

ACCUPLACER ESL Test - Answer Explanations

Reading Skills Test

The ESL Reading Skills test measures your ability to read English. Specifically, it assesses your comprehension of short passages. It contains brief passages of 50 words or less and moderate length passages of 50 to 90 words. Half of this test contains straightforward comprehension (paraphrase, locating information, vocabulary on a phrase level, and pronoun reference). The other half assesses inference skills (main idea, fact versus opinion, cause/effect logic, identifying irrelevant information, author's point of view and applying the author's logic to another situation).

1. Television has been introduced to almost every country in the world, reaching a large number of viewers on every continent. About 600 million people saw the first person walk on the moon, and a billion people watched the twentieth Olympic Games. Television has in many ways promoted understanding and cooperation among people. It does this by showing educational and cultural programs.

From this passage, a reader can conclude that the author believes that

- a. people spend too much time watching television.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Although the author writes about how large numbers of people have watched such events as the moon walk or the Olympics, he writes that this is a good thing because of how it helps with understanding and cooperation.
 - b. not every country needs to have television.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The author writes about how television is available in many countries, but nowhere does he say that it is not needed.
 - c. television can unify people from around the world.
 - i. This answer is correct. In the third sentence, the author says that television has “promoted understanding and cooperation among people.” When people understand each other, and are cooperative, they will be more like one, unified, than separate.
 - d. television is as important as schools.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Although the author says that television shows educational programs, he does not compare its importance with schools.
2. Janet's parents bought her a new sports car as a birthday present. It was blue. Janet sold her 7-year-old blue pickup truck to a high school student. The truck could not go very fast, but the student was happy with it.

From this passage, which of these statements can the reader assume?

- a. Janet prefers trucks to cars.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. If Janet likes trucks better than cars, she would have kept her truck instead of selling it.
- b. Janet likes the color blue.

- i. This answer is correct. Both of Janet’s cars are blue which would suggest that she likes this color.
 - c. Janet owns more than one vehicle.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Though she got a new car for her birthday, she then sold her old car to a high school student.
 - d. Janet drives her car every day.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The passage does not say how often Janet drives her car.
- 3. Some of Edward Weston’s black-and-white photographs of American nature scenes are considered superb examples of visual art. Indeed, some of his photographs have commanded top prices at art galleries.

Which of the following best characterizes Weston’s photographs?

- a. They belong to famous collectors.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Although people have spent a lot of money buying his photographs, the passage does not say that those people are famous collectors.
 - b. They have been sold in art galleries for large sums of money.
 - i. This answer is correct. The phrase “top prices” means a lot of money, or large sums of money.
 - c. They introduced many Americans to visual art.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The passage does not say how many Americans have seen his work, only that some have paid a lot of money for his photographs.
 - d. They contrast American cities with natural settings.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The passage only says his photographs are of nature scenes, but not that they show the differences, or contrasts, with American cities.
- 4. Speaking to a group of people can be a frightening experience. Some speakers cope by looking above the heads of the audience. Others try to imagine that they are talking to a friend. A few try picturing the audience in some non-threatening way, such as in their pajamas.

The author of the passage assumes that speakers should

- a. feel comfortable when addressing an audience.
 - i. This answer is correct. The author gives three different ways to be relaxed when speaking in front of a group.
- b. scare the audience.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. None of the examples deal with frightening the audience.
- c. encourage people to talk during the speech.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. None of the examples mention trying to get other people to talk.
- d. speak only to familiar people.

- i. This answer is incorrect. Though one example mentions pretending people are your friends, it does not mention only talking to people you know.
- 5. People have different ways of learning. Some are better at making mental pictures of new ideas. Others are more comfortable with writing lists of things to memorize. Certain people can learn best when listening to music, while others need silence to concentrate.

Which of the following is the main idea of the passage?

- a. Mental pictures help many to learn.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. This is one specific example, but it is not general enough to be the main idea.
 - b. Some people prefer lists to making mental pictures.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. This is one specific example of learning, but it is not general enough to be the main idea.
 - c. To learn well you need to be comfortable.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The author never mentions this point.
 - d. Different individuals have different ways of acquiring information.
 - i. This answer is correct. The author is writing about ways to learn and gives several examples.
6. Before giving first aid to an accident victim, you should obtain his or her consent. Asking for consent takes a simple question. Say to the victim, "I know first aid, and I can help you until an ambulance arrives. Is that okay?"

"Asking for consent" means asking for

- a. permission to help the victim.
 - i. This answer is correct. *Consent* means *permission*.
 - b. thanks from the victim.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. *Consent* does not mean thanks.
 - c. help from onlookers.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. *Consent* does not mean to help.
 - d. information about the victim's injuries.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. *Consent* does not mean information.
7. Jane and Paul are busy for 15 hours a day, 5 days a week going to college and working in a restaurant. They go to sleep at 11 p.m. every day, but on Sunday they take part in dance lessons.

