

ACE READING COMPREHENSION *for* CAT



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Chapter 1: Introduction to Reading Comprehension

1.1 Introduction

Verbal ability is a section found in nearly all competitive exams. It is an important testing parameter to judge a person's verbal aptitude, comprising language skills, grammar and vocabulary. Within the Verbal section, reading comprehension is a key area. It generally presents a big hurdle for the candidates, as it tests the language skills of the candidates and topics are from diverse areas with varying levels of difficulty.

This book will equip you on basics of how to read, where to read from and other tips to improve your comprehension.

Structure of Reading Comprehension

Usually, you are given passages with 3- 4 paragraphs and these passages could be short or long (200- 500 words). Occasionally, you see a poem given for reading comprehension. Each RC passage may have approximately 3- 5 questions. Questions would be followed by 4 or 5 options. Content wise the passages would be from diverse fields such as social science, natural science, economics, politics, technology etc. You are not expected to have any prior knowledge of the



various topics. However, having some familiarity with various topics enhance your comprehension.

1.2 What is measured?

- a. Your ability to understand written English
- b. Your ability to relate logical relationship between facts and concepts
- c. Your Ability to draw inferences-
- d. Your ability to mark correct answers within the time limit.

1.3 What skills are required?

- Regular reading habit
- Exposure to diverse topics
- Remaining focussed while reading
- Engaging with the passage
- Comprehension skills
- Comfortable reading speed so as not to lose focus on comprehension



1.4 How to use this book

- This book adopts a step by step approach to help you improve your reading skills
- You are requested to go through each chapter sequentially. Do not jump to the other chapter before understanding and imbibing the concepts mentioned in the previous chapter
- Practise simultaneously from the practise exercise given at the end of the chapters (wherever applicable)



Chapter 2: Tips to overcome challenges faced while attempting RC

2.1 Some of the challenges faced:

a. I get distracted while reading

Suggestion:

Practise reading every day. Set a target and maintain a disciplined routine for reading. First begin with whatever interests you. Gradually move to diverse topics and read minimum 2- 3 RC passages every day.

Making notes, or summarising in the margin can be very helpful in creating a mind map of the structure – as you read along. Try it out and experience the benefits.

b. I get lost in the vocabulary and complex sentences

Suggestion:

When you solve RC passages in the exam make sure that vocabulary constraints do not come in the way of the comprehending the passage. Though it is likely that some of the words in the passage are unfamiliar to you, try to guess the meaning of those unfamiliar words from the context in which they are used. Focus on the key idea/ main idea of each paragraph rather than focussing on individual words.

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- c. I go to previous lines again and again because I lose track of what I read**

Suggestion:

Use the note making technique. Some people trace their way through the passage using their finger or a pencil. Using a pacer helps avoid regression, enhances your focus on the text, and your concentration.

- d. I understand only when I underline**

Suggestion:

On the computer based test, you cannot underline. You can just move your pen/finger across the lines.

Substitute underlining by writing the key idea in the margin or on the piece of paper.

- e. I get confused while marking the answers**

Suggestion:

First understand the type of question asked and the technique to answer those questions.

For example, a question may ask: *which of the following options makes the author's conclusion supportable?* Comprehension of this question would mean that you first define the author's conclusion in the passage. In



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this case, many of us tend to spend more time evaluating the options without understanding the conclusion or the main idea of the passage

Whenever you are confused by the options, you need to check whether it is your inadequate comprehension of either the passage or the question that is creating the confusion.



Chapter 3: Reading Comprehension Passage Types

All questions are to be answered on the basis of what is stated or implied in the reading material.

To answer the questions, you need not be an expert in any of the subjects mentioned earlier, but you need a general awareness of these topics.

The best way to build awareness is through consistent reading on diverse subjects.

3.1 Different Passage types

A. Social Science Passages

These passages would be from areas such as history, politics, and geography. These passages are enjoyable to read and are not too dense.

Generally, a lot of inferential questions are based on these passages, which check your reading ability as well as how closely you have followed the passage.

Sample Passage

For most Americans and Europeans, this should be the best time in all of **human history** to live. Survival — the very purpose of all life — is nearly guaranteed for large parts of the world, especially in the West.



