

1.3061 Concerned about various forms of workplace harassment, a city attorney's office instituted a publicity campaign last year encouraging victims of such harassment to come forward and file reports of the harassment. During the year following the inception of the publicity campaign, the frequency of harassment reports filed with the city attorney's office tripled. The publicity campaign has therefore been successful in its goal to raise awareness and reduce the frequency of harassment in the workplace.

Which of the following, if true, most seriously weakens the conclusion of the passage above?

- ☐ The increase in harassment complaints has consisted almost exclusively of additional complaints of racial harassment; complaints of other varieties of harassment have not increased significantly.
- ☐ Although the number of complaints has tripled, the number of complaints that have resulted in financial penalties for the harassers has not increased significantly.
- ☐ Many individuals who have brought complaints within the past year were previously unaware that the behavior to which they had been subjected was regarded legally as harassment.
- ☐ The city attorney's office is not permitted to release details of any complaints to the companies involved, to the courts, or to the general public.
- ☐ The city attorney's office originally instituted the campaign in response to falling numbers of workplace harassment complaints.

(1) *Identify the Question Type*

The "weakens" and "if true" language indicate that this is a Weaken question.

(2) *Deconstruct the Argument*

The passage concludes, on the basis of an increase in the number of harassment complaints, that awareness has increased and that the frequency of harassment has decreased. The argument, though, provides no information about what happens after a complaint is filed. The author assumes that, because a complaint is filed, the frequency of harassment will therefore decrease, but no evidence in the argument supports this assumption.

(3) *State the Goal*

To weaken the conclusion, the correct answer needs to provide a new piece of information that makes the conclusion less likely to be true. Some information about what happens after a complaint is filed might weaken the conclusion—perhaps the city attorney's office doesn't actually do anything with the complaints. Perhaps the companies in question don't care and won't do anything to change the situation.

(4) *Work from Wrong to Right*

(A) The particular type of harassment complaints being filed does not indicate whether such harassment is ultimately decreasing.

(B) The argument does not address particular punishments or outcomes for the harassers. It's entirely possible that harassers wouldn't face financial penalties but still might reduce the harassing behavior for other reasons.

(C) If the publicity campaign has educated these individuals about the nature of **WORKPLACE HARASSMENT**, then the argument's conclusion is strengthened. The campaign did **INDEED** raise awareness.

(D) CORRECT. If the city attorney's office cannot pursue legal remedies or even tell anyone about the complaints,

then it's less likely that this complaint system will lead to a decrease in the rate of workplace harassment.

(E) Since the passage's conclusion is concerned only with the results of the publicity campaign, the original motivation behind the campaign is irrelevant.

2.30603.3033 Joe: Many large, intricate, and precise geometric patterns called "crop circles" consisting of flattened plants in a field of corn or other grains have mysteriously appeared from time to time on farms in both the United States and the United Kingdom. The appearance of these crop circles is usually preceded by strange lights in the sky and no human has ever been caught in the act of creating one of these patterns. These crop circles must be the product of aliens from outer space.

Steve: Maybe they are a means of communication for some weird secret society. Or perhaps they are all part of an elaborate hoax by college fraternities. In any case, I seriously doubt that these crop circles are the product of extra-terrestrial beings.

Steve responds to Joe's conclusion by _____

- ☐ suggesting alternatives that disprove Joe's conclusion
- ☐ assuming that Joe's conclusion cannot be correct
- ☐ negating the validity of a premise upon which Joe relies in drawing his conclusion
- ☒ offering alternative explanations consistent with the evidence that Joe cites
- ☐ attacking Joe's conclusion as inconsistent with the available evidence

While Steve asserts that he does not agree with Joe's conclusion, he does not address the evidence that Joe cites, nor does he attempt to show that Joe's conclusion is inconsistent with that evidence. Steve merely offers two possible alternative explanations and asserts an opinion that he doubts aliens are to blame.

(A) Steve does suggest alternative causes, thus weakening Joe's conclusion. However, these alternatives do not go so far as to *disprove* Joe's conclusion. Even Steve uses the words *maybe* and *perhaps* to introduce his alternatives. This choice is too extreme.

(B) Steve "seriously doubt[s]" that Joe's conclusion is correct; he does not say that Joe cannot be correct. This choice is too extreme.

(C) Steve does not directly address any of Joe's premises. Rather, he offers his own alternative causes.

(D) CORRECT. Steve does offer alternative explanations that would go along with Joe's evidence. A *secret society* or people perpetrating a *hoax* would be likely to try to ensure that they weren't *caught in the act* while making the crop circles.

(E) Though Steve is dismissive of Joe's conclusion, he does not attempt to show that it is inconsistent with the evidence Joe cites; rather, Steve offers alternate scenarios that he believes are more reasonable than Joe's claim.

