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LESSON 2

ADVANCED TRANSITIONS



In this lesson, you will learn to:

- Differentiate between less common addition and contrast transitions.
- Learn to use rarer types of transitions such as purpose transitions.
- Solve test-style questions requiring the use of advanced transitions

Overview

In **Lesson 1: Basic Transitions**, you learned about the most common categories of transitions: **addition**, **contrast**, and **cause-effect**. You also learned about some frequently-encountered subcategories of addition transitions, like emphasis transitions.

This lesson expands your skills by introducing transitions that are less commonly encountered, including **similarity**, **sequence**, and **summary / conclusion** transitions.

PART 1: LESS COMMON CONTINUER TRANSITIONS

Less common continuer transitions include **similarity** transitions, **sequence and time** transitions, and **summary/conclusion** transitions.

Similarity Transitions

Similarity transitions highlight similarities between two ideas, claims, or statements. These transitions help readers understand how the ideas are related, similar, or alike.

Common similarity transitions include “**Similarly**”, “**Likewise**”, “**By the same token**”, “**In the same way**”, and “**In the same vein**”.



For example:

William Shakespeare’s play *Julius Caesar* examines political intrigue and the moral complexities of betrayal. **Similarly**, Christopher Marlowe’s play *Edward II* focuses on the personal and political turmoil of a king’s reign and downfall. ✓

William Shakespeare’s play *Julius Caesar* examines political intrigue and the moral complexities of betrayal. **Likewise**, Christopher Marlowe’s play *Edward II* focuses on the personal and political turmoil of a king’s reign and downfall. ✓

In both examples, the transitions “similarly” and “likewise” signal that Marlowe’s *Edward II* addresses themes closely related to those found in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*.

Sequence and Time Transitions

Sequence transitions and **time transitions** perform similar roles. However, each type serves a slightly different purpose in connecting ideas and events.

Sequence transitions such as “first”, “second”, and “finally” typically show steps in a process. They are often used in instructional writing and when describing processes. Typically, they work together in groups.

 For example:

To develop a new targeted drug, researchers follow a meticulous process. **First**, they synthesize the initial compound needed for the targeted drug in the lab. **Second**, they test its efficacy and safety through a series of cellular assays. **Last**, they document the results. ✓

Time transitions indicate the progression of time. Like sequence transitions, they typically work together in groups.

 For example:

Ancient Greek historian Herodotus’ account of a battle that was reportedly halted by a sudden solar eclipse has intrigued scientists for centuries. **Initially**, estimates of the event’s date ranged from 626 to 583 BCE. **Later**, British astronomer Francis Baily pinpointed it to September 30, 610 BCE, but his attempts to verify this date fell short. ✓

 Here’s a list of sequence and time transitions:

Afterward, Currently, Earlier, Eventually, Finally, First, In the first place, Initially, Lastly, Later, Next, Previously, Second, Subsequently, Then¹, Today, Ultimately

 **Tip:** If you notice sequence or time transitions (or dates, such as 1981 or 400 BCE) in the surrounding paragraph, you will likely need to use a sequence or time transition in the blank.

 **Tip:** Do not confuse “consequently” and “subsequently”. “Consequently” is a cause-effect transition, but “subsequently” is a sequence transition.

1. “Then” can also be used to indicate cause-and-effect.

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 Here's a test-style example. Try to find and underline the sequence transitions in the surrounding paragraph:

While working at the National Szechenyi Library in Budapest, Balazs Mikusi discovered a rare manuscript copy of Mozart's famous piano sonata, *Sonata in A, K.331*. First, Mikusi identified the handwriting as Mozart's. _____ he took it to top scholars, who confirmed the manuscript's authenticity. Ultimately, the discovery validated the theory that the first edition of the sonata, previously believed to contain errors, was correct.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A) In contrast,
- B) Specifically,
- C) Next,
- D) That is,

 **Explanation:** Because the surrounding context includes the sequence transitions “First” and “Ultimately”, the correct answer will likely also be a sequence transition.

Choice A, “In contrast,” is incorrect because it typically introduces a contrasting or opposing idea, which does not fit here as the subsequent information is a continuation of a sequence, not a contrast. ❌

Choice B, “Specifically,” is incorrect as it is used to provide more detailed information about the same topic, but in this context, a sequential action is being described, not a specification of the prior statement. ❌

Choice D, “That is,” is incorrect. “That is” is used to indicate a restatement or explanation of the previous information. However, the sentence following the blank is not a restatement; rather it is the next step in a sequence. ❌

Choice C, “Next,” is the best answer because it continues the sequence of events in a logical order. It indicates that following the identification of the handwriting as Mozart's, the next step taken by Mikusi was to present the manuscript to experts for further validation. ✅

Summary / Conclusion Transitions

Summary and conclusion transitions are used to wrap up ideas, summarize the main points, or draw conclusions from the preceding text. These transitions signal the end of a discussion or provide a final thought on the topic.

