COMPREHENSION PASSAGES

GOALS

Learners will be able to-

1. To enable learners to read and understand given texts of varied lengths from a wide range of subjects like arts, politics, economics, history, geography etc.

2. To apply the skills and strategies of a successful reader.

3. Read the given information critically.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Skim (reading the text quickly) to get a general idea/meaning/ theme of text.

- ◆ Scan (look at all parts of carefully) for details.

- ◆ Develop reading speed.

- ◆ Build vocabulary.

- ◆ Infer meaning of unfamiliar words from the context.

- ◆ Differentiate between main ideas and specific details.

- ◆ Be able to understand the difference between facts and opinions.

- ◆ Identify author's tone and purpose.

- ◆ Develop ability to infer, predict, analyse, and evaluate content in the text.

STRATEGIES FOR ATTEMPTING COMPREHENSION PASSAGES

Strategies for attempting comprehension passages-

1. Read the passage quickly to understand the main idea.

2. It is advisable to underline the main points, identifying key words and statements, while reading the passage.

3. Scan through all the questions.

4. It is beneficial to underline the detail/ information asked for in the questions to avoid misinterpretation of the question.

Example: What did Rohan seek while climbing the mountain?

Underlining brings clarity ……the answer should be based on the object/ emotion/ state of mind sought by Rohan and not difficulties faced while ascending the mountain etc.

5. Reread the passage, marking the specific information related to questions.

6. There is often ambiguity in the answers provided in multiple-choice questions. Many a time, students feel that two answers are appropriate in the context. However, there will always be fine differences. One answer may be incomplete compared to another, or the inference may be varied. Therefore, re-read and choose carefully.

Example-refer to sample passage 3, Q1.

Q1. We lose privacy on social networking sites because

   a)   We put many photographs on the site.

   b)   Sites require us to share a great deal of our personal information.

   c)   We choose wrong friends.

   d)   Youngsters are generally careless.

   In the question all options seem to be valid. However, when you go through the passage again, you realize that (b) is the correct answer in context of the passage.
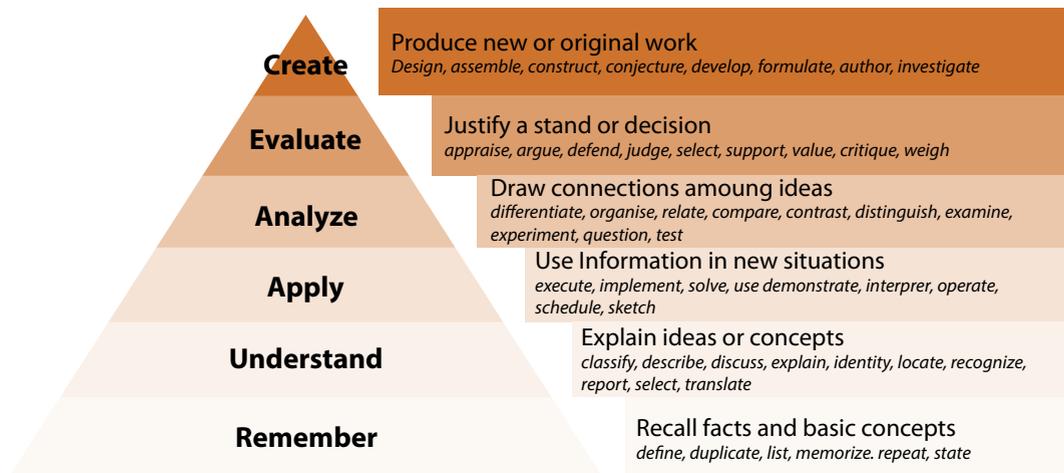
7. Sometimes readers feel none of the given choices answer the question. Again, it is reiterated that reread and choose carefully.

8. Finally, review before you move on to the next question.

BLOOMS TAXONOMY

Blooms taxonomy gives the students an idea of higher and lower order thinking skills. The students will be tested on all areas depicted in the pyramid.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Create — Produce new or original work
Design, assemble, construct, conjecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate

Evaluate — Justify a stand or decision
appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique, weigh

Analyze — Draw connections among ideas
differentiate, organise, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test

Apply — Use Information in new situations
execute, implement, solve, use demonstrate, interprer, operate, schedule, sketch

Understand — Explain ideas or concepts
classify, describe, discuss, explain, identity, locate, recognize, report, select, translate

Remember — Recall facts and basic concepts
define, duplicate, list, memorize. repeat, state

Source: Vanderbilt University Centre for Teaching

Types of Questions

A reading comprehension passage attempts to test a student's reading skills, and ability to recall, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate and create content based on the passage. A variety of questions are framed to cover the above listed areas of Bloom's taxonomy. The following are examples of the types of questions that are based on the passage.

