

# GRE<sup>®</sup> STRATEGY SESSION 2

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## The Verbal Section

In-Depth

*& With a Brief Discussion of the Essays*

# READING TECHNIQUES

# **SECTION 1**

# Reading Comprehension

All **Reading Comprehension Passages** are **Argumentative**.

There are three types of **Reading Comprehension Questions**:

- **Multiple Choice**
- **Select All That Apply**
- **Select a Sentence**

Some of these ask about **Details, Structure, Tone, Words-in-Context, or Main Ideas**.

Some of these are intended to test **Critical Reasoning skills**, for example with **Conclusions, Premises, and Assumptions**.

# Reading Comprehension Basic Approach

1. **Work the Passage:** have a plan; read actively; find main ideas
2. **Understand the Question:** break the question down
3. **Find the Information:** refer back to the passage; keep the question task(s) in mind; find the "answer"
4. **POE:** compare the "answer" found to the answer choices; eliminate wrong answers

Here are the steps of the Basic Approach:

## 1. Work the Passage

This is where you apply **The Basics of Cracking the Passage**. You must have a plan for reading the passage and you must learn to read actively. As you read, always be on the lookout for how each element of the passage relates to the main idea of the passage. To find the main idea, ask yourself questions such as: What does the author want me to remember or believe about the topic under discussion? What's the author's conclusion? How is that conclusion supported?

## 2. Understand the Question

This is where you apply **The Basics of Cracking the Questions**. Try to break the question down. First, look for the subject of the question. Then, find the words that indicate the task.

## 3. Find the Information in the Passage that Addresses the Task of the Question

Refer back to the passage. ETS needs to be able to justify its credited responses by referring to specific information mentioned in the passage. When you understand the task of the question, it becomes easier to find this information. Once you locate the information in the passage that addresses the question task, you're ready to look at the answer choices.

## 4. Use Process of Elimination

This is where you use **The Basics of Cracking the Answer Choices**. Approach each answer choice with a healthy level of suspicion. Since there are more incorrect answers than correct answers for most questions, you are more likely to be reading a wrong answer than a right answer. Look for signs that are more likely to make an answer wrong, the most common of which are the signs outlined later in this chapter as tools for POE. Don't be afraid to just pick the answer that remains if you can find good reasons to eliminate the other answer choices. An overview of common trap answer choices can be found later in this chapter.

# Reading Comprehension Example: Multiple Choice

**The Question is: "The ... argument relies on which ... assumptions?"**

**Here is the passage:**

After examining the bodies of a dozen beached whales and finding evidence of bleeding around the animals' eyes and brains as well as lesions on their kidneys and livers, environmental groups fear that the Navy's use of sonar is causing serious harm to marine mammals. A leading marine biologist reports that sonar induces whales to panic and surface too quickly, which causes nitrogen bubbles to form in their blood.

# Reading Comprehension Example: Multiple Choice

**The previous argument relies on which of the following assumptions?**

- A. Marine biologists have documented that other marine animals, including dolphins and sea turtles, have exhibited kidney and liver lesions.
- B. No studies have been conducted on the possible detrimental effects of sonar on marine animals. **Can we eliminate this?**
- C. Whales in captivity panic only when exposed to man-made, rather than natural, sound waves.
- D. The presence of nitrogen bubbles in the blood has been demonstrated to cause damage to various internal organs.
- E. It is unlikely that the symptoms found in the beached whales could be caused by any known disease.

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**The previous argument relies on which of the following assumptions?**

- A. Marine biologists have documented that other marine animals, including dolphins and sea turtles, have exhibited kidney and liver lesions.
- B. *No studies have been conducted on the possible detrimental effects of sonar on marine animals.* **WRONG** ("a ... biologist reports ... sonar induces whales to panic")
- C. Whales in captivity panic only when exposed to man-made, rather than natural, sound waves. **Can we eliminate this?**
- D. The presence of nitrogen bubbles in the blood has been demonstrated to cause damage to various internal organs.
- E. It is unlikely that the symptoms found in the beached whales could be caused by any known disease.



# Reading Comprehension Example: Multiple Choice

## Read the following passage:

After examining the bodies of a dozen beached whales and finding evidence of bleeding around the animals' eyes and brains as well as lesions on their kidneys and livers, **environmental groups fear that the Navy's use of sonar is causing serious harm to marine mammals**. A leading marine biologist reports that sonar induces whales to panic and surface too quickly, which causes nitrogen bubbles to form in their blood.

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The previous argument relies on which of the following assumptions?

