

- 18.** First-generation Vietnamese-American Monique Truong blends fact and fiction, history and speculation in *The Book of Salt*; a novel inspired by a reference to an Indochinese cook in *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book*.
- The Book of Salt*; a novel inspired by a reference to an Indochinese cook in *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book*.
 - The Book of Salt*, which was a novel that was inspired by a reference to an Indochinese cook in *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book*.
 - her novel *The Book of Salt*, which was inspired by a reference to an Indochinese cook in *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book*.
 - her novel, *The Book of Salt*; which was inspired by another book, *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book*, which mentioned an Indochinese cook.
 - her novel *The Book of Salt*, it was inspired by a reference to an Indochinese cook in *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book*.
- 19.** Held in 1883, President Chester Arthur presided over the ceremony to officially dedicate the Brooklyn Bridge.
- Held in 1883, President Chester Arthur presided over the ceremony to officially dedicate the Brooklyn Bridge.
 - Held in 1883, it was President Chester Arthur who presided over the ceremony to officially dedicate the Brooklyn Bridge.
 - The Brooklyn Bridge was officially dedicated in 1883, at a ceremony that was presided over by President Chester Arthur.
 - President Chester Arthur presided over the 1883 ceremony that officially dedicated the Brooklyn Bridge.
 - The 1883 ceremony, presided over by President Chester Arthur, which officially dedicated the Brooklyn Bridge.
- 20.** According to a recent survey, 36% of Americans cook vegetarian meals; significantly more than the previous decade.
- meals; significantly more than the previous decade.
 - meals, a significant increase over numbers from the previous decade.
 - meals, which is a significant increase over the previous decade.
 - meals, which, compared to the previous decade, is a significant increase in number.
 - meals, previously in the last decade the numbers were much higher.

► Improving Paragraphs

These questions are the toughest, and most time-consuming, questions you'll encounter in the Writing section. You'll be asked about ways in which a rough draft of a short essay can be improved. Don't worry so much about *what* the passage says; your job is to choose the best ways to improve *how* it says it.

The draft will be followed by questions that cover a range of writing issues, from the sentence level (grammar and usage, sentence structure, word choice, etc.), to the paragraph level (paragraph divisions, transitions, paragraph unity), to the essay level (overall organization, development, and support). The questions are designed to measure your ability to identify weaknesses and improve the writing in a text.

This section describes the question format, including the kinds of questions to expect, the errors you're likely to see in the passages, and strategies to determine the best answer for each question.

Question Structure

The Improving Paragraphs section begins with a short passage (typically two to four paragraphs long). The passage will most likely be the draft of an essay, but you might also find a letter to the editor, an excerpt from a

memo, or another type of general writing. Because the passage is a draft, it will need improvement on many levels. Following the passage will be a series of questions about how to improve the passage. These questions can be divided into three general categories: **revising individual sentences**, **revising sentence pairs**, and **revising the big picture**. You can expect the five or six Improving Paragraphs questions to be divided equally among these three question types.

Revising Individual Sentences

These questions refer to a specific sentence within the passage and ask you to determine the most effective revision of that sentence. They are essentially the same as those in Improving Sentences, with the exception that you will often need to consider the context of the passage to determine the correct answer. For example, the alternate versions of the selected sentence may offer different transitions from the previous sentence, but only one will be correct, concise, and the most appropriate way to move from one idea to another.

Revising Sentence Pairs

These questions refer to two sentences within the passage and ask you to determine the most effective revision and/or combination of those sentences. These questions are also similar to Improving Sentences, often focusing on establishing the right relationship (coordination/subordination) and proper boundaries between the two sentences. Here's an example:

Which of the following is the most effective combination of sentences 10 and 11 (reprinted below)?

(10)Our group was divided by ability into different classes. (11)Each class focused on a set of skills and worked to improve those skills during the camp week.

- a. We were divided by ability into different classes, each of which focused on, during the camp week, improving a set of skills.
- b. We were divided into different classes, and by ability we focused on a set of skills so that we could improve on them over the course of the week at camp.
- c. We were divided into different classes and our abilities to focus on a set of skills worked to improve those skills during the camp week.
- d. Divided into different classes based on ability, we focused on the camp week to improve a set of skills.
- e. After we were divided into different classes based on ability, we focused on a set of skills to improve on during the camp week.