According to the passage, Jane and Paul spend most of their time

- a. at home.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. They spend many hours at school or at work.
- b. going to college and working.
 - i. This answer is correct. Most of each day, and five days out of the week are spent at school or work.
- c. taking part in dance lessons.

- i. This answer is incorrect. They only have dance lessons on Sunday.
 - d. sleeping.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Most of their time is spent at school or at work.
- 8. If you hold a piece of copper wire over the flame of a match, heat will be conducted by the copper wires to your fingers, and you will be forced to drop the wire. You will, however, still be able to hold the match because the match is a poor conductor of heat. Anyone, child or adult, can try this simple experiment.

Which of the following is implied in the passage above?

- a. Copper is a good conductor of heat.
 - i. This answer is correct. You can't hold onto a copper wire if you also hold a match to it. The heat from the match travels through the copper metal to your fingers.
 - b. A match and copper conduct heat equally.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The passage makes the point that even though you can't hold a copper wire that is heated by a match, you can still hold the burning match.
 - c. A match is an excellent conductor of heat.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. If a match were an excellent conductor of heat, you would not be able to hold it while it burned.
 - d. Matches should be kept out of the reach of small children.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Though this is a good idea, the author does not mention it in the passage.
9. Many people own different pets. Dogs, cats, birds, and fish are common household pets. Other pets are considered to be exotic animals. These include snakes, lizards, and hedgehogs.
- Snakes are
- a. uncommon pets.
 - i. This answer is correct. The passage says snakes are an example of an exotic pet. Exotic means unusual or uncommon.
 - b. likely to be found in a household with dogs.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Snakes are not common pets, and so unlikely to be in the same house as a dog.
 - c. found only in zoos.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The passage says that some people do have snakes as pets in their homes.
 - d. not allowed in people's homes.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The passage does not say anywhere that snakes are not allowed in homes.
10. Cesar Chavez was an influential leader for farmworkers. He fought for their rights and better working conditions. Chavez led many strikes that angered farm owners. Eventually, he succeeded in getting increased wages and improved living situations for farmworkers.

Chavez changed lives because he

- a. helped the farmers get more workers.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The passage says that Chavez worked to help farmworkers, not the farmers.
 - b. worked for the farmers.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Chavez changed lives by helping the farmworkers, not by working on farms.
 - c. helped work on the farms every day.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Chavez changed lives by helping the farmworkers, not by working on farms.
 - d. changed the conditions for the farmworkers.
 - i. This answer is correct. Chavez was able to change the amount of money farmworkers got and get them better living conditions.
11. When cartoonist Charles M. Schultz was a boy in elementary school, other boys teased him for being small and not very good at sports, and his art teacher told him he had no talent for drawing. He had few friends, and was too shy to talk to a red-haired girl he admired. Later in life, Schultz used his childhood experiences in his comic strip “Peanuts,” using the strip’s main character, the sad and lonely Charlie Brown, to represent himself as a little boy. “Peanuts” was unique at the time because it contained no adult characters. Readers fell in love with Charlie Brown, and “Peanuts” eventually became one of the most popular comic strips of all time.

What is the main idea of the passage?

- a. “Peanuts” was the world’s most widely read comic strip.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Although this is true, it is a specific detail but not the overall idea of the passage.
 - b. Charles M. Schultz was a very famous cartoonist.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Although this is true, it is a specific detail but not the overall idea of the passage.
 - c. Schultz turned the pain of his youth into fame as an adult.
 - i. This answer is correct. The passage tells how Schultz’s childhood was difficult, and how he used those same difficulties when he drew his comic strip.
 - d. The “Peanuts” comic strip featured children as its only characters.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Although this is true, it is a specific detail but not the overall idea of the passage.
12. Money has existed for thousands of years in nearly every culture as a means of exchange. However, today, the use of cash is becoming less and less common in modern societies all over the world. Every year, a higher percentage of purchases is made online, and even in stores customers are now using credit cards more often than cash. Many people today do all of their banking on the Internet rather than going to the bank in person.

The author of this passage probably assumes that

- a. cash will become virtually obsolete in the near future
 - i. This answer is correct. *Obsolete* means no longer in use, and the author makes the point that fewer and fewer people use cash, preferring credit cards.
 - b. using cash will become popular again
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The author is making the point that people are not using cash as much, and more and more are using credit cards instead.
 - c. paying with credit cards all the time is dangerous
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The author never says whether or not he thinks credit cards are dangerous, only that more people are using them.
 - d. societies that do business online will prosper
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Although online business may make more money because people are shopping online, this does not mean that society will benefit.
13. Insomnia – the inability to fall asleep or to stay asleep – is a condition that plagues many people at one time or another in their lives. It can be uncomfortable, but it is usually not harmful, and most people who believe they have been awake all night have actually slept more than they think. While some people rely on prescription medication to help them sleep, insomnia can be controlled by changing behavior. Insomnia is often caused by stress or anxiety, but it can also be made worse by eating too heavily too late; consuming a lot of caffeine; or watching television, using computers or exercising right before bedtime. If you can't sleep, the best thing to do is to get out of bed and do something calming for a while, such as read, until you feel sleepy. Some people find that herbal tea such as chamomile helps them feel drowsy.

