

READING – SKILL PRACTICE

READING QUESTION TYPES

Question type 1

VOCABULARY

In the passage, one or two words will be underlined or put in bold, and you will be asked to choose an option that is closest in meaning to those. The best way to succeed on this question type is to know as many vocabulary words as possible, but if you really don't know the meaning of the word, we have 3 simple strategies that can help you conquer this type of question.

Question forms

The word/ phrase _____ in paragraph X is closest in meaning to

The word/ phrase _____ in paragraph X could be best replaced by

Based on the information in paragraph X, which of the following best explains the term _____?

Strategy 1: Connect the word to the one you already know.

This strategy means you can always try to connect the unknown word with a word in the same sentence that you do know.

Sample Questions

The assessment of past rises and falls in sea level requires study of submerged land surfaces off the coast and of elevated beaches on land. Raised beaches are **remnants** of former coastlines at higher levels relative to the present shoreline and visible, for instance, along the California coast north of San Francisco, the height of a raised beach above the present shoreline, however, does not generally give a straightforward indication of the height of a former sea level.

The word "**remnants**" in the passage is closest in meaning to

- A. remains
- B. regions
- C. pints
- D. origins

Strategy 2: Understand through context

Understanding the context of a passage is another helpful strategy for capturing the meaning of the highlighted word in this type of question.

Sample Questions

At night, the solar energy (stored as vast quantities of heat in city buildings and roads) is slowly released into the city air. Additional city heat is given off at night (and during the day) by vehicles and factories, as well as by industrial and domestic heating and cooling units. The release of heat energy is **retarded** by the tall vertical city walls that do not allow infrared radiation to escape as readily as does the relatively level surface of the surrounding countryside. The slow release of heat tends to keep nighttime city temperatures higher than those of the faster-cooling rural areas.

The word "**retarded**" in the passage is closest in meaning to

- A. disguised
- B. added to
- C. made possible
- D. slowed down

Strategy 3: Check if the word is an adjective, adverb, verb, or noun and eliminate incorrect choices

Keep in mind this strategy is only to help you eliminate incorrect choices. You still need to rely on other techniques to solve this question.

Sample Questions

Several dinosaur fossil localities preserve coprolites. Coprolites yield **unequivocal** evidence about the dietary habits of dinosaurs. Many parts of plants and animals are extremely resistant to the digestive systems of animals and pass completely through the body with little or no alteration. Study of coprolites has indicated that the diets of some herbivorous dinosaurs were relatively diverse, while other dinosaurs appear to have been specialists, feeding on particular types of plants. The problem with inferring diets from coprolites is the difficulty in accurately associating a particular coprolite with a specific dinosaur.

The word "**unequivocal**" in the passage is closest in meaning to

- A. deniable
- B. unambiguous
- C. unclear
- D. largely

PRACTICE 1

Human Anatomy

Human anatomy is the scientific study of the body's structures. Some of these structures are very small and can only be observed and analyzed with the assistance of a microscope. Other larger structures can readily be seen, manipulated, measured, and weighed. The word "anatomy" comes from a Greek root that means "to cut apart." Human anatomy was first studied by observing the exterior of the body and observing the wounds of soldiers and other injuries. Later, physicians were allowed to dissect bodies of the dead to augment their knowledge. When a body is dissected, its structures are cut apart in order to observe their physical attributes and their relationships to one another. Dissection is still used in medical schools, anatomy courses, and in pathology labs.

Q. The word augment is closest in meaning to:

- a. Prove
- b. Increase
- c. Validate
- c. Spread

PRACTICE 2

The Ideal Gas Law

During the seventeenth and especially eighteenth centuries, driven both by a desire to understand nature and a quest to make balloons in which they could fly, a number of scientists established the relationships between the macroscopic physical properties of gases, that is, pressure, volume, temperature, and amount of gas. Although their measurements were not precise by today's standards, they were able to determine the mathematical relationships between pairs of these variables (e.g., pressure and temperature, pressure and volume) that hold for an ideal gas—a hypothetical construct that real gases approximate under certain conditions. Eventually, these individual laws were combined into a single equation—the ideal gas law—that relates gas quantities for gases and is quite accurate for low pressures and moderate temperatures.