The correct answer is **e**, which expresses the ideas of the sentences more clearly and concisely than any of the other choices.

Revising the Big Picture

“Big picture” questions ask about paragraph-level and essay-level issues such as organization and writing strategies. Thus, the format and writing issues can vary greatly. Here's a sample big picture question:

Which of the following is the most logical order of the paragraphs?

- a. 1, 2, 3, 4
- b. 1, 3, 2, 4
- c. 2, 3, 4, 1
- d. 4, 3, 2, 1
- e. 1, 4, 2, 3

Caution: Question Formats Vary!

Read each question carefully. Unlike Identifying Sentence Errors and Improving Sentences questions, the prompts and answer choices for Improving Paragraphs will vary. All will offer five choices (a–e), but *choice a will not always repeat the original text.*

Errors You’re Likely To See

You’re now familiar with the types of questions you will encounter. But what kinds of issues will those questions most likely deal with? All of the errors that appear in Identifying Sentence Errors and Improving Sentences are fair game in Improving Paragraphs. Expect to see problems with word choice and sentence-level issues such as adjective/adverb confusion, verb tenses, faulty comparisons, and improper use of the passive voice.

In addition, there will be six new types of questions to expect, including those about effective paragraphing, organization of ideas, transitions, cohesion, development of ideas, and style.

Effective Paragraphing

A paragraph by definition is a group of sentences about one idea. Long paragraphs often contain more than one main idea and should usually be divided to improve readability and unity of ideas. A question about effective paragraphing might be worded as follows:

The author wishes to divide paragraph 2 into two paragraphs. After which sentence should the author begin a new paragraph?

This question requires that you look for a turning point in the paragraph—a place where the topic shifts, and a new idea is introduced.

Organization of Ideas

Paragraphs and essays can be organized in countless ways, and many of them are correct. Problems arise, however, when the organization isn’t logical. Explaining a solution to a problem before detailing the prob-

lem, comparing two items when only one has been mentioned, ignoring issues of chronology—these are all examples of illogical organization. The most common organizational methods include: order of importance, chronology, cause and effect, and comparison and contrast.

Underlying the organizational pattern is the basic essay structure, *assertion-support*. That is, an essay has a main idea, which should be stated near the beginning, and the rest of the essay serves to develop and support that idea. The same structure is repeated in each paragraph; there is one main idea, often expressed in a topic sentence, and the rest of the paragraph supports that idea.

A question that asks “Which would be the most effective order of paragraphs?” tells you to look carefully at the organizational pattern. Are the paragraphs out of chronological order? Does the discussion of X interrupt the discussion of Y? Does the paragraph start with specific examples, make a general statement, and then go back to providing more examples? Look for these types of problems when you encounter a question about organization.

Transitions

Transitions are words, phrases, and sentences that show the relationship between ideas, and lead from one idea to another, such as *meanwhile*, *however*, *after*, or *in contrast*. A paragraph that needs a stronger transition is a likely candidate for an Improving Paragraphs question. Here are a couple of examples:

Which of the following phrases should be added to the beginning of sentence 4 to link it to sentence 3?

Which of the following sentences, if added to the end of paragraph 1, would most effectively link the paragraph to the rest of the essay?

These questions tell you that you need to look for the relationship between sentences 3 and 4 or paragraphs 1 and 2. Does paragraph 2 offer another example? Does it describe a different point of view? When you understand the relationship, select the sentence that best expresses it.

Cohesion

As stated earlier, a paragraph is a group of sentences about the same idea. Frequently, a passage will include one or more sentences that stray from the main idea of the paragraph or essay. To improve the cohesion of ideas, off-topic sentences should be deleted or moved to another, more relevant section. Here's how a question about cohesion might be phrased:

The deletion of which sentence would most improve the second paragraph?

Development of Ideas

An idea is properly developed in three steps: first, it's introduced with some explanation; second, more details and/or examples are given; third, a conclusion is drawn. In Improving Paragraphs questions, development is tested in a number of ways. An introductory or concluding sentence could be missing, and you'll be asked to choose one. Or, you may be asked to select the most logical information to add to a paragraph. Other questions will ask you to consider which sentence from a list might best serve to further develop an idea. The key is to look at the logical relationships between ideas and to remember the overall assertion-support structure of essays. You might find prompts like the following:

The author's argument could best be expanded by which of the following statements?

