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List of Official Guide Problems that Deal With Meaning

In this table, we discuss a number of Sentence Correction problems from the OG12. Certain answer choices have “meaning” issues; we list the answer choice letters and provide a brief discussion of the issues involved. Note that this list is not comprehensive and is still in fairly raw form; there are additional problems and answer choices that could also contain meaning issues, and it’s possible that reasonable people will disagree with some of the things on this list (though we tried to include only the ones that we thought were most straightforward).

Also note that there are certain types of grammar errors that could always be described as “meaning” issues – for example, pronouns or modifiers that refer to the wrong noun, illogical comparisons, many verb tenses, and so on. We did not make an exhaustive list of these grammar+meaning issues, but we did include some as examples.

KEY

OE = Official Explanation

All quotes are from the problem cited

Source	Q #	Answers That Deal with Meaning	Summary
OG12	2	E	OE: this answer “does not make sense”; intended meaning = we hope that a recovery <i>has begun</i> ; meaning in E = we hope for the existence of a recovery (not quite the same thing)
OG12	3	A, E	OE: “ <i>Until almost 1900</i> is confusing. Does it refer back to the first verb or forward to the next verb?” In answer choice A, we’re not sure which action took place “until almost 1900.” None of the answer choices pairs that time marker with the first action (had professed / had pretended). Some of the answers do place that time marker unambiguously with the second action (began studying), including the correct answer.
OG12	5	all	The modifier <i>only</i> moves around; according to the original (and correct) answer, we want to use <i>only</i> to limit “by heart disease and cancer” – that is, only heart disease and cancer surpass diabetes. In choices B, C, and E, “only” appears before “surpassed” – that is, heart disease and cancer <i>only surpass</i> diabetes. This would mean that there are no other actions, or verbs, by which we can relate heart disease and cancer to diabetes – only the verb “surpass.” It does not, however, maintain the original meaning: that there are <i>only two things</i> that surpass diabetes as a cause of death.
OG12	6	A, B	Original meaning is absurd – the repairs themselves were due to moisture exhaled by tourists? No, there was damage due to the moisture, and that damage necessitated repairs. B repeats that error.

OG12	8	C, D	Original says two things about the theory: it “began in an instant” and “has been expanding ever since.” C changes that meaning – in C, the “instant” has expanded. D similarly says that the “beginning is expanding, not the universe.”
OG12	12	A	The original sentence places “correspondingly” next to “unaccompanied,” which doesn’t really mean anything. What is “corresponding” to something else? The increases in sales. Interestingly, the other 4 answers all place “correspondingly” correctly with the info about sales (though not always in the correct form).
OG12	14	B	Original sentence says that sunspots have been sighted on the surface, but never on the poles or equator. Answer B says that the sunspots have never been sighted on the surface – a direct contradiction of the original meaning.
OG12	16	D	OE: “Although this option is not technically wrong, it is less clear and graceful than B.” That appears to mean there must be a meaning issue, but Ron and I disagree; we think this construction is actually wrong. You can see Ron’s discussion of another problem with the same issue here .
OG12	18	A, B, E	Original meaning is unclear – <i>what</i> is in the form of carbon dioxide? B and E repeat this ambiguity.
OG12	19	all	OE: “the logic of this sentence demands a contrast, not an extension” so the construction of the original is illogical. B and C use “and,” which also does not provide the necessary contrast. E is similar to choice A.
OG12	33	C, D	OE: “This sentence describes a causal sequence of events” – that is, first there’s an oversupply and that results in plunging prices, which results in factory closings. The OE describes the order of events in both C and D as “confusing.”
OG12	36	B, E	Answer B says that Deborah Sampson was injured “ <i>while being</i> discharged” – that is, that these things happened at the same time. Answer E indicates that the three injuries all occurred in 1783. The original sentence indicates that she was injured after joining but before being discharged.
OG12	37	B, D, E	These three answers change the word <i>economic</i> to <i>economical</i> . Economical means to be thrifty or not to be wasteful. Economic has to do with economics – the distribution and consumption of resources, for example.
OG12	39	A, B	OE: original sentence is incorrect because “it does not identify who will marry.” Answer B is “illogical” because it implies that simply <i>seeking</i> to have his marriage annulled then allowed the King to marry Anne Boleyn.
OG12	40	C, D	Two wrong answers switch the word <i>each</i> to <i>all</i> . OE: “the use of <i>all</i> does not make sense” because we’re really trying to say that each antibody specifically targets its own “invading microbe or foreign substance.”
OG12	41	B, C	These two answers change the word <i>economic</i> to <i>economical</i> . Economical means to be thrifty or not to be wasteful. Economic has to do with economics – the distribution and consumption of resources, for example.
OG12	44	E	OE: answer E “This sentence does not make it clear that Olive is a party to the rivalry.” E says the plot “centers on Olive and the rivalry” – two separate things.
OG12	46	E	The original sentence states that the “artisans’ creative energy was expended” on the creation, construction, and decoration of various things. Answer E says that “the creation of Buddha images accounted for much of [one thing] as well as construction and decoration of the temples.” The “creation of images” (the subject) was responsible for the construction and decoration of the temples? Doesn’t make sense.

