



Continue

The following types of questions can be found in Lesson 4 of the TOEFL iBT Reading Section. Each relates to the author of the passage and tests for a specific kind of information.

- **Purpose questions** require you to understand *why*.
- **Method questions** ask you to think about *how*.
- **Opinion questions** require you to understand *what*.

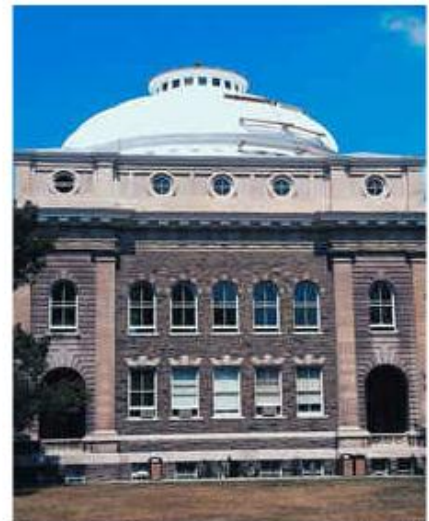
Each passage has up to 2 questions belonging to these question types.



Back

Close

[How Purpose Questions Work](#)
[Examples of Purpose Questions](#)
[Sample Passage with Purpose Question](#)
[How Method Questions Work](#)
[Examples of Method Questions](#)
[Sample Passage with Method Question](#)
[How Opinion Questions Work](#)
[Examples of Opinion Questions](#)
[Sample Passage with Opinion Question](#)





Back

Close

How Purpose Questions Work

Purpose questions require you to examine *why* an author develops, supports, expresses, or orders ideas in a certain way.

ETS describes these as "rhetorical purpose" questions. Purpose questions test why an author uses devices such as these:

- Specific words, phrases, or sentences
- Certain examples to support, explain, or illustrate
- Quotations to clarify or persuade
- Citations of experiments, statistics, or studies
- Comparisons
- Particular order of events



Back

Close

Examples of Purpose Questions

Some examples of purpose questions include:

- The author's main purpose in paragraph ____ is to . . .
- The author refers to _____ to illustrate that . . .
- The author cites _____ to show that . . .
- The example of _____ in paragraph ____ is used to show that . . .
- Why does the author mention _____ in paragraph ____?
- The word _____ in paragraph ____ is used to show . . .
- Why does the author compare _____ and _____ in paragraph ____?
- Why does the author provide details about _____ in paragraph ____?
- The author gives statistics about _____ in paragraph ____ because . . .



Back

Close

Sample Passage with Purpose Question

Below is a sample reading passage and purpose question:

Sample

Some aspects of culture pervade the whole society, such as common language, general patterns of dress, and dominant value systems. Popular culture comprises the beliefs, practices, and objects that are part of everyday traditions. This includes mass-produced culture such as popular music and films, mass-marketed books and magazines, large-circulation newspapers, and other parts of the culture that are shared by the general populace. Popular culture is distinct from elite culture or that which is shared by only a select few but is highly valued such as yacht racing or opera. Unlike elite culture, popular culture is mass-produced and mass-consumed. Popular culture has enormous significance in the formation of public attitudes and values, and it plays a significant role in shaping patterns of consumption in contemporary society.

Why does the author mention yacht racing and opera?

- ☐ To define popular culture
- ☐ To contrast elite culture and popular culture
- ☒ To illustrate elite culture
- ☐ To show similarities between popular culture and elite culture

Explanation of Answer Choice

The paragraph is about the role of popular culture in contemporary society. The author defines popular culture by giving a brief definition and providing examples of mass-produced popular culture. Then the author compares popular culture to elite culture, defines elite culture, and notes two characteristic elite activities: yacht racing and opera. Thus, choice three, "To illustrate elite culture," is the correct answer.

[Back](#)[Close](#)**How Method Questions Work**

Method questions require you to examine *how* the author develops ideas in a passage. These questions test the way that the author does the following:

- Explains ideas
- Illustrates points
- Introduces a topic or specific ideas
- Makes points understandable
- Shows the significance of information
- Supports ideas



Back

Close

Examples of Method Questions

Some examples of method questions include:

- How does the author illustrate the idea of _____ in paragraph _____?
- How does the author show the importance of _____ in the passage?
- Some researchers define the concept of _____ by . . .
- The author explains the concept of _____ by . . .



