

Basics of Verbal Ability

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Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension (RC) is one of the most regular sections in English section of CAT. Reading comprehension solving is an art as well as science. One is required to have good reading habits, ability to read anything and everything, decent level of vocabulary, ability to analyze data and the ability to reflect. Reading comprehension takes a lion's share of marks in English section. It normally accounts for 40-50% of the marks of the whole section.

How to solve reading comprehension

As mentioned earlier reading comprehension is science as well as arts. There are some basic things that you need to have and rest is ability to comprehend, analyze and reflect.

To start with one should select an RC on the topic on which one is most comfortable. This helps to understand the topic as one is familiar with the subject; moreover, it also helps to analyze the data given in the passage. Confidence while reading is also very important. When one starts the passage he/she should try to gauge what is the intention of the author or what the author is willing to communicate. Now we understand that prior knowledge gives an edge while reading passage but we have to constantly understand the subject matter of the passage. In other words, we have to follow the intention of the author without getting biased by our own knowledge. Neutrality towards the topic one is reading is very important. Your knowledge is as deep as one offered in the passage. One should see the passage from the eyes of examiner.

To make it simple, following are the main things one should focus while attempting a reading comprehension.

- Understand the main idea of the passage.
- Organize the ideas while one is going through the passage.
- Tone of the passage.
- Lookout for structural words.

By structural words we mean words that continue the idea e.g., similarly, moreover, additionally, in the same way etc. Conclusion words like therefore, thus, hence, so etc. Contrast words like nevertheless, however, but, even though etc.

Now, if one is reading something with which he is not familiar then also there is no problem. The passage is as deep as what is offered in the paragraph. Questions can only be from the passage itself. One should read carefully and try to gauge the intention of the author. Also important here is to understand that the knowledge of the RC grows from every paragraph and that is the tool for organizing the information. So, one should develop ideas with the paragraph.

One more point, many students are concerned about slow reading speed. I would like to assure them that an average reading speed of 250 wpm is more than enough. So the students should focus more on understanding the RC and to get most of the questions correct.

An Example

The painter is now free to paint anything he chooses. There are scarcely any forbidden subjects, and today everybody is prepared to admit that a painting of some fruit can be as important as a painting of a hero dying. The Impressionists did as much as anybody to win this previously unheard-of freedom for the artist. Yet, by the next generation, painters began to abandon the subject altogether, and began to paint abstract pictures. Today the majority of pictures painted are abstract.

Is there a connection between these two developments? Has art gone abstract because the artist is embarrassed by his freedom? Is it that, because he is free to paint anything, he doesn't know what to paint? Apologists for abstract art often talk of it as the art of maximum freedom. But could this be the freedom of the desert island? It would take too long to answer these questions properly. I believe there is a connection. Many things have encouraged the development of abstract art. Among them has been the artists' wish to avoid the difficulties of finding subjects when all subjects are equally possible.

I raise the matter now because I want to draw attention to the fact that the painter's choice of a subject is a far more complicated question than it would at first seem. A subject does not start with what is put in front of the easel or with something which the painter happens to remember. A subject starts with the painter deciding he would like to paint such-and-such because for some reason or other he finds it meaningful. A subject begins when the artist selects something for special mention. (What makes it special or meaningful may seem to the artist to be purely visual-its colours or its form.) When the subject has been selected, the function of the painting itself is to communicate and justify the significance of that selection.

It is often said today that subject matter is unimportant. But this is only a reaction against the excessively literary and moralistic interpretation of subject matter in the nineteenth century. In truth the subject is literally the beginning and end of a painting. The painting begins with a selection (I will paint this and not everything else in the world); it is finished when that selection is justified (now you can see that entire I saw and felt in this and how it is more than merely itself).

Thus, for a painting to succeed it is essential that the painter and his public agree about what is significant. The subject may have a personal meaning for the painter or individual spectator; but there must also be the possibility of their agreement on its general meaning. It is at this point that the culture of the society and period in question precedes the artist and his art. Renaissance art would have meant nothing to the Aztecs-and vice versa. If, to some extent, a few intellectuals can appreciate them both today it is because their culture is an historical one: its inspiration is history and therefore it can include within itself, in principle if not in every particular, all known developments to date.