•   Asking specific details from the content/body of the passage - **remember and understand**

•   Determining the meaning of words/phrases/idioms used in the passage (from the context) - **understand and apply**

•   Drawing inferences and conclusions - **analyze, evaluate**

•   Identifying the tone of the speaker /author/ passage - **evaluate**

•   Main idea/theme of the passage - **understand, apply, evaluate**

•   Suitable title for the passage - **understand, evaluate, create**

How to Improve Reading Speed

Reading any text is often a challenge for many people, especially if it is not your mother tongue. Several techniques can be applied to improve reading speed.

1.   Read early in the day/or whenever you are the most receptive, and in a quiet environment.

2.   Do not read aloud. It hampers speed.

3.   Sometimes it is beneficial to cover the text you have already gone through to prevent your eyes from straying to the previously read content.

4.   Set a speed faster than you can understand. You may not comprehend the material at first, but stay focused on the text, and keep your eyes moving. Set yourself a time limit. Gradually your speed will increase and you will begin to comprehend the text.

5.   If you want to get a gist or general idea of a text, a newspaper/ magazine article, or prepare for an examination, skimming through the subject matter helps. However, reading the text in detail is the only way to get a complete understanding of any written material.

6.   Read the main and sub heading, tabular material and table of contents to get an idea of the information contained in the text. An idea of the content increases reading speed.

7.   It helps in reading the beginning and end of any text, article, paragraph etc. Reading the first and last paragraphs and lines gives an idea of the content. If you are familiar with it, reading becomes faster.

8.   Underline/ highlight important words in the text. It helps in picking out the important aspects and mark crucial areas of the subject. It also helps build vocabulary.

9.   It is a good strategy to practice often and time your reading speed. Time yourself each time you speed read. Try to improve your speed each time. You can try the following method.

   •   Get an idea of number of words in a page by counting the words in a line and thereafter multiply it with number of lines in the page.

   •   Put a time limit for yourself, say half an hour and check how much text you can cover in that time.

   •   Use simple mathematics of multiplying the number of pages/ words by the time taken to read them to assess your reading speed per minute.

10. You have to set yourself a target of the time and pace which you want to achieve in improving your reading speed. Adopting the strategies mentioned above will definitely help you improve. Sometimes people even double their speed in a few weeks. Self motivation and regular practice is the best way to attain your goal.

The varied speed at which people read are classified as follows:

- *An individual aged 12 or above is supposed to read 200–250 words per minute.*

- *College students generally read at 300wpm.*

- *If you're reading 450 wpm, you will be skimming the text for main points. At this speed, you should be able to understand almost the complete text.*

- *A reading speed of 600–700 wpm, is used for looking for some specific information in a text.. Most people can learn to read at this speed with about 75% of their normal comprehension.*

- *At 1,000 wpm and above, you're reaching the level of competitive speed readers. This usually requires extreme techniques that skip over most of the text. Most people can't remember much at this speed.*

Tips

- Take a break after about half an hour. This helps to remain focused and reduce eye strain.

- Practicing in a place that is quiet with no distractions and which is well-lit and ventilated is recommended.

- Don't change the text you are reading too often. It makes comprehension and maintaining reading speed difficult.

- Make sure your speed reading is not hampering your understanding of the text.

- A fresh mind and ability to concentrate is a pre requisite for reading important texts. Some people function well in the morning, while others think better in the afternoon or evening.

Vocabulary Enhancement

Learning new vocabulary is never easy. Here are some suggestions to enhance your word power.

1. **Reading extensively** whether it is magazines, newspapers, novels or any other texts **exposes you to a wide range of vocabulary.**

2. **Use a dictionary or thesaurus to look up meanings of new words.** You will also come to know which is the most appropriate in the context.

3. Read **material that interests** you. It strengthens word associations and meanings. For example, reading engaging stories helps **learners build emotional and sensory contexts around new vocabulary.**

4. **Learn groups of words that come together.** E.g. It is easier to memorize and recall 'flock of sheep' than just 'flock'.

5. It is impossible to memorize all the words we come across. One way to enhance vocabulary to put **the words you wish to memorize where you will see them frequently** - on a wall, computer (make it your screen saver), on desktop, notebook- anything you will view frequently.

6. A successful way of building vocabulary is to **make associations with the word which you will always recall,** for example 'gigantic', linking it to the huge God statue in your vicinity will always help remember the meaning.

7.   Many experts advice that to build vocabulary, **'learn a dedicated memorization strategy that uses some form of mnemonics (a system such as pattern of letters, ideas, or associations which assists in remembering something').**

8.   Lastly **dedication and perseverance,** of course, play a key role in the effort to build a large, comprehensive vocabulary.

Sample Passages

Passages of differing lengths and a range of topics have been included to expose students to varied types of content.

