

Text Structure and Purpose

what the passage is doing, not what it is about

What this domain actually asks

- every question here comes with its own short passage, 25 to 150 words, written for that question alone, so there is nothing to gain by reading ahead
- three stems cover almost all of it: the overall structure of the passage, its main purpose, and the function of one underlined sentence
- all three ask what the writer is doing, never what the passage is about, so a choice can be perfectly true about the topic and still be wrong
- the passage subject does not matter: history, a lab result, a poem's opening, the moves are identical

Four passage shapes



four shapes drawn side by side under one root, each label naming what comes first and what follows it. They sit at the same level, none ranked above another say the shape out loud in six words before you look at any option. A passage you can describe is a passage you can match

read the stem first: what is it actually asking about

it says overall structure

the whole passage

describe it in order, from the first sentence to the last

it says main purpose

one job, one verb

why the passage exists: to argue, to report, to correct

it names an underlined sentence

that sentence only

what it does for the sentences around it

an answer that correctly describes the whole passage is still wrong under a stem that asked about one underlined sentence. Misreading the stem is the most expensive mistake in this domain

Predict before you read the options

- the four options are written to sound alike, so reading them cold makes every one feel possible
- cover them, describe the passage in your own plain words, then uncover and hunt for the match
- your prediction does not need the option writer's vocabulary, it only needs the right shape
- if no option matches your prediction, re-read the first and last sentences before you loosen it

Pacing this domain *

- the paper runs 54 questions in 64 minutes, two modules of 27 in 32 minutes each, about 71 seconds a question on average
- these questions sit near the middle of that budget: aim for 75 to 80 seconds, funded by the transitions questions, which should cost you well under a minute
- questions are grouped by domain inside a module and run roughly easiest to hardest within each group, so a sudden jump in difficulty means you are near the end of the group
- there is no penalty for a wrong answer, so a blank scores exactly what a guess scores. Mark it, guess it, move on, and come back
- module 1 decides whether module 2 is the easier or the harder form, so the first module is worth your steadiest pacing