ENGLISH COMPOSITION · STUDY GUIDE

Exam 6 Study Guide

This guide covers chapters 11 and 12. First you will learn a repeatable edit for style: put the actor in the subject and the action in the verb, cut by category, order sentences old to new, and put the point where readers look for it. Then you will triage grammar and mechanics: the short list of errors that change meaning or cost credibility, and the long list of "rules" you can stop worrying about. Work one chapter at a time. Read the "what to know" paragraphs, copy the tables by hand, then try each worked case with the steps covered. Finish each chapter with its ten self-test items. The cram sheet at the end holds every pattern.

WHAT THIS GUIDE COVERS

- Chapter 11 · the two questions (who is the character, what is the action), nominalizations and when they help, the passive voice honestly, five kinds of clutter plus expletives and metadiscourse, the twenty percent drill, topic and stress positions, topic strings, transitions, sentence length, parallelism, subordination, academic register, hedges and intensifiers, jargon and the eight-pass edit.
- Chapter 12 · independent and dependent clauses, comma splices, fused sentences and fragments, five repairs and FANBOYS, subject-verb agreement, singular they, vague reference, misplaced and dangling modifiers, faulty parallelism, six comma patterns, semicolons, colons, dashes, apostrophes and quotation marks, shifts in tense, person and number, usage superstitions and the personal error inventory.

CHAPTER 11

Style, Clarity and Concision

Read it in full: **Chapter 11 in the textbook**. Practice it in the lab: **The Character & Action Bench** and **The Twenty Percent Drill**.

What to know

When a sentence feels heavy, ask two mechanical questions: who or what is the main **character**, and what is that character **doing**? English readers expect the character in the subject slot and the

action in the verb. "The determination of the cause of the medication errors was accomplished by the committee through an examination of dispensing records" becomes "The committee examined dispensing records to determine what caused the medication errors." Twenty words become twelve, but the point is structure. This is the organizing idea of Joseph Williams's book *Style*. Quick check: circle the first eight words of any sentence over about eighteen words; if they hold no concrete actor followed by a real verb, you found the problem.

A **nominalization** is a noun made from a verb or adjective (discuss becomes discussion). Nominalizations are ordinary English; the trouble is stacking them, because each drags a preposition behind it: "the implementation of the reduction of the utilization of restraints" is "the unit used fewer restraints." Watch for empty verbs like conduct, perform and make. Nominalizations earn their place when they refer back to a whole sentence ("This decision..."), name a concept as your topic, or compress something established.

In the **passive voice** the subject receives the action (be plus a past participle), and the agent can vanish. The blanket ban is too crude; linguist Geoffrey Pullum has shown that many sentences condemned as passive are not passive at all, and grammar checkers inherit the confusion. Usable rule: the passive is a problem when it deletes an agent the reader needs ("Errors were made"). It is fine when the agent is unknown, irrelevant or obvious, or when it lets a sentence open with familiar information. Lab methods sections traditionally favor the passive; APA 7 recommends the active voice and permits first person for your own work.

"Omit needless words" (William Strunk Jr., *The Elements of Style*) only works with categories you can search for: **empty modifiers** (basically, actually, really, very), **doubled words** (each and every, first and foremost), **redundant modifiers** (past experiences, future plans), **redundant categories** (pink in color, large in size) and **long phrases for one word** (due to the fact that = because; at this point in time = now; in order to = to). Also audit **expletive** openers (there is, it is) and heavy **metadiscourse** ("This paper will attempt to argue that"). The **twenty percent drill**: cut a paragraph by twenty percent without losing an idea. Realistic gains on real prose are fifteen to twenty-five percent. Concision is not unlimited: a qualifier or second example is not padding. Below a word minimum, add evidence, not adjectives.

Flow is an ordering problem. Open each sentence in the **topic position** with information the reader already has and close in the **stress position** with what is new (George Gopen and Judith Swan argued this for scientific prose in 1990). Keep a steady **topic string**: read only the grammatical subjects and see whether they belong to one family. A transition is a promise about a relationship; if the relationship is not there, the word misleads. Placing however after the subject is often smoother; however cannot join two clauses with only a comma. Diagnose choppiness by reading the first five or six words of each sentence.

