Comprehensive Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation Test

Try your hand at the following comprehensive grammar, spelling, and punctuation test. You will find the answer key at the end of the test.

**PART A: REVISION**

Rewrite the sentences below by fixing the errors, which may be in spelling, grammar, punctuation, or any combination of the three. Every sentence has at least one error, though most sentences have several errors.

1. The short story Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been is a brilliant masterful work that examines the life of the Modern American Teenager.
2. William Faulkner's style is often compared to Ernest Hemingway's; because both writers employ the modern, technique stream of consciousness.
3. The beautiful interesting novel had a brilliance about it I had never experienced, it truly touched me.
4. When I was in Europe I learned that other cultures view Americans and our ideas as hedonistic yet they also see Americans as hip modern and idealistic.
5. Neil Postman writes about this problem, in his seminal, book “Amusing Ourselves to Death”: Everything in our background has prepared us to know and resist a prison when the gates begin to close around us...But who is prepared to take arms against a sea of amusements? To whom do we complain....when serious discourse dissolves into giggles?.
6. My Philosophy Professor announced, “Today we will address Thoreau’s statement, “the price of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it.”
7. The best teacher, we ever had, Mrs. Meyer told us never give up on your dream.
8. Thomas could be a brilliant writer, he just does not know it because he spends too much time, watching Television.
9. Smith’s report defines “sustainable development” as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Smith’s definition is important to consider because it illustrates that that we do not have to destroy the natural environment, to have economic progress.
10. We had a pretty impressive guest list for the party, we invited Tom Stoppard, Playwright, J.K. Rowling, Author, and Ron Howard, Director.

11. David, my friend from work told me you are never going to get anywhere unless you believe in yourself.’

12. A government, ruled solely or mostly by a single individual, is a dictatorship.

13. There are three basic, economic systems present within modern nations; capitalism socialism and communism.

14. The bureaucracy of Higher Education can be overwhelming, just remember to remain calm be polite and ask questions about anything you do not understand.

15. Be careful what you Post about your Classes on facebook or twitter. It is not wise to tweet rude; judgmental thoughts about your class the material or the Professor online where anyone can read it. Remember; professors are active on Social Networks; too.

16. Mrs. Hall, my school librarian always told us, 'Be careful what you think about yourself; for you will become what you think’.

17. Staring in is Spring Semester my Cousin and I will be taking Philosophy Biology and English.

18. One of the most beautiful cities in the world is San Francisco California, it is widely known for its majestic; views and rolling, hills.

19. Most readers usually miss the full significance of Shakespeares’ play "Hamlet’; because they often believe its simply a play about revenge.
Circle the correct usage of the underlined words in the sentences below.

20. We had fewer/less items than the allowed limit, so we were able to use the express line where there are fewer/less people waiting.
21. I thought about stealing the money, but I knew my conscious/conscience would bother me if I did; even if I was never caught, I would always be conscious/conscience of my theft.
22. There/they’re/their were so many things I wanted to say to him, but since his friends were there/they’re/their, I said nothing and just waited for there/they’re/their departure.
23. Its/It’s true that some readers have scene/seen the poem as pedantic, but I thought the work and its/it’s message were important and interesting.
24. The very site/cite/sight of the book is enough to bring tears to my eyes; its/it’s cover and language are so beautiful that in every paper I write, I feel compelled to cite/sight/site an excerpt from it.
25. Whomever/whoever wins the lottery will be a multimillionaire; I hope he or she will remember all those who/whom have been good to them.
26. My older sister is taller than I/me. Please RSVP to the party by sending an e-mail to Silas or I/me.
27. I finally gained access/excess/assess/except to the website with my log-in information, but once I logged in, I could not access/excess/assess/except how well I was doing with the assigned work.
28. How much farther/further will we have to drive in this car? I could not read his hand-drawn map, so I asked him to explain it to me farther/further.
29. I feel good/well today; I think I did very good/well on my test.
1. The short story “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been” is a brilliant, masterful work that examines the life of the Modern American Teenager.
   - Be sure your do not italicize the short story title but rather place it in quotation marks. Modern and teenager are common nouns and thus do not need capitalizing, but American does, as it is a proper adjective.

