

## Basic Skills

### Reading Sample Items

Read the passage below; then answer the six questions that follow.

1. Much of human history has been spent trying to remember. Because all but the most important events fade in memory over time, people have gone to great lengths to preserve their experiences so that they might be conveyed to future generations. Painting, writing, printing, photography, and film: each has been used in unique ways to preserve our thoughts, words, and actions. Yet, until very recently, storing and sorting through all of this material have been enormously inconvenient. It is only in the last ten years or so that advances in computer technology have allowed us to record and "remember" almost everything we do. Although this may sound good, the possibilities for misuse are likely to leave us wishing we still knew how to forget.
2. Each year, technology's capacity for storing information almost doubles. Saving data on computers is inexpensive and oftentimes easier than deleting it. Millions of surveillance cameras tucked away in public places record our movements whenever we walk past. Law enforcement agencies, credit bureaus, and marketing services maintain vast files of information on many millions of people. Experts say that this is only the tip of the iceberg. It will not be long before tiny computer chips will be used to store information about how we use our cars, cell phones, cameras, and other everyday objects. However unlikely it is that any of these data would ever be used against us, the idea that such data are being collected and saved for the indefinite future is more than a little disturbing. Indeed, knowing that many of our words and actions will never be forgotten could pose a threat to freedom of expression by making us more cautious in what we say and do.
3. Several countries have already enacted privacy laws that address fears of large-scale data retention. Under statutes enacted by the European Union, personal information can only be collected, stored, and used with the individual's consent. If an organization decides to use data for a different purpose than originally intended, additional permission must be obtained. Individuals are also free to request a complete transcript of their files at any time. Although this system empowers people to control precisely how their information is forgotten or remembered, a surprisingly small number of people actually take advantage of the opportunity. During the more than ten years that privacy laws have been in effect in Germany, relatively few people have asked to see their data, and virtually no one has taken legal action against violators of the law.
4. This has prompted Harvard government professor Viktor Mayer-Schönberger to propose a simpler solution. He advocates utilizing the technology itself to forget the information stored in computers. In his proposal, software companies would be required to build programs into their software that delete data automatically. It would be possible to change these settings for personal use, but information would not be stored against one's will for more than a short amount of time. By making the act of remembering deliberate rather than automatic, Schönberger's idea reduces technology's indirect threat to free speech. This will not, of course, be an easy law to pass. The corporations who benefit from collecting data are likely to be much more vocal than the millions who are adversely affected. Nevertheless, we are at one of those rare junctures in history when people should rise up and demand to be forgotten.

1. Which of the following phrases is closest in meaning to the phrase tip of the iceberg as it is used in Paragraph 2?

- A. result one would expect
- B. beginning of something much greater
- C. cost of progress
- D. consequence of poor planning

2. Which of the following statements best expresses the main idea of Paragraph 1?

- A. Because most individuals soon forget many of the things that happen to them, people have gone to considerable lengths to preserve experiences they wish to see conveyed to future generations.
- B. Painting, writing, printing, photography, and film are only some of the many methods that have been used to preserve people's thoughts, words, and actions.
- C. Although advances in computer technology that allow us to "remember" everything we do may sound good, the possibilities for misuse are likely to leave us wishing we still knew how to forget.
- D. Compared with those who lived in earlier periods of human history, people today find it easier

to remember the past than to forget it because of recent technological innovations.

**3. Which of the following statements best describes the writer's opinion of the increased capacity to store personal information?**

- A. It has improved the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies.
- B. It is a remarkable technological achievement.
- C. It has eliminated many of the inconveniences of modern life.
- D. It constitutes a worrisome development.

**4. Which of the following phrases best describes the organizational strategy used by the writer to convey his or her ideas?**

- A. stating a problem and discussing solutions to the problem
- B. arranging ideas according to their relative importance
- C. using examples to present numerous instances of the same phenomenon
- D. breaking subject matter into several equivalent subparts

**5. Which of the following sentences from the passage is an expression of opinion rather than a statement of fact?**

- A. Painting, writing, printing, photography, and film: each has been used in unique ways to preserve our thoughts, words, and actions.
- B. Law enforcement agencies, credit bureaus, and marketing services maintain vast files of information on many millions of people.
- C. Knowing that many of our words and actions will never be forgotten could pose a threat to freedom of expression by making us more cautious in what we say and do.
- D. Under statutes enacted by the European Union, personal information can only be collected, stored, and used with the individual's consent.

**6. Which of the following summaries best captures the main points addressed in the passage?**

- A. The enormous increase in society's information-storing capacity threatens freedom of expression; one simple but effective proposal for dealing with the problem is to create computer programs that delete data automatically after a short period.
- B. Although there is reason to be concerned about the countless ways in which our actions are tracked and recorded by various electronic devices, there is little likelihood that any of the information obtained will be used against us.
- C. More information is more readily available to more people today than at any previous time in human history; some countries believe that it may be necessary to strengthen privacy laws to deal with this development.
- D. Throughout much of human history, people have been in constant search of effective ways to preserve memories of the past; now that means exist for instantly recalling whatever one wishes, not everyone is pleased with the resulting changes in society.

