

READING COMPREHENSION (SKILLS 8-11)

TOEFL TUTORIAL
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C. Vocabulary Questions

Skill 8: Find Definitions from Structural Clues

The passage:

One of the leading schools of psychological thought in the twentieth century is **behaviorism**—the belief that the role of the psychologist is to study behavior, which is observable, rather than conscious or unconscious thought, which is not.

(5) Probably the best-known proponent of behaviorism is B.F. Skinner, who is famous for his research on how positive and negative reinforcement influence behavior. He came to believe that positive reinforcement such as praise, food, or money were more effective in promoting good behavior than

(10) negative reinforcement, or punishment.

The question:

In “**behaviorism**” in line 2, a psychologist is concerned with

- (A) conscious thought patterns
- (B) unconscious thought patterns
- (C) observable actions
- (D) unobservable actions






Look at the expression positive reinforcement in the passage. Positive reinforcement might take the form of

- a gift
- a reward
- a bribe
- a penalty

What is “negative reinforcement” in line 10?

- (A) A promotion
- (B) A reward
- (C) A surprise
- (D) A punishment

Adopted from: Deborah, P. (2003). Longman preparation course for the TOEFL Test: The Paper Test. New York: Pearson Longman

STRUCTURAL CLUES  		
HOW TO IDENTIFY THE QUESTION	on both paper and computer tests  	<p>What is the meaning of "X" in line Y?</p> <p>The word "X" in line Y is closest in meaning to...</p> <p>The word "X" in line Y could best be replaced by...</p>
	on computer test only 	<p>Look at the word X in paragraph Y. Click on another word that is close in meaning to X.</p> <p>Click on the word in paragraph Y that could best be replaced by...</p>
TYPES OF CLUES	punctuation	comma, parentheses, dashes
	restatement	or, that is, in other words, i.e.
	examples	such as, for example, e.g.
WHERE TO FIND THE ANSWER	Information to help you determine what something means will generally be found after the punctuation clue, the restatement clue, or the example clue.	
HOW TO ANSWER THE QUESTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Find the word in the passage. 2. Locate any structural clues. 3. Read the part of the passage after the structural clue carefully. 4. Eliminate any definitely wrong answers and choose the best answer from the remaining choices. 	

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C. Vocabulary Questions

Skill 9: Determine Meanings from Word Parts

A SHORT LIST OF WORD PARTS					
PART	MEANING	EXAMPLE	PART	MEANING	EXAMPLE
CONTRA	(against)	<i>contrast</i>	DIC	(say)	<i>dictate</i>
MAL	(bad)	<i>malcontent</i>	DOMIN	(master)	<i>dominant</i>
MIS	(error)	<i>mistake</i>	JUD	(judge)	<i>judgment</i>
SUB	(under)	<i>subway</i>	MOR	(death)	<i>mortal</i>
DEC	(ten)	<i>decade</i>	SPEC	(see)	<i>spectator</i>
MULTI	(many)	<i>multiple</i>	TERR	(earth)	<i>territory</i>
SOL	(one)	<i>solo</i>	VER	(turn)	<i>divert</i>
TRI	(three)	<i>triple</i>	VIV	(live)	<i>revive</i>

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The passage:

Ring Lardner was born into a wealthy, educated, and cultured family. For the bulk of his career, he worked as a reporter for newspapers in South Bend, Boston, St. Louis, and Chicago. However, it is for his short stories of lower middle-class Americans that Ring Lardner is perhaps best known. In these stories, Lardner vividly creates the language and the ambiance of this lower class, often using the misspelled words, grammatical errors, and incorrect diction that typified the language of the lower middle class.

The question:

The word “vividly” in line 6 is closest in meaning to

- (A) in a cultured way
- (B) in a correct way
- (C) in a lifelike way
- (D) in a brief way

Look at the word misspelled in the passage. This word is closest in meaning to

- highly improper
- incorrectly written
- quite vulgar
- extremely long

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C. Vocabulary Questions

Skill 10: Use Context to Determine Meanings of Difficult Words

A line in the passage:




... The barges headed across the lake. ...

The question:

A “barge” is probably which of the following?

- (A) A train
- (B) A plane
- (C) A bicycle
- (D) A boat

VOCABULARY QUESTIONS CONTAINING DIFFICULT WORDS

HOW TO IDENTIFY THE QUESTION	on both paper and computer tests  	<i>What is the meaning of "X" in line Y?</i> <i>The word "X" in line Y is closest in meaning to...</i>
	on computer test only 	<i>Look at the word X in paragraph Y. Click on another word that is close in meaning to X.</i> <i>Click on the word in paragraph Y that is closest in meaning to X.</i>
WHERE TO FIND THE ANSWER	Information to help you understand the meaning of an unknown word can often be found in the context surrounding the unknown word.	
HOW TO ANSWER THE QUESTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Find the word in the passage. 2. Read the sentence that contains the word carefully. 3. Look for context clues to help you understand the meaning. 4. Choose the answer that the context indicates. 	

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C. Vocabulary Questions

Skill 11: Use Context to Determine Meanings of Simple Words

The passage:

Faced with serious threats to its future, the company is taking steps to improve its outlook. The company has brought in a new crop of trainees to staff some of its empty positions.






Line In addition, the company has created a new committee to
(5) research various proposals and has appointed a key member of its management team to chair the committee.

The question:

The word “steps” in line 1 could best be replaced by

- (A) stairs
- (B) walks
- (C) actions
- (D) footprints

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VOCABULARY QUESTIONS CONTAINING SIMPLE WORDS  		
HOW TO IDENTIFY THE QUESTION	on both paper and computer tests  	<i>What is the meaning of "X" in line Y?</i> <i>The word "X" in line Y could best be replaced by...</i>
	on computer test only 	<i>Look at the word X in paragraph Y. Click on another word that could best be replaced by...</i> <i>Click on the word in paragraph Y that could best be replaced by...</i>
WHERE TO FIND THE ANSWER	Information to help you understand the secondary meaning of a simple word can often be found in the context surrounding the word.	
HOW TO ANSWER THE QUESTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Find the word in the passage. 2. Read the sentence that contains the word carefully. 3. Look for context clues to help you understand the meaning. 4. Choose the answer that the context indicates. 	

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References

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