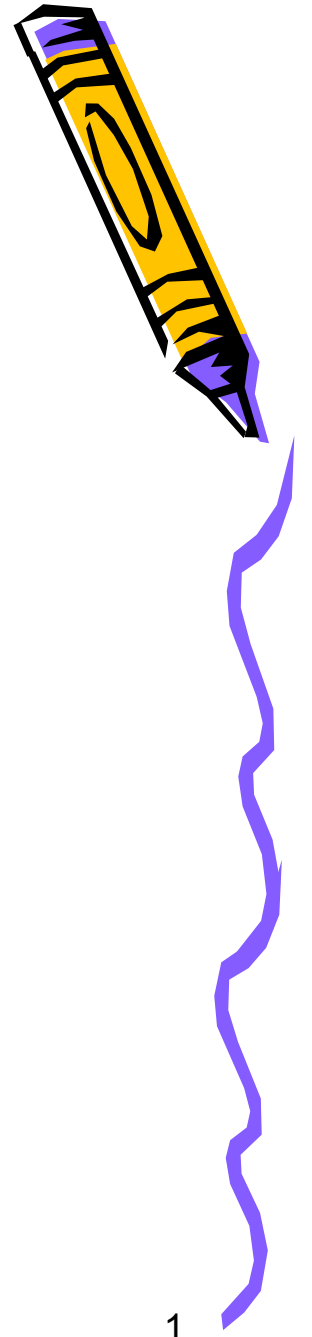


PSAT & SAT Test Prep: Sentence Completion



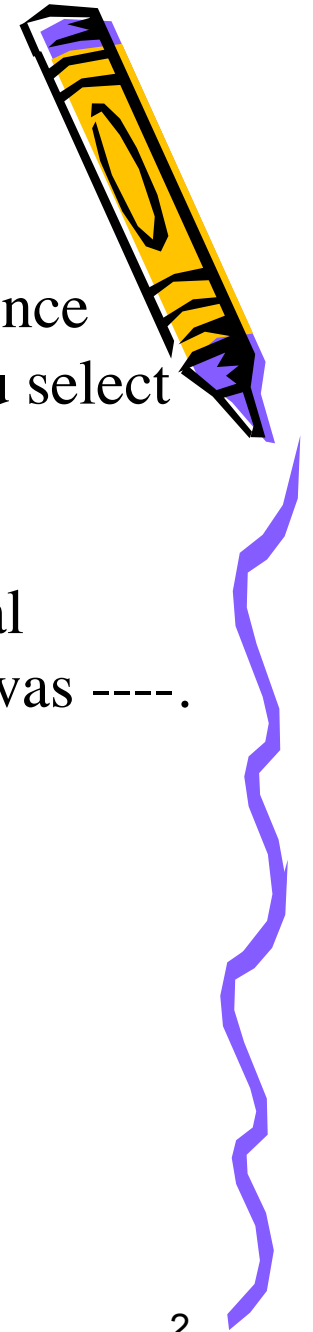
Strategies for Sentence Completion

Sentence Completion questions consist of a sentence in which one or two words (or phrases) are missing. You select the word or words that best complete the sentence.

EXAMPLE:

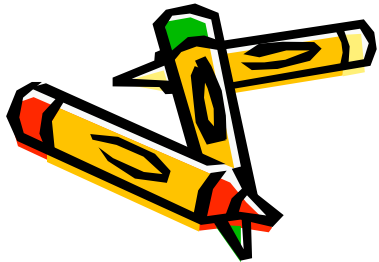
Medieval kingdoms did not become constitutional republics overnight; on the contrary, the change was ----.

- (A) unpopular
- (B) unexpected
- (C) advantageous
- (D) sufficient
- (E) gradual



Strategies for Sentence Completion

Some questions are straightforward vocabulary-in-context questions. There are also sentence completions that combine vocabulary and reasoning. In the second type, understanding the sentence is as important as knowing the vocabulary.



