

SENTENCE SKILLS

Overview

The Sentence Skills section of ACCUPLACER contains 20 multiple choice questions that fall into two categories.

- ❖ The first category involves sentence correction questions that require an understanding of sentence structure. These questions ask you to choose the most appropriate word or phrase to substitute for the underlined portion of the sentence. If no changes need to be made to the sentence, the answer choice would be A.

Example: Ms. Rose planning to teach a course in biology next summer.

Select the best version of the underlined part of the sentence above.

- a. planning
- b. are planning
- c. with a plan
- d. plans ***

If necessary, rewrite the sentence on your scratch paper, substituting each choice for the underlined part of the sentence. The correct answer is *d. plans*. The sentence should be "Ms. Rose plans to teach a course in biology next summer."

- ❖ The second type involves construction shift questions. These questions ask that a sentence be rewritten according to the criteria shown while maintaining essentially the same meaning as the original sentence.

Example: Being a female jockey, she was often interviewed.

Rewrite the sentence, beginning with:

She was often interviewed...

The next words will be:

- on account of she was
- by her being
- because she was
- being as she was

As in the previous section, rewrite the sentences on your scratch paper, substituting each choice to create a sentence that is well written and has the same meaning as the original sentence. The correct answer is *because she was*. The sentence should be "She was often interviewed because she was a female jockey."

Testing Tips

- ✓ Familiarize yourself with basic grammar rules.
- ✓ Reread the sentence with the answer you chose to make sure it sounds correct.
- ✓ Utilize scratch paper to write out the sentence.
- ✓ Remember: You should answer the question using proper grammar and English language skills, not how YOU would necessarily write or speak informally.

Sample Questions

The following questions ask you to rewrite sentences. You will be given information regarding what changes should be made to form your new sentence. The new sentence should be grammatically correct and have essentially the same meaning as the original.

1. *Writing a best seller had earned the author a sum of money and had freed him from the necessity of selling his pen for the political purposes of others.*

Rewrite, beginning with

The author was not obliged . . .

The new sentence will include

- A) consequently he earned*
- B) because he had earned*
- C) by earning*
- D) as a means of earning*

Analysis of #1: In the above sample, you must rewrite the sentence to begin The author was not obliged... To decide what to do, look at the meaning of the original sentence: What was the author “obliged” to do? The sentence says he was *faced with “the necessity of selling his pen,” etc. Therefore, this necessity was his obligation.*

To retain this main idea, your new sentence must begin with “The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others...” But you must now complete the sentence to explain **why** he was not so obliged. To do so, test all four options (A--D) to see which fits your main clause best in both grammar and meaning. Write your options out! Don’t jump at the first version you think sounds good!

A. The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others [consequently he earned] a sum of money by writing a best seller.

Note that this sentence makes little sense because his earning the money is not a consequence of his lack of obligation but rather the cause of it. Besides, the structure creates a run-on sentence, which is grammatically incorrect.

B. The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others [because he had earned] a sum of money by writing a best seller.

This version makes more sense because earning the money is in fact the cause of his not needing to sell his pen, and the sentence is grammatically correct.

C. The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others [by earning] a sum of money by writing a best seller.

At first glance, this sentence may seem to make sense, but “was not obliged...by earning” makes little sense and only clumsily conveys the idea.

D. The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others [as a means of earning] a sum of money by writing a best seller.

This sentence also makes no sense because not selling his pen is not a means of earning money but rather a result of such earning.

Therefore, of the four choices, **B** is clearly the best.

2. Jose wanted to study he tried to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

- A) Jose wanted to study he tried to keep*
- B) Jose wanted to study, he tried to keep*
- C) Because he wanted to study, Jose tried to keep*
- D) Jose wanting to study, and trying to keep*

Analysis of #2: In this sample, you must examine four versions of the same sentence to determine which one is grammatically correct.

A: Jose wanted to study he tried to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

This version places two independent clauses together with no separating punctuation. Therefore, version A is a run-on sentence, which is not correct.

B: Jose wanted to study, he tried to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

This version places two independent clauses together with only a comma to separate them, creating a comma splice, which is grammatically incorrect.

C: Because he wanted to study, Jose tried to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

In this version, the opening clause has been changed from an independent (main) clause to a dependent (subordinate) clause introduced by the subordinating conjunction "Because". Therefore, we no longer see two main clauses strung together incorrectly. The subordinate clause is correctly separated from the following main clause by a comma, so this version of the sentence is correct.

D: Jose wanting to study, and trying to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

You notice that in this version, the past tense verbs "wanted" and "tried" have been changed to -ing verbs. But "wanting" and "trying" by themselves do not create a definite time frame for the actions. The word "trying" could be taken to mean "is trying," "was trying", "has been trying," "will be trying," etc. Each of these verb structures indicates a different time frame. So, an -ing verb form by itself is not a COMPLETE verb; it requires a helping verb to fix the time of the action. Therefore, the verb structures in version D are incomplete, and the sentence is thus an incorrect fragment.

Therefore, answer **C** is the only correct choice here.

Practice Questions

3. In the modern world, groups of people living thousands of miles apart may still be dependent on each other politically, culturally, and economically.

Change people living to people may live.

Your new sentence will include

- A) apart and still be dependent
 - B) apart so as to be dependent still
 - C) apart, they are still dependent
 - D) apart, but would still be dependent
4. Predictions twenty years ago that the phonograph record was about to become obsolete have proven to be true.
- A) Predictions twenty years ago that
 - B) Predictions twenty years ago,
 - C) Twenty years ago, predictions that
 - D) Predictions, twenty years ago
5. When you move out of an apartment before the contract expires, this is an example of breaking a lease.
- A) When you move out of an apartment before the contract expires, this
 - B) You move out of an apartment before the contract expires, this
 - C) Moving out of an apartment before the contract expires
 - D) The fact that you move out of an apartment before the contract expires
6. Knocked to his knees, the quarterback looked as if he were in pain.
- A) Knocked to his knees, the quarterback looked
 - B) The quarterback was knocked to his knees, looked
 - C) The quarterback looked knocked to his knees
 - D) The quarterback, looking knocked to his knees,
7. Yesterday the President announced that he would retire from political life, to amazed reporters.
- A) Yesterday the President announced that he would retire from political life, to amazed reporters.
 - B) Yesterday the President announced that he would retire from political life, amazing reporters.
 - C) The President, to the amazement of reporters, announced that he would retire from political life yesterday.
 - D) Yesterday the President announced to amazed reporters that he would retire from political life.

THE ANSWERS

1. B

2. C

3. A

4. A

5. C

6. A

7. D