Q. The word precise is closest in meaning to ...

- a. Known
- b. Certain
- c. Accurate
- d. Proper

PRACTICE 3

Human Movement

Human movement includes not only actions at the joints of the body, but also the motion of individual organs and even individual cells. As you read these words, red and white blood cells are moving throughout your body, muscle cells are contracting and relaxing to maintain your posture and to focus your vision, and glands are secreting chemicals to regulate body functions. Your body is coordinating the action of entire muscle groups to enable you to move air into and out of your lungs, to push blood throughout your body, and to propel the food you have eaten through your digestive tract. Consciously, of course, you contract your skeletal muscles to move the bones of your skeleton to get from one place to another, and to carry out all of the activities of your daily life.

Q. The word contracting is closest in meaning to ...

- a. Loosening
- b. Strengthening
- c. Releasing
- d. Tightening

Question type 2: REFERENCE

In a "Reference" question, you are asked what the highlighted word refers to. If it's a pronoun then you need to identify what word the pronoun is replacing. Here are highlighted words you might be asked about:

1. Subject pronoun: it, they
2. Object pronoun: it, them
3. Demonstrative pronoun: these, those, this, that
4. Possessive adjectives: its, their
5. Other reference words: the former, the latter, one, ones, another, other, others

Question forms

The word/ phrase _____ in paragraph X refers to

Strategy

- The referent usually appears before the pronoun in the same sentence or shows up in an earlier sentence. Sometimes, however, the referent might be found after the pronoun.
- Substitute your answer for the highlighted word or words in the passage.
- Make sure that your answer is the same number (singular or plural), gender (male, female), case (first, second, or third person) as the highlighted pronoun.

Sample Question

[3] Economic contact between Native Americans and Europeans can be traced back to the English and French fishermen off the coast of Canada in the 1500s. **They** traded guns and other weapons for beaver fur. The first explorers to trade with the Native Americans were Giovanni da Verrazano and Jacques Cartier in the 1520s and 1530s. In Verrazano's book he notes, "If we wanted to trade with them for some of their things, they would come to the seashore on some rocks where the breakers were most violent while we remained on the little boat, and they sent us what they wanted to give on a rope, continually shouting to us not to approach the land."

The word "**They**" in paragraph 3 refers to?

- A. English and French fishermen
- B. Beavers
- C. Europeans
- D. Traits and characteristics

PRACTICE 1

Technological Globalization

Technological globalization is impacted in large part by technological diffusion, the spread of technology across borders. In the last two decades, there has been rapid improvement in the spread of technology to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations, and a 2008 World Bank report discusses both the benefits and ongoing challenges of **this diffusion**. In general, the report found that technological progress and economic growth rates were linked, and that the rise in technological progress has helped improve the situations of many living in absolute poverty. The report recognizes that rural and low-tech products such as corn can benefit from new technological innovations, and that, conversely, technologies like mobile banking can aid those whose rural existence consists of low-tech market vending. In addition, technological advances in areas like mobile phones can lead to competition, lowered prices, and concurrent improvements in related areas such as mobile banking and information sharing.

The words **this diffusion** refers to ...

- A. The spread of technology
- B. A 2008 World Bank report
- C. The last two decades
- D. Rapid improvement

PRACTICE 2

The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is based on the idea that people experience their world through their language, and that they therefore understand their world through the culture embedded in their language. The hypothesis, which has also been called linguistic relativity, states that language shapes thought. Studies have shown, for instance, that unless people have access to the word “ambivalent,” **they** don’t recognize an experience of uncertainty due to conflicting positive and negative feelings about one issue. Essentially, the hypothesis argues, if a person can’t describe the experience, the person is not having the experience.

