ACT English Cheat Sheet

Grammar
1. Period = Semicolon = Comma + and/but (ch. 2)
2. colon = dash; 2 commas = 2 dashes = non-essential clause, which can be crossed out (ch. 4, 6-7)
3. It’s = It is; Its = Possessive form of it (ch. 1)
4. Colon = list or explanation. Need a complete sentence before but not necessarily after (ch. 6)
5. –ING (gerunds), especially Being usually = WRONG (ch. 2)
6. Could/Would/Should/Might HAVE, not OF (ch. 16)
7. No comma before or after a preposition, or the word that (ch. 5)
8. Comma before it, he, she, they usually = WRONG (ch. 3)
9. Singular verbs end in –s, plural verbs do not end in –s (e.g. she reads, they read) (ch. 8)
10. Keep pronouns consistent: one = one, you = you (ch. 9)
11. Who is for people, which is for things, where is for places (e.g. the time/book where = WRONG) (ch. 14)
12. Use who before a verb (who went, NOT whom went); use whom after a preposition (e.g. by whom, NOT by who) (ch. 14)
13. All items in a list must match (noun, noun, noun or verb, verb, verb)
14. Always underline NOT, LEAST, and EXCEPT

Rhetoric
1. Shorter is better (ch. 15)
2. Context is key: if you’re not sure of the answer, read a sentence before and a sentence after.
3. OMIT/DELETE: check that option first because it’s usually right. (ch. 18)
4. Transitions within/between sentences: physically cross out the original transition and determine the relationship (e.g. continue, contradict, emphasize) between the two sentences or halves of a sentence BEFORE you look at the answer choices. (ch. 17)
5. Transitions between paragraphs: read at least a few sentences of the paragraph that the transition is intended to begin. The end of the previous paragraph might not be important. (ch. 17)
6. Insert/Delete: reread the paragraph and state the topic in your own words before checking the answers choices. If the sentence is directly relevant to that topic, it belongs. If not, it doesn’t. (ch. 18)
7. Purpose of a passage: determine whether the topic is specific or general, then “yes” or “no.” (ch. 20)
Part I:
Punctuation and Grammar
Parts of Speech

There are eight parts of speech in the English language, seven of which are tested on the ACT. If you are not comfortable identifying them, it is suggested that you begin by reviewing this section. Although portions of these definitions are repeated throughout the guide, familiarizing yourself with these terms before you begin will help you move through the explanations and exercises more easily.

The seven major parts of speech tested on the ACT are as follows:

1. Verb

Verbs indicate actions or states of being.

Examples: To be
To have
To seem
To go
To speak
To believe

The “to” form of a verb is known as the infinitive. All of the verbs listed above are infinitives. If you are uncertain whether a word can be used as a verb, try placing to in front of it to form an infinitive.

Verbs are not always used as infinitives, however. In order to indicate who is performing an action, we must conjugate the verb and provide its subject.

To be and to have are the most frequently tested verbs on the ACT. Because they are irregular, their conjugated forms are different from their infinitives; you must therefore make sure that you are comfortable distinguishing between their singular and plural forms.

Conjugation of the verb to be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am</td>
<td>We are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are</td>
<td>You (pl.) are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He, She, It, One is</td>
<td>They are</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conjugation of the verb to have:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have</td>
<td>We have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have</td>
<td>You (pl.) have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He, She, It, One has</td>
<td>They have</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The number of a verb tells us whether it is singular or plural.

I, you, he, she, it, one speaks = Singular

We, you, they speak = Plural

The tense of a verb tells us when an action occurred.

She speaks = Present  She would speak = Conditional
She has spoken = Present Perfect  She would have spoken = Past Conditional
She spoke = Simple Past  She will speak = Future
She had spoken = Past Perfect  She will have spoken = Future Perfect

2. Noun

Nouns indicate people, places, objects, and ideas, and can always be preceded by a(n) or the. Proper nouns indicate specific people and places.

Examples: house, bicycle, supervisor, idea, Julia Child, Chicago

The girl rode her bicycle down the street to her house.

In the theater, the dancer moved across the stage with her arms held above her head.

3. Pronoun

Pronouns replace nouns.

Examples: she, you, one, we, him, it(s), their, this, that, which, both, some, few, many, (n)either

Samantha loves basketball. She plays it every day after school.

Marco walks to school with Sherri and Ann. He meets them at the corner.

Personal Pronouns are often referred to in the following manner:

1st Person Singular = I  1st Person Plural = We
2nd Person Singular = You  2nd Person Plural = You
3rd Person Singular = He, She, It, One  3rd Person Plural = They
4. **Preposition**

Prepositions indicate where someone/something is, or when something happened.

**Example:** The dog ran **under** the fence and jumped **into** the neighboring yard in only a **matter of** seconds.

Common prepositions include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Of</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Within/out</th>
<th>Over</th>
<th>Beside</th>
<th>Next to</th>
<th>Against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From</td>
<td>At</td>
<td>Between</td>
<td>Above</td>
<td>About</td>
<td>Toward(s)</td>
<td>Upon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In</td>
<td>For</td>
<td>Under</td>
<td>Along</td>
<td>Among</td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>Around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On</td>
<td>By</td>
<td>Beneath</td>
<td>Beyond</td>
<td>Near</td>
<td>After</td>
<td>Outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>Behind</td>
<td>Across</td>
<td>During</td>
<td>Through(out)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. **Adjective**

Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns.

**Examples:** large, pretty, interesting, solid, wide, exceptional, smart, dull, caring, simple

The class was so **boring** that I thought I would fall asleep.

The **stunning** view left him at a loss for words.

6. **Adverb**

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. They frequently end in –ly.

**Examples:** rapidly, calmly, mildly, boldly, sharply, well, fast, very

She smiled **brightly** at him when he entered the room.

He received an **exceedingly** good grade on the test.

7. **Conjunction**

Conjunctions indicate relationships between words, phrases, and clauses.

**Examples:** and, but, however, therefore, so, although, yet, when, because, since

Alice went to the dentist, **but** first she went to the candy store.

**Because** it rained yesterday, the ceremony was be held indoors.
Although igloos are usually associated with 1. Alaskan Eskimos (Inuits), they have mostly been 2. constructed by people who lived in the central 3. Arctic and Greenland's Thule region. Other Inuit 4. peoples tended to use snow to insulate their 5. houses, which were constructed from 6. whalebone and hides.

Traditionally, three types of igloos were 4. constructed. Small igloos were constructed as 5. temporary shelters and used only for one or two 6. nights. These were built and used during hunting 6. trips, often on open sea ice. Medium-sized igloos 7. were usually single-room family dwellings that 7. housed one or two families. Often, several of these 8. igloos were located in a small area, forming an Inuit 8. village. The largest igloos were normally built in 9. pairs: one of the buildings was a temporary 9. structure for community feasts and dances, while 10. the other was intended for living. These igloos 10. could be constructed from several smaller igloos 11. attached by tunnels.
Today, igloos are used mostly for brief camping trips; however, the principles behind their construction remain the same. The snow used to build an igloo must have enough strength to be cut and stacked correctly. The best snow to use for this purpose is snow blown by wind because it contains interlocking ice crystals, which increase the amount of weight the ice can support. Because of snow's excellent insulation properties, inhabited igloos are surprisingly comfortable and warm inside. Sometimes, a short tunnel is constructed at the entrance to reduce heat loss when the door is opened. Animal skins can also be used as door flaps to keep warm air in.

Architecturally, the igloo is unique because it is a dome that can be constructed without an additional supporting structure. Independent blocks of ice lean on one another and are polished to fit. In the traditional Inuit igloo, the heat from the kudlik, or stone lamp, causes the interior to melt slightly, creating a layer of ice that contributes to the igloo's strength. In fact, a correctly-built igloo will support the weight of a person standing on the roof.
1. Apostrophes: Possessive vs. Plural

The possessive/plural distinction is one of the most frequently tested concepts on the ACT; you are more or less guaranteed to see at least two or three questions testing when — and when not — to use an apostrophe.

**Nouns: Possessive and Plural**

To form the plural of a noun, add \(-s\). When a singular noun ends in \(-s\), add \(-es\). Do not add an apostrophe.

Correct: The *artists* are painting. = More than one artist is painting.
Correct: The *businesses* are open. = More than one business is open.

To form the possessive of a singular noun, add *apostrophe + \(-s\)*, even for nouns whose singular ends in \(-s\).*

Correct: The *artist's* paintbrush = the paintbrush belonging to the artist
Correct: The *business's* policy = the policy of the business

To form the possessive of a plural noun, add *\(-s + apostrophe\) (or \(-es + apostrophe\) if the singular ends in \(-s\)).*

Notice that while the apostrophe comes *before* the \(-s\) when a noun is singular, it comes *after* the \(-s\) when a noun is plural.

Correct: The *artists'* paintbrushes = the paintbrushes belonging to the artists
Correct: The *businesses'* policies = the policies of the businesses

**Note:** Some of the confusion surrounding apostrophes results from the fact that when well-known figures have names ending in \(-s\), the possessive may be formed by adding only an apostrophe after the \(-s\) (e.g. Dickens' works = the works of Dickens). This use is **not**, however, tested on the ACT.

**Contraction with Verb**

The construction *\(-s + apostrophe\)* can also be used to form a **contraction** between a noun and the verb *is*.

Incorrect: The *artists* working in her studio.
Correct: The *artist's* working in her studio. = The artist *is* working in her studio.

The second sentence is correct because *apostrophe + \(-s\)* stands in for the verb *is*. The first sentence is incorrect because the lack of an apostrophe makes the word *artists* plural and eliminates the verb from the sentence.

