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THE ENGLISH REVISION HANDBOOK

# English Vocabulary & Composition

## Must Know

NDA · CDS · AFCAT

Words in context. Clear methods. Explained practice.

Vocabulary • Cloze • Comprehension • Sentence ordering

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A common companion to the grammar handbook. Select a topic or page number to open it.


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**Shared foundation:** vocabulary, usage, reading and cohesion. **AFCAT focus:** Analogy and Transformation of Sentence are marked separately. Composition here develops sentence and paragraph skills for objective questions.

For the practice questions, choose an option before opening its explanation. Passage links let you return to the shared text.

# 1 Synonyms

Choose the meaning that fits this sentence, not every meaning the word can have.

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## Meaning, sense and tone

**Read the whole sentence.** Identify the target's part of speech, its specific sense and its positive or negative tone. Substitute each plausible option and reread.

**Worked distinction.** "The officer gave a **candid** account." Here **frank** fits; "rude" adds a criticism the sentence does not require.

**Context changes the answer.** A "grave error" is **serious**; a "grave" in a cemetery is a burial place. A "sound argument" is **well-founded**, not noisy.

**Avoid.** Choosing a word merely because you associate it with the same subject. **Prefer.** The option that preserves the sentence's meaning and grammar.

## Words in context · 1

**abate** — become less strong. Near meaning: subside.
*The storm began to abate before dawn.*

**aberration** — a departure from what is usual. Near meaning: deviation.
*The unusually poor result was an aberration.*

**abhor** — dislike intensely. Near meaning: detest.
*She abhors cruelty in every form.*

**abstain** — choose not to take part. Near meaning: refrain.
*Two members abstained from the vote.*

**acquiesce** — accept without protest. Near meaning: consent.
*He acquiesced in the committee's decision.*

## Words in context · 2

**adroit** — skilful in handling a task. Near meaning: deft.
*Her adroit response settled the dispute.*

**alleviate** — make suffering or difficulty less severe. Near meaning: ease.
*The supplies helped alleviate the shortage.*

**ambiguous** — open to more than one interpretation. Near meaning: unclear.
*The ambiguous instruction confused the team.*

**ameliorate** — improve an unsatisfactory condition. Near meaning: improve.
*Better drainage can ameliorate living conditions.*

**anomaly** — something that differs from the expected pattern. Near meaning: irregularity.
*The analyst investigated the anomaly in the data.*

## Words in context · 3

**arduous** — requiring sustained effort. Near meaning: strenuous.
*The final climb was arduous.*

**assiduous** — showing persistent care and effort. Near meaning: diligent.
*Assiduous revision improved her accuracy.*

**audacious** — bold enough to take a substantial risk. Near meaning: daring.
*The rescue required an audacious plan.*

**austere** — plain and without luxury. Near meaning: spartan.
*The trainees lived in austere quarters.*

**belligerent** — showing a wish to fight or argue. Near meaning: hostile.
*His belligerent tone hindered negotiation.*

## Words in context · 4

**benevolent** — wishing to do good to others. Near meaning: kind-hearted.
*A benevolent donor funded the library.*

**bolster** — support or strengthen. Near meaning: reinforce.
*The new evidence bolstered her argument.*

**candid** — honest and direct. Near meaning: frank.
*The report offers a candid assessment.*

**capricious** — changing unpredictably. Near meaning: fickle.
*Capricious weather delayed the flight.*

**circumspect** — careful about possible consequences. Near meaning: cautious.
*The board remained circumspect about the proposal.*

## Words in context · 5

**coherent** — logically connected and understandable. Near meaning: consistent.
*She presented a coherent explanation.*

**complacent** — too satisfied to notice possible problems. Near meaning: self-satisfied.
*The team must not become complacent after one win.*

**concise** — brief while expressing the essentials. Near meaning: succinct.
*Give a concise account of the incident.*

**corroborate** — support a statement with further evidence. Near meaning: confirm.
*The records corroborated the witness's account.*

**credulous** — too willing to believe claims. Near meaning: gullible.
*Credulous readers accepted the false report.*

## Words in context · 6

**debilitate** — make physically or mentally weaker. Near meaning: weaken.
*The illness debilitated him for weeks.*

**deference** — respectful acceptance of another's standing or judgement. Near meaning: respect.
*She listened with deference to the senior expert.*

**detrimental** — causing harm. Near meaning: damaging.
*Sleep loss is detrimental to concentration.*

**diligent** — careful and hard-working. Near meaning: industrious.
*A diligent inspection revealed the defect.*

**disseminate** — spread information widely. Near meaning: circulate.
*The office will disseminate the revised instructions.*

## Words in context · 7

**elated** — very happy after a success. Near meaning: overjoyed.
*The cadets were elated by the result.*

**elucidate** — make an idea easier to understand. Near meaning: clarify.
*The diagram elucidates the process.*

**emulate** — try to match someone's achievement or qualities. Near meaning: imitate.
*Young athletes hoped to emulate her discipline.*

**enervate** — drain strength or energy. Near meaning: weaken.
*The oppressive heat enervated the marchers.*

**ephemeral** — lasting for a very short time. Near meaning: short-lived.
*The flowers have an ephemeral beauty.*

## Words in context · 8

**equanimity** — calmness under strain. Near meaning: composure.
*She received the setback with equanimity.*

**exonerate** — clear someone of blame. Near meaning: absolve.
*The inquiry exonerated the wrongly accused driver.*

**expedite** — make a process happen sooner. Near meaning: accelerate.
*Digital records helped expedite the review.*

**frugal** — careful to avoid wasteful spending. Near meaning: economical.
*A frugal household plans its purchases.*

**futile** — unable to achieve the intended result. Near meaning: pointless.
*Further searching in the wrong area was futile.*

## Words in context · 9

**gregarious** — enjoying other people's company. Near meaning: sociable.
*The gregarious recruit quickly made friends.*

**impeccable** — free from fault in the relevant respect. Near meaning: flawless.
*Her conduct during the mission was impeccable.*

**inadvertent** — not intended. Near meaning: accidental.
*An inadvertent omission changed the total.*

**incessant** — continuing without a break. Near meaning: unremitting.
*Incessant rain flooded the track.*

**indignant** — angry at perceived unfairness. Near meaning: resentful.
*The honest worker was indignant at the accusation.*

## Words in context · 10

**intrepid** — fearless when facing danger. Near meaning: brave.
*The intrepid rescuers entered the flooded building.*

**judicious** — showing sound judgement. Near meaning: wise.
*Judicious use of time improved the team's performance.*

**laconic** — using very few words. Near meaning: terse.
*His laconic reply contained only two words.*

**lucid** — clear and easy to understand. Near meaning: intelligible.
*The instructor gave a lucid explanation.*

**meticulous** — extremely careful about detail. Near meaning: painstaking.
*A meticulous check prevented a costly mistake.*

## Words in context · 11

**obstinate** — unwilling to change despite persuasion. Near meaning: stubborn.
*The obstinate negotiator rejected every compromise.*

**ostentatious** — intended to attract admiration by display. Near meaning: showy.
*The ostentatious ceremony impressed few residents.*

**plausible** — apparently reasonable or believable. Near meaning: credible.
*The theory is plausible but still needs evidence.*

**pragmatic** — concerned with practical results. Near meaning: practical.
*They chose a pragmatic solution to the delay.*

**prudent** — careful in anticipating risks. Near meaning: sensible.
*Keeping a reserve was a prudent decision.*

## Words in context · 12

**resilient** — able to recover after difficulty. Near meaning: quick to recover.
*The resilient community rebuilt after the flood.*

**scrupulous** — very careful to act honestly or correctly. Near meaning: conscientious.
*The scrupulous auditor checked every receipt.*

**sporadic** — occurring at irregular intervals. Near meaning: intermittent.
*Sporadic showers interrupted the practice.*

**tenacious** — holding firmly to a purpose or position. Near meaning: persistent.
*Her tenacious effort finally succeeded.*

**vindicate** — show a judgement or action to have been justified. Near meaning: justify.
*The later findings vindicated her decision.*

## Do not flatten important distinctions

**Credible / credulous.** A credible report is believable; a credulous reader believes too easily.

**Enervate / energise.** Enervate means weaken, despite its energetic-looking spelling.

**Prudent / cowardly.** Sensible caution does not necessarily imply fear. **Frugal / miserly.** Avoiding waste differs from an unwillingness to spend even when necessary.

**Plausible / proven.** An explanation may sound reasonable without being established by evidence. In comprehension, do not promote possibility into certainty.

# 2 Antonyms

Reverse the relevant meaning on the same scale; an unrelated word is not an opposite.

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## Find the axis of contrast

**Worked example.** “The evidence was **scanty**.” The relevant contrast is amount: **abundant**. “Accurate” concerns reliability and is not its opposite.

**Keep word class and degree.** If the target is an adjective, compare adjective senses. Watch for prefixes, but do not assume every word beginning with *in-* or *dis-* is negative.

**Sense matters.** “Light” contrasts with **heavy** for weight and **dark** for illumination. “Sanction” may mean permission or a penalty; use the sentence.

