

# Language Conventions and Usage

# **Learning Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- edit to ensure correct use of punctuation and capitalization
- edit to ensure correct sentence structure and formation.
- edit to ensure parallelism of nouns, verbs, and other parts of speech
- edit to correct errors in pronoun-antecedent agreement, subject-verb agreement, and modifiers
- edit to ensure effective use of transitions, prepositions, and commonly confused words
- edit to eliminate wordiness or awkward sentence construction



# **Capitalization**

In addition to capitalizing the first word of a sentence, you should also capitalize **proper nouns**— the names of specific people, places, things, or ideas.

Proper nouns: Amy Detroit, Michigan World Cup American Cancer Society

Common nouns: city tournament doctor's office

You should also capitalize **proper adjectives**—those formed from a proper noun.

Proper adjective: French Canadian Shakespearean play



# **Capitalization**

Capitalize the **title before a person's name** or when the title appears as a direct address.

Title before name: Dr. Lambowski Senator Wallace

Direct address: "It's an honor to meet you, Prime Minister."

You should also capitalize holidays, days of the week and months.



## **Sentence Structure and Formation**

A **complete sentence** has a subject and verb, and it expresses a complete thought.

An **independent clause** could stand alone as a complete sentence.

Elaine took notes during the meeting.

A **dependent clause** has a subject and a verb, but it does not express a complete thought.

While Elaine took notes during the meeting

A **run-on sentence** involves two or more independent clauses that lack proper punctuation or connections.

Elaine took notes during the meeting, she used the main office computer to type them up.

Elaine took notes during the meeting. She used the main-office computer to type them up.



## **Sentence Fragments**

A **sentence fragment** is an incomplete sentence: a sentence that is missing either a subject, verb or complete thought.

Typed up her notes.

The computer in the main office.

When she lost her work.

Elaine typed up her notes.

The computer in the main office rebooted.

When she lost her work, Elaine was frustrated.



# **Combining Independent Clauses**

To combine two independent clauses, you must use either a semi-colon or a coordinating conjunction with a comma.

Use a coordinating conjunction with a comma to express a relationship between the two independent clauses.

Sam saw a design flaw, so he wrote a memo.

A semi-colon (;) is used when the ideas expressed in the independent clauses are related and equal in terms of importance.

The designers responded to the memo quickly; the product shipped without issue.



# **Coordinate Conjunctions**

Use the acronym FANBOYS to remember the coordinating conjunctions:

For

And Sam showed initiative, yet his boss praised him.

Nor Sam showed initiative, so his boss praised him.

But

Or My coworker offered to drive me home, and I refused.

Yet My coworker offered to drive me home, but I refused.

So



Ellen Gardner, CEO Skyview PC, Inc. 888 Pyle Rd. San Marte, CA 94656

#### Dear Ms. Gardner:

My wife and I have been loyal owners of Skyview computers for over 10 years. We are currently on our \_\_\_\_1\_\_, which we purchased three months ago. We appreciate your competitive prices that allow us to upgrade every few years. Also, we have

- 1. A. third Skyview laptop computer
  - B. third Skyview Laptop computer
  - C. third skyview laptop computer
  - D. third Skyview Laptop Computer



always been delighted with the compatibility of Skyview products with software we use for our home-based business. The speed and power of our Skyview products have been 2\_\_\_\_. Just last week, however, our new laptop began to freeze almost every time we logged on. My wife called the Skyview help desk and received advice from five different advisors. She followed their recommendations, but the computer

I researched the problem and found that

- 2. A. outstanding your products are always well-suited to our needs.
  - B. outstanding. Your products are always well-suited to our needs.
  - C. outstanding, they are always well-suited to our needs.
  - D. outstanding. Always well-suited to our needs.



continues to freeze.

Skyview laptops in our serial number range have a history of freezing up, just as ours is doing. None of the advisors with whom my wife spoke acknowledged this problem. Each asked for the serial number of our machine but never mentioned that there is an ongoing problem which needs to be resolved.