Some common summary / conclusion transitions are “**In conclusion**”, “**In short**”, “**In sum**”, and “**To conclude**”.

 **Warning:** Summary / Conclusion transitions are likely to be **wrong** since the passages featured within DSAT transitions are generally too short to need a summary or conclusion.

 See if you can pick out the summary / conclusion transition among the answer choices in the test-style question below:

In a recent study, researchers found that patients’ brains reacted more positively to images of healthier foods after six months of dieting and nutritional counseling. _____ a 1981 study demonstrated that children’s snack preferences could be shifted with positive adult attention.	Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition? A) Afterward, B) In summary, C) Similarly, D) As a result,
--	---

 **Explanation:** Choice A, “Afterward,” is incorrect because it suggests that the study in the second sentence happened after the study in the first sentence; this is illogical since the first sentence mentions a study that happened recently while the second mentions one from “1981”. ❌

Choice B, “In summary,” is incorrect because the information following the blank is not a summary of the preceding information. Instead, it introduces a new study. ❌

Choice D, “As a result,” is incorrect. There is no cause-effect relationship between the two studies. The first study happened recently while the second is from “1981”. A recent study cannot influence a study from the past. ❌

Choice C, “Similarly,” is the best answer because it indicates that the information following it is similar to the previously mentioned study. Both studies involve changes in food preferences influenced by external factors, demonstrating a broader pattern in behavioral science. ✅



Exercise: Less Common Continuer Transitions

Instructions: Fill in the table with the transitions below.

Finally, First, In conclusion, In short, In sum, In the same way, In the same vein, Initially, Lastly, Later, ~~Likewise~~, Next, Previously, Similarly, Subsequently, Then, To conclude, Ultimately

Similarity	1. <i>Likewise</i> 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
Sequence and Time	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____
Summary / Conclusion	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____

 TEST-STYLE QUIZ:
LESS COMMON ADDITION TRANSITIONS**1**

The United States Secret Service was initially established in 1865 as a division of the Treasury Department to combat counterfeiting. _____ following the assassination of President McKinley in 1901, it assumed the responsibility of protecting the President.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A) Consequently,
- B) Subsequently,
- C) For example,
- D) To be clear,

2

Iceland's history is filled with peculiar bans, shaping its unique cultural identity. _____ a dog ban in the 1920s to prevent disease led to cats becoming the preferred pet. Other bans include owning reptiles, boxing, watching television on Thursdays and in July, and giving children certain non-Icelandic names.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A) For instance,
- B) Therefore,
- C) Nonetheless,
- D) Next,

3

Shamanism, a traditional religious practice within Indigenous communities, has evolved over time to encompass a diverse range of cultural elements and to cater to wider audiences, including urban professionals and the middle class. _____ modern-day shamans play a key role in Indigenous cultural revitalization and human rights movements.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A) Nevertheless,
- B) In conclusion,
- C) In many cases,
- D) In other words,

4

In a surprising revelation, scientists from the Subglacial Antarctic Lakes Scientific Access expedition discovered complex life forms, including crustaceans and tardigrades, in Antarctica's subglacial Lake Mercer. _____ such environments were thought to host only simple life forms.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A) Therefore,
- B) Nevertheless,
- C) Previously,
- D) Similarly,

Answers are at the end of the lesson

Mid-sentence and End-of-sentence Transitions

 **Warning:** So far we've mostly looked at situations where transitions are located at the beginning of a sentence. However, in some situations, transitions can be placed in the middle of a sentence or at the end of a sentence. This is done for stylistic reasons, and it has no effect on the way the transition works.

 In other words, the following examples all mean the same thing:

Electric vehicles are gaining popularity, but concerns persist. **For example**, their battery life remains a significant issue. ✓

Electric vehicles are gaining popularity, but concerns persist. Their battery life, **for example**, remains a significant issue. ✓

Electric vehicles are gaining popularity, but concerns persist. Their battery life remains a significant issue, **for example**. ✓

 **Tip:** It's easier to solve transitions questions with mid-sentence blanks if you imagine that the blank is at the beginning of the sentence. However, this strategy won't work with the transition word "though".

