English: conventions and punctuation

Original skill preparation; versioned source scope

ACT English: Conventions and Punctuation

- Mark sentence boundaries and avoid a **comma splice** 逗号拼接错误.
- Make verbs and pronouns show **agreement** 一致关系 with their subjects and nouns.
- Place each **modifier** 修饰语 next to the word it describes.

ACT English: Conventions and Punctuation (2)

- Keep lists and comparisons in **parallelism** 平行结构.
- Use commas, apostrophes, colons and dashes correctly.

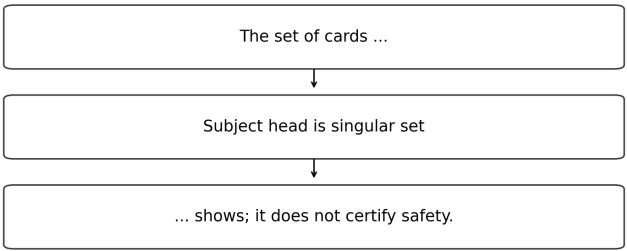
Sentence boundaries

- An independent clause has a subject and verb and can stand alone.
- Join two independent clauses with a full stop, a semicolon, or a comma plus and, but, or, so, yet, for or nor.
- A comma alone between them is a **comma splice**; nothing at all is a run-on.

Agreement

- A verb agrees with its true subject, not the nearest noun: "The set of blue cards shows the stage."
- A pronoun agrees with the noun it replaces: "The group updates its records."
- Keep verb tense consistent unless the time changes.

Figure: Agreement



- Worked steps: The set of cards ... → Subject head is singular set → ... shows; it does not certify safety.
- Match each part of the diagram to the text.

Modifiers and parallelism

- An opening phrase describes the subject that follows the comma: "Inspecting the lamp, Noor noticed…".
- Items in a list share one form: "to inspect, record and advise".
- Compare like with like.

Punctuation marks

- Commas: after an introductory clause; around nonessential information (in a matching pair); between items in a list.
- No comma between a subject and its verb, or between a verb and its object.
- Apostrophes: "its" is possessive; "it's" means "it is". Plural possessive: "the volunteers' table".
- A colon follows a complete clause; it introduces a list, explanation or example.

Practice passage

- Original continuous editing passage — A place to mend

P1 On the first Saturday of each month, a group of volunteers opens a repair table in the public library. [S1] The project began when librarian Noor noticed a row of broken desk lamps outside a nearby building. [S2] Some needed specialist work, but others had loose switches or damaged cables. [S3] Noor did not want untrained visitors to try unsafe electrical repairs. [S4] She invited a qualified repairer to explain which items the group could inspect and which should go to a professional.

- The first session accepted only battery-powered objects, with damaged batteries excluded.
- Visitors registered their items and described the faults before any work began.

Worked example: agreement and boundary

- Subject: "set", singular, so "shows".
- Two independent clauses joined by a comma alone: a **comma splice**.
- Corrected: "The set of blue cards shows the current stage; it does not certify safety." The pronoun "it" now matches "set".

Worked example: modifier, parallelism and apostrophes

- "Inspecting the lamp, a loose switch was noticed by Noor." The switch did not inspect anything. Corrected: "Inspecting the lamp, Noor noticed a loose switch."
- "The group aims to inspect, recording, and advise." Corrected: "to inspect, record, and advise".
- "The group updates ____ records": "its" (possession). "____ important to label outcomes": "It's" (it is). Test by reading "it is" aloud.

Common errors

- Joining independent clauses with a comma alone.
- Matching the verb to the nearest noun.
- Writing "it's" for possession.

Common errors (2)

- Leaving an opening phrase with no subject to describe.
- Putting a comma between a subject and its verb.

Key terms

- **conventions**: The accepted rules of grammar, usage and punctuation.
- **comma splice**: Two independent clauses joined only by a comma.
- **agreement**: Matching a verb to its subject, or a pronoun to its noun, in number.
- **modifier**: A word or phrase that describes another word.

Check yourself

- Correct: "The list of names were long."
- Choose: "The company changed ____ logo." (its / it's)
- Correct: "Running for the bus, my bag fell open."