

**Aptitude Advanced**

# Basics of Sentence Completion

**eBook 02**

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction to Sentence Completion

### 1.1 Introduction

A sentence completion item consists of a sentence, a part or parts of which have been left out, besides answer choices. You must choose an answer that will complete the sentence by correctly filling in the blank or blanks. Sentence completions are, in part, a test of reading comprehension, but they are also a test of vocabulary. The basic idea of a sentence completion is to "fill in the blank." Here are the instructions. Don't try to memorize them; just make sure you understand them.

### 1.2 What is measured?

These questions check:

- Vocabulary
- Sentence Structure
- Main idea and logic of the sentence

### 1.3 Relevance in entrance tests:

Sentence completion or fill in the blank questions are relevant in placement exams. The number of questions

asked in these tests varies from 2 to 3 questions on an average.

## 1.4 Types of questions asked

Sentence completion questions can be:

- One blank
- Two blank
- A short paragraph with multiple blanks (cloze test)
- Grammar based fill in the blanks

### Let's look at the example of each kind

1. Because no comprehensive \_\_\_\_\_ exist regarding personal reading practices, we do not know, for example, the greatest number of books read in an individual lifetime.

1. records

2. instincts

3. remedies

4. proposals

5. commercials

### Solution:

Option 1. The second part of the sentence indicates that we are seeking a detail regarding the number of books read, but are unable to find it.

2. The Internet is a medium where users have nearly \_\_\_\_\_ choices and \_\_\_\_\_ constraints about where to go and what to do

1. unbalanced, nonexistent

2 embarrassing, no

3. unlimited, minimal

4. choking, shocking

**Solution:**

Option 3

### **Grammar based fill in the blanks**

**DIRECTIONS for questions 1 to 10:** Fill in each of the blanks using a correct word or a correct phrase from the options given below each sentence.

1. George and Alice haven't got \_\_\_\_\_ children.

1. some 2. any

3. more

4. little

5. few

2. I read two books but \_\_\_\_\_ book was interesting.

1. either                      2. neither                      3. none of  
4. some of                      5. none

3. Please deter your children \_\_\_\_\_ walking across busy avenues.

1. with    2. of    3. against    4. from    5. on

4. He confided \_\_\_\_\_ John his desire to find a new job.

1. in    2. on    3. with    4. over    5. into

5. They concentrate their efforts \_\_\_\_\_ improving the infrastructure

1. in    2. on    3. to    4. from    5. to

## Answer keys

1. 2 With negative sentences we use *any* and with positive sentences we use *some*.
2. 2 We use *neither* because the meaning conveyed is not one nor the other of the two things.
3. 4 The correct verb usage is *to deter somebody from doing something*.
4. 1 The correct phrasal verb is *to confide in somebody* – to trust somebody enough to tell him everything about yourself.
5. 2 The correct verb usage is *concentrate on* – to do one particular thing and no other.

## 1. 5 Important Facts about Sentence Completion

A. Sentence completions can be about almost any subject in the world-sports, history, opera, medicine, politics, and so on. But you do not need any special

knowledge. The sentence itself will give you all the information you need to complete it. Don't give up on a sentence just because it starts with something strange, such as "The bel canto period of opera was ... " or " The thermonuclear reactions that fuel most mainline stars . . . ." Don't be intimidated by the sentence.

Compare the following two sentence completions.

## EXAMPLES

1. In our corporation there is a \_\_\_\_ between male and female \_\_\_\_ because 73 percent of the men and 34 percent of the women polled believe that our company provides equal compensation to men and women.

1. contrast..... stereotypes
2. difference..... Perceptions
3. variation..... salaries
4. resemblance..... employees
5. similarity..... aspirations



**Solution:**

The first sentence completion is fairly easy; the answer is 2. There is a difference in the statistics presented and that is what the first blank talks about. (Where is the second example here?)

2. Although the feeding activities of whales and walruses give the seafloor of the Bering Shelf a devastated appearance, these activities seem to be actually ----- to the area - ----- its productivity.

