

PSAT

READING AND LANGUAGE SUBTEST

TEST OVERVIEW

- Second section of the test
- 35 minutes long
- 44 questions total
 - approximately 20 questions on **Standard English conventions**
 - approximately 24 questions on **Expression of Ideas**; approximately **3** of these questions will relate to **analysis of graphs**

PASSAGES

- One with a **career theme**
- One from **humanities**
- One from **science**
- One from **social studies**

Questions are in **random order** of difficulty. So what does this mean for you?

GRAMMAR BASICS REVIEW QUIZ

1. (A) Talking on her phone while driving the car. (B) My friend was talking on the phone while driving her car.
2. (A) I swim in the pool to cool off in the summer. (B) I swim in the pool I like to cool off in the summer.
3. A long time ago, the queen (A) rescued or (B) rescues the king.
4. He had (A) eating (B) eaten the spoiled food.
5. The people who left a big mess on the table need to mind (A) their (B) its manners.
6. Jill and Jane forgot to pick up (A) her or (B) Jane's deliveries.
7. Because (A) it is or (B) they are quite interesting, the art museum and the natural history museum are worth quite a visit.

COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

1. Who is going to accept/except the award at the ceremony?
2. The politician had a profound affect/effect on her country.
3. Criminals typically try to allude/elude arrest.
4. I have a great amount/number of respect for my teacher.
5. Beside/besides being a nice guy, he is extremely intelligent.
6. Between/among all the people in the world, she won the Nobel Peace Prize.
7. Make sure you choose/chose the best candidate when you vote today.
8. It is nice to pay your instructor a complement/compliment when he explains things really well.

MORE COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

9. Sometimes it is difficult to elicit/illicit responses from surveys.

10. If I could have/of performed better on my test, my grade would have been much better this semester.

11. Please respond to I/me when you receive the voice mail.

12. There are fewer/less pieces of gum in my pocket than in my drawer.

13. Don't forget to lay/lie your assignment on the teacher's desk.

14. It doesn't matter whether you win or loose/lose – it's how you play the game.

15. Civil rights advocates have very strong principals/principles.

16. This clock is better at keeping time than/then that clock.



LAST COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

17. If you stay up to/too late, you may not perform well on the test.

18. My new truck, which/that cost \$20,000, has plenty of storage space.

19. From who/whom did you receive that lovely bouquet of flowers?

OVERALL APPROACH TO THE TEST

- Good editing assesses context: be sure to check out enough of the surrounding sentences to make a well-founded choice.
- Mouth silently while you evaluate the passage. “Listen” for the correct answer.
- The essay must go beyond basic grammar rules. It must also be logical and consistent.
- Note: This is not a reading comprehension test. It is likely not necessary to read the entire passage before answering the questions.

HOW CAN I AVOID BEING INDECISIVE?

- Realize that the writing and language sections tests **agreed-upon grammar rules**, not “pet peeves.”
- There will not be questions for concepts that are up for debate, such as the Oxford comma, whether to use third person in formal essays, or whether it is acceptable to start a sentence with “but” or “because.”
- Trust your instincts.
- Consider covering up the answer choices. Rely on your own thinking first.

PACING

- You can take a little **fewer than nine minutes** per passage and its questions.
- Most students find that they have plenty of time.

TRICKY QUESTIONS

Hoping to secure the position of nurse as a true profession, Florence Nightingale established the first nursing school in 1860. (1) Nursing was practiced throughout the world from the Middle Ages all the way until the present day.

Suppose the author wants a sentence at this point in the paragraph that supports the idea that nursing had not been a widely respected profession prior to the 1860s. Which choice would best accomplish the author's goal?

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. The profession of nursing involves rigorous training in medical science and patient interaction.
- C. Nurses had consistently been held in the same esteem as other professionals even though many nurses were underpaid.
- D. Until this point, nurses lacked recognition from doctors and the general public as real health care providers.

TRICKY QUESTIONS

The nursing profession has significantly grown and developed since the (2) opening of the first school over 150 years ago.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. inaugural activity
- C. foundational ceremonial commencement
- D. germinal occurrence

*Students mistakenly believe that “fancy” wording is preferable.

TRICKY QUESTIONS

- Students do not consider enough context on a large scale.
- When asked to provide a good transition between paragraphs, be sure to read the **entirety of both paragraphs** to ensure you are making the proper connection.

TRICKY QUESTIONS

This means that a large portion of nurses (4) have about to apply for retirement.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. are
- C. is
- D. were

*Students do not consider enough context within a sentence. It is easy to jump to a conclusion on a question like this by assuming that the verb must agree with the noun that comes immediately beforehand. In fact, the verb needs to agree with “portion.”

LAST TRICKY QUESTION

While some believe this shortage is not (5) detrimenting for the overall field of nursing, others believe it can be harmful to providing quality health care.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. detrimenting to
- C. detrimental for
- D. detrimental to

*Students who look for “mathematical style” rules for grammar may be thrown off by questions involving prepositions and idiomatic expressions. On a question like this, trust your experience with the language and your instincts.