4.2986 Every year many people become ill because of airborne mold spores in their homes. After someone becomes ill, specialists are often hired to eradicate the mold. These specialists look in damp areas of the house, since mold is almost always found in places where there is substantial moisture. To minimize the risk of mold poisoning in the home, then, one should make sure to

keep all internal plumbing in good condition to prevent leakage that could serve as a breeding ground for mold.

Which of the following is an assumption on which the argument depends?

- ☐ Mold itself does not create moisture.
- ☐ Most homeowners know enough about plumbing to determine whether theirs is in good condition.
- ☐ Mold cannot grow in dry areas.
- ☐ No varieties of mold are harmless.
- ☐ Mold spores cannot be filtered from the air.

(1) *Identify the Question Type*

The word *assumption* in the question stem indicates that this is a Find the Assumption question.

(2) *Deconstruct the Argument*

The argument indicates that mold spores in the HOME can cause illness; experts brought in to eradicate the mold check damp areas because *mold is almost always found in places where there is substantial moisture*. The author then concludes that preventing leakages via plumbing problems will minimize the risk of mold poisoning.

(3) *State the Goal*

On Find the Assumption questions, we're looking for something that the author must believe to be true in order to draw the given conclusion. This argument assumes that wet areas occur first, with PLUMBING LEAKS cited as one possible cause, causing mold to grow. The argument also assumes that preventing any PLUMBING LEAKS will *minimize* the danger (as opposed to merely reducing it).

(4) *Work from Wrong to Right*

(A) CORRECT. The argument depends on the assumption that the reason mold and wetness are observed together is that wet areas cause mold growth. If the reverse causation (mold causes wetness) were true, then keeping all plumbing in good condition to prevent leakage might not actually minimize mold growth. Rather, the mold would develop due to some unmentioned reason and then that mold would cause dampness.

(B) If most homeowners know enough ABOUT PLUMBING to determine whether theirs is in good condition, then the recommendation made in this argument would be more useful. However, this is not an assumption on which the argument depends.

(C) The argument says only that mold is *almost always* found in web places and that preventing leaks would *minimize* mold poisoning. The argument does not rely on the idea that it is impossible for mold to grow in dry areas.

(D) The argument does not rely on the idea that every variety of mold is harmful; it merely discusses what to do to avoid poisoning from those types of mold that are harmful.

(E) Whether mold spores can be filtered from the air may be relevant to a general discussion

about the health effects of mold in the home, but it is not directly relevant to the conclusion here, which focuses on the potential for mold growth via plumbing leaks.

5.2981 Stoneville Council Member: The number of police officers per one thousand residents is substantially higher in Stoneville than in any other town or city in the same region, and Stoneville does not have higher CRIME rates than average. Considering that Stoneville's government has been running a substantial deficit for the past few years, Stoneville should reduce the size of its police force to help balance the budget. Stoneville currently employs more police officers than it needs, and so such an action would have little collateral impact on public safety.

Knowing the answer to which of the following would be most useful in evaluating the the council member's plan?

- ☐ Are Stoneville's police officers paid more than their counterparts in the region's other cities and towns?
- ☐ Over the past few years, has Stoneville's police department attempted to increase its efficiency or reduce its internal operating costs?
- ☐ Does Stoneville's unusually large police presence act as a deterrent to CRIME?
- ☐ Is Stoneville's population significantly higher than that of the other towns and cities in the region?
- ☐ Has the CRIME rate increased over the last ten years in the cities and towns surrounding Stoneville?

Identify the Question

The prompt asks for information that would be "most useful in evaluating the... plan" from the passage, so this is an Evaluate the Argument question.

Deconstruct the Argument

The argument points out that, despite Stoneville's crime rate, which is close to the national average, its police force is much larger (relative to the population) than those of neighboring cities. The quoted town council member advances two judgments: first, that Stoneville should shrink its police force to help balance the budget; second, that doing so will not have a substantial detrimental effect on public safety.

State the Goal

We are looking for a consideration that will help us evaluate the argument; in other words, we need an outside idea with some direct bearing on the council member's judgments. It is reasonable to assume that reducing the size of the police force will work in the direction of balancing the budget. Therefore, look primarily for a statement affecting the council member's other judgment, that such a reduction in Stoneville's police force will have little effect on public safety.

Work from Wrong to Right

(A) The pay of Stoneville's officers relative to their counterparts in other towns has no effect on the issues in the passage.

(B) The actions mentioned in this choice could be other ways to approach the goal of balancing Stoneville's budget, but they have no bearing on the issues raised by the council member's statements.

(C) CORRECT: If Stoneville's police presence is an active deterrent to crime, then a reduction in the size of the police force could attenuate that deterrent effect. Removing a deterrent to crime – which is essentially equivalent to encouraging crime – can reasonably be expected to have negative effects on public safety, so this issue is important to an evaluation of the council member's judgments.

(D) All of the figures in the passage are stated in per-capita terms, making population sizes irrelevant.

(E) Such trends, even if they were to have occurred, would have no obvious implications for the issues raised by the council member's statements.