1. destructive ..... counterbalancing

2. rehabilitative..... diminishing

3. beneficial ..... enhancing

4. detrimental..... redirecting

5. superfluous ..... encumbering

**Solution:**

The structure "Although" and "devastated" suggest that there is something the opposite of devastating that is actually happening. Options 2 and 3 are both positive as

far as the first blank is concerned. But the second blank, which should also be positive, is in fact negative for option 2. So we can rule out option 2, 3 is the correct answer.

B. Wrong choices are wrong for one of the two reasons: one, when inserted in the sentence, the phrase they create is not idiomatic; or two, they fail to support the overall logic of the sentence. First, many answer choices are wrong because the phrasing they would create is not idiomatic i.e. the words just never go together.

Note: Needless to say, having a good vocabulary helps in doing better at this question type. You are advised to work on vocabulary simultaneously in order to improve your ability at solving this question type. However, even if you are caught short in your vocabulary by a particular question, you can still try to solve it by few strategies given in the next chapter.

In case you are still not able to get these questions due to lack of vocabulary or lack of understanding - do not waste time solving these questions; instead focus on other areas of verbal ability.

## **Chapter 2- Strategy to Solve Sentence Completion**

### **2.1 Introduction to Strategy**

Every sentence contains hints that will help you select the correct answer. Each of the following strategies will help you decipher those hints, but remember that any given question might require you to use more than one approach:

1. Identify the context- See what is the sentence talking about
2. Break the sentence in parts - Identify the flow of thought given in the parts of the sentence.
3. You should immediately begin to pick up on the idea the sentence is trying to convey, as well as any suggestions of tone or mood. Understanding the general meaning and nature of the sentence will help you to choose the most logical and stylistically appropriate answer

4. Look for clue words/ transition word: When reading, pay attention to transition words or phrases in the structure of the sentence that indicate a relationship between ideas or tell you where the sentence is going. These indicators will help you anticipate the blank. We have the following indicators:
  - a) Descriptive Indicators
  - b) Contrast Indicators
  - c) Similar Indicators
  - d) Cause and Effect Indicators
5. Look for key words: Other than transition words there would be some key words used in the context of the sentence which will help you to predict the answers
6. Anticipate the blanks: Before you look at the answer choices, try to predict an answer. If your predicted word or words match one of the answer choices, it is most likely the correct choice. Remember that the

test writers create incorrect answers in an attempt to distract you—if you predict an answer you are less likely to get caught up on these confusing incorrect answers.

7. **Shortlist the Answer:** Be careful to consider all of the choices before you confirm your answer, even if your predicted answer is among the choices. The difference between the best answer and the second best answer is sometimes very subtle. When you think that you have the correct answer, read the entire sentence to yourself, using your choice(s) in the blank(s). If it makes sense, mark your answer on the computer screen and move on to the next question.
8. **Idiomatic Usage:** If you see more than two choices that are close, check for the idiomatic usage.
9. **Use Logic:** If you find a sentence with no transition words, check the positive or negative tone or

connotation of the sentences. Use logic based on the key words given in the sentence.

## **2.2 Indicators based on transition words**

### **I. Descriptive indicators**

Whenever the punctuation "," (comma) appears, followed by a blank in between two sentences, then it means that the synonym of the phrase/word before "," is the meaning of the blank. In simple words, when you find ',' followed by a blank then find the synonym of the word before ',' and check the options to match the synonym of the word.

In the same way, when you find ":" (colon) or ";" (semi-colon) in the sentence, they will indicate that the idea coming up is merely an explanation of the earlier idea. So, simply find the synonym of the word/phrase before the punctuation and fill in the blank with the synonym from the options given.