Passage 1

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow:

What is spirituality? It is nothing but living life sensibly, striking a balance with your material life, neglecting neither. We have around us the immediate reality, the world. Living sensibly, and perfectly in this world is important and is our immediate goal. We have to consider both material and spiritual parts. We have to burn karmas by meditation and gain freedom from all types of bondages. We have to gain freedom at several levels before achieving the final freedom, Moksha, the ultimate goal. We have to emote and think without any past influences; this is possible by meditation. Meditation is a must even to live our material life sensibly. But mere meditation won't make us spiritual. We have to allow the influence of meditation into our daily life.

So from now, let us step complaining, grumbling and feeling disgusted with the systems we have. Let us begin channeling Light to these systems and the people, instead. Of course, we complain about others. Sometimes by mistake, we also grumble about and condemn ourselves.

We know, when we channel light, we can bring changes and completely prevent destruction or minimize it, at least. Let us change ourselves. Then the systems change automatically. If you change, people around you also change. So channel light daily for at least seven minutes- Heal yourself and the world.

(Source: The Speaking Tree)

Q1. Give a suitable title to the passage.

Q2. Express the main idea of the passage in two to three sentences.

Passage 2

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow:

Three years ago, technophobic Sushmi Ghosh refused to exchange her feature phone for a smart phone. But last month, the 45-years-old high schoolteacher ordered a front-loading washing machine through an e-retailer's app on her iPhone. "I was pleasantly surprised," she said, "It was not only delivered in a day but also installed immediately. I didn't have to walk to a shop in this heat. I saved some money too because I bought it during a sale." Online sales of large appliances have boomed in the past two years as e-retailers have addressed buyers' delivery and installation concerns. While they also offered discounts earlier, delivery took days and installation was another waiting game, with further uncertainty about warranty.

During its recently concluded sale, Amazon claimed in the first day it sold around half (20,000 units) of the average daily TV sales in India. "There has been a huge shift in the number of brands that want to do business with us," said Manish Tiwary, VP (category management), Amazon India.

Some manufacturers have even teamed up with e-retailers to offer TVs, refrigerators and washing machines with specific features. "This helps bring down prices," said Sandeep Karwa, head of large appliances at Flipkart. From being a negligible part of its business, the large appliances category has become one of the top three earners for Flipkart. It acquired Jeeves, a repair services and maintenance company, for providing after-sales services. At present, Flipkart offers one-day delivery on 72% of large appliances through 10 dedicated warehouse. "We are working on a pilot that will enable installation of 70% of our large appliances at the time of delivery," said Karwa. Exchange offers and financing options provided by e-retailers have also pushed sales. "During our last sale 35% of shoppers opted for no-interest EMIs," said Karwa.

Amazon has also created a home services arm to synchronise delivery and installation of products. Amazon's Tiwary said, "We created our group of technicians who will get the installation done according to the convenience of the customer. In smaller towns, this is a big help since many brands don't have a robust presence." Amazon has nine warehouses from which it can reach 80% of the country. Most manufacturers, however, are tight-lipped about online sales as e-retailers' discounts and freebies eat into the margins of their brick-and-mortar dealers. While a spokesperson for LG turned down an interview request for this story, Samsung India did not reply to an email.

Ajay Seth, director of sales and service at Panasonic India, said, "It's still early days for online. Customers want to have a look and feel of the product before buying. Most of our online sales consist of small appliances." Companies such as BPL, Vu and TCL, which follow an online-first model, are optimistic, though of favourable response from buyers.. Devita Saraf, founder of Vu Technologies, which sells 40% of all TVs sold on Flipkart, said, "When I started selling Vu televisions we did a business of Rs. 35 crore in 2013-14. After going online, we ended 2016-17 at Rs 500 crore."

Q1. Sushma Ghosh **says,** "I was pleasantly surprised." She was surprised

   a)   By the promptness of the service for the washing machine.

   b)   Because she managed to save money while buying the washing machine.

   c)   By the warranty offered for the washing machine.

   d)   By the quick delivery and instant installation of the washing machine.

Q2. Some manufacturers have even teamed up with e-retailers to

   a)   Give special discounts

   b)   Have special sale offers on large appliances like T.V.s with specific features

   c)   Get discounts from e retailers

   d)   To give discounts to e retailers

Q3. One of the top three earners of Flipkart is

   a)   Household goods

   b)   Clothes brands

   c)   Large appliances

   d)   Mobile phones

Q4. The two factors that are promoting sales of e retailers are

    a)   Exchange offers and easy financing options available.

    b)   Quick delivery and good products.

    c)   Ease of service and no disturbance of any kind.

    d)   Many options to choose from and ability to view products from home.

