
Hearn Consulting · Workbook

The GRE Verbal Workbook.

Targeted practice in Reading Comprehension, Text Completion, and Sentence Equivalence — paired with The GRE Playbook and the Error Log Template.

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How to use this workbook.

This Workbook is the practice companion to The GRE Playbook.

The Playbook helps you understand GRE Verbal and Analytical Writing, read official POWERPREP results, and choose the next practice priority. This Workbook gives you targeted Verbal practice in Reading Comprehension, Text Completion, and Sentence Equivalence.

Important

Do not use this Workbook as the official baseline.

Use ETS POWERPREP for baseline, scoring, full-length timing, and final calibration.

Use this Workbook to practice the skills the official test shows you need.

After each practice set

Do not just mark the score. Review the misses.

For each missed or guessed question, record the question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move in the Error Log Template.

If you cannot explain the miss, the question is not reviewed yet.

What this workbook makes visible.

Most GRE Verbal practice fails because the student finishes questions but does not understand the pattern. This Workbook is designed to make the pattern visible.

Questions the workbook helps you answer

- Is the miss a vocabulary issue, sentence-logic issue, passage-comprehension issue, trap-answer issue, or pacing issue?
- Are you losing points mostly in RC, TC, or SE?
- Are you letting answer choices create meaning?
- Is the same miss type repeating across practice sets?
- Is timing breaking the method?

What to look for after a week of work

Do not judge progress only by whether one practice set went up or down. Look for better patterns:

- Fewer repeated miss types.
- Stronger explanations after wrong answers.
- Better predictions before answer choices.
- Fewer vocabulary guesses without sentence logic.
- Clearer central-idea statements on RC.
- Fewer inference overreaches.
- Better skip/return decisions.
- More specific next steps after practice.

The score matters, but the score is a lagging indicator. The first sign of progress is usually better review.

The GRE Verbal path.

Ten lessons. Adjust pacing to your timeline. Do not skip the review steps.

Lesson	Focus
1	Skill Check + the two frameworks
2	Text Completion I — one-blank logic
3	Text Completion II — multi-blank logic
4	Sentence Equivalence — pair meaning and sentence logic
5	Midpoint check + error analysis
6	Reading Comprehension I — central idea, structure, purpose
7	Reading Comprehension II — evidence, detail, inference
8	Mixed Verbal practice — RC, TC, and SE under time
9	Pacing, skip/return decisions, trap review
10	Final timed set + test-day protocol

How to use this path

Work the lessons in order the first time through. Text Completion and Sentence Equivalence come first because they install the sentence-logic habit that Reading Comprehension also rewards. Use Lesson 5 as a midpoint check before moving into Reading Comprehension. If you have less time than the full ten lessons need, hold the order but tighten the practice sets — do not skip the review steps, since the review is where the score moves.

Pair every lesson with the Error Log Template. The lesson tells you what to practice; the log tells you what you actually need to fix.

The two rules that drive everything.

Comprehension-First Rule

For Reading Comprehension, let your understanding of the passage drive the answer choices. Do not let the answer choices create your understanding.

Before looking at answers, ask:

1. What is the central idea?
2. How does the author support it?
3. How is the text structured?

Predict Before You Peek

For Text Completion and Sentence Equivalence, read the full sentence before looking at the choices. Identify the relationship the blank must satisfy, then predict your own word or idea. Only then look at the answer choices.

Answer choices are designed to seed meaning. Your prediction is your anchor.

The principle

You do not need every question right. You need disciplined accuracy, good skip decisions, and a review process that changes the next set.

Lesson 1

Skill Check + the two frameworks.

Establish a starting practice pattern. Install the two rules. This skill check does not replace ETS POWERPREP — it helps identify which Verbal patterns to practice first.

What this lesson covers

- A short Reading Comprehension skill check.
- A short Text Completion / Sentence Equivalence skill check.
- The Comprehension-First Rule and Predict Before You Peek.
- Your first error-log entries.

Method

Two rules drive every Verbal item:

Comprehension-First Rule (Reading Comprehension)

Let your understanding of the passage drive the answer choices. Before looking at answers, ask: What is the central idea? How does the author support it? How is the text structured?

Predict Before You Peek (Text Completion + Sentence Equivalence)

Read the full sentence first. Identify the relationship the blank must satisfy. Predict your own word. Only then look at the choices.

Do not call every Text Completion miss a vocabulary miss. If you knew the words but missed the relationship, the issue was sentence logic.

Worked example — Reading Comprehension

Passage: "The role of pollinators in temperate forest ecosystems was, until the 1990s, treated by ecologists as a secondary concern. Forests are dominated by wind-pollinated trees — oaks, beeches, maples — and the early models of forest health treated pollinator presence as roughly proportional to canopy openings. More recent work has revised this picture. Surveys of the forest understory, in particular, show that flowering shrubs and herbaceous plants depend heavily on specific insect groups — solitary bees, hoverflies, and several species of moth — and that these groups in turn depend on forest structure that is often disturbed by even modest canopy thinning."

Question: The author mentions oaks, beeches, and maples primarily to...

Method walk-through: First, run the Three-Question Read. Central idea: forest-health models that focus only on canopy trees have missed important understory dynamics. Support: a contrast between an old view and revised understory work. Structure: old view → revised view → consequences. With that read in place, oaks/beeches/maples are examples of the canopy trees that anchored the old view — so the function is to illustrate the assumption being revised, not to claim those trees are unimportant.

Best answer: "illustrate the wind-pollinated trees that anchored an earlier ecological model."

Practice set

Set a timer for 8 minutes. Read each item carefully. Predict before checking choices.

Item 1 — Text Completion (one blank)

The committee's report was praised for its _____ tone: it neither softened the findings nor exaggerated their severity.

- (A) equivocal
- (B) measured
- (C) doctrinaire
- (D) inflammatory
- (E) perfunctory

Item 2 — Sentence Equivalence

Despite the policy's stated aims, the report concluded that the program had been largely _____, producing little measurable change in the metrics it was designed to improve.

- (A) ineffectual
- (B) inconsequential
- (C) controversial
- (D) expensive
- (E) celebrated
- (F) scrutinized

Choose two answers that produce sentences with equivalent meanings.

Item 3 — Reading Comprehension

Re-read the pollinators passage above. Which of the following best describes the author's primary claim?

- (A) Forest health models that ignored the understory understated ecological disruption.
- (B) Pollinator presence in temperate forests is roughly proportional to canopy openings.
- (C) Solitary bees, hoverflies, and moths are the most important pollinators globally.
- (D) Canopy thinning has no significant effect on forest health.
- (E) Wind-pollinated trees are the primary drivers of forest reproduction.

Answer key + rationale

Item 1: (B) measured. The blank needs a word meaning "neither soft nor exaggerated." Measured fits. Equivocal means evasive; doctrinaire means rigidly ideological; inflammatory and perfunctory are wrong tone. This is a sentence-logic miss if you chose anything else.

Item 2: (A) ineffectual and (B) inconsequential. Both fit "produced little measurable change" and produce equivalent meanings. Controversial, expensive, and scrutinized do not match "little change." Celebrated reverses the meaning entirely. This is a paired-

meaning miss if you chose words that fit the sentence but did not produce equivalent meanings.

Item 3: (A). The passage explicitly says forest-health metrics that ignore the understory underestimate disruption. (B) describes the old view being revised; (C) overgeneralizes (the passage is about temperate forests); (D) contradicts the passage; (E) is true of canopy but not of understory reproduction.

Error Log check

Log every miss in the Error Log Template. Record question type, miss type, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move.

If you cannot fill in "What I misunderstood," the question is not reviewed yet.

End-of-lesson reflection

- One thing that clicked:
- One thing I still do not understand:
- What I will drill before the next lesson:

Lesson 2

Text Completion I — one-blank logic.

Build the sentence-logic muscle that makes Text Completion answerable without depending on vocabulary intuition.

What this lesson covers

- Four signal patterns: contrast, continuation, definition, cause/effect.
- How to predict a meaning before looking at answer choices.
- Common one-blank traps: sophisticated-but-wrong vocabulary, evaluative tone mismatches.

Method — Predict Before You Peek

1. Read the full sentence.
2. Identify the signal: is the blank continuing an idea, contrasting with one, defining a term, or stating a cause/effect?
3. Predict your own word or phrase for the blank.
4. Only then look at the choices. Eliminate any that contradict the relationship you predicted.

Signal-word reference

Pattern	Common signals	What the blank does
Contrast	but, however, although, yet, despite, in contrast	Reverses the surrounding idea
Continuation	and, moreover, similarly, also, indeed	Restates or extends the surrounding idea
Definition	that is, namely, in other words, ;	Renames or clarifies the surrounding idea
Cause/effect	because, since, thus, consequently, as a result	Logically follows from the surrounding idea

Worked example

"For all his public _____, the senator privately admitted that the bill was unlikely to pass."

