

Analogy

Analogy questions test your ability to recognize relationships between words or ideas and to know when these relationships are parallel. The analogy subtest is an area where, with practice, you can achieve a very good score. First, you must find the relationship between the original pair of words. To help you, listed below are some common types of analogies. The list contains some overlapping and similarities, and the precise names of the categories need not be memorized. It is important, however, that you learn types of relationships to look for.

Some Common Types Of Analogies

1. PART and WHOLE: sole:shoe
2. WHOLE and PART: hand:fingers
3. CLASS and MEMBER: fish:salmon
4. TYPE OF: debate:argument
5. DEGREE: cool:frigid
6. OPPOSITES: tall:short
7. WORKER and TOOL: photographer:camera
8. WORKER and WORKPLACE: teacher: classroom
9. CAUSE and EFFECT (RESULT): poison:death
10. EFFECT and CAUSE: death:poison
11. ACTION and THAT WHICH PERFORMS IT: fly:plane
12. PURPOSE (or OBJECT:ACTION): scissors:cut
13. INDICATION OF: boo:disapproval
14. SYNONYMS: canine:dog
15. STUDY OF: linguistics:language
16. CHARACTERISTIC OF: dexterity:pianist
17. DEFINITION: hero:courage (by definition, a hero has courage)
18. LACK OF DEFINITION: coward:courage (by definition, a coward lacks courage)

Advice on how to deal with analogy questions is given below. After you have read it, use the practice tests on this site to help you Practice is particularly valuable with analogies. You can also create your own analogies using the list of common types given above. Creating your own list has the advantage of forcing you to think analogously.

Tips For The Analogy Section:

1. The Reasonable and Inevitable or Valid and Necessary Connection Rule

You should keep in mind that there must be a reasonable and necessary connection between two words. The connection must be **VALID**, otherwise there would be no point in making the analogy. For example, what reasonable connection could there be between bird:algebra? On the other hand, there is a reasonable connection between fish:salmon since salmon is a type of fish. The connection must also be **NECESSARY** or **INEVITABLE**. There is a necessary connection between photographer:photo since a photographer by definition takes photos. However, the connection between student:photo is only a possible one since a student may or may not take photos. All CAT analogies will have connections that are reasonable (logical, valid) **AND** necessary or inevitable. Any choices that fail to meet these criteria should be rejected. If you cannot figure out the connection between the original pair, you can still improve your chances of picking the correct answer by eliminating any choices that do not confirm to the above rule.

2. Make Up a Sentence

Creating a sentence that shows the connection between the two words is absolutely essential and is the difference between a high or low mark on analogies. For example, if the first pair of words is **APPLAUSE:APPROVAL**, your sentence might be: "Applause is an indication of approval (an indication of analogy)." If the first pair is **chisel:sculptor**, you might say "A chisel is a tool used by a sculptor to perform his work (a tool:worker analogy)."

3. Be as Precise as Possible

It is important to make your bridge sentence as precise as possible. In the example below, note how a very general sentence can narrow your choices only slightly while a more precise one can lead you to the correct answer.

Example

MINISTER : SERMON

- (A) politician:promises
- (B) heckler:interruptions
- (C) doctor:diagnosis
- (D) lecturer:speech
- (E) curator:museum

For example, we could say:

A minister makes/gives sermons.

A politician makes promises

A heckler makes interruptions.

A doctor makes a diagnosis.

A lecturer makes a speech.

A curator makes a museum . (eliminate).

These sentences only eliminate (E) and aren't a lot of help. But, if we say: "One of the functions of a minister is to teach through sermons" then we eliminate all choices but (D), that is, "One of the functions of a lecturer is to teach through speeches."

4. The Parts of Speech Must Match

If the capitalized pair are NOUN:NOUN, then the correct answer must also be noun:noun. If the capitalized pair are NOUN:ADJECTIVE, then the correct answer must be noun: adjective, etc. Most analogies involve nouns or adjectives.

You will find this "part of speech" rule most helpful when a word is used in a way that may be unfamiliar to you. Try this one:

Example

RIFLE:RANSACK::

(A) search:destroy

(B) shoot : kill

(C) speak:orate

(D) pontificate:discuss

(E) elucidate:clarify

Since all the choices here are verbs, rifle must also be used as a verb. (B) is probably misleading, then, since it's based on a gun. If you didn't know what the word rifle meant when it is used as a verb, then consider what possible type of analogy we have here. (C) and (D) are roughly synonymous while (E) is a true synonym. Possibly a synonym is needed, so you guess (E). And you're right: rifle does mean to ransack.

5. Be Alert to Multiple Meanings

Even though the part of speech remains the same (unlike our rifle example), a word may have multiple meanings. If you are having difficulty figuring out the analogy, perhaps you are using the wrong definition for one of the words.

6. The Answer Must Be in the Same Order

Make sure that the capitalized words and the pair you choose are in the same order.

COLLAGE:ARTIST novel: author composer:sonata

A collage is a work of art created by an artist.

A novel is a work of literary art created by a novelist.

A composer is NOT a work of musical art created by a sonata.

(The reverse is true: a sonata is a work of musical art created by a composer.)