9. From the moment *2001: A Space Odyssey* premiered in 1968, it was clear that the film would become best known for its special effects. It featured spacecraft that flew realistically—not zooming around in a cartoonish manner, as was the case in other films of the time. _____ Kubrick imagined a fully realized vision of regular human spaceflights in Earth orbit and beyond.

- Ⓐ Moreover,
- Ⓑ Nevertheless,
- Ⓒ To illustrate,
- Ⓓ Meanwhile,

10. Discarded electronic devices such as cell phones and tablets are a rapidly growing source of waste, but there are some potential solutions. One way to mitigate the problem, _____ could be to include components made with renewable resources.

- Ⓐ therefore,
- Ⓑ moreover,
- Ⓒ otherwise,
- Ⓓ for instance,

10 Verbs: Agreement and Tense

The SAT contains two main types of verb questions:

1) Subject-verb agreement

2) Verb tense

Although some questions may test both concepts, it is important to understand that they are distinct.

- **Agreement** answers the question **"singular or plural?"**

  Verbs must agree with their subjects: singular subjects must take singular verbs, and plural subjects must take plural verbs.

- **Tense** answers the question **"when?"** It indicates past, present, or future.

Let's consider the following sentence:

> **The feathers** of the black-backed woodpecker **has** evolved to blend in with charred trees so that they are invisible to predators lurking in the forest.

This sentence contains a **disagreement between the subject and the verb** because the subject (*feathers*) is plural and the verb (*has*) is singular.

The singular noun *woodpecker*, which appears immediately before the verb, is part of the prepositional phrase *of the black-backed woodpecker* and has no effect on the number of the verb.

In order to correct the sentence, we must use the plural verb *have* rather than the singular verb *has*.

When many students encounter this type of sentence, however, their first instinct is to change the **tense** of the verb and use the past tense, *had*. While this change does make the sentence grammatically acceptable, there is no compelling reason for the sentence to be rewritten in another tense. **More importantly, the correction does not address the actual problem: the subject and the verb disagree.**

But, you might wonder, why does that matter if *had* fixes the sentence anyway? Why bother learning all that grammar if you can get the question right without worrying about any of it?

Well, because you could see a question that looks like the one on the next page.

Some contemporary artists seek inspiration in historical as well as current events. For example, the works of California-based painter and sculptor Alan Chin _____ elements commonly associated with the nineteenth century gold rush and the transcontinental railroad.

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ has included

Ⓑ includes

Ⓒ have included

Ⓓ having included

Unfortunately, this question forces you to deal with the actual error. If you can't hear there's a problem and don't have the grammatical tools to figure it out, you're out of luck. You can probably recognize that (D) is awkward and breaks the "*–ing* is bad" rule, but otherwise… you really have to guess.

If you cannot identify the error immediately, the key to dealing with subject-verb agreement questions is to work backwards, using the answer choices to determine what the question is testing.

1) Look at the answer choices.

(A) and (B) contain singular verbs, "has" and "includes," whereas (C) contains a plural verb, "have."

When some answer choices contain singular verbs while other answer choices contain plural verbs, the question is testing subject-verb agreement.

2) Identify the subject, and determine whether it is singular or plural.

Remember that the noun right before a verb usually won't be the subject. If it were, the question would be too easy, and it wouldn't be on the test in the first place!

When a verb to be filled in is located near the beginning of a sentence, the subject is typically right at the start. So back up and read the first few words: *For example, the works. Works* is the subject. It ends in *–s*, so it's plural.

Alternately, you can think about it logically. What has included elements inspired by both the California gold rush and the transcontinental railroad? Alan Chin's *works*. A person can't contain these things.

3) Find the verb that agrees with the subject.

Works is plural, so a plural verb is required. Only (C) contains a plural verb ("have"), so it is correct.

Notice that although (B) contains a verb in one tense ("includes"), while (A) and (C) contain verbs in other tenses ("has/have included"), you do not need to worry about tense at all in order to answer the question correctly. The only thing that matters is subject-verb agreement. **The fact that different answers contain different tenses is simply a distraction technique designed to make verb questions look more complicated than they actually are.**

Subject-Verb Agreement

You are very likely to encounter at least one question testing subject-verb agreement on your test, so you should be familiar with the various ways in which disagreements can be constructed.

These questions ask about verbs in the third-person singular (*she/he/it/one*) and third person plural (*they*) because these forms have the highest potential for confusion.

The most important thing to remember about the singular vs. plural forms of a verb is as follows:

- Singular verbs end in *–s* (e.g., *it makes*)
- Plural verbs do **not** end in *–s* (e.g., *they make*)

Note that this is the **opposite of nouns**, which take an *–s* in the plural and no *–s* in the singular.

For example, *the book* (noun) is singular, and *the books* is plural

However, *he writes* (verb) is singular, and *they write* is plural.

Regular Verbs

Subject	Correct	Incorrect
Singular	The researcher believes	The researcher believe
Plural Simple	The researchers believe	The researchers believes
Plural Compound	The researcher and her team believe	The researcher and her team believes

Irregular Verbs

		To be	To have
Present	**singular**	is	has
	plural	are	have
Past	**singular**	was	had
	plural	were	had

Unfortunately, questions testing subject-verb agreement avoid making disagreements too obvious. Subjects and verbs are unlikely to appear next to one another, first because this arrangement would make errors easy to spot, and second because errors in students' own writing generally occur when some form of separation is involved.

That said, there are a number of fairly predictable ways in which disagreements can be disguised.

