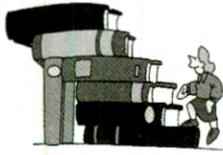




## Topic 1: Speed Reading Strategies

We get to read a variety of content on a regular basis and it is important that we understand and comprehend what we read. In order to achieve complete comprehension of any reading material, a reader has to possess a high degree of concentration. With increased levels of concentration, a good reader will be able to read and comprehend documents at a faster rate. Such speed-reading abilities are particularly important while answering competitive examinations as it would result in saving precious time.



Some of the ways to improve reading speed are:

### **Widening the eye span**

#### Widen your eye span

If you read word by word, chances are you will read slower than if you were to read larger sections of text at a time.

Eye-span refers to the number of words that a reader can read for each fixation of the eyes. An evolved reader has an expanded eye span. For that to happen, you should consciously increase your eye-span.

**Drill 1****Exercise 1**

Read the following three passages using the speed-reading tactics and experience the difference in your speed.

**Aqueducts**

What is an aquaduct? An Aquaduct is an artificial channel built to transport water. An aquaduct may be an open or enclosed canal, a tunnel, or a pipeline; water through a canal constructed by ancient cultures in India and Mesopotamia, but probably the most extensive in the ancient world. Aqua Apia was the first to be built over a valley or a river. Aquaducts were constructed by the Romans. It provided the city with about 143,845 cubic aquaduct about 16 km (10 miles) long. More than ten aquaducts meters (38 million gallons) of water each day. Interestingly, some parts of these aquaducts are still in use today. They supply water to fountains in Rome. Also, the ancient Romans built aquaducts in all parts of the empire, many of which still exist.

**Dolphins and Man**

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 contrary, the more we discover least satisfactory. On the creatures, the less we appear about these remarkable superior when we destroy them.

## Benjamin Franklin and his Short Stories

Benjamin Franklin is one of the finest writers that America has ever produced. Essays by Benjamin Franklin have acted as a sort of yardstick for essay writers. The supple, satirical and witty style in which Benjamin Franklin normally wrote entertains readers wonderfully well. Benjamin Franklin essays are not only witty, they also enlighten one on the contemporary social, economic and political issues. Essays by Benjamin Franklin are rich in humour and satire drawn from real-life experiences. The essays by Benjamin Franklin are punctuated with laughter elements to grab the highest possible attention of mass readers.



## Topic 2: RC - Types and Tackling Strategies

**There are two types of questions that can be asked based on a passage:**

- Literal questions

Literal questions are questions for which answers are found explicitly in the passage.

- Inferential questions

Inferential questions are those for which you have to analyze the given passage, understand it fully and then answer the questions.

**For example:** The starved cat walked slowly around the kitchen. He looked cautiously at the work surface and leapt up on to it. He greedily ate the chicken flavored cat food from the bowl, looking around all the time. He cleaned the plate and looked at the fridge before jumping back down.

### Questions:

1. The cat is a male- **true**/ false/ can't say (inferential question)
2. The cat is hungry- **true**/ false/ can't say (literal question)

3. The cat's favourite food is chicken flavor- yes/ no/ **can't say**

4. It was raining outside- yes/ no/ **can't say**

Answering inferential questions needs weighing the evidences in the passage. An evolved reader will know how to ignore the "not-so-important" sentences. Interestingly, people are evolved enough to ignore needless letters.

**Example:** We shld trvl.

Though the words are not complete, we are evolved enough to realise that the sentence should have read "We should travel."

### Tackling Strategies

There are five strategies to tackle RC passages. They are

#### 1. Take different types of approaches:

Consider that you are asked to look around a house and you are supposed to answer a questionnaire that is based on the house. There are three approaches to go about this:

##### Scholar approach:

In this approach, you would go to each and every room in the house, take notes and obtain detailed information about each object in the room and come back to the questionnaire and answer the questions. This method is time-consuming but is very efficient.



##### Hunter approach:

In this approach, you would glance at the questions first, locate each room and then search for the answers in the appropriate rooms.



##### Balanced approach:

In this approach, you would first look around the house as to know the rooms in the house, then glance at the questions and answer them. This method is more effective compared to



the other two approaches. This is a combination of the two approaches dealt with before.

Quite analogous to the above, we can analyse a given RC passage in 3 ways – scholar approach, hunter approach and balanced approach. In the scholar approach, you read the whole passage in detail, taking down notes and answering the questions following one by one. In the hunter approach, you run through the questions once, run through the passage to know the probable location of answers, read that part in detail and answer. In the balanced approach, you rush through the passage to understand which portion of the passage speaks of what, rush through the questions and answer them one by one.

## 2. Look for signpost words:

Signpost words are either positive or negative. Consider a person driving a car. He slows down when he is not clear about which route to take, and takes the help of signposts in determining which direction to travel. A positive signpost word is one which helps continue with the same argument but with new evidences to prove or to further substantiate the argument. On the other hand, a negative signpost word is one which indicates a shift in the argument and presents a different idea from what was provided before the signpost word.



