**Making Inferences**

Inferences are evidence-based guesses. Inferences are based on information that is implied, indicated, or suggested **without being clearly stated**.

Often a writer tells a reader more than what they say directly. They give **hints or clues** that help the reader "read between the lines." ***Inferring*** is using these clues to get a better understanding of what one is reading.

***Inference*** can be thought of as **drawing a** ***conclusion.*** If a reader infers that something has happened, he or she does not see, hear, feel, smell, or taste the actual event.

Observations occur when we **can see** something happening. In contrast, inferences are what we **figure out** based on ***evidence from a text, personal experience, past knowledge, and common sense.***

* We need to find clues to get some answers.
* We need to add those clues to what we already know or have read.
* There can be more than one correct answer.
* We need to be able to support inferences.

When making an ***inference***, choose the most likely explanation from the evidence in the text, past knowledge, personal experience, and common sense. And remember, even after using this skill, the inference may not always be correct.

This critical reading comprehension skill is necessary to grasp concepts related to the [main idea](https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-find-the-main-idea-3212047), the [author's purpose](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-the-authors-purpose-3211720), and the [writer's tone](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-authors-tone-3211744).

**Inferences on Standardized Tests**

Most standardized tests for reading comprehension and vocabulary include a great deal of inference questions that require students to use context clues to answer questions based on either the vocabulary used or the events that happened in the passage. Common questions on reading comprehension tests include:

* "According to the passage, we can reasonably infer..."
* "Based on the passage, it could be suggested that..."
* "Which of the following statements is best supported by the passage?"
* "The passage suggests that this primary problem..."

An inference question will often use the words "suggest" or "infer" right in the tag, and because you understand inference, you will understand that in order to come to a conclusion, you must use evidence or support presented in the passage.

Once a reader is able to process this, he or she can then choose the best answer on [multiple choice tests](https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-make-an-inference-3211647) or write in a brief explanation on open-ended quizzes.