## Contrasts to remember · 1

**abundant ↔ scarce** — plentiful versus in short supply.
*Water was abundant upstream but scarce in the village.*

**altruistic ↔ selfish** — concerned for others versus chiefly oneself.
*The act was altruistic rather than selfish.*

**apathy ↔ enthusiasm** — lack of interest versus keen interest.
*The new coach replaced apathy with enthusiasm.*

**arbitrary ↔ reasoned** — based on whim versus supported by reasons.
*The decision appeared arbitrary, not reasoned.*

**audacious ↔ timid** — bold versus lacking confidence or courage.
*An audacious approach replaced the timid plan.*

## Contrasts to remember · 2

**benign ↔ harmful** — harmless in this sense versus damaging.
*The substance proved benign rather than harmful.*

**candid ↔ evasive** — direct and frank versus avoiding a direct reply.
*She wanted a candid answer, not an evasive one.*

**coherent ↔ incoherent** — logically connected versus confused or disjointed.
*Fatigue made his usually coherent account incoherent.*

**concise ↔ verbose** — brief and essential versus using too many words.
*Make the report concise rather than verbose.*

**conspicuous ↔ inconspicuous** — easily noticed versus difficult to notice.
*The bright sign was conspicuous; the small mark was inconspicuous.*

## Contrasts to remember · 3

**credible ↔ implausible** — believable versus difficult to believe.
*The first explanation was credible; the second was implausible.*

**dearth ↔ abundance** — shortage versus plentiful supply.
*A dearth of equipment became an abundance after delivery.*

**defer ↔ advance** — postpone versus bring forward in time.
*They deferred one meeting and advanced another.*

**diligent ↔ negligent** — careful in duties versus failing to take proper care.
*A diligent check would have prevented the negligent omission.*

**ephemeral ↔ enduring** — short-lived versus lasting.
*The publicity was ephemeral; the achievement was enduring.*

## Contrasts to remember · 4

**explicit ↔ implicit** — directly stated versus suggested without direct statement.
*The rule was explicit, but the warning was implicit.*

**feasible ↔ impracticable** — possible to carry out versus not workable.
*The revised route was feasible; the original was impracticable.*

**frugal ↔ extravagant** — economical versus wastefully lavish.
*The frugal plan replaced an extravagant proposal.*

**hostile ↔ amicable** — unfriendly versus friendly and cooperative.
*Hostile exchanges gave way to amicable discussion.*

**impartial ↔ biased** — fair to all sides versus favouring a side.
*An impartial referee must avoid biased decisions.*

## Contrasts to remember · 5

**incessant ↔ intermittent** — unbroken versus stopping and starting.
*The incessant rain later became intermittent.*

**indigenous ↔ introduced** — native to a place versus brought there from elsewhere.
*The garden has indigenous trees and introduced species.*

**lenient ↔ strict** — not severe versus firmly enforcing standards.
*The first supervisor was lenient; the next was strict.*

**lucid ↔ obscure** — clear versus difficult to understand.
*Replace the obscure phrase with a lucid explanation.*

**mitigate ↔ aggravate** — make less severe versus make worse.
*The remedy should mitigate pain, not aggravate it.*

## Contrasts to remember · 6

**obstinate ↔ amenable** — stubborn versus willing to consider suggestions.
*The once obstinate member became amenable to compromise.*

**optimistic ↔ pessimistic** — expecting favourable versus unfavourable outcomes.
*One forecast was optimistic and the other pessimistic.*

**peripheral ↔ central** — at the edge or of lesser importance versus at the centre.
*Focus on the central issue, not a peripheral detail.*

**plentiful ↔ scanty** — ample versus insufficiently small in amount.
*Evidence was plentiful in one case but scanty in the other.*

**prudent ↔ reckless** — careful about risks versus disregarding them.
*A prudent delay prevented a reckless departure.*

## Contrasts to remember · 7

**reluctant ↔ willing** — unwilling or hesitant versus ready to act.
*The reluctant participant eventually became willing.*

**rigid ↔ flexible** — unbending versus adaptable.
*A flexible timetable replaced the rigid schedule.*

**sceptical ↔ credulous** — doubtful and questioning versus too ready to believe.
*The sceptical investigator challenged the credulous witness's assumptions.*

**spurious ↔ genuine** — false or not authentic versus authentic.
*The document was spurious, not genuine.*

**stagnant ↔ flowing** — not moving versus moving steadily, of water.
*Avoid the stagnant pool and use the flowing stream.*

## Contrasts to remember · 8

**superficial ↔ thorough** — limited to the surface versus examining fully.
*A superficial check missed what the thorough inquiry found.*

**taciturn ↔ talkative** — habitually quiet versus speaking much.
*The taciturn recruit shared a room with a talkative colleague.*

**transient ↔ permanent** — temporary versus lasting indefinitely.
*The pain was transient, not permanent.*

**venerate ↔ despise** — regard with deep respect versus contempt.
*Some venerated the leader; others despised him.*

**voluntary ↔ compulsory** — chosen freely versus required.
*The session is voluntary; the examination is compulsory.*

# 3 One Word Substitution

Match the exact definition, including who, what and the qualifying condition.

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## Read the whole definition

**Person, field or belief?** A **botanist** studies plants; **botany** is the field. A **philanthropist** helps people; **philanthropy** is the practice.

**Do not drop a condition.** An **extempore** speech is delivered without prior preparation; an **eloquent** speech is fluent and persuasive. One can be both.

**Roots help, but are not proof.** *Bio-* often relates to life and *-logy* to a field of study. Confirm the whole word rather than inventing a meaning from fragments.

## People, ideas and descriptions · 1

**altruist** — a person who acts out of concern for others.
*The altruist volunteered without seeking a reward.*

**amateur** — a person pursuing an activity without doing it as a paid profession.
*An amateur astronomer discovered the object.*

**ambidextrous** — able to use both hands skilfully.
*The ambidextrous player can throw with either hand.*

**anarchist** — a person advocating a society without governmental authority.
*The passage describes an anarchist's political beliefs.*

**anthropologist** — a specialist studying human societies, cultures or human development.
*The anthropologist studied the community's customs.*

## People, ideas and descriptions · 2

**archaeologist** — a specialist studying the human past through material remains.
*The archaeologist examined the pottery fragments.*

**atheist** — a person who does not believe in a god or gods.
*The writer openly described herself as an atheist.*

**autobiography** — an account of a person's life written by that person.
*The retired pilot wrote an autobiography.*

**biography** — an account of a person's life written by someone else.
*The historian published a biography of the explorer.*

**botanist** — a scientist specialising in plants.
*The botanist identified the rare shrub.*

## People, ideas and descriptions · 3

**cartographer** — a person who makes maps.
*The cartographer revised the coastal map.*

**connoisseur** — a person with expert appreciation of a particular field.
*The connoisseur recognised the painting's quality.*

**cosmopolitan** — familiar with or containing people and influences from many countries.
*The port has a cosmopolitan population.*

**democracy** — a system in which political authority rests with the people, directly or through representatives.
*The constitution establishes a representative democracy.*

**epitaph** — words written in memory of someone on a tomb.
*The epitaph praised her courage.*

## People, ideas and descriptions · 4

**extempore** — spoken without advance preparation.
*He gave an extempore speech.*

**fatalism** — the belief that events are predetermined and cannot be avoided.
*Her fatalism discouraged attempts to change the outcome.*

**fratricide** — the killing of one's brother.
*The tragedy centres on an act of fratricide.*

**garrulous** — excessively talkative, often about trivial matters.
*The garrulous passenger spoke throughout the journey.*

**herbivore** — an animal that feeds on plants.
*A deer is a herbivore.*

## People, ideas and descriptions · 5

**illegible** — impossible or very difficult to read.
*The damaged label was illegible.*

**illicit** — forbidden by law or accepted rules.
*The inquiry exposed an illicit trade.*

**immigrant** — a person who comes to live in another country.
*The immigrant settled in her new country.*

**emigrant** — a person who leaves a country to live elsewhere.
*The emigrant said farewell to his homeland.*

**incorrigible** — not capable of being corrected or reformed.
*The character is described as an incorrigible liar.*

## People, ideas and descriptions · 6

**indelible** — unable to be removed or forgotten.
*The experience left an indelible impression.*

**infallible** — incapable of making an error.
*No examiner should assume that a key is infallible.*

**insolvent** — unable to pay debts owed.
*The insolvent company sought protection from creditors.*

**introspection** — examination of one's own thoughts and feelings.
*Quiet introspection helped her understand her motives.*

**invincible** — impossible to defeat.
*The legend portrays an invincible warrior.*

## People, ideas and descriptions · 7

**lexicographer** — a person who compiles or edits dictionaries.
*The lexicographer revised the entry.*

**misogynist** — a person who hates or shows prejudice against women.
*The novel condemns the misogynist's views.*

**misanthrope** — a person who dislikes humankind generally.
*The withdrawn character calls himself a misanthrope.*

**nepotism** — unfair favour shown to relatives, especially in appointments.
*The hiring inquiry found evidence of nepotism.*

**nostalgia** — an affectionate longing for the past.
*The old photograph filled him with nostalgia.*

## People, ideas and descriptions · 8

**obituary** — a published account announcing a death and describing the person's life.
*The newspaper carried her obituary.*

**omniscient** — knowing everything.
*The story uses an omniscient narrator.*

**omnipotent** — having unlimited power.
*The myth describes an omnipotent deity.*

**ornithologist** — a scientist specialising in birds.
*The ornithologist recorded the nesting sites.*

**pacifist** — a person who opposes war or violence.
*The pacifist argued for negotiation.*

## People, ideas and descriptions · 9

**panacea** — a supposed remedy for every difficulty or disease.
*One policy cannot be a panacea for all problems.*

**polyglot** — a person who knows and uses several languages.
*The polyglot interpreted for the visitors.*

**posthumous** — occurring or published after the person's death.
*The author received posthumous recognition.*

**recluse** — a person who lives apart from others.
*The recluse rarely received visitors.*

**redundant** — no longer needed or unnecessarily repeated.
*Delete the redundant sentence.*

## People, ideas and descriptions · 10

**sceptic** — a person inclined to question accepted claims.
*The sceptic asked for independent evidence.*

**stoic** — a person who endures pain or difficulty without showing distress.
*The stoic bore the setback quietly.*

**unanimous** — fully agreed by all involved.
*The committee reached a unanimous decision.*

**veteran** — a person with long experience, especially a former armed-services member.
*A veteran instructor led the course.*

**zoologist** — a scientist specialising in animals.
*The zoologist studied the mammals' behaviour.*

# 4 Idioms and Phrases

Recognise the figurative meaning and preserve it in context.

