

VERBAL STRATEGIES

Contents of Flash Cards

Basic Strategies and Principles of Critical Reasoning and Reading Comprehension with a few examples

Illustration of errors and right answer choices through examples

Critical Reasoning

Contents

Main Point / Must Be True

Weaken

Strengthen

Assumption

Resolve the Paradox

Reasoning

Bold Faced

Numbers and Percents

Basic Deconstruction

Step 1: Read the question stem and categorize the question.

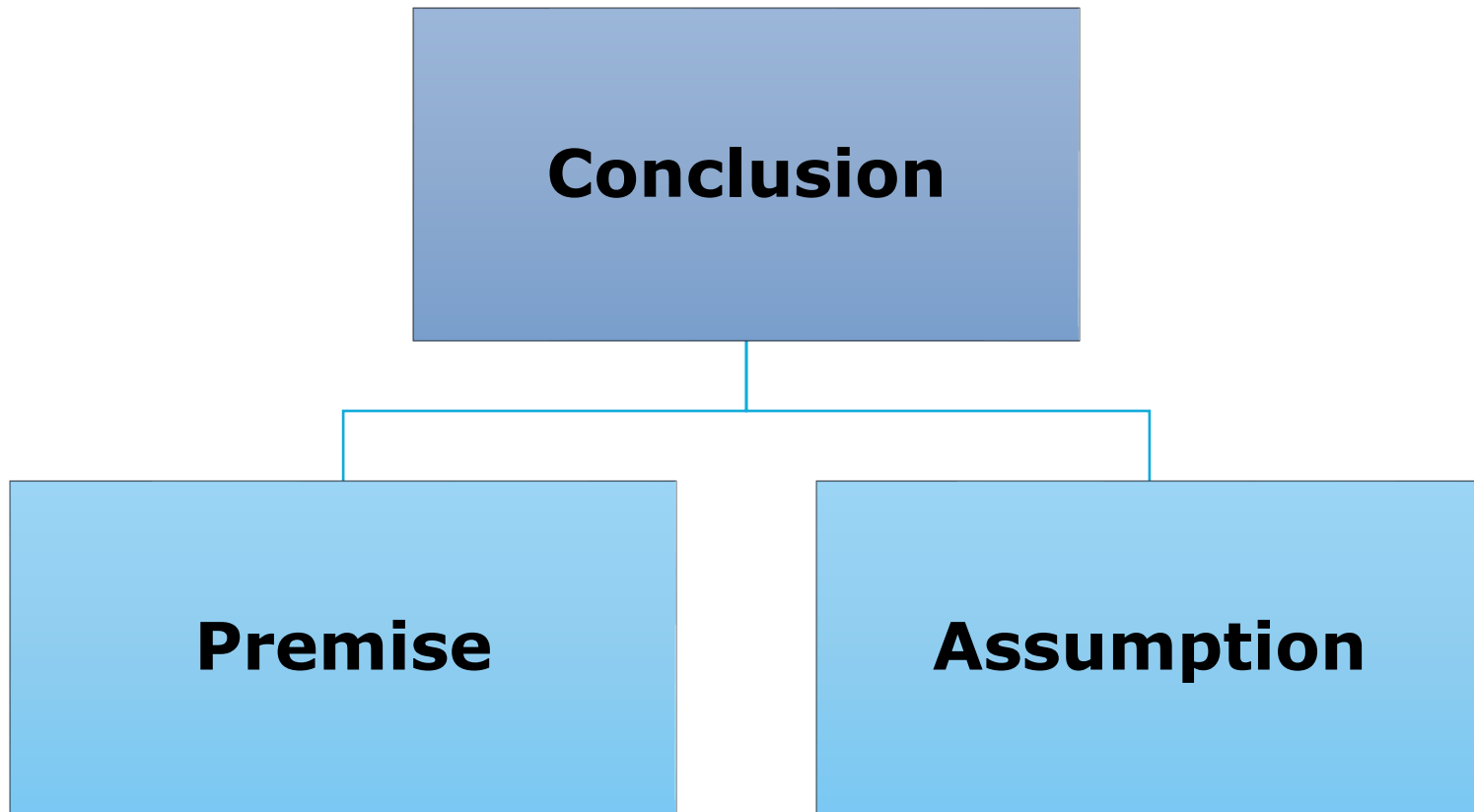
Step 2: Read the stimulus and identify the premise and the conclusion

