

INTRODUCTION

The reading skills that you need to develop to improve your reading ability can be categorised into seven dimensions, which are divided into Basic and Advanced reading skills:

Basic Dimensions	Dimension 1:	Understanding Vocabulary in Context
	Dimension 2:	Identifying and Understanding Ideas
	Dimension 2(A):	Identifying and Understanding Main Ideas
	Dimension 2 (B):	Identifying Implied Main Ideas
	Dimension 3:	Identifying Supporting Details
	Dimension 4:	Identifying Relationships between Ideas
	Dimension 4 (A):	Understanding the Use of Transitions
	Dimension 4 (B):	Idea Organization patterns.
Advanced Dimensions	Dimension 5:	Identifying Facts, Opinions and Inferences.
	Dimension 5 (A):	Facts and Opinions
	Dimension 5 (B):	Inferences
	Dimension 6:	Identifying Purpose and Tone
	Dimension 7:	Recognising Arguments and their Common Structures.

Fig. 2.1 Seven Dimensions of Reading Skills

BASIC DIMENSIONS OF READING SKILLS

Dimension One: Developing the Ability of Understanding Vocabulary in Context

As mentioned above, any piece of writing is a sequence of words, sentences and paragraphs. The *word* is the most basic building block of any piece of writing.

During the process of reading, we often come across situations where we are unaware of the meaning of

particular words. The presence of unfamiliar words in a piece of writing might lead to one of two types of situations:

- (a) The meaning of the word totally breaks the comprehension of the sentence, leading to uncertainty in the interpretation of the passage.

Consider the following example:



- (i) And the courtier said “ May I *genuflect*?”
- (ii) Since, Ecuador’s presidents are limited to one term, Mr.Gutierrez might also back his former boss. If so, things really could get *loco*.



In each of the above sentences, the italicised words make the reader lose comprehension with what the author is trying to get across. Unless you happen to know the exact meaning of the word, you will be at a loss to understand the author’s message. The best you can do is to create alternatives in your mind with respect to what the particular word could mean.

- (b) The meaning of the word can be understood (or pieced together) based on the context in which it is used.

If you were asked to define the words *testimony*, *charismatic* or *clannism*, you might face some discomfort. However, if you saw these words in sentences, the chances are that you would come up with fairly accurate meanings of the same words.

Consider the following examples. See whether you can define the words in italics in the following three sentences:



Judge John Hass imposed a publication ban on the *testimony* of Philip Sartre, former head of Amans and Mather, an advertising agency, as he is to stand trial on fraud charges.

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Here, the word *testimony* means statement.



The **charismatic** leader's home coming will further complicate Ecuador's already turbulent political scene.



Here, *charismatic* means magnetic.



The revival of village **clannism** is among the party's main worries about its grip on rural stability. In Beihe, more than half of the villagers share the surname Zhang. Among the rest, Yan is the biggest clan.



Here, *clannism* means the tendency to stick to one's tribe or family.

In each of the above sentences, the context (the previous and the following words and ideas) provides us with clues for defining the unfamiliar word.

In most situations, the meaning of the word can be derived from the context of the passage. However, this is an ability that gets better with use.

Picking Contextual Clues Generally, contextual clues are seen in the form of:

- (a) Illustrations & Examples
- (b) Cause & Effect relationships
- (c) Synonyms (Parallelisms or similarities)
- (d) Antonyms (Opposites or contrasts)
- (e) General sense of the paragraph or passage.

Let us now look at examples of each type one by one:

(A) Illustrations or Examples One of the ways of making a point which is commonly used by authors is through the use of illustrations or examples to reiterate the point. In such cases, if the unfamiliar word has an illustration or an example to support what it means, it provides us with a contextual clue for solving the question.

Let us look at the following examples:



1. The **impoverished** state of the castle told a sorry tale of holding on to past glories—the walls were barren, the paint had peeled off and the glory of the past had clearly worn off.

In the above sentence, **impoverished** means:

- (a) poor
- (b) rich
- (c) inadequate

2. His **obsequious** nature made him a favorite of all—he only had complimentary words to say about everybody.

In the above sentence, **obsequious** means:

- (a) Deceiving
- (b) Critical
- (c) flattering



In the first sentence above, the examples provided to illustrate, impoverished, clearly point to 'poor' as its meaning. In the second, the illustration provides only one meaning, i.e., flattering, to the word in the context of the sentence.

(B) Cause & Effect Cause and effect relationships are again very commonly used in most writing structures. If we come across an unfamiliar word in either the cause or the effect of a cause-effect structure, the context is likely to tell us what the intended meaning of the word is. This principle is amply illustrated in the example below:



Asked to explain the **rosier** outlook, manufacturers cite one factor above all—the sharp decline in interest rates in the past five years, which besides beautifying company balance sheets is encouraging consumers to borrow, to buy cars, for example and build houses.

In the above sentence, **rosier** means:

- (a) Optimistic
- (b) pessimistic
- (c) Indifferent



In the sentence, **rosier** obviously means optimistic, considering the illustrations in the later part of the sentence. The **cause-effect** relationship is extremely clear here. Dropping of interest rates has led to improved company balance sheets, as well as to greater demand in the form of consumers buying cars and building houses. The effect of all this has been to create an optimistic outlook on the part of the manufacturers.

(C) Synonyms (Parallelisms or Similarities) Often, context clues occur in the form of synonyms— wherein one or more words mean the same as the unfamiliar word. The presence of the synonym gives a context clue that is useful to understand the meaning of the unfamiliar word.

Consider the following examples where the italicised word has its synonym in the form of the emboldened word/s.



1. The **exhilaration** experienced by the parents when their child starts to walk is common to all cultures. The child's first steps give a feeling of **intense happiness** to the parents.
2. Coming face to face with his first love, left Sameer in a **poignant** mood. He was **touched** by the irony of the situation.
3. The **felony** committed by the robber was sure to make him pay. After all, serious **crime** seldom goes unpunished.
4. Although he had sworn not to **divulge** her secret, he **revealed** it to his best friend, Rajeev.
5. The **emancipatory** or **liberatory** significance of situating ordinary life and the world of duality and dualism in terms of a philosophy of non duality, lies in the fact that ultimately most of the categorical errors, those deep fundamental errors constitutive of our misunderstanding of being, which are at the same time constitutive of the superficial, oppressive and mystifying levels of social beings which dominate and screen our life world, is the fact that they turn on misidentifications.
6. Let us look at how a block operates, how potentially free, unbound energy becomes **fixated** or **stuck** or alternatively—in the case of a weakness of attention/one-pointedness/mindfulness—becomes **dissipated** or **dispersed**.

(D) Antonyms (Opposites or Contrasts) Just like same meaning words, there are situations where opposite meaning words give the contextual clues. Antonyms normally are signaled by a contrast statement/phrase, like however, on the other hand, but, yet, as against, although, etc.

Consider the following examples. In these examples, the italicised words are antonyms (have opposite meanings):



1. Although my grand father was always **profuse** in his criticism, his praise was always **scarce**.
2. A **sedentary** lifestyle is the root cause of all diseases, hence, regular exercise to stay **active** is a must to prevent disease.
3. The **homogeneity** of the mixture was broken by the presence of a **variety** of stuff in it.

(E) General Sense of the Paragraph or Passage In many cases, the contextual clues can be seen on the basis of the general sense of the paragraph (or sometimes, even the entire passage.)

Consider the following paragraph as an example.



Oddly, things are looking up for American International Group (AIG). Yes, the **embattled** global insurer has admitted overstating past earning and has postponed filing its financial statement with the Securities and Exchange Commission(SEC) , provoking questions about how much the company is really worth; yes, there was an embarrassing **kerfuffle** between lawyers over the possible removal of critical documents in Bermuda; yes, regulators are looking through an ever-expanding list of suspect deals; and yes, Maurice "Hank" Greenberg, the brilliant executive who built AIG, has been forced to sever his formal ties with the firm. But a company as aggressive as this has faced litigation before. Even as the headlines seem ever more dire, AIG and Mr. Greenberg already looked poised for a modest comeback.

In the context of the above paragraph:

embattled means:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| (a) Healthy | (b) Profitable |
| (c) Stressed or beleaguered | |



The answer is obviously, stressed, and this can be deduced from the overall meaning of the passage.

Kerfuffle means:

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| (a) dialogue | (b) talks | (c) commotion |
|--------------|-----------|---------------|



The answer is obviously, c.

In your normal everyday reading exercises, try to identify sentences and paragraphs where contextual clues fitting in one of the patterns above, help you to understand the meaning of a word with which you were unfamiliar.

Dimension Two (A): Ability to Identify and Understand Main Ideas

The ability to identify main ideas is perhaps the most important factor for good reading skills.

The main idea is the answer to the question: What is the main point that the author is trying to make in the paragraph?

For instance, read the following paragraph:



Most people do not worry much about physics or politics when for example, they look at the colours of a rainbow. Nor do they pause much when they use a remote control for their T.V. set, talk on the mobile phone, listen to the radio, cook food in their microwave oven, open

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their car door from a distance, or surf the internet without wires. Yet, these are all phenomena of electromagnetic radiation. How humans harness electromagnetic waves—and specifically those in the radio frequency part of the spectrum—has become so important that old and new ways of thinking are now lining up for a tense confrontation that will affect numerous businesses and billions of consumers.

The old mindset, supported by over a century of technological experience and 70 years of regulatory habit, views spectrum—the range of frequencies, or wave lengths, at which electromagnetic waves vibrate—as a scarce resource that must be allocated by government or bought and sold like property. The new school, pointing to cutting edge technologies, says that spectrum is by nature, abundant and that allocating, buying or selling parts of it will one day seem as illogical as, say, apportioning or selling sound waves to people who would like to have a conversation.



What is the main point that the author is trying to make in this paragraph? In order to discover the main idea, you should first determine the topic being discussed. In the above paragraph, for example, the topic is ‘harnessing of electromagnetic radiation’. The main idea is that ‘old and new ways of thinking are confronting each other with respect to the way we are harnessing electromagnetic waves.’

The main idea is something like an umbrella idea—the author’s primary point about the topic. All the other material in the paragraph falls under the main idea (and is called the supporting detail, which consists of examples, illustrations, causes and reasons, evidence in the form of factual information, etc.).

(A) The Concept of the Idea Sentence In a paragraph, authors often present the main idea to the readers, in the form of a single sentence, called the ‘**Idea Sentence**’. For example, in the given extract both the topic and the point about the topic are expressed in the last sentence of the first paragraph. Thus, the outline of the above paragraph can be shown as:

Topic: Harnessing of Electromagnetic radiation.

Main idea (as expressed in the idea sentence): There is a conflict of opinion about the harnessing of electromagnetic radiation between the old and the new way of thinking.