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## An idiom is a meaning unit

**Literal words may mislead.** “The report **shed light on** the delay” means it explained the delay; it says nothing about lighting equipment.

**Check the situation.** “A close shave” can mean a narrow escape. Choose the figurative sense when the surrounding sentence describes avoiding danger.

**Keep the grammatical frame.** We “turn a blind eye **to**” something and “take something **with** a pinch of salt. Learn the phrase with its usual complement.

## Phrases in use · 1

**a blessing in disguise** — something apparently unfortunate that proves beneficial.
*Missing the bus was a blessing in disguise: the later service avoided the road closure.*

**a bone of contention** — a persistent cause of disagreement.
*The division of duties remained a bone of contention.*

**a close shave** — a narrow escape from danger or trouble.
*The falling branch missed him; it was a close shave.*

**a far cry from** — very different from.
*The temporary shelter was a far cry from home.*

**a feather in one’s cap** — an achievement bringing credit.
*The award was a feather in her cap.*

## Phrases in use · 2

**a hard nut to crack** — a difficult problem or person to deal with.
*The final puzzle was a hard nut to crack.*

**a red herring** — something that diverts attention from the real issue.
*The irrelevant statistic was a red herring.*

**at loggerheads** — in strong disagreement.
*The two groups were at loggerheads over the route.*

**at sixes and sevens** — in confusion or disorder.
*The office was at sixes and sevens after the sudden move.*

**back to square one** — back to the starting point after failure.
*The failed test sent the designers back to square one.*

## Phrases in use · 3

**beat about the bush** — avoid coming directly to the point.
*Stop beating about the bush and explain the problem.*

**bite off more than one can chew** — undertake more than one can manage.
*Taking five courses at once was biting off more than he could chew.*

**break the ice** — ease initial social tension.
*A short introduction helped break the ice.*

**burn the midnight oil** — work or study late into the night.
*She burnt the midnight oil before the assessment.*

**by the skin of one's teeth** — only just successfully.
*He caught the last train by the skin of his teeth.*

## Phrases in use · 4

**call a spade a spade** — speak plainly about an unpleasant truth.
*The reviewer called a spade a spade and identified the failure.*

**carry the day** — win or prove successful.
*The practical proposal carried the day.*

**cut corners** — omit necessary steps to save effort, time or cost.
*Do not cut corners on safety checks.*

**draw the line** — set a limit on what is acceptable.
*The coach drew the line at abusive behaviour.*

**face the music** — accept the unpleasant consequences of one's actions.
*Those responsible must face the music.*

## Phrases in use · 5

**get cold feet** — lose the courage to proceed.
*He got cold feet just before the announcement.*

**give someone the benefit of the doubt** — judge favourably when the evidence is uncertain.
*The panel gave the applicant the benefit of the doubt.*

**hit the nail on the head** — identify exactly the right point.
*Her explanation hit the nail on the head.*

**in hot water** — in trouble.
*The missing files landed him in hot water.*

**in the same boat** — in the same difficult situation.
*All delayed passengers were in the same boat.*

## Phrases in use · 6

**keep an eye on** — watch or monitor.
*Keep an eye on the changing weather.*

**leave no stone unturned** — try every possible way.
*The search team left no stone unturned.*

**make both ends meet** — manage to live within one's income.
*The family worked hard to make both ends meet.*

**once in a blue moon** — very rarely.
*The village sees snow once in a blue moon.*

**on the spur of the moment** — without prior planning.
*She volunteered on the spur of the moment.*

## Phrases in use · 7

**read between the lines** — understand an implied meaning.
*Read between the lines to notice the writer's reservation.*

**rule of thumb** — a practical approximate guide.
*This estimate is a rule of thumb, not an exact formula.*

**shed light on** — help explain.
*The logbook shed light on the missing hour.*

**spill the beans** — reveal a secret.
*He accidentally spilt the beans about the surprise.*

**take with a pinch of salt** — treat with some scepticism.
*Take the unsupported claim with a pinch of salt.*

## Phrases in use · 8

**the ball is in your court** — it is your turn to decide or act.
*We have submitted the draft; the ball is now in your court.*

**through thick and thin** — through good and difficult times.
*The partners supported each other through thick and thin.*

**turn a blind eye to** — deliberately ignore.
*An honest supervisor cannot turn a blind eye to misconduct.*

**under the weather** — feeling unwell.
*She felt under the weather and stayed home.*

**up in the air** — still undecided.
*The departure date is still up in the air.*

# 5 Word Usage

Choose precise meanings and natural combinations, not merely familiar spellings.

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## Word classes: identify the function

**Noun:** names or refers to a person, thing, state or idea: "**Courage** matters." **Verb:** expresses an action or state: "They **train**"; "She **is** ready."

**Adjective:** describes a noun or pronoun: "a **careful** driver"; "The driver seems **careful**." **Adverb:** modifies a verb, adjective, another adverb or a whole clause: "drives **carefully**"; "**very** useful".

**Same word, different job.** "A **fast** vehicle" uses an adjective; "It moves **fast**" uses an adverb. Classify the underlined word in its sentence, not from its usual dictionary label.

**A suffix is a clue, not a verdict.** *Friendly* is usually an adjective despite ending in *-ly*; *training* may be a noun or part of a verb phrase.

## Pronouns, determiners and linking words

**Pronoun:** stands in a noun-phrase position: "**They** arrived"; "I chose **that**." **Determiner:** specifies a noun's reference or quantity: "**that** route"; "**some** water"; "**the** map".

**Preposition:** heads a phrase showing a relationship: "**near** the gate"; "**after** the briefing". **Conjunction:** links words or clauses: "Riya **and** Aman"; "We left **because** it was late."

**Interjection:** expresses a reaction: "**Oh!** I had forgotten." Articles *a/an/the* are normally grouped with determiners in modern descriptions.

**Use the question's classification.** Traditional parts-of-speech exercises may place determiners under adjectives. The word's actual function remains the deciding evidence.

## Preference patterns

**Prefer A to B:** “I prefer tea **to** coffee”; “I prefer walking **to** waiting.” Keep paired activities in comparable forms.

**Prefer to do A rather than do B:** “I prefer to walk **rather than** wait.” With a specific choice, “I would prefer **to leave** now” is standard.

**Would rather + base verb:** “I would rather **stay** than leave.” Do not insert *to* before stay.

**Would rather + another subject:** “I would rather you **stayed** tonight” expresses a present/future preference; “I would rather you **had stayed**” refers to an alternative past. The past form does not automatically mean past time.

## Confusable words · 1

**accept / except** — receive or agree to / excluding.
*All cadets except Arun accepted the invitation.*

**advice / advise** — noun meaning guidance / verb meaning give guidance.
*The instructor advised us to follow the safety advice.*

**affect / effect** — usually influence as a verb / usually result as a noun.
*Fatigue can affect accuracy; its effect was visible. “Effect a change” means bring one about.*

**allude / elude** — refer indirectly to / escape or avoid.
*The speech alluded to a problem whose solution continued to elude us.*

## Confusable words · 2

**assure / ensure / insure** — reassure a person / make certain / arrange insurance.
*Assure the team, ensure the gate is locked, and insure the vehicle against loss.*

**complement / compliment** — complete or go well with / praise.
*The map complements the account; the reviewer paid the writer a compliment.*

**conscience / conscious** — moral sense / aware or awake.
*Her conscience troubled her; she remained conscious of the consequences.*

**continual / continuous** — often repeated / without interruption.
*Continual interruptions delayed a continuous two-hour test. Usage can overlap; use context.*

## Confusable words · 3

**credible / credulous** — believable / too ready to believe.
*A credulous reader may accept a report that is not credible.*

**defer / differ** — postpone or yield respectfully / be different or disagree.
*We differ on timing, so let us defer the decision.*

**discreet / discrete** — careful to avoid embarrassment or disclosure / separate.
*A discreet inquiry examined three discrete incidents.*

**economic / economical** — relating to the economy / avoiding waste.
*An economic survey assessed whether the new engine was economical to operate.*

## Confusable words · 4

**eligible / illegible** — qualified to be chosen / difficult or impossible to read.
*The eligible candidate's signature was illegible.*

**eminent / imminent** — distinguished / about to happen.
*The eminent researcher warned of imminent danger.*

**imply / infer** — suggest without directly stating / reach a conclusion from evidence.
*The writer implies doubt; the reader infers it from the wording.*

**judicial / judicious** — relating to courts / showing good judgement.
*Judicious review is useful, but not every review is a judicial proceeding.*

## Confusable words · 5

**later / latter** — after a stated time / second of two mentioned.
*The latter of the two options will be discussed later.*

**loose / lose** — not tight / fail to keep or win.
*Tighten the loose strap so that you do not lose the bag.*

**principal / principle** — main, or head of an institution / rule or belief.
*The principal explained the guiding principle of fair selection.*

**stationary / stationery** — not moving / writing materials.
*The stationary vehicle carried boxes of stationery.*

## Precision without false absolutes

**Disinterested / uninterested.** In formal exam contrasts, **disinterested** commonly means impartial and **uninterested** means not interested. Some dictionaries also record overlapping uses: let context determine the intended sense.

