

PERT - READING + WRITING BOOTCAMP

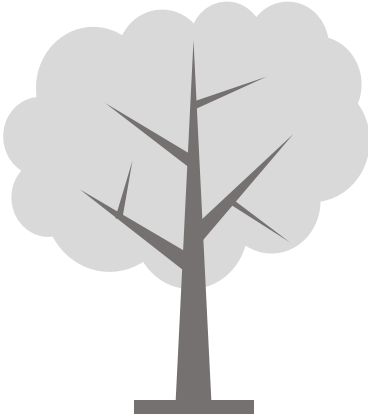
TIPS TO HELP WITH BASIC SKILLS AND
CONCEPTS FOR THE PERT

VALENCIA COLLEGE

Reading: Main Idea and Supporting Details

Main Idea

The main idea/central point is the author's reason for writing. It's a broad statement that displays the author's argument or claim.

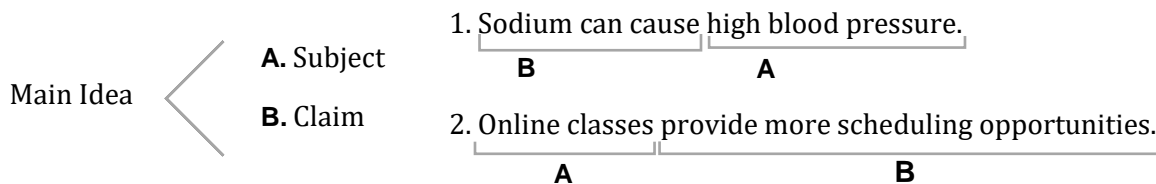


You can think of the main idea like the trunk of a tree. All the branches, the supporting details, connect back to the trunk.

Strategies for Identifying Main Idea:

1. Determine the subject of the passage before the main idea
2. Use the supporting details to figure out what is being argued/claimed

The main idea of a passage can be divided into two parts: subject and claim.



To identify the subject of the passage, ask, "What is the author primarily writing about?" Then, to identify the main idea, ask, "What is the author claiming about this subject?"

Supporting Details

The supporting details will always provide more specific information about the main idea. It's the evidence for the claim the author wants to communicate.

Example supporting details for the main ideas above:

1. Excess sodium results in water retention that can increase pressure in the blood vessels.
2. There is not a set period of time that students must show up for online classes.

Testing Taking Strategies

- Summarize the passage in your own words to make sure you understand what the passage is about.
- Main Idea: When selecting your answer, ask, "Do all the other sentences support this idea?"
- Supporting Details: Watch out for answer choices that say "All, always, never, none." These are *all-or-nothings*—rarely correct. Reread the passage to find the appropriate detail.

Reading: Main Idea Practice Questions

This review is practice for the PERT, so there is no pressure to figure out the correct answers. If you have questions, please ask them.

Example 1 is taken from the article “The New Jim Crow” by Michelle Alexander.

The impact of the drug war has been astounding. In less than thirty years, the U.S. penal population exploded from around 300,000 to more than 2 million, with drug convictions accounting for the majority of the increase. The United States now has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, dwarfing the rates of nearly every developed country, even surpassing those in highly repressive regimes like Russia, China, and Iran. In Germany, 93 people are in prison for every 100,000 adults and children. In the United States, the rate is roughly eight times that, or 750 per 100,000.

Questions

1. Subject/Topic: What is this passage about?

2. Supporting Details: How does the author prove that the impact of the drug war has been astounding? Summarize the pieces of evidence that are presented.

3. Supporting Details: Does the paragraph compare and contrast supporting details? Identify the supporting details from the passage to support your answer.

4. Main Idea: What are the supporting details providing evidence for? What claim is the author making

Reading: Organizational Patterns and Transitional Devices

Organizational Patterns

The purpose of writing is to communicate ideas. Organizational patterns help to communicate those ideas clearly to the reader.

Examples of organizational patterns:

- compare and contrast
- cause and effect
- time order
- definition and example
- process order
- listing

Supporting details will be organized according to the main idea. The organizational structure of a passage can also help you determine the main idea. Ask yourself, “Why would the author organize the writing this way?”