For more details about transitions appearing in the middle of a sentence or at the end of a sentence (and how to deal with "though"), see **Lesson: 15: Transitions and Boundaries**.

 Here's a straightforward test-style example. Use the strategy from the tip above to solve:

NASA's InSight lander mission to Mars, planned for 2016, was affected by a leak that developed in a French-built seismological instrument. The instrument, designed to gather data from Mars's core, mantle, and crust, failed to maintain the necessary vacuum seal for accurate measurements. The launch was, _____ delayed until 2018.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A) however,
- B) for example,
- C) therefore,
- D) in other words,

 **Explanation:** Choice A, “however,” is incorrect because it suggests a contrast or opposition, which isn’t present here. The delay described in the sentence is directly related to the previously mentioned instrument malfunction, not a contrasting idea. ❌

Choice B, “for example,” is incorrect because it would imply the sentence is providing an illustration or example of a previously stated general point. In this context, the sentence is describing a specific outcome resulting from a specific incident rather than offering an example. ❌

Choice D, “in other words,” is incorrect. It indicates restatement or clarification of the preceding idea, which doesn’t fit here because the sentence introduces new information (the delay of the launch) rather than rephrasing existing information. ❌

Choice C, “therefore,” is correct. It clearly signals a cause-and-effect relationship: the instrument’s failure to maintain a vacuum seal directly resulted in the mission’s delay. ✅

 **Note:** Choice C is equivalent to “Therefore, the launch was delayed until 2018.”

LESS COMMON CONTRAST TRANSITIONS

Just as there are several types of continuer transitions, there are also several types of contrast transitions. These include **acknowledgment** transitions, and **alternative and replacement** transitions.

Acknowledgment Transitions

Acknowledgment transitions acknowledge or concede to an opposing viewpoint or a limitation in an argument.

 For example:

The analysis did not show the close genetic relationship between Neanderthals and modern humans that researchers expected. **Admittedly**, the sample size was small. ✅

The analysis did not show the close genetic relationship between Neanderthals and modern humans that researchers expected. **That said**, the sample size was small. ✅

In these examples, we see an acknowledgment of the fact that the analysis described has a limitation—it used a small sample size.

LESSON 2 • ADVANCED TRANSITIONS

 See if you can identify the acknowledgment transition among the answer choices in the test-style question below:

Researchers believe that severe drought may have contributed to the fall of the ancient Hittite Empire, which once ruled over modern-day Turkey and northern Syria. Using tree ring data from ancient juniper trees, they discovered evidence of three consecutive years of extreme dryness around the time of the empire's collapse. _____ they do not believe that drought was the sole cause of the empire's downfall: it likely just magnified the risk of other threats such as invasion and famine.	Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition? A) As a result, B) In fact, C) Likewise, D) Granted,
--	---

 **Explanation:** Choice A, “As a result,” is incorrect. “As a result” implies a direct causation, suggesting that the subsequent information is a consequence of the initial statement. However, the second part of the sentence is about discounting drought as the sole cause, which is not a direct consequence but rather a qualification of the initial claim. ❌

Choice B, “In fact,” is incorrect. “In fact” is used to introduce information that confirms or emphasizes the preceding statement. In this context, the information that follows does not confirm but rather qualifies the understanding of the drought’s impact by suggesting it was not the only cause. ❌

Choice C, “Likewise,” is incorrect. “Likewise” is used to introduce a similar or comparable situation or fact. The following sentence, however, is not introducing a similar case but is qualifying the initial claim about the drought’s impact. ❌

Choice D, “Granted,” is the correct choice. “Granted” is used to acknowledge a point or concede a fact, often before introducing a contrasting or additional aspect that modifies the initial statement. It fits here as it acknowledges that while drought played a role in the downfall of the Hittite Empire, it was not the sole factor. This transition sets up the acknowledgment of drought’s role while also indicating that other factors like invasion and famine were also significant. ✅

Alternative and Replacement Transitions

As their name suggests, alternative transitions show that there are two alternatives. These could be alternative plans, options, or approaches.

 For example:

Recent observations suggest phosphine in Venus's atmosphere, hinting at microbial life. Scientists are considering deploying aerial probes to directly sample the atmosphere. **Alternatively**, they may use orbiters with spectrometers to analyze the composition remotely. ✓

The example passage presents two options for investigating phosphine in Venus's atmosphere. The first option is using aerial probes, and the second is using orbiters with spectroscopy. Therefore, an alternative transition can be used.

 Here are the alternative transitions:

Alternately, Alternatively

When one alternative is listed as a replacement for another, use a replacement transition, like “instead”.

