Word association and verbal analogy questions gauge your ability to make sense of relationships between given words with the help of your vocabulary skills.

This review discusses how to answer word analogy problems in major examinations like the civil service exam, college entrance exams, and many more.

What Are Word Association and Verbal Analogy Questions?

Word association questions challenge the examinees to select the correct word based on a given set of words that are related by a particular rule. Word association questions are also known as "Word Analogies."

Here's an example of a word association question:

Apple : Red, Leaf : _____

Your goal is to determine the correct word that must be placed in the blank to make the analogy correct.

The first pair of words provide us with the rule of the analogy. In our example, the first pair is *"Apple : Red."* From here, we can deduce that the rule of this analogy is that the second word (red) states the color of the first word (apple).

Now that we know the "rule" of this analogy, we will apply it to determine the unknown word in the second pair. In our example above, we need to identify the color of the first word in the second pair (i.e., leaf). Thus, the word in the blank should be "green."

The complete word analogy is

Apple : Red, Leaf : Green

So, to answer a word analogy problem, follow these steps:
1. **Identify the "rule" of the analogy using the first pair of words**. The "rule" of the word analogy is the relationship between the first and second words in the first pair.
2. **Apply the "rule" to determine the missing word in the second pair**.

Sample Problem 1: Philippines : Manila, France : _____

Solution:

Step 1: *Identify the "rule" of the analogy using the first pair of words.* This is the relationship between the first and second words in the first pair.

The first pair of words is *Philippines : Manila*. The *Philippines* is a country, while *Manila* is its capital. Thus, the rule is that the second word refers to the city capital of the first word, which refers to a country.

Step 2: *Apply the "rule" to determine the missing word in the second pair*.

Knowing that the second word in a pair refers to the capital city of the country referred to in the first word, we simply need to identify the capital of France to find the unknown word. Since Paris is the capital of France, then the missing word is Paris.

The complete analogy is *Philippines : Manila, France : Paris.*

Sample Problem 2: *carpenter : hammer, surgeon :* _____
   a) stethoscope
   b) gavel
   c) scalpel
   d) metronome

Solution:

Step 1: *Identify the "rule" of the analogy using the first pair of words.* This is the relationship between the first and second words in the first pair.

Using the first pair of words (i.e., *carpenter : hammer)*, we can derive the rule of the analogy. The first word states the occupation of a person (carpenter), and the second word states a tool that a person with this occupation uses (hammer).

Step 2: *Apply the "rule" to determine the missing word in the second pair.*

Let us think about what tool a surgeon uses. Among the given options, it is the scalpel that a surgeon uses. Specifically, the scalpel is a small sharp blade used in surgeries.

Although stethoscopes are also used in the medical field, the scalpel is a more appropriate "partner" to surgeons since stethoscopes are more commonly used by diagnosing physicians. Meanwhile, a gavel is the "hammer" that judges use in a court proceeding. On the other hand, a metronome is a tool musicians use to keep in rhythm when they are playing their instruments.

Sample Problem 3: *tranquil : peaceful, terrible : _____*
   a) magnanimous
   b) dreadful
   c) colossal
   d) astonishing

Solution:

Step 1: *Identify the "rule" of the analogy using the first pair of words.* This is the relationship between the first and second words in the first pair.

Tranquil is another word for peaceful. Thus, the rule of the analogy is that the first and second words are synonyms (i.e., words with the same meaning).

Step 2: *Apply the "rule" to determine the missing word in the second pair.*

Knowing the rule of the analogy, we simply need to determine the word with the same meaning as terrible.

Among the given options, the word "dreadful" is the one that is synonymous with terrible.

Therefore, the complete word analogy is *tranquil : peaceful , terrible : dreadful.*

Common Word Association Rules

It is crucial to be familiar with the standard word analogy rules or patterns used in exams. Again, the rule of a word analogy is how the given words are related.

Here are the most common word association rules used in assessments and exams.