Supporting details:

1. The old way of thinking is that the spectrum of radiation is a scarce resource and its scarcity must be

respected by making people buy and sell it like property.

2. The new way of thinking is that the spectrum is abundant by nature and buying and selling it will seem illogical one day.

The Cream of the Piece

You should always remember that the topic is the subject of a selection. It is normally expressed in a few words. Since Reading Comprehension passages do not have the topic mentioned, your first objective while reading a passage should be to identify the topic of the passage. In such a case, the question—‘Who or what is the passage about?’, is a useful question to ask oneself, as the answer to this question is the topic of the selection.

Once you have found the topic of the selection, the next step is to find the main idea which the author is trying to convey. For this purpose, you should ask yourself the question: ‘What is the main point of the author about the topic?’

Note that it is not necessary that authors present the entire main idea of the paragraph in one sentence.

Sometimes, the main idea might be distributed across two to three sentences in the paragraph.

Consider the following selections. The topic and the idea sentence/s in each of these passages have been described below it.



They have a dismal track record when it comes to predicting economic growth, exchange rates or the direction of the stock market. So, you might have expected economists to despair at the thought of forecasting sports result. Not at all. Efforts to work out the numbers of medals which countries are likely to get in the Athens Olympics, which start on August 13th, are well under way.



The topic is forecasting sports results and the last sentence is the idea sentence.



“You want rubies! We can do business!” the anonymous caller promised a lucrative deal over the phone: stump up dollars in advance and he would produce a glittering hoard in Johannesburg. But your correspondence refused; so the caller instead produced some colorful abuse, sneered at British sexual prowess, and hung up.

It is rare for any attempted African scam to be executed so inelegantly. Advance-fee frauds often lure victims to part with tens of thousands of dollars on the promise of

huge, but somehow plausible, later gains. Nigerians, especially, are renowned for elaborate and persuasive tales: “my uncle the president, died leaving me a million to smuggle to your country; let me use your bank account to hide the cash and you will get a slice; oh, and pay me a few thousand dollars in advance for handling fees”.



The topic and the main idea are visible in the second sentence of the second paragraph. The topic is ‘advance fee frauds in Africa’ and the main idea is—what is done in these frauds.



“Our everyday life is much stranger than we imagine, and rests on fragile foundation.” This is the intriguing first sentence of a very unusual new book about Economics, and much else besides: “The company of Strangers”, by Paul Seabright, a professor of Economics at the University of Toulouse. Why is everyday life so strange? Because, explains Mr Seabright, it is so much at odds with what would have seemed, as recently as 10000 years ago, our evolutionary destiny. It was only then that “one of the most aggressive and elusive bandit species in the entire animal kingdom” decided to settle down. In no more than the blink of an eye, in evolutionary time, these suspicious and untrusting creatures, these “shy, murderous apes”, developed co-operative networks of staggering scope and complexity—networks that rely on trust among strangers. When you come to think about it, it was an extraordinarily improbable outcome.



The topic is the ‘unlikely evolution of the human species’ and the idea conveyed is that the human species has moved ‘from being an aggressive and elusive bandit species to a species which has developed cooperative networks of staggering scope and complexity, something that seemed highly unlikely in the context of what was our evolutionary destiny’.



“In the first weekend of every August, the town of Twinsburg, Ohio, holds a parade. Decorated floats, cars and lorries roll slowly past neat, white houses and clipped lawns, while thousands of onlookers clap and wave flags in sunshine. The scene is a perfect little slice of America. There is though, something rather strange about the participants: they all seem to come in pairs. Identical twins of all colours, shapes, ages, and sizes are assembling for the world’s largest annual gathering of their kind.

The Twinsburg meeting is of interest to more people than just the twins themselves. Every year, the festival attracts dozens of scientists who came to prod, swab,

sample and question the participants. For identical twins are natural clones: the odd mutation aside, they share 100% of their genes. That means studying them can cast light on the relative importance of genetics and environments in shaping particular human characteristics.”



The topic is ‘identical twins’ and the main idea as expressed in the second last and last sentences of the second paragraph is that ‘studying identical twins can help us understand better, the relative importance of genetics and environment in shaping particular human characteristics.’



“The twin rule of pathology states that any heritable disease will be more concordant (that is, more likely to be jointly present or absent) in identical twins than non-identical twins—and in turn, will be more concordant in non-identical twins than in non-siblings. Early work, for example, showed that the statistical correlation of skin mole counts between identical twins was 0.4, while non-identical twins had a correlation of only 0.2 (A score of 1.0 implies perfect correlation, while a score of zero implies no correlation). This result suggests that moles are heritable, but it also implies that there is an environment component to the development of moles, otherwise, the correlation in identical twins would be close to 1.0.



The topic is ‘the twin rule of pathology’ and the main idea about it is ‘the relative concordance of heritable diseases between identical twins, non identical twins and non siblings. The idea sentence here is the first sentence of the selection. (In this case, the topic is also in the same sentence.)

The Cream of the Piece

1. The idea sentence is usually supported by all the information in the remaining part of the paragraph. Hence, a useful way to check if you have got the idea sentence and hence, the main idea correctly is by asking yourself the question—“Is the sentence you have identified as the idea sentence supported by all the other material in the paragraph?”
2. Be careful not to select a topic that is too broad or too narrow.
3. The idea sentence can occur at either the start or the middle or the end of the paragraph. Paragraphs could be written in any of the following structures.
 - A. Idea Sentence at the start of the paragraph (within the first two sentences). This is the most commonly used structure in writing. In

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such cases, the paragraph can follow any of the following structures:

- (i) **Idea Sentence**—Supporting Detail/comment—Supporting Detail/comment—Supporting Detail/comment—Supporting Detail/comment
 - (ii) Introductory detail/comment/question—**Idea Sentence**—Supporting Detail/comment—Supporting Detail/comment—Supporting Detail/comment
- B. Idea Sentence in the middle of a paragraph (Beyond the first two sentences). In such cases, the paragraph would typically follow the following structure:
- (i) Introductory detail/comment—Introductory detail/comment/question—**Idea Sentence**—Supporting Detail/comment—Supporting Detail/comment—Supporting Detail/comment
- C. Idea Sentence at the end of the paragraph will follow the following structure:
- (i) Introductory detail/comment—Supporting Detail/comment—Supporting Detail/comment—Supporting Detail/comment—**Idea Sentence**
- D. Idea Sentence at the beginning and the end of the paragraph

Some authors like to make a point at the beginning of the paragraph and reiterate it at the end of the paragraph. In such cases, the following structure will be used:

Idea Sentence—Supporting Detail/comment—Supporting Detail/comment—Supporting Detail/comment/question—**Idea Sentence**

Whatever, we have been discussing above has been in the context of single paragraphs. How does it apply to a reading comprehension passage? This is a very obvious query that comes to mind. Well, the answer is that in a long passage consisting of 4–5 paragraphs, each paragraph will have its own main idea (or its own theme). This is due to the fact that the main idea of the entire passage is broken down into its component parts. What you need to realize is that just as the alphabet is the building block of a word and the word is the building block of the sentence, so also the paragraph is the building block of the passage. Just as we need to read all the alphabets used in the formation of a word in order to make sense of the word, and just as we need to read all the words in a sentence in order to make sense of a sentence, similarly, we need to read and grasp

each paragraph of a passage to get the true meaning of the entire passage.

Comprehending individual paragraphs without linking them, often leaves us with an incomplete idea structure. Seen from the author's point of view, the writing process as described earlier, is: he/she formulates the main idea in his mind and then breaks it down into its component parts. Each component part is then normally put into separate paragraphs and the supporting details filled in to complete the passage.

Dimension Two (B): Identifying Implied Main Ideas

Many a times, the main idea may not be expressed inside one sentence. In such cases, authors typically imply or suggest a main idea without actually stating it clearly in one sentence. In such cases, the reader needs to be able to figure out the main idea by stringing together multiple statements giving the idea. Even in such cases, the main idea will be got by the answer to the question:

What is the main point that the author is trying to make in the paragraph? The only difference will be that the answer to the question will not be found in one or more idea sentences.

In fact, it will not be stated anywhere in the paragraph. In such cases, the main idea gets identified by the fact that most of the supporting details will be pointing towards the implied main idea. The student is encouraged to locate and experience such situations in his/her normal reading exercises.

BETTER UNDERSTANDING

FOR YOUR

In the following paragraphs, identify the topic and the idea.

1. Even by the standards of ASEAN, it was a dismal performance. The leaders of the other nine members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations used their summit in Bali this week to ladle praise on Myanmar for its “positive” and “pragmatic” recent policies. These, it appeared, meant the transfer of Myanmar’s most famous citizen, the Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, from prison to house arrest, and the publication of a “road map” for democracy. Since a return to democracy

has been promised by Myanmar's current junta ever since it took power in 1988, and since Miss Suu Kyi won an election in 1990 that has never been recognised, the Myanmar map looks as forlorn as the Middle Eastern one.

The disgraceful treatment meted out to Miss Suu Kyi is only the most obvious outrage committed by South-East Asia's most repressive and incompetent government. The generals do not just imprison thousands of political prisoners: they have turned their country into a place where life expectancy has collapsed to around 55, and growth has vanished. The World Health Organisation ranks the efficacy of Myanmar's health system at 190 out of 191 nations.

Topic : _____

Main Idea : _____

2. In Pakistan—they are katchi abadis, in Cuba—focos isalubres, in India—bustees and in Brazil—favelas. Whatever the local name of slums, there are a lot of them and they are growing fast. A new report, "The Habitat," by the United Nations agency responsible for "human settlements", says that in 2001, just under a billion people were living in slums—about a third of the world's city dwellers. In the last decade, urban populations in less developed regions increased by a third. On present trends, says the UN report, 2 billion people could be living in slums by 2030.

In Africa, many parts of the middle East, Latin America and Asia, migrants are leaving farm land which is unable to support them, and arriving in cities which are unprepared to deal with them. This has been a long term trend, and is unlikely to abate no matter how awful the slums become. In 1800, only 2% of the world's population was urbanized; by 2008, more than half of the world will be. Because such migration is so predictable, and long established, it might seem surprising that many governments are ill-equipped for it. But there is little new in that either: the now—rich countries fared just as badly when their cities first began to grow rapidly.

Topic : _____

Main Idea : _____

3. The main factor in the California recall election is the economically underestimated effect of charisma, or rather Governor Grey Devis's utter lack of it. No one can calculate the cost of having uninspiring leaders but we would do well to consider past American presidents.

America struggled in the Depression, but eventually rebounded under brilliant Franklin Roosevelt, in spite of the war. We boomed under the spell of dashing young John Kennedy and declined under smart-but-creepy Richard Nixon and dull Gerald Ford. We muddled along under earnest Jimmy Carter and boomed, after a rough start, under ebullient Ronald Reagan. We fell into recession under the often-unintelligible George Bush senior and then boomed under charming Bill Clinton, before declining once again under plain-spoken George Bush junior. Mr. Davis's problem is that he is perceived not only as ineffectual but insipid; a bad combination for any leader.

