Critical Reading
KNOW THE DIRECTIONS BEFORE YOU TAKE THE TEST. READING THEM IS THE TIME VAMPIRE: THEY SUCK THE TIME RIGHT OUT OF YOUR TEST!
The Time Demon

When the Time Demon is breathing down your neck, remember:

Accuracy is better than wild guessing!
Critical Reading Questions

Use content from:
  - humanities
  - social studies
  - natural sciences
  - literature

• 13 Sentence Completions
• 35 Passage-Based Reading Questions
  (100- to 800-word passages)
# Format of Critical Reading Sections

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Critical Reading: Sentence Completions
Sentence Completion Directions

Each of the following sentences contains one or two blanks; these blanks indicate that a word or set of words has been left out. Below the sentence are five words or phrases, lettered A through E. Select the word or set of words that best completes the sentence.
Roger said the report was significant; Heather contradicted him, saying that all the information presented was _____.

Because Heather is contradicting Roger, the correct response is the word that is most nearly the opposite of “significant.”

Choice (E) is correct.

“Immaterial” means inconsequential or irrelevant.

Information that is immaterial is by definition not significant.
Sentence Completion YouTube Resources

- PSAT Critical Reading: How to Predict the Answer to Sentence Completions
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xmgp-bWHWB4&list=PLb9g9Sg3aRCsc2vk6YcYBq8W2kYWgzzOD&index=1

- PSAT Critical Reading: How to Answer **Definition** Sentence Completion Questions
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xtZJZsg6MQ

- PSAT Critical Reading: How to Answer **Contrast** Sentence Completion Questions
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnCFeg1pSJw&list=PLb9g9Sg3aRCsc2vk6YcYBq8W2kYWgzzOD

- PSAT Critical Reading: How to Answer **Cause-and-Effect** Sentence Completions
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCNgwRASYCQ
Kaplan’s Critical Reading: How to Answer Sentence Completions
The Kaplan Method for Sentence Completions

1. Read the sentence, looking for clues.
2. Predict an answer
3. Select the choice that best matches the prediction.
The Kaplan Method for Sentence Completions

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1. Feeling _____ about her latest victories, the tennis champion looked smugly down at the row of trophies on her mantelpiece.

2. Her employers could not complain about her word because she was _____ in the _____ of her duties.

3. Although eighteenth-century English society as a whole did not encourage learning for its own sake in women, nonetheless it illogically _____ women’s sad lack of education.
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   A. downcast
   B. agitated
   C. indifferent
   D. complacent
   E. philosophical
The Kaplan Method for Sentence Completions

1. Read the sentence, looking for clues.
2. Predict an answer
3. Select the choice that best matches the prediction.

2. Her employers could not complain about her word because she was _____ in the _____ of her duties.
   A. derelict...performance
   B. importunate...observance
   C. meticulous...postponement
   D. assiduous...execution
   E. hidebound...conception
The Kaplan Method for Sentence Completions

1. Read the sentence, looking for clues.
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3. Although eighteenth-century English society as a whole did not encourage learning for its own sake in women, nonetheless it illogically ____ women’s sad lack of education.

A. palliated
B. postulated
C. decried
D. brooked
E. vaunted
Sentence Completion Questions

- Three Types of Questions
  - Definition
    - More than half of questions
    - Rest of the sentence defines the blank(s)
  - Contrast
    - About one-quarter of questions
    - Rest of the sentence describes opposite
  - Cause and Effect
    - Least common question
    - One part of the sentence brings about a predictable result in the other

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xtZJZsg6MQ&list=PLb9g9Sq3aRCsc2vk6YcYBq8W2kYWgzzOD
More than half of questions
Rest of the sentence defines the blank(s)
Identify clues
Look for punctuation

Normally an individual thunderstorm lasts about 45 minutes, but under certain conditions the storm may ____, becoming ever more severe, for as long as four hours.

A. wane
B. moderate
C. persist
D. vacillate
E. disperse

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xmgp-bWHWB4&list=PLb9g9Sq3aRCsc2vk6YcYBq8W2kYWgzzOD&index=1
Sentence Completion: Contrast

- About one-quarter of test questions
- Rest of the sentence describes opposite
- Pay attention to key words:
  - Although
  - While
  - But
  - Yet
  - On the contrary
  - Despite
  - Even though
  - However

Although the drummer played _____, the other instruments were clearly _____.

