Reading Comprehension Preparation

Even if you don’t love reading, you can still do well on this part of the test. The important thing is to take your time. AccuPlacer is to see how well you understand what you read, not how fast (especially since the test is untimed). There are 20 total questions on this section and you will see two types of questions: sentence relationships and questions based on reading passages of various lengths.

Sentence Relationships

Reading one sentence on its own rarely tells the whole story: we need more information. This section is about context and the relationships between the sentences we read. For instance, what if I said:

“Everyone should eat broccoli every day.”

Even if you like broccoli, you might be thinking, why? Let’s add a sentence.

“Broccoli contains vitamins and minerals your body needs to stay healthy.”

These two sentences are related, but how? Does the second sentence contrast the first? Does it expand the first and provide more information? Does it qualify the first? Does it describe a process happening over time—first, second, third? Thinking these types of questions will help you determine sentence relationships for the types of sentences you will see on the AccuPlacer test.

In this section of the test, you will always see two or three sentences, and then a question will follow asking about their relationship.

Reading Passages

Pretend you’ve just finished a novel or article and a friend asks you about it. What was it about? Did you like it? What was the author’s viewpoint? To answer your friend, you wouldn’t recite the whole book—you would summarize the main point or plot, highlight some things the author did well, maybe touch on the author’s style, and comment on the author’s tone or viewpoint.

When you get questions based on a reading passage, pretend they are coming from a friend and you are using your knowledge of the passage to respond.

Watch for

- Main theme or idea
- Tone
- Style
- Supporting details

These questions are not testing how well you can remember the facts, but how well you can refer to the passage and chose an answer that correctly describes what the author is saying. The
questions all deal with what is either stated directly or implied by the passage. This is not the place for your personal opinion or choice–try to answer like the author.

Strategies for Reading Comprehension

1. Paraphrase in your own words what the passage is saying.
2. Don’t read too much importance into small details.
3. Just use the passage–don’t bring in outside information or your own opinion.
4. Use the passage to make sure your answer is right.
5. Read the question before the answers to know what to look for.
6. Because of the length of some passages, you may need to scroll down to see all the answers. Make sure you read them all!

Practice, Practice, Practice

Read the statements below and then choose the best answer to the question from the list of lettered choices that follows.

1. Sometimes when we don’t get enough sleep we become very short-tempered. It is important to set a time to go to bed that is realistic.

How are these two sentences related?

   a. The first sentence explains the meaning of the second.
   b. The second sentence explains why a lack of sleep affects us.
   c. The second sentence contradicts the first.
   d. The second sentence proposes a solution.

2. Most people collect *Star Wars* toys for sentimental reasons. Some people collect them strictly to make money.

What is the relationship between the two sentences?

   a. Cause and Effect
   b. Contrast
   c. Repetition
   d. Statement and Example

3. There are two kinds of jewelry with which I work. There is commercial jewelry–class rings, necklaces, the kinds of things most people wear. I sell these items to meet my expenses for raw materials, supplies, and to make my living. The other, more creative work I do makes me feel that I am developing as a craftsperson.
The author of this passage implies that

a. Artists are poor.
b. There is no market for creative work.
c. Rings and necklaces cannot be creative.
d. Commercial and creative works fulfill different needs for the artist.

4. Did you know that the U.S. postal service handles 40% of the world’s mail volume? Japan is the second largest carrier of cards and letters, but it handles only 8% of the world’s mail. Perhaps the reason that the U.S. handles such a large volume of mail is the large number of personal letters American citizens write. Personal letters do not require a strict format, but they do have a few guidelines. The date should be written at the top of the letter, either in the center or in the right hand corner. The salutation, “Dear _____,” should begin the letter and should be followed by a comma instead of a colon which is used in the salutation of a business letter. The body of the letter should sound like you, and say the things you intend to say. Unlike in a business letter, you can use slang words, dashes, smiley faces, sentence fragments, and other kinds of casual forms of communication. Closing for personal letters is also a matter of personal preference. While a business letter requires you to use more formal closings such as “Sincerely,” “Regards,” or “Best Wishes,” a personal letter can end with more casual phrases such as “Later,” “Talk to you soon,” or “Bye.” As with the rest of the letter, the closing should express your own feelings.

How did the author organize this passage?

a. Cause and Effect
b. Example
c. Comparison and Contrast
d. Humor

5. Jenny does not like cake.
She does not like to bake it, to ice it, or to eat it.

What does the second sentence do?

a. It states the cause of the first.
b. It emphasizes what is stated in the first.
c. It compares the three things Jenny does not like about cake.
d. It draws a conclusion about Jenny.

