

The Writing Center's GSP REVIEW

The GSP is a 100-question exam divided into three parts (in this order): 1) grammar; 2) punctuation; and 3) spelling. You will have 90 minutes to complete the exam. A passing score on the GSP is a 70. Don't take it without preparing for it.

The Writing Center, located in Flowers Hall G09, provides 1:1 GSP tutoring. Call 245-3018 for an appointment. The Writing Center also has a 100-question sample GSP: http://writingcenter.english.txstate.edu/gsp_quizzes.htm

GRAMMAR REVIEW

GSP Tip: Some of the grammar questions may fall into the spelling or punctuation category.

EXAMPLES: "Drowneded" is incorrect – the correct spelling is "DROWNED"
"A LOT" is two words

"Senators" is only capitalized when using it as part of someone's title.

EXAMPLE: **Senator John Smith** will be speaking at the capitol today.
The **senators** met this morning to discuss a new bill for school finance.

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT: subjects and verbs must agree in number: singular subjects require singular verbs and plural subjects require plural verbs. Generally this is easy to spot: "cats are" or "a cat is." However, note the following complications:

- 1) **Sentences with indefinite pronouns as subjects:** *most* are singular and therefore require singular verbs, even though the sentence may sound odd.

Indefinite Pronouns

another, anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, every, everybody,
everyone, everything, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, one, somebody,
someone, something

EXAMPLES: None of the boys **is** home.
Neither wants to go to the party.

PRACTICE:

About one of every three of our graduates now *goes/go* to college, and most of them go to schools in the state.

The majority of GSP test takers *is/are* mad.

None of my professors *is/are* a Texas State alum.

Warning: A few indefinite pronouns--*none, some, more, most, any, and all*--may be either singular or plural, depending on the meaning of the sentence:

EXAMPLES: All he asks **is** a chance. ("Chance" is singular so "all" is singular.)
All are gone. ("All" refers to more than one, so it is plural.)

- 2) **Words that separate the subject from the verb**: to spot the true subject and verb, cross out all clauses, prepositional phrases and any phrases that start with "including," "together with," "in addition to," and "as well as."

EXAMPLES: One of the problems that plague American society in the United States, as well as the rest of the world, is poverty.

The moon, as well as Venus, is visible in the night sky.

PRACTICE:

The sweater, as well as the skirt, *was/were* imported from France.

The book, as well as the notebook, *was/were* left on the bus.

- 3) **With subjects joined by "and"**: two or more subjects joined by "and" require a plural verb.

EXAMPLE: The dalmatian and the terrier are destroying my flowerbed.

PRACTICE:

The squirrel and the raccoon *was/were* getting into my trash can.

- 4) **With subjects joined with "or," "nor," "neither . . . nor," "either . . . or," and "not only . . . but also"**: the verb agrees with the subject closest to it.

EXAMPLES: Neither the crabs nor the lobster tempts my appetite.
Neither the lobster nor the crabs tempt my appetite.

PRACTICE:

Neither my left ankle nor my knees *hold/holds* up well during basketball practice.

Either the toast or the biscuits *come/comes* with gravy.

- 5) **With questions.** Reverse the sentence to determine the true subject and verb.

EXAMPLE: Does one of the planets have a life-sustaining atmosphere? [One of the planets does have a life-sustaining atmosphere.]

PRACTICE:

Is/are there ten bears?

- 6) **With collective nouns.** Just remember that some nouns may refer to a group of individuals or things, but are singular if the group refers to ONE unit:

EXAMPLES: Humanities was my favorite area of study.

PRACTICE:

Mathematics *is/are* a challenging class when you are a Liberal Arts major.

EXAMPLES: The jury reports its verdict. [one unit]
The jury still disagree on a number of counts. [the members]

SENTENCE FRAGMENT: A complete sentence must have a subject (can be implied) and a verb, and it must convey a complete thought. Without even one of these items, you have a fragment. With fragments, your voice DOES NOT fall at the end.

EXAMPLE: Because the actress could not locate a lawyer who would be willing to handle her lawsuit against the production company. **Correction:** omit "Because."

COMMA SPLICES AND FUSED SENTENCES: Two complete sentences cannot be joined with a comma (comma splice) nor can they be joined without any punctuation at all (fused sentence).

EXAMPLE: The musicians were unhappy with their recent promotional tour schedule, they had to perform every night for three weeks.
Correction: A period or semicolon is needed to replace the comma.

MISPLACED/DANGLING MODIFIERS: modifiers (describing words) need to be as near as possible to what they describe.

EXAMPLE: Anita listened to the teacher read to the class with her eyes closed.
Correction: With her eyes closed, Anita listened to the teacher read to the class.

PRACTICE:
Running down the street, my shoes came untied.

The student watched Mrs. Smith pass back the exams with fear.

FAULTY PREDICATION: Your subject and its complement must match—your subject equals its complement.

EXAMPLE: A stereotype is when someone characterizes others....
Correction: A stereotype is an unfair characterization....

