



The Betty East Tutoring Center at Victoria College

Johnson Hall, Room 106
2200 E. Red River St.
Victoria, TX 77901
361-571-6473

www.victoriacollege.edu/tutoringcenter

Reading Exam Skills

By reviewing the types of questions and determining what the question is asking you to do, you should be able to work out the correct answers. Remember to use the process of elimination and cross off wrong answers first.

Determine Meaning:

Use the surrounding sentence to determine the meaning of the words and phrases in the passage. Many of the vocabulary sections will be words with multiple meanings or figurative language. Questions will ask you to decide which answer best fits the word as it is used in the passage.

Understanding Main Idea:

Read the passage as a whole and come up with a main idea that covers the entire passage. After you decide what the passage is about, the rest of the information should support this idea.

Identify Purpose:

Determine the writer's reason for writing and how you know that. Ask yourself why the writer wrote this particular passage. You may also have to decide which statement the writer would agree with or what the writer bases their stand on.

Analyze Relationship:

Recognize organizational patterns in writing. Make sure you know the difference between the types of essay patterns: narrative, cause and effect, compare and contrast, persuasive or argumentative, and sequential or profess. You may be asked to classify the passage, explain why the writer chose that style of writing, or to predict the writer's next point. Transitional words are crucial to this skill, so ask yourself what words lead from one sentence, example, or paragraph to the next.

Critical Reasoning:

Identify and assess the overall logic and credibility of the writer. The three steps of critical evaluation are 1) finding the main idea, 2) identifying the underlying argument for that idea, and 3) finding the support for that idea. Does the writer do a good job of convincing you of their premise?

Apply Study Skills:

Condense the passage into a brief outline, summary, or chart to organize the information for study purposes. What are the main ideas in each paragraph? What is the support? Do not use internal lists, statistics, or other detailed facts in your outline or synopsis. These items are good support but are not needed for an overview.