A. Quietly...missing  
B. Poorly...ignored  
C. Loudly...audible  
D. Enthusiastically...unappreciated  
E. Quickly...synchronized

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnCFeg1pSJw&list=PLb9g9Sq3aRCsc2vk6YcYBq8W2kYWgzzOD
Sentence Completion: Cause and Effect

- Least common question
- One part of the sentence brings about a predictable result in the other
- Refer back to the three steps we discussed earlier:
  1. **Read the sentence, looking for clues.**
  2. Predict an answer
  3. Select the choice that best matches the prediction.

- Cause and effect Clues
  - Given
  - After
  - Therefore
  - Thus
  - Leading to

Because her delivery was _____, the effect of her speech on the voters was nonexistent.

A. halting
B. plausible
C. moving
D. respectable
E. audible

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCNgwRASYCQ
Kaplan’s Strategies for Sentence Completions: The Forward Method

1. Cover up the answer choices
2. Read the Sentence Completion and determine its type.
3. Supply your own words to complete the sentence.
4. Match your prediction to the answer choices.
5. Plug your choice back into the SC.

USEFUL FOR EVERY SENTENCE COMPLETION
Kaplan’s Strategies for Sentence Completions: The Forward Method

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Ignoring criticisms that the film was excessively _____ and biased, the director resisted efforts to make changes designed to produce a less fierce, more _____ story.

A. placid...prejudicial
B. tranquil...neutral
C. Brutal...unfair
D. violent...even-handed
E. long...compact
Kaplan’s Strategies for Sentence Completions: The Backward Method

1. Use positive or negative signs to determine what type of word you will need.
2. Assign positive or negative signs to each answer.
3. Eliminate the choices that don’t fit, then select from the rest.
4. Plug your choice back into the Sentence Completion.

THIS SHOULD BE YOUR BACKUP PLAN, WHEN THE FIRST STRATEGY ISN’T WORKING.
Kaplan’s Strategies for Sentence Completions: The Forward Method

1. Use positive or negative signs to determine what type of word you will need.
2. Assign positive or negative signs to each answer.
3. Eliminate the choices that don’t fit, then select from the rest.
4. Plug your choice back into the Sentence Completion.

Some linguists argue that when the term “unique” is used loosely, the concept becomes _____, losing its power to identify people, things, or concepts that are one of a kind.

A. conservative
B. sensational
C. domestic
D. scarce
E. diluted
Barron’s Tips for Handling Sentence Completion Questions
Tip #1: Before you look at the answer choices, read the sentence, substituting the word “blank” for the missing word.

Think of words you know that might make sense in the context.

You may not come up with the exact word, but you may come up with a synonym.

The psychologist set up the experiment to test the rat’s _____: he wished to see how well the rat adjusted to the changing conditions it had to face.

A. reflexes
B. communicability
C. stamina
D. sociability
E. adaptability
Tip #2: Look for words or phrases that indicate a contrast between one idea and another.

- Words like:
  - Although
  - However
  - Despite
  - But
- An antonym or near antonym may be the correct answer

We expected the winner of the race to be jubilant about his victory, but he was _____ instead.

A. triumphant
B. mature
C. morose
D. talkative
E. culpable
Tip #3: Look for phrases or words that indicate support for a concept.

- Words such as:
  - Likewise
  - Similarly
  - In the same way
  - In addition
  - Additionally
  - Also

- A synonym or near-synonym for another word in the sentence may be the correct answer.

The simplest animals are those whose bodies are least complex in structure, and that do the same things done by all animals, such as eating, breathing, moving, and feeling in the most _____ way.

A. haphazard
B. bizarre
C. advantageous
D. primitive
E. unique
Tip #4: Look for words or phrases that indicate one thing causes another.

- Words like:
  - Because
  - Since
  - Therefore
  - Thus

We ran out of food toward the middle of the day, so by the time we returned to camp that evening we were _____.

