

# PSAT Reading and Writing Practice Set (15 Questions)

This mini-mock focuses on the four core content domains of the Digital PSAT Reading and Writing section.

**Time Limit:** Allocate **18 minutes** for this section. (Approx. 1 minute 12 seconds per question).

## SECTION: READING AND WRITING

**Directions:** Each question is based on a single, short passage. Choose the best answer from the available options.

### Information and Ideas

1. The practice of using predictive modeling to anticipate crop yields has become standard in modern agriculture. By integrating satellite data on weather patterns, soil moisture, and historical harvest results, farmers can accurately forecast their output months in advance. This capability allows for more strategic decision-making, such as optimizing fertilizer application and timing the market sale of the harvested goods.

**Question:** The primary purpose of the text is to:

- (A) argue that traditional farming methods are becoming obsolete due to climate change.
- (B) describe the methodology used to collect satellite data on soil moisture.
- (C) explain how predictive modeling in agriculture supports more efficient decision-making.
- (D) compare the relative accuracy of different crop yield forecasting techniques.

2. Despite its immense popular appeal, fantasy literature often faces criticism from literary scholars who label the genre **escapist**. However, many of the greatest fantasy works—from J.R.R. Tolkien's epics to Ursula K. Le Guin's stories—engage deeply with complex ethical, political, and philosophical questions relevant to the real world.

**Question:** Which choice best describes the function of the underlined word in the text?

- (A) It introduces a key literary technique used by fantasy authors.
- (B) It signals a counterargument that the author will then refute.
- (C) It describes the central feature that defines the fantasy genre.
- (D) It provides a specific example of a complex ethical question found in the literature.

3. Researcher: For decades, scientists believed that all life forms required sunlight or chemical energy derived from geothermal vents to survive. However, new research on deep-sea sponges confirms they utilize tiny amounts of radiation naturally emitted from deep-sea rock formations. This discovery expands the known conditions necessary to support life on Earth.

**Question:** The researcher's argument suggests that the discovery about deep-sea sponges challenges which of the following long-held scientific beliefs?

- (A) The belief that deep-sea sponges are primitive organisms.
- (B) The belief that terrestrial life forms are generally simpler than marine life forms.
- (C) The belief that life requires either chemical or solar energy for sustenance.
- (D) The belief that radiation is harmful to most biological processes.

## Craft and Structure

4. Critics were quick to praise the director's bold new cinematic style, describing it as a thrilling departure from Hollywood's predictable formulas. This was surprising, as the director's previous work had been widely regarded as **staid** and utterly conventional.

**Question:** As used in the text, what does the word "staid" most nearly mean?

- (A) innovative
- (B) rebellious
- (C) serious
- (D) dull

5. **Passage:** The novel *Moby Dick* is often lauded for its thematic ambition, its exploration of obsession, and its intricate structure. But its reputation owes as much to its slow, measured prose, which gives the reader time to reflect on the nature of Captain Ahab's quest.

**Question:** The author's mention of the novel's "slow, measured prose" primarily serves to:

- (A) introduce an element that detracts from the novel's thematic ambition.
  - (B) provide a formal stylistic detail that supports the author's overall praise.
  - (C) emphasize the novel's adherence to 19th-century writing conventions.
  - (D) compare *Moby Dick* with other novels that feature faster pacing.
6. Scholar A: All artistic movements are cyclical; a period of rigid classicism inevitably gives way to an era of passionate romanticism, which then resets the stage for a new form of classicism.

Scholar B: While history shows alternating trends, the transition is never clean. Each "return" to classicism is fundamentally altered by the preceding romantic era, making genuine, pure repetition impossible.

**Question:** Scholar B would most likely respond to Scholar A's claim by:

- (A) providing evidence that romanticism is a superior artistic form to classicism.
- (B) asserting that the core conflict between classicism and romanticism is purely theoretical.
- (C) arguing that while the labels may cycle, the actual content of the movements is not truly repetitive.
- (D) suggesting that Scholar A has ignored the influence of technology on art movements.