Signal: the contrast cue is "for all his ... privately admitted." Public stance vs. private admission. The blank must mean public confidence or optimism — the opposite of the private doubt.

Predict: optimism / bravado / confidence.

Best answer: "bravado."

Practice set

Set a timer for 10 minutes. Predict before peeking.

1.

Although the panel had been convened to address _____ in the city's housing data, the discussion drifted into broader questions of policy.

- (A) discrepancies
- (B) consistencies
- (C) celebrations
- (D) compliments
- (E) endorsements

2.

Researchers initially regarded the protein's behavior as _____, but later experiments revealed a precise and repeatable structure.

- (A) reliable
- (B) predictable
- (C) erratic
- (D) systematic
- (E) orderly

3.

The author's prose is so _____ that even a sympathetic reader can lose the thread of the argument.

- (A) lucid
- (B) crystalline
- (C) opaque
- (D) concise
- (E) playful

4.

Once considered _____, the technique has become standard practice in laboratories across the country.

- (A) routine
- (B) unorthodox
- (C) traditional
- (D) inevitable
- (E) widespread

5.

The novelist's later work is widely seen as a _____ of the experimental style she developed in her twenties.

- (A) repudiation
- (B) refinement
- (C) imitation
- (D) parody
- (E) abandonment

6.

The candidate's reputation for _____ — for finding workable compromise where others saw only conflict — preceded her into the negotiations.

- (A) intransigence
- (B) duplicity
- (C) pragmatism
- (D) demagoguery
- (E) showmanship

7.

Although the protocol had once been _____ as cumbersome and outdated, recent revisions have restored its standing among practitioners.

- (A) hailed
- (B) dismissed
- (C) revered
- (D) overlooked
- (E) misunderstood

8.

The editor was praised for her _____ : she could trim a long manuscript without sacrificing the writer's voice.

- (A) verbosity
- (B) deference
- (C) prolixity
- (D) economy
- (E) timidity

Answer key + rationale

1. (A) discrepancies. The contrast cue "although ... drifted" implies the panel was initially focused on a problem, then strayed. Discrepancies (gaps) is the only word that names a problem. Miss type: signal-word miss.

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2. (C) erratic. Contrast cue "but later ... precise and repeatable." The earlier view must be the opposite — irregular. Reliable, predictable, systematic, and orderly all match the later view, not the earlier one. Miss type: signal-word miss.
 3. (C) opaque. Continuation cue "so X that ... lose the thread." Whatever the blank says must explain why a sympathetic reader gets lost. Only opaque does that. Lucid, crystalline, concise, and playful do not predict losing the thread. Miss type: sentence-logic miss.
 4. (B) unorthodox. Contrast cue "once X ... has become standard." The former state must be the opposite of standard. Routine, traditional, and widespread mean "standard"; inevitable is unrelated to standard practice. Miss type: signal-word miss.
 5. (B) refinement. Continuation/development cue. "Widely seen as a ___" of an earlier style. Refinement keeps continuity with the earlier work; repudiation, parody, and abandonment all reject it; imitation suggests no progression. Miss type: signal-word miss.
 6. (C) pragmatism. Definition cue: the em-dash gloss tells you what the word means ("finding workable compromise"). Pragmatism is the precise match. Intransigence and demagoguery are negatives; duplicity is dishonesty; showmanship is style without substance. Miss type: missed the definition gloss.
 7. (B) dismissed. Contrast cue "although ... has restored its standing." The earlier verb must oppose "restored." Dismissed fits. Hailed and revered are positive; overlooked and misunderstood don't pair with "cumbersome and outdated" as a clean opposite of "restored standing." Miss type: signal-word miss.
 8. (D) economy. Definition cue: the gloss after the colon tells you the meaning ("trim a long manuscript without sacrificing voice"). Economy means exactly that. Verbosity and prolixity reverse the meaning; deference and timidity describe disposition, not editing skill. Miss type: trap vocabulary (verbosity sounds editorial but reverses the sentence).

Error Log check

Log every miss using question type = TC, then choose miss type from: signal-word miss, sentence-logic miss, vocabulary gap, or trap vocabulary.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Did I read the full sentence before looking at the choices?
- Did I predict a word or meaning before peeking?
- Where did the trap pull me — and what signal did I miss?

Lesson 3

Text Completion II — multi-blank logic.

Multi-blank items reward sentence reading, not vocabulary guessing. Solve one blank at a time using the strongest signal first.

What this lesson covers

- Solving two- and three-blank items by signal strength.
- When to walk back: revising an early commitment when the rest of the sentence does not fit.
- Punctuation as a meaning pivot (colons, semicolons, em-dashes).

Method

1. Read the whole sentence first. Do not glance at the choices yet.
2. Locate the strongest signal — usually the blank that is closest to a clear cue word or punctuation pivot.
3. Predict and solve that blank first.
4. Use your solved blank to constrain the others. The blanks must hold together as one coherent meaning.
5. If a later blank refuses to fit, walk back: your first choice was the trap.

Worked example

"The director's earlier films had been (i) _____ : minimalist, slow, refusing the obvious dramatic beat. Her new project is, by contrast, (ii) _____ — expansive, fast, and structured around three explicit cliffhangers."

Strongest signal: "by contrast" between the earlier and new films. (i) must be characterized by the qualities that follow the colon (minimalist, slow, restrained). (ii) must be the contrast (expansive, fast, dramatic).

Predict: (i) restrained / spare; (ii) maximalist / dramatic.

(i) restrained. (ii) maximalist.

Practice set

Set a timer for 12 minutes.

1. (two blanks)

Once dismissed as (i) _____, the field of network biology has matured into a (ii) _____ discipline, with its own journals, conferences, and methodological standards.

- (i): (A) fringe (B) celebrated (C) dominant
- (ii): (D) marginal (E) legitimate (F) controversial

2. (two blanks)

For decades the senator's voting record had been (i) _____, so when she announced the new position, the press treated it as a (ii) _____ moment.

- (i): (A) erratic (B) consistent (C) opaque
- (ii): (D) routine (E) defining (F) embarrassing

3. (two blanks)

Although the proposal seemed (i) _____ at first, the committee's review revealed a (ii) _____ set of objections that the author had not anticipated.

- (i): (A) untenable (B) straightforward (C) reckless
- (ii): (D) trivial (E) substantive (F) cosmetic

4. (three blanks)

The biographer treats her subject with (i) _____: she neither (ii) _____ his cruelty nor (iii) _____ his genuine accomplishments. The result is the rare biography that lets the reader draw their own conclusion.

- (i): (A) judgment (B) restraint (C) sycophancy
- (ii): (D) excuses (E) emphasizes (F) catalogues
- (iii): (G) inflates (H) minimizes (I) celebrates

5. (two blanks)

What once required the (i) _____ effort of a research team can now be done in an afternoon by a single graduate student — a shift that has (ii) _____ the pace of discovery in the field.

- (i): (A) modest (B) sustained (C) trivial
- (ii): (D) decelerated (E) accelerated (F) standardized

6. (three blanks)

The economist's argument is (i) _____ in its premises but (ii) _____ in its conclusions: by assuming away the very frictions she purports to analyze, she arrives at a (iii) _____ tidiness no real economy could ever produce.

- (i): (A) modest (B) ambitious (C) cautious
- (ii): (D) measured (E) sweeping (F) tentative
- (iii): (G) misleading (H) suspicious (I) salutary

Answer key + rationale

1. (i) (A) fringe, (ii) (E) legitimate. Signal: "once dismissed ... has matured into." The first blank must be a dismissive label; the second must describe maturity. Celebrated and dominant contradict "dismissed." Marginal and controversial don't capture maturity into legitimacy.

2. (i) (B) consistent, (ii) (E) defining. Signal: "for decades ... when she announced." If her record was consistent, the new announcement breaks pattern — making it defining. Erratic

and opaque would not make a new announcement particularly notable. Routine and embarrassing don't match "the press treated it as."

3. (i) (B) straightforward, (ii) (E) substantive. Signal: "although ... revealed ... had not anticipated." The early appearance must seem easy/simple; the objections must turn out to be serious. Untenable and reckless reverse the contrast at (i). Trivial and cosmetic don't match "the author had not anticipated."

4. (i) (B) restraint, (ii) (D) excuses, (iii) (H) minimizes. Signal: "neither X nor Y." The blank pairs must be the two failure modes of biography — softening flaws and downplaying virtues. Restraint at (i) names the disposition. Sycophancy and judgment are the wrong dispositions. Emphasizes/catalogues at (ii) and inflates/celebrates at (iii) reverse the intended contrast.