Although this use is fair game for the ACT, it is not typically tested and should not be of primary concern.
One of the ACT’s favorite errors involves confusing the plural and possessive forms of nouns. While the distinction may seem straightforward, many test-takers do begin to second-guess themselves during the exam.

To minimize confusion, break these questions into two parts:

1) Determine whether the noun is singular or plural. If singular, cross out plural answers and vice versa.
2) Determine whether the noun is possessive, and eliminate the remaining choice or choices that don’t fit.

For two-noun questions, check each noun separately, starting with the one you’re more certain about. In some cases, one noun will give you all the information you need to answer a question.

Let’s look at an example. Break each question down, making sure to cross out incorrect answers as you go.

Since I was a child, my family has gathered at my grandparent’s home in Maine each summer. My grandmother and grandfather bought it decades ago and still live there from June to September. The houses’ rooms are bright and airy, and I love to sit on the deck and watch the waves roll in.

Question 1: Singular or Plural? _______ Possessive? _______

Question 2: Noun 1: Singular or Plural? _______ Noun 2: Singular or Plural? _______

Possessive? _______ Possessive? _______

Solution:

1) Since the passage makes clear that the writer has both a grandmother and a grandfather, grandparents must be plural. That eliminates (A) and (D). Furthermore, the sentence indicates that the home belongs to the grandparents, so a possessive plural noun is required. (C) can thus be eliminated because it’s plural but not possessive. That leaves (B), which is correct because it is both plural and possessive.

2) Let’s start with the houses: writer earlier refers to the grandparents’ home, singular, so logically, house must be singular as well. That eliminates (F), which is plural and possessive, and (J), which is plural. Now, look at the second noun: there’s nothing to indicate that anything belongs to the rooms, so it must be plural only. (G) indicates that it is possessive and can thus be eliminated, leaving (H).
B. They're, Their, and There

*They* is the plural form of *its,* and *their* is the plural form of *its* (remember that *-s* has nothing to do with making pronouns plural).

Although the same rules apply to *they’re* vs. *their* as apply to other pronouns, an extra degree of confusion is often present because of a third identical-sounding pronoun: *there.*

**They’re** = they are

**Their** = possessive of *they.* Used before a noun.

**There** = a place

In general, it’s easiest to think of *there* as separate from *they’re* and *their,* which are both forms of *they.* For *their* vs. *they’re,* ask yourself whether you could plug in *they are.* If you can, you need the apostrophe; if not, you don’t.

**They’re**

Incorrect: Although *their* usually powered by rowers, canoes may also contain sails or motors.

Incorrect: Although *there* usually powered by rowers, canoes may also contain sails or motors.

Correct: Although *they’re* usually powered by rowers, canoes may also contain sails or motors.

Since you would say, “Although *they are* usually powered by rowers,” the apostrophe is required.

**Their**

Incorrect: Deactivated viruses form the basis of many vaccines known for *they’re* effectiveness in preventing disease.

Incorrect: Deactivated viruses form the basis of many vaccines known for *there* effectiveness in preventing disease.

Correct: Deactivated viruses form the basis of many vaccines known for *their* effectiveness in preventing disease.

Since you would not say “Deactivated viruses form the basis of many vaccines known for *they are* effectiveness,” no apostrophe should be used. And since the sentence does not refer to a place, *there* cannot be correct either.

**There**

Incorrect: Because the city of Munich is located close to the Alps, snow regularly falls *they’re.*

Incorrect: Because the city of Munich is located close to the Alps, snow regularly falls *their.*

Correct: Because the city of Munich is located close to the Alps, snow regularly falls *there.*

Since the sentence is clearly talking about a place (the *city* of Munich), *there* is required.
C. Who's vs. Whose

The same rule regarding apostrophes applies to who.

Who's = who is

Whose = possessive form of who. Unlike who, whose can be use to refer to both people and things.

To determine which version is correct, plug in who is and see whether it works.

Incorrect: Jessye Norman is an American opera singer whose known for her moving performances.

Correct: Jessye Norman is an American opera singer who's known for her moving performances.

Since you would say “Jessye Norman is an American opera singer who is known for her moving performances,” the apostrophe is necessary. On the other hand:

Incorrect: Jessye Norman is an American opera singer who's performances many people find moving.

Correct: Jessye Norman is an American opera singer whose performances many people find moving.

Since you would also not say, “Jessye Norman is an American opera singer who is performances many people find moving,” whose rather than who’s must be used.

Very occasionally, questions testing possessive and plural will involve other pronouns (you, that). The same rule applies to those pronouns as applies to the ones discussed throughout this chapter: apostrophe $+ -s$ or $-re = pronoun + is$ or $are$, while no apostrophe = possessive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun + is/are</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>Your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That</td>
<td>That’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thats = does not exist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She, He</td>
<td>She’s, He’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shes, hes = does not exist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her, Him</td>
<td>Her’s, hers’ = does not exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His’s, his’ = does not exist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their</td>
<td>Their’s = does not exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theirs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Drill 1: Apostrophes (answers p. 238)

1. Despite it’s brilliance and power, the sun grew out of tiny particles suspended in enormous clouds of dust and gas.

2. The British scientist J.D. Bernal believed that human beings’ would eventually be replaced by creatures who’s bodies were half-human and half-machine.

3. Instrument-makers have tried to reproduce a Stradivarius violin’s precise sound for hundreds of years, but all of they’re attempts have been unsuccessful.

4. Bats can perceive and stalk their prey in complete darkness, using a system of ultrasonic sounds to produce echo’s that identify it’s location.

5. A computer program devoted to facial recognition can determine people’s emotions by following there faces’ movements and linking its readings with a database of expressions.

6. George Westinghouse was an electrical industry pioneer who’s first major invention, the rotary steam engine, earned him many scientists’ admiration when he was still a young man.

7. Although Los Angeles has long been famous for it’s traffic jam’s, pedestrians are now able to walk in the cities center with much greater ease.
8. The peacock is a bird who's penchant for showing off its bright, multicolored plumage has made it a symbol of vanity and pride in many different cultures.

9. The gray wolf, which once lived throughout much of North America, is now rarely spotted because it's habitat has been almost entirely destroyed.

10. Every spring, New Orleans receives thousands of tourists for Mardi Gras, the years most important festival. Visitors arrive their from around the world.
Drill 2: Apostrophes (answers p. 238)

1. Thailand is full of bright colors. **It's** a country who’s inhabitants spontaneously plant flowers, where the impressive and countless temples emit there glory with an abundance of gold and red, and where the fruits at the market put every rainbow to shame.

2. Although half of the Earth’s inhabitants now live within a hundred miles of an ocean, few people have a working knowledge of the sea. As a science, oceanography is still in its infancy. Yet large numbers of people know the sea in other ways, through the arts and literature. Since the nineteenth century, fiction has described undersea world’s that explorers were unable to reach.

3. A few years ago, while writing an article about twentieth-century American literature, I consulted a literary encyclopedia to see how entries on authors were composed. Among the encyclopedia’s articles was an entry about Amy Lowell, whose best known for her poem “Patterns.” I didn’t know much about Lowell, but as I read more about her, I found myself becoming intrigued.
4. One of the oldest pyramids in Egypt is the Pyramid of Djoser, built around 2700 B.C. The pyramid and its surrounding complex, which were designed by the architect Imhotep, are generally considered the world's oldest monuments built with cut stone.

5. Caroline Maria Hewins, who is best known for helping to expand children's library services across the United States, also led the Harford Public Library's transformation from a subscription library to a free public library. In 1895, Hewins started her own library branch in the North Street Social Settlement House. She was extraordinarily committed to its success, moving in and eventually residing there for 12 years.

6. Crocodile's have many traits that make them successful predators. Their streamlined bodies enable them to swim swiftly. They can also tuck their feet to the side while swimming, allowing them to move faster by decreasing water resistance.

   If a crocodile wants to make a sharp turn in the water, its webbed feet allow it to do so with ease.
2. Sentences and Fragments

Knowing how to distinguish between sentences and fragments is one of the most important skills necessary for success on the English portion of the ACT. The ability to correctly use most of the punctuation tested on the exam depends on your ability to consistently recognize what is and is not a sentence – without that knowledge, you will find it extremely difficult to know when to use periods, commas, semicolons, and colons. At this point, you might be rolling your eyes and thinking, “Well *duh*, of course I know what a sentence is,” but sometimes that isn’t nearly as obvious as you might think.

Is it a Sentence?

We’re going to try an exercise: For each question below, circle “Sentence” if it can stand alone as an independent sentence and “Fragment” if it cannot. Once you’ve read the sentence carefully, spend no more than a few seconds deciding on your answer.

1. Louis Armstrong was one of the greatest jazz musicians of the twentieth century.
   
   Sentence  
   Fragment

2. He was one of the greatest jazz musicians of the twentieth century.
   
   Sentence  
   Fragment

3. Louis Armstrong, who was one of the greatest jazz musicians of the twentieth century.
   
   Sentence  
   Fragment

4. Who was one of the greatest jazz musicians of the twentieth century.
   
   Sentence  
   Fragment

5. Louis Armstrong, who was one of the greatest jazz musicians of the twentieth century, was a vocalist as well as a trumpet player.
   
   Sentence  
   Fragment

6. Today, he is considered one of the greatest jazz musicians of the twentieth century.
   
   Sentence  
   Fragment
7. He is, however, considered one of the greatest jazz musicians of the twentieth century.

Sentence Fragment

8. He is now considered one of the greatest jazz musicians of the twentieth century.

Sentence Fragment

9. Because of his virtuosic trumpet skills, Louis Armstrong is considered one of the greatest jazz musicians of the twentieth century.

