Reading: explicit detail, inference and relationships

Original skill preparation; versioned source scope

ACT Reading: Explicit Detail, Inference and Relationships

- Locate an explicit **detail** 细节 in the passage.
- Draw an **inference** 推断 that the **evidence** 证据 supports.
- Identify relationships: **cause and effect** 因果关系, comparison and **sequence** 顺序.

Explicit details

- Find the line first. Many questions give a paragraph number; others need a quick scan for a key word.
- Read a sentence before and after: the answer is often a little away from the key word.
- The right answer usually restates the passage in different words.

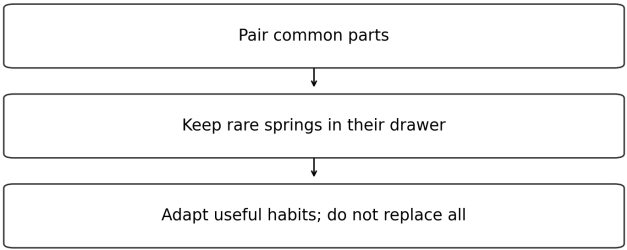
Inferences

- An inference joins two or more stated facts.
- Test each option: can you point to the lines that support it?
- Reject options that add numbers, causes, feelings or events the passage does not give.
- In a first-person story, the narrator may say they are unsure. Do not turn their guess into a fact.

Relationships

- **Cause and effect**: look for "because", "so", "after", "which made".
- Comparison: what is the same and what differs between two people, places or methods?
- **Sequence**: put events in the order they happened, which may differ from the order they are told.

Figure: Relationships



- 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.

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 cause and a sequence

- Cause (paragraph 2): a simple latch repair took a long time because the narrator had to search for the matching washer separately.
- Explicit contrast: the uncle "could see a repair in his mind before he opened a drawer; I could not."
- **Sequence**: the repair happens; "that evening" the narrator pairs common parts; "a week later" the uncle visits.
- The passage states no measured time saved, so an answer claiming "repairs became twice as fast" adds a number.

Worked example: a comparison and its limit

- The rare springs stay in their old drawer "because they had no regular partners"; a size-labelled drawer for larger washers also remains.
- So the narrator keeps parts of both systems. The uncle says it: "So you have kept both systems."
- Limit: "I could not tell whether his smile meant approval or amusement." Any answer stating that the uncle approved goes beyond the **evidence**.

Common errors

- Answering from memory instead of the line.
- Choosing an inference that adds a number or a feeling.
- Confusing the order of telling with the order of events.

Common errors (2)

- Treating a narrator's uncertainty as a fact.
- Choosing an answer that is true for one paragraph but contradicted by another.

Key terms

- **detail**: A specific piece of information stated in the passage.
- **inference**: A conclusion supported by stated information.
- **evidence**: The lines that support an answer.
- **cause and effect**: A relationship in which one event leads to another.

Check yourself

- What does the narrator do immediately after the neighbour's repair?
- Why did the narrator search so long for the washer?
- Does the passage say the uncle disliked the changes?