

PERT Review Guide

Reading Skills



VALENCIA COLLEGE

About this Resource

Who it's For

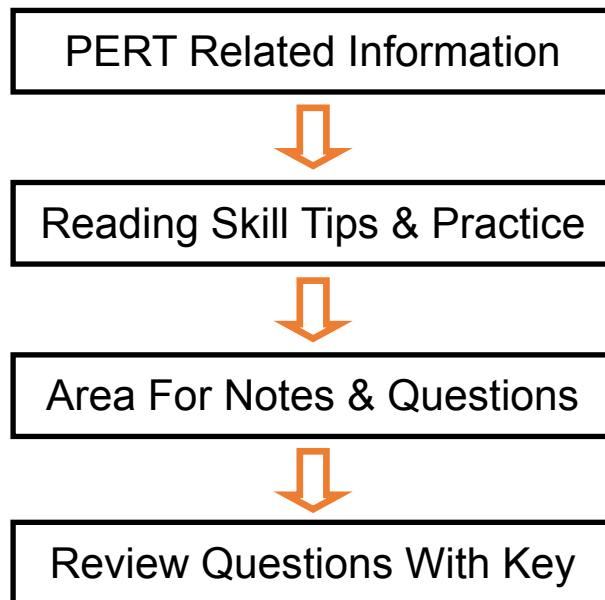
This guide is for students who have not yet taken the PERT Assessment, but plan to, students who have taken the assessment but did not pass, or students who are in college level classes but would like to brush up on their reading skills.

What it Is

The information in this book is meant to provide a review of major reading skills needed to pass the PERT Reading Assessment as well as those skills needed to be a strong college-level reader.

It is not a comprehensive course in academic or college level reading. If you have no previous experience with the subject matter, it is unlikely that this guide will provide enough information for you to be adequately prepared. If that is the case, it may be more beneficial to take a developmental reading course instead.

How this Guide is Structured



VALENCIA COLLEGE

Materials composed, compiled, edited and formatted by Valencia College
Learning Support staff and English faculty at Osceola Campus

Revised 2016

Table of Contents

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| PERT Info..... | 7 |
| Subject & Topic | 11 |
| Main Idea | 13 |
| Supporting Details..... | 15 |
| Sentence Relationships..... | 17 |
| Inference | 19 |
| Author’s Purpose..... | 21 |
| Author’s Tone | 23 |
| Bias..... | 25 |
| Fact and Opinion..... | 27 |
| Transitional Devices | 29 |
| Organizational Patterns..... | 31 |
| Context Clues | 33 |
| Appendix..... | 37 |
| Notes for Review..... | 43 |
| Practice Questions/Test..... | 45 |
| Key & Next Steps | 51 |

Things to consider about the PERT...

○ The PERT assessment is meant to determine whether you are ready for college level classes. Ultimately, your score on the test will place you into either college-prep or college-level courses. Consequently, the more seriously you take the test, the more likely you are to prepare appropriately.

○ Although students want to start college-level classes immediately, it is often more advisable to take those classes that are accurately leveled to the student. Some students decide to take courses for which they are not prepared, and they often end up struggling through the semester, feeling lost and discouraged, withdrawing from the course, or maybe even failing.

○ In the end, however, it probably would have been better to take a developmental or prep class, pass, and be prepared for the college level class rather than fail a college-level class and have to retake it. Even though taking a prep course would require an extra cost upfront, it will more than pay for itself down the road in time, emotional health, and even further tuition costs.

○ Remember too that the PERT is not a PASS/FAIL test, and it is not a measure of intelligence; it is simply an assessment of your academic preparedness.

○ As a college student you will need good study skills, so start your college career right by not cramming for the PERT. Invest time and effort into your education because short-term knowledge gained solely to pass a test, for the PERT *and* in future classes, will probably leave you feeling lost and unable to keep up with the material in your course or major.

Please check Valencia's website for current score cut-offs.

Skill Areas



Finding the Topic/Subject

Learn

The main subject of a passage is often an **incomplete sentence or a few words**. Ex: music, mental illness, famous artists, technology.

Most of the supporting **details revolve around or support the topic**. One way to identify the subject is to think about what keywords you would use to search for the passage.

To determine the topic, you might be asked one of the following:

- an appropriate topic for this passage would be _____
- the main topic/subject of this passage is _____
- the author is primarily talking about _____

Practice


Dr. King recognized that, as a country built on the foundation of self-governance, our success rested on engaging ordinary citizens in the work of securing our birthright liberties. Together, with countless unsung heroes equally committed to the idea that America is a constant work in progress, he heeded the call etched into our founding documents nearly two centuries before his time, marching and sacrificing for the idea of a fair, just, and inclusive society. By preaching his dream of a day when his children would be judged by the content of their character rather than by the color of their skin, he helped awaken our Nation to the bitter truth that basic justice for all had not yet been realized. And in his efforts, he peaceably yet forcefully demonstrated that it is not enough to only have equal protection under the law, but also that equal opportunity for all of our Nation's children is necessary so that they can shape their own destinies. (Presidential Proclamation - Martin Luther King Jr., Federal Holiday, 2016)

The subject of the passage is:

- A: The effects of inequality
- B: The dangers of racism
- C: The influences of Dr. King on equality in America
- D: America is a constant work in progress

Understand

Answers explained:

- A. Inequality is part of the passage, but its effects are not outlined or presented.
- B. Racism is part of the main idea, but the dangers are not outlined or presented.
-  **C. The passage primarily discusses Dr. King, his work, and how it has influenced the idea of equality, specifically in America.**
- D. This is a supporting detail that does not mention Dr. King or equality.

Main Idea and Central Point

Learn

Defined: The **main** idea is what the passage is **mainly** trying to say or support; it is the most important point, claim, or argument.

Think of the main idea like Main St. in a small town—all of the other streets connect to it. In the same way, all the details in a paragraph should connect to the main idea.

While the topic/subject of a passage is usually just a phrase, the main idea is a broad statement in the form of a **complete sentence**.

Ex. **Subject/Topic** (very broad): high blood pressure

Ex. **Main Idea** (broad): Sodium can cause high blood pressure.

Ex. **Detail** (more specific): Excess sodium results in water retention that can increase pressure in blood vessels.