- A. Marine biologists have documented that other marine animals, including dolphins and sea turtles, have exhibited kidney and liver lesions. **Can we eliminate this?**
- B. **WRONG**
- C. *Whales in captivity panic only when exposed to man-made, rather than natural, sound waves. SEEMS TOO EXTREME* ("... groups fear ...")
- D. The presence of nitrogen bubbles in the blood has been demonstrated to cause damage to various internal organs.
- E. It is unlikely that the symptoms found in the beached whales could be caused by any known disease.

# Reading Comprehension Example: Multiple Choice

The previous argument relies on which of the following assumptions?

- A. Marine biologists have documented that other marine animals, including dolphins and sea turtles, have exhibited kidney and liver lesions. **SEEMS KIND OF 'OUT THERE'** ("relies on" in the question presupposes the main idea, which is not really related to this answer choice)
- B. **WRONG**
- C. **SEEMS TOO EXTREME**
- D. The presence of nitrogen bubbles in the blood has been demonstrated to cause damage to various internal organs.
- E. It is unlikely that the symptoms found in the beached whales could be caused by any known disease. **Can we eliminate this?**

# Reading Comprehension Example: Multiple Choice

The previous argument relies on which of the following assumptions?

- A. **SEEMS KIND OF 'OUT THERE'**
- B. **WRONG**
- C. **SEEMS TOO EXTREME**
- D. The presence of nitrogen bubbles in the blood has been demonstrated to cause damage to various internal organs. **OK - is this consistent?**
- E. *It is unlikely that the symptoms found in the beached whales could be caused by any known disease.* **SEEMS KIND OF 'OUT THERE'** ("relies on" in the question presupposes the main idea, which is not really related to this answer choice)

# Reading Comprehension Example: Multiple Choice

## Read the following passage:

After examining the bodies of a dozen beached whales and finding **evidence of bleeding around the animals' eyes and brains as well as lesions on their kidneys and livers**, environmental groups fear that the Navy's use of sonar is causing serious harm to marine mammals. A leading marine biologist reports that **sonar induces whales to panic and surface too quickly, which causes nitrogen bubbles to form in their blood.**

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The previous argument relies on which of the following assumptions?

- A. ***SEEMS KIND OF 'OUT THERE'***
- B. ***WRONG***
- C. ***SEEMS TOO EXTREME***
- D. The presence of nitrogen bubbles in the blood has been demonstrated to cause damage to various internal organs. **CORRECT - EVIDENCE BASED**
- E. ***SEEMS KIND OF 'OUT THERE'***

# Reading Comprehension

Remember there are also two other types of questions:

**Select All That Apply**

and

**Select a Sentence**

Karl has hopefully covered or will hopefully cover these in-depth. If you have further questions regarding these types of questions, I can give you examples next class, as well.

# SECTION 2



Go Back To The Passage!

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**Read the whole sentence that includes the line.**

## Go Back To The Passage!

**Read the whole sentence that includes the line ...** If you don't find the answer in the line you're given, **check one sentence before or after the line reference** to get a fuller context.

# Anticipate

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The key to anticipation is that all the information you need to answer the question is in the passage. **That's why we look in the passage, not in the choices, for our answers.**

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55 computer, she had no autonomy and could only work on what she was assigned, and as a woman, she had no chance for advancement. The tide of women's rights had begun to turn—Harvard would award a PhD in astronomy to a woman for the first time in 1925—but these changes  
60 came too late for Leavitt, who died of cancer in 1921. However, the importance of her discovery did not go unnoticed by the scientific community. Later astronomers such as Hubble and Hertzsprung acknowledged how indebted their work was to her discovery, and she was  
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- A) the recognition she got from the general public.
- B) the extent to which astronomy was dominated by men.
- C) her dependence on the work of earlier scientists.
- D) the esteem other scientists had for her work.

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- ✓) **the esteem other scientists had for her work.**

Throughout the nineteenth century, as optic technology burgeoned, academic institutions built larger and larger telescopes that could peer farther and farther into the night sky. With the invention of photography, observatories could now produce records of the images their telescopes captured. This meant the astronomers could leave the tedious work of data collection to low-paid workers without wasting valuable telescope time. These workers were called “computers”, women who would compute the data in the photographs for 25 cents an hour.

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she joined the photographic photometry department at  
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**How Leavitt became  
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- A) discuss opportunities available to women in astronomy.
- B) describe the daily activities of a typical computer.
- C) provide biographical background on the subject.
- D) examine the role of technology in the observatory.

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**tell who Henrietta Leavitt was and what she did**

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- A) show how technology contributed to Leavitt's work.
- B) detail how astronomers calculated the size of the universe.
- C) discuss women's rights in the early twentieth century.
- D) describe a scientist who made an important discovery.