The correct answer is C.

6.2980 For each of the past two years, major department stores have reported a nearly 50% increase in their sales of men's clothing manufactured by Zachary, Inc., a result that is all the more surprising because the sales of most other brands of men's clothing have been depressed over the same period. Nevertheless, even Zachary, Inc. does not appear to have emerged unscathed from the overall trend: despite the aforementioned increase, Zachary, Inc. has reported a slight decline in overall sales in each of the past two years.

Which of the following, if true, most helps to explain the surprising result above?

- ☐ The sales of clothing at Zachary, Inc.'s boutique stores, which, unlike department stores, are owned and operated by the company itself, have held steady over the last two years.
- ☐ Two years ago, Zachary, Inc. began an ambitious new advertising campaign; in each of the last two years, the company's advertising department has overspent its planned budget by almost half.
- ☐ Zachary, Inc. is renowned for the quality of its fabrics, and sells large quantities of fabric to other manufacturers of men's clothing.
- ☐ Zachary, Inc. formerly manufactured leather accessories and women's clothing in addition to men's clothing, but, for the past three years, the company has produced only men's clothing.
- ☐ In the last two years, the percentage of Zachary, Inc.'s clothing sold by department stores at discounted prices has been unusually high, a result that analysts have blamed on the sluggish economy.

Identify the Question

The prompt asks us to "explain the surprising result" in the passage, so this is an Explain the Discrepancy question.

Deconstruct the Passage

According to the passage, SALES of Zachary clothing at department stores are up significantly since two years ago. Nevertheless, despite that increase, the company's overall sales numbers have shrunk over the same period, in line with the figures for the industry as a whole.

State the Goal

The "surprising result", here, is the decrease in Zachary's *overall* sales, despite the jump in the sales of its men's clothing at department stores. Since the department-store sales have definitely increased, the only possible explanation for this result would be a decrease in some *other* aspect of Zachary's sales.

Work from Wrong to Right

(A) According to this statement, the boutique stores' SALES remained constant. To help explain the unexpected drop in the company's overall SALES, though, the boutique stores' SALES would need to have *decreased* over the two-year period.

(B) The current passage is focused only on Zachary's SALES, not on its overall profits, so advertising expenses are irrelevant.

(C) CORRECT: If SALES of fabric to other men's clothing manufacturers – which themselves experienced depressed sales – constitutes a significant portion of Zachary's overall sales, then a decrease in that component of the company's sales could conceivably account for the unexpected result in the passage.

(D) The passage is concerned only with the trends in the company's sales over the past two years, so any earlier changes in the company's profile are irrelevant.

(E) It is given that the overall sales of Zachary's men's clothing in department stores are up, so the exact breakdown of those figures, in terms of full- and reduced-price sales, is not useful.

The correct answer is C.

7.2979 Which of the following most logically COMPLETES the passage?

Legislator: Recently, the state's small-business association proposed a plan to allow small (as defined by law) retail establishments to deduct the cost of unsold inventory from their tax liability. The association's spokesperson emphasized that, since smaller businesses have less money with which to purchase inventory, the proposed measure would help those smaller retailers remain competitive with their larger counterparts. Nevertheless, in practical terms, fair enforcement of the plan would be infeasible, because _____.

- several new state employees would have to be hired to audit the new deductions
- it is not possible to distinguish unsold inventory from the store proprietors' personal purchases
- stores would have to repay the deducted amount of tax if they sold the inventory in question at a later date
- the threshold of sales below which a business legally qualifies legally as "small" was set by the state legislature in response to a different proposal
- small businesses are less likely than their larger counterparts to have computerized or otherwise automated inventory systems

Identify the Question

We are asked for a reason why "fair enforcement of the plan would be infeasible". This claim is not the conclusion of any argument made in the passage; rather, it is stated without a reason. Nevertheless, the blank calls for such a reason, so this question type is closest to Strengthen the Argument.

Deconstruct the Argument

The legislator describes a proposal from a local small-business association: namely, to allow tax deductions for smaller retailers' unsold inventory, so that those smaller businesses might be more competitive with larger retailers that are better able to absorb the costs of unsold inventory. Importantly, the legislator does not object to any of the claims underlying the proposal itself; rather, the legislator claims that the proposal is impractical in terms of enforcement.

State the Goal

The legislator must supply a reason why *enforcement* of the proposed measure would be *infeasible*, from a practical standpoint.

Work from Wrong to Right

(A) This choice explains why the proposal could lead to increased government costs, but it does nothing to support the idea that fair enforcement of the plan would be infeasible.

(B) CORRECT: If unsold inventory is impossible to distinguish from the store owners' personal purchases, then fair enforcement cannot be assured: either the owners could unfairly deduct their own purchases from the stores' taxes, or, conversely, they might have to pay unjustified taxes on their own personal purchases.

