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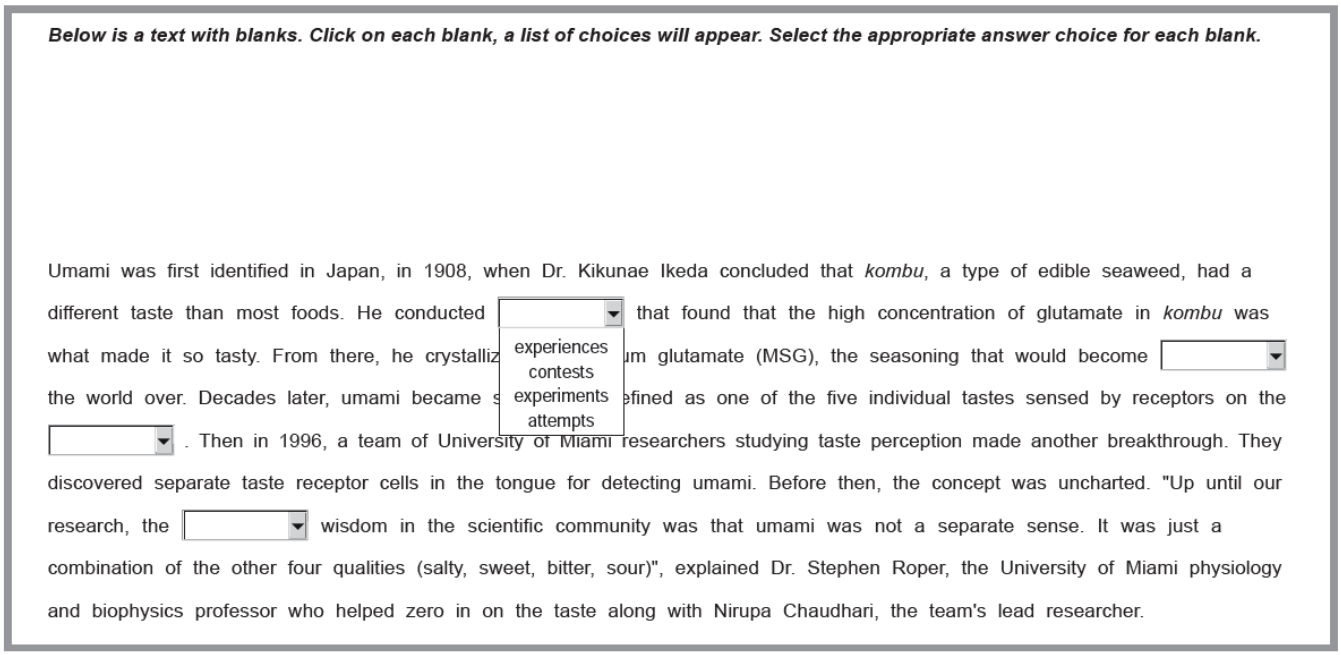
PTE Academic Lesson Plan Ideas: Test Taking Strategies

Lesson 12 – Reading & writing: Fill in the blanks

Time allocated: 50 minutes

Step 1: Introduce the Item Type

This item type integrates reading and writing skills, and requires test takers to use contextual and grammatical cues to complete a reading text by identifying a single correct answer for each blank.



Step 2: Present the Item Type Strategies

Strategy 1

Use your knowledge of collocation and grammar to help you guess or predict the word or type of word that best fits each blank.

Strategy 2

Eliminate options that you know are not appropriate in terms of meaning or the grammatical context.

Strategy 3

Read each sentence in your head several times, inserting each of the remaining possible options one-by-one. This will help you activate your knowledge of collocation. Listen to the way the sentence sounds and choose the option that sounds best in the sentence.

Step 3: Explain and Practice Each Strategy

Strategy 1

Explain to your students that activating and using their knowledge of collocation and grammar will help them guess or predict the word or part of speech that best fits each blank.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities in pairs:

- Give pairs a copy of Item 1 without the answer choices.
- Ask students to skim the text quickly first to get an idea of the gist.
- Have students work together to establish which part of speech is needed to complete each sentence and to brainstorm words that collocate with the words on either side of each blank (e.g., blank 1 needs a plural object, *tests, experiments*, etc. to collocate with *conduct*; blank 2 needs an adjective, *famous, accepted*, etc. to collocate with *around the world*; blank 3 needs a noun, *tongue* fits logically; blank 4 needs an adjective, *perceived*, *accepted*, etc. to collocate with *wisdom*).
- Have students share their responses and explain their thoughts.
- Display the suggested words for each blank for students to see.

Strategy 2

Tell your students that once they have made their own predictions, they should study the options and eliminate any words that they know are inappropriate in terms of meaning or the grammatical context. This will help them narrow down the choices and make it easier to select the correct option.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities in pairs:

- Give pairs the options for each blank in Item 1.
- Ask them to work together to establish which of the options can be eliminated in each case.
- Have students share their responses and give reasons for their choices.

Strategy 3

Tell your students that they should now read each sentence out loud to each other several times, inserting each of the remaining possible options one-by-one. This will help them activate their knowledge of collocations. Tell them to listen carefully to the way the sentence sounds and to choose the option that sounds best in the sentence. Remind them to also pay particular attention to the meanings of homophones and homonyms which may be confusing. Also remind students that although for this practice activity they are reading out loud, in the actual test they should say sentences to themselves in their heads.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities in pairs:

- Tell students to work together and read each sentence out loud to each other several times, each time inserting one of the remaining possible options.
- Remind students to listen carefully to the way the sentence sounds each time and to choose the option that sounds best in the sentence.
- Have students share their responses and give reasons for their choices.
- After they have done this, show the answers for Item 1.