**Read the passage below; then answer the six questions that follow.**

1. Think about it: every time we breathe, thousands of molecules from distant and nearby objects enter our noses. These molecules go to the back of the nasal cavity. There they pass over the olfactory site, an area that has approximately five million receptor cells with hairs capable of detecting odors. A molecule of freshly brewed tea passing over the olfactory site, for example, hooks up with cells uniquely designed to recognize the scent of tea. The cells then transmit this information to the brain, and the person becomes aware of the smell of tea.
2. The first person to develop a theory of smell was the ancient Greek scientist Democritus. Smelling the delicious odor of bread baking in a room above him, he wondered how the brain so quickly perceived the bread's presence even though he could neither see nor touch the actual object. As a solution to the puzzle, he suggested that tiny invisible particles of bread called atoms floated in the air down to where his nose sensed them. Today we know that Democritus was basically correct, although it is usually molecules rather than atoms that find their way to our noses.
3. Modern studies indicate that humans perceive seven basic categories of smell: minty, floral, ethereal (like pear), musky, resinous, rotten, and acrid (vinegar). One major theory explaining how receptor cells recognize these odors uses a lock-and-key model. Each of the seven kinds of receptor sites has a characteristic shape that is paired to a complementary shape on a specific odor-carrying molecule. When two shapes successfully match up, the receptor cell responds by firing a signal to the brain.
4. The mechanics of this process do not account for the powerful effect that odors have on people. For that we must look to how scents are processed in the brain. When a receptor cell

in the nose recognizes an odor-carrying molecule, it sends a signal directly to the brain's primitive emotional center, known as the hypothalamus. This, together with the fact that odors are quickly stored in the brain's long-term memory, explains why they sometimes elicit strong emotional responses that people find difficult to describe or analyze. In a famous passage from literature, Marcel Proust relates how an extraordinary sensation of happiness flooded over him, triggered by the simple act of dipping a cookie in his tea. Proust could find no explanation for his mood until he traced the smell of the tea and cookie back to a childhood memory of a beloved aunt.

5. The act of smelling an odor is thus far more complicated than we might realize. It involves external factors such as the chemical makeup of the substance being smelled. It also involves internal factors such as the health and sensitivity of a person's nose and the perceptiveness of the human brain. Finally, it can bring into play a full range of emotional and cognitive associations linked to the particular scent. Though often taken for granted, the sense of smell plays an important role in how we experience our world.

**7. Which of the following words is the most appropriate synonym for the phrase account for as it is used in Paragraph 4?**

- A. explain
- B. demonstrate
- C. assess
- D. measure

**8. Which of the following details from the passage best illustrates the writer's assertion that "the sense of smell plays an important role in how we experience our world"?**

- A. the discussion of the operation of the olfactory site in Paragraph 1
- B. the discussion of how atoms float in the air in Paragraph 2
- C. the discussion of the seven categories of smell in Paragraph 3
- D. the discussion of a passage from Marcel Proust in Paragraph 4

**9. The writer's main purpose in the passage is to:**

- A. describe processes related to the experience of smelling and its effect on people.
- B. compare different theories about the development of the sense of smell.
- C. show how the experience of smelling affects different people in different ways.
- D. raise questions about the role of smell in the everyday lives of people.

**10. Which of the following pairs of events described in the passage is an example of a cause-and-effect relationship?**

- A. Democritus's experience of smelling bread baking and the discovery of the seven basic categories of smell
- B. the passage of odors over the olfactory site and the creation of receptor cells
- C. Proust's experience of smelling tea and cookies and the discovery of how external factors influence smell
- D. the storage of odors in the brain's long-term memory and emotional responses to scents

**11. Which of the following assumptions most influenced the writer's argument in the passage?**

- A. Different people experience different sensations when exposed to various odors.
- B. The sense of smell is the most important of the five senses.
- C. Most people give little thought to how they smell odors or what the sense of smell means to them.
- D. The ability to detect odors strongly influences personality development.

**12. Which of the following outlines best organizes the major topics addressed in the passage?**

- A. — structure and function of the nasal cavity
  - Democritus and the experience of smelling bread baking
  - shapes of the different kinds of receptor sites
  - Proust and the experience of smelling tea and cookies
- B. — how people experience the sense of smell
  - Democritus's theory of smell
  - how receptor cells recognize odors
  - why odors sometimes elicit emotional responses
- C. — cells in the nasal cavity that are capable of detecting odors

- how the brain perceives unseen objects
  - variations in the structure of odor-carrying molecules
  - effect of external factors on the sense of smell
- D.
- functions of the olfactory site
  - atoms, molecules, and the sense of smell
  - different categories of smell
  - odor-carrying molecules and the brain

### Answer Key

Item Number	Correct Response	Objective
1	B	0001
2	C	0002
3	D	0003
4	A	0004
5	C	0005
6	A	0006
7	A	0001
8	D	0002
9	A	0003
10	D	0004
11	C	0005
12	B	0006

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