



Road to Gapped Text Mastery

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Gapped Text and its variants have always been the staple of Reading sections in English Major Entrance exams across the country, especially those of Ho Chi Minh City Department of Education and Training (HCMCDOET) and *Phổ Thông Năng Khiếu* (PTNK). For this reason, earning full marks in this question type will be a major booster for your chances of joining English Major classes, yet this goal may be out of reach for some. Gapped Text is one of the hardest parts to conquer in the exams, as it diverges from the standard question types found in IELTS and non-major exams. In this article, we will provide you with the fundamental strategies and common mistakes while doing this question type and how to improve your performance in it while you are training for the Entrance Exams.

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1. What is Gapped Text?

Gapped Text consists of a passage in which some sections are removed, mixed up, and placed after the text, thereby examining students' understanding of coherence (how ideas flow (Quỳnh, 2023)), cohesion (how sentences and paragraphs are linked using certain words and phrases (Quỳnh, 2023)), and organization of ideas (Sax, n.d.).

There are numerous variants of Gapped Text that have appeared in High school Entrance exams for English majors, as shown in the table below:

Type	Format	Example
Gapped Text	Paragraphs are removed from the text	<i>Phổ Thông Năng Khiếu</i> (PTNK)'s 2025 Entrance exam for English majors
Gapped Sentences	Sentences within a paragraph are removed	Ho Chi Minh City Department of Education and Training (HCMCDOET)'s 2025 Entrance exam for English majors
Hybrid Gapped Text	Gapped Text alongside other question formats (e.g., True/False/Not Given)	PTNK's 2023 Entrance exam for English majors
	Paragraphs and sentences are removed from the text and filled in separately	PTNK's 2024 Entrance exam for English majors

Figure 1: Table outlining the variants of Gapped Text in major High school Entrance exams in Specialized English. Note: Compiled from HCMCDOET (2025), PTNK (2023 - 2025)

HCMCDOET's and PTNK's English major entrance exams' Gapped Text sections differ drastically in terms of format, which can be summarized through the following table compiled from our own research as of 2025.

Name	Position in the test	Format	Score contribution
HCMC	Usually on Page 3	No. of questions: 5 Length: Moderately short, taking up 1/4 to 1/2 of an A4 page Type: Gapped Sentences Difficulty: Easy to Medium	5/100 points
PTNK	Varies , sometimes appearing near the beginning of the test, sometimes after the <i>Language Use</i> section	No. of questions: 5 - 7 per passage, with 1 - 2 passages per test Length: Long, spanning up to 2 pages for some years. Type: - If there are two passages, one will likely be Gapped Sentences, and the other will likely be Gapped Text or <i>hybrid</i> variants. - If there is only one passage, it will likely be Gapped Text or its <i>hybrid</i> variants. Difficulty: Medium to High	Up to 12/100 points

Figure 2: Table comparing various aspects of HCMC's and PTNK's Gapped Text sections in their respective English major entrance exams. Note: Compiled from HCMCDOET (2020 - 2025), PTNK (2020 - 2025)





2. Fundamental strategies

2.1. Skimming

Skimming, which involves reading quickly and skipping non-essential information, is a popular technique used to find the main idea and overall flow (how the author develops their ideas) of a text (e.g., articles, blogs, social media posts). When done correctly, this skill can save test-takers a lot of time, as it expedites text comprehension and consequently enables quicker identification of missing paragraphs/sentences for Gapped Text – a significant advantage when tackling these sections.

Imagine you encountered Gapped Text and its variants in PTNK's or HCMCDOET's entrance examination, what should you do first? Start going over and underline topic sentences – sentences encapsulating the main idea of paragraphs or the whole passage – and words central to the main arguments. Notice how each section builds on the others. For example, a test passage may be a narrative or a biography (see example in Section 2.2) in which ideas are often presented in chronological order. Similarly, in a scientific article, research findings and other scientists' remarks should all contribute to its central argument(s). Once you recognize these ideas and how they flow, predicting what might follow a section becomes much simpler, thereby making Gapped Text more doable.

Let's skim this extract from a *The Guardian* article by Nicola Davis (2025) in about 20 seconds and find its main idea and argument organization to illustrate our point:

“Ultra-processed foods are typically **defined** as industrially produced products that are often ready-to-eat, contain little in the way of whole foods, fibre and vitamins, and are typically high in saturated fat, sugar, salt and food additives.

While the concept is not without controversy, not least around whether all UPFs are unhealthy, **studies** have **suggested such foods** are **associated** with a host of **health problems**, from higher risk of heart disease to early death.

Now **researchers** say **women** who have a **greater intake** of **UPFs** have a **greater risk** of the **early onset** of a common type of **bowel polyp** known as conventional adenomas.”

