

Question ID 6977ec30

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 6977ec30

Where ____ Interestingly, it was invented by an author. It first appears in the novel *Through the Looking Glass* by English author Lewis Carroll.

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

- A. did the word “chortle” come from.
- B. the word “chortle” did come from?
- C. did the word “chortle” come from?
- D. the word “chortle” come from.

ID: 6977ec30 Answer

Correct Answer: C

Rationale

Choice C is the best answer. The convention being tested is end-of-sentence punctuation. This choice correctly uses a question mark to punctuate the interrogative sentence "where did the word ‘chortle’ come from," which asks a direct question.

Choice A is incorrect because a period can’t be used in this way to punctuate an interrogative sentence, such as "where did the word ‘chortle’ come from." Choice B is incorrect because "where the word ‘chortle’ did come from" does not follow the conventional structure of a direct question in Standard English. It’s conventional in Standard English to follow the interrogative word "where" with an auxiliary verb (such as "did") when asking a direct question. Choice D is incorrect because "where the word ‘chortle’ come from" does not follow the conventional structure of a direct question in Standard English. It’s conventional in Standard English to follow the interrogative word "where" with an auxiliary verb (such as "did") when asking a direct question. Furthermore, a period can’t be used in this way to punctuate an interrogative sentence.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 46844ba2

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 46844ba2

Generations of mystery and horror _____ have been influenced by the dark, gothic stories of celebrated American author Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849).

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

- A. writers
- B. writers,
- C. writers—
- D. writers;

ID: 46844ba2 Answer

Correct Answer: A

Rationale

Choice A is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation between a subject and a verb. When, as in this case, a subject (“Generations of mystery and horror writers”) is immediately followed by a verb (“have been influenced”), no punctuation is needed.

Choice B is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the subject and the verb. Choice C is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the subject and the verb. Choice D is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the subject and the verb.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID a3cffc4f

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: a3cffc4f

About 70,000 meteorites have been found on Earth. Although most meteorites are fragments of _____ hundred have been identified as being from the Moon or Mars.

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

- A. asteroids. Several
- B. asteroids, several
- C. asteroids; several
- D. asteroids: several

ID: a3cffc4f Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. This choice uses a comma to correctly separate the dependent clause "although...asteroids" from the independent clause "several hundred have been...Mars."

Choice A is incorrect. This choice results in a sentence fragment. "Although...asteroids" is a dependent clause. It can't stand on its own as a sentence, which means it can't end in a period. Choice C is incorrect. This choice results in a punctuation error. "Although...asteroids" is a dependent clause and can't be joined to the independent clause "several hundred have been...Mars" with a semicolon. A semicolon can only join two independent clauses. Choice D is incorrect. This choice creates a punctuation error. A colon can only come after an independent clause, but "although...asteroids" is a dependent clause.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 082b33f5

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 082b33f5

Robin Wall Kimmerer of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation is a bryologist, a plant scientist who specializes in mosses. To Kimmerer, mosses are Earth’s most adaptable plants: they can clone _____ enter a dormant state in times of drought, and grow in areas that don’t have soil.

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

- A. themselves;
- B. themselves,
- C. themselves. And
- D. themselves

ID: 082b33f5 Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. The convention being tested is the punctuation of items in a series. The comma after “themselves” is used conventionally to separate the first item (“they can clone themselves”) and the second item (“enter a dormant state in times of drought”) in the series of things mosses can do.

Choice A is incorrect because a semicolon can’t be used in this way to separate items in a simple series such as this. Choice C is incorrect because it results in a rhetorically unacceptable sentence fragment beginning with “And enter.” Choice D is incorrect because it fails to use appropriate punctuation to separate the first and second items in the series.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID b922039f

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: b922039f

A standard Argo float, a type of autonomous robot, measures temperature and salinity in the upper regions of ice-free oceans. More advanced floats can measure a wider range of _____ and monitor seasonal ice zones.

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

- A. variables: travel to greater depths
- B. variables, travel to greater depths,
- C. variables travel to greater depths,
- D. variables, travel to greater depths;

ID: b922039f Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. The convention being tested is the punctuation of items in a series. The comma after “variables” is used conventionally to separate the first and second items in the series, and the comma after “depths” is used conventionally to separate the second and third items.

Choice A is incorrect because a colon can’t be used in this way to separate items in a simple series. Choice C is incorrect because a comma is needed after “variables” to separate the first and second items in the series. Choice D is incorrect because a semicolon can’t be used in this way to separate items in a simple series.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 26f96633

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 26f96633

The life spans of rockfish vary greatly by species. For instance, the colorful calico rockfish (*Sebastes dallii*) can survive for a little over a _____ the rougheye rockfish (*Sebastes aleutianus*) boasts a maximum life span of about two centuries.

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

- A. decade: while
- B. decade. While
- C. decade; while
- D. decade, while

ID: 26f96633 Answer

Correct Answer: D

Rationale

Choice D is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation between a main clause and a subordinate clause. This choice correctly uses a comma to mark the boundary between the main clause ("the colorful...decade") and the subordinate clause ("while...centuries") that provides contrasting information about the life span of rougheye rockfish.

Choice A is incorrect because a colon can't be used in this way to join a main clause and a subordinate clause. Choice B is incorrect because it results in a rhetorically unacceptable sentence fragment beginning with "while." Choice C is incorrect because a semicolon can't be used in this way to join a main clause and a subordinate clause.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 76153b20

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 76153b20

Typically, underlines, scribbles, and notes left in the margins by a former owner lower a book’s _____ when the former owner is a famous poet like Walt Whitman, such markings, known as marginalia, can be a gold mine to literary scholars.

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

- A. value, but
- B. value
- C. value,
- D. value but

ID: 76153b20 Answer

Correct Answer: A

Rationale

Choice A is the best answer. The convention being tested is the coordination of independent clauses within a sentence. An independent clause is a phrase containing a subject and a verb that can stand on its own as a sentence. This choice uses a comma and the coordinating conjunction “but” to join the first independent clause (“underlines...lower a book’s value”) and the second independent clause (“such markings...can be a gold mine to scholars”) to create a compound sentence.

Choice B is incorrect because it results in a run-on sentence. The two independent clauses are fused without punctuation and/or a conjunction. Choice C is incorrect because it results in a comma splice. A comma can’t be used in this way to mark the boundary between two independent clauses. Choice D is incorrect because a comma is needed to mark the boundary between two coordinated independent clauses.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID e4af3467

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: e4af3467

After the United Kingdom began rolling out taxes equivalent to a few cents on single-use plastic grocery bags in 2011, plastic-bag consumption decreased by up to ninety _____ taxes are subject to what economists call the “rebound effect”: as the change became normalized, plastic-bag use started to creep back up.

