SC Skillbuilder Exit Quiz

1. Which two of the following five sentences exhibit illogical meanings:

   A) Worried about the approaching storm, David’s father turned on the generator to ensure that the family didn’t lose electricity.
   B) Exhausted after a stressful, sleepless night before the interview, David’s car drifted nearly all the way off the road before he regained control.
   C) Much like Florida oranges, Georgia grows peaches that have become nearly synonymous with the state itself.
   D) Perhaps most famous for its bodybuilding exploits, Arnold Schwarzenegger’s resume also boasts film and political triumphs.
   E) Not unlike the transcontinental railroad, which opened up trade and commerce between disparate geographical regions, the Erie Canal transformed American business, making New York the most important port in North America.

(Solution: B and C. The modifier “Exhausted...” in choice B appears next to the noun “David’s car,” which is an inanimate object that could not logically be exhausted. Similarly, the modifier “Much like Florida oranges” in choice C is set up to modify “Georgia,” the state, which cannot be like a fruit. This modifier would have to say “Much like Florida, Georgia...” or “Much like Florida oranges, Georgia peaches...”)

2. Which two of the following five sentences are incorrect?

   A) The United States War Department created the Department of the Ohio so as to defend the nation’s most important waterways during the Civil War.
   B) The Board of Directors announced that it will soon need to close the historic factory in yesterday’s address.
   C) The police department’s primary goal is the prevention of crime before it happens, not the punishment of crime after it has already taken place.
   D) In last night’s State of the Union Address, the President urged Congress to put aside partisan differences and work together toward a better future for the nation.
   E) The House of Representatives are expected to unanimously pass the jobs bill proposed by the president.
3. Which two of the following five sentences commit Pronoun or Agreement errors?

A) In his radio address to the state, the governor failed to mention the charges leveled against him by the Securities and Exchange Commission, but he was unable to avoid it when interviewed by the Chicago Tribune the following morning.
B) The number of toxins in the world’s five oceans is increasing even more rapidly than even the most concerned researchers predicted.
C) Each of the handcrafted statues are individually numbered and signed by the artist.
D) Representatives of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers met last week, and in that meeting they decided to move forward with plans for a walkout in protest of declining wages and benefits.
E) Satisfied with her performance in the triathlon, Katie ordered herself an Oreo milkshake to celebrate.

Solution: A and C. In choice A, the pronoun “it” has no logical antecedent. The only logical noun that the governor is trying to avoid is the plural “the charges”, so the pronoun “them” would be appropriate. In choice C, it’s important to remember that “each” is a singular noun, so the proper verb there would be “is”.

4. Which two of the following sentences commit Modifier or Pronoun errors?

A) In his autobiography, which was written ten years before he even became a United States Senator, the possibility of Barack Obama’s eventual run for President was never even broached.
B) While waiting for the school bus, which would arrive a full 20 minutes late, eight-year old Billy impressed his classmates by jumping high enough to retrieve his hat from the top of a signpost.
C) Like the Farrelly Brothers with their slapstick comedies such as Dumb & Dumber, Tom Shadyac possesses an innate ability to elicit laughs through shock value without ruining the audience’s relationship with his movies’ protagonists.

Solution: B and E. Look at the placement of the modifying phrase “in yesterday’s address” in choice B. It should modify “when the announcement took place” but instead it appears after the clause “it will soon need to close the factory”, making it look like the factory will be closed in yesterday’s address. That meaning is illogical, as “will need to” is in the future, and “yesterday’s address” is in the past. Choice E is wrong because of a subject/verb agreement error. “of Representatives” modifies “The House,” which is singular, so the correct verb would be “is expected...” not “are expected.”
D) Much like that of the honeybee, the wasp has a stinger that can administer intense pain to predators hundreds of times the insect’s size.

E) While its signature horn may suggest that the rhinoceros is a predator, in fact it is an herbivore, using the horn primarily to sift through dirt for leafy greens.

(Solution: A and D. Choice A begins with the modifier “In his autobiography...” but the noun it modifies is “the possibility,” which cannot take the pronoun “his” nor can it actually have an autobiography. Choice D begins with the modifier “Much like that of the honeybee,’ referring to a bee’s stinger, but that modifier is set up to describe the noun “the wasp” which cannot be anything like a stinger.)

5. Which two of the following sentences commit Comparison or Tense errors?

A) In order to break the world record at next summer’s world championships, Tyson Gay will need to run faster than Usain Bolt ran at the 2008 Olympics.

B) Since 1984, when the Los Angeles Olympic organizing group turned a quarter-billion dollar profit by selling sponsorship rights, the International Olympic committee focused on its branding and global sponsorship programs and has earned an iconic place in world marketing history.

C) The number of applicants to UCLA, a public school that charges California residents only in-state tuition rates, is more than double Harvard’s applicants, all of whom are responsible for expensive private school tuition even though plenty of scholarship opportunities exist.

D) The price of in-state tuition for the so-called “Public Ivy” universities, including UCLA, North Carolina, and Michigan, is less than half that for the true Ivy League schools.

