

phrase in a given context offers just the right flavor is something that good authors do all the time; recognizing the effects of word choice on the audience is something, in turn, that good readers must be able to do.



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Taking context into consideration is critical when answering questions about the effective use of language. You may, for instance, need to consider the overall tone or style of the passage or the writer's purpose when choosing your answer.

Making Effective Use of Language (Writing and Language Test)

While the Reading Test asks you to interpret how authors use words and phrases, the Writing and Language Test calls on you to make those kinds of decisions yourself as you revise passages. Questions about effective language use are varied. Some questions may present you with language that's wordy or redundant, and you'll have to choose a more concise way of conveying the same idea without changing the meaning. Other questions may ask you to choose the most precise way to say something or the most appropriate way to express an idea in a given context. Other questions may have you pick out the word or phrase that does the best job of maintaining the style or tone of the passage, or of continuing a particular linguistic pattern, such as repetition for emphasis or cohesion. In these cases, you may have to replace informal language with a more formal expression (or vice versa, depending on the style and tone of the overall passage) or decide which option most effectively maintains a pattern. Still other questions may require you to combine whole sentences or parts of different sentences to make choppy or repetitive sentences flow more smoothly or to accomplish some other goal (such as placing emphasis on an action rather than on the person performing the action).

It's worth noting here that these language use questions aren't directly about grammar, usage, or mechanics. Instead, these questions try to get you to think about how language should be used to accomplish particular writerly aims, such as being clearer, more precise, or more economical.

Chapter 4 Recap

The Words in Context subscore on the SAT is based on questions from both the Reading Test and the Writing and Language Test. These questions are intended to see whether you can determine word and phrase meanings in context and understand how authors use words and phrases to achieve specific purposes.

There are two types of questions on the **Reading Test** that address words in context.

1. **Interpreting words and phrases in context:** You'll be asked to decide on the precise meaning of particular words and phrases as they're used in context. This will typically involve considering various real-world meanings of words and phrases and picking the



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Since the words and phrases you'll be tested on are set within extended contexts, you'll have clues to help you determine the correct meaning. Don't be discouraged if you're unfamiliar with some of the tested words or phrases.

one that most closely matches how the word or phrase is used in the passage. These sorts of questions accompany most passages on the test.

- 2. Analyzing word choice rhetorically:** You'll be asked to think about how an author's choice of words and phrases helps shape meaning, tone, and style. These sorts of questions accompany select passages on the test.

You'll find a single main type of question (and several subtypes) on the **Writing and Language Test** that addresses words in context. In questions about effective language use, you'll be asked to revise passages to improve the precision and concision of expression; ensure that style and tone are appropriate; and combine sentences or parts of sentences to enhance flow or to achieve some other purpose (such as emphasis). These sorts of questions accompany every passage on the test.

While the specific format of Words in Context questions varies within and between the Reading Test and the Writing and Language Test, all of the questions ask you to consider the same kinds of choices about language that skilled authors routinely make. As you approach each question, you'll want to examine the nuances of word and phrase meanings as well as the impact that particular words, phrases, and language patterns are likely to have on the reader.



REMEMBER

Analyzing word choice is also an integral part of your task on the Essay.

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