

READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

1. Always read the **questions first**. This will help you to focus your attention and direct you to the parts of the passage that are most important for you to understand.
2. Make sure you understand exactly what each question is asking. STOP and take a moment to think about what you will need to look for in the reading passage. Sometimes it helps to *put the question in your own words* or *circle key words* in the passage, such as not, least, cause, effect, first, last, etc.
 - Believe it or not, this is one of the most important strategies for a test taker to learn. If you just read the questions without really thinking about them or taking a moment to circle the most important words in the questions, you will probably forget what the questions are asking before you even finish reading the passage.
3. Guess on any of the ones that you do not know. Choose what you think is the best answer by eliminating the choices that do not seem correct.
4. Remember that the proficiency test asks you to choose the best answer for each question, so it is important to read **all** your answer choices and then eliminate the ones that do not seem correct or best answer the question.
5. **Never** choose an answer that is not supported by something in the selection or your own background knowledge.
6. Don't expect to always know the answers to most questions after only one reading.
 - Most test takers expect to read the passage once and then be able to answer the questions. **However, very few of us know all of the answers after reading the passage only one time.** Good test takers learn how to go back into the passage again and again to find specific information. This is one of the most important strategies for a reading test – knowing what information you need and rereading until you find it.
7. **Never choose an answer that contains any wrong information.** If any part of an answer choice is wrong, do not choose this answer.
 - Understand that part of an incorrect answer is often correct, but may not be complete enough to be the best answer.

8. Be aware that the answer to the question is **often stated in words that are a little bit different from the exact words used in the reading passage.**
- Here's an example: A passage about the Civil War discusses the casualties of war, but the answer choice uses the word fatalities. By choosing the answer choice that contains the word fatalities, a good test taker is also demonstrating understanding or reading comprehension.
9. For main idea questions, always **reread the first and last sentences.** Also, skim through the reading passage to see how many times each of the answer choices is discussed.
- Here's an example: You are trying to decide whether the main idea is about soccer or football, so you skim through the passage and learn that soccer is mentioned four times. (Be sure to include the pronouns in your count.) However, the writer only mentions football two times. You can be pretty confident that the main idea is about soccer. (If you are given permission to write in your test booklet, go ahead and underline the words football and soccer as you skim. This way, you know you have made the correct choice.)
10. When you finish a reading passage, **try to sum up everything in one sentence.** This should be very close to the main idea.
11. For vocabulary questions, when you have to choose the correct meaning of a word, it is helpful to read the following:
- The sentence that the word is in
 - The sentence right before
 - The sentence right after
- This area of the passage surrounding the word is called the **context**. Context clues are the words, phrases, and sentences that surround the word you do not know. Many sentences and paragraphs contain enough information for you to use the clues that the writer has left to figure out the meanings of many words you do not know.
12. . Multiple choice answers that are often wrong:
- Answers that seem **humorous or ridiculous**
 - Answers that contain **extreme** or **absolute** statements (all, always, never, no one everyone, impossible, must, absolutely, etc.)
 - Answer choices that are **almost exactly alike** or **say the same thing in different words**