Which of the following sentences, if added to paragraph 3, would provide the best support for the main idea?

Which best describes the relationship of sentence 7 to sentence 6?

For the last type of question, you will be asked to choose from a list of answers such as: *It is an example, it contradicts the argument, it confirms the claim, it adds information, or it draws a conclusion.*

Style

The last type of error you may encounter involves stylistic issues such as word choice, tone, or level of formality. Here are two examples:

The author wishes to alter the tone of sentence 12. Which of the following revisions would most suit the overall tone of the essay? Which of the following offers the most effective revision of sentence 6 (reprinted below)?

(6) *I can't tell you how much I learned by reading Macbeth.*

- a. *Macbeth* really had a big impact on me.
- b. I learned tons by reading *Macbeth*.
- c. *Macbeth* taught me an invaluable lesson about the dangers of ambition.
- d. *Macbeth* is a play that I read that I learned a lot from.
- e. Reading *Macbeth* was an extremely knowledgeable experience.

Only choice **c** really improves the sentence. Why? Because *invaluable lesson about the dangers of ambition* is more specific and exact than the other versions—it tells *what* was learned. Choice **c** is also written in a more formal tone than the other choices, which is more

suited to a discussion of literature. The other choices all contain slang or other informal idioms.

Strategies for Improving Paragraphs

Improving Paragraphs are more difficult than Identifying Sentence Errors and Improving Sentences questions; you're dealing with a passage and three different levels of its composition. But these questions aren't impossible. They focus only on one step of the writing process, revision. And there are only a few kinds of questions and errors you should expect. The following strategies will help you spend your time on these questions most effectively, helping you score the most points in a reasonable amount of time.

1. Do Improving Paragraphs last. This is your most important strategy for the Writing section's multiple-choice questions! Improving Paragraphs is the smallest question category on the exam (only about 5 questions) and these questions take the longest to complete—so save them for last. Do Identifying Sentence Errors first and then Improving Sentences to answer the most questions in the least amount of time and earn the greatest number of points.

2. Scan the questions *before* you read the passage. The draft contains many more errors than you will be asked about. Reading the questions first can help you focus on the mistakes that you will need to revise and not be distracted by the other weaknesses and errors.

3. Read the questions carefully. The questions will tell you the specific lines to revise and the specific writing issue(s) that need to be addressed. For example, if a question asks, "Which phrase, if added to the beginning of sentence 2, would most improve the essay?" you know you need to determine the relationship between sentences 1 and 2 and then find the best transition.

4. Remember the 3C's. For questions that ask you to revise sentences, use the 3C's as your guide. Choose the version that is **correct** (no grammar, usage, or logic errors), **clear** (no ambiguity or confusing sentence structure), and **concise** (no unnecessary wordiness).

5. Study the most common question topics. This will help you know what to expect and what to look for as you read the passages.

6. Save the big picture questions for last. They're usually the most time-consuming Improving Paragraphs question type.

Practice Improving Paragraphs Questions

Directions: Questions 21–25 are based on the following passage, a first draft of an essay about the evocation of mood and emotion in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." Read the passage and the questions that follow. For each question, choose the answer that will most improve the passage. Some questions ask you to choose the best revision of a particular sentence or pair of sentences. Other questions ask you to consider how to best improve the overall organization of the passage. In each case, the correct answer is the one that most closely conforms to the conventions of formal writing. The answers are at the end of the chapter.

(1)Writers have to be very skillful in word choice in order to evoke emotions. (2)As I explored Edgar Allan Poe's works, I became intrigued with the way Poe carefully chose language and how it elicits specific feelings.

(3)Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" involves a young man who rents a room from an elderly man in a large, dark mansion. (4)Descriptions of this eerie setting help Poe create the mood. (5)He masterfully builds suspense in "The Tell-Tale Heart." (6)You realize he is capable of anything. (7)For example, the tenant opens his landlord's bedroom door at night

and stares at his glass eye for hours while in a seething rage.

