

Qualifying Arguments, Syntax, and Conventions

AP English Language ■ Unit 7

AP English Language



What we will cover

- 1 Introductions and Conclusions Revisited
- 2 Writing Introductions and Conclusions
- 3 How Claims Are Qualified
- 4 Qualifying a Claim
- 5 Clauses and Relationships Between Ideas
- 6 Writing Clear Sentences



Introductions and Conclusions Revisited

Unit 7 returns to introductions and conclusions with more experience behind you, then moves to the two things that most separate competent writing from strong writing: **qualification** and **sentence structure**.



Writing Introductions and Conclusions

At this stage the useful upgrade is to make the conclusion do the work the CED permits. A conclusion may:

- Explain the **significance** of the argument – why it matters that this is true;
- Situate it in a **broader context** – what larger question it belongs to;
- Present the **thesis** in its final, now-earned form.

Writing Introductions and Conclusions, continued

The third is the strongest under exam conditions: restate the thesis in language you could not have used in the introduction, because the argument had not yet been made.



How Claims Are Qualified

- A lack of understanding of the complexities of a subject can lead to **oversimplification or generalisation** .
- Because arguments are usually part of an ongoing discourse, effective arguments often **avoid expressing claims in absolute terms** .
- Writers may strategically use words, phrases, and clauses as modifiers to qualify or limit the scope of an argument.

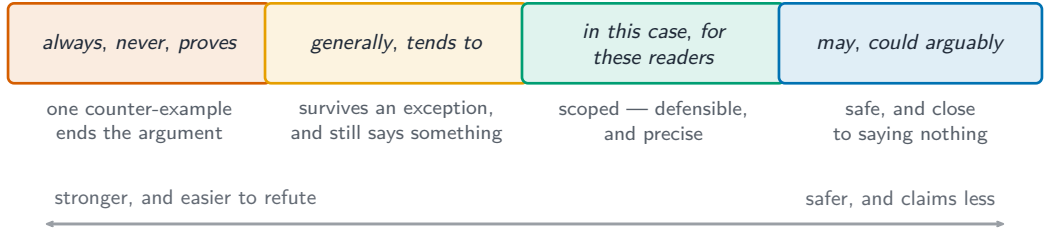


Qualifying a Claim

The tools are ordinary words used deliberately:
in most cases, where X holds, for this population, unless, to the extent that. Each narrows the claim to the ground the evidence actually covers.

A student who states a position, then shows they know its limits and defends it anyway, has demonstrated exactly the control the rubric is looking for.

How much of a claim you can hold



Aim for the third position. A qualified claim is not a weaker claim – it is one you can **hold** for the length of an essay

Why a qualified claim is the stronger one

the intuition

many students assume a **stronger-sounding** claim scores better

the truth

the opposite: an unqualified claim is easier to refute, because one counter-example destroys it

a qualifier

often, in most cases, where conditions allow, for this population

what it buys

the claim now survives the exceptions, and the writer has shown they anticipated them

the limit

qualify so heavily that nothing is asserted and there is no argument left

the balance

claim as much as your evidence supports, and **no more**

Qualification is not hedging. It is stating the **scope** within which the claim holds – which is what makes it defensible.



Two ways to join ideas, meaning different things

- Writers express ideas in **sentences**, made up of **clauses**, at least one of which must be **independent** .
- **The arrangement of sentences** in a text can **emphasise particular ideas**.
- **Subordination and coordination** express the intended relationship between ideas in a sentence.
- Writers use **coordination to illustrate balance or equality** between ideas.

Two ways to join ideas, meaning different things, in detail

Two ways to join ideas - and they mean different things

COORDINATION

shows **BALANCE** -
the ideas are equals

*"The measure was
expensive, and
it worked."*

cost and result are
ranked the same; the
reader weighs both

SUBORDINATION

shows **IMBALANCE** - one
idea outranks the other

*"Although the measure
was expensive,
it worked."*

the cost is still true,
but it has been ranked
BELOW the result

**Same two facts. Different argument.
Put YOUR point in the independent clause.**

Writers use **coordination to illustrate balance or equality** between ideas.