1. John is well known for his \_\_\_\_\_ he usually acts with great audacity and recklessness.

a. smartness

b. boldness

c. sincerity

d. cunningness

Step 1: Context- John's traits

Step 2: Two parts related- Second part is describing John's traits

Step 3: Clues- "comma" after the blank

Step 4: Key words- Great audacity & recklessness (negative connotation)

Step 5: Anticipate the blanks- negative adjective and synonym to audacity is required to be used for describing John. Hence boldness is similar to audacity

Step 6: Look in the options

Step 7: Re-read the sentence by fitting the blank with the shortlisted option

**Solution:** Boldness

2. She was a \_\_\_\_\_criminal, her name in every household and her face on every wall.

- a. famous                      b. hardworking
- c. notorious                 d. sincere

Step 1: Context- Criminal and her traits

Step 2: Two parts related- Second part is describing how the criminal was

Step 3: Clues- “comma” after the blank

Step 4: Key words- house hold name and her face (posters) on the wall

Step 5: Anticipate the blanks- She was known to all but in a negative way. Hence we need someone who is well known for negative actions.



Step 6: Look in the options- We have famous and notorious. Famous is positive. Hence we will select notorious

Step 7: Re-read the sentence by fitting the blank with the shortlisted option

**Solution:** notorious

3. The spacecraft has two ----- sets of electronic components; if one fails, its duplicate will still function.

- |              |                |              |
|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| a. divergent | b. identical   | c. simulated |
| d. mutual    | e. prohibitive |              |

Step 1: Context- space craft and electronic components

Step 2: Two parts related- Second part is describing the first part

Step 3: Clues- “semi colon”

Step 4: Key words- house hold name and her face (posters) on the wall.

Step 5: Anticipate the blanks- The information following the semicolon helps to identify the missing term. The fact that one of the sets of electrical components has a "duplicate," or exact copy, indicates that the two sets are "identical."- Similar to duplicate words

Step 6: Look in the options- identical

Step 7: Re-read the sentence by fitting the blank with the shortlisted option

**Solution:** identical

## II. Contrast indicators

Transition clue words/ phrases

Although	Yet	But	In spite	Despite
On the contrary	Ironically	Opposite	Anything... but	Than

Far from	Ranging from	While...others	However	
----------	--------------	----------------	---------	--

1. Although the terms Toad and frog refer to two different animals of the same species, many students \_\_\_\_\_ the two.

- A. distinguish      B. confuse      C. respect  
D. observe          E. Mention

Step 1: Context- Frogs, toads & students

Step 2: Two parts related- Second part is a response to the first. Response should be opposite to the first idea.

Step 3: Clues- Although in the first part of the sentence

Step 4: Key words-different animals of same species.....many

Step 5: Anticipate the blanks- In this variation, the word *although* introduces a contrast. What comes after the

comma is the reverse of what comes before. Here we need a word to indicate that the distinction between toads and frogs is ignored. So we need words like- not able to identify, cannot distinguish etc.

Step 6: Look in the options- similar to the word which should mean not able to identify would be confuse.

Step 7: Re-read the sentence by fitting the blank with the shortlisted option

Solution: Confuse

2. The editor expected her reporters to be\_\_\_\_\_, *but* the number of \_\_\_\_\_ in the articles submitted clearly showed that her *expectations were often not met*.

- |                            |                       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| A. impartial, clichés      | B. Frank, predictions |
| C. decisive, facts         | D. Creative, errors   |
| E. accurate, misquotations |                       |

Step 1: Context– expectations of editor

Step 2: Two parts related- Second part is a response to the first. Response should be opposite to the first idea.

Step 3: Clues- BUT in the second part of the sentence- after the comma

Step 4: Key words-expectations not met

Step 5: Anticipate the blanks- In this variation, the word *but* introduces a contrast. What comes after the comma is the reverse of what comes before. Here we need a word to indicate that she expected positive behaviour in the first part. Second part should be reverse of her expectations. The term "but" indicates a contrast between the editor's expectations of her reporters and their actual performance. It is logical that an editor would expect "accuracy" from her reporters, and "misquotations" are an example of inaccuracy.

Step 6: Look in the options- 1<sup>st</sup> blank should be positive, second should have negative connotation. Hence option E satisfies this combination.