(8)The police investigate the home after a neighbor reported hearing screams. (9)The tenant invites the police into the room where he did hide the corpse that was dismembered. (10)Poe adds to the suspenseful mood because you wonder if the man will confess to murder. (11)While being interrogated, the man hears a faint heartbeat that grows louder. (12)However, he is the only one who hears it. (13)His attempt to fool the police while sitting on the corpse fails as he mentally breaks down from the noise inside his mind and confesses.

(14)As Poe creates an eerie, suspenseful tone in his fiction, it shows that authors can lead their readers to feel certain emotions through their writing.

- 21.** In the context of the passage, which of the following is the most effective revision of sentence 9 (reprinted below)?

(9)*The tenant invites the police into the room where he did hide the corpse that was dismembered.*

- a. The tenant invites the police into the room where he hid the dismembered corpse.
- b. The tenant did invite the police into the room where he did hide the dismembered corpse.
- c. The tenant led the police to the room where he did hide the corpse that was dismembered.
- d. The tenant invites the police right near where the dismembered corpse was hiding.
- e. In a move that only adds to the eerie and suspenseful tone, the tenant invites the police to come into the room where earlier he hid the dismembered corpse.

- 22.** Which of the following revisions is the best way to combine sentences 4 and 5?

(4)*Descriptions of this eerie setting help Poe create the mood.* (5)*He masterfully builds suspense in “The Tell-Tale Heart.”*

- a. In “The Tell-Tale Heart,” Poe not only creates the mood by describing this eerie setting he also masterfully builds suspense.
- b. Creation of mood is achieved through descriptions of this eerie setting, and then Poe masterfully builds suspense.
- c. This eerie setting helps Poe create the mood, and set the stage for the suspense he will masterfully build.
- d. Poe not only creates the mood by describing this eerie setting, but also in “The Tell-Tale Heart,” he masterfully builds suspense.
- e. Poe simultaneously creates mood and builds suspense in “The Tell-Tale Heart” by describing this eerie setting.

- 23.** The revision to sentences 11 and 12 that would most improve the essay is:

(11)*While being interrogated, the man hears a faint heartbeat that grows louder.* (12)*However, he is the only one who hears it.*

- a. Place sentence 12 before sentence 11.
- b. Delete the word *however*, and connect the sentences with the word *and*.
- c. Connect the sentences with a comma.
- d. Delete sentence 12.
- e. Leave them as is.

- 24.** In the context of the essay, which of the following revisions of sentence 14 more effectively concludes the essay?

(14)As Poe creates an eerie, suspenseful tone in his fiction, it shows that authors can lead their readers to feel certain emotions through their writing.

- a. Poe's building up of an eerie mood and suspenseful tone is a good example of how authors can lead their readers to feel certain emotions through their writing.
- b. The powerful conclusion of "The Tell-Tale Heart" shows that strong emotions can be felt by readers of fiction when the author, such as Poe, creates an eerie, suspenseful tone.
- c. Poe's creation of an eerie, suspenseful tone shows that authors can lead their readers.
- d. The powerful conclusion of "The Tell-Tale Heart" is yet another example of Poe's mastery of language and his ability to evoke emotion.
- e. Poe's masterful creation of mood and tone in "The Tell-Tale Heart" puts him in a league of other great writers of suspense, such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Ellery Queen.

- 25.** Which of the following is the most logical order of sentences within paragraph 2?

(3)Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" involves a young man who rents a room from an elderly man in a large, dark mansion. (4)Descriptions of this eerie setting help Poe create the mood. (5)He masterfully builds suspense in "The Tell-Tale Heart." (6)You realize he is capable of anything. (7)For example, the tenant opens his landlord's bedroom door at night and stares at his glass eye for hours while in a seething rage.

