

SENTENCE SKILLS

STUDY GUIDE FOR THE ACCUPLACER (CPT)

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The following sample questions are similar to the format and content of questions on the Accuplacer Sentence Skills test. Reviewing these samples will give you a good idea of how the test works and just what grammar, punctuation, and sentence skills you may wish to review before taking the test itself. Our purposes in providing you with this information are twofold: one, we want you to do the best you can; and two, we do not want the format of the test itself to interfere with your thinking about your answers. **We suggest four test-taking strategies:**

1. **Take your time.** The test is not timed. Relax and choose answers carefully without worrying about the clock ticking.
2. **Read carefully.** Be sure to understand exactly what each question requires.
3. **Think carefully.** The test requires one to complete or substitute information for parts of given sentences. Response should reflect clear language use.
4. **Write before choosing an answer.** Use scratch paper to experiment with answers. Be sure to understand the given options before answering.

THE SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Questions on the test ask you to rewrite sentences such as the following. You will be told what changes your new sentence should contain. Your new sentence should be grammatically correct and have essentially the same meaning as the original.

Sample #1 Writing a best seller had earned the author a sum of money and had freed him from the necessity of selling his pen for the political purposes of others.

Rewrite, beginning with, "The author was not obliged". The new sentence will include;

- A) consequently he earned
- B) because he had earned
- C) by earning
- D) as a means of earning

Analysis of Sample #1: In the above sample, you must rewrite the sentence to begin; The author was not obliged. To decide how to do the job, look at the meaning of the original sentence: What was the author "obliged" to do? The sentence says he was faced with "the necessity of selling his pen," etc. Therefore, this necessity was his obligation.

To retain this main idea, your new sentence must begin with "The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others..." But you must now complete the sentence to explain **why** he was not so obliged. To do so, test all four options (A through D) to see which fits your main clause best in both grammar and meaning. Write your options out! Don't just jump at the first version you think sounds good!

A. The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others "consequently he earned" a sum of money by writing a best seller.

Note that this sentence makes little sense because his earning the money is not a "consequence" of his lack of obligation but rather the "cause" of it. Besides, the structure creates a run-on sentence, which is grammatically incorrect.

B. The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others "because he had earned" a sum of money by writing a best seller.

This version makes more sense because earning the money is in fact the "cause" of his not needing to sell his pen, and the sentence is grammatically correct.

C. The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others "by earning" a sum of money by writing a best seller.

At first glance, this sentence may seem to make sense, but "was not obliged...by earning" makes little sense and only clumsily conveys the idea.

D. The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others "as a means of earning" a sum of money by writing a best seller.

This sentence also makes no sense because not selling his pen is not a means of earning money but rather a result of such earning.

Therefore, of the four choices, "B" is clearly the best.

NOW YOU TRY ONE!

Sample #2 (Like Sample #1, you are asked to rewrite the original sentence.) In the modern world, groups of people living thousands of miles apart may still be dependent on each other politically, culturally, and economically.

Change "people living" to "people may live." Your new sentence will include;

- A) apart and still be dependent
- B) apart so as to be dependent still
- C) apart, they are still dependent
- D) apart, but would still be dependent

Questions such as the previous ask you to select the best version of the underlined part of the sentence. The first choice given is always the same as the original, and it may be the best choice given. Therefore the answer is "A"

Sample #3 (In this sample, you must examine four versions of the same sentence to determine which one is grammatically correct.)

Jose wanted to study he tried to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

- A) Jose wanted to study he tried to keep
- B) Jose wanted to study, he tried to keep
- C) Because he wanted to study, Jose tried to keep
- D) Jose wanting to study, and trying to keep

A. Jose wanted to study he tried to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

This version places two independent clauses together with no separating punctuation. Therefore, version A is a run-on sentence, which is not correct.

B. Jose wanted to study, he tried to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

This version places two independent clauses together with only a comma to separate them, creating a comma splice, which is grammatically incorrect.

C. Because he wanted to study, Jose tried to keep to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

In this version, the opening clause has been changed from an independent (main) clause to a dependent (subordinate) clause introduced by the subordinating conjunction "Because". Therefore, we no longer see two main clauses strung together incorrectly. The subordinate clause is correctly separated from the following main cause by a comma, so this version of the sentence is correct.

D. Jose wanting to study, and trying to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

You notice that in this version, the past tense verbs "wanted" and "tried" have been changed to "-ing" verbs. But "wanting" and "trying" by themselves do not create a definite time frame for the actions. The word "trying" could be taken to mean "is trying," "was trying", "has been trying," "will be trying," etc. Each of these verb structures indicates a different time frame So an -ing verb form by itself is not a COMPLETE verb; it requires a helping verb to fix the time of the action. Therefore, the verb structures in version D are incomplete, and the sentence is thus an incorrect fragment.