Scientists don't want to use aerial probes to directly sample Venus' atmosphere. **Instead**, they may use orbiters with spectrometers to analyze its composition remotely. ✓

This passage presents a situation where one option is rejected in favor of another. The scientists prefer using orbiters with spectroscopy rather than using aerial probes.

 See if you can identify another replacement transition in the answer choices of this test-style example:

When introduced to a new competitor, Florida anole lizards evolved a response in just 15 years, according to an experiment. When faced with competition from brown anoles, green anoles climbed higher in trees and evolved better climbing structures on their feet. _____ green anoles on islands without brown anoles showed no change.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A) Hence,
- B) Rather,
- C) Similarly,
- D) On the other hand,

 **Explanation:** Choice A is incorrect. “Hence” introduces a cause and effect relationship, which does not align with contrasting scenarios presented. It wrongly suggests that green anoles on islands without brown anoles showed no change because green anoles on islands with brown anoles evolved better climbing structures, which is not the intent here. ❌

Choice B is incorrect. “Rather” indicates a replacement or alternative, where one option or action is taken over another. In this context, however, there is no replacement or alternative being presented. The unchanged behavior of green anoles on islands without brown anoles is not an alternative to their behavior in the presence of competitors, but a contrasting situation. Therefore, “Rather” does not fit. ❌

Choice C is incorrect. “Similarly” introduces a similarity relationship and wrongly indicates that the unchanged green anoles are similar to the adapting green anoles. ❌

Choice D is correct. “On the other hand” indicates that the unchanged green anoles on islands without brown anoles are in contrast to the green anoles that had to adapt to the presence of brown anoles. ✅

Purpose Transitions

Purpose transitions indicate that someone (or something) has undertaken an action (or a series of actions) in order to achieve a particular goal.

 Here’s a test-style question. Try to identify a purpose transition among the answer choices:

Steven N. Austad, a researcher at the University of Idaho, studies aging. He questions the effectiveness of traditional research animals like fruit flies, which have short lifespans, and suggests studying species that reach older ages. _____ he analyzes long-lived animals like Micronesian wild mice and Sapelo Island opossums.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A) Nonetheless,
- B) To that end,
- C) Subsequently,
- D) That said,

 **Explanation:** Choice A, “Nonetheless,” is incorrect. “Nonetheless” introduces a contrasting or opposing idea, but the sentence that follows is not contrasting Austad’s idea that it may be ineffective to use animals with short lifespans. ❌

Choice C, “Subsequently,” is incorrect. “Subsequently” indicates a sequence of events or a chronological progression, which does not fit here because the sentence emphasizes the purpose behind analyzing long-lived animals, not the timing of the action. ❌

Continued...

Choice D, “That said,” is incorrect. “That said” is used to acknowledge a point or introduce a qualification. In this context, the sentence that follows does not acknowledge a counterpoint; rather, it supports that idea by explaining how the researcher implements it. ❌

Choice B, “To that end,” is correct. It indicates that the action taken—analyzing long-lived animals such as Micronesian wild mice and Sapelo Island opossums—is specifically done to achieve the stated goal: studying species that age better. This matches the purpose-driven context of the passage. ✅

 **Note:** “To this end”, “To these ends”, and “To those ends” are purpose transitions that function the same way as “to that end”.

“Then” as Cause-Effect Transition

While “then” can be used as a time transition, it can also be used as a cause-effect transition.

 For example:

Rising sea levels are a significant threat to coastal communities. Governments, **then**, must prioritize flood defenses and evacuation plans.

In the example above, “then” is equivalent to “therefore.” In other words, because of the threat of rising sea levels, governments must prioritize flood defenses and evacuation plans.

Rare Transitions

 **Tip:** If you see a transition that you haven’t encountered before, that choice is more likely to be correct. Still, while considering the rarity of an answer choice can help, the correct answer ultimately depends on context.

 See if you can identify a “rare” answer choice in this test-style example:

In nineteenth-century America, letters were the sole means of communication over long distances. _____ they were often treated as treasured keepsakes and preserved for future generations. Today, historians study Civil War-era letters to gain insight into the experiences, thoughts, and emotions of individuals involved in the war.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- A) As such,
- B) For example,
- C) Eventually,
- D) Nevertheless,

 **Explanation:** Choice B is incorrect. “For example” introduces a specific instance or illustration of a broader idea. In this case, the second sentence does not provide a specific example of the first; instead, it elaborates on the implications of letters being the sole means of communication. ❌

Choice C is incorrect. “Eventually” suggests a sequence or progression of events over time, which does not fit the context of the sentence. The preservation of letters is not something described as something that happened later in a sequence; it is described as something that was happening at the time they were being written and received. ❌

