CLATAPULT

ENGLISH

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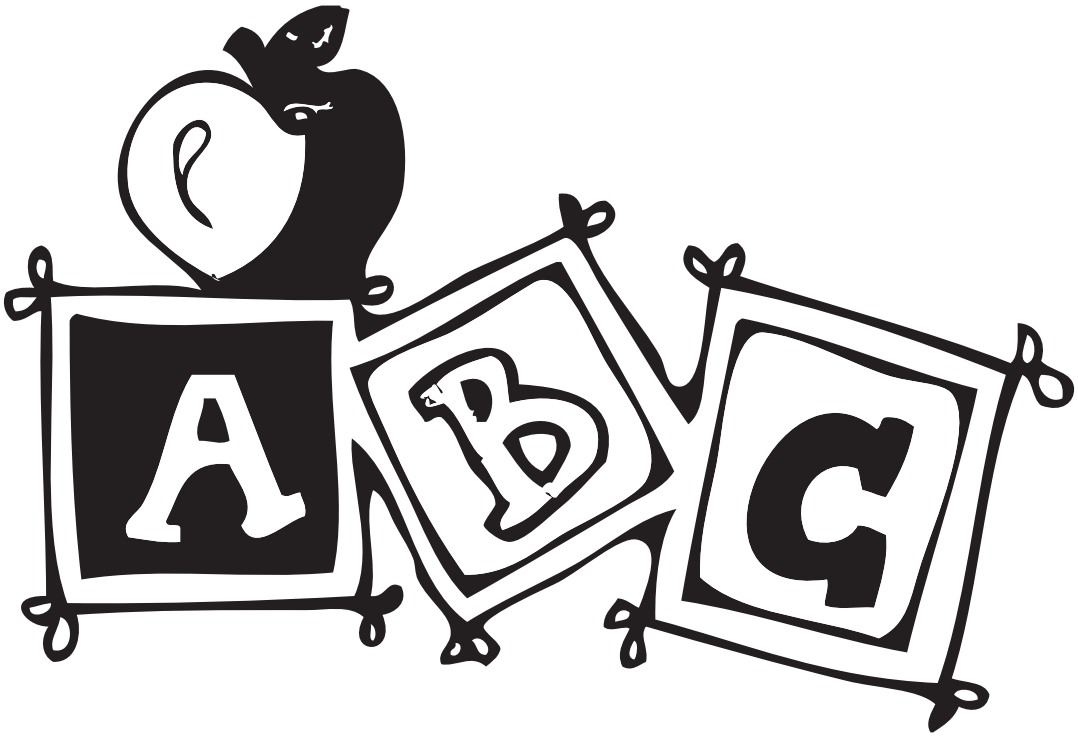
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Reading Comprehension

This section defines the power to "comprehend", or "understand" the content of a given passage, explaining what exactly is to be conveyed to the reader. Since the passage is totally new to the student, to answer the questions given at the end of the passage, one is required to exert considerable skills while reading . The catch is that time is limited, so one has to be quick and efficient, with a good grasp on vocabulary and a broad and open mind to gauge the theme of the passage.

There are three broad ways in which an article can be constructed:

a) The conclusion first, and then the support arguments.

b) The support arguments first and then the conclusion.

c) Some support arguments first, the conclusion in the

middle, and some more support arguments in the end.

The Reading Comprehension or RC is ideally solved in the following steps:

a) The first read determines the general theme the passage dwells on.

b) The second read notes down the author's approach or attitude to the theme, i.e. the tone and style of the author.

c) The third reading is to read between the lines, to ensure an even comprehension of every detail in content and context, even if they are not clearly stated in words.

There are multiple approaches to this section. Let us first analyse the types of questions that could come under this category:

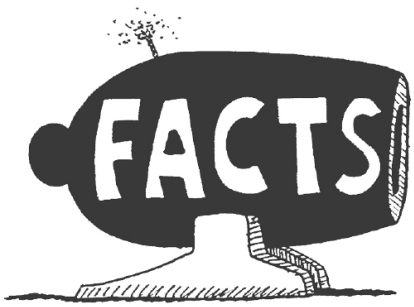
• **Facts**- A fact is something that is true about a subject and can be tested or proven. For such questions, the answer is direct, and not implied. The simple task is to locate the spot of its occurrence in the passage. The answers are essentially related to the facts and figures mentioned in the passage.

The most common types of questions in this are:

In which continent does Amazon flow?

"The passage states that...."

"According to the passage..."



• **Main Idea**- The main idea or theme of the passage tells us what it is about, the subject matter, the topic of discussion. However, they are not always stated explicitly. It is usually stated in the last paragraph of the passage, but occasionally exists in the first. In some cases, it may even be located in the last sentence of the passage. **The tip to speedy observation is looking at the first line of every paragraph, and the last line of the first and last paragraphs to understand the main idea.**

Sometimes, conclusion words like 'therefore', 'hence', 'thus', etc introduce the main idea. It actually summarises the passage. It will thus neither focus on one aspect of

the passage nor will it go beyond the scope of the passage.

The most common types of questions in this are:

"Which of the following best states the central idea of the passage?"

"Which of the following most accurately states the main idea of the passage?"

