



# TOEFL Reading Practice Questions

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## Complete the Words

**Directions:** Fill in the missing letters in the paragraph. (Questions 1-10)

*Shield volcanoes are broad, gently sloping mountains formed by repeated eruptions of low-viscosity lava. Be\_\_\_\_\_ the lava fl\_\_\_\_\_ eas\_\_\_\_\_, it spreads o\_\_\_\_\_ ov\_\_\_\_\_ large areas be\_\_\_\_\_ cooling and hardening. Over t\_\_\_\_\_, these layers build u\_\_\_\_\_ to create t\_\_\_\_\_ volcano's w\_\_\_\_\_ shape. Shield volcanoes are most common in oceanic regions, such as Hawaii, where basaltic lava rises from deep within the Earth's mantle. Their eruptions are usually nonexplosive but can last for long periods.*

1. Be\_\_\_\_\_
2. fl\_\_\_\_\_
3. eas\_\_\_\_\_
4. o\_\_\_\_\_
5. ov\_\_\_\_\_
6. be\_\_\_\_\_
7. t\_\_\_\_\_
8. u\_\_\_\_\_
9. t\_\_\_\_\_
10. w\_\_\_\_\_

## Read in Daily Life

**Directions:** Read a social media post.



11. What is the main purpose of the post?
  - A. To enlist new members of a film club
  - B. To advertise vendors at Riverside Park
  - C. To promote a recurring community gathering
  - D. To announce a change in park hours
  
12. What can be inferred about the seating available at the event?
  - A. Chairs will be provided by the organizers.
  - B. Attendees are expected to bring something to sit on.
  - C. Only people with tickets will receive seating.
  - D. Seating will be arranged by the food trucks.

## Read in Daily Life

**Directions:** Read an email.

To:	janet.q@dmil.com
From:	skywayteam@dmil.com
Subject:	Important Update: Policy Changes

Beginning August 1st, our airline will introduce updated baggage rules to make check-in faster and improve on-time departures. Business class travelers will continue to enjoy two free checked bags. For passengers with economy seating, each checked bag will be charged according to new weight-based fees rather than flat rates.

Carry-on limits remain one small suitcase and one personal item, which must fit in the overhead compartment or under the seat in front of you. For full flights, some passengers may have their carry-on items checked free of charge, depending on available cabin space. To help avoid flight delays, before flying, we strongly recommend reviewing the updated baggage chart on our website, where you'll find detailed examples of fees for each route.

Thank you for your continued cooperation and understanding.  
The Skyway Airlines Team

13. What is the main purpose of the email?
- A. To advertise discounted baggage fees for new customers
  - B. To warn airline customers of upcoming flight delays
  - C. To announce new in-flight services for business class travelers
  - D. To explain upcoming changes to fees applicable to some passengers

14. What does the email say about carry-on baggage?
- A. Passengers may bring two full-sized suitcases on board.
  - B. Carry-on bags must meet certain size requirements.
  - C. Carry-on rules apply only to international flights.
  - D. The number of free items depends on the route flown.
15. According to the email, how will checked bags be priced for economy passengers?
- A. Using a variable rate per item
  - B. Using a flat rate per item
  - C. Based on the airplane's capacity
  - D. Based on their ability to fit into overhead compartments

## Read an Academic Passage

### The Origins of Written Language

Humans have used spoken language for tens of thousands of years, but writing is a much more recent invention. The ability to record information visually, rather than relying only on memory or speech, allowed early societies to keep track of trade, government, and history. But where did writing begin, and how did it develop into the systems we use today?

The earliest known writing appeared in Mesopotamia around 3200 BCE. People there used cuneiform, pressing a reed stylus into soft clay to create wedge-shaped marks. At first, these symbols represented rudimentary concepts, often objects or quantities, such as the number of sheep or jars of grain. Over time, however, cuneiform evolved to include signs for ideas and sounds, making it possible to record speech and tell stories.

Other civilizations created their own systems independently. In ancient Egypt, scribes used hieroglyphs, pictures that represented both words and sounds, while in China, early characters appeared on oracle bones used for divination. Despite differences, these early systems served a similar purpose: they allowed humans to transfer knowledge and communicate across time and distance.