Strategies for Sentence Completion

A one-blank vocabulary-based question

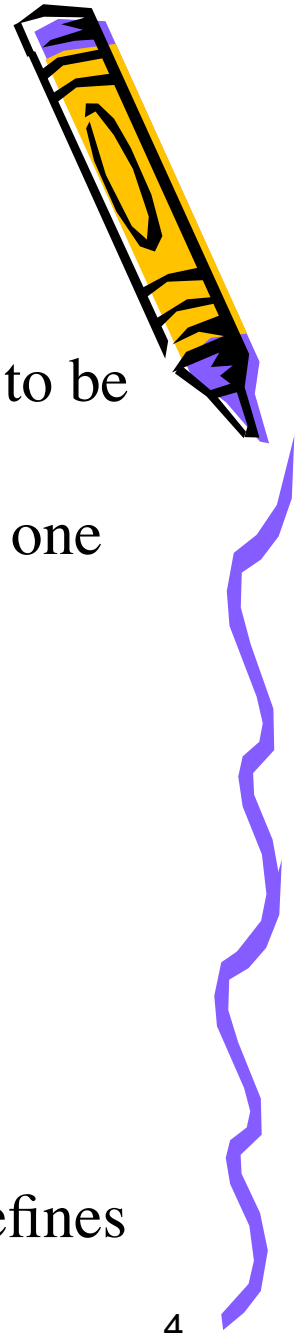
The one-blank vocabulary-based questions tend to be relatively short, usually not more than 20 words.

Ravens appear to behave - - - -, actively helping one another to find food.

- (A) mysteriously
- (B) warily
- (C) aggressively
- (D) cooperatively
- (E) defensively

The correct answer is (D).

The information after the comma restates and defines the meaning of the missing word.



Strategies for Sentence Completion

A two-blank vocabulary-based question

The two-blank vocabulary-based sentence have rather straightforward logic but challenging vocabulary.

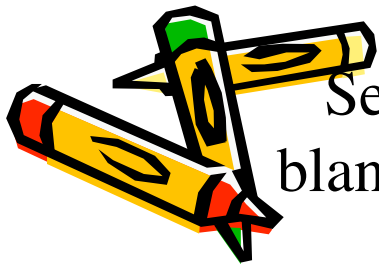
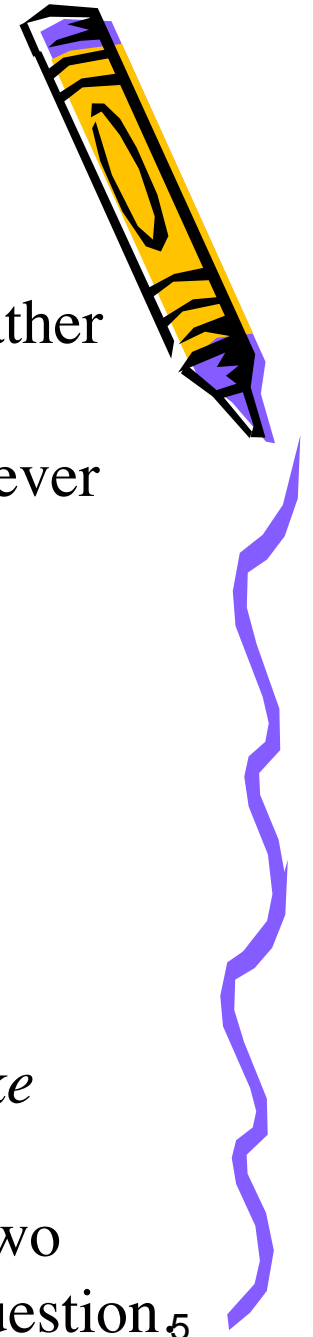
Both - - - - and - - - -, Wilson seldom spoke and never spent money.

- (A) vociferous . . generous
- (B) garrulous . . stingy
- (C) effusive . . frugal
- (D) taciturn . . miserly
- (E) reticent . . munificent

The correct answer is (D).

One of the words has to mean that he *seldom spoke* and the other that he *never spent money*.

Sentence Completion questions can have one or two blanks, but each sentence still counts as only one question.