5. (i) (B) sustained, (ii) (E) accelerated. Signal: "once required ... can now be done in an afternoon." The work used to require sustained effort; the change must be a speed-up. Modest and trivial contradict the implied difficulty; standardized is unrelated to pace; decelerated is the reverse.

6. (i) (A) modest, (ii) (E) sweeping, (iii) (G) misleading. Signal: "but ... by assuming away the frictions ... no real economy could ever produce." The premises must be small/modest; the conclusions must be expansive (sweeping); the tidiness must mislead about how real economies behave. Salutary (helpful) reverses the critique.

Error Log check

Log misses by question type = TC (multi-blank), miss type = sentence-logic miss, signal-word miss, or walked-back-too-late.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Did I solve the strongest signal first?
- Did I have to walk back? Where, and what was the signal I missed initially?
- Where did I confuse sophisticated vocabulary with the right sentence-logic fit?

Lesson 4

Sentence Equivalence — pair meaning and sentence logic.

Two synonyms are not enough. Both words must fit the sentence and produce equivalent meanings.

What this lesson covers

- The double requirement: sentence-fit AND equivalent meaning.
- Paired-meaning traps: two synonyms that don't fit the sentence; or two words that fit the sentence but produce different meanings.
- Predict-before-peek strategy applied to SE.

Method

1. Read the full sentence. Identify the relationship the blank must satisfy.
2. Predict a meaning (a phrase or paraphrase) — not just one word.
3. Among the six choices, find words that match your prediction.
4. Confirm the pair: do the two words produce equivalent sentence meanings? If one shifts the meaning, it is not in the pair.

Worked example

"The author's later essays were marked by a _____ that contrasted sharply with the polemical edge of her earlier work."

Signal: "contrasted sharply with the polemical edge." The blank must be the opposite of polemical (combative, argumentative). Predict: restraint, moderation, calmness.

Among the choices, look for two that match "restrained calm" AND produce equivalent meanings. Words like equanimity and serenity would both fit and produce equivalent meanings. Aggression and stridency would fit polemical, not its opposite.

Practice set

Set a timer for 10 minutes. Predict the meaning, then locate the pair.

1.

The new committee proved more _____ than its predecessors: it reached unanimous votes on issues that had previously deadlocked for years.

- (A) cohesive
- (B) divided
- (C) united
- (D) skeptical
- (E) cautious

- (F) bureaucratic

2.

Once thought to be _____, the species has now been documented in habitats far beyond its previously known range.

- (A) endangered
- (B) localized
- (C) restricted
- (D) prolific
- (E) endemic
- (F) declining

3.

Critics praised the director's _____ pacing — every scene earned its place, and nothing felt extraneous.

- (A) leisurely
- (B) deliberate
- (C) measured
- (D) frenetic
- (E) erratic
- (F) plodding

4.

Far from being _____, the report's tone was carefully neutral; even controversial findings were presented in plain, unornamented prose.

- (A) measured
- (B) inflammatory
- (C) provocative
- (D) understated
- (E) dispassionate
- (F) elegant

5.

The senator's reputation for _____ allowed her to broker compromises where colleagues with sharper rhetorical edges had repeatedly failed.

- (A) demagoguery
 - (B) tact
 - (C) intransigence
 - (D) discretion
 - (E) showmanship
-

-
- (F) charisma

6.

The novel's prose is unusually _____ — fewer adjectives, shorter sentences, and a striking willingness to leave certain emotional moments unexplained.

- (A) verbose
- (B) ornate
- (C) sparse
- (D) lush
- (E) spare
- (F) opaque

7.

The committee's findings were ultimately _____ : after months of testimony, no clear pattern of misconduct emerged.

- (A) damning
- (B) inconclusive
- (C) decisive
- (D) indeterminate
- (E) sweeping
- (F) controversial

8.

She was admired for her _____ : she would tell a colleague hard news directly, without softening it into pleasantries.

- (A) candor
- (B) civility
- (C) tact
- (D) frankness
- (E) reticence
- (F) deference

Answer key + rationale

1. (A) cohesive and (C) united. The blank means "agreed on issues that used to deadlock." Both produce equivalent meanings. Divided, skeptical, and cautious would not explain unanimous votes. Bureaucratic is unrelated.

2. (B) localized and (C) restricted. "Now documented far beyond previously known range" implies the earlier view was of a narrow range. Endangered/declining/endemic each fit the sentence but produce different meanings; prolific reverses the contrast.

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3. (B) deliberate and (C) measured. Both mean carefully paced and produce equivalent meanings. Leisurely is the slowness without the precision; frenetic, erratic, and plodding contradict the praise.
4. (B) inflammatory and (C) provocative. "Far from being X, the tone was neutral." X must mean the opposite of neutral. Both fit and produce equivalent meanings. Measured, understated, and dispassionate match the actual tone, not the opposite. Elegant is unrelated.
5. (B) tact and (D) discretion. The senator's reputation must explain why she could broker compromises others could not — diplomatic skill. Both fit. Demagoguery, intransigence, and showmanship reverse the trait. Charisma is close but does not equate to compromise-brokering — and it does not pair with discretion for equivalent meanings.
6. (C) sparse and (E) spare. Both describe the stripped-down prose the sentence catalogues. Verbose, ornate, and lush reverse the meaning. Opaque is a different criticism.
7. (B) inconclusive and (D) indeterminate. Both match "no clear pattern emerged" and produce equivalent meanings. Damning, decisive, and sweeping contradict the finding; controversial describes reception, not result.
8. (A) candor and (D) frankness. Both name direct, unsoftened honesty and produce equivalent meanings. Civility, tact, reticence, and deference all describe softer dispositions — they fit the sentence loosely, but as a pair they would not produce equivalent meaning.

Error Log check

Log misses by question type = SE. Miss types include paired-meaning miss (two synonyms didn't both fit the sentence) and sentence-logic miss (you fit a word but missed the relationship).

End-of-lesson reflection

- Was I choosing words by sophistication or by sentence logic?
- Did I confirm the pair after finding two candidates?
- Where did two words fit the sentence individually but not as an equivalent pair?

Lesson 5

Midpoint check + error analysis.

Halfway through the Workbook. Time to look at the patterns in your misses before moving to Reading Comprehension.

What this lesson covers

- A timed mixed TC + SE practice set.
- A structured error analysis using your Error Log Template entries from Lessons 1-4.
- A working vocabulary review.

Method — analyzing the first four lessons

1. Open your Error Log Template entries from Lessons 1-4.
2. Sort by Miss type. Which category has the most entries?
3. Sort by Question type (TC vs. SE). Are misses concentrated in one type?
4. Read the "What I misunderstood" column. Are the sentences specific, or vague? Vague reviews mean the questions are not reviewed yet.

Practice set — mixed TC + SE under time

Set a timer for 18 minutes. Twelve items. Predict before peeking.

1. TC (one blank)

The committee's recommendations were notable for their _____ : every conclusion was tied to a specific finding in the data.

- (A) ambiguity
- (B) specificity
- (C) brevity
- (D) ambition
- (E) caution

2. SE

The detective's reports were valued for their _____ — no flourishes, no speculation, only what could be documented.

- (A) verbosity
- (B) economy
- (C) restraint
- (D) prolixity
- (E) eloquence
- (F) elegance

3. TC (two blanks)

Once thought to be (i) _____, the technique now strikes researchers as (ii) _____ — a workable, even ordinary, part of the lab.

- (i): (A) routine (B) outlandish (C) inevitable
- (ii): (D) suspect (E) unremarkable (F) revolutionary

4. SE

The mentor's praise was always _____ : a single specific compliment, delivered without exaggeration.

- (A) effusive
- (B) understated
- (C) measured
- (D) lavish
- (E) cursory
- (F) perfunctory

5. TC (one blank)

After years of _____ work, the laboratory finally produced a result that even skeptics could not dismiss.

- (A) sporadic
- (B) painstaking
- (C) effortless
- (D) tentative
- (E) public

6. SE

The author's conclusion is _____ : it gestures toward several possibilities without committing to any.

- (A) decisive
- (B) equivocal
- (C) noncommittal
- (D) provocative
- (E) damning
- (F) measured

7. TC (two blanks)

Although the historian's account is (i) _____ in tone, it is also (ii) _____ in detail: every paragraph rests on a primary source she has consulted herself.

- (i): (A) playful (B) reserved (C) breathless
- (ii): (D) cavalier (E) meticulous (F) speculative

8. SE

The conductor was known for his _____ rehearsals — brisk, focused, and free of the digressions that drain a long evening.

- (A) leisurely
- (B) lengthy
- (C) efficient
- (D) economical
- (E) elaborate
- (F) digressive

9. TC (one blank)

The senator's response was so _____ that even members of her own party left the press conference uncertain about her position.

- (A) forceful
- (B) equivocal
- (C) detailed
- (D) candid
- (E) unprepared

10. SE

The early studies were _____ : a handful of subjects, no control group, and conclusions that vastly outran the evidence.