A. Subject – Non-Essential Clause – Verb

In this structure, a non-essential clause is simply inserted between the subject and the verb to distract from the fact that the subject is singular and the verb is plural or vice versa. When the information between the commas is crossed out, the disagreement between them is revealed.

Again, if you have difficulty identifying these errors, you should practice by taking your pencil and physically crossing out the information between the commas so that you are more easily able to work with the structure visually on a screen.

For example:

Incorrect: Green tea with mint, which is a popular drink in many Middle Eastern countries, **are** said to have many health benefits.

Cross out: Green tea with mint~~, which is a popular drink in many Middle Eastern countries,~~ **are** said to have many health benefits.

Correct: Green tea with mint, which is a popular drink in many Middle Eastern countries, **is** said to have many health benefits.

It is also possible for a disagreement to occur **within** a non-essential clause:

Incorrect: Green tea with mint, **which are** a popular drink in many Middle Eastern countries, is said to have many health benefits.

Correct: Green tea with mint, **which is** a popular drink in many Middle Eastern countries, is said to have many health benefits.

Essential Clause with "That"

Disagreements can also involve essential clauses beginning with *that*. As is true for disagreements involving non-essential clauses, errors can be placed around the essential clause or within it.

Incorrect: **A drink** that is popular in many Middle Eastern countries **are** green tea with mint, said to have many health benefits.

Correct: **A drink** that is popular in many Middle Eastern countries **is** green tea with mint, said to have many health benefits.

Incorrect: The black widow spider has **striking red hourglass markings** that **makes** it one of the most recognizable spiders in the United States.

Correct: The black widow spider has **striking red hourglass markings** that **make** it one of the most recognizable spiders in the United States.

B. Subject – Prepositional Phrase – Verb

As discussed earlier, a prepositional phrase is a phrase that begins with a preposition (e.g., *in the box, under the table, over the hill*). Prepositional phrases are frequently inserted between subjects and verbs to distract from disagreements.

If a set of answer choices contains both singular and plural verbs, make sure to check for a prepositional phrase between the subject and verb. The last word of the phrase will always appear right before the verb.

In the examples below, the subject is underlined, the prepositional phrase is italicized, and the verb is bold.

Incorrect: The patent *for the first mechanical pencils* **were** granted to Sampson Morgan and John Hawkins in England during the early nineteenth century.

Cross out: The patent ~~*for the first mechanical pencils*~~ **were** granted to Sampson Morgan and John Hawkins in England during the early nineteenth century.

Correct: The patent *for the first mechanical pencils* **was** granted to Sampson Morgan and John Hawkins in England during the early nineteenth century.

In the example above, the subject (*patent*) is singular and requires a singular verb (*was*). However, the prepositional phrase ends with a plural noun (*pencils*), which is placed immediately before the verb.

C. Verb Before Subject

In this structure, the normal word order (or **syntax**) of a sentence is reversed so that the verb is placed before the subject. Sentences may **begin with a prepositional phrase**, followed by the verb and then subject.

In the examples below, the subject is underlined, the prepositional phrase is italicized, and the verb is bold.

Incorrect: Among the finds from a recent archaeological dig **was** earthenware knobs originally used for "pay walls," boxes into which Elizabethan theater-goers deposited their fees.

Correct: Among the finds from a recent archaeological dig **were** earthenware knobs originally used for "pay walls," boxes into which Elizabethan theater-goers deposited their fees.

Most often, the preposition will be the first word of the sentence, as in the example sentences above, but sometimes it will be the second.

Incorrect: Identified among the finds from a recent archaeological dig **was** earthenware knobs originally used for "pay walls," boxes into which Elizabethan theater-goers deposited their fees.

Correct: Identified among the finds from a recent archaeological dig **were** earthenware knobs originally used for "pay walls," boxes into which Elizabethan theater-goers deposited their fees.

This structure can be confusing because the reversed syntax makes the sentence sound odd. It is important to understand, however, that the unusual syntax itself is not what makes the sentence incorrect. It is simply a distraction to keep you from hearing the disagreement between the subject and the verb.

Sometimes a sentence in this form will not contain an agreement error. In such cases, you will still need to be able to identify the subject and double-check the agreement in order to confirm that no change is necessary.

It is also important that you be able to determine the subject because you may also encounter errors in which the verb comes before the subject but is not preceded by a prepositional phrase:

Incorrect: Radioactivity is generally not considered harmful when people are exposed to it at low levels for brief periods, but less clear **is** its long-term effects.

Correct: Radioactivity is generally not considered harmful when people are exposed to it at low levels for brief periods, but less clear **are** its long-term effects.

When there is no preposition at the start of the sentence, there are unfortunately no real tip-offs for this error besides the presence of both singular and plural verb forms in the answer choices. The easiest way to identify the subject is simply to ask yourself *what* is "less clear" – the plural noun *long-term effects* is the only option that makes sense, so the sentence requires the plural verb *are*.

D. Compound Subject

A compound subject consists of two nouns—singular or plural—joined by the word *and*. Compound subjects are **always plural** and thus take plural verbs.

While compound subjects are generally quite straightforward in short, simple sentences, they can be easy to overlook in longer ones if you do not read carefully or only pay attention to the noun next to the verb. Errors involving compound subjects can also be very difficult to hear, so you cannot rely on your ear.

For example:

Incorrect: Pigeons make highly effective messengers because their speed and homing ability **allows** them to quickly and reliably reach familiar destinations.

