

# Making Inferences

## What is an Inference?

An inference is an educated guess about exactly what an author is trying to communicate. Writers don't always connect all the dots for you – sometimes they leave it up to the reader to get the point. You may not think you are up to the task, but making inferences can be easy if you follow a few simple rules.

## How to Make Inferences?

1. Pay attention to the overall thesis, main ideas, major supporting details, and the organizational patterns of the material you are reading.
2. Make sure you understand the facts that are stated directly. Also, look up any words you aren't familiar with.
3. Look for any unusual facts or details that stand out. Think about why they are included.
4. Think about the words the author uses to suggest certain attitudes, and the kinds of facts the author either includes or leaves out.
5. Determine the author's purpose: are you reading an advertisement, a textbook, a political pamphlet, or something else?
6. Double check your inference. Is your conclusion supported by the text? Could there be a more accurate inference?

When making inferences, make sure you connect all the dots so you can see the big picture!

Adapted from McWhorter, Kathleen T. Reading Across the Disciplines. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005.