Writing transformed civilization. It enabled laws, literature, and complex governments. Even today's alphabets share the same goal: to make language permanent.

16. What is the main focus of the passage?
- A. How writing replaced spoken language
  - B. The development and impact of early writing systems
  - C. The invention of tools for recordkeeping
  - D. The similarities between modern and ancient alphabets
17. The word “rudimentary” in the passage is closest in meaning to
- A. fundamental
  - B. agricultural
  - C. necessary
  - D. temporary
18. According to the passage, writing contributed to all of the following developments EXCEPT
- A. the preservation of knowledge across generations
  - B. the creation of organized governments and laws
  - C. the decline of oral storytelling traditions
  - D. the ability to record trade and history
19. The phrase “these early systems” refers to
- A. ancient spoken languages
  - B. oracle bones used for divination
  - C. civilizations that created written characters
  - D. Egyptian and Chinese writing forms
20. According to the passage, what was one result of the invention of writing?
- A. Disparate societies and cultures became more similar
  - B. People could share information in ways not previously possible
  - C. Governments became less organized
  - D. Trade records were replaced by spoken agreements

## Answer Key

You can find tips and preparation resources for the Reading Section [here](#).

## Answer Key

1. Because
2. flows
3. easily
4. out
5. over
6. before
7. time
8. up
9. the
10. wide
11. C
12. B
13. D
14. B
15. A
16. B
17. A
18. C
19. D
20. B

## Explanations

### Questions 1-10:

#### Strategy 1: Use Grammar Structure

This strategy helps us figure out missing words by looking at grammar clues: what type of word we need (verb, noun, preposition, etc.), how it fits into the sentence, and how it agrees with other words nearby.

Let's first go through some of the blanks in the passage by focusing specifically on grammar structure.

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### 1. Be\_\_\_\_\_ → **Because**

The full sentence is:

"Be\_\_\_\_\_ the lava fl\_\_\_\_\_ eas\_\_\_\_\_, it spreads o\_\_\_\_ ov\_\_\_\_\_ large areas be\_\_\_\_\_ cooling and hardening."

The part after the comma is an independent clause with a subject ("it") and a verb ("spreads"). The comma before the independent clause is a signal that this sentence opens with a *dependent clause*. And dependent clauses begin with a subordinating conjunction, such as *although, when, since*. So, what subordinating conjunction do we need?

We know that "it spreads..." is the *result*, so the missing clause must give the *reason*. **Because** is a subordinating conjunction that introduces a cause or reason, so it's a great match.

**Grammar Clue:** We need a conjunction to start a dependent clause

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### 2. fl\_\_\_\_\_ → **flows**

We're talking about what lava *does*, so we need a *verb*. "Lava" is singular, and this passage is in present tense (it "spreads"). That means we need a singular verb that ends in -s.

"Flow" is a common word used when talking about "lava". "Flow" is the base verb, and the correct present-tense form for "lava" (a singular noun) is **flows**.

**Grammar Clue:** Subject-verb agreement: "lava" is singular, so verb must end in -s

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### 3. eas\_\_\_\_\_ → **easily**

After a verb, we often need an *adverb* to describe more about *how* the verb operates. So, in this case, we need something that describes *how* the lava flows.



It sure looks like we're given the first three letters of "easy", but that is the adjective form. We need the adverb form, which is **easily**.

**Grammar Clue:** After a verb, use an adverb to describe how the action happens

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#### 9. t\_\_ → the

This is part of a noun phrase:

"...to create t\_\_ volcano's w\_\_\_ shape."

The articles *a*, *an*, and *the* often appear before a noun. We use **the** here because we're referring to a specific thing: the volcano we've been talking about.

**Grammar Clue:** Articles like "the" come before nouns to specify them.

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### Strategy 2: Use Common Collocations

Common collocations are like "word best friends": they just sound right together and are often used in the same combinations. When you're stuck, think: *Have I heard this phrase before?*

Let's apply that idea to some of the remaining blanks in the passage.

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#### 4. o\_\_ → out

In the sentence:

"...it spreads o\_\_ ov\_\_ large areas..."

The verb "spread" often comes with the preposition "out" to make the phrasal verb "**spread out**", which means to move and cover a larger area. That fits the image of lava moving across the land.

