

24 Text structure, sentence function and rhetorical purpose

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ Total: 13 marks

KEY WORDS sentence function • qualification • evidence • argument
• proposal

Objective

- Identify how a passage develops its central point
- Explain a sentence’s role in the larger argument
- Distinguish a text’s purpose from its subject matter

Original public practice; marks below are classroom self-check points, not official criteria.

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

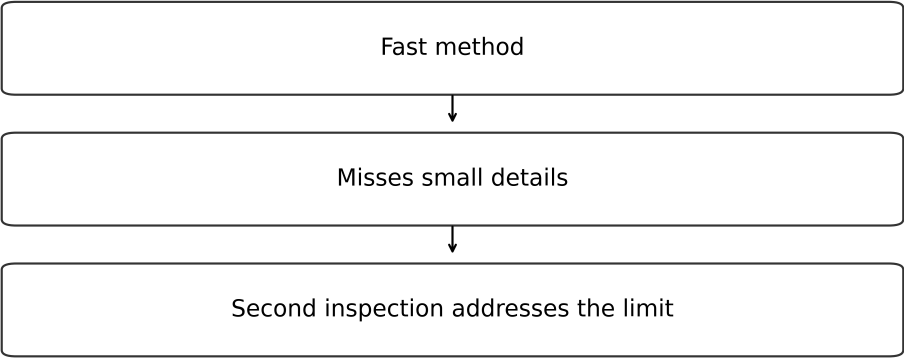
Summarise each part with an action: introduces a problem, describes an approach, presents evidence or notes a limitation. The ordered actions describe structure more precisely than a list of subject nouns. Look for a shift where the author moves from background to a claim or from a claim to a qualification.

For the function of a marked sentence, compare what comes before and after. If it contradicts an earlier expectation and the next sentence explains that surprise, its role may be to introduce an unexpected result. It is not automatically the author’s conclusion just because it appears late.

Purpose states what the author is trying to do with the information: explain a distinction, challenge an assumption, evaluate a method or describe a response. An option that merely names the topic is incomplete. An option that says persuade readers to take action needs actual advocacy, not an informative description alone.

Distinguish an objection the author presents from a view the author endorses. Reported claims, examples and hypothetical situations can serve an argument without becoming the author’s final position. Use the passage’s wording and relationship markers to assign roles rather than imposing a favourite argument structure.

Sentence function states what a sentence does in its context. “The machine was fast. It damaged thin sheets. The team added a gentler setting.” The middle sentence limits an advantage and motivates a response. Calling it merely “about sheets” names a topic, not a function.



Worked steps: Fast method → Misses small details → Second inspection addresses the limit

Worked example. Original passage: “Catalogues once grouped these objects by the material from which they were made. That approach placed tools with different uses together. The revised catalogue therefore adds a function label to each entry.” Structure: describe an existing approach, identify its limitation, then explain a response. The middle sentence supplies the limitation motivating the revision; it does not claim material is irrelevant.

■ Practice material

Passage. Early walking maps marked every route with the same solid line. This kept the map simple, but walkers could not tell whether a route included steps. Some designers proposed adding a written note beside every staircase. A trial instead used a distinct line pattern for routes without steps and explained it in a clear legend. Walkers then identified these routes more accurately in the trial, although some readers needed help noticing the legend. The designers retained the pattern and made the legend more prominent.

2 Practice

2.1 Original passage: “The method is fast. However, it misses small details. A second inspection can address that limitation.” What does the middle sentence do? [1]

- **A** Qualifies the stated advantage
- **B** Gives historical background
- **C** Shows the method has no advantage
- **D** Presents the final solution

2.2 A passage explains why two classification methods differ. Its purpose is chiefly to: [1]

- A Narrate the author’s holiday
- B Explain a distinction
- C Demand a purchase
- D Predict a result without evidence

2.3 A detail narrowing an earlier claim is a _____. [1]

2.4 Every view quoted in a passage is endorsed by its author. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

Use the complete original case context in section 1.

3.1 State the overall structure using actions rather than a list of subjects. [3]

3.2 What does “although some readers needed help noticing the legend” do? Why is it not proof the whole trial failed? [3]

3.3 Does the writer endorse written notes beside every staircase? Explain the difference between reporting that proposal and describing the retained design. [3]

Solutions

Accept equivalent correct methods and supported interpretations. The marks check reasoning; they are not an official grade.

2.1 A – It limits the speed advantage by noting a weakness. B supplies a historical function absent here; C erases the retained speed advantage; D confuses the middle limitation with the final response.

Correct response linked to the given case.

2.2 B – The described explanatory action matches the purpose. A invents personal narrative, C a sales demand and D an unsupported forecast; none describes explanation of a difference.

Correct response linked to the given case.

2.3 qualification – It limits the claim rather than simply repeating it.

Correct response linked to the given case.

2.4 False – A quotation may be presented for criticism, contrast or context.

Correct response linked to the given case.

3.1 The passage introduces an earlier design, identifies an access problem, reports one proposal and a different tested response, qualifies the trial's success, and describes a refinement.

Sound conclusion or proposed method. Relevant supporting steps or textual evidence. Accurate conditions, checks or qualification.

3.2 It qualifies improved accuracy by identifying a remaining obstacle. The trial still reports more accurate identification, so a total-failure interpretation contradicts the stated improvement.

Sound conclusion or proposed method. Relevant supporting steps or textual evidence. Accurate conditions, checks or qualification.

3.3 The notes are a reported proposal, not the design tested and retained. The retained approach is a line pattern with a more prominent legend. Attributing the proposal to the writer as the final recommendation merges different stages.

Sound conclusion or proposed method. Relevant supporting steps or textual evidence. Accurate conditions, checks or qualification.