Central ideas: main point of a passage

The central idea is the main point the whole passage supports: the claim or focus...



Lesson `rw.infoideas.I1`

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

The idea

The central idea is the main point the whole passage supports: the claim or focus that its details develop. To find it, ask what the passage as a whole is about and what point it makes, then choose the option that captures that whole, in language no stronger than the text uses.

What is the passage as a whole about, and what point does it make about that topic?

Summarize the whole in a sentence using measured language. Test each option: is it the main point, a mere detail, an overstatement, a distortion, or a contradiction?

Watch every step

Tardigrades, microscopic animals often called water bears, can survive conditions that kill almost all other life: extreme heat, the vacuum of space, and doses of radiation thousands of times what humans can withstand. They achieve this by entering a dehydrated, dormant state in which their metabolism nearly stops.

Which choice best states the main idea of the text?

- ✓ **A.** Tardigrades survive extreme conditions by entering a dormant, dehydrated state.
- **B.** Tardigrades are microscopic animals. ✗ *detail-as-main-idea*
- **C.** Tardigrades are the most advanced animals on Earth. ✗ *too-extreme/broad*
- **D.** Tardigrades cannot survive exposure to radiation. ✗ *contradiction*

Why **A** — "Tardigrades survive extreme conditions by entering a. . . ." Select the option that matches the whole-passage point.

Now a harder one

Early electric cars in the 1900s briefly outsold gasoline models, prized for being quiet and easy to start. But their limited range and the spread of cheap gasoline soon pushed them aside. Only a century later, as battery technology improved, did electric vehicles return to prominence.

Which choice best states the main idea of the text?

- ✓ **A.** Electric cars were once popular, faded because of their limitations, and returned much later as technology advanced.
- **B.** Early electric cars were quiet and easy to start. ✗ *detail-as-main-idea*
- **C.** Gasoline cars were always more popular than electric cars. ✗ *contradiction*
- **D.** Electric cars faded because people disliked driving them. ✗ *distortion/half-right*

Why **A** — "Electric cars were once popular, faded because of their. . . ." Select the option that matches the whole-passage point.

The method, in one line

Central ideas: main point of a passage

Summarize the whole in a sentence using measured language. Test each option: is it the main point, a mere detail, an overstatement, a distortion, or a contradiction?

Is my choice the overall point (not a detail)? Is its strength matched to the text (no always/never if the text hedges)? Does it distort or contradict anything?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ detail-as-main-idea

Selects a true but minor detail from the passage instead of its overall point (too narrow).

⚠ too-extreme/broad

Selects an overstated or overgeneralized claim (often using always/never/all) that goes beyond what the text supports.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Command of evidence: best-supporting detail

A command-of-evidence question asks which finding or detail would most directly. . .



Lesson `rw.infoideas.I2`

Explore this live | Watch the walk-through

The idea

A command-of-evidence question asks which finding or detail would most directly support a specific claim or hypothesis. The correct choice supports exactly what the claim asserts.

What exactly does the claim assert? What would have to be true to support THAT claim?

State the claim precisely. For each option, ask whether it directly supports that exact claim, is off-topic, only partly relevant, undercuts it, or supports a different claim.

Watch every step

An author claims that switching to remote work increases employee productivity.

Which finding would most directly support this claim?

A. Employees who switched to remote work completed more tasks per week than they had before.

B. Remote employees reported enjoying their flexible schedules. ✗ *partial/weak support*

C. Office rents fell as companies adopted remote work. ✗ *off-topic evidence*

D. Output dropped sharply among employees after they went remote. ✗ *undercutting evidence*

Why A — "Employees who switched to remote work completed more tasks. . . ." Select the option that most directly and fully supports the stated claim.

Now a harder one

A study suggests that planting trees in cities lowers summer temperatures through shade and the release of water vapor. Researchers compared neighborhoods with many trees to those with few.

Which result would most strongly support the study's suggestion?

- **A.** Tree-dense neighborhoods recorded lower summer temperatures than sparsely treed ones.
- **B.** Tree-dense neighborhoods had higher property values. ✗ *supports-different-claim*
- **C.** Residents of tree-dense areas preferred walking outdoors. ✗ *off-topic evidence*
- **D.** City trees require regular watering to survive. ✗ *partial/weak support*

Why A — "Tree-dense neighborhoods recorded lower summer. . . ." Select the option that most directly and fully supports the stated claim.

The method, in one line

Command of evidence: best-supporting detail

State the claim precisely. For each option, ask whether it directly supports that exact claim, is off-topic, only partly relevant, undercuts it, or supports a different claim.

Does my choice support the specific claim (not a neighboring one)? Does it actually strengthen rather than weaken it? Is the support direct, not partial?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ off-topic evidence
Selects a detail unrelated to the specific claim, true but irrelevant to what is being supported.

⚠ partial/weak support
Selects a detail that is related but does not directly or fully support the specific claim.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Inferences: logical completion from a text

An inference question asks what most logically follows from the information given



Lesson `rw.infoideas.I3`

Explore this live | Watch the walk-through

The idea

An inference question asks what most logically follows from the information given. The correct inference is supported by the text and stays within its limits: it does not rely on outside assumptions, does not overstate beyond the evidence, and does not contradict the passage.

What does the text actually establish, and what conclusion does that evidence warrant?

List what the passage states. Choose the option that follows from it without extra assumptions, without overstatement, and without contradiction, and that adds a conclusion rather than restating a fact.

Watch every step

The new bus route reduced average commute times in the neighborhood. Yet ridership on the route remained low throughout the year.

Which choice most logically completes the text? It can be inferred that

- **A.** shorter commute times alone were not enough to attract many riders.
- **B.** the new bus route was the fastest in the entire city. ✗ *unsupported leap*
- **C.** no one ever rode the new bus route. ✗ *overstatement*
- **D.** the route actually increased commute times. ✗ *contradiction*

Why **A** — "shorter commute times alone were not enough to attract. . . ." Select the warranted inference.