**Collocation Clue:** "Spread out" is a very common phrasal verb

**Context Fit:** Lava is physically moving outward

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#### 5. ov\_\_ → over

In the sentence:

“...it spreads out ov\_\_ large areas...”

After “spread out,” we often use “**over**” when talking about space or area: for example, “spread out over the field” or “spread out over the land.” Here, the sentence says “large areas,” so “**over**” fits well.

**Collocation Clue:** “Spread out over [an area]” is a natural combination of words

**Context Fit:** Describes lava covering a wide space

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## 7. t\_\_ → time

In the sentence:

“Over t\_\_, *these layers build u\_ to create...*”

The phrase “**over time**” is super common when we talk about slow changes or gradual processes. Volcanoes don’t form instantly; they develop over time.

**Collocation Clue:** “Over time” is a standard expression

**Context Fit:** Fits the meaning of slow buildup of lava layers

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## 8. u\_ → up

In the sentence:

“...these layers build u\_ to create...”

The verb “build” often pairs with “up” to make the phrasal verb “**build up**”, which means to gradually increase or accumulate, which is exactly what lava layers do to form a volcano.

**Collocation Clue:** “Build up” = increase layer by layer

**Context Fit:** Lava layers piling to form a mountain

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## Strategy 3: Use Passage Context

This strategy helps you zoom out and ask:

- *What’s going on in the sentence before and after?*
- *Is there a sequence or cause/effect relationship?*
- *What makes logical sense here, based on the topic?*

- Any words elsewhere in the passage that can help us make an educated guess?

Let's use context to solve the rest of the blanks.

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**6. be\_ \_ \_ \_ → before**

In the sentence:

"...it spreads out over large areas be\_ \_ \_ \_ cooling and hardening."

Think about the sequence: first, lava flows easily and spreads out. Then it cools and hardens.

The missing word must show this order of events. The best fit here is "**before**", which shows that the lava spreads over the land **before** it cools and hardens.

**Context Clue:** Time sequence: what happens first, what happens next

**Logical Progression of Ideas:** Lava moves, then it cools. So, "before" fits naturally

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**10. w\_ \_ \_ → wide**

In the sentence:

"...to create the volcano's w\_ \_ \_ shape."

Earlier in the passage, we're told that shield volcanoes are "broad, gently sloping" and that lava spreads out over large areas. So the shape created by lava building up over time must also be broad or **wide**.

"**Wide**" is a good match for both the idea of spreading and the synonym "broad" that appears in the first sentence.

**Context Clue:** Earlier description says "broad" and "large areas"

**Vocabulary Match:** "Wide" is another word for "broad"

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## The Final Passage

Shield volcanoes are broad, gently sloping mountains formed by repeated eruptions of low-viscosity lava. **Because** the lava **flows easily**, it spreads **out over** large areas **before** cooling and hardening. Over **time**, these layers build **up** to create **the** volcano's **wide** shape. Shield volcanoes are most common in oceanic regions, such as Hawaii, where basaltic lava

rises from deep within the Earth's mantle. Their eruptions are usually nonexplosive but can last for long periods.

## Question 11:

### Step 1: Look at the heading and opening line

The post starts with:

“City Parks Department – Annual Film Night”  
“It’s that time of year again!”

This already tells us:

- It’s a community event
- It happens every year (that’s what “*annual*” means)
- The tone is friendly and inviting

So right away, we know this is about a recurring community event.

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### Step 2: Read the details

The post goes on to mention:

- Date and location: July 11 at Riverside Park
- Free admission
- Food trucks
- Family-friendly movies
- Everyone is welcome

All of this information is there to get people excited and to encourage attendance. That’s what promotion is.

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### Step 3: Ask, “What job is this message doing?”

This post is not asking for help or sharing rules—it’s meant to invite the public to an event and get the word out.

That's what **C. To promote a recurring community gathering** describes:  
“Promote” — meaning to advertise or share information about something  
“Recurring community gathering” — a yearly public event like this film night

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**Why the other answers are wrong:**

**A. To enlist new members of a film club**

This might sound close because of the word “film,” but there’s nothing about joining a group or becoming a member. This is about an event, not a club.