I called Skyview again this morning. 3
The representative with whom I eventually spoke directed me to take our laptop to a repair facility 30 miles from our home. I

- 3. A. The phone call lasted about 20 minutes asking for help with my problem.
  - B. Asking for help with my problem the phone call lasted about 20 minutes.
  - C. The phone call lasted about 20 minutes as I asked for help with my problem.
  - D. Asking for help on the phone call about my problem lasted about 20 minutes.



# **Comma Usage**

Use commas to separate elements in a series or list.

Keith, Darnell, and Marisol are planning a party.

Use a comma with a coordinating conjunction to separate independent clauses within a sentence.

Some people are insecure about hosting a party, but others have years of experience.

Use a pair of commas to add parenthetical (nonessential) phrases and clauses.

Darnell, a veteran party planner, advises hosts to first decide on a party theme.

Use a comma to separate an independent clause from a dependent clause or an introductory or modifying phrase from an independent clause.

If you are a good cook, you may want to host a dinner party.



#### **Parallelism**

When you write a sentence that lists two or more words, phrases, or clauses, the elements must be in **parallel structure**, or have the same grammatical form.

Jim wants to eat less, exercise more, and be getting more sleep.

Jim wants to <u>eat</u> less, <u>exercise</u> more, and <u>get</u> more sleep.

If one phrase in a list begins with a preposition, the others should too.

Avoid exercising on busy streets, near traffic jams, and polluted areas.

Avoid exercising on busy streets, near traffic jams, and in polluted areas.



# **Apostrophes**

Use an apostrophe to show possession by a noun or replace one or more letters in a contraction.

Possessive nouns: friend's car the dog's leash Chris's office

Plural possessive: workers' break room

Contractions: haven't don't they're there's it's

Do not use an apostrophe to show possession when dealing with pronouns.

Possessive pronouns: his hers theirs ours mine yours its



#### **Pronouns**

A **pronoun** is a word that replaces a noun. The **antecedent** is the word that is being replaced.

```
Steven lost <u>his</u> address book. antecedent pronoun
```

The proper pronoun will match up with the antecedent in terms of person, type and number.

```
Steven lost his <u>address book</u>. <u>It</u> contained many important phone numbers. antecedent pronoun
```



#### **Pronouns**

#### There are three types of pronouns:

Subject Pronoun: replaces subject	Object Pronoun: replaces object	Possessive Pronoun: shows ownership
1	me	my, mine
you	you	your, yours
he	him	his
she	her	her, hers
it	it	its
we	us	ours
they	them	their, theirs

Expert Tip:
possessive
pronouns do not
use apostrophes!



mentioned the information I had learned and was told that there is a shortage of the parts necessary for repair. Because of this shortage, he said the repair could take up to two months. However, this is not acceptable.

\_\_\_\_\_4 \_\_\_ conduct business from home and need daily access to our computer.

We believe it is unreasonable for Skyview to ask us to transport our computer at our expense for repairs that could take weeks when the problem is obviously not our fault.

- 4. A. My wife and I
  - B. Me and my wife
  - C. My wife and me
  - D. I, and my wife, we



We are also disappointed that we had to \_\_\_\_5\_\_ before we learned the truth of our situation. Is this an example of Skyview's customer service philosophy?

We would like to give Skyview the opportunity to remedy this situation. We firmly believe that Skyview needs to stand behind its products. If our laptop has a problem which makes it unusable, Skyview should immediately replace it with one that works, with as little inconvenience to 6 as possible.

- 5. A. make six phone calls, two emails, and doing our own research
  - B. have made six phone calls, two emails, and our own research
  - C. make six phone calls, write two emails, and do our own research
  - D. be making six phone calls, writing two emails, and researching on our own



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- 6. A. it
  - B. us
  - C. him
  - D. both



We look forward to hearing  $\frac{7}{}$  intend to resolve this issue.