Back

Close

Sample Passage with Method Question

Below is a sample reading passage and method question.

Sample

Calculators are a tool commonly used in emergency services (ES) to speed the process of mathematical operations. They are used in ES to calculate fire loads, drug dose, pressures, supply inventory, and budgets. Several types of calculators are available that provide a wide range of capabilities. In ES, for instance, a special calculator designed for hydraulic pressure calculations is used. Not all calculators operate in the same manner. The order in which numbers and operations are entered may differ from one calculator to another. To do well in this course, it is important to become familiar with your calculator!

How does the author show the importance of the calculator to emergency services?

- ☐ () By explaining how to correctly use a calculator
- ☒ (*) By listing the range of uses for a calculator
- ☐ () By defining what a calculator is
- ☐ () By discussing how calculators can differ

Explanation of Answer Choice

The paragraph discusses the use of calculators in the field of emergency services (ES). The author highlights the tool's significance to ES by listing examples of the way calculators are used in ES, such as to track inventory, dose drugs, and determine budgets. Therefore, the correct answer is choice two, "By listing the range of uses for a calculator."



Back

Close

How Opinion Questions Work

Opinion questions require you to determine *what* someone thinks about an idea in the passage. This type of question may ask you to do any of the following:

- Give the author's opinion on the topic or a specific point
- Give the opinion of someone quoted in the passage
- Infer an opinion not directly stated

Clues that can indicate opinion statements include:

- Value judgments such as *beautiful*, *exciting*, or *wonderful*
- Conditional terms such as *could*, *should*, or *would*
- Indefinite words such as *appears*, *seems*, *likely*, or *possible*

[Back](#)[Close](#)**Examples of Opinion Questions**

Some examples of opinion questions include:

- What does the author believe about _____?
- The author most likely has the opinion that _____.
- In paragraph _____, how does the author indicate the belief that _____?
- Which of these statements best expresses the researchers' opinion of _____?



Back

Close

Sample Passage with Opinion Question

Below is a sample reading passage and opinion question.

Sample

Economics is concerned primarily with scarcity—how we satisfy our unlimited wants in a world of limited resources. We may want “essential” items such as food, clothing, schooling, and health care. We may want more friendship, love, knowledge, and so on. We also may have many goals—perhaps an A in a course, a college education, and a great job. Unfortunately, people are not able to fulfill all their wants and desires, material and nonmaterial.

We all want more tangible and intangible goods and services. In economics, we assume that more goods lead to greater satisfaction. However, just because economics assumes that we want more goods does not mean that economics also assumes that we are selfish and greedy. That is, scarcity does not result from people just wanting more for themselves. Many people give much of their income and time to charitable or religious organizations. The ways people allocate their income and time reveal their preferences. The fact that people are willing to give up their money and time for causes that they believe to be important reveals quite conclusively that charitable endeavors are a desirable good. Clearly, then, many desires, such as the desire to build new friendships or help charities, can hardly be defined as selfish; yet these are desires that many people share. In other words, self-interest is not the same as selfishness or greed. Indeed, in a world without scarcity, we would have no use for generosity.

We all face scarcity because we cannot have all the goods and services we desire. However, it seems there is a link between scarcity and individual circumstances: because each of us has different wants and desires, scarcity affects everyone differently. For example, a child in a developing country may face a scarcity of food and clean drinking water, while a rich man may face a scarcity of garage space for his growing antique car collection. Likewise, a busy middle-class working mother may find time for exercise particularly scarce, while a pharmaceutical company may be concerned with the scarcity of the natural resources it uses in its production process. Its effects may vary, but no one can escape scarcity.

What is the author's opinion of scarcity?

- ☐ Scarcity can be controlled by eliminating self-interest.
- ☐ Scarcity only applies to tangible goods and resources.
- ☐ Scarcity can be improved by increasing the manufacturing process.
- ☒ Scarcity has a distinct effect on every person.

Explanation of Answer Choice

This passage explores the economic concept of scarcity in relation to the individual. After defining the term in the first paragraph and discussing the relationship between self-interest and scarcity in the second paragraph, the author examines the effects of scarcity in the third paragraph and concludes in conditional language that “scarcity affects everyone differently.” Thus, the correct answer is choice four, “Scarcity has a distinct effect on every person.”