

Matching information with paragraphs – reading tutorial and practice

This lesson focusses on the matching information with paragraphs type question where you need to find which paragraph in the text certain information is found in. You will find:

- a complete reading text with 6 questions to download
- 2 suggested strategies for approaching this type of question
- some of the more common problems.

How it works

You are given a series of 4/5 questions with information from the text and you are asked to say which paragraph the information appears in. The information you need to look for varies, it can be among other things:

- a fact
- an example
- a reason
- a summary
- a definition

Typically, you will be looking for a sentence or long phrase rather than a word to give you the answer.

Points to note:

1. there will be more paragraphs than questions so some paragraphs will have no answers
2. some paragraphs may contain more than one answer
3. it's important to realise that this is a very different type of question to the paragraph/heading matching question. Here the main idea is that you need to find **specific information** in a paragraph and **not the general meaning** of a paragraph. This often makes it harder because you cannot concentrate on the openings and endings of paragraphs as the information may well be in the middle of the paragraph

Know the problems

This is one of the harder question types for 4 reasons:

1. the questions can relate to the whole text and not just a part of it
2. the questions do not follow the order of the text
3. the information you are looking for may not be the main idea of a paragraph
4. sometimes one paragraph may contain more than one answer

The skills you need

This type of question requires different reading skills.

Skimming/Understanding general meaning

This will help you identify which paragraphs you should start reading to find the answers. I explain this more below but the my suggested way to do this task is to understand the whole text before you start looking for the answers.

Looking for synonyms – intensive reading

One of the keys to understanding this task is that you are generally not looking for the same words in the text as you find in the questions. What you need to do is look for words or phrases in the text that are similar in meaning to words in the questions. So you need to understand that this information in a question

why bats hunt in the dark

is matched by this information in the text

natural selection has favoured bats that make a go of the night-hunting trade

How to approach it – start with the questions

There are different ways to approach this question type, but here is my best suggestion:

1. Look at the questions first to understand the general meaning of the text.
2. If you have not done so already read the whole text quickly to decide what each paragraph is about. If you do this, you are much more likely to predict which paragraph contains the right answer. This can save you lots of time.
3. Look at each question in turn and try to predict which paragraph might contain the right answer.
4. Generally do not just focus on key words in the question, think of the meaning of the question. Be aware that you are normally looking for synonyms rather words in the question.
5. Read the paragraph you have predicted. Are there any sentences/phrases that relate to the question? If so, underline them and refer back to the question.
6. If you cannot find the answer in that paragraph, move on to the next question and come back to it later. You may well find the answer later when you are looking at another question.

How to approach it – start with the text

An alternative approach, which can work, is to start with the text. Here:

1. You read each paragraph one by one
 2. Then look at **all** the questions to see if you can find the information in the question in that paragraph
 3. If you cannot find anything, move on. There may be no answers in that paragraph
- The benefit of this approach is that you need to read the text only once. I dislike it though because you are likely to spend more time this way as you will spend time reading paragraphs with no answers in them. Also, if you take this approach you should know that the first one or

two paragraphs will take you much longer than the last paragraphs as you are looking for more information.

Practice reading online version

This is a full length text with 6 different questions. I wouldn't worry about timing here, treat it as a practice exercise and concentrate on getting the answers correct. One word of warning – if you try and just word match, you are certain to go wrong.