**Reading and Comprehension**

**Step 1:** Skim once as rapidly as possible to determine the main idea before you look at the questions. Do not worry about words you do not know at this stage.  
**Step 2:** Underline the words that you do not understand to facilitate a complete understanding of the passage. This will enable you to solve the vocabulary questions quicker.  
**Step 3:** Look through the words carefully. You are advised to maintain the order in which the questions appear in the test paper. Read intensively the portion relevant to the answer.  
**Step 4:** Concentrate on the vocabulary items and puzzle out from the context the meanings of those words you do not know.

**Ideas to Follow While Skimming**

1. Read the title of the passage/ poem very carefully, if given. Determine what clues it gives you about the passage/poem.
2. Watch for keywords like causes, results, effects etc. Do not overlook signal words such as those suggesting controversy (e.g., versus, pros and cons), which indicate that the author is intending to present both sides of an argument.
3. Concentrate on the main ideas and ignore details. Most passages require at least two readings. Before writing the answer, check the questions again to be sure you have understood them.

**Guidelines to Attempt Comprehension Passage**

1. First of all, read the passage quickly and study the questions given at the end of your passage.
2. Start your second reading of the passage. This reading should be thorough. Underline key sentences or words related to the given questions.
3. While answering the questions, try not to give vague or general answers; be specific; sometimes students use one general description when four or five points have to be made. Avoid general answers.
4. Write in short, simple sentences unless required to do otherwise.
5. Do not repeat yourself. This is a waste of time. Avoid using slang. Do not use vague words when a precise one will do.
6. Make sure that you use your own words as far as possible. This means that you must summarise and’ interpret information; never copy whole ‘chunks’ from the passage.
7. When answering factual questions, i.e., questions that involve words like ‘what7, ‘when’, ‘how’ and ‘why’, do not include information not given in the passage. While answering the ‘why’ question, you may begin your answer with ‘This is because of or a similar phrase.
8. While answering vocabulary questions, determine the part of speech of the word. Your answer should have the same part of speech.

**Strategy to answer the title questions correctly:**

1. Identify the subject/central idea: Identify the subject of the passage and make sure it reflects in the answer options (implicitly/explicitly), as done in case of 'main idea' question. This is the topic around which the whole passage is built.
2. Do not be misled by minor details; focus on the key ideas: Pay attention to the central ideas only. Details are irrelevant here. Do not obsess over single points/ideas. They may be stated directly but do not convey the main idea or theme of the passage. Always keep the whole picture in mind as single points cannot form the answer.
3. 'Title' is not a 'conclusion': This is a common mistake committed by the students. The title is meant to summarize the ideas/points enlisted in the passage and not to recommend subsequent action or deduce judgments. One important tip: summarize individual paragraphs of the passage. Look at the main idea question as one where you need to reach the final destination. How do you do so? Well, you take one step at a time- pausing at important junctions. Consume the information one paragraph at a time, summarize and make a mental roadmap of the passage flow. Once you have identified the flow of the passage, try to outline that one central idea the author of the passage is aiming at.
4. Focus on the structure: The structure and organization of the passage indicates the message/idea the author intends to convey. The tone and attitude adopted by the author, the way he presents his ideas- all signal towards the theme of the passage.

**Read the passage given below and answer the questions that follow: (Delhi, All India 2010)**

Everyone is fascinated by identical twins: they look the same – even advanced digital imaging systems sometimes fail to tell them apart – and yet they have different personalities and abilities. Literature and detective stories depend upon them for providing a plot twist or a mystery. In reality, too, there have been numerous cases of one twin impersonating the other for a joke, to escape punishment or to advance a romantic interest.

They may have the same eyes, the same hair colour, the same smile, but one will be shy and the other more outgoing, or one cleverer or funnier or kinder than the other. And this despite their having the same DNA. They do not, however, have the same fingerprints, which are believed to be determined by environmental factors.

Twins like spending time with each other – often to the exclusion of others. In fifty percent of cases, they even develop their own secret language. Furthermore, it is commonly believed that they have the ability to communicate telepathically so that, for instance, one is able to draw a picture of what the other is thinking. There have been innumerable claims that a twin has shared the physical or mental pain of the other – known as ‘crisis telepathy’ – even when they could not have known it was happening.

Monozygotic twins – who share everything before birth – usually share everything after birth too: the same tastes in food, music, sport or politics … One might think that this could be explained by the fact that parents often give their new-born twins confusingly similar names, continue to dress them exactly alike until they are well into their teens, and generally treat them in the same way throughout their upbringing.