With the help of keywords (bolded and underlined above) from the skimming process, you know that this excerpt's main idea is about research into ultra-processed foods (UPFs) and their potential risks for women. In addition, as you skim, you may notice that the extract begins with a definition of UPFs and then presents a claim about their harm, citing recent research as evidence. Continuing this argumentation flow, you may wonder, **“What exactly did the researchers do to reach that conclusion?”**, or **“What are the further implications of this?”** and from there, you can predict that another section answering these questions is forthcoming. This is basically the previously mentioned predictive power you gain through skimming!

Suppose you understand the big picture within the time limit, good job! Next time, try to limit the reading time further to master skimming. On the contrary, if you find that you often exceed the time limit and have to use the time initially planned for another part to compensate, try to improve your reading pace. To improve, start slow and gradually speed up as you master skimming alongside other strategies. Once you hit the ideal time limit for skimming a full passage (about 2-3 minutes), you can now do this section more efficiently.

A useful piece of advice is that you should read voraciously from anywhere you love to. Some recommended resources include daily newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, the BBC, and your favorite English books. You should also improve your vocabulary by noting new words because they can prove useful when doing Gapped Text (See Section 4.1 for more information).

2.2. Utilizing structural and contextual clues

Another strategy worth considering in doing Gapped Text is choosing answers based on contextual (how the argument flows) and structural (e.g., linking devices) clues. As the method suggests, there are some prerequisites,





especially analytical skills; therefore, it is mainly used in Gapped Text sections, where quick logical reasoning of options and gaps is essential. There are several steps to achieving this.

Firstly, getting the big picture of the passage through skimming is essential, as it informs you of the author's development of ideas. As mentioned above, this enables you to predict missing information more effectively and enhances your Gapped Text performance (Refer to Section 2.1 for more information).

Secondly, and most importantly, every passage has its coherence and cohesion, so it is advised that you understand the flow of information (as said above), and sticking to this flow can lead you to a good decision. In many cases, the given text is a narrative/biographical essay, so it is better to note that the organization of that text may be in chronological order or may be grouped by theme of objects by the writer.

In other situations, however, the flow of ideas may be more disjointed. For example, in some passages adapted from scientific articles, the writer jumps from one topic to another too abruptly, and this may disrupt your thought process. Cohesion, the cornerstone of all Gapped Text passages, especially ones like these, is characterized by linking words and phrases like “however”, “therefore”, “consequently”, “as a result”, “in addition”, “on the other hand”, etc. By using these linking words, test takers can identify concessions, contrasts, or other logical relationships in the text, ultimately recognizing a stressed point.

Another way through which authors achieve cohesion is by using phrases that reference another section/idea. These phrases may fall into the following categories (Zim Academy, 2020):

Type	Examples
Pronouns	Mr. A's findings suggest 67% of all teenagers are addicted to phones. Citing the severe harm of phone addiction in recent research, he argued that phones should be banned. Researchers have discovered a way to harvest minerals from asteroids. This discovery...
Articles	A recent paper claimed that 25% of people are living in poverty. [...] The paper suggested that...
Substitutions	I've just used the brush when it broke! Guess I'll have to buy another one . A shouted, “I just met the President at the mall today!” B, hearing the noise, exclaimed, “Really? So did I! ” Given all the disheartening statistics, will the rainforest be gone soon? I don't think so .

Figure 3: Table outlining various referencing phrases. Note: Adapted from Zim Academy

Coherence and Cohesion should go hand in hand to maximize understanding, so paying attention to these flows may bring you closer to the right choice. If you miss them, the text will likely feel disjointed, and in that situation, you should reread it while noticing cohesion.

Lastly, not overthinking the main point and the writer's attitude may save you time and keep your brain from getting stressed while reading. All writers aim to provide readers with a clear and logical grasp of their ideas and attitudes. That being said, you should not worry about the complicated text but the extra text snippet, which may be tricky. This extra piece of information serves to distract test takers from identifying the correct answers, often by containing contradictory or irrelevant information.

This efficient strategy can be applied to all English articles or passages, whether they are gapped or not, as it trains us to be sensible in noticing the key information, words and phrases, especially academic papers or news articles like those on The Guardian.

2.3. Time management

To begin with, allocate some time (2 – 3 minutes) at the beginning of the section just to orient yourself. Take a deep breath to calm yourself down, especially if the text spans many pages. Then skim the passage to build a mental





map. As mentioned above, doing so allows you to easily anticipate what should fill the gaps and enables you to approach the section with composure and preparedness.

