PRACTICAL AND FINANCIAL LITERACY

Reading Exam Questions Carefully

Difficulty level: Easy

Practical and Financial Literacy

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Overview of the concept

This is how you catch the one word in a question that changes the whole answer, like not or except, so you answer what was actually asked and keep marks you already earned. An exam question that asks which one is not true wants the opposite answer from one that asks which one is true, and missing that word flips a right answer to a wrong one. Students lose more marks to misreading than to not knowing the material, and a slow second read catches most of those losses. Reading the question twice takes seconds, and it protects marks you have already earned.



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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q **The exam question says 'Explain two reasons, using examples.' What should you underline, and how should you plan your answer?**

Explain two reasons, using examples.

SOLUTION

Question: 'Explain two reasons, using examples.'

Underline: Explain, two, using examples.

Plan: two reasons, each with an example, explained, not just listed.

Read the question twice, slowly, before writing anything.

Underline the command word (Explain), the number (two), and any condition (using examples).

Plan your answer around exactly those underlined parts, nothing extra.

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EXAMPLE 2

Q **An exam question asks 'Which of these is NOT a prime number?' What is the trap word, and what should you pick?**

Which of these is NOT a prime number?

SOLUTION

Question: 'Which of these is NOT a prime number?'

Trap word: NOT.

Answer: pick the non-prime, not a prime.

Read every word, especially small ones: not, except, always, never.

Circle the trap word so you do not lose it while working.

Answer the question as written, not the easier question you expected.

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Practice questions

1

Question: 'Name two capital cities.' What must your answer have?

- A Two capital city names
- B One capital city name
- C Two reasons, each with an example
- D A definition of a capital city

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2

Question: 'Describe two effects of exercise, using examples.' What must your answer have?

- A Two effects, described, each with an example
- B One effect, with an example
- C Four effects, listed only
- D A definition of exercise

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3 Question: 'Name four planets.' What must your answer have?

- A Four planet names
- B One planet name
- C Four reasons, with examples
- D A drawing of a planet

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4 Question: 'Explain one reason, using an example.' What must your answer have?

- A One reason, explained, with an example
- B Two reasons, listed only
- C One example, with no reason
- D Four reasons

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5 Question: 'Which of these is NOT a colour?'What is the answer?

- A red
- B happy
- C blue
- D green

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6 Question: 'Which of these is NOT a fruit?'What is the answer?

- A apple
- B carrot
- C banana
- D grape

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Question: 'Which of these is NOT a mammal?' What is the answer?

A dog

B shark

C cat

D horse

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8

Question: 'Which of these is NOT a planet?' What is the answer?

A Mars

B Venus

C Moon

D Jupiter

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What should you do before writing any exam answer?

A Read the question twice, carefully

B Write as fast as you can

C Skip the question and come back later

D Copy the answer from the next question

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Why read the question twice?

A To catch trap words and conditions missed on the first read

B To use up the exam time

C To memorise the question

D To find the hardest question first

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ANSWER KEY

1. Two capital city names
2. Two effects, described, each with an example
3. Four planet names
4. One reason, explained, with an example
5. happy
6. carrot
7. shark
8. Moon
9. Read the question twice, carefully
10. To catch trap words and conditions missed on the first read

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