Emphasis is engineered. Readers stress the last words, so end on the point and move trailing attributions, dates and which-clauses forward. Vary length: after a sentence of twenty-five words or more, one under about eleven words reads as emphatic, so save it for what you most want remembered. **Parallelism** gives matching ideas matching grammar; test by attaching the shared word to each item. **Coordination** joins equals; **subordination** demotes one idea so the main clause carries your claim. "Although the effect was large, the sample was small" stresses caution; flip it and it stresses the finding.

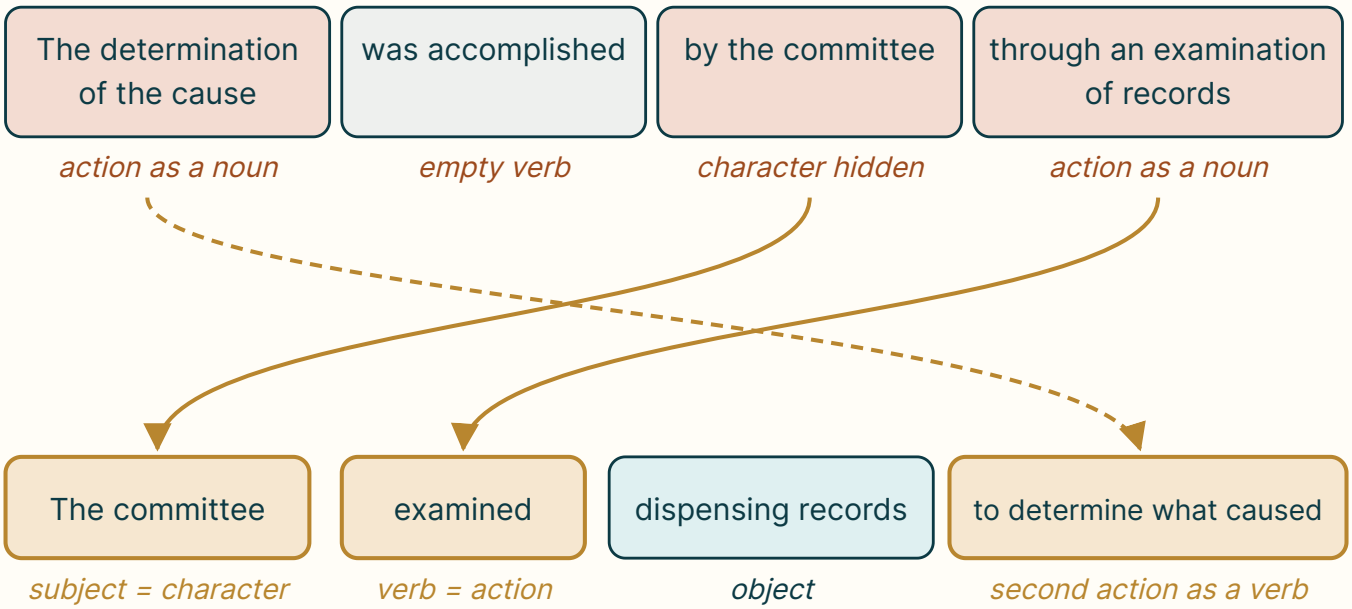
Register is formality. Academic register is formal, not inflated: use for utilize, help for facilitate, before for prior to. Some questions are unsettled and depend on the assignment: contractions, first person (APA recommends it for your own work) and singular they (endorsed by APA and most current guides). Calibrate certainty: **hedges** (may, suggests, in this sample) limit claims; **intensifiers** (clearly, obviously) inflate them and often substitute for evidence. Reporting verbs sit on a ladder: proves, demonstrates, shows, indicates, suggests, hints at. Choose the rung the source reached.