Sentence Fragment

10. Although he was one of the most virtuosic trumpet players of his generation.

Sentence Fragment

11. Many people considering Louis Armstrong the greatest jazz musician of all time.

Sentence Fragment

12. Many of them consider him the greatest jazz musician of all time.

Sentence Fragment

13. Many consider him the greatest jazz musician of all time.

Sentence Fragment

14. Many of whom consider him the greatest jazz musician of all time.

Sentence Fragment

15. Having shown an unusual gift for music early in his childhood, Louis Armstrong, who was born in New Orleans on August 4, 1901.

Sentence Fragment

16. Having shown an unusual gift for music early in his childhood, Louis Armstrong, who was born in New Orleans on August 4, 1901, went on to become one of the greatest jazz musicians of the twentieth century.

Sentence Fragment

17. Moreover, Armstrong, who spent much of his early life in poverty, went on to become one of the greatest jazz musicians of the twentieth century.

Sentence Fragment

18. Nicknamed “Satchmo,” Louis Armstrong, who was born in New Orleans on August 4, 1901, grew up to become one of the greatest jazz musicians of the twentieth century and, perhaps, one of the greatest musicians of all time.

Sentence Fragment
You might be wondering how much that exercise really has to do with the ACT — after all, ACT English questions are always presented in the context of a passage, and those are just random sentences. But if you can't consistently recognize when any given statement is and is not a sentence, you won't know what sort of punctuation to use when separating them from other sentences. In fact, dealing with sentences like the ones above in context can often make things harder, not easier, because you have all sort of other information that can potentially distract you. And that means you're likely to get confused when you get to the ACT.

For example, let's say you weren't sure about #13 (Many consider him the greatest jazz musician of all time). If you saw the following question, you might get stuck.

In the decades since Armstrong retired from performing, his fame has continued to grow. Jazz fans and scholars now unanimously consider him one of the greatest jazz musicians of the twentieth century. Many consider him to be among the greatest jazz musicians of all time.

1. A. NO CHANGE
   B. century, many would have considered
   C. century. Many consider
   D. century; many considering

Unfortunately, there's simply no way to answer this question for sure without knowing whether you're dealing with one sentence or two. You might recognize that (B) and (D) sound awkward and eliminate them on that basis. But with (A) and (C), you're stuck. If you think the second clause is a sentence, you'll want to put in a period and choose (C). But if it isn't a sentence, then the comma must be ok, and the answer must be (A).

You stare at the question for a while, thinking it over. Many consider him to be among the greatest jazz musicians of all time... That sounds kind of weird. Besides, what sort of sentence would just say many, without explaining many of what? You can say many people, that's fine, but not just many. It just sounds wrong. You don't even know who it's talking about. You can't start a sentence like that. Unless it's some kind of trick... But (C) is just too weird. No way can that be the answer.

So you pick (A).

But actually, the answer is (C).

You've just fallen into a classic trap – you thought that because Many consider him the greatest jazz musician of all time didn't make sense out of context, it couldn't be a sentence. But guess what: whether a statement is or is not a sentence has absolutely nothing to do with whether it makes sense out of context. Meaning is irrelevant; only grammar counts.

Starting on the next page, we're going to take a very simple sentence and look at the various elements that can get added onto it without changing the fact that it's a sentence. We're also going to look at some common types of fragments and how they get formed.
Building a Sentence

Every sentence, regardless of length, must contain two things:

1) A subject

2) A conjugated verb that corresponds to the subject.

A sentence can contain only one word (Go! is a sentence because the subject, you, is implied) or consist of many complex clauses, but provided it contains a subject and a verb, it can be considered grammatically complete — regardless of whether it makes sense outside of any context.

A. Simple Sentence

Sentence: The tomato grows.

This is known as a simple sentence because it contains only a subject (the tomato) and a verb (grows), which tells us what the subject does. Because it can stand on its own as an independent sentence, it can also be called an independent clause.

B. Prepositional Phrase

If we want to make our sentence a little longer, we can add a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase is a phrase that begins with a preposition — a time or location word that comes before a noun. Common prepositions include in, to, with, from, for, at, by, and on. (For a complete list, see p. 10.)

Sentence: The tomato grows around the world.

Sentences can contain many prepositional phrases, sometimes one after the other.

Sentence: The tomato grows in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

A prepositional phrase can also be placed between the subject and the verb. When that is the case, the prepositional phrase starts, as always, at the preposition and ends right before the verb.

Sentence: The tomatoes in the greenhouse grow in many varieties and colors.

A prepositional phrase can also be placed at the beginning of a sentence:

Sentence: In the greenhouse, the tomatoes grow in many varieties and colors.

A prepositional phrase cannot, however, stand alone as a complete sentence:

Fragment: In the greenhouse

Fragment: In many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world
C. Pronoun as a Subject

Nouns can also be replaced by pronouns — words such as *it*, *she*, and *they*. In the above sentence, we can replace the subject, the singular noun *tomato*, with the singular pronoun *it* and rewrite the sentence this way:

Sentence: It grows.

This is actually still a sentence because it still has a subject (*it*) and a verb that corresponds to the subject (*grows*). The only difference between this version and the original version is that we don’t know what the subject, *it*, is.

This is where a lot of people run into trouble. They assume that if a statement doesn’t make sense out of context, then it can’t be a sentence. But again, those two things are not necessarily related.

As is true for the original version, we can rewrite the longer versions of our sentence using pronouns:

Sentence: It grows around the world.

Sentence: It grows in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

If we wanted to make the subject plural, we could replace it with the plural pronoun *they*.

Sentence: Tomatoes grow.

Sentence: They grow.

Sentence: They grow in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

*It* and *they* are the most common subject pronouns (pronouns that can replace a noun as the subject of a sentence), but there are a number of other pronouns that can be used as subjects as well. Some of them can refer to people only, while others can refer to both people and things. The chart below lists some of the most common pronouns as well as what they can refer to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Groups of People or Things</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>Few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She/He/It</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>Several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>Many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A number of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The majority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Group” Pronouns

One very common point of confusion often involves “group” pronouns such as some, several, few, many, and others. These pronouns can be used to begin clauses in two different ways, one of which creates an independent clause and the other of which creates a dependent clause.

Let’s start with these two sentences:

Sentence: Many tomatoes are grown in greenhouses around the world.
Sentence: Most people believe that the tomato is a vegetable.

People generally don’t have too much trouble recognizing that these are sentences. They have pretty clear subjects (many tomatoes, most people) and verbs (are, believe), and they make sense by themselves. The problem arises when we take away the nouns tomatoes and people, and start to deal with the pronouns on their own.

**Pronoun (of them) = sentence**

In this usage, the pronoun simply acts as a subject and is used to replace a noun. It is often followed by the phrase of them, but it can be used by itself as well.

Sentence: Many (of them) are grown in greenhouses around the world.
Sentence: Most (of them) believe that the tomato is a vegetable.

Taken out of any context, the above examples don’t make much sense, nor do they provide any real information. Regardless of how odd you find these examples, however, they are still sentences because each one contains a subject (many, most) and a verb (are, believe) that corresponds to it.

**Pronoun + “of which” or “of whom” = fragment**

When an indefinite pronoun is followed by of which or of whom, it creates a dependent clause which, by definition, cannot stand alone as a full sentence.

Fragment: Many of which are grown in greenhouses around the world.
Fragment: Most of whom believe that the tomato is a vegetable.

Which means:

Incorrect: The tomato is used by cooks around the world, most of them believe that it is a vegetable rather than a fruit.
Correct: The tomato is used by cooks around the world. Most of them believe that it is a vegetable rather than a fruit.
Correct: The tomato is used by cooks around the world, most of whom believe that it is a vegetable rather than a fruit.
D. Adverbs

Adverbs modify verbs and clauses. Most adverbs are created by adding –ly onto adjectives. For example:

- Slow → Slowly
- Current → Currently
- Important → Importantly

A second type of adverb, however, does not end in –ly. Some of these adverbs are adverbs of time, which tell you when or how often something occurs. Others are transitions that indicate relationships between ideas.

- Again
- Consequently
- Furthermore
- Meanwhile
- Moreover
- Nevertheless
- Next
- Now
- Often
- Sometimes
- Today
- Then
- Sometimes

Important: adverbs have no grammatical effect whatsoever on a sentence. A sentence to which an adverb is added will continue to be a sentence, regardless of where the adverb is placed.

Sentence: Now, the tomato grows in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

Sentence: The tomato currently grows in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

Sentence: The tomato grows in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world today.

E. Non-Essential Clauses

Information can be inserted between the subject and the verb in the form of a non-essential clause:

Sentence: The tomato, which is one of the most popular salad ingredients, grows in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

Non-essential clauses describe nouns (usually the subject of a sentence). They often begin with “w-words” such as who(se), which, and where, and they are most often followed by a verb. They can consist of lengthy phrases, as in the example above, or of single words:

Sentence: The tomato, however, grows in many varieties in greenhouses around the world.

These clauses or words are called “non-essential” simply because they are not essential to the meaning of a sentence. When they are removed, the sentence still makes sense. For example:

Sentence: The tomato, which is one of the most popular salad ingredients, grows in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.
Appositives

Although non-essential clauses frequently begin with “w-words” (also known as relative pronouns), they are not required to do so. You could also see a non-essential clause that looks like this:

The tomato, one of the most popular salad ingredients, grows in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

A non-essential clause that does not begin with a “w-word” is known as an appositive. Appositives can also appear as descriptions at the beginnings or ends of sentences, as in the examples below.

Beginning: One of the most popular salad ingredients, the tomato grows in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

End: In greenhouses around the world grow many shapes and varieties of the tomato, one of the most popular salad ingredients.