E) Having already decided to cut its losses by closing the unprofitable Times Square location, the retailer was caught off-guard by its record-setting summer sales and will now need to reevaluate its decision.

Solution: B and C. Choice B includes a verb tense error, as the introductory phrase “since 1984” indicates an ongoing event, but the verb “focused” suggests an event that has finished. The correct verb choice would be “has focused.” Choice C involves an improper comparison, comparing “the number of UCLA applicants” to “Harvard’s applicants”. The latter requires a number so that the comparison is number to number, not number to applicants.

6. Four of the five sentences below convey illogical meanings. Select the sentence that has a logical meaning.

(A) Before he went to the market, Leon goes to the bank to deposit his paycheck.

(B) After he arrived at the airport, Jason had left his passport on the kitchen table.

(C) During her study at the University of Chicago, Ashley will have had four Nobel Prize laureate professors.
(D) While doing the crossword puzzle, Sarah listened to an NPR podcast.

(E) Before he finished the race, Dale will have suffered a scraped knee and several blisters.

Solution: D. Choice A has a verb tense error, as the verb “goes” does not fit with the timeline that that event took place prior to when he “went” somewhere else. Choice B is also guilty of a verb tense and logical timeline error; those events cannot have taken place in that order, and even if they did the “had left” past-perfect verb would have to take place before the other past-tense event. Choice C mixes timelines as well; the word “during” does not work with the verb “will have had”. And choice E makes another timeline mistake: since you know that Dale has finished the race, the future tense “will have” is incorrect.

7. Four of the five sentences below commit sentence construction errors. Select the sentence that is free from error.

(A) Because of inflated expectations heading into the event, it seems as though Missy will either win a gold medal in world-record time or she will disappoint teammates, sponsors, and countrymen alike.

(B) Investors in the potentially groundbreaking technology hope that the product will not only work but will also come in at a marketable cost.

(C) The firm’s top-performing attorney, Laura billed over 4,000 hours last year alone; it was 3,500 hours the year before.

(D) In tomorrow night’s telecast, the network will feature bungee jumping, motocross racing, and daredevils skydiving.

(E) The advertisements for a popular line of toupees are sure to highlight that the synthetic hair is affixed so well that its wearers can go swimming, proving that the wigs are waterproof, and drive in convertibles, demonstrating that the wigs are resistant to strong winds.

Solution: E. Choice A violates the parallel structure standard for “either/or” constructions. Since the verb “win” comes directly after the word “either”, a parallel construction would lead with a verb after “or”, but this one adds the unnecessary pronoun “she”. Choice B makes the same mistake: since a verb (“work” comes right after “not only”, a verb is required after “but also” – the term “will” before also is redundant since “will not only...” has already assigned the future “will” to both portions of that construction. Choice C makes a pronoun error, as the pronoun “it” after the semicolon has no logical antecedent. Choice D commits another Sentence Construction parallelism error: the three items in the list should all be in the same form as nouns (jumping, racing, and skydiving) but in choice D the third item includes a subject, making “skydiving” a verb and thus not parallel.

8. Four of the five sentences below commit errors. Select the sentence that is free from error.

(A) Already confused by the traffic roundabouts and different customs of the road, the fact that the street signs were in a foreign language added even one more hurdle to Steve’s overseas driving experience.

(B) The CEO catered elaborate events for his employees who successfully completed the management training program.

(C) The House of Representatives is meeting next week, and experts expect them to pass the much-anticipated reform bill.
The number of toxins polluting the world’s oceans are expected to increase exponentially over the next twenty years.

Aggravated by oversleeping his alarm clock and spilling coffee on his tie, the fact that John’s car wouldn’t start was the last straw.

Solution B. Choice A commits a modifier error, as the modifier “Already confused” cannot modify “the fact”. Choice C has a pronoun error with “them” referring to the singular “House of Representatives”. Choice D involves a subject-verb agreement error; the subject “the number” must be accompanied by a singular verb “is” and not the plural “are”. And Choice E commits the same error as Choice A, with the modifier “Aggravated…” illogically modifying the inanimate “the fact”.

For the following sentences, select the underlined portion that contains the error.

9. Because of (A) his failed drug test, (B) which revealed the presence of the steroid stanozolol, Ben Johnson’s gold medal from the 1988 Olympics was passed to Carl Lewis, (C) who in the same event became the world record holder in the 100-meter dash.

Solution: A. The pronoun “his” used in the modifier does not have a logical referent noun, as “Ben Johnson’s” is used as an adjective; the only noun there is “medal” which cannot be modified by “because of his drug test”.

10. Disappointed in the company’s quarterly performance, (A) it was decided by the CEO to withhold bonuses from (B) her employees until the end of the next quarter, (C) when there would likely be more reason to celebrate.

Solution: A. The pronoun “it” does not have a logical referent, and is therefore in error.