Strategies for Sentence Completion

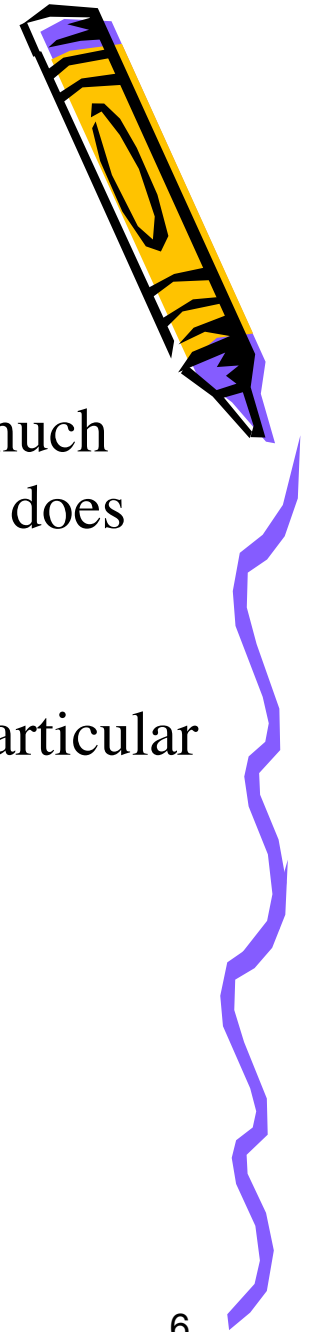
A one-blank logic-based question

Success in answering these questions depends as much on your ability to reason out the logic of the sentence as it does on your knowledge of vocabulary.

After observing several vicious territorial fights, Jane Goodall had to revise her earlier opinion that these particular primates were always - - - - animals.

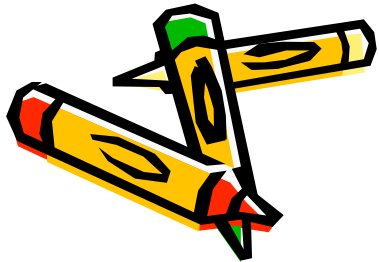
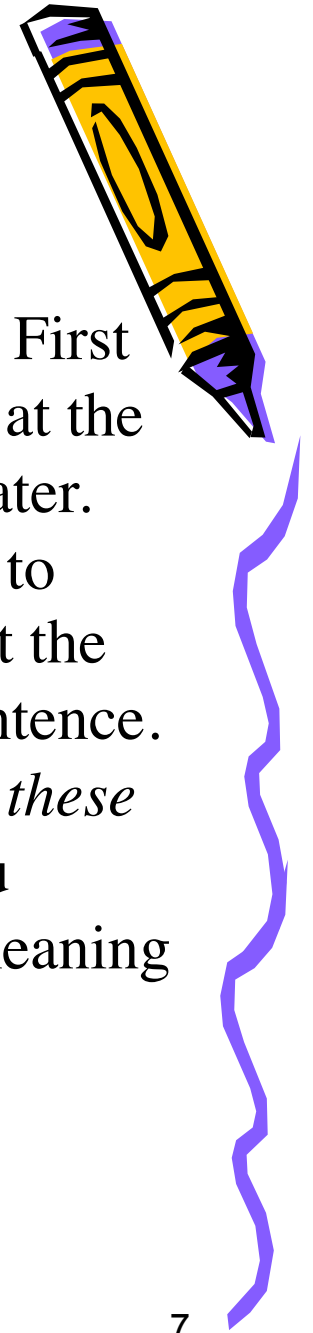
- (A) ignorant
- (B) inquisitive
- (C) responsive
- (D) cruel
- (E) peaceful

The correct answer is (E).



Strategies for Sentence Completion

A few key words reveal the logic of the sentence. First the introductory word *After* tells you that the information at the beginning of the sentence is going to affect what comes later. Second, the word *revise* tells you that something is going to change. It is going to change *after* the events described at the beginning of the sentence. Thus, this is a cause-effect sentence. Finally, the end of the sentence—*her earlier opinion that these particular primates were always - - - - animals*—tells you what is changing. The word you need should convey a meaning you would have to revise after seeing the animals fight.



Strategies for Sentence Completion

A two-blank logic-based question

This type of sentence requires you to know the meaning of the words, know how the words are used in context, and understand the logic of a rather complicated sentence.

Although its publicity has been - - - -, the film itself is intelligent, well-acted, handsomely produced, and altogether - - - -.

- (A) tasteless . . . respectable
- (B) extensive . . . moderate
- (C) sophisticated . . . amateur
- (D) risqué . . . crude
- (E) perfect . . . spectacular



Strategies for Sentence Completion

The correct answer is (A). This sentence has two parts or clauses. The first begins with *Although*; the second clause begins with *the film*. The two parts have contrasting or conflicting meanings. The word *Although* is used to introduce an idea that conflicts with something else in the sentence.