Topic : _____

Main Idea : _____

4. Pre-Election budgets are not what they used to be. Once upon a time, governments could be relied on to ply the electorate with extravagant giveaways in the run-up to polling day. But today's voters are an edgeable-lot, so a more subtle approach is required. Gordon Brown's second pre-election budget, like his first, avoided traditional tax bribes to the electorate as a whole. Instead, Britain's chancellor opted for a selection of sweeteners, carefully directed at vital electoral target groups such as pensioners, poorer families and aspiring home-buyers.

But the similarity between the two budgets ends there. In 2001, the public finances were exceeding healthy. Including measures announced in his pre-budget report, Mr. Brown was able to give away £8

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billion (\$12billion) in the fiscal year ahead while still forecasting a comfortable surplus. In this budget, Mr. Brown was in a much weaker position. Even the wee sweeties he handed out were far too much, bearing in mind how bad the figures now look.

Topic : _____

Main Idea : _____

5. The World Bank is the world's biggest development agency—a sprawling bureaucracy that is extremely difficult to run well. Its leader needs to know about development, be able to articulate a workable vision and be a good manager. Mr. Wolfowitz scores passably on two counts. He is not an economist or a banker, but has first-hand experience of developing countries. He has public-sector management experience—not least as number two at the Pentagon, although the bungling in Iraq raises questions about just how good his management skills are.

The biggest concern is that Mr. Wolfowitz is an idealist some would say a Utopian, whose career has been guided by zeal to bring democracy to the world—regardless of what the world might make of that ambition. Thus far,—Mr. Wolfowitz has focused on the relationship between democracy and security, but his belief in the power of democracy will surely colour his views of economic development as well.

Topic : _____

Main Idea : _____

6. If one considers how Nigeria has handled its oil revenues over the past 30 years, its quest for debt relief seems laughable. Its oil wells have yielded hundreds of billions of dollars, which its politicians have largely stolen or squandered. Nigeria is scarcely less poor than before its oil boom began. And, since successive governments borrowed against future oil receipts and wasted that money too, the country is saddled with some \$34 billion in foreign debt. Such a record suggests that extra cash freed up by debt relief would be frittered away.

But look at the past year and a half, and a different picture emerges. A new economic team, led by the finance minister, a former World Bank Director called Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, has made strenuous efforts to impose discipline. Recent high oil prices have generated an unexpected revenue surplus, which previous Nigerian governments would have spent. This one has saved it, on the wise assumption that prices will eventually fall. The federal government has also cajoled Nigeria's 36 states to save their share of the windfall. This is unprecedented. State governments are powerful, jealous of their prerogatives and often the kind of folk who, ahem, are glad that a governorship confers immunity from prosecution.

Topic : _____

Main Idea : _____

7. Will China and Russia be the new Axis of Oil? Supply and demand trends, plus this week's surprise from the OPEC cartel, suggest that these emerging giants may yet up-end energy market.

With oil prices above \$30 a barrel, OPEC was not expected to cut output quotas at its meeting in Algeria this week, merely to clamp down on quota busting, which adds some 1.5m barrels per day (bpd) to official quotas of 24.5m bpd. But, on February 10th, it agreed to cut quotas by 1m bpd from April.

Why? "The second quarter is a bad quarter," explained one oil minister. He was talking of the risk of price collapse as the northern-hemisphere winter (when demand peaks) gives way to warmer spring (when oil use declines). Yet, OPEC may be playing with fire. Edward Morse of HETCO, an energy trader, points out that inventories are currently unusually low. Even if OPEC cuts output by half of what it threatens, he says, there may still be sharp price spikes: "There's no cushion left."

Topic : _____

Main Idea : _____

8. There are now, according to Ben Bradshaw, a farming minister, about 1.5m deer roaming Britain—more than at any time since the last Ice Age. One reason is milder weather. Another is that farmers increasingly sow grain and rape seed in autumn rather than spring, because crops grow more vigorously in spring and so produce better yields. That provides fodder for deer in winter. At last, it seems, an agricultural technique which improves farmers' profits and boosts wildlife.

Not quite. Autumn planting may help see deer through hard times. But it is also blamed for a decline in numbers of certain bird species.

Graham Appleton, of the British Trust for Ornithology, says that autumn and winter planting means less grain lying around fields in winter. Naturalists think that may explain why corn bunting numbers are down by 41% since 1994, grey partridge by 18% and yellowhammer by 13%. Autumn-seeded crops also grow all too quickly for field nesters such as skylarks (down 14%).

Topic : _____

Main Idea : _____

9. The poison pill is one of the most egregious creatures of American corporate law. It exists to stop shareholders enjoying their full ownership right by threatening, if triggered, to dilute the value of those shares in certain circumstances by a firm's board. They first caught on in the 1980s, when boards used them to deter hostile takeover bids—hostile at least, to the board, though not necessarily to shareholders.

How strange, then, to find a poison pill being used (seemingly) in a good cause, against somebody who has (apparently) given many shareholders a lousy deal. This is the latest twist in the remarkable affair involving Hollinger International, a newspaper group, and its long time controlling owner, Conrad Black. This week, Hollinger International board launched a campaign, including the creation of a poison pill, to stop Lord Black selling control of the firm to wealthy Barclay brothers.

Topic : _____

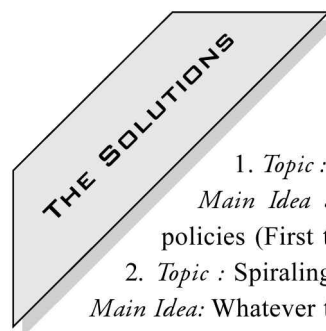
Main Idea : _____

10. A new computer virus, the fastest spreading ever, was this week making the rounds among unprotected computers running on Microsoft Windows. Such incidents of online vandalism by what are often presumed to be geeky teenage hackers are, sadly, routine. But this virus, called MyDoom by some and Novarg by others, seems to be of a different nature—conspiratorial and political. That is because its main feature, besides humiliating Microsoft, is to turn infected machines into weapons against a controversial company called SCO.

SCO, a tiny software firm in Utah, and Microsoft, the world's largest software firm, have only one thing in common. Both are passionately hated by "open-source" software programmers, who typically believe that computer code should be freely shared instead of sold as property. Microsoft is hated chiefly because it represents the opposite model, proprietary software, and because its operating system, Windows, is the main rival to Linux, the best-known open-source software today.

Topic : _____

Main Idea : _____



1. Topic : Myanmar's failure in ASEAN
Main Idea Sentence : Even by.... recent policies (First two sentences)
2. Topic : Spiraling Slums
Main Idea: Whatever the local name of slums, there are a lot of them and they are growing fast.
3. Topic : Economic effects of Inappropriate Leadership
Main Idea : No one can calculate the cost of having

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uninspiring leaders but we would do well to consider past American presidents.

4. *Topic* : Gordon Brown Pre-Election Budget

Main Idea : Gordon Brown's second pre-election budget, like his first, avoided traditional tax bribes to the electorate as a whole.

5. *Topic* : Mr. Wolfowitz's Selection as World Bank chief

Main Idea : Its leader needs to know about development, be able to articulate a workable vision and be a good manager.

6. *Topic* : Nigeria's changing face

Main Idea : A new economic team, led by the finance minister, a former World Bank Director called Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, has made strenuous efforts to impose discipline.

7. *Topic* : A surprise cut in oil supplies.

Main Idea : Price collapse as the northern-hemisphere winter (when demand peaks) gives way to warmer spring (when oil use declines).

8. *Topic* : Deer Oh! Dear

Main Idea : Farmers increasingly sow grain and rape seed in autumn rather than spring, because crops grow more vigorously in spring and so produce better yields. That provides fodder for deer in winter.

9. *Topic* : A new use for the poison pill

Main Idea : It exists to stop shareholders enjoying their full ownership right by threatening, if triggered, to dilute the value of those shares in certain circumstances, by a firm's board.

10. *Topic* : Computer security

Main Idea : This virus, called My Doom, seems to be of a different nature—conspiratorial and political. That is because its main feature, besides humiliating Microsoft, is to turn infected machines into weapons against a controversial company called SCO.

Now we will graduate from **Understanding Paragraphs** to **Understanding Passages**

Dimension Two (C): Identifying Central Points

A passage is a series of paragraphs connected to each other through a logical idea flow. Each paragraph has its own main idea. However, when the ideas of each of the paragraphs are connected to each other, one idea stands out as it is surrounded and supported by all the ideas of the passage. Besides, it will also be supported by the details

throughout the passage. Such an idea, then, is called the central idea or the central point of the passage.

The Cream of the Piece

Some useful questions that need to be answered in order to determine the central point of the passage are:

"What is the idea that the author is consistently referring to throughout the passage?"

"With what point are all the ideas in the passage connected to?"

"What central idea is supported by all the supporting details in the entire passage?"

The answer to one or more of these questions will help you to identify the central point of the passage.

Being able to identify the central point is a critical skill in the development of RC skills. The student should concentrate on honing this skill through his/her reading exercises. We have demonstrated this skill as applied to actual CAT passages in the detailed solved CAT passages at the end of this chapter.

Dimension Three: Ability to Predict and Identify Supporting Details

Supporting details are generally in the form of illustrations, reasons, factual evidences, examples, etc. that explain a main idea.

Since supporting details are always supportive of the main idea, developing the skill to predict, an oncoming supporting detail, or to identify the supporting detail when you see one is closely related to the ability to identify main ideas—something we saw in detail in the previous Dimension.

Let us look closely at some of the ways of putting in supporting details.

1. Supporting Details as Examples Read the following extract, where the supporting details appear as examples.



Some decisions will be fairly obvious—"no-brainers." Your bank account is low, but you have a two week vacation coming up and you want to get away to some place warm to relax with your family. Will you accept your in-laws' offer to free use of their Florida beachfront condo? Sure. You like your employer and feel ready to move forward in your career. Will you step in for your boss for three weeks while she attends a professional development course? Of course!



Here, The topic and main idea come out of the first sentence of the paragraph. The supporting details are in the form of examples which make the main idea clearer. There are two supporting details:

Supporting Detail 1:- Your bank account is low, but you have a two week vacation coming up and you want to get away to some place warm to relax with your family. Will you accept your in-laws' offer to free use of their Florida beachfront condo? Sure.

Supporting Detail 2:- You like your employer and feel ready to move forward in your career. Will you step in for your boss for three weeks while she attends a professional development course? Of course!

2. Supporting Details as a Reason or a Series of Reasons: Read the following extract, where the supporting details appear as reasons.