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

- A. percent, such
- B. percent and such
- C. percent. Such
- D. percent such

ID: e4af3467 Answer

Correct Answer: C

Rationale

Choice C is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation use between sentences. In this choice, the period after “percent” is used correctly to mark the boundary between one sentence (“After...percent”) and another (“Such...up”).

Choice A is incorrect because it results in a comma splice. A comma can’t be used in this way to mark the boundary between sentences. Choice B is incorrect. Without a comma preceding it, the conjunction “and” can’t be used in this way to join sentences. Choice D is incorrect because it results in a run-on sentence. The sentences (“After...percent” and “Such...up”) are fused without punctuation and/or a conjunction.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 103629f3

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 103629f3

The short story “Rogue Enchantments” by Isabel Ibañez appears in *Reclaim the _____* anthology of fantasy and science fiction written by authors of Latin American descent.

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

- A. *Stars*. An
- B. *Stars*, while an
- C. *Stars* an
- D. *Stars*, an

ID: 103629f3 Answer

Correct Answer: D

Rationale

Choice D is the best answer. The convention being tested is the use of punctuation within a sentence. This choice correctly uses a comma to mark the boundary between the main clause ("The short...*Stars*") and the supplementary element ("an anthology...descent") that provides additional information about what *Reclaim the Stars* is.

Choice A is incorrect because it results in a rhetorically unacceptable sentence fragment beginning with "an anthology." Choice B is incorrect. Joining the main clause and the following supplementary element with the conjunction "while" results in a confusing and ungrammatical sentence. Choice C is incorrect because it fails to mark the boundary between the main clause and the supplementary element with appropriate punctuation.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 226d8288

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 226d8288

The Kaiparowits Formation is a fossil-rich layer of sedimentary rock in the Grand Staircase, a colossal sequence of rock layers stretching from Utah’s Bryce Canyon to Arizona’s Grand Canyon. The sandstones and mudstones of the Kaiparowits Formation were deposited _____ the Late Cretaceous, preserving many species from that time.

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

- A. during:
- B. during;
- C. during,
- D. during

ID: 226d8288 Answer

Correct Answer: D

Rationale

Choice D is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation use between a preposition and its complement. No punctuation is needed between the preposition “during” and its complement “the Late Cretaceous.” The complement completes the meaning of the preposition in the phrase “deposited during the Late Cretaceous,” and any punctuation between the two results in an ungrammatical sentence.

Choice A is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the preposition and its complement. Choice B is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the preposition and its complement. Choice C is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the preposition and its complement.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID ff381ff0

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: ff381ff0

Louise Bennett (1919–2006), also known as “Miss Lou,” was an influential Jamaican poet and folklorist. Her innovative poems _____ the use of Jamaican Creole (a spoken language) in literature.

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

- A. popularized;
- B. popularized,
- C. popularized
- D. popularized:

ID: ff381ff0 Answer

Correct Answer: C

Rationale

Choice C is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation use between a verb and an object. No punctuation is needed between the verb "popularized" and its object "the use of Jamaican Creole." The object helps complete the idea of the verb—in this case, it explains what Louise Bennett popularized—and any punctuation between the two results in an ungrammatical sentence.

Choice A is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the verb and its object. Choice B is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the verb and its object. Choice D is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the verb and its object.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID e62cff97

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: e62cff97

Located in the northern United States, the Great Lakes Basin contains roughly 35,000 islands. Lake Superior has Grand Island, for example. Lake Michigan has Belle Isle. Lake Huron, though, is home _____ the largest island of them all: Manitoulin Island.

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

- A. to;
- B. to—
- C. to
- D. to,

ID: e62cff97 Answer

Correct Answer: C

Rationale

Choice C is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation use between a preposition and its complement. No punctuation is needed between the preposition "to" and its complement "the largest island of them all." The complement completes the meaning of the preposition in the phrase "home to the largest island of them all," and any punctuation within it results in an ungrammatical sentence.

Choice A is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the preposition and its complement. Choice B is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the preposition and its complement. Choice D is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the preposition and its complement.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID eeb0f59e

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
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ID: eeb0f59e

In the novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, Okonkwo is a leader of Umuofia (a fictional Nigerian clan) and takes pride in his culture’s traditions. However, when the arrival of European missionaries brings changes to Umuofia, the novel asks a central question: How _____

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

- A. Umuofia’s traditions will be affected.
- B. will Umuofia’s traditions be affected.
- C. Umuofia’s traditions will be affected?
- D. will Umuofia’s traditions be affected?

ID: eeb0f59e Answer

Correct Answer: D

Rationale

Choice D is the best answer. The clause before the colon tells us that the novel “asks a question,” so the clause after the colon should be in the conventional form of a question: with the verb before the subject, and a question mark at the end.

Choice A is incorrect. This choice ends the sentence with a period, which isn’t right. The clause before the colon tells us that the novel “asks a question,” so the clause after the colon should be that question. Choice B is incorrect. This choice ends the sentence with a period, which isn’t right. The clause before the colon tells us that the novel “asks a question,” so the clause after the colon should be that question. In Standard English, questions place the verb before the subject and end with a question mark. Choice C is incorrect. This choice doesn’t conform to the conventions of Standard English. In Standard English, questions place the verb before the subject.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 809b24ed

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 809b24ed

A harpsichord may look just like a piano, but the difference between the two instruments is easy to hear. When a harpsichord’s keys are pressed, the strings inside the _____ are plucked, not struck.

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

- A. instrument:
- B. instrument
- C. instrument—
- D. instrument,

ID: 809b24ed Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation use between a subject and a verb. When, as in this case, a subject ("the strings inside the instrument") is immediately followed by a main verb ("are plucked"), no punctuation is needed.

Choice A is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the subject and the verb. Choice C is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the subject and the verb. Choice D is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the subject and the verb.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 2b44a661

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 2b44a661

Many Samoans enjoy a sport called kilikiti. This bat-and-ball game was derived from ____ kilikiti differs from cricket in a few key ways.

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

- A. cricket but:
- B. cricket but,
- C. cricket, but
- D. cricket, but,

ID: 2b44a661 Answer

Correct Answer: C

Rationale

Choice C is the best answer. The convention being tested is the coordination of main clauses within a sentence. This choice correctly uses a comma before the coordinating conjunction "but" to join the first main clause ("This bat-and-ball game was derived from cricket") and the second main clause ("kilikiti differs from cricket in a few key ways").