## Expression of Ideas

7. The city council voted unanimously to approve the creation of a new public park, **that would span twelve city blocks and include a permanent space for local street artists.**

**Question:** Which choice most effectively combines the sentences at the underlined portion?

- (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) park that would span twelve city blocks and include a permanent space for local street artists.
- (C) park; this park would span twelve city blocks and include a permanent space for local street artists.
- (D) park, spanning twelve city blocks and it would include a permanent space for local street artists.

8. The new protocol requires all research assistants to compile and analyze the initial data set; **after this process, they are to submit** their findings to the lead researcher.

**Question:** Which choice results in the most effective flow of information and clarity of sentence structure?

- (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) after this process, they should submit
- (C) submitting
- (D) then submit

9. The company announced that their newly developed quantum processor is faster than any existing commercial processor. **Consequently,** the processor will be integrated into all new high-performance computing clusters next year.

**Question:** Which choice provides the most logical transition?

- (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) Furthermore,
- (C) By contrast,
- (D) Nevertheless,

10. To ensure fair competition, the rules stipulate that all participants must register their gear in advance, **that they must pass a technical inspection, and adhere to a strict time limit.**

**Question:** Which choice creates the most effective parallel structure in the sentence?

- (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) they must pass a technical inspection, and that they must adhere to a strict time limit.
- (C) must pass a technical inspection, and must adhere to a strict time limit.
- (D) pass a technical inspection, and adhere to a strict time limit.

## Standard English Conventions

11. The antique clock, which was valued at over ten thousand dollars, **its pendulum** was entirely missing when it arrived at the auction house.

**Question:** Which choice corrects the error in the underlined portion?

- (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) pendulum
- (C) its pendulum,
- (D) the pendulum

12. **Because of the extreme weather conditions, the national park closed its primary trail access for three weeks.**

**Question:** Which choice uses Standard English conventions most appropriately?

- (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) Due to the extreme weather conditions, the national park closed its primary trail access for three weeks.
- (C) The extreme weather conditions, the national park closed its primary trail access for three weeks.
- (D) The national park closed its primary trail access for three weeks, because of the extreme weather conditions.

13. The study indicated that **the average adult sleeps seven hours per night, which is three hours less than what is recommended** for optimal cognitive function.

**Question:** Which choice provides the most concise and grammatically correct option?

- (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) the average adult sleeps seven hours per night, a difference of three hours from the recommended amount.
- (C) the average adult only sleeps seven hours per night, three hours less than the recommended amount.
- (D) the average adult sleeps seven hours per night, three hours less than the recommended amount.

14. The team's new sensor system, which is capable of detecting seismic activity with unprecedented accuracy, **are expected** to be deployed worldwide next year.

**Question:** Which choice corrects the error in the underlined portion?

- (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) is expected
- (C) is expecting
- (D) they are expected

15. The discovery of a new species of fluorescent jellyfish in the deep ocean **was the source of much excitement** among marine biologists.

**Question:** Which choice makes the sentence most concise?

- (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) caused great excitement
- (C) was exciting
- (D) caused a lot of excitement

## ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATIONS

### Answer Key

| Question | Topic Area                                    | Correct Answer |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1        | Information and Ideas<br>(Main Purpose)       | <b>C</b>       |
| 2        | Craft and Structure<br>(Function)             | <b>B</b>       |
| 3        | Information and Ideas<br>(Challenging Belief) | <b>C</b>       |
| 4        | Craft and Structure (Words<br>in Context)     | <b>D</b>       |
| 5        | Craft and Structure<br>(Rhetorical Purpose)   | <b>B</b>       |
| 6        | Information and Ideas<br>(Cross-Text)         | <b>C</b>       |
| 7        | Expression of Ideas<br>(Combining Sentences)  | <b>B</b>       |
| 8        | Expression of Ideas<br>(Clarity/Conciseness)  | <b>D</b>       |
| 9        | Expression of Ideas<br>(Transition)           | <b>A</b>       |
| 10       | Expression of Ideas<br>(Parallel Structure)   | <b>D</b>       |
| 11       | Standard English<br>Conventions               | <b>B</b>       |

|    |                                                       |          |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------|----------|
|    | (Punctuation/Grammar)                                 |          |
| 12 | Standard English Conventions (Subordination)          | <b>A</b> |
| 13 | Expression of Ideas (Conciseness)                     | <b>D</b> |
| 14 | Standard English Conventions (Subject-Verb Agreement) | <b>B</b> |
| 15 | Expression of Ideas (Conciseness)                     | <b>B</b> |