Q5. Brick and mortar stores are affected by e retailers

    a)   Promoting their sales

    b)   In no major way

    c)   By starting a price war

    d)   By eating into their profits

Passage 3

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow:

The Internet has changed our world. It has been defined as 'a world-wide broadcasting capability, a mechanism for information dissemination, and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location'. Instant communication on various social networking sites is an off shoot of the internet revolution.

Though these sites have numerous advantages in terms of connectivity and sharing information, and are increasingly becoming a part of everyday life of people; they are being misused by anti-social elements, terrorist organizations, governments, various institutions and the public at large. Twitter, instagram, snapchat, <u>blogs, whatsapp, virtual worlds, and specific social networking sites like Facebook</u> are an inseparable part of our lives in the modern world.

One of the biggest disadvantages is loss of privacy by individuals. Social networking sites ask for a great deal of personal information, and it is possible for people in all parts of the world to see that information. There are privacy settings for these sites, but many people are either unaware of them, or are careless about guarding their personal information. Besides, the information creates a "digital footprint" that cannot be easily erased. Many share inappropriate content and pictures on which can be misused by unscrupulous elements and cause irreparable damage to reputations.

There have been innumerable examples of sexual exploitation of young boys and girls on social media. Inappropriate photographs, messages, and private content that they shared on the site, is used to blackmail them. Numerous instances of pictures being morphed, and used to ruin reputations, have been reported. Sexual predators make fake profiles, befriend young people and take advantage of them. Celebrities and ordinary citizens are trolled maliciously on twitter if their opinions are disliked by a certain section of their followers. Explicit sexual threats are posted on their accounts.

Cyber bullying has become a common phenomenon on social networks. All most all teenagers admit to being a target of such bullying at least once in their lives. People are abused, reviled and mercilessly teased. Being malicious, unkind and cruel is fun for some people. Others use the medium to send an intimidating message, start a nasty rumor, or upload embarrassing photos. It's possible to be completely anonymous as well, so there is less chance of getting caught. Such bullying causes lasting psychological damage to the victims. Many have been known to have taken the extreme step of committing suicide.

Another problem that has been highlighted by psychiatrists is 'internet addiction disorder'. Many people literally live out their lives on social media. Every event and happening has to be shared on Facebook. Their lives revolve around the number of likes and comments they get on their posts. Unfortunately, many of these comments are insincere and fake, thus giving the individual incorrect perception of himself / herself. Moreover, this addiction consumes a lot of time which would be otherwise productively used for the benefit of the body and mind.

Contrarily, interacting on internet is also known to have caused a loss of social skills. Many people feel comfortable chatting with a person online than in engaging in a face to face verbal conversation. More importantly, you can do all kinds of things you could never do in real life, like giving hugs and kisses to everyone, which you would rarely do in real life. And you can give yourself a completely unique identity. Sometimes people start to prefer their fake online lives to their actual lives, and this is when social networking sites start to negatively affect social skills.

Another issue gaining ground is spreading of fake news on the internet. Enormous amount of information on social, political, economic, health related information is available on various sites. There are serious social ramifications of circulation of such false information. The government is making attempts to bring in laws to control this phenomenon.

In conclusion, the advice is that, like everything else, use social media in moderation and with wisdom.

Q1. We lose privacy on social networking sites because

a) We put many photographs on the site.

b) Sites require us to share a great deal of our personal information.

c) We choose wrong friends.

d) Youngsters are generally careless.

Q2. Cyber bullying is common because

a) There are many bullies everywhere.

b) People are mean and unkind.

c) It's very easy to "hack" into another person's profile.

d) It is quick and easy to post nasty comments anonymously on social media sites.

Q3. What is the negative influence of 'social networking' in the context of the passage

a) It takes away our identity.

b) We do not make many friends.

c) We network with friends and colleagues easily and frequently.

d) It can lead to loss of social skills.

Q4. Which of the following is not a byproduct of social networking (in the passage)?

a) Sexual predatory

b) Damaging of social skills

c) Ability to make many friends

d) Waste of great deal of time

Q5. Which of the following words is most similar to **'intimidating'** as used in the passage

    a)   To get intimate with someone

    b)   To frighten or threaten someone

    c)   To become personal

    d)   To be too friendly

ANSWER KEY

Passage 1

1.   Modern Day Spirituality/Spirituality Redefined/ Balance between Spiritual and Material World. (any other suitable title)

2.   Spirituality is living life sensibly and striking a balance with the material world. Meditation is an important aspect of this balancing technique

Passage 2   Q1. d.   Q2. b.   Q3. c   Q4. a.   Q5. d

Passage 3   Q1. b.   Q2. d.   Q 3. d   Q4. c   Q5. b

PASSAGES FOR PRACTICE

Passage 1

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow:

Automation and Artificial Intelligence

Automation and artificial intelligence are the buzz words which have created excitement and commotion in the industry and economy. AI is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. These processes include learning (the machines acquire knowledge of rules for using the information), reasoning (using the rules to reach approximate or definite conclusions), and self-correction.