(C) Although this choice introduces a factor that may **INDEED** complicate the stores' tax calculations, this factor does not represent a significant obstacle to enforcement.

(D) This choice raises issues about the ethics of **APPLYING** the existing definition of "small business" to the proposal at hand, but it is irrelevant to the issue of enforcement.

(E) There is no essential connection between computerized or automated inventory systems and the enforcement of the proposed tax plan.

The correct answer is B.

8.2977Workshop instructor: Sewing leather is, in many respects, simpler than sewing fabric. For instance, pieces of fabric must be sewn together so that the "bias," the direction in which the fabric stretches most, matches throughout the final product; this consideration is irrelevant for leather. Furthermore, if fabric is not pressed before it is sewn, the final product is liable to "pucker" or to lie unevenly; leather, on the other hand, does not need to be pressed. Nevertheless, it is inadvisable for novice sewers to begin sewing leather until they have mastered the basic skills of sewing using fabric.

Which of the following, if true, most strongly supports the instructor's contention?

- ☐ To be used for sewing leather, most sewing machines must be fitted with a new attachment, which is inexpensive but usually must be purchased separately.
 - ☐ Many garments that can be sewn with fabric cannot, for either practical or aesthetic reasons, be sewn with leather.
 - ☐ Fabric is available in a much larger variety of weights, COLORS👉, and textures than is leather.
 - ☐ **When stitches are removed, as in the case of errors, they leave permanent, visible perforations in leather but not in fabric.**
 - ☐ While leather can be stitched in any direction, fabric must be stitched in particular directions to prevent undesirable stretching or WRINKLING👉 of the final product.
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Identify the Question

The prompt asks for a statement that "strongly supports" the conclusion, so this is a Strengthen question.

Deconstruct the Argument

In the passage, the instructor states that sewing leather is in some ways easier than sewing fabric, and provides two specific ways in which that statement is true. The instructor then concludes, unexpectedly given the facts just stated, that beginning sewers should nonetheless acquire mastery with fabric before switching to leather. No reasons are provided for why fabric is better for beginners.

State the Goal

Right now, the instructor's argument is not actually an argument, as there are no statements supporting the contention that fabric is better than leather for beginners. Therefore, to strengthen the argument -- or, perhaps more accurately, to create an argument in the first place -- we need at least one reason why fabric is more appropriate than leather for beginning sewers. Notice that the desired statement must satisfy two conditions. First, it must describe an advantage of fabric over leather; second, it must APPLY👉 specifically, or especially, to beginners.

Work from Wrong to Right

(A) The fact that this attachment must be purchased separately may present a minor inconvenience, but because it is inexpensive, this is not a major deterrent. (If the attachment were expensive, then this statement would provide some support for the argument, as it would be inadvisable for beginners to spend a great deal on a new hobby until achieving a certain level of competence.)

(B) While this may be true, this choice provides no reason why it would be better for beginners to learn how to sew using fabric even though there are at least two reasons why it's easier to sew leather.

(C) Although this statement suggests that fabric may, in general, be more versatile than leather, it provides no support for the idea that fabric is more appropriate for beginning sewers.

(D) CORRECT. This statement provides a concrete advantage of fabric in the case of sewing errors; namely, incorrect stitches can be removed from fabric, but not from leather, without leaving visible evidence. Moreover, it may reasonably be assumed that beginners make mistakes more frequently than other sewers, so issues regarding errors are of particular concern to beginners. This choice thus supports the instructor's argument.

(E) This choice explains another advantage of leather over fabric, and so is exactly the opposite of what is needed

9.2955 Over the past few years, retailers in the town of Statesville have suffered from decreasing sales, largely because increasing numbers of consumers, after seeing items in stock at those retailers' stores, have opted instead to purchase those items on the Internet. As a result, Statesville's local government revenues have been impacted as well. To **MAKE UP** the lost revenue, Statesville's mayor has proposed legislation that would require Internet retailers to charge and remit local sales taxes on all orders shipped to addresses in Statesville, at the same tax rate assessed on purchases in physical stores. If this legislation is enacted, the mayor reasons, Statesville will be able to bring its revenue back up to the level of a few years ago.

All of the following, if true, cast doubt on the mayor's conclusion EXCEPT

- ☐ Because they do not need to rent or maintain physical showrooms, Internet retailers generally charge substantially lower prices for most items than do physical stores.
- ☐ The vast majority of Statesville's residents have at least one trusted friend or family member who lives in one of the smaller towns surrounding Statesville and whom they would trust to **RECEIVE** their packages.
- ☐ Statesville's retail stores have been consistently considered the best in the county, and consequently draw a lot of shoppers from other towns.
- ☐ Over the next few years, the Statesville area is likely to experience a severe recession, which could reduce consumer spending by as much as 40 percent.
- ☐ Administering the proposed tax will increase the cost of doing business for Internet retailers, who will then pass the increased cost on to consumers in the form of slight markups on the price of merchandise.

