

SAT Grammar Practice Packet: Clause Boundaries and Sentence Structure

Attempt all 12 questions before reading the key. For each blank, underline the main subject and finite verb, then identify whether each side is independent. This is original PeakSAT practice, not an official SAT test or score predictor.

Decision method

1. Read the entire sentence.
2. Find the main subject and finite verb.
3. Test whether each side can stand alone.
4. Two independent clauses: a period, semicolon, or comma plus coordinating conjunction can work.
5. Introductory dependent clause: use a comma before the main clause.
6. Colon: first require a complete clause, then an explanation or list.
7. Check modifiers, agreement and parallelism separately. Do not put punctuation between a subject and its verb or a verb and its object.

Attempt before checking the answer key. No score conversion is supplied.

Question 1: Independent clauses

The telescope was small___it revealed unusually faint stars. Which choice creates a conventional boundary?

- A. ,
- B. ;
- C. no punctuation
- D. .,

Question 2: Introductory dependent clauses

Although the archive opened late___the visitors completed their research. Which choice fits?

- A. ;
- B. ,
- C. :
- D. no punctuation

Question 3: Conjunctive adverbs

The first batch failed___however, the revised process produced a usable sample. Which choice fits?

- A. ,
- B. no punctuation
- C. ;
- D. .,

Question 4: Coordinating conjunctions

The sound was faint___but the microphone captured it clearly. Which choice fits?

- A. ,
- B. .,
- C. .,
- D. no punctuation

Question 5: Colons introducing explanations

The kit contained three essentials___a ruler, a compass, and a notebook. Which choice conventionally introduces the list?

- A. :
- B. ;
- C. no punctuation
- D. , and

Question 6: Essential modifiers

The students___who completed the safety training___could use the laboratory. The writer means only the trained students. Which punctuation fits both blanks?

- A. commas in both
- B. no punctuation in either
- C. a semicolon in each
- D. a colon in each

Question 7: Nonessential appositives

The expedition leader___a skilled navigator___charted a new route. Which paired punctuation treats the middle phrase as extra description?

- A. no punctuation
- B. commas
- C. semicolons
- D. a colon then no mark

Question 8: Subject-verb boundaries

The analysis of the samples___revealed a previously unnoticed pattern. Which choice fits?

- A. ,
- B. ;
- C. :
- D. no punctuation

Question 9: Relative clauses versus main verbs

The instrument, which measures tiny vibrations, ___ sensitive enough to detect the signal. Which choice makes a complete grammatical sentence?

- A. being
- B. is
- C. to be
- D. and

Question 10: Participial modifiers

Carrying the replacement lens, ___ entered the observatory. Which completion avoids a dangling modifier?

- A. the case
- B. the technician
- C. there
- D. the observatory door

Question 11: Agreement across phrases

Each of the sketches ___ a different stage of the design. Choose the correct present-tense verb.

- A. show
- B. shows
- C. are showing
- D. have shown

Question 12: Parallel structure

The workshop teaches students to observe carefully, to record measurements, and ___. Which choice completes the parallel list?

- A. analyzing results
- B. analysis of results
- C. to analyze results
- D. results are analyzed

Answer key and fresh transfer checks

1. Answer B

Each side has a subject, a finite verb and a complete thought. A semicolon joins the related independent clauses.

A: A comma alone splices two independent clauses.

B: A semicolon makes a valid boundary between the complete clauses.

C: No punctuation creates a fused sentence.

D: A colon followed immediately by a comma is not a conventional boundary.

Fresh check: Join “The battery was charged” and “the sensor resumed recording” with one mark.

Check answer: ; Both clauses are independent, so a semicolon works. A period would also work if the second clause were capitalized.

2. Answer B

Although makes the opening clause dependent. An introductory dependent clause is followed by a comma before the main clause.

A: A semicolon requires an independent clause on each side here.

B: A comma separates the introductory dependent clause from the independent main clause.

C: A colon should follow a complete clause; this opening is dependent.

D: Omitting the boundary fails to separate the introductory clause conventionally.

Fresh check: Complete: “Because the labels had faded___the curator replaced them.”

Check answer: , Because creates an introductory dependent clause. It is followed by a comma.

3. Answer C

However is a transition, not a coordinating conjunction. The two independent clauses need a strong boundary; the existing comma sets off however.

A: A comma alone creates a comma splice.

B: No punctuation creates a fused sentence.

C: A semicolon separates the independent clauses; the comma after however is already supplied.

D: The extra comma immediately after the semicolon has no grammatical role.