"Which of the following is the principal topic of the passage?"

"The main theme of the passage is..."

• **Primary Purpose or Tone**- The primary purpose basically tells about the tone of the author, where he might be *arguing and justifying* his main idea, or describing the main event or idea. It tells about his principal intention of discussing the main idea of the passage. **When solving such questions, look for expressive words**- with positive or negative connotations; and frame your answer.

Under this type, the questions come generally as:

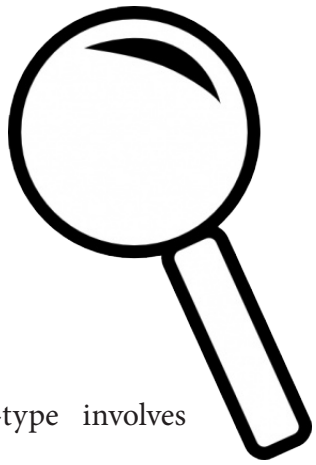
"The primary purpose of this passage is..."

"The primary focus of this passage is brought out best by which of the following?"

"In the passage, the main intention of the author is..."

"The passage is chiefly concerned with..."

"The main purpose of this passage is..."



• **Conclusions, Observations and Inferences**-This sub-type involves

questions that ask about the conclusions or observations made by the reading of the passage. The answer is definitely not explicit, so there is a need for carefully studying the paragraphs, borrowing ideas from each, logically explaining and making observations, till finally arriving at an inference, which is the answer.

The inference answer must not contradict the main idea of the passage. Also, synonymous language traps should be avoided.

The most common types of questions are:

"It can be inferred that the author makes which of the following assumptions?"

"Which is an assumption underlying in the last sentence of the passage?"

"Which of the following, if true, would maintain the hypothesis mentioned in ___ lines (or paragraph)?"

"With which of the following statements regarding a hypothesis mentioned in the passage would the author most likely agree?"

"By saying _____ what did the author probably mean?"

• **Context**- These are questions regarding the general context of the passage, referring to the contents; setting; author's profession; age; gender; tone etc.

Example questions:

"The author is most probably a/an..." (Author's profession or age or gender)

"The passage would have been written most probably in..." (The setting of the article)

"The author in this passage is being..." (Tone of the author)

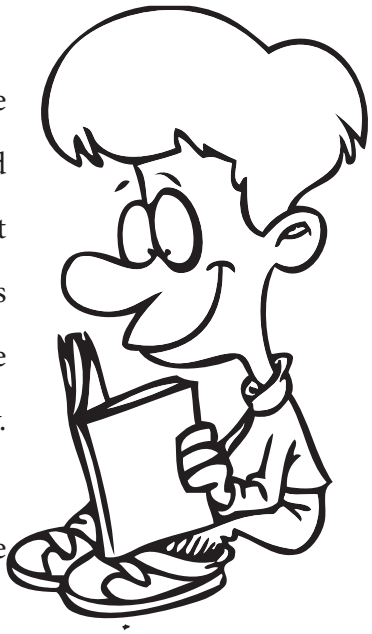
• **Predictive Application**- Often, there is a type of question that is given, in which there is a need to predict something which is

NOT given in the passage. It is close to the Context type of questions and good logical skills come to great help here.

The general modes of such questions are:

"Which one of the following statements would most logically begin a paragraph immediately following the passage?"

"What can be the most apt title for the passage?"



• **Meaning**- There might be questions which ask for the meaning of some terms. It should thus be remembered that it is the meaning with reference to the passage that is being asked and one's general strength of vocabulary is not in question. It must always be kept in mind that the answer is to be in accordance to the passage's context only. These questions are framed simply as:

"What does the word _____ mean according to the passage?"

"How is the author using the word _____ in the passage?

"The purpose of using the word _____ is..."

As we have put down the different frames of possible questions, we can now come across some points to remember when doing RCs.

a) **Pivotal Words**- The pivotal or key words determine the flow of the passage. Some supporting words are- also; besides; likewise; furthermore; additionally; in addition to; moreover etc. and opposing words are- but; however; despite; although; nevertheless; in contrast etc.

b) **Facts and Opinions**- Sometimes, the candidate may be confused with a fact stated in the passage and an opinion of the author who has written the passage. It's important

to differentiate between the two.

Here are two examples which show the difference:

Fact- It happened.

Opinion- *I felt very happy when* it happened.

To determine opinions, some clue words like "I believe"; "I felt"; "It's obvious"; "I would consider" etc. should be noted.

c) **Probable Source**- In most cases, the source of the passage is not given. However, it is easy to identify yet quite gullible to mistakes. The quicker way is to zero on the *topic of the passage* (fine arts, technology, sociology, literature, etc.) which is comparatively easier as there will definitely be words which indicate towards the topic which indicate towards the topic. Once that is done, it is easier to narrow down the search for the probable source. Plus, the *important proper nouns* can also help, as, if the name Stephen Hawkins is there, we know it is most probably going to be a scientific passage; whereas if Shakespeare is named, the passage is more likely to be literature-based. However, if both the names are given, the passage could have something very different as the topic or the main idea. Therefore, *hasty decisions must never be made,* this is exactly where one goes wrong while finding the source.