Correct: Pigeons make highly effective messengers because their speed and homing ability **allow** them to quickly and reliably reach familiar destinations.

You should be especially careful to determine the complete subject when the verb appears before the subject, as in the second example below. Agreement errors involving this type of syntax are exceptionally hard to identify by ear, even if they would be fairly obvious without the inverted word order.

Incorrect: The two lowest spots that researchers have ever identified on earth, the Mariana Trench **and** the HMRG Deep **sits** along the deepest part of the ocean floor

Incorrect: Along the deepest part of the ocean floor **sits** the Mariana Trench **and** the HMRG Deep, the two lowest spots that researchers have ever identified on earth.

Both versions of the sentence contain the same error, but the second one hides it much more effectively.

E. There is, There are, etc.

There is
There was
There has been
} go with **singular** nouns

There are
There were
There have been
} go with **plural** nouns

Incorrect: In recent years, there **has been** <u>many questions</u> raised about the safety of genetically modified foods.

Correct: In recent years, there **have been** <u>many questions</u> raised about the safety of genetically modified foods.

F. Gerunds = Singular

Gerunds (*-ing* words) take **singular verbs** when they act as subjects. Don't get distracted by a plural noun before the verb!

Incorrect: <u>Playing</u> parlor games such as charades **were** a popular pastime in the early twentieth century, before the invention of radio and television.

Correct: <u>Playing</u> parlor games such as charades **was** a popular pastime in the early twentieth century, before the invention of radio and television.

G. Collective Nouns = Singular

Collective nouns are **singular nouns** that refer to groups of people. Common examples include *agency, institution, school, committee, jury, city, country, company, university,* and *team.* Although such nouns are treated as plural in British English and are sometimes used with plural verbs in everyday American English as well, the SAT only considers **singular verbs** correct.

Incorrect: For the past several years, the theater company **have** traveled to various schools throughout the city in order to expose students to classic works.

Correct: For the past several years, the theater company **has** traveled to various schools throughout the city in order to expose students to classic works.

H. That, What, or Whether as a Subject = Singular

All of these words can be used as subjects, although that construction might strike you as very odd. *That* = the fact that; *whether/what* = the question of whether/what.

Correct: <u>That</u> Jane Goodall became the world's foremost expert on chimpanzees **was** hardly a surprise to those who had observed her childhood fascination with animals.

I. Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to unspecified nouns. They are used to indicate amounts and can take either singular or plural verbs.

Singular	Plural	Singular or Plural
None*	Few	Neither
No one	Both	Some
Any	Several	More
One	Many	Most
Each	Others	All
Every	A number	
Another		
Much		
The number		

If you encounter these pronouns on the SAT, they are likely to be followed by prepositional phrases (italicized below). Don't get distracted by a noun in the prepositional phrase and mistake it for the subject.

Incorrect: When any (one) *of the committee members* **propose** a new regulation, the committee discusses it thoroughly and then takes a vote.

Correct: When any (one) *of the committee members* **proposes** a new regulation, the committee discusses it thoroughly and then takes a vote.

When *(n)either* and *(n)or* are paired with two nouns, the verb must agree with the noun before the verb.

Correct: Neither Amy Tan nor Maxine Hong Kingston **was** raised in a literary family, but both became avid readers while growing up near San Francisco.

When *(n)either* is not paired with *(n)or* and is used with two singular nouns, a singular verb should also be used. In this usage, ***neither* is short for *neither one*, and *one* is singular by definition**.

Correct: Both Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston became avid readers while growing up near San Francisco, but neither **was** raised in a literary family.

When *some, more, most,* and *all* are paired with *of + singular (pro)noun,* they take singular verbs.

Correct: The state of Florida was the site of some of the first European settlements in North America, yet most of it **was** unpopulated until the nineteenth century.

However, when these pronouns appear alone or are paired with *of + plural (pro)noun,* they take plural verbs.

Correct: Although members of the Algonquin tribe obtained food primarily through hunting and fishing, some (of them) **were** also farmers who raised corn, squash, and beans.

*In everyday writing, *none* and, less frequently, *any* are often paired with plural verbs, although that use is technically wrong. You can assume that if the SAT ever tests these pronouns, only singular verbs will be considered correct.

Exercise: Subject-Verb Agreement (answers p. 215)

For the following sentences, determine whether the underlined verbs agree with their subjects. If not, write in the correct form of the verb. Remember that singular verbs end in *-s* whereas plural verbs do not.

1. Galaxies, far from being randomly scattered throughout the universe, appears to be distributed in a series of bubble-shaped patterns.	appear
2. The expansion of roads and the construction of a chemical plant has led to a rapid increase in the number of endangered bird species throughout the county.	have
3. The works of Chippewa author Louise Erdrich explores complex familial relationships among Native Americans as they reflect on issues of identity and belonging.	
4. Any of the participants in the study is permitted to withdraw if the medication's side effects become too severe.	✓
5. Each of the compositions by jazz musician Thelonius Monk seem to evoke a self-enclosed world, one with its own telltale harmonies and rhythms.	
6. The presence of mysterious cave paintings in the Mississippi Valley have puzzled archaeologists studying images created by ancient inhabitants of the region.	has
7. One of the most serious problems in treating the injuries of competitive athletes are that one injury often contributes to the next, making it difficult for doctors to identify the primary risk factor.	is