Scientific and technological advancements have lead to the invention of sophisticated machines, robots and software which surpass humans in physical and cognitive functions. This means that there is increased profitability which leads to economic growth. However, the downside is loss of traditional jobs and increasing unemployment in varied sectors of the industry which has a ripple effect on, and serious implications for the society.

As governments, organizations and workforce all over the world grapple with this phenomenon, one recalls the words of the U.S. president, Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964. He had said at that time, "If we understand it, if we plan for it, if we apply it well, automation will not be a job destroyer or have a family displaced. Instead, it can remove dullness from the work of man and provide him with more than man has ever had before." It also brings to fore the words of Isaac Asimov, who had said that, 'there is no way but onwards', in relation to scientific inventions impacting human lives.

The McKinsey Global Institute has published a report on automation and its potential effects on productivity. According to them, activities that involve data collection, data processing, and physical work in factories in sectors such as manufacturing, food services, transportation and warehousing, and retail will be the most affected.

On one hand, AI and automation will open new avenues for individuals, certain sections of the industry and the economy, but on the other hand, they will also lead to loss of jobs of millions across the world, creating an unhappy, dissatisfied and disgruntled population. It will also mean more money allocation by the state for social welfare. Thus, the need of the hour is to have strategies and policies that could increase the benefits of AI and diminish its negative impact.

Oscar Salazar, who built the app for a startup idea that we now call Uber, says he thought very little about how the application would impact society, and the large number of drivers who would lose a source of income. "We are all responsible," he said at the Milken Global Conference in Los Angeles. "We are adding technology to a society without thinking about the consequences. I think government, industry and society need to work more together, because it is going to get crazier and crazier." According to him, the technology companies who create AI, must not only participate in the discussions on the effects of the automation, but also take responsibility for them.

It is certain that AI-driven automation will influence and change the economy over the coming years and decades. The challenge for all stake holders and policymakers will be to update, strengthen, and adapt policies to respond to the economic effects of AI. The solution, it seems, lies in identifying skills required in the job market in the future; re-skilling and retooling workers for the new job scenario; revamping education for jobs of the future; and also support and develop AI for its many benefits.

Though no one can be certain how much and how far the human race will benefit from AI, or what drawbacks and disruptions people across the globe will face because of it, the need to be prepared for its impact on an individual, community, national and international level is vital and necessary in the future.

Q1. What is 'artificial intelligence'?

    a) Intelligence feigned by some humans.

    b) Intelligence exhibited by machines and software.

    c) Intelligence which is based on falsehood.

    d) Inappropriate intelligence.

Q2. Oscar Salazer says, 'We are all responsible'. For what does he hold us responsible?

    a) For creating new jobs in the industry.

    b) For developing new software for industry.

    c) For creating technology leading to loss of jobs.

    d) For creating new start ups.

Q3. The way forward for the tech community is

    a) To develop more software.

    b) To create an environment in which employees feel comfortable.

    c) To participate in discussions.

    d) To train the existing workforce for tech jobs of the future.

Q4. Which is the closest meaning of a 'startup' in the context?

    a)   To start something new.

    b)   An insolent person.

    c)   A young company that is just beginning to develop.

    d)   Fresh and modern.

Q5. Isaac Asimov says, 'There is no way but onwards.' He means that

    a)   We have to move forward quickly.

    b)   Science and technology are bringing rapid changes in our lives.

    c)   Further development in science and technology will find solutions to problems created by new inventions.

    d)   Moving on with life is the only option available to us in the current scenario.

Passage 2

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow:

'The difference between technology and slavery is the slaves are fully aware that they are not free'
Nassim Nicholas Taleb

How is technology impacting our lives? Many research studies are seeking answers to this question and coming up with data and information that is worrisome. As the human race increasingly depends on devices for work and leisure, technology invades every aspect of our lives. We have appliances in our kitchens and homes, machines and computers in offices, and of course, and innumerable gadgets without which people feel lost and incomplete.

In fact, we now try to measure every aspect of our lives with gadgets and gizmos available in the market. These health devices can track routine activities like sleep, exercise, diet, heartbeat, breathing rate, steps taken, water intake and every conceivable aspect of life. Health and fitness is measured by a smart watch, fitness band and other wearable apps available in the market. Though many of these apps are truly useful to measure health parameters like blood pressure, heart rate, etcetera for the ailing; they have begun to dominate the lives of people for whom it becomes their personal health information guru. If the health parameters do not match the desired outcome of the application they are using, it causes anxiety and stress. Many health freaks end up with *obsessive compulsive disorders.*

Several psychiatrists disapprove of our dependence on gadgets to assess our health. They refer to it as the over monitoring syndrome. Instead of listening to our own bodies, which are best judges of our physical and mental health, we look at the numbers on the gadget to tell us whether we had a good workout or sufficient and restful sleep at night. Since every human being is different, can an app accurately match and measure the parameters of each individual using it? Another downside is that instead of enjoying the simple health benefits and pleasure of a sport/ workout, the completion of the target becomes the focal point of the exercise.