Strategies for Sentence Completion

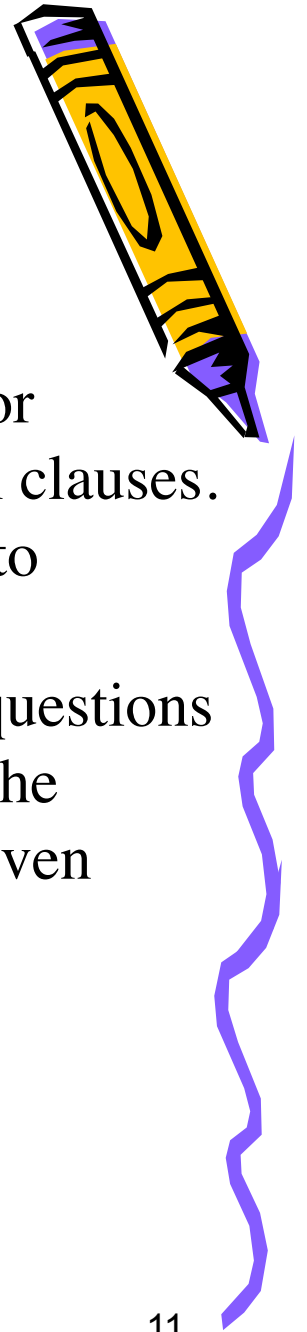
- Always read the entire sentence.
- Consider definitions of words in the sentence and in the answers.
- Introductory and transitional words are extremely important. They tell you how the parts of the sentence relate to each other.
- Also watch for negatives. Some of the most difficult Sentence Completion questions contain negatives, making it hard to follow the logic.
- Try to provide a word that fits before you look at the answer choices.
- Try to answer two-blank questions one blank at a time. Work on the first blank alone. Eliminate any choices for which the first word doesn't make sense.



Strategies for Sentence Completion

Most Sentence Completions involve compound or complex sentences, that is, sentences made up of several clauses. You have to figure out how the different clauses related to each other.

Some of the most difficult sentence completion questions contain negatives, making it hard to follow the logic of the clauses. Negatives in two clauses of a sentence can be even more of a challenge.



Strategies for Sentence Completion

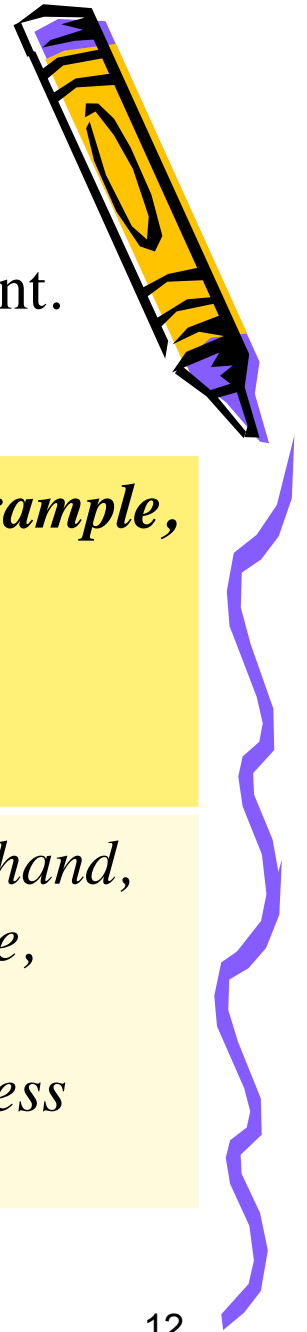
Introductory and transitional words are very important.
Examples of such words that

- connect ideas that are similar

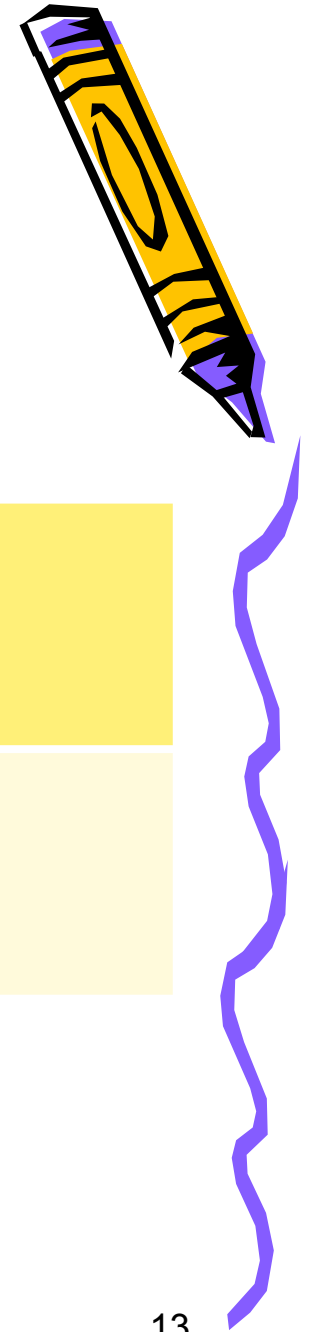
and, also, besides, for example, in other words, likewise, another, in addition, moreover, furthermore