2. William Faulkner’s style is often compared to Ernest Hemingway’s; because both writers employ the modern, technique stream of consciousness.
   - Both Faulkner and Hemingway’s names should contain only ’s because they are singular nouns. No comma is needed after modern (remember, you must be able to cite a rule to defend your inclusion of any comma. No rule, no comma.)

3. The beautiful, interesting novel had a brilliance about it I had never experienced; it truly touched me.
   OR
   The beautiful, interesting novel had a brilliance about it I had never experienced, and it truly touched me.
   - Beautiful and interesting are coordinate adjectives (they work together to describe the novel).
   - Be sure to join independent clauses with a semicolon or a comma and a FANBOY—not a comma alone.

4. When I was in Europe, I learned that other cultures view Americans and our ideas as hedonistic, yet they also see Americans as hip, Modern, and idealistic
   - Add a comma after introductory phrases four words or longer (such as, “When I was in Europe”).
   - Use a comma to separate two independent clauses joined by a FANBOY.
   - Only capitalize proper nouns. Add commas between items in a series of three or more.
5. Neil Postman writes about this problem; in his seminal book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*: “Everything in our background has prepared us to know and resist a prison when the gates begin to close around us … But who is prepared to take arms against a sea of amusements? To whom do we complain ... when serious discourse dissolves into giggles?”.
- Remove the commas around “in his seminal” because it is not an appositive. Italicize book titles and place direct quotes in double quotation marks.
- Ellipses should be three periods, not four or two.

6. My Philosophy Professor announced, “Today we will address Thoreau’s statement, “The price of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it.”
- Do not capitalize common nouns such as philosophy and professor.
- Begin full-sentence-length quotes with a capital letter.
- Be sure to enclose the entire quotation in quotation marks so readers know where the quote begins and ends.

7. The best teacher; we ever had, Mrs. Meyer, told us, “Never give up on your dream.”
- No comma is needed after teacher. (Remember, you must be able to cite a rule to defend your inclusion of any comma. No rule, no comma.)
- Insert a comma after Meyer because her name represents an appositive (additional information).
- Use a comma to introduce a full-sentence-length quote.
- Begin full-sentence-length quotes with a capital letter.

8. Thomas could be a brilliant writer; he just does not know it because he spends too much time, watching television.

OR

Thomas could be a brilliant writer. He just does not know it because he spends too much time, watching television.

OR

Thomas could be a brilliant writer, but he just does not know it because he spends too much time, watching television.
- Use a semicolon, a period, or a comma and a FANBOY to connect two independent clauses. No comma is needed after time. (Remember, you must be able to cite a rule to defend your inclusion of any comma. No rule, no comma.) Do not capitalize common nouns such as television.
9. Smith’s report defines “sustainable development” as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Smith’s definition is important to consider because it illustrates that we do not have to destroy the natural environment, to have economic progress.

   • Be sure to enclose the entire quotation in quotation marks so readers know where the quote begins and ends.

10. We had a pretty impressive guest list for the party; we invited Tom Stoppard, Pplaywright; J.K. Rowling, Aauthor; and Ron Howard, Ddirector.

   OR

We had a pretty impressive guest list for the party: We invited Tom Stoppard, Pplaywright; J.K. Rowling, Aauthor; and Ron Howard, Ddirector.

   OR

We had a pretty impressive guest list for the party, for we invited Tom Stoppard, Pplaywright; J. K. Rowling, Aauthor; and Ron Howard, Ddirector.

   • Use a semicolon, a period, or a comma and a FANBOY to connect two independent clauses.
   • Use a semicolon to separate items in a series that contain commas within the items of the series.
   • Only capitalize titles when they precede the person’s name.

11. David, my friend from work, told me, “You are never going to get anywhere unless you believe in yourself.”

   • Insert a comma after work because this information works as an appositive (it provides additional, nonessential information)
   • If you wish to quote someone directly, put their words in quotation marks and begin the full-sentence-length quote with a capital letter.
   • Use a comma to introduce a full-sentence-length quote.

12. A government, ruled solely or mostly by a single individual, is a dictatorship.

   • Remove the commas from around the phrase “ruled solely or mostly by a single individual.” Placing commas around these words mark them as an appositive, but in fact this information is crucial to understanding the meaning of the sentence.