Jargon is efficient among specialists and a barrier to a general reader. Define a term on first use, then use the same term consistently; **elegant variation** is a defect in explanation. Edit in narrow passes: structure, characters and actions, openings, endings, cutting, calibration, register and terms, proofreading. Change the font or print the page; read aloud or have a device read it to you. Treat grammar-checker style flags as questions, and do not accept a change you cannot explain.

LOCK THESE IN

- Character = subject; action = verb. Check the first eight words.
- Unstack nominalizations; turn conduct, perform, make into real verbs.
- Passive is a problem only when it hides an agent the reader needs.
- Five clutter categories: empty modifiers, doubled words, redundant modifiers, redundant categories, long phrases.
- Old information in the topic position; new in the stress position.
- A short sentence after a long one is emphatic; save it for the point.
- Main clause = your claim; subordinate clause = your concession.
- Match the reporting verb to the evidence: proves > shows > indicates > suggests.

Before: 20 words, no actor in the subject, no action in the verb



After: 12 words, character = subject, action = verb

Check the first eight words of any long sentence: is there an actor followed by a real verb?

The highest-yield edit. Find the main character and the main action, then put the character in the subject slot and the action in the verb. The nominalizations dissolve back into verbs.

Long phrases and their one-word jobs

Wordy phrase	Replace with	Wordy phrase	Replace with
due to the fact that	because	in the event that	if
at this point in time	now	has the ability to	can
in order to	to	a large number of	many
with regard to	about	take into consideration	consider
in spite of the fact that	although	prior to the start of	before
the majority of	most	make a decision about	decide

The edit in passes

Pass	The one question
1. Structure	Does each paragraph make one point, and do the points build?
2. Characters and actions	Is the main character the subject and the action the verb?
3. Openings	Do the first six words connect to the sentence before?
4. Endings	Does each sentence end on the words you want stressed?
5. Cutting	Can this paragraph lose fifteen percent without losing an idea?
6. Calibration	Is every claim stated exactly as strongly as the source supports?
7. Register and terms	Is every term defined once and used consistently?
8. Proofreading	Would it survive being read aloud, from the last sentence back?

Worked cases

WORKED CASE 1 · CHARACTERS AND ACTIONS ON ONE SENTENCE

Revise: "A review of the attendance policy was undertaken by the student senate, with the result being a recommendation for the elimination of the late penalty."

STEP 1 · FIND THE CHARACTER

The student senate, hidden in a by-phrase.

STEP 2 · FIND THE ACTIONS

Reviewed, recommended, eliminate: all buried in nouns (review, recommendation, elimination).

STEP 3 · SPOT THE EMPTY VERB

"Was undertaken" names no action.

STEP 4 · REBUILD

"The student senate reviewed the attendance policy and recommended eliminating the late penalty."

STEP 5 · COUNT AND CHECK

25 words became 13. **The first eight words now hold an actor and two real verbs.**

WORKED CASE 2 · THE TWENTY PERCENT DRILL BY CATEGORY

Cut by category: "It is important to note that, due to the fact that the majority of commuter students basically work each and every weekday, they are not able to attend office hours at this point in time." (35 words)

STEP 1 · EXPLETIVE AND METADISCOURSE

Delete "It is important to note that."

STEP 2 · LONG PHRASES

due to the fact that = because; the majority of = most; are not able to = cannot; at this point in time = now (or cut).

STEP 3 · EMPTY MODIFIERS AND DOUBLED WORDS

Delete "basically"; "each and every" = every.

STEP 4 · REBUILD

"Because most commuter students work every weekday, they cannot attend office hours." (12 words)

STEP 5 · CHECK FOR LOST MEANING

"At this point in time" may matter if hours could change; if so, keep "currently." **Stop cutting when you start removing content.**

WORKED CASE 3 · PUTTING THE CLAIM IN THE MAIN CLAUSE AND THE STRESS POSITION

Facts: the pilot cut wait times by half; it ran on only one campus. Write two versions, one stressing the finding and one stressing the caution, then fix this ending: "Wait times fell by half, which was what the

planners had hoped for."

STEP 1 · STRESS THE FINDING

"Although the pilot ran on only one campus, it cut wait times by half."