- connect ideas that are opposite or in contrast

in contrast, on the other hand, in spite of, yet, even while, except, nevertheless, notwithstanding, regardless



Strategies for Sentence Completion



- connect ideas in cause-and-effect relationships

because, consequently, therefore, thus, hence, as a result, in order to

- means that a certain condition must be considered

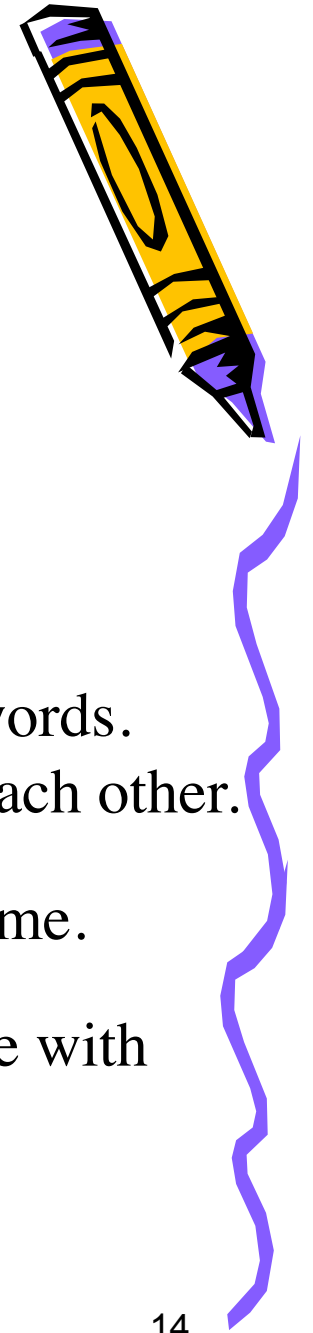
if, when



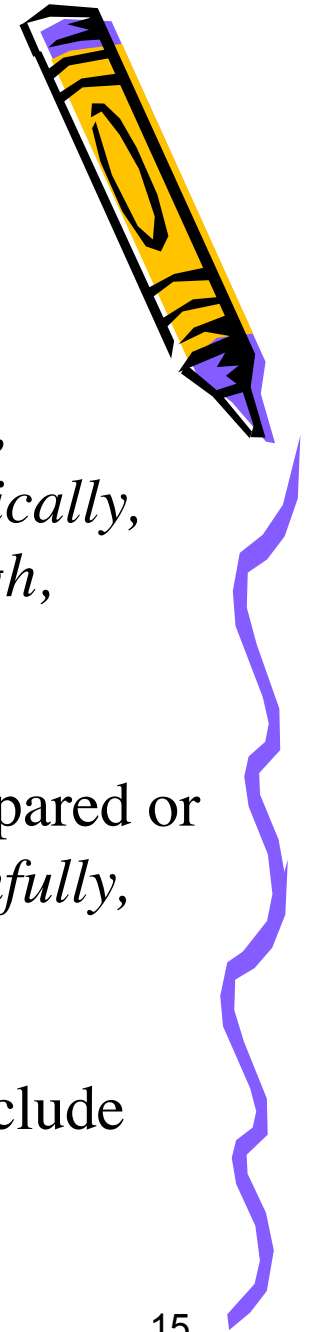
Strategies for Sentence Completion

Tips for answering sentence completions:

- Read the sentence, substituting the word “blank” for each blank.
- Watch for the key introductory and transitional words. These determine how the parts of the sentences relate to each other.
- Answer the two-blank questions one blank at a time.
- Check your answer by reading the entire sentence with your selected words in the blanks.



Strategies for Sentence Completion--Peterson's



- Look for key words.