Is your credit card your biggest source of worries? Unsolicited calls, indecipherable language, hidden charges, rude customer (un)care executives... Well, the Reserve Bank of India has just put an end to all these unfair practices. Arm yourself with details of the RBI notification and make sure you throw the rules at the bank if you are troubled again.

To begin with, banks have been asked to keep the language simple. Most important terms and conditions should be highlighted and advertised, and sent separately to customers. RBI has also instructed card issuers to dispatch bills on time and the customer should be given at least one fortnight for making payments before the interest is charged. Banks should quote annualised percentage rates on cards and the rate along with the annual fee should be shown with equal prominence. The RBI has also directed banks to provide explanation to the customer within 60 days if he questions any bill. Besides, the credit card companies would be responsible for all acts of omission or commission of their agents, so they should be extremely careful about the quality of service while out-sourcing various credit card operations. Further, the banks should ensure confidentiality of the customer's records and privacy.



Here, the topic is credit card companies, while the main idea is the RBI's putting an end to the unfair practices of credit card companies. (These are seen in the first two sentences.)

There are four supporting details in the second paragraph.

Supporting Detail 1: To begin with, banks have been asked to keep the language simple.

Supporting Detail 2: The RBI has also directed banks to provide explanation to the customer within 60 days if he questions any bill.

Supporting Detail 3: Besides, the credit card companies would be responsible for all acts of omission or commission of their agents.

Supporting Detail 4: Further, the banks should ensure confidentiality of the customer's records and privacy.

Consider another example which includes both reasons and examples as supporting details:



Foreign jaunts on business, after the first few times, can get rather boring. Jet lag, early morning meetings, bad weather, local language, and even bland food can turn these trips into a chore rather quickly. Software professionals soon realise that there are just so many parks or castles you can visit when you are in the US or Europe. You can get used to countries rather quickly. If you have been visiting Korea a few times, chances are that you are no longer thrilled about going to Taiwan even if it has a completely different history.

There is a way around it. You could try collecting old maps, for instance. Pradip Shah, a seasoned finance professional, still looks forward to his trips to Manhattan, even if they are just for a couple of days. And that's after years of going to the US. His visits to Amsterdam include a mandatory visit to the same shop on the Dam Street for as long as he can remember. And in Sydney and London, it is the same story. Shah's rendezvous has everything to do with maps. He collects them and puts them up in his office in South Mumbai.



In the first paragraph above, the supporting details are first given in the second sentence of the paragraph, in the form of reasons. The sentence 'Jet lag, early morning meetings, bad weather, local language, and even bland food can turn these trips into a chore rather quickly,' gives a set of reasons for the main idea—'why foreign business jaunts can get rather boring.'

These are followed by two examples as further supporting details—

There are just so many parks or castles you can visit when you are in the US or Europe.

If you have been visiting Korea a few times; chances are that you are no longer thrilled about going to Taiwan, even if it has a completely different history.

In the second paragraph, the author gives us one way of avoiding the boredom—collecting maps. Pradip Shah's example and the three examples he uses to explain what he does are supporting details in the form of examples.

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Supporting Detail: His visits to Amsterdam include a mandatory visit to the same shop on the Dam Street for as long as he can remember.

Division of Supporting Details into Major and Minor Supporting Details: In the last paragraph of the above passage, we came across an instance of major and minor details. Let us first understand the distinction between the two. We will then look at how the two are present above.

The Cream of the Piece

In any piece of writing, the **major details** are used to explain and develop the main idea. **Minor details**, on the other hand, help to explain and clarify the major details.

For instance, in the last paragraph of the above passage, the example of Pradip Shah has been taken to explain the strategy of collecting old maps as one of the ways of getting over boredom. Pradip Shah represents the major detail, while the specific examples of Manhattan, Amsterdam, Sydney and London have been used in order to explain and clarify the major detail.

Strategies for Identifying Supporting Details Apart from the fact that you need to practice these skills more and more, there are some specific strategies that will help you predict upcoming supporting details.

Strategy One: Anticipating Lists When the author uses what can be called a ‘list word’, as a reader you can predict an oncoming list (of reasons, causes, effects, examples, factors, merits/demerits, etc).

Being prepared for the same will help you better map the author’s idea structure. Some words that announce an oncoming list are:

1. A few
2. Some
3. A series of
4. Several
5. A number of
6. First of all
7. Sometimes, the author might use a specific number to prepare you for an oncoming list. Thus, he might use something like—Three specific reasons, Two examples, etc.

8. Another common structure used by authors involves the relative grading of the components of a list. Thus, the author might talk about **Principal and subsidiary reasons or effects**

Strategy Two: Identifying Additions: Additions introduce major details. Words that announce additions include:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. On top of | 2. Moreover |
| 3. Also | 4. In addition to |
| 5. Next | 6. After this |
| 7. Lastly | 8. Firstly |
| 9. Secondly, etc. | |

The Cream of the Piece

Mind Mapping—Understanding the structure of the passage to get a better grip of the same: As already explained earlier, your objective while reading is to create your own skeleton/map of the passage and the closer it is to the skeleton/map of the author, the better will be your understanding. Supporting details are a crucial factor while trying to create these mental structures. Improving your skill in identifying and then predicting supporting details will go a long way towards helping you gain a closer insight to what the author is trying to convey.

Before moving on to the next dimension, the student is advised to work on his ability to identify supporting details in the structures mentioned above.

Dimension Four (A): Understanding the Use of Transition and Idea Organisation Patterns

Most writers have a tendency to use structures/words/phrases that show relationships between ideas. The use of these structures/words/phrases in writing, guides the reader in a similar way as a road sign helps a tourist understand directions.

These relationship structures and words/phrases can be classified under the following categories:

- (A) Transitions
- (B) Idea Organisation

Let us now look closely at each of these relationships:

(A) Transitions Transitions are words or phrases that show the relationship between ideas. They are like milestones on a road that guides travelers. Consider the following statements:



Your skills at the English language can be substantially improved. You need to improve your vocabulary.

Your skills at the English language can be substantially improved. First of all, you need to improve your vocabulary.



You might have found the second item easier to understand. The only difference between the two items is the presence of the words 'first of all'. They give you an indication that the writer is planning on explaining several ways of improving your English language. Hence, you can anticipate an upcoming list of ways in the next few sentences. Based on this anticipation, you can prepare a mental framework of the structure of the idea presented by the author.

Transition words or phrases, can be classified in the form of:

(a) Addition Words These words signify an addition to the thought. An addition transition can be identified with the use of any of the following types of words.

also	further	secondly
next	in addition	furthermore
firstly	lastly	finally
moreover	another	one
additionally		

The following examples will clarify addition transitions for you:



- (i) An important dental warning sign is bleeding of gums. Another is a tooth that shows sensitivity to hot or cold.
- (ii) In the early seventies, there were three youngsters who broke into the world of professional tennis simultaneously. The first was Jimmy Connors, the next Bjorn Borg and the third Vijay Amritraj. Together, they were known as the ABC of tennis.
- (iii) The diesel passenger car is a peculiarity seen exclusively in the Indian transportation scenario. Another is the steam engine driven train. You would not find these anywhere in the world.

(b) Chronology Words These words signify a chronological relationship between the ideas presented under the structure. The following words signify chronology.

before	first	last
--------	-------	------

eventually	soon	next
after	then	previously
finally	until	now
while	since	following
preceding	second	immediately
during	often	later
as soon as	frequently	when
during	subsequently	one after the other

The following examples will clarify the concept of chronology words.



- (i) The performance of the company has been extremely encouraging during the last quarter.
- (ii) During the winter months, the whole of the Indian Railway system is paralysed due to the fog that prevails across the breadth of North India.
- (iii) Tiredness sets into an office worker by the time he has his lunch. It worsens by the time he gets home.

(B) Idea Organisation Patterns Very often, authors use standard structures to connect between different ideas. The ideas might be **supportive to** or **illustrative of** the central idea.

The Cream of the Piece

Idea organisation might occur in one of the following formats:

1. The list of items format
2. The chronological format
3. (a) The Idea–Example/Illustration format
(b) The Idea–Restatement/Reiteration format
4. The Comparison format
(a) The Contrast format
(b) The Parallelism/Similarity format
5. (a) The Cause and Effects format (Single cause and multiple effects)
(b) The Causes and Effect format (Multiple causes and single effects)

Before we take a closer look at each of these, it is imperative for you to understand that these idea organisation patterns may be applied in a format where the entire structure appears in a short span of two to three lines at one extreme. On the other hand the structure might be used in such a format that it is applied to an entire paragraph. In fact, at times, an idea structure might span the length of an entire passage.

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The following examples to illustrate each type are mostly two to three sentences long and at the maximum, up to a paragraph long. However, we would like to advise the readers that they should try to locate these idea organisation patterns in varying lengths of paragraphs and passages whenever they are reading anything.

Let us now take a closer look at these idea organisations one by one:

While the theoretical contents of this book have been created after a lot of painstaking research, language being a field of endless possibilities, there will always be more idea organisation structures which might come across while you read. Hence, we would like to encourage the readers of this book to not only try to identify one of the above listed idea organisation structures during their reading, but to also try to discover more methods of idea organisation whenever they read.

Idea Organisation Pattern 1 The list of items format:

The following extract will clarify to you how this format is used to present ideas.

 There are four broad categories of new technologies that could make this idea reality. The first is called “spread spectrum”, or “wideband”. As both names imply, this is a way of spreading an electromagnetic signal across wide bands of frequencies at low power, instead of booming a high power wave through a narrow band. Wi-Fi is one good example of wideband technology—the large range of frequencies and the low power allow it to co-exist with cordless phones and other devices. Hopes are highest, however, for a new technology called “ultra-wideband”, which will communicate by whispering its signals so softly across the frequency band of other, higher power transmitters, such as broadcasters, that these will not even notice the presence of another signal.

Another approach is to use “smart” antennae. These are systems of multiple antennae that can “aim” a signal in a particular direction (instead of radiating it out indiscriminately) or pick out a particular signal from background noise by calculating the wave’s angle of arrival (for example, from a satellite instead of a source on the ground).

A third technology is “mesh networking”. In a mesh, each receiver of a signal also re-transmits it. Every meshed laptop computer, for instance, in effect becomes a node or router on its network. This has three advantages. One is that, as with spread spectrum, signals can be sent at very low power, since they only have to travel to the next user’s node, which will be hundreds of meters, instead of kilometers, away. Another is that each newcomer to the

network not only uses, but also adds, capacity. A third is that the network will be robust, since traffic can be rerouted easily if nodes fail, the approach already taken by the internet.



As you can clearly see above, a list of items points to a series of reasons, examples or other details that might support an idea. The items have no particular chronological ordering, hence, they are referred to in the order the author most prefers.

Words signifying additions or numerals are often used in order to denote the position of the idea/example in the list.