STEP 2 · STRESS THE CAUTION

"Although the pilot cut wait times by half, it ran on only one campus."

STEP 3 · SEE WHAT CHANGED

Nothing was added or removed. The main clause carries the claim the reader takes away.

STEP 4 · FIX THE TRAILING WHICH-CLAUSE

"As the planners had hoped, wait times fell by half." The point now lands in the stress position.

STEP 5 · THE RULE

Decide which half is your claim before you write the complex sentence.

TRAPS PEOPLE FALL INTO

- **Banning every passive.** Keep it when the agent is unknown, irrelevant or obvious, or when it helps flow.
- **Banning every nominalization.** They name concepts and refer back to whole sentences. Just do not stack them.
- **Cutting by feel.** Your own clutter looks necessary to you. Search by category.
- **Padding to hit a word count.** Inflation has a signature. Add evidence, not adjectives.
- **Pasting on "Additionally."** If the ideas are not additive, the word lies. Reorder first.
- **Ending on a trailing which-clause.** It gives away the stress position. Move the point last.
- **Reaching for the longer synonym.** Utilize is not more academic than use, and often less precise.
- **Swapping synonyms for a defined term.** Define once, then repeat the same term.

Chapter 11 self-test · ten items

1. What two questions does the chapter use to diagnose a heavy sentence?

A. How many words are in it, and can it be shorter?

B. Is the grammar correct, and is the spelling right?

C. Does it sound formal, and does it use the passive?

D. Who is the main character, and what is it doing?

D. Who is the main character, and what is it doing? Then check whether the character is the subject and the action is the verb.

2. Revise: "The committee conducted an investigation of the delay."

A. An investigation of the delay was conducted.

B. The committee did conduct a full investigation.

C. The committee investigated the delay.

D. There was an investigation by the committee.

C. The committee investigated the delay. The empty verb plus noun collapses into one real verb.

3. Which passive sentence hides an agent the reader needs?

A. The samples were refrigerated for twelve hours.

B. The second prize was awarded for her radium work.

C. The building was completed in 1962 by contractors.

D. Errors were made in the dosage calculation.

D. Errors were made in the dosage calculation. The reader needs to know who erred. In the others the agent is irrelevant or the passive aids flow.

4. "Pink in color" and "large in size" are examples of which kind of clutter?

A. Redundant categories
B. Empty modifiers
C. Doubled word pairs
D. Expletive openers

A. Redundant categories Pink is already a color and large is already a size.

5. What is a realistic word reduction from the twenty percent drill on real academic prose?

A. Fifteen to twenty-five percent
B. Fifty to seventy-five percent
C. One to five percent at most
D. Exactly ten percent each pass

A. Fifteen to twenty-five percent Stop when cutting starts removing content rather than packaging.

6. A draft is 400 words short of the minimum. What should you do?

A. Lengthen each sentence with longer stock phrases
B. Add "it is important to note" before claims
C. Add content such as a source or counterargument
D. Increase the font and margins slightly

C. Add content such as a source or counterargument Inflation is visible. Add evidence, examples or a stated limitation.

7. Where should new information go in a sentence?

A. At the start, in the topic position
B. At the end, in the stress position
C. In the middle, inside a long clause
D. In a footnote after the sentence

B. At the end, in the stress position Open with what the reader already has; close with what is new.

8. You read only a paragraph's subjects: Freud, a 1970 study, critics, the unconscious, textbooks. What did you find?

A. Too few transition words
B. A scattered topic string
C. A missing thesis statement
D. Faulty parallel structure

B. A scattered topic string Five unrelated subjects means the paragraph keeps changing the subject. Reorder; do not add connectors.

9. Which version stresses the caution rather than the finding?

A. Although the sample was small, the effect was large.
B. Although the effect was large, the sample was small.
C. The effect was large, and the sample was small.
D. The sample was small and the effect was large.

B. Although the effect was large, the sample was small. The main clause carries the point, so the limitation in the main clause is your claim.

