Reading Comprehension Tips

1. **For Vocab questions, think like a thesaurus.** Approximately 15% of the RC questions will ask you about a specific word from a paragraph. Keep in mind that you are NOT expected to know the definition of this word, and most of the time the standard dictionary definition will be listed among the answer choices and will be INCORRECT. Look back to the passage and ask yourself, *how is this word being used in context?* Try to come up with your own word that is similar in meaning and could replace the word in the sentence. Use this prediction to eliminate answer choices.

2. **Focus on the first and final paragraphs to find the Main Idea.** he author usually uses the first paragraph to introduce his topic and start a discussion of the Main Idea. The final paragraph wraps up the discussion of the body paragraphs and reinforces the Main Idea. If you are having trouble finding what the overall purpose or point is for the passage, go back to these two bookending paragraphs. Look for thesis statements or concluding summations.

3. **Remember that Details are used to reinforce each paragraph.** Detail questions make up one quarter (25%) of RC questions. If you are asked about the purpose of a Detail or why the author mentions something, take a look at the paragraph in which the detail is found. Authors use details to support their points. What point is the paragraph trying to make?

4. **Assume the Tone is complex.** Sometimes the author's tone is relatively simple. He could simply be offering some statistics or factual data, or adopt a removed, neutral tone. However, the harder passages will have a more complicated Tone. Look for the subtle changes in the author's views. Tone is revealed in diction, or word choice. What does the author like? What does he criticize? What adjectives and adverbs does he use to describe things? He may feel positively about one aspect of the Topic, and negatively about another aspect.

5. **Find the implication to support the Inference.** The correct answer for an Inference question is NOT something that sounds reasonable to *you*. It is the choice that puts into words an unstated implication from the passage. Only once choice can be correct because the passage will be worded in such a way as to only support ONE of the implications. Look for stated support for each answer choice in the passage. Don't rely on your memory, and avoid large leaps in logic. The correct answer is ALWAYS based on something from the passage. You just have to find it!