

The DIRECT Method

- ✓ Don't read the passage first: you are proofreading, and reading for meaning fixes errors in your head
- ✓ Identify the key words in a stated question: *clearest and most concise, tone*
- ✓ Read for context: the whole sentence, and the sentences around a transition
- ✓ Examine how the answers differ: that shows what is being tested. Shorter is usually better
- ✓ Choose the best fit and read it back into the sentence. **Don't fear NO CHANGE**
- ✓ Take time to review flagged questions; each passage has one or two broader ones

The four passages

- ✓ **Philosophy/Religion:** often ancient or medieval, Plato to Aquinas; linger on hard sentences
- ✓ **Historical profile:** modern, factual prose about a historical figure
- ✓ **Science:** watch clause structure, agreement and tense
- ✓ **Modern/influential thinkers:** modern language, often on issues still debated

Building a sentence

- ✓ **Every sentence needs a main verb;** an *-ing* form alone is not one
Shivering with excitement. is a fragment
- ✓ **No single punctuation mark between a subject and its verb,** or a verb and its object; a pair is fine
You can't, the teacher warned, have it all
- ✓ **Parallelism:** items in a series take the same form
hiking, swimming, and biking, not hiking, to swim, and biking
- ✓ **Misplaced modifier:** put the modifier next to what it describes
I spotted a meatball rolling down the street, not Rolling down the street, I spotted a meatball

The Clause Test

Split the sentence at the punctuation. Could each part stand alone as a sentence?

Two independent clauses

Independent + dependent

Period

Comma

Semicolon

Nothing

Comma + FANBOYS: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*

Colon

Colon

- ✓ **Never a period or semicolon** between an independent and a dependent clause; a comma when the dependent clause comes first
- ✓ **Comma splice:** two independent clauses joined by a comma alone
- ✓ **Run-on:** two independent clauses with nothing between them
- ✓ Fix either with a period, a semicolon, comma + FANBOYS, or a word like *Although* that makes one clause dependent

Punctuation marks

- ✓ **Comma:** list items, after an introductory phrase, around nonessential information
- ✓ **Semicolon:** two related independent clauses, or list items that contain commas
- ✓ **Colon:** a list, explanation or emphasis; the "Here it is!" test: *She had one goal: to win the race*
- ✓ **Dashes** work like parentheses and come in pairs, unless the phrase ends the sentence
- ✓ **Handlebar Rule:** a phrase you can lift out by its commas, leaving a sentence, is set off by commas: *if you, young scholar, persevere*
- ✓ **When in doubt, take it out:** no comma without a reason, and none between a title and a name: *Byzantine scholar Procopius*
- ✓ Put a comma before *which* when it opens a nonessential clause