

PowerScore Critical Reasoning Summary

First question family:

Note:

- Stimulus is accepted as it is
- Answer choices should not contain new information

Includes:

- 1) Must be true
- 2) Main point
- 3) Method of reasoning
- 4) Flaw in the reasoning
- 5) Parallel reasoning

Second question family:

Note:

- The information in the stimulus is suspect.
- Answer choices are ok if they contain new information

Includes:

- 1) Assumption
- 2) Strengthen/ support
- 3) Resolve the paradox

Third question family:

Note:

- The information in the stimulus is suspect.
- Answer choices are ok if they contain new information

Includes:

- 2) Weaken

1) Must be true questions:

- 1) Select an answer choice that is proven by the information presented in the stimulus.
- 2) The correct answer can be a paraphrase of part of the stimulus or it can be a logical consequence of one or more parts of the stimulus.

Correct answers in must be true questions review:

- 1) Paraphrase answers
- 2) Answers that are the sum of two or more stimulus statements.

Incorrect answers in the must be true questions:

- 1) Could be true or likely to be true answers: the correct answer must be true.
- 2) Exaggerated answers:
- 3) New information answers
 - a. To avoid incorrectly eliminating a new information answer, take the following steps:
 - i. Examine the scope of the argument to make sure the new information does not fall within the sphere of a term or concept in the stimulus.
 - ii. Examine the answer to make sure it is not the consequence of combining stimulus elements.
- 4) the sell Game
- 5) the opposite answer
- 6) the reverse answer

Note:

- Be careful with: Some, many.
- Most of the time, there is no conclusion

2) Main point questions

- Find the conclusion. The correct answer choice should be a rephrasing of the conclusion

Two incorrect answer types:

- Answers that are true but don't encapsulate the author's point
- Answers that repeat the premises of the argument.

3) Parallel Reasoning Questions

Note:

- They ask you to identify the answer choice that contains reasoning most similar in structure to the reasoning in the stimulus
- They are in the first family.
- The stimulus for a parallel reasoning question can contain either valid or invalid reasoning.
- When a parallel reasoning stimulus contains flawed reasoning, we identify it as a parallel flaw question.

The elements of an argument that do not need to be paralleled:

- 1) Topic of the stimulus
- 2) The order of presentation of the premises and conclusion

The elements that must be paralleled:

- 1) The method of reasoning
- 2) The validity of the argument
- 3) The conclusion
 - a. The correct answer will **probably** have identical wording to the conclusion (must, could, many, some, never). Majority is the same as most.
 - b. The conclusion can be positive, where the correct answer can be negative.
- 4) the premises

The four tests that can be used

- Match the method of reasoning.
- Match the conclusion
- Match the premises
- Match the validity of the argument

4) Strengthen questions:

Note:

- The stimulus contains an argument
- Focus on the conclusion
- The stimulus is suspect

- The answer choices are accepted as given
- Strengthen questions ask you to support the argument in any way possible.

How to strengthen an argument:

- Identify the conclusion
- Personalize the argument.
- Look for weaknesses in the argument
- Arguments that contain analogies or use surveys rely upon the validity of those analogies and survey. Answers choices that strengthen the analogy or survey are usually correct.
- The correct answer can strengthen the argument just a little or a lot.

Three incorrect answer traps:

- Opposite answers.
- Shell game answers
- Out of scope answers: these answers miss the point of the argument and support issues that are either unrelated to the argument or tangential to the argument.

Causality and strengthen questions:

- Eliminate any alternate causes for the stated effect.
- Show that when the cause occurs, the effect occurs.
- Show that when the cause doesn't occur, the effect doesn't occur.
- Eliminate the possibility that the stated relationship is reversed.
- Show that the data used to make the causal statement are accurate, or eliminate the possible problems with the data.

