

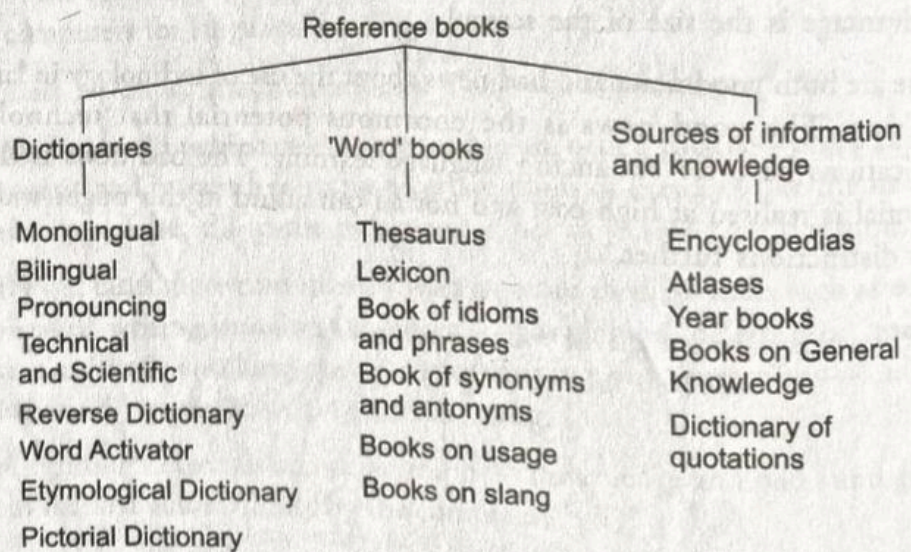
# 17. Study Skills and Reference Skills

*The word thesaurus means a treasure-house or treasure.*

**Q. 1** What are the study skills and how are they useful to a learner?

There are a number of instructional instruments that can be called essential aids in language learning and teaching; they are essential for reference purposes, locating, sorting and retrieving information, and study. Since the aim of teaching is teaching learners how to learn, there is a need for cultivating the skills of self-study among learners. Unfortunately, not much attention is paid to this aspect in the classroom.

## A. Locating information and the use of reference books



**B. Gathering information:** Skimming, scanning, intensive/extensive reading

**C. Storing information:** Note-taking, note-making, summarising and information transfer involving graphic and pictorial material, charts, tables, maps, etc.

D. Retrieving and interpreting information: The use of the library for locating the sources of information; making summaries, etc.

These are the 'survival-kits' or the 'tool-kits' that are necessary for successful and informed living in the competitive world of today.

## Q. 2 Mention some useful reference books.

1. *Dictionaries*: Most pedagogical and learners' dictionaries nowadays give not only the pronunciation, spelling and meaning(s) but also examples of usage with illustrations, variations in the British/American spelling, collocations, exceptions and a whole lot of information necessary to learn English.

Learners must be taught how to use such dictionaries. For example, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* gives picture illustrations for the entry *bird*; pictures are given for *sparrow, kingfisher, pigeon, woodpecker, crow, robin, etc.*, and the names of the parts like *feather, wing, bill*, etc., are shown for a bird; it also gives expressions like *birdie* (used by or to children), *The early bird gets/catches the worm*: A person who gets up or arrives early will be successful', 'kill two birds with the same stone', etc. Learners may be trained to look up such dictionaries often so that their vocabulary gets expanded.

*Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995) under the entry *child* gives the meanings and usage of related expressions like *child abuse, child care*, etc. and useful quotations like 'The child is father of the man' (Wordsworth). There is a wealth of information in modern dictionaries.

*Longman Essential Activator* is a word-bank that contains all essential information to help the learner to put ideas into words. For example, under the entry *agree*, one can find all necessary ways of expressing agreement with 'Help Boxes' that give the most common mistakes when learning English; it also gives situation-based essential communication and essential grammar. There is also a workbook to go with the Activator. *Reader's Digest Reverse Dictionary* helps the reader to find the words on the tip of their tongue. *Macmillan Dictionary for Advanced Learners* comes with a CD-ROM; two similar but separate editions, one for the British variety and another for the American variety, are available. This dictionary is highly innovative and user-friendly.

2. *Other basic reference works*: An encyclopaedia is another useful source of information and knowledge. An encyclopaedia is arranged in an alphabetical order by subject. On the spine of each volume the letters show the subject covered; for example, Volume I A-C covers all subjects, the first letters of

whose titles are between A and C. There can also be cross-references for certain subjects: e.g. 'see also' Vol IV. There is also an index at the end of the last volume to help the users.

The following are some of the general encyclopaedias:

(i) New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 30 Vols

(ii) Encyclopaedia Americana, 30 Vols

(iii) Collier's Encyclopaedia, 24 Vols

(iv) New Columbia Encyclopaedia, 1 Vol.

There are also a number of abridged versions of dictionaries and encyclopaedias in the market.

Some of the encyclopaedias are also available on CDs and the Internet.

The *thesaurus* is another useful book for reference purposes. *Rogers's Thesaurus* of English words and phrases is the standard one. A thesaurus is a converse dictionary in which, the idea being given, one can find the word or words and phrases by which the idea may be most aptly expressed. This arrangement is according to the meanings of words; it gives all synonyms in terms of meaning categories. For example, in the section on *formation of ideas*, we find all words related to *intellect*, *absence of intellect*, *thought*, *idea*, *curiosity*, *incuriosity*, *attention*, *inattention*, *care*, *neglect*, etc. Under *intellect*, we find all related words:

N. *intellect*, *mind*, *understanding*, *reason*, *rationality* ...

V. *note*, *notice*, *mark*; *take-notice*, *-cognizance of*.

Adj. *intellectual*, *mental*, *rational*, etc.

There are several versions like *The New Rogers's Thesaurus Dictionary Form* and even abridged versions.

*Manorama Year Book*, published every year, and books on general knowledge, quiz books, etc., are also available in the market.

Q. 3 Write a brief note on listening and taking notes.

While you listen to lectures, follow these useful tips for taking down better notes:

1. Get ready before the lecture starts, with a pen/pencil and a notebook.

2. Your entire attention should be on the lecture. It is better if you know the lecture topic beforehand so that you can tune yourself to the content of the lecture. Even if you don't know it beforehand, you can get it in the first few minutes of the lecture if you are attentive.