A. Footsore  
B. Reckless  
C. Envious  
D. Ravenous  
E. Tasteless
Tip #5: Look for signals that indicate a word is being defined.

- Phrases such as:
  - In other words
  - That is
  - Which means

- Also look for special punctuation clues, such as:
  - Commas
  - Hyphens
  - Parentheses

- These words and punctuation marks are used to set off definitions

As a child, Menuhin was considered a _____. gifted with extraordinary musical ability.

A. heretic
B. prodigy
C. mendicant
D. renegade
E. precursor
Tip #6: If you’re having vocabulary trouble, look for familiar word parts.

- Prefixes
  - Page 188
- Suffixes
  - Page 204
- Roots
  - Page 193

After a tragedy, many people claim to have had a _____ of disaster.

A. deviation
B. proclamation
C. presentiment
D. brink
E. verdict
Tip #7: Work out whether the missing word is positive or negative.

Then test the answer choices for their positive or negative sense, eliminating those that don’t work.

No matter how hard Ichabod tried to appear smooth and debonair, he still struck those who met him as a particularly ____ young man.

A. heroic  
B. promising  
C. mendacious  
D. ungainly  
E. precocious
Tip #8: In a sentence completion question with two blanks, eliminate answer choices by testing one blank at a time.

- First read the entire sentence and choose a blank on which to focus.
- Insert the appropriate word of each answer pair in that blank.
- Ask yourself whether this particular word makes sense in this blank.
- If a word makes no sense in the sentence, you can eliminate that answer pair.

The author portrays research psychologists not as disruptive _____ in the field of psychotherapy, but as effective _____ working ultimately toward the same ends as the psychotherapists.

A. proponents…opponents
B. antagonists…pundits
C. interlocutors…surrogates
D. meddlers…usurpers
E. intruders…collaborators
Sentence Completion Practice Resources

- Test Prep Practice
  - [http://www.testpreppractice.net/PSAT/Sentence-Completion-PSAT-Practice-Tests.aspx](http://www.testpreppractice.net/PSAT/Sentence-Completion-PSAT-Practice-Tests.aspx)

- Major Tests

- Word Dyanmo
PSAT/SAT: 2. Sentence Completion Questions

Note map generated from MyndBook

- **Levels of Difficulty**
  - Knowledge of the levels of difficulty in the sentence completion section.

- **Deductive Reasoning**
  - Application of deductive reasoning & process of elimination.

- **Familiarity**
  - Know the logical structure of the sentence completion questions.

- **Vocabulary**
  - Use word roots, prefixes, and suffixes to find the meanings of words you do not know.

- **Word Values**
  - Is the word in the blank supposed to be positive (+) or negative (-)? Are the answers positive or negative? Write a + or - next to the answer choices.

- **Sentence Completion Questions**
  - Include
  - One-Word Completions
    - Require you to fill in one blank. Questions based on levels of difficulty.
  - Two-Word Completions
    - Require you to fill in two blanks. Depends not only on difficulty of vocabulary, but relationship between words in the sentence.

- **Strategies/Techniques**
  - Include

- **Recognition of Context Clues**
  - Include

- **Level 1**
  - Level 1 allows you to rely on your instincts and common sense. Don’t obsess with analysis or second-guessing.

- **Level 2**
  - Level 2 presents words that appear to be easy at first glance but may have second meanings. Be wary of following gut reactions.

- **Level 3**
  - Level 3 contain “magnet words” to draw student away from correct answer intentionally designed to work against common sense.
Building Your Vocabulary
Online Vocabulary Resources

- Word Part Practice
  - Root Words: [http://www.vocabulary.co.il/root-words/](http://www.vocabulary.co.il/root-words/)
  - Prefixes: [http://www.vocabulary.co.il/prefixes/](http://www.vocabulary.co.il/prefixes/)
  - Suffixes: [http://www.vocabulary.co.il/suffixes/](http://www.vocabulary.co.il/suffixes/)

- PSAT Vocabulary Practice:

- SAT Vocabulary Practice
  - [http://www.vocabulary.co.il/sat-games/](http://www.vocabulary.co.il/sat-games/)
Critical Reading: Reading Comprehension
Critical Reading Directions

The passages below are followed by questions on their content; questions following a pair of related passages may also be based on the relationship between the paired passages. Answer the questions on the basis of what is stated or implied in the passages and in any introductory material that may be provided.
Passage Excerpt:
After I left the room, I began to sift my impressions. Only the day before, an acquaintance had warned me to watch carefully for sleight-of-hand tricks, especially as the man had earlier been a stage conjuror.