Step 4: Respond to a (Reading & writing) Fill in the Blanks Item

Explain to your students that they will now respond to a test item simulating test conditions. Remind them of the three strategies covered in this lesson and ask them to apply these strategies.

Give out copies of Item 2.

Step 5: Provide Feedback

Ask your students if they were able to use the strategies. Which one was the most difficult to apply? Which one do they think was the most useful? Ask them to compare and evaluate each other's responses in pairs or groups.

After they have done this, show the answers for Item 2 and have students discuss why these answers are most appropriate and the other options are not.

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Item 1

Below is a text with blanks. Select the appropriate answer choice for each blank.

Umami was first identified in Japan, in 1908, when Dr. Kikunae Ikeda concluded that ***kombu***, a type of edible seaweed, had a different taste than most foods. He conducted (1) that found that the high concentration of glutamate in ***kombu*** was what made it so tasty. From there, he crystallized monosodium glutamate (MSG), the seasoning that would become (2) the world over. Decades later, umami became scientifically defined as one of the five individual tastes sensed by receptors on the (3) . Then in 1996, a team of University of Miami researchers studying taste perception made another breakthrough. They discovered separate taste receptor cells in the tongue for detecting umami. Before then, the concept was uncharted. "Up until our research, the (4) wisdom in the scientific community was that umami was not a separate sense. It was just a combination of the other four qualities (salty, sweet, bitter, sour)", explained Dr. Stephen Roper, the University of Miami physiology and biophysics professor who helped zero in on the taste along with Nirupa Chaudhari, the team's lead researcher.

(1)
- experiences
- contests
- experiments
- attempts

(2)
- spread
- exported
- exclusive
- popular

(3)
- fingers
- mouth
- tongue
- jaws

(4)
- predominate
- insignificant
- important
- erroneous

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Item 1: Answer Key

Umami was first identified in Japan, in 1908, when Dr. Kikunae Ikeda concluded that ***kombu***, a type of edible seaweed, had a different taste than most foods. He conducted (1) experiments that found that the high concentration of glutamate in ***kombu*** was what made it so tasty. From there, he crystallized monosodium glutamate (MSG), the seasoning that would become (2) popular the world over. Decades later, umami became scientifically defined as one of the five individual tastes sensed by receptors on the (3) tongue. Then in 1996, a team of University of Miami researchers studying taste perception made another breakthrough. They discovered separate taste receptor cells in the tongue for detecting umami. Before then, the concept was uncharted. "Up until our research, the (4) predominate wisdom in the scientific community was that umami was not a separate sense. It was just a combination of the other four qualities (salty, sweet, bitter, sour)", explained Dr. Stephen Roper, the University of Miami physiology and biophysics professor who helped zero in on the taste along with Nirupa Chaudhari, the team's lead researcher.

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Item 2

Below is a text with blanks. Select the appropriate answer choice for each blank.

Global climate change is the greatest environmental challenge we face. We have at most a few decades to make the necessary investments to prevent the most serious impacts of climate change. Future generations will judge us based on the investments we are considering now. In its February 2007 report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that global emissions must peak no later than 2015 if we are to hold average global temperature increases to 2.4°C (4.3°F) or less. Moving to an emissions pathway that will hold temperature increases to a minimum will require a (1) effort. There is no time to lose given the long lag in research and development cycles, and energy-intensive (2) and product turnover. Fundamentally, (3) the world's energy system is unlikely to occur within this timeframe. It is thus imperative to find means to reduce the footprint of the existing system - most particularly, of coal, which is the most greenhouse gas intensive of the fossil fuels driving climate change. It is in this context that Carbon Dioxide Capture and Sequestration (CCS) becomes one of the most critical technologies in the menu of choices. It is the only option that provides a potentially near-term solution to rapidly expanding coal use here, in China and around the world. CCS must play the critical role of (4) growth in emissions from coal until other alternatives are ready.

(1)
- colossal
- nominal
- negligible
- customary

(2)
- agriculture
- architecture
- infrastructure
- conjecture

(3)
- altering
- revoking
- comparing
- analyzing

(4)
- sustaining
- curbing
- dividing
- increasing

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Item 2: Answer Key

Global climate change is the greatest environmental challenge we face. We have at most a few decades to make the necessary investments to prevent the most serious impacts of climate change. Future generations will judge us based on the investments we are considering now. In its February 2007 report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that global emissions must peak no later than 2015 if we are to hold average global temperature increases to 2.4°C (4.3°F) or less. Moving to an emissions pathway that will hold temperature increases to a minimum will require a (1) colossal effort. There is no time to lose given the long lag in research and development cycles, and energy-intensive (2) infrastructure and product turnover.

Fundamentally, (3) altering the world's energy system is unlikely to occur within this timeframe. It is thus imperative to find means to reduce the footprint of the existing system - most particularly, of coal, which is the most greenhouse gas intensive of the fossil fuels driving climate change. It is in this context that Carbon Dioxide Capture and Sequestration (CCS) becomes one of the most critical technologies in the menu of choices. It is the only option that provides a potentially near-term solution to rapidly expanding coal use here, in China and around the world. CCS must play the critical role of (4) curbing growth in emissions from coal until other alternatives are ready.