**Historic / historical.** Historic means important in history; historical means connected with the past or its study. A historical document is not necessarily historic.

**Borrow / lend.** The recipient borrows; the provider lends. “May I borrow your atlas?” / “Can you lend me your atlas?”

**Rise / raise.** Prices rise; a seller raises prices. **Lie / lay.** Lie down (lay, lain); lay the map on the table (laid, laid). Identify whether an object is required.

# 6 Homonyms

Use the sentence to distinguish similar sounds, spellings and unrelated senses.

**Core word skill · AFCAT names Homonyms explicitly**

## Sound, spelling and sense

**Homophones** share a pronunciation but differ in meaning: *pair / pear*. **Homographs** share a spelling but can differ in pronunciation: *lead* a team / a *lead* pipe.

**Homonym** is used differently across reference books: sometimes for words sharing both spelling and sound, sometimes more broadly. Answer from the stated task and sentence, not a disputed label.

**Worked example.** "The cadet checked the boat's **berth**." Here berth means its assigned mooring place, not **birth**.

## Sound-alike and multi-sense traps · 1

**altar / alter** — a ceremonial table / change.
*They will alter the position of the altar.*

**bare / bear** — uncovered / carry, endure, or the animal.
*The bare branches could not bear the heavy snow.*

**brake / break** — a device that slows motion / damage or interrupt.
*Use the brake before a sudden turn; do not break the lever.*

**cite / site / sight** — quote a source / a place / vision or something seen.
*Cite the report about the site, which is hidden from sight.*

## Sound-alike and multi-sense traps · 2

**coarse / course** — rough / a route, programme or sequence.
*The course crosses an area of coarse gravel.*

**council / counsel** — a deliberative body / advice or a legal adviser.
*The council sought legal counsel.*

**heal / heel** — recover from injury / back part of the foot.
*The wound on his heel will heal.*

**peace / piece** — absence of conflict / a portion.
*Each side offered a piece of land in pursuit of peace.*

## Sound-alike and multi-sense traps · 3

**right / rite / write** — correct or a claim / a ceremony / form written words.
*Write the right name for the rite.*

**weather / whether** — atmospheric conditions / introduces alternatives or uncertainty.
*Check whether the weather permits flying.*

**bank** — a financial institution or the edge of a river.
*The bank financed repairs to the river bank.*

**seal** — an animal or a device or mark used to close or authenticate.
*The seal on the container showed it had not been opened.*

## Spelling that affects recognition

**Double-letter traps.** accommodation, committee, embarrass, occurrence, necessary, possession.

**Order-of-letter traps.** separate, definitely, privilege, receive, deceive, foreign, environment.

**British and American forms.** Colour/color and centre/center are regional variants. Do not label a standard variant wrong unless the task specifies a convention. This handbook generally uses British spellings.

**Check the full form.** Advice/advice's and advise/advises are different grammatical forms. Similar pronunciation does not make their spelling interchangeable.

# 7 Fill in the Blanks

Combine meaning, grammar and collocation before eliminating options.

**NDA · CDS · AFCAT**

## A three-pass decision

**1. Meaning.** Does the sentence need support, criticism, contrast, cause or consequence? Read beyond the blank.

**2. Form.** Identify the required word class and verb pattern. In "The response was ___", an adjective may fit; in "responded ___", an adverb may fit.

**3. Combination.** Check the surrounding words: *reach a conclusion*, *pose a threat*, *comply with*. A near-synonym may not share the same partners.

**Worked example.** "The warning helped ___ a disaster." **Avert** fits: prevent it from happening. **Divert** means redirect; **convert** means change form or use.

## Natural word partnerships · 1

**make a decision / reach a conclusion** — decide / arrive at a judgement.
*The board made a decision after reaching a clear conclusion.*

**conduct research / carry out an investigation** — perform systematic study / investigate.
*The team conducted research and carried out an investigation.*

**draw attention / raise awareness** — direct notice / increase understanding.
*The report drew attention to the issue and raised awareness.*

**pose a threat / meet a requirement** — create a danger / satisfy a condition.
*Poor visibility poses a threat; the equipment must meet the requirement.*

## Natural word partnerships · 2

**bear responsibility / take precautions** — be accountable / act to reduce a risk.
*The supervisor bears responsibility for ensuring that staff take precautions.*

**heavy rain / strong wind** — natural adjective-noun combinations.
*Heavy rain and strong winds delayed the journey.*

**sound judgement / compelling evidence** — reliable judgement / strongly convincing evidence.
*Sound judgement requires attention to compelling evidence.*

**comply with / conform to** — obey a requirement / match a standard.
*Candidates must comply with instructions and conform to the prescribed format.*

## Natural word partnerships · 3

**refrain from / persist in** — avoid doing / continue doing.
*Refrain from guessing wildly; persist in checking the evidence.*

**prone to / conducive to** — likely to suffer or do / helping bring about.
*A noisy room is prone to distraction and is not conducive to study.*

**deprive of / prevent from** — take something away / stop an action.
*The outage deprived the village of power and prevented pumps from working.*

**capable of / responsible for** — having the ability / accountable.
*She is capable of leading and responsible for planning.*

## Phrasal verbs in context · 1

**bring about** — cause to happen.
*Careful planning brought about a major improvement.*

**bring up** — mention a subject.
*She brought up the scheduling problem at the meeting.*

**call off** — cancel.
*They called off the exercise because of lightning.*

**carry out** — perform or execute.
*The team carried out the inspection.*

## Phrasal verbs in context · 2

**come across** — find or meet unexpectedly.
*He came across an old route map.*

**come up with** — produce an idea or solution.
*The group came up with a safer plan.*

**cut down on** — reduce consumption or frequency.
*She cut down on unnecessary spending.*

**fall through** — fail to happen as planned.
*The arrangement fell through at the last moment.*

## Phrasal verbs in context · 3

**look into** — investigate.
*The office will look into the complaint.*

**look up to** — admire or respect.
*The trainees looked up to the veteran instructor.*

**put off** — postpone in this sense.
*They put off the briefing until noon.*

**put up with** — tolerate.
*Residents could not put up with the noise.*

## Phrasal verbs in context · 4

**rule out** — exclude as a possibility.
*The findings ruled out mechanical failure.*

**run out of** — use up the available supply.
*The vehicle ran out of fuel.*

**set up** — establish.
*They set up a temporary communications post.*

**turn down** — reject in this sense.
*She turned down the unsuitable offer.*

## Grammar does not settle every blank

**Grammatically possible, semantically wrong.** "The witness's account was ___ by the camera footage." **Corroborated** means supported; **contradicted** means challenged. Both fit the grammar. The surrounding evidence must decide.

**Register matters.** A formal report may require "investigate" rather than an informal expression. Do not assume the longest word is the most appropriate.

**Two blanks.** Test the pair as a unit. One strong fit does not compensate for a second word that reverses the intended meaning.

# 8 Cloze Test

Read the paragraph as a connected argument before deciding individual blanks.

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## The paragraph is the evidence

| FIRST READ | → | LOCAL CHECK | → | FINAL READ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Topic and direction** | | **Meaning and form** | | **Whole paragraph** |

A word must fit its immediate phrase and the paragraph's overall message. Keep an uncertain blank open until later sentences provide a clue.

## Four clues around a blank

**Grammar:** word class, agreement, tense, article and verb pattern. "An ___ decision" requires a suitable adjective with a vowel sound after *an*.

**Lexical partnership:** "pose a threat", "take a decision" or "make a decision", "rely on". Grammar alone does not establish natural wording.

**Logical relation:** contrast, cause, result, example or addition. *However* cannot replace *therefore* merely because both connect sentences.

**Reference and time:** identify what *this*, *they*, *such* and *then* refer to. A later sentence may explain an earlier blank.

## Worked cloze: three decisions

**Paragraph.** “The first plan looked efficient. (1) ___, a trial exposed a serious flaw. The team therefore (2) ___ the design before the final test. This change helped (3) ___ the risk of failure.”

**1 — However.** The second sentence contrasts appearance with the trial result. *Moreover* would add a similar point, while *therefore* would claim a result.

**2 — revised.** The past-time account needs a verb meaning changed after examination. A plan can be *revised*; “revision” is a noun.

**3 — reduce.** The change made failure less likely. “Helped reduce” is a standard verb pattern. “Helped to reduce” is also standard when the options permit it.

## Avoid the locally tempting answer

**Example.** “The policy was intended to save time. In practice, it added three extra approvals and made the procedure ___.” **Slower** fits the observed result even though “save time” initially suggests “faster”.

**Reread with all selected words inserted.** Check that the writer does not unintentionally change position, tense or subject halfway through.

**No guessing shortcut is universal.** Do not always choose the most positive word or the connector with the strongest contrast. The paragraph determines the answer.

# 9 Ordering of Words

Build a complete sentence before comparing the offered sequences.

