

Answer Key: Jargon Exercise (For Instructors Only)

This page provides insight and definitions that will facilitate discussion and assessment of the Jargon exercise.

These answers/definitions should not be shared with students.

Some of the terms in the Jargon exercise are intentionally difficult to define without insider knowledge of the transportation industry. In general, grades should be based on how close the student came to the actual definition, not whether their definition reflected all of the nuance and detail it could have.

RFID Sensor: Radio-Frequency Identification sensor. A small device that uses faint radio signals to identify and track objects without the need to directly handle those objects (the way one would with a barcode scanner). An RFID reader is used to locate objects tagged with an RFID sensor. In this context, RFID sensors are used to track both freight as well as manufactured goods (like automobile parts) throughout the supply chain.

Biofuel: Fuels produced organically. Biofuels differ from fossil fuels (like petroleum) in that they are produced contemporaneously, rather than over the course of many millennia.

Intermodal Freight Transportation System: The document is tricky here. It seems to define these as systems “which use multiple means of transportation to move people and goods.” In that case “intermodal” would refer to “passing from mode to mode.” However, an “intermodal” in transportation contexts is essentially a large, 40-foot shipping container. Such containers are designed to pass largely from ships to trains (and sometimes even via airplane). Transferring a bag of groceries from your car to your friend’s bicycle would not count as intermodal freight transport. An Intermodal Freight Transportation System, then, is a system for transporting intermodals.

Bottleneck: Any point where a process is slowed due to a limit in infrastructure. The typical example would be a traffic jam, but in this context, a bottleneck may refer to a slowdown on a highway, an assembly line, or the fact that one supplier takes too long to ship auto parts to a manufacturer.

Supply Chain: The entire system of materials, processes, and transportation that lead to the production of a manufactured good. The supply chain for a computer would include the mining of precious metals, the purchase of hardware from other manufacturers, the assembly of the final computer.

Region V: Defined by the federal Department of Transportation. Specifically, the region includes Illinois, Ohio, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Michigan. Obviously, there are other parts of the globe referred to as “Region V,” including one in the Philippines. Context clues within the document (the term “Midwest,” the statistical characteristics) will help locate the region precisely.

Obviously there are many ways to write an acceptable summary. A strong sentence should be grammatical and easy to read in a single breath. Generally, there will also be some mention of each of the three main areas the report covers: agriculture, biofuel, and the automotive industry.