Next, let's talk about the biggest illusion in Gapped Text: linear progress – the idea that the best strategy is to start at Gap 1, then solve Gap 2, then Gap 3, and so on. This is a terrible way to allocate your time. People who fall for this usually plod along, spending only 1 minute on Gap 6 but 6 or 7 on Gap 7. The reality is that some questions should take 30 seconds at worst, whereas others might take three minutes at best. In a high-stakes exam like the PTNK or any HCMCDOET test, letting the test-maker decide your pace by falling for this trap is deadly.

The core time management principle to beat this is non-linear prioritization. It's the idea that you should attack the task flexibly, securing easy questions first. The payoff for this strategy is accelerating simplification. You both get a point while narrowing down the options for the more difficult questions as you remove options from the pool.

Another principle is to strategically disengage from a question if it drags on for too long. If you feel Gap 6 might take you 7 minutes, move on. Do not put more time into that gap, or you will waste it doing nothing but going around in circles, stressing yourself out while you contemplate your life choices. Instead, quarantine that gap and move to another gap or section. Those minutes you gain by moving on from a couple of difficult gaps can repay you in double or more – there are often more questions within your reach that you have not touched yet.

Finally, spend 2 - 3 minutes checking your answers, once after finishing the section, and once after nearly completing the test. This will allow you to gain confidence in your answers while catching silly mistakes. In high-stakes exams like these, one mistake can mean the difference between getting into your dream school and regretting your choices for quite some time.

2.4. Double-checking

Congratulations on finishing the Gapped Text exercise. However, the task is not finished yet. As mentioned in Section 2.4, it is advisable that you review your answers carefully, ideally two or three times. In general, you should conduct an initial recheck right after finishing the exercise and then perform a second, more holistic one once you have completed the entire test. Now, let's discuss how you can actually carry out an effective review.

Initial recheck

Firstly, it might be helpful to have a quick pause, about 30 seconds to a minute. It is strongly recommended that you let your mind rest momentarily so you can return with a fresher and less biased view towards your old answers. Then, reread the entire passage, including your answers. Trust your intuition: identify any gaps that disrupt the logical flow of the passage.

If nothing seems wrong, proceed to the other parts. In the worst case, however, you detected some suspicious answers. Keeping your composure is essential in this situation. Re-read the parts before and after the gap, then note down reasons why you think your original answer may be wrong and find an alternative. Similarly, based on previously noted/highlighted evidence, recall why your old answer may also be correct. Afterwards, compare both sides and determine which is more justifiable. Ultimately, you should reach a conclusion. If you still cannot decide, try brute-forcing all answers and quickly test every option in the gap to see which one fits best. However, you should not spend too much time on this, as you will also need to complete other parts and maintain your composure.

Final recheck

This should be your final and most certain revision. Ideally, spend no more than 5 minutes for optimal results. Repeat the steps above once again. If you are confident in your answers, congratulations! If not, revisit the aforementioned process for the worst-case scenario, and try to find new arguments, especially why you do not think your original answer is correct. Then, revise other answers, even the ones that seemed fine earlier. This would rule out unsuitable options and help you identify the answers for the more uncertain gaps. In most cases, you may end up with a single gap that still has two plausible answers, which is normal. List down reasons supporting each option and evaluate them according to many different criteria: coherence and cohesion, logical meaning, collocations and word





repetition, and grammatical structures. Overthinking costs time and a final decision now is better than getting stuck and unable to recheck other parts. So, if you still cannot decide, choose the one that sounds more correct, or just gamble and then pray for the best.

3. Common pitfalls

3.1. Not skimming beforehand

You might be tempted to skip skimming in Gapped Text exercises because you believe this would save you time, with clues from nearby paragraphs supposedly providing enough information to choose accurately. Moreover, you may feel intimidated by the missing paragraphs, which can make the main idea harder to grasp. These are all common misconceptions.

Without a preliminary look at the extract's overall structure, you may often end up rereading sections to determine where a missing paragraph belongs. This constant backtracking not only slows you down but also disrupts your focus, as you must repeatedly readjust yourself within the text.

Additionally, skipping this step can cause you to lose sight of the bigger picture. When you fixate on small details such as individual words or phrases, multiple options may seem equally plausible for the same gap. A paragraph may contain familiar keywords and appear convincing at first glance, yet fail to align with the broader argument. As a result, you might select an option that appears to fit seamlessly with the sentences immediately before or after the gap, yet subtly contradicts the writer's overall direction or disrupts the logical progression of ideas.

To avoid this, take a brief moment to skim through the passage before attempting to fill in the gaps. By briefly identifying the topic, tone, and structural flow, you create a mental map of the argument. This clarifies the main ideas, transitions, and recurring concepts, allowing you to approach each gap with sharper awareness of both local connections and global structure. By doing so, we ensure that each gap expands the central argument.

