

Prerequisite MIS Test Study Guide

Sentence Clarity (Dangling/Misplaced Modifiers)

Modifying phrases and clauses must be placed properly in the sentence so that the meaning is clear. Place modifiers near the noun they modify.

Wrong: *Walking down the street*, the building was seen by Carmen.

Correct: *Walking down the street*, Carmen saw the building.

Wrong: *Having climbed for several hours to reach the summit*, the view was inspiring to them.

Correct: *Having climbed for several hours to reach the summit*, they found the view inspiring.

Wrong: *Unable to swim*, the lifeguard rescued me.

Correct: *Unable to swim*, I was rescued by a lifeguard.

Wrong: I saw two truck drivers get into a fight *while jogging down the street*.

Correct: *While jogging down the street*, I saw two truck drivers get into a fistfight.

Apostrophes (Simple Possessives and Contractions)

Examine the word up to the apostrophe and determine if that is the word you want to make possessive: today's news vs. today's news or Mary's coat vs. Marys' coat.

Be careful with irregular plurals; i.e. childrens' (Look at the word up to the apostrophe—childrens—there is no such word; children is the plural word; therefore children's is the plural possessive.)

Make sure you know when to use a possessive (two nouns together; the first possessing the second) and when you just want a plural word—read for *sense* of the sentence.

companies = many

company's = possessive form (another noun will follow)

Know the difference between contractions (words that are put together) and their sound alikes.

there = an adverb telling *where*

they're = a contraction meaning *they are*

their = a pronoun meaning *belonging*

it's = a contraction meaning *it is*

its = a possessive meaning *belonging*

Similar Words (*see attached sheets or HOW 11, Section 7*)

accept (to receive)

except (other than)

advice (suggestion, opinion, recommendation)

advise (to counsel or recommend)

affect (to have an influence on)

effect (result)

all ready (prepared)

already (by this time)

allusion (indirect reference)

illusion (erroneous perception)

a lot (TWO words, not one)

allot (to apportion)

anyone (any person or thing)

any one (any single one of)

anxious (worried)

egar (anticipating with enthusiasm)

ascent (a rise)

assent (agreement)

assistance (help given, aid)

assistants (several helpful people)

assure (to promise)

ensure (to make certain)

insure (to protect against loss)

bare (unclothed)

bear (to carry, or an animal)

beside (next to)

besides (in addition to)

board (a piece of wood)

bored (a state of being)

born (brought to life)

borne (carried)

brake (stop)

break (smash)

buy (purchase)

by (next to)

capital (seat of government)

capitol (legislative meeting place)

censor (to suppress)

censure (to criticize)

complement (to complete)

compliment (to praise)

cite (to quote an authority)

sight (the ability to see)

site (a place)

conscious (aware of)

conscience (moral guide)

decent (proper)

descent (a movement down)

dissent (disagreement)

desert (to abandon)

dessert (the course after dinner)

discreet (reserved, respectful)

discrete (individual, distinct)

effect (see affect, effect)

egar (see anxious)

elicit (to bring out)
illicit (illegal)

eminent (outstanding)
imminent (about to happen)

ensure (see assure)

everyone (all people in a group)
every one (every single one of)

except (see accept, except)

fair (average or lovely)
fare (a charge for transportation)

farther (measurable distance)
further (additional)

fewer (countable items)
less (quantity or mass)

formally (conventionally)
formerly (in the past)

forth (forward)
fourth (after the third)

further (see farther)

gorilla (a large primate)
guerilla (a kind of soldier)
grate (to shred, or a frame of parallel or crossed bars)
great (wonderful)

hear (to perceive by ear)
here (in this place)

heard (past tense of hear)
herd (a group of animals)

hole (an opening)
whole (complete)

horse (four-legged animal)
hoarse (thick voiced)

illicit (see elicit, illicit)
illusion (see allusion, illusion)

imminent (see eminent, imminent)

imply (to suggest)
infer (to reach a conclusion)

insure (see assure)

know (to be certain)
no (opposite of yes, or not any)

lead (heavy metal)
led (past tense of lead)

less (see fewer)

lessen (to make less)
lesson (something learned)

loose (not tight)
lose (opposite of win)

maybe (perhaps)
may be (could be)

meat (flesh)
meet (encounter)

no (see know, no)

passed (past tense of pass)
past (after, or a time gone by)

patience (forbearance)
patients (persons under medical care)
peace (the absence of war)
piece (a portion of something)

