What's the point?

Primary purpose questions ask us to identify why the author may have written the passage.

As you read through the passage the first time, it's a good idea to always be asking yourself: "**So what?**" "**What's the point?**"

Examples

There isn't much variance in how this question type is worded. They'll look something like this:

"The passage is primarily concerned with…"

"The primary purpose of the passage is to…"

"The author's primary purpose in writing the passage is to…"

Strategies

Turn that verb into an infinitive, and use Prediction: Try rephrasing the question into "The purpose of the passage is TO ___."

Fill in the blank yourself before looking at the choices, and then see if there's a choice that matches.

Common wrong choice types

Tempting wrong choices for primary purpose questions are:

Too narrow: A choice that accurately reflects the purpose of a sentence or a paragraph in the passage, but is too narrow to be the primary purpose of the entire passage.

Too strong: Be wary of extreme words like always and never. Authors rarely make points that are totally unqualified or all-encompassing.

Mischaracterizations: Sometimes a single word will mischaracterize the author's intention with the passage.

Not directly answering the question: Again, enticing wrong choices may contain information that is true to the content of the passage, but doesn't answer the fundamental question of purpose ("Why?").

Comparative Reading variants

While paired passages will never have the same main point, they can have a shared purpose, so you may encounter comparative reading questions that ask you to identify it:

"A central purpose of each passage is to…"

Ask yourself: **What** are both authors attempting to do with their passages? **What** is the shared **why**?

Perhaps both passages are primarily concerned with describing an artist's influences, or identifying distinctive features of a literary movement, or examining the impact that a specific scholar had on their field, or critiquing the applications of a specific statute.

Remember: When you get this kind of a question, even though the two authors' arguments will likely differ from one another, the "why" (or "what's the general goal") may still be the same. That's the question you're answering.

Below are 20 distinct introductions to academic paragraphs, each serving a different purpose:

1. **Informative**: The author's purpose is to present a comprehensive overview of evolutionary theories regarding the origins of the universe and the Earth. The goal is to inform readers about scientific and religious perspectives, presenting key theories and their proponents.

2. **Analytical**: The passage aims to critically analyze the strengths and weaknesses of various theories explaining cosmic and planetary formation. It evaluates the evidence supporting scientific theories while acknowledging alternative viewpoints based on religious beliefs.

3. **Descriptive**: This paragraph aims to vividly describe the intricate processes involved in the formation of galaxies, stars, and planets, highlighting the sequence of events leading to their creation, such as condensation, gravitational collapse, and nuclear reactions.

4. **Comparative**: The author's intention is to compare and contrast scientific and creationist theories regarding the origins of the universe. It evaluates similarities and differences between these perspectives, emphasizing divergent beliefs about the age of the Earth and the role of supernatural forces.

5. **Persuasive**: This paragraph seeks to persuade readers of the credibility of scientific theories by presenting empirical evidence supporting the Big Bang and cosmic evolution. It aims to convince readers of the validity of scientific principles over religious interpretations.

6. **Explanatory**: The purpose here is to explain the mechanisms behind the formation of celestial bodies, delineating how matter coalesced into galaxies, stars, and planets. It aims to clarify complex scientific processes for a lay audience.

7. **Argumentative**: The passage is structured to argue for the compatibility of religious beliefs with scientific theories, advocating for a synthesis between theistic evolution and empirical evidence. It aims to refute the notion of a young Earth while acknowledging the possibility of divine involvement in creation.

8. **Reflective**: Here, the author reflects on the limitations of human understanding when it comes to comprehending the origins of the universe. It questions whether conclusive proof will ever be attainable or if humanity will continue to rely on various theories and conjectures.

9. **Interpretative**: The paragraph interprets the significance of Edwin Hubble's discovery in reshaping scientific understanding. It highlights how this revelation shifted paradigms, challenging the notion of a static universe and laying the foundation for modern cosmological theories.

10. **Speculative**: This passage speculates on the future of cosmological research, pondering whether ongoing scientific exploration will eventually uncover definitive answers about the origins of the universe or if humanity will perpetually grapple with multiple theories.