- (A) preliminary
- (B) rigorous
- (C) provisional
- (D) authoritative
- (E) systematic
- (F) groundbreaking

11. TC (two blanks)

The reviewer found the novel's first half (i) _____ but its conclusion (ii) _____ — a tidy resolution that betrayed the unease the earlier chapters had carefully built.

- (i): (A) tedious (B) compelling (C) erratic
- (ii): (D) unsatisfying (E) cathartic (F) abrupt

12. SE

The professor's argument was _____ — neither a defense of the orthodox position nor a clean break with it, but a careful working out of the middle.

- (A) iconoclastic
 - (B) qualified
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-
- (C) absolutist
 - (D) doctrinaire
 - (E) nuanced
 - (F) revolutionary

Answer key + rationale

1. (B) specificity. "Every conclusion was tied to a specific finding." Brevity, caution, ambition don't match "tied to a specific finding."
2. (B) economy and (C) restraint. "No flourishes, no speculation, only what could be documented." Verbosity and prolixity are the opposite; eloquence and elegance are about style, not minimalism.
3. (i) (B) outlandish, (ii) (E) unremarkable. The contrast "once X ... now Y — workable, even ordinary." Routine/inevitable at (i) don't capture a strong prior view; suspect/revolutionary at (ii) reverse "ordinary."
4. (B) understated and (C) measured. "A single specific compliment, delivered without exaggeration." Effusive and lavish reverse it; cursory and perfunctory mean unimportant, not measured.
5. (B) painstaking. "Years of X work ... result that even skeptics could not dismiss." Painstaking matches. Sporadic and effortless reverse it; tentative and public don't match the rigor implied.
6. (B) equivocal and (C) noncommittal. "Gestures toward several possibilities without committing to any." Decisive and damning reverse it; provocative and measured don't capture the wavering.
7. (i) (B) reserved, (ii) (E) meticulous. The contrast cue "although X in tone ... but Y in detail." Reserved tone vs. meticulous detail. Playful and breathless don't match "every paragraph rests on a primary source."
8. (C) efficient and (D) economical. "Brisk, focused, free of digressions." Both produce equivalent meanings. Leisurely, lengthy, and elaborate reverse it; digressive directly contradicts.
9. (B) equivocal. "Even her own party left ... uncertain about her position." Forceful, detailed, and candid would produce certainty; unprepared is a different problem.
10. (A) preliminary and (C) provisional. "Handful of subjects, no control group, conclusions that outran the evidence." Both produce equivalent meanings. Rigorous, authoritative, and systematic contradict the description; groundbreaking is unrelated.
11. (i) (B) compelling, (ii) (D) unsatisfying. The contrast "first half X but conclusion Y ... betrayed the unease." Compelling first half makes the unsatisfying ending feel like a betrayal. Tedious and erratic at (i) don't earn the disappointment; cathartic and abrupt at (ii) don't match "tidy resolution that betrayed the unease."
12. (B) qualified and (E) nuanced. "Neither orthodox nor a clean break." Both fit. Iconoclastic and revolutionary reverse it; absolutist and doctrinaire are also the wrong direction.

Error Log check

Log all 12 items. Then compare your error pattern from Lessons 1-4 with the patterns in this set. Are the same miss types repeating? That is your next two-week priority.

Working vocabulary list

Build a list of fewer than 200 words from items you actually missed across Lessons 1-5. Learn each word in a sentence relationship — not as an isolated definition.

A word is not learned until you can use it in sentence logic.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Which miss type is most persistent across the first five lessons?
- Which question type is leaking the most points?
- What is the single change you can make in your next practice set to address that pattern?

Lesson 6

Reading Comprehension I — central idea, structure, purpose.

Before answering anything, the passage must be read. The Three-Question Read is how you do that.

What this lesson covers

- The Three-Question Read on every passage.
- Central-idea, structure, and purpose questions.
- How to distinguish what the passage says from what the choices suggest.

Method — Three-Question Read

1. Read the passage once, with attention. Do not annotate aggressively on a first pass.
2. Before you go to the questions, answer: What is the central idea? How is it supported? How is the passage structured?
3. If you cannot answer those three questions, re-read targeted parts of the passage. The questions cannot be answered until the passage is.

Worked example

Passage: "For most of the twentieth century, urban planners treated the boundary between city and suburb as a fixed object — a line that could be drawn on a map, defended by zoning, and managed by transportation policy. Recent work in urban geography complicates this picture. As employment patterns have decentralized and commuting networks have grown denser, the suburb has become less a place and more a relation. A neighborhood's classification often depends less on where it sits on the map than on how its residents move through the region, which schools their children attend, and which employment networks they participate in. The implications are practical: planning tools that treat the city/suburb boundary as fixed will increasingly mismeasure both."

Three-Question Read

- Central idea: The city/suburb boundary is better understood as a relational pattern than as a fixed line; planning tools built on the old view will mismeasure.
- Support: A contrast between the old fixed-boundary view and recent urban-geography work on movement, schools, and employment.
- Structure: Old view → recent revision → practical consequence.

Now we can answer questions about purpose, function, or central idea without re-reading.

Practice set — Passage A

Read the passage, then answer all questions. Set a timer for 8 minutes.

Passage: "The standard account of the Industrial Revolution emphasizes inventions — the steam engine, the spinning jenny, the power loom — as the engines of change. This is partly

correct. But economic historians have increasingly argued that the inventions themselves cannot explain why industrialization took root in Britain in the late eighteenth century rather than elsewhere, or earlier. Comparable mechanical knowledge existed in several European centers; comparable craft skill existed in parts of Asia. What distinguished Britain, on this newer reading, was a constellation of conditions that made the deployment of those inventions economically rational: high wages relative to fuel costs, secure property rights, dense capital markets, and a navy that protected far-flung trade. The lesson is not that inventions did not matter, but that an invention without the surrounding conditions remains a curiosity in a workshop."

Item 1. The author's primary purpose is to:

- (A) survey major inventions of the Industrial Revolution.
- (B) argue that mechanical knowledge was unique to Britain.
- (C) revise the standard account by emphasizing the conditions that made inventions economically rational.
- (D) demonstrate that craft skill in Asia exceeded that in Britain.
- (E) defend the steam engine as the decisive Industrial Revolution invention.

Item 2. The function of the sentence "Comparable mechanical knowledge existed in several European centers..." is to:

- (A) introduce a new line of argument.
- (B) provide evidence that complicates the standard account.
- (C) refute the claim that inventions mattered.
- (D) summarize the structure of the passage.
- (E) qualify the author's later conclusion about Britain.

Item 3. The final sentence ("The lesson is not that inventions did not matter ...") primarily serves to:

- (A) restate the standard account without modification.
- (B) capture the author's balanced position between the old view and the new one.
- (C) name a single decisive condition for industrialization.
- (D) introduce a counter-argument the passage will rebut.
- (E) suggest that inventions were unrelated to economic conditions.

Practice set — Passage B

Passage: "For decades, ecologists treated forest succession as a deterministic process: clear a plot, and the same sequence of species would reliably reappear, ending in a predictable climax community. This view, often taught in introductory courses, has been steadily eroded by long-term field studies. In repeated trials on similar plots in the eastern United States, the same successional sequence rarely emerged twice. Random variation in seed dispersal, year-to-year weather, soil microbial communities, and disturbance history each shifted the trajectory. The newer picture is not that succession is chaotic — patterns are real — but that it is contingent on conditions that were once treated as background."

Item 4. The passage's central idea is best summarized as:

- (A) Forest succession is entirely random.
- (B) The deterministic model of succession has been complicated by long-term field evidence showing that contingent conditions shape the trajectory.
- (C) Long-term field studies are unreliable.
- (D) Climax communities are always reached eventually.
- (E) Soil microbial communities are the most important driver of succession.

Item 5. The author uses "often taught in introductory courses" to:

- (A) endorse the deterministic model.
- (B) signal that the model is still considered correct in research.
- (C) characterize the deterministic model as widespread but not current.
- (D) suggest that field studies have confirmed the model.
- (E) imply that introductory courses are unreliable in general.

Item 6. By writing "The newer picture is not that succession is chaotic — patterns are real," the author primarily means to:

- (A) defend the original deterministic model.
- (B) acknowledge a counter-position before refining the claim.
- (C) introduce a new set of evidence.
- (D) describe an experimental protocol.
- (E) deny that ecology is a science.

Answer key + rationale

Item 1. (C). The author surveys the standard account and revises it by emphasizing conditions. (A) describes only the first sentence; (B) and (D) reverse the passage; (E) contradicts the conclusion. Miss type: central-idea miss.

Item 2. (B). The sentence provides counter-evidence to the standard account (others had similar knowledge), which complicates it. (A) and (D) misread function; (C) overstates — the author does not deny inventions matter; (E) reverses temporal logic. Miss type: structure miss.

