

IDENTIFYING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG IDEAS

Some of the questions in the Reading Assessment Test require you to identify connections between two or more sentences. These “sentence relationship” questions challenge you to do some critical thinking about how one idea relates to another. Typically, two underlined sentences are followed by a question, either “What does the second sentence do?” or “How are the two sentences related?” The types of relationships you might identify between two ideas include *Cause and Effect*, *Problem and Solution*, *Contradiction/Contrasting Views*, *Supporting Evidence/Example*, or *Explanation*. Another type of sentence relationship question might include four or five sentences, followed by a question asking you to identify the *Organization* of information.

1. Cause and Effect

In cause and effect relationships, the second sentence typically states an effect that is *caused* by the first sentence. Test for this option by adding the words “As a result,” between the sentences.

EXAMPLE

Engines with greater horsepower work harder than low-powered ones, causing components to incur greater stress and wear out faster.

AS A RESULT,

Cars with greater horsepower incur higher repair costs.

What does the second sentence do?

- A. It repeats the idea in the first sentence.
- B. It provides an example.
- C. It presents a solution.
- D. It states an effect.

2. Problem and Solution

In problem and solution relationships, the second sentence typically states a solution to the problem stated in the first sentence. Test for this option by adding the words “To solve this problem,” between the sentences.

EXAMPLE

States have slashed education budgets to cope with falling tax revenues and rising deficits.

TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM,

Parents and community organizations across the country are devising ingenious ways to raise money for local schools.

How are the two sentences related?

- A. The second sentence provides support evidence for the first sentence.
- B. They present contrasting views.
- C. They repeat the same idea.
- D. They present a problem and a solution.

3. Contradiction or Contrasting Views

Sometimes two sentences will contradict one another, or they will present contrasting views. Test for this option by asking yourself whether both sentences can be true at the same time. If not, then they contradict one another or represent contrasting views.

EXAMPLE #1

There is no consensus among educators or the public that smaller classes improve the quality of education.

Class size restrictions are among the most popular and common sense education reforms among teachers and parents.

How are the two sentences related?

- A. They present a problem and solution.
- B. They repeat the same idea.
- C. The second sentence draws a conclusion from the idea stated in the first.
- D. They contradict one another.

EXAMPLE #2

The No Child Left Behind Act will ensure that the nation's 621,000 teacher aides are competent in reading, writing and analytical skills.

The No Child Left Behind Act, with its offer of free education to teacher aides, will drive away the most talented aides, thereby reducing the quality of teacher aides.

How are the two sentences related?

- A. They present a cause and effect.
- B. They present a problem and solution.
- C. They present contrasting views.
- D. They repeat the same idea.

4. Supporting Evidence/Examples

Sometimes the second sentence will support the idea presented in the first sentence by providing an example or evidence. Test for the example option by adding the words “For example,” between the sentences. Test for the evidence option by adding the words, “This is supported by the fact that . . .” between the sentences.

EXAMPLE #1

Grass seeds can move from continent to continent by attaching themselves to the fur of animals and to the clothes and belongings of man.

FOR EXAMPLE,

The slave trade brought three grasses, including Bermuda grass, from Africa to the United States.

What does the second sentence do?

- A. It restates the idea in the first sentence.
- B. It states an effect.
- C. It gives an example.
- D. It draws a conclusion from the idea in the first sentence.

EXAMPLE #2

For most of the poor, the U.S. is no longer the land of opportunity.

THIS IS SUPPORTED BY THE FACT THAT

It is two or three times as difficult for children of poor families to rise above their economic circumstances as economists reckoned in the 1970s and 1980s.

What does the second sentence do?

- A. It repeats the idea stated in the first sentence.
- B. It presents a contradiction.
- C. It provides supporting evidence.
- D. It draws a conclusion.

5. Explanation

Sometimes the second sentence will explain or expand upon the idea presented in the first sentence. To test for this option, try asking the question “Why?” or “How?” between the sentences.

EXAMPLE

To describe its current marketing approach, the automobile industry might want to dust off the old slogan “power to the people.” WHY?

Detroit and the foreign automakers are in a horsepower war not seen since the muscle-car era of the 1960s.

What does the second sentence do?

- A. It describes an effect for the cause stated in the first sentence.
- B. It explains the idea in the first sentence.
- C. It draws a conclusion.
- D. It provides an example.

6. Organization

Sometimes a relationship question will challenge you to identify the organization of information in a series of sentences. The information might be arranged in chronological order (the order in which events happen), in geographic order (by location), in order of importance, in the order in which particular objects are seen, etc.

EXAMPLE

A Hare having ridiculed the slow movements of a Tortoise was challenged by the latter to run a race. A Fox was assigned to go to the goal and be the judge. They got off well together, the Hare at the top of her speed, the Tortoise, who had no other intention than making his antagonist exert herself, going very leisurely. After sauntering along for sometime he discovered the Hare by the wayside, apparently asleep, and seeing a chance to win pushed on as fast as he could, arriving at the goal hours afterward, suffering from extreme fatigue and claiming the victory. "Not so," said the Fox; "the Hare was here long ago, and went back to cheer you on your way."

The information in the passage is presented

- A. in order of importance
- B. to persuade
- C. in chronological order
- D. geographically.