When a culture is secure and certain of its values, it presents its artists with subjects. The general agreement about what is significant is so well established that the significance of a particular subject accrues and becomes traditional. This is true, for instance, of reeds and water in China, of the nude body in Renaissance, of the animal in Africa. Furthermore, in such cultures the artist is unlikely to be a free agent: he will be employed for the sake of particular Subjects, and the problem, as we have just described it, will not occur to him.

When a culture is in a state of disintegration or transition the freedom of the artist increases-but the question of subject matter becomes problematic for him: he, himself, has to choose for society. This was at the basis of all the increasing crises in European art during the nineteenth century. It is too often forgotten how many of the art scandals of that time were provoked by the choice of subject (Gericault, Courbet, Daumier, Degas, Lautrec, Van Gogh, etc.). By the end of the nineteenth century there were, roughly speaking, two ways in which the painter could meet this challenge of deciding what to paint and so choosing for society. Either he identified himself with the people and so allowed their lives to dictate his subjects to him; or he had to find his subjects within himself as painter. By people I mean everybody except the bourgeoisie. Many painters did of course work for the bourgeoisie according to their copy-book of approved subjects, but all of them, filling the Salon and the Royal Academy year after year, are now forgotten, buried under the hypocrisy of those they served so sincerely.

Question

In the sentence, "I believe there is a connection" (second paragraph), what two developments is the author referring to?

1. Painters using a dying hero and using a fruit as a subject of painting.
2. Growing success of painters and an increase in abstract forms.
3. Artists gaining freedom to choose subjects and abandoning subjects altogether.
4. Rise of Impressionists and an increase in abstract forms.

Solution

The answer is (3). The answer can be inferred from the 1st paragraph. The 1st line says "the painter is now free to paint anything he chooses and then the 3rd line says "yet, by the next generation, painters began to abandon the subject altogether and began to paint abstract pictures."

Question

When a culture is insecure, the painter chooses his subject on the basis of:

1. The prevalent style in the society of his time.
2. Its meaningfulness to the painter.
3. What is put in front of the easel.
4. Past experience and memory of the painter.

Solution

The answer is (2). The answer can be inferred from the 7th paragraph "when a culture is in a state of disintegration or transition the freedom of the artist increases.he, himself, has to choose for society."

Question

Which of the following views is taken by the author?

1. The more insecure a culture, the greater the freedom of the artist.
2. The more secure a culture, the greater the freedom of the artist.
3. The more secure a culture, more difficult the choice of subject.
4. The more insecure a culture, the less significant the choice of the subject.

Solution

The answer is (1). The answer can be inferred from the 7th paragraph, 1st line "when a culture is in a state of disintegration or transition the freedom of artist increases."

Question

Which of the following is NOT necessarily among the attributes needed for a painter to succeed:

1. The painter and his public agree on what is significant.
2. The painting is able to communicate and justify the significance of its subject selection.
3. The subject has a personal meaning for the painter.
4. The painting of subjects is inspired by historical developments.

Solution

The answer is (4). All except option 4 are attributes needed for a painter to succeed as mentioned in the passage. Option 1 is mentioned in the 5th paragraph 1st line "painter and his public agree about what is significant", option 2 can be inferred from the 3rd paragraph, last line "the function of the painting significance of that selection" and option 3 is mentioned in the 3rd paragraph 3rd line "a subject starts without which he finds it meaningful."

Question

In the context of the passage, which of the following statements would NOT be true?

1. Painters decided subjects based on what they remembered from their own lives.
2. Painters of reeds and water in China faced no serious problem of choosing a subject.
3. The choice of subject was a source of scandals in nineteenth century European art.
4. Agreement on the general meaning of a painting is influenced by culture and historical context.

Solution

The answer is (1). All except option 1 is true. Option 2 can be inferred from 6th paragraph "when a culture is secure and certain.reeds and water in China", option 3 is mentioned in the 7th paragraph 3rd line "it is too often forgotten..choice of subject," and option 4 can be inferred from 5th paragraph.

Verbal Analogy

Analogies are the set of questions which ask you determine the relationship between a pair of stem words and find the same relationship in one of the answer pairs. The question of analogy is normally presented as abc:pqr::def:pqr. Here the colon (:) should mean "is to" and double colon (::) means "as".

