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ENGLISH USAGE

Logical Reasoning (Argumentation And Other)

You could get this question under several formats. One format presents a conclusion, followed by two statements, and you have to identify whether either or both the statements could lead to the stated conclusion. A variation of this format presents a generalization or conclusion, followed by one or more statements. You have to find out whether either or both the statements lend any support, contradict or are irrelevant to the generalization/conclusion. Yet another format presents a statement, followed by two or more arguments and you have to find out which of the arguments is relatively strong or weak. Other formats could have the statements followed by assumptions, implications, inferences or conclusions. In certain other question forms, students have to identify the weakness in the statement i. e. whether it is incomplete; non-informative; or it lacks simplicity or logical strength.

Irrespective of the format, the questions remain the same at the core and the strategy to crack such questions also essentially remains the same.

There are mainly three parts of an ARGUMENT:

Conclusion: What point is the author trying to make? Or the claim of the argument.

Evidence: What evidence (if any) is there for the support of the 'conclusion?'

Assumption: What assumption is required to reach the conclusion of the argument?

The assumption bridges the gap between the conclusion and the evidence. It means that if the assumption is not true, the conclusion cannot be reached.

Here's an example:

All men are intelligent. Therefore, Harish is intelligent.

Now,

'Therefore, Harish is intelligent'----- conclusion

'All men are intelligent'----- evidence

What is the assumption in the argument above, if BOTH the given statements are true?

Simple, Harish is a man.

Because, the above argument would not have been true, if Harish had not been a man. Thus, this assumption has to be true for the conclusion to be reached.

Denial Test :

Denial test is a foolproof method that is used to eliminate the confusion between/among the probable right choices.

Application of Denial Test

After you have eliminated the wrong choices and are left with two or three probable choices, deny the assumptions (the choices) one by one. If in the process, the conclusion is also weakened or denied then the answer choice is right and if the conclusion can still be reached, then the assumption (choice) is wrong.

Let's try the denial test on this example.

Our assumption is that Harish is a man . The conclusion is that Harish is intelligent. Now try to negate the assumption i.e. Harish is not a man and in the process the conclusion that Harish is intelligent is also weakened. Therefore, our conclusion is right as it automatically gets denied if the assumption on which it is based is denied.

Once you reach your answer or a group of answer choices, ask yourself for each answer: Does this need to be true for the Argument to be true ? If yes, you made the right assumption.

Let us have a look at a few examples in various formats.

Directions: Each of the questions that follow has a conclusion followed by two statements A and B.

- Mark 1.** if statements A alone is adequate to arrive at the conclusion,
Mark 2. if statement B alone is adequate to arrive at the conclusion,
Mark 3. if both statements A and B are required to arrive at the conclusion,
Mark 4. if both statements are insufficient to draw the conclusion,

Example 

1. Coffee is a beverage that is injurious to health.
 - A. Coffee contains caffeine, a chemical substance.
 - B. When coffee is consumed, the nicotine in coffee enters the bloodstream and poisons it.

Here statement A does not state whether caffeine is good or not good for health. Hence, it does not lead to the conclusion. Statement B details how coffee poisons the bloodstream, and leads to the above conclusion. Answer: (2)



2. An inland letter is a cheaper form of communication in India than a post card.
- A. A post card costs 25 p while an inland letter costs 75 p.
 - B. For the same handwriting, a post card costs 5 p per 100 words while an inland letter costs 3 p.

This is a simple question. Statement A negates the conclusion. But statement B helps form the conclusion by comparing the unit cost or cost per 100 words of the post card and the inland letter. Answer: (2)

This question can figure in various formats, but the essential logic remains the same.

Let us have a look at another example in a slightly different format:

Direction: Sometimes we conclude about characteristics of a general phenomenon by studying or analyzing characteristics of a particular phenomenon. Below is given such an inductive argument. The generalization is given first, followed by a particular statement. You have to find out whether the numbered particular statement strongly confirms, vaguely hints, strongly disconfirms, or is irrelevant to the generalization.