Therefore, version "C" is the only correct choice here.

HERE ARE MORE SAMPLES TO CHECK YOUR SKILLS:

Sample #4 "Predictions twenty years ago" that the phonograph record was about to become obsolete have proven to be true.

- A) Predictions twenty years ago that
- B) Predictions twenty years ago,
- C) Twenty years ago, predictions that
- D) Predictions, twenty years ago

The answer is "A"

Sample #5 "When you move out of an apartment before the contract expires, this" is an example of breaking a lease.

- A) When you move out of an apartment before the contract expires, this
- B) You move out of an apartment before the contract expires, this
- C) Moving out of an apartment before the contract expires
- D) The fact that you move out of an apartment before the contract expires

The answer is "C"

Sample #6 "Knocked to his knees, the quarterback looked" as if he were in pain.

- A) Knocked to his knees, the quarterback looked
- B) The quarterback was knocked to his knees, looked
- C) The quarterback looked knocked to his knees
- D) The quarterback, looking knocked to his knees,

The answer is "A"

Sample #7 "Yesterday the President announced that he would retire from political life, to amazed reporters."

- A) Yesterday the President announced that he would retire from political life, to amazed reporters.
- B) Yesterday the President announced that he would retire from political life, amazing reporters.
- C) The President, to the amazement of reporters, announced that he would retire from political life yesterday.
- D) Yesterday the President announced to amazed reporters that he would retire from political life.

The answer is "D"

OSU-OKMULGEE SENTENCE SKILLS REVIEW

This review tests your understanding of sentence structure—of how sentences are put together and what makes a sentence complete and clear.

There are 20 questions on this review.

Before you begin, work the two sample questions to get the feel of the instructions. The correct answers are indicated.

Some questions on the review will ask you to select the best version of the underlined part of the sentence. The first choice is the same as the original. If you think the original sentence is best, choose the first one, for example,

Sample 1: Mr. Wilson "planning" to teach a course in physics next fall.

- a. planning
- b. are planning
- c. with a plan
- d. plans

The correct answer is "D"

The revised sentence should read "Mr. Wilson plans to teach a course in physics next fall." In other questions, the review will ask you to think through the sentences and the answer choices for a good revision. A new sentence beginning is provided. Your new sentence should be well written and should have basically the same meaning as the original sentence.

Sample 2: Rewrite the following: Using the spell checker, she eliminated a number of errors on her paper.

Rewrite, beginning with "She eliminated a number of errors on her paper." The next words will be

- a. on account of she used
- b. by her using
- c. because she used
- d. being as she was using

The correct answer is "C." The rewritten sentence should read, "She eliminated a number of errors on her paper because she used the spell checker."

For the first three problems, select the answer that is the best version of the underlined part of the sentence. The

first choice is the same as the original. If you think the original sentence is best, choose the first one.

1. Working as a receptionist for my uncle's business taught me to handle customer complaints, answering the telephone, and how to maintain a Rolodex.

- a. to handle customer complaints, answering the telephone, and how to maintain a Rolodex.
- b. how to handle customer complaints, answering the telephone, and maintaining a Rolodex.
- c. how to handle customer complaints, how to answer the telephone, and how to maintain a Rolodex.
- d. handling customer complaints, answering the telephone, and maintenance of a Rolodex.

2. Judy is dating a man that has a seven hundred-acre ranch near the foothills outside of town.

- a. a man that has a seven hundred-acre ranch near the foothills outside of town.
- b. a man, that has a seven hundred-acre ranch near the foothills outside of town.
- c. a man, who has a seven hundred-acre ranch near the foothills outside of town.
- d. a man who has a seven hundred-acre ranch near the foothills outside of town.

3. These books, which was published in the late eighteenth century, are very valuable.

- a. books, which was published in the late eighteenth century
- b. books in the late eighteenth century
- c. books, which were published in the late eighteenth century
- d. books, which is published, in the late eighteenth century

For the following three problems, think through the sentences for a good revision. A new sentence beginning is provided. Your new sentence should be well written and should have basically the same meaning as the original sentence.

4. The hikers were at the bottom of the canyon, and they discovered an abandoned mineshaft.

Rewrite, beginning with "After the hikers were"

The next words will be;

- a. at the bottom of the canyon, and they discovered an abandoned mineshaft.
- b. at the bottom of the canyon, they discovered an abandoned mineshaft.
- c. at the bottom of the canyon they discovered an abandoned mineshaft.
- d. at the bottom of the canyon when they discovered an abandoned mineshaft.