## Detailed Explanations

| Question | Explanation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1        | <b>(C)</b> The text primarily discusses how the modeling capability leads to benefits like "optimizing fertilizer application" and "timing the market sale," which are all examples of more <b>efficient decision-making</b> .                                                                  |
| 2        | <b>(B)</b> The text sets up a contrast: fantasy is criticized as being " <b>escapist</b> ," <b>However</b> , the author immediately follows up by stating that great fantasy <i>does</i> engage with complex issues. Thus, the second sentence is a <b>refutation</b> of the initial criticism. |
| 3        | <b>(C)</b> The text explicitly states that the previous belief was that life required <b>sunlight or chemical energy</b> . The new research shows sponges use <b>radiation</b> , which challenges the idea that <i>only</i> solar or chemical energy can sustain life.                          |
| 4        | <b>(D)</b> The passage sets up a strong contrast: the director's new style is a "thrilling departure" from predictable formulas, but the old work was <b>staid</b> and "utterly conventional." <b>Dull</b> or conventional is the best opposite to "thrilling departure."                       |
| 5        | <b>(B)</b> The author is generally praising the novel ("lauded for its thematic ambition"). The prose is mentioned as a specific <i>reason</i> why the reader can reflect on Ahab's nature, acting as a <b>supporting detail</b> for the novel's                                                |

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|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | overall quality.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 6  | (C) Scholar A claims repetition occurs (cyclical). Scholar B qualifies this by saying the "transition is never clean" and the new era is <b>fundamentally altered</b> . Therefore, B would argue that the movements are not truly repetitive, even if the <b>labels</b> (classicism/romanticism) appear to cycle.                                                                       |
| 7  | (B) Option (A) creates a comma splice error. Option (B) correctly uses the relative pronoun <b>that</b> to efficiently integrate the long descriptive clause into the main sentence without grammatical error.                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 8  | (D) The original sentence has awkward and redundant phrasing ( <b>after this process, they are to submit</b> ). Because the sentence already identifies the assistants, the most concise and logical way to continue the list of actions is with the infinitive without "to": <i>compile... and <b>then submit</b></i> .                                                                |
| 9  | (A) The first sentence states the processor is faster (a positive development). The second sentence states that as a <b>result</b> of this speed, it will be integrated into new systems. <b>Consequently</b> establishes this logical cause-and-effect relationship.                                                                                                                   |
| 10 | (D) The sentence establishes a series of requirements following "must." The structure must be parallel: "must [verb], [verb], and [verb]." The first verb is <b>register</b> (infinitive without 'to'). The correct continuation is <b>pass a technical inspection, and adhere to a strict time limit</b> .                                                                             |
| 11 | (B) The original sentence is a run-on sentence with an incorrect double subject ( <b>The antique clock... its pendulum</b> ). The phrase "which was valued..." is an interrupting clause. The main subject is <b>The antique clock</b> , and the main verb should apply to the missing pendulum. The correct structure is: "The antique clock... <b>pendulum</b> was entirely missing." |
| 12 | (A) The sentence is grammatically correct as written. The subordinating conjunction <b>Because of</b> correctly starts the introductory phrase, which is properly separated by a comma. Option (B) is acceptable but less formal than "Because of." (C) creates a comma splice. (D) is unnecessarily wordy.                                                                             |
| 13 | (D) The original (A) and (B) are wordy. (C) is missing a necessary comma. Option (D) is the most concise and accurate comparison: "seven hours per night, <b>three hours less than the recommended amount</b> ."                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 14 | (B) The subject of the sentence is <b>The team's new sensor system</b> (singular), which is modified by the clause "which is capable...". The main                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | verb must agree with the singular subject: <b>is expected</b> .                                                                                                                               |
| 15 | (B) The phrase " <b>was the source of much excitement</b> " is passive and overly wordy. The most concise way to express this idea is to use an active verb: <b>caused great excitement</b> . |