

**Aptitude Advanced**

# Basics of RC

**eBook 01**

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction to Reading Comprehension**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Verbal ability is a section found in nearly all competitive exams. It is an important testing parameter to judge a person's verbal aptitude, comprising language skills, grammar and vocabulary. Within the Verbal section, reading comprehension is a key area. It generally presents a big hurdle for the candidates, as it tests the language skills of the candidates and topics are from diverse areas with varying levels of difficulty.

Working on Reading for main idea is important for you to crack questions on Reading Comprehension and also questions on Sentence Rearrangement and Critical Reasoning.

This book will equip you on basics of how to read, where to read from and other tips to improve your comprehension. It will prepare you to handle questions on Critical reasoning, summary based questions and also sentence Rearrangement along with Reading Comprehension.

## Structure of Reading Comprehension

Usually, you are given passages with 3- 4 paragraphs and these passages could be short or long (200- 500 words). Occasionally, you see a poem given for reading comprehension. Each RC passage may have approximately 3- 5 questions. Questions would be followed by 4 or 5 options. Content wise the passages would be from diverse fields such as social science, natural science, economics, politics, technology etc. You are not expected to have any prior knowledge of the various topics. However, having some familiarity with various topics will enhance your comprehension.

If the test is on the computer, a passage appears on the left hand side of the screen and a related question appears on the right hand side of the screen. If the passage is longer than the screen, there will be a scroll bar that will allow you to scroll up and down the text.

**Note:** Please note that the number of passages, questions and weightage vary from exam to exam and also, year on year.

### 1.2 What is measured?

- a. **Your ability to understand written English-** This does not mean you will be asked the Grammar and

the meaning of the words. Infact you will be asked overall understanding of the passage.

- b. **Your ability to relate logical relationship between facts and concepts**-For example you may be asked to evaluate the relevance of certain supporting idea or example within a passage.
- c. **Your Ability to draw inferences**- It checks how well you can draw conclusions from the information given in the passage.

There are two myths about Reading Comprehension:

1. The Reading comprehension is a test of speed reading

This is not true. Students, who think this is a true, read the passage a lightening pace and lose on comprehending the passage and are forced to re-read the passage.

2. Reading Comprehension tests your ability to memories minute details in the passage.

This is not true. Students who believe this make the mistake of making a note of minute details and too many facts. This not only wastes your time but also prevents you from looking at the bigger picture of the passage.

### 1.3 What skills are required?

- Regular reading habit
- Exposure to diverse topics
- Remaining focussed while reading
- Engaging with the passage
- Comprehension skills
- Comfortable reading speed so as not to lose focus on comprehension

**Note:** This book contains very important concept of WHAT, WHY AND HOW to improve your reading speed and comprehension. However, you need to experiment and find out what works better for you and adopt that style.

The second part of this book will deal in detail the various question types and strategies to deal with each question type with practise exercises.

## Chapter 2: Tips to overcome challenges faced while attempting RC

Reading comprehension is a critical section as it constitutes a major portion of the verbal ability area. The topics are from diverse field and also the difficulty level of the passage varies. Above all there is a constant pressure of time and accuracy to crack this section. Test takers are anxious and want to give their best. It is important to maintain your calmness while preparing for the entrance tests .Do not be scared to attempt.

Next, we'll discuss the common doubts raised while preparing for Reading Comprehension Section and proposed suggestions.

**Note:** Each individual has his own style, speed, comprehension levels and accuracy, you need to analyse what works best for you. For this you need to practise. Give sufficient mock tests under simulated setting and analyse your performance. Then change your strategy to what suits or works the best for you.

## **2.1 Some of the challenges faced:**

### **a. I get distracted while reading**

#### **Suggestion:**

Practise reading every day. Set a target and maintain a disciplined routine for reading. First begin with whatever interests you. It could be newspaper articles, blogs etc. But get in the habit of reading every day. Slowly focus on comprehension while reading. Write the summary in 1- 2 lines after you read each paragraph. Keep a record of your reading style. Gradually move to diverse topics and read minimum 2- 3 RC passages every day.