personal (individual)
personnel (employees)

perspective (outlook)
prospective (likely to become, expected)

plain (easy to see or understand)
plane (an airborne vehicle, or a carpenter's tool)

presence (the state of being at hand)
presents (gifts)

principal (most important, or the head of a school)
principle (basic truth or law)

rain (precipitation)
reign (to rule)

rein (the strap for controlling an animal)
right (correct)

rite (a religious ceremony)
write (to compose text)

road (a surface for driving)
rode (past tense of ride)

scene (where an action occurs)
seen (past participle of see)

sit (to be seated)
set (to place)

sometime (an indefinite point in time)
some time (some amount of time)

sight (see cite, sight, site)
site (see cite, sight, site)

stationary (unmoving)
stationery (writing paper)

straight (unbending)
strait (a water passageway)

than (used for comparison)
then (at that time in the past)

threw (past tense of throw)
through (in one side and out the other)

two (following one)
to (toward)
too (also, or in excess of)

waist (the middle of the body)
waste (discarded material)

weak (not strong)
week (Sunday through Saturday)

weather (atmospheric conditions)
whether (introduces alternatives)

were (past tense plural of to be)
where (a place, location)

which (particular one)
witch (a sorcerer)

whole (see hole, whole)

write (see right, rite, write)

Appositives and Nonrestrictive Clauses and Phrases

or

(Renamers and nonessential clauses and phrases)

Read the sentence without the phrase or clause; if the sentence will be understood by the reader, place commas around the phrase or clause.

All my expenses will be submitted to Charlie Carothers, my accountant.

All my expenses will be submitted to Charlie Carothers, ~~my accountant~~. (This extra information doesn't change whom I am submitting the expenses to—Charlie.)

Our vice president, Dr. Olsen, will be out of town next week.

Our vice president, ~~Dr. Olsen~~, will be out of town next week.

(The meaning is still clear—the vice president will be out of town next week.)

Steve, who has worked for me before, is returning to the United States today.

Steve, ~~who has worked for me before~~, is returning to the United States today.

(Steve is still coming home, regardless of the fact that he worked for me = no commas)

The book *Creating a Personal Web Site* has been ordered for you.

The book ~~*Creating a Personal Web Site*~~ has been ordered for you.

(Which book? This information is necessary for understanding = no commas)

Movies that appeal to teenagers are big money makers.

Movies ~~that appeal to teenagers~~ are big money makers. (Which movies? The writer is not referring to all movies—*that appeal to teenagers* restricts/is necessary to the meaning = no commas.)

Parenthetical Elements

Though usually shorter, parenthetical elements are punctuated just like nonessential information and may all include direct address.

Dan, I will need to make a copy of your driver's license. (direct address)

I will, Dan, need to make a copy of your driver's license.

I will need to make a copy of your driver's license, Dan.

I will, however, need to make a copy of your driver's license.

Nevertheless, I will need to make a copy of your driver's license.

On the other hand, I will need to make a copy of your driver's license.

Unfortunately, I will need to make a copy of your driver's license.

Sentence Construction (Semicolons, Periods, Run-on Sentences, and Fragments)

A complete sentence contains a subject and a verb and completes a thought. Separate two (or more) complete sentences with a period or a semicolon.

Correct: I will get to New York. (This is a complete sentence)

Incorrect: When I get to New York (This has a subject and verb but does not complete the thought = sentence fragment)

If you are interested in applying for the scholarship and can meet the residency requirements (This has a subject and verb but does not complete the thought)

Correct: I am going to New York for the competition; I hope to see you there.
I am going to New York for the convention. I hope to see you there.
I am going to New York; however, I hope to see you before I leave.

Incorrect: I am going to New York for the convention, I hope to see you there.
I am going to New York, however, I hope to see you before I leave.
(Two complete sentences cannot be *spliced* together with a comma)

Conjunctions

When two complete sentences are joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, or, but, nor), use a comma before the conjunction. Read both sides of the statement to make sure they are complete sentences and retain the meaning intended.

I would like to go to dinner, but I will be out of town.

I would like to go to dinner and see a movie later.

I would like to go to dinner or see a movie later.

All applicants are qualified, and we will interview them next week.

All applicants are qualified and will be interviewed next week.

All applicants are qualified, but we will not interview them until next week.

All applicants are qualified but will not be interviewed until next week.

Nouns and Pronouns

Pronouns should agree in gender and number with the noun they refer back to.