Now a harder one

Researchers found that a species of frog changes color more dramatically in environments with many predators than in environments with few.

Which choice most logically completes the text? It can be inferred that

- **A.** the color change likely serves a defensive purpose related to predators.
- **B.** the frogs prefer to live where predators are numerous. ✗ *unsupported leap*
- **C.** the frogs change color by the same amount regardless of predators. ✗ *contradiction*
- **D.** the frogs change color more when predators are numerous. ✗ *restatement-not-inference*

Why **A** — "the color change likely serves a defensive purpose related. . . ." Select the warranted inference.

The method, in one line

Inferences: logical completion from a text

List what the passage states. Choose the option that follows from it without extra assumptions, without overstatement, and without contradiction, and that adds a conclusion rather than restating a fact.

Is it supported by the text alone? Is its strength within the evidence? Does it avoid contradicting the passage? Is it a new conclusion, not a restatement?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ unsupported leap

Infers something the text gives no basis for, requiring an outside assumption.

⚠ overstatement

Draws a conclusion stronger than the evidence allows (often turning 'low' into 'none' or 'some' into 'all').

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Command of evidence: quantitative (data displays)

A quantitative command-of-evidence question presents a data display (a graph...



Lesson `rw.infoideas.I4`

Explore this live | Watch the walk-through

The idea

A quantitative command-of-evidence question presents a data display (a graph or table) and asks which statement is best supported by the data, or which data point best completes or supports a claim. Read the specific values, trends, and comparisons the display actually shows, then choose the option grounded in them.

What does the display actually show: specific values, a trend, or a comparison? What exact claim must the evidence support?

Read the relevant values or trend directly. Match a choice to what the data show, without overreaching to causation and without backing a different claim.

Watch every step

A line graph shows a company's monthly sales rising steadily from $10,000 in January to $25,000 in June.

Which statement is best supported by the graph?

- **A.** Sales increased over the six-month period.
- **B.** Sales decreased over the six-month period. ✗ *trend-direction error*
- **C.** Sales stayed about constant across the period. ✗ *trend-direction error*
- **D.** Sales were highest in January. ✗ *misreads-value*

Why A — "Sales increased over the six-month period." Select the statement grounded in the displayed data.

Now a harder one

A bar graph shows average test scores by study method: flashcards 85, rereading 72, practice tests 90. A student claims that practice tests were associated with the highest scores.

Which data point best supports the claim?

- **A.** Practice tests averaged 90, the highest of the three methods.
- **B.** Rereading averaged 72. ✗ *supports-different-claim*
- **C.** Flashcards averaged 85. ✗ *supports-different-claim*
- **D.** Practice tests averaged 72. ✗ *misreads-value*

Why A — "Practice tests averaged 90, the highest of the three. . . ." Select the statement grounded in the displayed data.

The method, in one line

Command of evidence: quantitative (data displays)
Read the relevant values or trend directly. Match a choice to what the data show, without overreaching to causation and without backing a different claim.

Did I read the values and direction correctly? Did I avoid inferring cause from correlation? Does my choice support the SPECIFIC claim asked?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

misreads-value
Reads a wrong number, year, or category from the display.

overreach/causation
Claims more than the data support, especially inferring that one variable causes another from a correlation.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Active reading: main idea, pivot, and key word in...

Active reading means locating, in one pass, the sentences that carry a paragraph's...



Lesson `rw.infoideas.I5`

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

The idea

Active reading means locating, in one pass, the sentences that carry a paragraph's meaning: the main idea (the claim every other sentence supports), the pivot (the sentence where the paragraph reverses direction, often short and signaled by but, however, or the opposite occurred), and any word used figuratively or fixed only by context. The setup and the supporting evidence are never the main idea – the sentence they point. . .

Read the whole paragraph first. Which sentence is the claim, which is setup, which is evidence, and where does it turn?

Main idea = the sentence every other one supports (not the setup, not a detail). Pivot = the sentence that reverses direction. Key word = the one used figuratively or fixed only by context.

Watch every step

When the first public libraries opened their doors without charge, many critics predicted disaster. Reading, they warned, would waste the hours of working people and fill their heads with dangerous ideas. The opposite occurred. Free access to books turned out to sharpen skills, spread practical knowledge, and give ordinary readers a foothold in public life. Within a generation, the library had become less a luxury than an engine of opportunity, quietly reshaping who could learn and lead.

'Words in Context' targets a word used figuratively. Which word is used non-literally here?

A. libraries ✗ *literal-for-figurative*

B. engine (in 'engine of opportunity')

C. books ✗ *literal-for-figurative*

D. readers ✗ *literal-for-figurative*

Why B — "engine (in 'engine of opportunity')." Select the sentence or word that fills the role the question asks for.

Now a harder one

Early mapmakers drew the ocean floor as a smooth, featureless basin, assuming the deep sea was as flat as it was dark. The voyages of the mid-twentieth century overturned that picture entirely. Using sonar, researchers found a colossal mountain range winding through every ocean, along with trenches deeper than any peak on land is tall. Far from static, the seafloor turned out to be spreading – made at the ridges and swallowed at the trenches in slow, ceaseless motion. What had seemed a lifeless void became, almost overnight, the most dynamic surface on the planet.

Which sentence is the pivot of the paragraph?

A. Early mapmakers drew the ocean floor as a smooth, featureless basin. ✗ *pivot-misidentified*

B. The voyages of the mid-twentieth century overturned that picture entirely.

C. The seafloor turned out to be spreading in slow, ceaseless motion. ✗ *pivot-misidentified*

D. What had seemed a lifeless void became the most dynamic surface on the planet. ✗ *pivot-misidentified*

Why B — "The voyages of the mid-twentieth century overturned that. . . ." Select the sentence or word that fills the role the question asks for.

The method, in one line

Active reading: main idea, pivot, and key word in a passage

Main idea = the sentence every other one supports (not the setup, not a detail). Pivot = the sentence that reverses direction. Key word = the one used figuratively or fixed only by context.