Step 3: Try to focus on the conclusion and think of answer choices that might be right

Step 4: Use process of elimination to rule out wrong answer choices. Don't try to make them fit!

Step 5: Make sure answer choice makes sense!

Main parts of a CR question



Main parts of a CR question

Conclusion: This is the final argument that the author makes.

Premise: These are evidentiary statements that support the conclusion

Assumption: These are unstated premises, on which the conclusion and sometimes the premise rest on.

Premise & Conclusion

PREMISE	CONCLUSION
Supports the conclusion – Answers the question of “Why?”	Has a tone of finality and conveys the final message of what the author is saying
Because	Thus
Since	Therefore
For/For the reason	Hence
Due to	So
As indicated by	As a result of/Consequently
Furthermore	Accordingly
Given that	It follows that/It must be that

Type I – Ascertain Conclusion

These are questions where we **assume that the stimulus is true** and try to find **answer choices that are supported by the conclusion**

Possible Question Types:

1. Inference
2. Main Point
3. Must-be-True

Type II – Strengthen & Support

These are questions where **we assume that the given answer choices are true** and try to pick the **best one that will support the stimulus**

Possible Question Types:

1. Strengthen
2. Assumption

Type III – Weaken and Hurt

This is basically the opposite of the above type and aims to **disprove the conclusion of the stimulus**. Hence **we take the answer choice to be true** here as well.

Possible Question Types:

1. Strengthen
2. Assumption

Most Common Mistake Types

Opposite Answers

- ❖ Does the opposite of what the answer choice is supposed to do
- ❖ People pick them because they might get confused about the question type

Shell Game Answers

- ❖ Sounds really similar to the stimulus but differs by just the right amount to be incorrect but still lucrative.
- ❖ People pick these when they're not paying close attention

Most Common Mistake Types

Out of Scope/Irrelevant Answers

- ❖ Talks about something completely irrelevant to the discussion at hand.
- ❖ People tend to pick these when they're completely unsure of what they're supposed to be doing

Tone Mismatch Answers

- ❖ Answers that don't agree with the tone of the passage
- ❖ Might be too strong or too weak when compared to stimulus

Main Point/Must-Be-True

“Which of the following represents the main idea of the paragraph?”

“Which of the following can be inferred from the above?”

Correct Answer Choices

Can this answer choice be proven or validated by what is given in the stimulus? Is this answer choice true to the stimulus AND the main point of the passage, i.e. similar to the conclusion?

Should be validated by the stimulus (Stimulus is taken to be true)

Should be the main point of the stimulus, not just a premise (for Main Point questions)

Will either restate conclusion or present it in a different manner

A**B****C****D****E**

To be considered for this year's merit scholarship award, students need to have perfect attendance and a 4.0 GPA. Alex is the only person in the class who has a 4.0 but he has had 5 absences.

The claims above, if true, most strongly support which of the following conclusions?

- A. No student at this school has perfect attendance for the year
- B. Some students at this school who did not have a 4.0 also did not have perfect attendance
- C. Alex is the only student who could be considered for the award
- D. No student at this school qualifies for the award this year
- E. Many students have achieved perfect attendance but never 4.0 GPAs.



A: Exaggeration.

B: Possible, but not necessary

C: The stimulus clearly says that you need both perfect attendance and 4.0 GPA.

D: This is true. If Alex is the only one who has a 4.0 and he doesn't have a perfect attendance, it means the entire school is barred from qualifying for the award. Correct choice.