Common ways to ask for the main idea:

- The **central idea** of this passage is...
 - The author's **main point** is...
 - The **main idea** of the passage is...
-

Recap:

- When looking for the main idea, start by asking “What is the most important point, claim or argument that the author wants me to understand?”
- Look for a broad statement that covers all the details in the paragraph or passage.
- When selecting your answer, ask, “Do all the other sentences tell more about this idea?”

Practice


Some may think there is danger of setting too high a standard of action. I have heard teachers contend that a child will learn to write much faster by having an inferior copy, than by imitating one which is comparatively perfect; “because,” say they, “a pupil is liable to be discouraged if you give him a perfect copy; but if it is only a little in advance of his own, he will take courage from the belief that he shall soon be able to equal it.” I am fully convinced, however, that this is not so. The more perfect the copy you place before the child, provided it be written, and not engraved, the better. For it must always be possible in the nature of things, for the child to imitate it; and what is not absolutely impossible, every child may reasonably be expected to aspire after, on the principle, that whatever man has done, man may do. (*The Young Man's Guide: You are the Society* by William A. Alcott)

What is the central point of the passage?

- A: Working for perfection discourages children and slows their learning.
- B: A child learns to write faster if given an inferior product to imitate.
- C: Setting too high of a standard of action.
- D: Striving to accomplish perfection helps a child understand that anything is possible.

Understand

Answers explained:

- A. This is a claim the author disagrees with. The central point is what the author actually claims.
- B. This is the claim made by teachers, not the author.
- C. This is an incomplete statement and does not make a point.
-  **D. This is the main point made by the author as explained in the last half of the passage.**

Finding Supporting Details

Learn

Identify details that carry out the main idea of a passage or paragraph.
Always go back and REREAD the passage to check the facts; do not rely on your memory.

Nearly all supporting detail questions ask about specific facts, and can be answered by finding the information as it is stated in the passage, not something that you're asked to guess (implied).

Supporting detail questions often start out, "According to the passage..."

Watch out for absolute answer choices that say, "All, always, never, none."
These are rarely correct.

Common Supporting Details: explanations, examples, descriptions, illustrations, comparisons, contrasts, listed items, chronological terms, definitions, causes, effects, statistics or specific facts

Practice


There were definite rules governing the courtship period, from the "bundling" permitted in early New England days, when young couples slept side by side with all their clothes on, to strict etiquette that prescribed what sort of gifts a man might give his fiancée in circles where expensive gifts might be customary. Gifts had to be immediately consumable, like candy, flowers, or indestructible, like diamonds—which could be given back, their value unimpaired, if there was a rift in the relationship. Objects that could be damaged by use, like gloves and furs, were forbidden. A gentleman might call for a lady in a cab or in his own equipage, but it was regarded as inappropriate for him to pay for her train fare if they went on a journey.

According to the passage, all of the following would be considered acceptable gifts that a man could give his fiancée during courtship except:

- A: a dozen long-stemmed roses
- B: a box of chocolate
- C: a train ticket
- D: a diamond necklace

Understand

Answers explained:

- A. Flowers are listed as acceptable, not an exception.
- B. Chocolate is candy, which the passage lists as acceptable.
-  **C. Purchasing a train ticket counts as paying for her train fare, which is inappropriate.**
- D. Diamonds are indestructible and could be returned.

Relationships Between Sentences

Learn

Note: This skill involves sentence comprehension. You must recognize relationships between sentences. Identify how they are connected by the main idea of each sentence.

Relationships within and between sentences fall into some basic types:

- Addition** the author is adding onto ideas already mentioned.
Comparison looks at how two things are the same or what they have in common.
Contrast two or more things are being contrasted, looking at how they are different.
Example gives an example of an unknown word or concept.
Time Order a sequence of events, anecdotes, directions, or narratives.
Cause & Effect suggests that the idea in one phrase is the cause or effect of the other.

To determine relationships, you may be asked:

- How are the two sentences related?
- What is the relationship of the second sentence to the first?
- What is the relationship of the first sentence to the second?
- The second sentence gives/indicates/relates. . .

Practice

Example 1: What does the 2nd sentence do in relation to the first?

- 1: But for investors who like to deal on a smaller level, there are penny stocks.**
- 2. Penny stocks are those that sell on the Over-the-Counter market for less than 5 dollars.**

- A: It analyzes the statement made in the first sentence.
B: It defines something in the first sentence.
C: It states an effect from the first sentence.
D: It gives an example of something in the first sentence.

Example 2: What is the relationship of the second sentence to the first?


- 1: All university students experience stress, not just new students.**
- 2. This stress is a result of high-performance demands.**

- A: It alters the meaning of the first sentence.
B: It restates the meaning of the first sentence.
C: It gives an example of an idea in the first sentence.
D: It indicates a cause for what is stated in the first sentence.


Understand

Answers Explained:

Example 1:

- A: The second sentence does not analyze the buying and selling of stocks.
-  B: **Penny stocks are mentioned in the first sentence and the second defines them.**
- C: A definition is not an effect..
- D: There are no specific examples named in the second sentence.

Example 2:

- A: The fact that all students experience stress is not changed by naming of the cause.
- B: The second sentence adds information rather than restating the same information.
- C: There is no example of stress named in the second sentence.
-  D: **High performance demands are the cause of stress stated in the first sentence.**

What Passages Infer, Suggest, Imply

Learn

Defined: An **inference** or **implication** is a conclusion that is **suggested** (or hinted at) by the author. It is *not* directly stated. This is sometimes referred to as "reading between the lines."

Ask yourself where the author might stand on the subject matter and what he/she might be trying to "tell you without telling you." Come to a logical conclusion based on the information given that leads you to believe there is an underlying message behind what's being said.

Test questions may look like one of the following:

- The passage suggests that. . .
- You can infer from this passage that. . .
- The writer is implying that. . .
- From this passage you can conclude that. . .
- The writer of the passage feels/will/has/has never. . .

TIP: The correct answer will not be a quote from the passage! Quotes from the passage are direct statements and do not require you to infer anything.