Is my main-idea choice the point the rest supports, or just a true detail? Is my pivot the reversal itself, or a result of it? Is my word figurative, or literal?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

setup-as-main-idea
Selects the opening assumption or the view the paragraph exists to overturn.

evidence-as-main-idea
Selects a true supporting detail instead of the overall claim.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Words in context

A words-in-context question asks for the word that most precisely fits the meaning. . .



Lesson `rw.craft.K1`

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

The idea

A words-in-context question asks for the word that most precisely fits the meaning the sentence builds. Use the surrounding context (definitions, contrasts, examples, and tone) to PREDICT the intended meaning, then choose the word that matches it exactly.

What meaning does the surrounding context build for the blank? Is there a contrast, a definition, an example, or a tone to read?

Predict a word or phrase from context first. Then test each option for precise meaning, correct sense, matching connotation, and consistency with the context.

Watch every step

The editor asked the writer to ___ the article, trimming it from 2,000 words to 800.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word?

- **A.** condense
- **B.** expand ✗ *contradicts-context word*
- **C.** summarize ✗ *wrong-sense word*
- **D.** edit ✗ *imprecise/loosely-related word*

Why **A** — "condense." Choose the option that matches the prediction most exactly.

Now a harder one

Once dismissed as a fad, the technique has gained ___ acceptance, now endorsed by leading researchers across the discipline.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word?

- **A.** widespread
- **B.** reluctant ✕ *wrong-connotation word*
- **C.** partial ✕ *imprecise/loosely-related word*
- **D.** temporary ✕ *contradicts-context word*

Why **A** — "widespread." Choose the option that matches the prediction most exactly.

The method, in one line

Words in context

Predict a word or phrase from context first. Then test each option for precise meaning, correct sense, matching connotation, and consistency with the context.

Is the word precise, not just in the general area? Is it the right sense? Does its connotation match the tone? Does it fit, not contradict, the context?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ imprecise/loosely-related word

Selects a word in the right general area but not the precise meaning the sentence builds.

⚠ wrong-sense word

Selects a word whose alternate sense does not match the meaning the context requires.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Text structure & purpose

A structure-and-purpose question asks what a text is mainly trying to DO (its...

Lesson `rw.craft.K2`

Explore this live | Watch the walk-through

The idea

A structure-and-purpose question asks what a text is mainly trying to DO (its overall purpose) or what a specific part accomplishes within it (its function). Read for the author's rhetorical goal: to describe, argue, explain, illustrate, qualify, contrast, and so on.

Is the question about the whole text's purpose or a specific part's function? What rhetorical action is being performed?

Name the action (argue, explain, illustrate, qualify, contrast...). For a part, ask what it does relative to the whole. Reject options that name the topic only, an unperformed action, or a part mistaken for the whole.

Watch every step

While early reviewers focused on the novel's complex plot, this essay argues that its real achievement lies elsewhere: in the quiet precision of its sentences, which reward slow, careful reading.

What is the main purpose of the text?

- **A.** To argue that the novel's prose style, not its plot, is its true achievement.
- **B.** To summarize the novel's complex plot. ✗ *part-as-whole*
- **C.** To discuss a novel. ✗ *topic-not-purpose*
- **D.** To describe what early reviewers said about the novel. ✗ *part-as-whole*

Why **A** — "To argue that the novel's prose style, not its plot, is. . . ." Select the option that accurately names the purpose or function.

Now a harder one

The report opens with a vivid anecdote about a single family's struggle to afford housing. It then shifts to statistics showing that millions face the same difficulty nationwide.

What is the function of the opening anecdote?

- **A.** To give a concrete, human illustration before the broader statistics.
- **B.** To present the report's statistical conclusions. ✗ *wrong-function*
- **C.** To argue that the problem affects only one family. ✗ *wrong-function*
- **D.** To list the main causes of unaffordable housing. ✗ *wrong-function*

Why A — "To give a concrete, human illustration before the broader…." Select the option that accurately names the purpose or function.

The method, in one line

Text structure & purpose

Name the action (argue, explain, illustrate, qualify, contrast...). For a part, ask what it does relative to the whole. Reject options that name the topic only, an unperformed action, or a part mistaken for the whole.

Does my choice name an ACTION the text actually performs? Is it the whole purpose, not a detail? Is it more than just the topic? For a part, is its job stated relative to the whole?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

purpose-not-performed

Names a rhetorical action the text does not actually perform.

part-as-whole

Treats the function of a detail or section as if it were the whole text's purpose, or vice versa.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Cross-text connections

A cross-text question presents two texts on a shared topic and asks how they. . .



Lesson `rw.craft.K3`

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

The idea

A cross-text question presents two texts on a shared topic and asks how they relate, such as how the author of one would respond to the other or where they agree or disagree. Pin down each text's specific claim or stance, then compare them precisely.

What exactly does each text claim? Is the question about response, agreement, disagreement, or extension?

State Text 1's stance and Text 2's stance in your own words. Compare them, keeping the degree of agreement or disagreement matched to what each text actually says.

Watch every step

Text 1: Conservationists warn that draining the wetland threatens dozens of bird species that breed there each spring. Text 2: Local biologists report that since the wetland began drying, several migratory bird populations have sharply declined.

How do the two texts relate?

- **A.** Text 2 provides observed evidence consistent with the concern Text 1 raises.
- **B.** Text 2 directly contradicts Text 1's warning. ✗ *overstated-agreement/disagreement*
- **C.** Text 2 mainly describes the wetland's plant life. ✗ *one-text-only*
- **D.** Text 1 argues that the wetland should be drained. ✗ *misreads-one-text*

Why A — "Text 2 provides observed evidence consistent with the. . . ." Select the option that accurately captures both texts' positions and their relationship.

Now a harder one

Text 1: An economist argues that raising the minimum wage causes businesses to cut jobs, hurting the very workers it aims to help. Text 2: Studies of recent minimum-wage increases found only small employment effects, while many low-wage workers saw higher earnings.

How would the author of Text 2 most likely respond to the economist in Text 1?

