

Chapter 4

English: Rhetorical Skills

The English problems in this chapter test your “Rhetorical Skills”—that is, how well you choose the content of an essay, how well you organize that content, and how well you choose your words. The three major sub-topics in Rhetorical Skills are as follows:

- 1. Writing Strategy.** General choice of content, additions, deletions, and whether the passage achieves certain goals.
- 2. Organization.** Transitions, choice of opening/closing content, sentence order, paragraph order, and paragraph breaks.
- 3. Style.** Concision, choice of particular words.

How should you use this chapter? Here are some recommendations, according to the level you’ve reached in ACT English.

- 1. Fundamentals.** It’s good to start with a topically focused chapter, such as this one. Do at least some of these problems untimed. This way, you give yourself a chance to think deeply about the principles at work. Review the solutions closely, and articulate what you’ve learned. Redo problems as necessary.
- 2. Fixes.** Do a few problems untimed, examine the results, learn your lessons, then test yourself with longer timed sets.
- 3. Tweaks.** Confirm your mastery by doing longer sets of problems under timed conditions. Aim to improve the speed and ease of your solution process. Mix the problems up by jumping around in the chapter.

Good luck on the problems!

PASSAGE 1: WRITING STRATEGY**Food Truck**

When I am home for the summer between terms, I work where I did in high school: on a food truck called Wunderbare Wurst, which means “Wonderful Sausage.” [1] This truck was started several years ago by

1. At this point, the writer is considering adding the following sentence:

People usually pronounce the ending of the first word like “bare” or “bear,” but it should be pronounced “bah-ruh.”

Should the writer make this addition?

- A. Yes, because the sentence provides the right guidance for pronouncing an unfamiliar word.
- B. Yes, because the sentence reveals the narrator’s familiarity with the culture on which the truck is based.
- C. No, because the sentence fails to identify the language in which the truck’s title is expressed.
- D. No, because the content of the sentence strays from the main focus of the paragraph.

two adults with driver’s licenses, Sabine and Ferdinand, who realized that Miami was generally overflowing with culinary riches, particularly the cuisine of Cuba and other Latin American countries, but authentic bratwurst, sauerkraut, and other real German dishes were missing. [2] The two caught the wave of gourmet food trucks, which are in a different category—and

2. Given that all the choices are true, which one provides the most relevant background information on Sabine and Ferdinand?

- F. NO CHANGE
- G. dedicated entrepreneurs,
- H. married German immigrants,
- J. people not born in this country,

3. The writer is considering deleting the words “authentic bratwurst, sauerkraut, and other” from the previous sentence. If the writer were to make this deletion, the sentence would primarily lose:

- A. information that contrasts German dishes with those of other cultures.
- B. examples of the German dishes to which the narrator is referring.
- C. details that support a point made earlier in the paragraph.
- D. information that provides a logical transition to the next sentence.

ought to be distinguished—from hot dog carts or
other low-end providers. Sabine and Ferdinand charge

a premium for their products, but their ingredients are
expensive, as is gasoline.

I started working with Sabine and Ferdinand very soon after they launched their business. As the president of my high school's German club, I invited their then-unknown truck to park outside a Friday night home football game. [6] It was the truck's best night to date, and Sabine offered me a job the next day. I arranged for brats to be sold after all our remaining games,

and enrollment in the German club actually went up
during that time, too. Over the course of that year,