10. Which reporting verb fits a single correlational study?

A. Suggests
B. Proves
C. Demonstrates
D. Establishes

A. Suggests Choose the rung of the certainty ladder the design actually reached.

CHAPTER 12

The Grammar and Mechanics That Actually Matter

Read it in full: **Chapter 12 in the textbook**. Practice it in the lab: **The Boundary Repair Shop** and **Move the Modifier**.

What to know

Most feared "rules" are harmless; a short list of errors does real damage: leaking sentence boundaries, pronouns pointing at nothing, misattached modifiers, drifting tense and misused apostrophes. In a chart or incident report, a changed meaning is a safety problem. An **independent clause** has a subject and verb and can stand alone. A **dependent clause** has both but leans on something, because it opens with a subordinating word (after, although, because, if, since, unless, until, when, whereas, while, whether, once, so that, even if) or a relative pronoun (who, which, that) doing that job. The five-second test: put "It is true that" in front. If it sounds complete, the clause is independent.

A **comma splice** joins two independent clauses with only a comma; a **fused sentence** (run-on) joins them with nothing. A run-on is not a long sentence; it can be eight words. Five repairs, each saying something different: a **period** (two separate facts), a **semicolon** (read them together), a **comma plus FANBOYS** (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so; names the relationship), **subordination** (ranks the ideas), or a **colon** if the second clause explains the first. However, therefore, moreover

and thus are **conjunctive adverbs**; they cannot join clauses with a comma. "The study was large, however the sample was not representative" is the most common splice in college writing.

A **fragment** is a piece of a sentence punctuated as a whole one. Five common shapes: an orphaned dependent clause, an -ing phrase mistaken for a clause, a detached example, a missing verb, and a loose relative clause. Good writers use fragments on purpose for emphasis; the difference is whether the reader can tell you meant it. Some instructors forbid them in formal prose, which is defensible; ask early.

Subject-verb agreement fails by proximity: "The list of approved medications are posted" agrees with the nearest noun, not the subject (list). Bracket everything between the subject and verb and reread. Prepositional phrases and "along with" or "as well as" never contain the subject. Each, either, neither, one, everyone are singular. With neither...nor, the verb agrees with the nearer subject. In "there is/are," the real subject follows. American English treats collective nouns (team) as singular. **Data** is contested: traditional science and APA treat it as plural; everyday usage as a mass noun. Check your style guide and be consistent.

A pronoun must match its **antecedent**. The **singular they** has been used since the fourteenth century and is endorsed by APA 7, MLA, Merriam-Webster and, with some qualification, Chicago; it is also correct for a person who uses it. Generic he is no longer recommended by any major guide; he or she is clunky at scale; pluralizing the antecedent avoids the question. **Vague reference** changes meaning and matters more than agreement. Three patterns: the stand-alone **this** pointing at a whole sentence (give it a noun: "This combination"), the **ambiguous antecedent** (two possible nouns before "she"), and the **implied antecedent** ("In the article it says").

English attaches a modifier to the nearest word, so a **misplaced modifier** says something you did not mean ("gave the medication to the patient in a paper cup"). **Only** attaches to what follows it: "She only reviewed the chart," "She reviewed only the chart," "She reviewed the chart only on Tuesday" and "Only she reviewed the chart" are four different facts. The same goes for just, almost, nearly, even, merely, hardly. A **dangling modifier** has no actor in the sentence at all: "Having reviewed the literature, the intervention appeared effective." Ask who performs the opening action and check that it is the main-clause subject. Repair by supplying the actor as subject or expanding the phrase into a full clause. Danglers cluster around the passive.

Parallelism matters in lists, pairs joined by and or or, correlatives (not only...but also) and comparisons with than or as.

Commas mark structure, not pauses. Six patterns: before FANBOYS joining independent clauses; after an introductory element; around **nonessential** information; between series items (the **serial comma**, required by APA, MLA and Chicago, omitted by AP); between **coordinate adjectives** you could reverse or join with and; and around direct address, dates and titles. Pattern three changes facts: "The nurses who completed the training received the badge" (only some) versus "The nurses, who completed the training, received the badge" (all). The **semicolon** joins independent clauses or separates list items that contain commas. The **colon** announces and must follow a complete clause ("The three factors were:" is wrong). A dash interrupts loudly; parentheses whisper.

