Study Guide courtesy of
Aims Community College
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FRCC Testing Center

Sentence Skills Study Guide for the
ACCUPLACER (CPT)

The following sample questions are similar to the format and content of questions on the Accuplacer Sentence Skills test. Reviewing these samples will give you a good idea of how the test works and just what grammar, punctuation, and sentence skills you may wish to review before taking the test itself. Our purposes in providing you with this information are twofold: one, we want you to do the best you can; and two, we do not want the format of the test itself to interfere with your thinking about your answers.

We suggest four test-taking strategies:

1. **Take your time**. The test is not timed. Relax and choose answers carefully without worrying about the clock ticking.

2. **Read carefully**. Be sure to understand exactly what each question requires.

3. **Think carefully**. The test requires one to complete or substitute information for parts of given sentences. Response should reflect clear language use.

4. **Write before choosing an answer**. Use scratch paper to experiment with answers. Be sure to understand the given options before answering.

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THE SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Questions on the test ask you to rewrite sentences such as the following. You will be told what changes your new sentence should contain. Your new sentence should be grammatically correct and have essentially the same meaning as the original.

Sample #1

Writing a best seller had earned the author a sum of money and had freed him from the necessity of selling his pen for the political purposes of others.

Rewrite, beginning with

<u>The author was not obliged</u> . . .

The new sentence will include

A) consequently he earned
B) because he had earned
C) by earning
D) as a means of earning

Analysis of Sample #1: In the above sample, you must rewrite the sentence to begin The author was not obliged... To decide how to do the job, look at the meaning of the original sentence: What was the author "obliged" to do? The sentence says he was faced with "the necessity of selling his pen," etc. Therefore, this necessity was his obligation.

To retain this main idea, your new sentence must begin with "The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others..." But you must now complete the sentence to explain **why** he was not so obliged. To do so, test all four options (A--D) to see which fits your main clause best in both grammar and meaning. Write your options out! Don't just jump at the first version you think sounds good!

A. The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others [consequently he earned] a sum of money by writing a best seller.

Note that this sentence makes little sense because his earning the money is not a consequence of his lack of obligation but rather the cause of it. Besides, the structure creates a run-on sentence, which is grammatically incorrect.

B. The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others [because he had earned] a sum of money by writing a best seller.

This version makes more sense because earning the money is in fact the cause of his not needing to sell his pen, and the sentence is grammatically correct.

C. The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others [by earning] a sum of money by writing a best seller.

At first glance, this sentence may seem to make sense, but "was not obliged...by earning" makes little sense and only clumsily conveys the idea.

D. The author was not obliged to sell his pen for the political purposes of others [as a means of earning] a sum of money by writing a best seller.

This sentence also makes no sense because not selling his pen is not a means of earning money but rather a result of such earning.

Therefore, of the four choices, **B** is clearly the best.

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NOW YOU TRY ONE!

Sample #2 (Like Sample #1, you are asked to rewrite the original sentence.)

In the modern world, groups of people living thousands of miles apart may still be dependent on each other politically, culturally, and economically.

Change people living to people may live.

Your new sentence will include

A) apart and still be dependent
B) apart so as to be dependent still
C) apart, they are still dependent
D) apart, but would still be dependent

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Questions such as the following ask you to select the best version of the underlined part of the sentence. The first choice given is always the same as the original, and it may be the best choice given.

Sample #3

Jose wanted to study he tried to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

A) Jose wanted to study he tried to keep
B) Jose wanted to study, he tried to keep
C) Because he wanted to study, Jose tried to keep
D) Jose wanting to study, and trying to keep

Analysis of Sample #3: In this sample, you must examine four versions of the same sentence to determine which one is grammatically correct.

A: Jose wanted to study he tried to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

This version places two independent clauses together with no separating punctuation. Therefore, version A is a run-on sentence, which is not correct.

B: Jose wanted to study, he tried to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

This version places two independent clauses together with only a comma to separate them, creating a comma splice, which is grammatically incorrect.

C: Because he wanted to study, Jose tried to keep to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

In this version, the opening clause has been changed from an independent (main) clause to a dependent (subordinate) clause introduced by the subordinating conjunction "Because". Therefore, we no longer see two main clauses strung together incorrectly. The subordinate clause is correctly separated from the following main cause by a comma, so this version of the sentence is correct.

D: Jose wanting to study, and trying to keep his roommates quiet; but he did not succeed.

You notice that in this version, the past tense verbs "wanted" and "tried" have been changed to -ing verbs. But "wanting" and "trying" by themselves do not create a definite time frame for the actions. The word "trying" could be taken to mean "is trying," "was trying", "has been trying," "will be trying," etc. Each of these verb structures indicates
a different time frame So an -ing verb form by itself is not a COMPLETE verb; it requires a helping verb to fix the time of the action. Therefore, the verb structures in version D are incomplete, and the sentence is thus an incorrect fragment.

Therefore, version **C** is the only correct choice here.

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HERE ARE MORE SAMPLES TO CHECK YOUR SKILLS:

Sample #4

Predictions twenty years ago that the phonograph record was about to become obsolete have proven to be true.

A) Predictions twenty years ago that
B) Predictions twenty years ago,
C) Twenty years ago, predictions that
D) Predictions, twenty years ago

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Sample #5

When you move out of an apartment before the contract expires, this is an example of breaking a lease.

A) When you move out of an apartment before the contract expires, this
B) You move out of an apartment before the contract expires, this
C) Moving out of an apartment before the contract expires
D) The fact that you move out of an apartment before the contract expires

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Sample #6

Knocked to his knees, the quarterback looked as if he were in pain.

A) Knocked to his knees, the quarterback looked
B) The quarterback was knocked to his knees, looked
C) The quarterback looked knocked to his knees
D) The quarterback, looking knocked to his knees,

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Sample #7

Yesterday the President announced that he would retire from political life, to amazed reporters.

A) Yesterday the President announced that he would retire from political life, to amazed reporters.
B) Yesterday the President announced that he would retire from political life, amazing reporters.
C) The President, to the amazement of reporters, announced that he would retire from political life yesterday.
D) Yesterday the President announced to amazed reporters that he would retire from political life.

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THE ANSWERS

Sample #1: B
Sample #2: A
Sample #3: C
Sample #4: A
Sample #5: C
Sample #6: A
Sample #7: D