

Reading Comprehension



~ English · Competitive Exams ~

What is it?

You read a passage and answer questions based **only on what it says**. The answers are **in the passage** — your job is to **find them**, not to add your own opinion.

① How to Approach →

1. **Skim** the passage once for the **main idea**.
2. Read the **questions**, then go back and **locate each answer**.
3. Answer **from the passage** — **never** from outside knowledge or opinion.
4. **Eliminate** options that are too **extreme** or not supported by the text.

¶ Worked Example

"The peacock is India's **national bird**. Its bright feathers **open like a fan** when it dances in the rain."

Factual → What opens like a fan? **Its feathers** (line 2 says it directly).

Main idea → What is the passage about? **A short description of the peacock** (covers both lines).

Vocabulary → Here 'national' means ... **belonging to the whole country**.



Golden rule → if you can't **underline the exact line** that proves your answer, it is probably wrong!



Remember: the passage is the **final authority** — even if you know more, answer only what the writer actually wrote.



Golden rule → always read *all the options* before choosing – the first one that “sounds right” is often a *trap*.

② Types of Questions

Know the **type** first — then you know where to look!

Type	What to do
Main idea	state the central point of the whole passage
Factual / detail	find the exact line that answers it
Inference	choose what is implied , though not stated
Vocabulary in context	give the word's meaning as used here
Tone / attitude	judge the writer's feeling (positive, critical, neutral)
Purpose	why the author wrote the passage (to inform, warn, persuade)
Title	pick the best heading that fits the whole passage
True / False / Not Given	mark Not Given if the passage simply doesn't say
Reference	find what a pronoun (it, they, this) points back to
Structure / sequence	put events in the order the passage gives



Strategy — skim vs scan: skim the whole passage once for the main idea & tone; then scan for a keyword to jump straight to a detail answer.



A detail question has one right line. An inference question asks you to read between the lines — but stay close to the text!



*For the main idea pick the option that covers the **whole** passage – not just one sentence from it.*

③ Practice Passage 1

¶ The Passage

Honey bees are among the hardest workers in nature. A single hive may hold thousands of bees, and each has a fixed job. The **worker bees gather nectar** from flowers and slowly turn it into honey. While doing so, they **carry pollen** from one flower to another, which helps plants to grow. Without bees, many of the fruits and vegetables we eat would disappear. Sadly, their numbers are falling, and scientists **urge** us to protect them.

Questions

1. What do worker bees make from nectar?
2. How do bees help plants grow?
3. What would happen without bees?
4. What is the main idea of the passage?
5. In the passage, the word 'urge' means ...
6. What is the writer's tone about the falling bee numbers?

Answer Key

- 1→ Honey.
- 2→ By carrying pollen from one flower to another.
- 3→ Many fruits and vegetables we eat would disappear.
- 4→ Bees are important workers that we must protect.
- 5→ to strongly request or advise.
- 6→ Concerned / worried.

❓ *Why?* Q2's proof is the exact line – "they carry pollen from one flower to another, which helps plants to grow." Q6 is **concerned** because the writer calls the fall in numbers "sadly" and asks us to protect bees.

¶ Vocabulary in Context

nectar → the sweet liquid that bees collect from flowers.

pollen → the fine powder from flowers that helps new plants form.

hive → the home where a colony of bees lives together.

④ Practice Passage 2

¶ The Passage

The sun is the **closest star to the earth**. It gives us light and warmth, without which no life could exist. Green plants use sunlight to **make their food**, and animals depend on those plants for survival. Even the wind and the rain are caused by the sun's heat. Although it looks small in the sky, the sun is so large that a million earths could fit inside it. Yet it is only one of **countless** stars in the universe.

Questions

1. What is the sun?
2. How do green plants use sunlight?
3. What causes the wind and the rain?
4. Why does the sun look small to us?
5. What is the main idea of the passage?
6. In the passage, 'countless' means ...

Answer Key

1 → the closest star to the earth · 2 → to make their food · 3 → the sun's heat · 4 → because it is very far away · 5 → the sun is vital for life on earth · 6 → too many to count

⑤ Practice Passage 3

¶ The Passage

Ravi lived in a small village where there was no library. He loved to read but owned very few books. Every evening, after helping his father in the fields, he walked **three miles to a neighbouring town to borrow books**. Rain or shine, he never missed a single day. Years later, Ravi became a **well-known writer**. He often said that his love for reading, and not his circumstances, had shaped his life.

Questions

1. Why did Ravi walk to the town every evening?
2. What did he do before walking to the town?
3. What did Ravi become years later?
4. What shaped his life, according to him?
5. What is the main idea of the passage?
6. The tone of the passage is ...

Answer Key

1→ to borrow books · 2→ he helped his father in the fields · 3→ a well-known writer
· 4→ his love for reading · 5→ determination and love of reading can overcome
hardship · 6→ inspiring / admiring

 *Why? Q4's proof is the last line – his "love for reading ... had shaped his life."* Words: **circumstances**
= the conditions of one's life; **neighbouring** = nearby.