The author believes that people can best combat insomnia by

- a. trying to sleep
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Insomnia means to not be able to sleep, so a person with insomnia cannot fall asleep easily. You must first find a way to help yourself feel sleepy.
 - b. taking medication
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The author mentions that some people do use medicine to help them fall asleep, but he also lists a number of other more natural ways to feel sleepy.
 - c. accepting their condition
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The author provides several ways to help people feel sleepy so that they can overcome their insomnia.
 - d. changing their habits
 - i. This answer is correct. The author lists several bad habits that people may do that can cause insomnia (over-eating, too much caffeine, etc.). By stopping these bad habits, the insomnia might go away.
14. Before giving first aid to an accident victim, you should obtain his or her consent. Asking for consent takes a simple question. Say to the victim, "I know first aid, and I can help until an ambulance arrives. Is that okay?"

According to the passage, it is wrong to

- a. use first aid on an accident victim without medical training
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Though this is good advice, the author does not say this in the passage.
 - b. attempt to help an accident victim without permission
 - i. This answer is correct. The first line of this passage says a person should ask for *consent* or permission before giving first aid.
 - c. help a victim before an ambulance arrives
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The passage says a person should ask for permission to give first aid *until* an ambulance arrives.
 - d. call for an ambulance instead of helping the victim
 - i. This answer is incorrect. If a person knows first aid, and asks for permission, it is okay to help the victim.
15. Dr. Ellen Ochoa is an inventor and is also the first female Hispanic astronaut. Her inventions include technology to help robots to inspect equipment in space to maintain safety and quality control on a spacecraft. Before retiring, she logged more than 1,000 hours in space across several space missions.

Dr. Ochoa is

- a. the first Hispanic person to travel in space
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Dr. Ochoa is the first *female* Hispanic astronaut, but necessarily the first Hispanic person in space.
 - b. the first inventor to travel in space
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The passage says she is the first female Hispanic astronaut, but not necessarily the first inventor.
 - c. the first woman to travel in space
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Dr. Ochoa is the first female *Hispanic* to travel in space
 - d. the first Hispanic woman to travel in space
 - i. This answer is correct. The author makes this point in the first line of the passage.
16. Dogs and cats make very different types of pets. Before deciding whether to buy or adopt a dog or a cat, prospective owners need to carefully consider their own lifestyles and personalities. Dogs may make more affectionate companions, but they require more care and attention. They must be taken out several times a day and should not be left alone for more than a few hours. Larger dogs require significant exercise to remain fit and healthy. Cats are usually more independent in nature and interact less with their owners. Also, a cat can be left on its own all day, or even for several days, as long as it has food and clean water to drink.

From this passage a reader can conclude that

- a. owning a cat requires less work than owning a dog

- i. This answer is correct. The passage makes the point that cats do not need as much time or attention from their owners as do dogs, who need to be exercised and to interact with their owners.
 - b. people who travel a lot should not own a cat
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The passage says that cats can be left alone for several days so long as they have food and water. Therefore, a person who travels can own a cat.
 - c. people who like to play with their pets should own a cat
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Cats do not interact or play much with their owners, so a person who wants to play with a pet is better off with a dog.
 - d. owning a cat is more responsibility than owning a dog
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The passage says just the opposite. Cats need less time and attention, but dogs require quite a bit.
17. People's moods are largely a matter focus. It is a natural tendency of many people to focus on what is wrong in their lives, or on the day-to-day events that make them angry or irritated. However, anyone can change this by directing the mind. When feeling down or upset, a person can change his or her state of mind by recalling happy memories, by paying attention to the things for which he or she is grateful, or by directing the attention to something uplifting or beautiful, such as artwork, nature, or music. By directing the mind in this way, a person can transform his or her mood in an instant, even if none of the outward circumstances have changed.

Which of the following is implied by the passage above?

- a. people's moods are determined by the conditions around them
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The author says it not what is happening around a person, but what that person chooses to think about that impacts mood.
- b. people can take responsibility for controlling their own moods.
 - i. This answer is correct. The author says that by choosing to think about good things a person's mood can change from bad to good.
- c. a person's mood depends on what happens to him or her that day
 - i. This answer is incorrect. Although bad events can cause a person's mood to be down, by choosing to think about pleasant and uplifting things, that mood can be changed again.
- d. people are usually in a good mood unless something happens to change it.
 - i. This answer is incorrect. The author does not say anything about what a person's mood might generally be, but rather how a person can change a bad mood to a good one.