Generalisation: Laws that limit the amount of money that can be spent in political campaigns usually help incumbents.

- A. In the 1970's campaign-reforms, laws were passed that limited the amount of money that could be spent in a political campaign. In the time that has elapsed since the passage of these laws, the percentage of incumbents who have won re-election has increased.
- B. Of late the amount of money spent on political campaigns has indeed gone down.

Q. What type of support does statement (1) provide for this generalization?

- (1) Strongly confirms
- (2) Vaguely hints
- (3) Strongly disconfirms
- (4) Irrelevant

The generalization is that such laws help incumbents (who are already known to the electorate). Though statement (A) fails to establish a cause and effect relationship, it does vaguely hint that this could indeed be one of the reasons. Therefore, the right answer ought to be (2).



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Other Question Types

As we have already pointed out above, the only thing certain about the CAT is its uncertainty. Although we have tried to include all the question types that have possibly figured in the past CAT examinations, there are still some that might be beyond the categorization as above.

A few of such “different” question types are as under:

(A) Selecting the Odd-Out Statement:

In the preceding chapters we have come across words that do not belong to the group. Selecting the odd-out word needed a good command on vocabulary. Here we shall have a little practice of statements that do not belong to the group. We need to reason out the odd statement. Let us have a look at a couple of examples:

- Ex. 1.** (1) The only show of protest has come from the postal department
(2) Railways haven’t shown any protests
(3) Media has shown no protests
(4) Pay commission is leading to some real hot scenes.

Option (4) is easily the odd one out as the first three sentences all refer to protest in one form or the other.

- Ex. 2.** (1) Playful love songs
(2) Lusty cabaret songs
(3) Delightful songs from movies
(4) Funky pop music

This is another easy question. Sentences given in options (1), (2) and (3), all refer to different type of songs. Option (4) talks about music. So option (4) is the odd one out.

(B) Logical Completion of Statement:

We have had a little practice of short passages, where the last sentence has been deleted. There could be questions where the students have to logically complete a sentence. Let us have a look at a couple of examples:

Ex. 1 Being modern is more than just a fad or an outward projection of broad-mindedness;

- (1) it is, in fact, a state of prolonged hibernation
(2) it is the capacity to understand societal changes and absorb the good ones
(3) it is the unquestioned liberty of human soul where no mortal shackles inhibit its growth
(4) it is the manifestation of an unrestrained prognosis of liberation

The stem of the statement ends with a semi colon. It states that being modern is something more than just a fad. Options (1) (3) and (4) are not logical continuations as they cannot be connected with modernization. Hence, (2) is the right answer.

Ex. 2 The economic reforms process aims at liberalizing policies and systems – hence we may deduce that:

- (1) it is essentially a good process
- (2) it is essentially a bad process
- (3) some policies were indeed restrictive in the past
- (4) the future is golden

Options (1), (2) and (4) can be rejected on the ground that these do not provide an idea about effect of the programme or the kind of policies being used. Option (3) is valid because 'restrictive' word can directly be derived from 'liberalizing policies' and continues the same flow. Thus option (3) is correct answer.

(C) Correct Idiomatic Use:

Questions based on idiomatic use require the students to select the correct meaning based on contextual usage. Let us have a look at a couple of examples:

Ex. 1 Today's politicians move totally on the basis of a dog in the manger policy.

- (1) the policy of tit for tat
- (2) give and take
- (3) a selfish policy
- (4) the theory of capitalism

'A dog in the manger policy', is an expression used for a person who keeps others from using things that he may not be using himself. In a way, this means following a selfish policy. Option (3) is the perfect choice for our answer.

Ex. 2 Seeing the ultimate results I inferred that his initial courage was a Dutch courage.

- (1) big fiasco
- (2) failure
- (3) type of over excitement
- (4) fictitious courage induced by alcohol

Meaning of the expression, 'Dutch courage' is given verbatim in option (4): fictitious courage induced by alcohol. Therefore, our answer is option (4).