- Words indicating a contrast include *but, although, nevertheless, on the other hand, atypically, uncharacteristically, abnormally, illogically, yet, however, curiously, even though, except, strangely, oddly, ironically.*

- Words that hint at similar or like ideas being compared or coordinated include *and, moreover, like, always, ever, faithfully, reflected, echoed.*

- Words that suggest a cause and effect sentence include *so, because, result, since, unless, except, but.*



Strategies for Sentence Completion--Peterson's

- Certain sentence types repeat and, thus, should be learned.
 - * Contrast of one thing/situation with another;
 - * Definition or explanation;
 - * Comparison/Coordination of similar ideas;
 - * Cause and effect/result.
- As a general rule, the more difficult the question, the more sophisticated the answer choices.



Strategies for Sentence Completion--Princeton Review

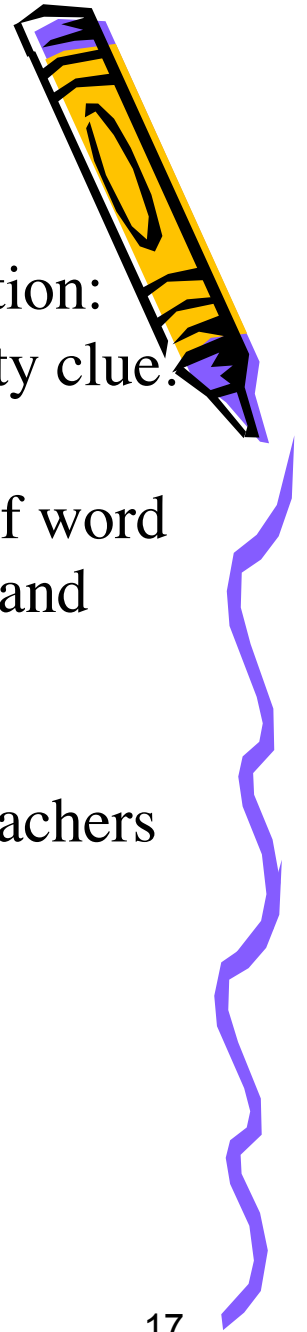
- There are three kinds of clues to sentence completion:
1) the doctor, 2) trigger words, and 3) the degree of difficulty clue.

The doctor refers to a key phrase that tells you what kind of word you need to fill in the blank. Cover up the answer choices and examine the sentence for the clue.

EXAMPLE:

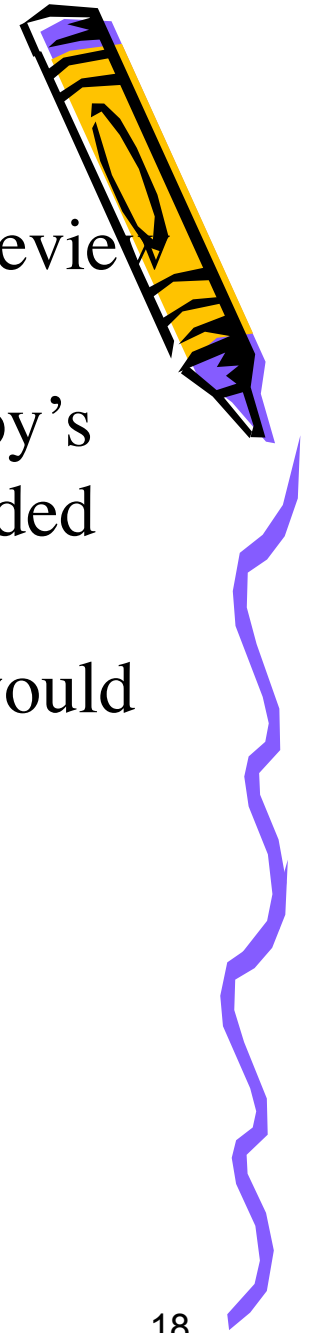
So ---- was the young boy's behavior that his teachers decided to give him a gold star.

- (A) exemplary
- (B) unruly
- (C) arrogant
- (D) radical
- (E) imaginative



Strategies for Sentence Completion--Princeton Review

All of the words can possibly relate to a boy's behavior, but "the doctor," or key phrase is "decided to give him a gold star." What kind of behavior would earn a boy a gold star? The best answer would be (A) exemplary.



