



Learning Project 4 Revising for Mechanics and Usage

(Note: *Italicized portions should be directed to the students.*)

Inquiry Activity 4-4: Revising for Mechanics and Usage

1. Identifying the Problem

In this Inquiry Activity, you will explore how to revise an essay to eliminate incorrect use of commas.

Many students are confused about commas, and some have spent considerable time worrying over comma usage.

You will practice with revision first on GED writing passages, next on some of your classmates' essays, and then on your own. First we start with revising a passage from the GED writing test, which is found here.

- 1. Read the whole passage to get an indication of what the passage is about. Do not try to find errors or make any corrections.*
- 2. In this Inquiry Activity we are going to concentrate on the correct use of commas. You will be asked to revise the sentences for comma usage in paragraphs A, B, and D. You will be asked to locate sentences in which commas should be used or to eliminate commas that are incorrectly used.*
- 3. Read paragraphs A, B, and D word for word to get a sense of which sentences might need a comma or those that don't need the comma that is there. Again, don't try to correct specific sentences yet; just read the paragraph as someone who is looking to revise possible comma misuse.*

Trotter Institute of Electronics "Training for the Future"

Mr. Carlos Montanez
286 Greencrest Street
Houston, TX 77001

Dear Mr. Montanez:

(A)

(1) What does it take to get a good job? (2) You probably have read newspaper articles about how job opportunities are declining today. (3) At the same time, however there are occupations in which opportunities are expanding. (4) The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics gave the following report. (5) The report states that in the next 10 years the demand for electronics technicians will increase by 21 percent. (6) As an electronics technician, you can expect to have your choice of many high-paying jobs with excellent working conditions. (7) That means that for every 10 electronics technicians now working, two more will be needed.

(B)

(8) One of the best aspects of an electronics education was that you don't ever have to leave home to get one. (9) The Trotter Institute of Electronics, offers a one-year correspondence course that leads straight to a Certificate of Electronics. (10) You could soon be on your way to a career in electronics. (11) A career filled with excitement and promise.

(C)

(12) You probably think that any course offered by the Trotter Institute would be expensive. (13) Because you get textbooks, assignments, and consultation for only \$450.00, and this includes employment counseling after you graduate, this will surprise you. (14) You can see now that getting a better job is easier than you thought.

(D)

(15) To prepare for a better job with a great future, complete the enclosed registration form. (16) Within 10 days, you'll move toward an interesting and rewarding new career. (17) As mentioned above in the next 10 years the demand for electronics technicians will increase by dramatic proportions. (18) Don't wait to take advantage of this exciting career opportunity.

Yours truly,

Michael T. Langford

Michael T. Langford
Admissions Counselor



2. Becoming Familiar with the Problem

Think about the task you are asked to do, reviewing sentences to determine if commas are correctly used or needed, before actually revising. Ask yourself questions like these about the problem, taking note of the ones that were especially helpful so that you can remember to use them when revising your essay for comma usage during the GED test.

1. *What do you know about using commas in a sentence?*
2. *How many comma rules do you know? Explain each of the rules that you can.*
3. *What techniques do you use to check on the use of commas in your writing?*

3. Planning, Assigning, and Performing Tasks

Try to add or correct any comma usage in paragraphs A, B, and D any way you can, even if you have to guess, but try to be aware of the reasoning and thinking steps that you are using. The following questions and strategies can be helpful.

Doing the Work:

Working alone, or in pairs, do the following:

- *Reread the paragraphs and identify possible misuse of commas or places where commas are needed.*
- *How did you go about identifying the comma issues in the paragraphs?*

Overuse of commas is common. Commas alone cannot correct poor writing.

- *Change or add commas in the sentences you found that needed revision.*
- *Give the reasons for the why you determined the commas were incorrectly used or should be added.*
- *Were any of the corrections to commas that you made to the passage included in the comma rules that you listed in Step 2 above? Revise your list to include any new comma rules you thought of.*
- *Look at Question 11 from PA:*

11. Sentence 3: **At the same time, however there are occupations in which opportunities are expanding.**

Which correction should be made to sentence 3?

