



Learning Project 8 Using Your Skills to Answer Questions

Inquiry Activity 8-2: Solving the Problem

The items in this Inquiry Activity consist simply of questions for which your learners must derive an answer. Your learners will need to use information from other sources to answer the question – prior knowledge, prior experience, problem solving, or test-taking strategies

(Note: Italicized portions should be directed to the students.)

1. Identifying the Problem (Items 3 Science & 24 Social Studies PA)

Look at the test items.

What must you do in order to answer the questions correctly?

Where else have you seen questions like this?

If you have not already done so, have your learners take a look at Reading IA 1-1, “Identifying Types of Questions.”

What will you have to do to be successful in this Activity?

Jot down your thoughts, or share them with your partner.

3. Which of the following statements could be directly derived from the fact that Earth rotates on a tilted axis while revolving around the sun?
 - (1) Earth is widest at the equator.
 - (2) While the Northern Hemisphere experiences winter, the Southern Hemisphere experience summer.
 - (3) Most of Earth’s surface is covered by ocean.
 - (4) The desert area of East Africa increases in size each year.
 - (5) Erosion occurs in a west-to-east pattern.

24. Which of the following is the most reasonable explanation for a surplus of a product on the market?
 - (1) Most consumers find the product reasonably priced.
 - (2) The producers overestimated the demand for the product.
 - (3) An expensive substitute for the product is available.
 - (4) Producers have not supplied enough of the product.
 - (5) The product has many uses.

2. Becoming Familiar with the Problem


Scan the items, and ask yourself questions like the following as your first step to identifying the question.

Is there anything in the items you do not understand?



What sets these two items apart from all the other short passages we have looked at?

These two items are questions only. There is no explicatory passage that accompanies them. That means the answer to each item will have to come from the test taker/learner and not from test material.

 You may want to point out that it is important to read the question and answer choices for item 24 very carefully since misreading answers 1 and 3 might confuse them.

What technical terms or ideas might you need to have clarified or defined?

3. Planning, Assigning, and Performing Tasks

Planning: *You may decide to work by yourself, in a pair, or a small group to do this Activity.*


Assigning: *Decide with your partner or in your group how you will carry out the task of answering the question.*

Doing the Work: *As you read the items, do the following:*

Scan the items; find and mark any words in the questions or the answer choices you might not know. See if the questions or the answer choices give you enough information to clarify the meaning of the words. If not, use other resources to define the term.

For science question 3, you may wish to draw the earth as it is described in the question. How might that help you find the answer?

Depending upon your class and the types of learners they are, you may want to draw a sketch on the board. You can download an excellent example from: <http://library.thinkquest.org/29033/begin/earthsunmoon.htm>

 *Decide how you will go about answering the questions.*

A test taker might be able to eliminate distractors or other evidently incorrect answers. Particularly in questions where the answer is not clear from the passage, test takers should eliminate distractors to narrow their answer choice options.

Learners may have other problem-solving approaches: using what they might know from other sources, experiences they may have had, or what is often called common sense.

Determine which answer choices are correct.

In Item 3, guessing the answer from the given of a tilted axis might be somewhat daunting. A close look at the answers can eliminate several choices that seem to have nothing to do with tilt: the amount of ocean (3) or the increasing desert area (4). Choice (1) fits well with the roundness and rotating but seems remote from the tilted axis. While choice (5) may be true, and may have something to do with a tilted axis, it is not as readily seen as the fact stated in choice (2), which is certainly true, and may seem to refer to the tilt.

In item 24, shoppers should be able to work out the answer from the choices given if they give themselves time and read the options. A reasonably priced (choice 1), useful (choice 5) product is likely to sell at a steady rate. If there were not enough of the product (choice 4) or a more expensive version was available, the product in question is likely to sell out. That leaves choice (2) that the producers thought more people would buy the product than did.

4. Sharing with Others

Telling people what you know helps you understand the material better. Take this opportunity not only to share the knowledge, but also to learn it more completely.

Small groups: *Compare the answers you found with others in the group. Discuss the methods you used to find the answers, the support for your answers in the passage, and the reasons each learner thinks his/her answers and support are correct.*



Agree on the correct answers and the strategy you would use for answering questions that ask you to draw conclusions from what you have read.

Both in the group and the whole-class discussion, you and the class may wish to refer to the sketch.

Whole class: *Share with the whole class the steps you used to answer the questions. Take notes on any different ways of answering the questions other groups gave.*

5. Reflecting, Extending, Evaluating

Reflecting: Think about what you have learned.

Here are some questions to start your thinking about the experiences you just had. Thinking about what you have learned and experienced is part of the learning process. When the focus is only on the answer, you don't get much time to think about what was learned.



1. *What have you learned about reading the questions and answer choices to find the correct response? How will that help you as a test taker?*
2. *What do you know about these topics?*
3. *What problem-solving skills did you use to answer these questions?*

Extending: Extend what you learned to new situations.

In extending, you are being asked to transfer the information presented in this Inquiry Activity to other information or situations.

1. *With your partner or with the class, discuss what usually happens to products that are left at the end of the season.*
2. *How do you, in your personal life, take advantage of the situation described in social studies 24?*
3. *In your groups, make a model of the sun and Earth, showing how Earth rotates on its axis and revolves around the sun.*
4. *Using reference materials in your classroom, find pictures of the solar system. What other information do you know about the planets that would make good multiple-choice questions?*
5. *Write an essay about space exploration. If you have a strong opinion about this topic, give reasons and examples that make your opinion clear and persuasive.*

Evaluating: Assess what you learned and how you learned it.

In this last step, you get a chance to review the content of what you learned and the methods used to learn. These questions have no right or wrong answers. This is your chance to look more closely at your learning style and the opportunity to state how you benefited or did not benefit from the content and/or the methods presented in this IA.

1. *What parts of the activity worked best for you? Explain.*
2. *What parts did not work well for you? Explain.*
3. *What ideas in this Inquiry Activity will you use when taking the GED test? Why?*
4. *How does following this 5-step format make you feel?*