Practice


The few university writing programs that are embracing the commercial empire as a credible area of study are doing so because it is an everlasting and relevant staple of writing life. The publishing industry and the reading public lurk in academia no matter how hard educators, theorists and intellectuals try to dismiss or remove them. Just as there will always be the literary students who diligently strive for awards, the hopeful romance and science-fiction novelists will also appear in the creative writing classroom. The obvious benefit of a genre-friendly M.F.A. program is that these students can coexist in an environment where they can learn from each other.

The passage implies that:

- A: Students can coexist in an environment where they can learn from each other
- B: The author is an advocate of the study of commercial fiction.
- C: The publishing industry is evil.
- D: There are benefits of a genre-friendly M.F.A program.

Understand

Answers explained:

- A. This is a direct quote from the passage and therefore not implied or suggested.
-  **B. It can be inferred by the author's use of positive language when talking about commercial fiction that he/she supports its study in the university.**
- C. The author never speaks negatively about the publishing industry.
- D. This is a main idea, not suggested or implied, but clearly stated.

Author's Purpose

Learn

Defined: *Author's purpose* is the writer's **main goal** when writing.

There are 3 main purposes:

To Inform The purpose is to **give information**. Information is usually given in a straightforward and matter-of-fact manner. This is normally found in DIY books, news reports and textbooks.

To Persuade The purpose is to **convince** or **change the mind** of the reader to the author's point of view. Often, but not always, persuasive writing uses imperatives such as "ought," "should," and "must" and is written in second person "you" to catch the reader's attention. Often this is used in advertisements, speeches, and commercials.

To Entertain The purpose is to **amuse** the reader. Entertainment can engage the emotions with humor, tragedy or romance, or the intellect with detective stories, adventures, and poetry.

Practice


Parents who do not read to their children often excuse themselves by claiming a lack of time. But with few exceptions, their failure to read is a matter of priorities. Most parents find time to put in a full workday, take a full complement of coffee breaks, eat lunch and dinner, read the newspaper, watch the nightly newscast or ball game, do the dishes, talk on the phone for thirty minutes (mostly about nothing), run to the store for a pack of cigarettes or a lottery ticket, drive to the mall, and never miss that favorite prime-time show. Somehow they find time for those things—important or unimportant as they are—but can't find time to read to a child, which is much more important than all the other items on a leisure priority list.

The author's purpose is to:

- A: give an optimistic view of the parents' role in the child's education
- B: criticize parents who spend more time on themselves than on their children
- C: explain the busy lives of families in today's society
- D: give an objective reason why many children have difficulty learning to read

Understand

Answers explained:

- A. The author uses negative language when discussing parents' roles.
-  **B. The author uses critical language to show that many parents' priorities are selfish.**
- C. While the passage refers to the busy lives of families, its purpose is not to explain it.
- D. The author is more critical toward parents than he is informative about a conflict.

Author's Tone

Learn

Defined: *Tone* is the attitude or indicator of what is felt, thought, or believed as a result of the author's word choice.

When determining tone, ask if the passage is **positive**, **negative**, or **neutral**. If you can determine which of these three options best fits the passage, then try to determine what kind of positive/negative feelings the author has and which words express that attitude. Notice how the choice of words affects the tone of each sentence:

Negative: Erica **seems too ambivalent** about how to proceed.

Positive: Erica **tries to be objective** about how to proceed.

Neutral: Erica is **matter-of-fact** about how to proceed

Tone is closely related to purpose. When answering questions, make sure the tone does not contradict the author's purpose.

For example: If the author's purpose is to inform, the tone should be described with neutral/objective words.

You must keep in mind that you are looking for the author's attitude, **not yours**. It's not about how *you* feel, but about how the author expresses a mood.

Practice


In deciding whether to visit ground zero at Trinity site, the following information may prove helpful to you. Radiation levels in the fenced, ground zero area are low. On average, the levels are only 10 times greater than the region's natural background radiation. A one-hour visit to the inner fenced region will result in a whole body exposure of one-half to one milliroentgen. To put this in perspective, a U.S. adult receives an average exposure of 90 milliroentgens every year from natural and medical resources. For example, we receive between 35 and 50 milliroentgens every year from the sun and 20 to 35 milliroentgens every year from our food. Living in a brick house adds 50 milliroentgens of exposure every year compared to living in a frame house. Finally, flying coast to coast in a jet liner gives an exposure of three to five milliroentgens each trip.

The tone of the above passage can be described as:

- A: depressed
- B: matter-of-fact
- C: alarmed
- D: cynical

Understand

Answers explained:

- A. There is no indication that the author is sad about his subject.
-  **B. The tone is matter-of-fact, informing visitors of the risks involved.**
- C. The risks don't imply alarm or serious concern.
- D. There are no words or phrases that show a negative outlook regarding the topic.

*In the appendix, on [page 39](#), you will find some words that are commonly used to describe an author's tone.

Identifying Bias

Learn

Defined: *Bias* is the side that an author takes on a topic (his/her prejudice).

Similar to author's tone, bias reflects how an author feels about his or her subject. However, whereas tone asks how the author *emotionally* feels about a topic, bias asks you to identify what viewpoint or side/perspective you think the author is taking.

For example, when you fill out a resume or an application for employment, you are being biased. You choose to share only positive information about yourself (you are on your side, not the company's). If you were on the company's side, you'd probably give information the company would like to know (how you are late 4 out of 5 days, etc).

Take a look at this example of the difference between tone and bias:

Passage: It is disheartening that so many students rely on technology for their education. Gone are the days of pencils and paper, when handwriting was once used for cognitive exercise. But now, spell-check and keyboards are making such things relics of a bygone but glorious era.

Tone: nostalgic (emotional mood)

Bias: The author is **biased against** technology in education (viewpoint/stance).

*Always check for **1)** positive/negative language, **2)** whether the info is mainly fact or opinion, and **3)** whether the author leaves out or treats opposing views unfairly.

