Distinguishing relevant and irrelevant ideas

To distinguish relevant from irrelevant information~ follow these steps:

• Identify the main topic of the material.

• Determine which supporting ideas are directly related to the topic.

• Identify sentences or ideas that do not seem to be related to the main topic.

• Sort through the information you think might not be relevant. Try to connect it to the main topic.

• If you cannot make a connection, then it is probably irrelevant.

A) **Determining Relevant and Irrelevant Information in a Passage**

*One of the sentences in the paragraph is irrelevant to the main idea of the paragraph. Cross* *out the irrelevant sentence.*

\* \* \*The longest-lived creature in the insect world is the queen termite (ant). She has been known to live for over 50 years. During that time, the queen can lay over 30,000 eggs each day. So in her 50 years of life, it is possible for her to give birth to half a billion children. Some termite hills can be over six meters high.

\* \* \* For many years, all books were written by hand. Because it took so long to write one book, there were only a few of them. Most people could never own a book. Then sometime between 1450 and 1460, Johannes Gutenberg got the idea of carving separate letters and moving them to make new words. Gutenberg died at the age of 68. This was the invention of moveable type. From then on, the numbers of books printed grew quickly.

\* \* \* The solar system is believed to have formed, perhaps 5 billion years ago, from a spinning cloud of gas called a nebula. As this nebula contracted it began to spin faster and faster. Probably it spun off rings of planetary matter as it became more disk-like. These rings later contracted into planets. Earth is the third planet from the Sun.

\* \* \* Some people do not know that the whale is a mammal just like a human. Humpback whales will sometimes leap clear up out of the water, an act known as breaching. A humpback whale can weigh thirty tons and measure 15 meters in length. So it takes an enormous amount of energy for a whale to breach.

\* \* \* The largest organ in the human body is the skin. One of the skin's functions is to help regulate the amount of body heat that flows in and out of the body. Heavy smoking ages skin very quickly. When it is cold, we cover the skin with extra layers of clothing to slow down the outward flow of heat. When it is hot, evaporation of sweat cools us down.

\* \* \* The largest set of wings on any bird, more than three meters across, is found on the albatross. They are so heavy that it is difficult for the albatross to flap them in order to take off and fly. Not all large birds can fly. Albatross often nest on steep cliffs so that they can simply fall off into the air. Once they are airborne, they soar gracefully. Lake Baikal in central Asia is the deepest lake in the world. In places, it is 1.5 kilometres deep. The lake contains about one sixth of the world's fresh water supply. It contains over 1200 species of animals and 500 species of plants. Many of these plants and animals are not to be found anywhere else on earth. The name Baikal comes from the Mongolian word that means 'nature'.

\* \* \* Ice floats on water because it is not quite as dense as water is. The chemical formula for water is H20. If ice were denser than water, then lakes and other bodies of water would freeze from the bottom up during the winter. Fish would surface and eventually die.

\* \* \* Bats are able to manoeuver in the dark even if they are blindfolded. However, if their ears are taped shut they cannot find their way. Bats emit very high pitched sound waves through their nostrils. The reflection of these sound waves reaching their sensitive ears enables bats to avoid obstacles. In this way they can capture even very tiny insects. Many bats prefer to eat fruit than insects.

\* \* \* The cheetah, which is found mostly in Africa and India, is one of the fastest land animals. Cheetahs, like leopards, are covered in spots. They have long and muscular legs. Cheetahs have been known to sprint at a speed of over 60 miles per hour. On a long distance run, however, a cheetah can be overtaken by a horse.

\* \* \* It is estimated that the temperature of the inner core of the planet earth is between four and five thousand degrees Celsius. In some parts of the world, Fahrenheit is the unit used to measure temperature. Lava, the molten rock that flows down the sides of an erupting volcano, is much cooler. Even so, fresh lava is hot enough to emit light. A night view of an erupting volcano is a spectacular sight.

\* \* \* The elephant is about as heavy as a land animal can be. The larger an animal is, the larger the diameter of its legs. An antelope has slender legs. A horse's legs are somewhat thicker and those of an elephant are even thicker. If the elephant were much larger, its legs would touch one another and it wouldn't be able to move at all. Indian elephants have smaller ears than African elephants.

B) **Irrelevant sentence**

*Read the paragraphs below and identify the sentence that does not fit in each.*

1. (I) Science is systematic because of the attention it gives to organizing knowledge and making it readily accessible to all who wish to build on its foundation. (II) If the results support the hypothesis, the scientist may use them to generate related hypothesis. (III) In this way science is both a personal and a social endeavour. (IV) In other words, it is beneficial both to the individual and to society at large. (V) Therefore, science contributes a great deal to the improvement and the quality of human life.
2. (I) As people age, the amount of water in the body decreases. (II) Since many drugs dissolve in water and since less water is available to dilute them, these drugs reach higher level of concentration in the elderly. (III) Also, the kidneys are less able to excrete drugs into the urine, and the liver is less able to metabolize many drugs. (IV) For these reasons, many drugs tend to stay in an elderly person’s body much longer than they would in a younger person’s body. (V) People in every civilization in recorded history have used drugs of plant and animal origin to prevent and treat disease.
3. (I) Many Romantic writers in Europe were preoccupied with the fact and idea of revolution. (II) For instance, in the early period of French Revolution, all the leading English Romantic were in sympathy with it. (III) In fact, they were among its most fervent adherents. (IV) Through the greater part of the eighteenth century, man had been viewed a limited being in strictly ordered and essentially unchanging world. (V) Later, even after the first enthusiastic expectations had been disappointed by the events in France, the younger writers felt that its example still constituted humanity’s best hope.
4. (I) Modern Bergama is a sleepy agricultural market town in the midst of a well-watered plain. (II) There has been a town here since Trojan times. (III) Of Bergama’s four main tourists attractions, only the museum is in centre of the town. (IV) However, it was during the period between Alexander the Great and the Roman domination that Bergama, then called Pergamum, enjoyed its greatest prosperity. (V) At that time, it became one of the Middle East’s richest and most powerful small kingdoms.
5. (I) Seismic waves are the vibrations from earthquakes that travel through Earth. (II) The Richter magnitude scale was developed in 1935 by Charles F. Richter of the California Institute of Technology to compare the intensity of earthquakes. (III) They are recorded on instruments called seismographs. (IV) Seismographs record a zigzag trace that shows the varying amplitude of ground oscillations beneath the instrument. (V) Sensitive seismographs, which greatly magnify these ground movements, can detect strong earthquakes from sources anywhere in the world.
6. (I) In the fall of 2000 and the winter of 2001, Britain was beset by a series of problems. (II) In September 2000, rising oil prices prompted protests by truck drivers and farmers who demanded a reduction in the fuel tax. (III) In November 2000, a series of unusually severe rainstorms and tornadoes caused high flooding and killed 12 people. (IV) In June 2001, Blair won a second landslide victory, with the Labor Party capturing 413 seats in Parliament. (V) In February 2001, foot-and-mouth disease broke out among British livestock, prompting other countries to ban British meat import and forcing the slaughter of thousands of cattle, pigs and sheep.