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## Find the grammatical backbone

| SUBJECT | VERB | COMPLEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| The careful team | checked | every route |

Attach time, place and qualifying phrases to this backbone. Keep fixed phrases and dependent clauses intact; word order must preserve the intended meaning.

## Keep units together

**Phrase units.** Treat *in spite of*, *as soon as*, *in order to* and *not only ... but also* as connected structures, not isolated words.

**Clause units.** A clause introduced by *although*, *because* or *when* needs a suitable main clause. A grammatically unfinished fragment is rarely a complete answer.

**Adverb position.** Meaning can change: “Only Riya checked the map” excludes other people; “Riya checked only the map” excludes other objects. Do not force one universal position for *only*.

## Worked ordering: preserve the qualifier

**Parts.** P: after checking the weather
Q: the team
R: began the exercise
S: and inspecting the equipment
**Constraint:** Begin with Q.

**Sequence: Q R P S.** "The team began the exercise after checking the weather and inspecting the equipment."

**Why.** Q supplies the subject and R the main verb. P and S form parallel activities after *after*. S cannot begin a complete sentence here.

**Check the given constraint.** An introductory phrase might work in another sentence, but this item requires Q at the beginning. Preserve both the sentence's grammar and the task's stated opening.

## Fixed opening and closing

**Opening:** "The instructor asked the cadets"
**P:** before they
**Q:** to check their equipment
**R:** entered the training area

**Q P R.** "The instructor asked the cadets to check their equipment before they entered the training area."

**Reason.** *Asked the cadets to check* is the governing pattern. *Before they* must precede a finite verb such as *entered*. Read the fixed opening as part of the sentence.

# 10 Ordering of Sentences

Follow references, chronology and argument; first impressions are not enough.

**NDA · CDS · AFCAT**

## A strong paragraph chain

| INTRODUCE | → | DEVELOP | → | RESOLVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A problem or idea** | | **Evidence or response** | | **Result or judgement** |

This is a useful pattern, not a compulsory template. Narrative, comparison and argument can follow different structures. Use the links that the actual sentences provide.

## Links that constrain order

**Reference:** "this decision" usually needs a decision already identified. "Such equipment" normally points to a preceding description.

**Chronology:** an event precedes its aftermath; a proposal precedes its approval. Distinguish story time from the order in which a writer chooses to reveal it.

**Logic:** a contrast follows something to contrast with; an example follows or introduces a general claim; a conclusion needs supporting material.

**Lexical chains:** a project → the plan → its implementation. A repeated noun may provide a more secure link than a vague pronoun.

## Worked paragraph: a definite chain

**P.** The first inspection found cracks in the old bridge.
**Q.** These cracks made immediate repairs necessary.
**R.** The repairs were completed before the monsoon.
**S.** The bridge could therefore reopen safely.

**P Q R S.** P introduces cracks; Q refers to *these cracks* and creates the need for repairs. R reports their completion. S states the result.

**Why not P R Q S?** It reports completion before establishing why the repairs were needed and weakens the immediate reference from cracks to *these cracks*.

## S1 and S6 are part of the puzzle

**S1.** The village had no reliable warning system.
**P.** To address this gap, volunteers installed a river-level sensor.
**Q.** Its readings were sent to a shared phone.
**R.** When the level rose sharply, the phone issued an alert.
**S.** Residents then moved to higher ground.
**S6.** The early warning helped prevent casualties.

**P Q R S.** The gap is the missing warning system; *its* refers to the sensor. Alert precedes evacuation, and the final sentence evaluates the outcome.

**Final check.** Test the last movable sentence against S6. A convincing opening pair does not guarantee the full order.

# 11 Discourse Markers

Identify the relationship between ideas before choosing the connector.

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## Addition, contrast and concession

**Addition:** moreover, furthermore, in addition. “The route is shorter; moreover, it is well lit.” The second point supports the same direction.

**Contrast:** however, in contrast, whereas. “The route is shorter; however, it is steep.” The second point limits the advantage.

**Concession:** although, even though, despite. “Although the route was steep, the team continued.” An expected obstacle does not prevent the result.

**Form matters.** *Although + clause*; *despite + noun/-ing form*. “Despite the rain” / “Although it rained.” Do not write “despite of”.

## Cause, result, purpose and condition

**Cause:** because, since, as. “The departure was delayed because visibility was poor.” *Since* and *as* can also have other senses.

**Result:** therefore, consequently, as a result. “Visibility was poor; therefore, departure was delayed.” Preserve the direction of reasoning.

**Purpose:** so that, in order to. “They left early so that they could arrive before dark.” Purpose is an intended result, not necessarily an achieved one.

**Condition:** if, unless, provided that. “Proceed only if permission is granted” makes permission necessary; it does not by itself guarantee departure.

## Examples, reformulation and qualification

**Example:** for example, for instance, such as. A specific case illustrates a broader point; it does not automatically prove a universal claim.

**Reformulation:** in other words, that is. The next wording restates or clarifies an idea rather than introducing a contradiction.

**Qualification:** to some extent, generally, in most cases. Preserve these limits in a paraphrase; “often” does not mean “always”.

**Worked choice.** “The equipment is expensive. ___, its long life may justify the cost.” **Nevertheless** fits the concession. *Consequently* would wrongly present longevity as the result of being expensive.

# 12 Assertion and Reason

Decide how the second sentence relates to the first.

**CDS statement-relationship format · useful reading skill for all**

## Four relationships to distinguish

**Confirms:** S2 supports, verifies or reinforces the assertion in S1. It need not repeat exactly the same words.

**Contrasts:** S2 presents a difference, often between different subjects or circumstances. Both statements can be true together.

**Contradicts:** S2 asserts something incompatible with S1 when the subject, time and scope are the same. “All routes are open” and “One of these routes is closed” cannot both be true at that time.

**Qualifies:** S2 narrows, limits or adds a reservation to S1. It does not necessarily reject S1; it may state where its benefit, strength or application ends.

## Read scope before choosing a label

**Different subjects:** “The northern hall is bright.” / “The southern hall is dim.” This is a contrast, not a contradiction about one hall.

**Same subject, incompatible claim:** “Every parcel arrived.” / “One parcel did not arrive.” S2 contradicts the universal assertion.

**A limited benefit:** “The new bridge shortens the journey.” / “This saving applies only to travellers approaching from the north.” S2 qualifies the scope of the benefit.

**No connector shortcut.** *However* may introduce a contrast or a qualification. Judge what S2 does to the actual claim, not merely its opening word.

## Confirmation, explanation and the given task

**Example.** S1: “The reservoir level has fallen this week.” S2: “The gauge shows a drop of twenty centimetres since Monday.” S2 supplies evidence confirming S1.

**Confirming is not necessarily explaining.** A measurement supports the fall without identifying its cause. A cause-and-effect explanation is a different relationship.

**Use the supplied response categories.** In a separate assertion–reason format, an exam may ask whether both statements are true and whether R explains A. That requires a truth check and an explanation check; do not import that answer scheme into an S1/S2 confirmation–contrast question.

# 13 Reading Comprehension

Base every answer on the passage and distinguish what is stated from what is merely possible.

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## Claim, evidence, scope

| CLAIM | EVIDENCE | SCOPE |
|---|---|---|
| **What does the option say?** | **Which line supports it?** | **Has it gone too far?** |

A true fact from outside the passage can still be the wrong answer. For an inference, select a conclusion supported by the text without adding an unstated assumption.

## Main idea, title and purpose

**Main idea:** the central claim connecting most of the passage. A detail from one example is usually too narrow; a claim about all society may be too broad.

**Title:** a concise description of the passage's overall focus. Prefer coverage and precision over a dramatic phrase that distorts the author's position.

**Purpose:** explain, argue, compare, criticise, describe or recommend. A passage can mention a problem chiefly to explain a proposed solution.

**Worked distinction.** A passage weighing the benefits and limits of digital maps is not simply "about technology"; its focus is how to use digital maps without losing navigational judgement.

## Fact, inference and assumption

**Stated fact:** directly given, sometimes rephrased. "The library opens at seven" supports "Readers may enter from 7 a.m." if the morning context is clear.

**Inference:** a conclusion warranted by the details. "Only holders of a pass entered; Mira entered" supports "Mira held a pass".

**Unsupported leap:** Mira entered does not show she was the first visitor, liked the library or visited every day.

**Necessary versus sufficient.** "Only trained staff may operate the machine" makes training necessary. It does not say every trained person has permission to operate it.

## Tone and attitude

**Analytical:** examines reasons or components. **Sceptical:** questions a claim. **Appreciative:** recognises value. **Critical:** identifies faults.

**Qualified approval:** support with reservations. **Cautiously optimistic:** hopeful while recognising uncertainty. **Neutral:** largely informative without a strong evaluative stance.

**Do not overstate.** Criticism is not automatically sarcasm; concern is not necessarily pessimism; one favourable phrase does not make a balanced passage enthusiastic.

**Evidence first.** Notice evaluative words, concessions and the conclusion. The subject's emotional importance does not determine the writer's tone.

## Words and references in a passage

**Vocabulary in context.** Replace the word in the actual sentence. "The proposal gained currency" means acceptance or circulation, not banknotes.

**Pronoun reference.** Follow number, grammar and meaning. The nearest noun is a candidate, not an automatic answer.

**Scope words.** Some, many, most and all are different claims. May, can, should and must are different levels of possibility or obligation.

**Negative questions.** Mark **NOT**, **EXCEPT** or **cannot be inferred**. For each option, note whether the text supports it, contradicts it or leaves it undecided.

