

GRE Prep

Critical Reasoning 1



Critical Reasoning 1

Introduction:

Reasoning Questions in GRE® are typically based on such short passages. These questions measure your reasoning skills through various question types.

Sample Question

Nursing homes range from three to five stories in height. If a nursing-home room is above the first floor, it has a fire escape.

If the above statements are true, which of the following must also be true?

- A. First-floor rooms in nursing homes do not have fire escapes.
- B. Fire escapes are allowed but not required for first-floor rooms in nursing homes.
- C. Some nursing homes have no fire escapes.
- D. Not all nursing homes have proper fire escapes.
- E. Second-floor rooms in nursing homes have fire escapes.



Critical Reasoning 1

A Critical Reasoning (CR) argument is usually structured into facts (also sometimes referred to as premises) and a conclusion. It is important that you are able to identify the parts of an argument. Your job is never to question the facts of the argument.

Premise

- A premise is information used by the author to support some claim or conclusion.
- Can be a fact or a third-party opinion; can be a description, historical information, statistical or numerical data, or a comparison of things.
- Often signalled by words or phrases such as *because of*, *since*, *due to*, *as a result of*...
- All arguments contain at least one premise.

Conclusion

- A conclusion represents the author's main opinion or claim; can be in the form of a prediction, a judgment of quality or merit, or a statement of causality.
- Is supported by at least one premise.
- Often signalled by words such as *therefore*, *thus*, *so*, *consequently*...
- Most (though not all) arguments contain a conclusion.



Critical Reasoning 1

Inspirus “*RIPE*” Strategy for CR Questions:

- Read the argument and simplify it in your own words.
- Identify the key components of the argument; premise, counter-premise, and conclusion.
- Predict an answer based on the type of the question type.
- Eliminate the options that are irrelevant or do not match with the predicted answer.

Critical Reasoning 1

Exercise: Identify the components in the following argument:

The expansion of the runways at the Bay City Airport will allow for larger planes to travel to and from Bay City. These new planes will create a large amount of noise, a nuisance for residents who live near the airport. However, many of the residents in this neighbourhood work in construction, and the contract to expand the runways has been awarded to a local construction company. Thus, the expansion of the runways will lead to an increased quality of life for the residents of this neighbourhood.

Premise: _____

Conclusion: _____



Critical Reasoning 1

Types of Critical Reasoning Questions in GRE®

- Draw the Conclusion/Inference
- Find the Assumption
- Explain the Discrepancy
- Strengthen/Weaken the Argument
- Flawed Reasoning
- Evaluate the Argument
- Parallel Reasoning
- Boldfaced Questions



Critical Reasoning 1

Draw the Conclusion/Inference

Conclusions/Inferences are logical deductions that are based on premises. These questions want you to understand an author's intended meaning in parts of a passage where the meaning is only suggested.

Premise 1 + Premise 2 = Inference/Conclusion

Strategy for Draw the Conclusion/Inference Questions

1. Read and paraphrase the given argument.
2. Draw possible conclusion/inferences based on the argument.
3. The correct answer choice can be a paraphrase of a part of the argument or it can be a logical consequence of one or more parts of the argument.
4. Eliminate the answer choices which are:
 - I. contradicting the argument
 - II. out of scope
 - III. too broad/extreme answer choices



Critical Reasoning 1

1. In a study, infant monkeys given a choice between two surrogate mothers - a bare wire structure equipped with a milk bottle, or a soft, suede-covered wire structure equipped with a milk bottle - unhesitatingly chose the latter. When given a choice between a bare wire structure equipped with a milk bottle and a soft, suede-covered wire structure lacking a milk bottle, they unhesitatingly chose the former.

Which one of the following conclusions can be most suitably drawn from the above passage?

