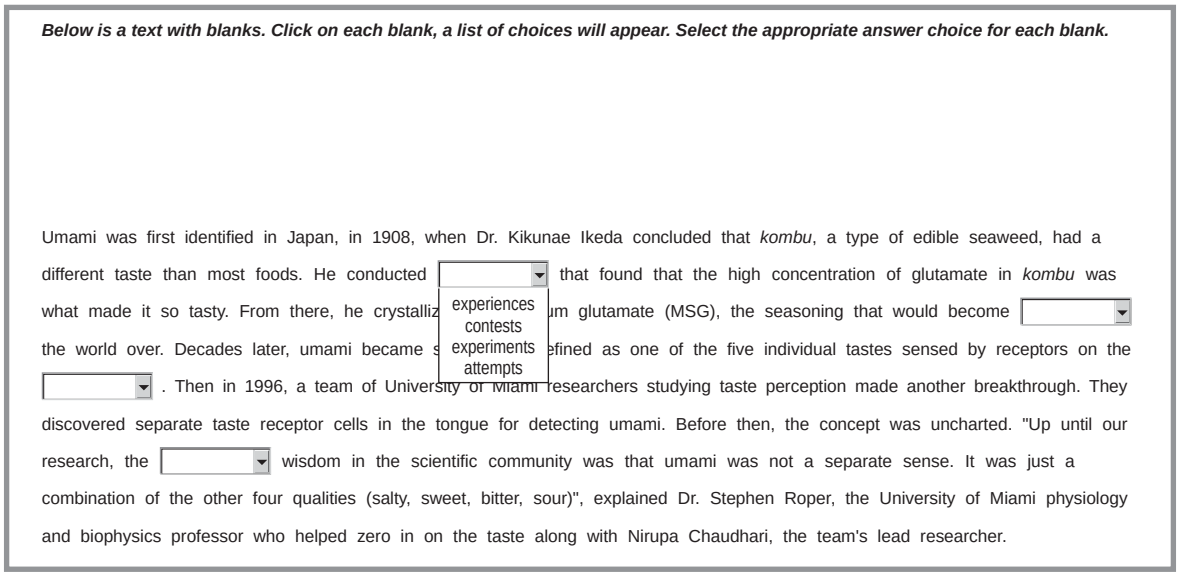
Reading & writing: Fill in the blanks

This item type integrates reading and writing skills, and requires you to use contextual and grammatical cues to complete a reading text by identifying a single correct answer for each blank.



Item Type Strategies

Strategy 1 Use your knowledge of collocation and grammar to help you guess or predict the word or type of word that best fits each blank.

Strategy 2 Reject options that you know are not appropriate in terms of meaning or the grammatical context.

Strategy 3 Read each sentence to yourself several times, adding in each of the remaining possible options one-by-one. This will help you activate your knowledge of collocation. Listen to the way the sentence sounds and choose the option that sounds best in the sentence.

Explanation and Practice of Each Strategy

Strategy 1

Activating and using your knowledge of collocation and grammar will help you guess or predict the word or part of speech that best fits each blank.

To practice this strategy, do the following activities:

- Look at Item 1 without reading the answer choices.
- Skim the text quickly first to get an idea of the overall meaning.
- Decide which part of speech is needed to complete each sentence and brainstorm words that collocate with the words on either side of each blank.
- Compare your suggestions to the suggested words below:

  Blank 1 needs a plural object, *tests*, *experiments*, etc. to collocate with *conduct*; blank 2 needs an adjective, *famous*, *accepted*, etc. to collocate with *around the world*; blank 3 needs a noun, *tongue* fits logically; blank 4 needs an adjective, *perceived*, *accepted*, etc. to collocate with *wisdom.*

Strategy 2

Once you have made your own predictions, study the options and reject any words that you know are inappropriate in terms of meaning or the grammatical context. This will help make the right choices and select the correct option.

To practice this strategy, do the following activities:

- Look at the options for each blank in Item 1.
- Establish which of the options can be rejected in each case.
- Analyze your responses and note down reasons for your choices.

Strategy 3

You should now read each sentence out loud several times, inserting each of the remaining possible options one-by-one. This will help you activate your knowledge of collocations. Listen carefully to the way the sentence sounds and choose the option that sounds best in the sentence. Remind yourself to pay particular attention to the meanings of homophones (words that sound similar but have different meanings, e.g., *two* (the number) and *too* (meaning *also*)), which may be confusing. Note that although for this practice activity you are reading out loud, in the actual test you should say sentences to yourself in your head.

To practice this strategy, do the following activities:

- Read each sentence out loud to yourself several times, each time adding in one of the remaining possible options.
- Listen carefully to the way the sentence sounds each time and choose the option that sounds best in the sentence.
- After you have done this, read through the answers for Item 1.

Respond to a (Reading & writing) Fill in the Blanks Item

You will now respond to a test item simulating the test conditions. Remind yourself of the three strategies for this item type and apply them.