Clauses and Relationships Between Ideas

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- **The arrangement of sentences** in a text can **emphasise particular ideas**.
- **Subordination and coordination** express the intended relationship between ideas in a sentence.
- Writers use **coordination to illustrate balance or equality** between ideas.
- Writers use **subordination to illustrate imbalance or inequality** between ideas.



Writing Clear Sentences

For your own writing: decide the relationship first, then choose the structure that expresses it. If two ideas genuinely carry equal weight, coordinate them.

If one is a concession and the other your point, subordinate the concession – and put your point in the independent clause, where the emphasis falls.

Where a sentence ends

- **Grammar and mechanics** that follow established conventions **enable clear communication**.
- Writers use **punctuation strategically** to demonstrate relationships among ideas.
- **Punctuation** - commas, colons, semicolons, dashes, hyphens, parentheses, quotation marks, end marks - **advances the argument**.
- **Design features** such as **italics or boldface** create emphasis.

Where a sentence ends, in detail

THE FAULT	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	THE FIX
COMMA SPLICE	<i>The data was clear, the committee ignored it.</i>	full stop, semicolon, or add <i>but</i>
RUN-ON	<i>The data was clear the committee ignored it.</i>	the same three repairs — the comma was never the problem
FRAGMENT	<i>Although the data was clear.</i>	attach it to the sentence it depends on

Writers use **punctuation strategically** to demonstrate relationships among ideas.



Grammar, Mechanics, and Clarity

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- Writers use punctuation strategically to demonstrate relationships among ideas.
- Punctuation – commas, colons, semicolons, dashes, hyphens, parentheses, quotation marks, end marks – advances the argument.
- Design features such as italics or boldface create emphasis.



Conventions of Grammar and Mechanics

The examinable framing is that punctuation is **argumentative**, not merely correct. A colon promises that what follows explains what preceded. A semicolon asserts that two independent statements belong together.

A dash interrupts, and the interruption is the point.

Exam tips

- **Qualify your claims.** An absolute claim is defeated by one counter-example; a qualified one is not.
- Qualification is the most reliable route to the **sophistication point**.
- **Coordination = balance. Subordination = imbalance.** The CED says so, and it makes syntax analysable.
- Put your point in the **independent clause**. Concessions belong in the subordinate one.
- Punctuation **advances the argument**. A colon explains, a semicolon joins as equals, a dash interrupts.
- Never write "the writer uses a semicolon" without saying **what relationship it asserts**.

Three marks, three promises

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- Qualification is the most reliable route to the **sophistication point**.
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Three marks, three promises, in detail

MARK	WHAT IT PROMISES	AN EXAMPLE
semicolon ;	two complete statements, closely related and of equal weight	<i>The policy was cheap; it was also useless.</i>
colon :	what follows <i>delivers</i> what the first half announced	<i>The result was predictable: nobody applied.</i>
dash —	an interruption, or a turn the reader did not expect	<i>The scheme worked — for the six people who heard of it.</i>

Qualification is the most reliable route to the **sophistication point**.

Worked example – syntax analysed as argument

The passage reads: *“The programme was popular; it was also, by every measure the department itself proposed, ineffective.”*

- **Low-scoring:** *“The writer uses a semicolon.”*
- **Scoring:** *“The semicolon presents the two facts as equal and simultaneous rather than as a contrast, so the reader cannot dismiss the failure as an objection to popularity. The parenthetical then removes the department’s escape route before the word ‘ineffective’ arrives.”*

Punctuation is a rhetorical choice. Say what the arrangement *does* to the reader, not what mark appears.



Unit 7 – key takeaways

1

Qualify

an absolute claim dies to one counter-example

2

Sophistication

qualification is the most reliable route

3

Syntax

coordination = balance;
subordination = imbalance

4

Point

belongs in the independent clause

Check yourself

- 1 What defeats an absolute claim?
- 2 What is the most reliable route to sophistication?
- 3 Coordination vs subordination?
- 4 Where do concessions belong?

Answers: one counter-example ■ qualification ■ balance vs imbalance ■ the subordinate clause