Choice A is incorrect. When coordinating two main clauses such as these, it's not conventional to use a colon in this way after the coordinating conjunction. Choice B is incorrect. When coordinating two main clauses such as these, it's not conventional to use a comma in this way after the coordinating conjunction. Choice D is incorrect. When coordinating two main clauses such as these, it's not conventional to use a comma in this way after the coordinating conjunction.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID a425eb34

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: a425eb34

Researchers Amit Kumar and Nicholas Epley investigated how _____. In a series of experiments conducted in 2022, they found that people performing small acts of kindness underestimated the positive effect their actions had on others.

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

- A. do people perceive acts of kindness.
- B. do people perceive acts of kindness?
- C. people perceive acts of kindness?
- D. people perceive acts of kindness.

ID: a425eb34 Answer

Correct Answer: D

Rationale

Choice D is the best answer. The convention being tested is end-of-sentence punctuation. This choice correctly uses a period to punctuate a declarative sentence that asks an indirect question ("Researchers Amit Kumar and Nicholas Epley investigated how people perceive acts of kindness").

Choice A is incorrect. The structure of the sentence requires a declarative clause at the end of the sentence that states what Kumar and Epley did, not an interrogative clause that asks a direct question, such as "how do people perceive acts of kindness."
Choice B is incorrect. The structure of the sentence requires a declarative clause at the end of the sentence that states what Kumar and Epley did, not an interrogative clause that asks a direct question, such as "how do people perceive acts of kindness?"
Choice C is incorrect. It's unconventional to use a question mark in this way to punctuate a declarative sentence that asks an indirect question, such as "Researchers...kindness."

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 4169f4a7

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 4169f4a7

When using a search engine, many people click just the first one or two results. Click restraint is the practice of scanning a search results page and evaluating what you see before deciding which link _____

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

- A. should you choose.
- B. you should choose?
- C. should you choose?
- D. you should choose.

ID: 4169f4a7 Answer

Correct Answer: D

Rationale

Choice D is the best answer. The convention being tested is end-of-sentence punctuation. This choice correctly uses a period to punctuate a declarative sentence that ends with an indirect question (“which link you should choose.”)

Choice A is incorrect. The structure requires a declarative clause that presents an indirect question about what is evaluated in click restraint, not an interrogative clause that presents a direct question, such as “which link should you choose.” Choice B is incorrect. It’s unconventional to use a question mark in this way to punctuate a declarative clause that presents an indirect question, such as “which link you should choose.” Choice C is incorrect. The structure requires a declarative clause that presents an indirect question about what is evaluated in click restraint, not an interrogative clause that presents a direct question, such as “which link should you choose.”

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 2189052b

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 2189052b

In 2000, Nora de Hoyos Comstock, herself an owner of a successful consulting firm, sought to increase Latina representation in corporate _____. founded Las Comadres para las Americas, an international community that for over two decades has served as a resource and information network for Latina business professionals.

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

- A. settings she
- B. settings, she
- C. settings and she
- D. settings. She

ID: 2189052b Answer

Correct Answer: D

Rationale

Choice D is the best answer. It appropriately uses a period to mark the end of one independent clause ("In 2000...settings") and the start of another ("She founded...professionals").

Choice A is incorrect. This choice results in a run-on sentence error. Both the clause before the blank ("In 2000...settings") and the clause after the blank ("she...professionals") are independent clauses, so they need to be separated by punctuation. Choice B is incorrect. This choice results in a comma splice error. It incorrectly joins two independent clauses with just a comma. Linking two independent clauses with a comma also requires the use of a coordinating conjunction (like *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, or *so*). Choice C is incorrect. This choice results in a run-on sentence, an error caused when two independent clauses are joined without punctuation or appropriate conjunctions. Since both the clause before the blank ("In 2000...settings") and the clause after the blank ("she...professionals") are independent, a comma would be required in addition to the coordinating conjunction "and."

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 986493b4

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 986493b4

Psychophysicist Howard Moskowitz was hired by a soda company to determine how much artificial sweetener _____. After conducting consumer taste tests, he found that no such ideal existed: participants expressed a wide range of preferences for different blends of sweetener, carbonization, and flavoring.

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

- A. do most people prefer in a diet drink?
- B. do most people prefer in a diet drink.
- C. most people prefer in a diet drink?
- D. most people prefer in a diet drink.

ID: 986493b4 Answer

Correct Answer: D

Rationale

Choice D is the best answer. This sentence is a statement: “Moskowitz was hired by a soda company to determine how much artificial sweetener most people prefer in a diet drink.” So a period is the most appropriate punctuation mark.

Choice A is incorrect. This doesn’t complete the text in a way that conforms to the conventions of Standard English. This sentence is not a question—it’s a statement. So a question mark is not the appropriate punctuation. Choice B is incorrect. This doesn’t complete the text in a way that conforms to the conventions of Standard English. We already have the verbs “was hired... to determine” in this sentence. The verb “do” is not needed and results in a confusing, ungrammatical sentence. Choice C is incorrect. This doesn’t complete the text in a way that conforms to the conventions of Standard English. This sentence is not a question—it’s a statement. So a question mark is not the appropriate punctuation.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID f4d556bb

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
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ID: f4d556bb

Emperor Ashoka ruled the Maurya Empire in South Asia from roughly 270 to 232 BCE. He is known for enforcing a moral code called the Law of Piety, which established the sanctity of animal _____ the just treatment of the elderly, and the abolition of the slave trade.

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

- A. life
- B. life;
- C. life:
- D. life,

ID: f4d556bb Answer

Correct Answer: D

Rationale

Choice D is the best answer. Notice that "the sanctity of animal life" is the first item in a list of three things. We must use a comma to separate the first two items in the list, just as a comma is used to separate "the just treatment of the elderly" and "the abolition of the slave trade."

Choice A is incorrect. This choice creates a punctuation error. Notice that "the sanctity of animal life" is the first item in a list of three things. To appropriately format the list, we need punctuation to separate each item. Choice B is incorrect. This choice creates a punctuation error. Notice that "the sanctity of animal life" is the first item in a list of three things. While semicolons are sometimes used to separate list items, this list uses commas to separate the other list items, and lists must use the same punctuation throughout. Choice C is incorrect. This choice creates a punctuation error. Notice that "the sanctity of animal life" is the first item in a list of three things. While colons can be used to introduce lists, they can't be used to separate items within a list.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID a380f9d7

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: a380f9d7

The part of a compound that determines the compound’s color is _____ the chromophore. One example of a chromophore is hemoglobin, which gives human blood its red color.

