

READING COMPREHENSION

Reading comprehension is the ability to read text, process it and understand its meaning. It relies on two, interconnected abilities: word reading (being able to decode the symbols on the page) and language comprehension (being able to understand the meaning of the words and sentences).

When we make sense of a text, however, we don't just remember the exact words and phrases we read. Rather, we form a mental model of what the text describes by integrating the sense of the words and sentences into a meaningful whole, like a film that plays in our head.

Good comprehension is vital if reading is to have a purpose, if a reader is to engage with and learn from a text and, ultimately, if a reader is to enjoy what they're reading.

There are some suggestions to understand the passage properly.

1. Read the passage at least twice and understand its contents well. This should not take more than five minutes for a small and ten for a long passages.

2. Do not read the questions first. This may tempt you to look for only particular information in the passage and consequently, affect full comprehension. It is important to first understand the passage before you go to the questions because if the questions are not very specific, you may commit a lot of mistakes. Generally, the passages have a mix of implied ideas and specific detail type of questions.

3. Eliminate regression, i.e., going back to the lines you have just read. This is out of habit developed over years of wrong or half-

hearted reading. This must be done away with as the maximum time you should take to answer all the questions after reading a passage is about seven minutes. Regression is the result of lack of concentration and assumptions.

4. Do not let your own knowledge (or lack of it) interfere with the contents of the passage. Do not make any attempt to agree or disagree with the author.

5. Your principal task in attempting a comprehension passage should comprise:

- i. Finding the topic. The topic must be precise. Generally the topic is found either in the first or in the last line.
- ii. Finding the main idea. This can be a definition, a classification, a purpose or an elaboration of the topic; often the topic and the main idea are the same.
- iii. Finding major supporting details. The supporting details modify, explain or elaborate the main idea. You should learn to recognize these supporting details that explain, illustrate, compare and contrast, show cause-effect relationship or merely restate the main idea in other words.

6. Underline the words you don't know the meaning of. Try to relate them to the given context.

Usually to check your comprehension, you are asked 4 types of questions.

1: questions about a specific part of the passage

2: meaning of difficult words

3: main idea, theme, purpose

4: precis

1: Question about a specific part

- I. Do not copy exact phrases or sentences of the passage.
- II. Always write in your own words.
- III. Answer in the same tense as the question.
- IV. Do not give your own opinion unless asked.
- V. Do not write anything that is not in the passage.
- VI. Do not use difficult words from the passage. Use easy synonyms instead.
- VII. Do not write incomplete sentences.
- VIII.

2: Meanings of difficult words

- I. If you are 100% sure about the meaning of a word, you may ignore the context.
- II. Make sure you know whether the meaning is connotative or denotative. Sometimes a word may be very simple but the connotative meaning in that context may be completely different.
- III. Try to understand the word in that particular context using context cues. Context cues are hints that help you understand the meaning. (discussed below)
- IV. Do not translate a word into Urdu when asked about its meaning. Either write an easy synonym or explain its meaning in English. You may also use it in sentence simply, but make sure the sentence clarifies the meaning of that sentence.

Context cues:

Context cues consist of all the words and phrases that are near a word. Often, you can define words based on the other words around them. If you're reading a lot of material, you don't have time to look up individual words. Reading words in context helps ensure a high level of focus, whereas breaking your concentration to lookup words is distracting.

Context clues can be broken down into six different types, described below. This classification is only one method of thinking about context clues.

Definition Clue

A definition clue is a word or phrase that defines the unfamiliar word. Look for words or phrases that introduce a definition for the unfamiliar word, such as is defined as, means, and refers to. Also, look for punctuation marks that set off a definition, such as quotation marks, parentheses, and brackets.

Example:

Telepathy is defined as the ability to communicate information to another person without the use of any known senses or communication devices.

Synonym Clue:

A synonym clue is a word or phrase that has a similar meaning to the unfamiliar word. Look for words or phrases that introduce a synonym, such as in other words, or, that is to say, and also known as. Also, look for punctuation marks that set off a synonym, such as commas, parentheses, dashes, and brackets.

Example:

The cheerleader appeared vapid— spiritless—as he delivered his pitiful performance in front of the stands.

Contrast Clue:

A contrast clue is a word or phrase that has the opposite meaning of the unfamiliar word. In other words, it's an antonym. Look for words or phrases that introduce a contrast, such as however, but, instead of, on the other hand, on the contrary, whereas, in contrast, unlike, although, and even though.

Example:

Lions are solitary creatures that prefer to hunt alone, but hyenas are gregarious creatures that hunt in packs.

