

One short passage, one question

Passages run **25–150 words**, from literature, history and social studies, the humanities and science. Questions come grouped by type, usually in this order: **words in context** → **reading** (structure, ideas, data) → **grammar** → **transitions** → **rhetorical synthesis**.

AB Words in context

- ✓ Find the **context clues**, especially contrast: however, but, although
- ✓ **Predict** a word before reading the choices, then match it
- ✓ Unknown word? Break it into **roots**: *in-* means not; *derive* means to take from
- ✓ Check the **tone**: positive or negative?
- ✓ **Plug your answer back in** and reread the sentence

🏠 Purpose and structure

- ✓ **Function** of an underlined part: ask **why** the author put it there, not what it says; read the whole text
- ✓ **Main purpose**: zoom in on the **last sentence**, where the conclusion usually sits
- ✓ Fiction: weigh **tone and mood** as well as the literal words
- ✓ Avoid choices that fixate on a **detail** or misstate the context

🔗 Cross-text connections

- ✓ Two texts: focus on how **Text 2** responds to, or reinterprets, **Text 1**
- ✓ Track every idea that appears in **both** texts
- ✓ “Agree” questions: find the **common ground** both would accept
- ✓ Avoid **extreme** wording

↔ Transitions

- ✓ Read the sentences on **both sides** of the blank and name the relationship:
- ✓ **Contrast**: however, nevertheless, on the other hand
- ✓ **Cause and effect**: therefore, as a result, because
- ✓ **Addition**: moreover, furthermore, also
- ✓ **Sequence**: first, then, subsequently, finally; **example**: for instance
- ✓ Contrast already in the sentence (a “however”)? The blank needs a **different** relationship

🎯 Main idea and detail

- ✓ **Main idea**: usually the **last sentence**; look for contrast and emphasis
- ✓ **Supporting detail**: usually right beside the main idea, often the **second-to-last** sentence
- ✓ Avoid choices that are too **narrow**, too **broad**, or use **always**, **never** or **first**

💡 Inferences

- ✓ The passage ends in a **blank**: finish the logic of everything before it
- ✓ **Predict the completion** before you read the choices
- ✓ Note relationships: direct (both rise) or **inverse** (one rises, one falls)
- ✓ Be wary of **extreme** words and unearned **comparisons** (“more”, “less”)

⚖️ Command of evidence

- ✓ **Strengthen**: name the claim, then pick the most **relevant** support; stronger beats weaker
- ✓ **Weaken**: the same task in reverse — make the claim less likely
- ✓ **Illustrate** (a quotation): it must show **every** quality the claim names, in the right tone
- ✓ **Data**: read the title, the axes or headings, then the **trend**; the answer must be true of the data **and** do what the claim needs

📄 Rhetorical synthesis

- ✓ Notes in bullets, then a **goal**: “to emphasize a similarity”, “to explain why”
- ✓ **Read the question stem carefully**: pick the choice that meets that exact goal
- ✓ Often you need the notes only to **confirm**
- ✓ Harder questions **combine two notes** in one choice