A non-essential clause cannot stand alone as a complete sentence. As a shortcut, know that a statement beginning with a “w-word” like which, who(se), or where will not be a complete sentence.

Fragment: Which is one of the most popular salad ingredients

Fragment: Who think that the tomato is a vegetable

Sentence: One of the most popular salad ingredients, the tomato grows in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

In addition, a sentence cannot stop right after a non-essential clause. If it does, it is no longer a complete sentence but rather a fragment, and it should not have a period or semicolon placed after it.

Fragment: The tomato, which is one of the most popular salad ingredients

Fragment: The tomato, one of the most popular salad ingredients

Although the first version does contain the verb is, that verb does not correspond to the subject, the tomato. Instead, it corresponds to the pronoun which at the beginning of the new clause. In order to create a sentence, we must either remove which from the sentence, restoring the verb to the subject, the tomato:

Sentence: The tomato is one of the most popular salad ingredients.

or we must place a main verb after the non-essential clause and complete the sentence with more information:

Sentence: The tomato, (which is) one of the most popular salad ingredients, grows in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.
F. Participles and Gerunds

Participles

Every verb has two participles:

1) Present participle

The present participle is formed by adding \(-ing\) to the verb

- Talk \(\rightarrow\) talking
- Paint \(\rightarrow\) painting
- Throw \(\rightarrow\) throwing

2) Past participle

The past participle is usually formed by adding \(-ed\) or \(-n\) to the verb

- Talk \(\rightarrow\) talked
- Paint \(\rightarrow\) painted
- Throw \(\rightarrow\) thrown

A participial phrase begins with a participle and can be in either the present or the past. While participial phrases will occasionally involve past participles, the vast majority will involve present participles (\(-ing\) form).

Let's get back to our sentence – now we're going to add a participial phrase at the beginning:

**Originating in South America,** the tomato, one of the most popular salad ingredients, grows in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

To form the past tense, we can use the present participle **having** + past participle of the main verb (originated):

**Having originated in South America,** the tomato, one of the most popular salad ingredients, grows in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

We can also use the past participle of the verb **grow**.

**Grown originally in South America,** the tomato, one of the most popular salad ingredients, is now produced in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

Participial phrases can appear in the beginning (as in the above examples), middle, or end of a sentence.

Middle: The tomato, **cultivated initially in South America during the first millennium B.C.**, is now grown in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

End: The tomato is now grown in greenhouses around the world, **having first been cultivated in South America in the first millennium B.C.**
Participial phrases **cannot** stand alone as sentences, however:

- Fragment: Originating in South America
- Fragment: Having first been cultivated in South America in the first millennium B.C.
- Fragment: Grown originally in South America
- Fragment: Grown originally in South America, the tomato, one of the most popular salad ingredients

**Gerunds**

Gerunds are identical in appearance to present participles: they are created by adding *-ing* to the verb. (At this point, you do not need to worry about the grammatical distinction between gerunds and participles.)

**Important:** a word that ends in *-ing* is **not a verb**. A phrase that contains only an *-ing* word and no conjugated verb is a **fragment**.

- Fragment: Tomatoes **growing** in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

In order to turn the fragment into a sentence, we must eliminate the gerund by **conjugating** the verb.

- Sentence: Tomatoes **grow** in many shapes and varieties in greenhouses around the world.

**Important:** Answer choices that contain *-ing* words, especially **BEING**, are usually wrong. **Being**, the gerund form of the verb *to be*, is the most commonly tested gerund on the ACT. It is also **irregular** — the conjugated forms look completely different from the gerund form. In order to easily correct errors with **being**, you should make sure to know all of that gerund’s conjugated forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Is</td>
<td>Was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>Are</td>
<td>Were</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Present**

- Fragment: Today, the tomato **being** grown in greenhouses around the world.
- Sentence: Today, the tomato **is** grown in greenhouses around the world.

**Past**

- Fragment: Originally, tomatoes **being** cultivated only in South America.
- Sentence: Originally, tomatoes **were** cultivated only in South America.
G. Conjunctions

There are two main types of conjunctions:

1) **Coordinating conjunctions** join two independent clauses.

2) **Subordinating conjunctions** join an independent clause and a dependent clause.

**Important:** a single clause that begins with a conjunction cannot be independent, even though a sentence with more than one clause can sometimes begin with a conjunction.

**Coordinating Conjunctions**

There are seven coordinating conjunctions, collectively known by the acronym **FANBOYS**.

*For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So*

The most commonly tested FANBOYS conjunctions are **AND & BUT**, so they should be your primary concern. We'll talk a lot more about FANBOYS in the next chapter, but for now, you need to know that a complete sentence cannot begin with a FANBOYS conjunction, regardless of how many clauses it contains. In real life, this rule is sometimes broken for stylistic reasons, but if the ACT asks you to choose between a version of a sentence that begins with a FANBOYS conjunction and one that does not, the latter will virtually always be correct.

Incorrect:  And today, tomatoes are cultivated in greenhouses around the world.

Correct:  Today, tomatoes are cultivated in greenhouses around the world.

**Subordinating Conjunctions**

Somewhere around third grade, you probably learned that you should never start a sentence with **because**. While this rule is taught with the best of intentions, it's unfortunately only half right. In reality, it's perfectly acceptable to begin a sentence with **because** — sometimes.

Here's the rule: **Because** is a type of conjunction known as a **subordinating conjunction**. A clause that begins with a subordinating conjunction cannot stand on its own as a sentence and is therefore **dependent**.

Sentence:  Tomatoes are brightly colored and full of flavor.

Fragment:  **Because** tomatoes are colorful and full of flavor.

If, however, we add that dependent clause to an independent clause (i.e. a complete sentence), it is perfectly acceptable to begin the whole sentence with the word **because**.

Sentence:  **Because tomatoes are brightly colored and full of flavor**, they are one of the most popular salad ingredients.
Other common subordinating conjunctions include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When</th>
<th>Although</th>
<th>Until</th>
<th>If</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whenever</td>
<td>Though</td>
<td>Whatever</td>
<td>Whether</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>Despite</td>
<td>Because</td>
<td>Whereas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
<td>Unless</td>
<td>Since</td>
<td>While</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any of these words can be used to begin a sentence, as long as that sentence contains an independent clause in addition to the dependent clause.

Incorrect: **Although** tomatoes have been cultivated since the first millennium B.C.

Correct: **Although** tomatoes have been cultivated since the first millennium B.C., they did not become popular in the United States until the mid-nineteenth century.

Incorrect: **When** tomatoes were first brought to Europe from South America.

Correct: **When** tomatoes were first brought to Europe from South America, many people believed that they were poisonous.

Incorrect: **Despite** the fact that many people believe that the tomato is a vegetable.

Correct: **Despite** the fact that many people believe that the tomato is a vegetable, it is actually a fruit.
Drill: Punctuating Sentences and Fragments (answers p. 251)

1. Numismatics is the study or collection of
   currency. Including coins, tokens, paper money,
   and related objects. Numismatists – more
   commonly known as coin collectors – also
   studying other types of payment used to resolve
   debts and purchase goods, such as shells,
   precious metals, and gemstones.

2. Levittown is the name of four large suburban
developments created in the United States by
William Levitt and his company, Levitt & Sons.
Built in the 1950s for World War II veterans and
their families. These communities offered
attractive alternatives to cramped city locations and
apartments. Thousands of identical homes were
produced, these came standard with a white picket
fence, green lawn, and kitchen with modern
appliances. When sales began in March 1947, nearly
1,500 homes being bought within the first three
hours.

1. A. NO CHANGE
   B. currency, including
   C. currency, this includes
   D. currency and including

2. F. NO CHANGE
   G. having studied
   H. would have studied
   J. study

1. A. NO CHANGE
   B. families, these communities offered
   C. families, and these communities offered
   D. families, these communities offering

2. F. NO CHANGE
   G. produced, they came
   H. produced and coming
   J. produced. They came

3. A. NO CHANGE
   B. having been
   C. has been
   D. were
3. The Globe Theatre was a theatre in London associated with William Shakespeare, it was built in 1599 by Shakespeare's playing company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Although the Globe's actual dimensions are unknown. Evidence suggests that it was a three-story open-air amphitheater, which could hold up to 3,000 spectators. For a long time, scholars thought that theater was round. Now however, they believe that it was actually a 20-sided polygon.

4. There are many ways to apply color to blown glass, one of them involves rolling molten glass in powdered color or larger pieces of colored glass called frit. Complex patterns with great detail can be created through the use of colored rods, which can be arranged in a pattern on a flat surface and then “picked up” by rolling a bubble of molten glass over them. One of the most exacting and complicated color techniques being “reticello,” which involves creating two bubbles from cane, each twisted in a different direction.
5. It might not be as famous as the Statue of Liberty, but the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, which is also a New York City landmark. A double-decked suspension bridge that connects the boroughs of Staten Island and Brooklyn, it is named for both the Florentine explorer Giovanni da Verazzano, the first European to enter New York Harbor and the Hudson River, and for the body of water it spans: the Narrows. With a central length of nearly a mile, it was the longest suspension bridge in the world until 1981, when it was surpassed by the Humber Bridge in the United Kingdom. Today it is the tenth longest suspension bridge in the world. Every day, the Verazzano-Narrows bridge is crossed by thousands of people, many of whom live in Staten Island and commute to work in Manhattan.
3. Joining and Separating Sentences: Periods, Semicolons & Comma + FANBOYS

There are three ways to separate complete sentences (independent clauses) from one another:

1) Period
2) Semicolon
3) Comma + Coordinating (FANBOYS) Conjunction

A. Period = Semicolon

Periods and semicolons have the same function: to separate two complete sentences. Although the first letter after a period is capitalized while the first word after a semicolon is not, they are grammatically identical.