Remember: Though you may find more than one pattern in a paragraph/essay, the key is to look for the overall pattern of the entire passage.

For example, if the passage is about the effects of Hurricane Dorian, the overall pattern of organization will be cause/effect, but within that passage there may be a sentence like this: “The projected path of Hurricane Dorian was expected to hit the coast of Florida. However, by the time the hurricane got near Florida, a wind current from the West pushed it further out to sea.” Here the relationship between these two sentences is contrast even though the overall pattern of organization for the entire passage is cause and effect.

Transitional Devices

Transitional devices guide readers and show the relationship between supporting details. They can signal to readers the overall organizational pattern.

Examples of Transitional Devices:

Comparing and Contrasting	Adding	Time Order
although, whereas, but, yet, on the other hand, however, nevertheless, on the contrary, similarly	furthermore, and, again, and then, besides, finally, next, further, in addition	immediately, thereafter, finally, later, previously, soon, then
Showing an Exception	Giving an Example	Cause and Effect
yet, still, however, nevertheless, in spite of, despite, of course	for example, for instance, in this case, to demonstrate, to illustrate, such as	therefore, as a result, because, consequently, thus

Testing Taking Strategies

- There can be multiple organizational patterns in a passage, but the overall pattern presents major details in a clear structure.
- Look for transitional devices. They can help you determine the pattern of organization.

Reading: Organizational Patterns Practice Questions

This review is practice for the PERT, so there is no pressure to figure out the correct answers. Please feel free to use the previous explanations to help you answer the following questions. If you have questions, please ask them.

Example 3 is taken from the article “I’m Your Teacher, Not Your Internet-Service Provider” by Ellen Laird.

There are no sick or personal days in cyberspace.

In my traditional classes, I refrain from informing students that I will be out of town for a weekend, that I need a root canal, or that my water heater failed before work. My face-to-face students can read my expression and bearing when they see me; thus, I can usually keep personal explanations to a professional minimum.

In my online class, however, students cannot see the bags under my eyes or the look of exuberance on my face. They cannot hear the calm or the shake in my voice. Thus, for the smooth functioning of the course, I willingly provide details about where I am and what I am doing, so students can know what to expect.

Questions

1. List examples of transitional devices used in the passage. Identify how the transition is being used. (For example, is the transition illustrating comparison, cause or effect, or addition, etc.?)
2. Identify the sentences that are structured similarly between the two paragraphs? Why would the author choose to do this?
3. What is the overall pattern of organization?

Reading: Inference

An inference is a conclusion that a reader makes after inspecting and analyzing clues from a passage. Authors often imply or suggest ideas without directly stating them. Therefore, making an inference means looking for what the author is saying without directly telling you. To make an inference, you must become an investigator and “read between the lines.”

Investigating the Text

1. Comprehension before analysis.

- Summarize the ideas in your own words
- Determine what the main idea is

2. Ask questions. You can ask questions to help you make an inference.

- What does the author assume I know?
- Does the author use any critical/pointed language?
- What is the author suggesting but not directly saying?

Test Taking Strategies

- Answer choices that state or quote what is directly said in the passage are not inferences. Rule these answers out.
- Try to understand the author’s feelings towards their subject.

Practice Question

This review is practice for the PERT, so there is no pressure to figure out the correct answer. If you have questions, please ask them.

Example 4 Read the following letter to a newspaper in which the writer argues that Fairlawn Park should not be turned into a baseball field.

Citizens of the Fairlawn Park area look with alarm at the diabolical plot to change a beautiful spot into a baseball park. If this malicious plan is carried out, the lovely trees in the park will be chopped down. Values of the property within the area will drop sharply as the park fills with the filth and debris of the bulldozers and other equipment. Later the shrieks of the young ruffians who take over the park will destroy the peace and quiet of the neighborhood. Obviously no one cares about the poor citizen who has slaved to pay for his home and to keep up with his taxes.

Question. How does the author feel about Fairlawn Park being changed to a baseball park?