3. You should focus on the essential points in the lecture. The jokes and fun should only be enjoyed and not taken seriously. The main points should be noted down clearly.

4. You should be quick in taking notes and you should follow an order while taking notes. It can be any order of your choice but follow it consistently. It is better to number the headings, subheadings, subsections, etc., so that the sequence of argument is not lost. For example, see the following notes taken of the lecture on 'English in India'.

**Title: Why English in India**

(i) English as an international language

(a) A brief history of English

(b) The growth of English

(c) The uses of English in the world

(ii) English in India

(a) How English came to India

(b) English in Indian education

(c) The place of English at present

(iii) Advantages and disadvantages

(a) The various uses of English in India

(i) In formal situations

(ii) In informal situations

(b) The difficulties in using English

(i) Due to the nature of the language

(ii) Due to the mental makeup of Indians

(iii) The influence of Indian languages

5. The best time for you to take notes is when the speaker switches over from one point to another. Generally the speaker signals this switch over by using phrases such as 'the next point is' or 'let me now talk about the ...', 'Let me move on to ...', 'firstly, secondly, thirdly, etc.'. This is only a suggestion and if you are able to take notes simultaneously when you listen to the lecture, please do it.

**Q. 4 Write a brief note on reading and making notes.**

A student needs to read a lot in English and so the skill of making notes is of utmost importance to him/her. The following tips will be useful:

(i) Prepare yourself for making notes before you start reading the book; keep a small notebook and a pen/pencil.

(ii) Read the content of the book and get some idea of the entire book. If necessary, read the preface or introduction.

(iii) Focusing on essential points is very important. Equally important is ignoring the non-essential ones.

(iv) Use symbols, abbreviations or any other devices which you find useful and make notes. Whatever system you use, use it consistently.

(v) As making notes is a leisurely activity, don't be in haste—reread the part which you don't understand.

To make good notes, you must proceed systematically; you should also know for what purpose you are making notes—just for the examination, for future reference, or just for organising your thoughts better and for drawing conclusions.

Taking notes and making notes are applicable to all subjects but are never taught in schools and colleges. Since English is related closely to other subjects, the teacher of English must train students in these skills; these skills are a part of teaching comprehension and summarising.

There are several techniques that can be used for recording and preserving notes. Notes can be in the form of outlines, drawings, charts, etc.

**Q. 5 Write a brief note on graphic representations and their use.**

In the present-day world of information technology, graphic representations have become very important. They are also useful in making notes.

*Tables, charts, histograms or graphs* are useful in representing and storing information. Collecting information from some source and transferring it from the verbal mode (i.e. oral or written mode) to a non-verbal mode (i.e. a table, a chart, a flow chart, etc.) and vice versa are very useful and necessary. The advantages of presenting the information in non-verbal form are:

- (i) We can refer to it quickly.
- (ii) The information is easily and effectively presented. A picture is worth a thousand words, it is said.
- (iii) Longer pieces of information can be stored in a small space—economy of space.
- (iv) Making comparisons is very easy.
- (v) Retrieving information is easier.
- (vi) In real life visuals are used more to present information and so students are prepared for real-life situations.
- (vii) Students who learn to store information in the form of tables, charts, diagrams and graphs are at an advantage while they prepare for exams.

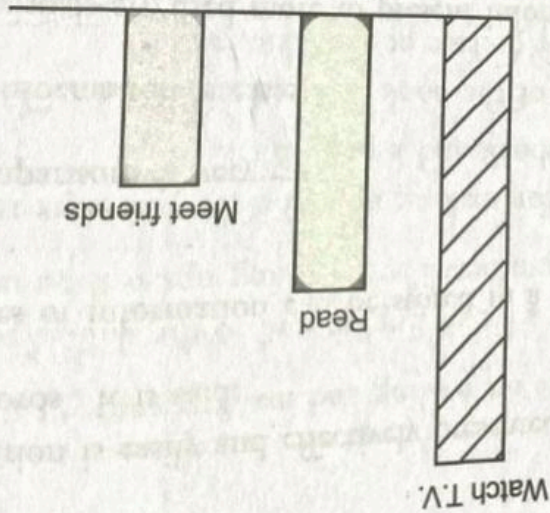
Common uses of the visual mode for presenting information:

- (i) *Railway and bus timetables*, tables of prices or weight, tax tables, conversion tables, substitution tables, etc.
- (ii) *Charts* in government offices, to compare the population growth, price rise, etc.; in police stations to illustrate the crime rate; in schools to indicate the admission, pass percentage, etc.
- (iii) *Graphs* to compare data, to indicate the growth rate of industries, increase in the number of educational institutions, etc.

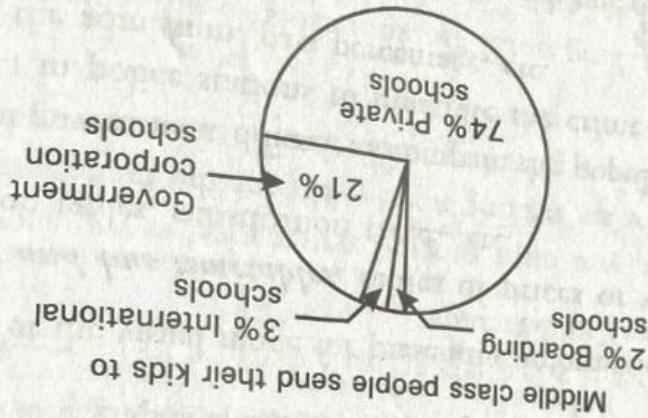
- (iv) *Diagrams* to illustrate scientific equipment, scientific experiments, etc.
- (v) *Flow charts* to explain the sequence of action in a science experiment, production line.
- (vi) *Tree diagrams* to illustrate the hierarchical relationship of ideas, family tree, etc.

There are different kinds of charts used to present information and one can find them even in the daily newspapers—bar charts, pie charts, organisation charts, pictographs, etc.

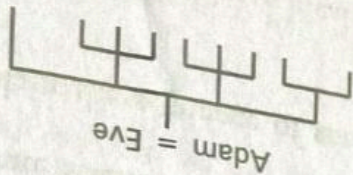
A bar chart/graph is a graph/chart consisting of a series of bars whose lengths indicate quantity.