5. Good money managers control their present expenses, and they invest surplus dollars to meet their future needs.

Rewrite the sentence using "because"

The best choice will be;

- a. Good money managers, because they control their present expenses, they invest surplus dollars to meet their future needs.
- b. Because good money managers control their present expenses, they invest surplus dollars to meet their needs.
- c. Because good money managers control their present expenses they invest surplus dollars to meet their needs.
- d. Good money managers control their present expenses, because they invest surplus dollars to meet their future needs.

6. In a large city, you may have massive traffic jams on your daily commute to work.

Rewrite this sentence omitting you.

- a. In a large city, a person may have massive traffic jams on your daily commute to work.
- b. In a large city, a resident may have massive traffic jams on his daily commute to work.
- c. In a large city, massive traffic jams may be part of the daily commute to work.
- d. In a large city, massive traffic jams may be part of the everyday commute on the way to work.

In the next three problems, select the best version of the underlined part of the sentence. The first choice is the same as the original. If you think the original sentence is best, choose the first one.

7. Panting, the cab pulled away just as Judy arrived.

- a. Panting, the cab pulled away
- b. The cab pulled away panting
- c. The cab pulled away
- d. The cab, panting, pulled away

8. We could watch the stars sitting on the balcony.

- a. sitting on the balcony
- b. Sitting on the balcony, the stars
- c. on the balcony, sitting
- d. Sitting on the balcony,

9. If a person wants to succeed in school, they have to study.

- a. they have to study.
- b. he or she has to study.
- c. they has to study.
- d. he or she have to study.

For the following three problems, think through the sentences for a good revision. A new sentence beginning is provided. Your new sentence should be well written and should have basically the same meaning as the original sentence.

10. We ordered lobster since it was our anniversary.

Rewrite, beginning with "Since it was our anniversary". The new sentence should read;

- a. Since it was our anniversary; we ordered lobster.
- b. Since it was our anniversary, we ordered lobster.
- c. Since it was our anniversary we ordered lobster.
- d. Since it was our anniversary, and we ordered lobster.

11. Tornadoes are winds which rotate in a counterclockwise direction and look like a funnel at the bottom of a cloud, as anyone who is familiar with Oklahoma weather knows.

Rewrite, beginning with "Anyone who is familiar with". Your new sentence will include

- a. knowing tornadoes
- b. and knows tornadoes
- c. has knowledge of tornadoes
- d. knows that tornadoes

12. Our supervisor, Betty White, handles all of the personnel problems that arise because she is an extremely diplomatic person in working with people.

Rewrite, beginning with "Being extremely diplomatic in working with people,". The next words would be

- a. all of the personnel problems
- b. our supervisor, Betty White,
- c. and that
- d. problems arising with personnel

In the next three problems, select the best version of the underlined part of the sentence. The first choice is the same as the original. If you think the original sentence is best, choose the first one.

13. Chief Harriman was invited to our safety meeting, he can demonstrate the correct use of fire extinguishers.

- a. Chief Harriman was invited to our safety meeting, he can demonstrate the correct use of fire extinguishers.
- b. Chief Harriman was invited to our safety meeting, therefore, he can demonstrate the correct use of fire extinguishers.
- c. Chief Harriman was invited to our safety meeting; therefore to demonstrate the correct use of fire extinguishers.
- d. Chief Harriman was invited to our safety meeting so that he can demonstrate the correct use of fire extinguishers.

14. Coming in from Fourth Street, the Student Union is seen by students who are arriving on campus.

- a. Student Union is seen by students who are arriving on campus.
- b. students who are arriving on campus see the Student Union.
- c. the students having seen the Student Union are arriving on campus.
- d. the Student Union is being seen by students who are arriving on campus.

15. Because modern machinery can function unattended, the unemployment rate may increase, this could possibly cause the poverty rate to be higher.

- a. this could possibly cause the poverty rate to be higher.
- b. possibly causing a higher poverty rate.
- c. the possible raising of the poverty rate will be the result
- d. this causes the poverty rate to increase.

For the following four problems, think through the sentences for a good revision. A new sentence beginning is provided. Your new sentence should be well written and should have basically the same meaning as the original sentence.

16. Due to the fact it was raining on the scheduled day of the picnic, the drama club had to cancel and reschedule a new date for the event.

Rewrite, beginning with "The drama club had to"

The next words should be

- a. due to the fact it was raining on the scheduled day of the picnic, cancel and reschedule a new date for the event.
- b. reschedule the picnic because of rain.
- c. cancel the picnic and reschedule it because of rain
- d. reschedule a new date for the picnic because it was canceled due to rain.

