

Reading Comprehension Study Guide

The Reading Comprehension portion of the CPE measures your ability to understand main ideas and supporting details in a reading selection, to understand vocabulary in context, and to draw conclusions from what you read. For practice, read the following selection and work through the sample questions.

Sample Reading Passage:

Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Part of the transition involves a shift in orientation, away from the previous generation toward one's own generation. For instance, adolescents may reject the clothes their parents want them to wear. They prefer to dress like their friends. This transition starts in early childhood; even young children respond more to the influences of their peers than to the desires of their parents. Adolescence is a period in which parental control is in its waning days and many teenagers break away from parental control for good.

Understanding Main Ideas

Now apply your understanding by answering the following sample question. Read through all the possible answers and blacken the circle corresponding to the best response.

Sample Question #1

- The author sees adolescence primarily as
- (A) the most important time of life.
 - (B) a time to train to become a parent.
 - (C) a time of change.
 - (D) a time of hopefulness.

Sample Answer #1* *A B C D

The passage focuses on the transition or change from childhood to adulthood, so "C" is the correct answer for question #1. Notice the frequently repeated key word "transition" may have helped you determine the topic and main idea of the paragraph.

If you have difficulty understanding main ideas, think of the main idea as a generalization. A generalization is a broad statement that may be pictured as an umbrella covering the supporting details of the passage. Look at the generalization written in the umbrella below and think about the smaller details covered by the main idea.

Recognizing Supporting Details

Supporting details are the specific facts, examples, reasons, descriptions and/or steps that prove, explain or illustrate the main idea. In the example above, the details explain the kind of change involved in adolescence and the length of time involved in this change.

Now apply your understanding of these supporting details to answering sample question #2. Read through all the possible answers and blacken the circle corresponding to the best response. You may wish to refer to the passage itself.

Sample Question #2

According to the passage, which of the following is not part of adolescence?

- (A) shift from childhood to adulthood
- (B) movement away from one's own generation
- (C) increased focus on one's peers
- (D) breaking away from parental control

Sample Answer #2 **A B C D**

Responses “A”, “C”, and “D” are all included under the umbrella, so “B” is the best choice for question #2.

Understanding Vocabulary in Context

Good readers figure out the meaning of new words by looking carefully at the words and phrases around unfamiliar vocabulary. If you encounter unfamiliar words as you take your CPE, look for definitions, examples, or other “clues” that will help you understand new words. Practice this skill with the following two questions about the Sample Reading Passage on adolescence.

Sample Question #3

If people shift “orientation” (line 3), they most likely change their

- (A) fears
- (B) focus
- (C) dreams
- (D) control

Sample Answer #3 **A B C D**

Sample Question #4

In line 12, “waning” most nearly means

- (A) winning
- (B) useful
- (C) bad
- (D) fading

Sample Answer #4 **A B C D**

To figure out the meaning of the word “orientation,” you might have looked at the phrases “shift,” “away from,” and “toward.” These familiar terms show a change to the new direction or focus. Thus “B” is the best answer for question #3. Much of the paragraph describes how adolescence brings an end to parental control, so “fading” (D) would be the best response to question #4.

Making Inferences/Drawing Conclusions

An inference is a prediction based on available fact and information; you might also think of an inference as an “educated guess.” You make inferences from available evidence every day. Suppose you are entering a restaurant you haven’t eaten at before. You notice all customers who are leaving the restaurant are smiling and patting their bellies. You might infer or figure out the restaurant serves large, tasty meals. While reading comprehension begins with understanding the words on the page, it also includes drawing conclusions from what the author tells you. Reread the sample passage and answer the following question about what you can infer from the passage. Remember to read all four options carefully before you choose the best response.

Sample Question #3

The author suggests which of the following is true of the relationship between parents and children?

- (A) Most parents fail to control their children.
- (B) Children work hard to control their parents.
- (C) The child’s natural desire for independence often hurts his or her parents.
- (D) Children gradually become independent of their parents.

Sample Answer #5 **A B C D**

The selection does not include sentences about how hard the transition is for parents and children, nor does it discuss the “success” or “failure” of the transition. It does, however, say “This transition starts in early childhood.” This sentence indicates independence develops gradually, over many years. Thus “D” is the best answer for question #5.

Essay Form

Essays generally consist of an introduction, a body and a conclusion. The introduction captures the reader's interest, gives the writer's attitude toward his subject, and explains how the subject will be developed. The body is broken down into a number of paragraphs, each of which develops in detail the points being made to support the thesis. The conclusion briefly summarizes (but does not repeat) the ideas of the essay and connects the discovery, which the writer has made to the lives of the readers.

Introduction

*Attention-getter and orientation of subject to be discussed.
(Give background, history, current circumstances and importance of subject to readers.)*

Thesis

Purpose of paper and plan of development.

Topic Sentence

Body

Specifics (examples, details, explanations, or evidence which support the topic sentence). If there is more than one specific use transition between each. Use transition between each paragraph, too.

Topic Sentence

Body

Specifies (examples, details, explanations, or evidence which support the topic sentence.)

Topic Sentence

Body

Specifies (examples, details, explanations, or evidence which support the topic sentence.)

Summary of Essay

CONCLUSION

Importance or relevance of subject to lives of readers.