

COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSION?

- Comprehension is the interpretation and understanding of spoken, written and visual texts.
- Comprehension skills are not needed only for exam purposes - but they are life skills that need to be developed.

Reading techniques:

- **Skimming:** Glancing quickly over the text to get the general idea.
- **Scanning:** Looking down the page rapidly to find specific details like names, dates, or numbers.
- Skim and scan the text and questions. Take note that a text can also be referred to as an extract or a passage in the examination.
- Look over the text quickly (skim) to get an idea of what the text is about. Pay attention to the following:
 - How many paragraphs there are in the extract?
 - The title of the extract, which may also offer a clue to the content of the passage and the writer's intention;
 - The headings and sub-headings;
 - Who wrote the text and where it came from, if this information is given;
 - Key words and names;
 - Topic sentences;
 - Unfamiliar, unusual or difficult words;
 - The introductory paragraph – it often creates the atmosphere and provides the setting for what is to follow; and
 - The final paragraph – it usually summarises the extract.
- Then, quickly look at (scan) the questions. This will give you an idea of what kind of information to look for when you read the text again.
- Notice things such as:
 - Names of people or places; and
 - The question words and instructions.

During reading

Five Skills that Will Improve Your Reading Skills:

1. Finding **the main idea**.
2. Making **inferences**.
3. Understanding **vocabulary** in context.
4. Determining the **writer's purpose**.
5. Determining the **tone** used by the writer.

Read the instructions and information

- This will ensure that you know what is expected of you.
- You will also notice the time allocation for each question.
- This will help you to manage your time effectively.

Before you answer – read the question

3-step strategy:

1. Read
2. Find
3. Answer

Remember:

- Read the questions first.
- Highlight key words.
- Read the whole text. You need to read to:
 1. Understand the meaning of the text as a whole.
 2. Find the information the questions are asking for.

Question words

Question word	What does it require?
Who?	A person
What?	Information/action
Where?	A place
Why?	Reason
Explain	Give meaning/reason
Describe	Give details

Example of an extract:

	The Dedicated Educator	
1.	<i>Valley of 1000 hills, South Africa (03 September 2026)</i> – from as far back as she can remember, Zizile ‘Zizi’ Mdunge has always wanted to be a teacher – and it shows! Deep in the valley of 1000 hills, her laughter echoes long before she steps into a room. At her creche, she gives countless free hugs, wipes away tears, and carries children who are still finding their feet. Under her watchful eye, she ensures that the most vulnerable little ones feel seen and heard, and are fed and loved.	5
2.	An ECD practitioner in rural KZN, Zizi represents the incredible dedication it takes to educate preschoolers and run a classroom.	
3.	She brings more than a decade of experience to her three-year-old learners. However, her path to qualification required years of steady determination. Zizi completed both her ECD level 1 and level 2 certificates part-time over four years. This meant studying after a long day of teaching, writing assignments during evenings, and sacrificing weekends to invest in her profession.	10 15
4.	What makes Zizi’s story truly remarkable is that she completely self-funded her training. On a modest salary, she carefully saved for years to afford her tuition and travel costs. She made this immense commitment because she knew the children in her care deserved the absolute best start in life.	20
5.	She now receives support from Project Hope’s Grow ECD programme, which powers its affiliated early learning centres. Project Hope supports early learning through strengthened Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres like Zizi’s creche, alongside integrated services that respond to children’s health, nutrition, emotional wellbeing, and family resilience. It works not only with children, but with the systems around them – because children flourish when families and communities are supported too.	25

1.1 Refer to **paragraph 1**.

1.1.1 **What** career has Zizile Mdunge always wanted to pursue? (1)

1.1.2 Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence:

‘countless free hugs’ (**line 4**) means ...

A an unlimited offer of comfort.

B a limited offer of affection.

C strictly no physical contact.

D an aloof and guarded action. (1)

1.1.3 Mention **TWO** ways in which Zizi cares for the children at her creche. (2)

(Establish or indicate who or what (someone or something) is.