- A. Infant monkeys' desire for warmth and comfort is nearly as strong as their desire for food.
- B. For infant monkeys, suede is a less convincing substitute for their mother's touch than animal fur would be.
- C. For infant monkeys, a milk bottle is a less convincing substitute for their mother's teat than suede is for their mother's touch.
- D. For infant monkeys, a milk bottle is an equally convincing substitute for their mother's teat as suede is for their mother's touch.
- E. Infant monkeys' desire for food is stronger than their desire for warmth and comfort.



Critical Reasoning 1

2. Journalist: A free marketplace of ideas ensures that all ideas get a fair hearing. Even ideas tainted with prejudice and malice can prompt beneficial outcomes. In most countries, however, the government is responsible for over half the information released to the public through all media. For this reason, the power of governments over information needs to be curtailed. Everyone grants that governments should not suppress free expression, yet governments continue to construct near monopolies on the publication and dissemination of enormous amounts of information.

Which of the following most accurately expresses the conclusion of the journalist's argument?

- A. The freedom of the marketplace of ideas is in jeopardy.
- B. Preserving a free marketplace of ideas is important.
- C. The control that governments have over information needs to be reduced.
- D. Ideas that have malicious content or stem from questionable sources can be valuable.
- E. Governments have near monopolies on the dissemination of many kinds of information.



Critical Reasoning 1

3. Last January, in an attempt to lower the number of traffic fatalities, the state legislature passed its “Click It or Ticket” law. Under the new law, motorists can be pulled over and ticketed for not wearing their seat belts, even if an additional driving infraction has not been committed. Lawyers and citizens’ groups are already protesting the law, saying it unfairly infringes on the rights of the state’s drivers. Law enforcement groups counter these claims by stating that the new regulations will save countless additional lives.

Which of the following inferences is best supported by the passage above?

- A. Prior to the “Click It or Ticket” law, motorists could not be stopped simply for not wearing a seat belt.
- B. The “Click It or Ticket” law violates current search and seizure laws.
- C. Laws similar to “Click It or Ticket” have reduced traffic fatalities in a number of states.
- D. The previous seatbelt laws were ineffective in saving lives.
- E. Law enforcement groups, rather than citizens groups, should determine how to best ensure the safety of motorists.



Critical Reasoning 1

4. The head baker at Barry's Bagels can either purchase flour in-person from the local flour mill, Larry's Local Mill, or order a shipment of flour from an out-of-state mill, Isadore's Interstate Mill. The cost of the flour from Isadore's Interstate Mill is 10 percent less than the cost of the flour from Larry's Local Mill. Even after shipping and handling fees are added, it is still cheaper to order flour that has to be shipped from Isadore's than to buy flour locally from Larry's.

The statements above, if true, best support which of the following assertions?

- A. Production costs at Isadore's Interstate Mill are 10 percent below those at Larry's Local Mill.
- B. The shipping & handling fees for a batch of flour purchased from Isadore's Interstate Mill are less than 10 percent of the cost of an identical batch of flour purchased from Larry's Local Mill.
- C. Buying flour from Isadore's Interstate Mill will eliminate 10 percent of the local flour mill jobs.
- D. The shipping and handling fees for a batch of flour purchased from Isadore's Interstate Mill are more than 10 percent of the cost of Isadore's flour.
- E. Isadore's Interstate Mill produces flour 10% more efficiently than Larry's Local Mill does.



Critical Reasoning 1

5. High levels of fertilizer and pesticides, needed when farmers try to produce high yields of the same crop year after year, pollute water supplies. Experts therefore urge farmers to diversify their crops and to rotate their plantings yearly. To receive governmental price-support benefits for a crop, farmers must have produced that same crop for the past several years.

The statements above, if true, best support which of the following conclusions?

- A. The rules for governmental support of farm prices work against efforts to reduce water pollution.
- B. The only solution to the problem of water pollution from fertilizers and pesticides is to take farmland out of production.
- C. Farmers can continue to make a profit by rotating diverse crops, thus reducing costs for chemicals, but not by planting the same crop each year.
- D. New farming techniques will be developed to make it possible for farmers to reduce the application of fertilizers and pesticides.
- E. Governmental price supports for farm products are set at levels that are not high enough to allow farmers to get out of debt.



