

7.8 Conventions of grammar and mechanics

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to apply **conventions** 惯例 in a way that serves the argument.

You must be able to:

- use punctuation to control emphasis, not only to be correct
- use the semicolon and the colon for their distinct jobs
- keep tense and person consistent across a passage
- explain why conventional errors cost credibility

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Punctuation as emphasis

A dash isolates and emphasises; parentheses subordinate. "The cost —and it is considerable —falls on residents" and "The cost (considerable) falls on residents" say the same and weight it differently.

■ Semicolon and colon

A **semicolon** joins two closely related independent clauses. A **colon** introduces what follows as the fulfilment of what precedes: a list, an explanation, an example.

■ Consistency

Shifting tense or person mid-passage forces the reader to relocate themselves. Consistency is invisible when present and distracting when absent.

■ Why errors cost

An error signals that the text has not been checked, and a reader who doubts your care will doubt your facts. The cost is to credibility, not to grammar.

2 Practice

2.1 State the difference between a dash and parentheses in effect. [2]

2.2 State the distinct jobs of the semicolon and the colon. [2]

2.3 A passage shifts from "one must" to "you should".

(a) Name the fault. [1]

(b) State its effect on the reader. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A colon most precisely introduces [1]

- **A** an unrelated clause
- **B** what fulfils the preceding statement
- **C** a contrast
- **D** a concession

3.2 Conventional errors cost the writer mainly in [1]

- **A** length
- **B** credibility
- **C** tone
- **D** unity

3.3 Punctuate for emphasis on the exception: "Every department met the deadline except one the largest." [4]

4 Go further

- work through the **7.8 Conventions of grammar and mechanics** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Qualifying Arguments, Syntax, and Conventions** section of the AP English Language handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 a dash isolates and emphasises; parentheses subordinate the material.

2.2 a semicolon joins two closely related independent clauses; a colon introduces what fulfils the preceding statement.

2.3 (a) an inconsistent shift of person. (b) the reader must relocate themselves, which distracts from the argument.

3.1 B. the colon points forward to the fulfilment.

3.2 B. an unchecked text invites doubt about its facts.

3.3 correct punctuation supplied; the exception is emphasised, e.g. with a dash or colon before "the largest".