Now respond to Item 2.

Assess your Response

Were you able to use the strategies? Which one was the most difficult to apply? Which one was the most useful?

Read through the answers for Item 2 and think about why these answers are most appropriate and the other options are not.

Item 1

Below is a text with blanks. Select the appropriate answer choice for each blank.

Umami was first identified in Japan, in 1908, when Dr. Kikunae Ikeda concluded that *kombu*, a type of edible seaweed, had a different taste than most foods. He conducted (1) that found that the high concentration of glutamate in *kombu* was what made it so tasty. From there, he crystallized monosodium glutamate (MSG), the seasoning that would become (2) the world over. Decades later, umami became scientifically defined as one of the five individual tastes sensed by receptors on the (3) . Then in 1996, a team of University of Miami researchers studying taste perception made another breakthrough. They discovered separate taste receptor cells in the tongue for detecting umami. Before then, the concept was uncharted. "Up until our research, the (4) wisdom in the scientific community was that umami was not a separate sense. It was just a combination of the other four qualities (salty, sweet, bitter, sour)", explained Dr. Stephen Roper, the University of Miami physiology and biophysics professor who helped zero in on the taste along with Nirupa Chaudhari, the team's lead researcher.

(1)
- experiences
- contests
- experiments
- attempts

(2)
- spread
- exported
- exclusive
- popular

(3)
- fingers
- mouth
- tongue
- jaws

(4)
- predominate
- insignificant
- important
- erroneous

Item 1: Answer Key

Umami was first identified in Japan, in 1908, when Dr. Kikunae Ikeda concluded that *kombu*, a type of edible seaweed, had a different taste than most foods. He conducted [(1) experiments] that found that the high concentration of glutamate in *kombu* was what made it so tasty. From there, he crystallized monosodium glutamate (MSG), the seasoning that would become [(2) popular] the world over. Decades later, umami became scientifically defined as one of the five individual tastes sensed by receptors on the [(3) tongue]. Then in 1996, a team of University of Miami researchers studying taste perception made another breakthrough. They discovered separate taste receptor cells in the tongue for detecting umami. Before then, the concept was uncharted. "Up until our research, the [(4) predominate] wisdom in the scientific community was that umami was not a separate sense. It was just a combination of the other four qualities (salty, sweet, bitter, sour)", explained Dr. Stephen Roper, the University of Miami physiology and biophysics professor who helped zero in on the taste along with Nirupa Chaudhari, the team's lead researcher.

Item 2

Below is a text with blanks. Select the appropriate answer choice for each blank.

Global climate change is the greatest environmental challenge we face. We have at most a few decades to make the necessary investments to prevent the most serious impacts of climate change. Future generations will judge us based on the investments we are considering now. In its February 2007 report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that global emissions must peak no later than 2015 if we are to hold average global temperature increases to 2.4°C (4.3°F) or less. Moving to an emissions pathway that will hold temperature increases to a minimum will require a (1) effort. There is no time to lose given the long lag in research and development cycles, and energy-intensive (2) and product turnover.

Fundamentally, (3) the world's energy system is unlikely to occur within this timeframe. It is thus imperative to find means to reduce the footprint of the existing system - most particularly, of coal, which is the most greenhouse gas intensive of the fossil fuels driving climate change. It is in this context that Carbon Dioxide Capture and Sequestration (CCS) becomes one of the most critical technologies in the menu of choices. It is the only option that provides a potentially near-term solution to rapidly expanding coal use here, in China and around the world. CCS must play the critical role of (4) growth in emissions from coal until other alternatives are ready.

(1)
- colossal
- nominal
- negligible
- customary

(2)
- agriculture
- architecture
- infrastructure
- conjecture

(3)
- altering
- revoking
- comparing
- analyzing

(4)
- sustaining
- curbing
- dividing
- increasing

Item 2: Answer Key

Global climate change is the greatest environmental challenge we face. We have at most a few decades to make the necessary investments to prevent the most serious impacts of climate change. Future generations will judge us based on the investments we are considering now. In its February 2007 report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that global emissions must peak no later than 2015 if we are to hold average global temperature increases to 2.4°C (4.3°F) or less. Moving to an emissions pathway that will hold temperature increases to a minimum will require a (1) colossal effort. There is no time to lose given the long lag in research and development cycles, and energy-intensive (2) infrastructure and product turnover.

Fundamentally, (3) altering the world's energy system is unlikely to occur within this timeframe. It is thus imperative to find means to reduce the footprint of the existing system - most particularly, of coal, which is the most greenhouse gas intensive of the fossil fuels driving climate change. It is in this context that Carbon Dioxide Capture and Sequestration (CCS) becomes one of the most critical technologies in the menu of choices. It is the only option that provides a potentially near-term solution to rapidly expanding coal use here, in China and around the world. CCS must play the critical role of (4) curbing growth in emissions from coal until other alternatives are ready.