- ✓ **A.** By suggesting that the feared job losses have been smaller than Text 1 claims.
- **B.** By agreeing that minimum-wage increases sharply cut employment. ✗ *misreads-one-text*
- **C.** By asserting that minimum-wage increases have no effect on anyone at all. ✗ *overstated-agreement/disagreement*
- **D.** By explaining how the inflation rate is calculated. ✗ *unsupported-relationship*

Why A — "By suggesting that the feared job losses have been smaller. . . ." Select the option that accurately captures both texts' positions and their relationship.

The method, in one line

Cross-text connections

State Text 1's stance and Text 2's stance in your own words. Compare them, keeping the degree of agreement or disagreement matched to what each text actually says.

Did I read each text correctly? Is the agreement/disagreement strength accurate (not overstated)? Does the relationship come from the texts, not invented? Does my choice involve BOTH texts?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

misreads-one-text
Gets one text's position wrong, so the stated relationship between the texts is off.

overstated-agreement/disagreement
Claims the texts agree or disagree more strongly than they actually do.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Rhetorical synthesis: using notes to meet a goal

A rhetorical-synthesis question gives bullet-point notes and a specific goal, such. . .



Lesson `rw.synthesis.S1`

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

The idea

A rhetorical-synthesis question gives bullet-point notes and a specific goal, such as to introduce a topic to an unfamiliar audience, to emphasize a contrast, or to present a measured finding. The correct sentence uses the RELEVANT notes to accomplish exactly that goal.

What is the specific GOAL? Which notes are relevant to that goal?

Restate the goal as a test ('the sentence must ...'). Choose the option that performs that action using the relevant notes; reject options that are merely accurate, off-goal, incomplete, or unsupported.

Watch every step

Notes: A new app teaches coding through games. It is designed for children ages 8 to 12. Early testers improved their problem-solving scores. Goal: present the app's measured benefit.

Which choice most effectively accomplishes this goal?

- **A.** In early testing, children using the app improved their problem-solving scores.
- **B.** The app teaches coding through games. ✗ *incomplete-for-goal*
- **C.** The app is designed for children ages 8 to 12. ✗ *irrelevant-detail*
- **D.** The app guarantees that every child will become a programmer. ✗ *distorts-notes*

Why **A** — "In early testing, children using the app improved their. . . ." Select the sentence that accomplishes the goal.

Now a harder one

Notes: Honey never spoils if it is sealed properly. Archaeologists found still-edible honey in 3,000-year-old Egyptian tombs. Its low moisture and acidity prevent bacterial growth. Goal: illustrate honey's remarkable longevity with a concrete example.

Which choice most effectively accomplishes this goal?

- ✓ **A.** Archaeologists have found still-edible honey in Egyptian tombs more than 3,000 years old.
- **B.** Honey's low moisture and acidity prevent bacterial growth. ✗ *goal-mismatch*
- **C.** Honey never spoils as long as it is sealed properly. ✗ *goal-mismatch*
- **D.** Honey is a sweet food made by bees. ✗ *irrelevant-detail*

Why A — "Archaeologists have found still-edible honey in Egyptian. . . ." Select the sentence that accomplishes the goal.

The method, in one line

Rhetorical synthesis: using notes to meet a goal

Restate the goal as a test ('the sentence must ...'). Choose the option that performs that action using the relevant notes; reject options that are merely accurate, off-goal, incomplete, or unsupported.

Does my choice DO what the goal asks (not just state a true fact)? Does it use the relevant notes, include what the goal requires, and avoid claims the notes don't support?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

goal-mismatch
Selects a sentence that is accurate but does not accomplish the stated rhetorical goal.

irrelevant-detail
Selects a sentence built on notes that are not relevant to the goal, or that adds off-target information.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Transitions: core logical relationships

A transition signals the logical relationship between the previous idea. . .



Lesson `rw.transitions.T1`

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

The idea

A transition signals the logical relationship between the previous idea and the next, so the method is to read both sentences, name the relationship, and pick the transition that matches it. Core relationships and their signals: CONTRAST (however, but, nevertheless, on the other hand), CAUSE/EFFECT (therefore, thus, consequently, as a result), ADDITION (furthermore, moreover, in addition, also), and EXAMPLE (for example, for...

What is the logical relationship between the two sentences: contrast, cause/effect, addition, or example?

Name the relationship from the content (does the second idea reverse, result from, add to, or illustrate the first?), then choose the transition family that signals it.

Watch every step

The museum offers free admission on Sundays. ___, it hosts guided tours every afternoon.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- **A.** In addition
- **B.** However ✗ *contrast-vs-continuation error*
- **C.** Therefore ✗ *cause/effect error*
- **D.** In contrast ✗ *contrast-vs-continuation error*

Why **A** — "In addition." Select the transition matching the named relationship.

Now a harder one

The experiment produced promising results. ___, the sample size was too small to draw firm conclusions.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- **A.** Nonetheless
- **B.** Therefore ✗ *cause/effect error*
- **C.** Similarly ✗ *wrong-category error*
- **D.** For example ✗ *wrong-category error*

Why A — "Nonetheless." Select the transition matching the named relationship.

The method, in one line

Transitions: core logical relationships

Name the relationship from the content (does the second idea reverse, result from, add to, or illustrate the first?), then choose the transition family that signals it.

Does the transition match the actual relationship? Does it avoid signaling a contrast where ideas agree, or a cause where there is none?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ contrast-vs-continuation error

Chooses a contrast transition (however, nevertheless) where the ideas agree or continue, or an addition transition (furthermore, moreover) where the ideas actually contrast.

⚠ cause/effect error

Chooses a cause/effect transition (therefore, thus) where there is no causal relationship, or otherwise misreads the direction of causation.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Transitions: sequence, comparison, emphasis &. . .

Beyond contrast, cause, and addition, transitions also mark SEQUENCE/TIME (first. . .