Identify the Question

We are asked to identify choices that “cast doubt on the mayor's conclusion”, so this is a weakening question. Note, however, that the goal of the question is to find the statement that does *not* weaken the argument.

Deconstruct the Argument

According to the argument, physical retailers in Statesville are losing business to Internet retailers, resulting in a concomitant loss of sales tax revenue for Statesville's government. To address the problem, the mayor of Statesville proposes that the town collect sales tax on all Internet purchases shipped to addresses within the town. If this measure is enacted, the mayor believes, Statesville will be able to bring its tax revenue back up to its previous levels.

State the Goal

The mayor believes that the new tax will restore the town's SALES tax revenue to its original level. Therefore, any evidence that the proposed measure will *not* generate such additional revenue, or will generate *less* tax revenue than was collected before the advent of the Internet retailers, will weaken the mayor's argument.

Four of the given statements should weaken the mayor's argument; ultimately, we are looking for the one statement that does not.

Work from Wrong to Right

(A) If Internet retailers charge substantially lower prices for merchandise, and Statesville collects SALES tax at the same rate used for purchases in physical stores, then Statesville will RECEIVE substantially less tax revenue from Internet purchases than it would if those purchases were made in the town's physical stores. This choice therefore weakens the mayor's argument.

(B) If this statement is true, then most RESIDENTS of Statesville will be able to have Internet purchases shipped to an address outside the town, and will thus not have to pay the new tax. This statement also casts doubt on the mayor's argument.

(C) If shoppers from outside Statesville choose to purchase items on the Internet rather than in Statesville's retail stores, they will not pay the new tax, as those items will not be shipped within the town. (For purchases these customers still do choose to make at Statesville's retail stores, the argument is unaffected.) This choice serves as more evidence that the tax will not generate as much revenue as the mayor believes.

(D) If this statement is true, the total dollar amount of purchases made by Statesville's residents is likely to decrease sharply, resulting in a corresponding decrease in local tax revenue. Therefore, this choice also works against the mayor's argument.

(E) This choice does not give any evidence that local tax revenue will decrease. In fact, if Internet retailers compensate for the increase in their costs by raising the price of merchandise, Statesville's government will receive slightly *more* tax revenue from its residents' purchases of that merchandise. This choice thus works in favor of the mayor's argument, not against it.

The correct answer is E.

10.2954 Profits for one of Company X's flagship products have been declining slowly for several years. The CFO investigated and determined that inflation has raised the cost of producing the product but consumers who were surveyed reported that they felt the product's functionality didn't justify a higher price. As a result, the CFO recommended that the company stop producing this product because the CEO only wants products whose profit margins are increasing.

The answer to which of the following questions would be most useful in evaluating whether the CFO's decision to divest the company of its flagship product is WARRANTED?

- ☐ Does the company have new and profitable products available with which to replace the flagship product?
- ☐ Will the rest of Company X's management team agree with the CFO's recommendation?
- ☐ Can Company X sell the flagship product to new markets to increase its customer base?
- ☐ Are there additional features that could be added to the product without raising the unit price?
- ☐ What percentage of Company X's revenues is represented by sales of the flagship product in question?

Profits for a particular product have been going down and the CFO has determined that this is because, on the one hand, the cost to make the product has increased and, on the other, consumers won't pay more than the current price (recall that Profit = Revenues – Costs). The CEO only wants Company X to sell products with increasing profit margins; as a result, the CFO decides the solution is to stop making this product. This decision would make sense only if we can be assured that there is no way to have an increasing profit margin for the product in question.

(A) Whether there are new, profitable products does not address the issue of whether there is a way to achieve increasing profit margins for the flagship product.

(B) Whether the management team agrees with the CFO's recommendation does not address the issue of whether there is a way to achieve increasing profit margins for the flagship product.

(C) While selling the product to more customers may increase the total revenues (and assumedly profits), this solution won't address the profit *margin* of the product, and hence is out of scope.

(D) CORRECT. The argument says that customers "felt the product's functionality didn't justify a higher price." If new features could be added to the product (without increasing the cost of the product) the company may be able to charge a higher price for the product, thus increasing profit margins for the product.

(E) The flagship product's revenues as a percentage of total revenues does not address the issue of whether there is a way to achieve increasing profit margins for the flagship product (although it does highlight why the company might find itself with a big problem if it follows the CEO's advice!).

11.2950 Garment industry representative: Women's pants are usually sized according to the circumference of the wearer's natural waist – the narrowest part of her torso, located roughly at the height of her navel. For instance, a pair of women's pants tagged size 29 is designed to fit the average woman with a 29-inch natural waist.

CONSULTANT☑: But then the sizing number is not an actual measurement of the pants themselves. If a pair of pants is tagged size 29, then no dimension of the pants themselves will necessarily measure 29 inches. The current sizing system is thus likely to be more confusing for consumers than, say, a system in which sizes are numbered according to the waistband circumference of the pants themselves.

