

Understanding the WIAT III Written Expression Scoring and Scoring Workbook

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CAN I RUN ON THAT PARALLEL STRUCTURE

Parallel Structure - Using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. The usual way to join parallel structures is with the use of a coordinating conjunction such as 'and' or 'or'

- Not Parallel - Mary likes hiking, swimming, and to ride a bicycle.
- Parallel - Mary likes hiking, swimming, and riding a bike.

Run On Sentence- Includes COMMA SPLICE, and FUSED SENTENCE.

- Contains two or more independent clauses
- Does not join clauses with a semi colon
- Does not join clauses with a coordinating conjunction
- Independent clauses are not appropriately linked
- Does not necessarily have to be a long sentence.

- I got up late this morning, I didn't have time for coffee
- Susan studied for the test, she failed anyway
- I don't play basketball well I can't dribble.

ELABORATE on ELABORATION And other Weird Rules & Definitions

ELABORATION - For most this means 'to add details to initial point' or 'expand upon a thought'. For WIAT, it seems to be any complete sentence after a reason. That sentence does not necessarily have to be related to the reason.

Run-on yes and no - Run-on's allowed for Sentence Combining, not allowed for Sentence Building

Not so poor sentence structure- While grammatically correct, needing to repeat the subject before the verb after a conjunction is not typically taught. "The dog is brown and runs fast" should not be penalized but is.

I BELIEVE IN THE CLAUSE & SUBJECTS & VERBS CAN AGREE.

Independent Clause- Group of words that contains a subject and a verb. Expresses a complete thought. It can stand alone in a sentence.

Dependent Clause- Group of words that contains a subject and a verb but DOES NOT express a complete thought and CANNOT stand alone in a sentence. It will begin with a subordinate conjunction or relative pronoun.

A. **Subordinate Conjunction** - Used to join two thoughts. Words such as after, although, as, as if, as long as, as much as, since, than.

- ❖ "...although soccer is hard..."

B. **Relative Pronoun** - a pronoun that refers to an antecedent.

- ❖ "...which means it is challenging."

Subject Verb Agreement-

- Has to agree in number (both singular or both plural)
- Verb will most likely agree with first noun TO THE LEFT
- Relative Pronouns (who, whom, which, that)
- Indefinite Pronouns that are always SINGULAR
 - anyone, everyone, someone, no one, nobody
- Indefinite Pronouns that can be either SINGULAR OR PLURAL
 - all, some, none

Darn it Jim, I am a School Psychologist Not an English Major

Anecdotal data from the NASP listserv indicates frustration with much of the Written Expression subtests, especially the Sentence and Essay Composition sections. There have been threads about **inflated standard scores, confusion over the scoring procedures, and time needed to analyze and score**. The various WIAT III webinars on the Pearson website note the feedback they receive about these concerns as well.

The writing subtests requires a wide background knowledge regarding the rules and specific vocabulary of grammar. For example, the evaluator has to be able to recognize independent clauses, dangling modifiers, and nonparallel structures in order to score a writing sample appropriately. **Unfortunately, many school psychologists who administer the WIAT-III are not particularly well versed in the area of grammar, making the scoring of the Written Expression section overwhelming and frustrating.**

To reach a level of proficiency, WIAT III administrators are encouraged to practice with the provided Scoring Workbook and Scoring Guide. Both can be cumbersome and confusing, sometimes making scoring decisions unclear. The guide contains technical definitions of various grammatical terms with few supportive examples, and several if-then statements that can be hard to follow. The book version is laid out awkwardly, with sections split from one page to another, and information boxes that interrupt the flow of text.

There are no clear explanations for the scoring of samples in the Workbook. One has to repeatedly review the guides with the workbook in order to gain some understanding. If unsure about why a sentence, word, or paragraph was scored in a certain manner, no guidance is provided. **In some cases, even when the workbook tries to clarify, it can actually confuse.** For example, cases are identified if it is from a student with or without a disability. There are two 8th grade students' essays that represent each category (Cases 27 and 25, respectively). While it is presumed that this would help distinguish a child with a writing disability, **both cases receive the same raw score**. In fact, the essay of the child identified with a writing disability has a higher word count much longer than the child identified as 'nonclinical'. This would be counter to the research indicated in the technical manual.

COMPANION WORKBOOK to SCORING WORKBOOK

To assist practitioners in the administration and scoring of the Written Expression subtests, we are creating a **COMPANION WORKBOOK** to the Scoring Workbook. Our book will :

- explain the scoring of every item,
- provide an index so one can immediately find examples of the various errors,
- define various grammatical rules in non-technical language with several clarifying examples,
- convert case sample raw scores into Standard Scores to better identify quality of writing to normative classification.

I SEEM TO HAVE MISPLACED MY MODIFIER

A MODIFIER is supposed to describe, clarify, or give more detail about a concept.

"*Having finished*, Jill turned on the T.V." - The modifier states an action and is connected to the doer of the action. This is CORRECT. 😊

"*Having finished*, the T.V. was turned on" - TV sets do not finish assignments - DANGLING PARTICIPLE

"*Without knowing his name*, it was difficult to call him" - Who didn't know his name- DANGLING PARTICIPLE. Needs to be fixed to:

"*Because Maria did not know his name*, it was difficult to call him." 😊

FORGET SEMI COLONS, WHO KNEW THAT COMMAS WERE SO TOUGH

THERE SEEM TO BE MORE THAN 20 RULES to USING COMMAS, including to:

- Separate word groups with a series of THREE or more.
- To separate TWO adjectives when the word *and* can be inserted between them
- Set off expressions that interrupt sentence flow
- Separate a statement from a question
- Surround words such as *therefore* and *however* when they are interrupters
- When starting with a weak clause, use comma. When starting with strong clause, no comma
 - *If you are not sure about this, let me know*
 - *Let me know now if you are not sure about this.*

SYNTAX VERSUS GRAMMAR

A **grammar error** usually refers more to the part of speech (e.g. using the wrong pronoun or verb tense) or the wrong morphological rule (e.g. irregular past tense verb "ated" or irregular plurals "foots"). The **syntax error** relates to the organization of the sentence (word order for meaning "The boy slowly goes home." or "When the children will play?"). The error is more evident in the attempted use of the passive voice (The book which Paul owns is on the table for Mary.)

HELPFUL WEBSITES

www.towson.edu/ows/
<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar>