



## GOOD TEST TAKERS ARE DETECTIVES

What's the job of a detective?

- Search for **evidence**
- Find **clues**
- Dig for **answers**
- Use **information**

A good detective also:

- Looks for reasons
- Discovers connections
- Relies on logic – evidence, reasons, and problem solving
- Eliminates suspicious answers

How does a detective use **CLUES**?

**C – Check Evidence**

**L – Look at All Choices**

**U – Use Logic**

**E – Eliminate (the Obvious and the Ridiculous)**

**S – Select the Best Answer**

How does this help me?

- These strategies are not just for standardized tests
- You can be a detective every day with homework, class quizzes and tests
- **CLUES** can be used in any subject area

## ANSWER SHEET SMARTS

- Do not leave any answers blank on the bubble sheet.
- Watch out for bubble trouble.
- Fill in bubbles completely (look at directions on page).
- Take your time and be sure to bubble in the correct answer choice for each question.
- Check that you are in the right place on your bubble sheet when you come to a new section or page.
- If you guess and want to come back later, be extra careful to go to the right place on the answer sheet.
- Do not make stray marks on the answer sheet. Fill in only one choice per question. Erase well when changing answers.



## **GENERAL TEST-TAKING RULES**

Answer ALL questions as quickly as you can. You are not penalized for guessing

- A guess may be right...a blank is always wrong.

If you are working on a question that seems too difficult, do not waste your time. Take a stab at the answer, and guess! If you feel you are making a good guess (you think it may be correct), put a (+) in the margin of your test booklet by the question number. If you took a wild guess, put a (-) by the number. If you have time at the end of the section, return to the questions marked (+) first, then go to the (-),

For Verbal Sections: Don't go for the first answer just because it sounds good. Often the first choice (A) sounds good but is incorrect. Make sure to continue reading ALL the answer choices in order to find the BEST answer possible.

For the Math Sections: Try to figure out the answer independent of the answer choices, then go to the correct choice. If you do not know how to do a specific math problem, look at the answer choices and eliminate answers that are obviously wrong (i.e.: too big or too small).

Do not leave any answer blank on the test.

Make sure that you take a moment to look at your answer sheet. Every question must have only ONE answer. ERASE any other markings.

Do not skip questions!

- If you don't know the answer, guess!
- Some students find it helpful to pick one letter such as (B) or (C) to use whenever they make a random or wild guess. It doesn't matter which letter you choose; using the same letter whenever you make a random guess will save.
- Remember, the "guess" letter is for random guesses only; always try to make an educated guess if possible.

You may only work on one section at a time.

You may not return to another section after time has been called.

Check your answers when you have finished.

You may not get or give help on the test.

Books and notes are not allowed.



## Test Taking Strategies by Section

### Overall

- **Process of elimination**

- After you read the question, read ALL of the answer choices
- Look for the “best” answer, which may be the least wrong answer choice
- Rule out in order from most wrong to least wrong
- Use ruling out before you guess, even if the question leaves you totally confused

### Verbal Reasoning

- **Synonyms:**

- Come up with your own word
- ○ Use positive or negative
  - ✦ Write a “+” or “-” sign next to the question word and then rule out answer choices that are opposite or neutral
- Use context
  - ✦ In what sentence or phrase have you heard the word before?
- Look for roots or word parts that you know
  - ✦ Ask yourself what other words this word looks like

- **Sentence Completions:**

- Underline the key idea
- Look for sentences showing contrast
  - ✦ Circle any conjunctions that are used to change direction (“however,” “but,” “although,” “even though,” “despite”)
- Look for sentences showing cause or sequence
  - ✦ These sentences may have the word “because” or words indicating time such as “while” or “after”
- Use strategies for synonyms when you don’t know the meaning of one or more of the answer choic

## STRATEGIES FOR VERBAL REASONING QUESTIONS

What is Verbal Reasoning?

- Synonyms
  
- Vocabulary in context
  - You are given a sentence or a story and asked:
    - ➔ What word means the same thing as \_\_\_\_\_(synonyms)?
    - ➔ Pick a word or pair of words that fits best in a sentence.