Lesson `rw.transitions.T2`

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

The idea

Beyond contrast, cause, and addition, transitions also mark SEQUENCE/TIME (first, then, next, finally, meanwhile), COMPARISON/SIMILARITY (similarly, likewise), EMPHASIS (indeed, in fact), and CONCLUSION/SUMMARY (in conclusion, in short, overall). Choose by the actual relationship: do not announce a summary in the middle of an argument, signal a sequence where none exists, or claim similarity between ideas that actually. . .

Is the relationship one of order/time, similarity, emphasis, or summary/conclusion?

Match the transition to the relationship: sequence words for ordered steps or simultaneous events, similarity words for parallel ideas, emphasis words for intensification, summary words only when drawing a conclusion from prior material.

Watch every step

The recipe requires several steps. ___, combine the dry ingredients in a large bowl.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- **A.** First
- **B.** Finally ✗ *sequence/time error*
- **C.** Similarly ✗ *comparison/similarity error*
- **D.** In conclusion ✗ *conclusion/emphasis misuse*

Why **A** — "First." Select the transition that fits the named relationship.

Now a harder one

The committee reviewed the budget for hours. ___, the volunteers prepared the venue next door.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical transition?

- **A.** Meanwhile
- **B.** Therefore ✗ *conclusion/emphasis misuse*
- **C.** Finally ✗ *sequence/time error*
- **D.** In conclusion ✗ *conclusion/emphasis misuse*

Why A — "Meanwhile." Select the transition that fits the named relationship.

The method, in one line

Transitions: sequence, comparison, emphasis & conclusion

Match the transition to the relationship: sequence words for ordered steps or simultaneous events, similarity words for parallel ideas, emphasis words for intensification, summary words only when drawing a conclusion from prior material.

Is a sequence word used only for genuine order? Is 'similarly' used only for parallel ideas? Is a summary word used only at a real conclusion?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ sequence/time error

Uses a sequence or time transition where the ideas are not ordered in that way, such as 'finally' for a first step or a sequence word where none applies.

⚠ comparison/similarity error

Uses 'similarly' or 'likewise' for ideas that contrast or are not parallel, or signals contrast where ideas are actually parallel.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Idioms and transitions: standard prepositions, set 3

English pairs particular verbs, adjectives, and nouns with particular prepositions. . .



Lesson `rw.transitions.T3`

Explore this live | Watch the walk-through

The idea

English pairs particular verbs, adjectives, and nouns with particular prepositions (differ FROM, accompanied BY, refrain FROM). These items test the idiomatic preposition Standard English requires in context.

Which base word governs the blank, and what preposition does Standard English idiom pair with it here?

Say the phrase aloud with each option; keep the one that is both idiomatic AND preserves the intended meaning.

Watch every step

The mountain's summit was completely obscured ___ a thick bank of clouds.

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

A. from ✗ *omission/contradiction*

B. by

C. with ✗ *plausible-but-wrong preposition*

D. in ✗ *unidiomatic/register error*

Why **B** — "by." Choose the preposition English conventionally requires with this word in this sense.

Now a harder one

Thick storm shutters were installed to protect the greenhouse ___ hail and high winds.

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

- **A.** from
- **B.** by ✗ *plausible-but-wrong preposition*
- **C.** for ✗ *wrong-meaning preposition*
- **D.** of ✗ *unidiomatic/register error*

Why **A** — "from." Choose the preposition English conventionally requires with this word in this sense.

The method, in one line

Idioms and transitions: standard prepositions, set 3

Say the phrase aloud with each option; keep the one that is both idiomatic AND preserves the intended meaning.

Is it the standard collocation, not merely a preposition that 'sounds okay'? Does it keep the intended meaning?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ plausible-but-wrong preposition

Selects a preposition that collocates with a related word but not this one.

⚠ wrong-meaning preposition

Selects a preposition that changes or breaks the intended meaning.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Idioms and transitions: standard prepositions, set 4

English pairs particular verbs, adjectives, and nouns with particular prepositions. . .



Lesson `rw.transitions.T4`

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

The idea

English pairs particular verbs, adjectives, and nouns with particular prepositions (differ FROM, accompanied BY, refrain FROM). These items test the idiomatic preposition Standard English requires in context.

Which base word governs the blank, and what preposition does Standard English idiom pair with it here?

Say the phrase aloud with each option; keep the one that is both idiomatic AND preserves the intended meaning.

Watch every step

The village became famous ___ its centuries-old cheese-making tradition.

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

A. by ✗ *plausible-but-wrong preposition*

B. with ✗ *wrong-meaning preposition*

C. of ✗ *unidiomatic/register error*

D. for

Why **D** — "for." Choose the preposition English conventionally requires with this word in this sense.

Now a harder one

The apprentice quickly became adept ___ the delicate art of glassblowing.

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

A. with ✗ *plausible-but-wrong preposition*

B. for ✗ *wrong-meaning preposition*

C. of ✗ *unidiomatic/register error*

D. in

Why **D** — "in." Choose the preposition English conventionally requires with this word in this sense.

The method, in one line

Idioms and transitions: standard prepositions, set 4

Say the phrase aloud with each option; keep the one that is both idiomatic AND preserves the intended meaning.

Is it the standard collocation, not merely a preposition that 'sounds okay'? Does it keep the intended meaning?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ plausible-but-wrong preposition

Selects a preposition that collocates with a related word but not this one.

⚠ wrong-meaning preposition

Selects a preposition that changes or breaks the intended meaning.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Idioms and transitions: standard prepositions, set 5

English pairs particular verbs, adjectives, and nouns with particular prepositions. . .



Lesson `rw.transitions.T5`

Explore this live | Watch the walk-through

The idea

English pairs particular verbs, adjectives, and nouns with particular prepositions (differ FROM, accompanied BY, refrain FROM). These items test the idiomatic preposition Standard English requires in context.

Which base word governs the blank, and what preposition does Standard English idiom pair with it here?

Say the phrase aloud with each option; keep the one that is both idiomatic AND preserves the intended meaning.

Watch every step

The film's screenplay is loosely based ___ a true story from the 1970s.