## 3. Go around speed-breakers:

A speed-breaker is a word / phrase which you might not understand. Another reason for a slow reading pace is the presence of speed-breaker(s). When you find a speed-breaker, you simply needn't stop to analyse the meaning. When you find an unfamiliar word and you are not clear about the meaning, you can understand it based on the context of the sentence.



When you find a tree trunk on the middle of the road, there is no need for you to clear the place completely and then move on. It is better to take a diversion and continue.



Similarly if you find a new word, you can just skip it off and continue. By doing this you need not worry if you would miss the main theme of the passage. Remember, a good author will reiterate his thoughts in the passage.

#### **4. Itemize:**

Itemization of a passage is all about segregating the passage into introduction, body and conclusion. The body itself can be segregated into various headings (items) like examples, illustrations, explanations, supportive / counter arguments and so on. This exercise is useful in tackling very long passages because it helps you to look for answers to the questions at the end of the passage at the right areas. This way, you will save time spent in reading all through the passage in looking for answers to questions.

#### **Tips to find answers:**

- Understand the key points in each paragraph of the given passage and summarize them. This will help in arriving at certain answers directly.
- While answering questions based on identifying the theme of the passage or choosing the best possible title for the passage, it is essential that the entire passage be read. The content of the introduction or the conclusion by itself shouldn't be the basis for the choice. The most encompassing (the idea that is expressed throughout the passage) option should be chosen.
- If a sentence in the options has been exactly replicated from the passage in the context of the given question, then that should be chosen as the answer.
- Whenever there are two or more close options as in the example given below, extra attention should be given to the words used.

**e.g.**, The sentence given in the passage is as follows: "Most of the men in the country were against women working."

The options are as follows:

- a. All the men in the country were against women working.

- b. There were a lot of men in the country against women working.
- c. Few of the men in the country were against women working.
- d. 90% of men in the country were against the women working.

Here, the only possible answer is option *b* because it is the only one that exactly conveys the meaning given in the passage.



## Drill 2

### Exercise 1

**Read the following passage and answer the questions below:**

One day a visitor knocked at Nasreddin Shah's door. "I am your cousin from Konya," he introduced himself, "and I have brought you a duck to celebrate the visit." Nasreddin was delighted. He asked his wife to cook the duck, and served the visitor a fine dinner.

The next day another visitor arrived. "I am a friend of the man who brought you the duck," he said. Nasreddin invited him in and gave him a good meal. The next day, a yet another visitor arrived, claiming that he was the friend of the friend of the man who had brought the duck. Nasreddin treated this man too with a fine meal, but began to get second thoughts that visitors are using his house as a restaurant.

Then another visitor came, and said he was the friend of the friend of the friend of the man who had brought the duck. Nasreddin invited him to eat dinner with him. His wife served this visitor some soup and the visitor tasted it. "What kind of soup is this?" asked the visitor very curiously. "It tastes just like warm water." "Ah!" said Nasreddin, "That is the soup of the soup of the soup of the duck." The visitor was bewildered!

**Questions:**

1. How many people visited Nasreddin Shah?
2. Why was Nasreddin Shah delighted?
3. What made Nasreddin Shah have second thoughts?
4. How did Nasreddin Shah handle the tricky situation he was in?

**Exercise 2**

**Read the following passage and answer the questions below:**

The City Street Manager, Mr. Joseph Parks said that the winter parking rules will be in effect in the city from December 1 through March 31. These rules include alternate-side parking regulations, as well as demarcation of tow-away zones and handicap exceptions. Cars are to be parked on the south and east sides of streets from 8 a.m. to midnight; and on the north and west sides of streets between midnight and 8 a.m. This will help snow-ploughs and emergency vehicles get access to all neighbourhoods, as well as to keep rush-hour traffic to a minimum. Parks had further warned that all vehicles that [excepting those displaying handicapped parking permits] do not follow these guidelines will be towed at the owner's expense.

**Questions:**

1. What is the main idea of the passage?
2. When should cars be parked on the east side of the road?

3. What are the winter-parking rules? What are their purpose(s)?

### Exercise 3

**Read the following passage to state which word(s) you would consider as speed-breaker(s). For how many of these, were you able to get at the meaning as you proceeded with reading the passage?**

I discovered that my obsession for having each thing in the right place, each subject at the right time, each word in the right style, was not the well-deserved reward of an ordered mind but just the opposite: a complete system of pretense invented by me to hide the disorder of my nature. I discovered that I am not disciplined out of virtue but as a reaction to my negligence, that I appear generous in order to conceal my meanness, that I pass myself off as prudent because I am evil-minded, that I am conciliatory in order not to succumb to my repressed rage, that I am punctual only to hide how little I care about other people's time. I learned, in short, that love is not a condition of the spirit but a sign of the zodiac.

SPEED-BREAKER	MEANING