Reading Test Tips and Strategies

Use these strategies to help you move quickly through the exam without re-reading and extra frustration.

The most important thing to remember on test day?

Relax and trust your instincts.

Please consider printing out these instructions for reference while taking the practice tests.

Open the link to COMPASS Reading Practice.
- Format, functionality, and content resembling the actual COMPASS Reading Test
- 6 passages of 4-5 questions each
- Provides a final score and a list of missed questions
- Offers a chance to return through the test to review errors and try to correct them.

For an online workshop, How to Take Reading Tests, click here:
http://fsweb.bainbridge.edu/tstrickland/compass/test1/index.html
This workshop provides general tips on taking any reading-based test.
- Test-taking overview for reading skills exams like the COMPASS and the Regents’ Reading Exam
- Interactive questions/activities about question stems, topics, and test-taking strategies
- Self-check activity with sample test questions and questions about test-taking

1. Main Skills Addressed in the COMPASS Reading Test:
- Main Idea
- Supporting Details
- Inference
- Tone
- Patterns of Organization
- Purpose
- Vocabulary

2. Before You Read:
- Quickly check the questions for any “Context Vocabulary” questions.
- Scan (don’t read!) the passage to find those words and write them down.
- Don’t answer the questions now – wait until you’ve read the passage.
- Write the focus question as a statement.

3. While You Read:
- Computer-Based Test: Write the number of the passage and then write ALL of the following information on extra paper
  - Context guesses of underlined/bold words, or any unfamiliar words.
  - Clue words that indicate the author’s tone or purpose (positive, negative, neutral language)
  - Words that signal transitions.

4. After Each Passage, Make a Quick List (still not looking at questions!)
- Topic / Subject (one or two words)
- Main Idea (briefly)
- Author’s Tone (positive, negative, or neutral) about the topic
- Author’s purpose (inform, persuade, entertain)
5. Read Each Question – But don’t choose any answers yet!
   A. Anticipate the answer **(without looking back!): write** your guess on your scratch paper.
   B. Read all of the answer choices and mark the Question Stem type (Vocabulary; Main Idea; Supporting Details; Inference; Patterns of Organization; Tone; Style; Purpose; Fact or Opinion)
   C. Write the letters **A B C D E** on your scratch paper.
   D. Strike out obviously incorrect answers **A B C D E**
   E. Circle potential answers **A B C D E**
   F. NOW, determine which answer choice seems most like your anticipated guess.

6. **TIPS to CONSIDER:**
   • Avoid answers with 100% words like **never** or **always**
   • Consider answers with words like **few, many, often, some**
   • Don’t overanalyze... no one is trying to trick you.
   • “Which of the following is true?” - True statements must be true **without exception**, based solely on the information presented in the passage.
   • Validate true responses on “all of the following except” – find the one that’s **different**.
   • If two options are synonymous (mean EXACTLY same thing) eliminate both.
   • If two answers are definitely (without a doubt) both correct, you’ll choose an answer with “all” or “none” of the above.
   • Clues from other questions might help you! Use them.
   • Move quickly – don’t stress yourself by staring at a question and re-reading the passage! Make an educated guess and MOVE ON. Spend about 10 minutes total on each passage (that’s about 5 minutes to read and 1-2 minutes per question)
   • Don’t skip questions!

**Other Notes for Test Day:**
   • Bring earplugs.
   • Be early!
   • Eat a good snack or meal before the test (although use the restroom ahead of time)

**More Online Resources:**

**ACT.org COMPASS Student Page**
   • Information about the COMPASS tests
   • Link to sample online test samples with answers (left-hand navigation)
   • Downloadable test packet with information and sample test questions and answers
   • Test-Taking tips

**Townsend Press Textbooks Online:**
   • Skills-based practice based on the various components of reading comprehension: Main Ideas, Vocabulary in Context, Purpose and Tone, Inference, etc.
   • Visitors may either “Try” the exercises or sign up for a free account to maintain a record of scores and practice
   • Use the “10 Steps to Advancing College Reading, 5/e” or “10 Steps to Advanced Reading” for most up to date exercises and tests.
   • Provides immediate answer feedback during exercises and after tests.
Pearson Companion Website
http://cwabacon.pearsoned.com/bookbind/pubbooks/seyler_ab/
- Select skills area from drop-down menu
- Provides answer feedback after submitting answers for score.

Cengage Reading: ACE Practice Tests
http://college.cengage.com/devenglish/resources/reading_ace/students/
- 20 practice tests of 18-20 questions each.
- Includes sample questions from all skill categories

Regents’ Reading Practice Test
http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwrtp/f23fra_i.htm
- Sample Regents' Test passages and questions
- Immediate feedback and will help you on the COMPASS (very similar passages and question types)