We would encourage you to familiarise yourself with this style of writing of the author since it is one of the most common ways of writing used currently. Look for more instances where an author uses a list of items as the principle structure in a paragraph or even in a passage.

Idea Organisation Pattern 2: The chronological format:

As the name itself suggests, in such idea organisation structures, the crucial element defining the interrelationships between the ideas/examples is the factor of time. Under this structure of idea organisation, authors normally present things in the order in which they occur. For example, a passage might talk about the events leading up to the Economic Liberalisation in India.

The Cream of the Piece

Most passages on historical occurrences use chronological idea structuring. For that matter, even in the case of the description of events, the same structuring of ideas is used.

Obviously, the chronology words listed under Transitions will be an integral part of Chronology based Idea Structuring. Besides, other signs of the use of this pattern of idea organisation are words such as stages, series, process, steps, sequence, etc. Passages involving a series of events and passages involving a series of steps are the most common under this pattern.

Consider the following example that illustrates the same:



No President wants to hear that the economy has stopped producing new jobs three months before election-day. But for George Bush, the news that only 32,000 new jobs were created in July is doubly troubling. This paltry number makes it almost certain that he will be the first

president since Herbert Hoover to face the electorate with an economy that has fewer jobs than when he took office (as John Kerry's campaign delights on pointing out). What makes this all the more embarrassing, however, is that the White House has lately gone out of its way to claim responsibility for the short-term performance of the jobs market.

After enduring months of a "jobless" recovery, George Bush's team was quick to claim credit earlier this year when the pace of jobs growth finally accelerated. John Snow, the Treasury Secretary, argued that the creation of over 300,000 new jobs in March "clearly demonstrated" that Mr. Bush's tax cuts were working. These tax cuts, he suggested, were "driving job creation". The administration did not simply claim that the huge fiscal expansion of the past three years had helped cushion America's recession (which would have been correct). It went much further. Tax cuts, intoned every Bush official, were the elixir behind the jobs recovery.

Now that the payroll figures have weakened, the Bush team is squirming. White House aides offer a slew of reasons why the statistics which just a few month ago "clearly demonstrated" the wisdom of Mr. Bush's economic policies should now be discounted. The president himself pretends the bad news simply does not exist. "We have a strong economy and it's getting stronger," he claimed only hours after the jobless figures were released on August 6th.

The truth is that America's economy has cooled during recent months. Consumer spending slowed during the second quarter, particularly in June.....

The chronological format of organisation is an extremely widely used structural format. It is very common in most writing that you will come across. We would advise you to look for more instances where an author uses a chronological format as the principle structure in a paragraph or even in a passage.

Idea Organisation Pattern 3

- (a) Idea Example/Illustration
- (b) Idea restatement/ reiteration

Most authors will give you multiple chances to understand the idea that they are presenting to you. This is because, in order to communicate successfully, an author must help his readers understand the words and ideas that he is expressing. Many a times, authors realize that writing a key idea in one sentence might not be able to successfully communicate the same—as a reader might miss the idea. To overcome this problem, most authors prefer to clarify their key ideas through examples/illustrations or through restatement/reiteration to make the reader connect better to the idea.

This is typically done through two structures of writing:

- (a) The Idea–Example/Illustration format
- (b) The Idea–restatement/reiteration format

(a) **The Example/Illustration format** One of the most common styles of idea presentation is the example/illustration format.

The Cream of the Piece

Under this structure, an author first introduces a new idea and then, follows it up with an explanation of the same. The explanation is in the form of an example/illustration.

The following example serves the purpose of clarifying the idea in the mind of the reader.

The following paragraphs use the example based structure of writing:



- (i) The truth is that America's economy has cooled during recent months. *Consumer spending slowed down during the second quarter, particularly in June. Employers are once again leery of hiring new workers. Production indicators are showing a down-ward trend.*



The italicised part of the paragraph above has the author using three examples to explain the point **that the American economy has cooled during recent months.**



- (ii) Progress is being made, albeit slowly. *Democracy has brought increased (and better directed) social spending. Economic growth has returned after several years of stagnation. New political forces and the alternation of power are making politics more representative.*



The italicised part of the paragraph above has the author using three examples to explain the point **how progress is being made.**



- (iii) Setting up a business abroad has always been risky, and not just financially. *To create a colony of 90,000 white settlers that, in the late 17th century, earned enormous profits from growing tobacco in Virginia, required the immigration of around 116,000 people. The chaps who sailed*

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for India a century later had to endure even worse. *"The variety of means by which a man could be carried off was quite bewildering," observes a recent book on the East India Company.* Malaria, typhoid or enteric fever, cholera, dysentery and small pox were the most common diseases, and the bites of scorpions and mad dogs were frequently lethal."



The italicised part of the paragraph above has the author using two examples to explain the point **that setting up a business abroad has always been risky.**

The following paragraphs use the illustration based structure of writing (Note that there is a very thin line between example and illustration):



- (i) A resident of Najaf, who loathes the militants, was scornful of the Iraqi forces' capabilities. *"The national guard of the Iraqi army fires into the air," he said. "The Mahdi army shoots to kill."* The ill trained fighters of the Mahdi army are in fact, rotten shots. But no one doubts their eagerness to shed blood, whether their own or other people's.



In the paragraph above, the italicised statement of the resident of Najaf is an illustration of **his scorn for the capabilities of the Iraqi forces.**



- (ii) *To his supporters, both inside and outside Venezuela, Hugo Chavez is a cross between Che Guevara and Mother Teresa.* He is, as they see it, the standard bearer of a superior alternative to a Latin America impoverished by 'neo-liberal' economics and elitist, merely formal, democracy.



In the paragraph above, the italicised sentence has illustrated the idea the author is trying to present. The idea is in the next sentence, i.e., a **superior alternative** to 'impoverishment' (illustrated in his comparison with Che Guevara) and 'merely formal democracy' (illustrated in his comparison to Mother Teresa).

The following words show example/ illustration usage:

for example	for instance	to illustrate
as an example	including	

like
specifically

such as
for one, etc.

to be specific

(b) **The Restatement/Reiteration format** This format of idea presentation is again commonly used by authors.

The Cream of the Piece

Under the **Restatement format**, the author first presents an idea and then rephrases the same idea in other words. Most often, the restatement is in simpler words than the original statement and hence easier to understand.

Consider the following extract from an article:



A very tentative conclusion is that while America is practicing for another September 11th, the threat of Islamic militancy is becoming less spectacular, more general and more unpredictable. *In short, it may be becoming more like the sort of insurgencies that Britain has fought during many decades.*



The italicised part of the paragraph above has the author restating the point, making it clearer to the reader.

The Cream of the Piece

Under the **Reiteration format**, the author restates the original idea, with greater emphasis or force. This style serves to push through the point more emphatically into the reader's mind.

Consider the following extracts:



- (i) The Indian policy of having a closed economy proved to be an impediment to the growth of the economy. *So severe was the negative impact of these policies, that by the late 1980s the Indian economy started to look increasingly fractured and handicapped.*



The italicised part of the paragraph above has the author reiterating the point not only making it clearer to the reader, but also increasing the force used in stating the same.



- (ii) Roger Federer is considered to be a great tennis player. *In fact, he is considered to be one of the greatest of all time.*

The Cream of the Piece

Note that the restatement/reiteration, like all idea organisation structures, might come immediately after the original idea is presented or might come later in the passage.

Idea Organisation Pattern 4 Often, in order to explain a point completely, one needs to make a comparison between two or more ideas. The comparison might be in the form of a similarity or a contrast.

A similarity uses the structure—‘A is like B’. In such a case, the similarity between A and B is brought about.

A contrast uses the structure—‘A is different from B’. In such a case, the differences between A and B are highlighted.

The Cream of the Piece

A comparison format might show how two or more things are similar or how they are different or both. In this structure of idea organisation, the author compares/contrasts two or more ideas/points/examples.

As is clear from the above description, the Comparison format can be divided into two sub types:

4 (a) The Contrast format

4 (b) The Parallelism/Similarity format

(a) The Contrast format In figurative terms, contrasts can be visualised as Y junctions—where a fork in a road leads towards two different directions. Looking at it, one notices the difference between the two forks.

Consider the following statements:



The organisation pays the executive handsomely. He doesn’t work very hard.

The organisation pays the executive handsomely even though he doesn’t work very hard.



It is clear that the second style of writing is much superior than the first, since it is easier to read.

The following words can be used to show contrast.

but	instead	on the one hand
on the other hand	still	even though
yet	in contrast	as opposed to
against this	in another way	however
in spite of	differs from	although

on the contrary	despite	inspite of
unlike	nonetheless	nevertheless
conversely	rather than	while
difference	opposite	

The following examples use this structure of Idea organisation:



(i) For any American President hoping to claim victory in the war on terror, such an analysis brings both good news and bad. *Massive, potentially election-wrecking attacks look less likely, though not impossible. On the other hand, it would no longer be possible to claim—as Mr. Bush would doubtless like to claim—that by knocking out Mr. Bin Laden, the war has been taken to its final round.*

(ii) *Has brave America got Mr. Bin Laden cornered? Or is America bravely stepping up to face head on a renewed threat from Mr. Bin Laden?* Both, is the answer.



In each of the paragraphs above, the italicised statements make a contrast between two ideas.



(iii) *A common myth about electromagnetic waves is that they bounce off one another if they meet. They do not. Instead, they travel onwards through other waves forever (even though they eventually attenuate to the point where they become undetectable.)*

The paragraph above uses a flip-flop-flip structure of argumentation, i.e., an idea is presented, it is then contrasted and then, the contrast itself is contrasted.

(b) The Parallelism/Similarity format Similar to the contrast format, the parallelism format is the discussion of the likeness of two or more ideas.

In figurative terms, it can be seen as two parallel roads, which are similar to each other. Looking at them, one notices the similarities between the two.

Consider the following statements:



The use of computers for printing bills has made a tremendous negative impact on the printing industry, since orders for printing cash memos have disappeared. The introduction of FM radio has greatly affected the music industry, as the sales of cassettes has dropped drastically.

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Now consider the same sentences, written differently:



The use of computers for printing bills has made a tremendous negative impact on the printing industry, since orders for printing cash memos have disappeared. Similarly, the introduction of FM radio has greatly affected the music industry, as the sales of cassettes have dropped drastically.

As you can see, the clarity of the second style of writing is much higher than that of the first.

The following words are used to create similarities/parallelisms:

as	just as	similar
similarly	likewise	just like
same	alike	in the same way
in a similar manner	equally	in like fashion
in a similar fashion	resembling	

Idea Organisation Pattern 5: The Cause and Effect format: Cause and Effect is another extremely common idea structure. As the name suggests, the cause is the reason for the effect (which is an outcome of the reason). The typical cause and effect relationship is—the cause leads to the effect.