11. Even as a small child, the legendary astronomer passed most of his time (A) by gazing at the stars, (B) by sketching the constellations, and using trigonometry (C) to calculate interstellar distances.

Solution: B. Choice B breaks parallelism; the list of events should be “He passed his time by: gazing, sketching, and using.” Since the last term does not have its own “by”, adding one to the second term makes for a not-parallel list.

For the next five questions, select the answer choice that is free of grammatical and logical errors.

12. Biologists worry that the Arctic ecosystem will unravel quickly, citing the fact that the average temperature within the Arctic circle is already two degrees warmer than ten years ago.

(A) two degrees warmer than ten years ago
(B) warmer by two degrees than ten years ago
(C) two degrees warmer than it was ten years ago
(D) two degrees warmer than it had been ten years ago
(E) warmer, two degrees so, than ten years ago

Solution: C. Choice A commits a comparison error, as the temperature cannot be compared to “ten years ago”, but rather must be compared to the temperature at that time in the past. Choices B and E make essentially the same mistake. Choice D commits a verb tense error, as the past perfect “had been” cannot be used in the absence of another past tense event. Since there is no past-tense verb in the rest of the sentence, the past-perfect cannot be used.

13. In 2001, the average price of a gallon of gasoline was $1.52, and $2.59 in 2011.

(A) was $1.52, and $2.59 in 2011
(B) was $1.52; $2.59 in 2011
(C) was $1.52; by 2011, that figure was $2.59
(D) was $1.52, and by 2011 was $2.59
(E) $1.52, having risen to $2.59 in 2011

Solution: C. The modifier “In 2001” applies to the entire clause “the average price of a gallon…”, which makes choices A, D, and E incorrect by not introducing a new subject/verb clause to start a new thought with a new year (you can’t say “In 1985, I was born and graduated from college in 2007”, as that makes it seem like both events took place in the same year, 1985). Choice B is a sentence fragment; a new subject and verb are needed after a semicolon.

14. Michael Phelps won a record-setting eight gold medals at the 2008 Olympics, touching the wall first in multiple disciplines that included freestyle, butterfly, and swimming the individual medley.

(A) freestyle, butterfly, and swimming the individual medley
(B) the freestyle, butterfly, and the individual medley
(C) the freestyle, butterfly, and individual medley
(D) both the freestyle and butterfly, and also the individual medley
(E) freestyle, the butterfly, and the individual medley

Solution: C. Because this sentence involves a list of three items, you should ensure that those items are parallel. Only choice C keeps a parallel list of three consecutive nouns “freestyle, butterfly, and individual medley”. Choice E is close, but notice that without the article “the” before “freestyle” it actually is not parallel.
15. In the United States, Memorial Day serves as the unofficial beginning of summer, **kicking off the season with barbecues, camping trips, and pool openings nationwide**.

(A) kicking off the season with barbecues, camping trips, and pool openings nationwide
(B) which kicks off the season with barbecues, camping trips, and pool openings nationwide
(C) kicked off with barbecues, camping trips, and with pool openings nationwide
(D) kicking off the season with barbecues, with camping trips, and pool openings nationwide
(E) which, kicking off the season, does so with barbecues, camping trips, and pool openings nationwide

Solution: A. Choices B and E are guilty of modifier errors; the word “which” has to modify the adjacent noun, and “summer” is not the appropriate noun for either description. Choices C and D include lists of three items, and neither is expressed in parallel form.

16. Native to Louisville, Kentucky, where he later threw his Olympic gold medal into the Ohio River after being refused service at a whites-only restaurant, Berrien Springs, Michigan serves as Muhammad Ali’s current home.

(A) Native to Louisville, Kentucky, where he later threw his Olympic gold medal into the Ohio River after being refused service at a whites-only restaurant, Berrien Springs, Michigan serves as Muhammad Ali’s current home.
(B) Native to Louisville, Kentucky, where he later threw his Olympic gold medal into the Ohio River after being refused service at a whites-only restaurant, Muhammad Ali’s current home is in Berrien Springs, Michigan.
(C) Native to Louisville, Kentucky, where he later threw his Olympic gold medal into the Ohio River after being refused service at a whites-only restaurant, Muhammad Ali currently resides in Berrien Springs, Michigan.
(D) Originally native to Louisville, Kentucky, where he later threw his Olympic gold medal into the Ohio River after being refused service at a whites-only restaurant, Muhammad Ali’s current home is in Berrien Springs, Michigan.
(E) Currently residing in Berrien Springs, Michigan, Muhammad Ali’s native city is Louisville, Kentucky, where he later threw his Olympic gold medal into the Ohio River after being refused service at a whites-only restaurant.

Solution: C. The modifying phrase “Native to Louisville” has to modify a person (Ali), and in choices A, B, and D it does not. Choice D also leads with a redundancy error – since “native” already means “originally”, the first word “originally” is unnecessary. Choice E makes the same error just with different words; “Currently residing” also has to modify a person (Ali) and in choice E the noun being modified is “Ali’s native city”, which cannot logically reside in another location.