## A worked inference with elimination

**Text.** "The trial reduced delivery time on clear days. During heavy rain, however, the new route offered no advantage. The planners recommended retaining both routes."

**Supported:** The new route's advantage depends on conditions.

**Too strong:** The new route is always faster. Heavy rain is an explicit exception.
**Unsupported:** The old route is cheaper. Cost is never discussed.
**Contradicted:** The planners rejected the new route entirely. They retained both.

**Exam habit.** Eliminate options for a stated reason. A defensible answer is stronger than one that merely "sounds right".

# 14 Analogy

State the relationship as a sentence, then preserve its direction.

**AFCAT-specific topic · useful vocabulary practice for all**

## The relationship is the test

| PAIR ONE | → | RELATION | → | PAIR TWO |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Compass → direction** | | **instrument identifies** | | **Thermometer → temperature** |

A compass and a thermometer have different uses, but the relationship between each instrument and the quantity it indicates is parallel.

## Common relationships

**Creator → creation:** poet → poem; sculptor → statue.
**Study → subject:** ornithology → birds; botany → plants.

**Object → function:** sieve → separate; shield → protect.
**Part → whole:** petal → flower; wheel → vehicle.

**Degree:** warm → hot; annoyed → furious.
**Opposition:** scarce → abundant; rigid → flexible.

**Direction is essential.** If the first pair is *worker → workplace*, do not choose a pair arranged as *workplace → worker*. Sharing a topic is weaker than sharing a precise relation.

## Worked analogy: role, not association

**Question.** Cartographer : map :: lexicographer : ?
A. dictionary B. library C. language D. manuscript

**A — dictionary.** A cartographer makes maps; a lexicographer compiles dictionaries. *Language* is the field-related distractor; *library* is a place.

**Check precision.** The relationship is not "a person who reads something". Name the activity before selecting the parallel pair.

# 15 Transformation of Sentence

Preserve the actors, time, degree, negation and logical relationship.

**AFCAT-specific focus · complements the grammar handbook**

## Recognise the sentence structure

**Simple:** one independent clause without a finite subordinate clause in the usual exam classification. “The team checked the route and departed.” A shared subject can have coordinated verbs without creating two independent clauses.

**Compound:** at least two independent clauses linked appropriately: “The team checked the route, and the driver prepared the vehicle.” Each clause can stand on its own.

**Complex:** a main clause with at least one subordinate clause: “The team departed **after the driver checked the vehicle**.” The after-clause cannot stand alone with this meaning.

**Compound-complex:** at least two independent clauses plus a subordinate clause. In traditional complex-to-simple tasks, a finite subordinate clause is often replaced by a non-finite or prepositional expression; modern grammar may call non-finite expressions clauses too. Follow the task’s convention without changing the meaning.

## Complex to simple: keep the meaning

**Concession.** “Although she was tired, she continued.” → “Despite being tired, she continued.” The same person is tired and continues.

**Cause.** “Because he was ill, he stayed home.” → “Because of his illness, he stayed home.” Do not turn an actual cause into a mere purpose.

**Purpose.** “She trained so that she could improve her stamina.” → “She trained to improve her stamina.” The intention is preserved; improvement is not asserted as certain.

**Time.** “After she checked the map, she left.” → “After checking the map, she left.” The understood subject of *checking* remains *she*.

## Do not create a dangling subject

**Original.** “When the rain stopped, the team departed.”
**Equivalent.** “After the rain stopped, the team departed.”

**Not equivalent.** “After stopping the rain, the team departed.” This makes the team the agent that stopped the rain.

**Safe reduction.** “When the team finished its inspection, it departed.” → “After finishing its inspection, the team departed.” The agent remains the team.

**Transformation tasks may require a specific form.** An option can preserve meaning yet fail a request for a *simple* sentence. Check both equivalence and the requested structure.

## Degree and negation traps

**Too … to.** “The box is too heavy for him to lift.” → “The box is so heavy that he cannot lift it.” Preserve *for him*; it does not mean no one can lift it.

**Unless.** “Unless you practise, you will not improve.” → “If you do not practise, you will not improve.” This does not claim practice guarantees improvement.

**Only.** “Only trained staff may enter” is not equivalent to “All trained staff must enter”. Permission, necessity and obligation differ.

**Comparison.** “Mira is taller than any other cadet in her group” identifies her as the tallest in that group. Do not expand the comparison to every cadet everywhere.

# 16 Practice Questions

Attempt the questions before opening the explanations. All items here are original practice.

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## Questions 1–2

**1.** The panel gave a **candid** assessment. Choose the closest meaning of candid.
**A.** hostile · **B.** frank · **C.** careless · **D.** lengthy
Explanation

**2.** The heat began to **abate** after sunset. Abate means:
**A.** subside · **B.** intensify · **C.** spread · **D.** return
Explanation

## Questions 3–4

**3.** The witness's account was **corroborated** by the recording. Corroborated means:
**A.** supported · **B.** rejected · **C.** repeated word for word · **D.** concealed
Explanation

**4.** The heat **enervated** the marchers. Enervated means:
**A.** encouraged · **B.** organised · **C.** refreshed · **D.** weakened
Explanation

## Questions 5–6

**5.** The explanation was **lucid**. Lucid means:
**A.** brief · **B.** cautious · **C.** clear · **D.** traditional
Explanation

**6.** Choose the opposite of **scanty** in "The evidence was scanty".
**A.** unreliable · **B.** recent · **C.** abundant · **D.** irrelevant
Explanation

## Questions 7–8

**7.** Choose the opposite of **mitigate** in “The measure will mitigate the problem”.
**A.** identify · **B.** examine · **C.** aggravate · **D.** postpone
Explanation

**8.** Choose the opposite of **taciturn**.
**A.** honest · **B.** sensitive · **C.** talkative · **D.** patient
Explanation

## Questions 9–10

**9.** Choose the opposite of **ephemeral** in “an ephemeral success”.
**A.** unexpected · **B.** enduring · **C.** undeserved · **D.** accidental
Explanation

**10.** Choose the opposite of **impartial**.
**A.** careful · **B.** qualified · **C.** biased · **D.** confident
Explanation

## Questions 11–12

**11.** A person who compiles dictionaries is a:
**A.** calligrapher · **B.** biographer · **C.** cartographer · **D.** lexicographer
Explanation

**12.** A speech delivered without advance preparation is:
**A.** posthumous · **B.** illegible · **C.** extempore · **D.** unanimous
Explanation

## Questions 13–14

**13.** A person studying birds professionally is an:
**A.** anthropologist · **B.** entomologist · **C.** archaeologist · **D.** ornithologist
Explanation

**14.** Words inscribed on a tomb in memory of a person form an:
**A.** epitaph · **B.** autobiography · **C.** anthology · **D.** obituary
Explanation

## Questions 15–16

**15.** Unfair favour to relatives in appointments is:
**A.** nostalgia · **B.** nepotism · **C.** fatalism · **D.** altruism
Explanation

**16.** "The date is still **up in the air**" means the date is:
**A.** no longer relevant · **B.** announced publicly · **C.** not yet settled · **D.** approaching rapidly
Explanation

## Questions 17–18

**17.** The inquiry **shed light on** the delay. It:
**A.** removed every consequence · **B.** helped explain it · **C.** ignored it · **D.** made it longer
Explanation

**18.** An irrelevant argument introduced to distract from the issue is a:
**A.** red herring · **B.** rule of thumb · **C.** feather in one's cap · **D.** close shave
Explanation

## Questions 19–20

**19.** They refused to **cut corners** during inspection. They refused to:
**A.** use a shorter road
**B.** inspect the building's edges
**C.** omit necessary steps
**D.** change direction
Explanation

**20.** "Take the claim **with a pinch of salt**" means:
**A.** treat it with some scepticism
**B.** dismiss it as certainly false
**C.** repeat it widely
**D.** accept it literally
Explanation

## Questions 21–22

**21.** The investigator tried to ___ the cause of the failure.
**A.** retain · **B.** entertain · **C.** sustain · **D.** ascertain
Explanation

**22.** The writer ___ that the delay was avoidable; the reader may ___ this from the final paragraph.
**A.** infers / infer · **B.** infers / imply · **C.** implies / imply · **D.** implies / infer
Explanation

## Questions 23–24

**23.** The ___ of the college explained its guiding ___.
**A.** principle / principal · **B.** principal / principle · **C.** principal / principal · **D.** principle / principle
Explanation

**24.** The boat was moved to a sheltered ___.
**A.** breathe · **B.** berth · **C.** birth · **D.** breadth
Explanation

## Questions 25–26

**25.** The engineer will ___ the source in the report about the new ___.
**A.** cite / site · **B.** site / sight · **C.** sight / cite · **D.** cite / sight
Explanation

**26.** All applicants must comply ___ the instructions.
**A.** for · **B.** with · **C.** to · **D.** at
Explanation

## Questions 27–28

**27.** The committee will look ___ the complaint before replying.
**A.** into · **B.** over to · **C.** after · **D.** up
Explanation

**28.** The remedy should ___ the pain rather than make it worse.
**A.** alleviate · **B.** imitate · **C.** aggravate · **D.** generate
Explanation

## Questions 29–30

**29.** The new route is shorter. ___, it is closed during the monsoon.
**A.** However · **B.** For example · **C.** Therefore · **D.** Moreover
Explanation