17. While it was raining, we decided to play cards.

Rewrite, beginning with "We decided to play"

The next words should be

- a. cards while it was raining
- b. cards, while it was raining.
- c. cards; while it was raining.
- d. cards; but while it was raining.

18. While we were in Illinois, we visited General Grant's home.

Rewrite, beginning with "We visited General Grant's"

The next words should be

- a. home, it is in Illinois.
- b. home, and it is in Illinois.
- c. home; in Illinois.
- d. home visiting in Illinois.

19. Tornadoes are made up of winds with speeds of 30 or 40 miles an hour or higher, and they cause the most deaths.

Rewrite, beginning with "Because tornadoes are made up of winds with speeds of 30 or 40 miles an hour or higher,"

The next words should be

- a. and they cause the most deaths.
- b. causing the most deaths.
- c. the tornadoes causing the most deaths.
- d. they cause the most deaths.

In the next problem, select the best version of the underlined part of the sentence. The first choice is the same as the original. If you think the original sentence is best, choose the first one.

20. If you want to create a beautiful room, having a large sum of money is not nearly as important to the finished setting as is the knowledge of basic decorating.

- a. as is the knowledge of basic decorating.
- b. as knowing the basics of decorating.
- c. but the knowledge of basic decorating.
- d. like the knowledge of basic decorating.

ENGLISH REVIEW ANSWER SHEET

- 1. **c.** Parallel form is needed for expressing similar ideas. Repeating "how to" with each action accomplishes this.
- 2. **d.** When referring to a person or people, use the relative pronoun "who." Since the clause beginning with "who" is essential to the meaning of the sentence, a comma is unnecessary. The reader needs to know "who" Judy is dating.

3. **c.** Use “were” for subject-verb agreement. “Which” is plural because it refers to “books.”
4. **b.** Introductory dependent clauses need a comma to set them off from the main clause. Sentences beginning with “after, when, if as, before, because, etc.” usually need a comma after the introductory dependent clause.
5. **b.** Sometimes sentences contain ideas that are unequal. If one idea explains the other, it is put in a subordinate (lesser) position. This idea should be expressed in a subordinate clause. A dependent clause at the beginning of a sentence must be followed by a comma.
6. **c.** Avoid using ambiguous references to “you.” Also, construct sentences for clarity. People don’t have traffic jams; cars do.
7. **c.** A misplaced modifier is a word or word group that is improperly separated from the word it modifies making the sentence sound awkward, ridiculous, or confusing. An introductory verbal must modify the subject.
8. **d.** Modifiers should be close to the word they modify; otherwise, they are misplaced (see #7).
9. **b.** A pronoun must agree in number with the antecedent (word it modifies). “Person” is singular; “they” is plural and this causes a shift in number. To avoid sexist language, both “he” and “she” are used to refer to “person” since “person” is not gender-specific.
10. **b.** When a dependent clause introduces a sentence, a comma is needed after the clause.
11. **d.** The new sentence upgrades the dependent clause “as anyone...knows” to an independent clause “Anyone ...knows.” The new sentence includes “knows that tornadoes are”—subordinating the main idea, “Tornadoes are winds....”
12. **b.** The dependent clause has been reduced to an introductory verbal phrase modifying the subject.
13. **d.** This sentence contains the error of a comma splice (two independent clauses separated by a comma only). One way to correct this is to subordinate a clause. When the dependent clause is at the end of a sentence, a comma is usually not necessary.
14. **b.** An introductory verbal phrase must modify the subject of the sentence.
15. **b.** The last two clauses contain a comma splice. To correct this, the last clause can be reduced to a verbal phrase modifying “increase.”
16. **b.** Avoid unnecessary words which can jumble the flow of the sentence.
17. **a.** When an independent clause is followed by a dependent clause, a comma is usually unnecessary.
18. **b.** Two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, so, or, for, nor, yet) need a comma after the first clause.
19. **d.** When a dependent clause introduces the sentence, a comma is needed after the clause.
20. **b.** For clarity, use parallel wording: “having a large sum of money...knowing the basics of decorating.”

ENGLISH REVIEW ANALYSIS

If you missed	Study
1, 20	Parallel Form
2, 9	Pronoun Reference
3	Subject - Verb Agreement
4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 19	Dependent Clauses, Subordinating Ideas and Sentence Structure
6	Clarity
7, 8	Misplaced Modifiers
13, 15	Comma Splices
14	Verbal Phrases (Introductory)
16	Wordiness
18	Punctuating Compound Sentences