

Strategies for Critical Reasoning

General Applies to ALL CR-questions.	What to do		Why	
	1. Read the question, identify and write down the question type and argument types (Cause-Effect, etc.).		To use the right strategy for that particular question type, and keep focus.	
	2. Identify and summarize the <i>conclusion</i> , the premisses, and the context-information, and create a flow-chart (premisses+assumptions=conclusion).		Because the <i>conclusion</i> (very important) and the premisses are the core of the argument. It is crucial to identify the context-information, because some wrong answer options go beyond the scope.	
	3. Predict the right answer. Why is it right?		To keep focus and don't fall into the traps.	
	4. POE: Use your scratch-paper and, match your prediction with the answer options. Identify why an answer option is wrong.		To eliminate wrong answer options, and pick the right answer.	
	Strengthen/Weaken	Assumption	Inference	Explain
Description	Strengthen/Weaken questions ask you to support/attack (the assumption underlying in) an argument. Strengthen: Add value to the conclusion. Weaken: subtract value from the conclusion. Note: Flaw in reasoning questions is essentially like weakens questions.	The assumption is never explicitly stated in the argument and is necessary for the conclusion to be valid.	Must Be True questions are considered the foundation of CR-questions, and ask you to find what must be true if the statements in the argument are true (deduce).	Explain the Paradox questions do not follow the typical argument pattern. These questions ask you to find information that explain why two seemingly contradictory statements isn't contradictory.
Step 1	Read the question stem, and identify the question type.	Read the question stem, and identify the question type.	Read the question stem, and identify the question type.	Read the question stem, and identify the question type.
Step 2	Identify and summarize the conclusion and supporting evidence, and context information.	Identify and summarize the conclusion, supporting evidence and the gap in the logic.	Identify and combine the premisses, and infer a conclusion that must be true based on the premisses.	Identify and summarize the contradictory premisses of the argument (the paradox)
Step 3	Predict the right answer (pre-think); identify what would weaken/strengthen the argument most.	Predict the right answer (pre-think).	Predict the right answer (pre-think).	Predict the right answer (pre-think)
Step 4 (POE)	Eliminate answer options that do not weaken or strengthen the argument. Wrong answers: - Go beyond the scope (context) of the argument. - Answers that use terms like "some" or "a few". - Opposite answers. Right answer: - Information that weakens or strengthens the premise/conclusion - New Information is allowed if it adds value to the conclusion or the premisses. - Answers that use words like "most," and "many".	Eliminate answers that is not the critical assumption. Wrong answers: - Add new information - that is not part of the argument. - Information from the stimulus is often wrong. Right answer: - An answer that close the gap in the logic of the argument. - Will probably introduce a new supporting element to the conclusion. - Verify the your answer with the Negation test.	Eliminate answers that are not supported by ALL of the premisses. Wrong answers: - Information not mentioned in the passage. - Could be true, but are irrelevant. - Go too far: Contain strong words such as "all", "never". Right answer: - Is true based on the passage, and mirrors the passage as a whole. - The right answer must be true based on ALL (most of) the premisses	Eliminate answers that do not explains the contradiction. Wrong answers: - New information, - Information not mentioned in the passage. Right answer: - Find the answer option that explains/resolves the discrepancy or contradiction.

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	2. Identify and summarize the <i>conclusion</i> , the premisses, and the context-information, and create a flow-chart (premises+assumptions=conclusion).		Because the conclusion and the premisses are the core of the argument. It is crucial to identify the context-information, because some wrong answer options go beyond the scope.	
	3. Predict the right answer. Why is it right?		To keep focus and don't fall into the traps.	
	4. POE: Use your scratch-paper and, match your prediction with the answer options. Identify why an answer option is wrong.		To eliminate wrong answer options, and pick the right answer.	
	Evaluate	Bold face	Parallel	Logical conclusion
Description	These questions are a hybrid between strengthen and weaken questions. Often, the information you need to evaluate an argument has to do with the assumption of the argument.	This type of question asks you to determine what the function the two phrases mean.	This type of question asks you to find the answer that mimic the reasoning used in the argument.	This type of question asks you to complete the argument – based on the stimulus.
Step 1	Read the question stem, and identify the question type.	Read the question stem, and identify the question type.	Read the question stem, and identify the question type.	Read the question stem, and identify the question type.
Step 2	Identify what information that is necessary.	Identify and summarize the role/function of the bold faced statements.	Identify and summarize the reasoning in the argument.	Identify and summarize what must logically follow from the stimulus.
Step 3	Predict the right answer (pre-think)	Predict the right answer (pre-think).	Predict the right answer (pre-think).	Predict the right answer (pre-think)
Step 4 (POE)	Eliminate wrong answers. Wrong answers: - Do not contain necessary information. Right answer: - Contains necessary information.	Eliminate wrong answers. Wrong answers: - Do not mirror the role/function of the bold faced statements. Right answer: - Mirrors the role/function of the bold faced statements.	Eliminate answers that do not mimic the reasoning in the argument. Wrong answers: - Do not mirror the reasoning in the argument. Right answer: - Mimics the line of reasoning in the argument.	Eliminate answers that do not logically follow from the argument. Wrong answers: - Do not follow logically from the stimulus. Right answer: - Follows logically from the stimulus.

Common argument types/patterns for Critical Reasoning

Some of the most common argument patterns on the CR-section:

		The Argument			Question Type	
	Description	Premise	Conclusion	Assumption	To Strengthen	To Weaken
Causal	These arguments state that because two things are correlated, X must be the cause of Y. (because X, then Y).	The premise states that factors x and y occur together or are correlated.	The conclusion states that because x and y are correlated, X causes Y or Y depends on X.	Causal arguments assume that there is a causal relationship between the factors, that there are no more causes, and that the cause and effect relationship is not reversed.	Deny alternate causes. Show that the cause and effect relationship is not reversed.	Introduce an alternate cause. Show that the cause and effect relationship are reversed.
Analogy	An analogy is a comparison where the argument uses a comparison between two things to reach its conclusion	A fact or statement is given about X	The fact about X is used to draw a conclusion about Y	X and Y are similar enough to draw a valid comparison; what is true of X is also true of Y.	Show that the two things are similar, and that no significant differences exists.	Show that the two things are not similar or differ significantly.
Statistics	Statistics arguments use percents, statistics, ratios, etc. to reach their conclusions	The premise gives an average, ratio, percent, etc.	The conclusion uses the statistic in the premise to make a conclusion about the total population in question	The statistics actually indicate the relationship the conclusion is maintaining	Indicate that a change in ratios, percentage, etc., demonstrates a similar change in the real values of the argument; when numbers are used to make a comparison, show that the totals being compared are the same.	Indicate that there can be a change in ratios, percentage, average, etc. doesn't effect the totals or are changed in the opposite direction.