Choice D is incorrect. “Nevertheless” introduces a contrast, implying that the second sentence contradicts or qualifies the first. Here, the sentences build upon each other, rather than opposing one another. ❌

Choice A is correct. “As such” logically connects the two sentences. It signals that letters, as the sole means of long-distance communication, were naturally treated as treasured keepsakes and preserved. This transition appropriately conveys the cause-and-effect relationship between the significance of letters and their preservation. ✅

 **Tip:** Because “As such” is a more rarely encountered transition, it is more likely to be correct.

Final Tips:

- Look for context clues. Pay close attention to indicators of time (e.g., dates or sequences), similarity, or purpose.
- Rare transitions are often correct. Less common transitions like “as such” and “to be sure” are frequently correct answers because they precisely fit specific contexts. Don’t dismiss unfamiliar transitions—check carefully.
- Avoid summary and conclusion transitions. DSAT passages are generally too short to require summary transitions such as “in summary,” “to conclude,” or “in short.” These transitions are usually incorrect.
- Always check logical flow. Plug your chosen transition back into the sentence and surrounding context. If it sounds unnatural or disrupts logical flow, eliminate it.
- Don’t forget to use the strategies from Lesson 1.

LESSON 5

INTERRUPTIONS

 In this lesson, you will learn to:

- Identify interruptions
- Use commas, dashes, and parentheses to punctuate interruptions correctly
- Solve questions involving interruptions

Introduction to Interruptions

Interruptions are phrases that “interrupt” the flow of sentences.

They are set off from the rest of the sentence using parallel punctuation: a pair of commas, a pair of dashes, or a pair of parentheses.

In the official explanations for the DSAT, they are referred to as “supplementary elements within sentences”. Some textbooks call them “nonessential elements”.

 **Warning:** Interruptions cannot contain a sentence’s main subject or main verb. You learned how to identify a main verb in **Lesson 4: Finite Verbs and Clauses**. To learn how to identify a main subject, see **Lesson 9: Basic Subject-Verb Agreement**.

 For example, take a look at the following sentences:

MycoWorks, a biotech company based in California, has created a new type of eco-friendly leather made from fungi. ✓

MycoWorks—a biotech company based in California—has created a new type of eco-friendly leather made from fungi. ✓

MycoWorks (a biotech company based in California) has created a new type of eco-friendly leather made from fungi. ✓

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All three of the sentences are punctuated correctly and mean basically the same thing, at least on the DSAT.¹ They tell the reader that the information being set off by punctuation is an interruption—in other words, it interrupts the flow of the sentence and can be removed without fundamentally changing the sentence’s meaning.

 For example:

MycoWorks ~~a biotech company based in California~~ has created a new type of eco-friendly leather made from fungi.

➔ MycoWorks... has created a new type of eco-friendly leather made from fungi.

Because the sentence still has the same fundamental meaning (and it still contains its main subject “**MycoWorks**” and its main verb “**has**”), the information between the commas / dashes / parentheses is an interruption.

Although interruptions can appear anywhere within a sentence, it’s very common for them to come between a sentence’s main subject and verb, as in the examples above.

Interruptions are also often used to provide a restatement of previously introduced information or a clarification of complicated terminology.

 Example:

Interruption

Transposons, *or jumping genes*, are DNA sequences that can change their position within a genome. ✓

In some cases, interruptions can be just one word. This is especially common with transition words like “therefore”, “however”, and “consequently”. Although these words most frequently appear at the beginning of a sentence, they can appear within a sentence as well.

 Example:

Interruption

The pundits were, *however*, amazed by the results of the election. ✓

Less frequently, interruptions are used to set off short statements like “critics agree”, “researchers argue”, and “experts suggest”.

 Example:

Interruption

In the face of global warming, *experts suggest*, immediate action is necessary. ✓

1. In reality, they have subtly different meanings, but this is not tested on the DSAT.

 Exercise: Is it an interruption?

Instructions: Find and cross out the interruptions within the sentences. If there are no interruptions, write “NONE”.

 **Warning:** Sentences may include commas and dashes that are not being used to set off interruptions.

Examples:

- a. *Chlamydoselachus anguineus* ~~also known as the frilled shark~~ is a deep-sea species that has remained largely unchanged for millions of years.
- b. Its unique features ~~such as its elongated body and gill slits~~ have led to speculation about its evolutionary history.