3.2. Getting bogged down in details

One of the most common and practical challenges readers encounter, both in everyday and academic reading, is getting bogged down in details. This phenomenon occurs when a reader's attention becomes trapped by excessive information. This could be a minutiae of a text, an unfamiliar word, secondary examples, or the supporting data that doesn't carry the main argument. Some would spend so much time trying to decipher such information that it narrows down their focus, and their comprehension becomes scattered or incomplete.

The main reason why getting bogged down in details is difficult to avoid lies in the reader's desire for precision. Many still believe that good reading means total understanding, and every word must be decoded and analyzed. This, however, often slows down the reading process. By pausing at every unknown term or dissecting each clause, the reader loses the sense of flow and fails to connect individual parts to the text's central idea.

Another contributing factor is the inability to identify major and minor points: major points contain the information as a whole, while minor points generally provide nuance and examples. We shouldn't assume that all information is equally important, as it would make the reading process quite exhausting.

In a Gapped Text article, you have to focus even harder due to the missing information. Make sure to never lose focus and run low on time while guessing the meaning of a word or understanding irrelevant information. In addition, when reading, wise advice would be actively ignoring all the difficult vocabulary, interesting but unrelated details and statistics that do not connect to the gap. One question that should be asked continuously is "How does this paragraph connect to the next one?" This helps you keep track of your focus structurally, rather than emotionally. Lastly, the all-time nuance here is that "A good guess in 60 seconds is better than a perfect answer in 10 minutes."

In conclusion, avoiding getting bogged down is synonymous with reading efficiently. You must try to strike a balance between precision and perspective, knowing when to zoom in for further explanation and when to zoom out for the big picture. For instance, should the answer require a focus on fixed grammar mechanics or structural patterns,





you must zoom in on the specific word by asking yourself questions such as “What does this collocate with?” or “Am I disrupting the linear flow?”. Next, you might want to try to zoom out in cases when meaning, logic, or cohesion is more important than individual grammar. A more specific explanation would be trying to grasp the overall tone of the paragraph and avoid over-analysis, which can make you overthink your answer.

3.3. Hastiness

Hastiness is one of the easiest ways to lose marks in Gapped Text exercises. You know that feeling when you think you have found the correct answer, write it down, move on fast, and get only 2 out of 7 questions correct? This is what happens when you are too hasty in Gapped Text. Keep in mind that these exercises aren't just about vocabulary but also about your ability to see coherence and cohesion. Thus, being hasty usually means only focusing on surface-level clues, such as familiar words, repeated phrases, or topic similarities, instead of the overall flow of the ideas presented in a text.

The problem with hastiness, in general, is that many sentences may appear to fit at first glance with their similar topics and/or vocabulary, which is not equivalent to the logical connection between surrounding sentences. When you are in a rush, you tend to misinterpret subtle clues like pronouns, discourse markers, and shifts in tone and sense. Meanwhile, you may also miss minor inconsistencies – non-existent contrasts, pronouns with no clear reference, or sudden shifts in tense. As such, you can lose marks for what is meant to be an easy gap, with haste fundamentally destroying your accuracy as it replaces the reasoning of a correct answer with a random or misguided guess.

There is one simple solution to this matter: slow down when a gap seems suspiciously easy. Re-reading the sentence before and after the gap carefully, looking for linking clues, and trying to predict what could fit there beforehand are advisable. Pause for a moment before you pick, and if you are unsure, mark the gap (with a star or heart, maybe?) and return to it after answering other easier questions.

4. Tips and tricks for practicing

4.1. Read voraciously

Reading in a second language has never been easy. For the novice reader, deciphering the meaning of unfamiliar words is challenging enough, let alone grasping the various nuanced ideas embedded within every context – a requirement when doing Gapped Text passages. Good reading skills are therefore essential when doing these exercises. Though mastering literacy in a foreign language is no small feat, it is a skill, and, like all other skills, it can be refined through consistent, goal-oriented practice.

To read efficiently, you must first hone your strategies. Practice skimming the text for key points and finding the main idea and structure while making mental notes and summarising the text. Once a general understanding of the material has been achieved and a deeper understanding is needed, begin processing the finer details to more accurately predict what is likely to precede or follow a gap. Applying this method while reading a wide variety of texts can help you become familiar with the multitude of grammar structures and linking techniques in each language. This improves language reflexes when doing Gapped Text exercises.