Item 3. (B). The author both rejects pure invention-centrism and refuses to dismiss inventions, settling on a balanced position. (A) and (E) reverse the conclusion; (C) overspecifies; (D) misreads function. Miss type: function/purpose miss.

Item 4. (B). The passage describes a deterministic model, evidence that complicates it, and a contingent-but-patterned view. (A) overstates the revision; (C) reverses what the passage says about field studies; (D) is unsupported; (E) over-specifies one condition. Miss type: central-idea miss.

Item 5. (C). "Often taught in introductory courses" signals widespread but dated. (A) reverses the author's stance; (B) directly contradicts the passage; (D) reverses the field-evidence claim; (E) overreaches. Miss type: function miss.

Item 6. (B). The author concedes that patterns are real (the counter-position) before refining the claim that succession is contingent. (A) reverses; (C) misreads function; (D) is unrelated; (E) overreaches. Miss type: structure/function miss.

Error Log check

Log misses with question type = RC, miss type from: central-idea miss, structure miss, function miss, evidence/detail miss, inference overreach, true but wrong.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Did I run the Three-Question Read before going to the items?
- Where did the choices try to seed meaning that wasn't in the passage?
- Which question type slowed me down the most?

Lesson 7

Reading Comprehension II — evidence, detail, inference.

Evidence questions reward precision. Inference questions reward staying inside what the passage supports.

What this lesson covers

- Evidence questions: locate the exact line.
- Inference questions: do not exceed the passage.
- "True but wrong" — choices that are accurate but do not answer the question asked.

Method

1. For evidence questions, name the specific sentence or clause that supports your answer before clicking.
2. For inference questions, the correct answer is the smallest, most defensible step beyond the passage — not the most ambitious.
3. Test every choice with the question being asked, not the topic alone. If the choice is true but does not address the question, it is wrong.

Worked example

Passage: "A common assumption among science policy researchers is that funding drives discovery. The historical record is more ambiguous. In some fields — high-energy physics, large-scale clinical trials — funding does seem to be the rate-limiting factor. In others — pure mathematics, theoretical computer science — the most consequential advances of the last fifty years have often come from researchers working on problems for which they did not need substantial external support. What funding consistently produces is volume: more papers, more conferences, more graduate students. Whether that volume translates into transformative results appears to depend on the field, the problem, and the researcher."

Question: The passage most strongly supports which of the following inferences?

- (A) Increasing funding is the most reliable way to accelerate scientific discovery.
- (B) Funding levels and transformative results have no relationship.
- (C) Funding's effect on transformative scientific advancement varies by field.
- (D) Pure mathematics produces more transformative results than high-energy physics.
- (E) Funding is necessary in theoretical computer science.

Method: (A) reverses the passage; (B) overstates — the passage says funding produces volume; (D) is not compared; (E) directly contradicts the example given. (C) is the smallest defensible inference from the passage's actual claims.

Practice set — Passage A

Passage: "For most of the twentieth century, the standard literary history of Victorian poetry treated Tennyson as central and Hopkins as peripheral. Recent reassessments have largely reversed this judgment. Hopkins, who published nothing during his lifetime, is now read as one of the most formally inventive poets of the period; Tennyson, who was Poet Laureate for forty-two years, is increasingly read as a representative figure of Victorian taste rather than a transformative one. The reasons for the shift are not obvious. One factor is that Hopkins's innovations in meter — the 'sprung rhythm' he devised — anticipated the kinds of free experimentation that became central to twentieth-century poetics. Tennyson's craftsmanship, by contrast, refined a tradition rather than breaking from it."

Item 1. Which sentence from the passage most directly supports the claim that Hopkins is currently considered "formally inventive"?

- (A) "For most of the twentieth century, the standard literary history..."
- (B) "Hopkins, who published nothing during his lifetime, is now read as one of the most formally inventive poets of the period;..."
- (C) "Tennyson, who was Poet Laureate for forty-two years..."
- (D) "The reasons for the shift are not obvious."
- (E) "Tennyson's craftsmanship ... refined a tradition rather than breaking from it."

Item 2. The passage suggests that one reason for Hopkins's rising reputation is:

- (A) the discovery of additional Hopkins poems.
- (B) the influence of his metrical innovations on later poetics.
- (C) renewed criticism of Tennyson's politics.
- (D) twentieth-century editors' preference for shorter poems.
- (E) the decline of Victorian taste in academic curricula.

Item 3. According to the passage, Tennyson is now read as:

- (A) a transformative figure in poetic technique.
- (B) a representative figure of Victorian taste.
- (C) a precursor to free experimentation.
- (D) primarily a craftsman of metrical innovation.
- (E) more formally inventive than Hopkins.

Practice set — Passage B

Passage: "The honeybee dance — the figure-eight pattern by which forager bees communicate the direction and distance of food sources — has been studied since the 1940s, when Karl von Frisch's work suggested that bees were transmitting precise spatial information. For decades the central question was whether the dance was, in fact, communicating that information, or whether the bees were responding to other cues such as odor or visual landmarks. By the 1990s, a series of controlled experiments — including some that placed dancing bees inside enclosures to isolate the dance itself — established that the dance does indeed convey both direction and approximate distance. Yet ongoing work shows

that the dance is best understood not as a stand-alone signal but as one input in a system that also includes scent, prior experience, and social learning."

Item 4. Which sentence is the strongest evidence that the dance, by itself, conveys spatial information?

- (A) "The honeybee dance ... has been studied since the 1940s..."
- (B) "For decades the central question was whether the dance was, in fact, communicating that information..."
- (C) "By the 1990s, a series of controlled experiments — including some that placed dancing bees inside enclosures to isolate the dance itself — established that the dance does indeed convey both direction and approximate distance."
- (D) "Yet ongoing work shows..."
- (E) None of the above.

Item 5. The passage most strongly supports which of the following inferences?

- (A) Von Frisch's early hypothesis has been entirely overturned.
- (B) The dance is one part of a multi-input foraging communication system.
- (C) Bees rely only on visual landmarks for navigation.
- (D) Odor is not relevant to foraging behavior.
- (E) Honeybees cannot communicate distance information.

Item 6. The phrase "not as a stand-alone signal but as one input in a system" most directly serves to:

- (A) reject von Frisch's view that the dance carries spatial information.
- (B) introduce a new debate about whether the dance is real.
- (C) refine the picture of how the dance contributes to bee communication.
- (D) summarize the structure of the passage.
- (E) signal that the dance has no functional role.

Answer key + rationale

Item 1. (B). The sentence directly characterizes Hopkins as formally inventive. (A), (C), (D), (E) say true things about the passage but do not directly support the specific claim asked about. Miss type: true-but-wrong.

Item 2. (B). The passage explicitly says Hopkins's metrical innovations anticipated twentieth-century poetics. (A) and (C) are unsupported; (D) is unrelated; (E) overreaches. Miss type: evidence/detail miss if you went outside the passage.

Item 3. (B). "Increasingly read as a representative figure of Victorian taste rather than a transformative one" is direct. (A) and (C) reverse the passage; (D) describes Hopkins; (E) reverses the comparison. Miss type: evidence/detail miss.

Item 4. (C). This sentence names the controlled experiments that isolated the dance. (A) is background; (B) names the open question; (D) introduces a later refinement; (E) is wrong because (C) does the job. Miss type: evidence miss.

Item 5. (B). The passage explicitly says the dance is best understood as one input in a system. (A) overstates: the dance was confirmed, not overturned; (C), (D), and (E) contradict the passage. Miss type: inference overreach if you chose A, C, D, or E.

Item 6. (C). The phrase refines, not rejects, the picture. (A) is too strong; (B) and (E) reverse the passage; (D) describes the role of the phrase incorrectly. Miss type: function/purpose miss.

Error Log check

Log misses with miss type chosen from: evidence/detail miss, inference overreach, true but wrong, function miss, central-idea miss.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Did I find the exact sentence before clicking an evidence-question answer?
- Where did I overreach on an inference question?
- Where did I choose a "true but wrong" answer — accurate about the passage but not the question?

Lesson 8**Mixed Verbal practice — RC, TC, and SE under time.**

Now the methods get integrated under pressure. The challenge is not just answering correctly — it is making the right choice about where to spend time.

What this lesson covers

- A section-style practice set: 12 items in 18 minutes (matching the first GRE Verbal section).
- Pacing across the three question types.
- When to flag and return.

Method

1. TC and SE items generally move faster than RC.
2. If a TC or SE item is not resolving in about 90 seconds, flag and return.
3. For RC, budget reading time deliberately — about 90 seconds for a short passage, longer for a denser one — and treat the questions as a fixed cost on top of the read.
4. End with at least two minutes to revisit flagged items.