Step 7: Re-read the sentence by fitting the blank with the shortlisted option

**Solution:** Accurate.....misquotations

3. The two travellers may have chosen ----- routes across the continent, but the starting point was the same for each.

- A. coinciding      B. direct      C. charted  
D. divergent      E. intersecting

**Solution:**

"The phrase "may have" and the term "but" sets up a contrast between the two clauses of the sentence. The fact that the travellers took distinctly different trips is contrasted with the fact that they left from the same

place. Hence Choice (D) is correct. "Divergent" means proceeding from one point in different directions.

### III. Similar indicators

#### Transition clue words/ phrases

Addition:			
indeed,	further,	as well (as this),	either (neither),
also,	moreover,	what is more,	as a matter of fact,
and,	furthermore,	in addition (to this),	besides (this),
or,	in fact,	actually,	to say nothing of,
too,	let alone,	much less	additionally,
nor,	alternatively,	to tell the	

		truth,	
Similarity:			
similarly,	in the same way,	by the same token,	in a like manner,
equally	likewise,		

1. Just as Henry fooled the audience, his brother too was successful at \_\_\_\_\_others.

- a. Attracting      b. mocking  
c. duping      d. Praising

Step 1: Context – Henry & his brother

Step 2: Two parts related- Second part is similar in idea

Step 3: Clues- “Just as” transition word given in the first part of the sentence

Step 4: Key words-fooled



Step 5: Anticipate the blanks- In this variation, the word “Just” as introduces a similarity in the two ideas. What comes after the comma should be similar to what comes before. Here we need a word to indicate that the his brother is also fooling people. So synonyms of fooling are required- e.g. cheating, duping etc.

Step 6: Look in the options- we have duping in the option

Step 7: Re-read the sentence by fitting the blank with the shortlisted option

Solution: Duping

2. Archaeology is a poor profession; only \_\_\_\_ sums are available for excavating sites and even more \_\_\_\_ amounts for preserving the excavations.

- A. paltry – meagre      B. miniscule - substantial  
C. average - augmented D. judicious - penurious  
E. modest - generous

Step 1: Context – Archaeology as a poor profession

Step 2: Two parts related- Second part is similar in idea

Step 3: Clues- “ Even more” transition word given in the second part of the sentence

Step 4: Key words-poor profession

Step 5: Anticipate the blanks- In this variation, the word *even more* introduces a similarity in the two ideas. What comes after the comma should be similar to what comes before. So, since the first part tells us that there is no money in archaeology, then there will only be small (*paltry*) amounts for excavating.

Step 6: Look in the options- we have paltry in the option

Step 7: Re-read the sentence by fitting the blank with the shortlisted option

Thus, “meagre” also means small. (*miniscule = tiny; augmented = increased; judicious = wise, just; penurious = poor*)

**Solution:** meagre

#### IV. Cause and Effect

Transition clue words/ phrases

Effect/Result:				
as a result (of this),	consequently	hence,	for this reason,	thus,
because (of this),	in consequence	so that,	accordingly	
as a consequence,	so much (so) that,	so,	Therefore,	

1. The attorney was expert in identifying ----- in contracts, ambiguities that could cause difficulties and therefore needed to be revised.

- A. clauses      B. forgeries      C. loopholes  
D. intervals      E. thresholds

Step 1: Context– attorney as expert

Step 2: Two parts related- Second part is a response to the first.

Step 3: Clues- therefore in the first part of the sentence

Step 4: Key words-ambiguities, needed revision

Step 5: Anticipate the blanks- We need a similar to ambiguity and something meaning that it is not right. The outcome we want is that it needs revision. Means the first part should have negative connotation.

Step 6: Look in the options- similar to the word ambiguity

Step 7: Re-read the sentence by fitting the blank with the shortlisted option

**Solution:** loopholes

2. The formerly \_\_\_\_ waters of the lake have been polluted so that the fish are no longer visible from the surface.

A. muddy

B. tranquil

C. stagnant                      D. pellucid

E. rancid

Step 1: Context – lake water

Step 2: Two parts related- Second part is a response to the first.