Writing: Coordination

Coordination is the joining or connecting of two complete sentences, two independent clauses, into a single sentence. An independent clause is a complete thought or statement that can stand alone as a sentence. An independent clause contains both a subject and a verb.

- *She likes ice cream.*
- *He wants to visit the beach next weekend.*
- *She can take a break.*

How to Coordinate Independent Clauses Together

There are three ways to connect independent clauses together.

1. Connect the two sentences together using a coordinating conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) and a comma.

His love of reading was unmatched, and there was no space on his bookshelf.

2. Connect the two sentences with a semi-colon.

His love of reading was unmatched; there was no space on his bookshelf.

**Do not capitalize after the semi-colon.*

3. Connect the two sentences together using a semi-colon, a conjunctive adverb (*however, therefore, nevertheless, furthermore, likewise*), and a comma.

His love of reading was unmatched; consequently, there was no space on his bookshelf.

Run-on Sentences

Incorrectly coordinating sentences results in two types of errors: comma splices and fused sentences.

1. A comma splice is when a comma is used to join two independent clauses together. A comma is too weak to connect independent clauses.

Example of a comma splice:

His love of reading was unmatched, there was no space on his bookshelf.

2. A fused sentence is when two independent clauses are smooshed together without any punctuation or conjunction. Without a connector, where ideas begin and end is unclear.

Example of a fused sentence:

His love of reading was unmatched there was no space on his bookshelf.

Writing: Coordination Practice Questions

1. How would you fix the comma splice below?

There was an accident on Route 38 last night, several people got hurt.

- A. There was an accident on Route 38 last night; several people got hurt.
- B. There was an accident on Route 38 last night, and several people got hurt.
- C. Several people got hurt there was an accident on Route 38 last night.
- D. Both A and B are correct.

Choose the best way to coordinate the sentences in the next two questions.

2. My cat loves having his head scratched. He hates getting his claws trimmed.

- A. scratched, so he
- B. scratched, and he
- C. scratched, or he
- D. scratched, but he

3. She was well prepared for the test. She was polite.

- A. test; in addition, she was polite.
- B. test in addition; she was polite.
- C. test, she was polite.
- D. test; In addition, she was polite.

Writing: Subordination

Subordination is the joining of an independent clause and a dependent clause. A dependent clause is an incomplete thought or statement that cannot stand alone as a sentence. A dependent clause relies on an independent clauses to be a complete sentence.

- Because *she* likes ice cream
- Although *he* wants to visit the beach next weekend
- Until *she* can take a break

Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions create dependent clauses or fragments. If you can identify subordinating conjunctions, then you can identify dependent clauses and fragments.

A Quick List of Subordinating Conjunctions

Although	Before	Because	When
As	Since	While	Unless
Even though	If	After	Once

Fragments

Incorrectly subordinating sentences results in sentence fragments. A fragment is an incomplete sentence.

When I go shopping

Because I have a car

These are examples of fragments. Add an independent clause to these sentences to correct them.

How to Connect Dependent Clauses and Independent Clauses

If your sentence begins with a subordinating conjunction, include a comma at the end of the dependent clause.

When I go shopping,	I always buy orange juice.
Because I have a car,	I can drive to my friend's house.
Dependent Clause	Independent Clause

If your sentence begins with your independent clause and a dependent clause follows it, you do not need to add a comma.

I always buy orange juice when I go shopping.

I can drive to my friend's house because I have a car.

Writing: Subordination Practice Questions

1. Which of the following phrases is a fragment?
 - A. Before class starts, I want to study.
 - B. When I finish the book, I'll let you borrow it.
 - C. Because he missed the meeting.
 - D. After the game, we ate pizza.

2. Which of the following is not a fragment?

(The correct answer will be a complete sentence.)

 - A. When the store closes.
 - B. Because it started raining.
 - C. Who was seated next to the teacher.
 - D. After the graduation ceremony, we went to the beach.

3. Which of the following is not a fragment?

(The correct answer will be a complete sentence.)

 - A. Once the new train station opens.
 - B. Since the bookstore is closed, I'll go in the morning.
 - C. If you are going to Orlando tomorrow.
 - D. Even though it doesn't snow in Florida.

