

Concept Notes:

Reading Comprehension (RC) is a common section in the Verbal aptitude tests.

Reading Comprehension section can be one of the complex sections depending on the standard of language used. As part of a reading comprehension test you will be tested on your vocabulary, absorption and understanding of the language. English comprehension passage is the good test of your language skills. The questions in the reading comprehension exercise are mostly inference based.

How should you attempt RC (Reading Comprehension)?

Reading is in itself a good habit to inculcate. It is that skill which enables all other skills involved in acquiring a language. Reading in a particular language improves your vocabulary, writing skills, pronunciation, spellings, grammar, as well as, imagination. Besides increasing awareness and knowledge, a good reading habit will equip you to tackle the Verbal Ability (VA) section itself.

Given that an entrance exam is a timed exam which puts a lot of pressure on the candidates, each second is crucial. If the aspirant takes too long to read the passages, he/she will lose out on precious time for the other questions. Therefore, an aspirant should be able to go through the passage quickly and process the information or issues presented in the passage precisely. This is a skill that can only come with practice and some strategies.

1. Read quickly: Reading the passages quickly is the foremost requirement for attempting the Reading Comprehension. You need to train yourself to skim through the passage, keeping an eye on the key words in the passage, as well as, pointing out the essence of the passage. Doing this while keeping in mind the questions that have been asked, will help you reduce the time considerably.

2. Build your vocabulary: A decent vocabulary is a prerequisite for attempting the reading section as swiftly as possible. Difficult words can obstruct the speed of your reading and understanding of the passage; hence, knowing their meanings will aid your comprehension.

3. Focus: Maintaining your focus through the passage is crucial. Reading comprehension is complex and can be confusing at times. In such situations, keeping your focus intact and knowing which part or words of the passage to particularly focus on will help.

4. Time Management: How you manage your time will decide if you finish the paper to your satisfaction or end up leaving a few questions. The reading section, for its unpredictability and complexity, can consume a lot of your time. So, the trick is not to spend too much time thinking about a single question and instead finish the other questions.

5. Develop a method: Develop a method of solving a comprehension. This method will vary from person to person. Some people tend to mark the answers or important points in the passage with a pencil while reading; some remember them in their minds while some make brief notes. Do whatever works best for you.

6. Practice: Practicing reading comprehension regularly before the final exam, will prepare your mind to focus on important areas and attempt the section in as little time as possible. There is no one strategy to attempt the Reading Comprehension. Whichever strategy saves time and makes you feel comfortable is the best.

Reading Strategies: How to read in between the lines in paragraphs of RC?

1. Skim through: The first step is to skim through the passage quickly, so that you get some idea as to what the main idea of the passage is. The theme of the passage will come through clearly, if you read the passage once. This step will also include registering the difficult words that are not part of your vocabulary and processing the information/data given in the passage.

2. Contextual understanding: To be able to read between the lines, one has to understand the contextual meaning of the words and sentences. Often, what we read is not what the passage is all about. The real meaning of the passage lies in the context in which the words have been used. For instance, in the sentence,

„The businessman had blue blood, he didn't understand the problems of the masses"- the connotations of „blue blood" is very different from its literal annotations. „Blue blood" here stands for royalty, aristocracy. So what the sentence means is

that the businessman belonged to aristocracy, hence, was detached from the world of the common public. Understanding the contextual meaning is a challenge the candidates need to prepare for.

3. Use clues: The passage will provide enough clues for you to find out the hidden meaning of the passage. These clues might come in the form of information, data, any remark about anyone and so on. You should keep an eye out for such clues while reading the passage, as they will help you to get inside the passage and also the mind of the author.

Trainer's Guidelines:

- There are 6 passages in the hand-out. 2 short, 3 medium and 1 long passages.
- You must read all the passages and the answer options carefully before beginning the training session. Also keep the meanings of all the difficult words handy.
- After the students attempt a passage, discuss the meanings of difficult words too and ask them to make notes in the handout.
- Encourage the students to time up their attempt for every passage.
- Alternatively you can set a timer for every passage and check how many students complete within that time

Answer Key

Directions: In the given passages below, read through the passage and choose ONE answer for each question.

PASSAGE 1:

Dolphins are regarded as the friendliest creatures in the sea and stories of them helping drowning sailors have been common since Roman times. The more we learn about dolphins, the more we realize that their society is more complex than people previously imagined. They look after other dolphins when they are ill, care for pregnant mothers and protect the weakest in the community, as we do. Some scientists have suggested that dolphins have a language but it is much more probable that they communicate with each other without needing words. Could any of these mammals be more intelligent than man? Certainly the most common argument in favour of man's superiority over them that we can kill them more easily than they can kill us is the least satisfactory. On the contrary, the more we discover about these remarkable creatures, the less we appear superior when we destroy them.