⑥ Practice Passage 4

¶ The Passage

Water covers most of the earth's surface, yet **very little of it is fit to drink.** Most of it is salty sea water, and much of the fresh water is frozen in ice. As the population grows, the demand for clean water rises every year. Rivers and lakes are being **polluted by waste from homes and factories.** If we do not act now, future generations may face a serious **shortage.** Saving water is therefore everyone's duty.

Questions

1. Why is very little water fit to drink?
2. What is polluting rivers and lakes?
3. What may future generations face?
4. Whose duty is it to save water?
5. What is the main idea of the passage?
6. In the passage, 'shortage' means ...

Answer Key

1→ most of it is salty or frozen · 2→ waste from homes and factories · 3→ a serious shortage of clean water · 4→ everyone's · 5→ clean water is scarce and must be saved · 6→ a lack, not enough

⑦ Practice Passage 5

¶ The Passage

The elephant is the **largest animal that lives on land.** Despite its huge size, it is gentle and remarkably intelligent. Elephants live in herds that are **led by the oldest female.** They use their long trunks to gather food, drink water and even greet one another. Sadly, elephants are hunted for their tusks, and the forests where they live are shrinking fast. Many countries have now made strict laws to protect them.

Questions

1. Which is the largest animal that lives on land?
2. Who leads an elephant herd?
3. Name two uses of an elephant's trunk.
4. Why are elephants hunted?
5. What is the main idea of the passage?
6. The writer's tone about the elephants' future is ...

Answer Key

1 → the elephant · 2 → the oldest female · 3 → to gather food and drink water (also to greet) · 4 → for their tusks · 5 → elephants are remarkable animals that need protection · 6 → concerned

 **Why?** Q6 is **concerned** – the writer says “sadly” the forests are “shrinking fast.” **Words:** **herd** = a group of animals; **tusks** = an elephant’s long front teeth.

⑧ Practice Passage 6

¶ The Passage

Trees are among the most useful living things on our planet. Through their leaves they **take in carbon dioxide and give out the oxygen** that we need to breathe. Their roots hold the soil in place and **stop it being washed away by rain**. Birds and small animals make their homes in the branches. Trees also give us shade, fruit, **timber** and medicines. Cutting down forests without planting new trees is a serious mistake.

Questions

1. What gas do trees give out?
2. What do the leaves take in?
3. How do the roots help the soil?
4. Name two things trees give us (besides oxygen).
5. What is the main idea of the passage?
6. In the passage, 'timber' means ...

Answer Key

1 → oxygen · 2 → carbon dioxide · 3 → they hold it in place / stop it washing away ·
4 → shade, fruit, timber and medicines · 5 → trees are very useful and must not be cut down carelessly · 6 → wood used for building

⑨ Practice Passage 7

¶ The Passage

Regular exercise is one of the simplest ways to stay healthy. When we move our bodies, the **heart beats faster and pumps blood more efficiently**. Exercise also makes the muscles stronger and keeps the joints **flexible**. Doctors say that people who walk, run or play games are **less likely to fall ill**. Besides keeping the body fit, exercise lifts the mood and helps us sleep better. Even thirty minutes of activity a day can make a big difference.

Questions

1. What happens to the heart when we exercise?
2. What does exercise do to the muscles?
3. Who does doctors say is less likely to fall ill?
4. Name one benefit of exercise besides fitness.

5. How much daily activity makes a big difference?

6. In the passage, 'flexible' means ...

Answer Key

1→ it beats faster and pumps blood more efficiently · 2→ makes them stronger · 3→ people who walk, run or play games · 4→ it lifts the mood / helps us sleep better · 5→ thirty minutes a day · 6→ able to bend easily

Quick Tips

The little habits that win marks — keep them handy!

✓ The answer is **in the passage** — don't rely on outside knowledge.

✓ For **main idea**, pick the option that covers the **WHOLE** passage, not one detail.

✓ For **inference**, choose what the text **implies**, but stay close to it.

⚠ Beware options with **always / never / only** — they are often **too extreme**.

⚠ Read the question carefully: **'not', 'except', 'true'** change everything.

✓ For **vocabulary**, replace the word with your guess and check it still **fits the sentence**.

✓ Attempt the **easy detail** questions first; leave **inference & tone** for the end.

⚠ Common Traps

- **True but not the answer** — the option is correct information, yet it does not answer this question.
- **Extreme words** — *always, never, only, all* usually go too far for the passage.
- **Outside knowledge** — the fact is true in real life but is **not stated** in the passage.
- **Partly correct** — the option is right in one half and wrong in the other; reject the whole thing.

✓ **Golden habit:** underline the proof line for every answer — if there is no proof, there is no answer!

☆ Read closely – the answer is always in the passage! ☆