 **Tip:** If you’re not sure whether a group of words is an interruption or not, try “**The Interruption Test**”. That is, try reading the sentence without that group of words. If the sentence makes sense when it is removed, then it is likely an interruption.

 Notice, for instance, that the example sentences above still make basic sense when the interruption is removed: ➡ *Chlamydoselachus anguineus*... is a deep-sea species that has remained largely unchanged for millions of years.

➡ Its unique features... have led to speculation about its evolutionary history.

Remember, interruptions are often placed between a sentence’s main subject and main finite verb.

Exercises:

1a. New York City’s Initiative 1482B a measure requiring new buildings and major renovations to adopt bird-friendly designs is intended to combat the issue of bird collisions, a significant factor in declining avian populations.

1b. This groundbreaking legislation the most comprehensive in the country aims to save thousands of bird lives by mandating the use of materials that birds can easily identify.

2a. George Walker an African American composer, pianist, and organist achieved unprecedented success in the predominantly white field of classical music.

2b. In 1996, he became the first African American to win a Pulitzer Prize for Music for his work “Lilacs.”

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3a. For the first time, researchers have recorded a video of a puffin a type of seabird with a short beak using a tool.

3b. The video published on the website of the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* depicts a puffin scratching its feathers with a twig.

3c. This breakthrough makes puffins the first known tool-using seabirds—meaning that these creatures now join the ranks of dolphins, crows, and primates.

4a. A fragment of a statue of King George III which was toppled by American patriots in 1776 and transformed into musket balls was discovered in a Connecticut garden in 1991.

4b. Now, the artifact a lead arm is expected to fetch \$15,000 to \$25,000 at auction.

4c. The statue once located in Manhattan's Bowling Green Park was dismantled by about 40 soldiers and sailors just days after the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

5a. Victorian-era convicts' tattoos contrary to popular belief were not symbols of criminal affiliation but rather expressions of fashionable sentiments, according to researchers Robert Shoemaker and Zoe Alker.

5b. Utilizing the extensive Digital Panopticon database, they found that tattoos which became prevalent across various social classes provided a unique lens into the lives of ordinary individuals who typically left no historical records.

6a. Scotland's Callanish standing stones arranged nearly 5,000 years ago have long puzzled researchers.

6b. However, recent geophysical surveys reveal a star-shaped pattern possibly created by a massive lightning strike several thousand years ago in the earth surrounding one stone.

Answers and explanations are at the end of the lesson.

PART 2: PUNCTUATING INTERRUPTIONS

As mentioned previously, interruptions are set off from the rest of the sentence with paired punctuation—that is, a pair of commas, dashes, or parentheses.

Wrong answer choices on the DSAT may, for example, illogically pair a comma with a dash, or a dash with a parenthesis.

In this section, we'll look at some basic situations involving interruptions and discuss how to punctuate them properly.

 **Rule #1:** If an interruption starts with a parenthesis, it should end with a parenthesis—and vice versa.

In some ways, parentheses are the easiest type of punctuation tested on the SAT. Unlike a comma or a dash, a parenthesis **must** be paired with another parenthesis—no exceptions.

 Examples:

Frida Kahlo's captivating 1949 self-portrait *Diego y yo* (*Diego and I* set a new record as the most expensive artwork by a Latin American artist ever sold at auction, fetching \$34.9 million. ✗

Frida Kahlo's captivating 1949 self-portrait *Diego y yo* (*Diego and I*) set a new record as the most expensive artwork by a Latin American artist ever sold at auction, fetching \$34.9 million. ✓

 Here's a straightforward example question:

In 1803, Jane Austen sold the rights to her novel _____ (<i>Northanger Abbey</i>) for £10 to a publisher who decided not to publish it and sat on the manuscript for 13 years. Distraught, Austen eventually bought the novel back for the same amount she had initially sold it for.	Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English? A) <i>Lady Susan</i> later renamed B) <i>Lady Susan</i>—later renamed C) <i>Lady Susan</i> (later renamed D) <i>Lady Susan</i>, later renamed
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 **Explanation:** The convention being tested is the punctuation of a supplementary element within a sentence. Applying the interruption test, we get: In 1803, Jane Austen sold the rights to her novel *Lady Susan* ~~later renamed *Northanger Abbey*~~ for £10 to a publisher who decided not to publish it and sat on the manuscript for 13 years.

That means “later renamed *Northanger Abbey*” is an interruption, so it should be set off from the rest of the sentence with paired punctuation.

Choice A is incorrect. Because the interruption ends with a parenthesis after “*Abbey*”, it should begin with a parenthesis after “*Susan*”. However, this choice does not place any punctuation after “*Susan*”.