11. **Narrative**: This paragraph aims to narrate the historical progression of scientific thought on the origins of the universe, tracing the evolution of theories from a static universe to the concept of an expanding cosmos.

12. **Exploratory**: The purpose is to explore the impact of cultural and societal beliefs on the formulation of theories about the universe's creation, examining how religious and scientific ideologies have intersected and influenced each other.

13. **Evaluative**: Here, the author evaluates the reliability and credibility of evidence supporting various theories, dissecting the scientific rigor behind each perspective and assessing their empirical foundations.

14. **Instructional**: The paragraph provides a step-by-step instructional guide to understanding key concepts in cosmology, breaking down complex scientific processes like gravitational collapse and nuclear fusion for better comprehension.

15. **Hypothesis-driven**: This passage is centered on proposing a hypothesis on the potential convergence between scientific and religious interpretations, suggesting a middle ground that bridges the gap between empirical evidence and faith-based beliefs.

16. **Forecasting**: The author forecasts potential advancements in cosmological research, speculating on future discoveries and technological innovations that might revolutionize our understanding of cosmic origins.

17. **Comparative Analysis**: This paragraph conducts an in-depth comparative analysis of various religious creation myths and their resemblances or disparities with scientific theories, aiming to highlight commonalities or divergences.

18. **Critique**: The purpose is to critically analyze the methodologies employed in formulating and testing cosmological hypotheses, scrutinizing the strengths and weaknesses of experimental designs and data interpretations.

19. **Synthesis**: Here, the author synthesizes diverse viewpoints on the origins of the universe, attempting to reconcile conflicting theories and construct a holistic framework that encompasses multiple perspectives.

20. **Survey**: This paragraph surveys the historical and cultural context that shaped early human perceptions of celestial phenomena, exploring how ancient civilizations conceptualized the universe's creation and evolution.

Here are 20 common verbs often used to express the primary aim of an author, along with new examples:

1. **Inform**: The author informs readers about the effects of climate change on marine life.
2. **Explain**: The author explains the intricacies of quantum physics for a lay audience.
3. **Explore**: The article explores the impact of social media on mental health.
4. **Analyze**: The researcher analyzes the correlation between diet and cardiovascular health.
5. **Argue**: The essay argues for the importance of renewable energy in combating global warming.
6. **Describe**: The author describes the cultural significance of traditional festivals.
7. **Evaluate**: The study evaluates the effectiveness of educational reforms in urban schools.
8. **Discuss**: The book discusses the ethics of artificial intelligence in modern society.
9. **Examine**: The research paper examines the neurological basis of decision-making.
10. **Present**: The article presents new theories on the formation of black holes.
11. **Compare**: The study compares two different approaches to treating chronic pain.
12. **Interpret**: The researcher interprets historical data to understand past economic trends.
13. **Suggest**: The paper suggests innovative solutions to urban congestion.
14. **Critique**: The review critiques the methodology used in a recent scientific study.
15. **Propose**: The author proposes a new framework for understanding human cognition.
16. **Demonstrate**: The experiment demonstrates the effects of sleep deprivation on cognitive function.
17. **Investigate**: The study investigates the relationship between stress and immune response.
18. **Predict**: The report predicts future trends in global population growth.
19. **Summarize**: The article summarizes key findings from previous research on climate change.
20. **Clarify**: The textbook clarifies misconceptions about evolutionary biology.

OpenAI. (2023). ChatGPT [Large language model]. https://chat.openai.com

Here are distinct paragraphs addressing the use of AI with different aims. Match the paragraphs to the aims.

To Inform:

A. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become integral across industries, revolutionizing processes and augmenting human capabilities. From enhancing efficiency in manufacturing through automation to enabling predictive analysis in healthcare, AI's applications are diverse. Its algorithms learn from vast datasets, enabling systems to recognize patterns and make informed decisions autonomously. However, concerns loom regarding ethical implications, bias in algorithms, and potential job displacement due to automation, highlighting the need for responsible AI development and deployment.