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

A. from ✗ *plausible-but-wrong preposition*

B. at ✗ *wrong-meaning preposition*

C. with ✗ *unidiomatic/register error*

D. on

Why **D** — "on." Choose the preposition English conventionally requires with this word in this sense.

Now a harder one

The novelist's memoir draws heavily ___ her childhood in rural Vermont.

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

A. from ✗ *plausible-but-wrong preposition*

B. on

C. about ✗ *wrong-meaning preposition*

D. with ✗ *unidiomatic/register error*

Why **B** — "on." Choose the preposition English conventionally requires with this word in this sense.

The method, in one line

Idioms and transitions: standard prepositions, set 5

Say the phrase aloud with each option; keep the one that is both idiomatic AND preserves the intended meaning.

Is it the standard collocation, not merely a preposition that 'sounds okay'? Does it keep the intended meaning?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ plausible-but-wrong preposition

Selects a preposition that collocates with a related word but not this one.

⚠ wrong-meaning preposition

Selects a preposition that changes or breaks the intended meaning.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Idioms and transitions: standard prepositions, set 6

English pairs particular verbs, adjectives, and nouns with particular prepositions. . .



Lesson `rw.transitions.T6`

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

The idea

English pairs particular verbs, adjectives, and nouns with particular prepositions (differ FROM, accompanied BY, refrain FROM). These items test the idiomatic preposition Standard English requires in context.

Which base word governs the blank, and what preposition does Standard English idiom pair with it here?

Say the phrase aloud with each option; keep the one that is both idiomatic AND preserves the intended meaning.

Watch every step

The two companies agreed to enter ___ a five-year licensing agreement.

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

A. in ✗ *plausible-but-wrong preposition*

B. into

C. on ✗ *wrong-meaning preposition*

D. with ✗ *unidiomatic/register error*

Why **B** — "into." Choose the preposition English conventionally requires with this word in this sense.

Now a harder one

Younger investors have shown a growing tendency ___ short-term, high-risk trades.

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

- **A.** toward
- **B.** for ✗ *plausible-but-wrong preposition*
- **C.** of ✗ *wrong-meaning preposition*
- **D.** with ✗ *unidiomatic/register error*

Why A — "toward." Choose the preposition English conventionally requires with this word in this sense.

The method, in one line

Idioms and transitions: standard prepositions, set 6

Say the phrase aloud with each option; keep the one that is both idiomatic AND preserves the intended meaning.

Is it the standard collocation, not merely a preposition that 'sounds okay'? Does it keep the intended meaning?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ plausible-but-wrong preposition

Selects a preposition that collocates with a related word but not this one.

⚠ wrong-meaning preposition

Selects a preposition that changes or breaks the intended meaning.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Sentence boundaries: joining & separating clauses

An independent clause has a subject and a verb and can stand alone



Lesson `rw.conventions.W1`

Explore this live | Watch the walk-through

The idea

An independent clause has a subject and a verb and can stand alone. Two independent clauses may NOT be joined by a comma alone (a comma splice) or by nothing at all (a fused or run-on sentence).

Are the two parts each independent clauses, or is one dependent or a phrase? What sits at the boundary between them?

If both are independent, join with a period, a semicolon, or comma + coordinating conjunction. A conjunctive adverb needs a semicolon. If one part is dependent or a phrase, attach it; do not punctuate it as a full sentence.

Watch every step

Although the road was icy, ___

Which choice completes the text so that it forms a complete sentence?

- **A.** the bus arrived on time.
- **B.** arriving on time. ✗ *fragment*
- **C.** which arrived on time. ✗ *fragment*
- **D.** on time despite the conditions. ✗ *fragment*

Why A — "the bus arrived on time.." Choose the boundary punctuation that matches the clause types.

Now a harder one

The recipe calls for fresh basil ___ dried basil will not produce the same flavor.

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

- **A.** basil; dried
- **B.** basil, dried ✗ *comma splice*
- **C.** basil dried ✗ *fused/run-on*
- **D.** basil, therefore dried ✗ *connector error*

Why **A** — "basil; dried." Choose the boundary punctuation that matches the clause types.

The method, in one line

Sentence boundaries: joining & separating clauses

If both are independent, join with a period, a semicolon, or comma + coordinating conjunction. A conjunctive adverb needs a semicolon. If one part is dependent or a phrase, attach it; do not punctuate it as a full sentence.

Did I avoid a comma splice and a fused run-on? Did I treat conjunctive adverbs correctly? Is every sentence built on at least one independent clause?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ comma splice
Joins two independent clauses with only a comma.

⚠ fused/run-on
Joins two independent clauses with no punctuation at all.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Punctuation within a sentence: supplements, commas. . .

Nonessential (supplementary) information is set off with a matching PAIR. . .



Lesson `rw.conventions.W2`

The idea

Nonessential (supplementary) information is set off with a matching PAIR of punctuation marks: two commas, two dashes, or two parentheses, and the pair must match. Essential (restrictive) information that identifies the noun takes NO punctuation around it.

Is the inserted information essential (identifies the noun) or nonessential (extra)? Is there a list or explanation that a colon might introduce?

Nonessential: enclose with a matching pair of marks. Essential: no punctuation. Never split a subject from its verb with a single comma. Use a colon only after a complete clause.

Watch every step

For the camping trip, the essential items are ___ a tent, a stove, and a map.

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

- **A.** items are
- **B.** items are: ✗ *colon misuse*
- **C.** items are; ✗ *colon misuse*
- **D.** items are, ✗ *unnecessary comma*

Why A — "items are." Place or remove punctuation according to whether the element is essential, and check colon placement.

Now a harder one

The novel ___ explores themes of memory and loss. (The clause 'which won several awards' is extra information.)

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

A. , which won several awards,

B. which won several awards ✗ *essential/nonessential error*

C. , which won several awards ✗ *unpaired/mismatched supplement*

D. which won several awards, ✗ *unnecessary comma*

Why A — ", which won several awards,." Place or remove punctuation according to whether the element is essential, and check colon placement.

