# Inferencing

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| 0:00 | **Owl:** Welcome to Inferencing, an instructional video on reading comprehension brought to you by the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab. |
| 0:10 | Imagine you are visiting a friend who has just returned from a trip with a dark tan. |
| 0:15 | Based on this evidence, you might reason that your friend recently traveled to a tropical location. |
| 0:22 | This is called making an inference. |
| 0:24 | An inference is a conclusion that you draw based on background knowledge, evidence, and reasoning. |
| 0:32 | We make inferences every day. |
| 0:34 | For instance, when we are with someone, we might infer what they are thinking or feeling based on what they say or do. |
| 0:43 | Furthermore, in a text message or email we often infer what someone means based on what they write. |
| 0:52 | And in new situations we infer what's going on by interpreting clues around us. |
| 0:59 | Not surprisingly, readers make lots of inferences as they read. |
| 1:03 | We sometimes call this "reading between the lines." |
| 1:08 | We can group these inferences into two types: inferences about details and inferences about main ideas. |
| 1:15 | Let's say you are reading a short story and you come across the following passage: |
| 1:21 | Miranda was physically and mentally exhausted. She had scrubbed the floors, bathed the children, and baked the casserole, but her husband, Ferdinand, who had once been the sunshine of her life, now remained distant and unimpressed. Dark thoughts clouded her mind. |
| 1:40 | Based on this passage which of the following conclusions is the most logical inference you can make about the last sentence? |
| 1:50 | The passage describes how hard Miranda has worked to keep up the home for her husband, Ferdinand, and how ungrateful he appears. |
| 1:58 | Based upon this evidence, the best answer is "Miranda is unhappy with her marriage." because it would be logical to infer that Miranda's "dark thoughts" have to do with her marriage. |
| 2:10 | Sometimes, you may also have to infer the main idea of a paragraph or text. |
| 2:15 | This often occurs when the main idea is not clearly stated, the text begins with a question, the text compares and contrasts two or more things, each sentence in the paragraph contains equally specific information, or the text is satirical, or the author's tone is ironic. |
| 2:37 | Luckily, there are some tips and clues that can help you infer the main idea: |

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| 2:43 | Observe signposts like abstracts, titles, headings and subheadings, transitions, and summaries. |
| 2:51 | These signposts can help you deduce the meaning of a text. |
| 2:55 | Identify key words. |
| 2:57 | You can do this by looking for words that are repeated or words that are referred to by other words, such as pronouns, substitutes, and associated words. |
| 3:08 | Find a major sentence that almost states the main idea and try adding a word or phrase to complete it. |
| 3:15 | Combine two or more key sentences into a single statement of the main idea. |
| 3:21 | If all sentences are equally important, summarize them into a shorter statement of the main idea. |
| 3:28 | Finally, be alert to the author's attitude or tone, which can tip you off to their point of view. |
| 3:35 | Using these tips and clues, try inferring the main idea of the following paragraph: |
| 3:42 | Cirrus clouds appear as thin, wispy strands high up in the atmosphere. On the other hand, cumulus clouds are low-lying and look puffy or cotton-like. Cirrocumulus clouds appear as white, patchy sheets with ripples or tufts. Stratus clouds look flat, hazy, and featureless, often resembling fog. Nimbostratus clouds are also featureless, yet appear thick, opaque, and gray, portending the onset of rain. |
| 4:15 | Now, which of the following statements is the best inference you can make about the main idea? |
| 4:21 | The paragraph lacks a topic sentence that conveys the main idea. |
| 4:25 | Furthermore, each sentence conveys the same level of detail by describing a different cloud type. |
| 4:32 | However, we can infer the main idea by paying attention to key words that are repeated or referred to. |
| 4:39 | They are clouds and appear or look. |
| 4:45 | By using these key words and summarizing the paragraph, we can infer the main idea is most similar to this option: |
| 4:54 | There are many different types of clouds, each with its own distinct appearance. |
| 4:59 | Whether you're inferring the meaning of a detail or the main idea, make sure that your inference is logical. |
| 5:06 | You can check whether your inference is logical or not by asking these questions: |
| 5:11 | Is it based on words and sentences in the text? |
| 5:15 | Is it based more on the author's words than on your point of view? |
| 5:20 | Does it manage to avoid contradicting other statements made in the text? |
| 5:25 | Does it comply with the author's attitude or tone about the topic? |
| 5:30 | Could it function as the thesis or topic sentence? |
| 5:34 | If you answer "no" to any of these, your inference may be illogical. |
| 5:39 | In that case, go back and check your inference. |

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| 5:44 | Thanks for listening to this instructional video on Inferencing! |
| 5:48 | Visit the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab for more support with reading and writing skills. |

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