Word Association Rule/Pattern	Examples
Synonyms	annihilate : decimate
Antonyms	divulge : conceal
Part to the whole	wheel : car
Category to item	rodent : hamster
Member to group	sheep : flock
Object to attribute	leaf : green
Object to action	guitar : strum
Person to tool	surgeon : scalpel
Cause and effect	work : earn

Geography	Manila : Philippines
Measurement	weight : kilogram
Symbol to representation	crown : glory
Young to old	foal : horse
Person to place	sailor : ship
Field to study	Geology : Earth

1. Synonyms

Word analogies involving synonyms include words with the same meaning.

Examples:
- *tranquil : peaceful :: terrible : dreadful*
- *noble : patrician :: annihilate : decimate*
- *pleasant : courteous :: minute : small*
- *arduous : taxing :: neutral : fair*
- *candid : straightforward :: unostentatious : plain*

2. Antonyms

Word analogies involving antonyms include words with opposite meanings.

Examples:
- *lazy : industrious :: gallant : coward*

- *straight : crooked :: initiate : cease*
- *juvenile : archaic :: repulsive : alluring*
- *conceal : divulge :: docile : disobedientfertile : barren :: intensify : abate*

3. Part to the Whole (and Vice Versa)

In a "part to whole" analogy, the first word is a "part" or "portion" of the second word.. For instance, *mouth : face* is an example of a "part to whole" because the mouth is a part of a human face.

The opposite of "part to whole" is also usually used in word analogies. For instance, *tree : root* is the opposite of "part to whole" because the tree is the "whole" while the root is the "part."

Examples:

- *root : tree :: tail : dog*
- *wings : bird :: fins : fish*
- *thumb : hand :: string : guitar*
- *roof : house :: wheel : car*
- *screen : phone :: toe : foot*

4. Category to Item (and Vice Versa)

A "category to item" word analogy compares a particular category to an object that belongs to that category. For example, *music : jazz* is a category-to-item analogy where "music" is the category and "jazz" is an item that belongs to this category.

Examples:

- *vegetable : radish :: ocean : pacific*
- *noun : doctor :: verb : diagnose*
- *mammal : platypus :: amphibian : salamander*
- *rodent : hamster :: bird : ostrich*
- *autotroph : plants :: flower : daisy*

5. Member to Group (and Vice Versa)

A "member to group" word analogy is similar to the "category to item" analogy. In this type of analogy, we compare a "member" of a particular group to the collective in which that member belongs to. For example, *sheep : flock* is a "member to group" analogy where "sheep" is the member and "flock" is the group.

Examples:

- *sheep : flock :: goose : gaggle*
- *cow : herd :: mother : family*
- *soldier : battalion :: cellist : orchestra*
- *ants : colony :: wolf : pack*
- *bird : flock :: cat : clowder*

6. Object to Attribute

An "object to its attribute" word analogy compares an object to one of its characteristics. This characteristic could be the object's size, color, texture, age, weight, etc. For example, *leaf : green* is an "object to attribute" analogy where "leaf" is the object while "green" is its attribute.

Examples:

- *donut : round :: feather : light*
- *apple : red :: leaf : green*
- *silk : smooth :: vase : fragile*
- *cotton : soft :: eggplant : violet*

- *tower : high :: talc : powdered*

7. Object to Action (and Vice Versa)

An "object to action" word analogy compares an object to the action usually associated with it. For instance, *pencil : write* is an example of an object-to-action analogy with the *pencil* as the object and *write* as the action.

Note that the "object to action" analogy can be a "person to action" analogy as well, where we compare a specific person to the action he/she usually performs. For instance, *chef : cook* is a "person to action" analogy where the *chef* is the person and *cook* is the action.

Examples:

- *pencil : write :: ball : dribble*
- *knife : slice :: gun : shoot*
- *bat : swing :: ball : dribble*
- *guitar : strum :: cup : drink*

8. Person to Tool (and Vice Versa)

A "person to tool" analogy compares a particular person (or occupation of that person) to the tool that he/she usually uses. For example, *surgeon : scalpel* is a person-to-tool analogy where the *surgeon* is the person and the *scalpel* is the tool.