8. When the Punic Wars, a series of conflicts between Rome and Carthage, ~~was~~ fought during the second and third centuries BCE, they probably formed the largest military clash that had ever taken place.		were
9. The founding of *The Chicago Tribune* by friends James Kelly, John Wheeler, and Joseph Forrest was prompted by the desire to create a world-class newspaper in a region lacking in serious journalism.		✓
10. Although Andrew Carnegie and Cornelius Vanderbilt established themselves as two of the most powerful figures in business during the late nineteenth century, neither were born into a wealthy family.		X ~~were~~ was
11. Though its use has been widely banned, lead paint, which was once used in both homes and businesses, has left potentially hazardous materials in many buildings.		✓
12. The study of foreign languages requires considerable effort and time, as well as access to the right tools. What constitutes the "right" tools, however, changes based on previous language exposure and students' preferences.		✓
13. Also known as coverts, the feathers of a peacock's tail spreads out in a distinctive train and boast colorful "eye" markings.		X spread
14. The writings of Edmund Wilson, who was interested in many aspects of modern culture, reflect a fascination with the ideas of thinkers ranging from Marx to Freud.		✓

Verb Tense

Correct answers to tense questions are primarily **based on context**. Several options may be acceptable on their own, but only one answer will fit in the passage. **Unless there is a clear reason for the tense to change, a verb should be parallel to the other verbs in the sentence or passage.** You must therefore **make sure to read the surrounding sentences** in order to obtain enough information to answer tense questions.

For example, consider the question below.

The tomato **is** consumed in many different ways, including raw, as an ingredient in many dishes and sauces, and in drinks. Botanically a fruit, it _____ considered a vegetable for culinary purposes. It **belongs** to the nightshade family, and its plants typically **grow** from three to ten feet high.

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ	was
Ⓑ	had been
Ⓒ	would be
Ⓓ	is

Out of context, the sentence is fine. If you looked at it on its own, you would have no way of knowing whether there was a problem.

(B), (C), and (D) are all grammatically acceptable as well (although more complex tenses such as *would be* and *had been* are less likely to appear as correct answers). As a result, it is necessary to consider the verbs in the surrounding sentences: *is*, *belongs*, and *grow*. All of those verbs are in the **present tense**, so the underlined verb must be in the present tense as well. Only (D) contains a present-tense verb, so it is correct.

In addition, when a sentence includes two verbs in different tenses, each item must include a separate conjugated verb corresponding to the appropriate tense.

Incorrect: The forestry industry **has met and continue** to meet the growing changes required to stay competitive within a rapidly transforming economy.

Correct: The forestry industry **has met and will continue** to meet the growing changes required to stay competitive within a rapidly transforming economy.

Although many tense questions will require you to keep the tense of a particular verb consistent with the tense of the surrounding verbs, correct answers may sometimes depend on other factors.

A. Simple Present

Simple perfect = one-word present form, e.g., *paint(s), do(es), grow(s)*

This tense is unique in that all verbs have separate singular (*-s*) and plural (no -s) third-person forms. It is used to describe **currently occurring** and **ongoing** present actions. It is also used to describe the actions in **books** and **movies** (literary present).

Correct: Today, engines powered by ions **can** travel great distances and **carry** satellites beyond our solar system.

B. Present Perfect

Present perfect = *has/have* + *past participle*, e.g., *has painted, has done, have grown*

- Usually formed by adding *–ed* to the verb. (For common irregular past participles, see p. 144.)
- Used for actions that **began in the past** and that are **continuing into the present**.
- **Most important** irregular verb = *to be*, which becomes *has been* (sing.) and *have been* (pl.).

The words ***for, since, over***, and ***during*** usually act as **tip-offs** that the present perfect is required.

Incorrect: Since around 500 BCE, people **cultivate(d)** tomatoes in Mesoamerica.

Correct: Since around 500 BCE, people **have cultivated** tomatoes in Mesoamerica.

The present perfect is also commonly used to describe **an action that occurred very recently**.

Correct: Scientists **have reported** that the breakthrough may result in new technologies.

Note that **questions involving the present perfect are likely to depend only on the sentence in which they appear**. For example:

The complexity of human speech is a problem that continues to puzzle computer scientists. **Since** the 1950s, they _____ to create a machine capable of responding to human language with a comparable degree of flexibility and depth.

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ have struggled

Ⓑ had struggled

Ⓒ would struggle

Ⓓ struggle

The word *since* serves as a signal that the present perfect is required. (A) is thus correct.

C. Simple Past

Simple past = *verb* + *–ed*, e.g., *talked, played, painted*

- Describes a **finished action in the past**.
- Usually identical to the past participle, e.g., *they have walked* and *they walked*. For a list of common irregular past participles, see p. 144.
- Most important **irregular verb** = *to be*, which becomes *was* (sing.) and *were* (pl.).

Dates and **time periods** are usually tip-offs that the simple past is required.

Correct: Around 500 BCE, the inhabitants of Central America **began** to cultivate the first tomatoes.

Correct: During the Middle Ages, many members of the nobility **lived** in castles.

D. Past Perfect

Past perfect = *had* + *past participle*, e.g., *had painted, had done, had grown*

- When a sentence refers to two finished actions, the past perfect is used to describe only the action that happened **first**.

Important: the phrase *by the time* is a tip-off that the past perfect is required. For example:

Martha Graham, an American dancer and choreographer, is known as one of the foremost pioneers of modern dance. Building upon the foundation of turn-of-the-century dancer Isadora Duncan, Graham brought this art form to a new level with her introduction of dance techniques that at first horrified and then later won over the American public. **By the time** she retired from the stage in 1970, she _____ hundreds of performances and permanently altered the course of dance in the United States.

