Sample SAT Writing Questions

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Sample questions cover the following question types on the test:

- Identifying Sentence Errors
- Improving Sentences
- Improving Paragraphs
- The Essay

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Identifying Sentence Errors

Directions: The following sentences test your knowledge of grammar, usage, diction and idiom.

Some sentences are correct.

No sentence contains more than one error.

You will find that the error, if there is one, is underlined and lettered. Elements of the sentence that are not underlined will not be changed. In choosing answers, follow the requirements of standard written English.

If there is an error, select the one underlined part that must be changed to make the sentence correct.

If there is no error, choose answer E.

1) The wrestlers knew that fasting could be dangerous but they and their teammates A B were desperate to lose weight before the championship match. No Error C D E

2) As one roams the halls of the National Gallery of Art, you should appreciate not only A B C the displays of art, but the grandeur of the building’s architecture. No Error D E

3) The clean cars and spacious stations of the new subway system is a tribute to the A B C project’s thousands of laborers. No Error D E

4) Unemployment compensation was developed to aid those people between jobs or otherwise temporarily without a position of employment. No error A B C D E

5) By the time today’s freshmen complete their engineering degrees, the job market A B C in their field has become quite robust. No Error D E

6) Borges, probably the most innovative writer of the twentieth century, brought to A B C literature a fresh concept of the nature of fiction. No Error D E
Improving Sentences

**Directions:** The following sentences test correctness and effectiveness of expression. In choosing answers, follow the requirements of standard written English; that is, pay attention to grammar, choice of words, sentence construction, and punctuation.

In each of the following sentences, part of the sentence or the entire sentence is underlined. Beneath each sentence you will find five ways of phrasing the underlined part. Choice A repeats the original; the other four are different.

Choose the answer that best expresses the meaning of the original sentence. If you think the original is better than any of the alternatives, choose it; otherwise choose one of the others. Your choice should produce the most effective sentence – clear and precise, without awkwardness or ambiguity.

1) Exposed to the extremely long and severe cold spell, frost soon killed the buds of the citrus trees and they did not produce fruit that season
   a) frost soon killed the buds of the citrus trees and they did not produce fruit that season
   b) soon the buds of the citrus were killed by frost, and therefore not producing fruit that season
   c) the buds of the citrus trees were soon killed by frost, they did not produce fruit that season
   d) fruit was not produced by the citrus trees that season because their buds had been killed by frost
   e) the buds of the citrus trees were soon killed by frost, and the trees did not produce fruit that season

2) This group of artists, masters of the short brush stroke developed by the Impressionists in the 19th century, did not believe in selling works of art; however, some giving paintings away.
   a) some giving paintings away
   b) giving some paintings away
   c) paintings were given away by some of them
   d) some having given paintings away
   e) some gave paintings away

3) Environmental scientists are very concerned about dangerous fluorocarbons, found in pressurized aerosol cans which quicken the erosion of the ozone layer.
   a) about dangerous fluorocarbons, found in pressurized aerosol cans which quicken the erosion of the ozone layer
   b) that, while emitting dangerous fluorocarbons, pressurized aerosol cans quicken the erosion of the ozone layer
   c) about the erosion of the ozone layer caused by pressurized aerosol cans quicken the erosion of the ozone layer
   d) that pressurized aerosol cans emit dangerous fluorocarbons, which the quicken erosion of the ozone layer
   e) when, quickening the erosion of the ozone layer, pressurized aerosol cans emit dangerous fluorocarbons
4) According to Aristotle, a catastrophe **is** when the action of a tragic drama turns towards its disastrous conclusion.

   a) is when the action of a tragic drama turns towards its disastrous conclusion
   b) is where a tragic drama turns the action toward its disastrous conclusion
   c) occurs where, towards its disastrous conclusion, the action of a tragic drama is turning
   d) approaches when the action of a tragic drama has turned toward its disastrous conclusion
   e) is the turning point at which the action of a tragic drama approaches its disastrous conclusion

5) Emerging from the jungle to surrender decades after the war ended, the last Japanese soldier still in World War II uniform was hailed as a symbol of steadfastness.

   a) the last Japanese soldier still in World War II uniform was hailed as
   b) they called the last Japanese soldier still in World War II uniform
   c) was the last Japanese soldier still in World War II uniform hailed as
   d) the last Japanese soldier still in World War II uniform hailed as
   e) popular opinion refers to the Japanese soldier still in World War II uniform as

6) The protest movement’s impact will depend on both how many people it touches and its durability.

   a) its durability
   b) is it going to endure
   c) if it has durability
   d) how long it endures
   e) the movement’s ability to endure

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**Improving Paragraphs**

Directions: The passage below is an early draft of an essay. Parts of the passage need to be rewritten. Read the passage and answer the questions that follow. Some questions are about individual sentences or parts of sentences; in these questions, you are asked to select the choice that will improve the sentence structure and word choice. Other questions refer to parts of the essay or the entire essay and ask you to consider the organization and development of the essay. You should follow the conventions of standard written English in answering the questions.

