READING AND WRITING ASSESSMENT

# Grammar and punctuation checklist

Correct grammar and punctuation are part of how your writing is scored. Use this checklist to proofread your practice responses.

## Sentences

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|---|---|
| **Complete sentences** | Every sentence has a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought.<br>Fragment: Because the author rereads the passage.<br>Fixed: Because the author rereads the passage, she notices new details. |
| **No run-ons or comma splices** | Join two complete sentences with a period, a semicolon, or a comma followed by *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, or *yet*.<br>Comma splice: The passage is short, it makes a strong claim.<br>Fixed: The passage is short, but it makes a strong claim. |
| **Subject-verb agreement** | A plural subject takes a plural verb.<br>The details in the passage change the meaning. |
| **Clear pronouns** | Each *he*, *she*, *it*, *they*, or *this* points to one clear noun. |
| **Consistent tense** | When you write about what an author says, use the present tense: "The author argues." |

## Punctuation

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|---|---|
| **Introductory comma** | Put a comma after an opening word or phrase.<br>For this reason, the author rereads the text. |
| **Commas in a list** | Separate three or more items with commas, including one before the final *and*.<br>clarity, organization, and grammar |
| **Apostrophes** | Use them for possession and contractions, never for plurals.<br>the author's claim (one author) · the authors (more than one) |
| **Quotation marks** | In American usage, periods and commas go inside the closing quotation mark. |
| **Semicolon** | Joins two closely related complete sentences. |
| **Colon** | Follows a complete sentence and introduces a list or an explanation. |

## Commonly confused words

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|---|---|
| **its · it's** | *its* shows possession; *it's* means "it is" or "it has." |
| **their · there · they're** | belonging to them · a place · "they are" |
| **your · you're** | belonging to you · "you are" |
| **than · then** | a comparison · a time or sequence |
| **affect · effect** | usually a verb, to influence · usually a noun, a result |
| **whose · who's** | belonging to whom · "who is" or "who has" |

## How to proofread

1. Read your response aloud, slowly.
2. Check for one kind of error at a time.
3. To catch spelling errors, read the last sentence first and work backward.
4. Confirm that every sentence has a subject and a verb.