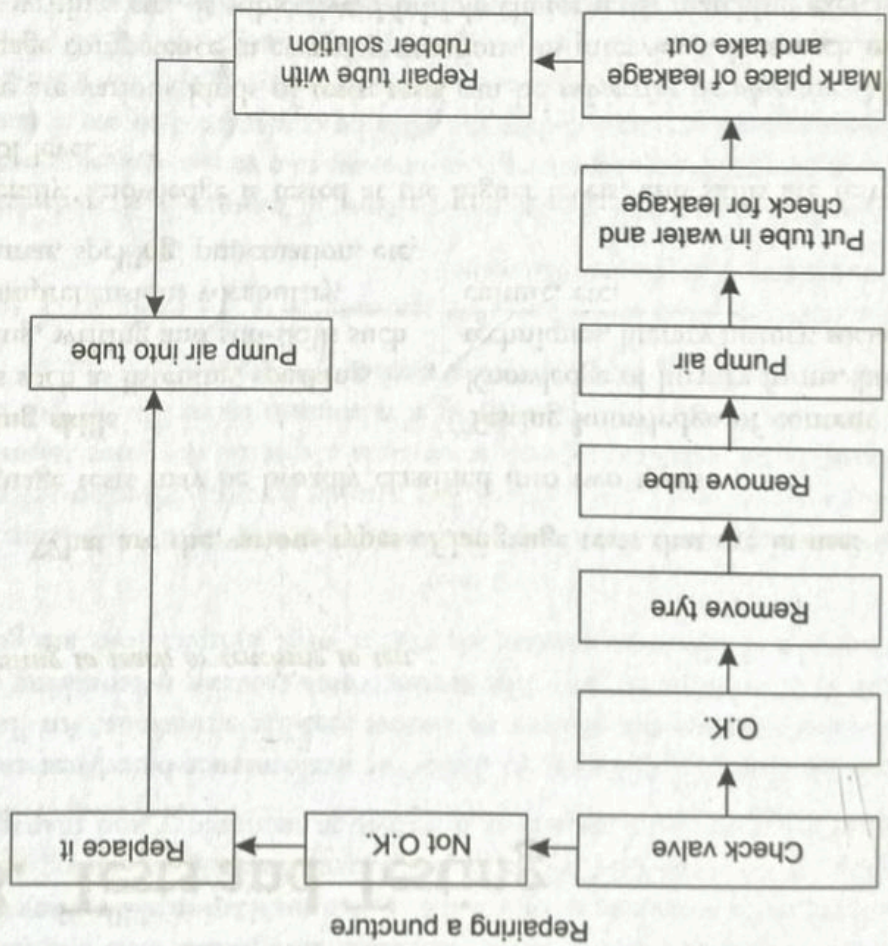
A pie chart is a graph/chart in the form of a circle with sectors of varying size representing the units.



An organisation chart is a chart in the form of a diagram showing relationships of the parts.



Maps and atlases are also good sources of knowledge.



Flow chart



Bl... the... Son... at... draw... can... clas... Exa...

# 18. Tests and Testing

*Testing to teach or teaching to test.*

Q. 1 What are the various types of language tests that are in use?

Language tests may be broadly classified into two types:

**Testing skills**

Skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and sub-skills such as comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.

**Testing knowledge of content**

Knowledge of literary forms, literary techniques, literary history, social history, culture, etc.

Generally, knowledge is tested at the higher levels, and skills are tested at the school level.

There are various kinds of tests; tests can be *subjective* or *objective*. Measurement of language competence in everyday situations, in interviews, in speech making, in essay writing, etc., is *subjective*. Multiple choice tests, matching exercises, true or false items are examples of *objective* tests. Subjective procedures are more impressionistic, even if the evaluation is done by trained professionals; there can be variations in the evaluation even by experts in the field. For example, an answer-key that gives the right answer. Objective tests can be marked by machines with and, generally, for each item in the test there is only one correct answer. There are tests that measure *productive abilities* like speaking and writing and *receptive abilities* like listening and reading. Tests can also be classified according to the mode or medium: *oral* tests and *written* tests; there can be *bimodal* tests like dictation or note-taking (i.e. writing after listening).

Tests can be based on language components such as pronunciation, spelling and punctuation, grammar, composition, vocabulary, etc. The term *discrete-point* refers to anything isolated—maybe one skill at a time or at one level.

(phonology, grammar, etc.) or one bit (sentences, words, etc.) at a time. Discrete point tests emphasise isolated bits of language. Integrative tests emphasise the use of all the skills and components and test communication skills; they evaluate the ability to communicate effectively in speech as well as writing and they have become important in areas like information technology and management. Tests can be **direct** or **indirect**. A 'direct' or performance-based test measures one's communicative competence in almost real-life situations. An 'indirect' test does it in an indirect way like testing one's reading or speaking ability. Direct tests are difficult to administer; that is why, indirect tests are generally used.

Non-referencing tests measure an examinee's performance with reference to the performance of others in a group, like gaining grades. Criterion-referencing tests measure the examinee's progress towards a specific objective regardless of what others do; for example, specifying a minimum score like 35 per cent or 40 per cent for passing in a paper is *criterion-referencing*.

Tests are also classified as follows: (a) aptitude tests (b) proficiency tests (c) achievement tests (d) diagnostic tests.

(a) **Aptitude tests** give us guidelines to show if learners have the ability to learn a given subject. Aptitude tests in areas like music, painting, scientific reasoning, mathematical ability, etc., can be constructed to see if one has a tendency towards fine arts, science, language learning, etc. They are difficult to construct and their validity and reliability should be carefully evaluated since they provide the inputs for deciding one's future course of action in life. Aptitude tests are not much in use in India, but are widely used in countries like the USA.

(b) **Proficiency tests** measure the ability, for example, in English, to undertake a particular programme or course. For instance, placement tests are proficiency tests; they are, in a way, diagnostic in the sense that they tell us whether a learner is ready to undertake a course at a particular level and the candidate's strengths and weaknesses. TOEFL (Testing of English as a Foreign Language) or IELTS (International English Language Testing System) are proficiency tests. Some institutions stream students on the basis of proficiency tests and decide if a student can be placed in stream A (i.e. above average), stream B (average), or stream C (below average). In a way, tests for admission to courses, jobs, etc., are of this type.

(c) **Achievement tests**, on the other hand, indicate the level of achievement or the level of progress towards a specified goal. Most examinations and tests conducted in schools and colleges are achievement tests.

(d) Diagnostic tests are useful in planning remedial activities because they give the necessary inputs about the nature of the problem.

