

Based simply on the fact that you're reading this, one can infer that you're a decent reader. So why are you struggling with Reading Comprehension questions on the GMAT? GMAT Reading Comprehension is its own genre; remember, business schools are preparing you for management, so the type of reading they want to see is different from the kinds of reading one would undertake in medical or law school. Accordingly, the GMAT needs to assess the way that you read as a manager, and so it features passages and questions that will allow it to do so. Learning to read in a GMAT context will greatly improve your performance and efficiency.

These three strategies will be instrumental in that process:

### **1) Read for Organization**

The GMAT likes to include dense information on obscure topics. Yet at the same time, the GMAT isn't testing your knowledge of botany or your ability to compare and contrast Russian authors. What the GMAT does need to test, however, is your ability to follow the author's logic. What is the author trying to convey? And on which premises does the author's point depend? As a manager post-MBA, you'll be faced with proposals all the time. For example, "we should invest in a new research facility because statistics show that the market for thermodynamic imaging will triple in the next ten years". As a manager, your job isn't to compile those statistics or know the details of the proposed research, but rather it's to understand the proposal and why the proposer thinks it makes sense. Then you can deploy analysts to validate the statistics and calculate the investment and potential returns.

Because of this, on the GMAT your job isn't to break down the details of the passage, but rather to follow its organization. If you can summarize a paragraph by just noting that "The author introduces one theory of cellular mutation, but foreshadows that it's incomplete", you have the passage right where you want it. You know what the author is trying to convey, even if you'll never understand the science behind the theory. This helps you in two ways: First, many questions that you'll face are general, and don't require you to know anything about the details. In these cases, the details are distracting more than anything...they prevent you from seeing the forest because you're focused on the trees, so to speak. Second, even if a question does focus on a detail, it's quite unlikely that you'll remember that detail specifically without going back to read it. Knowing the intent of each paragraph will tell you exactly where to go to find that detail for closer analysis. This saves you valuable time and keeps your mind clear of useless detail – you only try to understand the details that truly matter.

Strategically, this means that you should focus on keywords that signal the author's intent. Words like "but" and "however" show that the author is changing gears; "also" and "furthermore" signal that the author is expanding on a point. "Therefore" and "we should" signal a conclusion. Reading for organization makes passages easier to understand, allows you to quickly assess general questions, and keeps you away from delving too deep into details and wasting valuable time and energy. And when details are important, remember that the GMAT still primarily cares about your abilities as a manager, so...

### **2) Note that specific-detail questions often hinge on cause/effect relationships**

When the GMAT does ask you to consider specific details, the intent is almost always to test your ability to process cause/effect relationships. Questions will ask:

*The reaction that takes place within the cell's nucleus does not affect the membrane because \_\_\_\_\_.? (looking for the cause of the membrane's "safety")*

*Which of the following results from the mitochondria's transformation? (looking for an effect)*

*If the worm's cilia were to become damaged and therefore be unable to sense warmer temperatures, which of the following would result? (here they're asking you to assess what crucial function the cilia perform, and then infer what would happen without them)*

If you've read for organization, you should know where to look for these relationships because you know the intent of

each paragraph. From there, be sure to note exactly which portion of the cause/effect the question seeks (it's quite common for the question to ask for the cause of a reaction, but give the effect as a popular wrong answer choice), and to then break down that relationship to ensure that you understand each step. Generally, once you've honed in on the relationship specifically you can efficiently process exactly what you need by taking a few seconds to break down the steps (X leads to Y, which then leads to Z). The difficulty lies in the fact that the GMAT offers multiple details, so you need to find the particular relationship being questioned, and that its answer choices will include several details mentioned in the passage nearby the keywords in the question, but if you break down that specific relationship you'll know which details are truly important.

### **3) Practice the way you'll play**

Remember, by the time you get to your first Reading Comprehension passage you'll have already completed an hour's worth of AWA essays (or, by next June, 30 minutes of AWA and 30 minutes of [Integrated Reasoning](#)) and 75 minutes' worth of math. So even if you're naturally inquisitive and enjoy reading passages on new topics, under test-day circumstances it's unlikely that you'll be as receptive to new information as you are in your leisure time. One of the core elements of Reading Comprehension difficulty is its placement; toward the end of a long test and under timed pressure, you need to efficiently read and answer questions.

To ensure that you're prepared for *GMAT* Reading Comprehension, and not just for reading in general, practice Reading Comprehension at the end of other study sessions so that you can simulate the fatigue and distraction that you'll face on the exam. Remaining focused and attentive under test conditions is its own challenge, but like triathletes know that they must practice with brick workouts (bike-then-run to practice running with "bike legs") and biathletes know that a steady shooting hand only helps them if they can keep it steady after skiing has increased their heart rate, you can prepare to read critically and efficiently while your mind is fatigued and your psyche just wants to be done.