

And the Answer Is...?

Tackling Multiple-Choice Test Questions

Lots of people have trouble with the multiple-choice questions on reading comprehension tests. The best way to tackle them is to become familiar with the different kinds of questions and answers that appear on the tests. Below you'll find three common types of questions based on a short reading passage. Begin by reading the passage at least twice.

VOTE! And take the kids along!

When Election Day comes around, adults should take children with them to the polls. Research shows that young people are more likely to vote if their parents or guardians voted. And, if children actually go to the polls with their parents, there is an even greater chance that the youngsters will grow up to be voters.

But many adult Americans are not voting at all. According to the U.S. Census, only 63% of the U.S. population voted in the November 2008 presidential election. This is terrible! The turnout is too low. We need to encourage children to think that voting matters.

THREE COMMON TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Three types of multiple-choice questions that you will often see on tests are:

- Main Idea
- "According to the passage..."
- Opinion...

Read each question carefully and take the time to understand the question. Use the "tips" box if you need help.

1. What is the main idea of this passage?
 - (A) Good and bad parenting
 - (B) Changing the voting age
 - (C) How many people voted in the 2008 election
 - (D) Voting and teaching children to vote

tips

A Main Idea question asks about the overall point of the passage. Eliminate choices that include ideas or information that are not mentioned in the passage. Also, do not choose answers that contain supporting ideas or details from the passage rather than main points.

2. According to the passage, what does research show about children and voting?
- (A) Children should be allowed to vote.
 - (B) Teachers and community leaders made a big push to change the voting age.
 - (C) Children are more likely to vote when they grow up if their parents or guardians voted.
 - (D) Children will not grow up to be voters if their parents take them to the polls.

tips

“According to the passage...” usually means that the answer is directly stated in the passage. For this type of question, you need to go back to the passage and locate the exact words from the answer choice.

tips

To determine if something is an opinion, ask yourself, “Is this the writer’s personal belief or is it a statement of fact?” For this type of question, eliminate choices that give plain, factual information. Look for opinion words such as “This is terrible!” which you see in this passage. Also, watch out for tricky answers that are opinions but are either not expressed in the passage or are the opposite of what is expressed. The correct answer will be an opinion that is clearly expressed in the passage.

3. Which of the following is an opinion expressed in this passage?
- (A) Research has been done about children and voting.
 - (B) In the presidential election of 2008, 37% of Americans didn’t vote.
 - (C) The voter turnout in the 2008 presidential election was too low.
 - (D) Right now, too many Americans are voting.

JUST TO REVIEW

Draw a line from the question type to the phrase that best explains it.

Question Type

Explanation

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 4. main idea | (A) Usually, words will be stated directly in the passage |
| 5. “according to the passage...” | (B) Someone’s personal ideas or beliefs |
| 6. opinion | (C) The overall message or point |

ANSWERS: 1: Choice D is correct; it includes the two most important ideas. Eliminate A and B; they are not contained in the passage. Eliminate C; it is not the most important concept. 2: Choice C, located in the second sentence of the first paragraph, is correct. Eliminate A, B, and D; they can't be found anywhere in the passage. 3: Choice C is correct. Eliminate A and B; they are statements of fact, not opinions. Eliminate D; although this is an opinion — because it makes a judgement that others may not agree with — it is not correct because it expresses an opinion that is the opposite of the author's. 4: C 5: A 6: B