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Inside the *TOEFL*® Test - Reading Sentence Simplification Question

People in this video

Michael

Intro

[music playing]

Michael: Hi, I'm Michael from ETS. Today on Inside the TOEFL Test, we're going inside the TOEFL iBT Reading section. Specifically, the Sentence Simplification questions.

On-screen:

Inside the TOEFL® Test – Reading
Sentence Simplification

Michael: Sentence Simplification questions ask you to identify a sentence that has essentially the same meaning as a sentence from the reading passage. The correct answer choice contains the main ideas from the sentence in the passage but may leave out minor or unimportant details. It should restate the most important information in a simpler way.

On-screen:

Sentence Simplification – Identify a sentence that has essentially the same meaning

- Correct answer contains the main ideas restated in a simpler way

Michael: Sentence Simplification questions are easy to recognize because the wording of the question is always exactly the same:

"Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the following sentence? Incorrect choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information."

On-screen: Sentence Simplification

Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the following sentence? Incorrect choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.

Michael: The highlighted sentence will have both essential and non-essential information. Your job is to pick the answer choice that best includes the essential information and leaves out the non-essential information.

Answering this type of question will require you to understand the relationship between the pieces of information in the sentence.

Often, there is an important cause/effect relationship, or there may be a conclusion based on some evidence. So look for those same ideas in the answer choices.

On-screen: Essential information (green check appears)

Non-essential information (red x appears)

Relationship between pieces of information in the sentence

- Cause/effect
- Conclusion based on evidence

Michael: Here's an example of a sentence simplification question from a passage about meteorite impacts and dinosaur extinction.

This type of question can be challenging, because all of the answer choices will contain words or phrases that are similar to ones in the given sentence.

For example, 3 of the answer choices talk about the explosion...

... 3 talk about fires

... and 3 mention the destruction of plant life

On-screen: Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the following sentence? Incorrect choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.

The explosion is also calculated to have produced vast quantities of nitric acid and melted rock that sprayed out over much of Earth, starting widespread fires that must have consumed most terrestrial forests and grassland.

- a. Scientists believe that large amounts of nitric acid and melted rock were released by the explosion, causing fires that probably destroyed most of Earth's plant-life
- b. Fires spread out over Earth, burning many forests and releasing nitric acid and other materials into the atmosphere.
- c. Scientists have calculated the amount of nitric acid and melted rock that was released on Earth after the explosion.

d. Scientists believe that large fires in forests must have spread to grasslands and caused explosions that destroyed most of Earth's plants.

Michael: So, can you identify the correct answer? It's A, because all of the important information is aligned with the given sentence.

Both the given sentence and choice A talk about the large amounts of nitric acid and melted rock...

...that were the result of the explosion...

...and that started fires that destroyed plant life.

On-screen:

The explosion is also calculated to have produced vast quantities of nitric acid and melted rock that sprayed out over much of Earth, starting widespread fires that must have consumed most terrestrial forests and grassland.

Green check appears next to answer choice A. Scientists believe that large amounts of nitric acid and melted rock were released by the explosion, causing fires that probably destroyed most of Earth's plant-life

Michael: The other responses have content that contradicts the highlighted sentence, or just isn't there.

Choice B looks like a good answer at first, because it talks about the fires spreading and burning forests...

But choice B says that it was the fires that released the nitric acid, which is different from the highlighted sentence, which says that the nitric acid, along with the melted rock, caused the fires.

On-screen:

The explosion is also calculated to have produced vast quantities of nitric acid and melted rock that sprayed out over much of Earth, starting widespread fires that must have consumed most terrestrial forests and grassland.

Red X appears next to answer choice B. Fires spread out over Earth, burning many forests and releasing nitric acid and other materials into the atmosphere.

Michael: Choice C can be eliminated because it leaves out essential information about the fires and the destruction of forests and plant life.

On-screen:

Red X appears next to answer choice C. Scientists have calculated the amount of nitric acid and melted rock that was released on Earth after the explosion.

Michael: Finally, choice D is incorrect because again, the cause and effect are reversed. This one says that the fires caused the explosions, when it was really the other way around.

On-screen:

Red X appears next to answer choice D. Scientists believe that large fires in forests must have spread to grasslands and caused explosions that destroyed most of Earth's plants.

Michael: One tip to build your reading skills, which will also help you answer sentence simplification questions, is to look at complex sentences or paragraphs, and separate the main ideas from less important information.

Non-essential information can be things like examples, or text in parentheses, or very specific information like numbers or dates.

On-screen: Identify Main Ideas

Main ideas

Less important information:

- Examples
- Parentheses
- Numbers/dates

Michael: There are lots of ways to improve your English skills. Whatever you do, keep practicing. And good luck on your TOEFL test.

On-screen: For more information about the *TOEFL*® test and to register, visit the *TOEFL*® website at

www.toeflgoanywhere.org

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Total length of video: 4:04

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