Step 3: Clues- “So that” transition word used in the second part of the sentence

Step 4: Key words, Formerly.....fish are no longer visible

Step 5: Anticipate the blanks- So, since now the waters are polluted so that fish cannot be seen, then formerly they must have been unpolluted and clear

Step 6: Look in the options- Clear (*pellucid*) (*tranquil* = peaceful; *stagnant* = not moving; *pellucid* = transparently clear; *rancid* = stale

Step 7: Re-read the sentence by fitting the blank with the shortlisted option

**Solution:** pellucid

## 2.3 Connotation

Each word expresses two things: a definition and a connotation. A connotation is a positive, negative, or neutral feeling that is implied by or associated with a word. Although context is the part of a sentence that surrounds a particular word or passage and determines its meaning, connotation refers to the emotion that is suggested by the word itself.

For example, the adjective "thrifty" implies a positive connotation, whereas the adjective "cheap" implies a negative connotation. Both words have similar definitions, but very different connotations. Using connotations can help you determine the correct answer or at least eliminate a few wrong answers.

Here is an example of how to use connotation to select the correct answer:

1. Because of his -----, Max's guests felt very welcome and comfortable staying at his house for the weekend.
- A. animosity                      B. Hospitality  
C. determination              D. wittiness  
E. severity

**Solution:**

The best answer is B. The sentence has a positive connotation—Max's guests feel welcome and comfortable. In addition, the transition "because" indicates that something that belongs to Max has caused his guests to feel welcome and comfortable. "Animosity" and "severity" have a negative connotation and "determination" has a neutral connotation. "Hospitality" and "wittiness" both have positive connotations, but "hospitality" best fits the context of the sentence.

**2.4 Idiomatic Usage**

Idiom refers to the common or everyday usage of a word or phrase. Learn to recognize idiomatic words and phrases, as they might provide additional clues regarding the intended meaning of the sentence. Ask yourself if the completed sentence "sounds" correct, and make sure that the sentence effectively combines words into phrases that express a logical idea. If any portion of the sentence becomes unclear, wordy, or awkward after you insert an answer choice, eliminate that choice.

2. Although adolescent maturational and developmental states occur in an orderly sequence, their timing ----- with regard to onset and duration.

1. lasts

2. varies

3. falters

4. accelerates

5. Dwindles

Option 2 is the best answer. The rest can be eliminated because its substitution would create a phrase that is not idiomatic English:

1. their timing lasts

3. their timing falters



4. their timing accelerates      5. their timing dwindles

**Solution:**

Try to think up a sentence using one of these words in the phrase in a sentence. All seem very unlikely. Second, although an answer choice may create a meaningful phrase, it may be wrong because it is not consistent with the overall logic of the sentence.

**2.5 Sentences without transition words:**

In case where the sentence does not have any of the above mentioned indicators, use logic based on key words

1. His characteristically \_\_\_\_ views on examination methods at university level have aroused \_\_\_\_ in those who want to introduce innovative and flexible patterns of assessment.

- A. hidebound - antagonism      B. moderate - anger  
C. reactionary - admiration      D. rigid - support  
E. accommodating – annoyance

Step 1: Context – His views on exam

Step 2: Two parts related- Second part is a response others have on his view

Step 3: Clues- No transition word used

Step 4: Key words- views.....aroused.....flexible

Step 5: Anticipate the blanks- Follow the logic. If his views are flexible the people who want flexible methods will approve. But, if his views are rigid the same people will oppose them.

Step 6: Look in the options- Hence, the best fit comes with hidebound (rigid) and antagonism (hostility). (reactionary = ultraconservative; accommodating = flexible).

Step 7: Re-read the sentence by fitting the blank with the shortlisted option

**Solution:** hidebound.....antagonism (option A)

2. To reach Simonville, the traveller needs to drive with extreme caution along the \_\_\_\_ curves of the mountain road that climbs \_\_\_\_ to the summit.

