

Inference: an idea that is suggested by the facts or details in a passage.

Most writing *suggests* more than it *says*. Conclusions may be missing from the things you read, so you have to draw your own. An author may not include information for several reasons:

1. They may think you already know it
2. It may not seem important to them
3. They may want you to find the result

How to Make an Inference:

1. Observe all the facts, information, and arguments given by the author.
2. Consider what you already know from your own experience.
3. When faced with multiple choice answers, determine whether each is true or false based on the information in the passage:

The woman waited nervously in line. When the counter was empty, she carefully unloaded her items from her cart. Lines creased her forehead as if to show the calculations ringing up in her head. Finally, the cashier began ringing up the items as the woman clutched her purse.

→ Inference: The woman may not have enough money to cover the cost of her groceries.

4. Think about the facts of the passage and what may result from them.
5. Think about causes and effects. Sometimes, the writer may only provide a list of effects, so you have to figure out the cause:

The child stood on the sidewalk clenching her ice cream cone. Beads of sweat collected on her little nose as she furiously licked at the ice cream dripping down her hand.

→ Inference: It must be a hot day because her ice cream is melting, and she is sweating.

6. Try saying “If ...then.”

*If the girl is sweating, **then** it may be warm outside.*

NOTE: For better or worse, many writers make assumptions about shared cultural experiences they believe their audience will recognize. For that reason, learn as much as you can about the cultural context of the story. Some ways to learn about a culture:

1. Ask friends in that culture about their childhoods.
2. Watch movies and television from that culture, including from several decades back.
3. Read, read, read.

Practice:

Turner almost wished that he hadn't listened to the radio. He went to the closet and grabbed his umbrella. He would feel silly carrying it to the bus stop on such a sunny morning.

Which probably happened?

- a. Turner realized that he had an unnatural fear of falling radio parts.
- b. Turner had promised himself to do something silly that morning.
- c. Turner had heard a weather forecast that predicted rain.
- d. Turner planned to trade his umbrella for a bus ride.

"Larry, as your boss, I must say that it's been very interesting working with you," Miss Valdez said. "However, it seems that our company's needs and your performance style are not well matched. Therefore, it makes me very sad to have to ask you to resign your position effective today."

What was Miss Valdez telling Larry?

- a. She would feel really bad if he decided to quit.
- b. He was being fired.
- c. He was getting a raise in pay.
- d. She really enjoyed having him in the office.

Every day after work, Paul took his muddy boots off on the steps of the front porch. Alice would have a fit if the boots made it so far as the welcome mat. He then took off his dusty overalls and threw them into a plastic garbage bag; Alice left a new garbage bag tied to the porch railing for him every morning. On his way in the house, he dropped the garbage bag off at the washing machine and went straight up the stairs to the shower as he was instructed. He would eat dinner with her after he was "presentable," as Alice had often said.

What type of job does Paul work? _____

Describe Alice: _____

What relationship to Paul and Alice have? _____

What might "presentable" mean to Alice? _____