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ gave

Ⓑ will give

Ⓒ had given

Ⓓ would have given

The presence of the phrase *by the time* in the passage indicates that the past perfect is required. You can also think of it this way: logically, Martha Graham must have given hundreds of performances (action #1) before she retired (action #2). (C) is thus correct.

Past Forms: Irregular Verbs

- Irregular past participles often end in *-en, -own, -ung,* or *-unk.*
- Irregular simple past forms often end in *-ew, -ang,* or *-ank.*

Infinitive	Simple Past	Past Participle
To (a)rise	(A)rose	(A)risen
To (a)waken	(A)woke	(A)woken
To be	Was	Been
To become	Became	Become
To begin	Began	Begun
To blow	Blew	Blown
To break	Broke	Broken
To choose	Chose	Chosen
To do	Did	Done
To draw	Drew	Drawn
To drink	Drank	Drunk
To drive	Drove	Driven
To fly	Flew	Flown
To freeze	Froze	Frozen
To get	Got	Gotten*
To go	Went	Gone
To hide	Hid	Hidden
To give	Gave	Given
To grow	Grew	Grown
To know	Knew	Known
To ride	Rode	Ridden
To ring	Rang	Rung
To run	Ran	Run
To see	Saw	Seen
To sew	Sewed	Sewn
To shrink	Shrank	Shrunk(en)
To sing	Sang	Sung
To sink	Sank	Sunk(en)
To speak	Spoke	Spoken
To spring	Sprang	Sprung
To steal	Stole	Stolen
To stink	Stank	Stunk
To swim	Swam	Swum
To take	Took	Taken
To tear	Tore	Torn
To throw	Threw	Thrown
To wear	Wore	Worn
To write	Wrote	Written

*Note to students who have attended school in the British system. Although *got* is used as the past participle of *get* in British English, *gotten* is standard in American English.

E. Would vs. Will

Future = *will* + *verb*

The future is used to describe actions that have not yet occurred but that will definitely occur, and to indicate **predictions**, **suggestions**, and **hopes**.

Correct: Over the next several decades, demographers believe, millions of people **will migrate** to cities from rural areas.

Correct: Scientists now use machine learning algorithms to predict how long lithium-ion battery **will last**.

Conditional = *would* + *verb*

Would is used to describe **hypothetical** situations: ones that **could** or **might** occur but have not actually occurred.

Correct: Many people who think of the tomato as a vegetable **would be** surprised to learn that it is actually a fruit.

Would + *verb* can also refer to a **recurring action** in the past.

Correct: The Fireside Poets, so called because families **would read** them aloud in front of their fireplaces, were as popular in the nineteenth century as rock stars are today.

Finally, *would* can be used to refer to an action that, from the perspective of the past, has not yet occurred—even if, from today's perspective, that action occurred long ago.

Shortcut: use *would*, not *will*, in sentences that include a date/time period or event in the past.

For example:

At the age of 14, Martha Graham saw the acclaimed dancer Ruth St. Denis perform and proclaimed that her future profession was "chosen." However, when Graham began dancing shortly afterward, in the **early years of the twentieth century**, no one could have imagined that she _____ one of the greatest choreographers of all time.

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ will become

Ⓑ would become

Ⓒ would have become

Ⓓ becomes

Because the sentence clearly describes events in the past, *would*, not *will*, should be used. (B) is thus correct.

F. Would Have vs. Will Have

In the paper version of the SAT, answers with *would have* and *will have* have traditionally been **incorrect**, but it is nevertheless useful to have a basic understanding of how these tenses are used.

Past conditional = *would have* + *verb*

Would have is used to describe an action that could have happened, but that did not actually occur.

The most important thing to know about this tense is that *would have* + *past participle* should not appear in a **clause** begun by *if*, although this construction can appear in the same **sentence**.

Incorrect: If the Washington Monument **would have been** constructed as originally designed, the National Mall **would have been** anchored by a pantheon of 30 columns.

Correct: If the Washington Monument **had been** constructed as originally designed, the National Mall **would have been** anchored by a pantheon of 30 columns.

Future perfect = *will have* + *verb*

Will have is used to describe a future action that will be finished *before* a second action occurs.

As is true for the past perfect, this tense is often associated with the phrase *by the time*.

Correct: By the time construction on the GIFT Diamond Tower is complete, workers **will have spent** more than three years assembling the 87-story building.

The Progressive

All tenses have a corresponding progressive (*-ing*) form, e.g., *she is painting, they were doing, it will be growing*. These forms are used to emphasize that an action is in the middle of occurring.

Note that for the purposes of the SAT, progressive forms can generally be considered parallel to verbs in the simple (no *-ing*) form. For example, if a passage contains verbs in the simple present, a correct answer could include a verb in the present progressive.

Correct: Engines powered by ions can travel great distances and **are** now **carrying** satellites beyond our solar system.

In descriptions of **past events**, progressive forms are frequently used to describe ongoing actions that were **interrupted** by second, one-time actions.

Correct: The fossil record suggests that dinosaurs **had been living** on Earth for around 165 million years when the meteor that would lead to their extinction crashed into the Yucatan Peninsula.

Passive Voice

In a **passive** construction, the subject and the object are flipped. *X does y* (active) becomes *y is done by x* (passive). Note that the construction *by* combined with a form of *to be* often signals the passive voice.