- A. serpentine - steeply      B. jagged - steadily

C. gentle - precipitously      D. shady - steadily

E. hair-raising – languidly

Step 1: Context– driving on the mountain

Step 2: Two parts related- Second part tells us how a traveller should drive to reach Simonville

Step 3: Clues- No transition word used

Step 4: Key words- extreme caution.....curves

Step 5: Anticipate the blanks- Follow the logic: Since the driver needs extreme caution, the road must be dangerous. So words could be risky road, steep curves etc

Step 6: Look in the options- Therefore, the curves could be *serpentine*, and the road could climb *steeply*. (*serpentine* = highly curved; *jagged* = having rough edges; *precipitously* = steeply; *languidly* = in a relaxed manner)

Step 7: Re-read the sentence by fitting the blank with the shortlisted option

**Solution:** serpentine.....steeply (option A)

## 2.6 Strategy to solve the cloze test

1. Read the entire paragraph very carefully as the understanding of the entire context is important to find the right answer.
2. As the options are simple and very close so it is important to know the usages of the words in the given options.
3. Other tricks to solve the cloze tests will remain the same as for solving the sentence completion questions.
4. Use the context wisely to negate the options.

### ➤ CLOZE TEST

**Directions for questions 1 to 10:** The passage given below contains blanks, each one of which has been numbered. These numbers are printed below the passage and against each, four choices have been suggested, one of which fits the blank most

appropriately. Find the best choice in each case and mark your answer accordingly.

It takes millions of years for a full-fledged coral reef system to \_\_\_\_01\_\_\_\_ itself as a biodiversity-rich underwater rainforest, and it takes only a few decades to destroy it. Coral reefs \_\_\_\_02\_\_\_\_ a wide \_\_\_\_03\_\_\_\_ marine life that feed predating species and \_\_\_\_04\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_05\_\_\_\_ the delicate \_\_\_\_06\_\_\_\_ of life in the ocean. There is a dwindling of species with habitat loss; some have been driven to \_\_\_\_07\_\_\_\_. The conventional response is to \_\_\_\_08\_\_\_\_ all unsustainable development model with eco-friendly, sustainable ones. Easier said than done, but we do need to make an effort. Scientists \_\_\_\_09\_\_\_\_ a complementary solution that could well \_\_\_\_10\_\_\_\_ the process of regenerating coral reefs --- or at least, place them on life-support.

- |    |           |              |            |         |
|----|-----------|--------------|------------|---------|
| 1. | 1. evolve | 2. establish | 3. make    | 4. grow |
| 2. | 1. create | 2. have      | 3. display | 4. host |

- |    |                 |                 |
|----|-----------------|-----------------|
| 3. | 1. selection of | 2. area of      |
|    | 3. Coverof      | 4. diversity of |
| 4. | 1. contribute   | 2. add          |
|    | 3. attend       | 4. cave in      |
| 5. | 1. creating     | 2. disrupting   |
|    | 3. maintaining  | 4. Deleting     |

### **Answer keys & Explanations**

1. 2 The correct answer should be opposed to destroy (which is a part of the sentence later) in terms of meaning. make itself .... asis unidiomatic English and so is true of grow ... asas

an option. If something is already fully developed, there is no question of its evolving itself. Therefore, the best option appears to be establish, which points to the fact of the system getting entrenched and not getting created across millions of years.

2. 4 The context supports the fact that the corals reef is actually a biological system, which supports various forms of life on itself. In the light of this fact, create would be a factually wrong answer, while display is meaning-wise inappropriate. There appears to be some competition between host and have and contextually speaking, the former is a better option.
3. 4 Area of and cover of do not make any logical and semantic sense in this case. Selection of implies that probably, the variety has been deliberately chosen out of a much larger range, which is not a fact. Thus diversity is the only meaningful option

left.

4. 1 Attend and cave-in does not make any sense at all in the given context. If we opt for add, it would imply that the balance is already there and the coral reefs are enhancing it, an idea open to debate because the paragraph does not support it. Yes, of course, coral reefs do contribute something.

5. 3 The context supports only a choice with positive connotations, thereby ruling out options 2 and 4.
- Look at the options, and use your GK – do Corals infest marine life or do they help it. Hence 3.