

Test Prep · ACT English & ACT Reading · Free sample

The ACT Companion Sample

One strategy chapter and Lesson 1 of each series, taken straight from The ACT Companion.

In this sample

- Strategy chapter — ACT Reading core strategy
- ACT English · Lesson 1 — How to read an ACT English question
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The full Companion

Strategy chapters and every lesson for ACT English and ACT Reading, every practice test with its answer key, and the Test Prep Learning Log at the end.

Contents, pricing, and Hub access: www.hearn.consulting/act-companion

ACT Reading core strategy

Read the passage before working the questions. As you read, hold three questions in mind. They are the same three questions across literary, social-studies, humanities, and natural-science passages.

The three-question passage map

Question 1

Central idea

What is the passage about, and what is the writer's overall point?

Question 2

Support

How does the writer support that idea — what kinds of evidence, examples, or moves?

Question 3

Structure

How is the passage built? What is each part doing, and how do the parts fit together?



Working principle

Comprehension should drive answer choices. Answer choices should not drive comprehension.

Working moves by question family

Central idea and structure	Use your answers to the three-question map. Strong wrong answers describe a single paragraph instead of the passage as a whole.
Paragraph function	Ask what the paragraph does in the argument, not what topic it mentions. "Provides an example," "introduces a counterpoint," "qualifies the previous claim" are function answers.
Detail and line-reference items	Return to the exact lines. Do not guess from memory of what the passage covered.
Inference items	Pick the smallest defensible step beyond the passage, not the most ambitious one. Strong wrong answers go a step too far.
Author's argument and point of view	The right answer fits the central idea and the support together. A choice that fits one but contradicts the other is the wrong choice.
Comparison and relationship (paired passages)	Build the three-question map for each passage. Then ask what the second passage adds, qualifies, contradicts, or assumes that the first did not.
Words and phrases in context	Read the sentence around the target word. The word's meaning is decided by the sentence, not by its most common dictionary sense.

Lesson 1

How to read an ACT English question

Reading routine · ACT English · read around the underline, then read the choices vertically

Purpose

Build a routine you can use on any ACT English item. Before you choose, you read around the underline, read the answer choices vertically to see what is changing, and decide what kind of decision the item is testing — grammar, punctuation, clarity, or rhetoric. The answer choices tell you what kind of decision to make.

Lesson format

Read · identify · decide · check

What you need

This lesson · a notebook or the Test Prep Learning Log

KEY POINT

The answer choices tell you what kind of decision you need to make.

If the choices change punctuation, you are making a punctuation decision. If the choices change verbs, you are making a verb decision. If the choices change the order of words, you are making a clarity or modifier decision. If the choices change a whole sentence, you are making a rhetoric decision. Read the choices vertically first; then return to the underline with a question in mind.

What this skill tests

Every ACT English item now comes with a question, but the question names the decision only loosely — “most grammatically acceptable,” “least redundant,” “most logical transition.” Your first job is still to figure out what kind of decision the writer of the item is asking you to make. Until you know what kind of decision it is, you cannot apply the right rule.

How to recognize the decision in the choices

Read the four choices stacked on top of each other. Look down the choices, not across them. The thing that changes from choice to choice is the decision you are making.

What changes across the choices	What the item is testing
Punctuation marks (comma, semicolon, period, dash)	Punctuation / sentence boundaries
Verb form, pronoun, or single replaced word	Grammar (agreement, tense, pronoun, modifier)
Word order, length, or wording with the same meaning	Concision and clarity
A whole replacement sentence, or add / delete / move	Rhetoric, transitions, or organization

Worked model

A short passage with one underlined portion. Read the passage. Then read the choices vertically and work the item.

WORKED MODEL · QUESTION 1 · PUNCTUATION DECISION

Every Saturday morning, my grandfather sets up his repair bench in the garage. He lays out small tools — screwdrivers, pliers, and a magnifying glass [1] and waits to see what the neighbors bring him. A toaster that has stopped clicking. A lamp with a frayed cord. A child's wind-up music box. He works quietly, turning each object in his hands, looking for the place where something went wrong. He never charges for his work, and he never throws away the broken parts. He keeps them in a tin coffee can on the shelf, labeled, in case the next thing he repairs needs them. Eventually, his neighbors started calling him "the fixer." I think he prefers "the neighbor."

