

TRICK QUESTION SURVIVAL GUIDE

Common traps in OC / Selective reading
– and how to beat them



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Master the art of reading comprehension with confidence

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: What This Guide Is For	4
Chapter 2: Golden Rule: Text First, Brain Second	5
Chapter 3: The 8 Big Traps (with Fixes)	6
Trap 1 – "Copycat" Answer	6
Trap 2 – "Almost Right" (One Poison Word)	7
Trap 3 – True but Doesn't Answer the Question	8
Trap 4 – Using Your Own Knowledge	9
Trap 5 – Misreading Small Command Words	10
Trap 6 – Emotion/Tone Mismatch	11
Trap 7 – Overthinking and Changing	12
Trap 8 – Main vs Detail	13
Chapter 4: 3-Step Survival Routine	14
Chapter 5: Mini-Checklist for Reviewing	15
Conclusion	16

Chapter 1: What This Guide Is For

This is for the child who:

- picks a good answer first,
- reads the others,
- changes to the wrong one,
- then says, "**I overthought it!**" afterwards.

In OC / Selective reading, many wrong options are **designed to look tempting**.

This guide shows:

- the most common traps,
- how they work,
- short worked examples, and
- a simple **3-step routine** so your child learns to trust evidence, not panic.

Chapter 2: Golden Rule: Text

First, Brain Second

Before we list traps, one rule:

**Your first job is to find evidence in the text.
Only then are you allowed to think.**

Bad Habit	Good Habit
"Which option sounds deep / clever / what I've heard before?"	"Which option has the closest match to what the text actually says?"

Chapter 3: The 8 Big Traps

(with Fixes)

TRAP 1 – "Copycat" Answer (Same Words, Wrong Meaning)

What it is

The wrong option steals exact words from the passage, but uses them in a way the author did not.

How it tricks you

- You recognise the words → it "feels" safe.
- You think, "I definitely saw this phrase" → tick.

Example

Passage (shortened):

"Although Alex loved sport, he chose to spend most afternoons in the library because he wanted to improve his writing before high school."

Question: Why did Alex spend most afternoons in the library?

Options:

- A. Because he loved sport.
- B. Because he wanted to improve his writing.
- C. Because he was forced to go there by his parents.

- D. Because he did not enjoy sport.

Many students choose **A** because "loved sport" stands out.

Correct: B

Fix

1. Underline the part of the question that matters: "Why did Alex spend most afternoons in the library?"
2. **Find the exact sentence**: "because he wanted to improve his writing".
3. **Do not choose an option just because it uses familiar words**; check that it answers the question.

TRAP 2 – "Almost Right" (One Poison Word)

What it is

An option that is mostly correct, but has one small word that makes it wrong:

always, never, only, everyone, completely, every time, all...

How it tricks you

- You recognise 80–90% as true.
- Your brain ignores the one extreme detail that breaks it.

Example

Passage:

"Most of the time, Mia enjoys group work, but in this project she felt left out."

Question: Which sentence best describes Mia's usual attitude to group work?

Options:

- A. She always enjoys group work.
- B. She never enjoys group work.
- C. She usually enjoys group work.
- D. She is always left out in group work.

Tempting: A ("enjoys group work")

Poison word: **always** – passage says *most of the time*.

Correct: C

Fix

When you see extreme words:

1. **Circle them** in the options: always / never / only / everyone / completely.
2. **Ask:** "Did the passage say this is true *all the time*?"
3. If not, treat with suspicion.

TRAP 3 – True but Doesn't Answer the Question

What it is

An option that is true somewhere in the text, but does not answer what the question is actually asking.

How it tricks you

- You remember the fact from the passage.
- You forget to check if it matches the question stem.

Example

Passage:

"Lena joined the environment club because she wanted to do something practical, not just talk about climate change."

Question: Why did Lena join the environment club?

Options:

- A. Because she was worried about climate change.
- B. Because she wanted to do something practical.
- C. Because her friends were already in the club.
- D. Because she liked talking about big issues.