1.2 Refer to **paragraph 3**.

1.2.1 Why is the following statement **FALSE**? Zizi completed her ECD Level 1 and Level 2 certificates in one year. (1)

1.2.2 What does Zizi's willingness to study after a long day of teaching reveal about her **attitude towards her profession**? **Give a reason for your answer**. (2)

1.3 Do you think the title "The Dedicated Educator" is **suitable** for the text? Give **a reason** for your answer using **evidence** from the passage. (2)

Visual Comprehension



1.11 **Explain** how Visual 1 conveys the idea of 'team spirit'. (2)

(Make clear by describing it in more detail)

1.12 **Discuss** whether the visual indicating 'ASSERTIVENESS' is effective. (2)

(You must demonstrate reasoning skills with this type of question, by using evidence from the text to make a case for your argument)

In every comprehension:

- Level 1 & 2 questions – 40% - Literal Comprehension & Reorganisation
- Level 3 questions – 40% - Inferential Comprehension
- Level 4 & 5 questions – 20% - Evaluation & Appreciation

TYPE OF QUESTION	WHAT IT TESTS	HOW TO ANSWER
Literal (Level 1)	Direct info from the text	Find and write the answer as found in the text (in your own words).
Reorganisation (Level 2)	Organise or rearrange info	In different ways from the text.
Inference (Level 3)	"Read between the lines"	Drawing conclusions and making inferences based on the text.
Evaluation (Level 4)	Judgements about the text	Quality, accuracy or fairness - support with reasons; use textual evidence.
Appreciation (Level 5)	Responding emotionally to the text	Considering its impact and style.

SECTION A: COMPREHENSION

QUESTION 1 [25]

Read the following passage [TEXT A] and answer the set questions.

TEXT A

	Miya's Smile Makeover	
1	Miya had developed careless habits when it came to oral hygiene. She often stayed up late at night and hurried through her mornings. In her rush, she sometimes skipped breakfast and neglected to brush her teeth. To make matters worse, Miya had a strong preference for sugary foods and drinks. Chocolate, sweets, and fizzy beverages were her daily indulgences, and she rarely considered the consequences.	5
2	Her neglect eventually caught up with her. During a school excursion, Miya experienced a painful wake-up call. While enjoying a snack break, she bit into a crisp apple. Instantly, a sharp pain shot through one of her teeth. The discomfort was so intense that she could not continue eating. Embarrassed, she watched as her classmates paused while teachers attended to her. The pain worsened, and she was taken to a dentist for urgent treatment.	10
3	At the dentist's office, Miya received alarming news. The dentist explained that she had multiple cavities and inflamed gums. These conditions were the direct result of poor brushing habits and excessive sugar intake. The dentist emphasised that regular brushing, flossing, and dental check-ups could have prevented such damage. Miya felt regretful when she realised that her own choices had led to the pain she was experiencing.	15
4	The dentist provided clear guidance on how to restore her oral health. Miya was instructed to brush her teeth twice daily with fluoride toothpaste. She had to floss regularly to remove food particles between her teeth. She was advised to reduce her consumption of sugary snacks and drinks and eat healthier. Determined to change, Miya adopted these new habits. At first, it was challenging to remember, but with persistence, brushing and flossing became part of her routine. Gradually, she noticed improvements: her breath was fresher, her gums were healthier, and she felt more confident when smiling.	20 25
5	This experience taught Miya a valuable lesson: prevention is far easier than cure. Good oral hygiene is not only essential for strong teeth but also contributes to overall health. Dentists recommend brushing twice a day, flossing daily, and scheduling check-ups every six months to maintain oral well-being.	30
6	Miya began sharing her new knowledge with her peers, encouraging them to adopt healthier habits. Some of her friends followed her example, proving that small, consistent changes can have a significant impact. Her story demonstrates that it is never too late to take responsibility for one's health. With discipline and commitment, a simple routine can protect your smile for many years.	35
	[Adapted from Google.com]	