Making notes or summarising in the margin can be very helpful in creating a mind map of the structure – as you read along. Try it out and experience the benefits.

### **b. I get lost in the vocabulary and complex sentences**

#### **Suggestion:**

When you solve RC passages in the exam make sure that vocabulary constraints do not come in the way of the comprehending the passage. Though it is likely that some of the words in the passage are unfamiliar to you,



try to guess the meaning of those unfamiliar words from the context in which they are used.

Focus on the key idea/ main idea of each paragraph rather than focussing on individual words.

An efficient reader would focus on the parts of the passage that are clearly understood, and then make educated guesses about the parts that are too complex to immediately understand. Make sure that the passage is thus adequately understood.

### **c. I am comfortable reading only familiar topics**

#### **Suggestion:**

First of all don't be scared of unfamiliar areas. You need to keep your reading habit consistent. Unfamiliar ideas or subject matter would not pose a big problem if you have consistent reading habit. Read diverse subjects, although it is not necessary to master every subject under the sun. Try to get the gist of the passage. Do not focus on speed on such topics to begin with. Your aim is to get familiarity on the diverse topics.

**d. I go to previous lines again and again because I lose track of what I read**

**Suggestion:**

Use the note making technique. Some people trace their way through the passage using their finger or a pencil. Using a pacer helps avoid regression, enhances your focus on the text, and your concentration. It slows you down slightly, but it ensures that no word or idea is missed. Experiment and see if it is worth it. If you find it a waste of time, do without it.

**e. I understand only when I read aloud**

**Suggestion:**

In the exam hall you can't read aloud.

Sub vocalisation i.e. reading aloud reduces your reading speed. Your brain can process much faster than what your tongue can speak. Consciously practise without reading aloud. Initially your speed or comprehension may not be great, but with practise and note making technique, it shall improve.

#### **f. I understand only when I underline**

##### **Suggestion:**

On the computer based test, you cannot underline. You can just move your pen/finger across the lines.

Substitute underlining by writing the key idea in the margin or on the piece of paper.

#### **g. I get confused while marking the answers**

##### **Suggestion:**

First understand the type of question asked and the technique to answer those questions.

For example, a question may ask: *which of the following options makes the author's conclusion supportable?* Comprehension of this question would mean that you first define the author's conclusion in the passage. In this case, many of us tend to spend more time evaluating the options without understanding the conclusion or the main idea of the passage. We immediately move to options.

As a result, we are confused by the options. Whenever you are confused by the options, you need to check

whether it is your inadequate comprehension of either the passage or the question that is creating the confusion.

Read: How to solve various question types in RC book 2

## **h. Should I read the questions first or the passage?**

### **Suggestion:**

In most of the exams, the questions are mostly inference based. These questions require your understanding of the passage. If you read the questions and option first, chances are you may get distracted from the main theme.

So, you can either read the entire passage and answer the questions referring back to the passage to ensure accuracy or

Skim through the entire passage. Skim through the questions Read the entire passage. Answer the questions

You need to practice and decide on your method.

## **i. Should I choose a passage to attempt?**

### **Suggestion:**

If the paper allows you sufficient choice among passages, choose the passages wisely. Skim through the entire passage as quickly as you can. Judge whether you

would like to continue studying this passage. If so, short list it as a likely passage to attempt. Do the same with the other passages. Remember to work fast in this process. At the end you may have short listed a couple of passages or more that you would be comfortable reading. After that apply the methodology most comfortable to you and work with those passages.

The selection of passages is completely based on the comfort that you experience with the passage. If you find a particular passage easy, you will be able to attempt the questions based on that passage comfortably. But if you find that a passage is easy to read and understand, you will be able to work with even the most difficult question set on it. Hence choose the passages that you are most comfortable reading.

If the paper, however, does not offer you the freedom to choose, you must try to do your best even in an uncomfortable passage by making a habit of reading diverse topics.

