

7.8 Conventions of grammar and mechanics

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

KEY WORDS conventions 惯例 • independent 独立分句

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 | B |
| C | D |
- 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 | B |
| C | D |
- 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]