Correct: Tomatoes are used in many different types of cooking. Farmers around the world grow them in both fields and greenhouses.

Correct: Tomatoes are used in many different types of cooking; farmers around the world grow them in both fields and greenhouses.

“Strong” Transitions

Commonly tested “strong” transitions (formally known as conjunctive adverbs) include however, therefore, consequently, moreover, nevertheless, meanwhile, and instead. When these transitions begin a clause, the clause is independent – that is, the transition must come after either a period or a semicolon, not a comma.

When these transitions are tested on grammar questions, the correct answer can be given in the form of either “semicolon + transition” or “period + Transition.”

When these transitions are tested on rhetoric questions, the answer will virtually always be given in the form of “period + Transition.”

When they are used to begin a clause, these transitions should never follow a comma.

Incorrect: The tomato is one of the most popular salad ingredients, however, it is actually a fruit.

Correct: The tomato is one of the most popular salad ingredients; however, it is actually a fruit.

Correct: The tomato is one of the most popular salad ingredients. However, it is actually a fruit.
Let's look at an example:

Since the early nineteenth century, doomsayers have gloomily predicted that increasing populations would exhaust their food supplies in only a few decades, they claimed, food shortages would result in catastrophic famines. Yet the world currently produces enough food to feed 10 billion people, and there are only 7 billion of us.

Because the underlined phrase initially seems to make sense where it is, most test-takers will immediately pick NO CHANGE and move on to the next question without a second thought. (If you did that, don't worry – it just means you're normal.) What they will not do is read all the way to the period at the end of the paragraph.

Take a moment now and just read the entire sentence in isolation:

Since the early nineteenth century, doomsayers have gloomily predicted that increasing populations would exhaust their food supplies in only a few decades; they claimed food shortages would result in catastrophic famines.

Can you spot the problem now? If we leave the phrase in only a few decades without any punctuation, the sentence is way too long. In fact, there are two sentences, not one:

Sentence #1: Since the early nineteenth century, doomsayers have gloomily predicted that increasing populations would exhaust their food supplies in only a few decades.

Sentence #2: They claimed food shortages would result in catastrophic famines.

As discussed, two complete sentences must be divided by a period or a semicolon, not a comma. The only answer that divides the sentence into two is (B). When the underlined phrase is attached to the beginning of the second sentence rather than the end of the first, the sentences make perfect sense:

Sentence #1: Since the early nineteenth century, doomsayers have gloomily predicted that increasing populations would exhaust their food supplies.

Sentence #2: In just a few decades, they claimed, food shortages would result in catastrophic famines.

So (B) is correct.

Important: You can save time by checking answer choices that contain periods first. When you are given the option to use a period, that's often a hint that there are two sentences.
B. Comma + FANBOYS

As discussed in the previous chapter, complete sentences can also be joined by “comma + coordinating (FANBOYS) conjunction:” For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So.

To reiterate, the ACT tests primarily and + but. The conjunctions so and yet are tested very rarely, and or and nor are virtually never tested.

When a FANBOYS conjunction is used without a comma to join two sentences, the result is a run-on sentence. Note that a sentence does not have to be long to be a run-on.

Run-on: Tomatoes are used in many different types of cooking and they are grown around the world in both fields and greenhouses.

Correct: Tomatoes are used in many different types of cooking, and they are grown around the world in both fields and greenhouses.

Likewise, a FANBOYS conjunction should never be used after a period or a semicolon*. Any answer choice that contains one of those constructions can be automatically eliminated.

Incorrect: Tomatoes are used in many different types of cooking. And they are grown around the world in both fields and greenhouses.

Incorrect: Tomatoes are used in many different types of cooking; and they are grown around the world in both fields and greenhouses.

When the subject is the same in both clauses and is not repeated in the second clause, do not use a comma:

Incorrect: Tomatoes are used in many different types of cooking, and are grown around the world in both fields and greenhouses.

Correct: Tomatoes are used in many different types of cooking and are grown around the world in both fields and greenhouses.

You can also think of the above rule this way. Since comma + and = period, simply replace comma + and with a period and see if you have two complete sentences:

Incorrect: Tomatoes are used in many different types of cooking. Are grown around the world in both fields and greenhouses.

Since the information after the period is not a sentence, no comma should be used before and.

*Occasionally, an ACT sentence will begin with a FANBOYS conjunction for stylistic effect. When this occurs, you will not be tested on the conjunction, although you may be tested on another aspect of the sentence. See The Real Guide, p. 292, fourth sentence (So, when he has went...) for an example.
Comma Splices

When a comma alone is used to separate independent clauses, the result is known as a **comma splice**. Comma splices are **always incorrect**.

Comma Splice: Tomatoes are used in many different types of cooking, farmers around the world grow many varieties of them in both fields and greenhouses.

Remember from Chapter 2 that an independent clause can start with a pronoun (*it, they, she, many, some*) as well as a noun, and that it does not need to make sense out of context to be a grammatically complete sentence.

Sentence: Tomatoes are used in many different types of cooking.

Sentence: They are grown in both fields and greenhouses around the world.

Comma Splice: Tomatoes are used in many different types of cooking, they are grown in both fields and greenhouses around the world.

Sentence: Tomatoes come in a variety of colors.

Sentence: Some (of them) are red, while others are green or yellow.

Comma Splice: Tomatoes come in a variety of colors, some (of them) are red, while others are green or yellow.

Fixing Comma Splices

There are number of ways to fix comma splices, and the ACT does not favor any particular method over another. Some questions will require you to fix them by using a period, and others will require you to fix them using a semicolon, a comma plus FANBOYS conjunction, or even another way entirely. As a result, you should be comfortable fixing comma splices a variety of ways.

The simplest way to correct a comma splice is to replace the comma with a period or semicolon:

Comma Splice: Tomatoes were originally small and multicolored, they are mostly large and red today.

Correct: Tomatoes were originally small and multicolored. They are mostly large and red today.

Correct: Tomatoes were originally small and multicolored; they are mostly large and red today.

We can also leave the comma and add a FANBOYS conjunction, or add “semicolon + however:”

Correct: Tomatoes were originally small and multicolored, but they are mostly large and red today.

Correct: Tomatoes were originally small and multicolored; however, they are mostly large and red today.
Another option is to turn one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause. When a dependent clause is added to an independent clause to form a sentence, then a comma alone can be placed between the clauses.

Correct: While tomatoes were originally small and multicolored, they are mostly large and red today.

Correct: Originally small and multicolored, tomatoes are mostly large and red today.

Correct: Tomatoes are one of the most popular cooking ingredients, used in soups, stews, and salads in many different cuisines.

Correct: Tomatoes were originally small and multicolored, having become large and red only during the nineteenth century.

The last example above is notable because it involves an exception to a common answer choice pattern, namely that answers containing —ing are usually wrong.

When it comes to fixing comma splices, however, answers containing -ing are often correct because they create dependent clauses and thus prevent a comma from separating two independent clauses.

For example:

The large, lumpy tomato originated in Mesoamerica, it became the direct ancestor of some modern cultivated tomatoes.

1. A. NO CHANGE
   B. Mesoamerica, becoming
   C. Mesoamerica; and it became
   D. Mesoamerica it became

Although (B) contains an —ing word, becoming, it corrects the comma splice in the original version of the sentence by making the second clause (it became the direct ancestor of some modern cultivated tomatoes) dependent.

(C) is incorrect because it places a semicolon rather than a comma before a FANBOYS conjunction, and (D) is wrong because it places no punctuation whatsoever between the two independent clauses (fused sentence).
Very Important: Semicolon = Period = Comma + FANBOYS

Because a period, semicolon, and "comma + FANBOYS" are grammatically identical, the ACT will never ask you to choose between them. When more than one of these constructions appear as answer choices, you can eliminate all of them since no question can have more than one right answer.

For example:

If you grow tomatoes to sell at a market,
1 remember that it will take about 70 to 80 days
1 from the time you set plants in the field until you can pick ripe tomatoes from them.

Since (B), (C), and (D) are grammatically equivalent, all of them can be eliminated. When you encounter this pattern, you should of course double-check the remaining answer to make sure that it makes sense, but in general, you can assume that it will be right. In this case, (A) is correct because it places a comma between a dependent clause and an independent clause.

Very often, the semicolon = period = comma + FANBOYS rule will also be tested in "all of the following EXCEPT" questions.

For example:

There are many good varieties of tomatoes available to growers – each grower should try a few plants of several varieties to determine which performs best.

1. A. NO CHANGE
   B. market, and remember
   C. market. Remember
   D. market; remember

Solution: Don’t get too concerned about the dash; we’ll talk about those later. If you know that the period in (A), the semicolon in (C), and the comma + and in (D) are the same, you can instantly eliminate all of them. Only (B) remains. Since it forms a comma splice, it is NOT an acceptable alternative to the underlined portion of the sentence.

While not every question will be nearly as straightforward as the examples above, many will contain this exact answer choice pattern, and most others will contain something close to it.
1. In 2006, the beverage marketing company Power Brands was co-founded by Darin Ezra and Martin Molina. Both of whom had prior experience in the beverage industry. The company expanded rapidly. It currently employs people in more than a dozen countries on every continent except Antarctica.

2. Since I learned to control a pencil at the age of four; writing has been one of my favorite activities. As a child, I would sit for hours, scribbling down stories about characters that I had invented and insisting that my parents read them aloud. Today, I keep a journal. I set aside time to write in it every day.