5) Assumption questions:

Note:

- They ask you to identify a statement that the argument assumes or supposes.
- An assumption is the foundation of an argument. A statement that the premises and conclusion rest upon.
- An assumption is simply an unstated premise – what must be true in order for the argument to be true
- An assumption can be defined as something that is necessary for the argument to be true.
- If an answer choice contains a statement that the author might only think could be true, or if the statement contains additional information that the author is not committed to, then the answer is wrong.
- The correct choice cannot have irrelevant information.

two types of assumption:

1) Supporter:

- An assumption connects the pieces of the argument.
- The conclusion often contains a piece of information not previously seen in the argument.
- The supporter closes the hole by bring the statements together.

2) Defender:

- Protect the argument by eliminating ideas that weaken the argument.
- They defend the argument by showing that a possible source of attack has been eliminated.

6) Resolve the paradox questions:

Note:

- No conclusion
- Language of contradiction: but, paradoxically, surprisingly.
- Answer choices are ok if they contain new information
- The word “explain” is used more frequently in paradox questions.
- The correct answer will resolve the paradox. It will allow both sides to be factually correct.
- You must select the answer choice that contains a possible cause of the situation.

Types of answers are incorrect:

- Explain only one side of the paradox
- Similarities and differences
 - when a stimulus contains a paradox where two items are different, then an answer choice that explains why the two are similar cannot be correct (vie versa)

7) Evaluate the argument questions:

Note:

- Use the words: evaluate, judge, assess.
- Answer choices are accepted even if they include new information.

The variance test:

- It consists of supplying two polar opposite responses to the question.

- Then analyze how the varying responses affect the conclusion in the stimulus.
- If different responses produce different effects on the conclusion, then the answer choice is correct.

8) Numbers and percentages:

Note:

- Numerical situations normally hinge on three elements: an overall total, a number within that total, and a percentage within the total
- GMAT will give you one element; you cannot make a definitive judgement about what is occurring with another element.
- Words used to introduce numerical ideas: sum, count, and tally.
- Words used to introduce percentage ideas: incidence, likelihood, segment, and share.
- Market share is simply the portion of a market that a company controls. The market share can be measured either in terms of revenues (sales) or units sold.
- Market share can change when factors in the market changes.

You can use the following rules for Must Be True questions:

- If the stimulus contains percentage or proportion information only, avoid answers that contain hard numbers
- If the stimulus contains only numerical information, avoid answers that contain percentage or proportion information
- If the stimulus contains both percentage and numerical information, any answer choice that contains percentage or proportion information percentages or both **may true.**

9) Weaken questions

Note:

- The stimulus will be an argument.
- Focus on the conclusion.
- The information in the stimulus is suspect.
- The answer choices are accepted as given even if they include new information.
- The questions contain: undermine, refute, counter, challenge, damage.

How to weaken an argument:

- Premises: the answer will contradict one of the premises.
- Conclusion: the correct answer often shows that the conclusion does not necessarily follow from the premises even if the premises are true.
- We need to focus on the conclusion and how the author arrived at the conclusion.

Common weakening scenarios:

- Incomplete information: the author fails to consider all of the possibilities or relies upon evidence that is incomplete.
- Improper comparison: compare two or three items that are essentially different.
- Qualified conclusion: the author qualifies or limits the conclusion in such a way as to leave the argument open to attack.

Three incorrect answer traps:

- Opposite answers: answers that strengthen the argument.
- Shall game answers.
- Out of scope answers: issues not related to the argument

10) Cause and effect reasoning

Note:

- If the causal statement is the conclusion, the reasoning is flawed.
- If the causal statement is in the premise, then the argument may be flawed, but causal statement
- Questions include: induced by, promoted by, determined by.

Situations that can lead to errors of causality:

- One event occurs before another
- Two (or more) events occur at the same time

How to attack a causal conclusion:

- Find an alternate cause for the stated effect.
- Show an event when the cause occurs, the effect does not occur.
- Show that although the effect occurs, the cause did not occur.
- Show that the stated relationship is reversed
- Show that a statistical problem exists with the data used to make the causal statement.