To Criticize:

B. The pervasive use of AI brings forth critical concerns regarding its ethical implications and societal impact. While AI promises efficiency and innovation, its reliance on biased datasets can perpetuate societal biases and discrimination. Algorithmic biases in facial recognition systems, for instance, disproportionately affect marginalized groups. Moreover, the rapid integration of AI technologies in decision-making processes raises apprehensions about transparency and accountability. The opacity of AI decision-making algorithms creates challenges in understanding and challenging outcomes, raising valid concerns about unchecked power and ethical oversight.

To Entertain:

C. Picture this: a world where AI not only performs mundane tasks but also creates captivating art and entertainment. From AI-generated music compositions to algorithmically crafted visual art, the realm of creative AI holds limitless possibilities. These AI-generated creations blur the lines between human ingenuity and machine intelligence, sparking curiosity and wonder. Imagine an AI comedian cracking jokes or an AI-authored novel enthralling readers. The whimsical intersection of AI and creativity promises a future where machines contribute to entertainment in unprecedented ways.

To Explain:

D. At its core, AI operates through complex algorithms designed to mimic human cognitive processes. Machine learning, a subset of AI, allows systems to learn from data inputs and improve over time. This learning process, whether supervised or unsupervised, empowers AI systems to recognize patterns, make predictions, and perform tasks without explicit programming. Neural networks, inspired by the human brain, form the basis for many AI models, enabling deep learning and complex problem-solving capabilities.

To Refute:

The widespread fear of AI surpassing human intelligence and rendering humanity obsolete is largely unfounded. While AI excels in specific tasks and domains, it lacks human-like general intelligence. The idea of an all-powerful super intelligent AI taking control remains speculative and largely confined to science fiction narratives. AI systems are limited by their programming and lack human consciousness, emotions, and ethical reasoning. Addressing ethical concerns and ensuring human oversight can mitigate the exaggerated fears of AI dominance portrayed in popular media and literature.

To Instruct:

Understanding the fundamentals of AI is pivotal in navigating its applications. Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence. To comprehend AI, delve into its core components: machine learning, where algorithms learn from data; neural networks, inspired by the human brain's structure; and natural language processing, enabling machines to understand and respond to human language. Grasping these elements elucidates AI's role in diverse fields, from self-driving cars to personalized recommendations in online platforms.

To Summarize:

AI's impact spans industries, transforming how we live and work. Its applications range from automating routine tasks in industries like manufacturing to optimizing healthcare with predictive analytics. In essence, AI learns from data to make informed decisions or predictions. Despite its benefits, concerns persist regarding AI ethics, biases in algorithms, and potential job displacement due to automation. Balancing AI's advantages with ethical considerations remains a crucial point in its ongoing integration across sectors.

To Warn:

Embracing AI comes with potential risks and ethical dilemmas. One significant concern revolves around algorithmic biases, where AI systems, trained on biased datasets, perpetuate societal prejudices. Moreover, over-reliance on AI for critical decision-making can lead to opacity and lack of accountability. Concerns about job displacement and the need for reskilling amid increasing automation also warrant attention. Additionally, the rapid advancement of AI technologies demands careful consideration of regulations and ethical frameworks to ensure responsible development and deployment.

To Advertise:

Unlock the potential of AI to revolutionize your business. Our AI-powered solutions optimize processes, streamline operations, and drive innovation. Experience increased efficiency with automated workflows and predictive analytics tailored to your industry. Harness the power of AI-driven insights to make informed decisions and stay ahead in today's competitive landscape. Join us in embracing the future of AI technology for sustainable growth and enhanced customer experiences.

To inform

Artificial Intelligence (AI) stands as a technological marvel, reshaping industries and daily life. At its core, AI refers to computer systems emulating human intelligence, encompassing various subfields like machine learning, neural networks, and natural language processing. Machine learning algorithms empower AI systems to learn from vast datasets, recognizing patterns and making predictions without explicit programming. Neural networks, inspired by the human brain's structure, facilitate deep learning and complex problem-solving capabilities. Natural language processing enables machines to understand and interact with human language, driving advancements in virtual assistants, language translation, and sentiment analysis. The applications of AI span a wide spectrum, from enhancing customer experiences through personalized recommendations to optimizing supply chains with predictive analytics.