Which choice makes the sentence most grammatically acceptable?

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. screwdrivers, pliers and a magnifying glass —
- C. screwdrivers, pliers, and a magnifying glass —
- D. screwdrivers, pliers and, a magnifying glass

Worked thinking: Look down the choices. The list itself does not change; what changes is the punctuation around it. The sentence opens with a dash ("He lays out small tools —"), so the underline needs a closing dash to pair with it. The serial comma is consistent with the rest of the passage.

Worked answer: C

The choices announced the decision. You read vertically first, named the decision, and returned to the underline with a question in mind.

Guided practice

Three items on one short passage. Read the passage segment, then work the item beside it. Use the workspace under each question. Answers and explanations are at the end of the lesson.

PASSAGE A — "THE GARDEN BEHIND THE LIBRARY"

GUIDED • ITEM 2

The community garden behind the library was once a vacant lot. A retired schoolteacher named Maria Soto began clearing it in 2008, hauling broken concrete out by the bucket. Within two years, a dozen neighbors had joined her. Today the garden produces tomatoes, beans, peppers and herbs [2] that fill the food pantry's summer shelves.

Which choice makes the sentence most grammatically acceptable?

- F. NO CHANGE
- G. tomatoes, beans, peppers, and herbs
- H. tomatoes; beans; peppers; and herbs
- J. tomatoes beans, peppers, and herbs

Notes

Decision type	
Why this answer	

GUIDED • ITEM 3

Ms. Soto, who still arrives before sunrise, says the garden is not about the vegetables. It is about, the people [3] who decided to show up.

Which choice makes the sentence most grammatically acceptable?

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. It is about the people
- C. It is, about the people
- D. It is, about, the people

Notes

Decision type	
Why this answer	

GUIDED • ITEM 4

Although the garden has become a model for similar projects in nearby towns. [4]

Which choice makes the sentence most grammatically acceptable?

F. NO CHANGE

G. The garden has become a model for similar projects in nearby towns.

H. Although the garden, has become a model for similar projects in nearby towns.

J. Because the garden has become a model for similar projects in nearby towns.

Notes

Decision type	
Why this answer	

Independent practice

One short passage with eight items. Work each item beside its passage segment.
Answers and explanations are at the end of the lesson.

PASSAGE B — "THE QUILT LIBRARY"**INDEPENDENT • ITEM 5**

On the second floor of the public library in Aiken, South Carolina, there is a room with twenty wooden drawers [5]. Each drawer holds a folded quilt. Some are nearly two hundred years old. Others were finished last spring.

Which choice makes the sentence most grammatically acceptable?

A. NO CHANGE

B. there is a room, with twenty wooden drawers,

C. is a room, with twenty wooden drawers

D. there's a room with twenty wooden drawer's

Notes

Decision type	
Why this answer	

INDEPENDENT • ITEM 6

The collection was started by Vivian Reese a librarian who [6] noticed how often patrons mentioned that a grandmother or great-aunt had quilted. She began asking families if they would lend a quilt for one month, to be displayed and then returned.

Which choice makes the sentence most grammatically acceptable?

- F. NO CHANGE
- G. Vivian Reese a librarian, who
- H. Vivian Reese, a librarian who
- J. Vivian Reese; a librarian who

Notes

Decision type	
Why this answer	

INDEPENDENT • ITEM 7

She began asking families if they would lend a quilt for one month, to be displayed and then returned. Within a year, the library was overflowing with quilts, photographs of quilts, and stories of quiltmakers [7].

Which choice makes the sentence most grammatically acceptable?