A is true (she is clearly worried), but the reason given is:

"because she wanted to do something practical".

Correct: B

Fix

1. **Read the question stem twice.**
2. If it starts with "Why...?", "What is the main reason...?", "What is the best explanation...?"
→ **Only choose options that give a clear reason**, not just a true fact.

TRAP 4 – Using Your Own Knowledge Instead of the Text

What it is

An option that fits what you already believe about the real world, but the passage doesn't say it (or even suggests the opposite).

How it tricks you

- You think about real life: "But in real life, kids do feel that way..."
- You forget this question is about what the text says, not what is generally true.

Example

Passage:

"Unlike many of his classmates, Ravi found exams exciting because they were a chance to prove to himself how much he had improved."

Question: How does Ravi feel about exams?

Options:

- A. He hates exams like most students.
- B. He feels nervous and sick before every exam.
- C. He finds exams exciting.
- D. He thinks exams are unfair.

Your real-world brain: "Most kids hate exams." → pulls you towards A or D.

Text brain: Must answer: "He finds exams exciting..."

Correct: C

Fix

When tempted by "what everyone knows":

1. **Ask:** "Where in the text is that idea?"
2. If you cannot point to a sentence or clear clue, **do not use background knowledge** to override the passage.

TRAP 5 – Misreading Small Command Words

What it is

Questions with tiny words that flip the task:

EXCEPT, NOT, FALSE, LEAST, BEST, MAIN.

How it tricks you

- You rush and answer as if it was a normal question.
- For "EXCEPT", students choose the one that *is* in the text – the opposite of what's needed.

Example (EXCEPT)

Passage mentions:

- exams are stressful
- teachers give practice papers
- parents encourage sleep
- school runs a wellbeing workshop

Question: The passage mentions all of the following ways to support students
EXCEPT:

Options:

- A. Giving practice exams.
- B. Encouraging students to sleep well.
- C. Running wellbeing workshops.
- D. Shortening the length of the exam.

Child often picks A/B/C because "it was in the passage".

Correct: D (the only one not mentioned).

Fix

1. **Circle or underline** EXCEPT / NOT / FALSE / LEAST / MAIN / BEST in the question.
2. **Say out loud:** "I am looking for the one that is *NOT* in the passage."
3. For EXCEPT, tick the true ones lightly, then pick the leftover.

TRAP 6 – Emotion / Tone Mismatch

What it is

The option labels how someone feels (angry / delighted / confused), but the text hints at a different emotion.

How it tricks you

- You half-read a sentence.
- You pick an emotion that fits how you might feel, not how the character is shown.

Example

Text:

"When her name was read out, Maria's hands trembled. She tried to smile, but her eyes kept returning to the long list of responsibilities beneath the word 'Captain'."

Question: How does Maria feel about being chosen as Captain?

Options:

- A. Proud and relaxed.
- B. Excited but overwhelmed.
- C. Angry and resentful.
- D. Disappointed and bored.

Many pick **A** ("she smiles so she's proud").

But we see: hands trembled, "tried" to smile, kept returning to long list of responsibilities → shows excitement + pressure.

Correct: B

Fix

1. **Underline the evidence words** for feelings (trembled, tried, kept returning).
2. **Check:** does the emotion in the option match *all* evidence, not just one word?

TRAP 7 – Overthinking and Changing a Good First Answer

What it is

You pick a reasonable answer quickly, then:

- re-read every option,
- imagine extra possibilities,
- convince yourself another (usually more complicated) option "sounds smarter".

How it tricks you

- You stop trusting your literal reading and chase the one that sounds difficult or deeper.
- You move away from the evidence.

Example

Text:

"The plan looked simple on the board, but nobody had tested it in real life."

Question: What does this suggest about the plan?

Options:

- A. It might not work as expected.
- B. It is guaranteed to succeed.
- C. It has been tested many times.
- D. It is too complicated to understand.

Most students first think **A**.

Then some overthink: "The exam is tricky... maybe it's about complexity?"

