

Section A passage types

Opinion, academic, political, scientific and legal prose without five separate reading methods.

THE SHORT ANSWER

The surface changes; the core job does not. Find the claim, the support, any qualification and the scope. Opinion pieces may hide concessions or refuse them. Academic prose limits what follows. Political passages mix facts with values. Scientific prose punishes causal overreach. Legal prose turns on a rule and its exception. No legal knowledge is assumed.

Checked against the sources named in this guide, August 2026. British English. Free to share.

1 One skeleton, five outfits

Every Section A passage can be reduced to four questions:

1. What is the author trying to establish?
2. What reason or evidence supports it?
3. What objection, exception or limitation narrows it?
4. How far does the language commit: always, usually, may, only, unless?

The passage type tells you where those parts are likely to hide. It does not change the rule that the answer must come from the passage. If the writer makes a false scientific claim, treat it as true for that question unless the passage itself challenges it.

1 The tell

Before reading the options, complete one sentence: "The author accepts X, but argues Y because Z." If the writer concedes nothing, use: "The author insists Y because Z." If neither works, you are still holding the topic rather than the argument.

2 The five types and their favourite traps

Type	Track this	Likely trap	Fast annotation
Opinion	Thesis, concession, tone, rhetorical example	Treating the conceded point as the final view	C for concession, T for thesis
Academic	Hypothesis, evidence, limitation, rival explanation	Upgrading "suggests" to "proves"	H, E, L
Political	Value being protected, institution, affected group	Confusing what is legal, popular and desirable	Fact / value in margin
Scientific	Comparison, variable, result, causal boundary	Turning correlation into causation or all cases	Arrow only if passage earns it
Legal	Rule, exception, reason and new facts	Importing outside law or ignoring an exception	R, X, apply

3 Opinion: the word “but” usually earns its space

Opinion passages often begin fairly: a rival view is presented before the author’s own claim. The trap is choosing a polished sentence that summarises the opening concession. Track whose voice owns each claim and whether the author adopts, limits or rejects it.

Tone is a matter of degree. “Unconvincing” is not “dishonest”. “Premature” is not “absurd”. Match the temperature of the answer to the temperature of the prose.

Not every opinion passage begins fairly. A polemic may state a rival answer only to reject it outright. Do not invent a compromise merely because a qualified option sounds thoughtful.

Worked example A committed stance earns a committed answer

Passage. Public authorities should stop naming civic buildings after living politicians. The practice converts shared space into campaign material, rewards those who control today’s vote and forces public praise before a career can be judged. An independent panel does not cure the offence: the decision remains a state-sponsored verdict on an unfinished record. Honour service with names only after the subject is beyond office and historical scrutiny has had time to work. A council that names a library after its current leader is not celebrating history; it is manufacturing it.

Question. Which statement best captures the author’s position?

- A. Naming a civic building after a living politician is acceptable when an independent panel makes the choice.
- B. Civic buildings should never be named after living politicians.
- C. Councils should choose names that increase public interest in local political history.
- D. A politician’s record can be judged fairly as soon as that person leaves office.

Correct: B. The author opposes the practice without an exception for process, popularity or intention.

Misreading: Concession laundering, A: the panel is rejected as unable to cure the underlying offence; it is not a condition of acceptance.

Misreading: Purpose substitution, C: increasing interest in history is neither claimed nor used to justify naming.

Misreading: Timing dilution, D: the author requires both departure from office and time for historical scrutiny, not departure alone.

The committed answer is correct because the passage is committed. Qualification is a reading result, not a personality trait to reward in every option set.

4 Academic and scientific: do not promote the evidence

Academic prose regularly uses narrow verbs: *indicates, is consistent with, may explain, within this sample*. Wrong options remove the brake. A study that finds a link does not automatically identify the cause; a result in one population does not automatically govern every population.

When the passage gives an alternative explanation, keep it alive unless later evidence removes it. Your own knowledge of the topic has no vote.

5 Political: separate description from judgement

A political passage may report that a policy is popular, argue that it is fair, and predict that it will work. Those are three different claims. Ask which value controls the author’s conclusion: liberty, equality, efficiency, stability, accountability, or something narrower the passage defines.

Do not assume that the author supports a policy merely because they explain it clearly. Description is not endorsement.

6 Legal: no secret law syllabus

Legal prose may state a rule, give its purpose, then describe an exception. Treat it like a small machine. A new case fits only if the relevant facts trigger the same rule or exception. The governing law is the law printed in the passage, even if you remember a different real-world rule.

Analogy questions require the same principle, not the same nouns. A case about a train ticket can share a principle with a software subscription if both concern clear notice before payment.

2 Try it

Take one passage of each type. Write only four margin marks: claim, support, limit, scope word. Then answer without adding facts. The aim is a portable reading frame, not five folders of jargon.

7 Worked Section A: a scientific passage with a policy sting

Worked example The result is narrower than the headline

Passage. In one city, commuters given free bus travel for a month reported lower stress than commuters who paid normal fares. The groups were not randomly assigned: volunteers chose whether to join the free-travel scheme. The result therefore does not establish that fares caused the difference. Even so, it justifies a larger trial, because cost may affect both travel choices and the anxiety associated with them. The mayor should fund that trial before claiming that free buses improve public health.

Question. Which statement would the author most likely accept?

- A. The study proves that paying bus fares is itself a cause of commuter stress.
- B. Because volunteers chose their groups, the study provides no useful reason for further investigation.
- C. A controlled trial is warranted; the causal claim remains premature.
- D. Free public transport cannot improve public health under any circumstances.

Correct: C. It preserves both parts of the argument: useful signal, insufficient causal proof.

Misreading: Causal promotion, A: the passage expressly refuses that inference.

Misreading: All-or-nothing evaluation, B: a limitation reduces certainty without erasing the reason to investigate.

Misreading: Scope reversal, D: the author says the effect is unproven, not impossible.

This is a hybrid passage: scientific evidence inside a political recommendation. Label by the reasoning move that controls the question, not by the nouns on the page.

8 A passage-by-passage review method

After a set, do not write “science passage bad”. Record the precise miss:

- conclusion confused with concession;
- evidence promoted beyond its scope;
- author’s view confused with a reported view;
- rule applied without checking the exception;
- analogy matched by topic instead of principle;
- degree word ignored.

When the same label appears three times, you have a trainable pattern. Passage variety stops feeling random once the misreading has a name.

9 Sources

LNAT Consortium, Test format

Twelve argumentative passages, three or four questions each, 42 questions in 95 minutes. [Read the official format.](#)

LNAT Consortium, Hints and tips

Read the exact meaning, import no outside knowledge, treat the passage at face value and discriminate between close options. [Read the official advice.](#)

UniGenius LNAT planning specification

The opinion, academic, political, scientific and legal working taxonomy used for passage analytics. This is a study taxonomy, not an official LNAT label set.

The worked passages are original. Passage labels help diagnose reading; the official test may mix several styles in one text.