1.1 Refer to paragraph 1

1.1.1 What careless habit did Miya sometimes neglect in the mornings? (1)

- 1.1.2 What does Miya's love for sweets and fizzy drinks suggest about her eating habits? (2)
- 1.2 Refer to paragraph 2
- 1.2.1 Why did Miya suddenly feel pain during the school excursion?
 A. She fell and hurt her mouth.
 B. She bit into a crisp apple.
 C. She drank a cold fizzy drink.
 D. She forgot to eat breakfast. (1)
- 1.2.2 Give a reason why biting into the apple caused such severe pain for Miya. (2)
- 1.2.3 Explain why Miya felt embarrassed when the group had to stop for her. (2)
- 1.2.4 Where was Miya taken after the pain became worse? (1)
- 1.3 Refer to paragraph 3
- 1.3.1 Name TWO dental problems Miya had developed. (2)
- 1.3.2 According to the dentist, which TWO habits could have prevented Miya's dental problems? (2)
- 1.4 Refer to paragraph 4
- 1.4.1 Explain why the following statement is FALSE.
 Miya immediately refused to change her habits after visiting the dentist. (1)
- 1.4.2 What type of toothpaste was Miya told to use when brushing her teeth? (1)
- 1.4.3 Explain, in your own words, why flossing is important for oral hygiene. (2)
- 1.5 Refer to paragraph 5
- 1.5.1 Explain in your own words what the statement "prevention is far easier than cure" means in the context of the passage. (2)
- 1.5.2 How often do dentists recommend people should visit them for a check-up? (1)
- 1.6. Why do you think some of Miya's friends followed her example? (2)
- 1.7 In your opinion, how can small daily habits protect a person's health in the long term? (1)
- 1.8 Is the title "Miya's smile makeover," a suitable title for this passage? Give a reason for your answer. (2)

TOTAL SECTION A: 25

Marking guideline

SECTION A

QUESTION 1: COMPREHENSION

Number	Answer	Mark
1.1.1	She skipped breakfast/She did not brush her teeth. ✓	(1)
1.1.2	She prefers unhealthy food✓ and she consumes too much sugar. ✓	(2)
1.2.1	B)/She bit into a crisp apple ✓	(1)
1.2.2	Her teeth were already damaged / had cavities./The pressure of biting exposed the problem in her tooth. ✓	(2)
1.2.3	Everyone's attention was on her. ✓ She delayed the group / felt uncomfortable in front of her classmates. ✓	(2)
1.2.4	To the dentist	(1)
1.3.1	cavities ✓and inflamed gums. ✓	(2)
1.3.2	Brushing Flossing Central check-ups (Any TWO of the above)	(2)
1.4.1	After the visit to the dentist, she was determined to change/she immediately started with the new habits. ✓	(1)
1.4.2	Fluoride ✓	(1)
1.4.3	It helps keep teeth and gums clean✓ and prevents tooth decay. ✓	(2)
1.5.1	It is better to take care of your teeth early./Good habits like brushing and flossing prevent serious problems./Fixing dental problems later is more difficult or painful. NOTE: Accept any relevant response	(2)
1.5.2	It is recommended that people should visit the dentist every six months. ✓	(1)
1.6	They saw that she was more confident because her teeth were clean when she smiled. They also wanted to take responsibility for their health in order to protect their teeth. NOTE: Accept any relevant response	(2)
1.7	If you eat a healthy snack instead of a sugary snack/drink water instead of a fizzy drink, you will be able to manage your weight/lower chances of developing illness. NOTE: Accept any relevant response	(1)
1.8	It is suitable because Miya improves her smile through better oral hygiene. OR It is not suitable because the story is more about Miya learning about oral hygiene and how it affects her confidence, not necessarily about changing her smile's appearance. NOTE: Accept other suitable answers. A candidate can score 1 mark for an answer that is not well-substantiated.	(2)

TOTAL SECTION A: [25]