

Scholastic Aptitude Test: **Reading Comprehension**

**test basics and
testing strategies**

SAT critical reading

Question types

- sentence completion
- reading comprehension (short, long, and paired passages)

sections

- 2 sections of M-C
25 minutes, 24 questions
- *sentence completion and reading comprehension (short, paired, and long passages)*
- 1 section of M-C
20 minutes, 19 questions
- *sentence completion and reading comprehension (usually one long passage)*

Critical Reading section: what the College Board is testing

1. Vocabulary

your knowledge of words and ability to determine meaning through context

2. Reasoning Skills

your ability to determine relationship between words and ideas

3. Reading Skills

your understanding of what you read (main idea, tone, details, content)

Reading Comprehension strategies

- The answers are in the passage—either stated or directly inferred. The reading passage must support your answer; look for information and details within.
- Every word counts, so pay attention.
- Mark the passage thoroughly.
- Read questions and answer choices carefully; this is as crucial as reading the passage carefully.
- Use your time wisely; have long passages and their questions for last.

Reading Comprehension DON'Ts

- Don't jump from passage to passage. Because you will invest time reading that you can't waste, answer as many questions as you possibly can in one set before moving on. But, do move around within a set of questions to find the ones you can answer quickly.
- Don't apply your personal opinion; focus on the text only.

Reading Comprehension question types

1. Big Picture

2. Little Picture

3. Inference

4. Vocabulary-in-Context

5. Function

Big Picture questions

- **about:**
main point or purpose; overall tone; author's argument; logic of passage
- **wording:**
The passage is primarily concerned with . . .
What is the author's attitude toward . . . ?
What is the main idea of the passage?
Why does the author mention . . . ?

Little Picture questions

- **about:**
information stated in passage; locating information; differentiating between main ideas and specific details
- **tip:**
These questions may be answered without reading the entire passage.
- **wording:**
According to the passage . . .
In lines 12-16, what does the author say about . . .?
How does the author describe . . .?

Interference questions

- **about:**

using information in the passage to come to logical conclusions; reasoning based on evidence and clues in text

- **wording:**

It can be inferred from the passage that . . .

The phrase _____ implies that . . .

The author states that _____. This would indicate which of the following?

Vocabulary-in-Context questions

- **about:**

usage of specific words; contextual meanings of words with multiple denotations

- **tip:**

Answer like a sentence-completion question.

These can be answered without reading the passage.

- **wording:**

As used in line 8, _____ most nearly means . . .

Which of the following is the best description of this word's meaning in the context of the passage?

The term _____ most likely refers to . . .

Function questions

- **about:**

beyond the *What?* of the passage; why the author includes specific details, words, sentences, paragraphs

- **wording:**

The _____ mentioned in lines 4-5 serves primarily to . . .

The author uses the description of _____ in lines 5-7 mainly to . . .

The second paragraph mostly serves to . . .

The author cites _____ in lines 8-9 in order to convey . . .

Reading Comprehension strategies

1. Read the question stem.
2. Locate the material you need in the passage to answer the question.
3. Skim—but do so seriously and purposefully.
4. Predict the answer before reading choices.
5. Read the choices and select the best one.
An answer could be true for the passage but not actually answer the question.

mapping passages to read actively

- Make notes in the margin as you read— words and phrases not whole sentences. (*MP = main point, EX = example*)
- Write down the purpose of each paragraph.
- Circle or bracket key points.
- Concentrate on places where the author or others express an opinion. (*OP = opinion*)

Paired Passages strategies

1. Read passage 1 and answer the questions about it.
2. Read passage 2 and answer the questions about it.
3. Finally, answer the questions asking about both passages.