

## Focus for Editing and Revising

### Student Resource

Good writing has many characteristics, but some that are “tested” are consistency, logic, conventions, and clarity and precision. The list below outlines some of the areas of which students need to be aware when writing or taking standardized tests.

Consistency	
<p><b>Verb Tense:</b> Verb tenses should be consistent—no shifting from past to present or present to past.</p>	<p><b>Example:</b> The first little pig built his house with straw, but the third little pig <u>builds</u> his house with bricks. Better: <i>built</i> (Both verbs should be past tense.)</p>
<p><b>Parallelism:</b> Parallel construction is always the preferred form.</p>	<p><b>Example:</b> Goldilocks ate the porridge, sat in the chairs, and <u>was able to sleep in the bed</u>. Better: <i>slept in the bed</i> (Parallelism is created with the verbs <i>ate</i>, <i>sat</i>, and <i>slept</i>.)</p>
<p><b>Pronoun Reference:</b> Pronouns must agree with their antecedents.</p>	<p><b>Example:</b> If anybody wants to read a great story, <u>they</u> should get a copy of <i>Grimm’s Fairy Tales</i>. Better: <i>he</i> or <i>she</i> (<i>Anybody</i>, the antecedent of <i>they</i>, is singular.)</p>
<p><b>Subject-Verb Agreement:</b> Subjects and verbs must agree in number. Some problems occur with inverted structures or the separation of subject and verb (especially by prepositional phrases) and with indefinite pronouns.</p>	<p><b>Example:</b> Cinderella’s two stepsisters and stepmother <u>makes</u> her work from dawn until dusk. Better: <i>make</i> (The compound subject <i>two stepsisters and stepmother</i> requires a plural verb.)</p>
Logical Expression	
<p><b>Faulty Subordination:</b> Use correct conjunctions to convey the proper cause/effect relationship. Correlating conjunctions must include both parts.</p>	<p><b>Example:</b> <u>Unless</u> the wicked queen questions the mirror on the wall, Snow White is discovered by the Seven Dwarves. Better: <i>after</i> (The relationship between the two clauses is one of time rather than condition.) <b>Example:</b> The Seven Dwarves <u>not only</u> find Snow White <u>but</u> let her live with them. Better: <i>not only, but also</i> (Include both parts of the correlative conjunction.)</p>
<p><b>Misplaced or incorrect modifiers:</b> Introductory participial phrases must modify the subject.  Modifiers should not be “misplaced” in a sentence so that what is being modified is unclear.</p>	<p><b>Example:</b> The Beast returns to the castle where he keeps Beauty imprisoned, <u>dying slowly from a wicked curse</u>. <i>Dying slowly from a wicked curse</i>, the Beast returns to the castle where he keeps Beauty imprisoned. (Placement of the phrase in the first sentence creates confusion; it seems as if Beauty is dying from a wicked curse.)</p>

Conventions	
<b>Pronoun Case:</b> Objective and nominative cases must be used correctly.	<b>Example:</b> Between you and <u>I</u> , the story of Hansel and Gretel is too frightening for young children. Better: <i>me</i> (The object of the pronoun <i>between</i> must be in objective case.)
<b>Comparison of Modifiers:</b> Comparative and superlative forms must be used correctly.	<b>Example:</b> The <u>warmest</u> of the two bowls of porridge belonged to Papa Bear. Better: <i>warmer</i> (Only two items are compared.) <b>Example:</b> <i>Snow White</i> has the <u>most scariest</u> villain of all the fairy tales. Better: <i>scariest</i> (Use only one superlative form.)
<b>Sentence Fragment:</b> Sentences must have a subject and a verb. Often sentence fragments result because an incorrect verb form is used as a verb rather than as a verbal.	<b>Example:</b> Little Red Riding Hood <u>escaping</u> from the Big Bad Wolf after she reaches grandma’s house. Better: <i>escapes</i> (“Escaping” is a participle, not a verb here.)
<b>Comma Splice:</b> Punctuate compound sentences correctly with a comma and a conjunction, a semicolon, or a period.	<b>Example:</b> Ariel, the little mermaid, is a princess who lives in the ocean, <u>she</u> longs to be human. Better: <i>Ariel, the little mermaid, is a princess who lives in the ocean, <u>but</u> she longs to be human.</i>
Clarity and Precision	
<b>Ambiguity:</b> Pronoun use must be clear; avoid using vague or remote antecedents.	<b>Example:</b> <u>It</u> has a happy ending. Better: <i>Snow White</i> has a happy ending. (There is nothing to indicate what “it” is.)
<b>Poor Word Choice:</b> Use the word that is intended, not just one that sounds similar.	<b>Example:</b> The house built of straw was not very <u>affective</u> in keeping out the wolf. Better: <i>effective</i> ( <i>Effective</i> is the preferred adjective form.)
<b>Wordiness:</b> Avoid the use of unnecessary words, especially redundant ones.	<b>Example:</b> Cinderella’s fairy godmother, <u>she who is able to grant Cinderella’s wishes</u> , warns the girl to leave the ball before midnight. Better: <i>able to grant Cinderella’s wishes</i> (Delete unnecessary words.)
<b>Improper Modification:</b> Use the adverb form to modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Avoid using ambiguous modifiers.	<b>Example:</b> The wicked stepsisters act <u>hateful and selfish</u> toward Cinderella. Better: <i>hatefully and selfishly</i>
<b>Passive Voice:</b> Active voice is usually more effective.	<b>Example:</b> In most fairy tales, <u>evil is defeated by good</u> . Better: In most fairy tales, <i>good</i> defeats <i>evil</i> .