Besides executing strategies, you must train your reading skills using goals. Training your skills can easily be misunderstood as reading mindlessly – consuming text after text without aim or purpose. Although this can improve your reading speed and vocabulary, it is not a constructive way to master Gapped Text. As such, frequent and intentional exposure to foreign language texts is vital. Build a habit of questioning the purpose and tone of the text (e.g., is it to inform, criticise, or entertain?) before the first read. Upon completing it the first time, think about the contexts/structures you've just seen and what they imply. With those thoughts in mind, rereading the text becomes a search to confirm your answers/observations, making you more attentive and critical as you progress. When this process is implemented across many types of texts (literary works, research papers, fiction and nonfiction alike), discerning specialised contexts within different modes of writing becomes intuitive.





Engrossing yourself in texts can enhance your reading skills, which are foundational for mastering Gapped Text. To get into the habit of reading in a foreign language, start with texts that feel 'safe' to read, such as entertainment articles, compendia (books that have detailed but concise information about a particular subject), graded readers (books abridged for language learners), etc. Advance towards more challenging native-targeted texts such as research papers, newspaper articles from reputable outlets (Forbes, The Financial Times) or mainstream literature as you gain momentum in your reading journey. It is also important to note that reading must be an enjoyable, worthwhile experience before it can be skillfully mastered. Therefore, it will be highly beneficial to explore a wide variety of topics and genres for leisure reading as well as for work or learning purposes. Through absorbing a diverse array of texts while employing techniques and setting reading goals, the fundamental workings of a language can gradually be understood and applied. Being able to recognize coherence and cohesion between ideas and thoroughly separating and classifying them gives a clearer view of the main message.

Mastering your reading skills in a second language requires consistency, time and patience. With the right methods and mindset, reading will become second nature, which, in turn, makes Gapped Text effortless.

4.2. Practice with mock tests

Success in Gapped Text exercises, as iterated above, primarily depends on understanding the structure of the passage rather than vocabulary knowledge or sentence-level comprehension. This skill cannot be mastered by practicing Gapped Text in isolation; it is developed through exposure to authentic mock tests that replicate test-day conditions, revealing weaknesses while steadily sharpening the student's sense of textual logic.

The value of mock tests lies not in the quantity of tests completed, but in how strategically they are used. Here are some methods to increase the value of each test.

- *Time the tests:* While working within a strict time limit (typically 15-20 minutes, depending on the length of the text) is essential to simulate the actual cognitive pressure of the exam, you may benefit from starting in your comfort zone. Starting slow can help you focus on accuracy and build confidence without the extra stress. Then, gradually introducing stricter time limits helps develop focus and endurance while improving pacing in manageable steps. Through consistent practice, you not only learn to distribute time more strategically but also perform more consistently under realistic exam conditions.
- *The review process:* This is when the most substantial learning occurs. Upon completion, review the answers and categorize errors to determine their causes (misinterpreting the logic, overlooking cohesion clues, working too quickly, etc.). This shifts focus to specific weaknesses, helping you decide which skills need improvement. Then reconstruct the text by rereading it with the correct paragraphs inserted. In this phase, underline or annotate the *cohesive devices* that make the correct answer fit (refer to Section 2.2 for more information on these links). Lastly, examine the incorrect options and identify why they disrupt the text's logic. A paragraph might be irrelevant, or might introduce a new topic prematurely. Recording these observations helps visualize and internalize the invisible threads that hold a text together.
- *Maintain a clue checklist:* After every mock test, note what lexical or structural clues helped you find the right answer. Over several weeks of practice, this list will grow into a personalized inventory of textual signals and patterns to look for, such as demonstrative references (*this, those, such*), contrast markers (*however, nevertheless*), and cause-and-effect transitions (*as a result, therefore*). Repeatedly refining this list helps train intuition for recognizing paragraph connections, which is essential to success in Gapped Text tasks.
- *Diversify practice materials:* Relying solely on one textbook or past paper may cause you to become accustomed to a particular writing style. To avoid this, include mock tests from multiple reliable sources. These may include past entrance papers, city or national test preparation books, and advanced B2–C2 reading materials from established exam series such as Cambridge or Oxford. Exposure to varied texts broadens understanding of how coherence and cohesion operate across genres, making you more adaptable when encountering unfamiliar content on exam day.





5. Practice exercises

Part 1: You are going to read an extract from a magazine article on environmental science. Six pieces of text have been removed from the extract. Choose from the texts A - G the one that best fits each gap (1 - 6). There is ONE extra piece of text you do not need to use.

Investing In The Ecosystems That Sustain Us

From the clearing of forests to the depletion of fisheries, the value of nature has long been found in its erasure. The founders of Western economics often treated nature as a “permanent field” that, to be classed as a productive asset, needed to be exploited or converted, whether for agriculture or to make way for industrial capacity.