Active	**Passive**
William Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*.	*Hamlet* **was** written **by** William Shakespeare.

Although the passive voice should not be a major concern, you should be aware that it has a tendency to create **wordy and awkward constructions likely to signal incorrect answers**.

Assuming that there is no additional error involved, if you are trying to decide between an answer with an active construction and an answer with a passive one, you can assume that the active option will be correct.

In response to the demand for long-lasting staple foods during the 1970s, _____ As result, the nutritional value of many packaged foods declined.

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ	preservatives were added by manufacturers to dishes that previously were simple.
Ⓑ	the addition of preservatives to manufacturers to previously simple dishes.
Ⓒ	manufacturers added preservatives to previously simple dishes.
Ⓓ	previously simple dishes had preservatives added to them by manufacturers.

(B) creates a fragment because it does not contain a main verb, so it can be eliminated immediately. (A) and (D) both contain wordy, passive construction (preservatives were "added by manufacturers"). As a result, they read less cleanly than (C), which contains a much cleaner, more standard subject-verb construction ("manufacturers added preservatives"). (C) is thus correct.

To vs. –ING

Finally, it is possible that you will encounter questions asking you to identify whether the *to* (infinitive) or *-ing* (gerund) form of a verb is correct.

Incorrect: Even brief exposure to words associated with money seems to cause people to become more independent and less inclined **helping** others.

Correct: Even brief exposure to words associated with money seems to cause people to become more independent and less inclined **to help** others.

Unfortunately, there is no rule or "trick" for these questions—you must simply be able to hear which version is correct. These questions are likely to appear very infrequently and should not be a major cause for concern; however, based on the practice material released by the College Board, they do appear to be fair game for the digital test.

When a *to* form is replaced with an *–ing* form, a preposition must often be placed before the *–ing* form. For example:

Deactivated viruses form the basis of many vaccines known for their effectiveness _____ disease. As a result, people can be safely injected with genetic material from a virus without becoming ill themselves.

effectiveness in doing something

play a role in doing something

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ to prevent

Ⓑ in preventing

Ⓒ with preventing

Ⓓ preventing

Because the standard phrase is *effectiveness in preventing*, (B) is correct.

Note: when both the "to" and "–ing" forms are acceptable, you will not be asked to choose between them.

Correct: During the Seneca Falls convention in 1848, the problem of women's suffrage began **taking** precedence over other concerns.

Correct: During the Seneca Falls convention in 1848, the problem of women's suffrage began **to take** precedence over other concerns.

For the sake of thoroughness, an extended list of expressions requiring *to* and *-ing* forms is included on the following page. To be clear, however, even if English is not your first language, I do not advocate spending long periods of time trying to memorize it. The chance that you will encounter one of these questions is sufficiently small that you should not worry about them until you are consistently answering every other type of question correctly.

Infinitive	Gerund
Agree to be	Accused of being
Allow to be	Accustomed to being
Appear/seem to be	Admired for being
Arrange to be	Admit to being
Aspire to be	Advocate being
Attempt to be	After being
Cease to be	Avoid being
Choose to be	Banned from being
Claim to be	Before being
Consider to be	Consider being
Decide to be	Deny being
Decline to be	Describe being
Deserve to be	Discuss being
Encourage to be	Effective in/at being
Expect to be	Enjoy being
Fail to be	Famous for being
Have the ability to be	Imagine being
Inclined to be	In charge of being
Inspire (someone) to be	In the hope(s) of being
Intend to be	(In)capable of being
Known to be (+ noun)	Insist on being
Manage to be	Known as/for being
Neglect to be	Mind being
Offer to be	Postpone being
Prepare to be	Praised for being
Promise to be	Prevent from being
Refuse to be	Regarded as being
Reluctant to be	Report being
Require to be	Resent being
Seek/strive to be	Risk being
Shown to be	Seen as being
Struggle to be	Stop being
Tend to be	Succeed in/at being
Threaten to be	Used to being
Want to be	Viewed as being
Wish to be	Without being

Exercise: Subject-Verb Agreement and Tense (answers p. 215)

1. For several weeks each year, more than 200 artists from 60 countries gather in Santa Fe to offer handmade masterworks. Every July, one of the world's largest folk-art festivals _____ together artists from every corner of the globe for a vast and colorful international bazaar.

- Ⓐ brings
- Ⓑ bring
- Ⓒ have brought
- Ⓓ bringing

2. Kite-flying has a long history in Japan: according to legend, the first kites flew nearly 1,400 years ago. Since that time, kite-flying _____ a delightful tradition.

- Ⓐ had remained
- Ⓑ has remained
- Ⓒ remained
- Ⓓ remains

3. Although the Concorde was retired in 2003, a plane capable of flying halfway around the world in a mere four hours could soon exist. For engineers, the elimination of sonic booms _____ one of the biggest challenges involved in building the new craft. Some of them claim, however, that they have found a way of reducing the amount of noise the planes make.

- Ⓐ is
- Ⓑ are
- Ⓒ have been
- Ⓓ were

4. The construction of prefabricated houses is based on the assembly-line model of car manufacturing. In the 1920s, Ford's production method for the Model T transformed the automobile from a luxury item into a purchase that was affordable for the average consumer. Today, assembly-line production and bulk buying _____ both the cost and construction time for prefabricated homes.

- Ⓐ has driven down
- Ⓑ have driven down
- Ⓒ is driving down
- Ⓓ drives down

compound subject.

