

Qualifying Arguments, Syntax, and Conventions

AP English Language and Composition

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** 限定 and **sentence structure**.

On introductions and conclusions, the CED's statements are unchanged - the introduction introduces subject and writer to the audience; the conclusion brings the argument to a **unified end** and may present the thesis, explain its significance, or situate the argument in a broader context.

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.

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** 过度简化与以偏概全.
- Because arguments are usually part of an **ongoing discourse**, effective arguments often **avoid expressing claims in absolute terms** 绝对化表述.
- Writers may strategically use **words, phrases, and clauses as modifiers** to **qualify or limit the scope** of an argument.

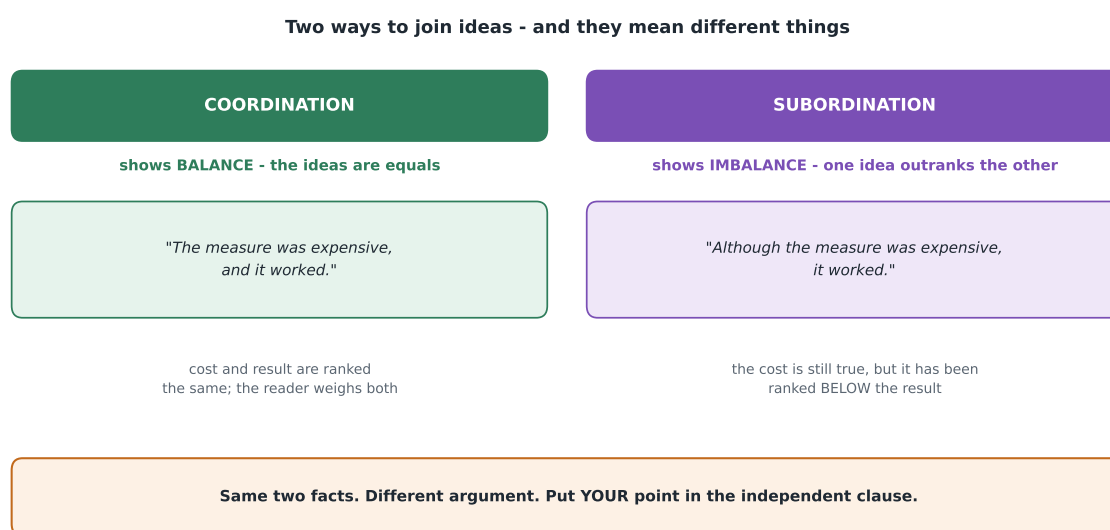
This is counter-intuitive for many students, who assume that a stronger-sounding claim scores better. The opposite is true: an unqualified claim is easy to defeat with one counter-example, while a qualified claim survives it. *Schools should ban phones* invites a single exception. *Schools should restrict phone use during instructional time, where the cost to attention is measurable* does not.

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.

Qualification is also what the **sophistication point** most often rewards. 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.

Clauses and Relationships Between Ideas



The CED is explicit: coordination shows balance, subordination shows imbalance

- Writers express ideas in **sentences**, made up of **clauses**, at least one of which must be **independent** 独立分句.
- **The arrangement of sentences** in a text can **emphasise particular ideas**.
- **Subordination and coordination** 从属与并列 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.
- The arrangement of clauses, phrases, and words within a sentence can **emphasise ideas**.

Those two middle statements make sentence structure analysable rather than decorative. *The measure was expensive, and it worked* treats cost and effect as equals. *Although the measure was expensive, it worked* subordinates the cost - it is still true, but it has been ranked below the result. Same facts, different argument.

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.

Grammar, Mechanics, and Clarity

- **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.

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.

Worked example (a real AP exam task). A rhetorical-analysis passage reads: *"The programme was popular; it was also, by every measure the department itself proposed, ineffective."* A low answer notes "the writer uses a semicolon". A scoring answer explains the structure: *"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 - both are simply true at once. The parenthetical 'by every measure the department itself proposed' then removes the department's escape route before the word 'ineffective' arrives."* That is syntax analysed as argument.

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**.