Critical Reasoning 1

6. There should be a ban on television commercials for prescription drugs. These commercials put preconceived notions in people's heads and make them ask their doctor for a drug whose side effects they are not aware of. If a person needed that drug, their doctor would have already prescribed it to them.

If the statements above are true, which of the following must be true?

- A. Most people who visit a doctor are already aware as to which drug the doctor will most likely prescribe to them.
- B. Television commercials for prescription drugs don't have an educational aspect to them in that they don't educate the consumers about the use of various drugs.
- C. Pharmaceutical companies try to sell harmful drugs to consumers by using deceptive advertising.
- D. At least some people ask doctors to recommend to them medicines whose advertisement they have seen on television.
- E. At times, doctors themselves use the advertisements for prescription drugs as a source of information to recommend medicines to their patients.



Critical Reasoning 1

Find the Assumption

An assumption is an unstated premise necessary to reach the conclusion. It bridges the gap between two pieces of the argument, usually between the conclusion and the premise.

Premise/s + (Assumption) = Conclusion

Strategy for Find the Assumption Questions

1. Read the argument and identify the premise and the conclusion.
2. Choose the option that either
 - I. fills the gap / provide missing piece of evidence or
 - II. protects the argument by eliminating ideas that could weaken the argument.
3. Try to predict the missing piece of evidence.
4. Eliminate the answer choices which are:
 - I. outside the scope of the argument
 - II. repeat what is stated in the argument
 - III. inferences from the argument.



Critical Reasoning 1

Negation technique

- The negation technique can be used to determine if the given answer choice is the true assumption or not. In other words, it is a reliable way to validate the answer (recommended use) or to determine whether an answer choice is an assumption.
- The correct answer choice is like a missing premise. This means that it has to be true for the conclusion to hold true. This implies that the negated version of the correct answer choice will shatter, falsify, or invalidate the conclusion.
- Hence, once we have narrowed down our answer choice(s), we can verify it by evaluating whether the negated version really shatters the conclusion or not. If it does, then your selected choice is indeed the conclusion, otherwise not.



Critical Reasoning 1

7. To prevent some conflicts of interest, Congress could prohibit high-level government officials from accepting positions as lobbyists for three years after such officials leave government service. One such official concluded, however, that such a prohibition would be unfortunate because it would prevent high-level government officials from earning a livelihood for three years.

The official's conclusion logically depends on which of the following assumptions?

- A. Laws should not restrict the behavior of former government officials.
- B. Lobbyists are typically people who have previously been high-level government officials.
- C. High-level government officials who leave government service are capable of earning a livelihood only as lobbyists.
- D. Low-level government officials do not become lobbyists when they leave government service.
- E. High-level government officials who leave government service are currently permitted to act as lobbyists for only three years.



Critical Reasoning 1

8. A researcher discovered that people who have low levels of immune-system activity tend to score much lower on tests of mental health than do people with normal or high immune-system activity. The researcher concluded from this experiment that the immune system protects against mental illness as well as against physical disease.

The researcher's conclusion depends on which of the following assumptions?

- A. High immune-system activity protects against mental illness better than normal immune-system activity does.
- B. Mental illness is similar to physical disease in its effects on body systems.
- C. People with high immune-system activity cannot develop mental illness.
- D. Mental illness does not cause people's immune-system activity to decrease.
- E. Psychological treatment of mental illness is not as effective as is medical treatment.



Critical Reasoning 1

9. Bank depositors in the United States are all financially protected against bank failure because the government insures all individuals' bank deposits. An economist argues that this insurance is partly responsible for the high rate of bank failures, since it removes from depositors any financial incentive to find out whether the bank that holds their money is secure against failure. If depositors were more selective, then banks would need to be secure in order to compete for depositors' money.

The economist's argument makes which of the following assumptions?