Garment industry representative: You are correct that the size number does not necessarily represent an actual dimension of the pants. However, your proposed sizing system would lead to substantially more confusion than the current one. Which of the following, if true, supports the garment industry representative's position and also undermines the consultant's argument?

- ☐ Most consumers are quick to learn the sizing systems of their preferred brands, regardless of how counterintuitive or unusual they may find those systems at first.
- ☐ Many shoppers will measure their favorite pairs of pants at home before a shopping trip, so that they can quickly evaluate the fit of unfamiliar brands of pants without having to try them on.
- ☐ Even when wearing identical brands and styles of pants, some women prefer a tighter fit, while other women with similar bodies prefer a looser fit; moreover, a given woman's preferences often vary unpredictably from style to style within the same brand.
- ☐ Many women find smaller size numbers psychologically appealing and, when choosing among identically sized garments, are more likely to buy those tagged with smaller size numbers.
- ☐ Different styles of women's pants are worn with their waistbands at widely varying heights, some as high as the wearer's natural waist and some as low as the wearer's hipbone.

(1) Identify the Question

The prompt asks for a statement that supports one of the two arguments in the passage while undermining the other. This problem thus combines the attributes of a "strengthen" question and a "weaken" question. Fortunately, the basic mindset for strengthening arguments is the same as that for weakening them; the extra challenge, in a problem like this one, lies in keeping track of which argument you must support and which you must undermine.

(2) Deconstruct the Argument

The garment industry representative describes the currently prevailing sizing system for women's pants -- a system in which pants are sized according to the average wearer's natural waist circumference, rather than according to any actual dimension of the pants themselves. The CONSULTANT criticizes this system, claiming that an alternative system based on the measurements of the pants themselves would be less confusing. The garment industry representative argues the opposite; according to the representative, a system based on the actual measurements of the pants would be more confusing, not less so.

(3) State the Goal

You are to find a statement that supports the representative's position while undermining the consultant's. In other words, the desired statement should represent an advantage of the existing system (based on the wearer's body measurements) and, at the same time, a disadvantage of the consultant's proposed system (based on the measurements of the pants).

(4) Work from Wrong to Right

(A) If shoppers are quick to learn the sizing systems of their favorite brands, the most likely conclusion is that *no* sizing system will remain confusing for very long. Rather than supporting one side at the expense of the other, then, this statement renders the entire debate unimportant.

(B) This statement supports the notion of a system based on the measurements of the pants, rather than on those of the wearer's body. This choice thus accomplishes the opposite of what is desired: IT SUPPORTS the consultant's argument and undermines the representative's.

(C) If this statement is true, then a sizing system based on the wearer's body measurements cannot feasibly account for the range of preferences desired; a system based on the measurements of the pants themselves could possibly do so. This choice thus accomplishes the opposite of what is desired: IT SUPPORTS the consultant's argument and undermines the representative's.

(D) This statement provides evidence that many shoppers would be *more psychologically pleased* by a system based on their waist measurement, as that number (as described) will be smaller than the corresponding number for the waistband of the pants themselves. However, the argument is not concerned with determining which system would be more psychologically appealing to shoppers; it is concerned only with which system would be *less confusing* to them. This choice gives no evidence that either system is more or less confusing than the other, so it is irrelevant.

(E) CORRECT. If this statement is true, then, under a system based on the measurements of the pants themselves (as proposed by the consultant), shoppers would have to know the exact height at which every style of pants was designed to be worn, as well as their own preferred size at each of those heights. That system would thus be much more complicated -- and therefore more confusing -- than the existing system, in which each shopper only needs to know one measurement (her natural waistline).

12.2941 The climbing season of 2006 was the deadliest on record for those attempting to conquer Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain, as more people perished attempting to reach the summit in 2006 than in any other year. Almost all of these deaths occurred in the unforgiving "death-zone" above 26,000 feet. Oddly, though, the 2006 season enjoyed exceptionally ideal climbing weather compared to more typical years.

All of the following, if true, help explain the apparent contradiction in the above passage EXCEPT

- ☐ The warmer the weather, the more likely it is that crevasses (deep holes) will open up unexpectedly in the ice.
- ☐ In 2006, fewer climbing teams than usual were forced to turn back at some point during the ascent prior to reaching the "death-zone."
- ☐ The number of amateur climbers who reached the "death-zone" increased steadily during the early 2000s, peaking in 2006.
- ☐ In 2006, authorities suspended climbs due to inclement weather on fewer days than the average for more typical years.
- ☐ Although the 2006 season overall enjoyed ideal weather conditions, the one unexpected major storm was one of the worst on record

The argument presents apparently contradictory information and we are asked to resolve this issue. Four of the answers, when inserted into the argument, should offer an explanation as to why there were a high number of deaths despite the ideal weather in 2006.

