

We all know that a Jump-to-Conclusions mat is a horrible, horrible [idea](#) as a mainstream consumer product. As a GMAT strategy, though? Used properly, a Jump-To-Conclusions Mindset can be a valuable asset to you on Critical Reasoning problems.

Problems often ask you to strengthen a conclusion, weaken a conclusion, or determine an assumption necessary for the conclusion to hold true. In any of these cases, it is of prime importance that you know exactly what the conclusion is saying; otherwise, it's easy for your answer choice to miss the mark.

Accordingly, it's important to ensure that you correctly identify the conclusion of the argument, and to make doing so a priority. There are four clues to determine the conclusion of a Critical Reasoning argument, any of which should help you determine which statement is the argument's conclusion:

1) Conclusion language like "thus" or "therefore"

2) A call for action, such as "we should..." or "they must..."

3) The effect of a cause-and-effect relationship. For example, "Because it is raining, the parade will be canceled." The parade being canceled is a conclusion dependent on the rain.

4) The "Why" test. The "Why" test dictates that CR arguments are made up of only two things: facts and conclusions. And conclusions need to be based on facts. If you ask "why is that true" of a statement, and realize that the paragraph gives no attempt at a reason for it, that statement must be given as a fact – no reason is necessary. But if a reason is given – if you can point to another sentence after asking "why," then the statement that depends on another is likely the conclusion.

As an example, consider the question:

**Paretan newspaper editor:** David Salino assails as distorted our quotation of remarks on Paretan values by the Qinkoan prime minister and bemoans what he sees as the likely consequences for Paretan-Qinkoan relations. Those consequences will not be our fault, however, since officials at the Qinkoan embassy and scholars at the Institute of Qinkoan Studies have all confirmed that, as printed, our quotation was an acceptable translation of the prime minister's remarks. No newspaper can fairly be blamed for the consequences of its reporting when that reporting is accurate.

Which one of the following is an assumption on which the editor's argument depends?

A) The confirmation that the translation is acceptable is sufficient to show that the prime minister's remarks were accurately reported.

B) Newspapers ought not to consider the consequences of their coverage in deciding what to report.

C) If the newspaper's rendering of the prime minister's remarks was not distorted, then there is no reason to fear adverse consequences from reporting the remarks.

D) If David Salino was prepared to praise the newspaper for any favorable consequences of quoting the prime minister's remarks, he could then hold the newspaper to blame for adverse consequences.

E) Only scholars or people with official standing are in a position to pass judgment on whether a translation of Qinkoan into Paretan is acceptable.

Quite regularly, students gravitate to the last line "no newspaper can fairly be blamed..." as the conclusion. But that line gives none of the above conclusion signals. If you ask "why," you won't find a reason. The appropriate conclusion is actually:

"Those consequences will not be our fault"

Why? Well, because officials have said that the translation is accurate. Because there's a reason behind the statement, we can determine it to be the conclusion.

With that as a conclusion, our argument is constructed as follows:

- The translation of the remarks is accurate
- We cannot be blamed if our reporting is accurate
- THEREFORE, the consequences are not our fault, as we cannot be blamed

The gap here is that simply admitting that the TRANSLATION is accurate does not mean that the REPORTING is accurate. Accordingly, we need answer choice A to be true in order to link the facts to reach that conclusion, and A is correct. But had we selected the wrong conclusion to support from the outset, we wouldn't have had a chance.

Selecting the proper conclusion on a Critical Reasoning question is a crucial step, so it's certainly appropriate for you to "Jump to conclusions" to have your goal in mind before you dig through the details. Find the proper conclusion and the question will become clearer from there. Find the conclusion, get the question right, ace the GMAT, graduate from a top business school... but then don't tell your employees that you're going to need them to go ahead and come in on Saturday. That policy fails the "Why test" – there's no good reason for it!