

## Learning Project 4 Reading Business Documents

### Inquiry Activity 4-2: Determining Purpose of the Text

GED test questions are written to elicit different kinds of responses. This question asks the reader to determine the purpose of the text.

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

#### 1. Identifying the Problem (Item #14 PA)

*Scan the test question to find out what you are being asked to do.*

*Questions refer to the excerpt from a passage introduced in Inquiry Activity 3-1.*

**14** What is the main purpose of the College's Just Cause policy?

- (1) to build employee morale at the College
- (2) to prevent harassment cases from going to court
- (3) to protect the College from hiring incompetent employees
- (4) to help employees conceal misconduct from the College
- (5) to make clear to employees the rules for discipline and dismissal

#### 2. Becoming Familiar with the Problem

Four pre-reading strategies are introduced and used consistently to help learners develop the pre-reading skills for use with any reading they might do. These pre-reading strategies are:

- Preview the Passage
- Activate/Build from Prior Knowledge
- Consider/Build Interest
- Set a Purpose

*Remember, in this step, we are focusing on becoming familiar with the question through pre-reading strategies, not answering it from the passage.*

*Preview the Question:* What does the passage look like? Is there anything in the question you do not understand?

*What does the question ask you to do?*

The question asks learners to identify the reason the college publishes its reasons for discipline and dismissal.

*Activate/Build from Prior Knowledge:* What do you know about this topic? Have you seen workplace policies before?

Most businesses and organizations that hire also publish an Employee Handbook that outlines expected behaviors, benefits, holidays, and company information. Anyone who has worked will have seen some form or another of this kind of document.

People who work probably have been given an Employee Handbook and have gone through an Employee Orientation program.

*Consider/Build Interest:* Are you interested in why a business would give this information to their employees? When you see questions like the one in this IA, how do you react?

*Set a Purpose:* Look at the title of IA 4-2. What do you think **determine the purpose** of the text means?



### **3. Planning, Assigning, and Performing Tasks**

During reading strategies that help answer questions include *clarifying, analyzing, questioning, summarizing, determining important from unimportant*. Each IA will use *clarify* and another strategy. This IA uses *determining important from unimportant* as a comprehension strategy.

**Planning:** *Determine if you want to work individually, with a partner, or in a small group.*

**Doing the Work:** *As you read the question and reread the passage, do the following:*

**Clarify:**

*Scan the passage. Find and mark any words you might not know. See if the passage gives you enough information to **clarify** the meaning of those words. If not, find the meaning by asking somebody or looking it up.*

One advantage for learners reading employee documents is that difficult words are generally defined within the context. Examples include: insubordination, excessive, or felony. Others that might need to be defined include: harassment, detrimental, willful, and authorization. Probably everyone knows the definition of controlled substance.

*Were there any places in the passage where you did not understand what was going on?*

**Determine Important from Unimportant:**

In this passage everything is important because the reasons that the college can dismiss or discipline an employee are outlined. It is particularly important that just cause includes, but is not limited to, this list.

*Look carefully at the question and the question answers.*

*How does the question to be answered help you to **determine the important from the unimportant** in the passage? What section or parts of the passage support your answer?*

**Analyze**

*How can you use the answer choices to understand the question?*

Some answers, (3) and (4) in particular, are contradictions of “Employee Performance.”

*Read each answer choice and decide if the information in the answer is:*

- *not in the passage,*
- *the opposite of the information in the passage, or*
- *not accurate.*

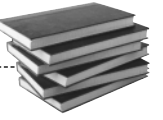
*Determine which answer choice answers the question.*

Looking carefully at the wording of the questions is helpful. Answer (1) building morale does not necessarily come from a discussion of discipline or dismissal. The issue of harassment is addressed (Answer 2) but it is only one reason for just cause. That would not make it a main purpose. Choice (3) is about hiring. Employees have been hired already, so information in the Handbook is not about hiring practices. Identifying reasons for dismissal is clearly in opposition to (4) helping employees conceal misconduct. The final choice, (5) making clear the rules of discipline and dismissal, is given in the title.

### **4. Sharing with Others**

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

**Small Groups:** *Compare the answer you found with the others in the group. Explain the support for your answer in the passage.*



Talk about how **summarizing** helped you find the answer and the reasons why each learner thinks his/her answer and the support are correct.

Agree on the correct answer and a reading strategy you would use for answering questions that ask you to **determine the purpose of a text**.

**Whole Class:** Report to the class the group's answer to the question and how **summarizing** helped to find the answer. Discuss the support for the answer chosen, and your group's strategy for answering questions that ask you to **determine the purpose** of a business document.

Take notes on any different approaches to answering questions that ask for the main **purpose**.

## 5. Reflecting, Extending, and Evaluating

**Reflecting:** Think about how well you understood what you have done. Here are some questions to start you thinking about the experience you just had. Thinking about what you have 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 you learned.

If you have had prior experience with employment documents, explain how that prior knowledge helped you with answering this question about the purpose of the document.

In *Becoming Familiar with the Problem* you decided whether or how much you were interested in this topic. How did your level of interest affect your reading?

If you have had no prior experience with employment documents, explain how **summarizing** the passage helped you to understand it in order to answer the test question about **the purpose of the document**.

**Extending:** Extend what you learned to new situations.

In extending, you are being asked to transfer the information presented in the Practice Test question to other information or situations.

You are now the test question designer for a passage like this. Write a main idea (like the one you selected in 2-1) multiple-choice question. Concentrate on making the wrong choices close to, but not exactly, the best answer. Pass around your questions for others to answer and then discuss.

Tell a story to a classmate or a friend that includes a lot of details. Have your friend **summarize** the story you told. Does that **summary** include the main ideas from your point of view? What was included or left out?

Sometimes a main idea is called the gist. Have you heard this word before? What do you think it means? When might you use it?

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

In this last step, you get a chance to review the methods used to learn. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions; it is your chance to look more closely at your learning style and the opportunity to state how you benefited or didn't benefit from the content and/or the methods presented in this IA.

What did you learn about reading from this activity?

How did the approaches in this activity work for you?

How did you find the purpose of the document?

How does writing test questions help you be a better test taker?

How does reading like this make you feel?