The advice given by medical practitioners is that a healthy life is judged by your physical, mental and social wellbeing and not machines of any kind. So use gadgets judiciously and do not let them dictate your life.

Q1. Health devices are useful for

a)   checking our moods.

b)   keeping fit and happy.

c)   keeping a track of everyday activities like exercise, sleep etc.

d)   monitoring work and leisure activities.

Q2. Medical practitioners' advice is that we should measure health by

a)   physical fitness

b)   mental fitness

c)   social wellbeing

d)   all of the above.

Q.3. The drawbacks of health devices are

a)   they are too bulky.

b)   they are very costly.

c)   they cause pressure and anxiety in users.

d)   they are a cause of too much distraction.

Q4. We should assess our health by

a)   using health gadgets which measure all our parameters.

b)   talking to a doctor.

c)   listening to our own body.

d)   asking family and health experts.

Q5. Find words in the passage which are similar in meaning to the ones given below

a)   Dimensions

b)   Supervising or overseeing

Passage 3

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow:

Studies by the Bengaluru-based Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana (S-VYASA) analysed the changes that take place in the body during Om meditation. The study found "small but statistically significant" reduction in hear-rate during Om meditation. This, according to the researchers, suggests a deep psycho physiological relaxation, which in turn increases alertness. The study also showed decrease in blood flow in the skin, which, too, is indicative of improved alertness.

Some studies based on the analysis of electroencephalographic (EEG) recordings have shown that mindfulness meditation improves relaxation. One study that looked at performance in cancellation tasks (a psychometric test of visual perception and vigilance) in 70 healthy subjects-some of them meditated before the task-found that performance in such tasks improves after meditation.

Researchers have demonstrated that meditation leads to positive changes in midbrain-associated with vision, hearing, motor control sleep and alertness-whether one choose to meditate on a single syllable or a series of thoughts, Transcendental meditation, which uses a sound or mantra, improves perception of hearing. In the various studies done by-S-VYASA on sleep and meditation, it is said meditation in many ways is similar to a deep state of sleep. Bodily sensation is voluntarily reduced in both these conditions. However, unlike in sleep, the level of awareness is significantly higher in meditation.

Q1. Meditation benefits the

    a)   Body

    b)   Mind

    c)   Spirit

    d)   All of the above

Q2. Transcendental Meditation uses

    a)   Sleep mode

    b)   Sound or mantra

    c)   Music

    d)   Psycophysiological phenomena

Q3. Select the most suitable title for the passage

    a)   Mindful Meditation

    b)   Body of Meditation

    c)   The Science of Meditation

    d)   Best of Meditation

Q4. Select the option which is closest in meaning to 'vigilance' in the context

    a)   Keeping track of

    b)   Helpfulness

    c)   Perception

    d)   Attentiveness

Passage 4

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow:

Cerebral Matter

The human brain has been examined for ages in an attempt to understand its structure and functioning. Scientists, over time, have indicated that the slow decline of brain as you age is inevitable. It is true that after the age of forty the brain begins to lose volume. However, it has recently been discovered that if we continue to keep it active by using it to learn multifarious new and challenging skills and activities , it will improve instead of declining. Research shows that we can not only change the way we think and feel, but that those thoughts and feelings can change the very physical workings of the brain-it is called neuroplasticity. And

that means the brain you own is the one you build, and you are building it every day with what you do. Exercise and nutrition are key, and genetics plays a role, of course.

A US study recently published findings on online brain training games, concluding that the games-which challenge memory and reasoning skills-could cut the risk of dementia by a third. Experts described these results as "spectacular".

But there are other changes you can make that have a proven impact on brain function. You need to challenges you brain so find something really difficult and new that you like to do-and do it. Numerous studies prove that the more mentally active you stay, the longer you stay mentally active, building new networks among your brain cells. Build a boat, learn a language, make art, make music-and don't retire from life when you stop working. Studies show that the educated brain stays sharp longer, so keep learning-or even better, teach a class.

The healing benefits of sleep are obvious. Now studies show that it enhances memory if you sleep within a few hours of learning something new-and that sleep deprivation disrupts memory formation. These studies, both from the US, found that even a very short sleep after learning strengthens memory. It appears that our unconscious (or autonomic) nervous system stays at work while we sleep, seemingly consolidating all that new learning.

And don't forget naps. Even very short ones can enhance memory and improve learning. Sara Mednick, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Riverside, author of Take a Nap! Change Your Life and co-author of one of the sleep studies, has said that napping between 15 and 90 minutes of great for the brain and can be as good as a whole night's sleep.