The method, in one line

Punctuation within a sentence: supplements, commas & colons

Nonessential: enclose with a matching pair of marks. Essential: no punctuation. Never split a subject from its verb with a single comma. Use a colon only after a complete clause.

Are supplement marks PAIRED and matching? Did I leave essential information unpunctuated? Did I avoid a stray comma between subject and verb? Does any colon follow a complete clause?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ unpaired/mismatched supplement

Sets off a nonessential element with only one mark, or with mismatched marks (a comma paired with a dash), instead of a matching pair.

⚠ essential/nonessential error

Puts commas around essential (restrictive) information, or omits the commas around nonessential information.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Subject-verb agreement

A verb must agree in number with its SUBJECT: a singular subject takes a singular...

Lesson `rw.conventions.W3`

Explore this live | Watch the walk-through

The idea

A verb must agree in number with its SUBJECT: a singular subject takes a singular verb, a plural subject a plural verb. The subject is not always the noun nearest the verb; intervening phrases (especially 'of ...' and other prepositional phrases) do not change the subject, so look past them to the head noun.

What is the true subject? Is it separated from the verb by a phrase, an indefinite word, a compound, an inversion, or a collective noun?

Strip away intervening phrases to find the head noun. Treat each/every/neither as singular. 'And' is plural; 'or/nor' agrees with the nearer subject. For inversions, find the subject after the verb.

Watch every step

On the high shelf ___ several old books.

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

A. are

B. is ✗ *inverted/collective error*

C. was ✗ *inverted/collective error*

D. has been ✗ *inverted/collective error*

Why **A** — "are." Match the verb's number to that subject.

Now a harder one

The committee, along with its advisors, ___ scheduled to meet weekly.

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

- **A.** is
- **B.** are ✗ *agreement with nearest noun*
- **C.** were ✗ *agreement with nearest noun*
- **D.** have been ✗ *inverted/collective error*

Why A — "is." Match the verb's number to that subject.

The method, in one line

Subject-verb agreement

Strip away intervening phrases to find the head noun. Treat each/every/neither as singular. 'And' is plural; 'or/nor' agrees with the nearer subject. For inversions, find the subject after the verb.

Did I agree with the SUBJECT, not the nearest noun? Did I handle indefinite words, compounds, inversions, and collectives correctly?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ agreement with nearest noun

Makes the verb agree with a noun in an intervening phrase (often a prepositional 'of ...' phrase) rather than the true subject.

⚠ indefinite-singular error

Treats a singular indefinite subject (each, every, everyone, neither, either) as plural, or vice versa.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Pronoun-antecedent agreement & pronoun case

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number: a singular antecedent. . .



Lesson `rw.conventions.W4`

Explore this live | Watch the walk-through

The idea

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number: a singular antecedent (including a company, an organization, or an indefinite like everyone) takes a singular pronoun; a plural antecedent takes a plural one. Pronoun CASE depends on the role: subject pronouns (I, he, she, they, who) act as subjects, and object pronouns (me, him, her, them, whom) act as objects, including after prepositions.

Does the pronoun match its antecedent in number? What role does it play (subject or object)? Is its reference clear?

Match number to the antecedent. Pick subject vs object case by role; in a compound, test by dropping the other element. Use who/whom by subject/object. If reference is ambiguous, replace the pronoun with the noun.

Watch every step

The award was shared between Maria and ___.

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

- **A.** me
- **B.** I ✗ *case error*
- **C.** myself ✗ *case error*
- **D.** mine ✗ *case error*

Why **A** — "me." Choose the pronoun with the right number, case, and clear reference.

Now a harder one

The scientist ___ discovered the comet received a prestigious award.

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

- **A.** who
- **B.** whom ✗ *who/whom error*
- **C.** which ✗ *who/whom error*
- **D.** whose ✗ *who/whom error*

Why A — "who." Choose the pronoun with the right number, case, and clear reference.

The method, in one line

Pronoun-antecedent agreement & pronoun case

Match number to the antecedent. Pick subject vs object case by role; in a compound, test by dropping the other element. Use who/whom by subject/object. If reference is ambiguous, replace the pronoun with the noun.

Number agrees with the antecedent? Case fits the role (object after a preposition)? Who vs whom correct? Does the pronoun point to exactly one antecedent?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ antecedent number error

Uses a plural pronoun for a singular antecedent (such as a company or organization) or vice versa.

⚠ case error

Uses the wrong case, especially a subject pronoun where an object is needed (e.g. 'between Maria and I') or a reflexive in place of an object pronoun.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Verb tense, form & aspect

Keep verb tense consistent within a sentence or passage unless the time frame. . .



Lesson `rw.conventions.W5`

Explore this live | Watch the walk-through

The idea

Keep verb tense consistent within a sentence or passage unless the time frame genuinely changes; do not shift tense without a reason. Use the perfect aspects to show sequence: the past perfect (had + past participle) marks an action completed BEFORE another past action, and the present perfect (has/have + past participle) marks an action reaching into or relevant to the present.

Is the time frame consistent? Is there a sequence of past actions, an irregular participle, or a time marker that fixes the tense?

Hold tense steady unless time shifts. For an earlier past action, use the past perfect. Use the proper past participle after has/have/had. Read time markers to set the tense.

Watch every step

She has ___ to that museum many times.

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

- **A.** gone
- **B.** went ✗ *irregular-participle error*
- **C.** going ✗ *irregular-participle error*
- **D.** goed ✗ *irregular-participle error*

Why **A** — "gone." Choose the verb form matching consistency, sequence, participle, and any time marker.

Now a harder one

By next June, the team ___ the project.

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

- **A.** will have completed
- **B.** completed ✗ *tense-from-time-marker error*
- **C.** completes ✗ *tense-from-time-marker error*
- **D.** had completed ✗ *tense-from-time-marker error*

Why **A** — "will have completed." Choose the verb form matching consistency, sequence, participle, and any time marker.

The method, in one line

Verb tense, form & aspect

Hold tense steady unless time shifts. For an earlier past action, use the past perfect. Use the proper past participle after has/have/had. Read time markers to set the tense.

