

# ACT English / SAT Writing Rules

## Grammar

1. Shorter is better.
2. Being = WRONG
3. Period = Semicolon = Comma + and/but
4. Colon = Dash; 2 commas = 2 dashes = non-essential clause (can be removed without changing the meaning of sentence)
5. It's, their = possessive; it's = it is; they're = they are; there = a place.
6. Colon = list or explanation. There must be a complete sentence before but not necessarily after.
7. All items in a list must match (noun, noun, noun or verb, verb, verb)
8. Comma before preposition = WRONG
9. Comma + *it, this, he, she, they* usually = comma splice = WRONG
10. Than = comparison; then = next
11. Singular **verbs** end in -s, plural **verbs** do not end in -s (e.g. *she reads, they read*)
12. *This, that, these, and those* should be followed by a noun.
13. No comma before or after preposition, or the word *that*
14. Could/would/should/Might HAVE, not Of
15. *Who* is for people, *which* is for things, *where* is for places (e.g. *the time/book where* = WRONG)
16. Use *who* before a verb (*who went*, NOT *whom went*); use *whom* after a preposition (e.g. *by whom*, NOT *by who*)
17. Keep pronouns consistent: one = one; you = you; a person = he or she; people = they
18. Transition questions: cross out the transition and determine the relationship (continue, contradict, cause-and-effect) between the two sentences / parts of a sentence BEFORE you look at the answer choices
19. Insert / Delete: reread the surrounding sentences and state the topic **in your own words** before checking the answers. If the sentence is directly relevant to that topic, it belongs. If not, it doesn't belong.

**Remember: before you choose and answer, plug it back into the passage to make sure that it works. An answer that makes perfect grammatical sense on its own may create a serious error when considered in context of the passage.**