E: Out of scope answer.

Weaken

“Which of the following, if true, calls into question the validity of the argument?”

“Which of the following most seriously undermines the conclusion?”

Correct Answer Choices

Does this answer choice break down causality? Does it give an alternate cause, show that the cause-effect relationship is non-existent or reversed?

Answer choice should break down structure of stimulus (Answer is taken to be true)

Could be in relation to a gross generalization, a wrong conclusion or incorrect hypothesis from facts.

A**B****C****D****E**

There are 350 brands of cell phones in the market today. However, our store only stocks the top 10 brands. In order to increase our sales, we plan to increase the size of our inventory to the top 50 brands.

Which of the following, if true, points out a major flaw in the plan above?

- A. The capabilities of the top five cell phones are almost the same, with no brand having consistent superiority in all respects.
- B. The top 8 brands account for almost all the cell phones sold
- C. As users get more sophisticated, they want to try out the lesser known brands which might offer some other value to them.
- D. Less popular brands provide little profit to the store because they have to be discounted to be sold
- E. The leading brands are now losing sales to less popular



A: Irrelevant. Does this affect profit margins for the store if they were to increase inventory? No

B: This means that the store already has the brands that sell the most. Increasing inventory will have little effect on profit margins. Correct Answer.

C: This almost strengthens the argument.

D: This tells you that the lesser brands will provide lesser profit. But “less” is a relative term. This is an unclear statement.

E: This almost strengthens the argument by favoring an increase in inventory. Hence incorrect.

Strengthen

“Which of the following, if true, strengthens the argument the most?”

“Which of the following, if true, would most significantly help prove the scientist’s hypothesis?”

Correct Answer Choices

Does this answer choice reinforce the conclusion directly? Does it validate an assumption or rule out a discrepancy? Does it help establish causality?

Answer choice should strengthen structure of stimulus (Answer is taken to be true)

Needs to directly strengthen conclusion by bridging logical gaps, validating reasons or assumptions or finding missing links. If it’s not a direct strengthening, move on! Don’t try to make the connections!

A**B****C****D****E**

Recently, several companies have withdrawn their ads from Magazine A, because the editorial board of the magazine had decided to change the image that the magazine portrays from one of family values to one concerned more with sex and violence. Surely this indicates that the decision-makers in advertising agencies do still have a sense of moral propriety that occasionally drives their actions.

Which of the following, if true, would strengthen this conclusion?

- A) The advertisers regularly review the placement of their advertisements.
- B) It is a rare event for several advertisers to withdraw all their advertisements simultaneously from a publication.
- C) The advertisers, when questioned, admitted that their clients would lose revenue as a result of the advertisements being withdrawn.
- D) The advertisers all placed new advertisements with other publications that emphasised family values.
- E) A survey of the readership of Magazine X suggested that the majority of the readership think that the standard of the magazine's contents had failed since its transformation.

(95810)



A: This is irrelevant to the question of moral propriety.

B: This doesn't necessarily point to moral propriety directly. Don't make unnecessary connections!

C: Once again, no correlation to what we're talking about

D: If this is true, then it shows that the agencies care about where their ads go. Hence correct.

E: This is about the magazine. Not the advertisers.

Assumption

“The author assumes which of the following in saying that ...”

“The argument cannot be true unless which of the following statements are assumed?”

Correct Answer Choices

Supporter: Links unrelated elements in the stimulus and fills in logical gaps

Defender: Eliminates the alternatives and any choices that might weaken the conclusion.

Assumption Negation Technique: Narrow it down to the final answer choices and then negate them – the main modifier or a verb (such that the meaning of the sentence is reversed) and if the negated choice weakens the conclusion, the answer is right.

A**B****C****D****E**

In theory, it's possible that bacteria developed on Mars early in its history and some were carried to Earth by a meteorite. However, strains of bacteria from different planets would probably have substantial differences in protein structure that would persist over time, and no two bacterial strains on Earth are different enough to have arisen on different planets. So, even if bacteria did arrive on Earth from Mars, they must have died out.

