

Analogies - Three Step Guide

An analogy is a comparison between two things. We can use analogies to breathe life into our writing, or improve our comprehension of someone else's. While closely related to similes and metaphors, analogies differ in that they offer us a logical argument of some kind.

Analogy problems are often presented in the following form:

shovel : dig :: ← (This is saying: "**Shovel** is to **dig** as?")

- 1) bag : buy
- 2) baby : cry
- 3) cloud : rain
- 4) fork : eat
- 5) car : stop

STEP ONE: Identify the Relationship

Our first step in solving a problem like this is to identify a *direct and necessary relationship* between the two words (in this case, 'shovel' and 'dig'). Think to yourself: "*How are these two words connected to each other in a clear and specific way?*"

Here's one: *A shovel **is used to** dig.*

This relationship (in this case, the phrase "**is used to**," or "**use**"), is also known as the *bridge* between these two terms.

STEP TWO: Apply the Relationship

Now that we have our bridge, we can plug it into the possible answers and see if it fits for any of them. Chances are, the one that fits the best will be the correct answer.

- 1) "A bag **is used to** buy" - a bag is not always used to buy; additionally, we could buy with many other things. This is not a fitting answer.
- 2) "A baby **is used to** cry" - babies aren't used to cry! Babies aren't used for anything!
- 3) "A cloud **is used to** rain" - a cloud rains, sure, but it's not *used* to rain. Let's keep going.
- 4) "A fork **is used to** eat" - this one looks good. A fork is used to eat! Before we stop, though, let's try the last one.
- 5) "A car **is used to** stop" - while it is true that a car is sometimes used to stop, a car can also be used to go. So, it is not a direct and necessary relationship; it doesn't work.

After reviewing our options, it looks like "fork : eat" is the best answer here, because it continues the same direct and necessary relationship as the original set.

STEP THREE (optional): Review and Adjust

Sometimes, none of the answers will fit with your relationship. Other times, multiple answers may fit your relationship. This will require you to return to step one and find a new relationship between the original terms. Keep trying until one (and only one) answer is clearly the best fit.

Follow-Up Work:

1) Identify a fitting bridge for these analogies:

Cold : chilly _____ Pencil : write _____

Tall : short _____ Student : class _____

Sick : ill _____ Boat : water _____

2) Circle the best answer for the following analogy:

mountain : rock ::

- a) car : tire
- b) building : window
- c) house : brick
- d) sky : cloud
- e) sandwich : puppy

What bridge did you end up using? _____

Extension (optional):

Write an analogy of your own, using the format above (A is to B as C is to D).