

ESTERMA ACADEMY

# DIGITAL SAT READING & WRITING

LESSON 1

## COMPLETE SENTENCES

Sentence structure • Questions vs. statements • Main verbs • Parallel verb forms

### Learning Goal

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to identify whether a sentence is complete, distinguish statements from direct questions, locate the main verb, and recognize consistent verb structures in Digital SAT questions.

*A bridge to your dreams*

# 1. What Makes a Complete Sentence?

At its core, a complete sentence needs a subject and a main verb. The subject tells us who or what the sentence is about. The main verb tells us what the subject does, what happens to it, or what state it is in.

✓ **Complete:** *The researcher works.*

✓ **Complete:** *The results were surprising.*

✗ **Incomplete:** *The researcher working late into the night.* — The sentence has no finite main verb.

## Subjects

A subject is usually a noun or pronoun. It can also be an -ing form when that word functions as a noun.

✓ **Noun:** *The experiment succeeded.*

✓ **Pronoun:** *They published the results.*

✓ **-ing form as a noun:** *Reading improves concentration.*

## Objects: Sometimes Necessary

Some verbs need an object to complete their meaning. An object normally follows the verb and answers a question such as what? or whom?

✓ **Complete:** *The committee approved the proposal.*

✗ **Unclear / incomplete idea:** *The committee approved.* — In many contexts, approved needs an object that tells us what was approved.

### SAT Strategy

Ignore extra descriptive phrases at first. Find the grammatical core: SUBJECT + MAIN VERB. A long sentence can still be incomplete if that core is missing.

## Quick Check

Which sentence is complete?

A. The students preparing for the competition.

B. The students prepared for the competition.

C. The students to prepare for the competition.

Answer: B. “Prepared” can serve as the main verb.

## 2. Statement or Question?

Digital SAT questions may test whether a sentence should be written as a statement or as a direct question. A statement gives information. A direct question asks for information.

✓ **Statement:** *Researchers wonder whether the new method will reduce costs.*

✓ **Direct question:** *Will the new method reduce costs?*

### Indirect Questions Stay in Statement Order

Words such as wonder, ask, investigate, determine, and examine can introduce an indirect question. Even though the idea involves uncertainty, the whole sentence may still be a statement.

✓ **Correct:** *Scientists are investigating whether the species can survive in colder regions.*

✗ **Incorrect:** *Scientists are investigating whether can the species survive in colder regions?* — This incorrectly uses direct-question word order.

### Remember

Do not choose punctuation only because the sentence contains a question idea. First decide whether the entire sentence directly asks the reader a question.

### SAT-Style Example

Archaeologists continue to debate \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. did the settlement disappear because of drought?
- B. whether the settlement disappeared because of drought.
- C. whether did the settlement disappear because of drought?
- D. the settlement disappeared because of drought?

### Answer & Reasoning

B. The sentence reports what archaeologists debate; it does not directly ask the reader a question. The clause after “debate” therefore uses statement word order and ends with a period.

### 3. Main Verbs and Verb Forms

A complete sentence must contain a main verb that works with its subject. Verb forms ending in -ing and infinitives formed with to + verb cannot normally stand alone as the main verb of a complete sentence.

✓ **Complete:** *The engineer designs efficient systems.*

✗ **Incomplete:** *The engineer designing efficient systems.* — Designing cannot stand alone as the main verb.

✗ **Incomplete:** *The engineer to design efficient systems.* — To design cannot stand alone as the main verb.

#### When -ing Forms Are Correct

An -ing form can be correct when another verb supplies the finite main verb, or when the -ing phrase adds descriptive information.

✓ **Progressive verb:** *The engineer is designing a new system.*

✓ **Descriptive phrase:** *The engineer entered the lab, carrying a stack of notes.*

#### When to + Verb Is Correct

An infinitive can follow another verb or a noun, but it does not replace the sentence's required main verb.

✓ **After a verb:** *The team hopes to publish the study.*

✓ **After a noun:** *The researchers developed a plan to test the material.*

#### Fast Test-Day Method

1) Find the subject. 2) Ask whether that subject already has a main verb. 3) If not, the blank must supply one. 4) Be suspicious of a lone -ing form or to + verb when the sentence still needs its main verb.

#### SAT-Style Example

The new sensors \_\_\_\_\_ changes in air pressure and transmit the data to a central computer.

- A. detecting
- B. to detect
- C. detect
- D. having detected

#### Answer & Reasoning

C. The subject is “sensors,” and the sentence needs a main verb before “and transmit.” “Detect” correctly creates the parallel structure “detect ... and transmit ...”.

## 4. Two or More Verbs with the Same Subject

A sentence can contain multiple verbs that share the same subject. When those verbs are connected in the same grammatical structure, their forms must be consistent.