(1) recently a report came out in a science magazine that claimed the earth’s protective ozone layer was being steadily depleted. (2) It names several companies that produced chemicals responsible for this situation and consumers were advised by it to boycott these businesses. (3) An editorial in a business magazine insisted that this report was faulty. (4) It states that there could be other, less dangerous reasons for the changes in climate that we’ve been experiencing. (5) However, I believe that the scientists are right, we should all consider the
effect we can have on making sure the ozone layer is not harmed more that it already has been.

(6) In the past few decades, the ozone layer has been steadily depleted. (7) This means harmful ultraviolet rays get through to our atmosphere. (8) People who do these bad things which contribute to this situation should know that their actions could harm future generations. (9) Not buying products that are harmful to the ozone layer means out children’s children will be more secure. (10) Consumers can choose to purchase any kind of product they desire. (11) They should be aware of what happens when they make their choices. (12) If they don’t boycott companies that produce harmful substances, our atmosphere will steadily worsen.

1) Consider the essay as a whole, which is the best edit for the underlined section of sentence 2 (reproduced below)?

It named several companies that produced chemicals responsible for this situation, and consumers were advised by it to boycott these businesses.

   a) As it is now
   b) It names several companies that produced chemical responsible for this situation and advises consumers
   c) Naming several companies that produce chemicals responsible for this situation, consumers are advised by the report
   d) It is naming several companies that produce chemicals responsible for this situation and advising consumers
   e) The report named several companies that produced chemicals responsible for this situation, and advised consumers

2) Consider the essay as a whole, which is the best edit for the underlined section of sentence 2 (reproduced below)?

An editorial in a business magazine insisted that this report was faulty. It stated that there could be other, less dangerous reasons for the changes in climate that we’ve been experiencing.

   a) The report was faulty, an editorial in a business magazine insisted, it stated
   b) An editorial in a business magazine insisted that this report was faulty, stating
   c) In an editorial in a business magazine was the insistence that the report was faulty and
   d) The editorial in a business magazine insists that the consumers were faulty,
   e) Insisting that the report was faulty, an editorial in a business magazine states

3) The phrase do these bad things in sentence 8 can be made clearer in relation to the content of the essay if it is edited as

   a) exacerbate the situations
   b) don’t participate in events
   c) are in need of services
   d) use the types of chemicals
   e) consider options
4) Which is the best version of the underlined portions of the sentences 10 and 11 (reproduced below)?

Consumers can choose to purchase any kind of product they desire. They should be aware of what happens when they make their choices.

a) As it is now
b) Evidently, consumers can choose to purchase any kind of product they desire. If they would just be aware
c) Consumers can definitely choose to purchase any kind of product they desire; in spite
d) Consumers can definitely choose to purchase any kind of product they desire, but they should be aware
e) While consumers can choose to purchase any kind of product they desire, they are also aware

5) Which of the following words of phrases best replaces the word they in sentence 12?

a) workers
b) future generations
c) consumers
d) chemical industries
e) editors

6) What sentence most clearly represents the main idea of the writer?

a) I understand now how the scientists who wrote the report are right.
b) From now on, consumers must refuse to buy products that threaten the ozone layer and the health and safety of all of us.
c) In conclusion, we all have to watch out for each other.
d) All of us have to find ways to maintain integrity in our economic choices.
e) Businesses are responsible for the safety of their products.

The Essay

Directions: Consider carefully the following statement(s) and the assignment below it.

Essay topic 1

1. “War does not determine who is right – only who is left”
   - Bertrand Russell

2. “We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.”
   - Sir Winston Churchill

Assignment: do you agree with the idea that war is never justified? In an essay, support your position by discussing an example (or examples) from literature, science and technology, the arts, current events or your own experience or observation.
Essay topic 2

“The fearless are merely fearless. People who act in spite of their fear are truly brave”.
- James A. LaFond-Lewis

“I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that bring total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain.”
- Frank Herbert

Assignment: do you agree with the idea that people can exercise control over their fear, or does fear control people? In an essay, support your position by discussing an example (or examples) from literature, science and technology, the arts, current events or your own experience or observation.