PRACTICE:
Love is when someone sends you flowers. Error

Love is an emotion everyone wants to experience. Correct

PRONOUN AGREEMENT:

- 1) **Make sure that your pronoun agrees in number with its antecedent (the word it is replacing).**

<i>SINGULAR PRONOUNS</i>	<i>PLURAL PRONOUNS</i>
I/ ME /MY	WE/ US/ OUR
YOU/YOUR	YOU/YOU
HE/ HIM/ HIS; SHE/ HER; IT/ ITS	THEY / THEM / THEIR

EXAMPLE: Any Texas State student could access **their** own e-mail account.

Correction: Any Texas State student could access **his/her** own e-mail account.

PRACTICE:

The students voted not to have *his or her/their* tuition raised.

The new student lost *his or her/their* backpack.

- 2) **Make sure that your pronoun agrees in case with its antecedent (the word it is replacing).**

<i>SUBJECT PRONOUNS</i>	<i>OBJECT PRONOUNS</i>
I, WE	ME, US
YOU	YOU
HE / SHE / IT / THEY / WHO	HIM / HER/ IT / THEM / WHOM

EXAMPLE: My entire family is taller **than me**.

Correction: My entire family is taller **than I** [am]. (Finish the comparison in order to determine the correct verb.)

PRACTICE:

His teacher was a better public speaker than *him/he*.

My sister has always been more outgoing than *me/I*.

GSP TIP: For a simple way to remember when to use "who" and "whom," substitute "he" for "who" and "him" for "whom."

EXAMPLE: Give the money to **whomever**. (Give the money to HIM).

However, remember to look first to the right of "who," "whom," "whoever," and "whomever." Thus if a sentence reads, "Give the money to *whoever/whomever* needs it, ask yourself if **He** needs it or **Him** needs it. **He** needs it, so it would be **whoever** needs it.

EXAMPLE: "Give the money to **whoever** needs it."

PRACTICE:

I wonder *who/whom* would vote.

I loaned the book to *whoever/whomever* signed the list first.

PRONOUN REFERENCE: It must be absolutely clear which noun a pronoun is referring to. Failure to do so = pronoun reference error.

EXAMPLE: My mother told me to put my shoes in their boxes, but I couldn't find **them**.

Correction: My mother told me to put my shoes in their boxes, but I couldn't find **the boxes**.

PRACTICE:

Eddie and Larry went fishing, and he caught a fish. *Who caught the fish?*

FAULTY PARALLELISM: When listing items in a series or as a comparison, they must be in the same grammatical form (all nouns, all verbs, all infinitives, etc.) Failure to do so = faulty parallelism.

EXAMPLE: I like swimming, fishing, and to hike.

Correction: I like swimming, fishing, and hiking.

PRACTICE:

I sent him to the store for bread, milk, *and to get butter/and butter*.

AFFECT and EFFECT: "affect" is always a verb; "effect" is a noun.

EXAMPLE: The war in Iraq *affects* US gas prices.

One of the *effects* of the Iraq war is skyrocketing gas prices.

LESS VS. FEWER: "less" refers to a proportion while "fewer" refers to something that you can count.

EXAMPLE: I have five pieces of pie and you have three; you have **less** pie and **fewer** pieces.

PRACTICE:

When her book was published, she was disappointed to find out she sold *less/fewer* copies in the first week than she had anticipated.

LIKE VS. AS: When describing how something occurs, do not use "like"; instead use "as" or "as if." Like compares one noun to another. For example, "her skin is like a baby's," or "her eyes were like pools of water."

When you use "as" or "as if," you are usually comparing an action to a noun.

EXAMPLE: They shot him in the street **like** he were a worthless animal.

Correction: They shot him in the street **as if** he were a worthless animal.

WHICH VS. WHO/WHOM: Use "who" and "whom" when referring to people.

LAY VS. LIE: "lay" must be followed by a direct object--you lay down a pencil or set down a bag of groceries. You lie down ALONE.

PRESENT TENSE	PAST TENSE	PAST PERFECT	PRESENT CONTINUOUS
Today I lie down.	Yesterday, I lay down.	I have lain down in the past.	I am lying down.
Today I lay the pencil down.	Yesterday, I laid the pencil down.	I have laid the pencil down in the past.	I am laying the pencil down.

PRACTICE:

My dog went to *lie/lay* down for a nap, and shortly after I went and *laid/lay* down too.

BADLY: Never use “badly” to describe how you feel. If someone asked you how you were feeling, you wouldn’t say “goodly,” so do not say “badly” either.

EXAMPLE: The woman feels **badly** because she cannot make it to her son’s baseball game.

Correction: The woman feels **bad** because she cannot make it to her son’s baseball game.

PUNCTUATION REVIEW

When you’re taking the GSP, make a note of when you move from the grammar section to the punctuation section. You should shift from looking for grammatical errors to zeroing in on punctuation errors.

