

# ABE ENGLISH STUDY MATERIALS



1. Writing
2. Reading Comprehension

**This material is intended as a review of skills you once learned  
and wish to study before your assessment.**

## **ABE ENGLISH ASSESSMENT** **WRITING SAMPLE**

As part of your ABE English Assessment, you will be asked to give us a sample of your writing. We ask for this sample so that we can use it, along with your reading score, to talk with you about where to begin your English upgrading. We would like to encourage you to start at a level where you will gain the most benefit and learn the skills you need to succeed in your education.

**You will be given a list of topics to choose from.**

If you know about essay structure, are familiar with what a "thesis" statement is, and feel able to write a detailed, well-organized essay, then do that. A good quality essay is required for placement in upper level classes.

If it has been a long time since you have done any writing, or if you don't feel confident about your writing skills, write a few sentences or a paragraph or two about one of the topics. We want to see an example of how you write (your writing style, not your handwriting).

**Or ...** if you feel inspired and would like to write something longer (a page or so), then do so. We don't want you to spend a lot of time on your writing sample (60 minutes at the most), but it might help to do a brief outline to help you organize your thoughts before you start.

**\* Remember: This is not a test that you either "pass" or "fail". It is a reflection of where you are with your writing at this time. You will not be given a mark for your essay. We will be using your writing sample and your reading comprehension level to help you figure out where best to start your English upgrading.**

# Reading Comprehension Study Materials

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# Reading Comprehension Study Materials

## 1. **Tips to get Started:**

- a) Look over the whole piece of writing. Notice its title.
- b) Notice its length.
- c) Read the first line of each paragraph to get an idea of how the writer has organized the piece.
- d) Read the first line of the last paragraph to get an idea of how it may finish.

## 2. **Read with concentration.**

Concentrate on the words **AND** the meaning of groups of words. If there are vocabulary words that are unknown to you, read the sentence and try to understand what is meant by the sentence, so that you can guess at the meaning of the word.

## 3. **When concentrating is challenging, try these strategies:**

- a) Read the questions **before** you read the piece. It may help to know what you are looking for!
- b) Read **out loud**. Your own voice can sometimes focus your mind **AND** eliminate outside distractions.
- c) Discuss the meaning **as if** you were telling someone else what you think it means. Sometimes having to express your thoughts can clarify them.

## 4. **The following are skills that are helpful when practicing reading:**

- a) Recalling details/facts/information
- b) Understanding main ideas
- c) Making inferences

## A. Tips for Recalling Details, Facts, and Information

- try to **get interested** in the details (readers recall what they are interested in)
- decide what is **most important** and what is probably not worth remembering (you can't remember everything)
- **reread** if you need to so that you ensure you understand
- go back and reread **after** you have read the question

### Sample Questions: (answers at the end of each exercise)

1. An adult drinks from one and one half to five, or more, quarts of water a day. Total daily intake depends on climate, workload, body size, and many other factors.

One of the factors that determines the amount of water an adult drinks per day is

- A. state of health
- B. body size
- C. age
- D. gender

2. Most of us think that the water we drink is safe. It usually is, but some of us are using poorly treated drinking water which has been spoiled by bacteria, toxic chemicals, metal, and a possible wide range of other pollutants.

Most of the time our drinking water is

- A. contaminated by bacteria
- B. contaminated by metals
- C. undrinkable
- D. safe to drink

3. At least 4,000 cases of water-borne illnesses occur each year in the U.S.A. The actual total may be ten times greater. Further, medical science has not yet determined the effects on people of long-term exposure to contaminated drinking water.

Medical science does not know

- A. how to protect people from contaminated drinking water
- B. why some drinking water is improperly treated
- C. the long-term effects of unsafe drinking water on people
- D. how much water is required for the average person

**Answers:** 1. B      2. D      3. C

**Read the following and answer the questions:**

There are several things that every defensive driver should learn. To begin with, the defensive driver should learn to drive courteously. That is, he should always let the other person have the right-of-way if there is any doubt. Also, the defensive driver should learn to anticipate, or guess, what the other driver is going to do next. This gives him time to get his car into a safer position, if necessary. Furthermore, every defensive driver should learn to give the proper signal before changing directions, allowing enough time for other drivers to react to it. Lastly, every defensive driver should learn to keep a safe distance between his car and the car ahead.

1. A defensive driver is
  - A. courteous
  - B. an aggressive driver
  - C. a slow driver
  - D. a night driver
  
2. The motto of the defensive driver should be:
  - A. If you drink, don't drive.
  - B. A safe driver is a relaxed driver.
  - C. Safe driving does not just happen; you have to work at it.
  - D. When in doubt, give the other person the right-of-way.
  