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

- A. called,
- B. called
- C. called—
- D. called;

ID: a380f9d7 Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation use between a verb and its complement. No punctuation is needed between the verb “is called” and its complement “the chromophore.” The complement helps complete the idea of the verb—in this case, it explains what the part of a compound that determines the compound’s color is called—and any punctuation between the two results in an ungrammatical sentence.

Choice A is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the verb and its complement. Choice C is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the verb and its complement. Choice D is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the verb and its complement.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 54f239e3

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 54f239e3

Human-made (synthetic) fibers used in clothes and many other consumer products are more durable than most natural plant ____ the manufacture of synthetic fibers requires toxic chemical solvents that can pollute air and water.

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

- A. fibers,
- B. fibers but
- C. fibers
- D. fibers, but

ID: 54f239e3 Answer

Correct Answer: D

Rationale

Choice D is the best answer. The convention being tested is the coordination of main clauses within a sentence. This choice correctly uses a comma and the coordinating conjunction “but” to join the first main clause (“Human-made...fibers”) and the second main clause (“the manufacture...water”).

Choice A is incorrect because it results in a comma splice. Without a conjunction following it, a comma can’t be used in this way to join two main clauses. Choice B is incorrect because when coordinating two longer main clauses such as these, it’s conventional to use a comma before the coordinating conjunction. Choice C is incorrect because it results in a run-on sentence. The two main clauses are fused without punctuation and/or a conjunction.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID f3dcf156

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: f3dcf156

In the 1980s, Latino filmmakers Luis Valdez, Gregory Nava, and Ramón Menéndez helped expand on-screen representation of Latino Americans with the films *Zoot Suit* _____ and *Stand and Deliver* (1988), respectively.

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

- A. (1981) *El Norte* (1983),
- B. (1981)—*El Norte* (1983)—
- C. (1981), *El Norte* (1983),
- D. (1981) *El Norte* (1983)

ID: f3dcf156 Answer

Correct Answer: C

Rationale

Choice C is the best answer. The convention being tested is the punctuation of items in a series. The comma after “(1981)” is used conventionally to separate the first and second items in the series, and the comma after “(1983)” is used conventionally to separate the second and third items in the series.

Choice A is incorrect because it fails to use appropriate punctuation to separate the first and second items in the series. Choice B is incorrect because dashes can’t be used in this way to separate items in a simple series. Choice D is incorrect because it fails to use appropriate punctuation to separate the items in the series.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID d5f3e15d

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: d5f3e15d

Award-winning cinematographer James Wong Howe was known for his innovative filming techniques. While filming a boxing match for the movie *Body and Soul* _____ Howe had a handheld camera operator wear roller skates. This allowed the operator to move smoothly around actors in a boxing ring, creating an immersive experience for viewers.

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

- A. (1947), and
- B. (1947),
- C. (1947) and
- D. (1947)

ID: d5f3e15d Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation between a supplementary element and a main clause. This choice correctly uses a comma to mark the boundary between the supplementary phrase (“While...1947”), which indicates when the action occurred, and the main clause (“Howe had a handheld camera operator wear roller skates”).

Choice A is incorrect because a comma paired with the conjunction “and” can’t be used in this way to mark the boundary between the supplementary element (“While...1947”) and the main clause (“Howe...skates”). Choice C is incorrect because the conjunction “and” can’t be used in this way to join the supplementary element (“While...1947”) and the main clause (“Howe...skates”). Choice D is incorrect because it fails to mark the boundary between the supplementary element and the main clause with appropriate punctuation.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID bb4dc5c6

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: bb4dc5c6

At eight paragraphs long, the preamble to the constitution of _____ country in Western Asia—is much longer than the one-paragraph preamble to the United States Constitution.

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

- A. Bahrain—a
- B. Bahrain, a
- C. Bahrain a
- D. Bahrain: a

ID: bb4dc5c6 Answer

Correct Answer: A

Rationale

Choice A is the best answer. The convention being tested is the punctuation of a supplementary element within a sentence. The dash after “Bahrain” pairs with the dash after “Asia” to separate the supplementary element “a country in Western Asia” from the rest of the sentence.

Choice B is incorrect because a comma can’t be paired with a dash in this way to separate the supplementary element from the rest of the sentence. Choice C is incorrect because it fails to use appropriate punctuation to separate the supplementary element from the rest of the sentence. Choice D is incorrect because a colon can’t be paired with a dash in this way to separate the supplementary element from the rest of the sentence.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID b0833423

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: b0833423

The algaita is a double reed wind instrument from West Africa. The reed of a wind instrument is the mouthpiece _____. A double reed contains two pieces of cane that vibrate and produce sound as air passes between them.

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

- A. where sound is made?
- B. where is sound made.
- C. where sound is made.
- D. where is sound made?

ID: b0833423 Answer

Correct Answer: C

Rationale

Choice C is the best answer. The convention being tested is end-of-sentence punctuation. This choice correctly uses a period to punctuate a declarative sentence ("the reed of a wind instrument is the mouthpiece") that ends with a prepositional phrase ("where sound is made").

Choice A is incorrect. It's unconventional to use a question mark to punctuate a declarative sentence. Choice B is incorrect. The structure requires that the sentence continue as a declarative clause, not end with an interrogative clause. Choice D is incorrect. The structure requires that the sentence continue as a declarative clause and end with a period, not end with an interrogative clause and a question mark.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 9b6bd3f8

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 9b6bd3f8

While many video game creators strive to make their graphics ever more _____ others look to the past, developing titles with visuals inspired by the “8-bit” games of the 1980s and 1990s. (The term “8-bit” refers to a console whose processor could only handle eight bits of data at once.)

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

- A. lifelike but
- B. lifelike
- C. lifelike,
- D. lifelike, but

ID: 9b6bd3f8 Answer

Correct Answer: C

Rationale

Choice C is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation between a subordinate clause and a main clause. This choice correctly uses a comma to mark the boundary between the subordinate clause (“While...lifelike”) and the main clause (“others look to the past”).

Choice A is incorrect because it results in an incomplete sentence with no main clause. Choice B is incorrect because it fails to mark the boundary between the subordinate clause (“While...lifelike”) and the main clause (“others...past”). Choice D is incorrect because it results in an incomplete sentence with no main clause.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 892ffa0b

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 892ffa0b

Emperor penguins don’t waddle out of the ocean. They launch themselves at such a high speed that they travel up to two meters before landing. How _____ A layer of microbubbles on their plumage reduces friction as the penguins speed to the surface.