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. Within a year, the library was overflowing with: quilts, photographs of quilts, and stories of quiltmakers
- C. Within a year — the library was overflowing with quilts, photographs of quilts, and stories of quiltmakers
- D. Within a year the library, was overflowing with quilts, photographs of quilts, and stories of quiltmakers

Notes

Decision type	
Why this answer	

INDEPENDENT · ITEM 8

Ms. Reese, who retired six years ago, but she still volunteers [8] every Wednesday afternoon, says the room is not a museum.

Which choice makes the sentence most grammatically acceptable?

- F. NO CHANGE
- G. retiring six years ago but she still volunteers
- H. who retired six years ago, but still volunteering
- J. who retired six years ago but still volunteers

Notes

Decision type	
Why this answer	

INDEPENDENT · ITEM 9

Ms. Reese, who retired six years ago but still volunteers every Wednesday afternoon, says the room is not a museum. She prefers to call it a memory library [9]. The drawers are labeled with the names of the women who made each quilt. A few drawers are labeled with the words "unknown maker." Ms. Reese notes that those drawers are often the ones visitors stand in front of the longest.

9. The writer is considering revising the underlined sentence to: "She prefers to call it a memory library, since it is a library that holds memories." Should the writer make this revision?
- A. Yes, because it explains why Ms. Reese says the room is not a museum.
 - B. Yes, because it introduces a contrast that the next sentences develop.
 - C. No, because it merely restates the name without adding information.
 - D. No, because it shifts the focus away from Ms. Reese's role at the library.

Notes

Decision type	
Why this answer	

INDEPENDENT • ITEM 10

[s1] The room itself is simple: white walls, two reading chairs, and a small desk where a notebook waits for visitors to write what a quilt brought to mind. [s2] Most entries are short. "My mother's hands." "The smell of cedar." "A bed I shared with my sister." [s3] Some entries are long enough to fill a page. [s4] Together, the entries — like the quilts themselves — record what a community remembers.

10. The writer wants to add the following sentence to the paragraph: "What visitors write there is as varied as the quilts." The sentence would best be placed:

- F.** before Sentence 1.
- G.** after Sentence 1.
- H.** after Sentence 3.
- J.** after Sentence 4 (at the end of the paragraph).

Notes

Decision type	
Why this answer	

INDEPENDENT · ITEM 11

The room itself is simple: white walls, two reading chairs, and a small desk where a notebook waits for visitors to write what a quilt brought to mind. Most entries are short. "My mother's hands." "The smell of cedar." "A bed I shared with my sister." [11]
Some entries are long enough to fill a page.

Which choice makes the sentence most grammatically acceptable?

- A.** NO CHANGE
- B.** Most entries are short, "my mother's hands," "the smell of cedar," "a bed I shared with my sister."
- C.** Most entries are short; "my mother's hands," "the smell of cedar," "a bed I shared with my sister."
- D.** Most entries are short, such as: "my mother's hands," "the smell of cedar," "a bed I shared with my sister."

Notes

Decision type	
Why this answer	

INDEPENDENT · ITEM 12

Some entries are long enough to fill a page. Together, the entries — like the quilts themselves — record what a community remembers. End of passage. Refer to the whole essay for this item.

- 12.** Suppose the writer's primary purpose had been to show how a small library project can preserve community memory. Would this essay accomplish that purpose?
- F.** Yes, because it traces a single library project from its founding to its broader role in the community.
 - G.** Yes, because it gives statistics on how many quilts the library holds.
 - H.** No, because the essay focuses mainly on Ms. Reese's career rather than on community memory.
 - J.** No, because the essay does not describe what visitors do at the library.

Notes

Decision type	
Why this answer	

Debrief

Before you check the answer key, look back at your workspace notes. For each item, ask yourself: did I identify the decision before I chose? Did the answer choices announce the kind of decision being made? If you chose by ear and got it wrong, the workspace notes will tell you what habit to build.

LEARNING LOG STEP

For every missed, guessed, or uncertain question, record the lesson, question number, decision type, what you chose, what the correct answer was supported by, and the next practice move in the Test Prep Learning Log.