(1) _____

While industrialization has improved the material lives of untold millions around the world, it has also saturated the atmosphere with greenhouse gases, acidified and overexploited the oceans and degraded nearly every biome, often to the point of destruction. This poses a fundamental threat to our collective future – a reality that conventional economic thought has largely ignored.

(2) _____

In a more nuanced claim, Mahbub ul-Haq, the co-creator of the Human Development Index, averred that “the environmental debate must be given a human perspective to save it from the excesses of environmental fanatics, who often seem more interested in saving trees than in saving people.”

(3) _____

As nature transforms from a backdrop for human affairs into an active force shaping them, greater economic value can be produced from its cultivation than from its exploitation.

(4) _____

To address the planetary consequences of its pyrrhic industrial victory, modern economics must now urgently evolve in two important and related directions: discarding long-held definitions of value that separate humanity from nature, and embracing a new model of development that recognizes ecological production as a form of economic production.

(5) _____

GDP, an approximation of the value of goods and services produced within a country’s borders, emerged in the U.S. during its 20th century crucible of war planning and welfare state construction.

(6) _____

Today, decimal-level fluctuations in GDP’s growth can unnerve ministries and shift billions on financial markets. The ubiquity and influence of the metric have endowed it with an aura of unshakeable authority over economic affairs; it is often treated as if it were an objective feature of the world rather than a human artifact that is freighted with the biases of its creators and marked by the circumstances of its creation.

(Adapted from Noema Magazine)

Texts to choose

- A. Economic growth, in turn, has come to gravely imperil the planetary systems on which civilization depends.
- B. It was adopted by the government to measure the aggregate value of economic production at a time when such information was unavailable to policy and business leaders.
- C. But in the Anthropocene, the development of trees is integral to the development of people, and an ecological perspective is therefore also a human perspective.
- D. As both cause and telltale symptom, gross domestic product encapsulates why modern economics has been so anesthetized to planetary peril.
- E. How we measure the economy is more discretion than discovery. Simon Kuznets, who has been credited with formalizing the concept of GDP, initially opposed the inclusion of government spending and expenditures on armaments and advertising.
- F. In other words, a standing forest is worth more than a pile of felled trees – something we have started to realize only recently.
- G. “The world can, in effect, get along without natural resources, so exhaustion is just an event, not a catastrophe,” Robert Solow, the godfather of economic growth theory, once wrote, expressing an indifference toward nature shared broadly within modern economics.





Part 2: You are going to read an extract from a newspaper article on genetics. Seven paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs A - H the one that best fits each gap (7 - 13). There is ONE extra paragraph you do not need to use.

How Genetic Variants Interact Shapes Disease Predisposition

New research reveals how complex interactions between genetic variants can explain different outcomes in disorders like autism, schizophrenia, and more.

Genetic inheritance may sound straightforward: One gene causes one trait or a specific illness. When doctors use genetics, it's usually to try to identify a disease-causing gene to help guide diagnosis and treatment. But for most health conditions, the genetics is far more complex than how clinicians are currently looking at it in diagnosis, counseling, and treatment.

(7) _____

In our newly published research in the journal *Cell*, my team and I found that a genetic mutation involved in neurodevelopmental and psychiatric conditions such as autism and schizophrenia is affected by multiple other genetic variants, changing how these conditions develop.

(8) _____

Primary and Secondary Variants

Certain rare variants can cause problems on their own, such as the genetic mutations that cause sickle cell anemia and cystic fibrosis. But in many cases, whether someone actually develops symptoms of disease depends on what else is happening across the genome.

(9) _____

That's why two people with the same genetic mutation can seem so different. One person might have severe symptoms, another person mild symptoms, and another none at all.

(10) _____

Sometimes, a primary variant and a secondary variant together can cause two different disorders in the same

person, such as Prader-Willi syndrome and Pitt-Hopkins syndrome. Other times, secondary variants have no obvious effect on their own but together can tip the balance of whether and how a disease will appear, even in the absence of a primary variant. This can be seen in the development of heart disease in children.

Insights from a Missing Piece of a Chromosome

(11) _____

To understand why this happens, we analyzed 442 individuals from 124 families carrying this genetic mutation. We found that children lacking this piece of chromosome 16 had more secondary variants elsewhere in the genome compared to their carrier parents. These secondary variants took many forms, including both small changes and large deletions, duplications and expansions of their DNA.

(12) _____

One reason why scientific understanding of secondary variants has lagged is that genetic research often depends on who is recruited to participate in these studies and how researchers recruit them.

(13) _____

But if researchers were to study people drawn from the general population – say, by recruiting people from a large shopping mall – some might carry the same primary variant but have far milder symptoms or none at all. This variability allows researchers to better dissect how different parts of the genome interact with each other and affect how a disease develops.

