



Really Radical Reading Techniques for the SAT and ACT

Here's what you read FIRST:

- the blurb, if provided (= the intro, often in italics before the passage)
- the first inch (= 5-7 lines)
- the first sentence of each paragraph
- the last inch (= 5-7 lines)

Don't skim; really read. As you read:

- Underline whatever seem like key points. Do not underline indiscriminately! Be very selective in what you underline; don't underline more than a few words or phrases per paragraph. This forces you to really THINK about what you want to emphasize to yourself.

- Circle triggers (= direction words such as however, and, nevertheless, because, and more). See **Triggers Worksheet** for practice), mentally noting the direction: same or change direction.

Do questions in this general order:

1. Vocab in Context
2. Line Reference questions (= questions which mention a particular line or lines in the passage)
3. Lead Word questions (= questions with key words that will lead to where to start to read)
4. I, II, III or EXCEPT/NOT/LEAST
5. fuzzy, interpretive questions: inferences, author's point, tone

How to approach most questions:

1. Cover the answers with your fat eraser for the ACT, with your hand for the SAT.
2. Rephrase the question, starting with a question word:
Who, What, When, Where, Why, Which, or How
(Do the **Rephrasing the Question Worksheet** to get good at this!)
3. Find the line reference or lead word from the question that will lead you to the answer area of the text. Then read 5 lines above and 5 lines below that point. Really read; don't skim.
4. Come up with your own answer or idea and jot your memo next to the answer choices.
5. Uncover the answers and eliminate any that are inconsistent with your memo.
Put a squiggle to the left of any answer choices that have words you don't know.
6. P.O.E. (= Process of Elimination)

Specific question type techniques:

1. **Vocab in Context:** "As used in the passage, the word ... most nearly means..."
 - find the word in the passage. Cross it out so you can't see it anymore.
 - read 5 lines up, 5 lines down
 - underline clues, circle triggers
 - write your own word or memo
 - P.O.E. (Process of Elimination)

TIP:

If the word is a hard, sophisticated word that you happen to know, the first dictionary definition is probably correct. If it is an easy-seeming word, the first dictionary definition is probably NOT the answer. Do not fall into the trap of plugging answer choices into the sentence from the start. Save that for when you are down to two choices if you must do it.

2. Line Reference questions:

Do in chronological order of the lines referenced which may not be the same as question order.)(

- Cover the answers.
- Read the question - rephrase in your own words as a question, using a question word:
Who What When Where Why How (Do **Rephrasing the Question Worksheet** to hone this skill)
- Find the line, then read 5 lines up, 5 lines down.
- Write your answer or a "duh" memo. (A "duh" memo is a simple, obvious connection. It's actually a good memo that will protect you from at least one wrong, but appealing, answer choice.)
- P.O.E. (Process of Elimination)

3. Lead Word questions:

A "lead word" is a word that leads you to the place in the passage where you will find the answer.

- Read the question; rephrase in your own words as a question.
- Underline any lead words.
- Find those words in the passage, then read 5 lines up, 5 lines down.
- Make your memo.
- P.O.E. (Process of Elimination)

4. EXCEPT/NOT/LEAST

- Cross out the word EXCEPT/NOT/LEAST. Now read the question.
- To the left of the answer choice letter, write **T** for true or **F** for false. If you can't tell immediately, leave that answer choice blank and do the other ones first.
- Whichever answer is different is the rest (that is, the lone T or the lone F) is the answer.

Passage 1 and Passage 2 (Passage A and B on the ACT):

- Read Passage 1 and do Passage 1 questions first, just as if it were a single passage, using techniques above.
- Then read Passage 2 and do Passage 2 questions.
- LASTLY, do the ones that refer to both passages.