Fresh check: Complete: “The original route was blocked___therefore, the hikers took a detour.”

Check answer: ; Therefore is a conjunctive adverb between two complete clauses.

4. Answer A

But is a coordinating conjunction joining two independent clauses. A comma before but makes the standard boundary.

A: A comma followed by but joins the complete clauses conventionally.

B: The semicolon-comma combination is unnecessary and invalid here.

C: The colon-comma combination is not a conventional boundary.

D: These two independent clauses call for a comma before but in this construction.

Fresh check: Complete: “The gate was locked___so the team used another entrance.”

Check answer: , So joins two independent clauses as a coordinating conjunction.

5. Answer A

The words before the blank form a complete clause. A colon introduces the list that identifies the three essentials.

A: A colon follows a complete clause and introduces its explanatory list.

B: The list is not an independent clause, so a semicolon does not work.

C: The list needs a boundary after the complete opening clause.

D: And does not connect the list conventionally to the preceding complete sentence in this wording.

Fresh check: May a colon follow “The kit contained” before a list?

Check answer: No. That would separate the verb from its objects. “The kit contained a ruler, a compass, and a notebook” needs no colon.

6. Answer B

Who completed the safety training restricts which students are meant. An essential modifier is not enclosed in commas.

A: Commas would present the modifier as extra information and change the intended restriction.

B: No commas preserve the restriction to trained students.

C: Semicolons cannot separate this relative clause from its noun and main verb.

D: Colons do not enclose a restrictive relative clause.

Fresh check: Does “The students, who completed the training, entered” restrict the statement to a subgroup?

Check answer: No. The comma-enclosed modifier presents the training as additional information about the identified students.

7. Answer B

A skilled navigator is a nonessential appositive describing the already identified leader. It needs matching boundaries on both sides.

A: Without boundaries, the inserted appositive is not set off.

B: Matching commas enclose the appositive.

C: Semicolons are not boundaries for this phrase.

D: A colon after the subject interrupts the subject-verb connection, and the phrase lacks a closing boundary.

Fresh check: Remove the appositive from the original sentence. What remains?

Check answer: The expedition leader charted a new route. The remaining complete sentence confirms that the inserted description is structurally optional.

8. Answer D

The main subject is analysis, followed by its verb revealed. The intervening prepositional phrase does not create a punctuation boundary.

A: A comma would unnecessarily separate the subject from its verb.

B: The text before the blank is only the subject phrase, not a complete clause.

C: A colon would interrupt the subject-verb connection.

D: No punctuation keeps the main subject connected to its verb.

Fresh check: Identify the subject and verb in “The color of the stones changed.”

Check answer: Subject: color. Verb: changed. Of the stones modifies color; it does not create a separate clause.

9. Answer B

Measures belongs to the relative clause. The main subject instrument still needs the finite main verb is.

A: Being alone is not a finite main verb.

B: Is supplies the required singular finite main verb.

C: To be is an infinitive and cannot serve as the main finite verb here.

D: And supplies neither a verb nor a complete predicate.

Fresh check: Complete: “The instruments, which measure tiny vibrations, ___ sensitive.”

Check answer: are The plural main subject instruments requires are. The verb within which-clause does not replace the main verb.

10. Answer B

The introductory phrase describes the person carrying the lens. The main subject should identify that person.

A: A case is not the intended person carrying the lens.

B: The technician is the logical doer of carrying and entered.

C: There does not identify a person carrying the lens.

D: A door cannot perform the described actions.

Fresh check: Repair: “Walking toward the lab, the notebook fell from Maya’s bag.”

Check answer: As Maya walked toward the lab, the notebook fell from her bag. The revision explicitly assigns walking to Maya rather than the notebook.

11. Answer B

The main subject each is singular. Of the sketches is a modifying phrase, so the plural sketches does not control agreement.

A: Show does not agree with singular each in this sentence.

B: Shows is the singular present-tense form.

C: Are is plural and does not agree with each.

D: Have is plural here and also changes the requested tense.

Fresh check: Complete: “Several of the sketches ___ a different stage.”

Check answer: show Several is plural. Changing each to several changes the controlling subject.

12. Answer C

The first two list items are infinitive phrases. To analyze results gives the third item the same grammatical form.

A: The -ing phrase breaks the established infinitive pattern.

B: The noun phrase breaks the pattern.

C: The infinitive phrase matches to observe and to record.

D: The independent clause changes both structure and subject.

Fresh check: Complete the alternative list: “observing carefully, recording measurements, and ___.”

Check answer: analyzing results Here all three items use -ing phrases. Parallelism depends on the actual pattern.

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