This should allow **people a sense of security** and contentment. If life is no longer, as Thomas Hobbes famously wrote, “nasty, brutish, and short,” then should it not be pleasant, dignified, and long? To know that tomorrow is nearly guaranteed, along with thousands of additional tomorrows, should be enough to render hundreds of millions of people awe-struck with happiness.

And **modern humans**, especially in the West, have every opportunity to be free, even as they enjoy ever-longer lives. Why is it, then, that so many people feel unhappy and trapped? The answer lies in the constant pressure of trying to meet needs that don’t actually exist.

The word *need* has been used with less and less precision in modern life. Today, many things are described as needs, including fashion items, SUVs, vacations, and other luxuries. **People say, “I need a new car,”** when their current vehicle continues to function. People with many pairs of shoes may still say they “need” a new pair.

Clearly, this careless usage is inaccurate; neither the new car nor the additional shoes are truly “needed.”

Key words:- Human history, people need, modern humans, people need car, shoes etc.

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B. Business & Economics Passages

These passages are based on important Economic theories and business events. It is important for you to get acquainted with the language of business and economics, understanding the terminology from this field .Work on your business knowledge and vocabulary to be comfortable with these passages.

Sample Passage

On **inflation**, the risk to the upside comes from the severe El Nino conditions that we are facing, which is affecting weather conditions globally and the impact this could have on **food prices**. Another upside risk comes from the fact that higher growth means that the output gap is going to continue to narrow and in our forecast close at some point in 2016. So inflation might tend to tick up. Apart from that if the Pay Commission **wage hike** comes through and if **GST** comes through, both of them in the short term will be **inflationary** for the economy. So, there are risks to inflation, which are clearly skewed to the upside.

Key words: inflation, food prices, wage hike, food prices, GST etc.



3.2 How should I prepare

If you are a beginner

- Read at least 3- 5 articles of your area of interest and try to summarize them in your own words.
- Make a record of your summary in a notebook
- Your immediate goal is to form a habit of reading, which will come by disciplined practice.
- Then gradually move to diverse topics and focus on comprehension

If you an average Reader

- Focus on moving to diverse topics and reading for ideas
- Focus on your comprehension skills

If you are a Good Reader

- Your goal should be to read challenging material (area you are not very comfortable with)
- Solve 2-3 passages everyday
- Focus on accuracy under simulated exam condition (on the computer and within specific time).

Chapter 4: Speed Reading Technique

4.1 Is speed important?

Speed of reading differs from person to person. What's important is a right balance of speed with comprehension. If you don't understand what you read than you are just wasting your time.

Also, it shouldn't be too slow. Because when you read slowly it might happen that while reading some other simultaneous thoughts are flashing in front of you.

4.2 Check your speed

Now that you have a benchmark, make it a point to calculate your reading speed by approximating the number of words and dividing it by the time taken in minutes to read the passage. This passage had 545 words in all.

Refer to the table below to calculate your reading speed in words per minute (WPM):

Time	WPM	Time	WPM	Time	WPM
30 s	1090	2 min 40 s	204	4 min 40 s	117
45 s	727	2 min 50 s	192	4 min 50 s	113
1 min	545	3 min	182	5 min	109
1 min 10 s	467	3 min 10 s	172	5 min 10 s	105



1 min 20 s	409	3 min 20 s	164	5 min 20 s	102
1 min 30 s	363	3 min 30 s	156	5 min 30 s	99
1 min 40 s	327	3 min 40 s	149	5 min 40 s	96
1 min 50 s	297	3 min 50 s	142	5 min 50 s	93
2 min	273	4 min	136	6 min	91
2 min 10 s	252	4 min 10 s	131	6 min 10 s	88
2 min 20 s	234	4 min 20 s	126	6 min 20 s	86
2 min 30 s	218	4 min 30 s	121	6 min 30 s	84

4.3 Techniques to improve reading speed

Requirement:

1. Book to read
2. Watch/ Stop clock
3. Pen/ pencil
4. Your current speed of reading
5. Your Approach to the Course:
 - attitude—having a positive outlook, trust, and a willing suspension of disbelief
 - motivation—keeping your goals in mind and being disciplined with practice even if you do not experience immediate results.



Technique 1: Trackers and Pacers

Why use this Method:

To avoid regression i.e to read the lines by going back every time. The duration of fixations can be minimized by using a tracker and pacer.