Lesson 1 decision types: punctuation · sentence boundary · grammar (verbs, pronouns, modifiers) · concision and clarity · rhetoric (revision, organization, transition, purpose) · reading-the-question check (when NO CHANGE is the answer).
WHAT TO LOG IF MISSED — Log a missed item by the decision it was testing, not by the topic of the passage. The lesson skill is reading the question. Lessons 2 through 7 then teach the rules behind each kind of decision.

Answer explanations

2. **Correct answer: G.** Punctuation decision. The serial comma is required on ACT English. Full rules in Lesson 3.

Watch out: Assuming the comma before "and" is optional. ACT English uses the serial comma consistently.

*If you missed this, log it as: **Punctuation (comma in a list)***

3. **Correct answer: B.** Punctuation decision. A comma should not separate a verb from its complement. Full rules in Lesson 3.

Watch out: Adding a comma anywhere there is a pause. ACT punctuation is decided by structure, not pause.

*If you missed this, log it as: **Punctuation (no unneeded comma)***

4. **Correct answer: G.** Sentence-boundary decision. The underlined material is a dependent clause; removing "Although" makes it a complete sentence. Full rules in Lesson 2.
Watch out: Choosing J ("Because") — same problem; "Because" still leaves a dependent clause.
*If you missed this, log it as: **Sentence boundary (fragment)***
5. **Correct answer: A.** Reading-the-question check. The original sentence is complete and clear. B and C cut the room off from its drawers with a comma, and D puts an apostrophe in a plain plural.
Watch out: Assuming NO CHANGE is rarely the answer. It is correct roughly a quarter of the time on ACT English.
*If you missed this, log it as: **Reading the question (no error)***
6. **Correct answer: H.** Punctuation decision. An appositive renaming a noun takes a comma before it. Full rules in Lesson 3.
Watch out: Choosing J (semicolon) — semicolons join independent clauses; "a librarian who..." is not independent.
*If you missed this, log it as: **Punctuation (appositive comma)***
7. **Correct answer: A.** Reading-the-question check. The serial commas are correct; the other choices add unneeded punctuation. Punctuation rules in Lesson 3.
Watch out: Adding a colon after "with." A colon needs a complete sentence on its left.
*If you missed this, log it as: **Reading the question (no error)***
8. **Correct answer: J.** Concision-and-parallelism decision. "Who" governs both verbs ("retired" and "still volunteers"); the added "she" and the comma are not needed. Full rules in Lessons 5 and 6.
Watch out: Reading "but" as a sentence joiner. Here "but" joins two verbs that share a subject.
*If you missed this, log it as: **Concision and parallelism***
9. **Correct answer: C.** Rhetorical decision. 'A library that holds memories' says nothing that 'memory library' does not already say, so the revision adds words without adding information. The sentences that follow (the labeled drawers, the 'unknown maker' drawers) already show what the term means.
Watch out: Choosing A because the revision sounds more complete. A restatement is not an explanation.
*If you missed this, log it as: **Rhetoric (revision / focus)***
10. **Correct answer: G.** Organization decision. 'Write there' needs the notebook on the desk, which Sentence 1 introduces, and the general claim about variety must come before the examples (short entries, long entries) that illustrate it. Full rules in Lesson 7.
Watch out: Choosing H. By Sentence 3 the examples have already been given; a generalization placed after them has nothing left to set up.
*If you missed this, log it as: **Organization (sentence placement)***

11. **Correct answer: A.** Punctuation decision. The original lets each entry stand as its own sentence. A comma cannot introduce a list after a complete sentence, a semicolon needs a complete sentence on its right, and 'such as' never takes a colon. Full rules in Lesson 3.

Watch out: Choosing D because a colon can introduce examples. It can — but not after 'such as.'

*If you missed this, log it as: **Punctuation (end punctuation around quoted fragments)***

12. **Correct answer: F.** Rhetorical decision at the passage level. The essay traces the project from founding to expansion to its role in community memory. Full rules in Lesson 7.

Watch out: Choosing H because Ms. Reese is named throughout. Naming a person is not the same as focusing on that person.