Writing: Subject/Verb Agreement

Steps to take for ensuring your subject and verb agrees.

1. Identify the subject of your sentence.
2. Determine if your subject is singular or plural.
3. Match the verb to the singular or plural subject.

Singular Subject

When the subject of your sentence is singular, your verb will end with an -s.

Subject Verb
The **student** wants to nap after class.

Plural Subject

When the subject of your sentence is plural, the verb will most likely not end in -s.

Subject Verb
The **students** plan to form a study group.

Reminder:

Sometimes, it's difficult to determine the subject of a sentence.

Subject *Interrupting thought* Verb
The **barking dog**, *as well as my neighbor's screeching children*, keeps me awake.

In this example, the subject of the sentence is dog, not children. Don't confuse your subject, or else your verb won't match.

Tricky Cases of Subject/Verb Agreement

Some words effect your subject/verb agreement. Refer to the list below.

Remember These Words

Singular: each, neither, either, one, every

Plural: both

Words that depend on the sentence: all, some, none

Singular:

1. Everyone *likes* his baking.
2. Neither of her friends *wants* to go.

Plural:

1. Both of the dogs *play* energetically.

Depends on the sentence:

1. All of the cake *is* gone.
2. All of the cookies *are* gone.

Writing: **Subject/Verb Agreement Practice Questions**

In the sentences that follow, choose the correct form of the verb.

1. Aaron, Daniel, and Jeffery (wants/want) to hang out with one another more often.
2. Sebastian (performs/perform) his poetry and music at the open mic every Thursday.
3. Both cats (likes/like) watching for birds through the window.
4. Each paint brush, drawing pencil, and eraser (has/have) its own designated place on the desk.
5. Sitting in the passenger seat during long car rides (is/are) relaxing if there is music playing.
6. All the notebooks (contains/contain) messy scribbles that only the owner could understand.

Writing: Complete and Logical Comparisons

When the PERT asks you about “complete and logical comparisons,” it is asking you to make sure that sentences in which something is being compared are clear about what is being compared to what. Look for these comparison words: **better, worse, more, less, fewer, as much, such, so.**

1. A “**than...**” phrase makes the comparison complete: it tells us what is being compared to what.

Incomplete

People who stop eating when they're full are *healthier*.

Complete

People who stop eating when they're full are healthier **than those who don't stop eating when they're full.**

People who stop eating when they're full are healthier **than those who don't stop.**

2. Often, “**do/does**” is needed to avoid confusion and keep the intended meaning clear.

Illogical

His best friend likes pizza *as much as him*.

Logical

His best friend likes pizza **as much as he does.**

Illogical

Parents often value reading *more than their children*.

Logical

Parents often value reading **more than their children do.**

3. “**Such**” and “**So**” will need a “that....” clause for the comparison to be completed or will need to be replaced by a word that doesn't suggest a comparison.

Incomplete

I am *so tired*.

Complete

I am so tired **that I'm going to get into bed early.**

I am **very tired.**

I am **quite tired.**

Incomplete

She was having *such a good time*.

Complete

She was having such a good time **that she lost track of the hour.**

Writing: Complete and Logical Comparisons Practice Questions

1. Choose the option that makes a complete and logical comparison.
 - A. I enjoy soccer more than my friends.
 - B. Because Janae practices every day, she plays piano better than Chris.
 - C. Jose enjoys going to concerts more than I do.
 - D. Laura is so good at biology and chemistry.

2. Choose the option that does not make a complete and logical comparison.
 - A. Olivia drinks more coffee than me.
 - B. No one likes spaghetti more than John does.
 - C. Natalie has fewer pets than Joel does.
 - D. Julia is so good at economics that she often helps other students.

3. Choose the best revision for the following illogical comparison in order to show who likes music more: *Penelope likes music more than Joel.*
 - A. Penelope likes music more than she likes Joel.
 - B. Penelope likes music more than Joel does.
 - C. Penelope likes music more than she does Joel.
 - D. Penelope likes music more than that of Joel.