SKYSCRAPER:SHACK::

- (A) elevator:escalator
- (B) house:building
- (C) village:town
- (D) jetliner:biplane
- (E) chimney:fireplace

Now we can see that relationship given is the set of words, skyscraper and shack. A skyscraper is large building which is tall and modern. A shack is a small structure. So the relation ship is between large and small. Taking up the options we can see that elevator and escalator can not be the relation large and small. So is the case with the house and building. Any house is building. Third option deals with village as a modern version of town. Now this is again wrong. Option four offers the relationship between jetliner and the biplane. Jetliner is a large and modern version of biplane so the relationship is established. Option five gives chimney and fireplace. Both of these are not bound by the relation of large and modern.

So the key of any analogy question is to define the relationship that stem can offer. One has to first understand the relationship between the stem and try to reflect the same relationship in the answer.

Now when one is attempting the question of analogy, he /she should keep the following in mind.

- The correct answer pair must relate in the same order that the stem words relate.
- The stem words are either noun or verb.

Common relationships that are tested in the examinations are

- Type of. For example, Football: Sport. Here football is a type of sport.
- Definition. Hazard : Risk
- Opposites. Headstrong : Nimble feet
- Lack of. Pauper : Money
- Same idea. Persuasive : convincing
- Extremes. Drenched : Parched
- Subset to set. Fleet : Ship
- Job related pairs. Building : Mason, Surgery : Incision

These are some of the varieties of analogies that are tested. The best way to master these is to practice analogy while observing the relationship. Second thing that should be remembered is that noun and verb offer different relationships and one must understand the relationship on the basis of noun and verb as well.

An example

PRESERVE : MORATORIUM ::

1. tyrannize : revolt
2. shade : tree

3. solve : problem
4. accumulate : collection
5. cover : eclipse

A *moratorium* is an official halt or cessation of an activity. One possible purpose, or use, of a moratorium is to *preserve* (for instance, to preserve an endangered animal species). Similarly, one possible use of a *tree* is to *shade*. **The second answer choice is the best response.**

The first answer choice: Is one possible use of a *revolt* to *tyrannize*? No. The purpose of a revolt might be to stop tyranny (which means "oppressive rule").

The third answer choice: Is one possible use of a *problem* to *solve*? No.

The fourth answer choice: Is one possible use of a *collection* to *accumulate*? No. The relationship between these two words is just the opposite: One possible purpose of accumulating is to form a collection.

The fifth answer choice: Is one possible use of an *eclipse* to *cover*? No. Covering is part of the definition of eclipse.

Sentence Completion

Sentence completion is an exercise to test the logical flow of information. The questions have become like a regular fixture in CAT as experienced in last 2-3 years. Sentence completion as an exercise test many aspects of candidates' logical ability. Some of the qualities tested are

- Ability to judge flow of information.
- Ability to understand the tone of the paragraph.
- Ability to understand the subject of the paragraph.

These types of the questions are one of the simplest yet very difficult to approach. This unique feature of these questions has made them a regular entry in the CAT paper.

How to Solve?

Now solving sentence completion require a great degree of judgment and an eye to catch the tone of the paragraph. We have to understand that the tone gives the direction to the subject and plays a big role in defining the flow of information. Now the best thing would be solve one question to clarify the modus operandi for sentence completion

The audiences for crosswords and sudoku, understandably, overlap greatly, but there are differences, too. A crossword attracts a more literary person, while sudoku appeals to a keenly logical mind. Some crossword enthusiasts turn up their noses at sudoku because they feel it lacks depth. A good crossword requires vocabulary, knowledge, mental flexibility and sometimes even a sense of humor to complete. It touches numerous areas of life and provides an "Aha!" or two along the way.

