

Verbal Question Type: READING COMPREHENSION

Number of Reading Comprehension Questions
About 4 passages and 14 questions
(out of 41 total Verbal questions)

Recommended Time per Question
4 minutes per passage and a little
less than 1.5 minutes per question

Here's an Example of a GMAT Reading Comprehension Passage and Question:

The 1950s saw the emergence of the theory of andragogy, the process by which adults learn (as distinct from pedagogy, the theory of children's learning processes). Educator Malcolm Knowles held that flexibility, informality, enthusiasm, and commitment from both student and teacher, as well as the ability to build upon extant knowledge, were all necessary aspects of adult education classes.

Knowles's beliefs about adult learning had their roots in five assumptions, which stand in contrast to established findings on how children learn. First, adults are self-directed, independent beings. Next, adults have a reservoir of experiences on which to build, which children lack. Third, they are ready to learn skills necessary for their social roles. Fourth, adults learn as a way of solving problems, since their application of learned concepts is immediate. Finally, adults' motivation to learn comes from within.

Malcolm Knowles would most likely agree with which of the following statements?

- (A) Children receive their motivation from external sources rather than from within.
- (B) Educating children is the most important function of society.
- (C) Adult learners are comfortable learning abstract ideas.
- (D) Adult education is the most logical response to society's changing needs.
- (E) Adults are essentially unable to learn new ideas or skills.

And Here's How a Kaplan-Trained GMAT Test Taker Would Answer This Question:

Step 1—Read the Passage Strategically: Here is an example of how an expert test taker would take notes on this passage by summarizing the passage's topic (broad subject matter), the scope (aspect of the topic on which the author focuses), the author's purpose (goal in writing the passage), and the main points of each paragraph. Taking notes this way—we call it a "passage map"—prepares you to answer the kinds of questions that the GMAT predictably asks:

Topic:	Theory of andragogy
Scope:	Knowles's views on adult learners
Purpose:	To explain K's views on characteristics of adult learners
Passage Map:	¶1: K's beliefs re: characteristics of adult ed classes ¶2: K's beliefs—5 assumptions—re: characteristics of adult vs. children learners

Step 2—Analyze the Question Stem: Once we've written our passage map, we go to the questions, which will appear on the computer screen one at a time for any given passage. Questions that ask which statement someone "would most likely agree with" are called Inference questions; the correct answer will follow logically from information in the passage, even if it's not directly stated in the passage.

Steps 3 and 4—Research the Relevant Text and Make a Prediction: Because this question stem does not give us specific points to research, we will compare each answer choice to the information given in the passage, summarized in our notes. We know that one choice will follow clearly from the passage and the remaining four will be either incorrect or irrelevant.

Step 5—Evaluate the Answer Choices: Choice (A) is correct, because one role of the second paragraph is to contrast the characteristics of adult learners with those of children. Since Knowles believed that adults were "self-directed, independent beings" and that their "motivation to learn comes from within," he must have believed that children were externally motivated.

Key Takeaway:

Success on GMAT Reading Comprehension depends on your ability to interpret the question quickly and extract information from the passage efficiently. Repeated practice will lead to speed and accuracy.