- OG12 47 E Five eagles “left their nests,” and that action brought to 34 the number of eagles who successfully left their nests – cause and effect. Answer E says “five eagles left their nests *and* brought to 34...” Now, we’re separating the two actions: (1) “five eagles left their nests;” (2) “five eagles brought to 34...” But it wasn’t the case that the existence of the 5 eagles brought to 34 etc. It was *the action taken* by the 5 eagles that brought to 34 etc.
- OG12 48 D, E An example of a misplaced modifier that messes up the meaning. The original sentence tells us that the *translation* of the Iliad took 7 years. Answers D and E say that the Iliad itself took 7 years to complete.
- OG12 51 D Choice D says that “the conversational pace of everyday life may be so brisk that it [hampers one thing], and results in [another thing].” Take just the second thing: “the conversational pace of everyday life may be so brisk that it results in not making sense of speech.” Who’s not making sense of speech? Everyday life? The pace? Where are the children? OE: choice D “nonsensically suggests” something that “remov[es] the children from the picture.”
- OG12 53 E According to the OE, answer E appears to suggest that chemist Davy critiqued his own vision of a new chemistry: “critiquing A (all the chemistry done since Robert Boyle) as well as B (his own envisioning of new chemistry that Davy hoped to found).
- OG12 56 A, B, C Another misplaced modifier! In the original sentence, the “placement of the modifier *fashioned* suggests” an illogical meaning, namely that “the *Empire* was fashioned out of these materials.” B and C repeat this illogical meaning.
- OG12 57 B, C, E The original sentence indicates that the educators are not at fault; answer E implies that the educators are at fault (or at least makes this ambiguous). The OE says that answer C “distorts meaning,” probably because it is unclear *what* is not the fault of the educators.
- OG12 62 B, D The original sentence discusses what “farmers are to be allowed” to do. Answer B talks about what is “able to be grown by farmers” – what they are capable of growing and what they are legally allowed to grow are two different things. Answer D makes a similar meaning change.
- OG12 64 all The OE states that, in all 4 incorrect answers, “*aggravating* suggests a different meaning than does *aggravate*.” I’m not 100% sure I buy that – not in all 4 answers. The “are aggravating *to*” construction in B and D does, I agree, convey a different meaning. I think C and E are fuzzier – and arguably okay from a meaning perspective.
- OG12 72 B, D Another problem that tries to use “economically” in place of “economic!” These two answers change the word economic to economical. Economical means to be thrifty or not to be wasteful. Economic has to do with economics – the distribution and consumption of resources, for example.
- OG12 73 A, C, D The OE doesn’t mention a meaning issue here, but I would argue that the construction “appear as equipped” is ambiguous. Read one way, it could imply a comparison: You appear as equipped to climb the mountain as he does. You only realize as you continue to read that there’s no later item for comparison. Alternatively, the construction could be read: You appear as though you are equipped to succeed. Or (the officially intended meaning): You appear to be equipped to succeed. The ambiguity in the number of ways that this could be read is, to me, a meaning problem in the original sentence. C and D also repeat this problem.
- OG12 74 A, B The use of the past perfect “had been allowed” creates an illogical meaning – you can’t reduce something that already took place in the past. From the point in time at which the