✓ **Correct:** *The device measures temperature, records humidity, and stores the results.*

✗ **Incorrect:** *The device measures temperature, recording humidity, and to store the results.* — The three verb forms are not parallel.

### Look for Coordinating Words

Words such as and, but, and or often connect verbs that belong to the same subject. If there is no new subject after the connector, check whether the next verb should match the first.

✓ **Correct:** *The seeds can travel long distances and colonize open ground.*

✗ **Incorrect:** *The seeds can travel long distances and colonizes open ground.* — After can, the base form is required.

### Verb Tense Consistency

When a sentence lists actions that happened in the same time frame, the verbs usually need consistent tense as well.

✓ **Correct:** *The scientist identified the compound and published the findings.*

✗ **Incorrect:** *The scientist identified the compound and publishes the findings.* — The unexplained tense shift breaks consistency.

### SAT Strategy

When answer choices differ only in verb form, locate the subject and every verb attached to it. Then compare the forms before worrying about vocabulary or meaning.

### Common Traps

- Choosing an -ing form because it sounds sophisticated even though the sentence still lacks a main verb.
- Using direct-question word order after an indirect-question phrase such as “researchers wonder whether ...”.
- Missing a shared subject after “and” and choosing a verb form that does not match the earlier verb.
- Focusing on the closest noun instead of identifying the actual subject of the clause.

## 5. Guided Practice

1. The museum's conservation team \_\_\_\_\_ the painting carefully before returning it to the gallery.
- A. examining
  - B. to examine
  - C. examined
  - D. having examined
2. Historians continue to investigate \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. why did the settlement decline?
  - B. why the settlement declined.
  - C. why the settlement did decline?
  - D. did the settlement decline why?
3. The software can analyze large data sets and \_\_\_\_\_ patterns that would otherwise be difficult to notice.
- A. identifies
  - B. identifying
  - C. identify
  - D. identified
4. The biologist entered the forest at dawn, \_\_\_\_\_ samples from several plant species.
- A. collected
  - B. collecting
  - C. collects
  - D. to collected
5. The author researched the topic for several years and then \_\_\_\_\_ a detailed history of the region.
- A. writes
  - B. writing
  - C. wrote
  - D. to write

### Before You Check

For each item, identify the subject, underline the main verb(s), and decide whether the sentence is a statement or a direct question.

## 6. Independent Practice

6. The new telescope \_\_\_\_\_ astronomers to observe extremely faint objects.

- A. allowing
- B. allows
- C. to allow
- D. having allowed

7. Researchers asked \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. whether the material could withstand extreme heat.
- B. could the material withstand extreme heat?
- C. whether could the material withstand extreme heat?
- D. the material could withstand extreme heat?

8. The birds migrate thousands of kilometers each year and \_\_\_\_\_ to the same nesting sites.

- A. returned
- B. returning
- C. return
- D. returns

9. The engineer tested the prototype, \_\_\_\_\_ several weaknesses in its design.

- A. discovering
- B. discovers
- C. discovered
- D. to discovered

10. The committee reviewed the evidence, discussed the alternatives, and \_\_\_\_\_ a final recommendation.

- A. issuing
- B. issues
- C. issued
- D. to issue

### Score Guide

9-10 correct: Strong control of the concept

7-8 correct: Good foundation; review the traps you missed

5-6 correct: Review main verbs and parallel structures

0-4 correct: Re-study Sections 1-4 before moving on

## 7. Answer Key & Explanations

1. **C** — “Team” is the subject, and the sentence needs a finite main verb. “Examined” completes the sentence.
2. **B** — The sentence is a statement reporting what historians investigate. The embedded clause uses statement word order.
3. **C** — The subject is “software.” After “can analyze ... and,” the second verb must use the base form: “identify.”
4. **B** — The main verb is “entered.” The -ing phrase “collecting samples ...” correctly adds information about the biologist.
5. **C** — “Researched” and “wrote” describe completed actions in the same past-time sequence.
6. **B** — The subject “telescope” needs a main verb. “Allows” supplies it.
7. **A** — “Researchers asked” introduces an indirect question. The clause uses statement order and the full sentence ends with a period.
8. **C** — The verbs share the subject “birds”: “migrate ... and return.”
9. **A** — “Tested” is already the main verb. “Discovering ...” is a modifying -ing phrase describing what happened during the test.
10. **C** — The sentence lists three completed past actions: “reviewed, discussed, and issued.”

### Lesson Summary

- A complete sentence needs a subject and a main verb.
- Statements provide information; direct questions ask for information.
- A lone -ing form or to + verb cannot normally serve as the main verb.
- An -ing form can be part of a verb phrase or a modifying phrase when a main verb is already present.
- Verbs sharing the same subject or forming a list should follow a consistent grammatical pattern.

#### Esterma Academy SAT Rule

On verb-form questions, do not guess by sound. Find the subject, locate the main verb, and map the sentence structure first.

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