Below are listed some words which commonly signal a cause and effect format:

- therefore, hence, so, thus, as a result, results in, because of, thus, causes, effect, is the effect of,
- reason as a consequence of explanation consequently leads to if...then
- accordingly due to since owing to

The cause and effect format is used in a variety of forms as under:

(a) **Single cause–single effect** Consider the following extract:



Since the failure of the Americans' to crush the Sunni insurgents in Fallujah(CAUSE), the central government has largely given up trying to run many of the Sunni areas of the country (EFFECT).

(b) **Single cause–multiple effects** Consider the following extract:



In the early part of the 21st century, the introduction of low cost airlines to the Indian skies (SINGLE CAUSE) caused paradigm shifts (MULTIPLE EFFECTS) in the way

people traveled in India. There was a shift of air conditioned train travellers from trains to aeroplanes. Middle class and even lower middle class families experienced air travel for the first time. The distance measured between cities in terms of the time of travel suddenly started sounding much more manageable** Mumbai-Delhi was suddenly two hours instead of sixteen. Businesses started to use the opportunity to expand like never before.

In some cases, the effects will have their own hierarchy where one effect might be the principal effect and there might be other supporting effects.

(c) **Multiple causes–single effect** Consider the following paragraph, which can be classified under this format:



If Mr. Chavez wins this, as his supporters now predict, it will be for a mixture of three reasons.

The first is that high oil prices have brought Venezuela a windfall that Mr. Chavez is busily spending on social programs (known as “mission”). These programs have a political purpose and message: the government has mobilised all the resources of the state to secure a vote against recall.

Second, there are other doubts as to how free and fair the vote will be. The referendum is a device inserted into the constitution by Mr. Chavez himself. But he spent almost two years manoeuvring to avoid what his supporters portrayed as an underhand attempt by an American-financed opposition to unseat a democratically elected president. The electoral authority has a pro-Chavez majority. It has placed restrictions on observers. If the outcome is close, fraud is a real fear.

Third, Mr. Chavez is genuinely liked by many Venezuelans. Not all the poor are with him. But he has inspired a sense of political inclusion among many neglected by the previous, increasingly corrupt two-party pact. By contrast, his fractious opposition is unattractive. Most are democrats, but some are not: they staged a failed coup against Mr. Chavez in April 2002.

Another example of this format is given below:




But Londoners aren't ending up on the streets, or at least, not for long.

Why not? There are several reasons. Compared to America, the benefits system is relatively generous and fairly stable, which may be more important: abrupt reforms in the late 1980s sent many young men on to the streets. And the alternatives to living alfresco are better than in New York, and better than they used to be. London's direct-access hostels have converted dormitories into single rooms, which means fewer beds (about 3,000

today, compared with almost 10,000 in the early 1980s) but more enticing ones.

(d) **Multiple causes–multiple effects** Consider the following extract:

 In the later part of the 20th century, the increasing prominence of private sector jobs coupled with the disillusionment with government jobs(MULTIPLE CAUSES), precipitated a series of changes in the psyche of the Indian career aspirant(MULTIPLE EFFECTS). For starters, their conception of what they wanted in a job changed. Job security gave way to job profile as the principle word that defined the way they made their choices. Private sector jobs started to become more lucrative and more appealing to career aspirants in general. The focus of the way they spent their time in their universities also underwent a major change as a result of this.

The Cream of the Piece

Although sometimes an author will use only one idea organisation pattern in a passage, very often authors use multiple idea organisation patterns within the same passage. Hence, you need to be open to identifying and interpreting multiple idea organisations when you see them inside a passage.

It is not necessary for authors to use addition or chronological words prior to using an idea organisation pattern. In some passages, you will come across the use of idea organization patterns without the use of any words which will signal an oncoming pattern.

Dimension Five:Facts, Opinions and Inferences

Let us first understand what facts and opinions are. We often come across situations where a person gets emotional about an issue and starts to speak and give his/her opinions on the basis of emotions, wherein he/she is expected to speak objectively. Especially in formal situations, people want to hear facts rather than emotional opinions.

Consider the following statements:

Opinion	Fact
Jawaharlal Nehru is to date the best Prime Minister India has produced.	Jawaharlal Nehru is the first Prime Minister India has produced.
The Indian Economic Tiger is all set to capture the world.	The Indian economy has grown by over 7% for the last three years.
State Bank of India is India's best bank.	State Bank of India is India's largest bank.

Around the turn of the century, Sachin Tendulkar was the greatest batsman in the world.

IIM Calcutta is a very good institute. (Author's note: Even though this is largely accepted as a fact, this is still an opinion, since what is very good is a subjective issue and hence, cannot be defined or verified.)

The government has met all its promises in the first hundred days of its office.

There is little symbolism in Greek art.

Internal conflicts are always psychologically interesting.

The detective story by Erle Stanley Gardner can be described as a glorification of intellectualized conflict.

Derrida's work is complex in the extreme.

During his playing career, Sachin Tendulkar went on to make the highest number of test centuries by any batsman in the world.

IIM Calcutta was the first IIM.

The government has been in office for hundred days.

Greek art dates back to the BC era.

An internal conflict can be defined as a conflict within a person's mind about his objectives.

Erle Stanley Gardner, is a leading detective story writer.

Derrida's work is based on the theory of deconstruction.

What is the principal difference that you notice between the two columns above?

Each of the entries under the **Fact** column is something which can be easily verified and proven to be true/false, i.e., the statement can be put through the truth test. This is the essential nature of a fact.

The Cream of the Piece

A fact is information that can be proved through objective evidence.

This evidence may be in the form of physical proof or spoken and written testimony of witnesses.

A statement of fact might be found to be untrue on verification. However, that does not change its classification as a factual statement, since the only thing we are concerned about is that a fact can be physically verified.

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The Cream of the Piece

An opinion on the other hand, can be seen as someone's point of view about an issue. There is no way to physically verify the truth of the statement.

Hence, there can always be an opposite point of view that can be justified. An opinion is basically a belief, judgment or conclusion that might be based on observable facts, but cannot be objectively proved true. The opinion may be agreed with or disagreed with as it is open to question. Thus, if someone tells you that the food at Taj Lucknow is great, it might be his/her individual opinion. You might dine at the same hotel and come to a very different conclusion. Normally, it is widely accepted that more the number of opinions within a piece of writing, the greater is the bias present in the article.

It can be seen from the table above that in simple writing not involving advanced ideas and language structures, it is extremely easy to identify the difference between a fact and an opinion, but when the ideas presented start to become complex, the differentiation starts to become more and more difficult.

TO BELL THE CAT

The skill to differentiate between fact and opinion is a key skill possessed by expert readers and it is tested extensively in the CAT examination.

Hence, mastering this key skill is extremely crucial for the student. The only way to do so is to continuously practice and apply the differentiation between fact and opinion while reading any piece of writing.

The Cream of the Piece

A handy way to identify opinions is that normally, opinions contain a set of 'value' words—words which show judgment. These words are subjective in nature because they interpret reality from the writer/speaker's point of view.

Given below is a list of some value words:

Best, The best, worst, bad, good, wonderful, disgusting, interesting, dull, better, amazing, beautiful, fanciful, excellent, etc.

Whenever you come across any statement using value words similar to the list above, you should realize that an opinion is being expressed. Besides, words such as should, would, ought to, must, etc. signal an upcoming opinion.

The Cream of the Piece

In most writing that you will come across, purely factual information is not easy to come by. When most writers and speakers communicate, they rapidly alternate between stating facts and opinions about an issue being discussed. Hence, what is communicated has a sprinkling of bias (which is almost unavoidable.)

However, a lot of writers do try to remain as objective as possible. News items based on event reporting, scientific reports, descriptions of events/experiments, etc. are examples of writing that is mostly factual and hence, unbiased. On the other hand, other types of materials such as editorials, political speeches, advertisements, analysis of events, etc. are examples of writing which contain opinions and hence, are biased by nature.

As a reader, both facts and opinions are crucial for you. All good readers have the ability to differentiate between fact and opinion. Knowing the difference is important in evaluating what is read, because most of what we come across as readers is a mixture of fact and opinion.

It is important to note that, even though opinions cannot be verified to be true, their relevance to everyday life is immense. Some of our most basic foundations and ways of living are built upon opinions. Discarding them is likely to lead to utter chaos in our minds and our lives—since some of those opinions are central to our way of life. Consider trying to live without the following opinions. Each of the list below is an opinion since it cannot be verified and proven to be true.

One should respect one's parents.

Democracy is the best form of governance.

Human life is valuable. (Some of the world's worst tyrants have gone against this opinion, leading to disastrous outcomes for humanity.)

The Cream of the Piece

The relationship between fact and opinion is similar to a pillar supporting a building structure. Writers state facts in order to give support to their opinions. In the absence of facts to support one's opinions, they are unlikely to stand the test of any logical interrogation.



For e.g.: B.S. Chandrasekhar is the best batsman produced by India.



(Surely, you must be kidding!! You just need to look at the records of some of the batsmen India has produced and

compare them to B.S. Chandrasekhar's batting records. **The facts simply do not support this opinion.**

Directly opposite to an opinion which is negated by facts, is the opinion which is supported by it. This kind of an opinion can be called an informed opinion. The more the facts that support an opinion, the more the people that are likely to agree with it. And the more people agree with an opinion, the more it starts to be accepted as a generic opinion which is not to be questioned—it gets closer to be accepted as a pseudo fact.

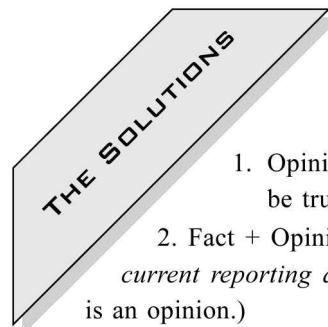
BETTER UNDERSTANDING

FOR YOUR

In each of the following sentences, identify whether the author is stating a fact or is making an opinion or using a mixture of both.

1. If you are a rural parent, you would see little point in most of the news reported in the media on matters of education, including some of the controversies and debates concerning ideology in textbooks.
2. The urban world, in which middle class children routinely move on from one level to the next, and eventually seek admission to a college, dominates current reporting and writing about education.
3. Pass percentages are not calculated separately for rural and urban schools, and research which might provide such differentiated awareness has not been done.
4. The NCERT, that I saw four months ago, looked rather difficult to recognize in terms of its original memorandum.
5. In mid-November, when the plan to review the National Curriculum Framework was announced, I met the press and found it stuck to its oppositional mood.
6. Sceptics and critics will undoubtedly continue to see politics in everything.
7. In matters which constitute the frontier of educational services, the specific requirements of rural education are quite poorly appreciated.

8. Productivity growth is probably the single most important indicator of an economy's health: it drives real income, inflation, interest rates, profits and share prices.
9. Since 1996, America's productivity in terms of output per man hour has grown by 3% every year, which is double the pace of the first half of the 1990s.
10. America's growth in labour productivity is likely to slow, even though it should remain faster than in the decade before 1996.