3. For centuries, scientists believed in the existence of planets beyond the solar system, but had no way of knowing how common they were or how similar they might be to better-known planets. Beginning in the 1900s, many people insisted that they had discovered exoplanets; however, the first confirmed detection did not occur until 1992.
4. The kangaroo is an unofficial symbol of Australia. As a result, there are numerous popular culture references to it. A kangaroo appears as an emblem on the Australian coat of arms as well as on some Australian currency, and is also used by some well known organizations, including Qantas airline and the Royal Australian Air Force.

5. Sweet Honey in the Rock is an award-winning a cappella troupe. Its members recount African American history through song, dance, and sign language. The group was originally a four-person ensemble but has expanded to five-part harmonies, a sixth member acts as a sign-language interpreter. The members of the group have changed many times during the group’s 30-year existence, more than 20 individuals have lent their voices to the group. Their music has consistently combined contemporary rhythms and narratives with a musical style rooted in traditional African American spirituals.

1. Which of the following would NOT be an acceptable alternative to the underlined portion of the sentence?

A. troupe, its members
B. troupe whose members
C. troupe with members who
D. troupe; its members

2. F. NO CHANGE

G. currency, it is
H. currency. It is
J. currency; it being

3. A. NO CHANGE

B. times, during the group’s 30-year existence
C. times. During the group’s 30-year existence,
D. times, during the group’s 30-year existence,
6. Historians of the crossword puzzle (yes, they do exist) generally date the brainteaser's first appearance to December 21, 1913. Shortly before the end of World War I. That year, Arthur Wynne of the New York World published what he called a “word-cross” in his paper's Fun section; however, more than ten years would go by before the crossword, as it was known by that time, would become one of the biggest fads of the 1920s.

7. Seagrove, North Carolina has been a home to potters for hundreds of years in the 1700s, they were drawn to the town by two things all potters of that era needed: good clay and an abundant supply of trees for firewood to heat their kilns. These early potters primarily produced redware, an earthenware made of soft, porous red clay that turns red when fired at the time. Most Seagrove area potters were farmers who earned a little extra income by producing wares that were sold regionally or traded. Most of their output was strictly functional and included pots, bowls, jugs, and even roof tiles. A few potters added simple decorations to their pottery, but most did not.

1. A. NO CHANGE
   B. 1913, shortly before
   C. 1913, this was shortly before
   D. 1913; shortly before

2. F. NO CHANGE
   G. section, however,
   H. section however,
   J. section; but

3. A. NO CHANGE
   B. pottery; but most
   C. pottery, most
   D. pottery, most of them
8. With its bright, round eyes, furry body, and vividly striped tail, the lemur is among the most fascinating and mysterious creatures in the animal kingdom. Because of its haunting stare and preference for nighttime activity, the lemur is named after the Latin word for “ghost.” Millions of years ago, this ancient primate is believed to have "sailed" on clumps of vegetation from the African mainland to the island of Madagascar, where it has lived largely in isolation ever since.

9. Beautiful, glamorous and mysterious, Saturn's rings are among the most recognizable features in the solar system. While the solar systems' other three gas giants – Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune – have rings orbiting around them, Saturn is by far the largest and most spectacular. The rings spread over hundreds of thousands of miles, and consist of billions of individual particles that create waves, turbulence and other effects.
10. I've never been the world's most adventurous eater. For most of my childhood, I ate plain noodles with butter or grilled cheese while the rest of my family dined on chicken cacciatore or grilled salmon occasionally. My parents persuaded me to try a few bites of a new dish, but I could never bring myself to finish an entire plate of asparagus or steamed mussels.

Last year, however, I was invited to spend a month in Dijon, French as an exchange student. I would live with a local family, and attend classes at a nearby high school. Although I'd studied French for several years, I had never traveled to a French-speaking country. I was anxious to meet my host family and try out my language skills. The only thing that worried me was the food.

1. A. NO CHANGE
   B. salmon. Occasionally,
   C. salmon, occasionally
   D. salmon, occasionally

2. F. NO CHANGE
   G. family and attend
   H. family and attending
   J. family, which I would attend

3. A. NO CHANGE
   B. years. I had never
   C. years, I had never
   D. years I had never
4. Non-Essential and Essential Clauses

As introduced in Chapter 2, non-essential words and phrases can be removed from sentences without affecting their essential meaning. If these words or phrases are removed from the sentence, the sentence will still make grammatical sense. Consider the following sentence:

Correct: The Tower of London, which was begun by William the Conqueror in 1078, is one of the largest and most imposing fortifications in England.

The sentence contains a clause that is surrounded by commas and that begins with the word which. If we cross out that clause, we are left with:

Correct: The Tower of London...is one of the largest and most imposing fortifications in England.

The sentence that remains makes complete sense on its own, indicating that the two commas were necessary.

Important: One of the ACT's absolute favorite ways to create errors is to give you a non-essential clause that is missing one or both of its commas. In such cases, you are responsible for recognizing where in the sentence the non-essential clause begins and ends — that is, where the missing comma or commas belong.

For example, it is very common to see sentences that look like these:

Incorrect: The Tower of London, which was begun by William the Conqueror in 1078 is one of the largest and most imposing fortifications in England.

Incorrect: The Tower of London which was begun by William the Conqueror in 1078, is one of the largest and most imposing fortifications in England.

Incorrect: The Tower of London which was begun by William the Conqueror in 1078 is one of the largest and most imposing fortifications in England.

In order to correct the sentence, you must recognize that it will still make sense if the clause which was begun by William the Conqueror in 1078 is removed, and that therefore commas must be added around that clause.

Correct: The Tower of London, which was begun by William the Conqueror in 1078, is one of the largest and most imposing fortifications in England.

Sometimes non-essential clauses can be very long and confusing. In such cases, you must make sure to look all the way back to the beginning of the sentence and consider whether the sentence will still make sense if a particular section is removed. Keep in mind that you may have to cross out a lot of information to test out whether a non-essential clause is present.
Non-Essential Transition Words and Phrases

While non-essential clauses can be very long, they can also consist of single transition words and short phrases. Common examples include however, in fact, moreover, and on the other hand. Like longer non-essential clauses, these words and phrases must be surrounded by commas when they appear in the middle of a sentence:

Correct: The Tower of London was built during the Norman Conquest. It has, in fact, served as a treasury, an armory, and the home of the Royal Mint.

Correct: The Tower of London was built during the Norman Conquest. It still, however, remains standing nearly a thousand years later.

Although the placement of these words and phrases may seem odd to you, it is perfectly acceptable. When commas are concerned, only grammar is important.

Important: Do not try to “cross out” information mentally. Take your pencil and physically draw a line through the words on your test, as in the example below. You can always erase the line if necessary, but you’re a lot more likely to miss something important if you don’t actually cross out the words.

You should also make sure to look for key words such as which, who(se), and where, which often signal the start of a non-essential clause. In addition, you should think carefully about where in the sentence it is logical for the clause to end. This is particularly important when several lines of the passage are underlined, or when several questions asking about punctuation in a given section are presented consecutively. For example:

Incorrect: London, which was originally built by the Romans along the banks of the Thames more than two thousand years ago contains some extremely modern neighborhoods.

Crossed Out: London, which was originally built by the Romans along the banks of the Thames more than two thousand years ago contains some extremely modern neighborhoods.

The sentence that remains makes sense, so it is necessary to insert the second comma after ago.

Correct: London, which was originally built by the Romans along the banks of the Thames more than two thousand years ago, contains some extremely modern neighborhoods.

If you encounter a sentence such as this on the ACT and neglect to look back to the beginning, you may overlook the word which, which signals the start of a non-essential clause.
Important: two commas do not always equal a non-essential clause!

One common mistake is to assume that the presence of two commas in a sentence automatically indicates a non-essential clause. Compare the following two sentences:

Sentence #1: London, which was one of the largest and most important cities in Europe during the Middle Ages, remains an important financial and cultural center today.

This sentence contains a non-essential clause that can be removed without altering its basic meaning:

London, which was one of the largest and most important cities in Europe during the Middle Ages, remains an important financial and cultural center today.

Now take a look at this sentence:

Sentence #2: During the Middle Ages, London was one of the largest and most important cities in Europe, and today it remains an important financial and cultural center.

If we cross out the information between the commas, we get this:

During the Middle Ages, London was one of the largest and most important cities in Europe, and today it remains an important financial and cultural center.

The remaining sentence does not make sense, indicating that the information between the two commas is essential. The two commas are still necessary, however, just for different reasons.

In addition, some sentences that contain commas setting off non-essential clauses also contain commas that serve unrelated purposes. In such cases, it can be difficult to quickly tell where non-essential clauses are located.

Sumo wrestling, a full-contact sport in which competitors attempt to force one another out of a circular ring, originated in Japan, which remains the only country in the world where it is practiced.

The above sentence contains only one non-essential clause that can be removed without creating a problem:

Sumo wrestling, a full-contact sport in which competitors attempt to force one another out of a circular ring, originated in Japan, which remains the only country in the world where it is practiced.

If the information between a different set of commas is removed, however, we are left with nonsense:

Sumo wrestling, a full-contact sport in which competitors attempt to force one another out of a circular ring, originated in Japan, which remains the only country in the world where it is practiced.

If you cannot hear where the non-essential clause belongs, take your pencil (not a pen!), draw a line through the section you want to test out, and read the sentence without it. If that doesn’t work, erase the line, cross out a different section, and try again. It is very important that you go through this process because it is the only way you have of figuring out the answer logically.
Transitions: Two Commas vs. Semicolon or Period

Many of the transition words and phrases that are used non-essentially within clauses are also used to begin clauses – when this is the case, they should not be surrounded by commas but rather should come after a semicolon or a period.