Apply CLUES:

**C – Check Evidence**

**L – Look at All Choices**

**U – Use Logic**

**E – Eliminate (the Obvious and the Ridiculous)**

**S – Select the Best Answer**

- Use context
  - Context is what the surrounding words are “telling” you. There are often clues hiding among the words used in the original sentence(s).
  
- Your answer needs to be the one that “fits” best into the phrase or sentence that is already provided.



## **VERBAL REASONING: SYNONYM REVIEW – ALL LEVELS**

Synonyms are words that have similar meanings. You will be given a word in all capital letters and be asked to choose the word that has the closest meaning.

1. Synonyms are usually words that you come across in reading. They may not be the kind you would use in everyday conversation.
2. Remember to read all of the answer choices.
3. Find the word that is closest in meaning.
4. Watch out for words that are related to the key word, but that are not true synonyms.
5. If you must guess, try to eliminate as many of the answer choices as possible before guessing.
  - For example, if you think the word might have a positive or “good” meaning, eliminate answer choices that are negative or “bad.”
6. Use the root, prefix, or suffix as clues to the meaning of the word.
  - Use the provided chart of common root words, prefixes and suffixes as a study sheet. Practice breaking down new words with the provided tools, and practice coming up with relevant words you already know.
7. Check your answer by using it in a sentence.
8. Increase your vocabulary by looking up new words in the dictionary. Read books, newspapers, or magazines whenever you can. In writing assignments, try exchanging dull words to their more interesting synonyms.

## STRATEGIES FOR READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- **READ EVERYTHING!**
  - Directions
  - Entire passages
  - Headings
  - Captions
  - Charts, graphs and labels
  - Question and all answer choices
- Now it's time to apply CLUES!

### **C – Check Evidence**

### **L – Look at All Choices**

### **U – Use Logic**

### **E – Eliminate (the Obvious and the Ridiculous)**

### **S – Select the Best Answer**

**C** Check Evidence — Read the passage and questions. Look for clues in the passage

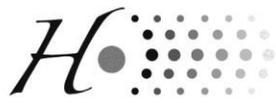
to help you answer the questions.

**L** Look at **ALL** the answer choices — often, there are two that look suspiciously wrong, one that is correct, and one that is the BEST answer according to the evidence in the passage.

**U** Use Logic—Use your time and explain your choices. Rely on evidence. All the answers may not be provided in the story. Sometimes you need to read between the lines.

**E** Eliminate the obvious and the ridiculous (extreme, NO WAY choices).

**S** Select the BEST answer using all the evidence and logic – make an educated guess as to what you think the evidence points to most. The best choice is not about what you think, but about what the evidence in the test is telling you.



## SMART READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

- Before reading the entire passage, preview the test questions first. This will guide your reading when searching for answers.
- Label questions as “general” or “specific.”
- Always apply CLUES.
- Watch out for words like: **ALL**, **EXCEPT**, **NEVER**, **NONE**, and **NOT**. These are tricky words that change the meaning of a sentence or question.
- Eliminate and choose from the best possible answers. Make smart guesses if needed. Base your answers on what you read and what you know.
- Reading comprehension requires you to answer according to what evidence you are given. Look for the answer that fits with the provided information. This is not about your personal opinion, but about the facts presented. What is the passage telling me about this person, concept, or idea?
- Read between the lines – sometimes the answer will not be directly mentioned in the passage. This is when you need to make an inference. An inference is an educated guess based on evidence that is implied or suggested. The actual answer may not be “given to you” in the passage.

Sample Question: Catherine is pacing back and forth while she waits for the team list to be posted. She had a good try-out, but lots of kids tried out for the team. Catherine has wanted to be on the team for a long time.

Catherine is \_\_\_\_\_

- a) happy
- b) nervous
- c) silly
- d) excited



### **Reading Comprehension**

#### **General plan of attack:**

1. Plan your time
  - a. Know your start time, end time, and when you should finish each passage
  - b. Consider prioritizing passages
    - i. Don't just answer the passages in the order given
    - ii. You don't necessarily have to do this, since you do have to be an expert bubbler for it to be at all useful
2. Go to the questions first
3. Read the passage
4. Answer specific questions
5. Answer general questions
6. Repeat steps 3-5 with the next passage

#### **Secrets for choosing the correct answer**

1. Be cautious when choosing an answer that repeats words from the passage
2. On general questions, be sure not to pick an answer that is a detail
  - a. Look out for answers that are details - these are the wrong answers for main idea questions
  - b. Reread the last sentence before answering a general question



## READING COMPREHENSION: TECHNIQUES – ALL LEVELS

You should now be familiar with the different types of questions that you will have to answer on the reading comprehension sections. Below you will find some tips and techniques that may help you answer those different types of categorical questions.

