



How Can I Predict What the Passage is about?

Aim: This section will show you how to look for clues in the reading passages that will help you to predict what the passages are about.

Problems: Although many candidates are good at academic reading tests because they have good test skills, they generally don't read a lot in their free-time and so this means that they don't have very good reading skills.

Because the passages are usually academic and on unfamiliar topics, students tend to panic and decide that they can't understand complete the task before they even start to try.

How can I get a general idea of what the passage is about?

Reading passages are not only text, they also have other things included. These things can be:

- Titles
- Paragraph headings
- Sub-headings
- Italicized or bold type
- Pictures
- Diagrams & other visual information
- Tables & charts

You can use these things to help you to intelligently guess or "predict" what the passages are going to be about and what kind of information you might expect to find in them. You can do this even if you don't really know anything about the topic because you will always find that you have some ideas about the topic and, even if those ideas may not be correct, they will help a lot in predicting.

For example, if you look at any pictures in the text and ask yourself:

- What is happening?
- Who is doing it?
- Where is it taking place?
- Why is it being done?
- What is needed to do it?
- What other things do I think I know about this?

From just asking and answering a few simple questions you can get an idea of what kind of information will be contained in the passage. Even if you never think about mountain climbing and know nothing about it, you can still use your general knowledge to come up with some information that will help you to understand the passage more.



Tip: If you follow this simple procedure, you will become more confident about answering the questions and finding the information in the passage because you are applying your own pre-existing knowledge to the problem to find out more information. This is what we do every day when we read something – although we don't realize it; for example if we are interested in what is happening with Manchester United, we will look at the sports pages of a newspaper to find an article that will give us more information.

Try the same thing with this title:

The Decline of the Postal Service

- What does the postal service do? *send mail, parcels, telegrams ...*
- Why might it be in decline? *internet, telephone, online working ...*
- What vocabulary do I know related to this topic? *stamp, postage, ...*

Further practice

Do the following exercises and this time think of your own questions:

A) Solar Power Wins Out

B) Increased Risk of Heart-Disease

Tip: You can do this kind of exercise everyday using an English language newspaper. It is guaranteed to improve your confidence. You can also write out some questions about a newspaper article after you've looked at the headings & pictures, but before you read it; and then look to see if you can find the answers in the passage – it's all very good practice for the test.

There is no Answer Key for this worksheet.

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