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Factual questions test your ability to understand specific details from the conversations and academic lectures. Inference questions--based on explicit information presented in the conversations and academic lectures--test your ability to draw logical conclusions. In this lesson, we will look at each of these two question types: factual and inference.

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Factual Question Overview

Factual questions test your ability to understand key facts and details heard in the conversations and academic discussions and lectures. These questions typically test a listener's understanding of important points or supporting details that are stated explicitly in a lecture or conversation. Minor or insignificant facts are seldom used as correct answer choices, though they may appear in incorrect answer choices.

Here are some examples of typical factual questions:

What [point does the professor make about moray eels]?

Why [do companies perform S.W.O.T analyses]?

According to the professor, **how** [will the drama club pay for the field trip]?

Based on the conversation, **when** [will the man apply for graduate school]?



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Answer Choices: Factual Questions

- The correct answer choice:
 - Usually identifies an important detail from an academic lecture or discussion, or a key piece of information from a conversation
 - May use words or phrases not mentioned in the passage
- The incorrect answer choices:
 - May use actual words from the passage to make incorrect statements
 - Contain information that is refuted in the passage
 - Contain information that is not discussed in the passage



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Signal Phrases

Certain words or phrases are used in the conversations, discussions, and lectures to signal a significant point. For example, the speaker may be stating a main point, giving an example of something, or summarizing what he or she just said. Listen carefully for this sort of phrasing. In this section, we will focus on phrases that signal **important factual information**:

- "OK, next, let's talk about the origin of the name of this movement, the Dada movement, **and um . . . this is important** . . . the name means entirely different things in a number of European languages."
- "OK, now **I'd like to point something out here** . . . the Egyptians did not invent the pyramid, but they certainly took it to new heights."
- "OK, **class, take note of this, ok?** Even by the late 1800s, scientists knew that something tiny, um . . . smaller than a bacterium, could transmit disease."



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Hints

- Decide in advance whether you will take notes as you listen. If you do take notes, focus on the main ideas and supporting details and how the points are connected to one another.
- Be careful. An answer choice is not necessarily correct just because it contains a word that appears on the chalkboard screen.
- Don't select an answer choice simply because you heard a particular word in the conversation or lecture and the same word is repeated in the answer choice.
- The correct answer choice often uses words or phrases that are paraphrases (rewordings) of information presented in the conversation or academic lecture. Look carefully at the answer choices for these synonyms.
- Remember that the questions are presented in the same order in which the information is presented in the passages.
- If a piece of information is repeated in the listening passage, then it is probably important. Listen carefully for repeated information and make note of it.
- Pay attention to facts and details. Factual information questions represent a substantial portion of the listening section of the test.

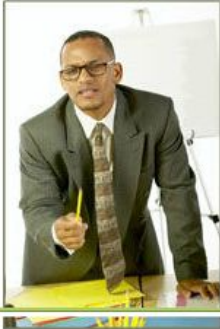


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Sample

Listen to part of a lecture in a business management class and take notes as you listen. Sample notes are given as well. After listening to the lecture, answer the factual question using your notes.

*Professor**N.A. workforce is getting older**What does this mean for H.R. depts?**- new training programs that didn't exist before (edu)*

- e.g. diversity seminars; show how emp's can work more productively together*



- very important - many businesses use this for their employees*

Listen to part of a lecture in a business management class.



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According to the professor, what is a result of greater age diversity in the workforce?

- ☒ There have been significant changes in corporate educational programs.
- ☐ Many companies have moved their trainers into managerial positions.
- ☐ Conflict management is a key component of companies' business practices.
- ☐ Employees over 55 years of age represent a majority of North American workers.

Answer Choice Breakdown:

- Answer Choice 1: This is the correct answer choice; corporate trainers have added new programs to reflect more age diversity in the workforce.
- Answer Choice 2: The professor talked about corporate trainers, but said nothing about their role as managers.
- Answer Choice 3: The professor describes training to reduce problems arising from insensitivity, but said nothing about managing conflict after it occurs.
- Answer Choice 4: According to the passage, the workforce is aging, but we don't know if older employees represent a majority of workers.



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Sample

Listen to part of a lecture in a sociology class and take notes as you listen. Sample notes are given as well. After listening to the lecture, answer the factual question using your notes.



<input type="radio"/>	<i>Professor</i>
	<i>Major 20th century soc. school: funct'ism</i>
	<i>looked at the role of institutions - fam, church, govt. etc - in promoting stability</i>
	<i>Three questions:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Role of indiv? → static nature promotes inevitable inequality</i>• <i>How is order maintained? → consensus - people accept this inequality</i>
<input type="radio"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>How does change occur? → when there is disorder, people seek order → demand change</i>

Listen to part of a lecture in a sociology class.



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Sample Detail Question: "Choose Two"

According to the professor, which of the following are true of functionalism?

Choose two answers.

- ☒ Change results from a lack of structure.
- ☐ Insufficient resources lead to change.
- ☒ People accept certain inequalities.
- ☐ Symbols are used to maintain order.

Answer Choice Breakdown:

Answer Choice 1: The professor describes three questions that functionalists pose; this is the first key point.

Answer Choice 2: The professor does not mention anything about the scarcity of resources.

Answer Choice 3: This is the professor's second key point.

Answer Choice 4: The professor does not talk about the role of symbols in maintaining social order.



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Inference Question Overview

Inference questions test your ability to draw logical conclusions based on information you hear in the conversation, discussion, or lecture. Often, the speaker gives several examples or restates the information needed to make the inference.

- Inference question variety--here are some examples of typical inference questions:

What does the man imply about [his plans for next semester]?

What does the professor suggest about [the nature of organic compounds]?

Which of the following can be inferred about [the price of oil in the future]?

What will the student most likely do next?



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Answer Choices: Inference Questions

- The correct answer choice:
 - Is a correct inference that is based on the passage
 - Is fairly obvious, given some key piece(s) of information from the passage
 - Often includes words not mentioned in the passage
- The incorrect answer choice:
 - Makes an inference that is too extreme
 - Does not follow from the information presented



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Hint

Pay attention to facts and details, and take good notes. Inference questions are based on specific information presented in the text.



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Sample

Listen to part of a lecture in a political science class and take notes as you listen. Sample notes are given, as well. After listening to the lecture, answer the factual question using your notes.



○	Professor
	Population - birthrates in many c's ↓
	ex. US: 1900 - 30 births/1000
	Now - much lower
	Same thing in many places
	Reason?
	migration from country to city
	Urb. dwell. have fewer kids.
○	BUT - in few places, people move urb → country

Listen to part of a lecture in a political science class.



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Inference Question

What does the professor imply about population in areas where people move from the city to the country?

- ☐ It changes at a constant rate.
☒ It can actually increase.
☐ It typically decreases.
☐ It does not change significantly.

Answer Choice Breakdown:

Answer Choice 1: The professor mentions migrations from urban to rural areas, but he doesn't say this.

Answer Choice 2: This is a good inference. We know that when people move from the countryside to the city, the population declines. The professor says the trend can be seen in reverse. Thus, if people move back to the country from the city, birthrates can increase.

Answer Choice 3: This is true when people move from the country to the city.

Answer Choice 4: The entire passage is about change in population, not population stability.