Practice


A) Marriage indeed seems to be in the air more than ever in this year of grace; **B)** everywhere it is discussed, and very few people seem to have a good word to say for it. The most superficial observer must have noticed that there is being gradually built up in the community a growing dread of the conjugal bond, especially among men; and a condition of discontent and unrest among married people, particularly women. **C)** What is the matter with this generation that wedlock has come to assume so distasteful an aspect in their eyes? **D)** On every side one hears it vilified and its very necessity called in question. From the pulpit, the clergy endeavor to uphold the sanctity of the institution, and unceasingly exhort their congregations to respect it and abide by its laws. But the Divorce Court returns make ominous reading; every family solicitor will tell you his personal experience goes to prove that happy unions are considerably on the decrease, and some of the greatest thinkers of our day join in a chorus of condemnation against latter-day marriage. (*Modern Marriage and How to Bear it: You are the Society* by Maud Churton Braby)

Which statement reveals the author's bias?

A B C D

Understand

Answers explained:

- A. States an observation, but does not offer a biased opinion about it.
- B. States an observation, but word choice is generally neutral, not critical.
-  **C. The author uses words like “so distasteful” to describe the opposing viewpoint and suggests by “what is the matter with” that those who express it are wrong.**
- D. States an observation and makes a point that is neutral and matter-of-fact.

Determining Fact or Opinion

Learn

When trying to decide whether a statement is a fact or an opinion, make sure to remember that fact/opinion does not mean true/false. There can be “false facts” (something stated as a fact but not true).

The difference: A fact can be proven **true or false**.
An opinion can be argued to be **valid or invalid** (not true or false).

A valid opinion would be based on proven facts, much like how a doctor comes to an opinion based upon symptoms and test results, which are facts.

Facts are pieces of information given by the author. Even if they are untrue or incorrect, they are *presented* to you as facts. For example: “The sun is purple.”

Opinions express attitudes, beliefs, feelings, assumptions and preferences.

Many sentences are a *mixture* of fact and opinion.
In these cases the sentence cannot be considered fully “factual.”

Ex: The riots ended in the summer of 1967 (**fact**), proof that this political subgroup had finally earned respect from society (**opinion**).

* *The entire sentence is considered opinion.*

Often opinions can be identified when the author uses subjective adjectives (most, best, strange, good, bad, worst, etc.) and with words that suggest assumption (probably, it seems, maybe, might, often, etc.). These words are subjective to the observer and can be argued as valid/invalid.

Practice 1


In this uncertainty as to the basis of good and bad conduct, many appeal to “conscience” as the infallible guide. What is conscience? It is not a distinct function of the mind, and if it were, would it be more reliable than the other function? **A)** It has often been said that some divine power implanted conscience in every human being. Apart from the question of whether human beings are different in kind from other organisms, which will be discussed later, if conscience has been placed in man by a divine power, why have not all people been furnished with the same guide? **B)** A conscience is described as a feeling that certain things are right, and certain other things are wrong. **C)** This conscience does not affect all the actions of life, but probably the ones which to them are the most important. **D)** It varies, however, with the individual. What reason has the world to believe that conscience is a correct guide to right and wrong?

Which sentence could be considered a fact?

A B C D

Understand

Answers explained:

- A. Use of the word “often” suggests the author’s opinion on what he considers frequent.
-  **B. This is a definition of the word “conscience” and does not include an opinion**
- C. Use of the word “probably” suggests the author is assuming (which is opinion based).
- D. This is an open-ended statement that suggests the author’s assumptions about variety.

Transitional Devices

Learn

Transitional devices help the reader along like beacons or flags on a path. Certain phrases—which indicate sequence, summary, proof, emphasis, exception, comparison, contrast or addition—help the reader navigate through the passage with clear signs of what the author is building upon.

For example (which is a transition!), we know “**and then**” signals us that an important event or idea is coming. We also know that “**ultimately**” means that the author is arriving at an important effect or end result. These devices help guide readers forward and make the author’s message distinct.

Practice


It would be very imprudent to go straight into an ice-cave after a long walk on a hot summer's day, so we prepared to dine under the shade of the trees at the edge of the pit, and I went down into the cave for a few moments to get a piece of ice for our wine. My first impression was that the glacier was entirely destroyed, for the outer cave was a mere chaos of rock and stones; but, on further investigation, it turned out that the ruin had not reached the inner cave. In our previous visit we had noticed a natural basin of some size and depth among the trees on the north side of the road, and we now found that the chaos was the result of a recent falling-in of this basin; so that from the bottom of the first cave, standing as it were under the road, we could see daylight through the newly-formed hole. (*Ice-Caves of France and Switzerland* by George Forrest Browne)

Which of these phrases serves as a transitional device?

- A: we had noticed
- B: we could see daylight
- C: but, on further investigation, it turned out
- D: was the result of a recent falling-in

Understand

Answers explained:

- A. This is a past tense phrase that describes an even that has already occurred.
- B. This is a past tense phrase that describes a scene, but is not a transition.
-  **C. This phrase signals the reader that a contrast is about to be revealed (“but”)**
- D. This phrase describes the result, but does not indicate transition.

*In the appendix, on [page 40](#), you will find a list of transitional words/phrases and what they indicate.

Patterns of Organization

Learn

Defined: An *organizational pattern* relates to how a paragraph is arranged and presented.

There are 3 main patterns of organization:

time order | simple listing | definition and example

More specific patterns include: process order, comparison, contrast, and cause/effect.

*Though you may find more than one pattern in a paragraph/essay, the key is to look for the *overall* pattern of the **entire** passage.

Things that may be helpful when trying to determine the pattern of organization:

- Look for transitional words or phrases introducing the major details.
- When looking for an overall pattern, think about the author's main idea/purpose.
- Be aware that there may be more than one pattern, but the overall pattern arranges the **major details** in a clear structure.

Practice


Granite has long been used in building wherever a strong, solid material was needed; but until the sand blast was tried, people thought it impossible to do fine work in this stone. There was a firm in Vermont, however, who believed in the sand blast. They had a contract with the Government to furnish several thousand headstones for national cemeteries. Cutting the names would be slow and costly; so they made letters and figures of iron, stuck them to the stones, and turned on the blast. If sand is only fast enough, it will cut stone harder than itself. The blast was turned upon a stone for five minutes. Then the iron letters were removed. There stood in raised letters the name, company, regiment, and rank of the soldier, while a quarter of an inch of the rest of the stone, which the iron letters had not protected, had been cut away. By means of the sand blast it has become possible to do beautiful carving even in material as hard as granite. (*Diggers in the Earth*, by Eva March Tappan)

The main organizational pattern of this passage can be described as:

- A: simple listing
- B: process order
- C: definition and example
- D: comparison and contrast

Understand

Answers explained:

- A. Though materials and techniques are listed, it is not the overall pattern.
-  **B. The passage describes the process order of sand blast's implementation and method.**
- C. There are no clear definitions or examples in the passage.
- D. The passage describes two techniques, but does not compare or contrast them.