(A) CORRECT. First, the argument does not mention that crevasses were or could be responsible for deaths. However, there is a larger issue. The argument says only that the weather was "ideal." Ideal climbing weather does not necessarily equate to warm weather; perhaps the best climbing weather is cold and clear. If we knew that "ideal climbing weather" meant warmer weather, then this choice might be an adequate explanation for the contradiction. If anything, however, it sounds like such warm weather is decidedly non-ideal.

(B) If more climbers were able to get into the "death-zone" than usual, then there were more opportunities for climbers to die in that area. This choice opens up the possibility that climbers in the death-zone died at the same rate as they always have but, because there were more of them, the absolute number of deaths was higher.

(C) If there were more amateurs than ever who made it to the "death-zone," that could explain the increased number of deaths in 2006. Even in ideal weather, amateurs can be assumed to be more likely to make mistakes than professional climbers.

(D) If ideal weather led to more climbing days than in a typical season, that could explain why more deaths occurred, as climbers had more opportunities to be on the mountain.

(E) If the worst storm on record happened during the 2006 season, and was 'unexpected,' it could account for a higher than usual number of deaths, as climbers may not have had time to adequately protect themselves against the storm.

13.2924A group of experimental subjects participated in an "intermittent fasting" study, under which they ate all of their food for the day within six hours of waking up. The subjects consumed the same number of calories as they normally did throughout an entire day and did not change their **EXERCISE** patterns. Nearly all of the subjects lost a significant amount of weight during the study. It can thus be concluded that eating all of one's food within a relatively short period of time causes the body to burn more calories.

Which of the following must be assumed for the argument above to be valid?

- ☐ The most important time for a meal, from the standpoint of **WEIGHT MANAGEMENT**, is early in the day.
- ☐ Intermittent fasting protocols are safe and free of major side effects, even when pursued for long periods of time.
- ☐ People are unable to consume as many calories within an interval of a few hours as they can over the course of an entire day
- ☐ People eating on an intermittent-fasting protocol will not feel substantially hungrier than those who space out their meals more regularly.
- ☐ The body does not generally **BURN CALORIES** faster when food is eaten earlier in a person's waking hours than when it is eaten later.

1) Identify the Question Type

The question stem asks what *must be assumed*, so this is a Find the Assumption question.

(2) Deconstruct the Argument

The argument describes an experiment in which subjects changed their normal eating patterns: they consumed all of their food during the first six hours they were awake, though they did consume the same number of calories as normal and also exercised the same as normal. Most of the subjects lost a *significant* amount of weight on this intermittent-fasting diet. The argument concludes that the subjects lost this weight *because* they ate all of their food within a short period of time.

For assumption questions, you do want to brainstorm any assumptions that you can. There is one major disconnect between the study details and the conclusion. The study specifically required the participants to eat all of the calories within the first six hours after waking up, not during just any six hour period throughout the day. The conclusion, though, doesn't mention anything about eating just after waking up; rather, the conclusion assumes that, as long as the calories are restricted to a short period, the body will burn more calories than otherwise. Perhaps this is true—but, right now, the author is assuming that the time of day (eating just after waking up) is not a major factor in the **WEIGHT LOSS**.

(3) State the Goal

On Find the Assumption questions, you're looking for an unstated assumption that the author must believe to be true in order to draw his conclusion. In this case, the author believes that eating calories within a short period of time causes more calories to be burned, but the author ignores the aspect that has to do with the *timing* of the meals. Perhaps it's more important to eat food earlier in the day in general but not as important that one does so in a 6 hour

period.

(4) Work from Wrong to Right

(A) In order for his argument to be valid, the author must assume that the timing of meals is not an important factor in producing the observed results. This statement is the opposite of what must be assumed.

(B) The argument does not indicate whether the study was done over a long or short period of time. Moreover, the argument is not concerned with side effects or safety issues; it is solely concerned with the study's effect on calorie burning and WEIGHT LOSS🔗.

(C) The argument states that the subjects consumed the same number of calories as usual. Even if what this statement says is true in general, it does not apply to this particular case.

(D) The argument is concerned only with objective effects such as calorie burning and WEIGHT LOSS🔗; how hungry the subjects may have felt is irrelevant to the conclusion.

(E) CORRECT. This statement is a required assumption, because the argument does not differentiate between the effects of eating in a short period of time and the effects of eating earlier in the day. It is impossible to tell whether just one or both of these factors resulted in the WEIGHT LOSS🔗. Therefore, to attribute the weight loss only to eating in a shorter period of time, the author must assume that it is *not* due to the time of day when the food was consumed.

You can also use the negation method. If the body *does* BURN CALORIES🔗 faster earlier in a person's waking hours, then that weakens the conclusion that the weight-loss result was due to eating in a short period of time vs. eating earlier in the day.

14.2922 Newtronix, a technology company that sells only one product, recently raised prices on its signature product, the ePod. Analysts had predicted that increased prices would translate into higher profits for Newtronix. However, Newtronix saw its profits decline after the price increase.