- A. Bank failures are caused when big borrowers default on loan repayments.
- B. A significant proportion of depositors maintain accounts at several different banks.
- C. The more a depositor has to deposit, the more careful he or she tends to be in selecting a bank.
- D. The difference in the interest rates paid to depositors by different banks is not a significant factor in bank failures.
- E. Potential depositors are able to determine which banks are secure against failure.



Critical Reasoning 1

10. Any serious policy discussion about acceptable levels of risk in connection with explosions is not well served if the participants fail to use the word “explosion” and use the phrase “energetic disassembly” instead. In fact, the word “explosion” elicits desirable reactions, such as a heightened level of attention, whereas the substitute phrase does not. Therefore, of the two terms, “explosion” is the one that should be used throughout discussions of this sort.

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

- A. In the kind of discussion at issue, the advantages of desirable reactions to the term “explosion” outweigh the drawbacks, if any, arising from undesirable reactions to that term.
- B. The phrase “energetic disassembly” has not so far been used as a substitute for the word “explosion” in the kind of discussion at issue.
- C. In any serious policy discussion, what is said by the participants is more important than how it is put into words.
- D. The only reason that people would have for using “energetic disassembly” in place of “explosion” is to render impossible any serious policy discussion concerning explosions.
- E. The phrase “energetic disassembly” is not necessarily out of place in describing a controlled rather than an accidental explosion.



Critical Reasoning 1

Explain the Discrepancy/Paradox

In explain the discrepancy or resolve the paradox questions, the argument states two ideas or situations which contradict each other. There is no conclusion given in the argument.

Strategy for Explain the Discrepancy Questions

1. Read and identify the statements which are in contrast.
2. Look for the answer choice that explains the discrepancy.
3. Eliminate the answer choices that
 - I. explain only one side
 - II. contradict the given statements



Critical Reasoning 1

11. A discount retailer of basic household necessities employs thousands of people and pays most of them at the minimum wage rate. Yet following a federally mandated increase of the minimum wage rate that increased the retailer's operating costs considerably, the retailer's profits increased markedly.

Which of the following, if true, most helps to resolve the apparent paradox?

- A. Over half of the retailer's operating costs consist of payroll expenditures; yet only a small percentage of those expenditures go to pay management salaries.
- B. The retailer's operating costs, other than wages, increased substantially after the increase in the minimum wage rate went into effect.
- C. The retailer's customer base is made up primarily of people who earn, or who depend on the earnings of others who earn, the minimum wage.
- D. When the increase in the minimum wage rate went into effect, the retailer also raised the wage rate for employees who had been earning just above minimum wage.
- E. The majority of the retailer's employees work as cashiers, and most cashiers are paid the minimum wage.



Critical Reasoning 1

12. Products sold under a brand name used to command premium prices because, in general, they were superior to nonbrand rival products. Technical expertise in product development has become so widespread, however, that special quality advantages are very hard to obtain these days and even harder to maintain. As a consequence, brand-name products generally neither offer higher quality nor sell at higher prices. Paradoxically, brand names are a bigger marketing advantage than ever.

Which of the following, if true, most helps to resolve the paradox outlined above?

- A. Consumers recognize that the quality of products sold under invariant brand names can drift over time.
- B. In many acquisitions of one corporation by another, the acquirer is interested more in acquiring the right to use certain brand names than in acquiring existing production facilities.
- C. In the days when special quality advantages were easier to obtain than they are now, it was also easier to get new brand names established.
- D. The advertising of a company's brand-name products is at times transferred to a new advertising agency, especially when sales are declining.
- E. Brand names are taken by consumers as a guarantee of getting a product as good as the best rival products.



Critical Reasoning 1

13. The beer industry is still very profitable, and the projections are that it will remain so. In the United States this year, the total amount of beer sold by breweries has increased, even though the number of adults who drink beer has decreased.