Holding the pen in your dominant hand, you will underline each line (with the cap on), keeping your eye fixation above the tip of the pen.

This will not only serve as a tracker, but it will also serve as a pacer for maintaining consistent speed and decreasing fixation duration.

Requirements

You will need: a book of 200+ pages that can lay flat when open, a pen, and a timer (a stop watch with alarm is ideal). You should complete the 20 minutes of exercises in one session

Technique for using Tracker and Pacer

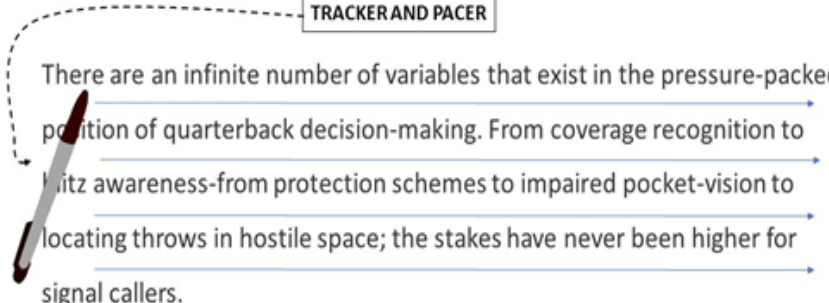
1) Step 1 (Practise for 2 minutes)

- A. Practice using the pen as a tracker and pacer.
- B. Underline each line, focusing above the tip of the pen.



- C. Do not concern yourself with comprehension.
- D. Keep each line to a maximum of one second, and increase the speed with each subsequent page. Read, but under no circumstances should you take longer than one second per line.

TRACKER AND PACER



There are an infinite number of variables that exist in the pressure-packed position of quarterback decision-making. From coverage recognition to blitz awareness-from protection schemes to impaired pocket-vision to locating throws in hostile space; the stakes have never been higher for signal callers.

Step 2: Build Speed (3 minutes):

- A. Repeat the technique, keeping each line to no more than one-half second (two lines for a single second).
- B. Some will comprehend nothing, which is to be expected. Don't worry.
- C. Maintain speed and technique-you are conditioning your perceptual reflexes, and this is a speed exercise designed to facilitate adaptations in your system.



- D. Do not decrease speed. One-half second per line for three minutes; focus above the pen and concentrate on technique with speed. Focus on the exercise, and do not daydream.

Step 3: Practise for 20 mins

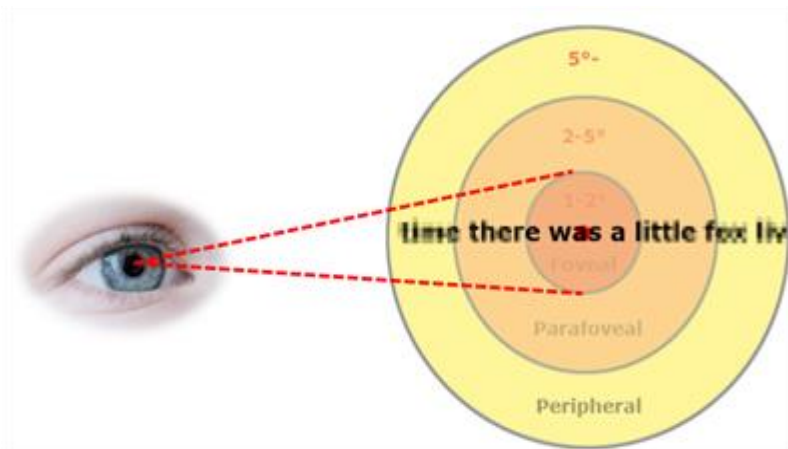
Step 4: Now check your speed.

Technique 2: Perceptual Expansion

Why use this method

According to Tim Ferriss, an average reader who reads from the 1st word to the last word of each line, are only using 50% of their peripheral vision.

The way to improve your peripheral vision is what Ferriss calls Perceptual Expansion.





Training peripheral vision to register more effectively can increase reading speed over untrained readers who use up to one-half of their peripheral field on margins by moving from first word to last, spending 25-50 percent of their time “reading” margins with no content. This concept is easy to implement and combine with the tracking and pacing you’ve already practiced.

To illustrate, let us take the hypothetical one line:

“Once upon a time, students enjoyed reading four hours a day.”