The argument is most vulnerable to which of the following criticisms?

- A. It fails to establish whether bacteria actually developed on Mars.
- B. It fails to establish how likely it is that Martian bacteria were transported to Earth.
- C. It fails to consider whether there were means other than meteorites by which Martian bacteria could have been carried to Earth.
- D. It fails to consider whether all bacteria now on Earth could have arisen from transported Martian bacteria.
- E. It fails to consider whether there could have been strains of bacteria that originated on Earth and later died out.

A

B

C

D

E

A: This is irrelevant to the argument that states that even if bacteria came from Mars, they must have died out.

B: Out of Scope!

C: Again, this doesn't talk about bacteria strains dying out

D: If this is true, then there need not have to be any significant difference between the strains found on Earth, since they all originated from Mars.

E: We are not concerned about this.

Resolve the Paradox

“Which of the following, if true, helps explain the paradox above?”

“Which of the following, if true, helps explain the apparent discrepancy in the argument?”

Correct Answer Choices

Active Resolution: Don't try to disprove the stimulus, take it as a given.

Does the answer choice address the facts? The answer choice **MUST** conform to the stimulus

The answer should address **BOTH** sides of the paradox, and resolve it. It shouldn't strengthen the paradox.

A**B****C****D****E**

A severe drought can lessen the total amount of government aid that US farmers receive as a group. The government pays farmers the amount, if any, by which the market price at which crops are actually sold falls short of a preset target price per bushel for the crops. The drought of 1983, for example, caused farm-program payments to drop by \$10 billion.

Given the information above, which of the following, if true, best explains why the drought of 1983 resulted in a reduction in farm-program payments?

- A. Prior to the drought of 1983, the government raised the target price for crops in order to aid farmers in reducing their debt loads.
- B. Due to the drought of 1983, United States farmers exported less food in 1983 than in the preceding year.
- C. Due to the drought of 1983, United States farmers had smaller harvests and thus received a higher market price for the 1983 crop than for the larger crop of the preceding year.
- D. Due to the drought of 1983, United States farmers planned to plant smaller crops in 1984 than they had in 1983.
- E. Despite the drought of 1983, retail prices for food did not increase significantly between 1982 and 1983.

A

B

C

D

E

A: Strengthens the paradox.

Amount Paid = Target – Market. We can't say anything unless we know what happened to the market price.

B: Exports are irrelevant here.

C: This talks about the higher market prices. This could explain the paradox because target – market will become lesser if market becomes higher

D: Size of crops is irrelevant.

E: Between 1982-1983? Retail price? Out of Scope!

Reasoning

“Which of the following most accurately describes the author’s method of defending the case?”

“Which of the following is most parallel to the argument in logical structure?”

Correct Answer Choices

Should follow the same pattern of reasoning. Focus on the logic, not the content of the argument!

Answer choice must be a description of the author’s logic!

Answer choice should not be inconsistent with the stimulus, even if the stimulus has flawed logic. We are not asked to evaluate the logic of the stimulus; we are merely asked to find an answer that follows the same pattern – right or not.

A**B****C****D****E**

Shakespeare was the world's greatest playwright, which means that he must have written the world's greatest plays. The fact that he wrote the greatest plays in the world only goes to prove that he is the world's greatest playwright.

Which of the following statements best matches the argument shown above?

- A. Dr. Smith is the only member of the twenty-strong English department who thinks that Byron wrote greater poetry than Keats. Therefore Byron was not as good a poet as Keats was.
- B. A miscarriage of justice occurs when an innocent person is sent to prison. However, there are no miscarriages of justice because people in prison are guilty. Otherwise they would not have been sent to prison.
- C. The presence of enlarged white corpuscles in the blood would indicate that the patient must be suffering from disease X. However, his blood sample contains no enlarged white corpuscles, so he cannot be suffering from disease X.
- D. Blair denies having committed the robbery, but has implicated Brown. Brown on the other hand, claims that he was elsewhere at the time, and points the finger squarely back at Blair.
- E. I believe that the presence of the tartar sauce helps to accentuate the flavour of the other ingredients, but they in turn release chemicals which tend to neutralise the tartar sauce. Therefore the dish is much less spicy than pure tartar sauce would be.