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- ✘) ~~show how technology contributed to Leavitt's work.~~
- ✘) ~~detail how astronomers calculated the size of the universe.~~
- ✘) ~~discuss women's rights in the early twentieth century.~~
- ✓) **describe a scientist who made an important discovery.**

# Eliminate Nonsense

- 1. Random**
- 2. False**
- 3. Irrelevant**

# Eliminate Nonsense

## **Random**

The choice talks about things that the passage doesn't even mention.

# Eliminate Nonsense

**False**

The choice is explicitly contradicted by the passage.

# Eliminate Nonsense

## **Irrelevant**

The choice is something the author *says*, but it doesn't actually *answer the question*.



## Eliminate Nonsense

**You should literally cross out the words that make a choice wrong. This will greatly help you keep track of what you're doing.**

# Eliminate Nonsense

**We're not looking for the right choice, we're looking for wrong choices.**

## Eliminate Nonsense

**We're not looking for the right choice, we're looking for wrong choices. If you're not sure whether a choice fits, just leave it in. Just ask whether the choice is Random, False, or Irrelevant. If you can't find a specific reason to eliminate it, leave it in for now.**

## Eliminate Nonsense

**On every question, three out of four choices are wrong. So if we think a choice is wrong, there's a 75% chance we're right!**

# Eliminate Nonsense

**Again, the key here is to work quickly.**

## Eliminate Nonsense

**Again, the key here is to work quickly. Don't spend too much time agonizing over every choice. Go through the choices, get rid of the ones that are *obviously* wrong, and see what you have left.**

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**Once you get down to two choices, you can go back to the passage again to see which is better. If you really can't decide which is better, guess one.**

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Lines 21-24 (“The opportunities...  
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- A) women had fewer opportunities in astronomy than in other sciences.
- B) only men were allowed to work at Harvard College Observatory.
- C) being a computer was one of the only positions available to Leavitt.
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**RANDOM**

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*FALSE*

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*IRRELEVANT*

One of the most important discoveries in the history of astronomy was made by a computer in 1908. This may sound like an anachronism; computing machines of the early twentieth century, predecessors of our modern PC's, were nowhere near advanced enough to be making discoveries. However, this “computer” was not a machine at all, but a woman named Henrietta Swan Leavitt.

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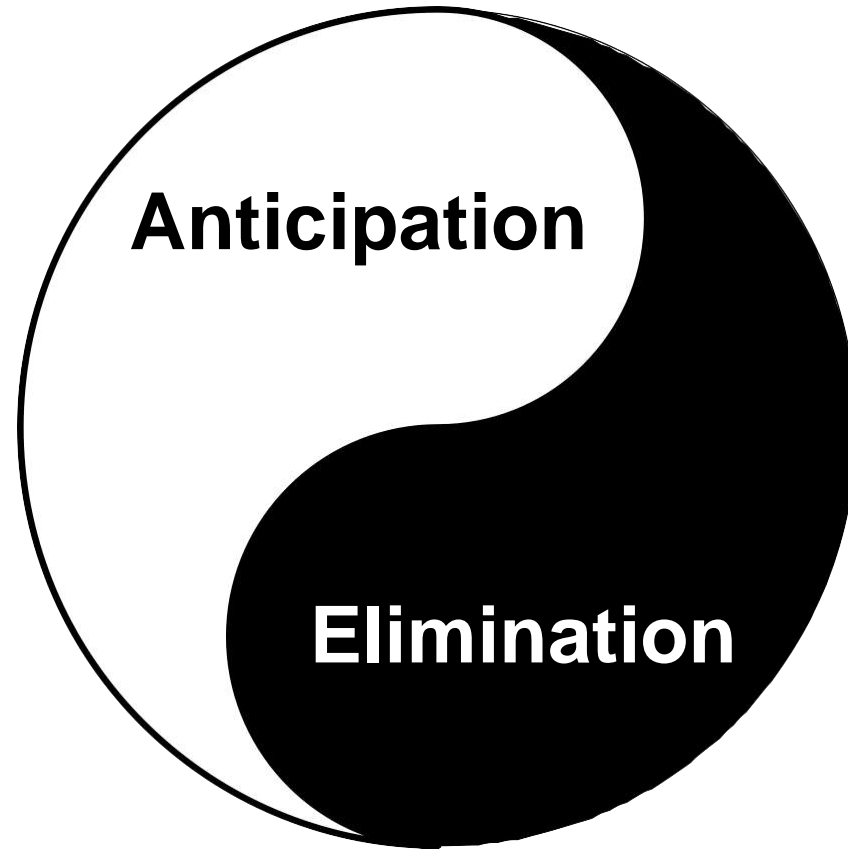
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15 believing that the shape and substance of buildings should be dictated only by their purpose, not unnecessary adornment. The results of this philosophy were radical: details were pared down, and buildings took on a sleek, simple, almost naked quality. The ornate stone buildings

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