### **j. How many questions should I attempt in RC?**

#### **Suggestion:**

Your focus should be on improving the accuracy in RC. So attempt a limited number of questions and ensure

accuracy .However, if your overall attempts are far below the target you have set, it is necessary to attempt questions to meet that target. At all times, in a competitive exam with negative marking, your attempt should be to maximise your marks not merely by attempting the maximum number of questions possible, but also by minimising the negative.

Analyse your performance during mock tests to decide the number of attempts to maximize your score. Since different individuals have different accuracy, the number of attempts and speed, you need to analyse on your individual performance and your goal.

## Chapter 3: Reading Comprehension Passage Types

Passages given in the Reading Comprehension sections are based on diverse field of studies or topic.

Because the Reading Comprehension section of the exam includes passages from several different content areas, you may be generally familiar with some of the material; however, no specific knowledge of the material is required.

All questions are to be answered on the basis of what is stated or implied in the reading material.

To answer the questions, you need not be an expert in any of the subjects mentioned earlier, but you need a general awareness of these topics.

**The best way to build awareness is through consistent reading on diverse subjects.**

### 3.1 Different Passage types

#### A. Social Science Passages

These passages would be from areas such as history, politics, and geography. These passages are enjoyable to read and are not too dense.

Generally, a lot of inferential questions are based on these passages, which check your reading ability as well as how closely you have followed the passage.

### Sample Passage

For most Americans and Europeans, this should be the best time in all of **human history** to live. Survival — the very purpose of all life — is nearly guaranteed for large parts of the world, especially in the West.

This should allow **people a sense of security** and contentment. If life is no longer, as Thomas Hobbes famously wrote, “nasty, brutish, and short,” then should it not be pleasant, dignified, and long? To know that tomorrow is nearly guaranteed, along with thousands of additional tomorrows, should be enough to render hundreds of millions of people awe-struck with happiness.

And **modern humans**, especially in the West, have every opportunity to be free, even as they enjoy ever-longer lives. Why is it, then, that so many people feel unhappy and trapped? The answer lies in the constant pressure of trying to meet needs that don’t actually exist.

The word *need* has been used with less and less precision in modern life. Today, many things are



described as needs, including fashion items, SUVs, vacations, and other luxuries. **People say, “I need a new car,”** when their current vehicle continues to function. People with many pairs of shoes may still say they “need” a new pair.

Clearly, this careless usage is inaccurate; neither the new car nor the additional shoes are truly “needed.”

**Key words:** Human history, people need, modern humans, people need car, shoes etc.

## **B. Business & Economics Passages**

These passages are based on important Economic theories and business events. It is important for you to get acquainted with the language of business and economics, understanding the terminology from this field. Work on your business knowledge and vocabulary to be comfortable with these passages.

### **Sample Passage**

On **inflation**, the risk to the upside comes from the severe El Nino conditions that we are facing, which is affecting weather conditions globally and the impact this could

have on **food prices**. Another upside risk comes from the fact that higher growth means that the output gap is going to continue to narrow and in our forecast close at some point in 2016. So inflation might tend to tick up. Apart from that if the Pay Commission **wage hike** comes through and if **GST** comes through, both of them in the short term will be **inflationary** for the economy. So, there are risks to inflation, which are clearly skewed to the upside.

**Key words:** inflation, food prices, wage hike, food prices, GST etc.

### **C. Science Passages**

These passages deal with areas such as biology, chemistry, medicine, technology and mathematics. These passages present a lot of facts, and since their subject matter is new to you, you might be bored by them. Do not get confused by the technical jargon and focus on the main ideas that are presented by the author of the passage.