6. When we write a check that we know is going to “bounce,” we are in fact performing a criminal act.
It is a crime to knowingly write a “hot” check, one we know we don’t have sufficient funds to cover.
What does the second statement do?

a. It provides supporting evidence for the first statement.
b. It draws a conclusion from the first sentence.
c. It restates the central idea of the first sentence.
d. It provides a contradictory point of view.

7. The new *Dance Tunes* CD has proved to be very popular. It has sold 80,000 copies over the last year.

How are these two sentences related?

a. The first sentence explains the meaning of the second.
b. The second sentence explains why the CD is popular.
c. The second sentence provides evidence of the first.
d. The first sentence contradicts the second.

8. Before the invention of automobiles and airplanes travel was a slow process. When traveling long distances families would be out of communication until the travelers reached their destination. Sometimes people lost touch with each other permanently.

The author would most likely continue the passage with which of the following sentences?

a. Advances in communication have helped travelers stay in communication.
b. Airplanes make travel more fun.
c. Driving a car helps families stay in touch.
d. Cars can be used to travel comfortably.

9. Scuba diving is the most exhilarating experience I have ever had. The first time I went, the dark mirror of the water beckoned me to drop from the side of the boat. I jumped feet first and entered a brightly colored world populated with fish, plants, and objects I had never dreamed of.

Which of the following best describes the mood of the author after having this experience?

a. Bored
b. Anxious
c. Excited
d. Serene
10. Did you know that a half-gallon milk container holds about $50.00 in pennies? While all investment counselors realize that we must accumulate money in order to save, most recommend different kinds of investments for people who are in different stages of life. Older investors, those with limited funds to invest, or people with greater financial and family commitments, should take fewer risks. Younger, wealthier, and unmarried investors can afford to venture into the unknown.

Which of the following best describes the main idea of this passage?

a. A penny saved is a penny earned.
 b. Our ages and stage of life are part of what determines the investments that are best for us.
 c. Old people have the most money.
 d. Young people should concentrate on collecting pennies.

11. Experienced truck drivers often travel in a convoy—a group of trucks that are traveling to the same part of the country. Convoys can help truckers to stay alert.

The author implies that professional long-distance truck drivers may avoid traveling alone because

a. They might drive too fast.
 b. They want to arrive before anyone else.
 c. Accidents happen more frequently to lone truck drivers than to car drivers who travel alone.
 d. Long-distance travel can cause drowsiness.

12. Huge beasts such as the dinosaur have never really become extinct. Mothra, a giant caterpillar who later becomes a moth, destroys Tokyo, and stars in the 1962 Japanese film named for him. Mothra is born, dies, and reborn regularly on classic movie channels. In Japan Mothra is one of the most popular films ever made. Mothra has survived the creation of more current scary creatures such as giant apes, extraterrestrial beings and swamp creatures. More than 30 years after his creation, Mothra still lives.

The main subject of the passage is

a. The reasons that fads do not endure.
 b. The lasting appeal of Mothra.
 c. The difficulty of marketing good horror movies.
 d. Old models for creatures are still used because making new monsters is expensive.
13. Anxious to ensure that America would depart from European traditions regarding religion and royalty, the early U.S. could be described as a place that focused more on work than on the entertainment offered by spectacle and ceremony in the Old World. However, national celebrations such as the lighting of the White House Christmas Tree and the ceremonies used to swear in new federal officials gave the American people some experiences that are based upon national tradition.

What does the second sentence do?

a. It cancels the meaning of the first sentence
b. It provides an example of the first sentence.
c. It adds more detail to the first sentence.
d. It offers an exception to the information given in the first sentence.

14. The Earth’s past climate—including temperature and elements in the atmosphere—has recently been studied by analyzing ice samples from Greenland and Antarctica. The air bubbles in the ice have shown that, over the past 160,000 years, there has been a close correlation between temperature changes and level of natural greenhouse gases carbon dioxide and methane. One recent analysis from Greenland showed that at the end of the last glacial period (when the great ice sheets began to retreat to their present position), temperatures in southern Greenland rose from 5 to 7 degrees in about 100 years. Air bubbles are not the only method of determining characteristics of the Earth’s ancient climate history. Analysis of dust layers from ancient volcanic activity is another such method; as is the study of ice cores, which interpret past solar activity that may have affected our climate.