However, there are well-documented cases of identical twins brought up separately from birth who nonetheless made the same decisions and life choices. In the 1980s, there was the much-publicised case of the identical twin ‘Jim’ brothers. Born in Ohio USA in 1939, Jim Springer and Jim Lewis were put up for adoption as babies and raised by different couples, who happened to give them the same first name. When Jim Springer reconnected with his brother at age 39 in 1979, a string of other similarities and coincidences was discovered. Both men were six feet tall and weighed 180 pounds. Growing up, they’d both had dogs named Toy and taken family vacations on the same beach in Florida. As young men, they’d both married women named Linda, and then divorced them. Their second wives were both named Betty. They named their sons James Alan and James Allan. They’d both served as part-time sheriffs, enjoyed home carpentry projects, and suffered from severe headaches.

In August every year, thousands of twins descend on a town in Ohio called Twinsburg, named by identical twin brothers nearly two centuries ago. The Twins Days Festival is a three-day event consisting of talent shows and look-alike contests that has become one of the world’s largest gatherings of twins. There have also been other festivals in the UAE, Australia, France and Nigeria. The latter country has a large proportion of twins in its population: one in 22 births to the Yoruba people in Nigeria produces twins, identical or fraternal, which is a much higher incidence than anywhere else in the world. This has been attributed to the eating of yams, but the theory is disputed. Biomedical researchers descend on these events, regarding them as a precious opportunity to conduct surveys and experiments.

Scientists study twins in order to collect evidence for the age-old nature versus nurture debate: how much of their behaviour is hereditary and how much conditioned by their environment; what are people actually born with and what is caused by experience? Because identical twins come from a single fertilized egg that splits in two, and share virtually the same genetic code, any differences between them must be due to environmental factors. Studying the differences between identical twins to pinpoint the influence of environment, and comparing identical twins with fraternal ones to measure the role of inheritance, has been crucial to understanding the interplay of nature and nurture in determining our personalities, behaviour, and vulnerability to disease.

* 1. How has twins been used to create suspense in stories?
  2. Pick any two uncanny characteristics of twins.
  3. Why do twins continue to fascinate the scientific community?
  4. Pick words that are similar in meaning from the passage:
     1. Mimick
     2. Fluke
     3. Unprotected
  5. Give a suitable title to the passage.

**Read the passage given below and answer the questions that follow: (Delhi, All India 2012)**

1. While there is no denying that the world loves a winner, it is important that you recognize the signs, of stress in your behaviour and be healthy enough to enjoy your success. Stress can strike anytime, in a fashion that may leave you unaware of its presence in your life. While a certain amount of pressure is necessary for performance, it is important to be able to recognize your individual limit. For instance, there are some individuals who accept competition in a healthy fashion. There are others who collapse into weeping wrecks before an exam or on comparing marks sheets and finding that their friend has scored better.

2. Stress is a body reaction to any demands or changes in its internal and external environment. Whenever there is a change in the external environment such as temperature, pollutants, humidity and working conditions, it leads to stress. In these days of competition when a person makes up his mind to surpass what has been achieved by others, leading to an imbalance between demands and resources, it causes psychosocial stress. It is a part and parcel of everyday life.

3. Stress has a different meaning, depending on the stage of life you are in. The loss of a toy or a reprimand from the parents might create a stress shock in a child. An adolescent who fails an examination may feel as if everything has been lost and life has no further meaning. In an adult the loss of his or her companion, job or professional failure may appear as if there is nothing more to be achieved.

4. Such signs appear in the attitude and behaviour of the individual, as muscle tension in various parts of the body, palpitation and high blood pressure, indigestion and hyperacidity. Ultimately the result is self-destructive behaviour such as eating and drinking too much, smoking excessively, relying on tranquilisers. There are other signs of stress such as trembling, shaking, nervous blinking, dryness of throat and mouth and difficulty in swallowing.

5. The professional under stress behaves as if he is a perfectionist. It leads to depression, lethargy and weakness. Periodic mood shifts also indicate the stress status of the students, executives and professionals.

6. In a study sponsored by World Health Organization and carried out by Harvard School of Public Health, the global burden of diseases and injury indicated that stress diseases and accidents are going to be the major killers in 2020.

7. The heart disease and depression both stress diseases are going to rank first and second in 2020. Road traffic accidents are going to be the third-largest killers. These accidents are also an indicator of psychosocial stress in a fast-moving society. Other stress diseases like ulcers, hypertension and sleeplessness have assumed epidemic proportions in modern societies.