Sincerely yours, James Hendricks

- 7. A. from you with regarding to how you
  - B. from you about how you
  - C. from you about how they
  - D. from you with how you

# **Subject-Verb Agreement**

The **subject** and **verb** of a sentence must match up in person and number.

Subjects and verbs can use first, second or third person.

I am studying. You are studying. They are studying.

The subject and verb of a sentence must also match up in number. Subjects can be singular or plural and verbs must be adjusted to match.

She works really hard. They work really hard.



# **Subject-Verb Agreement**

If a compound subject is joined by the word *and*, use a plural verb.

Tricia and her sister are caring for their mother.

If a compound subject is joined by *or*, *either* . . . *or*, or *neither* . . . *nor*, the verb should agree with the subject closest to it.

Either a health aide or a nurse visits each day.

Neither my sister nor my brothers have medical training.



## **Modifiers**

**Modifiers** are words and phrases used to add descriptive details. A modifier may be an adjective, adverb or modifying phrase.

**Adjectives** modify nouns. **Adverbs** modify verbs, adjectives and other adverbs.

The blue car drove quickly down the road.

Modifiers describe the word or phrase closest to them. A **misplaced or dangling modifier** results when it is not clear what the word modifies or when it modifies the wrong word in the sentence.

Parking in a tow zone, the police officer gave us a ticket.

Because we parked in a tow zone, the police officer gave us a ticket.



## **Transitions**

**Transitions** show how ideas are related. When editing a sentence that includes transitions, start by identifying the relationship between the two ideas.

Transitional Word or Phrase	Use it to
for example, for instance	give an example
also, furthermore, in addition, in the same way, likewise, moreover, similarly	compare ideas or add to an idea
however, nevertheless, on the other hand, in contrast	contrast ideas
first, second, then, next, after that, later, at last, finally, in conclusion	show steps in a process or time order
because	show a cause
as a result, consequently	show a result
therefore, thus	draw a conclusion



# **Prepositions**

A **preposition** is a word that connects a noun, a noun phrase, or a pronoun to another word (such as a verb, another noun, or an adjective).

I am studying with my friends.

I am going to work.

Using the incorrect preposition can alter the meaning of the sentence, or create an illogical thought.

I will be competing with my roommate during the softball game.

I will be competing against my roommate during the softball game.



# **Prepositions**

#### Common prepositions include:

on	in	at	by
with	for	from	in addition to
of	against	to	over
between	outside	inside	after
υροη	except	instead of	toward
through	since	near	off

# **Commonly Confused Words**

**Homonyms** are words that sound alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings. Possessives, contractions and homonyms are the kinds of spelling items that appear on the GED Test.

accept/except break/brake led/lead two/to/too
than/then passed/past are/our there/their/they're



## **Wordiness**

To avoid redundant writing, evaluate whether any part of the suggested revisions are repetitive and, therefore, unnecessary.

Repetitive: In addition to also volunteering, Caleb is employed by the library where he gets paid.

Concise: In addition to volunteering, Caleb is employed by the library.



#### Adoption

Adoption is a legal procedure that gives

8. This practice dates back to ancient
Greece. People without heirs used it to
perpetuate their estates.

Adoptions may be handled through an agency or by independent placement.

9 whether prospective parents will be fit. In an independent placement, there is no study. Lawyers \_\_\_\_\_10 \_\_\_\_.

- 8. A. a person the rights of a son or daughter, who is not the adopter's birth child
  - B. a person who is not the birth child of the adopter the rights of a son or daughter
  - C. a person a son's or daughter's rights, who is not a birth child
  - D. a person the rights of a birth child, who is not a son or daughter of the adopter



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- 9. A. Going through an agency, a "home study" is required to determine
  - B. Undergoing a "home study," an agency determines
  - C. An agency requires a "home study" to determine
  - D. Requiring a "home study," parents undergo such a study to determine



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- 10. A. handle these adoptions when asked frequently
  - B. handle these adoptions when frequently asked by the parents
  - C. handle these adoptions when parents ask them to, frequently
  - D. frequently handle these adoptions when asked



#### Sales Trainees Wanted

Do people feel comfortable with you? Do you have a friendly phone manner? Do you have good organizational skills? If you've answered yes to these \_\_\_\_11\_\_ skills at Macro Software.

