

Key for Punctuation Practice Test

1. E – The commas surrounding "in addition to his fellow bureaucrats" offset a non-restrictive phrase or superfluous information. President will only be capitalized if it's the first word in a sentence or if it's referring to the President of the United States. The 's is tagged on to Denton to indicate its possession of the North Texas locality. By default, the answer is E.

2. A – As is, the semicolon separates two independent clauses or complete sentences. Either can stand alone as a complete sentence. The latter, though, further modifies the last word, "statement," before the colon. The group of words to the left of a colon must be a complete sentence, whereas the group of words to the right can be a list, statement, directions, or a wide array of things. The key is to make sure that the group of words to the right of the colon modify or further explain the sentence to the left of the colon.

3. E – "Like" will remain as so. This is an example of the different meanings of prepositions. Although the difference is very slight in the cases of "like" and "as," it is still significant and something to be mindful of when taking the GSP. There is no need for the comma before "or" because the group of words that follow it is not a complete sentence. "pulp fiction," if you remember the movie, is not hyphenated. "Crazed out" is not hyphenated either.

4. D – The semicolons in this sentence are used to divide the items in the list that contain commas. The semicolon after "Midwest" does not act as a divider between the items that contain commas. One should replace the semicolon with a colon because the colon acts as a formal introducer to call attention to what follows, in this case the names of the members.

5. C – Commas and periods always go to the left of the quotations, regardless of whether there are two, three, or twenty quotation marks.

6. E – There is no abrupt change in tone in the phrase "by their children" worthy enough to merit the use of a dash. The commas surrounding "who hear... excuse" do not surround a non-restrictive phrase. Which mothers? The mothers who hear such a contrived excuse. Since that phrase is necessary to the clarification of which

mothers specifically, it does not need to be set off by commas. There is no need for an 's after "mothers" because the mothers are not showing ownership of anything.

7. C – "Superman... in distress" and "his powers... Kryptonite" are complete sentences. The conjunction "but" is not strong enough to hold them together on its own. Consequently, either a comma should be added or "but" should be replaced by a semicolon. Since the option to add a semicolon is not provided (the GSP will never ask you to choose between two right answers), add a comma before "but."

8. B – "though ruthless" is superfluous information irrelevant to the point of the sentence. By surrounding the phrase with commas, the sentence reads "Stealing babies' toys at Christmas time is a lucrative business," which stands perfectly well on its own. Commas should always set off non-restrictive clauses or elements, information that is not crucial to the point of the sentence.

9. A – Never hyphenate "ly" words. Hyphenated words can usually be thought of as one word. A hyphen connects two or more words serving as a single adjective or to avoid ambiguity.

10. C – The series of incessant dots are commonly referred to as ellipses. If one cuts out one part of a sentence and then resumes one thought within the same sentence, one would use three periods (...). Think of it as an omission within the same sentence.

Example: My sister, who lives in Vancouver, is quite strange. My sister... is quite strange.

If one were to cut off the end of a sentence and then resume one's thought in another sentence the result would be four periods and a capital letter starting off the first letter of the first word in the new sentence.

Example: We've all had little glimpses into the dirty, dark elevator shaft and seen the greasy cables passing each other. They never look totally safe. The idea of being trapped in a small box induces a kind of phobia in us.

We've all had little glimpses into the dirty, dark elevator shaft.... The idea of being trapped in a small box induces a kind of phobia in us.

11. C – "Cell phone... difficulties" is a complete sentence, as is "people... the future." One either needs a comma and a conjunction or a semicolon. Since the former is not an option, a semicolon will adequately suffice.

12. D – "it's" is always a contraction for "it is." Whereas "its" always denotes possession. "It's" is an exception to the general rule that apostrophes indicate possession.

13. C – "Radiohead, Ani Difranco, and Bright Eyes" needs to be offset by either two commas or two dashes because the list is superfluous information that simply elucidates the reader as to what Stevie's favorite bands are. It is not crucial to the overall meaning of the sentence. Thus, the list should either be surrounded by two commas or two dashes. Since it is not an option to replace the dash after "bands" with a comma, the comma after "Eyes" should be replaced with a dash.

14. E – Although commas and periods always come to the left of the quotation marks, it is not always so for exclamation and question marks. The main thing to keep in mind is that if the emphasis or question is within the quotations, then the end mark will be placed within the quotations. However, if the emphasis or question is outside of the quotation marks, then the end mark will be outside the quotations. In this case, the question is being asked outside the quotations.

15. C – Always place commas after dates, years, cities, states, countries, names, addresses and area codes.

Example: Last year on October 15th, 2003, in Denton, Texas, my brother crashed the family car into the living room.

Example: Mail the package to Jaime X. Zinchainai, 720 Sycamore, Denton, Texas, 73902.

16. A – There is no reason for the comma after "attendants)." If you cannot explain why a piece of punctuation is positioned as so, it probably shouldn't be there.

17. E – There is a comma after various forms of the word "said," but it is not needed after "that."

Example: The President said that he "had no idea."

Example: Julie always says, "there's no reason for that kind of vulgar behavior."

18. E – This is an odd question at first glance because it appears that "six- to" is one word. As with ellipses, pay attention to the little things, like the space between the hyphen and "to." It would be one word if it were typed "six-to." By placing the space, it indicates that the infant is either a six-month-old or an eight-month-old. If the hyphen were removed after "six," then it would imply an eight-month-old to six month-old. And there is no such thing as a month-old.

19. C – Anytime one adds a proper noun that can fit anywhere in the sentence, it should be surrounded by commas.

Example: James, run over to the refrigerator, James, and snag a cold brewsky for me, James.

James can be placed in several different places in the sentence. Thus, it needs to be surrounded by commas. Also, proper nouns that act as appositives, which usually rename a noun, may be nonrestrictive (set off by commas) or restrictive (not set off by commas). A nonrestrictive appositive provides additional but not essential details about the noun or pronoun.

Example: The hybrid of aloe vera, xxeyzx, has not been approved yet by the FDA.

20. E – "Though" is a superfluous, nonrestrictive word, thus it requires commas. "Goings-on" should be thought of as one word, because it's not "the goings of the government" nor is it "the on of the government." "As long as..." is restrictive and crucial to the meaning behind why "unethical politicians will continue to be elected..." Government should only be capitalized if one is referring to a specific government.