

Table 6.1 Key Words and Phrases for Understanding the Questions

Understanding the following key words and phrases will help you understand what the questions are really asking.

When you see this . . .	Remember that . . .
"according to the author" "according to the passage"	You must answer the question in terms of the statements, assumptions, or inferences that the writer is making, even if you <i>disagree</i> with what the writer has said. The question is meant to see if you understand what the writer has written.
"best"	This is an important word in test questions because it usually asks you to find the <i>most suitable</i> or <i>most acceptable</i> of the answer choices. This means that even though you may find a response that <i>seems</i> to fit, you still need to look at the rest of the responses in order to be sure that you have selected the <i>best</i> one. Sometimes you may think none of the answers are particularly good, but you must pick the one that is <i>best</i> .
"chiefly"	This means "above the rest," "mostly," "mainly but not exclusively." When you see <i>chiefly</i> , you will probably be looking for the <i>most central</i> element or <i>most important</i> explanation of something.
"except"	A question with <i>except</i> usually asks you to identify words or phrases that don't belong with the other choices.
"(the author) implies" "(it can be) inferred" "(the author) suggests"	These terms ask you to come to a conclusion that is <i>suggested</i> by the information in the passage but <i>not directly stated</i> by the author. Make sure that your inference is indeed based on the material in the passage rather than your own ideas or opinions.
"least"	Opposite of <i>most</i> .
"mainly"	Most important, or <i>chiefly</i> .
"most"	Frequently used as a qualifier, as in <i>most likely</i> , <i>most frequently</i> , <i>most reasonable</i> . A qualifier recognizes that there are exceptions to <i>most</i> situations and tries to allow for those exceptions.
"only"	<i>Only</i> means "just the one." For example, "This is the <i>only</i> . . . for me." It also can indicate a restriction, as in "You can go <i>only</i> after you wash the car."
"primarily"	Most important, or <i>chiefly</i> .