If you were able to begin your reading at “time” and finish the line at “four,” you would eliminate 6 of 11 words, more than doubling your reading speed.

We’ll break down this reading exercise in 2 simple steps:

Step 1: Technique (one minute):

- a. Use the pen to track and pace at a consistent speed of one line per second. Begin one word in from the first word of each line, and end one word in from the last word.
- b. Do not concern yourself with comprehension.
- c. Keep each line to a maximum of one second, and increase the speed with each subsequent page.



- d. Read, but under no circumstances should you take longer than one second per line.

Step 2: Technique (one minute):

- a. Use the pen to track and pace at a consistent speed of one line per second.
- b. Begin two words in from the first word of each line, and end two words in from the last word.

Step 3: Speed (three minutes):

Begin at least three words in from the first word of each line, and end three words in from the last word. Repeat the technique, keeping each line to no more than one-half second .

Note: Some will comprehend nothing, which is to be expected. Maintain speed and technique-you are conditioning your perceptual reflexes, and this is a speed exercise designed to facilitate adaptations in your system. Do not decrease speed. One-half second per line for three minutes; focus above the pen and concentrate on technique with speed. Focus on the exercise, and do not daydream.



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Step 4: Calculate New WPM Reading Speed

Mark your first line and read with a timer for one minute exactly. Read at your fastest comprehension rate.



Chapter 5: Techniques to improve Comprehension

A. Note making Technique

Here's how it works. You read a paragraph and then, take a quick note of what you just read. Then you simply repeat this process, read a paragraph, take a note. Read another paragraph, take another note. These notes should be quick. Just write a word or a phrase that describes the content in that paragraph.

Learn to take notes faster and more efficiently.

- Keep your notes concise.
- Write ideas not sentences
- Keep your notes to keywords and phrases
- Write down only what's absolutely necessary
- Avoid excessive highlighting
- "When you get caught..."up in details, you lose sight of the big picture. " This is one of the biggest issues when it comes to note-taking. People get caught up in details. .
- A better way to handle this would be ...to finish reading the paragraph and then decide...



Sample Passage – 1

Almost all of us have suffered from a headache at some time or the other. For some a headache is a constant companion and life is a painful hell of wasted time.

The most important step to cope with headaches is to identify the type of headache one is suffering from. In tension headaches (two hand headache), a feeling of a tight band around the head exits along with the pain in the neck and shoulders. It usually follows activities such as long stretches driving, typing or sitting on the desks. They are usually short lived but can also last for days or weeks.

A headache is usually caused due to the spinal misalignment of the head, due to the posture. Sleeping on the stomach with the head turn to one side and bending over positions for a long time make it worse.

In migraine headaches, the pains usually on one side of the head may be accompanied by nausea, vomiting irritability and bright spots or flashes of light. This headache is meant worse by activities especially bending. The throbbing pain in the head worsens by noise and light. Certain triggers for migraines may be chocolate, caffeine, smoking or MSU in certain food items. The pain may last eight to twenty four hours and



there may be a hangover for two or three days. Migraines are often produced by an 'aura'-----changes in sight and sensation. There is usually a family migraine.

In a headache, pain originates from the brain but from the irritated nerves of muscles, blood vessels and bones. These head pain signals to the brain which judges the degree of distress and relays it at appropriate sites. The pain sometimes may be referred to sights other than the problem areas. This is known as referred by pain and occurs due to sensation overload. Thus, though, most headache states at the base of the skull referred pain as felt typically behind the eyes.

Factors causing headache are understood but it is known that a shift in the level of body hormones chemicals, certain foods and drinks and environmental stress can trigger them.

If the headache troubles you often, visit the doctor, who will take a full health history relating to diet, life stresses, the type of headache, triggering factors and relief measures. You may be asked to keep a 'headache diary' which tells you to list – the time headache started and when it ended, emotional environmental and food and drinking factors which may contribute to it. The type



and severity of pain and the medications used which provide much relief are also to be listed.

This helps the doctor in determining the exact cause and type of headache and the remedy thereof.