Correct: A

Fix – "One Change Rule"

If you change an answer, you must be able to say:

"I am changing to option __ because the text says: '_____' and this evidence matches the new option better."

If you cannot point to new evidence, don't change.

TRAP 8 – Question Asks for "Main / Best" but You Pick a Detail

What it is

The option you choose is true, but only about one part of the passage, not the whole.

How it tricks you

- You remember a specific detail vividly.
- You forget the question: "main reason / best summary / overall message".

Example

Passage gist:

- Paragraph 1: Students stressed.
- Paragraph 2: Causes (homework, phones, late nights).
- Paragraph 3: Suggests balanced solutions (sleep, exercise, realistic expectations).

Question: What is the main message of the passage?

Options:

- A. Homework is the only cause of student stress.
- B. Phones are destroying students' attention.
- C. Student stress has many causes and needs balanced solutions.
- D. Students are lazy and don't manage time.

A and B are details in the middle. The overall passage pushes: "many causes → balanced solutions needed".

Fix

For "main / best / overall / mostly about":

1. **Cover the options.**
2. **Ask:** "If I had to explain this whole passage in one sentence, what would I say?"
3. Then pick the option closest to your one-sentence summary, even if some detailed words don't match perfectly.

Chapter 4: 3-Step "Survival Routine" for Every Question

Step 1 – Read the QUESTION stem twice

Underline commands:

why / how / main / best / EXCEPT / NOT / MOST LIKELY / attitude

Step 2 – Find EVIDENCE first

Underline or mentally note the part of the passage that answers it.

Ask: "What does the text actually say or show?"

Step 3 – Test OPTIONS Against the Text

For each option you consider:

- Is every part of the option supported, or is there a poison word (always, never, only)?
- Is it:
 - text-based, or
 - just my background knowledge / opinion?
- Does it answer the question, not just repeat a true detail?

Optional safety rule:

If you want to change your first answer, you must write or say the exact sentence in the text that proves the new choice is better.

Chapter 5: Mini-Checklist for Reviewing a Practice Paper

After doing a reading practice set, pick 3–5 wrong questions and run this checklist:

For each wrong answer, ask:

- ☐ Did I get tricked by a copycat **(TRAP 1)**?
- ☐ Did I ignore a poison word like "always/never/only" **(TRAP 2)**?
- ☐ Did I choose something true but not answering the question **(TRAP 3)**?
- ☐ Did I use my own knowledge instead of the passage **(TRAP 4)**?
- ☐ Did I misread EXCEPT / NOT / MAIN / BEST **(TRAP 5)**?
- ☐ Did I mismatch the emotion / tone **(TRAP 6)**?
- ☐ Did I change my first good answer without new evidence **(TRAP 7)**?
- ☐ Did I pick a detail instead of the overall idea **(TRAP 8)**?

Then write one sentence at the top of the next paper:

"Today I will watch out for: _____."

(e.g. "copycat answers and *EXCEPT* questions").

Conclusion

Reading comprehension success isn't about being the smartest student in the room—it's about being the most methodical. The traps in this guide catch even brilliant students because they prey on natural human tendencies: the desire to sound sophisticated, the tendency to overthink, and the impulse to rely on what we already know.

But now you have the tools to beat these traps:

- **Remember the Golden Rule:** Text first, brain second.
- **Use the 3-Step Routine:** Question → Evidence → Test Options.
- **Watch for the 8 Big Traps** that catch most students.
- **Review your mistakes systematically** to identify your personal weak spots.

The most important thing to remember is this: **trust the evidence**. When in doubt, go back to what the text actually says, not what sounds clever or what you think the examiner wants to hear.

With practice and patience, these strategies will become second nature. You'll find yourself automatically scanning for poison words, checking that your answer actually addresses the question, and staying grounded in textual evidence rather than getting carried away by overthinking.

Your reading comprehension success is not about luck—it's about having a system and sticking to it.

Now go forth and conquer those tricky questions. You've got this!