The categories mentioned above are not watertight compartments. Teachers generally evaluate students in a number of ways—homework assignments, class exercises (oral as well as written), team activities, weekly tests, projects, and participation, etc. In some institutions there is internal assessment that carries weight up to 40 to 50 per cent of the total marks. The final examination is based on the candidate's written performance.

## Q. 2 What are the characteristics of a good test?

In order to develop a proper test, one must be familiar with the important aspects of test construction. Given below are some of the aspects of a test:

- (i) The purpose of a test (i.e. what is it supposed to do?)
- (ii) A knowledge of the examinees and their background
- (iii) The accuracy of measurement (i.e. its validity)
- (iv) The suitability of the format and the familiarity of the examinees with the test format (i.e. multiple choice, cloze, etc.)
- (v) The nature of scoring and reporting
- (vi) Test economy (i.e. cost effectiveness)
- (vii) Test acceptability (i.e. suitable to the demands of the society, the institution and individuals).

There are three important characteristics of a good test—validity, reliability and feasibility.

*Validity* means the test actually measures what it is intended to measure; *reliability* shows consistency and that the test will function the same way each time it is administered with different examinees; *feasibility* includes several factors like economy (not time-consuming and not expensive with respect to development, administration and scoring), availability (i.e. easily available), acceptability (i.e. culturally and socially acceptable), relevance, interpretability and applicability.

- Identify the population (i.e. the target group)
- Prepare a pool of items
- Do a pilot try-out

- Do an item analysis
- Check for the difficulty value (DV)
- Check the discriminatory power (DP)
- Administer the test
- Give the test to a large population
- Standardise the test.

Improper wording can cause a test to become unreliable. Instructions are an essential part of any test; instructions must be clear, precise and grammatically correct. In writing instructions, one must be concise; it is better to check them over as if the one who constructs the text is the candidate to be tested; only then the difficulties and problems can be seen. Check the spellings. Instructions and sub-instructions are to be spaced out properly to avoid any confusion.

It is also very essential to create a proper 'climate' for testing. We can reduce the fear and anxiety of the students towards tests and examinations by developing a positive attitude; this can be done by conducting more informal tests and short quizzes; teachers too can reduce the excessive evaluation work by using informal testing techniques. Informal oral evaluation, open-book tests, announcing a battery of questions in advance, familiarising students in objective-type questions, using short assignments at frequent intervals and such other techniques can reduce the tension of the learners as well as the teachers and promote a more healthy attitude towards tests.

Tests can be used to enhance learning; they are effective teaching devices. By giving advance notice about the area to be covered in a test, teachers can ensure that the learning is done before hand. That is why we can say that most of the teaching activities can be considered 'testing instruments' and most tests can be used for teaching.

**Q. 3** Mention the types of questions that can be set. Illustrate your answer.

Question papers that are easiest to set are the most difficult to grade and vice versa. Essay-type questions that can be made up in a few minutes require more time to grade; objective-type questions, which take more time to construct, can be corrected at a greater speed. Short-answer questions fall somewhere between these two extremes.

Questions are generally selected in terms of class size, using objective-type tests for large classes or examinations involving a large number of students. The number of students to be examined is an important factor in selecting

question types but the aims and objectives of the syllabus and the educational goals are as important, if not more, as the number of students to be tested. This implies that different types of questions, problems, and questions requiring analysis, integration and application, and long-answer questions will have to find a place in a balanced question paper. A balanced test design must be properly contextualised, integrative, interactive and pragmatic.

There are several types of questions:

(a) Limited response format where the response is limited, like *yes/no* questions or the *true/false* format or asking the learner to do only one thing at a time

(b) The multiple choice format (with four suggested responses):

Care must be taken in setting multiple choice questions. *Distractors* are the incorrect options but they are to be carefully selected; they should not be too easy or too vague. For example, in

Of the two toys, the child chose \_\_\_\_\_

- (a) the less expensive (b) the one most expensive  
(c) the least expensive (d) the most expensive of them

there are very good distractors for the correct answer (a).

Similarly, in a vocabulary test, for example in

The little boy had a long day; he was feeling *drowsy*. For the word *drowsy*, *lazy*, *sad*, *exhausted* are good distractors but not *stupid*.

Multiple choice items are easy to score but difficult to set.

(c) Simple completion format like filling in blanks or completing incomplete sentences

(d) Multiple choice completion: Example:

Sahitya has been waiting here \_\_\_\_\_ half an hour.  
(i) during (ii) for (iii) while (iv) since

(e) Rearranging mixed items, maybe words, sentences or even paragraphs

(f) The matching format: Matching items in column A with the ones in column B; matching halves (called *photo-fit*).

(g) Cloze procedures: A text in which every *n*th word is deleted and the testee tries to restore the text by filling in the words, using his/her linguistic and textual knowledge and the knowledge of the world.

(h) Editing tests like precis writing, removing errors or changing the style or the mode of narration, etc.

(i) Dictation: Different variations of the traditional dictation that was used only as a spelling test

(j) Short-answer questions

(k) Essay-type questions

(l) Translation

(m) Information-transfer format: Texts are to be read carefully and the information to be arranged in tables/chart, etc. or the reverse of it (i.e. from tables/charts into paragraphs).

(n) Communicative testing: Actual use of language in real-life settings which are based on the needs of the learners.

Q. 4 Write a brief note on selecting texts for testing reading comprehension.

Texts for comprehension should be from authentic sources from standard newspapers, magazines, books, etc. The selected texts should conform to the types of texts included in the syllabus. It is not good to select texts simply because they are readily available or easy to read. A relatively difficult or complex text should be shorter than a more straightforward one. The length of the text may vary from 50 to 100 words at the elementary level, 200 to 300 words at the intermediate level, and 400 to 600 words at the advanced level. Passages for scanning may be longer; detailed reading can be tested using shorter texts. So, we should be clear about the objectives of testing reading comprehension. Texts dealing with a single idea or one theme are not suitable; it is better to select passages with a series of events, a collection of facts, or different options and attitudes. In addition, the selected passage should cover the structures and words included in the syllabus.

Instructions and questions for testing comprehension should be in simple English so that students understand them. It is better to use a variety of questions and not questions that can be answered by copying some words from the passage. Questions can be set according to the length and nature of the text selected. Some examples are given below.

*Sentence comprehension:* Multiple choice paraphrases of even simple signs can be useful.

Smoking is injurious to health.