1. Sudoku, on the other hand, is just a logical exercise, each one similar to the last.
2. Sudoku, incidentally, is growing faster in popularity than crosswords, even among the literati.
3. Sudoku, on the other hand, can be attempted and enjoyed even by children.
4. Sudoku, however, is not exciting in any sense of the term

Solution

After reading the paragraph we can easily make out that the purpose of the paragraph of is to glorify crosswords. Author appears to be a very ardent fan of crosswords and does not like Sudoko. He feels crossword appeals to literary and logical mind. Author has give benefits of the crossword in the passage and has given no opportunity to sudoko to defend its position. Now we will move towards the options. Option 1 gives out the inherent weakness of the Sudoko. This appears to be in flow with the information offered in the passage. Option 2 states that Sudoko is getting popular even among literati. Now the tone is not bring out the disconformities of the data. So the flow of this sentence is not in accordance with subject of the paragraph. Option 3 narrows down to children only. But main paragraph never tried to categorize the followers as adults and children. Option 4 is takes a extreme stance that Sudoko is not exciting in any terms but this is not true as author himself agrees that Sudoko is popular among some people. So option 4 is also wrong. **Hence the best answer is option 1.**

Solved Examples

Question

Federer's fifth grand slam win prompted a reporter to ask whether he was the best ever. Federer is certainly not lacking in confidence, but he wasn't about to proclaim himself the best ever. "The best player of this generation, yes", he said, "But nowhere close to ever. Just look at the records that some guys have. I'm a minnow."

1. His win against Agassi, a genius from the previous generation, contradicts that.
2. Sampras, the king of an earlier generation, was as humble.
3. He is more than a minnow to his contemporaries.

4. The difference between 'the best of this generation' and 'the best ever' is a matter of perception.

Solution

In The question we can say that Author wants to put forward the weather Fedrer is the best player ever. Fedrer is confident yet modest in his claims. He feels he is no where close to the best ever. At the same time he is confident enough to accept he is best player of this generation. Now option 1 talks about Fedrer defeating Andre Agassi. This shows that author want to conclude that Fedrer is best ever. This does not go with the subject of the option. It is trying to answer the question that Fedrer is best ever but we can't conclude it that way. Option 2 talks about the humility which is in no way related to the subject. Option 3 strengthens the main subject and goes with the flow of the sentence. Option 4 takes the debate out of the scope. **Answer is therefore, 3**

Question

Most people at their first consultation take a furtive look at the surgeon's hands in the hope of reassurance. Prospective patients look for delicacy, sensitivity, steadiness, perhaps unblemished pallor. On this basis, Henry Perowne loses a number of cases each year. Generally, he knows it's about to happen before the patient does: the downward glance repeated, the prepared questions beginning to falter, the over-emphatic thanks during the retreat to the door.

1. Other people do not communicate due to their poor observation.
2. Other patients don't like what they see but are ignorant of their right to go elsewhere.
3. But Perowne himself is not concerned.
4. But others will take their place, he thought.
5. These hands are steady enough, but they are large.

Solution

The subject of the question is that Henry Powne knows that patients are not going to come back but he takes no step to win the confidence of the patient. So author wants to say that he is not concerned about losing the patients. **So the answer should be 3**