Practice set

Set a timer for 18 minutes. 12 items: 4 TC, 4 SE, 4 RC (across two passages).

Passage 1

"For most of the past century, paleontologists considered the Cretaceous-Paleogene extinction — the event that ended the non-avian dinosaurs — as a single, asteroid-driven catastrophe. The asteroid hypothesis remains the most economical explanation for the global record, but recent work in stratigraphy has emphasized that the impact landed on an ecosystem already under stress. Massive volcanic eruptions in what is now India had been releasing climate-altering gases for hundreds of thousands of years before the impact. The current view does not deny the asteroid; it argues that the asteroid hit a planet whose ecosystems were already brittle."

Item 1 (RC). The author's primary purpose is to:

- (A) reject the asteroid hypothesis.
- (B) defend the asteroid hypothesis as the sole cause of the extinction.
- (C) revise the asteroid hypothesis by adding context about pre-existing ecosystem stress.
- (D) blame Indian volcanic activity for the extinction.
- (E) argue that the extinction has not been adequately explained.

Item 2 (RC). The phrase "the most economical explanation" most likely means:

- (A) the cheapest explanation to research.
- (B) the simplest explanation that accounts for the available evidence.

-
- (C) the explanation favored by funding agencies.
 - (D) the explanation requiring the most data.
 - (E) an explanation no one disputes.

Items 3-6 (TC and SE)

Item 3 (TC, one blank). The committee's report was praised for its _____ approach: every recommendation could be traced back to a specific finding in the data.

- (A) cautious
- (B) methodical
- (C) ambitious
- (D) speculative
- (E) original

Item 4 (SE). The novelist's later work was widely read as a _____ of the experimental style she had developed in her twenties — a continuation, not a rejection.

- (A) repudiation
- (B) refinement
- (C) imitation
- (D) maturation
- (E) abandonment
- (F) departure

Item 5 (TC, two blanks). Although the technique was once (i) _____, it is now widely accepted as a (ii) _____ part of the laboratory's standard workflow.

- (i): (A) controversial (B) routine (C) inevitable
- (ii): (D) suspect (E) ordinary (F) revolutionary

Item 6 (SE). The author's tone is unmistakably _____: she neither softens her criticisms nor exaggerates them.

- (A) measured
- (B) inflammatory
- (C) understated
- (D) controlled
- (E) provocative
- (F) celebratory

Passage 2

"The history of antibiotic resistance is sometimes told as a story of human folly — physicians prescribing too freely, agricultural producers using antibiotics as growth promoters. There is truth in this account. But it is incomplete in a way worth naming. Resistance is, first, a biological inevitability: any selective pressure on a microbial population will, given time and population size, produce resistant individuals. Human practices speed and shape resistance;

they did not invent it. The narrower, more useful question is which practices accelerate resistance most, and which can be changed."

Item 7 (RC). Which sentence is the strongest evidence for the author's claim that resistance is a biological inevitability rather than only a human-caused phenomenon?

- (A) "The history of antibiotic resistance is sometimes told..."
- (B) "There is truth in this account."
- (C) "Resistance is, first, a biological inevitability: any selective pressure on a microbial population will, given time and population size, produce resistant individuals."
- (D) "Human practices speed and shape resistance; they did not invent it."
- (E) Both C and D directly support the claim.

Item 8 (RC). The author would most likely agree with which of the following?

- (A) Antibiotic resistance would not exist without human practices.
- (B) Reducing human overuse is irrelevant to managing resistance.
- (C) The most useful policy question is which practices most accelerate resistance.
- (D) Resistance is primarily a problem of physician training.
- (E) Biological inevitability is a reason for inaction.

Items 9-12 (TC and SE)

Item 9 (TC, one blank). Once dismissed as _____, the research program has produced a series of findings that even initial skeptics now acknowledge.

- (A) celebrated
- (B) groundbreaking
- (C) marginal
- (D) decisive
- (E) routine

Item 10 (SE). The conductor's rehearsals were known for their _____ — every minute used, no time wasted on social chatter.

- (A) leisurely
- (B) efficient
- (C) economical
- (D) lavish
- (E) elaborate
- (F) extended

Item 11 (TC, two blanks). The biographer is at her best when she (i) _____ the temptation to judge her subject and (ii) _____ him to act in his own terms — which is, in the end, the only honest test of a biography.

- (i): (A) yields to (B) resists (C) embraces
- (ii): (D) allows (E) requires (F) condemns

Item 12 (SE). The committee's findings were ultimately _____ : after months of testimony, no clear pattern of misconduct emerged.

- (A) damning
- (B) inconclusive
- (C) sweeping
- (D) indeterminate
- (E) decisive
- (F) controversial

Answer key + rationale

1. (C). The passage adds context (volcanic stress) to the asteroid hypothesis without rejecting it. (A) and (B) reverse the position; (D) overstates; (E) is wrong because the passage gives an explanation.
2. (B). "Most economical" is a paraphrase for "simplest that accounts for the evidence." (A), (C), (D), (E) misread the idiom.
3. (B) methodical. "Every recommendation traced back to a finding." Cautious, ambitious, speculative, and original don't match the systematic quality.
4. (B) refinement and (D) maturation. "A continuation, not a rejection." Both produce equivalent meanings. Repudiation, abandonment, and departure reverse it; imitation suggests no development.
5. (i) (A) controversial, (ii) (E) ordinary. Contrast "once X ... now Y, standard workflow." Controversial vs. ordinary.
6. (A) measured and (D) controlled. "Neither soft nor exaggerated." Inflammatory and provocative reverse it; understated and celebratory don't match the balance.
7. (E). Both C and D directly support the inevitability claim. Some test sources would expect a single answer; in that case (C) is the strongest single sentence. Choose (E) when the test allows; otherwise (C).
8. (C). The passage explicitly identifies that question as "narrower, more useful." (A) and (B) reverse the passage; (D) is unsupported; (E) misreads the author's intent.
9. (C) marginal. "Once dismissed ... now acknowledged." Marginal contrasts with the later acceptance.
10. (B) efficient and (C) economical. "Every minute used, no waste." Leisurely, lavish, elaborate, and extended reverse it.
11. (i) (B) resists, (ii) (D) allows. "At her best when she resists ... and allows him to act in his own terms."
12. (B) inconclusive and (D) indeterminate. "No clear pattern of misconduct emerged."

Error Log check

Log every miss. Mark which type slowed you down the most and whether pacing forced rushed answers.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Which question type cost me the most time? Was that proportional to its score weight?
- Where did I skip when I should have? Where did I get stuck when I should have skipped?
- How much time did I have for review at the end? Was it enough?

Lesson 9

Pacing, skip / return decisions, trap review.

By Lesson 9 the methods are familiar. The remaining gains come from better decisions about which questions to spend time on and which to flag.

What this lesson covers

- Skip-decision rules and the math of pacing.
- Common GRE Verbal traps by type.
- A timed practice set with explicit pacing review.

Method — skip decisions

1. Within a Verbal section you may skip, flag, and return. Use it.
2. Skip when: the sentence logic is not becoming clearer after one pass; the passage line you need is not findable in 20 seconds; you can feel a trap pulling you but cannot name it yet.
3. Do not skip when: you are anxious about an item that you can answer with one more 15-second look. Anxiety masquerades as difficulty.
4. Return with at least 60 seconds per flagged item. Less than that and you will guess; more than that is bonus.

Common trap patterns

Type	Trap	How to spot it
TC	Sophisticated word that doesn't fit the relationship	The word feels GRE-y but doesn't match the signal.
TC multi	Solving the wrong blank first	Your answer for the harder blank doesn't agree with the easier one.
SE	Two synonyms that don't both fit the sentence	One word fits perfectly; the "pair" word changes the meaning.
SE	Two words that fit but don't produce equivalent meanings	Both fit the slot. Test: do the two sentences mean the same thing?
RC inference	Choice that overreaches what the passage supports	True in the real world, but not supported by the passage.
RC evidence	Choice that is accurate but doesn't answer the question	True about the passage; doesn't answer what was asked.
RC function	Choice that names the topic rather than the function	Tells you what the sentence is about, not what it is doing.

Practice set — pacing-explicit

Set a timer for 23 minutes. 15 items (matching the second GRE Verbal section). After each item, note how many seconds you used. Adjust live.

Items 1-8 (TC / SE block)

Move efficiently. Predict before peeking.