- agreement was made, future dumping was reduced; you can't reduce the amount that was already dumped before the agreement was made. B repeats this illogical meaning.
- OG12 75 A, B In the original problem, the pronoun "their" could technically refer to either "tourists" or "rhinoceroses." In this case, we can use common sense – clearly, we should be talking about the horns of the animals, not of the tourists! Answers A and B can both be eliminated for this reason. The correct answer substitutes "the animals' horns" for "their horns," making it very clear which mammal has the horns.
- OG12 79 A, C, E The first (non-underlined) portion of the sentence indicates that attorneys sometimes try to blame their "clients' misconduct" on "something ingested." That part is fine; the problem starts with the underlined portion. What's wrong with that? It says that the perpetrators (the criminals, or the attorneys' clients) are the ones who are "attributing" their behavior to an allergy. But the first half of the sentence didn't say that – it said the attorneys were the ones arguing this! The first half of the sentence and the second half are saying different things. C and E repeat this messed-up meaning.
- OG12 81 D, E The original sentence tells us that "ulcers are not caused by stress, alcohol, or rich foods..." Answers D and E both change the word "or" to the word "and" – that is, ulcers aren't caused by "stress, alcohol, and rich foods." What's the difference? "Or" means that any one of the three does not by itself cause an ulcer. "And" is a very different construction – now, the physicians are claiming that the combination of all three together does not cause ulcers. There's nothing wrong with or illogical about the original meaning, so we don't have an acceptable reason to change it by changing "or" to "and."
- OG12 84 C OE: "and when distorts the meaning, suggesting that ozone is formed in two ways." That is, the sentence says that (1) "ozone is formed in the atmosphere," and separately (2) "ozone is formed when hydrocarbons and" etc. Is B happening in the atmosphere? Who knows – this answer choice has lost that meaning.
- OG12 87 A, E There are two ways to read the original sentence and both are wrong (1) "wines have been priced to sell and they are [sell] (this is grammatically incorrect); or (2) "wines have been priced to sell and they are [priced to sell]" (why are we repeating that they are priced to sell? redundant). In answer E, the use of past perfect also messes up the meaning. E indicates that, first, the "wines had been priced to sell" and then the "vintners have cut prices." That sequence of events is backwards.
- OG12 89 >A, C I'm including this one to make the point that any "apples to oranges" comparison (comparing two things that it doesn't make sense to compare) can be considered a meaning problem (though I haven't included all of those on this list). In this one, the original sentence compares "dirt roads" (things) to "maintaining paved roads" (an action). C repeats this type of error.
- OG12 90 C, D, E The original sentence tells us that a certain type of program was first played on the radio in the 1920s – not the 1910s or the 1930s. Answers C, D, and E move the word "first" and change the meaning: now, these two choices are saying that this type of program was the first thing to air in the evening (say, at 6pm). Answers C and E could arguably go either way – but ambiguity is still cause for rejecting these answers.

- OG12 94 B The original, logical meaning is that an increase in the number of flights has led to an increase in the number of delays. To the extent that the awkward “more delay” in answer B could be considered grammatically acceptable, “more delay” implies that we are talking about the *length* of the delay, not the *number* of (different) flight delays.
- OG12 97 E What was “dominating the music of the postwar period?” In the original sentence, the system was. Answer choice E says that both Schoenberg and the system were.
- OG12 98 B, E The OE says that choice B “makes no sense”; I think the problem is more about ambiguity than a downright illogical meaning, but either explanation is sufficient to dismiss this choice. In choice E, “while” introduces the wrong contrast point – the contrast is between the two geographical locations, not how the spear points were made and where they were found
- OG12 105 B, D OE: in answer B “Phrase *carefully coordinating*... illogically modifies the noun that immediately precedes it.” Another example of a misplaced modifier messing up the meaning. OE: in answer D “*carefully coordinated*... absurdly modifies Beatrix Potter rather than her illustrations.” And yet another example – two for one!
- OG12 106 D In D, the “which has become” modifier is referring to the telephone rather than the radio. The original sentence indicates that we’re talking about the radio – it was originally conceived for one purpose but now is used for the opposite purpose.
- OG12 107 all Many misplaced modifiers here. In B, the sentence says the air pollutants “hav[e] the ability to analyze the chemical elements” – that makes no sense! In C and D, the sentence says that the air pollutants are “called proton-induced X-ray emission” and E says that the substance is “called proton-induced X-ray emission.
- OG12 108 C, E This is another one of those “apples to oranges” comparison mistakes. C and E both compare children to permissive parents, rather than the children of one type of parent to the children of another type of parent.
- OG12 109 B, C When studying this one, I think its simplest for us just to remember that the standard expression is “either X or Y” (and not “either X and Y”) but I wanted to point out that the OE says that “*and* is incorrect following *either*, and its use changes the meaning of the sentence.” Yes, that’s true – but it changes the meaning specifically because it’s (always!) the wrong construction, so let’s make our lives easy and just remember what the right construction is. 😊
- OG12 110 A, B There are multiple misplaced modifiers in this one that make the meaning ambiguous or illogical. Who or what was “published in Harlem?” Did they both own and edit, or was one the owner and one the editor? Who later made his reputation as a labor leader?
- OG12 114 E OE: “construction is illogical” and “makes no sense.” What did they draw? Pictures? What did they take turns doing with the funds?
- OG12 115 B, E The OE states that both B and E have a “distort[ed] meaning.” I think this is more clear in E, which says that “Gall’s hypothesis which is widely accepted today is that...” This implies that, of all of Gall’s hypothesis, there is only one which is widely accepted today; that may be true, but the original sentence never conveyed that info. In B, we have “Gall’s hypothesis of different mental functions that are (description)” The choice seems to limit Galls’ hypothesis to “different mental functions” themselves, as opposed to something about the locations of different mental functions. I think B is a bit fuzzier / harder to argue, but E