**B. To advertise vendors at Riverside Park**

Vendors (food trucks) *are* mentioned, but only briefly. They’re not the focus. The post is about the film night, not advertising for the food trucks. This is focused on something too specific.

**D. To announce a change in park hours**

The post doesn’t say anything about new hours or rules for the park. It’s just sharing an event happening at a certain time. This choice is completely off-topic.

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**Strategy Tip for Main Purpose Questions**

Ask yourself:

- *If I had to summarize this in one sentence, what's it trying to do?*

In this case: “Come enjoy a fun community movie night—here’s when and where!”

**Question 12:**

**Step 1: Identify Key Words in the Question**

The question asks: What can be inferred about the **seating available** at the event?

So we need to focus on what the passage tells us about **where or how people will sit** during the event.

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## Step 2: Find Clues in the Passage

Here's the key sentence:

*"Bring a blanket and enjoy a family-friendly movie under the stars."*

This is a big clue. If the organizers are telling people to **bring a blanket**, it suggests that:

- No seating will be provided, and
  - People will be sitting on the grass or ground, using whatever they bring
- 

## Step 3: Combine the Clues

The message doesn't outright say, "We won't provide seating," but the instruction to "bring a blanket" strongly implies that attendees should bring something to sit on themselves.

That's why **B. Attendees are expected to bring something to sit on** is correct. It's a reasonable conclusion and a good example of how to make an inference from indirect information.

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## Why the Other Answers Are Wrong:

### A. Chairs will be provided by the organizers.

The passage says nothing about chairs being provided—and if that were the case, there would be no need to bring a blanket. This answer contradicts the implication.

### C. Only people with tickets will receive seating.

This isn't true because the passage states: *"Admission is free... all are welcome!"* So, no tickets are required at all. This choice adds false information.

### D. Seating will be arranged by the food trucks.

Though food trucks are mentioned in the passage, this choice doesn't make sense in context. The food trucks are mentioned separately, and there's no connection between them and seating. This answer is not supported.

## Question 13:

### Step 1: Look at the subject line and opening sentence

The subject line says: “Important Update: Policy Changes.”

Right away, this tells us the email is about **changes**, not promotions or warnings.

Next, in the first sentence, the writer explains: “Beginning August 1st, our airline will introduce updated baggage rules...”

This sentence introduces **new rules that will start in the future**.

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### Step 2: Identify what kind of changes are being discussed

As you read on, the email focuses on:

- Baggage rules
- New weight-based fees for economy passengers
- Which passengers are affected (economy vs. business class)
- A reminder to review the updated fee chart

So the main topic is changes to baggage fees and policies, especially for some passengers.

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### Step 3: Ask, “What is this email mainly doing?”

The email is informing passengers about new fees and rules so they are not surprised later. It is not selling anything or announcing new services.

That’s why **D. To explain upcoming changes to fees applicable to some passengers** is the best answer.

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### Why the other answers are wrong:

#### **A. To advertise discounted baggage fees for new customers**

This might sound tempting because fees are discussed, but there are no discounts mentioned. In fact, the email explains new charges, not lower prices.

### B. To warn airline customers of upcoming flight delays

The email mentions avoiding delays, but only as a reason for the new rules. It does not warn that delays *will* happen. This choice focuses on a small detail instead of the main point.

### C. To announce new in-flight services for business class travelers

Business class is mentioned, but only to say their baggage allowance stays the same. There's nothing about in-flight services like meals or seating. This is a distractor that uses familiar words from the text.

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## Strategy Tip for Main Purpose Questions

When reading emails like this:

- Pay close attention to the subject line
- Look at the first paragraph to find the main message
- Ask: *Is this email informing, selling, warning, or requesting?*

Here, the email is informing passengers about upcoming fee changes.

## Question 14:

### Step 1: Look for keywords from the question

The question asks: "What does the email say about **carry-on baggage**?"

So we should scan the passage for:

- carry-on
- bags

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### Step 2: Find the exact sentence about carry-on baggage

Here is the key sentence in the email: "**Carry-on** limits remain one small suitcase and one personal item, which must fit in the overhead compartment or under the seat in front of you."