Did I avoid an unwarranted tense shift? Is the earlier past action in the past perfect? Is the participle correct for the irregular verb? Does the tense fit the time marker?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ unwarranted tense shift

Shifts verb tense within a sentence or passage with no change in time frame to justify it.

⚠ perfect-aspect error

Uses the simple past where the past perfect is needed to show one action preceding another, or misuses the present perfect.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Modifiers & parallel structure

A modifier must sit next to the word it describes



Lesson `rw.conventions.W6`

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

The idea

A modifier must sit next to the word it describes. An introductory modifying phrase must be immediately followed by the noun it logically modifies; if that noun is missing or wrong, the modifier dangles.

Is there an introductory or inserted modifier? A series, a correlative pair, or a comparison that must be parallel?

Make the noun right after an introductory phrase the thing it describes. Keep modifiers next to their targets. Put all items in a series or pair into matching grammatical form.

Watch every step

Walking to school, ___.

Which choice completes the text so that the modifier attaches correctly and conforms to Standard English?

- **A.** Maria noticed the fresh snow
- **B.** the fresh snow was noticed ✗ *dangling modifier*
- **C.** it was a beautiful morning ✗ *dangling modifier*
- **D.** the streets were quiet ✗ *dangling modifier*

Why **A** — "Maria noticed the fresh snow." Reposition modifiers and match the forms of parallel elements.

Now a harder one

The new policy is intended not only to reduce costs but also ___.

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

- **A.** to improve service ✓
- **B.** improving service ✗ *paired/correlative parallelism error*
- **C.** service improvements ✗ *paired/correlative parallelism error*
- **D.** it improves service ✗ *paired/correlative parallelism error*

Why A — "to improve service." Reposition modifiers and match the forms of parallel elements.

The method, in one line

Modifiers & parallel structure

Make the noun right after an introductory phrase the thing it describes. Keep modifiers next to their targets. Put all items in a series or pair into matching grammatical form.

Does the introductory phrase describe the subject that follows it? Is each modifier beside its target? Are the series and paired elements grammatically parallel?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

dangling modifier
An introductory modifying phrase has no logical or correct subject to attach to, so it modifies the wrong noun or none at all.

misplaced modifier
A modifier sits far from the word it describes, attaching to the wrong word and distorting the meaning.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Possessives & apostrophes

A possessive shows ownership and needs an apostrophe: a singular noun adds 's (the...



Lesson `rw.conventions.W7`

Explore this live | Watch the walk-through

The idea

A possessive shows ownership and needs an apostrophe: a singular noun adds 's (the dog's leash); a plural noun ending in s adds only an apostrophe (the dogs' leashes); an irregular plural adds 's (the children's toys). Possessive PRONOUNS never take an apostrophe – its, whose, theirs, yours, ours, hers.

Does the word show ownership (possessive) or stand for two words (contraction)? Is the owner singular or plural?

Ownership by a pronoun -> no apostrophe (its, whose). 'It is'/'who is' -> it's/who's. Singular owner -> 's; plural owner ending in s -> s'.

Watch every step

___ been an unusually dry year for the entire valley.

Which choice conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- **A.** It's
- **B.** Its ✗ *its / it's confusion*
- **C.** Its' ✗ *misplaced possessive apostrophe*
- **D.** It ✗ *plural vs possessive*

Why **A** — "It's." Write the form that matches ownership vs contraction and singular vs plural.

Now a harder one

The conservation group has expanded ___ efforts to restore the wetland.

Which choice conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- **A.** its
- **B.** it's ✗ *its / it's confusion*
- **C.** its' ✗ *misplaced possessive apostrophe*
- **D.** it ✗ *plural vs possessive*

Why A — "its." Write the form that matches ownership vs contraction and singular vs plural.

The method, in one line

Possessives & apostrophes

Ownership by a pronoun -> no apostrophe (its, whose). 'It is'/'who is' -> it's/who's. Singular owner -> 's; plural owner ending in s -> s'.

Could I replace it with 'it is'/'who is'? If not, no apostrophe. Is the owner singular or plural?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

its / it's confusion
Uses it's (it is) for the possessive, or its for the contraction.

whose / who's confusion
Uses who's (who is) for the possessive, or whose for the contraction.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through

Logical & complete comparisons

A comparison must compare LIKE things and be COMPLETE



Lesson `rw.conventions.W8`

Explore this live | Watch the walk-through

The idea

A comparison must compare LIKE things and be COMPLETE. Comparing mismatched items is illogical: 'The population of Tokyo is larger than New York' wrongly compares a population to a city; fix it with 'that of New York' (or 'New York's').

Are the two things being compared actually the same kind of thing? Are two items compared, or three or more?

Match the compared nouns with 'that of'/'those of' or a possessive. Two -> comparative; three or more -> superlative; never double up.

Watch every step

Of all the trails in the park, this one is ___.

Which choice conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- **A.** the steepest
- **B.** the steeper ✗ *comparative vs superlative misuse*
- **C.** the most steepest ✗ *double comparison*
- **D.** more steep ✗ *comparative vs superlative misuse*

Why **A** — "the steepest." Write the logical, complete, correctly-formed comparison.

Now a harder one

The song of the humpback whale is more elaborate than ___ nearly any other species.

Which choice conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- **A.** that of ✓
- **B.** than ✗ *illogical/incomplete comparison*
- **C.** those of ✗ *that / those number mismatch*
- **D.** them ✗ *illogical/incomplete comparison*

Why A — "that of." Write the logical, complete, correctly-formed comparison.

The method, in one line

Logical & complete comparisons

Match the compared nouns with 'that of'/'those of' or a possessive.
Two -> comparative; three or more -> superlative; never double up.

Am I comparing like to like? Comparative for two, superlative for 3+, and no doubled form?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

⚠ illogical/incomplete comparison

Compares mismatched things or omits 'that of/those of,' comparing a quality to the wrong noun.

⚠ that / those number mismatch

Uses 'that' for a plural noun or 'those' for a singular noun in the comparison.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through