

Reading Comprehension Tips and Strategies

The ACT and the SAT both require you to read passages and answer multiple-choice questions about them.

The questions will not require you to have any other outside knowledge of the subject. Instead, they will focus on what is stated directly in the text or what you can infer from the text. Questions in these tests are designed to assess your ability to identify the main idea, read for details, understand the author's intent, and make sense of vocabulary, among other skills.

GENERAL TIPS FOR READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Before You Read

- **Scan the questions and answer choices first.** This will help you focus your reading.
- **Read shorter passages first.** Leave longer passages until later. If you do not understand a passage, move on to the next one. Go back and reread the skipped passage if you have time.
- **Examine the title.** Quickly preview the passage to locate any helpful text features, such as headings.

As You Read

- **Read the passage carefully.** It is important that you read each sentence rather than skim the text. Make sure you understand relationships between and among ideas.
- **Identify main ideas and key supporting details.** Mentally summarize what you learn from each paragraph or section.
- **Look for transitional words and phrases.** Words such as *later*, *because*, *in addition to*, and *instead of* can help you determine relationships among sentences, paragraphs, and sections.

When You Answer the Questions

- **Refer to the passage.** Correct answers must be based on what is in the passage, not on other information you may know about the subject.
- **Reread, if necessary.** If a question asks about a particular section of the reading passage, you may find it helpful to quickly review it or even reread it.
- **Do not spend too much time on any one question.** Remember, you do not have to answer questions in sequential order.