4. Which choice makes the most effective comparison by describing what Sabine and Ferdinand's operation could be most reasonably confused with?
- F. NO CHANGE
 G. high-end stationary restaurants
 H. tractor-trailers and other large transport trucks
 J. specialty grocery stores and delicatessens.
5. Which choice most effectively illustrates the popularity of the food truck's offerings?
- A. NO CHANGE
 B. I believe that customers are getting a great value.
 C. they don't seem to be primarily motivated by money.
 D. wherever they take the truck, they sell out.
6. The writer is considering deleting the following phrase from the preceding sentence:
- As the president of my high school's German club, If the writer were to make this deletion, the essay would primarily lose:
- F. a detail that suggests a rationale for the invitation made by the narrator.
 G. an explanation of why the narrator took a risk for the truck's owners.
 H. details about what Sabine and Ferdinand thought of the narrator.
 J. broad background information on active clubs at the narrator's high school.
7. Given that all of the choices are true, which one is most relevant at this point in the essay?
- A. NO CHANGE
 B. and my friends were pleased with our improved Friday night meals.
 C. though some students were upset about lower sales at the concession stand.
 D. and in the truck itself, I started operating the cash register.

I took on more and more responsibilities, learning the ins and outs of running a small business. ⁸ Of course, Sabine and Ferdinand have taught me how to grill sausages properly, but more importantly, they have taught me how to serve customers with a smile, even when you don't feel like smiling. They have helped me learn how to manage crises calmly and improvise solutions. They have been excellent mentors to me, and

4

I hope that later in life, I can provide the same kind of guidance to my employees.

8. At this point, the writer is considering adding the following true statement:

My college doesn't have a business major exactly, so I'm studying economics.

Should the writer make this addition here?

- F. Yes, because it explains the narrator's desire to acquire hands-on experience in business.
- G. Yes, because it reminds the reader of the narrator's need to pay tuition and earn money.
- H. No, because it distracts the reader from the main focus of the paragraph.
- J. No, because it is inconsistent with the tone and style of the rest of the essay.

9. Which choice would provide the most appropriate context for the rest of the sentence?

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. when I start my own business someday,
- C. at some point in the future,
- D. whether I feel like smiling or frowning,

Question 10 asks about the preceding passage as a whole.

10. Suppose the writer had chosen to write a brief essay describing the evolution of a professional relationship between a small enterprise and an employee. Would this essay successfully fulfill the writer's goal?

- F. Yes, because the narrator outlines his or her own process of becoming a valued employee of the food truck.
- G. Yes, because the narrator continues to work in the same food truck in which he or she began to work in high school.
- H. No, because the food truck has reached a level of success that disqualifies it from being considered a small enterprise.
- J. No, because the relationship has been unable to progress further while the narrator has been attending college.

PASSAGE 2: WRITING STRATEGY

Ella Fitzgerald

[1]

I once kissed Ella Fitzgerald, the “First Lady of Song,” on the cheek. She was getting an honorary degree, ¹¹ and a member of the a-cappella group in which I sang had a family connection to Ella’s road

manager, who happened to be called Val Valentine. We lay in wait for the ¹² grande dame outside of the reception

hall, built in honor of graduates fighting for the Union during the American Civil War. ¹³ As Ella and Val slowly climbed a ramp toward the hall, we greeted them in white tie and tails, singing a song Ella made famous: “The Lady Is a Tramp.”

[2]

Quite elderly at that point, yet energetic and smiling, Ella appeared delighted with our performance.

11. At this point, the writer is considering removing the comma from after the word *degree* and adding the following phrase:

at my university,

Would this be a relevant addition to make here?

- A. Yes, because it provides academic credibility for assertions made later in the essay.
 B. Yes, because it justifies the narrator’s connection to the place where Fitzgerald would be.
 C. No, because it consists of unnecessary personal information that detracts from the narrative.
 D. No, because it offers insufficient detail, such as the name of the university itself.
12. Which choice most effectively conveys the narrator’s perspective on the name of Fitzgerald’s manager?
- F. NO CHANGE
 G. a man whose real name was
 H. the wonderfully named
 J. OMIT the underlined portion.
13. Given that all of the choices are true, which one provides the most logical cause for the events described in the next sentence?
- A. NO CHANGE
 B. where she was due for a dinner the night before the degree ceremony.
 C. which contains a theater in which we ourselves had often sung.
 D. an immense Gothic building used for many purposes over the years.