Macro Software is one of the industry leaders in software distribution. \_\_\_\_12\_\_\_ to offer a mail order service that was the first of its kind. We pride ourselves on our high-quality products, quick delivery times, and excellent customer service.

- 11. A. questions we need you're
  - B. questions we need your
  - C. questions, we need you're
  - D. questions, we need your



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- 12. A. In addition to hour chain of stores, we're proud
  - B. In addition to our chain of stores, we're proud
  - C. In addition to our chain of stores, were proud
  - D. In addition, to our chain of stores, we're proud



#### Unemployment Insurance

Unemployment insurance provides workers who have lost their jobs with partial replacement of their salaries. Each state \_\_\_\_13\_\_\_ its own laws. \_\_\_14\_\_\_ the amount received. When the unemployment rate rises above a certain level, states are required to extend the benefits. The state and federal governments share the cost of the additional benefits.

- 13. A. administers its own program and have
  - B. administer its own program and have
  - C. administers its own program and has
  - D. administers it's own program and have



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- 14. A. Wage level and length of employment determine
  - B. Wage level and length of employment determines
  - Wage level and length of employment would be determined by
  - D. Wage level and length of employment will then determine



#### What is Three-Way Calling?

Three-way calling is a unique service that enables you to conduct a conference \_\_\_\_\_15\_\_ the privacy of your own home. You can talk to your sister in Florida and your mother in Nebraska at the same time. It's even possible to seek a third person's advice when you're in the middle of a regular call. For instance,

15. A. call. And from

B. call. It from

C. call from

D. calling from

#### What is Three-Way Calling?

- 16. A. if you're closing a deal, you bring in your lawyer into the conversation
  - B. if you're closing a deal, can bringing your lawyer into the conversation
  - C. if you're closing a deal, you can bring your lawyer into the conversation
  - D. if you're closing a deal, you can bringing your lawyer into the conversation



#### Low-Fat Cooking

To have a more healthful diet, try cooking with less fat. \_\_\_\_17\_\_ such as steaming, poaching, or baking. When you do include oil in the preparation of your dish, use less of it. Vinegar can be used without oil in salad \_\_\_\_18\_\_ the flavor can be enhanced with fresh herbs.

- 17. A. For starters, use cooking methods that require little or no oil or butter,
  - B. For starters use cooking methods that require little or no oil or butter
  - C. For starters use cooking methods that require little or no oil or butter,
  - D. For starters use cooking methods that require little, or no oil or butter,



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- 18. A. dressing, and
  - B. dressing and,
  - C. dressing, or
  - D. dressing, for example



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- 19. A. low-fat version and though, not all of them may be pleasing
  - B. low-fat version, and though, not all of them may be pleasing,
  - C. low-fat version, and though, not all of them may be pleasing
  - D. low-fat version, and though not all of them may be pleasing



#### The Best Discipline

One parenting expert feels that <u>20</u> should be clear about their expectations from the outset so that children will not unknowingly violate rules. They should respond to children's misbehavior in a calm and neutral fashion. It's also important to choose a consequence related to the action. If a child hits or bites in a play group, for example, it would be most appropriate not to allow 21 for a short time. He or she will begin to see the connection.

20. A. he

B. we

C. one

D. parents



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- 21. A. the child to play with them
  - B. them to play with them
  - C. the child to play with the group
  - D. the child to plays with them



# **Learning Objectives**

Now that you have completed this lesson, you should be able to:

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# **Questions?**

Effort and practice are the keys to Test Day Success. Now that you have completed this lesson, you should reinforce these topics by completing practice questions.