*If you missed this, log it as: **Rhetoric (passage purpose)***

Lesson 1

The three-question passage map

Reading routine • central idea, support, structure

Purpose

Build the reading routine you will use on every ACT Reading passage. Before you look at the questions, you read for three things: the central idea, how the writer supports it, and how the passage is organized. The three-question map turns a passage from a stream of sentences into a structure you can navigate. Every later lesson in this Lesson Series assumes you are doing this first.

KEY POINT

Your comprehension should drive your answer choices. The answer choices should not drive your comprehension.

Build a short answer to each of the three map questions as you read. When the question set arrives, your map is what you check the choices against.

What this skill tests

Most ACT Reading questions can be solved from the passage if you have already understood what the passage is about, how the writer is supporting that, and how the parts fit together. Some questions ask the map questions directly — main idea, paragraph function, overall structure. Other questions ask about a detail or an inference; for those, the map tells you which part of the passage to anchor in. Without the map, every question becomes a fresh search.

The reading routine for this skill

Step	What you do
1 • Read the passage with the three questions in mind	Build a one-line answer for central idea, a quick mental tag for how the writer is supporting it, and a paragraph-by-paragraph sense of structure.
2 • Fill in the passage map	After you finish reading, put the three answers in your own words. They do not need to be polished — they need to be defensible from the passage.
3 • Read the question and anchor it in the map	Decide whether the question is about the central idea, about support, about structure, or about a specific line or detail. Then go to the right part of the passage.
4 • Check the choices against the passage, not against feeling	The right answer is the one the passage supports. Plausible-sounding choices that are not supported are wrong, even when they are true in the world.

The three-question passage map

Use the same simple workspace under every passage in this Lesson Series.

Central idea	How the writer supports it	Structure — what each paragraph is doing
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Worked model

Read the passage. Build the three-question map in your head as you read. Then work the item below. The reasoning is shown after.

WORKED MODEL

PASSAGE A • natural science

Watching the pebble

In the spring of her second year of graduate school, marine biologist Reyna Castellanos noticed something her tank logs could not explain. A small Pacific striped octopus — barely the size of her thumb — kept moving the same red pebble each

evening from one corner of its enclosure to the other. The first night, she assumed the pebble had drifted. The second night, she watched the octopus retrieve it from a feeding tube and carry it across the tank in a deliberate, looping path. By the fourth night, she had started filming.

For most of the past century, octopuses were treated by biologists as solitary, short-lived predators whose intelligence, if it could be called that, was confined to ambush and escape. A scattering of mid-twentieth-century experiments suggested they could distinguish shapes and unscrew jars, but those results were treated more as curiosities than as openings. The animals lived in glass tanks the way machines live in showrooms: contained, observable, and assumed to be doing nothing of interest when no one was watching.

That assumption is now harder to defend. Over the last fifteen years, laboratories on three continents have begun documenting behaviors in octopuses — tool use, individual recognition, problem-solving across multiple trials — that look less like reflex and more like deliberation. The footage from Castellanos's tank is part of that record. In the clearest of her clips, the octopus pauses with the pebble held in one arm, appears to consider two possible routes around a piece of coral, and then takes the longer path, which avoids a section of gravel that had been disturbed earlier in the day. The next night, the disturbed gravel had settled, and the octopus took the shorter route.

What is striking about these observations, the biologists who study them say, is not any single behavior. It is the accumulation. An octopus that recognizes a particular handler is interesting. An octopus that recognizes a particular handler, hides from one, accepts food from another, and adjusts its response based on the day of the week is harder to fold back into the old category of "instinct." When the cases stop being isolated, the language has to change.

The change has been slow. Funding for cephalopod cognition research remained small for decades, in part because the animals themselves were difficult to keep alive in captivity and in part because the field had nothing equivalent to the long pedigree of primate or rodent studies. Even now, most published work is observational rather than experimental, and the experiments that do exist are limited by the lifespans of the animals; many octopus species live only one or two years. A study that takes five years to design and run cannot be repeated three times on the same individual.