	Key idea	Supporting ideas
Para 1	Identification	(i) tension headache, or (ii) migraine headache
Para 2	Symptoms	i) Tension headaches (a) feeling tight band around head (b) pain in neck and shoulders (ii) Migraine headaches (a) pain on one side of the head (b) vomiting and irritability (c) bright sport of flashes of light
Para 3	Causes	(i) Tension headaches (a) long stretches of driving (b) long hours of typing or sitting on the desk (ii) Migraine headache. (a) Chocolate, coffee, smoking. (b) MSU is certain food items
Para 4	Treatment	(i) Self –care techniques for shorter period. (ii) Doctor advice for permanent treatments.



Summary: Life becomes a painful hell if headache becomes once constants companion. In order to find an effective cure for it, is very important to identify the type of headache one suffering from. It can be tension headache or a migraine, and the treatment as to be found as accordingly. Complete 'headache diary' if maintained may help the doctor find the perfect remedy to triggering factors responsible for it. Self-medication should be done for only a short-term relief and with the greatest caution. Doctor's advice is a must if it persists for a longer time.

5.1 Creating Visual Maps

A. Mind Maps

What are mind maps:

A visual or a pictorial ways of taking down notes while reading are called as Mind Maps. A great way to organize non-linear information is to take notes visually.

Suitable For:

The topics of business, law, physics, medicine etc. where information is not presented in a linear way and is not in a set specific order. You don't need to remember it in a set order. You just need to know that all of the concepts and details are associated with a single topic. A great



way to organize non-linear information is to take notes visually.

How to make mind maps

Mind maps consist of a central idea in the middle. If you were taking notes while reading, this might be the title of your chapter with nodes extending from that central idea. Their surrounding boxes or bubbles could be headings and subheadings within your chapter, or main points from the material you are reading. Mind maps can include colour and other visuals to help you remember even more effectively. Just make sure your note taking reflects the way in which the information is structured



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Chapter 6: Reading Better and Faster

6.1 Six Canons of Better and Faster Comprehension

To achieve your goal of faster reading speed and understanding, pay close attention to these important rules:

1. Read More and More
2. Learn to Read for Main Ideas
3. Challenge Your Comprehension
4. Budget Your Time
5. Pace Yourself
6. Develop Habits of Immediate Concentration

6.2 10 Tips that form The Basis of Reading

Reading of all types opens up vistas of knowledge at any level.. But sadly reading is not everyone's cup of tea. In this final section, we share with you a few fundamental tips to help improve your reading habits.

1. You don't need to understand each and every word.
2. Identify your purpose of reading
3. What to choose for reading
4. Read only the top-end material



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5. Scrutinize before starting
6. List your preferences
7. The environment should be conducive and pleasant
8. Finish what you start
9. Maintain your focus
10. Never Stop:



RC Practise Exercise

Let us try to apply the learning

In the following passages:

- a. Identify the topic of the passage
- b. Summarise each paragraph in one line

Passage - 1

In pre-penicillin 1937, medicine was cheap and very ineffective. If you were in a hospital it was going to do you good only because it offered you some warmth, some food, shelter, and the caring attention of a nurse. Doctors and medicine made no difference at all. This was when the core structure of medicine was created – what it meant to be good at what we did and how we wanted to build medicine to be. If you had a prescription pad, if you had a nurse, if you had a hospital that would give you a place to convalesce, maybe some basic tools, you really could do it all. This was a life as a craftsman. As a result, we built it around a culture and set of values that said what you were good at was being daring, at being courageous, at being independent and self-sufficient. Autonomy was our highest value.



Well, we've now discovered 4,000 medical procedures. We've discovered 6,000 drugs. And we've reached the point where we've realized, as doctors, we can't know it all. We're all specialists now. But holding onto that structure we built around the daring, independence, self-sufficiency of each of those people has become a disaster. We have trained, hired and rewarded people to be cowboys. But it's pit crews that we need, pit crews for patients.

As we've looked at the data about the results that have come as the complexity has increased, we found that the most expensive care is not necessarily the best care. And vice versa, the best care often turns out to be the least expensive. But when we look at the positive deviants -- the ones who are getting the best results at the lowest costs -- we find the ones that look the most like systems are the most successful. Having great components is not enough, and yet we've been obsessed in medicine with components. We want the best drugs, the best technologies, the best specialists, but we don't think too much about how it all comes together.

Extracted from a TED talk by AtulGawande



Answer key & Explanation

Passage - 1	Para 1	Early doctors were more independent artists than scientists.
	Para 2	Team work is important in medicine now.
	Para 3	Good players don't make good teams.