A: This calls for making a judgment based on someone's opinion. Not true.

B: This is true. The argument in the stimulus is a circular argument that says A proves B and then uses B to prove A. A similar pattern exists here.

C: This has a negation effect in the reasoning. Not relevant.

D: Shell game answer. Might seem like circular logic, but it's actually just a circular sequence of events.

E: Some kind of contradictory reasoning. Not relevant.

Bold Faced Questions

“The two bold faced sentences play which of the following roles?”

Correct Answer Choices

Should address both the boldfaced portions, not just one.

Will be true to the stimulus and mimic the reasoning in the stimulus!

Answer choice should not be inconsistent with the stimulus, and it should follow the same logical pattern in order to arrive at the argument of the stimulus. .

A**B****C****D****E**

Although the earliest surviving Greek inscriptions written in an alphabet date from the eighth century B.C., a strong case can be made that the **Greeks actually adopted alphabetic writing at least two centuries earlier**. Significantly, the text of these earliest surviving Greek inscriptions sometimes runs from right to left and sometimes from left to right. Now, the Greeks learned alphabetic writing from the Phoenicians, and in the process **they would surely have adopted whatever convention the Phoenicians were then using with respect to the direction of writing**. Originally, Phoenician writing ran in either direction, but by the eighth century B.C. it had been consistently written from right to left for about two centuries.

In the argument given, the two portions in boldface play which of the following roles?

- A. The first is the position that the argument seeks to establish; the second reports a discovery that has been used to support a position that the argument opposes.
- B. The first is the position that the argument seeks to establish; the second presents an assumption on which the argument relies.
- C. The first presents evidence that is used in support of the position that the argument seeks to establish; the second presents an assumption on which the argument relies.
- D. The first is an objection raised against a position that the argument opposes; the second is the position that the argument seeks to establish.
- E. The first is an objection raised against a position that the argument opposes; the second is evidence that has been used to support that position.



A: The second boldfaced portion doesn't represent a discovery; it's an assumption

B: This is true. The first part is a clause the stimulus wants to prove and the second is an assumption

C: The first boldfaced portion doesn't object to any statement.

D: The first boldfaced portion doesn't object to any statement.

E: The first boldfaced portion doesn't object to any statement.

Numbers & Percents

Larger numbers doesn't mean larger percentage and smaller number doesn't mean smaller percentage.

For example,

$$\frac{2}{3} > \frac{90}{243}$$

Increase in percentage is not the same as saying there is an increase in absolute numbers. This could merely be the result of a change in the group size. For example, 5% of 100 > 10% of 50.

A B C D E

A recent survey of all auto accident victims in Dole County found that, of the severely injured drivers and front-seat passengers, 80 percent were not wearing seat belts at the time of their accidents. This indicates that, by wearing seat belts, drivers and front-seat passengers can greatly reduce their risk of being severely injured if they are in an auto accident.

The conclusion above is not properly drawn unless which of the following is true?

- A. Of all the drivers and front-seat passengers in the survey, more than 20 percent were wearing seat belts at the time of their accidents.**
- B. Considerably more than 20 percent of drivers and front-seat passengers in Dole County always wear seat belts when travelling by car.**
- C. More drivers and front-seat passengers in the survey than rear-seat passengers were very severely injured.**
- D. More than half of the drivers and front-seat passengers in the survey were not wearing seat belts at the time of their accidents.**
- E. Most of the auto accidents reported to police in Dole County do not involve any serious injury.**



A: This is a tricky question. Our aim is to prove a correlation. Let's say 100 people were severely injured and 100 were not. Out of the 100 severely injured, 80 didn't wear seat belts.