Either of the girls will get her (not *their*) wish.

Jill and Sally will get their wish.

Jill or Sally will get her wish.

Nobody (singular) was eager to risk his or her life. (non gender-biased language)

All students in the class did their homework.

The class (one entity) reached its goal. (Generally, company, a group, the staff, the personnel, the faculty—all are singular and should be referred to as *it* not *they*.)

Subject-Verb Agreement

Find the simple subject and use the appropriate verb. Do not let intervening text throw you off.

Figures shown in the document are rounded to the nearest dollar.

Jean, along with ten other students, is going to the competition.

Jean and Sarah are going to the competition.

Jean or Sarah is going to the competition.

The Board of Regents approves all changes in tuition.

One of the reasons is to keep costs low.

Irregular Verbs (See HOW 11, Section 4-12)

A *HOW 11* reference book is on reserve in the Merrill-Cazier Library

Adjectives and Adverbs (See HOW 11, Sections 4-26 through 4-29)

Series

Elements in a series of three or more are followed by a comma—including the last element.

You will need to bring your own toothbrush, toothpaste, and soap.

You will need to bring your own toothbrush and toothpaste.

Number Rules

General rules: Numbers one through ten should be expressed written in words. Write numbers above ten in figures. The following are *a few* of the exceptions to these rules.

1. A number that begins a sentence must be expressed in word form. When the number cannot be written in one or two words, however, change the word order of the sentence so that the number does not begin the sentence; then write the number in figures.

2. Round numbers in the millions or above are expressed in a combination of figures and words for accuracy unless combined with numbers that cannot be expressed this way.

The growth of the company this year alone exceeded \$3.2 million.

Their earnings for the last three years were \$4,672,567, \$3,200,000, and \$3,234,000.

3. Related numbers (those in a series or referring to the same type of item) should be expressed the same. If even one of these numbers is above ten, use figure format.

Of the 30 items purchased, 2 had to be returned. (related)

The three partners each conducted 16 seminars this tax season.(not related)

4. Weights and measures and other number considered technical and exact are expressed in figure form.

The luggage is 4 pounds 3 ounces in excess of the international weight limitation.

My loan is due in 5 months.

5. Percentages are always in figure form; spell out *percent*.

Only 70 percent of the employees attended the training.

6. Money is expressed in figure form. Omit the decimal and extra zeros in expressing whole dollar amounts. Spell out the word *cents* rather than using the decimal unless the number is related to other amounts using a decimal.

The cost of a first-class stamp is now 30 cents.

To mail the three packages, I paid \$3.50, \$5, and \$.95.

7. When a day is written after a month, use cardinal figures (1, 2, 3, etc.); Ordinal figures (1st, 2nd, and 3rd, etc.) are used for expressing days that appear before the month or that stand alone.

I will arrive no later than January 2.

I will arrive on the 2nd of January. or I will arrive on the 2nd of the month.

8. Figures are used with a.m., p.m., noon, or midnight to express clock time. Omit the colon and zeros with even times. Either figure or word form may be used with *o'clock*.

Capitalization Rules

1. Capitalize proper nouns and their nicknames.

Several managers from New York City will attend.

Several managers from the Big Apple will attend.

2. Also capitalize derivatives of proper nouns such as *American* and *English*.

3. Street names are considered proper nouns and should be capitalized.

She lives on Fourth Street in a red brick house.

But: *Turn east on Second North to avoid the traffic.*

4. Company names are capitalized; however, commercial products are not capitalized.

The Apple computer has excellent graphic capabilities.

5. Names departments or division names are capitalized.

Please fill out your W-4 and turn it in to the Human Resources Department.

6. Capitalize professional/position titles used before a name and taking the place of a courtesy title such as Mr. or Ms. or used in place of a name. Otherwise, do not capitalize professional titles.

I have invited Professor Matthews to speak to the class.

As I mentioned, Professor, I will be glad help you with the presentation.

I have invited Jim Matthews, professor of accounting, to speak to the class.

You will need to get the professor's signature to add the class.

7. Family titles are treated similarly; they are capitalized when they replace the given name of an individual.

When Mom (Elaine) and Dad (Jason) come to town, we always go out to eat.

But: *When my mom and dad come to town, we always go out to eat.*

8. Do not capitalize the names of areas of study such as majors and classes unless referring to a specific class.

I am taking accounting this semester.

I am taking Accounting 6800 this semester.

I am taking business English this semester. (English is a proper noun)