This passage states that

a. The Greenhouse effect is destroying the planet’s atmosphere.
b. Temperatures in Greenland have been unusually stable over the past 100 years.
c. There is more than one kind of information that scientists can use to determine the characteristics of the Earth’s early climate.
d. Solar energy is the wave of the future.

15. Before video cameras were widely used, home and business owners had to rely only on written reports and photos as a way to document their valuables for insurance purposes. This form of documentation was difficult for some insurance policy holders. They found it was easy to lose lists, forget to add new items they purchased, or delete items they no longer had. As a result these insurance inventories were often inaccurate.

While videotaping is not an option for every home or business owner, this kind of insurance documentation is helpful for some.
How are these passages related?

   a. They repeat the same idea.
   b. They contradict one another.
   c. They compare two forms of written documentation.
   d. They present a problem and a solution.

16. Public speaking is very different from everyday conversation.
   First of all, speeches are much more structured than a typical informal discussion.

   How are these sentences related?

   a. Sentence two offers support for the statement made in the first sentence.
   b. Sentence two contradicts the statement made in the first sentence.
   c. Sentence two shows an exception to the first sentence.
   d. Sentence two compares two kinds of speeches.

17. French physicist Charles Fabry found ozone gas in the atmosphere in 1913. At room
    temperature, ozone is a colorless gas; it condenses to a dark blue liquid at -170° F. At
    temperatures above the boiling point of water, 212° F, it decomposes. Ozone is all around
    us. After a thunderstorm, or around electrical equipment, ozone is often detected as a sharp
    odor. Ozone is used as a strong oxidizing agent, a bleaching agent, and to sterilize drinking water. This gas is also highly reactive. For example, rubber insulation around a car’s spark plug wires will need to be replaced eventually, due to the small amounts of ozone produced when electricity flows from the engine to the plug.

   These passages imply that

   a. Ozone is the result of pollution.
   b. High ozone levels in the atmosphere will cause large numbers of people to buy new car batteries.
   c. Ozone has no practical uses.
   d. Ozone is a natural part of the Earth’s atmosphere.

18. Many people who have come close to death from drowning, cardiac arrest, or other
    causes have described near-death experiences—profound, subjective events that
    sometimes result in dramatic changes in values, beliefs, behavior, and attitudes toward
    life and death. These experiences often include a new clarity of thinking, a feeling of well
    being, a sense of being out of the body, and visions of bright light or mystical encounters. Such experiences have been reported by an estimated 30 to 40 percent of hospital patients who were revived after coming close to death and about 5 percent of adult Americans in a nationwide poll. Near-death experiences have been explained as a response to a perceived threat of death (a psychological theory); as a result of biological states that accompany the process of dying (a physiological theory); and as a foretaste of an actual state of bliss after death (a transcendental theory).
The primary purpose of this passage is to

a. Entertain  
b. Persuade  
c. Inform  
d. Express disbelief in the afterlife.

19. In most cases little birds lay little eggs. The kiwi is an astonishing exception to this rule: it is a smallish bird that lays a big egg. The kiwi, a flightless bird found in New Zealand, weighs about four pounds, and its egg weighs, believe it or not, about one pound. That is one-fourth of the bird’s body weight! If an ostrich laid an egg that was in the same proportion to the ostrich as the kiwi egg is to the kiwi, an ostrich egg would weigh a whopping seventy-five pounds instead of the usual three pounds.

Which statement below best describes the organizational method used in this passage?

a. Description  
b. Comparison/Contrast  
c. Chronological  
d. Cause/Effect

20. The rise in personal debt in recent years is due largely to aggressive and unwarranted hustling by credit-card companies. Between 1990 and 1996, credit card debt doubled. Today it is still rising. Credit cards with interest rates reaching nearly 20 percent are a remarkably lucrative part of the loan business. Debtors pay an average of $1,000 a year in interest and fees alone, money that could instead have been used for a college or retirement fund. Using subtle tactics to tempt unwary consumers to borrow, credit-card companies have led consumers to hold more cards and to fork over a bigger and bigger fraction of their income to the companies.

Which statement best reflects the organization used in this passage?

a. Cause/Effect  
b. Comparison/Contrast  
c. Description  
d. Explanation
Answers for Reading Comprehension Questions

1. d
2. b
3. d
4. c
5. b
6. c
7. c
8. a
9. c
10. b
11. d
12. b
13. d
14. c
15. d
16. a
17. d
18. c
19. b
20. a

For more practice on Reading Comprehension, and a simulation of the test, visit
http://www.yccd.edu/assessment/tests/reading.html