Apostrophes mark possession or omitted letters, never plurals: three RNs, the 1990s. Possessive pronouns (its, whose, theirs) never take apostrophes; expand it's to it is to test. In American usage, periods and commas go inside closing quotation marks; colons and semicolons outside; question marks depend on whether they belong to the quotation. With a parenthetical citation, the period follows the citation. **Shifts** in tense, person, number, voice or mood make writing harder; literary analysis uses present tense (Douglass argues); APA reports completed research in past tense.

Usage superstitions: split infinitives (imported from Latin, forbidden by no major guide), ending with a preposition, starting with and or but (Chicago calls the ban unfounded), never using I (APA 7 prefers first person over "the author"), never using the passive, five-sentence paragraphs and no contractions. These are register questions, not correctness questions. Writers repeat the same few errors; Mina Shaughnessy's 1970s work and later corpus studies support this. Build an **error inventory** from three graded papers, sort by type, and proofread for your own top patterns with targeted passes: read aloud, read backwards by sentence, search for however, this, it, there is and 's, scan the first three words of each sentence, print it, and treat checker flags as questions.

LOCK THESE IN

- "It is true that" + clause = complete? Then it is independent.
- Five boundary repairs: period, semicolon, comma + FANBOYS, subordination, colon.
- However is not but: use a semicolon or period before it.
- Bracket the words between subject and verb to check agreement.
- Never let this stand alone; give it a noun.
- Only goes immediately before what it limits. Opening phrases need their actor as subject.
- Essential clause, no commas; nonessential, two commas. Colon only after a complete clause.
- Apostrophes never make plurals; its and whose never take one.

Splice: The shuttle broke down, the class started without us.

Test each half with "It is true that...": both pass, so both are independent clauses.

Period	The shuttle broke down. The class started without us.	*two separate facts*
Semicolon	The shuttle broke down; the class started without us.	*read these together*
Comma + FANBOYS	The shuttle broke down, so the class started without us.	*names the relationship*
Subordinate	Because the shuttle broke down, the class started without us.	*ranks the ideas*
Colon	We missed the start: the shuttle broke down.	*second explains the first*

However is not FANBOYS: "large, however the sample" is still a splice.

Choose the repair, not just any repair. All five fix the boundary, but each tells the reader something different about how the two ideas relate.

The six comma patterns

Pattern	Rule	Example
1. FANBOYS between clauses	Comma before for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so	The dose was correct, but the timing was not.
2. Introductory element	Comma after an opening phrase or clause	After the second dose, the fever broke.
3. Nonessential information	Two commas around it	Dr. Navarro, who trained in Boston, runs the clinic.
4. Series	Comma between items, including before and	a CBC, a metabolic panel, and cultures
5. Coordinate adjectives	Comma if reversible or joinable with and	a long, exhausting shift
6. Address, dates, titles	Set them off	Dana, send it by March 3, 2027.

Agreement patterns

Pattern	Wrong	Right
Intervening phrase	The set of guidelines were revised.	The set of guidelines was revised.
Along with / as well as	The director, along with two nurses, were present.	…was present.
Indefinite pronoun	Each of the students submit a draft.	Each of the students submits a draft.
Neither…nor	Neither the charts nor the log show the time.	…the log shows the time.
Expletive opening	There is several reasons.	There are several reasons.
Collective noun (US)	The team are meeting.	The team is meeting.

Rules you can stop worrying about

Alleged rule	The actual situation
Never split an infinitive	Imported from Latin; no major guide forbids it
Never end with a preposition	A seventeenth-century preference
Never start with and or but	Strong writers do; Chicago calls the ban unfounded
Never use I	Discipline-specific; APA 7 prefers first person to "the author"
Never use the passive	Correct and sometimes preferable
Five sentences per paragraph	A classroom scaffold

Worked cases

WORKED CASE 1 · CHOOSING AMONG FIVE REPAIRS FOR A SPLICE

Splice: "The registration portal crashed, many students missed the deadline."