1. The author's prose is so _____ that even a sympathetic reader can lose the thread of the argument. (A) lucid (B) crystalline (C) opaque (D) concise (E) playful
2. Critics praised the documentary's _____ : every claim was supported by an on-camera primary source. (A) ambition (B) rigor (C) speculation (D) sentiment (E) brevity
3. Although the procedure once seemed (i) _____ , its results have made it (ii) _____ in many laboratories.
 - (i): (A) routine (B) outlandish (C) inevitable
 - (ii): (D) suspect (E) standard (F) controversial
4. The detective's reports were valued for their _____ : no flourishes, no speculation, only what could be documented. (A) verbosity (B) economy (C) restraint (D) prolixity (E) eloquence (F) elegance
5. The author's tone is _____ : she neither softens her criticisms nor exaggerates them. (A) measured (B) inflammatory (C) understated (D) controlled (E) provocative (F) celebratory
6. For all her public _____ , the senator privately admitted that the legislation was unlikely to pass. (A) bravado (B) hesitancy (C) hostility (D) modesty (E) tentativeness
7. The conductor's rehearsals were known for their _____ — every minute used, no time wasted on social chatter. (A) leisurely (B) efficient (C) economical (D) lavish (E) elaborate (F) extended
8. Although the new framework had been (i) _____ as too restrictive, recent applications have revealed it to be (ii) _____ in ways its critics did not anticipate.
 - (i): (A) hailed (B) dismissed (C) revered
 - (ii): (D) cumbersome (E) versatile (F) obsolete

Items 9-15 (RC block)

Passage: "In the late twentieth century, computational linguists treated the parsing of natural-language syntax as a problem amenable to explicit rules. Decades of work in this direction produced systems that handled cleanly grammatical sentences but failed catastrophically on the messier output of actual speakers. Two developments reframed the problem. First, the availability of very large text collections allowed statistical methods to absorb patterns rule-based systems had failed to specify. Second, neural-network architectures trained on those collections produced surprisingly competent parses without any explicit grammar at all. The current view is not that explicit syntactic theory is unimportant — it remains essential for understanding why certain constructions are parsed correctly or not — but that the engineering of systems that actually work has moved decisively away from rules."

9. The author's primary purpose is to:

- (A) reject the use of explicit syntactic theory.
- (B) survey developments that have moved working parsing systems away from explicit rules.
- (C) defend the rule-based parsing tradition.
- (D) criticize neural networks as parsing tools.
- (E) describe the structure of natural language.

10. Which sentence is the strongest evidence for the claim that rule-based systems struggled with real speech?

- (A) "In the late twentieth century, computational linguists treated..."
- (B) "Decades of work in this direction produced systems that handled cleanly grammatical sentences but failed catastrophically on the messier output of actual speakers."
- (C) "Two developments reframed the problem."
- (D) "Neural-network architectures..."
- (E) "The current view is not that explicit syntactic theory is unimportant..."

11. The passage implies that explicit syntactic theory is:

- (A) obsolete for both engineering and understanding.
- (B) useful for understanding why constructions are parsed correctly, even if engineering has moved away from rule-based approaches.
- (C) necessary for any working parsing system.
- (D) more important now than ever.
- (E) of interest only to historians of the field.

12. The phrase "moved decisively away from rules" most directly refers to:

- (A) the engineering of working systems.
- (B) the entire field of linguistics.
- (C) the abandonment of grammar in general.
- (D) the rejection of statistical methods.
- (E) the failure of neural-network approaches.

13. The author would most likely agree that:

- (A) Engineering progress in parsing has been driven by data and architecture more than by explicit theory.
- (B) Statistical methods are inferior to rule-based methods.
- (C) Neural networks have replaced linguistic theory.
- (D) Rule-based systems still outperform neural networks on real speech.
- (E) Real-language parsing is essentially a solved problem.

14. The phrase "the messier output of actual speakers" most likely refers to:

- (A) speech that is intentionally obscure.
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- (B) the kinds of constructions — disfluencies, ellipses, ambiguities — that real spoken or written language contains.
 - (C) speech that has been incorrectly transcribed.
 - (D) speech from non-native speakers only.
 - (E) all speech that is not in textbooks.
15. The passage's structure is best described as:
- (A) Counter-argument, defense of the original position.
 - (B) Original framing, two developments that reframed the problem, current synthesis.
 - (C) Three independent claims with no synthesis.
 - (D) Definitions, examples, and a moral.
 - (E) Chronological narrative of a single laboratory.

Answer key + rationale

1. (C) opaque. "So X that ... lose the thread." Only opaque produces that effect.
2. (B) rigor. "Every claim supported by an on-camera primary source." Ambition, sentiment, brevity don't match; speculation reverses.
3. (i) (B) outlandish, (ii) (E) standard. Contrast cue: "once X ... results have made it Y in many laboratories."
4. (B) economy and (C) restraint. "No flourishes, no speculation, only documented."
5. (A) measured and (D) controlled. "Neither softens nor exaggerates."
6. (A) bravado. "For all her X ... privately admitted ... unlikely to pass." Contrast public confidence and private doubt.
7. (B) efficient and (C) economical. "Every minute used, no time wasted."
8. (i) (B) dismissed, (ii) (E) versatile. "Although dismissed ... revealed to be versatile ... critics did not anticipate."
9. (B). The passage surveys two developments that moved working systems away from rules.
10. (B). The sentence directly says rule-based systems failed on real speech.
11. (B). The passage explicitly says theory "remains essential for understanding" even though engineering has moved away.
12. (A). The phrase is preceded by "the engineering of systems that actually work has moved."
13. (A). Direct paraphrase of the passage's conclusion.
14. (B). "Messier output" contrasted with "cleanly grammatical" implies the disfluencies and irregularities of real language.
15. (B). Original framing → two developments → current synthesis is the structure of the passage.

Error Log check

In addition to the usual fields, log a Time column: roughly how long did each missed item take? Pacing data is often the missing piece.

End-of-lesson reflection

- Where did I skip when I should have?
- Where did I return with enough time?
- Which trap pattern cost me the most? Same as last time, or new?

Lesson 10**Final timed set + test-day protocol.**

One full-section-style practice set, a structured review, and the protocol you will run on the day of the test.

What this lesson covers

- Two timed sets back to back: 12 items in 18 minutes, then 15 items in 23 minutes.
- A 30-minute structured review with the Error Log Template.
- A test-day protocol and an Analytical Writing Issue task.

Method — running the final set

1. Take a 5-minute break between the two sets — not longer.
2. After Set 2, do not check answers immediately. First write a one-sentence prediction of which type was strongest and which was weakest.
3. Then check answers and run a 30-minute review with the Error Log Template.
4. If the patterns match what you predicted, the method is internalized. If they do not, the review is the work.

Set 1 — 12 items, 18 minutes

Mixed TC, SE, RC. Use the methods from earlier lessons.

Passage A: "For most of the twentieth century, the standard literary history of Victorian poetry treated Tennyson as central and Hopkins as peripheral. Recent reassessments have largely reversed this judgment. Hopkins is now read as one of the most formally inventive poets of the period; Tennyson is increasingly read as a representative figure of Victorian taste rather than a transformative one."

1 (RC). The passage primarily: (A) defends Tennyson's status. (B) revises a literary-historical judgment. (C) introduces Hopkins to readers. (D) catalogues Victorian poets. (E) rejects all Victorian poetry.

2 (RC). The phrase "a representative figure of Victorian taste rather than a transformative one" implies that: (A) Tennyson is no longer read. (B) Tennyson's reputation now emphasizes representativeness over innovation. (C) Hopkins was unknown to Victorian readers. (D) Victorian taste has been entirely rejected. (E) Tennyson was not Poet Laureate.

3 (TC). The reviewer praised the novel's _____ structure: every chapter earned its place, nothing felt extraneous. (A) sprawling (B) baroque (C) economical (D) loose (E) tangential

4 (SE). The conductor's rehearsals were known for their _____ — brisk, focused, no time wasted. (A) leisurely (B) efficient (C) economical (D) lavish (E) elaborate (F) extended

5 (TC, two blanks). Although the panel had been convened to address (i) _____ in the city's housing data, the discussion soon drifted into (ii) _____ debates about policy. (i): (A) discrepancies (B) consistencies (C) celebrations. (ii): (D) narrow (E) broader (F) trivial

6 (SE). The committee's findings were ultimately _____ : after months of testimony, no clear pattern emerged. (A) damning (B) inconclusive (C) decisive (D) indeterminate (E) sweeping (F) celebrated

Passage B: "A central question in cognitive science is whether the abilities that allow humans to acquire language are domain-specific or whether they emerge from more general learning capacities. Recent work in computational modeling has produced surprisingly competent language systems using architectures that were not designed with language in mind, suggesting that general-purpose statistical learning may go further than the field once supposed. The work does not settle the question, but it lowers the cost of asking it."

7 (RC). The author's primary claim is that: (A) language is fully explained by general-purpose learning. (B) recent computational work makes general-purpose accounts more credible without settling the question. (C) domain-specific accounts have been refuted. (D) language systems are now better than humans. (E) computational modeling is irrelevant to cognitive science.

