

STRATEGY SUMMARY

READING STRATEGIES

My Notes

Understanding the Reading item-types will help you quickly identify the question that is being asked by a particular item.

Information and Ideas

The first group of Reading items, Information and Ideas items, tests your general understanding of the passage, your understanding of specific details in the passage, and your ability to evaluate the passage.

Main Idea items ask about the central theme that unifies the passage(s). The first sentence of a paragraph—often the topic sentence—may provide a summary of the content of that paragraph. Also, the last sentence of a paragraph usually provides concluding material that may also be helpful in understanding the general theme of the passage.

- *Which of the following is the main point of the passage?*
- *The primary purpose of the passage is to . . .*

Explicit Detail items ask about details that are specifically mentioned in the passage. This type of item differs from a Main Idea item in that explicit details are points provided by the author in developing the main idea of the passage. Explicit Detail items provide “locator words” that identify the required information in the passage.

- *The author mentions which of the following?*
- *According to the passage, . . . ?*

Implied Idea items don't ask about what is specifically stated in the passage; rather, Implied Idea items ask about what can be logically inferred from what is stated in the passage. For example, the passage might explain that a certain organism (X) is found only in the presence of another organism (Y). An accompanying Implied Idea item might ask the following

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question: “If organism Y is not present, what can be inferred?” Since the passage implies that in the absence of Y, X cannot be present, the answer would be “X is not present.” Since this type of item generally builds on a specific detail, “locator words” for identifying information in the passage are often provided in the item stem.

- *The passage implies that . . .*
- *The author uses the phrase “. . .” to mean . . .*

Application items are similar to Implied Idea items, but they go one step further: examinees must apply what they have learned from the passage to a new situation.

- *With which of the following statements would the author most likely agree?*
- *The passage is most probably taken from which of the following sources?*

Passage Development

This group of Reading items deals with the structure of the passage. Development, Textual Evidence, and Voice items all test your ability to understand the underlying structure and tone of the passage. Since this is an “open-book” test, returning to the selection is always an option. Therefore, if something is highly technical or difficult to understand, do not dwell on it for too long—come back later if necessary.

Development items ask about the overall structure of the passage or about the logical role played by a specific part of the passage.

- *The author develops the passage primarily by . . .*
- *The author mentions . . . in order to . . .*

Textual Evidence items ask which phrases or sentences in the passage support a particular conclusion or claim.

- *Which of the following sentences provides direct support for . . . ?*
- *Which of the follow phrases supports the author’s claim that . . . ?*

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Voice items ask about the author's attitude toward a specific detail or the overall tone of the passage.

- *The tone of the passage can best be described as . . .*
- *The author regards . . . as . . .*

Vocabulary

The third category of Reading item is Vocabulary. The nature of the Vocabulary items indicates two points. First, the correct answer choice will make sense when it is substituted for the referenced word. Second, the correct answer choice may not be the most commonly used meaning of the word.

Vocabulary items test the understanding of a word or phrase in context.

- *The word "——" in line ## means...*
- *In line ##, what is the best definition of the word "——"?*

Data Presentations

The final category of Reading item is Data Presentations. Some Reading passages include a graphic or data presentation, and Reading questions may ask how the information in the data presentations relates to the information presented in the passage.

Data Presentations items test the understanding of graphics or data corresponding to the reading selection.

- *Which of the following best summarizes the information presented in the graph?*
- *According to the data presentation, which of the following is true about . . . ?*

GENERAL STRATEGIES

My Notes

Reading strategies are not an exact science. Practice is essential to master the following techniques:

1. **Preview the Passage:** Read the first and last sentence of each passage in the test section. After reading the first sentence of each passage, label each passage as either “Easy” or “Hard” based on your initial understanding of the material and your level of interest. Analyze the easier passages first.
2. **Preview Each Paragraph:** Read the first and last sentences of the passage. If the selection is more than one paragraph long, begin with a preview of the first and last sentences of each paragraph.
3. **Preview the Item Stems:** Skim the item stems, making note of stems that mention key words or phrases. Look for those words or phrases as you read the passage.
4. **Read the Passage:** Ask what the author is attempting to describe. Also, read the first sentence in each paragraph prior to reading the entire selection. This step is optional, depending on the ease of the selection, your personal preference, and the time available. Bracket difficult material, either mentally or with some sort of a mark, and then simply revisit it if necessary or if time permits. Instead of wasting time re-reading, attempt to understand the context in which the author introduces a particular concept.
5. **Code in Groups:** If you are taking a paper-and-pencil test, circle the answers to the items in the test booklet and transcribe the answers to all the items for a passage to the answer sheet after finishing each passage. This approach helps increase accuracy and makes checking your work easier and more efficient. Transcribe the answers to the answer sheet together as a group. Only when the time limit approaches should you transcribe each answer individually.