8. A person under stress reacts in different ways and the common ones are flight, fight and flee depending upon the nature of the stress and capabilities of the person. The three responses can be elegantly chosen to cope with the stress so that stress does not damage the system and become distressed.

9. When stress crosses the limit, peculiar to an individual, it lowers his performance capacity. Frequent crossings of the limit may result in chronic fatigue in which a person feels lethargic, disinterested and is not easily motivated to achieve anything. This may make the person mentally undecided, confused and accident-prone as well. Sudden exposure of unnerving stress may also result in a loss of memory. Diet, massage, food supplements, herbal medicines, hobbies, relaxation techniques and dance movements are excellent stress busters.

1. What is stress? What factors lead to stress?   
2. What are the signs by which a person can know that he is under stress?   
3. What are the different diseases a person gets due to stress?   
4. Give any two examples of stress busters.   
5. How does a person react under stress?

6. Give a suitable title to the passage

7. Which words in the above passage mean the same as the following?  
(i) Fall down   
(ii) rebuke   
(iii) inactive

**Passage III:**

Today’s woman is a highly self-directed person, alive to the sense of her dignity and the importance of her functions in the private domestic domain and the public domain of the world of work. Women are rational in approach, careful in handling situations and want to do things as best as possible. The Fourth World Conference of Women held in Beijing in September 1995 had emphasized that no enduring solution of society’s most threatening social, economic and political problems could be found without the participation and empowerment of the women. The 1995 World Summit for Social Development had also emphasised the pivotal role of women in eradicating poverty and mending the social fabric. The Constitution of India had conferred on women equal rights and opportunities political, social, educational and of employment with men. Because of oppressive traditions, superstitions, exploitation and corruption, a majority of women are not allowed to enjoy the rights and opportunities, bestowed on them. One of the major reasons for this state of affairs is the lack of literacy and awareness among women. Education is the main instrument through which we can narrow down the prevailing inequality and accelerate the process of economic and political change in the status of women.

The role of women in a society is very important. Women’s education is the key to a better life in the future. A recent World Bank study says that educating girls is not a charity, it is good economics and if developing nations are to eradicate poverty, they must educate the girls. The report says that the economic and social returns on investment in education of the girls considerably affect the human development index of the nation. Society would progress only if the status of women is respected and the presence of an educated woman in the family would ensure education of the family itself. Education and empowerment of women are closely related.

Women’s education has not received due care and attention from the planners and policymakers. The National Commission for Women has rightly pointed out that even after 50 years of independence; women continue to be treated as the single largest group of backward citizens of India. The role of women in overall development has not been fully understood nor has it been given its full weight in the struggle to eliminate poverty, hunger, injustice and inequality at the national level. Even when we are at the threshold of the 21st century, our society still discriminates against women in matters of their rights and privileges and prevents them from participating in the process of national and societal progress.Various Committees and Commissions have been constituted before and after the independence to evaluate the progress in women’s education and to suggest ways and means to enhance the status of women. The female literacy rate has gone up in the 20th century from 0.6 per cent in 1901 to 39.29 per cent in 1991 but India still possesses the largest number of illiterate women in the world. The female literacy index for the year 1991 shows that there are eight States which fall below the national average. The most populous States of the country, UP, MP, Bihar and Rajasthan fall in the category of most backward States as far as female literacy is concerned.

The prevailing cultural norms of gender behaviour and the perceived domestic and reproductive roles of women tend to affect the education of girls. Negative attitude towards sending girls to schools, restrictions on their mobility, early marriage, poverty and illiteracy of parents affect the girl’s participation in education.

Women’s political empowerment got a big boost with the Panchayati Raj Act of 1993 which gave them 30 per cent reservation in Village Panchayats, Block Samities and Zila Parishads throughout the country. The National Commission for Women was also set up in 1992 to act as a lobby for women’s issues. The educational system is the only institution which can counteract the deep foundations of inequality of sexes that are built in the minds of people through the socialization process. Education is the most important instrument of human resource development. Educational system should be used to revolutionize the traditional attitudes and inculcate new values of equality.

* 1. Mention any two attributes of a modern woman.
  2. Why are women’s participation and empowerment considered necessary?
  3. What benefits did the women get with the enactment of the Panchayati Raj Act of 1993?
  4. By what process can we remove the sense of inequality of sexes from the minds of the people?
  5. Pick out words from the passage which mean the same as each of the following:   
     (i) cruel and unfair   
     (ii) remove   
     (iii) full of people
  6. Give a suitable title for the passage