- definitely changes the meaning.
- OG12 117 D In E, “as if they were” means that they actually aren’t. “I looked at her as if she were an alien” – but she’s not really an alien, right? (And, technically, I should also say “as *though* she were an alien.”) That changes the original meaning because George Sand did in fact consider the rural poor legitimate subjects for literature.
- OG12 119 D, E These choices say that the “asteroids and comets may have caused... continents” (to exist). That doesn’t make sense and also isn’t consistent with the rest of the list – the asteroids and comets caused certain *actions* to happen.
- OG12 120 A, B, C OE: “the meaning of this sentence becomes lost” because of the placement of the prepositional phrase “from a one-page writing sample.” Logically, the company can use a one-page writing sample to analyze someone’s handwriting. Answers A, B, and C, however, imply that the company is claiming in a one-page writing sample to be able to analyze handwriting. Perhaps it would be okay to say that they’re making this claim in a one-page press release... but not in a writing sample.
- OG12 121 all B and D both imply that red wine is a type of consumption; rather it is a type of product that can be consumed. C and E both imply that wine was consumed *in the report*; this is nonsensical.
- OG12 125 A, C OE: “*has* confounds the sequence of events and makes the comparison illogical.” The original sentence includes the time marker 1910; the action associated with 1910, then, must take place in the past. This is an example of an instance in which a certain tense is demanded by logic. You could argue that most if not all sentences demand a certain tense based upon the logic of the sentence, but we’ll limit ourselves here to very precise clues such as time markers.
- OG12 131 A OE: “the referent of *it* is ambiguous, raising questions about just what two things are being compared.” This is a good example of how pronoun errors can introduce an ambiguous or incorrect meaning. In the original sentence, the pronoun “it” could refer to “the energy” or possibly “the energy produced in France.” We want “it” to mean “the energy produced in Germany” so even if we go with the simple “it = the energy” interpretation, we still have a problem. “in Germany the energy is just over 33 percent?” The energy of what? The sentence doesn’t provide the concept of “energy produced in Germany.”
- OG12 132 A, B, C OE: “the pronoun *it* seems illogically to refer forward to someone.” We can’t refer to someone as an “it” (unless we’re trying to be rude!). Another example of a pronoun error introducing an illogical meaning. B repeats the error. Answer C uses the pronoun “they,” which is a fine match for “people” but we can’t refer to “the term psychopath” as “they.”
- OG12 134 A, B OE: “The omission of *and* before *fatigue* creates an unclear sentence.” Three things are being reduced, but the fourth is being raised. We need to separate out the first three with their own parallel list structure, and then introduce the 4th separately. How do we know this? Only from our understanding of the initial meaning: that 3 things are being reduced and the fourth is being raised.
- OG12 137 A OE: Answer A “Illogically suggests [that] the composer goes into decline after death.” We don’t necessarily know until we read the other answers that we want to talk about the fact that the composers’ *reputations* decline after death, but certainly it’s illogical (and kind of creepy!) to say that the composer himself is “declining” after death.

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This is a very organized list. I did not find it difficult to study. The summary is well written and very comprehensive.

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