Afterwards, we lined up and each gave her a kiss. ¹⁴ The only danger was that she was really leaning on each of us, a realization not shared by the last singer in line. When he pulled away, this national treasure started to topple. Only Val Valentine's quick reactions saved Ella from a

4

bad spill, and thankfully, the scare was quickly over.

¹⁵
[3]

Born in 1917, Ella Fitzgerald overcame a difficult

childhood ¹⁶ to win an "Amateur Night" while still a teenager at the famous Apollo Theater in Harlem, New

York, which was built in 1914 but wasn't opened to African-American audiences until the 1930s. ¹⁷ By 1940, she was the bandleader of her own jazz orchestra.

14. If the writer were to delete the preceding sentence, the paragraph would primarily lose:
- F. a description of the context needed to make sense of the next few sentences.
 - G. insight into the formation and composition of the singing group.
 - H. supporting evidence for the impact that Fitzgerald had on the narrator.
 - J. details that could be safely omitted without harming the rest of the story.
15. Given that all of the choices are true, which one gives the clearest glimpse into possible repercussions for the singing group if Fitzgerald had actually fallen?
- A. NO CHANGE
 - B. spill, although many of us leapt to her aid.
 - C. spill—and us from terrible shame.
 - D. spill—and who knows how bad that could have been.
16. At this point, the writer is considering placing a comma after the word *childhood* and adding the following phrase:
- one that included time in an orphanage and a reformatory school,
- Given that it is true, should the writer make this addition here?
- F. Yes, because it illustrates more specifically the obstacles to Fitzgerald's achievements
 - G. Yes, because it explains the source of Fitzgerald's emotional power as a singer.
 - H. No, because it makes an already long sentence even longer and more unwieldy.
 - J. No, because it is inconsistent with the positive tone established in the rest of the essay.
17. Given that all of the choices are true, which one provides the most detailed and effective explanation of the cultural importance of the venue referred to in this sentence?
- A. NO CHANGE
 - B. which frequently competed with its neighbor, the Lafayette Theatre, for top acts.
 - C. an establishment.
 - D. the launching pad for many prominent African-American performers for more than eighty years.

Other contemporaneous big bands were led by such greats as Count Basie and Duke Ellington.

Recording countless hits and jazz standards over the next few decades, Ella became known for her agility in scat singing, which imitates the improvised solos of trumpets and saxophones by means of nonsense syllables. [19] As for me, I will always remember and treasure the experience of singing for one of the greatest vocalists in history.

18. **F.** NO CHANGE
G. Count Basie and Duke Ellington were among the great leaders of other big bands around the same time.
H. Leaders of other big bands at the same time included the great Count Basie and Duke Ellington.
J. OMIT the underlined portion.
19. Which of the following true statements, if added here, would most effectively emphasize the public's recognition of Fitzgerald's accomplishments?
- A.** Perhaps because of her upbringing, Ella generously supported organizations that help underprivileged children.
B. In her lifetime, Ella won fourteen Grammy Awards and dozens of other honors from groups around the world.
C. Passionate fan Marilyn Monroe helped Ella make her debut for Hollywood celebrities at the Mocambo night club.
D. Later in life, Ella underwent several complicated surgeries and sang her final concert at Carnegie Hall in 1991.

Question 20 asks about the preceding passage as a whole.

20. Suppose the writer's goal had been to write a brief essay demonstrating how a musical icon influenced the subsequent career of a younger performer after a short meeting. Would this essay successfully fulfill that goal?
- F.** Yes, because it is evident that the narrator highly values the memory of his or her encounter with Fitzgerald.
G. Yes, because the career achievements of Fitzgerald have had a profound effect on American musical culture.
H. No, because the essay omits any mention of the narrator's later career, whether as a performer or otherwise.
J. No, because the episode described in the essay is too brief to have had lasting influence on the narrator.