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

- A. they are able to move so fast!
- B. are they able to move so fast.
- C. they are able to move so fast.
- D. are they able to move so fast?

ID: 892ffa0b Answer

Correct Answer: D

Rationale

Choice D is the best answer. The convention being tested is end-of-sentence punctuation. This choice correctly uses a question mark to punctuate the interrogative sentence “how are they able to move so fast?” The interrogative sentence asks a direct question, and the next sentence answers it.

Choice A is incorrect because the context requires an interrogative sentence. The exclamative sentence “how they are able to move so fast!” emphasizes the penguin’s high rate of speed, but it doesn’t set up the next sentence’s explanation of how the penguins achieve such speeds. Choice B is incorrect because a period can’t be used in this way to punctuate an interrogative sentence. Choice C is incorrect because the context requires an interrogative sentence. The exclamative sentence “how they are able to move so fast” emphasizes the penguin’s high rate of speed, but it doesn’t set up the next sentence’s explanation of how the penguins achieve such speeds.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID b8bd2a07

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: b8bd2a07

Before the Erie Canal was completed in 1825, transporting goods by wagon between New York City and the Midwest took up to forty-five days and cost one hundred dollars per ton. By linking the Hudson River to Lake _____ canal reduced transport time to nine days and cut costs to six dollars per ton.

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

- A. Erie; the
- B. Erie (the
- C. Erie, the
- D. Erie: the

ID: b8bd2a07 Answer

Correct Answer: C

Rationale

Choice C is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation between a supplementary phrase and a main clause. This choice correctly uses a comma to mark the boundary between the introductory supplementary phrase (“By linking the Hudson River to Lake Erie”), which identifies how the canal reduced transport time, and the main clause (“the canal reduced transport time to nine days and cut costs to six dollars per ton”).

Choice A is incorrect because a semicolon can’t be used in this way to mark the boundary between a supplementary phrase (“By... Erie”) and the main clause (“the canal...ton”). Choice B is incorrect because an open parenthesis can’t be used in this way to mark the boundary between a supplementary phrase (“By...Erie”) and the main clause (“the canal...ton”). Choice D is incorrect because a colon can’t be used in this way to mark the boundary between an introductory supplementary phrase (“By...Erie”) and the main clause (“the canal...ton”).

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 1714279b

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 1714279b

Technologies such as microphones and inkjet printers are made using piezoelectric materials, which generate an internal electric field when pressure is applied to them. The toxic nature of some of these materials recently led a team from the University of Sheffield to investigate how _____

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

- A. could their use be better regulated?
- B. their use could be better regulated.
- C. their use could be better regulated?
- D. could their use be better regulated.

ID: 1714279b Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. The convention being tested is end-of-sentence punctuation. This choice correctly uses a period to punctuate a declarative sentence that asks an indirect question ("The toxic nature of some of these materials recently led a team from the University of Sheffield to investigate how their use could be better regulated").

Choice A is incorrect because the structure requires a period and a declarative clause at the end of the sentence that states what the team investigated, not an interrogative clause that asks a direct question, such as "how could their use be better regulated?" Choice C is incorrect because it's unconventional to use a question mark in this way to punctuate a declarative sentence. Choice D is incorrect because the structure requires a declarative clause at the end of the sentence that states what the team investigated, not an interrogative clause that asks a direct question, such as "how could their use be better regulated?"

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID d8a1e63d

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: d8a1e63d

Azulejos, mosaics made of glazed ceramic tiles, can be found throughout Portugal. These mosaics beautify places such as _____ stations, and public squares.

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

- A. libraries train
- B. libraries: train
- C. libraries—train
- D. libraries, train

ID: d8a1e63d Answer

Correct Answer: D

Rationale

Choice D is the best answer. The convention being tested is the punctuation of items in a simple series. The comma after "libraries" is used conventionally to separate the first and second items ("libraries" and "train stations") in the series.

Choice A is incorrect because it fails to separate the first two items ("libraries" and "train stations") in the series. Choice B is incorrect because a colon can't be used in this way to separate items in a simple series. Choice C is incorrect because a dash can't be used in this way to separate items in a simple series.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 146c375f

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 146c375f

Mia Heavener’s 2019 novel *Under Nushagak Bluff*, which takes place in a mid-twentieth-century rural Alaskan fishing _____ the story of three Yup’ik women who grapple with the rise of commercial fisheries and other changes affecting their community.

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

- A. village. Tells
- B. village tells
- C. village: tells
- D. village, tells

ID: 146c375f Answer

Correct Answer: D

Rationale

Choice D is the best answer. The convention being tested is the use of punctuation within a sentence. The comma after “village” pairs with the comma after “*Under Nushagak Bluff*” to separate the supplementary relative clause (“which...village”) from the rest of the sentence. This supplementary relative clause functions to provide additional information about the setting of Heavener’s novel, and the pair of commas indicates that this element could be removed without affecting the grammatical coherence of the sentence.

Choice A is incorrect because it results in two rhetorically unacceptable sentence fragments, one beginning with “Mia” and the other beginning with “tells.” Choice B is incorrect because it fails to use appropriate punctuation to separate the supplementary relative clause (“which...village”) from the rest of the sentence. Choice C is incorrect because a colon can’t be paired with a comma in this way to separate the supplementary relative clause (“which...village”) from the rest of the sentence. A colon can be used between two main clauses or a main clause and supplement, but here there is no main clause on either side of the colon.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 9767db12

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 9767db12

In her two major series “Memory Test” and “Autobiography,” painter Howardena Pindell explored themes _____ healing, self-discovery, and memory by cutting and sewing back together pieces of canvas and inserting personal artifacts, such as postcards, into some of the paintings.

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

- A. of
- B. of,
- C. of—
- D. of:

ID: 9767db12 Answer

Correct Answer: A

Rationale

Choice A is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation between a preposition and its complement. No punctuation is needed between the preposition “of” and its complement, the noun phrase “healing, self-discovery, and memory.”

Choice B is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between a preposition and its complement. Choice C is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between a preposition and its complement. Choice D is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between a preposition and its complement.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID dd8861b0

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: dd8861b0

In forecasting weather events, meteorologists sometimes discuss the role of atmospheric rivers. What are atmospheric rivers, and how _____. Part of the water cycle, atmospheric rivers are narrow channels of moisture moving through the atmosphere. In certain conditions, these “rivers” can release some of their moisture as precipitation.

