store.
I drove my car (which was a big Cadillac) to the store.
I ate the entire pizza, wolfing and slobbering it like a hungry dawg.
Thousands of people line H Street.
It's the beginning of February, and as they do every year, <u>thousands of people line H Street</u>, the heart of Chinatown in Washington, DC.

SAT ACT Word Pairs & Other Slick Rules

Word Pairs

A. Either…or…
   Either Cardi B **or** Jennifer Lopez will sing really well.

B. Neither…nor…
   Neither Cardi B **nor** Jennifer Lopez will sing really well.

C. Not only…but also…
   Not only are your feet ugly, **but** they **also** smells bad too.

D. Both…and…
   Both your mama **and** your daddy have giant thumbs.

E. As…as…
   I am just **as** good a test-taker **as** any Harvard Student.

F. Between…and…
   Between you **and** me, your breath is stinky.

G. So/such…that…
   Your hair is **so** fugly **that** birds won't nest in it.
   Your hair had **such** a big knot in it **that** it broke my comb.

H. More/less…than…
   Although Justin's lyrics are **more** likeable **than** those of Selener's, Justin can be weak.

I. Just as…so…
   Just as Robert is known for his beats, **so** is Nikki known for her rhymes.

J. From…to…
   From the early days of kindergarten **to** the final day's of high school, we had fun.

K. At once…and…   (slick!)
   Kanye is **at once** popular because of his music **and** controversial because of his tantrums.

L. No sooner…than…   (slick!)
   No sooner had my grandma made me eat tuna salad **than** my grandpa made me eat cod fish.

M. Not so much…as…   (slick!)
   Although he has many fans, Lebron is known **not so much** for switching teams **as** he is for winning championships.

N. So far as…
   Kiki went **so far as** to eat 5 scoops of ice cream just to make Julio smile.
   So far as I know, I have to be home by 11.

SAT ACT Word Pairs & Other Slick Rules

Which vs. That
which = comma   that = NO comma

The movie was sad**, which** made us cry like babies. notice the the main sentence comes first
The movie **that** made us cry like babies was sad.

Who vs. Whom
who and whom deal with people not things
who = subject (S)   whom = direct object (DO)

Michael (S) danced with Marcie (DO).
Who danced with Marcie? Michael (S).
With **whom** did Michael dance? With Marcie (DO).

prepositions = whom
prepositions NO GO with who

with whom YES!	for whom YES!	by whom YES!	above whom YES!	between whom YES
with who NO!	for who NO!	by who NO!	above who NO!	between who NO!

prepositions = which
when matched with a preposition, do not use a comma

with which YES!	for which YES!	by which YES!	above which YES!	between which YES

Who vs. Which
who and whom deal with people not things
which deals with things not people

Einstein was a scientist which ruled the world of physics. NOPE!
Einstein was a scientist **who** ruled the world of physics. FO SHO!
notice: Who ruled the world of physics? Einstein (S).

Where vs. Were vs. We're
where = place   also where = in which
Home is **where** I live. Home is the place **in which** I live. FO SHO!

were = plural verb   We were playing.
We **were** only playing with you.

we're = a contraction for "we are"
We're going home.

There vs. Their vs. They're
there = place
Who goes **there**?

their = plural pronoun
Their shoes are funky.

they're = contraction for "they are"
Who knows where **they're** going?

Idioms

Unfortunately, preposition/idiom questions are among the most difficult to study for because there are thousands of possible errors and no real pattern to the prepositions tested. It is therefore not terribly constructive to spend your time memorizing long lists of phrases. In general, though, if a given preposition sounds somewhat odd, it's probably wrong. This is one case that requires you to trust your ear. That said, I am including a list of common idioms, including a number that have appeared on previous tests.

(Pre)occupation with	In the hope(s) of
Consistent/inconsistent with	Characteristic/typical of
Sympathize with	Convinced of
Correlate with	Consist of
Identify with	Composed/comprised of
Familiar/unfamiliar with	In recognition of
In contrast to (BUT: contrast with)	Capable/incapable of
Be native to (BUT: be a native of)	A mastery of
Have a tendency toward	Have an appreciation of/for
Biased toward	Criticize for
Recommend to	Necessary for
Listen to	Prized for
Try to (NOT: try and)	Endure/last for
Prefer x to y	Wait for
Devoted to	Watch/look (out) for
A threat to/threaten to	Responsible for
Central to	Compensate for
Unique to	Strive for
Similar to	Have a tolerance for
Parallel to	Famous/Celebrated for
An alternative to	Recognized/known for
Enter into	Named for/after
Have insight into	Worry about
Interested in	Complain about
Succeed in/at	Wonder about
Adept in/at	Curious about
Have confidence in	Think about
Engage in/with	Bring about
Take pride in	Be particular about
Insist on	Protect from/against
Focus on	Defend from/against
Rely on	Apparent from
Reflect on	Predate by
Dwell on	Followed by
Draw (up)on	Confused/puzzled/perplexed by
Based on	Accompanied by
Suspicious of	Encouraged by
Devoid of	Outraged by
A proponent of	Surprised/stunned/shocked by
A command of	Amazed/awed by
A source of	Impressed by
An offer of	Known as/to be
An understanding/knowledge of	Far from
Approve/disapprove of	Differ(ent) from
Take advantage of	Refrain from
In awe of	Have power/control over
A variety/plethora of	Mull over

Diction

Diction errors (also known as usage or "wrong word" errors) generally appear at most once per test, and often they do not appear at all. They are created by switching two similar or identical-sounding but differently spelled words.

Incorrect:	The work of Portuguese Renaissance painter Gregorio Lopes **insists** mostly of frescoes for monasteries across the Iberian Peninsula.
Correct:	The work of Portuguese Renaissance painter Gregorio Lopes **consists** mostly of frescoes for monasteries across the Iberian Peninsula.

Below is a list of word pairs of the sort that may appear on the SAT. Please be aware, however, that like preposition errors, diction errors are often extremely random and cannot be predicted with any degree of confidence.

Accept vs. Except	Comprehensive vs. Comprehensible	Incur vs. Occur
Access vs. Excess	Conscious vs. Conscience	Indeterminate vs. Interminable
Addition vs. Edition	Contribute vs. Attribute	Influence vs. Affluence
Adopt vs. Adapt	Counsel vs. Council	Ingenious vs. Ingenuous
Advice vs. Advise	Contemptuous vs. Contemptible	Laid vs. Lain
Affect vs. Effect	(In)credible vs. (In)credulous	Lead vs. Led
Afflict vs. Inflict	Desirous vs. Desirable	Lie vs. Lay
Allusion vs. Illusion	Devise vs. Device	Lose vs. Loose
Ambivalent vs. Ambiguous	Elicit vs. Illicit	Manner vs. Manor
Anecdote vs. Antidote	Elude vs. Allude	Pair, Peer, Pier
Appraise vs. Apprise	Emit vs. Omit	Precede vs. Proceed
Assent vs. Ascent	Ensure vs. Assure	Precedent vs. President
Auditory vs. Audible	Exhaustive vs. Exhausting	Perpetrate vs. Perpetuate
Averse vs. Adverse	Expandable vs. Expendable	Persecute vs. Prosecute
Capital vs. Capitol	Explicit vs. Implicit	Principal vs. Principle
Censor vs. Censure	Flaunt vs. Flout	Supposed to, NOT suppose to
Cite vs. Site vs. Sight	Foreboding vs. Forbidding	Than vs. Then
Collaborate vs. Corroborate	Imminent vs. Eminent	Visual vs. Visible
Command vs. Commend	Imply vs. Infer	Would/Could/Should have, NOT of