5. Ronald Joffrey and Gerald Arpino founded the Joffrey School of Ballet in 1953. In the years since, it _____ into one of the world's most prestigious training centers for classical dance.

- Ⓐ evolves
- Ⓑ would evolve
- Ⓒ has evolved
- Ⓓ is evolving

6. Basket weaving is one of the most widespread crafts in history: originating in the Middle East around 7,000 years ago, it spread to every continent except Antarctica. The preservation of ancient baskets is difficult, however, because most items are made of natural materials like wood, grass, and vines, which _____ rapidly. As a result, much of the history of basket making has been lost.

- Ⓐ decay
- Ⓑ decays
- Ⓒ has decayed
- Ⓓ decayed

7. The supercontinent called Pangaea broke apart about 200 million years ago, when it was fractured by the movement of tectonic plates. Geologists predict, however, that the pieces _____ themselves hundreds of millions of years in the future, possibly in the area around the North Pole.

- Ⓐ will reassemble
- Ⓑ reassemble
- Ⓒ have reassembled
- Ⓓ to reassemble

8. In the mid-1600s, the French playwrights Jean Racine and Pierre Corneille competed for the title of greatest tragedian. By the end of the century, however, Racine _____ considerably more successful than his rival.

- Ⓐ become
- Ⓑ will become
- Ⓒ has become
- Ⓓ had become

9. Yurts have been a distinctive feature of life in Central Asia for at least three thousand years. The first written description of a yurt used as a _____ recorded by the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, who described yurt-like tents as the homes of the Scythians: horse-riding nomads who lived in the northern Black Sea and Central Asia during the first millennium CE.

Ⓐ	dwelling was
Ⓑ	dwelling were
Ⓒ	dwelling has been
Ⓓ	dwelling having been

10. In 1860, the Lincoln-Douglas debates _____ as an important campaign document in the presidential race, which pitted Lincoln against Douglas for the second time. In this case, however, Douglas was running as the candidate of a divided party and finished a distant second in the popular vote.

Ⓐ	have been printed as a book and used
Ⓑ	were printed as a book and used
Ⓒ	were printed as a book and had been used
Ⓓ	printed as a book and used

11 Pronouns

A pronoun must agree with the noun to which it refers, i.e., its **antecedent** or **referent**.

Singular pronouns (e.g., *she, it*) must agree with singular nouns, and plural pronouns (e.g., *they*) must agree with plural nouns.

Some pronouns refer only to people (e.g., *he, she*); some only to things (e.g., *it*); and some to both (e.g., *they*).

On the SAT, some questions will ask you to determine whether a pronoun should be singular or plural, which in turn requires you to back up and determine whether the noun it refers to is singular or plural. In some cases, you may also need to identify whether a pronoun refers to a person or to a thing.

Let's start by looking at the following question.

The cacao bean is the dried and fully fermented fatty bean of the cacao tree (Theobroma cacao). _____ the source of cocoa butter and solids, including chocolate, as well as an ingredient in many Mesoamerican dishes such as molé and tejate.

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ	They are
Ⓑ	It is
Ⓒ	These are
Ⓓ	One is

When we look at the answers, we can see that they contain both singular (*it, one*) and plural (*they, these*) options. As a result, we must determine which noun the pronoun to be filled in refers to, and whether that noun is singular or plural.

The pronoun in question appears at the start of the sentence, and antecedents typically come before pronouns (*ante-* = before). It is therefore necessary to look at the previous sentence: *The cacao bean is the dried and fully fermented fatty bean of the cacao tree (Theobroma cacao).*

Now we're going to think through the problem step by step:

- Logically, what is the source of cocoa butter and solids? The cacao bean.
- Is *cacao bean* singular or plural? Singular. We know because there is no *-s* on the end of *bean*.
- Is *they* singular or plural? Plural.

So we have a mismatch. The pronoun *it* must be used to refer to a singular noun. The answer is therefore (B). Note that it does not matter that "they" in (A) could logically refer to the plural noun *cacao beans*. Only the singular noun *cacao bean* is present, and **a pronoun must refer to a word that actually appears**.

Don't get distracted by (D). "One" normally implies "one of many," but as we've established, the referent is singular. Although you could maybe-kind-of-sort-of make an argument for this answer, (B) is simply more correct according to the most logical interpretation of the passage.

A. Things

Traditionally, the majority of SAT pronoun agreement questions have tested things, and given that this type of agreement is responsible for most pronoun errors in academic writing, that pattern is likely to hold.

The pronouns *it(s)* and *they/their* are used to refer to singular and plural things, e.g., cities, books, paintings. (Note that the plural of *it* is either *they* or *them*, not *its*.)

Singular	Plural
It	They, Them
Its	Their

A singular noun must be replaced with a singular pronoun.

Incorrect: While the tomato is botanically a fruit, **they** are considered a vegetable for culinary purposes.

Correct: While the tomato is botanically a fruit, **it** is considered a vegetable for culinary purposes.

Likewise, a plural noun must be replaced with a plural pronoun.

Incorrect: While tomatoes are botanically fruits, **it** is considered a vegetable for culinary purposes.

Correct: While tomatoes are botanically fruits, **they** are considered vegetables for culinary purposes.

A referent may appear in the same sentence as a blank, but it may also appear in the previous sentence (as in the examples above) or, on rare occasions, in the following sentence.

To reiterate: When you encounter a set of answer choices that includes both singular and plural pronouns, you should always take a moment to figure out which noun the pronoun refers to. Otherwise, you are very likely to be confused by choices that are grammatically correct on their own but that create disagreements when plugged back into the passage.

