



# Boundaries · Punctuation · Agreement

From case study: 98 Q · 79✓ · 19✗

SEC ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ 5/7 Medium ← #1 gap

Algebra 6/7 · Craft/Expr 6/7 · others 7/7

## Sentence boundaries (highest yield)

| Error        | Pattern                           | Legal fixes                               |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Comma splice | IC , IC                           | . ; , FANBOYS · make one clause dependent |
| Run-on       | IC IC (no mark)                   | Same as splice fixes                      |
| Fragment     | Missing S/V or incomplete thought | Attach to neighbor or complete            |
| Fake join    | IC , however IC                   | Need ; however, or period                 |

### Independent clause (IC) test

- Can the words stand alone as a sentence? Yes → IC
- Dependent: although / because / when / which / that / -ing opener without main clause
- Conjunctive adverbs (however, therefore, moreover, etc.)

## Punctuation decision tree

| Mark      | Use when                                   | 1600 trap                                  |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Period    | Two ICs                                    | Leaving a fragment after the period        |
| , FANBOYS | IC + and/but/or/nor/for/so/yet + IC        | FANBOYS joining IC to fragment             |
| ;         | Related ICs; or IC ; however, IC           | ; before a dependent clause                |
| :         | After complete IC → list / explain / quote | Colon after “such as” / incomplete lead-in |
| —         | Emphatic aside                             | Mixing dash with comma on same aside       |
| ,         | Lists; intros; nonessential;               | Commas around                              |

## Subject–verb & pronouns

- Ignore prep phrases: *The list of requirements is...*
- Neither/nor, either/or → verb agrees with nearer subject
- Collective nouns: usually singular on Digital SAT unless members act separately
- There is/are → verb agrees with the real subject after
- Pronoun: clear single antecedent; match number
- Ambiguous “it/they/this” pointing to 2 nouns → rewrite
- Who = subject (he); whom = object (him)
- Its / it’s · whose / who’s — possessive has no apostrophe in its/whose

## Modifiers · parallelism · comparisons

- Opening phrase must describe the **next noun**
- *Running late, Jordan missed the bus. (not “the bus”)*
- Lists: same grammatical form (to measure, to record, to report)
- Comparisons: like with like — higher than **Sam’s**, not than Sam
- as...as for equality; than for inequality
- Idioms: interested **in**; responsible **for**; differ **from**; prefer X **to** Y

**Verb tense:** stay consistent unless a time cue shifts (In 1900 she published... Today scholars argue...).

## Medium-difficulty miss killers (this profile)

- ☐ Chose a comma between two ICs
- ☐ “Fixed” grammar but broke agreement
- ☐ Wrapped essential info in commas
- ☐ Trusted “sounds fancy” transition inside a grammar item
- ☐ Who/whom by ear instead of he/him test
- ☐ It’s vs its under time pressure
- ☐ Parallelism broken by the longest option
- ☐ Didn’t read past the blank to the period



# Drill plan · Rhetoric bridge · Checklist

## 10-day SEC sprint (repeat until 7/7)

| Day  | Focus                               | Exit criteria                   |
|------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1–2  | Comma splices / run-ons / fragments | 10/10 untimed boundary items    |
| 3    | ;; — and however/therefore          | Explain each mark aloud         |
| 4–5  | S–V agreement + pronouns            | 0 misses on intervening phrases |
| 6    | Modifiers + parallelism             | Spot dangling opener every time |
| 7    | Essential/nonessential commas       | that/which intuition stable     |
| 8    | Mixed timed SEC (20 Q)              | ≥90% · note remaining traps     |
| 9–10 | Only error-log trap families        | 3 clean clones each trap        |

## Bridge: Craft & Expression (6/7 → 7/7)

### Words in context

- Cover blank → predict meaning + tone
- Plug each choice; reject polarity mismatches
- Academic precision > casual near-synonym

### Purpose / structure

- Ask why the sentence is here (introduce, exemplify, contrast, concede, conclude)
- Signal words: however, indeed, for example, ultimately

### Transitions & concision

- Name relation: contrast / cause / add / example / sequence
- Shorter wins only if meaning stays complete

## Transition bank

- **Contrast:** however, nevertheless, although, whereas, instead
- **Cause:** therefore, thus, consequently, hence
- **Add:** furthermore, moreover, also
- **Example:** for example, specifically, namely
- **Concession:** granted, even so, admittedly

## Expression traps

- Fancy transition that reverses logic
- Shorter option that deletes needed meaning
- True detail that doesn't answer the ask
- Tone mismatch (slang in academic prose)
- Synthesis note that ignores the assigned goal

## SEC 30-second checklist

- ☐ Full sentence read?
- ☐ ICs identified?
- ☐ Subject found (ignore junk)?
- ☐ New error introduced?
- ☐ “No Change” still possible?
- ☐ Elimination left one clear winner?

## Pair with CertStud practice

- Drill SEC-tagged questions until Medium SEC misses = 0
- Then mix Craft + Expression under time
- Re-take a full R&W section; demand 7/7 SEC bars
- General R&W sheet: /pdfs/sat-reading-writing-cheatsheet.pdf
- This sheet: print & mark a personal trap list in the margin
- Strategy sheet: keep the 4-week calendar visible