It means (a) smoking is prohibited, (b) smoking will harm the smoker's health, (c) it is better not to smoke, (d) smoking will cause injury.

Q. 5 Write a brief note on testing listening comprehension.

Except for listening to their teachers in the class, our learners of English are neither exposed to any listening like the TOEFL test that is required for admission to universities in the USA, or in the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) required for admission to universities in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, listening comprehension is tested. It is becoming more and more important even in job selection, telephone interviews in areas like information technology and management.

Generally, listening tests do involve reading, writing and, sometimes, even speaking. Yet, it is possible to test listening alone in terms of (a) discrimination of sounds, (b) recognising specific elements like words and (c) overall comprehension.

As in the case of testing reading, a test constructor must keep in mind the length of the material, coverage, authenticity and the level of difficulty in testing listening. Listening can be done by giving instructions about the following:

• ticking the correct option

• circling the correct option

• underlining the correct/odd unit

• true/false type

• multiple choice

• numbering

• matching

• completion of sentences, tables, charts, diagrams, etc.

• filling in blanks.

Some examples for the lower classes:

(a) *Listen and do:* Children may be asked to listen to some instructions and do what they are asked to do. They can be asked to draw a simple picture or diagram or perform some actions. This is a good testing device at the primary level.

(b) *Listen and respond to words/sentences in English:* This format can be generally used at the middle- and secondary-school levels. Students are asked to mark the meaning of a word or sentence in the answer-sheet that uses a multiple choice or true/false format or the completion format.

## Examples:

- (i) *Matching*: A series of pictures can be given and students are asked to match the spoken word/sentence with the picture. They can be asked to order the pictures according to the order of words/sentences.

- (ii) *Dictation* of words, sentences or short paragraphs is also used for testing listening. Traditionally, it was used as a spelling test. But it can be used for asking the learner to write out in full any orally presented text; connected passages (i.e. discourse material) can be used since a discourse material always gives clues for understanding the passage.

- (iii) We can also test the candidate's reading speed. This can be done with the help of computers that display the time taken for answering questions given on reading passages.

## Q. 6 What are the different ways of testing writing?

Tests of writing may range from writing simple words to the writing of an essay. In the examination, mostly this is the skill that is tested at all levels. Since writing involves a variety of features like grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation, reading comprehension, paragraphing, unity and organisation, it takes a central place in our examination system. There are different types of questions to test writing skills. For the elementary level, pictures and photographs can be used to make the children write some descriptions.

- (i) *Description*: A picture or a photograph is given and children are asked to describe the objects/person in the picture or photograph.
- (ii) *Description, comparison and contrast*: Two similar pictures or diagrams are given and children are asked to write comparing the two. They can make lists of similarities and differences between the two.

- (iii) Index cards with one sentence on each are given; the children are to assemble the sentences and put them together. A picture or a diagram may be given to give an idea about the whole.

- (iv) Index cards with a part of one sentence and another part on the other may be given, all jumbled. They have to frame meaningful sentences from this jumble. They can be asked to copy the sentences.

- (v) At the secondary/intermediate level, students may be given the beginning of a paragraph with some outline and asked to complete the paragraph.

- (vi) Tables and graphs may be given for writing controlled composition tests.



- (vii) A series of questions may be given; students are to answer the questions and arrange the answers into paragraphs.
- (viii) A picture may be given without clear indications about what it is. Students are to guess and write sentences describing it.
- (ix) They may be asked to write letters describing a plan to build a house like what is given or what they would like to have etc.
- (x) Picture sequences may be given in a jumbled order; students may imagine the right sequence and write a paragraph or two.
- (xi) Even at the secondary/intermediate level, pictures and other visual representations can be used for testing writing. For example, a table with the rainfall or population in six or seven places (cities, states, countries) may be given and students are to write descriptions and comparisons.
- (xii) How to do something like using a camera/a computer for a specific purpose can be a good task for testing writing.
- (xiii) Given the map of an area with names of streets and names of important places, students are to write directions. It may be in the form of a telephone conversation, giving directions to one's friend on how to reach a place.
- (xiv) Given the map of one or two states (like AP or UP), they are asked to describe the location and some important features.
- (xv) Given a graph about the prices of a commodity like gold or LPG over a period of time, students may be asked to write a paragraph.
- (xvi) Comic strips can be used to test one's writing competence.
- (xvii) Simple sentences may be given; students are to combine the sentences using linking devices. A set may be given at the bottom. Or, a passage is given with all nouns and students are to use appropriate pronouns in different forms.
- (xviii) Punctuation marks may be left out in a short passage and students asked to punctuate the text.
- (xix) Arranging sentences in a logical order is a test given in many competitive examinations.
- (xx) Correcting mistakes is another popular test item in examinations.
- (xxi) Summarising a given passage or expanding from a given outline are also common testing techniques. At the intermediate/advanced levels, summarising even larger texts can be used.

(xxii) Translating passages can be used in monolingual contexts.

(xxiii) Apart from expansion from a given outline, speculation exercises may be used for testing writing.

Example:

Suppose there is a fire accident in a house. What precautions are to be taken? What will the firemen do in such a situation? What will the police do in this situation? What will the house owner do in such a situation?

'If you became the Prime Minister of the country, ...' is a favourite question among examiners.

(xxiv) Reacting to an advertisement or a news item is another testing technique.

The reaction may be in the form of a letter, dialogue or a short paragraph.

(xxv) At the higher levels, students may be asked to interview a film star, a sports person or a VIP and write the interview.

(xxvi) Form filling, letter writing and such other practical activities can be used to test writing skills.

### Q. 7 Write a brief note on testing speaking.

This test is never given to our students but it is better to give speaking tests as part of the on-going internal evaluation in the class.

(i) *Role-play*: Students can be asked to role-play in certain specified situations. This involves some imagination. Children can be asked to play the role of a shopkeeper, postman, etc., or some characters in a story.

(ii) *Free role-play*: The situations are specified in this test and students are free to decide on what to say. They can describe a situation or react to a given situation.

Example:

A visitor to your town wants to know the important places to see. Tell the visitor about the tourist places.

What are the local dishes that you will recommend to a person who wants to taste your food.

(iii) *Group discussions on assigned topics*: Students are asked to give their opinion on a given topic. This can be done at the advanced levels.

- (iv) *Presentations*: Students are asked to present their ideas on specified topics.
- (v) *Interviews*: Each student can be interviewed for about fifteen minutes and assessed.