Dozens of studies show meditation reduces stress. And newer studies show meditation also physically changes the brain. Ongoing studies from Richie Davidson at the Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA, have shown meditation increase grey matter in parts of the brain associated with flexibility, memory and learning, and also executive function-the ability to solve problems and make choices. While the most dramatic changes were seen in brains that had been meditating for decades, measurable brain changes were seen after only a few months.

(Source: The Week)

Q1. Neuroplasticity refers to

    a)   Ability of brain to form and reorganize connections to remain active and young

    b)   Flexibility of the brain

    c)   Challenging and stretching the brain

    d)   Change thoughts and feelings

Q2. The brain remains active and agile if

    a)   Eat nutritious food

    b)   Meditate

    c)   Build new networks in the brain by learning new things

    d)   All of the above

Q3. The best way to prevent dementia is

   a) Exercise everyday.

   b) Control your thoughts and feelings.

   c) Meet many people frequently.

   d) Enhance memory, reasoning skills and continue learning all your life.

Q4. Sleeping is

   a) Detrimental for physical and mental health.

   b) Makes you lethargic.

   c) Beneficial for all brain functions.

   d) Disrupts memory formation.

Passage 5

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow:

'Chanakya Neeti' is synonymous with efficient statecraft around the world, and Chanakya is India's face of political statecraft and the rich political understanding of its ancient heritage. No political efficiency is devoid of understanding Chanakya and his ways of statecraft. In fact, he showed the world what political theory is in practice. Ancient Indian history is incomplete without a reference to his ways of statecraft and politics.

Chanakya amazes any scholar with his multifaceted character, but it had a distinct focused aim. He was more about philosophy and thoughts put into action. He does not bore you with his philosophical theory but engages you to think, act and achieve what you dream of. He overthrew a mighty empire and put in the throne a humble man like Chandragupta Maurya. He identified the potential ruler from a group of children, thus gave the world a great sovereign who united the Indian subcontinent into a political and administrative unit.

For sure, Chanakya's mental capabilities were superb. The modern global diplomacy revolves around his principal of 'saam, daam, dand, bhed' (persuade, purchase/ set a price upon, punish, exploit the weakness). His 'Arthashastra' elevates the state to a position where service to it entails imperatives unknown to morality.

Chanakya would be identified as a professor of political science and economics at Taxila. He was an economic, political and royal adviser and a think tank, and can be credited to have given India its first complex united empire.

Q.1. 'Chanakya Neeti' is

   a) An individual

   b) A political treatise

   c) A philosophy

   d) A complex way of thinking

Q2. Chanakya amazes scholars because of

   a)   His character

   b)   His focused aim

   c)   Boring political philosophy

   d)   Ability to get people to think, act and achieve their dreams.

Q3. In 'Arthashastra' Chanakya places the interests of the state

   a)   Below moral responsibility

   b)   At par with moral responsibility

   c)   Above any moral responsibility

   d)   The state has nothing to do with moral responsibility

Q4. The modern day global diplomacy follows the principle of

   a)   Reward, request, entreaty and punishment

   b)   Request, cajole, threaten and persuade

   c)   Purchase, punish, request and accept

   d)   Persuasion, exploitation, punishment and purchase

Q5. Pick out words from the passage which means

   a)   involves

   b)   Raises

Passage 6

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow:

'Kindness & politeness are not overrated at all, they are underused' - *Tommy Lee Jones*

Following the latest trends and being fashionable is the **'in thing'** these days. This fad is not only prevalent in clothes, accessories, home décor and every conceivable thing, but also attitude and behavior. These days' being rude, loud, intolerant and aggressive is 'COOL'. Anyone who is quiet, polite, and keeps a low profile is labeled a sissy, simple and regressive.

Increasingly, the world is becoming 'I' centric. Everyone believes and follows the principle of 'ME' and 'MYSELF' above 'YOU' and 'YOURS' Checking your phone repeatedly when in company, not listening to others, interrupting a conversation, talking loudly on the phone in public places, parking my car in the middle of the road and being unmindful of the traffic chaos, being nasty on social media, aggression on the road is all a part of normal behavior these days.

A 2013 survey by Vital Smarts found that as social media usage surged over the years, it has given rise to increasing cases of incivility; with 78 per cent of 2,698 people reporting and increase in rudeness online. Social media has brought about an increase in bad manners and loss of courtesies, decency and etiquette in society. Perhaps, it is easier to be mean, nasty and rude when you are not in a face to face interaction with somebody.

Reality shows on T.V. like 'Big Boss and 'Roadies' encourage bad manners and vulgarity. People get vicarious pleasure in watching the contestants sling mud on each other and fling sleazy accusations on others. The

more conniving, cunning and crude you are, the higher your chances of winning. It is a reflection on our society that thrives on such shows. Sadly, appalling behavior and intolerant views, with a good dose of abuse, aggression and expletives thrown in, have become fodder for the soul.