- (1) insert a comma after however
- (2) replace there with they're
- (3) insert a comma after occupations
- (4) remove in after occupations
- (5) no correction is necessary

- *Did you make a change that is the same as or similar to one of these options? Discuss any similarities with your partner. If you are not sure about the answer to this question, ask your instructor.*

The correct answer is (1) insert a comma after however. However is an interjection and should be offset by commas. People often forget the second comma.

- *Now look at Question 15 from PA:*

15. Sentence 9: **The Trotter Institute of Electronics, offers a one-year course that leads straight to a Certificate of Electronics.**



Which correction should be made to sentence 9?

- (1) remove the comma after Electronics
- (2) change offers to offering
- (3) insert a comma after course
- (4) change leads to led
- (5) replace straight with strait

- *Did you make a change that is the same as or similar to one of these options? Discuss any similarities with your partner. If you are not sure about the answer to this question, ask your instructor.*

The correct answer is (1) remove the comma after Electronics. In a simple sentence, the subject and the verb should not be separated by a comma. (Selection (3) simply compounds the error. There is no subject in what now looks like an offset clause.)

- *Find support for the revisions in comma usage you made to the passage in an English handbook or text.*
- *Find support in your English handbook or text for the comma rules you have listed in Step 2 and added to in this Step.*
- *Develop an approach to review comma usage in sentences and to correct comma usage in your essay with your partner. Put your approaches in a Revising Journal. (You will add to this Journal as you work through these Inquiry Activities and Learning Projects.)*

4. Sharing with Others

Telling other people what you know helps you to understand the material better. So take this opportunity not only to share the knowledge, but also to learn it more completely.

Small Groups: *Do the following in your small group:*

- Discuss all the comma revisions made to sentences in the designated paragraphs;*
- Discuss the reasons for the revisions and the support found in the text for the revisions;*
- Discuss the answers to the two questions in PA;*
- Discuss the process used to find comma issues in the paragraphs; and*
- Share your Revising Journal entry for revising sentences for correct comma usage.*

Whole Class: *Report to the class:*

- The comma revisions made to the sentences in the paragraphs;*
- The reasons for the changes were made and the support found in the text changes; and*
- Discuss each class member's journal entries used for revising sentences for correct comma usage.*

5. Reflecting, Extending, and Evaluating

Reflecting: *Think about how well you understood what you have done.*

Here are some questions to start you thinking about the experience you just had. Thinking about what you have experienced is part of the learning process. When the focus is only on the answer, you don't get much time to think about what you learned.

What have you learned about the revision process in this Inquiry Activity?

What have you learned about commas in this Inquiry Activity?

Extending: *Extend what you learned to new situations.*

In extending, you are being asked to transfer the information learned in this Inquiry Activity to other information or situations.



Were you able to use the comma rules for compound and complex sentences that you learned from the last Inquiry Activity? Explain.

While Sentence 3 is a complex sentence, the comma error involves interjection, not the subordinate clause. Sentence 9 is a simple sentence.

Let's practice what you learned about commas to revise comma usage in your partner's writing.

Exchange essays you and your partner each wrote.

Determine if there are any commas usage issues and note them.

Either add commas or take commas out using the comma rules you have explored in this Inquiry Activity.

Discuss with your partner the revisions made, if any, and find textbook support for the commas that you added or took away.

How can you learn to spot comma issues in your own writing at home or on the job?

Pick one of the essays you have written (preferably one not already corrected) and:

Mark all the commas you used and review to determine if commas are needed;

Make the revisions to comma usage that you think are needed;

Determine the comma rules that support the changes you made;

Determine the comma rules that support the commas you didn't change.

Exchange essays with a partner and discuss the corrections each of you made to your own essays.

Evaluating: Assess what you learned and how you learned it.

In this last step, you get a chance to review the methods used to learn. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions; it is your chance to look more closely at your learning style and the opportunity to state how you benefited or didn't benefit from the content and/or the methods to help you pass the GED test.

What kind of revising strategies did you learn from this Inquiry Activity?

What parts of the activity worked best for you? Explain.

What parts did not work well for you? Explain.

What parts of this Inquiry Activity will you use when taking the GED test? Why?

Are you more comfortable about your knowledge of when to use commas? Explain.

Can you use your revising techniques for comma issues when you take the GED? Explain.

If you need more help with recognizing and revising comma usage, ask your instructor for more help.