Castellanos is cautious about her own footage. The pebble might be a fixation; the chosen path might be coincidence; the looping route might be nothing more than a

habit the animal happens to have. The point of the footage, she says, is not that it proves something. The point is that it is the kind of behavior that, twenty years ago, no one would have bothered to film.

That shift — what counts as worth filming — is itself a record of the field. For most of the century, the question was whether an octopus could do a particular task. The new question is whether a particular task is a good way to ask what an octopus can do. Some researchers have begun designing enclosures that resemble the animals' natural environments more closely, on the theory that an octopus given a glass box may simply have nothing interesting to do. Others are revisiting old footage, looking for behaviors that earlier observers missed because they were not yet ready to see them.

Three-question passage map • fill in before the questions

Central idea What is the passage about, and what is the writer's point?	
How the writer supports it Evidence, examples, moves	
Structure What each paragraph is doing	

WORKED MODEL • QUESTION 1 • CENTRAL IDEA

Which of the following best describes the central focus of the passage?

- A.** A description of the daily routines of laboratory octopuses kept in captivity.
- B.** An argument that earlier biologists were wrong to ignore cephalopod intelligence.
- C.** An account of how biologists' assumptions about octopus behavior have shifted, framed around one researcher's footage.
- D.** A defense of Reyna Castellanos's research methods against criticism from other biologists.

WORKED THINKING

Start with the passage map. Central idea: biologists used to treat octopuses as simple predators; that view is shifting, and Castellanos's footage is part of the shift. **Support:** a vivid opening anecdote, a paragraph on the old view, examples from newer labs, a paragraph on why the change has been slow, Castellanos's own caution, and a closing reframing. **Structure:** anecdote → old view → new evidence → reasons the shift has been slow → the researcher's caution → reframing the field's question. Now check the choices against the map. A describes a detail of the first paragraph, not the whole passage. B overstates: the passage describes a shift, not a verdict on earlier biologists. D invents a controversy the passage does not describe. C captures the actual arc: the assumptions, the shift, and the framing role of Castellanos's footage.

Worked answer: C

Guided practice

Three items on the same passage. Use the small workspace under each question. The answer key with brief commentary is at the end of the lesson.

GUIDED • ITEM 2

2. The reference to "laboratories on three continents" in paragraph 3 is included primarily to:

- F. show that Castellanos's observation is part of a broader pattern, not an isolated case.
- G. emphasize that octopus research is now better funded than other animal cognition research.
- H. explain why early octopus experiments were treated as curiosities.
- J. introduce a contrast between American and European approaches to cephalopod research.

Answer + why

GUIDED • ITEM 3

3. The main function of paragraph 5 (beginning "The change has been slow") is to:
- A. explain why the shift in thinking the passage describes has happened gradually rather than all at once.
 - B. shift the focus from octopus behavior to the careers of individual researchers.
 - C. introduce a new argument that contradicts the central claim of the passage.
 - D. summarize the findings of the most important studies in the field.

Answer + why	
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GUIDED • ITEM 4

4. Which of the following best describes the structure of the passage as a whole?
- F. A chronological account of Castellanos's career as a marine biologist.
 - G. A single anecdote followed by an explanation of what makes the anecdote significant.
 - H. A comparison of three different research labs' findings about octopus cognition.
 - J. A defense of a controversial claim, followed by responses to common objections.

Answer + why	
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Independent practice

Four items on the same passage. Use your map, then check each choice against the passage. The answer key is at the end of the lesson.

INDEPENDENT • ITEM 5

5. Based on the passage, the writer most likely includes Castellanos's own caution about her footage (paragraph 6) in order to:
- A. suggest that the conclusions drawn from the footage are unreliable.
 - B. show that even a researcher inside the new field treats individual observations carefully.
 - C. cast doubt on whether octopuses are capable of deliberate behavior at all.
 - D. defend Castellanos against accusations of over-interpretation.