It is possible that the digital test will include questions testing pronouns in terms of both agreement and apostrophes simultaneously. Although it is not yet clear whether this question type will indeed be included, if you do encounter one, you must first determine whether the referent is singular or plural; and second, whether an apostrophe is needed to indicate a contraction with *is* or *are*. For example:

Until recently, it was believed that silent synapses—connections between neurons that remain inactive until memories are formed—were present only during early development. However, new research suggests that _____ role in the adult brain may be much larger than previously thought.

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ its

Ⓑ it's

Ⓒ their

Ⓓ they're

Logically, the pronoun in the blank must refer to *silent synapses*, plural.

"Its" and "it's" are singular, so (A) and (B) can be eliminated. To choose between (C) and (D), plug in "they are": *However, new research suggests that <u>they are</u> role in the adult brain may be much larger than previously thought.* No, that clearly does not make grammatical sense. (D) can thus be eliminated, leaving (C) as the answer.

B. People

Errors involving people are typically easier to catch than ones involving things for the simple reason that it is generally quite clear whether a passage is discussing one person or multiple people. For example:

<u>Mae Jemison</u> became the first African American woman to travel into space when she went into orbit aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour on September 12, 1992. After _____ medical education and a brief general practice, Jemison served in the Peace Corps for two years.

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ one's

Ⓑ her

Ⓒ their

Ⓓ there

Because the pronoun in question must logically refer to Mae Jemison, who is clearly female (*the first African American woman*), *her* is the sole possibility. The answer is therefore (B).

When the gender of a singular noun is unspecified, e.g., *a researcher*, *an architect*, the phrase *he or she* (or a grammatically alternate form, e.g., *him or her*, *his or her*) should be used. Although *they* is common in everyday English, only *he or she* has traditionally been considered correct on the SAT. Unless material indicating otherwise is released by the College Board, it can be reasonably assumed that this pattern will hold true on the digital test. For example:

Working memory, the ability to consciously hold and manipulate new information in the mind, is an effortful process. In particular, neurons in a person's prefrontal cortex must work together in synchrony to focus _____ thoughts.

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ our

Ⓑ one's

Ⓒ his or her

Ⓓ your

Because the pronoun in question refers to *a person*, singular, (C) is correct.

Note: both *each* and *every* are **singular** (short for *each one* or *every one*) and take the singular pronouns *it* and *he or she*.

Incorrect: Each of the researchers will present **their** work at the conference.

Correct: Each of the researchers will present **his or her** work at the conference.

Incorrect: Every one of the researchers will present **their** work at the conference.

Correct: Every one of the researchers will present **his or her** work at the conference.

C. Emphatic Pronouns

"Self" words, e.g., *himself*, *itself*, and *themselves*, can be used to emphasize either people or things. As is true for the regular versions of these words, you must make sure that they agree with the noun they are logically intended to emphasize.

Incorrect: What is criticized is the author's refusal to discuss her work publicly, not the quality of the writing **herself**.

Correct: What is criticized is the author's refusal to discuss her work publicly, not the quality of the writing **itself**.

D. Missing or Ambiguous Antecedent (Pronouns vs. Nouns)

When a pronoun refers to a noun that is missing or unclear, it is necessary to name the specific person, place, or thing in order to remove the ambiguity. For example:

Daniel Liebeskind and Frank Gehry are among the most celebrated architects in the world. _____ for using unconventional building materials such as corrugated metal to create tilted geometrical structures.

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ He is known

Ⓑ It is known

Ⓒ Gehry is known

Ⓓ He would be known

Because *Daniel* and *Frank* are both male names, it is unclear which one "He" refers to. (A) and (D) can thus be eliminated. The tense shift in (D) is exceedingly awkward, eliminating that option as well.

Although (C) keeps the construction singular, this answer is correct because it supplies a specific name and removes the ambiguity.

Important: given the choice between a pronoun alone, and a noun naming a specific person or thing, the noun will virtually always be correct. For example:

Produced by the Boston-based startup Superpedestrian, a new device called the Copenhagen Wheel can be slipped onto any bicycle to provide an electronic boost. With a 350-watt motor and a 48-volt lithium battery, it can produce more than four times the energy created by regular pedaling. ____ can use a smartphone to unlock and lock it, change gears, and select how much assistance the motor should provide.

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ They

Ⓑ Bicycle riders

Ⓒ He or she

Ⓓ Some

The passage describes a device that *can be slipped onto any bicycle*, so it makes sense that *they* would refer to bicycle riders. The problem is that the noun *bicycle riders* doesn't actually appear in the passage—and again, **a pronoun must refer to a noun that actually appears**. Only (B) supplies the noun indicating exactly who can use a smartphone to control the device.

A version of the "noun over pronoun" rule can also be tested with *this* and *that*. Generally speaking, *this* and *that* (along with their plural forms *these* and *those*) should be followed by a noun because the pronoun alone tends to result in a vague construction. For example:

Over the last several decades, the Internet has fundamentally changed how we live, work, and play. From virtual classrooms to electronic banking to online gaming, many of our daily actions and interactions are now governed by the web. While _____ has numerous benefits, it has some drawbacks as well.

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ this

Ⓑ that

Ⓒ these

Ⓓ this technology

Although the reader can reasonably assume that the word *this* refers to the Internet or to conducting daily activities online, the sentence does not actually spell that fact out. (D) is correct because it includes a specific noun, and **more specific is always better**.