The word **they** refers to ...

- a. Studies
- b. People
- c. Positive and negative feelings
- d. Shapes

Question type 3: FACTUAL INFORMATION

Factual Information questions ask you to recognize information that is explicitly stated in the text. These may include facts such as major ideas, supporting details, or definitions.

Question forms

- According to the passage, which of the following is true of _____?
- According to paragraph A, who/ when/ where/ what/ how/ why _____?
- According to the passage, X did Y because _____?
- The author's description of X mentions which of the following?

Strategy

- Read the question first to know what exactly is being asked and identify keywords.
- Scan the passage for keywords, which is where the relevant information is in the passage.
- Remove the choices that are not relevant to the passage.
- Do not choose an answer just because it is mentioned in the passage.

Sample Questions

The Invention of the X-Ray

German physicist Wilhelm Röntgen (1845–1923) was experimenting with electrical current when he discovered that a mysterious and invisible “ray” would pass through his flesh but leave an outline of his bones on a screen coated with a metal compound. In 1895, Röntgen made the first durable record of the internal parts of a living human: an “X-ray” image (as it came to be called) of his wife’s hand. Scientists around the world quickly began their own experiments with X-rays, and by 1900, X-rays were widely used to detect a variety of injuries and diseases. In 1901, Röntgen was awarded the first Nobel Prize for physics for his work in this field. The X-ray is a form of high energy electromagnetic radiation with a short wavelength capable of penetrating solids and ionizing gases. As they are used in medicine, X-rays are emitted from an X-ray machine and directed toward a specially treated metallic plate placed behind the patient’s body. The beam of radiation results in darkening of the X-ray plate. X-rays are slightly impeded by soft tissues, which show up as gray on the X-ray plate, whereas hard tissues, such as bone, largely block the rays, producing a light-toned “shadow.” Thus, X-rays are best used to visualize hard body structures such as teeth and bones. Like many forms of high energy radiation, however, X-rays are capable of damaging cells and initiating changes that can lead to cancer. This danger of excessive exposure to X-rays was not fully appreciated for many years after their widespread use.

Q. The paragraph states that x-rays...

- a. Were invented by a female scientist in the 19th century
- b. Were commonly used in medicine to find diseases and injuries as early as the 1900’s
- c. Are typically used for observing the exterior structures of the body
- d. Were only widely appreciated several years following their invention

PRACTICE 1

Human Anatomy

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Q. Which of the following is true about human anatomy?

- a. The word "anatomy" is derived from a French root that means "cut"
- b. The observation of soldiers' wounds were originally used to study human anatomy
- c. Human and animal bodies were dissected in labs to understand human anatomy
- d. The smaller structures of the human body need to be observed with a telescope

PRACTICE 2

Exercise and Bone Tissue

During long space missions, astronauts can lose approximately 1 to 2 percent of their bone mass per month. This loss of bone mass is thought to be caused by the lack of mechanical stress on astronauts' bones due to the low gravitational forces in space. Lack of mechanical stress causes bones to lose mineral salts and collagen fibers, and thus strength. Similarly, mechanical stress stimulates the deposition of mineral salts and collagen fibers. The internal and external structure of a bone will change as stress increases or decreases so that the bone is an ideal size and weight for the amount of activity it endures. That is why people who exercise regularly have thicker bones than people who are more sedentary. It is also why a broken bone in a cast atrophies while its contralateral mate maintains its concentration of mineral salts and collagen fibers. The bones undergo remodeling as a result of forces (or lack of forces) placed on them.

Q. What does the author say about bones?

- a. They go through changes based on the amount of mechanical stress applied to them
- b. They lose 1-2 percent of their mass monthly
- c. They fluctuate in size and weight based on a human's body size
- d. They are thicker in people who are less physically active