- a. 3, 7, 4, 5, 6
- b. 3, 4, 6, 5, 7
- c. 5, 4, 6, 7, 3
- d. 3, 5, 4, 6, 7
- e. 3, 4, 5, 7, 6

► Commit To Memory

Here are the most important lessons from Chapter 2:

- No matter the order they're presented in, answer Writing section multiple-choice questions as follows: Identifying Sentence Errors, Improving Sentences, and Improving Paragraphs.
- If you can eliminate one or more responses, but aren't sure of the answer, guess.
- If you've spent a few minutes on a question, and still can't eliminate a response or two, skip it and move on.
- About 20% of the Identifying Sentence Errors and Improving Sentences questions will have no error. That means for Identifying Sentence Errors questions, you'll select choice **e** ("no error"), and for Improving Sentences questions, you'll select choice **a** (same as the original sentence).
- Questions are presented from easiest to hardest. For the hardest questions, expect the answer to be tricky; what at first looks to be the correct answer may not be.
- Identifying Sentence Errors questions don't test your knowledge of spelling or punctuation, so don't waste time looking for those types of errors.
- Don't waste time reading choice **a** in Improving Sentences questions; it merely repeats the original sentence.
- Target your studies: based on the analysis of your first practice test, pinpoint the areas you're weakest in, and spend the most time studying them. Still not sure whether to use *lay* or *lie*, *who* or *whom*? Now's the time to get it straight.
- The best sentences are those that use the 3C's: correct (no grammar or usage errors or lapses in logic), clear (no ambiguity or tangled sentence structure), and concise (no unnecessary wordiness).
- Read the choices for Improving Paragraphs questions carefully. Some of them may be "No error," and others will repeat the same error as the original sentence, but these responses could be **a**, **b**, **c**, **d**, or **e**.

► Answer Key

Identifying Sentence Errors

1. **d.** The verb *was feeling* should be in the simple past tense (*felt*) to maintain consistency with *fretted* and *worried*.
2. **b.** The adjective *fewer* should be used with the noun *people*. *Less* is used for singular nouns that represent a quantity or degree (*less salt*, *less time*), while *fewer* is used to modify plural nouns or things that can be counted (*fewer bagels*, *fewer minutes*).
3. **a.** The verb tenses in this sentence are not consistent. In order to maintain consistency, the present tense *realizes* should be changed to the past tense *realized*.
4. **b.** The verb *have finished* expresses the action of the noun *one*. Therefore, it should take the singular form *has finished*.
5. **e.** There is no error in this sentence. If you chose **d**, recall that the pronoun *everyone* is singular. The pronoun following this antecedent must agree with it (in this case, the singular pronouns *his* or *her*).
6. **d.** *Can't* and *hardly* are both negatives. When used together, they cancel each other's meaning. To correct the sentence, either drop *hardly*, or change *can't* to *can*.
7. **b.** *Careful* is an adjective. In this sentence, it incorrectly modifies the verb *handle*. The correct word is the adverb *carefully*.
8. **a.** This is an idiom error; the correct preposition to use after *contrast* is *with*.
9. **d.** The verb *to creep* is irregular; its past tense form is *crept*.
10. **e.** There is no error in this sentence. If you chose **a**, recall that *well* is an adverb, and it correctly modifies the verb *doing*. *Good* is an adjective, which modifies nouns.

Improving Sentences

11. **c.** Choice **a** incorrectly uses the passive voice. Choice **b** repeats the error, and also uses the wrong verb tense (*yesterday* calls for the past tense *was*, not the present tense *is*). In choice **d**, extra words are added, and choice **e** repeats the passive voice error while unnecessarily dividing the sentence into two sentences.
12. **b.** In choice **a**, *although* does not express the correct relationship between the two clauses. *Although* does express contrast, which is the logical relationship here, but it belongs with the first clause rather than the second. In choice **b**, the subordinate conjunction *while* clearly and effectively expresses the right relationship. Choice **c**'s use of *however* is correct, but it is preceded by a comma instead of a semicolon, creating a run-on sentence. Choice **c** is unnecessarily wordy. Choice **d** creates a run-on sentence and does not offer a coordinating or subordinating conjunction to express the contrast between the two clauses. Choice **e** repeats the error in **a** and adds unnecessarily wordy constructions.
13. **c.** Choices **a**, **b**, and **d** have misplaced modifiers; the rock band is not seated high in the arena. Choice **b** also includes the ungrammatical phrase *being seated*. Choice **e** is wordier than **c**, which is more direct and logical in structure.
14. **b.** Coordination, parallel structure, and wordiness are the problems here. Choices **a**, **c**, and **d** use incorrect conjunctions (*whereas*, *but*, and *in contrast*), and they lack parallel structure. In all of them, the elements of the second plant description (type and location) do not match the first. Choice **e** is wordy and lacks parallel structure.
15. **e.** Choices **a**, **c**, and **d** are unnecessarily wordy. Choice **b**, while also suffering from wordiness, is a sentence fragment.

