Gap Filling/Sentence Completion

Introduction

Gap filling or sentence completion questions require a student to fill in the gaps in a given paragraph with the most appropriate option. These questions test a student's understanding and ability to use the language correctly.

GRAMMAR CONCEPTS REQUIRED

Before answering such questions, a student should be thorough with certain rules and concepts in grammar. Some of the important ones are indicated below:

1. A verb should agree with its subject in terms of number and person.

2. Tense consistency has to be maintained.

3. A pronoun must be consistent with its antecedent.

4. Conjunctions should be used correctly.

5. The rules for using articles and determiners have to be followed.

6. Prepositions should be used in a suitable manner.

7. Voice (active or passive) consistency must be maintained.

8. Direct and indirect speech must be considered.

STEPS TO BE FOLLOWED

To answer questions based on gap filling, a student may follow the steps given below:

1. Read the entire paragraph in one go. Find the context or the main idea of the given paragraph or sentences.

2. Individually analyse the parts of sentences with the blanks. Study them in the context of what follows and/or what precedes a respective blank to find out the most appropriate tense/ voice or verb form to be used.

3. Try to fill in the easiest blank first and then move on to the more difficult ones. Remember to choose the most appropriate word/ phrase from the given options, indicating the respective blank for which it is substituted.

4. If steps 2 and 3 have been exhausted and the blanks are still left, consider subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent consistency, narration rules or use of articles and prepositions. Try to work with the options (by eliminating the obvious wrong options), if nothing comes to your mind.

5. Repeat the steps from 2 to 4 till all the blanks have been filled.

A NOTE ON MCQs

Sometimes, you may find two options that appear to fit the blank appropriately. However, remember that MCQs have only one option as the correct answer. So, choose **the most appropriate option** among the two possible ones.

Gap Filling/Sentence Completion Examples

Q. The woods here (a)_____ lovely, dark and deep, and the greenery is enchanting. It is the picturesque Sanjay Gandhi Biological Park, which (b)_____ over 153 acres of land. Founded (c)_____ 1969 on 34 acres of land, it (d)_____ initially a botanical garden and home to an exciting variety of trees, herbs and shrubs.

(a) i) are ii) were iii) was iv) has been

(b) i) is extending ii) extends iii) have extended iv) has extended

(c) i) from ii) since iii) in iv) on

(d) i) is ii) had been iii) were iv) was

Solution:

(a) i (b) ii (c) iii (d) iv

HOW TO SOLVE:

If we try to solve the blank (a) first, we can notice that the sentence can be divided in two parts, joined with the connector 'and'. The first part talks about the 'woods' while the second part talks about 'greenery'. Since, the verb in second part of the sentence is in the present tense, the verb in the first part of the sentence should also be in the present tense. Hence, options (ii) and (iii) cannot be correct. Moreover, the tense here should be present simple. So, option (iv) becomes incorrect. As we have eliminated all the other three options, we must be left with only the correct option, i.e., option (i).

For blank (b), we can notice that the sentence is in present indefinite tense. Thus, the answer should be a verb form in the same tense. Now, it is easy to note that option (i),

(iii) and (iv) are either in present continuous or present perfect form. So, they cannot be the correct replacement for the blank. Therefore, the correct answer is given by option (ii), which is the simple present form of the verb 'extend', used here with the singular subject 'It'.

The sentence indicates an action that talks about the past. As the preposition 'in' is used to show the year or month in which the action was completed, option (iii) gives the correct preposition for blank (c).

The last sentence reveals something about the past, therefore, the answer has to be a verb in its past-tense form. Since option (i) is in the present tense, it cannot be the correct answer. The verb given in option (iii) is incorrect as doesn't agree with the singular subject 'it'.

Although the verbs in both option (ii) and option (iv) are in their past forms, the former is in its past perfect form. Since the past perfect tense is used when a relative condition of the past is described, option (ii) cannot be the correct answer. Hence, the correct answer is the one given by option (iv).

Answer:

(a) i (b) ii (c) iii (d) iv