Each of the following, if true, is convincing as an explanation for the decline in Newtronix's profit EXCEPT

- ☐ Newtronix's market share has declined since the price increase.
- ☐ A recent patent dispute led to the ban of sales of ePods in several countries.
- ☐ Materials necessary to the production of a necessary component of the ePod recently went up in price.
- ☐ The average customer purchased fewer ePods as a result of the price increase, while the number of customers purchasing ePods remained the same.
- ☐ The government imposed higher taxes on Newtronix just prior to the price increase.

We are asked about explanations for the decline in profits, so this question requires us to resolve a discrepancy. We will need to identify the apparent contradiction and consider what helps to explain why the information is not actually contradictory. Because the question uses the word EXCEPT, we need to find four options that appear to explain the decline in profits and select the remaining option.

(2) Deconstruct the Argument

We are given a company that sells only one product, which eliminates the need to complicate the argument with a varied product mix. Analysts thought raising prices would increase profits, but instead profits declined.

(3) State the Goal

We need to find four answer choices that could explain a decrease in profits and select the remaining option. Profit is calculated as revenue minus costs, so any direct increase in costs or decrease in revenue will tend to lower profits.

We are looking to eliminate any options that increase costs, decrease revenue, or have no definite connection to either factor.

(4) Work from Wrong to Right

A. Decreased market share can lead to decreased revenues, but it is impossible to conclude this without knowing how large the market was before and after the price increase.

B. If sales were banned in several countries, there could be fewer customers, leading to a loss of revenue and lower profits.

C. If the cost of a component has increased, then costs in general have increased, which can lead to lower profits.

D. If the average customer purchased fewer ePods, and there is no increase in the total number of customers, this represents a loss of revenue.

E. Increased taxes represent increased costs

15.2921Joanne: An increasing number of online retailers now allow customers to create “wish lists” of items they would like to **RECEIVE** as gifts. Such lists are certainly useful, but these retailers should also explore other ways to suggest gift purchases for these customers. In particular, without revealing the specifics of a customer's purchase history, a website could quickly analyze a retailer's entire inventory, select a list of items similar to those the customer has already purchased, and then e-mail that list to a group of contacts specified by the customer. Such a system would suggest gifts that, because of their similarity to the customer's prior purchases, would be extremely likely to appeal to the customer.

In the argument, Joanne assumes that the hypothetical customers

- ☐ are familiar with most or all of the items in stock on the websites where they shop
- ☐ would prefer novel gifts that are unlike the items they currently own
- ☐ do not use retail websites primarily to purchase gifts
- ☐ would be relatively unconcerned if their retail purchase histories were available to others
- ☐ prefer online shopping to shopping in physical retail stores

(1) Identify the Question Type

The problem asks what is assumed by Joanne, so this is a Find Assumption question.

(2) Deconstruct the Argument

Joanne sees the introduction of “wish lists” on retail websites as a positive development. As an additional way to suggest gifts for customers, she says, retail websites should analyze those customers' previous purchases and generate gift ideas that are similar to those purchases. Because these items would be similar to things that the customer has already bought, Joanne reasons, they would be ideal gifts.

(3) State the Goal

We need to find what is taken for granted by Joanne in the argument. Her fundamental point is that a list of items similar to the customer's prior purchases should accurately reflect things that the customer would like for himself or herself (and would therefore make good gift ideas). To justify the premise that a customer's purchase history should reflect what that customer wants for himself or herself, Joanne must assume that the purchase history does not consist mostly of items bought for other people. It must also assume that a customer wants things similar to what they already own. If a person bought a toaster, does that necessarily mean that they want another toaster? As there are a few assumptions made, we will have to see how the answer choices are phrased before making a decision.

(4) Work from Wrong to Right

(A) Whether the customer is familiar with most of a retailer's inventory is irrelevant to Joanne's suggestion. Her proposed system would SCAN a retailer's entire catalog, whether the target customer is familiar with most of the products or not.

(B) In fact, Joanne assumes precisely the opposite: Her system is based on the idea that things similar to what a customer already owns will make good gifts.

(C) CORRECT: For the argument to work, Joanne must assume that customers use retail websites primarily to purchase things for themselves. More specifically, Joanne must assume that customers do not use these websites primarily to purchase items for other people, such as gifts or resale items. Therefore, this statement is an assumption.

We can also use the negation method. If this statement is false, then the hypothetical customer uses retail websites primarily to purchase gifts for other people. In that case, the customer's purchase history will reflect the desires of the people to whom the customer gives gifts, rather than those of the customer him- or herself -- thus destroying the effectiveness of Joanne's argument.

(D) Joanne's proposed system would not reveal customers' purchase histories, so this consideration is irrelevant.

(E) While Joanne does assume that customers have built up a purchase history with online retailers, she makes no assumptions about their preferences between online shopping and shopping in stores.