

Reading Tips

Sentence Completion Questions:

- Use the information in the question to help you to **fill in the blanks with your own words**. Then, you can pattern-match with the actual answers.
- If the sentence has multiple parts (clauses), often the parts of the sentence support each other (confirmation) or oppose each other (contrast).
- Look for confirmation keywords: and, because, since, therefore, accordingly, etc. Confirmation keywords indicate that the parts of the sentence confirm each other.
- Look for contrast keywords: but, although, instead, rather, while, despite, etc. Contrast keywords indicate that the parts of the sentence oppose each other.
- Look for time-based keywords: “for years...”, “once he was...”, etc. Time-based keywords indicate that something has changed between two parts of the sentence.
- Look for descriptive adjectives and adverbs: “he was a *horrible* example”, “her *careful* and *thorough* analysis”, etc. Descriptive words indicate the emotional intent of each part of the sentence (good/bad, positive/negative, supporting/opposing).
- Look for negating words: not, never, none, nothing, etc. These words reverse the meaning of a part of a sentence.

Short Passages:

- Read the entire passage.
- Focus on the first and last sentences of the paragraph. Determine what the paragraph is about.
- Look for keywords that give the purpose, central idea, and tone/mood of the passage. Why was it written? What is the main point? How does the author want us to feel?
- Try to answer the question in your own words (keep it short). Then look at the answers and pattern match to the right one.

Long Passages:

1. Skim the passage.
 - Read the first and last sentence of each paragraph. Determine the topic of each paragraph.
 - **The first and last paragraphs are often the most important. Focus on those.**
 - If it helps, read the longer passages in chunks of one or two paragraphs each and then immediately read any associated questions.
 - If it helps, read the questions first, but only to find referenced line numbers. Mark those line numbers in the reading passage before reading.
 - Skim the middle portions of each paragraph. Clarify any questions about which each paragraph is about.
 - Remember: you’re trying to get the basic idea of the passage, not to understand every word. You want to index the passage so you can more easily find where topics are discussed. Make a few notes in the margins to help.
 - Try to determine the purpose, central idea, and tone/mood of the passage. Why was it written? What is the main point? How does the author want us to feel?
2. Attack the questions that reference a word and/or line number first.
 - Read the sentences before and after the given line numbers. Check the first (topic) sentence of the paragraph including those line numbers.
 - Try to answer the question in your own words (keep it short). Then look at the answers and pattern match to the right one.

3. Answer any questions that discuss purpose, central idea, or tone/mood.
 - Use the notes you made in your first reading. Go back to the first and last paragraphs as needed. Those paragraphs will generally give you the right idea.
 - Again, try to answer the question in your own words (keep it short). Then look at the answers and pattern match to the right one.
4. Answer any global questions last.
 - Global questions are such that require a re-reading of the whole passage.
 - Questions such as “Which of the following would the author agree with *least*?” or “Which of the following did the author not discuss?” are common.
 - For these questions, you will probably not be able to write your own answer in advance. Instead, eliminate each of the wrong answers as you re-read the passage.

Two-passage Readings:

- Read or skim the first passage and answer any questions that correspond only to that passage.
- Then, read or skim the second passage and answer any questions that correspond only to that passage.
- Finally, answer global questions that compare both passages. You will probably need to re-read parts of each passage to answer them.

Other tips:

- Don't judge the intent of the author. Only answer questions based on what is actually written.
- **Remember:** an answer can be true, but not answer the question asked!