Question:
The “acquaintance” mentioned in line 2 can best be described as a 

(A) skeptic
(B) hypocrite
(C) hoaxer
(D) confidant
(E) mystic

The acquaintance mentioned in line 2 warns the author to “watch carefully for sleight-of-hand tricks.”

Choice (A) is correct.

In warning the author to watch out for tricks, the acquaintance is showing that he is skeptical about the telepathist's supposed powers.
Questions following passages are not ordered by difficulty, however, the passages are usually arranged in order from easiest to most difficult.

2 short passages
- Followed by between 2-5 questions

2 long passages
- Followed by up to 12 questions

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QB3bP23mmzw&list=PL2KH8Ghffd72ewK6XOJfv-d5DCsyRkEt
Reading Comprehension: What to Expect

- Passage Types
  - Humanities
  - Social Studies
  - Natural Sciences
  - Literature
Questions are never based on outside knowledge.

All of the information you need to answer the questions is in the passage (with the exception of PSAT Vocabulary words).

There may be a few unfamiliar terms, however those terms that are specific to the topic will be defined in the text. (You may be asked to define a word in context as well.)
Reading Comprehension: YouTube Resources

• PSAT Critical Reading: Score Raising Strategies:
  • How to Make Reading Passages Easier and Faster:
    • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIDd9Fe27zM&list=PL2KH8Ghffd72ewK6XOJfV-d5DCsyRkEtx&index=14
  • How to Answer Reading Comprehension Questions
    • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QB3bP23mmzw&list=PL2KH8Ghffd72ewK6XOJfV-d5DCsyRkEtx
• Kaplan PSAT Playlist:
  • http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2KH8Ghffd72ewK6XOJfV-d5DCsyRkEtx
Essential Concepts

1. Topic and Scope
2. Purpose and Main Idea
3. Tone
Reading Passages: Essential Concept #1

- **Topic and Scope**
  - Topic is the subject matter treated in a passage
  - Scope is the breadth of the topic covered in the passage
Purpose and Main Idea

- Purpose is the reason the author is writing.
- Main idea is the central point the author is making.

These questions are often combined.
Tone

- Tone is based on a passage's style and the particular words used in the passage.
- The way an author uses language indicates his or her attitude toward his or her subject matter.

All correct answers tend to align with the author’s tone.
One of the world’s most celebrated crusaders for social justice and peace is South Africa’s Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Despite his prominence, however, Archbishop Tutu has always made time for his people. One the day in 1984 that he was named winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, reporters and photographers mobbed the seminary where he was staying. A press conference was hastily set up. Just as it was to begin, the archbishop’s student assistant entered the courtyard, returning from a family funeral. Leaving the microphones and cameras behind, the archbishop went to comfort her. The world press could wait, her grief could not.
Reading Passages: The Big 5 Question Types

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<th>Question Type</th>
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<td>Understand the meaning of a word in relation to the sentence or passage.</td>
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<td>Literal Comprehension</td>
<td>Demonstrate your understanding of specific aspects of the passage.</td>
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<td>Attitude</td>
<td>Identify the writer’s attitude toward the subject.</td>
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<td>Big Picture/Purpose</td>
<td>Identify the passage’s purpose or main idea.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inference</td>
<td>Take something given in the passage and use it to figure out something else.</td>
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Vocabulary in Context

- Reread the referenced line IN ADDITION TO the sentence just before and just after.
- Test Tip: Answer these first because they correspond to specific line numbers.