Answer + why	
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INDEPENDENT • ITEM 6

6. The passage states that octopuses were once treated by biologists as:
- F. animals whose intelligence could be measured only through elaborate experiments.
 - G. social creatures that lived in groups but rarely interacted with humans.
 - H. solitary, short-lived predators with intelligence limited to ambush and escape.
 - J. organisms too rare in nature to study under laboratory conditions.

Answer + why**INDEPENDENT • ITEM 7**

7. According to the passage, what makes the recent behavioral observations harder to dismiss as instinct than earlier observations?
- A. The behaviors are now filmed with higher-quality equipment.
 - B. The behaviors are now being reported by better-funded laboratories.
 - C. The behaviors do not occur in isolation but accumulate across many cases.
 - D. The behaviors involve tool use, which earlier studies did not document.

Answer + why**INDEPENDENT • ITEM 8**

8. The last paragraph's distinction between "whether an octopus could do a particular task" and "whether a particular task is a good way to ask what an octopus can do" is best understood as a way to:
- F. explain why most cephalopod research is still observational rather than experimental.
 - G. introduce a critique of the new enclosure designs the paragraph mentions.
 - H. argue that earlier biologists were uncurious about octopus cognition.
 - J. capture the change in research question that the passage as a whole has been describing.

Answer + why

Debrief

Before you check the answer key, look back at your map and your per-question workspace. For each item, ask whether your answer was anchored in a specific phrase or paragraph, or whether you chose by feel. If a choice looked plausible but the support was thin, write that next to the item. That is the kind of note that becomes a Learning Log entry.

LEARNING LOG STEP

For every missed, guessed, or uncertain question, record the lesson, the question number, the question type, what you chose, what the passage actually supported, what you misunderstood, and the next practice move in the Test Prep Learning Log. Lesson 1 question types • central idea • support • structure (paragraph function or overall) • inference anchored in the text • detail.

WHAT TO LOG IF MISSED — Log a missed, guessed, or uncertain item by the question type it was testing, not by the topic of the passage. The lesson skill is the three-question passage map. Lessons 2 through 7 then build the specific question types in turn.

Answer explanations

2. **Correct answer: F.** The phrase appears at the moment the passage pivots from one tank to a wider record; the next sentence is "The footage from Castellanos's tank is part of that record."
Watch out: Choosing G. The passage says the change has been slow and funding remained small; the line is about scope, not funding.
*If you missed this, log it as: **Support/detail***
3. **Correct answer: A.** The paragraph explicitly lists reasons the change has been slow: small funding, animal lifespan, observational rather than experimental work. That is its function.
Watch out: Choosing C. The paragraph explains pace, not opposition.
*If you missed this, log it as: **Structure • paragraph function***
4. **Correct answer: G.** The passage opens with a vivid lab moment and uses the rest of the piece to set that moment in context. The arc is anecdote → context → reframing.
Watch out: Choosing F. Castellanos's career is not traced; only one observation is used.
*If you missed this, log it as: **Structure • whole passage***

5. **Correct answer: B.** The next sentence — "The point of the footage, she says, is not that it proves something" — makes the purpose explicit: a researcher inside the field treating individual cases carefully.

Watch out: Choosing A or C. Both overshoot the caution into doubt the passage does not raise.

*If you missed this, log it as: **Inference anchored in the text***

6. **Correct answer: H.** Paragraph 2: "octopuses were treated by biologists as solitary, short-lived predators whose intelligence ... was confined to ambush and escape." Direct match.

Watch out: Choosing F or J. Both are plausible-sounding but unsupported by the passage's actual wording.

*If you missed this, log it as: **Detail***

7. **Correct answer: C.** Paragraph 4: "It is the accumulation ... When the cases stop being isolated, the language has to change." C is the direct claim.

Watch out: Choosing D. Tool use is named, but the paragraph's argument is about accumulation, not any single behavior.

*If you missed this, log it as: **Support/detail***

8. **Correct answer: J.** The final paragraph reframes the field's question. That reframing is the passage's central move; the closing line names it directly.

Watch out: Choosing F. Observational vs. experimental is a detail from paragraph 5, not the work the closing distinction is doing.

*If you missed this, log it as: **Structure and central idea together***