*In the appendix, on [page 41](#), you will find clue words that can help you tell what kind of pattern is being used within a passage.

Context Clues

Learn

Often we learn new vocabulary words not by looking them up in the dictionary, but by hearing the words used in the context of conversation. The same is true with written passages. When you encounter a word you don't know, try to understand the word by looking at the context (the surrounding words/sentences).

If, on a test, you are asked to choose the word that most closely fits the meaning of a word in the passage, find the word in the passage and substitute the answer choices to see which one seems to make the most sense. While the correct answer may not be the word's exact meaning, it should be the closest of the four choices given.

You can also use word structures to help determine the meaning, such as **prefixes** (distempered), **roots** (achievement), and **suffixes** (reflexology).

Tip: Look for transitional words and connecting words (like “so” or “but”) for clues about what the word means in relation to how it is connected to other words or ideas in the passage. Here are some common connecting words with meanings:

- F** For — because
- A** and — also, furthermore, moreover, in addition
- N** Nor — neither, on the other hand
- B** but — however, nonetheless, nevertheless
- O** or — either, on the other hand
- Y** yet — however, nonetheless, nevertheless
- S** so — consequently, therefore, thus, as a result

Practice 1


The appearance of our visitor was a surprise to me, since I had expected a typical country practitioner. He was a very tall, thin man, with a long nose like a beak, which jutted out between two keen, gray eyes, set closely together and sparkling brightly from behind a pair of gold-rimmed glasses. He was clad in a professional but rather **slovenly** fashion, for his frock-coat was dingy and his trousers frayed. Though young, his long back was already bowed, and he walked with a forward thrust of his head and a general air of peering benevolence. (*The Hound of the Baskervilles*, by A. Conan Doyle)

The word “slovenly” most likely means:

- A: well dressed
- B: sleek
- C: casual
- D: untidy

Understand

Answers explained:

- A. The author says “professionally” which normally means well-dressed. However, he says “but” to indicate a contrast to being well-dressed. This must mean there was something not well-dressed about the character.
- B. Sleek, for appearances, would mean neat and well-groomed, which would be too similar to professional for the author to use “but” for a contrast.
- C. Casual is the opposite of professional
-  **D. Untidy means that, though his clothes are professional, they are not well-kept or clean.**

Practice 2


It's been seventy years since the University of Iowa began turning out dozens of prize-winning authors. Since then, it has been the model for writing programs across the nation and has modified its philosophy little, if at all. They continue to place popular fiction and literary fiction on two different levels of craft: one being art, the other being entertainment. While the Iowa Writer's Workshop and other prestigious universities will continue to serve as the stronghold for these literary traditions, one can't ignore the necessity for the creative writing program to evolve. The **segregation** of the study of fiction is nearly at an end as the publishing mainstream craves newer, fresher, more independent voices. Degree programs should not disregard the chance to be that engine for America's readership. More institutions will eventually join this cause, merging literary and commercial viewpoints and opening their doors to all writers who simply wish to master the craft and share a vision with the world.

It can be guessed that “segregation” means:

- A: exclusion
- B: prejudice
- C: division
- D: justice

Understand

Answers explained:

- A. Exclusion means cut off or separated altogether. The passage explains that the genres are separated from each other, but not that one is excluded entirely.
- B. Prejudice is an idea that one genre is judged with minimal knowledge of its attributes, but the passage explores the study of each independently.
-  **C. The passage explains that the genres are divided, that the two are not help up to the same standard.**
- D. The passage does not talk about victimization or injustice.