Example Clue:

An example clue is a word or phrase that provides an example to illustrate the unfamiliar word. Look for words or phrases that introduce examples, such as for example, for instance, to illustrate, like, and such as.

Example:

The manager disliked obsequious behavior, such as fawning and kowtowing.

Experience Clue:

An experience clue draws upon personal experience or background knowledge to help you infer the meaning of the unfamiliar word. Look for a word, phrase, or sentence that includes a familiar experience or information you already know.

Example:

Television audiences are familiar with disingenuous ads that make grand promises.

Adjacent Clue:

An adjacent clue is a word or phrase in a nearby sentence that explains the meaning of the unfamiliar word.

Example:

Nanotechnology is becoming more widespread in society. As computer chips continue to shrink, manufacturers are placing them in everything from clothing, to building materials, to even the human body.

3: Main idea

The main idea is the central, or most important, idea in a paragraph or passage. It states the purpose and sets the direction of the paragraph or passage.

- **The main idea may be stated or it may be implied.**
- **When the main idea of a paragraph is stated, it is most often found in the first sentence of the paragraph. However, the main idea may be found in any sentence of the paragraph.**
- **The main idea may be stated in the first sentence of a paragraph and then be repeated or restated at the end of the paragraph.**
- **The main idea may be split. The first sentence of a paragraph may present a point of view, while the last sentence presents a contrasting or opposite view.**

• To find the main idea of any paragraph or passage, ask these questions:

1. Who or what is the paragraph about?

2. What aspect or idea about the 'who' or 'what' is the author concerned with?

4:PRECIS:

Precis is a short summary of a paragraph. But writing Precis is more than just making the paragraphs short. Writing precis requires skill so that you do not miss out a point and capture all the main essence in one single small paragraph. Therefore, for writing a precis you need to follow a particular set of rules and that is why it is important to understand the Rules of precis writing. The motive of writing a precis is to make the reader understand the main essence of the paragraph in a shorter format.

- 1 Your precis must be one third of the original passage, neither more nor less.
- 2 Always give a title to the precis even if not asked.
- 3 Do not add your opinion to the precis.
- 4 Do not agree or disagree with the writer.
- 5 Do not skip any important idea.
- 6 Do not add irrelevant detail.
- 7 Do not use idiomatic expressions or metaphorical language.
- 8 Do not repeat the exact phrases or sentences of the original passage.
- 9 Write the precis in your own words.

- 10 Do not write “in this passage the writer says...” or “this precis is about...” Imagine that you are writing an original passage with the help of hints from the original.
- 11 Start your precis with the main idea so that reader can quickly understand the essence of the precis.
- 12 Removing the irrelevant data or sentence is as important as writing the relevant points.
- 13 For a precis writing, avoid using contractions and abbreviations.

How Good a Precis Can Be?

Now that we have understood what things you should do and what things you shouldn't while doing a precis, let's understand what a good precis is? That is to say what things should be included for a good precis? A good one should include this rules of precis writing.

It should be precise and clear

A precis writing is not just lifting the words from the original paragraph

It should be written in a precise manner in your own words

It should be a summary or a miniature version of the original paragraph

The precis must be logically connected and should have a good flow of words

It should be coherent and for this, it can use the linking words such as and, because, therefore, etc.

A precis should have an appropriate title and the order ideas need to be original

The details found in the precis must match the details found in the paragraph

Precis Sample

Almost every organism has the tendency to react to certain stimuli for survival. This reaction to each and every situation has an evolutionary basis of adaptation. The study of human emotions dates back to the 19th century and psychologists after exhaustive research have discovered many reasons for every emotion. The arousal of emotions and their assumed structures is said to occur due to repeated encounters with a situation followed by the adaptation of the encounter. Human emotions have been linked to adaptively regulate emotion-gathering mechanisms. Psychologists believe that the emotion of fear which is associated with ancient parts of the brain has presumably evolved among our pre-mammal ancestors while the emotion of a mother's love called the 'filial emotion' has seen to evolve among early mammals. Various emotions work as manipulative strategies that favour survival. For example,

feigning emotions by an accused person may help him be saved from the punishment. An exaggerated display of anger is also associated with manipulating or threatening someone. These expressions are also closely linked to self-protective communication.

Precis

Human Evolution and Emotions

The emotions that humans express and their reaction to stimuli in the environment have an evolutionary basis. Emotions are assumed to be a result of repeated encounters with a certain event. According to evolution, emotions like fear, love, feigning, anger, and disgust are results of consistent reactions in particular situations. Some expressions are often adapted as a form of self-protection.