Name _____ Date _____

Contested Usage: What the References Say

Directions: Each question names a usage reference and, where it matters, its edition or year. Choose the statement that matches what that reference says, not what you were taught or what sounds most formal.

1. A student writes, "Our club hopes to quickly finish the mural before winter break." A classmate objects to the split infinitive *to quickly finish*. What does The Chicago Manual of Style's online Q&A say about Chicago's position on split infinitives?

A. Chicago allows split infinitives only inside quoted dialogue and informal notes.

B. Chicago requires writers to split an infinitive whenever an adverb is available.

C. Chicago style has allowed writers to split infinitives since the 1983 edition.

D. Chicago forbids split infinitives in all formal writing, including school essays.

2. Merriam-Webster's online dictionary includes a usage guide at the entry *split infinitive*. How does that guide describe the way split infinitives are regarded today?

A. As a brand-new construction that first appeared after the year 2000

B. As an error that careful writers have always avoided in their work

C. As widely accepted, especially when splitting makes a sentence clearer

D. As acceptable in British English but never in careful American English

3. The Chicago Manual of Style, 18th edition (2024), addresses the old rule against ending a sentence with a preposition. Which statement reflects its position?

A. It requires writers to end sentences with prepositions when possible.

B. It says the ban still applies to every kind of formal writing.

C. It allows a final preposition only in sentences that ask questions.

D. It rejects the idea that a preposition is automatically wrong at the end of a sentence.

4. A student changes "That is the form you need to sign your name on" to "That is the form on which you need to sign your name," believing the original breaks a rule. What does Merriam-Webster's guidance on ending a sentence with a preposition say about the original?

A. It is permissible; a writer may avoid it, but avoiding it is not a rule.

B. It is an error that must be corrected in any piece of formal writing.

C. It is acceptable only when the final preposition is the word to or for.

D. It is acceptable in casual speech but forbidden in all written English.

5. A student opens an essay with "Hopefully, the new library hours will begin in January." Which two statements about this use of hopefully are accurate?

☐ A. Merriam-Webster says hopefully can be used to mean "I hope."

☐ B. The AP Stylebook forbids hopefully at the start of any sentence.

☐ C. The AP Stylebook still accepts hopefully only in the sense of "in a hopeful manner" and rejects "we hope."

☐ D. Since 2012, the AP Stylebook has accepted hopefully in the sense of "it is hoped" or "we hope."

☐ E. Merriam-Webster labels this use of hopefully a grammatical error.

6. Consider the generic singular they in "Each student should bring their own lunch." How did The Chicago Manual of Style's advice on this use change from the 17th edition (2017) to the 18th edition (2024)?

A. Neither edition says anything at all about the use of singular they.

B. The 17th edition endorsed it, and the 18th edition withdrew that endorsement.

C. The 17th edition advised avoiding it in formal writing; the 18th endorses it.

D. Both editions forbid it in every kind of writing, formal or informal.

7. In 2017 the AP Stylebook added guidance on they as a singular pronoun. What did that guidance say?

A. They is acceptable as a singular pronoun only in headlines and captions.

B. They is never acceptable as a singular pronoun anywhere in news writing.

C. They must be used for every person whose gender is not stated in a story.

D. AP allowed singular they in some cases when the alternatives would sound forced.

8. What does the MLA Handbook, 9th edition (2021), say about singular they?

A. It is banned in every paper written in MLA style, whatever the context or audience.

B. It may appear only inside direct quotations that a writer takes from published sources.

C. It must replace he and she in every sentence that a writer composes for any reader.

D. It may be used for one person when the writer does not know that person's gender or when the gender does not matter to the point.

9. How do the AP Stylebook and The Chicago Manual of Style, 18th edition, differ on the serial comma, the comma before and in a list such as "red, white, and blue"?

A. Both forbid it before and in every series of three items.

B. Both require it before and in every series of three items.

C. In a list like this one, AP leaves out the final comma and Chicago includes it.

D. AP calls for it, while Chicago omits it in a simple series.

10. In 2018, The Economist announced that the new edition of its style guide would no longer forbid split infinitives. What does this change show about usage?

A. British and American references now agree on every single point of usage.

B. Grammar rules never change once any style guide has printed them.

C. Usage conventions are not fixed, and a reference can revise its advice.

D. Split infinitives are now required in all British newspaper writing.