Examples:
- *carpenter : hammer :: surgeon : scalpel*
- *doctor : stethoscope :: biologist : microscope*

- *plumber : wrench :: pianist : metronome*
- *photographer : camera :: pen : writer*

9. Cause and Effect

A "cause and effect" analogy involves two words where the first word is the cause of the occurrence of the second word. For example, *rain : flood* is a cause-and-effect word analogy where *rain* is the cause and *flood* is the effect.

Examples:
- *insult : cry :: crime : jail*
- *train : improve :: ignite : burn*
- *work : earn :: sloppiness : accident*

10. Geography

In a geography word analogy, the pair of words are related based on their geographical nature. For example, *Manila : Philippines* is a geography word analogy in which Manila is the capital of the country Philippines.

There are different geographical relationships among words in a geography word analogy. For instance, it could be "city to country" (e.g., *Pontaise : France*), "landmark to country" (e.g., *Merlion : Singapore*), "language to country" (e.g., *Mandarin : China*), "landform to country" (e.g., *Mt. Fuji : Japan*), or a "person to country" (e.g., *Gandhi : India*).

Examples:

- *Vienna : Austria :: Ottawa : Canada*
- *Barcelona : Spain :: Cebu : Philippines*
- *Pyramids : Egypt :: Statue of Liberty : United States*

- *Chopin : Poland :: Einstein : Germany*

11. Measurement

In a measurement word analogy, the second word in the first pair usually indicates a particular unit of measurement for the first word. For instance, *length : meter* is an example of a measurement word analogy since the meter is a unit of measurement used to indicate length.

Examples:

- *length : meter :: temperature : Kelvin*
- *weight : gram :: area : hectare*
- *energy : joule :: sound : hertz*

12. Symbol to Representation

In this type of word analogy, we compare a particular symbol to the thing it represents. For instance, *cross : Catholicism* is a "symbol to representation" analogy since the first cross represents the Catholic faith.

Examples:

- *rose : love :: scroll : knowledge*
- *skull : death :: chain : slavery*
- *crown : glory :: fire : anger*
- *heart : love :: dove : peace*
- *pumpkin : halloween :: star : success*

13. Young to Old (and Vice Versa)

In this type of word analogy, we compare the word that refers to a young person/animal to the word that refers to its mature counterpart.

Examples:

- *kitten : cat :: squabs : pigeon*
- *calf : deer :: cub : lion*
- *infant : human :: pup : shark*

14. Person to Place (and Vice Versa)

In this type of word analogy, we compare a particular person to the place where this person usually stays or works.

Examples:
- *sailor : ship :: doctor : hospital*
- *priest : church :: instructor : university*
- *teacher : school :: king : palace*

15. Field to Study

In this type of word analogy, we compare a particular field of knowledge to what it studies.

Examples:

- *Geology : Earth :: Botany : Plant*
- *Meteorology : Weather :: Astronomy : Space*
- *Linguistics : Language :: Zoology : Animals*

Double-Word Analogy

In our previous examples, the word analogies only have one missing word. However, most assessment and qualifying exams usually also include "double-word analogies" in their questionnaires. In this type of analogy, there are two missing words that you are tasked to determine.

To identify the missing pair in a double-word analogy, we must look for the pair consisting of words that are related in the same way as how the first pair of words are related.

Sample Problem 1:

> *benevolent : magnanimous :: _____ : _____*

a) *heathen : pagan*
b) *malevolent : amiable*
c) *cruel : caring*
d) *mundane : thrilling*

Solution:

To determine which among the pair of words above will complete the double-word analogy, we need to determine first how the first pair of words (i.e., *benevolent : magnanimous)* are related.

The words *benevolent* and *magnanimous* have the same meaning (i.e., synonyms). Therefore, we need to determine which among the given pair of words in the choices follow the same relationship. That is, the words that are also synonymous to each other.