1. It is clear from the passage that dolphins _____.
A. don't want to be with us as much as we want to be with them
B. are proven to be less intelligent than once thought
C. have a reputation for being friendly to humans
D. are capable of learning a language and communicating with humans
2. The fact that the writer of the passage thinks that we can kill dolphins more easily than they can kill us _____.
A. means that they are better adapted to their environment than we are
B. shows that dolphins have a very sophisticated form of communication
C. proves that dolphins are not the most intelligent species at sea
D. does not mean that we are superior to them
3. One can infer from the reading that _____.
A. dolphins are quite abundant in some areas of the world
B. communication is the most fascinating aspect of the dolphins
C. dolphins have skills that no other living creatures have such as the ability to think
D. dolphins have some social traits that are similar to those of humans

PASSAGE 2:

When another old cave is discovered in the south of France, it is not usually news. Rather, it is an ordinary event. Such discoveries are so frequent these days that hardly anybody pays heed to them. However, when the Lascaux cave complex was discovered in 1940, the world was amazed. Painted directly on its walls were hundreds of scenes showing how people lived thousands of years ago. The scenes show people hunting animals, such as bison or wildcats. Other images depict birds and, most noticeably, horses, which appear in more than 300 wall images, by far outnumbering all other animals.

Early artists, drawing these animals, accomplished a monumental and difficult task. They did not limit themselves to the easily accessible walls but carried their painting materials to spaces that required climbing steep walls or crawling into narrow passages in the Lascaux complex. Unfortunately, the paintings have been exposed to the destructive action of water and temperature changes, which easily wear the images away. Because the Lascaux caves have many entrances, air movement has also damaged the images inside. Although they are not out in the open air, where natural light would have destroyed them long ago, many of the images have deteriorated and are barely recognizable. To prevent further damage, the site was closed to tourists in 1963, 23 years after it was discovered.

1. Which title best summarizes the main idea of the passage?
A. Wild Animals in Art
B. **Hidden Prehistoric Paintings**
C. Exploring Caves Respectfully
D. Determining the Age of French Caves
2. Based on the passage, what is probably true about the south of France?
A. It is home to rare animals.
B. **It has a large number of caves.**
C. It is known for horse-racing events.
D. It has attracted many famous artists.
3. According to the passage, which animals appear most often on the cave walls?
A. Birds
B. Bison
C. **Horses**
D. Wild cats
4. Why was the painting inside the Lascaux complex a difficult task?
A. It was completely dark inside.
B. The caves were full of wild animals.
C. Painting materials were hard to find.
D. **Many painting spaces were difficult to reach.**
5. According to the passage, all of the following have caused damage to the paintings EXCEPT _____.
A. temperature changes
B. air movement
C. water
D. **light**

6. What does the passage say happened at the Lascaux caves in 1963?

- A. **Visitors were prohibited from entering.**
- B. A new lighting system was installed.
- C. Another part was discovered.
- D. A new entrance was created.

PASSAGE 3:

A fact that draws our attention is that, according to his position in life, an extravagant man is either admired or loathed. A successful businessman does nothing to increase his popularity by being prudent with his money. A person who is wealthy is expected to lead a luxurious life and to be lavish with his hospitality. If he is not so, he is considered mean, and his reputation in business may even suffer in consequence. The paradox remains that had he not been careful with his money in the first place, he would never have achieved his present wealth.

Among the low income group, a different set of values exists. The young clerk, who makes his wife a present of a new dress when he has not paid his house rent, is condemned as extravagant. Carefulness with money to the point of meanness is applauded as a virtue. Nothing in his life is considered more worthy than paying his bills. The ideal wife for such a man separates her housekeeping money into joyless little piles – so much for rent, for food, for the children’s shoes, she is able to face the milkman with equanimity every month satisfied with her economizing ways, and never knows the guilt of buying something she can’t really afford.

As for myself, I fall into neither of these categories. If I have money to spare, I can be extravagant, but when, as is usually the case, I am hard up then I am the meanest man imaginable.

