

# ALST Literacy Strategies for Selected-Response Questions

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### I. Logistics:

- ◆ Selected-response questions make up about 40% of your test score on the ALST.
- ◆ There will be 40 Selected-Response Reading Comprehension Questions.
- ◆ Their order of difficulty does NOT increase or decrease on a continuum from start to finish of each section, so do not try to look for complex or simple answers based on the location of the question in this section. You can skip around and do the easiest questions first and then go back to the questions you found more difficult at the end.
- ◆ The Computer-Based Test will allow you to jump around and will mark which questions you have not answered yet.
- ◆ It is estimated this section of the test will take up to 110 minutes to complete.

### II. The Reading Process:

#### **Seven Steps to Success:**

1. *Read the title* and any other introductory information before the passage if it is provided. This may give you some context clues for what the passage will be about and will help you answer questions.
2. *Skim the questions* that accompany the passage **before** reading the passage so that you have an idea of what kind of information you're looking for when you read. (This gives you a purpose/ focus for reading.)
3. *Skim the passage and look for the Main Idea* of the passage. Knowing the Main Idea will help you to answer most of the questions, even if the test never asks for the main idea.
4. *Choose a question* that seems easy to you and answer it first. Since questions are not in order of difficulty, it is best to answer all the questions you are sure of first. Then do the harder questions that require more of your time.
5. Only thoroughly read the part of the passage that you need to read in order to answer the question. *Use the RULE of THUMB* to find 5 lines above and 5 five lines below the line they ask you to read. (This is particularly true for "vocabulary in context" questions.)

6. *Cover the answer choices* to the question and try to come up with the answer to the question in your own words. (The test may try to use exact words from the passage to trick you into choosing the wrong answer, so look for synonyms in the answers as well.) Once you have an idea of what the answer is, look at the answer choices and choose the one that is closest to your answer.
7. When all else fails, *use Process of Elimination*. Go through each answer choice and cross out each wrong answer choice that has a flaw. The correct answer choice is the one that has nothing wrong with it.

### **III. Vocabulary Questions:**

1. Vocabulary in Context Questions—Be sure to read the parts of the passage in which the vocabulary word/ phrase in question is found. Use the RULE OF THUMB.
2. If the word seems like a simple vocabulary word, it is likely that the ALST is looking for a secondary definition of the word, so be sure to read the context of the word/ phrase in the passage before choosing the best answer.
3. Whether the vocabulary word/ phrase seems difficult or not, be sure to go back to the passage for context clues. The test will often copy and paste the sentence that the vocabulary word/ phrase in question appears in within the passage; however, this is not adequate context for you to determine the meaning of the word. Go back to the passage to read 5 lines above and below the word/ phrase.

### **IV. Bloom's Taxonomy Higher Order Thinking Questions:**

1. **Determine Central Ideas**— Central Ideas are located in the last sentence of an introduction (i.e., thesis), in the first sentence of each body paragraph (i.e., topic sentence), and in the first sentence of a conclusion (i.e., thesis). (**Note:** If the text is an excerpt from a longer piece, you may not have an introduction or a conclusion paragraph, so you may need to synthesize central idea from the topic sentences.)
2. **Analyze the Development of Central Ideas**— Support for central ideas are located in the body paragraphs of a passage. The body paragraphs support the development of the thesis/ central idea of a passage. If the body paragraphs are support for the thesis, the examples and evidence within the body paragraphs are support for the topic sentences/ central ideas of each paragraph. Thus, the

middle of each body paragraph provides support for the central idea/ topic sentence of each body paragraph.

**3. Analyze How Specific Sentences, Paragraphs, and Larger Portions of a Text Relate to Each Other and the Whole**—Know the function of each sentence in a paragraph and the function of each paragraph within an essay. This will help to decipher the function of specific sentences and paragraphs within a given text. Knowing how to write effectively helps us read efficiently and analytically.

**4. Recognize the Difference Between Main Idea and Primary Purpose of a Text**—Main ideas is the central focus/ thesis of the text. Primary purpose of a text is the author's reason/ rationale for writing the text.

**5. Assess How Purpose Shapes Content & Style of Text**—If the purpose is to **analyze** a subject, the topic may be presented from multiple view points and examined in a variety of ways. Multiple examples will be provided to illustrate the many points of views. If the purpose is to **argue** a particular point of view, the topic will likely be presented predominantly from one perspective and will be supported with multiple reasons and evidence. An opposing view may be recognized in an argumentative text; however, it will always be refuted in support of the point of view being argued. If the purpose is to **inform** readers about a particular topic, the text will provide extensive details about time, place, events, important people, etc.

## **V. Additional Helpful Hints:**

1. *If part of an answer choice is wrong, the entire choice is wrong.* The right answer will be the choice that is entirely accurate according to the passage and answers the question being asked.
2. *Do not use outside knowledge to answer the questions.* Passages are often about science, social studies, literature, art, music, economics, history, sociology, and psychology; however, you do not need to have any knowledge of these subjects to answer the questions on the test. Any answer choice that requires you to know outside information is wrong.
3. *Read every answer choice* so that you can pick the “best” one.
4. *Be interested*—we retain more information when we are interested in the material we are reading. (If you aren't really interested, pretend you are... be an actor.)

5. *Note key parts of the passage* on the paper you are provided while you're reading so you don't have to go back and read entire sections to find answers to the questions.
6. *Don't overanalyze*—the right answer is usually the one that sounds like summary. The right answer in this reading comprehension is the one that is simply true—not the one that sounds the smartest. SUMMARY over ANALOGY
7. Answers to “primary purpose questions” or “main idea questions” are generally found in the first part or the last part of the reading.
8. The test will often copy and paste a sentence or two from the passage and provide it before asking a question pertaining to the line(s). This is not adequate context for you to determine the meaning or significance of the lines. **Always go back to the passage** and read at least 5 lines above and 5 lines below the sentence(s) in question.
9. Avoid answer choices with strong wording or extremes.
10. Flexible words are often found in the correct answers.

### **Strong vs. Flexible Words**

<b>Strong Words to Avoid</b> in Answer Choices	<b>Flexible Words to Look For</b> in the Correct Answers
Always	Might be
Never	May be
Must	Could be
Extremely	Suggests
Undoubtedly	Implies
Fully	Minorly
Could Only	Could be seen as
Impossible	Arguably
Totally	Possibly
All	Recommends
Every	Perhaps
Only/ Solely	Some