Q. 8 What type of questions can be asked for testing grammar and vocabulary? Illustrate your answer.

Grammar and vocabulary are tested in writing and speaking tests. However, teachers always add separate tests for evaluating the two components because they are easy to construct. We must remember that a test of grammar evaluation the candidate's knowledge of grammar and not the ability to use English unless the test is an applied one.

That is why those who score well in a grammar test may not be in a position to write a couple of sentences properly!

In testing grammar or structure, one should give proper weightage to various grammar points mentioned in the syllabus (if the test is based on a syllabus) or the important areas in the grammar of English. Equally important is the context. Testing grammar points in isolation is meaningless. For example, 'It—rain today' without a context, the blank may be filled in by any word, *may, might, can, could, should, will, is going to, must, has to*, etc. On the other hand, 'Look at the dark clouds; I think it—rain soon, maybe in an hour' gives a proper context.

The term 'grammar' is so broad that it can include even spelling, capitalisation, punctuation, vocabulary, etc. One who constructs a grammar test must be very clear about what points to test and what procedures or techniques are to be used; 'grammar' tests can be oral or written. The procedures outlined in the earlier sections for testing the four skills can be employed for testing grammar. Some examples are given below:

- (i) *Multiple choice*:  
The light is not on; so, they \_\_\_\_\_ out.  
(a) can't go  
(b) must have gone  
(c) can't have gone  
(d) must go
- (ii) *Multiple choice in a dialogue context*:  
Did Gopi ask you to go with him? No, he asked \_\_\_\_\_ instead.  
(a) another  
(b) other  
(c) someone else  
(d) anyone else

(ii) Ea

(i) C

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(iii) Simple completion:

The \_\_\_\_\_ purse was found. (loose/lost)

(iv) Error correction (Identify the error):

Less people are present today.

A B C D

(v) *Connected texts*: One night some thieves broke into my house. They \_\_\_\_\_ (take/took) away some currency notes and gold. Early in the morning, this \_\_\_\_\_ (was discovered/discovered) by my wife. She \_\_\_\_\_ (was fainted/ fainted) on the spot.

(vi) *Close procedure*: A passage is selected and certain grammar items like prepositions, articles, tenses, etc., are deleted; filling in the items can measure the candidate's grammatical ability. But this test has to be given carefully or else the text will be distorted. Cloze tests are not very effective in testing productive areas like speaking and writing.

Transformation of sentences, combining simple sentences into complex and compound sentences, changing the mode of narration, etc., are commonly used for testing grammar. Depending on the level and the background of the learners, many of the exercises suggested in the chapter on teaching grammar can be used.

Similarly, if there is a detailed syllabus, it is easy to construct a test based on it. Otherwise, the tester has to choose words from a frequency list, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, stories, other popular books, and words that are used in everyday contexts. Some magazines like the *Reader's Digest* have regular vocabulary tests called 'Enrich your word power', 'Word quiz', etc. They can be modified and used according to the level of the students taking the test. Some illustrative examples are given below:

(i) Circle the odd one in each group.

son, father, brother, sister, boy

arrive, depart, go away, have, stay

(ii) Each group is related to a particular subject or topic. Write down the topic or subject.

bed, ward, doctor, nurse, operation: \_\_\_\_\_

hand, dial, face, wrist, date: \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Watch: \_\_\_\_\_ wrist :: ring: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (The answer is 'finger'.)

(iv) Opposites can be listed:

slavery: freedom :: war: \_\_\_\_\_

(v) Cause and effect can be given:

germ:disease :: flood: \_\_\_\_\_

(vi) Synonyms can be given:

unwell = \_\_\_\_\_ suggestion = \_\_\_\_\_

(vii) One word for many:

dogs, lions, birds, men, women, fish = \_\_\_\_\_

(viii) Multiple choice completion:

If you do not know the meaning of a word, \_\_\_\_\_ it \_\_\_\_\_ in a dictionary.

(ix) Object-maker, producer-consumer, masculine-feminine relationships

tailor:clothes :: demand: \_\_\_\_\_

(x) Words in association:

marriage, husband, wife ...

(xi) Rhyming words:

ring: gift:

(xii) Multiple choice: Can this be a duplicate of the document?

(a) a summary (b) a revision

(c) an outline (d) a copy

(xiii) Definitions:

One who steals things from shops: \_\_\_\_\_

One who knows a number of languages: \_\_\_\_\_

(xiv) Crossword puzzles

(xv) Confusables:

steal, steel; straight, strait; compliments, complement; etc.

(xvi) Homonyms, homophones, homographs can be used for testing spelling

(xvii) Forming words from the letters: entertainment (form as many words as you can from the letters in the given word).

(xviii) Word-formation games using affixes

(xix) Identifying silent letters: comb, thumb, climb, crumb

(xx) Dictation

(xxi) Identifying the key or core words in a poem or a prose passage.

One can think of many more procedures or techniques in vocabulary testing.

Q. 9 Write a brief note on testing communicative abilities.

Pragmatic tests involve the use of linguistic content, such as grammar and vocabulary, and extra-linguistic content, such as gestures, tone of voice in speaking, subtle implications in communication, etc. Pragmatic tests are more integrative and natural, and they require attention to many skills at once. The student's ability to interact with other people with written texts and express his/her ideas in speech and writing is to be tested.

Such tests are not difficult to construct because one can always use a natural situation or a given communicative context; but, they are difficult to administer when there are thousands of students and even more difficult to evaluate.

Q. 10 Write a brief note on using technology for testing.

Many educational institutions have audio-visual equipment that can be used for conducting tests. In testing listening comprehension particularly, tape-recorders can be used. For instance, the advantages and disadvantages of using computers can be taped and played; the testees can be asked to list them in the form of a table. A talk by an outsider can be played and questions asked on the recorded text. A combination of sound and picture can be more realistic; video and TV offer this advantage. The teacher has to make a careful selection of what is relevant and testable, and then prepare the test in advance. Students can be asked different types of questions on the story, characters, on their roles, etc. A number of programmes on scientific experiments are available on video; they can be used for testing vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, etc. The computer is another tool that can be used; there are a number of question-and-answer programmes that deal with vocabulary, spelling and grammar; the word-processing and editing programmes are very useful in testing various skills. Film strips and cartoons can also be used in testing writing and other language skills. A lot depends on the teacher and the facilities in the institution.

