

Check Your Reading Skill with This Article and Quiz

Evaluate your reading skill with the reading passage and quiz on this page. Before you begin reading, think for a moment about what you already know about schizophrenia and mental illness.

Do you know anyone who is “a little paranoid?” (In American culture the word “paranoid” is often used casually, even jokingly. Most adults realize the actual psychiatric condition is not a joking matter.)

Have you heard or read about anyone who heard imaginary voices or saw things no one else could see?

What would you like to know about mental illness? This article (from the Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health) explains some common symptoms of schizophrenia from a medical point of view.

Read on and see if any of your questions are answered.

(You might want to read the tips in www.englishhints.com/improve-reading-skills.html first, if you have not already studied them. Then come back to this reading on symptoms of schizophrenia to try your skills out.)

Use Your Reading Skills on this Passage about Mental Illness

First skim it, looking for the main ideas and the organization of the information, including the sequencing and transitional words used to make the order of ideas clear. (These are in ***bold italicized type*** to help you notice them.) The author contrasts several types of symptoms.

What are the main categories of symptoms he or she describes?

Now read the passage again, more carefully.

The *italicized* (but not bolded) sentences give context clues-- in this case often definitions of key words, as well as some examples.

Use your reading skill to guess the meaning of the words in **bold** print, which are not given definitions but can be guessed from the context or analyzed using prefixes and roots you know.

After this second reading, answer the questions below.

One of the most common groups of symptoms that result from **disordered** processing and interpretation of sensory information are the hallucinations. *Hallucinations are said to occur when an individual experiences a sensory impression that has no basis in reality.* This impression could involve any of the sensory **modalities**. Thus hallucinations may be auditory, olfactory, gustatory, kinesthetic, tactile, or visual. For example, auditory hallucinations frequently involve the impression that one is hearing a voice. In each case, the sensory impression is falsely experienced as real.

A more complex group of symptoms resulting from **disordered** interpretation of information consists of delusions. *A delusion is a false belief that an individual holds despite evidence to the contrary.*

A common example is paranoia, in which a person has delusional beliefs that others are trying to harm him or her.

Attempts to persuade the person that these beliefs are unfounded typically fail and may even result in the further **entrenchment** of the beliefs.

Hallucinations and delusions are among the **most commonly observed psychotic symptoms**... Symptoms of schizophrenia are **divided into two broad classes**: positive symptoms and negative symptoms. **Positive symptoms** generally involve the experience of something in consciousness that should not normally be present. **For example**, hallucinations and delusions represent perceptions or beliefs that should not normally be experienced. **In addition to** hallucinations and delusions, patients with psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia frequently have marked disturbances in the logical process of their thoughts. **Specifically**, psychotic thought processes are characteristically loose, disorganized, illogical, or **bizarre**. These disturbances in thought process frequently produce observable patterns of behavior that are also disorganized and **bizarre**. The severe disturbances of thought content and process that comprise the positive symptoms often are the most recognizable and striking features of psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia or manic depressive illness.

However, in addition to positive symptoms, patients with schizophrenia and other psychoses have been noted to exhibit major **deficits** in motivation and spontaneity that are referred to as negative symptoms. **While** positive symptoms represent the presence of something not normally experienced, negative symptoms reflect the absence of thoughts and behaviors that would otherwise be expected. *Concreteness of thought represents impairment in the ability to think abstractly. Blunting of affect refers to a general reduction in the ability to express emotion.* Motivational failure and inability to initiate activities represent a major source of long-term disability in schizophrenia. *Anhedonia reflects a deficit in the ability to experience pleasure and to react appropriately to pleasurable situations.* **Positive symptoms such as hallucinations** are responsible for much of the acute distress associated with schizophrenia, **but negative symptoms** appear to be responsible for much of the chronic and long-term disability associated with the disorder.

Reading Skill Quiz

As you skimmed, what categories of symptoms did you notice? You might answer “positive and negative symptoms,” or give more detail:

positive symptoms like (fill in the blanks)

1. _____ and 2. _____,

and negative symptoms like

3. _____, 4. _____, and 5. _____. (See bottom of this pdf for the answers.)

Now answer these multiple choice questions with what you learned from a second reading of the passage.

6. Although it is not stated in this reading, it can be inferred that:

- A. every person with bizarre, disorganized thinking is schizophrenic.
- B. the negative symptoms of schizophrenia are less important than the positive.
- C. people with schizophrenia may have difficulty starting projects or changing their routines.
- D. paranoid people are dangerous.

7. After analyzing “disordered” (dividing it into a prefix, a suffix, and a word root), you can infer it means something like:

- A. out of order.
- B. unorganized.
- C. messy.
- D. lacking order, confused

8. From its context, you can guess modalities refers to

- A. the various senses or forms of perception.
- B. scientific classification of mental health models.
- C. different modes of seeing.
- D. false perceptions of reality.

9. Analyze the word 'entrenchment.' If a trench is a long narrow hole or ditch (such as soldiers dug in World War One as a partial shelter from enemy gunfire, "entrenchment of the beliefs" in this passage might mean

- A. digging down to one's basic position.
- B. persuading a troubled person to make a better defense of his position.
- C. narrowing or limiting one's thinking.
- D. a further digging in or strengthening of beliefs a person already held.

10. The meaning of bizarre in this reading is closest to

- A. untrue
- B. strange
- C. relaxed
- D. spontaneous

11. What's an hallucination?

- A. an optical illusion
- B. blunting of the senses
- C. a false perception of something non-existent
- D. an imaginary, unreal belief

12. You can conclude from this passage that

- A. Delusions are a major problem for society.
- B. Deficits of feeling and initiative lead to anhedonia.
- C. Schizophrenia is a complicated illness with many possible symptoms.
- D. Paranoia is a form of delusional thinking.

Check your answers below.

For more of this text on mental illness, and for practice scanning chapter titles and subheadings and skimming for specific information, see www.englishhints.com/practice-scanning-and-skimming-for-information.html.

Answers to Reading Skill Questions

1. hallucinations
- 2, delusions (or paranoia, or disorganized and bizarre thoughts & behavior)
3. concreteness of thought (or concrete thinking)
4. blunting of affect (or emotional deficits)
5. anhedonia (or inability to experience pleasure normally)
6. C. (See “inability to initiate activities” and the rest of the last paragraph.)

Regarding answer A, watch out for absolute statements. There are almost always exceptions, so answers with “everyone,” “no one,” “always,” or “never” are NOT usually correct. Answer B is false according to the last sentence of the passage, and answer D is not discussed in the passage at all.)

7. D (For answer B, it helps to understand that unorganized means not organized, as compared to disorganized, which means organized badly.)

8. A

9. D

10. B

11. C

12. C (The words used in A & B are discussed in this passage, but these conclusions are not. B expresses a cause and effect relationship that is not suggested by the passage.

D is true according to it, but not a major conclusion or summary.)