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

- A. do they affect our weather.
- B. they do affect our weather.
- C. do they affect our weather?
- D. they do affect our weather?

ID: dd8861b0 Answer

Correct Answer: C

Rationale

Choice C is the best answer. The convention being tested is end-of-sentence punctuation. This choice correctly uses a question mark to punctuate the coordinated interrogative clauses "What are atmospheric rivers" and "how do they affect our weather," both of which ask direct questions.

Choice A is incorrect because a period can't be used in this way to punctuate an interrogative clause, such as "how do they affect our weather," at the end of a sentence. Choice B is incorrect because the structure requires an interrogative clause and a question mark at the end of the sentence. Choice D is incorrect because the structure requires an interrogative clause at the end of the sentence.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID c9ff2656

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: c9ff2656

Many companies have simplified their products’ packaging designs in recent years, but _____ Researcher Lan Anh Nu Ton and her colleagues designed a research study to find out.

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

- A. consumers actually do prefer this simpler style.
- B. do consumers actually prefer this simpler style?
- C. do consumers actually prefer this simpler style.
- D. consumers actually do prefer this simpler style?

ID: c9ff2656 Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. The convention being tested is end-of-sentence punctuation. This choice correctly uses a question mark to punctuate the interrogative clause “do consumers actually prefer this simpler style,” which asks a direct question at the end of the sentence. This is the question that the researchers in the next sentence were trying to investigate.

Choice A is incorrect because the context requires an interrogative clause. The declarative clause “consumers actually do prefer this simpler style” incorrectly indicates the consumers’ preference was already known, whereas the researchers had yet to find this out. Choice C is incorrect because a period can’t be used in this way to punctuate an interrogative clause at the end of a sentence. Choice D is incorrect because a question mark can’t be used in this way to punctuate a declarative clause, such as “consumers actually do prefer this simpler style,” at the end of a sentence.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID fba043cf

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: fba043cf

Santa Clara Pueblo artist Roxanne Swentzell's sculpture *Mud Woman Rolls On* consists of five human figures made of clay and plant fiber and arranged in descending size; each figure holds the smaller one in front of it. The arrangement of the figures, according to _____ represents her idea that “we all come from the Earth, generation after generation.”

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

- A. Swentzell
- B. Swentzell,
- C. Swentzell:
- D. Swentzell—

ID: fba043cf Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. The phrase “according to Swentzell” is an aside that interrupts the flow of the sentence, so it needs to be separated from the sentence with a pair of matching punctuation marks: two commas, two dashes, or a pair of parentheses. We already have a comma before “according,” so we must add a comma after “Swentzell.” .

Choice A is incorrect. This choice creates a punctuation error. The phrase “according to Swentzell” is an aside that interrupts the flow of the sentence, so it needs to be separated from the sentence with a pair of matching punctuation marks: one before and one after the phrase. Choice C is incorrect. This choice creates a punctuation error. “The arrangement of the figures, according to Swentzell” is not an independent clause, so it can’t come before a colon. Choice D is incorrect. This choice creates a punctuation error. The phrase “according to Swentzell” is an aside that interrupts the flow of the sentence, so it needs to be separated from the sentence with a pair of matching punctuation marks. We already have a comma at the beginning, so we have to use another comma here to match. We can’t just switch to a dash! .

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 560b165d

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 560b165d

Dolores Huerta’s advocacy on behalf of farmworkers was rooted in her experience as a schoolteacher in Stockton, California, in the early 1950s. Hoping to help her students and their families outside the _____ Huerta left teaching to start the Stockton chapter of the Community Service Organization, a group focused on the needs of local farmworkers.

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

- A. classroom.
- B. classroom;
- C. classroom,
- D. classroom

ID: 560b165d Answer

Correct Answer: C

Rationale

Choice C is the best answer. The convention being tested is the use of punctuation within a sentence. This choice correctly uses a comma to mark the boundary between the introductory participial phrase ("Hoping...classroom") and the main clause ("Huerta...farmworkers").

Choice A is incorrect because it results in a rhetorically unacceptable sentence fragment beginning with "hoping." Choice B is incorrect because a semicolon can’t be used in this way to mark the boundary between the participial phrase ("Hoping...classroom") and the main clause ("Huerta...farmworkers"). Choice D is incorrect because it fails to mark the boundary between the participial phrase ("Hoping...classroom") and the main clause ("Huerta...farmworkers").

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID d9837d33

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: d9837d33

The fine, powdery substance that covers the Moon’s surface is called regolith. Because regolith is both readily available and high in oxygen _____ scientists have wondered whether it could be used as a potential source of oxygen for future lunar settlements.

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

- A. content and
- B. content,
- C. content
- D. content, and

ID: d9837d33 Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation between a subordinate clause and a main clause. This choice correctly uses a comma to mark the boundary between the subordinate clause (“Because...content”) and the main clause (“scientists...settlements”).

Choice A is incorrect. Joining the subordinate clause (“Because...content”) and the clause that follows (“scientists...settlements”) with the conjunction “and” results in an ungrammatical sentence that lacks a main clause. Choice C is incorrect because it fails to mark the boundary between the subordinate clause and the main clause with appropriate punctuation. Choice D is incorrect. Joining the subordinate clause (“Because...content”) and the clause that follows (“scientists...settlements”) with a comma and the conjunction “and” results in an ungrammatical sentence that lacks a main clause.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 992e4984

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 992e4984

In 2009, researchers determined that pottery fragments from a cave in China were close to 18,000 years old. These are some of the oldest _____ of pottery ever found.

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

- A. pieces:
- B. pieces,
- C. pieces
- D. pieces—

ID: 992e4984 Answer

Correct Answer: C

Rationale

Choice C is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation use between a noun and a prepositional phrase. No punctuation is needed between the noun "pieces" and the prepositional phrase "of pottery." The prepositional phrase provides essential information about what kind of pieces were found, so it shouldn't be separated from the rest of the noun phrase ("some of the oldest pieces") with punctuation.

Choice A is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the noun phrase "some of the oldest pieces" and the prepositional phrase "of pottery." Choice B is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the noun phrase "some of the oldest pieces" and the prepositional phrase "of pottery." Choice D is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the noun phrase "some of the oldest pieces" and the prepositional phrase "of pottery."

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID a19052dc

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: a19052dc

Polyphenols are organic compounds _____ among their many roles, provide pigment that helps protect plants against ultraviolet radiation from sunlight.