**30.** The sensor failed; ___, no warning was transmitted.
**A.** nevertheless · **B.** similarly · **C.** consequently · **D.** in contrast
Explanation

## Questions 31–32

**31.** Cartographer : map :: lexicographer : ?
**A.** library · **B.** dictionary · **C.** paper · **D.** language
Explanation

**32.** Ornithology : birds :: botany : ?
**A.** plants · **B.** stones · **C.** insects · **D.** stars
Explanation

## Questions 33–34

**33.** Scarce : abundant :: rigid : ?
**A.** flexible · **B.** solid · **C.** brittle · **D.** firm
Explanation

**34.** Choose the simple sentence closest to “Although she was tired, she continued the inspection”.
**A.** Because she was tired, she continued the inspection.
**B.** Despite being tired, she continued the inspection.
**C.** She was tired because she continued the inspection.
**D.** She continued the inspection so that she became tired.
Explanation

## Questions 35–36

**35.** Choose the closest meaning of "The box is too heavy for Arun to lift".
**A.** Arun lifted the box because it was heavy.
**B.** The box is so heavy that Arun cannot lift it.
**C.** No person can lift the box.
**D.** Arun must lift the box despite its weight.
Explanation

**36.** Fixed opening: "The instructor asked the cadets".
P: before they;
Q: to check their equipment;
R: entered the training area.
Choose the order.
**A.** Q R P · **B.** R P Q · **C.** P Q R · **D.** Q P R
Explanation

## Questions 37–38

**37.** Fixed opening: "The report was".
P: after;
Q: submitted;
R: the errors had been corrected.
Choose the order.
**A.** Q P R · **B.** Q R P · **C.** P Q R · **D.** R Q P
Explanation

**38.** P: A storm damaged the village bridge.
Q: This damage cut off the usual road link.
R: To restore the link, engineers built a temporary crossing.
S: The crossing reopened the route within a week.
Choose the order.
**A.** P Q R S · **B.** Q P R S · **C.** P R S Q · **D.** R P Q S
Explanation

## Questions 39–40

**39.** P: The new sensor was installed beside the river.
Q: Its readings were sent to the control room.
R: There, staff compared them with the warning threshold.
S: An alert was issued when that threshold was crossed.
Choose the order.
**A.** Q P R S · **B.** P R Q S · **C.** S P Q R · **D.** P Q R S
Explanation

**40.** S1: The library's catalogue was entirely on paper.
P: As a result, readers often waited while staff searched the files.
Q: To reduce these delays, staff created a digital index.
R: The index linked each title to its shelf location.
S: This made routine searches much faster.
S6: Staff could then spend more time helping readers.
Choose the order.
**A.** Q R P S · **B.** P Q R S · **C.** P R Q S · **D.** S P Q R
Explanation

## Cloze A · Questions 41–45

A good plan is not a promise that nothing will go wrong. It is a way of (41) ___ difficulties before they arise. Teams should test assumptions rather than (42) ___ them without question. When evidence challenges a plan, revision is a sign of judgement, not (43) ___. A revised plan should also be communicated clearly, (44) ___ different members may otherwise follow different versions. The final check is whether everyone understands what to do and (45) ___ to report a problem.

## Cloze A · blanks 41–43

Read Cloze A

**41.** Blank 41
**A.** forgetting · **B.** concealing · **C.** denying · **D.** anticipating
Explanation

Read Cloze A

**42.** Blank 42
**A.** examining · **B.** accepting · **C.** revising · **D.** testing
Explanation

Read Cloze A

**43.** Blank 43
**A.** courage · **B.** weakness · **C.** skill · **D.** clarity
Explanation

## Cloze A · blanks 44–45

Read Cloze A

**44.** Blank 44
**A.** unless · **B.** whereas · **C.** because · **D.** although
Explanation

Read Cloze A

**45.** Blank 45
**A.** whose · **B.** what · **C.** how · **D.** which
Explanation

## Cloze B · Questions 46–50

An effective reader does not stop at every unfamiliar word. First, the reader considers the sentence and the (46) ___ ideas. A contrast marker may show that the missing meaning is (47) ___ to an earlier one. An example may offer a more concrete clue. These clues do not (48) ___ certainty in every case, but they help narrow the choices. A dictionary can then confirm the likely sense. The aim is not merely to collect definitions, (49) ___ to recognise how words work together. Regular review makes this knowledge easier to (50) ___ when needed.

## Cloze B · blanks 46–48

Read Cloze B

**46.** Blank 46
**A.** unrelated · **B.** absent · **C.** surrounding · **D.** forgotten
Explanation

Read Cloze B

**47.** Blank 47
**A.** unconnected · **B.** identical · **C.** irrelevant · **D.** opposed
Explanation

Read Cloze B

**48.** Blank 48
**A.** guarantee · **B.** oppose · **C.** deny · **D.** reduce
Explanation

## Cloze B · blanks 49–50

Read Cloze B

**49.** Blank 49
**A.** for · **B.** or · **C.** nor · **D.** but
Explanation

Read Cloze B

**50.** Blank 50
**A.** retrieve · **B.** scatter · **C.** distort · **D.** conceal
Explanation

## Passage A · Questions 51–55

A coastal town installed a warning siren after a flood. During the first drill, the siren could be heard in the market but not in several streets behind a ridge. Officials initially proposed increasing its volume. Residents suggested a different approach: retain the siren, add phone alerts and train volunteers to visit households that could not reliably receive either signal. The second drill used all three methods. More households received the warning, but some did not understand the evacuation route. The organisers therefore concluded that successful warning required both reliable delivery and a clear message. They planned further drills rather than treating the new equipment as a complete solution.

## Passage A · questions 51–52

Read Passage A

**51.** What is the passage's main point?
**A.** Buying equipment makes further drills unnecessary.
**B.** Phone alerts should replace every other warning method.
**C.** Louder sirens always provide the best warning.
**D.** Warning systems need effective delivery and understandable instructions.
Explanation

Read Passage A

**52.** Why were phone alerts and volunteers added?
**A.** To avoid testing the warning system.
**B.** To close the town market.
**C.** To stop residents using evacuation routes.
**D.** To reach households not reliably served by the siren alone.
Explanation

## Passage A · questions 53–54

Read Passage A

**53.** Which conclusion is best supported?
**A.** Every household received the second warning.
**B.** Volunteers were the least effective method.
**C.** The new siren was louder than the first.
**D.** Equipment alone did not settle every warning problem.
Explanation

Read Passage A

**54.** In “reliable delivery”, delivery means:
**A.** the sale of goods
**B.** a public speech
**C.** the warning’s successful transmission to people
**D.** the transport of officials
Explanation

## Passage A · questions 55–55

Read Passage A

**55.** The organisers’ attitude at the end is best described as:
**A.** certain that no further work is needed
**B.** hostile to all technology
**C.** indifferent to household safety
**D.** practical and willing to improve
Explanation

## Passage B · Questions 56–60

A training centre introduced digital maps to help recruits compare possible routes quickly. The maps displayed distances accurately and saved time during planning. Yet instructors noticed that some recruits followed the displayed line without checking the ground. A short path on the screen could cross a flooded stream or a slope too steep for the group. The instructors did not abandon the maps. Instead, they asked recruits to explain why a proposed route was suitable, using both the map and observations from the field. The change made planning slightly slower at first, but it exposed weak assumptions before departure. The instructors judged this a worthwhile cost: a tool was most useful when it supported judgement rather than replacing it.

## Passage B · questions 56–57

Read Passage B

**56.** Which title best fits the passage?
**A.** Why All Digital Maps Are Inaccurate
**B.** The Shortest Route Is Always Best
**C.** Using Maps Without Surrendering Judgement
**D.** The End of Field Training
Explanation

Read Passage B

**57.** Why might a short displayed route be unsuitable?
**A.** The map never shows distance.
**B.** Ground conditions may prevent safe passage.
**C.** It must always be longer than the alternatives.
**D.** Instructors oppose every digital tool.
Explanation

## Passage B · questions 58–59

Read Passage B

**58.** The instructors regarded the initial extra planning time as:
**A.** a permanent failure of the recruits
**B.** a reason to stop comparing routes
**C.** a worthwhile cost for identifying weak assumptions
**D.** proof that the maps were useless
Explanation

Read Passage B

**59.** What does “it” refer to in “rather than replacing it”?
**A.** departure · **B.** judgement · **C.** the training centre · **D.** a flooded stream
Explanation

## Passage B · questions 60–60

Read Passage B

**60.** Which statement is **NOT** supported by the passage?
**A.** The revised process exposed some weak assumptions.
**B.** Field observations helped evaluate a route.
**C.** Digital maps saved planning time initially.
**D.** The shortest displayed route was always safe.
Explanation

## Questions 61–62

**61.** In “The patrol moved **fast**”, fast functions as an:
**A.** adjective · **B.** adverb · **C.** noun · **D.** preposition
Explanation

**62.** Classify “Because the rain became heavy, the team returned”.
**A.** compound sentence · **B.** simple sentence · **C.** complex sentence · **D.** sentence fragment
Explanation

## Questions 63–64

**63.** Choose the standard completion: “I prefer walking ___ waiting for a bus”.
**A.** from · **B.** over than · **C.** to · **D.** than
Explanation

**64.** Choose the standard completion: “I would rather you ___ the briefing now”.
**A.** attend · **B.** attends · **C.** attending · **D.** attended
Explanation

## Questions 65–66

**65.** S1: The northern hall is brightly lit.
S2: The southern hall is dimly lit.
S2 ___ S1.
**A.** contrasts with · **B.** confirms · **C.** contradicts · **D.** explains the cause of
Explanation

**66.** S1: The new bridge shortens the journey.
S2: This saving applies only to travellers approaching from the north.
S2 ___ S1.
**A.** qualifies
**B.** repeats exactly
**C.** contradicts
**D.** explains the construction of
Explanation

## Questions 67–68

**67.** S1: The reservoir level has fallen this week.
S2: The gauge shows a drop of twenty centimetres since Monday.
S2 ___ S1.
**A.** contradicts · **B.** confirms · **C.** contrasts with · **D.** limits the benefit of
Explanation

**68.** S1: All candidates in this group passed the final test.
S2: Two candidates in this group failed that test.
S2 ___ S1.
**A.** confirms
**B.** explains
**C.** contrasts without conflict with
**D.** contradicts
Explanation

# 17 Answers and Explanations

Use the reason to check your decision, especially where two options seemed close.