## Sample Passage

Not all of those **fossils** aged well. In one case, some smashed disarticulated **skeletons** of a strange **reptile** were found in Italy and the Netherlands. These were classified 14 years ago as a particular species of reptile—*Eusaurosphargis dalsassoi*—but because the **fossils** were in such poor shape, researchers still weren't 100 percent sure what it looked like in its day. During an excavation at an altitude of 9,000 feet in Duncanfurrga, Switzerland, researchers found an impeccably preserved fossil of *Eusaurosphargis dalsassoi* mixed in with fish and marine reptile remains. When it was first uncovered 15 years ago, encased in rock, it was initially classified as a boring, run-of-the-mill fish. But after the fossil was carefully prepared and removed from some of its protective stone casing, **paleontologists** swiftly realized it wasn't a **fish** at all. Now, they can finally put a face to the name.

**Key words:** fossils, skeletons, reptiles, paleontologists etc.

## D. Liberal Arts Passages

These passages are related to philosophy, psychology. Such as language, philosophy, literature, abstract science) intended to provide chiefly general knowledge and to develop general intellectual capacities (such as reason and judgment) as opposed to professional or vocational skills. Generally, these passages are very dense and require immense focus for understanding them. Previous acquaintance with similar material will go a long way in disarming your resistance to this particular passage type. Generally, the questions based on these passages are focused on the overall picture, and check your general understanding of the concepts presented.

### Sample Passage

“What does it feel like when you love something?” It’s intensely moving when his interviewees offer an unfiltered version of motherhood and the **tangle of love** that comes with it. “I’m the only thing keeping this guy alive. It’s all on me. Every call I make could be a life-and-death call,” says one mother. “Despite being **profoundly happy** ... I find myself in mourning for my old life. It’s

almost this grief that I've lost somebody and I think that somebody is I."

There's a contrast **with mothers learning to let go of their teenagers**, but a feeling that the primal feelings of love are the same. "I find myself alone a lot," says a mum of teenagers, her voice wavering. "Kids, growing up, really think they know their parents, but they don't know them as people. They know them as parents," says another.

**Key words:** tangle of love, mothers feeling to let go teenagers etc.

## **E. Politics & Current Affairs**

The passages from this area are based on current news, and these passages are by far the easiest to read. Since we are familiar with the topics, it becomes easy for us to understand what is happening and to follow the author of the passage. Though these passages are simple on most occasions, they can pose some tricky inferential questions at times. From the above analysis, you can identify the areas you are comfortable with and the ones that require work. The above classification gives you the

power to understand your passage preference and the areas which require work from your side.

### **Sample Passage**

Speaking after a day of bilateral discussions at the **G20 summit** in Hamburg, the prime minister said the UK had led on bolstering the **global fight** against terror and modern slavery as well as pushing for the implementation of the Paris agreement and **boosting international trade**.

**On terrorism, Theresa May** repeated past calls for world leaders to do more to disrupt international finance streams for terror groups and to help stop foreign fighters returning to the west from conflicts in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere. She also said the G20 agreed to do more to combat domestic violent extremism and welcomed moves from technology companies to address the online spread of extremist content.

**Key words:** G20 summit, global fight, on terrorism etc.

## 3.2 How should I prepare

### If you are a beginner

- Read something that interests you. It could be from any source.
- You can read from newspaper articles, blogs, internet, magazines etc.
- Read at least 3- 5 articles of your area of interest and try to summarize them in your own words.
- Make a record of your summary in a notebook
- Your immediate goal is to form a habit of reading, which will come by disciplined practice.
- Then gradually move to diverse topics and focus on comprehension

### If you an average Reader

- Identify your current Reading style by making a note of –
  - a) What do you read- What are the general reading areas
  - b) How much time do you spend on reading
  - c) What is your purpose of reading- (is it leisure, academic knowledge, comprehend etc.)

- Focus on moving to diverse topics and reading for ideas
- Focus on your comprehension skills

### **If you are a Good Reader**

- Identify your current Reading status and make a note of
  - a) Areas that you are comfortable reading
  - b) Areas that you are not comfortable reading
  - c) Your comprehension skills
  - d) Your accuracy in Reading Comprehension skills
- Your goal should be to read challenging material (area you are not very comfortable with)
- Focus on accuracy under simulated exam condition (on the computer and within specific time).