Probability of a person not wearing seat belt to get injured =

$$\frac{80}{100} = 80\%$$

Probability of a person wearing seat belt to get injured =

$$\frac{20}{120} = 16.7\%$$

B: Doesn't establish the correlation between what's being said. Hence incorrect.

C: This doesn't even give us a relative indication. Incorrect.

D: This tells us about the number of people who were not wearing seat belts, but not about the number of people who were injured.

E: Completely irrelevant to the scope of the discussion.

Reading Comprehension

Contents

Global Questions

- **Main Point / Primary Purpose**
- **Passage Organization**
- **Author's Perspective / Passage Tone**

Local Questions

- **Specific Reference**
- **Function**
- **Strengthen and Weaken**
- **Parallel Reasoning Question**

Four Questions for RC

Read from general to specific at three levels. Change your reading strategy, not your reading speed. Answer the following questions.

Why? Main Point of the passage.

How? Structure of the passage – Introduction, Example and Counter-Example. And so on.

What? What is being said? (Main Point of Individual Paragraphs)

What Tone? Make sure answer choice makes sense!

New vs. Existing Ideas

CONTINUATION OF OLD IDEAS	INTRODUCTION OF NEW IDEAS
Continues elaborating on an idea that's already been presented	Introduces another new idea, perhaps to contrast something presented.
Furthermore	However
For Instance	But
For Example	Nevertheless
Additionally	Yet
Similarly	In Contrast
Indeed	Although
In fact	Still

Common Indicators

Main Point or Strong Purpose

Very Common Question Type

Primary goal of reading passage – Find the main point!

Common Indicators

Difficult Words, Phrases & Concepts

Very Common Distraction

Don't focus on the difficulty of the words or terminologies

Instead, choose to focus on the underlying meaning of what it's saying

Common Indicators

List of Things/Enumerations

Pay close attention!

Don't memorize!

Very common question indicator. Make a mental note of where the list occurs, so you can return to it, if necessary.

Common Indicators

Reference with Authority

If authorities are mentioned, think about how and why this authoritative remark is necessary.

Might represent conflicting view points or ideas.

Make note of what each authority says and why their authority is relevant.

Very, very important, and very easy to misinterpret!

Common Indicators

Dates and Numbers

Match the correct dates with the events mentioned

Perhaps, make a note of the dates and a short-hand version of the event on your notepad.

Common Indicators

Hidden References

Ideas that are mentioned more than once in the passage.

Even if the question cites a line number for one of the references, the answer choice might draw on the same idea mentioned elsewhere, or another part of the passage.

Common Indicators

Contrasting Views

If several view points are presented in the passage, make note of each point and who's saying it/why it's being said.

Understanding of these counter-examples or views are very important! They will be indicated by words such as "However" or "In contrast"