(Adapted from The Scientist)

Missing paragraphs:

- These variations can even occur within the same family. This phenomenon, called variable expressivity, arises from differences in the secondary variants a person has. In most cases, these variants amplify the effects of the primary mutation. A higher number of secondary variants on top of a primary variant generally leads to more severe disease.
- While a primary variant might trigger a disease, secondary variants can alter how that disease develops and progresses. Think of it like a song: The melody (primary variant) is the main part of the song, but the bassist and drummer (secondary variants) can change its groove and rhythm.
- Most studies recruit patients affected with a particular disease. Families recruited from genetic clinics typically have children with severe versions of the disease. But if studies focus only on patients with the most acute symptoms, researchers may overestimate the effects of primary variants and miss the subtler role that secondary variants may play in how a disease develops.





- D. Each type of secondary variant was associated with different health outcomes. Some were linked to smaller head size and reduced cognitive function, while others contributed to higher rates of psychiatric or developmental symptoms. This suggests that while a 16p12.1 deletion makes the genome more sensitive to neurodevelopmental disorders, which symptoms manifest depends on which other variants are present.
- E. By embracing this complexity, I believe genetics can move closer to its ultimate promise: not just explaining why disease happens, but predicting who is most at risk and personalizing care for each individual.
- F. Your DNA carries millions of genetic variants you inherit from your parents or develop by chance. Some are common variants, shared by many people. Others are rare variants, found in very few people or even unique to a family. Together, these variants shape who you are – from visible traits such as height or eye color to health conditions such as diabetes or heart disease.
- G. My team and I studied a genetic change known as a 16p12.1 deletion, where a small piece of chromosome 16 is missing. Researchers have linked this mutation to developmental delay, intellectual disability and psychiatric conditions such as schizophrenia. Yet most children inherit this genetic variant from a parent who has milder symptoms, different symptoms or sometimes no symptoms at all.
- H. Our findings support the idea that, rather than focusing on single genes, taking the whole genome into account would provide insight into how researchers understand what makes someone genetically predisposed to certain diseases and how those diseases develop.

Part 3: You are going to read an article on grade inflation. Five paragraphs have been removed from the article. Choose from the paragraphs A - F the one that best fits each gap (14 - 18). There is ONE extra paragraph you do not need to use. Then answer questions 19 and 20 that follow.

Addressing the Grade Inflation Collective Action Problem

From 1990-2020, four-year college grade point averages (GPAs) rose more than 16% at public and non-profit universities. “A” is now the most common grade awarded at American universities—sometimes by comical proportions. For example, in 2020-21, Harvard University awarded “A’s” 79% of the time—and Yale recorded the same rate of awarding A’s in 2022-23. When top marks are awarded to nearly every student, grading becomes a farce.

(14) _____

If students’ motivations behind wanting higher grades are obvious, educators’ motivations are only slightly less so: happy students are easier to deal with, and they write more favorable evaluations. So, if lax grading makes everyone happy, what’s the problem? Why can’t everyone be winners?

(15) _____

Grade inflation presents a dilemma for higher education institutions. It is in the collective interest of every college to restore grading standards and academic rigor. But individually, each professor, department, and university fears losing students to an easier grader, an easier major, an easier institution.

(16) _____

A minimally burdensome path toward solving grade inflation is to increase transparency—and education policy professionals have identified several possible strategies for doing so. One strategy, described by Dr. Tom Lindsay calls for listing the class average grades next to students’ grade on their transcripts. I have also suggested reporting the average standardized test scores (e.g., SAT and ACT) by course and department.

(17) _____

Standardized test score reporting would help departments—and ideally, universities and university systems—to craft fairer and more precisely calibrated reforms. For example, if Biomedical Engineering awards higher average grades than American Studies, this could be due to differences in average student aptitude rather than differences in grading rigor. Reformers could use average student aptitude scores to assign different GPA or “A” grade caps at the course or department levels. These caps could be adjusted, as needed, to changes in student composition, such as student migration to easier grading courses and majors.