Q1. We are becoming increasingly rude because

   a)   of modern day stresses.

   b)   we like being rude.

   c)   social media encourages such behavior.

   d)   we aren't concerned about others feelings.

Q2. In many reality shows like 'Big Boss' and 'Roadies' the winner is

   a)   polite and courteous

   b)   friendly and considerate

   c)   happy and carefree

   d)   nasty and discourteous

Q3. These days it is 'fashionable' and 'cool' to be

   a)   dressed in the latest fashion

   b)   knowledgeable and accessible

   c)   funny and friendly

   d)   ill- mannered and insolent

Q4. Pick out words from the passage which mean the following

   a)   scheming

   b)   imagined

Passage 7

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow:

RBI GETS POWER TO ACT AGAINST DEFAULTERS

The government has promulgated an ordinance empowering the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to issue specific instructions to banks to act against defaulters and also initiate bankruptcy and insolvency proceedings under the law, while promising more steps to ensure that banks get cracking on tackling bad debt amounting to over Rs 6 lakh crore.

While details of additional steps will be announced shortly, finance minister Arun Jaitley told reporters that new targets, being fixed for the state-run lenders as part of the annual exercise, will link additional equity support to immediate "cash release initiatives", such as sale of assets, closure of non-profitable branches, steps to turn around the business and strengthening of credit appraisal process.

While some of the steps such as sale of non-core assets have been discussed in the past too, banks failed to make much headway. For the moment, the government has focused on the legal provisions through

the ordinance to let the RBI to issue "directions to any banking company or banking companies to initiate insolvency resolution process in respect of a default under the provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016".

The ordinance also empowered the RBI to set up sector oversight panels that will help shield bankers from possible action by investigative agencies looking into loan restructuring proposals. The fear of agencies such as the CBI, the Comptroller & Auditor General and the Central Vigilance Commission have been cited by bankers to hold back decisions.

"A Committee which oversees such JLF (Joint Lenders Forum) arrangements is one step which will give them (bankers) this comfort level," finance minister Arun Jaitley said at a press conference. An amendment is also proposed to the Prevention of Corruption Act, for which a Bill was introduced in parliament. The standing committee has submitted its report on it and a revised Bill will be introduced in parliament soon.

Jaitley – who made no bones about "unacceptably high level of non-performing assets (NPAs)" hindering the capacity of lenders to fund economic activities said the government has also given a one-time general authorisation to the RBI. The ordinance, recommended by parliament on Wednesday, was promulgated by President Pranab Mukherjee on Thursday evening. The ordinance, which inserts two new provisions into the Banking Regulation Act 1949, will have to be placed in parliament for approval in the monsoon session.

"The object of this act is that the present status quo cannot continue. And, the present status quo is that not much was moving and therefore paralysis in the name of autonomy is detrimental to the economy itself and therefore really requires to be broken," Jaitley said. He said the move will expedite commercial decisions of banks. The minister said one of the objects is that "when bankers take commercial decisions on commercial and banking considerations, they must have adequate comfort level".

(source: The Times of India)

Q1. The Reserve Bank has been empowered to

   a)   act against loan defaulters.

   b)   begin bankruptcy and insolvency proceedings against many people.

   c)   tackle bad debt by withdrawing money from accounts of defaulters.

   d)   give warning to loan defaulters.

Q2. Bankers do not take action against defaulters because they

   a)   have no powers to do so.

   b)   fear action by investigative agencies.

   c)   are forbidden to do so by forces in power.

   d)   have no desire to do so.

Q3. According to Mr. Jaitley, the present status quo cannot continue as

   a)   it is detrimental for the economy.

   b)   nothing is moving forward.

   c)   borrowers are taking the banks for granted.

   d)   the banks have to do something.

Q.4. Which is the most appropriate meaning of 'status quo'

    a) high status in society

    b) the status quotient in society

    c) existing circumstances

    d) poor circumstance

🕐 ANSWER KEY

Passage 1	Q1. b.	Q2. c.	Q3. d	Q4. c	Q5. c	
Passage 2	Q1. c	Q2. d	Q3. c	Q4. c	Q.5. a. parameters	b. monitoring
Passage 3	Q1. d	Q2. b	Q3. c	Q4. d		
Passage 4	Q1. a	Q2. d	Q3. d	Q4. c		
Passage 5	Q1. b	Q2. d	Q3. c	Q4. d	Q5. a. entails	b. elevates
Passage 6	Q1. c	Q2. d	Q3. d	Q4. a. conniving	b. vicarious	
Passage 7	Q1. a	Q2. b	Q3. a	Q4. c		