

Information presentation (rephrasing sentences in different words)

- Answers should use clear and concise sentences with proper grammar.
- Only use facts or information given in the original sentences. Don't insert any new outside knowledge.

Notes:

1. Select the paragraph that best expresses the ideas contained in the sentences above it.
(Example © CSEA Booklet #17 - Preparing Written Material ©2006 p. 13 #21; used with permission)

1. Snowboarding has become an increasingly popular alternative to traditional skiing.
2. From the beginning, snowboarders were perceived as a little wilder, a little more adventurous than skiers.
3. This image of the snowboarder as a free spirit has made the sport particularly popular among young people.

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- a. In recent years, snowboarding has actually become more popular than traditional skiing. The image of the reckless, carefree snowboarder has made the sport especially popular among young people, who are more inclined to take risks.
 - b. Snowboarding has become increasingly popular over the years. Snowboarding is seen by many as a more adventurous sport than skiing. Snowboarding has become popular for this reason among young people.
 - c. Snowboarding has become an increasingly popular sport, particularly among young people. The image of the snowboarder as a carefree adventurer seems to have an especially strong appeal to the young.
 - d. Adventure and risk-taking, to some degree, is the main appeal of snowboarding. This combination of features makes snowboarding especially appealing to young people.

Strategy: Underline mistakes, cross out choices with mistakes, and choose the best remaining one.

Mistakes to look for

- Grammatical mistakes
 - Singular vs. Plural (One thing **is**; multiple things **are**.)
 - Homophones
 - Their / there / they're
 - Your / you're
 - It's / its
 - Pronoun confusion
 - Agreement in number (**Everybody** should do ~~their~~ **his** work on time.)
 - Agreement in person (When **a student** is late, ~~you~~ **he** should apologize.)
 - Eliminate ambiguity (Fred visited Bob after ~~his~~ **Fred's** graduation.)
- Redundancy
 - Every sentence starts with the same word.
 - A long string of words appears verbatim in more than one sentence.
- Factual Mistakes
 - Stating things that aren't in the original
 - Not stating things that are in the original
 - Same category, different meaning (will / may , some / all)

Here's another example information presentation question (© CSEA, used with permission):

30. 1. The Hudson River School was a group of American landscape painters who worked from 1825 to 1875.
2. Influenced by European Romanticism, they painted scenes that embodied the beauty and grandeur of nature.
3. Most of their paintings depict scenes in the Hudson River valley.
- a. The Hudson River School, a group of American landscape painters, were influenced by European Romanticism. From 1825 to 1875, they painted scenes that embodied the beauty and grandeur of nature. Most of their paintings depict scenes in the Hudson River valley.
- b. The Hudson River school of painters were influenced by European Romanticism from 1825 to 1875 to paint scenes that show the beauty and grandeur of nature. Most of their paintings take place in the Hudson River valley.
- c. From 1825 to 1875, the Hudson River school painted scenes in the Hudson River valley that depict the beauty and grandeur of nature. They were influenced by European Romanticism.
- d. For a period of about sixty years in the nineteenth century, the Hudson River school painted scenes in the Hudson River valley that embodied the beauty and grandeur of nature. Their work was influenced by European Romanticism.

Continuation vs Contrast

Sentences often use keywords or phrases which indicate either continuation or contrast. Continuations keep the writing going in the same direction, and contrasts change the direction of the writing.

2. Show whether these words, phrases, and punctuation marks indicate continuation and/or contrast.

	Continuation	Contrast
;		
additionally		
also		
although		
and		
armed with the knowledge that		
as a matter of fact		
as well as		
because		
but		
by way of contrast		
consequently		
conversely		
despite		
for example		
further		
furthermore		
however		
in contrast		
in fact		
indeed		
moreover		
not only, ... but		
on the other hand		
though		
what is more		
when in fact		
while		
yet		

Cause & Effect

- »
- »
- »
- »
- »
- »

Pronouns

- »
- »
- »
- »
- »

Paragraph organization (putting sentences in a logical order)

- Look for the first sentence first.
- Try to come up with an answer without looking at the answer choices and see if your arrangement matches.
- Use process of elimination by substituting the sentences into the answer choices.

Notes:

3. Put these sentences about the Empire Plaza into two distinct paragraphs in the best order.

1. The massive undertaking used 232,000 tons of steel, 900,000 cubic yards of concrete, and 40,000 tons of marble, and expended 1.7 billion in 1970s dollars, leading to the popular joke that the governor had an "edifice complex", though not all commentators were so waggish.
 6. As the governor remarked: "There's no question that the city did not look as I think the Princess thought it was going to."
 8. Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller formulated his plans to build what is now the Empire Plaza in the wake of a diplomatic visit by Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands that highlighted the dilapidated condition of much of the city.
 9. One biographer wrote: "In a deeper sense, art and architecture have a much more intimate relationship. For him, art and architecture often blurred, and there is no doubt that on one plane of consciousness, Rockefeller perceived the outer shell of buildings as sculpture. The Mall here in Albany, for instance, can be characterized as a group of forms on a platform – sculpture on a pedestal, if you will."
 10. His attempt to improve the city's looks, however, met with a great deal of criticism due in large part to the effort's gargantuan scope and budget.
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2. This name comes from the structure's distinctive curvilinear concrete shell with a half-spherical half-prolate oval horizontal cross section.
 3. The shell's vast interior houses two amphitheatres with a combined seating capacity of 1,432, more than enough for the Ellen Sinopoli Dance Company, which has called it home for more than ten years.
 4. In 2004, the latter wrote a song entitled "The Egg" about the venue.
 5. The New York City Ballet, Henry Rollins, and They Might Be Giants, have also performed there.
 7. One of the most striking and distinctive features of Empire Plaza is a concert hall commonly known as 'The Egg'.

4. Put these sentences about Civil Service Exams in Ancient China into two distinct paragraphs in the best order.

1. A truly sophisticated understanding of the cultural underpinnings that the Chinese civil service both drew from and nourished can be obtained by focusing on the eight-legged essay, which was a chief hallmark of the Imperial Exam system.
2. In the 20th century, the term "Mandarin Bureaucrat" was frequently used as a contemptuous epithet connoting stodgy corruption, but the Mandarin system was actually a model of transparency and meritocracy beginning at its inception and continuing through nearly all of its existence.
3. Each exam required the examinees to write stylized essays in black ink according to a strictly formulaic set of rules and conventions which were well known and primarily remained constant.
4. In 605 Emperor Sui Yangdi instituted sweeping reforms that replaced direct appointment with a national system where the majority of appointments were only obtainable through impartially graded open competitive exams.
5. Perhaps the most admired of all essayists was Wang Ao, who was ranked first among 2,300 candidates in the 1474 Nanking provincial exams, and first again in the 1477 national level Metropolitan Exams.
6. Clearly, mindful use of the word Mandarin should take into account the history of this carefully designed system robust enough to survive for well over a thousand years.
7. An eight-legged essay is a learned commentary (typically on Confucian works relating to virtue in governance) with a set number of sentences, and a carefully prescribed role for each sentence.
8. His most memorable essay responded to the question "When the people have enough, how can the ruler alone have too little?" by giving independently arrived at assertions in the tone of Khaldun's economic paradox.
9. The best eight-legged essays were republished in official style guides, which not only served as standards for grading and studying, but also helped disseminate good views on government.
10. Each essay would be anonymized by transcribing it into a red ink copy without the examinee's name on it before handing it to the examiner for grading, thus systematically eliminating any potential for bias or favoritism.