Compare the punctuation surrounding the word however when it is used non-essentially:

Sentence #1: London is a very old city. It does, however, contain some modern neighborhoods.

...and the punctuation surrounding the word however when it is used to begin a clause:

Sentence #2: London is a very old city; however, it does contain some modern neighborhoods.

Both of these constructions are perfectly acceptable; the punctuation simply changes because the grammatical role that the word however plays within the sentence changes.

In Sentence #1, the two commas around however tell us that if we cross the word out, the sentence will still make sense. And sure enough, if we cross out however, we are left with a grammatically acceptable sentence – even if that sentence does not make much sense outside of context:

Correct: It does...contain some modern neighborhoods.

In Sentence #2, on the other hand, the semicolon indicates that however is being used to begin a clause. We cannot therefore do the following:

Incorrect: London is a very old city, however, it does contain some modern neighborhoods.

In the above version of the sentence, the two commas imply that the word however can be removed without affecting the sentence's essential meaning. But if we remove those commas, we end up with a fused sentence – two independent clauses placed back-to-back without any punctuation between them. Fused sentences are always incorrect.

Incorrect: London is a very old city it does contain some modern neighborhoods.

The need for two commas vs. a semicolon is determined solely by context. While there is no automatic “trick” for recognizing when one rather than the other is required, you should try crossing out the word or phrase in question and reading the sentence without it if you are uncertain which type of punctuation is required. If the sentence makes sense, the word or phrase is being used non-essentially, and two commas should be used; if the sentence does not make sense, you need a semicolon or a period.
1. A tandem is a form of bicycle designed to be ridden by more than one person, however, the term “tandem” refers to the seating arrangement (front to back), not the number of riders.

1. A. NO CHANGE
   B. person; however,
   C. person however,
   D. person, however

2. L. Frank Baum, who is best known for The Wonderful Wizard of Oz actually wrote thirteen novels based on the land of Oz. When it was published in 1900, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz became an instant success, remaining the best-selling children’s novel for two years. The other novels in the “Oz” series, however, did not achieve the same degree of popularity.

2. A. NO CHANGE
   B. series; however,
   C. series, however
   D. series however,

3. The red belt, one of several colored belts used in some martial arts to indicate the practitioner’s level, is most commonly used in Judo, a martial art that originated in Japan. Like the more commonly known black belt, which is used in Karate, the red belt can indicate Grandmaster status or other high rank, in contrast, other forms of martial arts use the red belt to indicate pre-black belt rank or even to denote a beginner who holds no rank.

3. A. NO CHANGE
   B. level, is most commonly used in Judo a martial art
   C. level is most commonly used in Judo, a martial art
   D. level, is most commonly used in Judo, A martial art

2. F. NO CHANGE
   G. Oz actually, wrote
   H. Oz actually wrote
   J. Oz actually, wrote,
4. George Barris, who created the Batmobile for the Batman films also built many other vehicles for movies and television programs. According to Barris, some of his first film work consisted of making soft aluminum fenders, for a Ford police car that crashes into the rear of a Mercedes Benz convertible. The scene was a challenge for Barris who wanted to make the scene both comic and thrilling, nevertheless, he succeeded, going on to pursue a decades-long career in the big-screen automotive industry.

5. Every year, nature-lovers flock to the Arnold Arboretum in Boston, Massachusetts. The arboretum, founded in 1872, features hundreds of tree, flower, and plant species; however, of all the plants in the arboretum's collection, only one the lilac, is honored with an entire day of celebration. That day, moreover, is the arboretum's biggest event of the year. Known as Lilac Sunday, it is a day when the arboretum's normally serene atmosphere gives way to fun and festivities. In fact, it is the only day that visitors are allowed to picnic on the arboretum's grounds.
Essential Clauses With and Without “That”

Clauses beginning with *that* are always essential to the meaning of a sentence and should *never be set off by commas* (or any other form of punctuation, in most cases). The use of a comma before or after *that* is virtually always **incorrect**.

Incorrect: Parrots are one of the most difficult pets, *that* a person can have because they are intelligent, demanding, and live for up to 50 years.

Incorrect: Parrots are one of the most difficult pets *that*, a person can have because they are intelligent, demanding, and live for up to 50 years.

Correct: Parrots are one of the most difficult pets *that* a person can have because they are intelligent, demanding, and live for up to 50 years.

In the above sentence, the word *that* is optional. The sentence can be correctly written both with and without it.

Correct: Parrots are one of the most difficult pets *that* a person can have because they are intelligent, demanding, and live for up to 50 years.

Correct: Parrots are one of the most difficult pets a person can have because they are intelligent, demanding, and live for up to 50 years.

If the word *that* is deleted, however, no comma should be used in its place. When *that* is optional and is not used, it is always incorrect to insert a comma in its place.

Incorrect: Parrots are one of the most difficult pets, a person can have because they are intelligent, demanding, and live for up to 50 years.

**This error usually appears at least once per test.** It can also be difficult to catch, first because it often seems that a small pause is required at the comma, and second because most people would not naturally stop and consider whether the clause could also be written with *that*. Mastering this type of question is therefore largely a result of training yourself to spot clauses that can be written either way. **Otherwise, you can think of things this way:** if you’ve mastered the ways in which a comma **should** be used (FANBOYS, non-essential clauses, lists) and encounter a comma **used in a different way**, you can be pretty sure that comma is wrong.
The Case of “Who:” Non-Essential vs. Essential Clauses

One potentially tricky concept that the ACT tests is the ability to distinguish between essential and non-essential information based on context. For example, it is possible to write the following sentence two different ways. **Both ways are grammatically correct**, but they have two different emphases.

Correct: People, who attend large open air events such as sporting matches and music festivals, often turn to camping as a cheap form of accommodation.

The commas in the above sentence imply that the clause between them is not central to the meaning of the sentence. The emphasis is on the fact that people often turn to camping in order to save money. The fact that they attend large open air events such as sporting matches and music festivals is **less important**.

Correct: People who attend large open air events such as sporting matches and music festivals often turn to camping as a cheap form of accommodation.

The lack of commas in this version of the sentences indicates that it is not discussing people in general but rather a **specific group of people**: those who attend large open air events such as sporting matches and music festivals. While the first version of the sentence is grammatically correct, this version simply makes more sense.

Independently, these sentences can be written either way without a problem – the focus of the sentence merely shifts depending on whether the commas are used. When a sentence that can be written either with or without commas is considered in the context of a paragraph, however, things get a bit more complicated.

Consider the following:

The store where I work has a return policy I have always found amusing. Normally, customers have one year from the purchase date to return unwanted or defective item; however, customers, who make purchases on February 29th, have four years to return their items. The store’s owner reasons that customers should have the right to return an item until the next occurrence of the date on which they bought it. Since February 29th occurs only once every four years, customers should thus be allowed nearly 1,500 days to decide whether They truly want a toaster or a pair of shoes.

1. A. NO CHANGE
   B. customers, who make purchases on February 29th
   C. customers who make purchases on February 29th,
   D. customers who make purchases on February 29th
Solution: The phrase who make purchases on February 29th cannot be crossed out of the sentence because it specifies which customers are being discussed. The remainder of the paragraph talks only about those particular customers, not about customers in general. Furthermore, without the phrase, the passage would contradict itself because the previous sentence states that customers normally only have one year to return unwanted items. The underlined portion shifts toward an exception to that rule. No commas are thus necessary, and (A) is incorrect.

(B) is incorrect because the clause in question must either have two commas, indicating that it is non-essential, or no commas, indicating that it is essential. Only one comma is never an option.

(C) is incorrect for the same reason as (B), except that in this case the single comma is placed at the end of the clause rather than at the beginning. This answer is a little trickier, however: the complete subject, customers who make purchases on February 29th, is quite long. As a result, it might seem that a pause is needed before the verb, have. Even when a subject is very long, however, no comma should be placed between it and the verb.

(D) is correct because the lack of commas indicates that the underlined information is essential to the meaning of the sentence and does not separate the subject from the verb.

Let's look at another example:

The hexacopter, a lump of steel propellers and lenses, is both camera and flying machine. This contraption is revolutionizing the way news is reported. In the past, journalists who wanted to obtain aerial shots of events to accompany their stories were forced to rely on conventional helicopters, which often flew too high to capture detailed images. The hexacopter, however, can catapult itself into the air and hover right above the scene the photographer wishes to record.

Solution: (B) and C) can be eliminated pretty quickly because our options are two commas or no commas. If we were to cross out the information between the commas, the sentence would still make perfect grammatical sense (In the past, journalists...were forced to rely on conventional helicopters).

The problem is that by definition, the commas imply that the information between them is not essential — and in this case, the information is important. Based on the context, it is clear that the sentence is not talking about journalists in general, as the commas would imply, but rather about specific journalists: those who wanted to obtain aerial shots to accompany their stories. Because that information is necessary to define the type of journalists being discussed, no commas should be used. (D) is therefore correct.
It is also possible that you will encounter other types of clauses that can be either essential or non-essential. Such questions appear rarely, but you should be prepared for the possibility of encountering them.

For example, consider the following:

In 2004, while rummaging in a Seattle basement, historian and journalist J. Pennelope Goforth came across a silver shopping bag with an envelope inside. The envelope marked “Alaska Commercial Company” immediately caught her attention. For years, Goforth had researched the company, which had controlled Alaska’s waters in the late nineteenth century.

Solution: The real question here is whether the clause marked “Alaska Commercial Company” is essential (no commas) or essential (two commas). If the sentence is crossed out, we’re left with The envelope…immediately caught her attention. Since the envelope has already been mentioned in the previous sentence, the sentence still makes sense in context. Two commas should therefore be used, making (C) correct.