Appendix



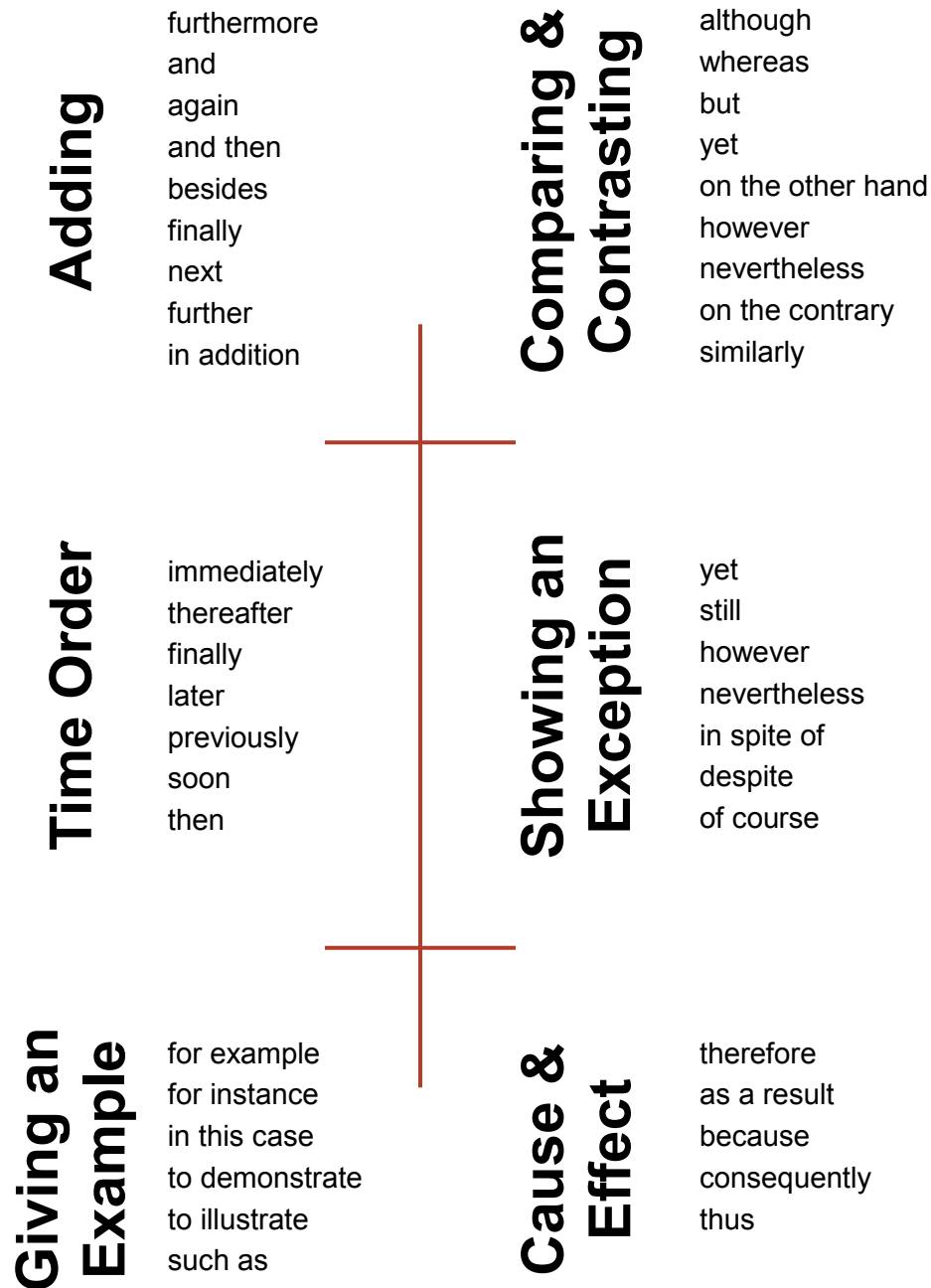
Words that Describe Tone

Learn

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| ambivalent | uncertain about a choice |
| ambiguous | unclear; confusing |
| arrogant | full of self-importance; conceited |
| bewildered | confused; puzzled |
| biased | strongly for or against something |
| bitter | angry; resentful |
| compassionate | deeply sympathetic |
| critical | finding fault with |
| cynical | negative about human nature; seeing/expecting the worst in people |
| depressed | very sad or discouraged |
| detached | emotionally uninvolved |
| didactic | instructive |
| hypocritical | false; actions not matching stated beliefs |
| impassioned | filled with strong feelings |
| indignant | angry about something unfair |
| instructive | teaching |
| lighthearted | happy; carefree |
| matter-of-fact | sticking to the facts; unemotional; unbiased; objective |
| mocking | making fun of |
| nostalgic | longing for or sentimental about something/ someone in the past |
| objective | neutral; unbiased; unemotional; not influenced by personal opinions |
| optimistic | looking on the bright side of things; positive outlook |
| pessimistic | seeing the negative side of things |
| remorseful | feeling guilty over something; sorry for a committed wrongdoing |
| resolute | positive and deliberate in one's purpose |
| sarcastic | irony with a hateful, mean-spirited turn |

Transitional Words & Phrases

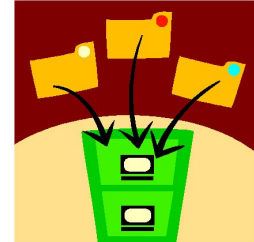
Learn



Organizational Patterns in Academic Writing

How are Organizational Patterns used in Academic Writing?

The purpose of academic writing is to present a number of ideas that somehow fit together to make sense. Sometimes the amount of new concepts, new words, and facts can be very large and complex. Professors, textbook authors, and researchers use a framework or plan that helps to communicate their ideas clearly. There are several types of plans, called organizational patterns that can be identified in academic writing. They help the author to organize his or her ideas in a way that makes sense, and hopefully, they help you to understand the material being presented.



How to Identify Organizational Patterns

Organizational patterns can be identified by what transitions or “signal words” the author uses. Recognizing the type of pattern that academic writing is organized by can help the reader to put all the facts together and understand what the text is all about. The following tables will help you to identify different organizational patterns.

| Organizational Pattern | Purpose | Signal Words |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Definition | Explains the meaning of new words or phrases. | is, refers to, can be defined as, means, consists of, involves, is a term that, is called, is characterized by, occurs when, are those that, entails, corresponds to, is literally |
| Classification | Divides a topic into parts based on shared characteristics. | classified as, comprises, is composed of, several varieties of, different stages of, different groups that, includes, one, first, second, another, finally, last |
| Chronological Order | Describes the sequence in which events occur in time. | first, second, later, before, next, as soon as, after, then, finally, meanwhile, following, last, during, in, on, until |
| Process | Describes the order in which things are done or how things work. | first, second, next, then, following, after that, last, finally |
| Order of Importance | Describes ideas in order of priority or preference. | less, more, primary, next, last, most important, primarily, secondarily |
| Spatial Order | Describes physical location or position in space. | above, below, beside, next to, in front of, behind, inside, outside, opposite, within, nearby |
| Cause and Effect | Describes how one or more things cause or are related to another. | <i>Causes:</i> because, because of, for, since, stems from, one cause is, one reason is, leads to, causes, creates, yields, produces, due to, breeds, for this reason <i>Effects:</i> consequently, results in, one result is, |

Appendix: Reading Skill 11b — Organization

| | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| | | therefore, thus, as a result, hence |
| Comparison and Contrast | Discusses similarities and/or differences among ideas, theories, concepts, objects, or persons. | <i>Similarities:</i> both, also, similarly, like, likewise, too, as well as, resembles, correspondingly, in the same way, to compare, in comparison, share <i>Differences:</i> unlike, differs from, in contrast, on the other hand, instead, despite, nevertheless, however, in spite of, whereas, as opposed to |
| Listing/Enumeration | Organizes lists of information: characteristics, features, parts, or categories. | the following, several, for example, for instance, one, another, also, too, in other words, first second, numerals (1, 2, 3...), letters (a, b, c...), most important, the largest, the least, finally |
| Statement and Clarification | Indicates that information explaining a concept or idea will follow. | in fact, in other words, clearly, evidently, obviously |
| Summary | Indicates that a condensed review of an idea or piece of writing is to follow. | in summary, in conclusion, in brief, to summarize, to sum up, in short, on the whole |
| Generalization and Example | Provides examples that clarify a broad, general statement. | for example, for instance, that is, to illustrate, thus |
| Addition | Indicates that additional information will follow. | furthermore, additionally, also, besides, further, in addition, moreover, again |

From: <http://valenciacollege.edu/wp/cssc/documents/organizationalpatternsinacademicwriting.pdf>

Adapted from McWhorter, Kathleen T. *Reading Across the Disciplines*. 2nd Ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005



Notes & Questions

This section should be utilized **if you are considering a review tutoring session** before retaking the PERT. As you study and review the skill areas, please write down specific questions about a skill or skills that you are struggling to understand or master. Also, make sure to bring this page, along with your booklet, to the tutoring session.