STEP 1 · TEST THE HALVES

"It is true that the registration portal crashed" and "It is true that many students missed the deadline" both sound complete. Two independent clauses, joined by a comma alone.

STEP 2 · NAME THE RELATIONSHIP

Cause and result: the crash led to the missed deadlines.

STEP 3 · REPAIRS THAT FIT

Comma + FANBOYS: "...crashed, so many students missed the deadline." Subordination: "Because the registration portal crashed, many students missed the deadline."

STEP 4 · REPAIRS THAT ARE NEUTRAL

Period or semicolon fix the boundary but leave the cause for the reader to infer.

STEP 5 · AVOID THE TRAP

"...crashed, therefore many students..." is still a splice. **Therefore needs a semicolon or period before it.**

WORKED CASE 2 · FIXING A DANGLER TWO WAYS

"After interviewing twelve residents, the proposal was revised to include weekend hours."

STEP 1 · WHO PERFORMS THE OPENING ACTION?

Someone interviewed twelve residents: the planning team.

STEP 2 · WHAT IS THE MAIN-CLAUSE SUBJECT?

"The proposal." The proposal did not interview anyone, so the phrase dangles.

STEP 3 · REPAIR A, ACTOR AS SUBJECT

"After interviewing twelve residents, the planning team revised the proposal to include weekend hours."

STEP 4 · REPAIR B, EXPAND TO A CLAUSE

"After the planning team interviewed twelve residents, the proposal was revised to include weekend hours."

STEP 5 · NOTE THE CAUSE

The passive main clause deleted the actor, which is why danglers cluster around the passive.

WORKED CASE 3 · COMMAS THAT CHANGE THE FACTS, AND AN APOSTROPHE CHECK

Decide the meaning of each: (a) "The students who missed the orientation must repeat it." (b) "The students, who missed the orientation, must repeat it." Then fix: "The club released it's schedule for the 2020's."

STEP 1 · SENTENCE (A)

No commas: an essential clause. Only the subset who missed orientation must repeat it.

STEP 2 · SENTENCE (B)

Two commas: a nonessential clause. All the students missed it, and all must repeat it.

STEP 3 · THE TEST

Remove the clause. If the reader would ask "which ones?", it was essential and takes no commas.

STEP 4 · IT'S OR ITS?

Expand: "released it is schedule" is nonsense, so use the possessive **its**.

STEP 5 · THE PLURAL DECADE

Apostrophes never make plurals: **the 2020s**. Corrected: "The club released its schedule for the 2020s."

TRAPS PEOPLE FALL INTO

- **Thinking a run-on means a long sentence.** A run-on can be eight words. It is a boundary error, not a length.
- **Using however like but.** It is a conjunctive adverb. Semicolon or period before it, comma after.
- **Agreeing with the nearest noun.** Bracket the intervening phrase and find the real subject.
- **Letting this stand alone.** Give it a noun: this delay, this combination.
- **Placing only loosely.** On the page there is no intonation. Put it right before what it limits.
- **Adding commas where you pause.** Commas mark structure. Pauses vary by speaker.

- **Putting a colon after an incomplete clause.** "The three priorities are:" needs no colon.
- **Proofreading for "grammar" in general.** Proofread for your own three patterns, one pass each.

Chapter 12 self-test · ten items

1. Which test tells you whether a clause is independent?

A. Count the words and check that there are more than eight
B. Put "It is true that" in front and see if it is complete
C. Read it aloud and add a comma wherever you pause
D. Check whether it contains any form of the verb be

B. Put "It is true that" in front and see if it is complete A dependent clause sounds broken after "It is true that" because of its subordinating word.

2. "The study was large, however the sample was not representative" is:

A. A comma splice
B. A fragment
C. Correct as written
D. A dangling modifier

A. A comma splice However cannot bind clauses. Use a semicolon before it or switch to but.

3. Which of these is one of the seven FANBOYS conjunctions?

A. Yet
B. Thus
C. Hence
D. Also

A. Yet For, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. The others are adverbs that cannot join two clauses with a comma.