In line 25, “plasticity” most nearly means

A. Nervous energy
B. Strength and endurance
C. Mobility and pliancy
D. Organic coherence
E. Muscular memory
Literal Comprehension

- Test whether you understand something specific about the passage.
- Generally give you a broad area of the text to return to
- Knowing the main idea and using your notes in the outline will help

According to Graham, most people believe that spontaneous theatrical moments

A. are the product of disciplined rehearsal and training
B. happen only because the actor is gripped by a sudden emotion
C. are dependent on the audience’s willingness to suspend their disbelief
D. depends on the quickness of the actor’s reaction time.
E. are more objective than subjective
Focus on the author’s attitude or tone toward the subject matter.

As you read, pay close attention to the author’s tone, even marking major tone words.

The author’s tone in describing the Indian survivors can best be described as:

A. skeptical
B. detached
C. elegiac
D. obsequious
E. impatient
Ask about a passage’s major purpose or main idea

Look for phrases like:
- Main idea
- Primary purpose
- Main point

In these passages, both Graham and Waters are

A. Examining their consciences
B. Presenting their artistic creeds
C. Criticizing their opponents
D. Analyzing their impact on their fields
E. Reassessing their chosen professions
Inference

- Ask for implied information
- Take a piece of information in the passage to figure out something else
- Because you are not simply using information from the text, these may be more difficult than specific detail questions
- Require you to understand the entire passage
- An inference is an unobserved fact that one believes must be true given other observed facts

It can be inferred from the passage that one of the following is true of epiphytes:

A. They lack root systems.
B. They do not require large amounts of soil for growth.
C. They are incapable of photosynthesis.
D. They are hard to perceive in the dense rain forest canopy.
E. They need different nutrients than other plants do.
YouTube Resources:

- PSAT Critical Reading: How to Make Passages Easier and Faster
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlDd9Fe27zM
Barrons: Improving Critical Reading Comprehension
Vocabulary Questions

Tip #1: Tackle vocabulary in-context questions the same way you do sentence completion questions.

Remember: words have multiple meanings, so make sure you check the context of the word.

In line 13, “frabbledrab” most nearly means

- A. snipsnop
- B. kangasplat
- C. replix
- D. oggitty
- E. thrumble
Tip #2: When asked to find a passage’s main idea, be sure to check the opening and summary sentences of each paragraph.

Ask yourself: Who or what is this passage about? What feature of this subject is the author talking about? What is the author trying to get across about this feature of the subject?

Sample questions:

- Which of the following best states the central thought of the passage?
- The primary purpose of the passage is to...
- In the second paragraph of the passage, the author primarily stresses that...
Specific Detail Questions

Tip #3: When you answer specific detail questions, point to the precise words in the passage that support your answer choice.

Sample Questions:
- According to the author, what is the reason for...
- The “fatal objections” to astrology referred to in line 25 are...
- To the author, a belief in astrology is...
Inference Questions

- Tip #4: When you answer inference questions, look for what the passage logically suggests, but does not directly state.
  - Use your judgment.
  - Look for clues in coming up with your own conclusion.

- Sample Questions:
  - The author implies that…
  - The passage suggests that…
  - It can be inferred from the passage that…
  - The author would most likely…
  - The author probably considers…
Tip #5: When asked to figure out an author’s attitude or tone, look for words that convey emotion, express values, or paint pictures

- Images and descriptive phrases

Sample Questions:
- The author’s attitude toward... is...
- The author regards the idea that... with...
- The author’s tone in the passage...
Literary Technique Questions

Tip #6: Familiarize yourself with the common terms used to describe and author’s technique.

- Even if you don’t know them all, you can eliminate incorrect choices.

Sample Questions:

- Which of the following best describes the development of this passage?
- In presenting the argument, the author does all of the following except?
- The statement in lines 8-9 is an example of...
- In the passage, the author makes the central point primarily by...
Logic/Application Questions

Tip #7: Think about how the ideas in the passage are logically organized.

- What point is the author making and what ideas support this point?
- Look for qualifiers, such as: somewhat, often, or almost.

Sample Questions:

- With which of the following statements would the author be most in agreement?
- The author’s argument would be most weakened by the discovery of which of the following?
- The author’s contention would be most clearly strengthened if which of the following were found to be true?
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Describe the sentence completions.
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Describe the reading comprehension section.
Reading Comprehension: What to Expect

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- 2 long passages
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