1. Which of the following would be the most appropriate title for the passage?
 - A. Being extravagant is always condemnable.
 - B. The cause of poverty is extravagance.
 - C. **Extravagance is a part of the rich as well as of the poor.**
 - D. Stingy habits of the poor.
2. According to the passage, the person who is a successful and wealthy businessman.....
 - A. **is expected to have lavish lifestyle.**
 - B. should not bother about popularity.
 - C. is more popular if he appears to be wasting away his time.
 - D. must be extravagant before achieving success.
3. The phrase „lavish with his hospitality” in the third sentence of the first paragraph means
 - A. Thoughtful in spending only on guests and strangers.
 - B. Unconcerned in treating his friends and relatives.
 - C. Stinginess in dealing with his relatives.
 - D. **Extravagance in entertaining guest.**
4. The word „paradox” in the last sentence of the first paragraph means
 - A. Statement based on the popular opinion
 - B. **A statement that seems self-contradictory but in reality, expresses a possible truth.**
 - C. Statement based on facts
 - D. A word that brings out the hidden meaning
5. What is the meaning of the word “equanimity”?
 - A. **Calmness**
 - B. Discomposure
 - C. Equivocal
 - D. Dubious

PASSAGE 4:

Marie Curie was one of the most accomplished scientists in history. Together with her husband, Pierre, she discovered radium, an element widely used for treating cancer, and studied uranium and other radioactive substances. Pierre and Marie’s amicable collaboration later helped to unlock the secrets of the atom.

Marie was born in 1867 in Warsaw, Poland, where her father was a professor of physics. At an early age, she displayed a brilliant mind and a blithe personality. Her great exuberance for learning, prompted her to continue with her studies after high school. She became disgruntled, however, when she learned that the university in Warsaw was closed to women. Determined to receive a higher education, she defiantly left Poland and in 1891 entered the Sorbonne, a French university, where she earned her master’s degree and doctorate in physics.

Marie was fortunate to have studied at the Sorbonne with some of the greatest scientists of her day, one of whom was Pierre Curie. Marie and Pierre were married in 1895 and spent many productive years working together in the physics laboratory. A short time after they discovered radium, Pierre was killed by a horse-drawn wagon in 1906. Marie was stunned by this horrible misfortune and endured heartbreaking anguish. Despondently she recalled their close relationship and the joy that they had shared in scientific research. The fact that she had two young daughters to raise by herself, greatly increased her distress.

Curie’s feeling of desolation finally began to fade when she was asked to succeed her husband as a physics professor at the Sorbonne. She was the first woman to be given a professorship at the world-famous university. In 1911 she received the Nobel Prize in chemistry for isolating radium. Although Marie Curie eventually suffered a fatal illness from her long exposure to radium, she never became disillusioned about her work. Regardless of the consequences, she had dedicated herself to science and to revealing the mysteries of the physical world.

1. The Curies' _____ collaboration helped to unlock the secrets of the atom.
A. **Friendly** B. Competitive C. Courteous D. Industrious
2. Marie had a bright mind and a _____ personality.
A. Strong B. **Lighthearted** C. Humorous D. Strange
3. When she learned that she could not attend the university in Warsaw, she felt _____.
A. Hopeless B. **Annoyed** C. Depressed D. Worried
4. Marie _____ by leaving Poland and traveling to France to enter the Sorbonne.
A. **Challenged authority** B. Showed intelligence C. Behaved D. Was distressed
5. _____ she remembered their joy together.
A. **Dejectedly** B. Worried C. Tearfully D. Irefully
6. Her _____ began to fade when she returned to the Sorbonne to succeed her husband.
A. Anger B. **Wretchedness** C. Disappointment D. Ambition

PASSAGE 5:

Chess is called the game of kings. It has been around for a long time. People have been playing it for over 500 years. Chess is based on an even older game from India. The chess we play today is from Europe.

Chess is a two-player game. One player uses the white pieces. The other uses the black pieces. Each piece moves in a special way. One piece is called the king. Each player has one. The players take turns moving their pieces. If a player lands on a piece, he or she takes it. The game ends when a player loses his or her king. There are a few more rules, but those are the basics.

Some people think that chess is more than a game. They think that it makes the mind stronger. Good chess players use their brains. They take their time. They think about what will happen next. These skills are useful in life and in chess. Chess is kind of like a work out for the mind.

You don't always have lots of time to think when playing chess. There is a type of chess with short time limits. It's called blitz chess. In blitz chess, each player gets ten minutes to use for the whole game. Your clock runs during your turn. You hit the time clock after your move. This stops your clock. It also starts the other player's clock. If you run out of time, you lose. Games of blitz chess are fast-paced.

Chess is not just for people. Computers have been playing chess since the 1970s. At first they did not play well. They made mistakes. As time went on they grew stronger. In 1997, a computer beat the best player in the world for the first time. It was a computer called Deep Blue. Deep Blue was big. It took up a whole room. By 2006 a cell phone could beat the best players in the world. Chess sure has come a long way. Don't you think so?