3. A defensive driver
  - A. should learn to anticipate the actions of others
  - B. should maintain a steady speed at all times
  - C. never stops to pick up hitchhikers
  - D. always checks the tires for air pressure

**Answers:** 1. A      2. D      3. A

The information in the above section has been adapted from: COMPREHENSION SKILLS: Isolating Details. Jamestown Publishers, 1974. pp. 13-21, 48, 56

## **B. Tips for Understanding the Main Idea in a Passage**

The main idea

- is the most important idea in the passage.
- can be found at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the passage.
- may be stated clearly or it may be implied.
- is supported by all the sentences in the passage.

The information in the above section has been adapted from: COMPREHENSION SKILLS: Main Ideas. Jamestown Publishers, 1974. pp.9-18

### **Sample Questions:**

1. If you, like most people, have trouble recalling the names of those people you have just met, try this. The next time you are introduced, plan to remember the names. Say to yourself, "I'll listen carefully, I'll repeat each person's name to be sure I've got it, and I will remember." You'll discover how effective the technique is and probably recall those names for the rest of your life.

The main idea of this passage maintains that memory

- A. always operates at peak efficiency
- B. breaks down early in the day
- C. improves if new information is used immediately
- D. becomes unreliable when a person is tired

**Answers:** 1. C Supports are "discover how effective"; "probably recall those names for the rest ..."

**Read the following and answer the questions:**

It seems that everyone you meet these days knows something about astrology. Go to a party nowadays and chances are that the first stranger you meet will ask you, "What's your sign?" This question comes even before, "What is your name?" The stranger means, of course, "What sign of the zodiac are you born under?" You would answer "Virgo" or "Pisces" or whatever your sign is. But astrology is nothing new. It has been around for thousands of years. In the Orient, it has long been a part of religion and daily life.

1. Which sentence expresses the main idea of the paragraph?
  - A. Go to a party nowadays and chances are that the first stranger you meet will ask you, "What's your sign?"
  - B. It has been around for thousands of years.
  - C. It seems that everyone you meet these days knows something about astrology.
  - D. In the Orient, it has long been a part of religion and daily life.
  
2. The author is most interested in
  - A. the newness of astrology
  - B. the widespread interest in astrology
  - C. the ancient forms of astrology
  - D. the magic of astrology
  
3. This paragraph could be titled
  - A. What's in a Star?
  - B. Magic in its Many Forms
  - C. Parties
  - D. Religion of the Orient

**Answers:** 1. C            2. B            3. A



### **C. Tips for Making Inferences**

Sometimes when you are reading you must go beyond the printed word on the page, to what is hinted at or likely to be true, given the set of facts. Inferences can only be made when there are facts to back them.

e.g. “The old man staggered along the sidewalk, his torn, grey coat flapping in the wind.”

You might infer that the man is drunk, but really the facts don’t substantiate that inference. That would be a guess. It could be that the man has been mugged, that he is sick, or that he has had a medical crisis such as a heart attack. All of these could be the case, or some other explanation may be possible. Unless the facts support the inference, it could be incorrect.

You can make accurate inferences when you

- ✓ think about all the ideas that are presented.
- ✓ think about the suggested or implied meaning of the words used.
- ✓ ensure they are supported by facts.

The following words may be used when an inference is needed:

‘implies that ...’  
 ‘indicates that ...’  
 ‘suggests ...’

‘infers that ...’  
 ‘seems to be ...’  
 ‘probably ...’

‘might be described as ...’  
 ‘can assume that ...’  
 ‘can conclude that ...’

## Sample Reading and Questions:

Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow it.

Of all the farm animals a person might own, the goat is the best personal pet. For one thing, you can keep it for a longer time than other farm animals. Even after a doe is fully-grown and you are milking her, she will remain your pet. She will not lose her love of adventure or her “sense of humour”. Goats nose over everything they see and they eat so many different things that people long ago thought that goats ate tin cans. A doe, often called a nanny goat, usually has a single birth. Sometimes, however, twins or even triplets are born. By the time a young kid is five months old, it may be taken from its mother and kept as a pet.

1. The writer implies that most farm animals
  - A. are hard to train
  - B. enjoy being with people
  - C. become independent as they grow older
  - D. like to live with other animals
  
2. The above paragraph suggests that goats are
  - A. stubborn
  - B. patient
  - C. curious
  - D. intelligent
  
3. According to the paragraph, the idea that goats can eat tin cans
  - A. is based on a fact
  - B. was argued many years ago
  - C. is untrue
  - D. is certainly possible

### Answers:

1. C            2. C            3. C

## Sample Reading and Questions:

Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow it.