Example:

Skill Area Author's Purpose

Question(s): *How do I know the difference between author's purpose and the main idea?*

Skill Area _____

Question(s):

Skill Area _____

Question(s):

Skill Area _____

Question(s):

Skill Area _____

Question(s):

Answer Strip

Your Answer Correct Answer

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 3. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 8. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 10. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 11. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 12. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 13. _____ | 13. _____ |
| 14. _____ | 14. _____ |
| 15. _____ | 15. _____ |
| 16. _____ | 16. _____ |
| 17. _____ | 17. _____ |
| 18. _____ | 18. _____ |
| 19. _____ | 19. _____ |
| 20. _____ | 20. _____ |

Credits

Content contributed, composed and compiled by English faculty and Learning Support faculty at Valencia Osceola Campus. Some passages included in this review guide were composed by faculty members. Credited passages were obtained from The Gutenberg Foundation's collection of printed works. Book icons designed by Harryarts - freepik.com.

Practice Questions

Note: The following passages and questions are included as a practice “test.” They are intended to provide a sampling of the types of questions you may encounter while taking the PERT. Please be aware that a high score based on these questions does not guarantee a passing score on the PERT itself, nor does it suggest that you do not need more studying to prepare.

Passage 1

Some argue that mainstream fiction is empty of substance and requires little discipline to produce, that it is intended primarily to entertain, and is therefore not ‘fine art’. An author’s intentions should not dictate whether his work has artistic value. There is just as much discipline and devotion in obtaining a publishing contract as there is in earning a literary award. Instructors should no longer be charged with urging students to write award-winning manuscripts, nor should they be obligated to push a student toward producing sellable work. Each writer has an individual goal, and it is simply an instructor’s aim to realize and nurture it, rather than cut it to fit the rigid literary yardstick. Students should have the opportunity to understand the differences between literary and genre fiction, and to make an educated decision about which would fulfill them. If, in fact, a writer wishes to entertain rather than intellectually enrich his readers, there should be a place for him to learn to do so effectively in the university environment his literary peers enjoy. If we can offer the aspiring student of mainstream fiction no intellectual environment in which to improve his craft, how can we expect the mainstream to ever gain in substance?

1. What is the central point of this paragraph?

- A: Discipline and devotion can take you far in life.
- B: Universities should give equal respect to the study of both mainstream and literary fiction.
- C: Mainstream fiction is not fine art.
- D: An author’s intentions should not dictate whether his work has artistic value.

2. The word “mainstream” most likely means:

- A: popular
- B: easy
- C: outdated
- D: complicated

3. The author’s tone in the paragraph can be described as:

- A: gloomy
- B: cheerful
- C: angry
- D: resolute

Passage 2

Modern astronomy began a little more than three centuries ago with the invention of the telescope and Galileo's application of it to the study of the heavenly bodies. This new instrument at once revealed to him the mountains on the moon, the satellites of Jupiter, and the spots on the sun, and brought the celestial bodies under observation in a way that no one had dreamed of before. In our view today, the planets of the solar system are worlds; we can examine their surfaces and judge wherein they resemble or differ from our earth. To the ancients they were but points of light; to us they are vast bodies that we have been able to measure and to weigh. The telescope has enabled us also to penetrate deep into outer space; we have learned of other systems besides that of our own sun and its dependents, many of them far more complex; clusters of stars have been revealed to us, and mysterious nebulæ, which suggest by their forms that they are systems of suns in the making. More lately the invention of the spectroscope has informed us of the very elements which go to the composition of these numberless stars, and we can distinguish those which are in a similar condition to our sun from those differing from it. And photography has recorded for us objects too faint for mere sight to detect, even when aided by the most powerful telescope; too detailed and intricate for the most skillful hand to depict. (*The Astronomy of the Bible* by E. Walter Maunder)

4. The word “intricate” most likely means:

- A: complex
- B: strange
- C: confusing
- D: plain

5. The subject of the paragraph is:

- A: the satellites of Jupiter
- B: Galileo's discoveries
- C: space photography
- D: the benefits of advancement of scientific instruments

6. Which phrase serves as a transitional device?

- A: More lately, the invention of...
- B: In our view today...
- C: And photography has recorded...
- D: All of the above

Passage 3

A) Douglass had learned to read, partly from childish curiosity and the desire to be able to do what others around him did; but it was with a definite end in view that he learned to write. By the slave code it was unlawful for a slave to go beyond the limits of his own neighborhood without the written permission of his master. **B)** Douglass's desire to write grew mainly out of the fact that in order to escape from bondage, which he had early determined to do, he would probably need such a "pass," as this written permission was termed, and could write it himself if he but knew how. His master for the time being kept a ship yard, and in this and neighboring establishments of the same kind the boy spent much of his time. He noticed that the carpenters, after dressing pieces of timber, marked them with certain letters to indicate their positions in the vessel. **C)** By asking questions of the workmen he learned the names of these letters and their significance. He got up writing matches with sticks upon the ground with the little white boys, copied the italics in his spelling-book, and in the secrecy of the attic filled up all the blank spaces of his young master's old copy-books. In time he learned to write, **D)** and thus again demonstrated the power of the mind to overleap the bounds that men set for it and work out the destiny to which God designs it. (Frederick Douglass, by Charles Waddell Chesnutt)

7. What is the organizational pattern of the paragraph?

- A: time order
- B: simple listing
- C: explanation and example
- D: comparison and contrast

8. According to the passage, Douglas learned to write by:

- A: learning the names of the letters from the carpenters.
- B: keeping a ship yard.
- C: copying italics in a spelling book.
- D: A and C

9. Which sentence marked in the passage is a fact?

- A B C D

10. It can be inferred from the passage that the author believes Douglass was:

- A: a criminal who disobeyed the law.
- B: someone with too much ambition.
- C: someone to be admired for his resourcefulness of mind.
- D: ultimately confined by his limitations.