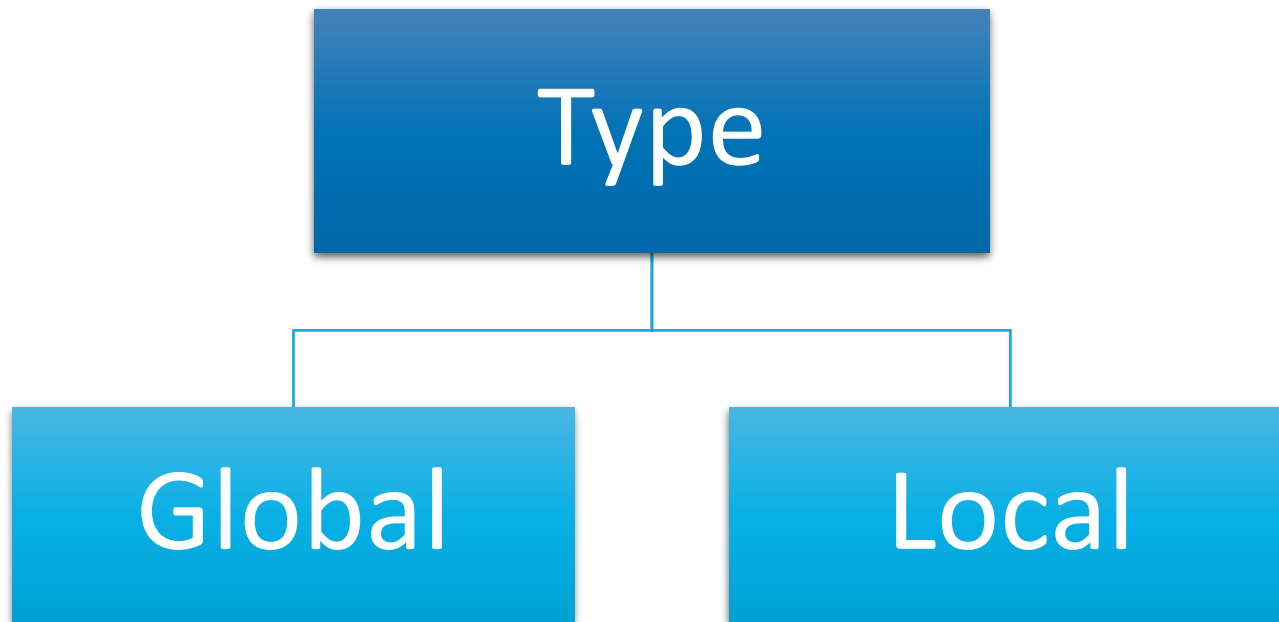
Common Indicators

Definitions

Common when the passage is of scientific nature

Make a note of the definition and expect to be questioned about your understanding of the definition

Basic Question Types



Question Types

Global – Broad Questions

Main Point/Primary Purpose

Passage Organization

Author's Perspective/Passage Tone

Broad Questions

Main Point/Primary Purpose

Represents Core Ideas

Will ask about the broader meaning of the passage, and what it seeks to convey.

Broad Questions

Passage Organization

This will ask about the structure of a passage

For instance, the structure might be something like this:

- **Introduction**
- **Example**
- **Counter-Example**

Broad Questions

Author's Perspective/Tone of Passage

These questions ask you to reflect on an author's perspective

Understand what the author is trying to say, and where he or she stands with respect to the views presented.

Is the author aggressive? Or is the author docile? What is the tone of the message conveyed?

Question Types

Local – Specific Questions (Four Types)

Specific Reference

Function

Strengthen and Weaken

Parallel Reasoning Question

Local Questions

Specific Reference

Will refer to a specific line or paragraph in the passage and ask for a question relating to that.

Might involve cross-referencing with other relevant information presented elsewhere in the passage

Local Questions

Function

Questions about what a piece of the passage – either a paragraph, a line or even a word is trying to accomplish with respect to the broader scope of the passage

Try to infer something about the context and tone of the specific reference, and ask yourself – “What does this line do?”

Local Questions

Strengthen / Weaken

Similar to Critical Reasoning Questions of the same type.

The required answer will either help or hurt the conclusive view point presented by the author, i.e. the main point

Assume the answer choices given to be true.

Local Questions

Parallel Reasoning

Again, similar to Critical Reasoning Question of the same type

Will ask to identify an action, among given actions, or a view point that mimics the reasoning that the author follows.

Identifying the structure of the passage and the structure of a line within a passage as necessary would greatly help!

RC in a Nutshell

The right mentality : The passage WILL be intentionally confusing. Get used to it!

Awareness of content: The passages might be from humanities, social sciences or sciences. Don't get bogged down by one kind or get excited about another

Reading Pattern: General to Specific

RC in a Nutshell

Understand question types: Global or Local

Pre-phrase: Frame a rough answer before you pick answer choices!

Process of Elimination: Don't keep an answer that you have to make connections for.