

🕒 Verb tense

- ✓ Keep tenses consistent, and let **time cues** decide: *yesterday, since, for years, by the time*
- ✓ **Present perfect** for an action begun in the past and still going: *Ever since I learned ..., I have thought of it differently*
- ✓ **Past perfect** for the earlier of two past actions: *I had eaten before I went swimming*
- ✓ **Future perfect** for an action done before a future point: *By then, preparations will have been completed*
- ✓ **Conditional**: *If she had known, she would have acted differently*
- ✓ An *-ing* form cannot be the main verb: *The students returned home, not returning*

⚖ Subject—verb agreement

- ✓ An *-s* makes a noun plural but a present-tense verb **singular**: *the student watches, the students watch*
- ✓ The subject is **never** inside a **prepositional phrase**: *A flock of seagulls pecks*
- ✓ Lift out what sits between subject and verb: *The Pritzker Prize, for which only living architects are eligible, is awarded*
- ✓ Two subjects joined by *and* are plural, unless they are one thing: *Spaghetti and meatballs is a classic*
- ✓ *Everyone, each* and *anyone* are singular: *Everyone is amazed*
- ✓ A collective noun is singular: *The pack of wolves was howling*

👤 Pronouns

- ✓ **Possessives take no apostrophe**: *its, their, whose; it's, they're, who's* are contractions
- ✓ Match the antecedent's number: *The lemur ... its nose; The girls, each with her mother*
- ✓ **Subject or object?** *Trevor and I rode; for the love of them*
- ✓ **Who or whom?** Swap in *he* or *him*: *he had the honor, so who. Who* for people, *which* for things
- ✓ Replace a **vague** pronoun with the noun: *Lauren's car, not her car*
- ✓ **Reflexive** only for the subject itself: *Stalin sentenced him, not himself*

A Parts of speech

- ✓ **Adjectives** describe nouns: *an administrative subunit*
- ✓ **Adverbs** modify verbs, adjectives and adverbs, usually with *-ly*: *crept silently, modestly armored*
- ✓ *You did well, not good; I feel bad, not badly*
- ✓ After *to*, a verb: *make sure to instruct you*
- ✓ Endings help: *-ly* adverb, *-ive* adjective, *-tion* noun

↔ Transitions and logical coherence

Name the relationship between the two ideas, predict the word, then check the choices.

Relationship	Words
Contrast	<i>however, but, nevertheless, yet, on the other hand</i>
Cause and effect	<i>because, therefore, as a result, consequently</i>
Addition	<i>moreover, furthermore, also</i>
Sequence	<i>first, then, next, subsequently, finally</i>
Intensifier	<i>indeed</i> ; the second idea amplifies the first

- ✓ Contrast words are the strongest clue; *otherwise* means "if not"
- ✓ *For* means "because"; *so* means "as a result"

AB Word choice

- ✓ Read the whole sentence, find the clues, and **predict the word** before reading the choices
- ✓ **Roots**: *circum-* around, *spect* look, *ben-* good, *belli-* war; Spanish and French help: *feliz, parler*
- ✓ **Thumbs up or down**: is the word positive or negative?
- ✓ **Word families**: *tutelage* and *tutor*, *opacity* and *opaque*
- ✓ **Shades of meaning**: *self-deprecating* is gentle, *self-denigrating* harsh; *glanced* is brief, *gazed* lingers
- ✓ **Sound-alikes**: *corroborate* (confirm), not *collaborate* (work together); *home in*, not *hone in*
- ✓ Only about four pure word choice questions: if time is short, guess and move on

🎭 Tone and style

- ✓ **Tone** is attitude, positive or negative; **style** is vocabulary, sentence length and formality
- ✓ Match the passage: a science journal is formal and neutral; literature is figurative
- ✓ Read the question's wording: *cautious approval* rules out both praise and criticism
- ✓ No / unless the author already writes in the first person

⚡ Clear and concise

- ✓ **Cut redundancy**: *always or every time*, not both; *because, not the reason why ... was because*
- ✓ Replace phrases with words: *due to the fact that* is *because*
- ✓ Put the subject and verb early
- ✓ **Shorter is better, but only if no meaning is lost**: the second-shortest choice is often right