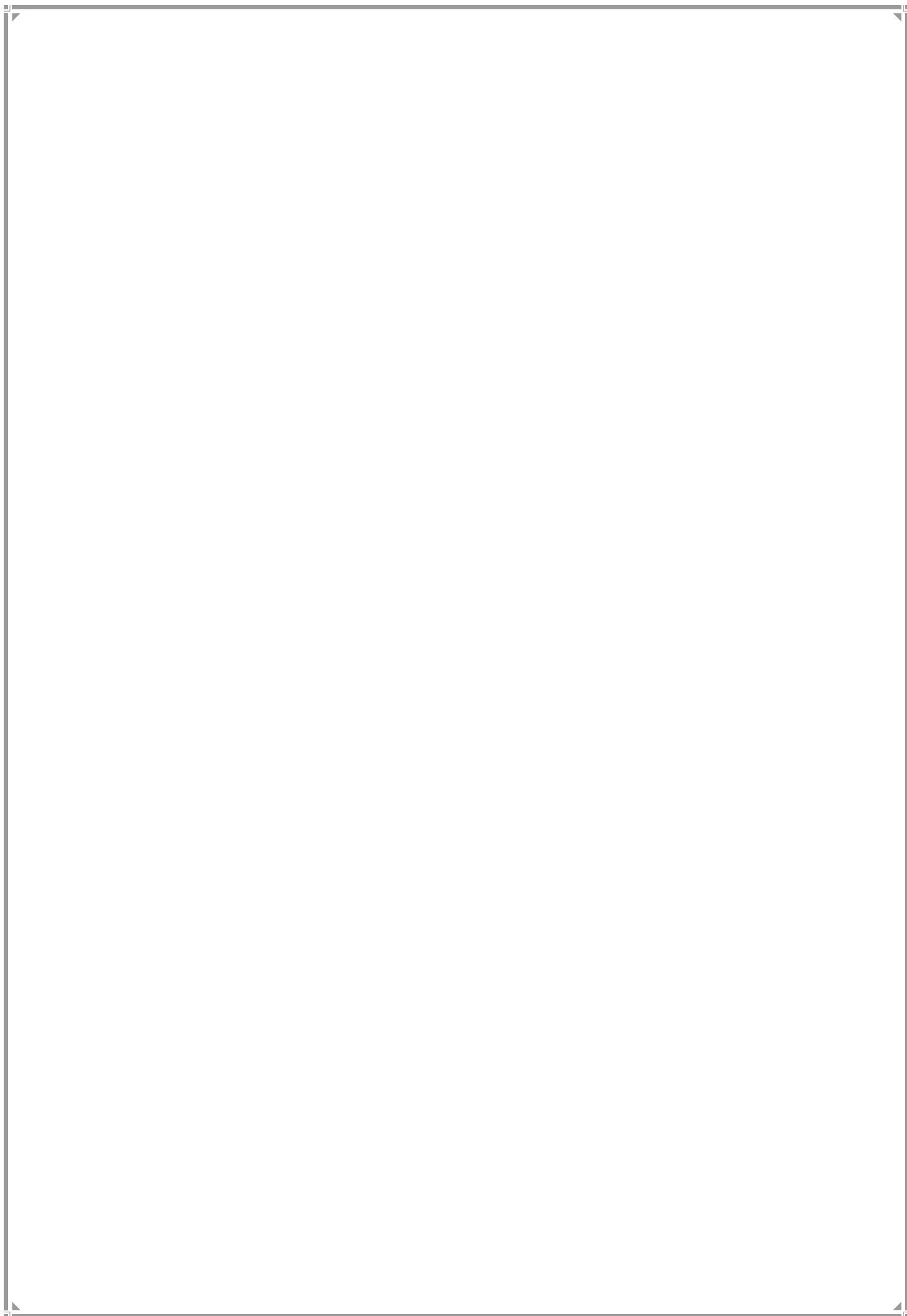
Question

Trade protectionism, disguised as concern for the climate, is raising its head. Citing competitiveness concerns, powerful industrialized countries are holding out threats of a levy on imports of energy-intensive products from developing countries that refuse to accept their demands. The actual source of protectionist sentiment in the OECD countries is, of course, their current lackluster economic performance, combined with the challenges posed by the rapid economic rise of China and India – in that order.

1. Climate change is evoked to bring trade protectionism through the back door.
2. OECD countries are taking refuge in climate change issues to erect trade barriers against these two countries.
3. Climate change concerns have come as a convenient stick to beat the rising trade power of China and India.
4. Defenders of the global economic status quo are posing as climate change champions.
5. Today's climate change champions are the perpetrators of global economic inequity.

Solution

In this question, subject is developed countries are trying to pose hurdles in the path of developing countries by raking the issue of climate change. Option 2 and 3 are very narrow as they talk only about India and China. Option E is changing the subject of paragraph. Option 1 claims that climate change is allowed through backdoor but, trade protection is entering through backdoor and not climate change. **Hence, option 4 is the best option.** As talks about the subject clearly



Sentence Correction

Sentence correction is considered to be most challenging exercise by the students writing CAT. Reasons for this are simple to find, firstly, the grammar we study is mostly theory and the practice questions are not at the level of CAT. Secondly, we hardly study grammar. Thirdly, we lack good reading habits.

How to solve sentence correction?

One should go through the question sentence properly and try to figure out the problem in the sentence. There are some common errors namely

- article error,
- subject verb agreement error,
- verb tense error,
- modifier error,
- parallelism,
- idiom and phrase use error
- pronoun error etc.