I was ignorant. I was young. I was broke. And I was scared. So I did the only thing that all those feelings added up to ... I ran. I figured I didn't stand a chance of keeping the kids if the welfare caught up with me. And if I stayed in the neighbourhood and they came looking, they'd find me. So I packed up the little stuff we had, with Anthony in my arms and Jackie and Kim clinging to my skirt, got on the bus and rode over to the next town by the river - back where I started from. When we got down off the bus and I looked around, it was pretty much the way I remembered it, shack and all. But when I started going up and down the streets looking for a room to rent, I saw that the Kelvins weren't there any more. Almost all the faces were new.

1. The paragraph suggests that the speaker is
  - A. tired but happy
  - B. worried but frank
  - C. friendly and loyal
  - D. trusting and kind
  
2. The reader can infer that
  - A. the story takes place in the summer
  - B. the speaker finds a room to rent
  - C. Anthony is the baby
  - D. Jackie is older than Kim
  
3. The speaker leads the reader to believe that
  - A. she has worked hard all her life
  - B. she came from a poor family
  - C. she hates to leave the city
  - D. she wants to live where no one knows her

**Answers:**      1. B            2. C            3. B

The information in the above section has been adapted from: COMPREHENSION SKILLS: Making an Inference. Jamestown Publishers, 1974. pp. 9 - 21, 30, 38

## Sample Reading and Questions:

Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow it.

### A Daily Record

A diary is a daily personal record. In it the writer is free to record anything at all. This may include events, comments, ideas, reading notes, or any subject on one's mind. Diaries may be kept for various purposes – to record the experiences of one's life so as not to forget them, to record ideas that might prove useful, or simply to express oneself through the medium of the printed word.

In past centuries people in public life often kept diaries. These have become valuable sources of fact and interpretation for later historians. The private candid observations set down in these personal journals often provide truer pictures of an age than do records or other books, which may have been censored during that time. For the most part, these diaries were never intended to be read by others. The entries were made simply as aids to memory or as a form of relaxation.

In modern times, however, politicians and other people realize that their diaries will likely be read by historians or, in published form, by the public. Thus they may make entries with these readers in mind. As a result, their diaries may lose the confidential, intimate nature of the older ones. On the other hand, their entries may tend to be more complete and self-explanatory.

The most famous diary ever written in English was that kept by Samuel Pepys. A civilian official of the British army, Pepys made regular entries between 1660 and 1669. His diary starts at the beginning of the Restoration period in English history and describes many of the court intrigues and scandals of his day. The diary reveals Pepys as a man with many human weaknesses but one who was honest with himself. He wrote his entries in a combined code and shorthand that was not solved until more than 100 years after his death. The most famous diary of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was published with the simple title Diary of a Young Girl. It was more commonly known as The Diary of Anne Frank. Anne was a young Jewish girl whose diary records the two years her family spent in hiding, mostly in the Netherlands, trying to escape the Nazi persecutors of the Jews. She and her family were finally caught in August 1944. She was imprisoned and died at a concentration camp in Germany in March 1945.

1. A diary is
  - A. a report on world events
  - B. a daily personal record
  - C. a documentary
2. The most famous diary ever written in English was kept by
  - A. Samuel Johnson
  - B. Samuel Pepys
  - C. Anne Frank
3. Diary of a Young Girl was written
  - A. during the civil war
  - B. in the 1940s
  - C. during the 19<sup>th</sup> century

4. Anne Frank's diary describes
  - A. the years her family spent hiding from the Nazis
  - B. a German concentration camp
  - C. the life of an average young girl
  
5. Diaries of the past may give a truer picture of an age than published books because
  - A. diaries are uncensored
  - B. published books give only one point of view
  - C. amateur writers were more thorough than professional writers
  
6. Today's diarists may not be as confidential as those in the past because
  - A. they expect that their diaries will be read by others
  - B. they have more secrets to hide
  - C. people today are harsher critics
  
7. You may conclude from the article that Samuel Pepys wrote his diary in code and shorthand because
  - A. he was fond of mysteries
  - B. he did not want his diary to be read by the wrong people
  - C. he could not write in proper English
  
8. It is probable that most people keep diaries in order to
  - A. become famous
  - B. keep personal records
  - C. practice their writing skills

**Answers:**      1. B            2. B            3. B            4. A  
                      5. A            6. A            7. B            8. B

The information in the above section has been adapted from: TIMES READINGS PLUS: Book Six. Jamestown Publishers, 1998. pp. 17, 18.