Strategies for Sentence Completion— Princeton Review



- Trigger words are structural clues .
- Words that signal a contradiction are *but, although, despite, rather, however, even though, though, on the contrary.*

There are other words that signal that the second half of the sentence will continue in the same general direction as the first half. Words that signal a continuation or amplification are *and, not only . . .but also, because, in fact, indeed, even.*

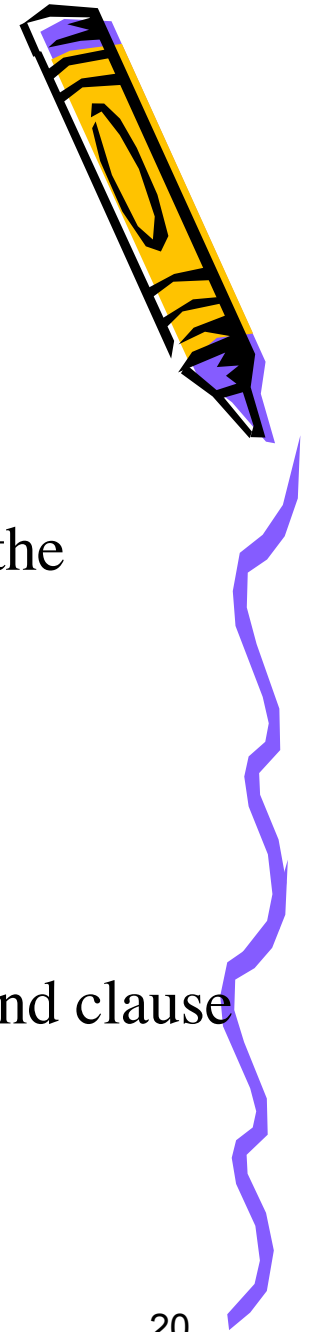
EXAMPLE:

Despite government efforts at population control, the number of people in China continues to ---- rapidly.

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| (A) decline | (D) stabilize |
| (B) increase | (E) deploy |
| (C) fluctuate | |



Strategies for Sentence Completion— Princeton Review



EXAMPLE:

Despite government efforts at population control, the number of people in China continues to ---- rapidly.

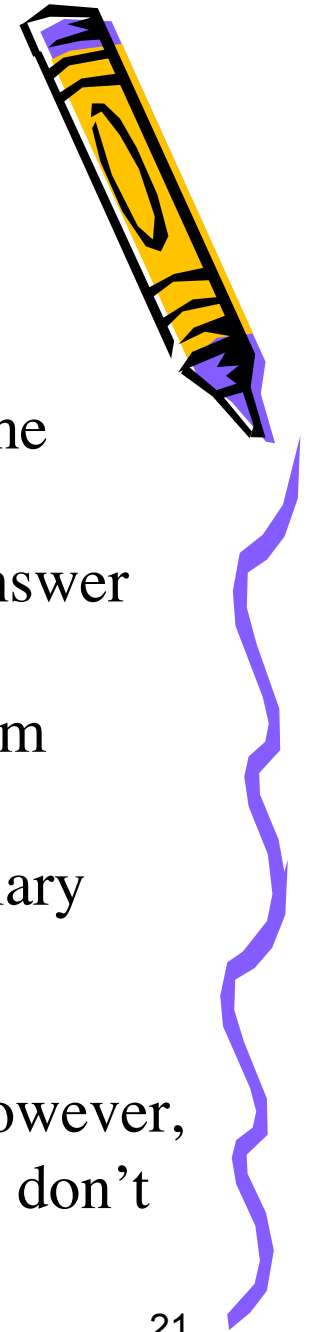
- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| (A) decline | (D) stabilize |
| (B) increase | (E) deploy |
| (C) fluctuate | |

The use of the word *despite* indicates that the second clause will need a contradiction to population control.

The correct answer is (B).