13. There are three basic, economic systems present within modern nations: capitalism, socialism, and communism.
• Remove the comma after basic. (Remember, you must be able to cite a rule to defend your inclusion of any comma. No rule, no comma). Use a colon—not a semicolon—to introduce a list. Remember, you must have two independent thoughts on both sides of a semicolon.
• Use a comma to separate items in a series.

14. The bureaucracy of Higher Education can be overwhelming; just remember to remain calm, be polite, and ask questions about anything you do not understand.

OR

The bureaucracy of Higher Education can be overwhelming, and just remember to remain calm, be polite, and ask questions about anything you do not understand.

OR

The bureaucracy of Higher Education can be overwhelming. Just remember to remain calm, be polite, and ask questions about anything you do not understand.

• Use a semicolon, a period, or a comma and a FANBOY to connect two independent clauses.
• Use a comma to separate items in a series.

15. Be careful what you post about your classes on Facebook or Twitter. It is not wise to tweet rude, judgmental thoughts about your class, the material, or the professor online where anyone can read it. Remember, professors are active on Social Networks, too.

• Remove the capitalizations of the verb post and the common nouns classes, professor, and social networks.
• Capitalize proper titles, such as Facebook and Twitter.
• Use a comma to separate items in a series, such as class, material, and professor.
• Insert a comma after a one-word introduction such as remember.

16. Mrs. Hall, my school librarian, always told us, “Be careful what you think about yourself, for you will become what you think.”

• Enclose an appositive (nonessential information, such as “my school librarian”) in commas
• Place double—not single—quotation marks around a direct quote. (Single quotation marks are only used to indicate a quote within a quote.)
• Use a FANBOY to connect to independent clauses joined by a comma.

17. Starting in the Spring Semester, my Cousin and I will be taking Philosophy, Biology, and English.

• Place a comma after introductory phrases four words or longer.
• Do not capitalize common nouns (such as spring, semester, philosophy, and biology).
• Use a comma to separate items in a series of three or more.

18. One of the most beautiful cities in the world is San Francisco, California; it is widely known for its majestic views and rolling hills.

OR

One of the most beautiful cities in the world is San Francisco, California, for it is widely known for its majestic views and rolling hills.

OR

One of the most beautiful cities in the world is San Francisco, California. It is widely known for its majestic views and rolling hills.

• Place a comma between city and state titles.
• Use a semicolon, a period, or a comma and a FANBOY to connect two independent clauses.

19. Most readers usually miss the full significance of Shakespeare’s play Hamlet because they often believe it’s simply a play about revenge.

• Place the apostrophe after Shakespeare’s name but before the s to indicate possession. Unless this writer is claiming that there are multiple writers named Shakespeare who co-wrote a play entitled Hamlet, “Shakespeare” is a singular noun, so only ’s is necessary to indicate possession.
PART B: SPELLING AND USAGE

Circle the correct usage of the underlined words in the sentences below.

20. We had **fewer**/less items than the allowed limit, so we were able to use the express line where there are **fewer**/less people waiting.
   - Use *fewer* for all countable nouns. Can we count how many items we have or how many people are waiting? Yes. So, we must use *fewer*.

21. I thought about stealing the money, but I knew my conscious/conscience would bother me if I did; even if I was never caught, I would always be conscious/conscience of my theft.

22. **There*/they’re/their* were so many things I wanted to say to him, but since his friends were there/the’re/their*, I said nothing and just waited for there/the’s/their* departure.

23. Its/It’s true that some readers have scene/seen the poem as pedantic, but I thought the work and its/it’s message were important and interesting.

24. The very site/cite/sight of the book is enough to bring tears to my eyes; its/it’s cover and language are so beautiful that in every paper I write, I feel compelled to cite/sight/site an excerpt from it.

25. Whomever/whoever wins the lottery will be a multimillionaire; I hope he or she will remember all those who/whom have been good to them.

26. My older sister is taller than I/me. Please RSVP to the party by sending an e-mail to Silas or I/me.

27. I finally gained access/excess/assess/except to the website with my log-in information, but once I logged in, I could not access/excess/assess/except how well I was doing with the assigned work; there was such an access/excess/assess/except of information, I felt overwhelmed by it all.

28. How much farther/further will we have to drive in this car? I could not read his hand-drawn map, so I asked him to explain it to me farther/further.

29. I feel good/well today; I think I did very good/well on my test.