1. What is the author's purpose in writing the second paragraph?
A. **To explain the rules of chess** B. To compare different types of games
C. To talk about game pieces D. To persuade people to play chess
2. Which is not a reason that chess is a good workout for the mind according to the text?
A. Good chess players think about what will happen next. B. **Good chess players take a lot of risks.**
C. Good chess players take their time. D. Good chess players use their brains.
3. Where did the game that chess is based on come from?
A. Europe B. America C. **India** D. All of these
4. Which best describes the main idea in the fourth paragraph?
A. This paragraph argues that players should think less.
B. **This paragraph explains how blitz chess is played.**
C. This paragraph explains time clocks work.
D. This paragraph describes many different ways to play chess.
5. Which happened first?
A. **Computers did not play chess well.** B. Deep Blue won an important game.
C. Cell phones got good at playing chess. D. Deep Blue took up a whole room.
6. How is blitz chess different from regular chess?
A. Each player has two kings. B. Players are blindfolded.
C. **Players only have ten minutes to play.** D. Players start from a random position.
7. If it's your turn in blitz chess, what happens when you hit the clock?

- A. Both your clock and the other person's clock keep running.
- B. The other person's clock stops running and yours starts.
- C. Both clocks stop running.
- D. Your clock stops running, and the other person's clock begins.**

PASSAGE 6:

Mike and Morris lived in the same village. While Morris owned the largest jewelry shop in the village, Mike was a poor farmer. Both had large families with many sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren. One fine day, Mike, tired of not being able to feed his family, decided to leave the village and move to the city where he was certain to earn enough to feed everyone. Along with his family, he left the village for the city. At night, they stopped under a large tree. There was a stream running nearby where they could freshen up themselves. He told his sons to clear the area below the tree, he told his wife to fetch water and he instructed his daughters-in-law to make up the fire and started cutting wood from the tree himself. They didn't know that in the branches of the tree, there was a thief hiding. He watched as Mike's family worked together and also noticed that they had nothing to cook. Mike's wife also thought the same and asked her husband, "Everything is ready but what shall we eat?" Mike raised his hands to heaven and said, "Don't worry. He is watching all this from above. He will help us."

The thief got worried as he had seen that the family was large and worked well together. Taking advantage of the fact that they did not know he was hiding in the branches, he decided to make a quick escape. He climbed down safely when they were not looking and ran for his life. But he left behind the bundle of stolen jewels and money which dropped into Mike's lap. Mike opened it and jumped with joy when he saw the contents. The family gathered all their belongings and returned to the village. There was great excitement when they told everyone how they got rich.

Morris thought that the tree was miraculous and this was a nice and quick way to earn some money. He ordered his family to pack some clothes and they set off as if on a journey. They also stopped under the same tree and Morris started commanding everyone as Mike had done. But no one in his family was willing to obey his orders. Being a rich family, they were used to having servants all around. So, the one who went to the river to fetch water enjoyed a nice bath; the one who went to get wood for fire went off to sleep. Morris's wife said, "Everything is ready but what shall we eat?" Morris raised his hands and said, "Don't worry. He is watching all this from above. He will help us."

As soon as he finished saying, the thief jumped down from the tree with a knife in hand. Seeing him, everyone started running here and there to save their lives. The thief stole everything they had and Morris and his family had to return to the village empty handed, having lost all their valuables that they had taken with them.

1. Why did Mike and his family decide to rest under the thief's tree?
 - A. Being a large family, they knew that they could easily defeat the thief
 - B. It was a convenient spot for taking a halt at night**
 - C. There was a stream nearby and wood enough to build a house
 - D. That was the only large tree that could shelter their large family
2. Which of the following best describes Morris?
 - A. He was a rich businessman
 - B. He bullied his wife
 - C. He paid his servants well
 - D. He was greedy and imitated Mike**
3. What did Mike mean when he said, "He is watching all this from above"?
 - A. He had spotted the thief and wanted to scare him
 - B. He was telling his wife to have faith in god**
 - C. It was just a warning his family members to stick together
 - D. He was begging the thief to help his family
4. Why did the thief return to the tree?
 - A. To wait for Mike to return
 - B. To set up a trap
 - C. To wait for Morris's family
 - D. Not mentioned in the passage**
5. How did the fellow villagers react to Mike getting rich overnight?
 - A. They were jealous of him
 - B. They were very excited**
 - C. They followed his example
 - D. They envied him