Passage 4

We, as a people, are becoming idle, living in luxury and ease, and in the gratification of artificial wants. Some indulge in unwholesome fast food, and think more of gratifying a morbid appetite than of supplying the body with proper nourishment. Others devote unnecessary attention to expensive clothes, yielding themselves completely to the sway of fashion. Such gluttony in diet and dress manifests itself in the general appearance of a person, and exposes his folly to the world with tobacco-tainted breath, a beer-bloated body, a rum-reddened nose, and other manifestations. They pamper themselves instead of practicing self-denial, and appear to think that the chief end of life is gratification, rather than useful endeavor. (adapted from *The People's Common Sense Medical Adviser in Plain English*, by R. V. Pierce)

11. It can be inferred that the author:

- A: considers himself part of the community he criticizes.
- B: has never made a poor choice regarding his health.
- C: thinks we are becoming idle.
- D: does not live in the community he criticizes.

12. The word “gluttony” in the context of the paragraph most likely means:

- A: irresponsibility
- B: wisdom
- C: devotion
- D: violence

13. The author’s purpose in writing the passage is to:

- A: demonstrate the ways society neglects health and well-being.
- B: criticize people who are enthusiastic about fashion.
- C: demonstrate what a responsible citizen he is.
- D: persuade the reader to stop smoking.

14. The author is biased against:

- A: people with too much money.
- B: fashion.
- C: dieting.
- D: people who do not prioritize their health

Passage 5

Traveling has become increasingly dangerous, not only to one's physical person, but also to one's wallet. While a few dollars might have secured passage on a boat traversing the Atlantic a hundred years ago, today that would barely cover a bus ride across town. Industrialization is just one of the culprits in the escalation of fees related to travel. Because more and more third-world countries are modernizing, they require oil to fuel their technological advancement. As a result, those living in the United States are forced to pay more for a gallon of gas at the pump or more for a plane ticket, for it is not only cars that run on oil. Of course, this effect is simply the result of supply and demand; the less of something to go around, the more expensive it becomes. Still, global development is only part of the reason a person will be paying more for travel this year because new regulations in the transportation industry will also trim your cash reserves. These new regulations mean that transportation departments will need to expend more money in order to stay in compliance. In the end, consumers will be the ones that will fit the bill for the increased costs, whether through taxes or through other fees. This effect can easily be seen in the cost of tolls; because toll roads must spend more money to stay in compliance, that extra cost, in the form of a higher toll, will extract more money from your pocketbook every time you pass one of those smiling attendants in their concrete cubicles.

15. What is the organizational pattern of the paragraph?

- A: time order
- B: simple listing
- C: cause and effect
- D: definition and example

16. According to the passage, industrialization, supply and demand, and _____ are the causes of high travel expenses.

- A: consumers
- B: tolls
- C: new regulations
- D: physical danger

17. Which phrase is used to signal a transition?

- A: Traveling has become increasingly dangerous...
- B: Still, global development is only part of the reason...
- C: Of course, this effect is simply the result of supply and demand...
- D: These new regulations mean that transportation departments...

Passage 5

What is this anti-gift card sentiment lately? Gift cards are convenient, require minimal wrapping, give your loved ones freedom from exchanges and returns, and come in all kinds of sparkly designs and brands. So, what can be bad about that? People argue that a gift card simply demonstrates that Christmas has become about how lazy we are as gift-givers. Where are the endless hours of shopping for that one special thing that so-and-so is just going to love? Where is the time spent meticulously wrapping it with gold-inlay scroll-work wreath patterns and curling ribbon with the scissors blade? Well, let me ask this. Is all that really necessary? Is proof of love really in the stress-filled torment just described? “But, I enjoy doing that for others,” you say. Sure, but I can count on two hands how many gifts I’ve slaved and brainstormed over that had only mild impressions on those who received them. There’s nothing like that Christmas Day “Oh...how nice,” reaction to morph someone into a Scrooge.

Many people say a gift card requires no thought. A gift card is usually given by someone who doesn’t know you well enough to shop for something that matters. Maybe once upon a time that was true. But now, there are a million brands, restaurants, and stores out there to choose from. Choosing a gift card has truly become a bit of critical thinking. You must consider your loved one’s tastes in an even more refined way than ever before. For women, there are beauty spas, jewelry, and clothing outlets, for men are electronic and hardware stores. There are music, movie, ebay, Amazon, book store, and department store cards. Anything and everything a friend or family member may want hangs from a colorful inventory of rectangular salvation at pretty much any major store you frequent.

18. The central point of the paragraph is:

- A: that gift cards don’t require any thought
- B: that gift cards require critical thinking
- C: that gift cards are a more genuine gift than previously thought
- D: that no one should ever buy gift cards

19. The author is biased against:

- A: the sentimental emphasis on traditional gift-giving
- B: people who don’t give gift cards
- C: people who don’t spend money on their loved ones
- D: the holidays in general

20. The author’s purpose in writing the passage is to:

- A: persuade the reader to consider the benefits of gift cards.
- B: show that Christmas is more trouble than it is worth
- C: show the variety of different stores and brands
- D: openly condemn people who do not give gift cards.

End

Answer Key

| <u>Correct Answer</u> | <u>Skill Area</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. B | central point |
| 2. A | context clues |
| 3. D | author's tone |
| 4. A | context clues |
| 5. D | main subject |
| 6. D | transitional devices |
| 7. A | organizational patterns |
| 8. D | supporting details |
| 9. C | fact/opinion |
| 10. C | inference |
| 11. A | inference |
| 12. A | context clues |
| 13. A | author's purpose |
| 14. D | author's bias |
| 15. C | patterns of organization |
| 16. C | supporting details |
| 17. B | transitional devices |
| 18. C | central point |
| 19. A | author's bias |
| 20. A | author's purpose |

Next Steps:



For information on what you should do next, please visit our resources page and click on the PERT link.

