

# Module 1: How Readers Actually Read

## Interactive Practice

### — ANSWER KEY —

#### Part 1: A Good Example

**Read this short passage and notice how effortlessly it moves:**

Vaccines train the immune system to recognise a threat before that threat arrives. The immune system detects the vaccine, builds a defense, and stores that defense. When the same threat later returns, that stored defense activates immediately.

#### Discussion Question:

What made that passage easy to read? List at least three specific features you noticed:

- 1. Verbs show the action:** — train, detects, builds, stores, activates — every main action is a verb. Nothing is buried in a noun.
- 2. Familiar information first:** — each sentence opens with something already established — “Vaccines”, then “The immune system”, then “that stored defense” — so the reader is never dropped into unfamiliar territory.
- 3. Parallelism:** — “detects the vaccine, builds a defense, and stores that defense” — all three actions use the same verb form, so the pattern is instantly visible.

*Note: Students may also name “new information last” (each sentence ends on its key point) or “subject and verb close together” (no long interruptions).*

#### Part 2: The Five Reader Expectations

You have just experienced the five reader expectations in action. Here they are again:

- 1. Parallelism**
- 2. Familiar information first:** start with what the reader already knows
- 3. New information last:** end with new information
- 4. Verbs show the action**
- 5. Subject and verb should be close together**

#### Part 3: Two Versions

Below are two versions of the same paragraph about climate change. Read both versions carefully, then answer the questions that follow.



## Version A

Rising global temperatures drive climate change. These temperatures melt polar ice caps, raise sea levels, and disrupt weather patterns. Weather disruptions cause more frequent droughts, floods, and storms. These extreme events threaten food production, damage infrastructure, and displace communities.

## Version B

The driving force behind climate change is the rise in global temperatures. The melting of polar ice caps, the raising of sea levels, and the disruption of weather patterns are caused by these temperature increases. More frequent droughts, floods, and storms result from these disruptions in weather. Food production threats, infrastructure damage, and community displacement occur due to these extreme events.

**Question 1:** Which version better serves the reader? Circle your answer:

**Version A**

**Question 2:** Using the five reader expectations, explain what makes your chosen version easier to read. Identify at least TWO specific expectations that work better in your chosen version:

Expectation #1: **Verbs show the action**

Version A expresses every action as a verb: drive, melt, raise, disrupt, cause, threaten, displace. The actions are immediately visible. Version B buries the same actions inside nouns: “the melting”, “the raising”, “the disruption”. Readers have to find the action in the noun, which slows them down.

Expectation #2: **Familiar information first**

Each sentence in Version A opens by picking up what the previous sentence left on the table: “Rising global temperatures” → “These temperatures” → “Weather disruptions” → “These extreme events”. The reader is always on familiar ground at the start of each sentence. Version B opens sentences with new, unfamiliar framings (“The driving force behind climate change”) before the reader has a context for them.

*Note: Students may also name Expectation 3 (new information last — Version A ends each sentence on its key new point) or Expectation 1 (parallelism — the verb lists in Version A are all parallel: melt/raise/disrupt; threaten/damage/displace).*

**Question 3:** Look at the first sentence in each version. Which version puts the action in the verb? Quote the specific words that show this:

Version A: “Rising global temperatures **drive** climate change.” The verb “drive” carries the action directly. Version B: “The driving force behind climate change **is**



the rise in global temperatures.” The verb is the weak linking verb “is”; the real action (“driving”) is buried in the noun phrase “driving force”.

**Question 4:** In Version B, identify one sentence where the subject and verb are separated. What gets in the way?

**Sentence:**

“The melting of polar ice caps, the raising of sea levels, and the disruption of weather patterns are caused by these temperature increases.”

**What separates them:**

The subject is a list: “The melting of polar ice caps, the raising of sea levels, and the disruption of weather patterns”. It contains too much new information and 17 words before the reader reaches the verb “are caused”.

**Reflection:**

Based on this exercise, complete this sentence:

*“A sentence that serves the reader is one that...”*

...meets the reader’s subconscious expectations: it starts with something familiar, puts the main action in the verb, keeps the subject and verb close together, and ends with the information that matters most.

*Note: Accept any answer that reflects the shift from writer-centred to reader-centred thinking. The key idea is that clarity is not about simplicity of content but about meeting expectations of structure.*