- 16. a.** This is the most clear and concise version. Choice **b** has a misplaced modifier—*many people* are not the fringe treatment. It is also wordy. The second clause in choice **c** is untrue. Choice **d** is unnecessarily wordy, and choice **e** is a sentence fragment.
- 17. b.** The problem with choice **a** is proper coordination/subordination. *Although* does not express the right kind of contrast; free verse has no organized structure *while* sonnets do—they exist simultaneously. Choice **c** makes the same mistake with *likewise*, which expresses similarity. Choice **d** uses the wrong subordinator (*since*); *unlike* would correct it. Choice **e** omits the subordinating or coordinating word and is a run-on sentence.
- 18. c.** Choice **a** incorrectly uses the semicolon. Choice **b** corrects the semicolon error, but is unnecessarily wordy. Choice **c** also corrects the semicolon error, and most concisely and clearly expresses the idea. Choice **d** repeats the semicolon error, has awkward sentence structure, and is wordy. Choice **e** corrects the semicolon error, but the change in syntax now calls for a semicolon rather than a comma.
- 19. d.** Choice **a** has a misplaced modifier. The ceremony was held in 1883, not President Arthur. Choice **b** retains this error and adds the wordy *it was . . . who* construction. Choice **c** is grammatically correct, but not as concise as choice **d** because it uses the passive voice. Choice **e** is a sentence fragment; removal of the word *which* would correct it.
- 20. b.** Choice **a** incorrectly uses the semicolon and does not clearly indicate what is a significant increase—the percentage of Americans who cook vegetarian meals, or the frequency with which they cook them. Choice **b** corrects the semicolon error and correctly identifies exactly what the increase is: an increase in *numbers*. Choice **c** merely states that the increase is over the decade, which is incorrect. Choice **d** repeats the semicolon error and is unnecessarily wordy. Choice **e** is a run-on sentence, is wordy, and has awkward sentence structure.
- 21. a.** There are two problems with the original sentence, and both are corrected in choice **a**. The helping verb *did* (in *did hide*) is unnecessary; it's clearer and more concise to say the man *hid* the corpse. Another instance of wordiness is the phrase *corpse that was dismembered*. Recall that *that* phrases can easily be turned into adjectives: *dismembered corpse*. Choice **b** corrects the *that* phrase, but adds another unnecessary helping verb, *did* invite. In choice **c**, neither original problem is corrected. Choice **d** uses the informal *right near where*, and adds confusion—corpses don't hide themselves. Choice **e** is wordier than the original sentence.
- 22. c.** These sentences involve two actions: Poe creates mood (by describing a setting), and builds suspense (how he does this is explained in the next sentence). Choice **c** uses the conjunction *and* to link them. Choice **a** seems to link the action with the conjunction *not only*, but it leaves out the second part of the conjunction pair, *but also*. It is also a run-on sentence. Choice **b** includes both actions, but improperly uses the passive voice. In choice **d**, the conjunction pair *not only . . . but also* is used. However, it unnecessarily repeats the title of the story, which was just mentioned in the previous sentence. Choice **e** is wrong because it incorrectly links the description of setting to the creation of suspense. In context, that doesn't make sense.
- 23. e.** There is nothing wrong with these sentences. They present critical information in the correct order, and would become a run-on

sentence if they were connected with a comma or other conjunction such as *and*.

- 24. d.** An effective conclusion recalls assertions made in the introduction without repeating them verbatim. Only choice **d** reiterates the introduction's ideas that Poe is a master of language and uses it to evoke emotion from his readers.
- 25. e.** Sentence 4 logically follows sentence 3—without the mention of the specific location of

the action of the story, a reference to *this eerie setting* makes no sense. Sentence 7 also logically follows sentence 5—it is the example of suspense building mentioned in the previous sentence. Sentence 6 should be after sentence 7. If it appears anywhere else in the paragraph, it causes confusion, because *he* could refer to Poe, the young man, or the elderly man.