Each of the following, if true, could explain the simultaneous increase in beer sales and decrease in the number of adults who drink beer EXCEPT

- A. During this year, the number of women who have begun to drink beer is greater than the number of men who have quit drinking beer.
- B. The number of underage people who have begun to drink beer is greater than the number of adults who have quit drinking beer during the same period.
- C. During this year, the number of non-drinkers who began to drink beer is greater than the number of people who have quit drinking beer.
- D. The people who continue to drink beer consume more beer per person than they have earlier.
- E. More of the beer made in the United States this year was exported than was the case last year.



Critical Reasoning 1

14. Calories consumed in excess of those with which the body needs to be provided to maintain its weight are normally stored as fat and the body gains weight. Alcoholic beverages are laden with calories. However, those people who regularly drink two or three alcoholic beverages a day and thus exceed the caloric intake necessary to maintain their weight don't in general gain weight.

Which one of the following, if true, most helps to resolve the apparent discrepancy?

- A. Some people who regularly drink two or three alcoholic beverages a day avoid exceeding the caloric intake necessary to maintain their weight by decreasing caloric intake from other sources.
- B. Excess calories consumed by people who regularly drink two or three alcoholic beverages a day tend to be dissipated as heat.
- C. Some who do not drink alcoholic beverages but eat high-calorie foods do not gain weight.
- D. Many who regularly drink more than three alcoholic beverages a day do not gain weight.
- E. Some people who take in fewer calories than are normally necessary to maintain their weight do not lose weight.



Critical Reasoning 1

15. A milepost on the towpath read “21” on the side facing the hiker as she approached it and “23” on its back. She reasoned that the next milepost forward on the path would indicate that she was halfway between one end of the path and the other. However, the milepost one mile further on read “20” facing her and “24” behind.

Which of the following, if true, would explain the discrepancy described above?

- A. The numbers on the next milepost had been reversed.
- B. The numbers on the mileposts indicate kilometers, not miles.
- C. The facing numbers indicate miles to the end of the path, not miles from the beginning.
- D. A milepost was missing between the two the hiker encountered.
- E. The mileposts had originally been put in place for the use of mountain bikers, not for hikers.



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Additional Questions

16. The number of North American children who are obese, that is who have more body fat than do 85 percent of North American children their age, is steadily increasing according to four major studies conducted over the past 15 years.

If the finding reported above is correct, it can be properly concluded that:

- A. When four major studies all produce similar results, those studies must be accurate.
- B. North American children have been progressively less physically active over the past 15 years.
- C. The number of North American children who are not obese increased over the past 15 years.
- D. Over the past 15 years, the number of underweight North American children has declined.
- E. The incidence of obesity in North American children tends to increase as they grow older.



Critical Reasoning 1

17. When limitations were in effect on nuclear-arms testing, people tended to save more of their money, but when nuclear-arms testing increased, people tended to spend more of their money. The perceived threat of nuclear catastrophe, therefore, decreases the willingness of people to postpone consumption for the sake of saving money.

The argument above assumes that:

- A. The perceived threat of nuclear catastrophe has increased over the years.
- B. Most people supported the development of nuclear arms.
- C. People's perception of the threat of nuclear catastrophe depends on the amount of nuclear-arms testing being done.
- D. The people who saved the most money when nuclear-arms testing was limited were the ones who supported such limitations.
- E. There are more consumer goods available when nuclear arms testing increases.



Critical Reasoning 1

18. The average age of residents in Sunset city is well over 70 years of age and the populace is composed almost entirely of retirees with extremely few families that have young children. However, Sunset City is also known for its many boutiques that specialize in selling clothing for infants and toddlers.

Which of the following, if true, best reconciles the seeming discrepancy described above?

- A. The children's clothing boutiques in Sunset City purchase their clothing from wholesalers in Sunrise City, where there are several families with small children.
- B. The few children that do live in Sunset City do not have particularly large wardrobes.
- C. The residents of Sunset City spend more on healthcare than residents of nearby cities.
- D. The residents of Sunset City are generally wealthy and are known to spend large amounts of money buying gifts for their grandchildren and great grandchildren living in other cities.
- E. Sunset City is not located on a major highway.





Thank you