**ACT Grammar Handout**

**Know the following definitions and words for the midterm.**

**Independent clause** – a fancy way to say a complete sentence

**Dependent clause** – a sentence part that is dependent

**Fragment** – A sentence part that does not contain a subject, verb, and complete thought

**Run-on** – two sentences separated by no marks of punctuation

**Comma splice** – two sentences separated by only a comma

**Prepositional phrase** – a sentence part that begins with a preposition and ends with the object of a preposition

**Coordinating conjunctions** – for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (connect independent clauses)

**Subordinate conjunctions** – after, although, when, while, unless, before, if, since (connect dependent and independent clauses)

**Conjunctive adverbs** – therefore, however, instead, nevertheless, also, meanwhile

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**Tricky Subject-Verb Agreement Rules**

1. When two or more singular nouns or pronouns are connected by or or nor, use a singular verb.

Example: The **mil**k or the **cheese** smells bad. NOT: The milk or the cheese smell bad.

2. When a compound subject contains both a singular and a plural noun or pronoun joined by or or nor, the verb should agree with the part of the subject nearer to the verb.

Example: The **dog** or the **cats** are ruining the furniture. (verb is plural)

Example: The **cats** or the **dog** is ruining the furniture. (verb is singular)

2. Indefinite pronouns such as anybody, each, either, everyone, neither, and one are always singular.

Example: **Everyone** has finished his or her homework.

3. The subject of the sentence cannot be in a prepositional phrase. Common prepositions are in, at, among, between, on, of, etc.

Example: **Neither** of the traffic lights is working.

Example: **One** of the boxes is open.

4. “Collective noun” is another term for designating a noun that is singular in form but which denotes a collection of individuals. It is treated as singular when the collection is thought of as a whole, but as plural when the individual members are thought of as acting separately.

**CORRECT**: The number of stray cats increases every year. (Singular)

**CORRECT**: A number of stray cats are adopted every year. (Plural)

**Pronoun Agreement**

1. Singular nouns must match with singular pronouns. The most common pronoun error involves the use of the pronoun “they”. It is singular, but it is often used as singular

**Incorrect**: If a **student** wants to park on campus, **they** have to buy a parking pass.

**Correct**: If a **student** wants to park on campus, **he or she** has to buy a parking pass.

**Semicolons**

1. Use a semicolon between related *independent clauses* not joined by a coordinating conjunction.

**Example**: The concert starts at 7:00pm; I’ll see you there!

2. Use a semicolon between independent clauses joined by a transitional word (e.g. accordingly, also, consequently, finally, furthermore, however, indeed, meanwhile, nevertheless, similarly, still, therefore, thus).

**Example**: My former apartment complex did not allow pets; therefore, I did not own any cats for three years.

3. Use a semicolon to separate items in a series when the items themselves contain internal punctuation.

**Example:** In recent years, the Olympics have taken place in Athens, Greece; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Sydney, Australia.

**Colons**

**1. C**olons are ONLY used after complete sentences usually to introduce a list or to provide emphasis.

**Incorrect:** Sally needed to major in: business and biology for her desired career.

**Correct:** Sally needed to major in two subjects for her desired career: business and biology.

**Misplaced Modifiers**

1. Modifiers (words, clauses, or phrases) must always be placed directly next to what they modify.

**INCORRECT**: He packed all of his extra pet toys and pet food into his van, which he was donating to the local shelter. [“which he was donating to the local shelter” is a misplaced modifying clause. This sentence says he is donating his van to the shelter.]

**CORRECT**: He packed all of his extra pet toys and pet food, which he was donating to the local shelter, into his van.

**ACT ENGLISH TEST**

**75 multiple-choice questions**

**45 minutes to answer**

5 passages – 9 minutes per passage

1. Read enough information to identify the error. Do not skip around!
2. Try to predict the correction in your head.
3. Do not pick an answer that fixes one problem but creates another.
4. Choose the answer that is correct, concise, and relevant. When in doubt, pick the shortest answer!
5. Trust your eyes and ears; do not choose the answer that looks “fancy” if it sounds wrong.

Take out a sheet of paper. While I pass out the ACT books, number your paper 1-15. When you get a book, open to page 377.