For more related review materials, visit
https://filipiknow.net/logical-and-analytical-reasoning/

To God be the glory!

Among the given choices, the pair *heathen : pagan* has the same meaning. Both these words refer to a person whose belief deviates from a widely-accepted religion.

Therefore, the complete analogy is *benevolent : magnanimous :: heathen : pagan*.

Sample Problem 2:
arachnid : spider :: _____ : _____

a) bird : scale
b) tadpole : frog
c) fish : shark
d) platypus : egg

Solution: The words *arachnid : spider* is a "category to item" analogy in which the first word is a category (arachnid) and the second word is an object/item that belongs to that category (spider).

This means that the second pair of words should follow the "category to item" relationship as well. Among the given options, *fish : shark* is the one that follows this rule. Specifically, the *fish* is the category and *shark* is an item that belongs to the "fish" category.

Additional Tips To Answer Word Association and Verbal Analogy Problems

1. Broaden Your Vocabulary

The more words you're familiar with, the higher the chance you can immediately identify the word analogy pattern. Hence, expanding your vocabulary is essential to ace word association questions.

Read a lot of English textbooks, novels, magazines, newspapers, and even online articles. Keep a notebook where you can write unfamiliar words you encounter every time you read. Afterward, get a dictionary and look for their meaning. Make sure to review this notebook during your spare time.

2. Master the Art of Elimination

Elimination is the process of removing the options (or words) that don't follow the word analogy pattern. This technique is helpful if you cannot immediately identify the correct word that completes the analogy.

Let us use elimination to determine the missing word in this analogy:

violent : meek :: significant : _____

    a) *colossal*
    b) *abundant*
    c) *virtuosic*
    d) *trivial*

The missing word cannot be identified easily among the given options because they are not usually used in a casual English conversation. By using elimination, we can increase our odds of arriving at the correct answer by disregarding the options that do not follow the pattern.

From the first pair of words, *violent : meek*, we have an "antonyms" word analogy.

Hence, the missing word should be the antonym or the opposite of the word *significant*. We all know that significant means important. Hence, we can eliminate the words in the given options that have nothing to do with importance.

Does the word *colossal* express the importance of something? No, *colossal* refers to the size of an object. Thus, we eliminate this option.

Does the word *abundant* express the importance of something? No, *abundant* refers to the quantity of an object. Thus, we eliminate this option.

Does the word *virtuosic* express the importance of something? No, *virtuosic* refers to the talent or skill of an object. Thus, we eliminate this option.

Hence, the remaining word, which is trivial, is the missing word. The complete analogy is *violent : meek :: significant : trivial.*

3. Transform the Analogy Into a Sentence

We can make sense of the relationship between the given words if we use them in a sentence. The sentence that we form is called a **bridge sentence.**

For example, suppose we want to answer this analogy problem:

insult : cry :: _____ : _____
  a) *run : feet*
  b) *bacteria : disease*
  c) *ignite : freeze*
  d) *foster : cultivate*

Let us try to write the first pair of words *insult : cry* as a bridge sentence:

*Insults **are the reason why people** cry.*

To determine which among the given options suits the analogy, we use the bridge sentence. If the bridge sentence becomes false (or does not make any sense) when we use the words to it, then this pair of words is not suitable for the analogy.

run : feet

Analytical Ability Reviewer

Word Association/Verbal Analogy

run **are the reason why people** *feet*

The sentence above does not make any sense, so the words *run* and *feet* are not the answer.

bacteria : disease
bacteria **are the reason why people** have *disease*

The bridge sentence is true as we use the words *bacteria* and *disease*. Therefore, the pair *bacteria : disease* is the one we are looking for.

Now, let us try the remaining options.

ignite : freeze

ignite **are the reason why people** *freeze*

foster : cultivate
foster **are the reason why people** *cultivate*

The words above do not satisfy the bridge sentence. Hence, only the pair *bacteria : disease* is the answer for the double-word analogy problem.