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

- A. that—
- B. that;
- C. that,
- D. that:

ID: a19052dc Answer

Correct Answer: C

Rationale

Choice C is the best answer. The convention being tested is the punctuation of a supplementary element within a sentence. The comma after “that” pairs with the comma after “roles” to separate the supplementary element “among their many roles” from the rest of the sentence. This supplementary element functions to clarify that polyphenols have many roles, and the pair of commas indicates that this element could be removed without affecting the grammatical coherence of the sentence.

Choice A is incorrect because a dash can’t be paired with a comma to separate the supplementary element from the rest of the sentence. Choice B is incorrect because a semicolon can’t be paired with a comma to separate the supplementary element from the rest of the sentence. Choice D is incorrect because a colon can’t be paired with a comma to separate the supplementary element from the rest of the sentence.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 3ec5bf1b

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 3ec5bf1b

The Alvarez theory, developed in 1980 by physicist Luis Walter Alvarez and his geologist son Walter Alvarez, maintained that the secondary effects of an asteroid impact caused many dinosaurs and other animals to die _____ it left unexplored the question of whether unrelated volcanic activity might have also contributed to the mass extinctions.

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

- A. out but
- B. out, but
- C. out
- D. out,

ID: 3ec5bf1b Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. The convention being tested is the coordination of main clauses within a sentence. This choice correctly uses a comma and the coordinating conjunction “but” to join the first main clause (“the Alvarez...out”) and the second main clause (“it left...extinctions”).

Choice A is incorrect because when coordinating two longer main clauses such as these, it’s conventional to use a comma before the coordinating conjunction. Choice C is incorrect because it results in a run-on sentence. The two main clauses are fused without punctuation and/or a conjunction. Choice D is incorrect because it results in a comma splice. Without a conjunction following it, a comma can’t be used in this way to join two main clauses.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 965dc30c

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 965dc30c

In early 1700s England, it was legal for shops to sell prints of artists’ engravings without the artists’ permission. This changed in 1735 with the passage of the Engravers’ Copyright ____ gave engravers control over the distribution and sale of all prints made from their designs.

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

- A. Act, which
- B. Act; which
- C. Act. Which
- D. Act

ID: 965dc30c Answer

Correct Answer: A

Rationale

Choice A is the best answer. The convention being tested is the use of punctuation between a main clause and a supplementary element. In this choice, the comma is used correctly to mark the boundary between the main clause ("This...Act") and the supplementary relative clause ("which...designs") that provides additional information about the Engravers’ Copyright Act.

Choice B is incorrect because a semicolon can’t be used in this way to mark the boundary between a main clause and a supplementary relative clause. A semicolon is conventionally used to join two main clauses, and "which...designs" isn’t a main clause. Choice C is incorrect because it results in a rhetorically unacceptable sentence fragment. Choice D is incorrect. Joining the main clause and the additional information about the Engravers’ Copyright Act ("gave...designs") without the comma and relative pronoun "which" results in a confusing and ungrammatical sentence.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 7a7bcd57

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 7a7bcd57

In her large-scale sculpture *Casa-lsla*, artist Edra Soto included references to her childhood in Puerto Rico. For example, the sculpture’s steel panels have a crisscrossing pattern inspired by the iron gates _____

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

- A. Soto would see in her neighborhood?
- B. Soto would see in her neighborhood.
- C. would Soto see in her neighborhood.
- D. would Soto see in her neighborhood?

ID: 7a7bcd57 Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. The convention being tested is end-of-sentence punctuation. This choice correctly uses a period to punctuate a declarative sentence ("For example...neighborhood").

Choice A is incorrect. It’s unconventional to use a question mark in this way to punctuate a declarative sentence. Choice C is incorrect. The structure requires a declarative clause at the end of the sentence that states where Soto saw the steel panels, not an incomplete interrogative clause that asks a direct question, such as "would Soto see in her neighborhood." Choice D is incorrect. The structure requires a period and a declarative clause at the end of the sentence that states where Soto saw the steel panels, not an incomplete interrogative clause asking a direct question, such as "would Soto see in her neighborhood?"

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 9e29cb8c

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 9e29cb8c

Both Sona Charaipotra, an Indian American, and Dhonielle Clayton, an African American, grew up frustrated by the lack of diverse characters in books for young people. In 2011, these two writers joined forces to found CAKE Literary, a book packaging _____ specializes in the creation and promotion of stories told from diverse perspectives for children and young adults.

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

- A. company,
- B. company that
- C. company
- D. company, that

ID: 9e29cb8c Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. The convention being tested is the use and punctuation of an integrated relative clause. This choice correctly uses the relative pronoun “that” and no punctuation to create an integrated relative clause that provides essential information about the noun phrase (“a book packaging company”) that it modifies.

Choice A is incorrect because it doesn’t use a relative pronoun to link the verb phrase beginning with “specializes” to the noun phrase that it modifies (“a book packaging company”). Choice C is incorrect because it doesn’t use a relative pronoun to link the verb phrase beginning with “specializes” to the noun phrase that it modifies (“a book packaging company”). Choice D is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the integrated relative clause beginning with “that specializes” and the noun phrase that it modifies (“a book packaging company”).

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 7d5507f5

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 7d5507f5

In 1727, dramatist Lewis Theobald presented a new play, *Double Falsehood*, at a London theater. Theobald claimed that his drama was based on a little-known play by William Shakespeare, *Cardenio*. Many, including poet Alexander Pope, were _____ historians have determined that Shakespeare’s company did perform a play called *Cardenio* in 1613.

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

- A. skeptical but
- B. skeptical, but
- C. skeptical,
- D. skeptical

ID: 7d5507f5 Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. There are two independent clauses in the sentence, each with a subject and a verb: "many...were skeptical" and "historians have determined...." These clauses can be grammatically joined by a comma and the coordinating conjunction "but."

Choice A is incorrect. This choice results in a run-on sentence, which occurs when two independent clauses are joined without punctuation. Two independent clauses can’t be joined by just the coordinating conjunction "but." A comma would also be required. Choice C is incorrect. This choice creates a punctuation error called a comma splice. This sentence contains two independent clauses ("Many...were skeptical" and "historians have determined..."). A comma alone can’t join two independent clauses. That requires a comma and a coordinating conjunction. Choice D is incorrect. This choice results in a run-on sentence, which occurs when two independent clauses are joined without punctuation. This sentence contains two independent clauses ("Many...were skeptical" and "historians have determined..."), which need to be either joined by a semicolon, joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction, or separated by a period.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 9f9ac891

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 9f9ac891

When particles are suspended in liquid (like pollen in a water glass), they will zigzag randomly through the liquid and collide with one another in perpetuity. This type of random, continuous _____ is known as Brownian motion, can be observed throughout the natural world.