APOSTROPHES: TWO RULES

1) **omission of letters** (*'68 or don't*)

2) **possession:** the pets of the people; the **people's** pets. If the word already has an "s," either because it's plural or it ends with an "s," then simply add the apostrophe after the "s" (students' rights; Lewis' beans); if the word doesn't end in an "s," add an apostrophe and an "s" (women's shoes; one cat's fleas).

******Note: it's = it is; its = possessive form******

SEMICOLONS: TWO RULES

1) **Use when joining two independent clauses (sentences).**

EXAMPLE: Professor Jones asked the class to evaluate the course; he wanted to determine his popularity.

PRACTICE:

Joe at the chili, he smelled of onions the rest of the day.

2) **Use when listing items in a series when the items themselves contain commas.**

EXAMPLE: We invited Joe Smith, President of State Bank; Detective Jill Williams; Susan Price, C.E.O. of CFAN; and Bob Jenkins, Ombudsman.

PRACTICE:

The chefs were in the kitchen chopping onions, peppers and garlic, slicing tomatoes, eggplant and celery, and sautéing chicken, beef and pork.

COLONS: THREE RULES

1) **Use with an independent clause (sentence) before the colon.** In a sentence look to the left of the colon. Ask yourself, "Is this a complete sentence?" If the answer is "Yes," then the colon can be used.

EXAMPLE: My favorite teachers are: Dr. Cohen, Mr. Wilson, and Dr. Ogletree.

Correction: My favorite teaches are Dr. Cohen, Mr. Wilson, and Dr. Ogletree.

2) **after salutations in letters (Dear ___:)**

3) **when writing the time (1:00).**

COMMAS: FIVE RULES - Know these as if your life depended on it.

1) **Use a comma when you have two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).**

EXAMPLES: Georgia has great peaches, but peaches host terrible parasites.
Georgia has great peaches, and peaches host terrible parasites.
Georgia has great peaches, yet peaches host terrible parasites.

2) **Use a comma after an introductory phrase or clause over four words long.**

EXAMPLE: Although I was very tired last night, I did not go to bed until 3 a.m.

3) **Use commas with dates, address, titles, and numbers.**

EXAMPLE: Monday, July 31, 1982, is my wedding anniversary.

EXAMPLE: Portland, Oregon, is much larger than Portland, Maine.

4) **Use two commas when including a non-restrictive element.** That is, if the information is not essential to defining who or what the subject is, set the information off with commas.

EXAMPLE: Jake Holmes, my accountant, fixed my taxes this year.

GSP Tip: You will **never** separate a subject from its verb with a single comma.

5) **Do not use two commas when including a restrictive element.** That is, if the information is vital to defining who or what the subject is, do not set the information off with commas.

EXAMPLE: Students, who fail their exams, must forfeit their scholarships.

Correction: Students who fail their exams must forfeit their scholarships.

QUOTATION MARKS:

1) **Periods and commas always go inside the quotation marks, even triple quotation marks.**

EXAMPLE: My mother once told me, "All girls are 'delicate flowers.'"

2) **Colons and semicolons always go outside the quotation marks.**

EXAMPLE: My grandmother once said, "life is like a box of chocolates"; granny would have liked Forrest Gump.

3) **Question marks may go inside or outside, depending on the context.**

EXAMPLES: Do you believe that "ignorance is bliss"?

Jesse asked, "When is dinner being served?"

HYPHENS: TWO RULES

1) Use hyphens to spell out whole numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine.

2) **Hyphenate compound-adjectives.** That is, if two or more adjectives are used as one word to modify a noun, hyphenate them IF they precede the noun.

EXAMPLE: We live in the twentieth century, but I live in a twentieth-century house. (Here, "twentieth" and "century" need to be hyphenated because they act together to describe the house.)

GSP Tip: Sometimes to shorten a sentence, one can use suspended hyphens.

EXAMPLE: Four- to six-week-old puppies are usually eating solid food instead of milk.

GSP Tip: DO NOT hyphenate an adverb-adjective combination. For example, "This was a poorly written story." (NOT poorly-written)

DASHES: They come in pairs (like parentheses), unless the second dash falls at the close of the sentence.

EXAMPLE: In one of my classes we are studying female writers--Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf--who had a great impact on the world of literature.

Helpful GSP Resources

The Writing Center

The Writing Center's counselors are trained in providing one-to-one tutoring for the GSP. Our services are free. Call (512) 245-3018 or drop by Flowers Hall G05 to arrange your appointment. Be sure to take the sample GSP available on the Writing Center's website:

<http://writingcenter.english.txstate.edu>

The Testing Center

The Testing Center is located in the Lower Commons Hall. Telephone number: (512) 245-2276.

Mass Communications

The Mass Communications Department is located in Old Main 118. Telephone number (512) 245-2656. You will obtain your GSP scores from your Mass Comm academic advisor.

SLAC

The Student Learning Assistance Center is located on the 4th floor of Alkek Library. They provide GSP tutoring and a 50-question sample GSP. Telephone number: (512) 245-2515.