If you have questions between live sessions, email your GED experts at **GEDHelp@kaplan.com** with questions.

Happy studying!





Ellen Gardner, CEO Skyview PC, Inc. 888 Pyle Rd. San Marte, CA 94656

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I researched the problem and found that

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The representative with whom I eventually spoke directed me to take our laptop to a repair facility 30 miles from our home. I

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  - C. The phone call lasted about 20 minutes as I asked for help with my problem.
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mentioned the information I had learned and was told that there is a shortage of the parts necessary for repair. Because of this shortage, he said the repair could take up to two months. However, this is not acceptable.

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  - B. have made six phone calls, two emails, and our own research
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Sincerely yours, James Hendricks

- 7. A. from you with regarding to how you
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#### Adoption

Adoption is a legal procedure that gives

8. This practice dates back to ancient
Greece. People without heirs used it to
perpetuate their estates.

Adoptions may be handled through an agency or by independent placement.

\_\_\_\_\_9 whether prospective parents will be fit. In an independent placement, there is no study. Lawyers \_\_\_\_\_\_10 \_\_\_\_.

- 8. A. a person the rights of a son or daughter, who is not the adopter's birth child
  - B. a person who is not the birth child of the adopter the rights of a son or daughter
    - C. a person a son's or daughter's rights, who is not a birth child
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Do people feel comfortable with you? Do you have a friendly phone manner? Do you have good organizational skills? If you've answered yes to these \_\_\_\_11\_\_ skills at Macro Software.

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- 12. A. In addition to hour chain of stores, we're proud
  - B. In addition to our chain of stores, we're proud
  - C. In addition to our chain of stores, were proud
  - D. In addition, to our chain of stores, we're proud



#### Unemployment Insurance

Unemployment insurance provides workers who have lost their jobs with partial replacement of their salaries. Each state \_\_\_\_13\_\_\_ its own laws. \_\_\_14\_\_\_ the amount received. When the unemployment rate rises above a certain level, states are required to extend the benefits. The state and federal governments share the cost of the additional benefits.

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  - D. Wage level and length of employment will then determine



What is Three-Way Calling?

15. A. call. And from

B. call. It from

C. call from

D. calling from



#### What is Three-Way Calling?

16.

- A. if you're closing a deal, you bring in your lawyer into the conversation
- B. if you're closing a deal, can bringing your lawyer into the conversation
- C. if you're closing a deal, you can bring your lawyer into the conversation
- D. if you're closing a deal, you can bringing your lawyer into the conversation



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  - D. For starters use cooking methods that require little, or no oil or butter,



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To have a more healthful diet, try cooking with less fat. \_\_\_\_17\_\_ such as steaming, poaching, or baking. When you do include oil in the preparation of your dish, use less of it. Vinegar can be used without oil in salad \_\_\_\_18\_\_ the flavor can be enhanced with fresh herbs.

- 18. A. dressing, and
  - B. dressing and,
  - C. dressing, or
  - D. dressing, for example



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- 19. A. low-fat version and though, not all of them may be pleasing
  - B. low-fat version, and though, not all of them may be pleasing,
  - C. low-fat version, and though, not all of them may be pleasing
  - D. low-fat version, and though not all of them may be pleasing



#### The Best Discipline

One parenting expert feels that <u>20</u> should be clear about their expectations from the outset so that children will not unknowingly violate rules. They should respond to children's misbehavior in a calm and neutral fashion. It's also important to choose a consequence related to the action. If a child hits or bites in a play group, for example, it would be most appropriate not to allow 21 for a short time. He or she will begin to see the connection.

20. A. he

B. we

C. one

D. parents



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- 21. A. the child to play with them
  - B. them to play with them
  - C. the child to play with the group
  - D. the child to plays with them