On the other hand, consider this version of the passage:

In 2004, while rummaging in a Seattle basement, historian and journalist J. Pennelope Goforth came across a silver shopping bag filled with envelopes. The envelope marked “Alaska Commercial Company” immediately caught her attention. For years, Goforth had researched the company, which had controlled Alaska’s waters in the late nineteenth century.

Solution: Crossing out the phrase marked “Alaska Commercial Company” again leaves us with The envelope immediately caught her attention. This time, however, the sentence no longer makes sense in context because the previous sentence only refers to “envelopes.” As a result, we don’t know which envelope caught Goforth’s attention. The clause is therefore necessary, so no commas should be used. (A) is therefore correct.
Commas with Names and Titles

Names and titles can be either essential or non-essential. While you may have learned in school that a comma should always be placed before a name or title, that is not the whole story. Commas should sometimes be placed before — and after — names and titles. Other times no commas at all should be used. It depends on the context.

Important: When a name or title appears in the middle of a sentence (that is, not as the first or last words), there are generally only two correct options: 1) two commas, before and after the name/title; or 2) no commas at all. In rare instances, a single comma may be required after the name or title for other reasons, as discussed later in the chapter.

The simplest way to determine whether commas are necessary is to treat the name or title like any other non-essential word or clause. Take your pencil, cross it out, and see if the rest of the sentence makes sense in context without it. If the sentence makes sense, the commas are necessary; if the sentence does not make sense, the commas are not necessary.

Let's look at how this rule would play out in some test-style questions:

Ada Lovelace and her acquaintance, Charles Babbage, were two of the most influential figures in the history of computer science. After Babbage sketched out his ideas for an “analytical engine,” Lovelace demonstrated that the machine might be able to carry out a variety of complex tasks.

Solution: Because the name Charles Babbage appears in the middle of a sentence, our options are two commas or no commas, eliminating (C) and (D). To decide between (A) and (B), we’re going to cross out the name:

Ada Lovelace and her acquaintance were two of the most influential figures in the history of computer science.

At this point, we need to be careful and consider the context. The sentence is still grammatically acceptable, but a crucial piece of information is lost: we do not know who Lovelace’s acquaintance was. As a result, the reference to Babbage in the following sentence does not make sense. So the name is essential, and no commas are required. The answer is therefore (B).
Another way to think of this rule is as follows:

- Commas around a name or title imply that it is the **only** person or thing.
- No commas around a name or title imply that it is **one of many** people or things.

While approaching questions this way can be confusing, it does offer another way of thinking them through.

In the case of the question on the previous page, placing commas around *Charles Babbage* would imply that Babbage was Ada Lovelace's **only** acquaintance. Is that possible? Yes, theoretically. But it's probably not what the writer intended to say. Without the commas, the sentence implies that Ada Lovelace had multiple acquaintances, one of whom was Charles Babbage. That version simply makes more sense.

In some cases, knowing this rule may allow you determine the answer more quickly. Consider the following two sentences. Although both versions are grammatically acceptable, only the second one creates a logical meaning.

Incorrect: The controversy over baseball player Satchel Paige’s true date of birth was stoked by Paige's **mother Lula**.

Correct: The controversy over baseball player Satchel Paige’s true date of birth was stoked by Paige's **mother, Lula**.

In the first version, the missing comma before *Lula* implies that she was one of many mothers. Logically, though, Paige only had one mother! Although the sentence is acceptable, its meaning is nonsensical.

In contrast, the comma before *Lula* in the second version of the sentence implies that Paige only had one mother, and that her name was Lula — a far more reasonable implication.

Let's look at another example:

Caribbean-American **author, Jamaica Kincaid**

is also known for being an enthusiastic essayist and gardener. She was born Elaine Potter Richardson in St. John's, Antigua but came to the United States at the age of 17 to work as an au pair in Westchester County, New York. She eventually won a scholarship to Franconia College in New Hampshire but returned to New York City to write. In 1985, she published the novel, *Annie John*, a semiautobiographical story of a young girl growing up in Antigua.

1. A. NO CHANGE  
   B. **author Jamaica Kincaid**  
   C. **author, Jamaica Kincaid**  
   D. **author Jamaica Kincaid**
Solution: Once again, we’re going to start by crossing the name out of the sentence.

Caribbean-American author...is also known for being an enthusiastic essayist and gardener.

No, that makes no sense. The name is clearly essential, so no commas are necessary. The answer is thus (B).

Now, however, consider this version of the passage:

I've always been interested in gardening, but until recently, I didn’t have room for flowers or plants. When I moved into a new house last summer, however, I was thrilled to discover that there was enough space in the yard for a garden. There was just one problem – I’d never actually planted one. So I called a friend who had a lot more gardening experience than I did. Luckily, that friend agreed to come over the next day.

Solution: Again, our options are two commas or no commas. When we cross out Jane, the resulting sentence Luckily, that friend agreed to come over the next day makes sense. The commas are thus necessary, making (A) correct.

Now let’s look at an example of a title question. We’re going to revisit this passage from a different angle:

Jamaica Kincaid (born May 25, 1949) is a novelist, essayist, and gardener. She was born Elaine Potter Richardson in St. John's, Antigua but came to the United States at the age of 17 to work as an au pair in Westchester County, New York. She eventually won a scholarship to Franconia College in New Hampshire but returned to New York City to write. In 1985, she published the novel, Annie John, a semiautobiographical story of a young girl growing up in Antigua.

1. A. NO CHANGE
   B. the novel Annie John,
   C. the novel, Annie John
   D. the novel Annie John
**Solution:** As always, we’re going to start by crossing the title out of the sentence and reading the sentence without it.

In 1985, she published the novel...a semiautobiographical story of a young girl growing up in Antigua.

No, this does not make sense in context because we do not know which novel the sentence is referring to. The information is therefore essential, meaning that commas should not be placed around the title.

But wait, there’s a twist! This is the rare exception to the “two commas or no commas” rule. A comma is required to separate the independent first clause from the dependent second clause (In 1985, she published the novel *Annie John*, a semiautobiographical story of a young girl growing up in Antigua). Without the comma, we just get a big jumble. So the answer is (B).

If a name or title appears at the end of the sentence, the rule is similar: a comma indicates that the name or title can be crossed out, while no comma indicates that the name or title cannot be crossed out.

Incorrect:  Glass is the building material most often associated with **celebrated architect, I.M. Pei**.

The comma before I.M. Pei implies that the name can be crossed out of the sentence. If you cross it out, however, you get the following:

Glass is the building material most often associated with **celebrated architect**.

Clearly, this version does not make any sense. The comma should therefore not be used.

Correct:  Glass is the building material most often associated with **celebrated architect I.M. Pei**.

You can also think of the sentence this way: even though the word *architect* is typically used as a noun, here it's actually acting as an adjective that describes I.M. Pei.

Since adjectives should never be separated from the nouns they describe by a comma, no comma should be placed between *architect* and *I.M. Pei*.
Drill: Commas with Essential and Non-Essential Clauses (answers p. 252)

1. The hexacopter, a lump of steel propellers and lenses, is both camera and flying machine. This contraption is revolutionizing the way news is reported. In the past, journalists, who wanted to obtain aerial shots of events to accompany their stories, were forced to rely on conventional helicopters — which often flew too high to capture detailed images. The hexacopter, however, can catapult itself into the air and hover right above the scene, the photographer wishes to record.

2. In 2004, while rummaging in a Seattle basement, historian and journalist J. Pennelope Goforth came across a silver shopping bag with an envelope inside. The envelope marked “Alaska Commercial Company” immediately caught her attention. For years, Goforth had researched the company that controlled Alaska’s waters in the late nineteenth century. Inside the envelope, she discovered the company’s ledger books for 1875 through 1897 — seven hundred pages of information.

1. A. NO CHANGE
   B. journalists who wanted to obtain aerial shots to accompany their stories,
   C. journalists, who wanted to obtain aerial shots to accompany their stories
   D. journalists who wanted to obtain aerial shots to accompany their stories

2. F. NO CHANGE
   G. scene; the photographer
   H. scene the photographer
   J. scene, the photographer,
3. Alfred Mosher Butts, the American architect who created Scrabble™, intended it to be a variation on an existing word game Lexiko. The two games had the same set of letter tiles and point values, which Butts had worked out by analyzing the frequency with which letters appeared in newspapers and magazines. He decided, the new game should be called “Criss-Crosswords” and added the 15 x 15 game board. Butts created a few sets himself, but the first manufacturers, who inspected them, did not think that the game was likely to become very popular.

4. In November 1895, German physicist, Wilhelm Roentgen accidentally discovered an image created by rays emanating from a vacuum tube. Further investigation showed, the rays penetrated many kinds of matter. A week after his discovery, Roentgen photographed the hand of his wife, Anna, clearly revealing her wedding ring and bones. The image electrified the general public and aroused great scientific interest in the new form of radiation, which Roentgen named the X-ray.
5. First recorded in 1835, the disease polio baffled researchers for decades. According to historian William O'Neill, “polio was, if not the most serious, easily the most frightening public health problem of the 1940’s and ‘50s.”

As result, scientists found themselves in a frantic race to find a cure. During the 1940s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was the world’s most recognized polio victim. In 1938, he had founded the organization the March of Dimes to fund the development of a cure. Before a vaccine was finally discovered by the American scientist Jonas Salk in 1955, more than 80 percent of polio patients were helped by the foundation.

6. Along with her husband Martin Luther King, Coretta Scott King played an important role in the Civil Rights Movement. She was most active in the years after 1968, when she took on the leadership of the struggle for racial equality herself and became a leading figure in the women’s movement. Although Mrs. King would object to the term “pacifism,” she was a longtime activist for world peace.