Reading: details, structure and integration

Original skill preparation; versioned source scope

ACT Reading: Details, Structure and Integration

- Find an explicit **detail** 细节 and make an **inference** 推断 from it.
- Describe how a passage is organised and what a part of it does.
- Identify the narrator's or author's **viewpoint** 观点 and **tone** 语气.
- Support each answer with **evidence** 证据 from the passage, and integrate information from two texts or a graphic.

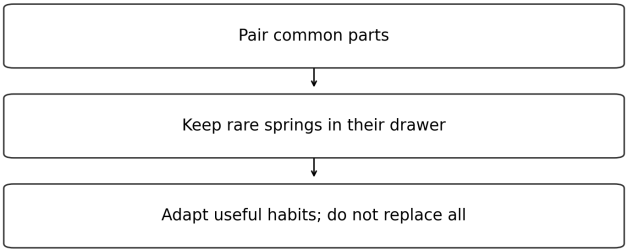
Details and inferences

- For a detail question, go back to the passage and find the line; do not answer from memory.
- An **inference** joins stated facts. The right answer can be pointed to in the text.
- Reject answers that are true in life but not in the passage, or that add a number or a cause.

Structure and function

- Ask what each paragraph does: introduces a situation, describes a problem, shows a change, reflects.
- A detail in a story often has a job: to show a feeling or a relationship without stating it.
- Look at how the ending connects back to the beginning.

Figure: Structure and function



- Worked steps: Pair common parts → Keep rare springs in their drawer → Adapt useful habits; do not replace all
- Match each part of the diagram to the text.

Viewpoint and tone

- Who is speaking? In a first-person story, the narrator's knowledge is limited; they may be unsure of others' feelings.
- Tone is the attitude shown by word choice: affectionate, uncertain, critical, amused.
- An answer that makes the tone more extreme than the words is usually wrong.

Integrating information

- In paired passages, summarise each text first, then compare.
- With a graphic, read its title, labels and units, and check that the answer uses the right part of it.

Practice passage

- Original literary passage — The spare key
- When I returned to the workshop after my uncle retired, the key felt too small for the responsibility attached to it.
- He had left the drawers neatly labelled, as though the labels might continue his explanations in his absence.
- I turned on the overhead light and read “washers”, “pins”, “springs”.

Worked example: a detail and its purpose

- The problem: a simple latch repair is delayed while the narrator searches for the matching washer (paragraph 2).
- The uncle could "see a repair in his mind"; the narrator could not. Pairing common parts helps someone without that skill.
- The passage gives no measured time saved, so the answer should describe the purpose, not a number.
- Not everything changed: the rare springs stay in their old drawer, and a size-labelled drawer remains. The narrator "kept both systems".

Worked example: interpreting the ending

- The narrator puts the uncle's cup on the old mark "without thinking", then sees that they "had made room beside it" for their own.
- A supported reading: the narrator is building a role of their own while keeping the relationship with the uncle.
- Unsupported: that the uncle demanded a permanent desk. Nothing like this is reported.
- The final paragraph confirms the theme: not replacing habits, but learning which ones to keep.

Common errors

- Answering from memory instead of the line.
- Choosing an **inference** that adds a number or a cause.
- Treating a narrator's guess as a fact ("I could not tell whether his smile meant approval").

Common errors (2)

- Making the tone more extreme than the passage.
- Choosing an answer that fits one paragraph but not the whole passage.

Key terms

- **detail**: A specific piece of information stated in the passage.
- **inference**: A conclusion that the stated information supports.
- **viewpoint**: The position from which a story is told or an argument made.
- **tone**: The attitude that word choice shows.

Check yourself

- The narrator says "I could not tell whether his smile meant approval or amusement." Can you answer that the uncle approved?
- What is the function of the circular tea-cup mark in paragraph 1?
- Which word best describes the narrator's tone at the end: bitter, reflective or triumphant?