### 1. Main Idea Questions

- Make sure your answer choice fits the whole passage, and not just the first or last paragraph. You will need to get the **WHOLE PICTURE** when you read.
- Beware of slight variations or contradictions of the main idea that sound correct or logical, but have nothing to do with the passage.

### 2. Detail Questions

- When you are asked to refer to a specific word or phrase in the passage, go back to the passage and read that portion again, looking for the key words or ideas.
- Remember “ALL EXCEPT” questions are the most time consuming, and often you will have to go back and refer to more than one place in the passage.

### 3. Inference Questions

- These questions require a very good understanding of the passage.
- Beware of answers that may use the same words that are found in the passage, but are not the right answers.
- **GUESSING STRATEGY:** It is a good bet that the answer to inference questions will be a “middle ground” answer. This means that the answer will not be too positive or too negative. Avoid answers that seem too extreme.

### 4. Tone and Mood Questions

- These also require relatively good knowledge of the passage, so read for content.
- For many of the questions, the correct answer will also be a “middle ground” type of answer.
- Good answers for tone and mood questions may also contain words such as:  
*Impartial      neutral      objective      respectful*
- Bad answers may include:  
*Furious      wildly enthusiastic      depressed      hysterical*

## STRATEGIES FOR QUANTITATIVE REASONING QUESTIONS

What are the question types?

- Algebraic Concepts
- Data Analysis and Probability
- Decimals, Percents, and Fractions
- Geometry
- Measurement
- Whole Numbers

What can I do to help solve these types of problems?

- Ask yourself: What do I already know, and what do I need to find out?
- As a detective, there is always a puzzle to solve. Puzzles come in many shapes and sizes.
- Scratch paper is your friend for arithmetic and drawing.
- Beware of time wasters. If you do not know how to solve a problem after evaluating your evidence, make your best guess and move on. There is no penalty for wrong answers!
- If time allows, you can always come back to a question later.
- Apply CLUES:

**C – Check Evidence**

**L – Look at All Choices**

**U – Use Logic**

**E – Eliminate (the Obvious and the Ridiculous)**

**S – Select the Best Answer**

## STRATEGIES FOR MATHEMATICS QUESTIONS

Types of questions:

- Algebraic Concepts
- Data Analysis and Probability
- Decimals, Percents, and Fractions
- Geometry
- Measurement
- Whole Numbers

How can I solve these problems?

- Look for what information is provided and identify what you are being asked to find.
- Consider what you already know about this topic. Plan out your steps to solve it.
- Don't forget to use provided information as evidence: charts, graphs, tables, illustrations, diagrams, formulas, equations.
- Pick a strategy that makes the most sense:
  - Consider figuring out the answer before consulting the provided answer choices.

If you get stuck, try the following:

- Work backwards from the answers provided – one of them has to be the right answer!
  - POE – process of elimination
  - Plugging in numbers for unknown values
  - Drawing pictures
  - Estimation
  - Ruling out the extremes (too big or too small)
  - Translate word problems into math operations (see chart)
- Always remember CLUES:

**C – Check Evidence**

**L – Look at All Choices**

**U – Use Logic**

**E – Eliminate (the Obvious and the Ridiculous)**

**S – Select the Best Answer**

## **Quantitative Reasoning and Mathematics Achievement**

- Estimate
- If there are variables in the answer choices, try plugging in your own numbers
  - Look for letters in the answer choices
  - If you think to yourself, “this problem would be a lot easier with real numbers,” then plug in real numbers
    - ✦ Make up your own numbers for the variables
    - ✦ Solve the problem using your numbers
    - ✦ Plug the numbers that you assigned to the variables in step 1 into the answer choices and see which answer choice matches the number that you circled
- If they ask for the value of a variable, plug in answer choices
  - A variable may not always be a letter, it can be any unknown quantity
  - Sometimes there is a symbol, such as a small square, instead of a let