(18) _____

(Adapted from U.S. Department of Education)





Missing paragraphs:

- A. The key to addressing grade inflation lies in scale: educators across departments, colleges, and universities should collaborate to establish consistent, meaningful grading standards. Several universities have taken meaningful action to restore rigor: Harvard, for example, recently announced a plan to make grading data available to faculty to “guide departmental conversations” on the topic. However, in a time of declining enrollments and budget constraints, academic rigor too often takes a backseat.
- B. This trend of declining grading rigor is commonly referred to as “grade inflation.” Research suggests the primary drivers of grade inflation are first, educators responding to “consumer demand” for higher grades from students and second, students self-selecting into less rigorous courses and disciplines. Without question, sites like RateMyProfessor compound both drivers.
- C. Large-scale, minimally burdensome approaches like these can eventually help to halt and even reverse grade inflation. The pursuit of excellence presupposes that not everyone can be a “winner” or receive the highest grade in the class. However, when educators motivate students to do their best work by setting and maintaining high standards, we benefit students, higher education, and American society as a whole—and, in that sense, everyone wins.
- D. Students who have received inflated grades tend to be highly confident in their abilities in spite of being perpetually underprepared for future endeavors (Hansen, 1998). Students who received “A” grades in high school will believe they earned those grades, and as a result, will also believe that they are prepared for college-level academics. In addition, when the colleges at which they apply admit them based on those grades, a cycle of dependence is fostered.
- E. Listing course average grades next to student grades would help to lessen the perceived costs of rigorous grading. For example, a student who received a “B+” in a class with a “B” average can fairly claim to have distinguished himself vis-à-vis a student who received an “A-” in a class with an “A-” average.
- F. When an “A” grade becomes a participation trophy, grades cease to function as meaningful records of student achievement and content mastery. This causes several problems. First, absent the ability to make finer distinctions—such as between “excellent,” “good,” and “merely adequate work”—student effort wanes, causing learning and skills acquisition to plummet. Second, without reliable indicators of student knowledge and diligence, employers and graduate admissions officers are forced to turn to other, potentially less useful, criteria to evaluate candidates. Finally, grade inflation (paradoxically) contributes to higher student stress—because students come to regard anything short of an “A” as akin to failing.

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the passage above?

For statements 19 and 20, write

TRUE if the statement agrees with the information

FALSE if the statement contradicts the information

NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this

- 19. Professors face a conflict of interest with regard to grading students, thus resulting in grade inflation.
- 20. Rapidly rising GPAs create high expectations, which causes knowledge acquisition to plummet.





6. Answer key

Part 1:

1. A
Further elaborates on the consequences of Western capitalists' view that nature is something to be exploited for economic gain.
2. G
The key link here is the one made with the paragraph below: *"In a more nuanced claim..."* → implying that the missing paragraph contains a claim with little nuance.
3. C
Links to the paragraph by providing a contrasting situation where the well-being of trees and people are inextricably linked.
4. F
Provides an analogy for the idea that more economic value can be extracted from nature by preserving it, rather than destroying it.
5. D
Introduces the term "gross domestic product," which is explained and subsequently abbreviated below
6. B
Explains the circumstances under which the term GDP was coined, contrasting with its limited applications today.

Part 2:

1. F
Elaborates on the complexity of genetics for most health conditions, while introducing "millions of genetic variants", which is also further explored in the subsequent paragraph
2. H
Explains the results of the "research published in the journal Cell".
3. B
Further elaborates on the difference between a primary variant and secondary variants.
4. A
Explores the true extent of the "variations" mentioned in the previous paragraph
5. G
Introduces a study which is explained in detail in the subsequent paragraphs
6. D
Further details the role of the "secondary variants" mentioned in the previous paragraph.
7. C

Elaborates on the issue of deciding on study participants mentioned in the previous paragraph

Part 3:

1. B
"This trend" in paragraph B refers to the debasement of grades and the "primary drivers" in paragraph B link with the "motivations" in the following paragraph.
2. F
Paragraph F answers the question, "So, if lax grading makes everyone happy, what's the problem? Why can't everyone be winners?"
3. A
A introduces the solutions to grade inflation and is expanded upon in the following few paragraphs. Furthermore, declining enrollments, budget constraints, and the phrase "minimally burdensome" in the following paragraph link together and make A better than E for this gap.
4. E
The passages surrounding Gap 4 discuss solutions to grade inflation, and E fits best here, as A is better suited for Gap 3.
5. C
"Approaches like these" in C refers to the solutions outlined in previous paragraphs and concludes the passage with the benefits of all these solutions.
6. TRUE
According to the passage, the professor's interests include gaining positive student reviews and retaining them, whereas the university (where the professor works) has a vested interest in maintaining academic standards. Such a discrepancy is a textbook definition of a conflict of interest, and this leads to grade inflation, according to paragraph B. The answer is thus TRUE
7. NOT GIVEN
"Rapidly rising GPAs create high expectations" refers to "Finally, grade inflation (paradoxically) contributes to higher student stress—because students come to regard anything short of an "A" as akin to failing." in Paragraph F, and the phrase "causing knowledge acquisition to plummet" refers to "causing learning and skills acquisition to plummet." also in F. Yet, there is no link between the two ideas in the passage, and the answer is thus NOT GIVEN.





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