This sentence tells us two important things:

1. There is a **limit** on carry-on items (one small suitcase and one personal item).



2. These items **must fit** in specific spaces: the overhead compartment or under the seat.

That means carry-on bags have size requirements, which matches choice **B. Carry-on bags must meet certain size requirements.**

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### Why the other answer choices are wrong

#### A. Passengers may bring two full-sized suitcases on board.

This is incorrect because the email says **one small suitcase**, not two, and not full-sized. The email does mention “two free checked bags” for business class, but that rule is for checked baggage, not carry-ons.

#### C. Carry-on rules apply only to international flights.

The email does not mention international or domestic flights at all. The carry-on rules are presented as general rules for all passengers. Now, in real life, airline rules sometimes differ by flight type, so you might assume this is true. However, TOEFL Detail questions require text-based evidence, not assumptions.

#### D. The number of free items depends on the route flown.

The email does mention routes but only when talking about checked-bag fees, not carry-ons: “you’ll find detailed examples of fees for each route.” Thus, carry-on rules are the same, regardless of route. This incorrect choice can be tempting because the word “route” appears near baggage information, so it’s easy to connect it to the wrong detail.

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### Strategy Takeaway

For Detail Reading questions:

- Use keywords from the question to find the exact sentence you need.
- Be careful not to mix up related yet different terms such as “checked baggage” and “carry-on baggage”
- Choose the answer that matches the wording of the passage, not the one that sounds reasonable in real life.

### Question 15:

### Step 1: Use keywords from the question

The question asks: “According to the email, how will **checked bags** be **priced** for **economy passengers**?”

Important keywords to look for are thus:

- checked bags
  - economy passengers
  - priced
- 

### Step 2: Find the exact sentence in the passage

Here’s the key sentence:

“For passengers with **economy** seating, each **checked bag** will be **charged** according to new weight-based fees rather than flat rates.”

Let’s break this down:

- “Weight-based fees” means the price can change depending on how heavy the bag is.
- That means the cost is not the same for every bag.

In other words, it’s a variable rate, not a fixed one, which matches answer choice **A. Using a variable rate per item.**

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### Why the other answer choices are wrong

#### **B. Using a flat rate per item**

This is directly contradicted by the passage. The email says fees are “weight-based *rather than flat rates.*” In real life, many airlines use flat fees, so this may feel familiar to you. However, the email is explaining a change away from that system.

#### **C. Based on the airplane’s capacity**

The email mentions capacity only when talking about carry-on bags on full flights, not *checked bags*. There’s no stated connection between airplane capacity and checked-bag pricing, but you may be distracted by the phrase “full flights” since that appears nearby in the passage.

#### **D. Based on their ability to fit into overhead compartments**

This rule is about carry-on baggage, not *checked bags*. Checked bags never go into overhead

compartments since you don't carry them on to the plane with you. This answer choice may look very tempting because it uses a lot of words that directly appear in the passage ("Carry-on... must *fit* in the *overhead compartment*").

## Question 16:

### Step 1: Check the first and last paragraphs

The first paragraph introduces the topic: *writing is a relatively new invention compared to spoken language*, and it asks: *Where did writing begin, and how did it develop into the systems we use today?* That's a big clue! The author is focused on how writing started and how it changed.

Now, let's jump to the last paragraph. It says that *writing transformed civilization* and helped create *laws, literature, and complex governments*. This paragraph focuses on the impact of writing.

So, the beginning talks about how writing developed, and the end talks about its impact.

### Step 2: Notice repeated ideas

Throughout the passage, we see repeated mentions of how different civilizations (like Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China) created writing systems. We also see how those systems evolved and what they allowed people to do—like *tell stories, record speech, or communicate across time*.

Again, this all points to the development and impact of writing systems, which matches answer choice **B. The development and impact of early writing systems**.

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### Why the Other Answers Are Wrong:

#### A. How writing replaced spoken language

This sounds important, right? But it's actually too narrow and not accurate. The passage does start by mentioning that writing came after spoken language, but it never says that writing *replaced* speech. In fact, people still speak all the time! This answer might seem tempting because of the mention of spoken language at the beginning, but it's not the main focus.

#### C. The invention of tools for recordkeeping

This one is too specific. It's true that the passage talks about how writing helped with recordkeeping (like keeping track of sheep or grain), but that's just one part of the story. The

main idea is bigger than just the tools or their use in trade—it's about the *whole development* of writing and what it meant for society.