8 (RC). The phrase "it lowers the cost of asking it" most directly means: (A) the research is cheaper to conduct. (B) the question is more reasonable to investigate seriously. (C) the question has been answered. (D) the question is no longer of interest. (E) general-purpose learning is the only viable hypothesis.

9 (TC). Once dismissed as _____ , the technique has become standard practice in many laboratories. (A) routine (B) outlandish (C) inevitable (D) traditional (E) widespread

10 (SE). Critics praised the documentary's _____ : every claim was supported by an on-camera primary source. (A) ambition (B) rigor (C) thoroughness (D) sentiment (E) brevity (F) speculation

11 (TC). The senator's reputation for _____ — finding workable compromise where others saw only conflict — preceded her into the negotiations. (A) intransigence (B) duplicity (C) pragmatism (D) demagoguery (E) showmanship

12 (SE). The author's tone is _____ : she neither softens her criticisms nor exaggerates them. (A) measured (B) inflammatory (C) understated (D) controlled (E) provocative (F) celebratory

Set 2 — 15 items, 23 minutes

Continue with same methods. After this set, take a five-minute break before review.

Passage C: "The history of antibiotic resistance is sometimes told as a story of human folly. There is truth in this account. But it is incomplete: resistance is also a biological inevitability. Any selective pressure on a microbial population, given time and population size, will produce resistant individuals. Human practices speed and shape resistance; they did not invent it."

13 (RC). The author would most likely agree that: (A) Reducing human overuse is irrelevant. (B) Resistance would not exist without human practices. (C) Resistance is partly a biological phenomenon that human practices accelerate. (D) Antibiotic prescribing should be unchanged. (E) The question is essentially political, not biological.

14 (RC). The strongest evidence that resistance is partly biological is: (A) "The history of antibiotic resistance is sometimes told..." (B) "There is truth in this account." (C) "Resistance

is also a biological inevitability. Any selective pressure on a microbial population, given time and population size, will produce resistant individuals." (D) "Human practices speed and shape resistance..." (E) "They did not invent it."

15 (TC). Once thought to be _____, the species has been documented in habitats far beyond its previously known range. (A) endangered (B) localized (C) prolific (D) widespread (E) endemic

16 (SE). The novel's prose is unusually _____ — fewer adjectives, shorter sentences, a willingness to leave certain emotional moments unexplained. (A) verbose (B) ornate (C) sparse (D) lush (E) spare (F) opaque

17 (TC). The new committee proved more _____ than its predecessors: it reached unanimous votes on issues that had previously deadlocked for years. (A) bureaucratic (B) cohesive (C) divided (D) skeptical (E) cautious

18 (SE). For all her public _____, the senator privately admitted that the legislation was unlikely to pass. (A) bravado (B) confidence (C) hesitancy (D) hostility (E) modesty (F) certainty

19 (TC, two blanks). The biographer treats her subject with (i) _____: she neither (ii) _____ his cruelty nor inflates his accomplishments. (i): (A) judgment (B) restraint (C) sycophancy. (ii): (D) excuses (E) emphasizes (F) catalogues

Passage D: "The standard story of computer science treats Alan Turing's 1936 paper as a foundational moment in the field. This is true, but it can mislead. Turing's paper did not invent the idea of mechanized computation, which had a long pre-history in mathematical logic; nor did it lead, by itself, to working computers. Both the broader theoretical context and the much messier engineering work of the next two decades had to happen for Turing's argument to become operational."

20 (RC). The author's primary purpose is to: (A) reject the importance of Turing's paper. (B) defend the standard story unchanged. (C) revise the standard story by emphasizing context and engineering work. (D) catalogue Turing's contributions. (E) describe the 1936 paper in detail.

21 (RC). The phrase "Both the broader theoretical context and the much messier engineering work" most directly serves to: (A) introduce a new development. (B) name what the standard story underweights. (C) reject Turing's contribution. (D) describe the structure of mathematical logic. (E) summarize the next ten years.

22 (RC). The passage implies that Turing's 1936 paper: (A) is unimportant. (B) is foundational but insufficient on its own to explain the rise of working computers. (C) led directly to ENIAC. (D) was the only theoretical work that mattered. (E) is best understood as engineering rather than mathematics.

23 (TC). The committee's report was praised for its _____: every conclusion was tied to a specific finding in the data. (A) ambiguity (B) specificity (C) brevity (D) ambition (E) caution

24 (SE). The detective's reports were valued for their _____ — no flourishes, no speculation, only what could be documented. (A) verbosity (B) economy (C) restraint (D) prolixity (E) eloquence (F) elegance

25 (TC). Although the new framework had been once dismissed as too restrictive, recent applications have revealed it to be _____ in ways its critics did not anticipate. (A) cumbersome (B) versatile (C) obsolete (D) inflexible (E) limited

26 (SE). The author's later work is widely seen as a _____ of the experimental style she developed in her twenties. (A) repudiation (B) refinement (C) abandonment (D) maturation (E) parody (F) departure

27 (TC). The conductor's rehearsals were notably _____ : every minute used, no chatter, no detours. (A) efficient (B) leisurely (C) elaborate (D) extended (E) digressive

Answer key + rationale

Set 1: 1.B 2.B 3.C 4.B&C 5.(i)A (ii)E 6.B&D 7.B 8.B 9.B 10.B&C 11.C 12.A&D

Set 2: 13.C 14.C 15.B (note: B is the strongest single match; localized fits the contrast with "far beyond previously known range") 16.C&E 17.B 18.A&B (or A&F — choose pair that produces equivalent meanings; A and F both fit and pair: bravado/certainty) 19.(i)B (ii)D 20.C 21.B 22.B 23.B 24.B&C 25.B 26.B&D 27.A

(For Item 18: the strongest paired meaning is bravado/certainty if both are listed and they produce equivalent meanings; if not, bravado/confidence. Different test forms may list different pairs — verify on the page.)

After answers, do not move on. Run the structured review below.

Structured review (30 minutes)

- Sort all 27 items by miss type. Which is dominant?
- Sort by question type. Where are the misses concentrated?
- For RC items, name the sentence that should have been the basis of the answer. If you cannot find it now, the passage was not read.
- For TC/SE items, write one sentence explaining the relationship the blank needed to satisfy.
- Decide which two miss types you will work on between now and the test.

Analytical Writing — Issue task

Set a timer for 30 minutes. Pick a published GRE Issue task. Write a full essay. Do not exceed 30 minutes.

Structure (one workable shape — others exist):

- Paragraph 1: state the position. Acknowledge complexity in one sentence.
- Paragraph 2: first supporting reason + a specific example.
- Paragraph 3: second supporting reason + a specific example.
- Paragraph 4: a real objection or limit + your response.
- Paragraph 5: restate the position with a sharper, more grounded version.

Use specific examples — historical, civic, scientific, professional, or personal — not just abstract reasoning.

Test-day protocol

- Sleep is more important than the night-before review.
- Eat earlier than you think you should.
- Arrive or log in early enough that the room or laptop is not a variable.
- Bring nothing the test center does not allow.
- Within a Verbal section: flag-and-return is free. Use it.
- Between sections: what is done is done. Reset focus, do not relitigate.
- Score reporting: check each program's policy before sending scores.

After the test — plan a POWERPREP retake

Whatever your score, run a follow-up POWERPREP within two weeks for recalibration. The goal is not to retest the test; it is to confirm or revise the pattern that the methods produced under the highest-pressure conditions.

End-of-lesson reflection

- What pattern is most stable across all ten lessons?
- Where is the residual risk?
- What is my POWERPREP retake plan, and what is my Verbal target on that retake?

Appendix: GRE Verbal miss types.

Use this menu when logging misses in the Error Log Template. Pick the closest match. If two apply, pick the more specific one.

Miss type	What it means
Vocabulary gap	I did not know the word or could not use it in context.
Sentence logic miss	I did not understand what the blank needed to do.
Signal word miss	I missed contrast, continuation, cause/effect, or definition.
Paired-meaning miss	For SE, I chose one plausible word but did not create two equivalent sentences.
Central idea miss	I did not understand the passage's main point.
Structure miss	I did not see how the passage was organized.
Evidence / detail miss	I missed or misread the specific support.
Inference overreach	I chose something beyond what the passage supports.
True but wrong	The answer was accurate or plausible but did not answer the question asked.
Trap vocabulary	I chose a word because it sounded sophisticated or familiar, not because it fit the logic.
Pacing miss	I spent too long, rushed, guessed, or failed to skip/return.
Fatigue	The miss came late in the set or after attention dropped.

Use this Workbook with the rest of the system.

The GRE Playbook

Use for strategy, official POWERPREP review, pacing, and Analytical Writing.

GRE Vocabulary

Use for vocabulary in context, roots, and word families.

Error Log Template

Use after every Verbal set to track missed questions, repeated patterns, and next moves.