These are some of the most common errors that are tested in the examination. It is possible that at times one may not be able to find any problem at all. In such a case, the candidate should read all the options properly and try to figure out the problems by identifying differences in the options. Also important here is to mention that sentences should carry logic and wrong sentences hardly carry any logic.

An example

Of all the countries contiguous to China, the Soviet Union's borders were the most strongly defended.

1. the Soviet Union's borders were the most strongly defended
2. the borders of the Soviet Union were defended more strongly than any of the others
3. the Soviet Union's borders stood out for the strength of their defensive capabilities
4. the Soviet Union had the most strongly defended borders
5. the Soviet Union's were the borders most strongly defended

Solution

Now in this question we can see that modifier says that of the all the countries contiguous to China and the takes up The Soviet Union's border. This is wrong it should be Soviet Union and not Soviet Union's border as border is not country. In this way A,C and E are out of question. In B and D, D communicates the meaning precisely and is idiomatic in construction. **So (4) is the answer.**

Solved Examples

Question

A prolific architect who worked from the turn of the century until the late 1950's, Julia Morgan designed nearly 800 buildings in California, perhaps most notably William Randolph Hearst's monumental estate at San Simeon .

1. Julia Morgan designed nearly 800 buildings in California, perhaps most notably William Randolph Hearst's monumental estate at San Simeon

2. perhaps the most notable of the nearly 800 buildings in California designed by Julia Morgan was William Randolph Hearst's monumental estate at San Simeon
3. of the nearly 800 buildings in California designed by Julia Morgan, perhaps the most notable was William Randolph Hearst's monumental estate at San Simeon
4. nearly 800 buildings in California were designed by Julia Morgan, of which William Randolph Hearst's monumental estate at San Simeon is perhaps the most notable
5. William Randolph Hearst's monumental estate at San Simeon is perhaps the most notable of the nearly 800 buildings in California designed by Julia Morgan

Solution

(1) is the best answer. The modifier is aimed at the person not her achievements or contributions nor at the buildings she designed. None of the options but A adhere to this condition .

Question

A proposal has been made to trim the horns from rhinoceroses to discourage poachers; the question is whether tourists will continue to visit game parks and see rhinoceroses after their horns are trimmed.

1. whether tourists will continue to visit game parks and see rhinoceroses after their horns are
2. whether tourists will continue to visit game parks to see one once their horns are
3. whether tourists will continue to visit game parks to see rhinoceroses once the animals' horns have been
4. if tourists will continue to visit game parks and see rhinoceroses once the animals' horns are
5. if tourists will continue to visit game parks to see one after the animals' horns have been

Solution

(3) is the best answer. Options A and B use the pronoun their incorrectly as it does not have a clear precedent. On conditional statements whether is always preferred over if so D and E will not be preferred .

Question

A peculiar feature of the embryonic mammalian circulatory system is that in the area of the heart the cells adhere to one another, beating in unison and adopting specialized orientations exclusive of one another.

1. beating in unison and adopting
2. they beat in unison while adopting
3. beat in unison, and adopt
4. beating in unison yet adopting
5. even though they beat in unison and adopt

Solution

Note that in the initial part of the sentence the author mentions the word peculiar. So, his intent is to show a deviation or a contrast. Option A correctly introduces the contrast but is not able to highlight it properly. Option B introduces non-parallel structures and option C is not able to produce the contrast. Option E brings together two separate aspects in one and thus eliminates the possibility of a contrast. **Thus, the right ans. is (4)**

Question

A President entering the final two years of a second term is likely to be at a severe disadvantage and is often unable to carry out a legislative program.

1. Likely to be at a severe disadvantage and is often unable to
2. Likely severely disadvantaged and often unable to
3. Liable to be severely disadvantaged and cannot often

4. Liable that he or she is at a severe disadvantage and cannot often
5. At a severe disadvantage, often likely to be unable that he or she can

Solution

The best ans. is (1) It is mandatory to use a to be verb with likely and more often than not the verb is to be itself. So option B is out. The word liable removes the element of uncertainty and makes the situation firm. This is not the original intention of the author. So option C and D are out. Option E suffers from awkwardness.