1. Opinion. This cannot be proved to be true.
2. Fact + Opinion (The last part '*dominates current reporting and writing about education*' is an opinion.)
3. Fact, since whatever the author states here can be put through the truth test.
4. Opinion.
5. Fact + Opinion. The author's mid-November meeting with the press can be verified, but the press being stuck to its oppositional mood is something that cannot be verified to be true or false.
6. Truth of the statement cannot be verified. Hence, clearly an opinion.
7. Opinion.
8. Opinion supported by facts.
9. Fact.
10. Opinion.

Dimension Five (B): Inferences

'Reading between the lines' is a phrase that best summarises what is meant by an inference. An inference is an idea that you pick up in your reading, even though it is not directly stated in what you are reading. In essence an inference is akin to an implied idea, and is extremely crucial for a full understanding of the author's ideas.

Making inferences is a common mental activity that happens everyday in our lives. It is not just confined to our reading, but even to our experiences in all other activities. Consider the following situations:

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- Suppose, you are going to the railway station and find that the road leading into the railway station is jam packed, with many more cars than normal. You might infer that the trains are likely to be much more crowded than normal.
- You meet a woman with a 3 month old child in her arms. You would most likely conclude that she is married and the child is her baby.
- You see a cavalcade of cars going on the road, and infer that someone important is inside the same.
- You see a person driving an expensive car and conclude that he is rich.
- Based on the behavior of a person you meet, you make inferences about his upbringing, his education and exposure in life.

THOUGHT GEMS FROM AN EXPERT

In each of the above situations, you are drawing inferences—conclusions about things that you cannot see or experience directly in front of you. Yet, you are in a position to make conclusions about things that you have not seen, on the basis of past experiences and their outcomes. These conclusions happen reactively and instinctively after the first experience. In everyday life, we make so many inferences, that it is impossible to live the way we live life without making inferences. In fact, the ability to make inferences is one of the parameters on which intelligence is judged.

Similarly, the making of inferences while reading is extremely natural. We have been doing it ever since we learnt our first words. What you need to realize is that the quality of a reader's abilities are defined by the quality of the inferences he/she is able to make. The deeper the inferences that you can make by reading what is written, the superior you are as a reader. In fact, I would go as far as saying that this skill, coupled with the skill to differentiate between fact and fiction, are the most important skills for RC. These are skills that differentiate between a capable/good reader and an expert/excellent reader.

The Cream of the Piece

Why Reading Between the lines/ Making Inferences is critical for Reading Comprehension

1. It takes you closer to the idea structure of the author:

2. It gives you an indication of the direction the author is likely to take.
3. It gives you a better hold on questions based on inferences, implied meanings and questions that go beyond the passage.

As already mentioned elsewhere, when the author puts pen to paper, he/she has already formulated his/her opinions on the topic, his/her idea structure, his/her style of presentation and even the supporting details. With every sentence the author writes, he starts to unravel his thinking.

Before you start reading the passage, you are blank about what the author is going to say. As you start reading the first sentence of the first paragraph, the mind of the author starts to get revealed. Since the author has written each sentence with his own thoughts in the background, he often reveals more than what he says in the sentence. The choice of words, phrases and the structure of the sentence used often gives us an insight into what the author is thinking. Some of these thoughts might be subsequently stated, while some of them might never be directly stated. Understanding what is not said, serves to fill in the gap that is left by virtue of the unstated ideas.

Hence, it serves to give a clearer understanding of the author's thoughts.

Reading being the art of decoding the author's view point about an issue, reading more than what the author has said invariably helps the reader connect better to the ideas of the author.

The ability to make inferences from reading can be further classified into three skill steps:

- (a) Skill Level One: Making inferences from single sentences.
- (b) Skill Level Two: Making inferences from groups of sentences/ from paragraphs.
- (c) Skill Level Three: Making inferences from groups of paragraphs/ from passages.

Let us now look at Skill Level One in detail:

Consider the following statements/extracts and the inferences we might draw from these:



1. Statement: Productivity growth is probably the single most important indicator of an economy's health: it drives real income, inflation, interest rates, profits and share prices.



Inference: There are several indicators of an economy's health—out of which productivity growth is one of the most important.



2. Does Turkey qualify as a European country in order to qualify itself for EU membership?



Inference:

- (a) Turkey is not an EU member presently;
- (b) In order to become a part of the EU, a country needs to meet the parameters set for being a European country;
- (c) EU membership is still open for discussion.



3. Those countries opposed to extending Europe's borders up to Syria and Iran feel that such a Europe would have little consistency.



Inference:

- (a) Some countries are in favor of extending Europe's borders up to Syria and Iran;
- (b) There is currently no clear demarcation of the geographical boundaries of Europe;
- (c) Countries that will be included in Europe by extending its borders up to Syria and Iran will be culturally, sociologically and economically different to the conventionally defined European countries.

Skill Levels Two and Three mentioned above with respect to drawing inferences are more complex for two principal reasons.

Drawing inferences out of groups of sentences (Level Two as defined above) or from groups of paragraphs (Level Three as defined above) involves being able to

- (a) Draw a string of inferences related logically to one another; or
- (b) Draw a common inference hinting at something that can be commonly inferred throughout one paragraph or across the entire passage.

Since inferences do not announce their arrival and simply creep in behind what is explicitly stated doing either of this is a complex skill.

Consider the following paragraph:



Astrologers habitually prone to goof-ups now have an excuse for why their predictions have been going haywire: the emergence of newer and newer planets that have caused their calculations to go awry. For the international team of astronomers who recently discovered eight new planets, the new arrivals are, however, a cause for excitement. Indeed, even as the rest of the world continues to be consumed by a morbid passion for shiny new war machines, deadly chemicals and sinister war tactics, astronomers have been doggedly searching the heavens for more heavenly bodies in the belief that the search will take us closer to a more exalted goal than that of knowing the truth about us and the universe. "Reality is much bigger than it seems... the part we call the universe is the merest tip of the iceberg," one scientist remarked. How true. In the beginning skeptics wouldn't accept that the earth actually moves, let alone that it revolves around the sun, because of an unshaken belief that the earth was the centre of the universe. We've come a long way. Today, scientists have spotted nearly 80 extra-solar planets using sophisticated instruments.



Inferences:

Astrologers make their predictions based on their calculations of known planetary positions.

Newer Planets are always discovered.

The author is against war and spending on war.

The author has a positive disposition towards scientific discoveries in general.

The instruments used by astronomers today are much more sophisticated than what was used in the past.

Astrologers' have little scientific basis for their predictions.

As you can experience in the paragraph above, and indeed in full length passages, being able to draw a series of correct inferences creates a kind of a '*net of understanding*', which runs parallel to and below the explicit understanding of the passage. The denser this '*net of understanding*', the better is your comprehension of the passage and the author's intention.

As you continue to read a passage, the creation of this parallel net of understanding helps you connect better to the author's idea structure as well as to the probable future direction the author is likely to take in the remainder of the passage.

ADVANCED DIMENSIONS OF READING SKILLS

Dimension Six: Identifying Purpose and Tone

As we already saw through dimension five, behind everything ever written, there is always a living person, who has his own collection of facts and his own opinions about the issue being talked about.

The author also has his own **purpose** for writing the passage, and typically conveys the ideas he wants to convey by using a particular **tone**—something that gives us an insight into his/her attitude and feeling.

Purpose We first look at **Purpose**: Identifying the authors' purpose of writing helps us in several ways:

- (a) It improves our connection with the author
- (b) It helps to improve the anticipation about the direction the author is likely to take.

There are three common purposes for writing any piece:

1. Informative/Descriptive Writing This type of writing is one whose objective is to inform / teach the reader about a subject, an event, a process or an issue.

The Cream of the Piece

Informative Descriptive Writing is the most common purpose of writing. It can be in two forms:

- (a) Narratives (informing in a narrative fashion, the outlines of an event/happening) or
- (b) Informative Articles: (Articles informing about the various dimensions of an issue.)

Writers writing with the purpose of informing/ teaching normally stick to facts and verifiable information. In such writing, the facts are presented as part of the main idea structure, while the supporting details are in the form of examples, illustrations, parallelisms and contrasts. Opinions are mostly conspicuous by their absence in such writing.

TO BELL THE CAT

An analysis of the various passages of the CAT paper of the past few years will clearly show you that the CAT (and indeed all other Management entrance exams) are filled with passages that can be classified as informative writing.

The passages on Derrida's work (Passage II of the CAT 2005 paper solved in the chapter on solved CAT

passages) and on Game theory (Passage I of the CAT 2005 paper solved in the chapter on solved CAT passages) in the CAT 2005 paper are examples of informative writing. Similarly, the CAT 2003 paper had four of the five passages that could be classified as primarily descriptive passages: As given in the chapter on Solved CAT passages they appear as: Passage 1 (Topic: Panchayati Raj Institutions), Passage 2 (Greek Architecture), Passage 4 (Education in the twelfth century) and Passage 5 (Development of Aviation).

Hence, as an aspirant, your focus should be on improving your ability to convert factual informative writing into symbols and pictures inside your mind.

2. To Persuade This is another common purpose of writing.

Such writing is opinion driven and has the primary purpose of convincing the reader about the author's point of view.

However, there is a fair sprinkling of facts on which writers draw upon to support their point of view and convince the reader about the same. Hence, such writing contains a mixture of facts (which act as supporting details) and opinions (which give the main ideas of the passage). The bias towards one opinion is clearly reflected in such writing—since all the facts presented as supporting details are normally in favor of the author's opinion. Words such as *should*, *must*, *ought to*, *need to*, etc. are clear giveaways of persuasive writing since they are clear indicators of the author's opinion.

TO BELL THE CAT

Like Informative writing, persuasive writing is also commonly used in CAT and Management entrance passages.

In the context of the CAT 2005 paper the passage starting with the words 'Crinolene and croquet are out' (Passage III of the CAT 2005 paper, solved in the next chapter on solved CAT passages) and the passage on Straddlers starting with the words 'When I was in class in Columbia' (passage 4 of the CAT 2003 paper in the next chapter on solved CAT passages) can be classified under this type of writing.

3. To Amuse/Entertain Another common purpose of writing is to lighten up the reader by amusing/entertaining him/her. Such writing might be in the form of fictional or non-fictional writing.

In either case, there is normally satire or adventure involved.

Most leisure reading comes in this category of writing and every newspaper worth its name has satirical articles with the sole aim of entertaining the reader.

The Cream of the Piece

However, for some reason, Management entrance exams have kept off such writing for the extracts they use to form their questions.

As a student of English, we would encourage you to find writing of each of the three types mentioned above in your day to day reading.