#### D. The similarities between modern and ancient alphabets

This answer uses familiar words from the passage (like “alphabets”), which might make it tempting. But the passage doesn't actually focus on comparing modern and ancient writing systems. There's only one brief mention at the end that *today's alphabets share the same goal*—and that's not enough to make it the main idea. So this is a case of reused vocabulary but distorted meaning.

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### Strategy Tip for Main Idea Questions

When answering Main Idea questions:

- Look at the first and last paragraphs—they usually frame the main point.
- Watch out for answers that are too narrow or that reuse words in misleading ways.
- The correct answer will often tie together repeated themes from the entire passage.

### Question 17:

#### Why A. fundamental is correct:

Rudimentary means “related to or limited to basic principles.” And fundamental means “involving basic facts or principles”. Hence, it's a great match.

But wait a minute! What if you didn't know what rudimentary means? What should you do to make an informed guess?

Well, let's first look at where “rudimentary” appears in the second paragraph:

“At first, these symbols represented **rudimentary** concepts, often objects or quantities, such as the number of sheep or jars of grain.”

Now, let's look at that (and the surrounding) context for clues:

1. Look for examples in the sentence:
  - The passage gives examples right away: *objects or quantities*, like *numbers of sheep or jars of grain*.
  - These are **very basic ideas**, not complex or abstract thoughts.

2. Think about contrast in the paragraph:
  - A few sentences later, we see: "Over time, however, cuneiform evolved to include signs for ideas and sounds..."
  - This contrast hints that *rudimentary* is being used to describe the **earliest, simplest stage** of writing, before writing became more advanced and able to tackle more complex ideas.
3. Now, try a simple paraphrase:
  - Replace *rudimentary* with *basic* or *simple*.
  - "These symbols represented **basic** concepts, often objects or quantities..."
  - That fits and makes for a good guess word!

So, **rudimentary** here means **basic**: something at an early, simple stage of development. And even if you don't know the exact definition of "fundamental," you may have heard before a phrase like "learning the fundamentals of math," which means the basic or early topics in math. But if not, you're still in a good position to eliminate many of the wrong answer choices which don't mean "basic".

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### Why the other choices are wrong:

#### B. agricultural

- **Meaning:** related to farming.
- **Why it's tempting:** The examples include sheep and grain, which are related to farming.  
**Why it's wrong:** *Rudimentary* describes the level of complexity, not the topic. The word doesn't mean "related to agriculture."

#### C. necessary

- **Meaning:** required or needed
- **Why it's tempting:** You may think the early concepts mentioned were "important," so *necessary* sounds related and potentially the answer.
- **Why it's wrong:** *Rudimentary*, by definition, doesn't mean "required". Also, the clues from the passage are about how simple the concepts were, not whether they were required.

#### D. temporary

- **Meaning:** lasting for a short time.
- **Why it's tempting:** The passage talks about early stages that later changed.
- **Why it's wrong:** *Rudimentary* does not mean short-lasting; it means not yet developed.

## Question 18:

This is an EXCEPT question, so we're looking for the one thing that writing did *not* contribute to, according to the passage. The other three choices *are* supported by details in the text, so we'll eliminate them one at a time.

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### A. the preservation of knowledge across generations

Keywords to scan for: *preserve, knowledge, generations / time*

In the first paragraph, the passage explains that writing allowed societies to “*record information visually, rather than relying only on memory or speech.*” “Record information” is another way of saying “preserve knowledge.”

Later, the third paragraph mentions that writing lets humans “transfer knowledge and communicate *across time and distance.*” In other words, the knowledge can be passed down across *generations.*

Thus, we can **eliminate A.**

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### B. the creation of organized governments and laws

Keywords to scan for: *creation, governments, law*

In the last paragraph, we see these sentences: “Writing transformed civilization. It *enabled laws, literature, and complex governments.*” The “it” in the second sentence refers back to “writing.” And writing is what *allowed* things like *laws* and *government* to happen, so writing indeed contributed to their creation.