Choice B is incorrect. Because the interruption ends with a parenthesis after “*Abbey*”, it should begin with a parenthesis after “*Susan*”. However, this choice uses a dash after “*Susan*,” not a parenthesis.



Choice D is incorrect. Because the interruption ends with a parenthesis after “*Abbey*”, it should begin with a parenthesis after “*Susan*”. However, this choice uses a comma after “*Susan*,” not a parenthesis.



Choice C is correct. The parenthesis after “*Susan*” and the parenthesis after “*Abbey*” work together to let the reader know that “later renamed *Northanger Abbey*” is an interruption. 

 Here’s another test-style question:

A group of international scientists is advocating for a Global Library of Underwater Biological _____ to catalog Earth’s submerged noises, such as whales’ clicks and boats’ hums.

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

- A) Sounds, (GLUBS)
- B) Sounds, (GLUBS),
- C) Sounds—(GLUBS)
- D) Sounds (GLUBS)

 **Explanation:** The convention being tested is the punctuation of a supplementary element within a sentence. Applying the interruption test, we get: A group of international scientists is advocating for a Global Library of Underwater Biological (GLUBS) to catalog Earth’s... Because “GLUBS” is an interruption, it should be set off from the rest of the sentence with punctuation. **Continued....**

Choice A is incorrect. The comma after “Sounds” is unnecessary. The parentheses surrounding GLUBS already set it off from the rest of the sentence. ❌

Choice B is incorrect. The comma after “Sounds” and the comma after “(GLUBS)” are unnecessary. The parentheses surrounding GLUBS already set it off from the rest of the sentence. ❌

Choice C is incorrect. The dash after “Sounds” is unnecessary. The parentheses surrounding GLUBS already set it off from the rest of the sentence. ❌

Choice D is correct. The parentheses around “GLUBS” work together to let the reader know that this is an interruption. ✅

 **Tip:** There can never be any punctuation immediately before an opening parenthesis, so you could have eliminated choices A, B, and C immediately.

 **Rule #2:** If an interruption starts with a comma, it should end with a comma (and vice versa).

 Examples:

interruption

The ruins at Fountains Abbey, *a tranquil British monastery* were once home to a major medieval tannery. ❌

The ruins at Fountains Abbey *a tranquil British monastery*, were once home to a major medieval tannery. ❌

The ruins at Fountains Abbey, *a tranquil British monastery*, were once home to a major medieval tannery. ✅

 Here’s a slightly challenging test-style question:

Wassailing, an Anglo-Saxon tradition practiced since the medieval era in _____ making noise with pots and pans to ward off evil spirits and ensure a bountiful apple harvest.

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

- A) England—involves
- B) England involves,
- C) England, involves
- D) England involves



Explanation: The convention being tested is the punctuation of a supplementary element within a sentence.

Applying the interruption test, we get: Wassailing ~~an Anglo-Saxon tradition practiced since the medieval era in England~~ involves making noise with pots and pans to ward off evil spirits and ensure a bountiful apple harvest.

Because “an Anglo-Saxon tradition practiced since the medieval era in England” is an interruption, it should be set off from the rest of the sentence with punctuation.

Choice A is incorrect. Because the interruption begins with a comma after “Wassailing”, it should end with a comma after “England”. However, Choice A uses a dash after “England,” not a comma. ❌

Choice B is incorrect. Because the interruption begins with a comma after “Wassailing”, it should end with a comma after “England”. However, Choice B illogically places a comma after “involves”. Remember, an interruption cannot include a sentence’s main verb. ❌

Choice D is incorrect. Because the interruption begins with a comma after “Wassailing”, it should end with a comma after “England”. However, Choice D does not place any punctuation after “England”. ❌

Choice C is correct. The comma after “Wassailing” and the comma after “England” work together to let the reader know that this is an interruption. ✅



Rule #3: If an interruption starts with a dash, it should end with a dash (and vice versa).¹



Examples:

interruption

Artist Maurizio Cattelan’s *Comedian*—*a banana duct-taped to a wall* sold for \$120,000 at Art Basel Miami Beach, sparking debate on art’s value and the artist’s role. ❌

Artist Maurizio Cattelan’s *Comedian*, *a banana duct-taped to a wall*—sold for \$120,000 at Art Basel Miami Beach, sparking debate on art’s value and the artist’s role. ❌

Artist Maurizio Cattelan’s *Comedian*—*a banana duct-taped to a wall*—sold for \$120,000 at Art Basel Miami Beach, sparking debate on art’s value and the artist’s role. ✅

1. Do not confuse a dash (—) with a hyphen (-). Notice that the dash is longer. Dashes are used to set off interruptions (among other things), but hyphens are used to make compound words, such as “duct-taped” in the example above. Hyphens are not directly tested on the SAT, but they may appear near dashes, causing confusion.