Tone We now move to the **Tone** of the author:

The tone of an article indicates the author's predisposition towards the subject. By identifying the tone of the author, we can judge his/her attitude/emotional standing towards the subject.

This helps us improve our predictions for questions which go beyond the boundaries of the passage.

The author of any piece of writing gives a fair view of the tone of the passage through the words and the details used in expressing his ideas. Hence, the tone is decoded through the words and the details that the author uses in his writing.

Especially concentrate on the kinds of adjectives and adverbs the author uses while trying to identify the tone of the passage.

The tone of the author can be identified by making a mental list of the adjectives and adverbs he/she uses. Words such as:

- Little, lovely, plain, exquisite, beautiful,
- incongruent, depressing, disgusting, bright,
- optimistic, factually, neutral, doubtful, surely,
- serious, grim, joyous, playful, sympathetic,
- nice, intransigent, flexible, tragic, happy, sad,
- delightful, delicious, inane, etc.

Depending on the basis of the adjectives/ adverbs used, as well as by the force with which they are used, we can get hints about the author's emotional orientation towards the topic. Some examples of tone, with their cue words are given as follows:

Tone

Types of Words Signifying the Tone

Critical	Words with a negative meaning such as incongruent, depressing, disgusting, doubtful, grim, etc.
Humorous	Words and situations with irony, punch lines and double meanings.
Disappointed	Words with a negative connotation—used in a lesser degree than in a critical or a depressing tone

Other examples of tones are factual, analytical, critical, disparaging, tolerant, neutral, hopeful, matter of fact, admiring, nostalgic, regretful, amused, arrogant, etc. As an aspirant for competitive exams, you should try to develop a sense of identifying the author's tone while reading a passage.

Dimension Seven: Recognising and Evaluating Arguments and their Common Structures.

There is an undeniable relationship between writing and thinking. During the process of writing, the writer opens up his mind's thought processes for the readers. Being on the reader's side of a written piece, one of the most important tasks before us is to be able to separate the principal arguments that the author is making, from the supporting reasons and other details that are mentioned in the passage.

This is especially important for articles that are written to persuade. In such articles, being able to decipher the author's argument has to be the principal purpose of the reading. It is therefore, essential to be able to recognize and evaluate arguments.

The Cream of the Piece

An Important point to note: Even though the full and final argument of the author will normally only be clear at the end of the article, most authors write in such a style so as to leave enough clues for the reader to understand the drift of the argument prior to actually stating it. It is obvious that the earlier you are able to catch the argument, the better it will be for you. This is because of two principal reasons. They are:

- (1) **The predictive value of understanding the author's argument early in the passage:** If you are able catch the author's argument early, you will be able to predict the future course that the author is likely to

take. This results in better understanding of why the author is using particular examples and/or phrases in the passage—during your first reading itself. Hence, you will be able to easily answer commonly asked questions that are based on the use of particular examples and/or statements in the passage. (In this context, it is important for you to realize at this point that one of the question types that creates major problems for students—where the question asks why the author has used the particular example/statement—cannot be answered until and unless you have read the example/statement with the author’s argument in your mind. Going back to the particular example/statement after reading the question does not help, since it ends up wasting time. Besides, the reader can never get a full perspective of the idea structure by reading a small part of the passage, thus, you will never be able to answer such a question with certainty, by going back to the passage.)

(2) **Faster reading speeds:** Being able to predict what the author’s principle argument is, early on in your reading is important since it helps you in reading the remainder of the passage much faster than normal. This is because your reading’s objective will change from being driven by the need to explore the idea, to the need to confirm your predictions. You will only need to slow down a bit when the passage’s idea structure takes a turn that you might not have expected. At such a stage, as the reader, you just need to expand your prediction of the author’s argument to include the new argumentative direction and then continue to read at a faster rate.

[Reading can be compared to driving. Just as during driving, you vary your speed depending on the traffic situation, similarly, during reading, you can vary your speed depending on how much ‘*idea catching*’ you have to do. Just as when there is no traffic on the roads, you might vary your speed of driving by as much as five times, so also during reading, the speed of reading can be easily multiplied by 5 when you are clued to the idea of the author. In our experience, you can and should vary your reading speed between 50 words per minute to up to 500 words per minute in the same passage—sometimes this variance might occur between two consecutive sentences also. Just as the art of driving is about knowing the optimal speed at

which to drive, the art of reading is to understand when to slow down and when to speed up while reading. Predicting arguments helps you in improving this skill.]

What is an Argument? Arguments are social phenomena. In our daily life, we are surrounded by numerous arguments—in fact, they are so common that we might feel their absence more than their presence. At the core of every communication going beyond mere factual information exchange is an argument. Every advertisement, every editorial, every conversation, every analytical exchange of ideas contains an argument

The Cream of the Piece

The core of an argument is a claim with reasons. In successful arguments, these reasons are linked to values, beliefs and assumptions held by the audience.

This is important since the purpose of an argument is to persuade. While persuading someone, we are concerned with influencing the way people think or act. In order to do so, we have to make an appeal to the reason of the reader/listener. It is a necessity that there are two conflicting points of view, each of which has its own reasons supporting it. While writing an argumentative passage, the author imagines the reader as an absent listener and hence, tries to address his/her mental frameworks. Hence, while reading, thinking of the author as a live person writing for some real purpose is important to catch the argument. When you start reading the passage, as soon as you recognize the objective of the writer as one of persuasion, you should start looking for the principle argument he/she is making. Ask yourself the question—‘What point is the author trying to convey to me as a reader?’ ‘The details and the reasons used in the passage are supporting which principle argument?’ The quicker that you identify the answer to these questions, the quicker you will have the main argument of the author.

Arguments are extensively referred to in passages written for description purpose. For example, consider this statement from the passage on Greek architecture in the CAT 2003 paper: ‘Greek art is intellectual art, the art of men who were clear and lucid thinkers, and it is therefore, plain art.’ The sentence is an entire argument in itself. The author is making a claim and justifying the same in the same sentence. The likelihood is that the author will either build upon or further support this argument throughout the remainder of the paragraph in which this sentence appears

as a starting sentence. As a gentle reminder, I would like to remind you that we had identified this article as primarily description based. This goes to prove the point that arguments are at the heart of every communication. Hence, they are at the heart of every paragraph and every passage of any kind.

Evaluating Arguments: Why is it important to be able to evaluate arguments?

Evaluating arguments for their strength and forcefulness is an important aspect of our lives.

The ability to critically determine how much of an argument one should accept and on what points to attack someone else's arguments is a crucial skill needed for success in every sphere of life today. In fact, it is doubly important in the field of management.

TO BELL THE CAT

In the context of aptitude based exams like CAT, XLRI, other management entrance exams as well as for Bank PO exams, the ability to evaluate arguments is important from three points of view:

- (a) In the context of Reading Comprehension, since all passages are filled with arguments, besides being able to identify the argument structure used by the author, we also need to be able to recognize the strength and relevance of the supports used in the arguments.
- (b) Critical Reasoning Questions, another important aspect of the CAT exam (explained in details in the Part 3 of this book) is mostly about evaluating arguments, their support, the adequacy and the relevance of the supports.
- (c) A specific type of question evaluating the strength and weakness of arguments is asked in Banking and other exams. Such questions are outside the scope of this book, but are also to be solved using the principles explained here.

How do we evaluate arguments?

The evaluation of the strength or weakness of an argument is done by critically looking at the supports the author has used for his argument. In this regard there are two critical questions that you have to ask yourself with regards the argument's supports in order to evaluate how strongly supported the argument is:

1. Is the support used by the author relevant to the claim he is trying to support? This is seen by evaluating the

question against the argument that the supporting point is trying to answer.

Let us take an example to illustrate this point:

Suppose an argument goes like this:



Argument: Mr. Francis should not be made the principal of the school.

Support: His mother was an uneducated woman.



The support here is irrelevant since it does not answer any questions that are likely to be raised against the argument. If it is being argued that Mr. Francis should not be made the principal of the school, opponents of the arguments are likely to attack the argument by talking about his abilities and qualifications that make him suited for the post. Giving a support by talking about his mother's illiteracy does not answer any possible opposition to the claim of the argument.

On the other hand, an example of a relevant claim could be:



Argument: You should buy the car of Brand X.

Support: Brand X cars are amongst the most respected cars in the world and are known for their safety.

2. Is the support used by the author adequate to cover all possible attacks against the claim?

The adequacy of the support of an argument is a slightly different story. In order to check the adequacy of the support of an argument, one needs to anticipate all the issues on which the claim of the argument can be attacked. Supports should then be created for the argument, which would cover all possible dimensions of attacks on the claim.

If an argument is supported in this way, where all possible counter arguments are effectively dealt with, the argument is adequately supported.

Needless to say, an argument that is relevantly and adequately supported, is a strong argument.

Some Standard Structures of Arguments

Type A: Truth or Factual Arguments: Truth arguments involve differing points of view about how reality is (or was or will be). They are different than facts because while facts can be confirmed or rejected by physical verification, a truth argument involves an interpretation of facts. The in-

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terpretation of facts, like all arguments, should be supported by strong reasons.

Consider the argument stated above:



‘Greek art is intellectual art, the art of men who were clear and lucid thinkers, and it is therefore, plain art.’



This is a factual argument, since it is based on an interpretation of certain facts.

It is important to note that there is a very thin line separating a plain fact and a truth argument based on an interpretation of facts. Authors utilise truth arguments as a basis of a larger framework.

There are three types of truth arguments:

- Definitional Arguments
- Causal Arguments
- Similarity Arguments

Definitional Argument: X is/ is not a Y such arguments are normally built on the basis of criteria matching. This means that when X is found to be similar to or different from Y, the criteria match is used as the most important support to show the truth of the argument. For this purpose, the criterion on the basis of which Y is defined, is first listed out and then it is shown that X is an instance of Y by matching the criteria and its presence/absence in X. Needless to say, definitional arguments are a very important means of argumentation.

Causal Argument: X is/was/will cause Y OR X will not/ does not/did not Cause Y again, a commonly used and very important argument structure. It can also be termed as the cause and effect structure.

Similarity Argument: X is/is not like Y similarity argument or a resemblance argument. In this argument structure, two different situations/things/eras/events that have no relation to one another, are compared on the basis of an analogy between them. A perfect case of this argument structure is the CAT 2005 passage on Edwardian summer—the passage which starts with ‘Crinolene and croquet are out...’ (Passage III of the CAT 2005 paper solved in the next chapter on Solved CAT passages)

Type B: Values or Judgmental Arguments: Values or Judgmental arguments, as the name suggests, have a value based judgment at their heart. There are two principal types of such arguments:

- Evaluation Argument
- Proposal Argument

Evaluation Argument: X is/isn’t a good Y or X is a Bad Y

Proposal Argument: One should/ should not do Y

We encourage the readers to try to start identifying each of these types of arguments in their daily reading scheme.