## 20. Planning and Lesson Planning

*He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches.*

—Bernard Shaw

Q. 1 Write a note on the need for planning in teaching and language teaching.

We know that some kind of conceptual orientation is necessary for any system to function efficiently. Like in the field of economic development where five-year plans and annual plans are drawn up, in the field of education or teaching English too, we need plans.

Planning can be long-range or short-range; planning can be year-long, month-long, week-long; it can be unit-planning and daily lesson-planning. Planning of any kind involves the specification of goals or objectives in terms of learner outcomes; it means stating objectives in terms of the competencies and skills students should acquire.

Course objectives can be: (a) skill-based objectives, (b) content-based objectives, and (c) proficiency-based objectives.

Skill-based objectives may be helpful in long-term planning because the functional ability to be acquired in each skill over a period of time is specified. For example, in listening and speaking, what is expected of the learners upon completion of the course is specified.

Content-based objectives specify the functions that students should be able to perform within specific themes and topics. For example, within the theme 'family', students should be able to describe family members in terms of their relations, describe the physical and personality characteristics of the members, provide biographical information and describe the activities and interests of the family members.

Proficiency-based objectives can be long-term general guidelines or proficiency outcomes of both unit and daily teaching-learning. Proficiency can be defined in terms of *functions* that learners should perform, the specific *contexts* in which

they are expected to use the language, and the *accuracy* of their language. These three criteria can also be used for organising daily lessons.

For example, the proficiency-based objectives of one lesson may be stated as follows:

- Function** Expressing likes and dislikes  
**Context** Recreation  
**Accuracy** Use of expressions like 'I like/don't like' and the use of appropriate vocabulary dealing with recreation; understandable pronunciation.

Long-term objectives must be stated without any reference to which textbook is to be used; the outcomes are specified for a given level without reference to a particular textbook. Textbooks are to be used as tools to realise the objectives and not vice versa. This kind of course-planning or year-long planning must state:

- (a) the central goals and purposes of teaching, say English, at a particular level;
- (b) the content, organisation and sequencing of the content in a coherent and teachable manner;
- (c) the time to be spent on the various topics in the sequence;
- (d) the broader skills to be acquired in terms of listening, speaking, reading, writing and understanding; and
- (e) the linguistic functions together with the grammar and vocabulary that students need to learn in order to attain the end-of-the-year goals.

These clear statements will enable the teacher to pay attention to unit planning.

### Q. 2 Write a note on unit planning. Illustrate your answer.

A unit is generally a series of lessons around a theme or a particular context; the theme may be letter-writing, shopping, daily activities, etc. The unit division may correspond to divisions in the textbook; teachers may include other material required to meet the needs of students more effectively.

In recent years, *unit planning* is used even in textbook writing. In planning units of instruction:

- (i) The *main purpose* of the unit and why a particular unit is to be taught is identified. For example, there can be a unit on 'Vacations and Travel'; this unit may consist of four or five lessons; the unit may enable students to make travel plans.
- (ii) The *content* required for the unit may include topics like transportation, bus and train routes, timetables, places of interest and their history.



accommodation or lodging, weather, food and eating places, etc. The vocabulary consists of words and expressions necessary for each topic and the grammar will consist of structures necessary to perform the functions or unit tasks.

(iii) The learner *outcomes* required in terms of the four skills and understanding are stated. In the unit on 'Vacations and Travel', for example, the skills may be *reading* travel booklets, timetables, weather charts, *talking* to travel agents or hotel managers, etc., *writing* to tourism departments and other agencies regarding reservations and other arrangements, and *listening* to announcements or others who have visited the places.

(iv) The techniques and strategies that can be used to help students learn the material are to be stated. Generally, *Handbooks for Teachers* perform this function; teachers add their own strategies from their personal experience.

More and more textbook writers and agencies are using the unit-planning model, particularly under the influence of CLT and functional language teaching models. [Units can be assembled to form larger chunks for a year or a term/semester.]

Given below is a unit plan for the second-year students of English in non-English-medium contexts:

**Topic:** Self                      **Suggested time:** 4 weeks  
**Theme:** My community and me

Skill	Functions	Content	Language
1. Listening	*Responding to commands	*Describing human needs and wants and that the community provides for these needs and wants	*Present tense for regular actions
	*Miming	*Description of a typical school day	*Present progressive tense *Expressing near future *Commands
	*Role-playing *Listening to an unfamiliar story		
2. Speaking	*Answering questions that ask for information (name, age, etc.)	*Describing human needs and wants that the community provides	*Basic word order

(Contd.)

Skill	Functions	Content	Language
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Using greetings</li> <li>*Asking simple questions</li> <li>*Expressing ideas in simple sentences</li> <li>*Using vocabulary related to dates, numbers, weather, food, house, etc.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Poss adjectives</li> <li>*Qualifying adjectives</li> <li>*Demonstrative adjectives</li> <li>*Questions</li> <li>*Negatives</li> <li>*Agreement sub-verb</li> </ul>
3. Reading	*Reproducing (orally) any written form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Selected areas from listening and speaking for reading reinforcement</li> <li>*Reading sets of sight words</li> <li>*Reading an unfamiliar story and answering questions</li> <li>*Reading familiar material with proper intonation and pronunciation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Correct pronunciation</li> <li>*Good information</li> <li>*Fluency</li> <li>*Comprehension</li> </ul>
4. Writing	*Copying with correct spelling and punctuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Selected areas from listening and speaking for writing reinforcement</li> <li>*Writing dictated material</li> <li>*Completing sentences by following a model</li> <li>*Answering direct questions using single words or simple phrases</li> <li>*Constructing simple sentences using subject, verb, object</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Copying</li> <li>*Spelling</li> <li>*Punctuation</li> <li>*Following sentence patterns</li> </ul>
5. Culture	*Understanding and appreciating one's own culture/ community	*Comparison of one's own with other communities nearby	*Participating in discussions

Mastery level expected: 75-80%

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Q.3 What is daily lesson-planning? Evolve a framework for daily lesson-plans.

Proper planning of lessons to be taught is essential because it is beneficial to the teacher as well as the student. It makes the teacher more relaxed and confident and improves the timing of the lesson; since there is a clear plan, students too know what they are learning. Every time a lesson is planned and taught, teachers can evaluate the plan, identify the parts that went well and those which were less effective and improve upon the plan.