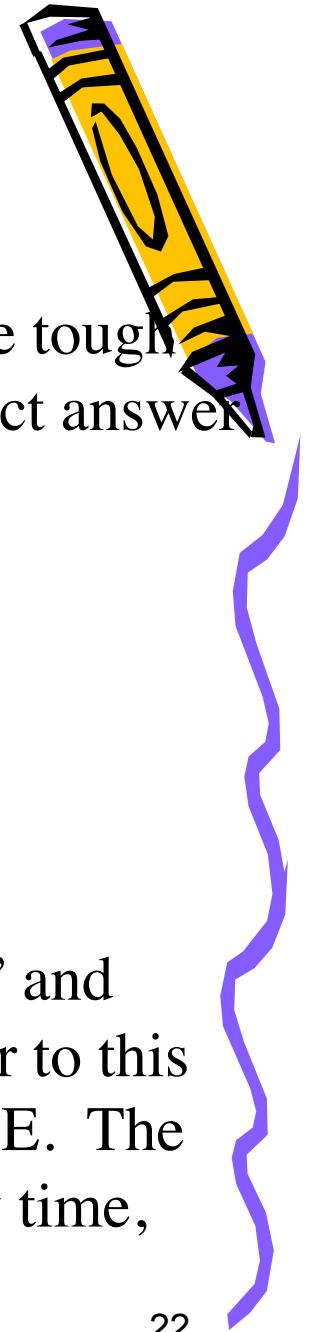
Strategies for Sentence Completion— Princeton Review



- Degree of difficulty clue refers to the location of the sentence in that section of the test.
 - If the question is in the easy section, the correct answer should be a relatively easy vocabulary word.
 - In the middle section, the answer will be of medium difficulty.
 - The difficult questions will be quite tough vocabulary words or medium words that have secondary meanings.
- The real value of this strategy comes when you have already eliminated several answer choices. However, this can be a last-ditch guessing strategy if you don't understand the contextual clues in the sentence.



Strategies for Sentence Completion— Princeton Review



• Based on the fact that tough questions tend to have tough answers, which of these choices are *unlikely* to be the correct answer of a tough question near the end of the section?

- (A) cosmopolitan
- (B) wavering
- (C) plucky
- (D) vindictive
- (E) bellicose

“Cosmopolitan is a fairly common word, as are “wavering” and “plucky.” Therefore, if we were simply to guess the answer to this difficult question, we would be tempted to pick either D or E. The actual answer was E. This won’t work every time, but it is a last-ditch guessing strategy.

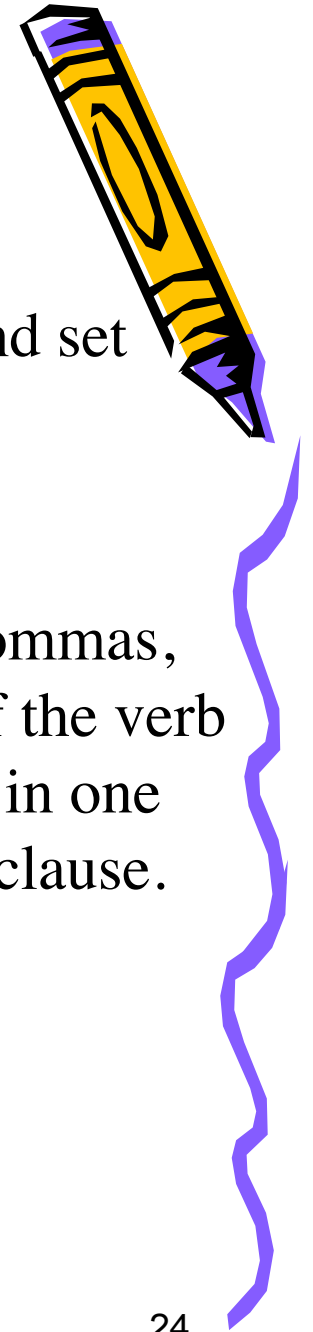


Strategies for Sentence Completion--Barron's



- Watch out for negative words and prefixes. *No, not, none, non-, un-, in-* are killers in combination, especially *not* because it's easy to overlook.
- Break down unfamiliar words into recognizable parts. Think of words you know that contain some of the same parts.
- Also, look for words that signal the unexpected. Some words indicate that something unexpected, possibly even unwanted, exists or has occurred. Words that signal the unexpected are *abnormal, anomalous, curious, illogical, incongruous, ironic, odd, paradoxical, surprising, unexpected.*





Strategies for Sentence Completion--Barron's

- Familiarize yourself with idiomatic expressions and set phrases such as *avert disaster*, *cavalier treatment*, *render unnecessary*, *overt acts*.
- Learn to spot definitions because of the signals: commas, hyphens, and parentheses. Definitions also follow forms of the verb *to be* and other connecting verbs; often an unfamiliar word in one clause of a sentence will be defined in the sentence's other clause.