4. "Nurses documented every intervention. Recording vital signs at fifteen-minute intervals." The second part is:

A. A comma splice error
B. An -ing phrase fragment
C. A fused sentence error
D. A correct short sentence

B. An -ing phrase fragment It has no subject-verb pair. Join it to the previous sentence with a comma.

5. Choose the correct verb: "The director, along with two nurses, ___ present."

A. were
B. are
C. have been
D. was

D. was "Along with" does not make a compound subject. The subject is director.

6. "The unit was short-staffed and two admissions arrived at once. This caused the delay." What is the problem?

A. A comma splice between the two sentences
B. A subject-verb agreement error in the second
C. A stand-alone this with no clear antecedent
D. A misplaced modifier in the first sentence

C. A stand-alone this with no clear antecedent The reader cannot tell whether staffing, admissions or both caused it. Write "This combination."

7. Which sentence says that nobody else reviewed the chart?

A. She only reviewed the chart on Tuesday.
B. She reviewed only the chart on Tuesday.
C. She reviewed the chart only on Tuesday.
D. Only she reviewed the chart on Tuesday.

D. Only she reviewed the chart on Tuesday. Only limits whatever immediately follows it; here, she.

8. "After completing the survey, the data were analyzed" contains:

A. A comma splice
B. A faulty parallel series
C. A vague this reference
D. A dangling modifier

D. A dangling modifier The data did not complete the survey. Supply the actor: the researchers analyzed the data.

9. Which style guide omits the serial comma except for clarity?

A. APA style
B. MLA style
C. AP style
D. Chicago style

C. AP style APA, MLA and Chicago all require the serial comma.

10. Which is correct?

A. The committee released it's findings.
B. The committee released its' findings.
C. The committee released its findings.
D. The committee released it is findings.

C. The committee released its findings. Possessive pronouns never take apostrophes. It's means it is.

ONE PAGE

Cram sheet

Everything from chapters 11 and 12 in one place. Cover the right column and see if you can rebuild each row.

Style moves

Move	How	Test
Characters and actions	Actor as subject, action as verb	First eight words: actor + real verb?
Unstack nominalizations	Turn nouns back into verbs	Look for chains of of-phrases
Passive check	Keep only if the agent is unneeded or it aids flow	Does the reader need the actor?
Cut by category	Empty, doubled, redundant modifier, redundant category, long phrase	Twenty percent drill
Openers	Cut expletives and announcing metadiscourse	There is, it is, this paper will
Old to new	Familiar first, new last	First six words connect back?
Topic string	Subjects in one family	Read only the subjects
Emphasis	End on the point; short after long	Under about 11 words after 25+
Subordination	Claim in the main clause	Which half is your point?
Calibration	proves > demonstrates > shows > indicates > suggests > hints at	Match the design

Mechanics

Item	Rule	Quick test
Boundaries	Period, semicolon, comma + FANBOYS, subordinate, colon	"It is true that..."
FANBOYS	for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so	However and therefore are not on the list
Agreement	Verb matches the true subject	Bracket the words in between
Pronouns	Singular they endorsed by APA, MLA, Merriam-Webster	Or pluralize the antecedent
Reference	No stand-alone this, ambiguous she, implied it	Point at one noun
Modifiers	Only before what it limits; opener needs its actor	Who does the opening action?
Commas	Six patterns	Essential: no commas; nonessential: two
Colon	After a complete clause only	Could a period go there?
Apostrophe	Possession or omission, never plurals	Expand it's to it is
Quotation marks (US)	Periods and commas inside; colons and semicolons outside	Citation? Period after it

Rules that are not formulas

Topic	The rule
Superstitions	Split infinitives, final prepositions, opening and or but are register choices, not errors.
Shifts	Hold tense, person and number. Literary analysis in present; completed research in past (APA).
Error inventory	Three graded papers, sorted by type; proofread for your top three.
Checkers	A flag is a question. Accept only what you can explain.
Jargon	Define on first use, then repeat the same term.

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