 Here's a test-style question:

Ethel Payne, born in 1911, emerged as a pioneering figure in journalism and civil rights, earning the title “First Lady of the Black Press.” Payne’s groundbreaking _____ from highlighting racial disparities in housing, employment, and healthcare to covering the White House—eventually led to her becoming the first Black woman commentator on a national network in 1972.	Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English? A) work— B) work C) work, D) work;
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 **Explanation:** The convention being tested is the punctuation of a supplementary element within a sentence (an interruption).

Applying the interruption test, we get: Payne’s groundbreaking work ~~from highlighting racial disparities in housing, employment, and healthcare to covering the White House~~ eventually led to her becoming the first Black woman commentator on a national network in 1972.

Because “from highlighting racial disparities in housing, employment, and healthcare to covering the White House” is an interruption, it should be set off from the rest of the sentence with punctuation.

Choice B is incorrect. Because the interruption ends with a dash after “White House”, it should start with a dash after “work”. However, Choice B does not use any punctuation to mark the beginning of the interruption. ❌

Choice C is incorrect. Because the interruption ends with a dash after “White House”, it should start with a dash after “work”. However, Choice C uses a comma, not a dash. ❌

Choice D is incorrect. Because the interruption ends with a dash after “White House”, it should start with a dash after “work”. However, Choice D illogically uses a semicolon, not a dash, creating a sentence fragment (“from highlighting...in 1972”). ❌

Choice A is correct. The dash after “work” and the dash after “White House” work together to let the reader know that this is an interruption. ✅

 Here's a challenging test-style question:

Researchers have utilized the Precision Integrated-Optics Near-infrared Imaging Experiment (PIONIER) to obtain detailed images of the red giant star P1 Gruis's surface. The _____ approximately 530 light years from Earth, is enveloped in convective cells—turbulent plasma regions responsible for heat transport.	Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English? A) star situated B) star—situated C) star) situated D) star, situated
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 **Explanation:** Applying the interruption test, we get: The star ~~situated approximately 530 light years from Earth~~, is enveloped in convective cells—turbulent plasma regions responsible for heat transport.

Because “situated approximately 530 light years from Earth” is an interruption, it should be set off from the rest of the sentence with punctuation.

 **Warning:** Don't be confused by the dash after “cells”. Dashes and commas do not necessarily appear in pairs. That dash is being used to mark the boundary between the main sentence and the closing supplement (“turbulent plasma... heat transport”).

Choice A is incorrect. Because the interruption ends with a comma after “Earth”, it should end with a comma after “star”. However, this choice does not place any punctuation after “star”. ❌

Choice B is incorrect. Because the interruption ends with a comma after “Earth”, it should end with a comma after “star”. This choice uses a dash, making it seem as if the interruption extends to “convective cells”. However, this cannot be the case since “is enveloped” is the sentence's main verb, and an interruption cannot contain a sentence's main verb. ❌

Choice C is incorrect. Because the interruption ends with a comma after “Earth”, it should end with a comma after “star”. However, this choice places an opening parenthesis after “star”, not a comma. ❌

Choice D is correct. The comma after “Earth” and the comma after “star” work together to let the reader know that “situated approximately...from Earth” is an interruption. ✅

 **Warning:** Not everything that is between a pair of commas or dashes is an interruption. You will need to use logic to determine what is an interruption and what is not.

 For example:

The Lord Howe Island stick insect, once thought to be extinct, ~~was miraculously found living on Ball's Pyramid,~~ an Australian volcano, in 2001. 

Here, “was miraculously found living on Ball’s Pyramid” is not an interruption. The sentence **does not** make sense when this element is removed. You may also notice that it contains the sentence’s main verb “**was**”, something an interruption can’t do.

 Final Tips:

- Interruptions must be set off with matching punctuation. Use a pair of commas, a pair of dashes, or a pair of parentheses. Mixing punctuation types is always incorrect.
- Interruptions cannot contain the sentence’s main subject or verb. If removing a phrase disrupts the sentence’s meaning or structure, it’s likely not an interruption.
- Use “The Interruption Test”. Try reading the sentence without the phrase. If the sentence still makes sense, the phrase is an interruption.
- Not all phrases between commas or dashes are interruptions. If removing the phrase makes the sentence grammatically incorrect or changes its meaning, it is not an interruption.