A basic three-stage plan, which can be used for any type of lesson, is the one used throughout the world. It can be used for any lesson plan in any subject.

The three basic principles in making a lesson-plan are:

1. deciding the aim(s) of the lesson,
  2. selecting the important language skill or item(s) to be taught, and
  3. choosing one's approach.
1. *Deciding the aim(s) of the lesson:* If there is a teachers' manual with the textbook, the aims of a particular lesson would be stated there; sometimes the textbook itself gives a list of words and structures for a lesson. The teacher knows the class better; so, depending on the level of the class, he/she must decide on the aim of the lesson.
  2. *Selecting the important language skills, item(s) to be taught:* Depending upon the nature of the lesson, the teacher decides what things are to be taught. It is not necessary to teach a grammar point or structure in each lesson; there is no need to teach new words in every lesson. The lesson may be for reading or listening; in that case, the language forms will be different.
  3. *Choosing the approach:* The approach must be in harmony with the aim; there is no single method or formula that will suit each lesson. The teaching strategies will vary according to the nature of the lesson.

The three stages in planning a lesson are: (a) presentation, (b) practice and (c) performance or production. The three Ps, as they are called, are essential for any lesson; each stage has several steps or phases.

- (a) The presentation stage consists of preparation and presentation. Preparation is needed to prepare the class for the new lesson to be taught. Students are to be prepared to receive the new lesson; they are to be motivated. Sometimes a review or revision may be necessary; in some lessons a pre-reading or pre-listening activity may be useful. These steps are included in the first stage.

- (b) The practice stage represents the exploitation of the text or the teaching item. Depending upon the nature of the text, the teacher has to think of possible activities that can be planned, based on the text or the item to be taught.
- (c) The performance stage is the one where *application* and follow-up activities are planned; the teacher can get the necessary feedback and plan more innovative activities.

**Supplementary activities** such as checking homework, playing a game or singing a song, conducting a quiz programme or giving a slip-test, revision, etc., can be incorporated in all the three stages mentioned above or can form the *fourth* stage. The suggested three-stage plan is only a broad framework for the teacher to plan a lesson; it is not a rigid or fixed grid for all lessons.

**The shape of a lesson plan:** It is better to keep a simple *master plan* on one sheet of paper with minimum details. Supplementary pages can carry details that can be used as and when necessary; the supplementary pages can be numbered and classified and they can show the details such as illustrative sentences, vocabulary items, a sketch of the blackboard work to be done, questions to be asked, teaching aids to be used, homework to be given, etc. The supplementary pages and their nature will depend on the kind of lesson to be taught but the master plan with reference numbers for the supplementary work can be more or less the same for most lessons.

#### Sample lesson plans

First, let us look at a *blank outline plan* which can be used for different kinds of lessons,

#### The skeleton of a plan

Class:

Lesson No.:

*Aims:*

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d) Words to be taught (if any)

(e) Structures/grammar points (if any)

*Comments/evaluation (teach and reflect) (to be filled-in after the lesson)*

The details can be filled-in and supplementary sheets prepared according to the content of each lesson. The three-stage lesson plan can be adventurous, innovative and communicative. All the skills, strategies, techniques and activities that a teacher has learnt can be put to use in the lesson plans; there is no one solution to planning activities. It should not become a ritual or a fixed-formula production. Teachers can be eclectic, varying the approach from day to day. Proper planning of lessons will give rewards far exceeding the effort; after sometime, it will take only a few minutes to plan a lesson. Once a lesson is tried out, changes can be incorporated where necessary and the lesson package can be kept for future use. One will grow professionally over the years and some teachers have even published their lessons in the form of articles and books. It is an experience that can be shared with other teachers.

A good lesson contains a judicious blend of coherence and variety. 'Coherence' means students can see a logical pattern to the lesson; there has to be a connection between parts. If there is no 'variety', the class will become restless. The make-up of the class will influence the plan: the students' age, level, background and interests. The 'description of the class' is an important factor in planning lessons.

**Q. 4** Prepare a detailed three-stage lesson-plan for teaching the passive voice in English. Specify the level and the medium of instruction.

Given below is a *sample* lesson-plan for teaching the passive voice in English.  
Class: X (English medium) Lesson No.: 21 (Second half of the year)

or  
XII (Non-English medium) or the first-year degree in semi-urban areas

*Aims*

- (a) To make the students use the passive voice.
- (b) To show the students how the passive construction is formed and used in affirmative/negative/interrogative sentences.
- (c) To make them describe processes using the passive voice.
- (d) Words to be taught: made/prepared/fixd/brewed/seeds/beans/berries/not fried/not baked, etc., invent/discover, strain, etc.

*Stage I: Presentation*

- Preparation*
- Warm-up*

1. 2. 3. 4. Co tak po Le Ch Sta Or Th gre Te Cl cha roz Tea col coff Tea are are diff Tea

What are the popular drinks usually taken in the morning? Tea, coffee, milk ...

Do you think that the word 'coffee' is an English word? Yes/No. It is borrowed/derived from the Arabic word 'qahwah'.

Where was coffee discovered? China, England, Europe ... (discovered/invented)

No, coffee was discovered in Abyssinia, which is now called Ethiopia.

Where is Ethiopia? ... (General knowledge)

Coffee was brought from Ethiopia to Arabia and then to Europe; later it was taken to South America; it came to India much later. The Arabic variety is quite popular; the Columbian variety is rich in flavour.

Let's see how coffee is made.

Is coffee made/prepared/fixxed/brewed?

prepared—Indian fixed—American  
made—British brewed—older usage]

Question: How is coffee made?

Change in word-order: Let's see how *coffee is made*.

Stage II: Practice

On preparation with some blackboard work.

The beans (in India 'seeds') of the right quality are *selected*; they are *tested* with great care. ('berries'—use a dictionary)

Teacher: Then, what's to be done? *(fried/baked/roasted)* slowly over a charcoal fire. (The teacher says: they *are not fried*, they *are not baked*; they *are* *fried/baked/roasted*.)

Teacher: The beans are *roasted* till they become ... (invite suggestions regarding colour words \_\_\_\_\_ black, brown ...); the correct expression is *coffee brown*!

Teacher: The *roasted beans* are ... (invite suggestions) ... not powdered; they are *ground* (grind—ground—grinder; also ground as noun). The roasted beans are ground into fine grains (*powders, granules, fine grains*—What is the difference?)

Teacher: What's to be done?