NDA · CDS · AFCAT

## Answers 1–4

**1. B — frank**
Candid means frank or direct here. It does not necessarily mean rude or hostile. Return to question

**2. A — subside**
Abate means become less strong. Subside preserves that reduction in intensity. Return to question

**3. A — supported**
The recording supplied supporting evidence. Corroboration need not be an exact verbal repetition. Return to question

**4. D — weakened**
Enervate means drain energy or strength; it is a trap for readers who associate its spelling with energy. Return to question

## Answers 5–8

**5. C — clear**
Lucid means understandable and clear. An explanation may be long and still be lucid. Return to question

**6. C — abundant**
Scanty concerns amount. Abundant reverses that meaning; unreliable concerns quality instead. Return to question

**7. C — aggravate**
Mitigate makes a difficulty less severe; aggravate makes it worse. Return to question

**8. C — talkative**
Taciturn describes a habitually quiet person. Talkative is the relevant contrast. Return to question

## Answers 9–12

**9. B — enduring**
Ephemeral means short-lived. Enduring reverses duration; the other options concern different qualities. Return to question

**10. C — biased**
Impartial judgement does not favour a side; biased judgement does. Return to question

**11. D — lexicographer**
A lexicographer compiles or edits dictionaries. A cartographer makes maps; a biographer writes about a life. Return to question

**12. C — extempore**
Extempore identifies the absence of prior preparation, not the speech's quality or length. Return to question

## Answers 13–16

**13. D — ornithologist**
Ornithology concerns birds. Entomology concerns insects, a related-looking but different field. Return to question

**14. A — epitaph**
An epitaph is a memorial inscription on a tomb. An obituary is a published death notice or account. Return to question

**15. B — nepotism**
Nepotism concerns favouritism towards relatives, especially in jobs or appointments. Return to question

**16. C — not yet settled**
Up in the air means unresolved or undecided in this context; it has no literal aviation meaning here. Return to question

## Answers 17–20

**17. B — helped explain it**
Shed light on means clarify. An inquiry can explain a delay without eliminating its consequences. Return to question

**18. A — red herring**
A red herring diverts attention. A rule of thumb is a practical approximate guide. Return to question

**19. C — omit necessary steps**
Cut corners means save effort or time by leaving out necessary or proper steps. Return to question

**20. A — treat it with some scepticism**
The phrase calls for caution, not unconditional belief or automatic rejection. Return to question

## Answers 21–24

**21. D — ascertain**
Ascertain means establish or find out. Only it fits the investigative purpose of the sentence. Return to question

**22. D — implies / infer**
The writer puts a suggestion into the message (implies); the reader draws the conclusion (infers). Return to question

**23. B — principal / principle**
Principal can mean the head of a college; principle means a governing rule or belief. Return to question

**24. B — berth**
Berth is a place assigned for a vessel to lie. Birth is unrelated despite the similar sound. Return to question

## Answers 25–28

**25. A — cite / site**
Cite means identify a source; site means a location. Sight concerns vision or something seen. Return to question

**26. B — with**
The required combination is comply with instructions. Do not transfer the preposition from conform to. Return to question

**27. A — into**
Look into means investigate. Look after means care for; look up has other senses. Return to question

**28. A — alleviate**
Alleviate means ease. The contrast with making pain worse confirms the intended meaning. Return to question

## Answers 29–32

**29. A — However**
The closure limits the route's advantage, so a contrast marker is required. Return to question

**30. C — consequently**
Failure is presented as the cause and the absent warning as the result; consequently preserves this relation. Return to question

**31. B — dictionary**
The relation is specialist to product: a cartographer makes maps; a lexicographer compiles dictionaries. Return to question

**32. A — plants**
The relation is field of study to its subject. Botany studies plants. Return to question

## Answers 33–36

**33. A — flexible**
Each pair consists of opposites in the relevant sense: limited supply versus plenty; inflexible versus flexible. Return to question

**34. B — Despite being tired, she continued the inspection.**
Despite being tired preserves concession and the same subject. The other options change cause, purpose or time. Return to question

**35. B — The box is so heavy that Arun cannot lift it.**
The original restricts inability to Arun. It does not establish that nobody can lift the box or create an obligation. Return to question

**36. D — Q P R**
Asked the cadets to check is the governing pattern. Before they entered forms the time clause. Return to question

## Answers 37–40

**37. A — Q P R**
The report was submitted completes the passive verb. After the errors had been corrected gives the preceding condition in time. Return to question

**38. A — P Q R S**
Damage is introduced before this damage; the lost link creates the need for the crossing, which then restores the route. Return to question

**39. D — P Q R S**
Its requires sensor; there refers to the control room; that threshold follows its introduction in R. Return to question

**40. B — P Q R S**
P explains the old problem; Q responds to these delays; R explains the index; S states the benefit that leads naturally into S6. Return to question

## Answers 41–44

**41. D — anticipating**
Anticipating means considering difficulties before they occur. The following words before they arise provide the clue. Return to question

**42. B — accepting**
Rather than contrasts testing with uncritical acceptance. Testing and examining would not create the intended contrast. Return to question

**43. B — weakness**
The sentence defends revision: it shows judgement rather than weakness. The other nouns would not express the intended rejected criticism. Return to question

**44. C — because**
The risk of members following different versions explains why communication is needed; because introduces the reason. Return to question

## Answers 45–48

**45. C — how**
How to report describes the procedure. The other options do not complete the intended structure here. Return to question

**46. C — surrounding**
The reader uses ideas around the sentence. Surrounding identifies relevant contextual information. Return to question

**47. D — opposed**
A contrast marker suggests an opposition or difference. Opposed is the only option expressing that relationship. Return to question

**48. A — guarantee**
The concession says context clues help without ensuring certainty. Do not guarantee expresses that limitation. Return to question

## Answers 49–52

**49. D — but**
The construction not merely … but … adds the more important purpose: recognising combinations. Return to question

**50. A — retrieve**
Retrieve means bring stored knowledge back when needed; the other verbs conflict with the purpose of revision. Return to question

**51. D — Warning systems need effective delivery and understandable instructions.**
The conclusion explicitly combines reliable delivery with a clear message; the drills reveal weaknesses in both. Return to question

**52. D — To reach households not reliably served by the siren alone.**
The ridge blocked the siren in some streets, and volunteers covered households that might miss electronic signals. Return to question

## Answers 53–56

**53. D — Equipment alone did not settle every warning problem.**
Some residents still misunderstood the evacuation route; the organisers did not regard equipment as a complete solution. Return to question

**54. C — the warning's successful transmission to people**
Delivery refers to getting the warning to its intended recipients, not to goods or officials. Return to question

**55. D — practical and willing to improve**
They identify remaining weaknesses and plan more drills, showing practical improvement rather than complacency or rejection of technology. Return to question

**56. C — Using Maps Without Surrendering Judgement**
The passage recognises the map's benefits but argues for combining it with field observation and judgement. Return to question

## Answers 57–60

**57. B — Ground conditions may prevent safe passage.**
Flooded streams and steep slopes are explicit examples of unsuitable ground conditions. Return to question

**58. C — a worthwhile cost for identifying weak assumptions**
The final sentences explicitly describe the extra time as worthwhile because it reveals weak assumptions early. Return to question

**59. B — judgement**
The contrast is between a tool supporting judgement and a tool replacing judgement. Return to question

**60. D — The shortest displayed route was always safe.**
The passage gives counterexamples to safety on short routes. The other statements are explicitly supported. Return to question

## Answers 61–64

**61. B — adverb**
Fast modifies the verb moved and describes how the patrol moved. The same word is an adjective in a fast vehicle. Return to question

**62. C — complex sentence**
The team returned is the main clause; because the rain became heavy is a subordinate clause giving the reason. Return to question

**63. C — to**
The standard paired -ing pattern is prefer doing A to doing B. Rather than is used in a different pattern such as prefer to walk rather than wait. Return to question

**64. D — attended**
With a different subject after would rather, a past form commonly expresses a present or future preference. Here now establishes the intended present time. Return to question

## Answers 65–68

**65. A — contrasts with**
The sentences describe different halls with different lighting. They can both be true, so this is contrast rather than contradiction. Return to question

**66. A — qualifies**
S2 limits who receives the benefit. It qualifies the scope of S1 without denying that some journeys become shorter. Return to question

**67. B — confirms**
The measurement provides supporting evidence for the fall. It confirms the statement without explaining the cause. Return to question

**68. D — contradicts**
With the same group and test, two failures are incompatible with the universal claim that all passed. Return to question