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

- A. movement: which
- B. movement, which
- C. movement which
- D. movement. Which

ID: 9f9ac891 Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. This choice correctly uses commas to set off the nonessential relative clause "which is known as Brownian motion" that provides extra information about the "random, continuous movement" that isn't necessary for the function of the sentence.

Choice A is incorrect. This choice results in a punctuation error. The relative clause "which is known as Brownian motion" is a nonessential supplement. Nonessential supplements need to be set apart from the rest of the sentence with a pair of commas, dashes, or parentheses, so we can't use a colon here. Also, notice that colons can only come after an independent clause, which isn't the case here. Choice C is incorrect. This choice results in a punctuation error. The relative clause "which is known as Brownian motion" is a nonessential supplement, so it should be separated from the rest of the sentence by a pair of matching punctuation marks. We already have a comma after "motion," so we need to add a comma before "which." This choice is missing that comma. Choice D is incorrect. This choice results in a sentence fragment. "This type of random, continuous movement" is not an independent clause and can't stand alone as a full sentence, so we can't put a period here.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 6358ca2f

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 6358ca2f

Many mechanical calculators were powered by a notched cylinder mechanism called the Leibniz wheel. Leibniz wheel calculators were popular in the first half of the twentieth _____ these ingenious devices were eventually replaced by electronic calculators.

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

- A. century
- B. century,
- C. century, but
- D. century that

ID: 6358ca2f Answer

Correct Answer: C

Rationale

Choice C is the best answer. The convention being tested is the coordination of main clauses within a sentence. This choice correctly uses a comma and a coordinating conjunction ("but") to join the first main clause ("Leibniz...century") and the second main clause ("these ingenious...calculators").

Choice A is incorrect because it results in a run-on sentence. The two main clauses are fused without punctuation and/or a conjunction. Choice B is incorrect because it results in a comma splice. Without a conjunction following it, a comma can't be used in this way to join two main clauses. Choice D is incorrect because joining the two main clauses in this way with the subordinating conjunction "that" results in an ungrammatical and illogical sentence.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID d92e8e9f

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: d92e8e9f

In her book *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, author Maxine Hong Kingston examines themes _____ childhood, womanhood, and Chinese American identity by intertwining autobiography and mythology.

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

- A. of:
- B. of
- C. of—
- D. of,

ID: d92e8e9f Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. “Themes of childhood” is one noun phrase, with “themes of” implicitly carrying over to the other items on the list (“themes of childhood, [themes of] womanhood, and [themes of] Chinese American identity”).

Choice A is incorrect. This choice inappropriately breaks up the introduction of a list. Also, “In her book...themes of” is not an independent clause, thanks to the dangling “of” at the end, so it can’t precede a colon. Choice C is incorrect. This choice inappropriately breaks up the introduction of a list. Also, “In her book...themes of” is not an independent clause, thanks to the dangling “of” at the end, so it can’t precede a single dash. Choice D is incorrect. This choice inappropriately breaks up the introduction of a list. “Themes of” implicitly carries over to each item on the list (“themes of childhood, [themes of] womanhood, and [themes of] Chinese American identity”), so we don’t want to use a comma to separate it.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID aa633897

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: aa633897

Nine months before Rosa Parks made history by refusing to comply with the segregated seating policy on a Montgomery, Alabama, bus, a fifteen-year-old Montgomery girl named Claudette Colvin was arrested for the same _____ to some historians, Colvin’s arrest led to Parks’s action and eventually to the desegregation of Montgomery’s bus system.

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

- A. offense. According
- B. offense, according
- C. offense according
- D. offense and according

ID: aa633897 Answer

Correct Answer: A

Rationale

Choice A is the best answer. “Nine months...offense” and “according to...system” are both independent clauses. Separating them with a period and turning them into their own sentences is the only grammatically correct choice among the provided options.

Choice B is incorrect. This choice results in a comma splice error, which is a punctuation error that occurs when two independent clauses are joined by only a comma. “Nine months...offense” and “according to...system” are both independent clauses, so they need to be either joined by a semicolon, joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction, or separated by a period. Choice C is incorrect. This choice results in a run-on sentence, which occurs when two independent clauses are joined without punctuation. “Nine months...offense” and “according to...system” are both independent clauses, so they need to be either joined by a semicolon, joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction, or separated by a period. Choice D is incorrect. This choice results in a run-on sentence, which occurs when two independent clauses are joined without punctuation. “Nine months...offense” and “according to...system” are independent clauses, so we would need to put a comma before the coordinating conjunction “and” to join them properly.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 2a4e8638

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 2a4e8638

According to the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, aloha ‘āina is “a recognition, commitment, and practice sustaining the ea—or life breath” between the Hawaiian people and their natural environments. The concept has been proudly embodied _____ Native Hawaiians for generations, contributing to the lush flora and renowned beauty of the islands.

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

- A. by;
- B. by:
- C. by,
- D. by

ID: 2a4e8638 Answer

Correct Answer: D

Rationale

Choice D is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation use between a preposition and its complement. No punctuation is needed between the preposition "by" and its complement "Native Hawaiians." The complement completes the meaning of the preposition in the phrase "proudly embodied by Native Hawaiians," and any punctuation within it results in an ungrammatical sentence.

Choice A is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the preposition and its complement. Choice B is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the preposition and its complement. Choice C is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the preposition and its complement.

Question Difficulty: Medium

Question ID 70dec72d

Assessment	Test	Domain	Skill	Difficulty
PSAT 8/9	Reading and Writing	Standard English Conventions	Boundaries	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

ID: 70dec72d

In 1953, a fellow performer tripped on legendary jazz musician Dizzy Gillespie’s trumpet, bending its bell upward. When Gillespie tested the damaged instrument, he realized that he _____ sound of a bent bell over that of a straight one.

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

- A. preferred; the
- B. preferred the
- C. preferred, the
- D. preferred. The

ID: 70dec72d Answer

Correct Answer: B

Rationale

Choice B is the best answer. The convention being tested is punctuation use between a verb and its object. No punctuation is needed between the verb "preferred" and its object "the sound of a bent bell over that of a straight one." The object helps complete the idea of the verb—in this case, it explains what type of sound Gillespie preferred—and any punctuation between the two results in an ungrammatical sentence.

Choice A is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the verb and its object. Choice C is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the verb and its object. Choice D is incorrect because no punctuation is needed between the verb and its object.

Question Difficulty: Medium