Thus, we can **eliminate B.**

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### C. the decline of oral storytelling traditions

Keywords to scan for: *oral, storytelling*

The passage explains that writing made it possible to record speech and tell stories, but it never says that oral storytelling *declined or disappeared because of writing.*

Since there is no mention of oral traditions becoming weaker or less common, this idea is not discussed in the passage at all.

**Therefore, C is the correct answer.**

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### **D. the ability to record trade and history**

Keywords to scan for: *trade, history*

These words both appear in the first paragraph, at the end of a sentence we discussed earlier: "The ability to record information visually, rather than relying only on memory or speech, *allowed early societies to keep track of trade, government, and history.*"

This is almost an exact match, so we can **eliminate D.**

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### **Strategy Takeaway:**

For EXCEPT questions:

- Scan for keywords or synonyms
- Eliminate choices that are clearly supported by the text
- The remaining option is your answer

### **Question 19:**

#### **Step 1: Find the phrase in the text.**

The phrase "these early systems" appears in the last sentence of paragraph 3:

*"Despite differences, these early systems served a similar purpose..."*

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#### **Step 2: Read the sentence(s) before it.**

This whole paragraph talks about how other civilizations created *their own writing systems independently*. It then presents two examples of such civilizations: the Egyptians with hieroglyphs and the Chinese with early characters on oracle bones.

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### Step 3: Try replacing the phrase with the answer choices.

Let's test out answer D by replacing "these early systems" with "Egyptian and Chinese writing forms":

*"Despite differences, **Egyptian and Chinese writing forms** served a similar purpose..."*

That is logical and aligns with the rest of the paragraph since this concluding sentence is summing up the examples (Egyptian hieroglyphs and Chinese early characters on oracle bones) given just before.

Thus, "these early systems" indeed refer to the writing systems from Egypt and China, which is **Answer D**.

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### Why the Other Answers Are Wrong:

#### A. ancient spoken languages

This might seem tempting because spoken language is mentioned *at the beginning* of the passage. But look closely: the specific paragraph where the highlight phrase appears is talking specifically about *writing systems*, not speech. Spoken language and writing are different things in this context.

#### B. oracle bones used for divination

Yes, oracle bones are mentioned in this paragraph, but they're just one *part* of the example about China's writing system. The phrase "these early systems" is talking about *multiple* systems. Since oracle bones are just one, this is too specific to be the right answer.

#### C. civilizations that created written characters

This one is tricky because it refers to the *people* (civilizations), not the systems themselves. The phrase "these early systems" is talking about *writing systems*, not the civilizations that made them.

### Question 20:

#### Step 1: Look for keywords from the question

The question asks: "According to the passage, what was one result of the invention of writing?"



Key words to focus on are:

- result
- invention of writing

So, we should look near the beginning and end of the passage, which is where the author explains why writing mattered and what changed because of it.

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## Step 2: Find the relevant sentence(s) in the passage

Here's a key sentence from the first paragraph:

"The ability to record information visually, rather than relying only on memory or speech, allowed early societies to keep track of trade, government, and history."

And later, in the third paragraph, the passage says:

"These early systems served a similar purpose: they allowed humans to transfer knowledge and communicate across time and distance."

Together, these sentences show that writing made it possible to share and preserve information in new ways. By visually storing the information, they didn't have to rely on memory or speech. Furthermore, the ideas were allowed to persist over time and distance.

In other words, writing made it possible that **B. People could share information in ways not previously possible.**

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## Why the other answer choices are wrong:

### A. Disparate societies and cultures became more similar

The passage does mention that different civilizations developed writing independently, and thus they were "disparate" (or "different") societies. However, it never says that writing made cultures more *similar*. In fact, it emphasizes their *differences* (cuneiform, hieroglyphs, oracle bones).

### C. Governments became less organized

This is the opposite of what the passage suggests. The text says writing helped enable: "laws, literature, and *complex governments*."

The more complicated something is, the more likely it requires more organization. So, writing actually supported more organization, not less. This answer choice is the opposite of what the passage states.

**D. Trade records were replaced by spoken agreements**

The passage says writing helped societies *keep track of trade*, which means that these written records are something that were *added*, not removed.

This answer choice also doesn't fit with the broad message of this passage: writing is what enabled societies to do all kinds of new things, so it would be strange for the passage to talk about how something spoken replaced something that was written.