

Special Event: GMAT Terminator by Dustin

Ways to Tackle

Critical Reasoning “Boldface” Questions

Five Key Principles & Step-by-Step Approach

- Analyze choices first, then the passage
- Identify key differences first, then refer to the Passage
- Focus on the core idea first, then consider modifiers
- determine objectivity vs. subjectivity first, then analyze attitude
- Prioritize clear differences first, then ambiguous ones

Principle 1: Analyze Answer Choices First, Then the Passage

- Avoid reading the passage first to minimize unnecessary distractions
- Start by understanding each answer choice and compare it with others

Principle 2: Identify Key Differences Between Choices Before Referring to the Passage

- Find the most obvious core difference between the remaining answer choices (e.g., logic, tone, subjectivity vs. objectivity)
- Only after identifying a key difference, refer to the passage for relevant information

Principle 3: Focus on the Core Idea Before Considering Modifiers

- Identify the main claim or key term in each answer choice
- Ignore unnecessary modifiers (e.g., details, qualifiers) that do not change the core meaning
- Only analyze modifiers if the core analysis is insufficient to differentiate choices

Principle 4: Determine Objectivity vs. Subjectivity Before Analyzing Attitude

- First, classify the tone:
 - Objective: Based on facts, data, or neutral statements
 - Subjective: Includes speculation, opinions, or evaluative language
- Then, analyze the attitude (supporting, opposing, neutral, etc.)

Principle 5: Prioritize Clear Differences, Defer Ambiguous Choices

- Eliminate answer choices based on the most obvious differences first
- If two choices are similar or ambiguous, skip them temporarily and mark them for later review
- Once all clear distinctions are handled, return to resolve ambiguous choices

#1

Chaco Canyon, a settlement of the ancient Anasazi culture in North America, had massive buildings. ****It must have been a major Anasazi center.**** Analysis of wood samples shows that some of the timber for the buildings came from Chuska and San Mateo Mountains, 50 miles from Chaco Canyon. ****Only a major cultural center would have the organizational power to import timber from 50 miles away.****

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

- (A) The first is premise used to support the argument's main conclusion; the second is the argument's main conclusion.
- (B) The first is the argument's main conclusion; the second is a premise used to support that conclusion.
- (C) The first is one of the two premises used to support the argument's main conclusion; the second is the other of those two premises.
- (D) The first is premise used to support the argument's main conclusion; the second is a premise used to support another conclusion drawn in the argument.
- (E) The first is inferred from another statement in the argument; the second is inferred from the first.

Difference first, Core first, Clear first

Chaco Canyon, a settlement of the ancient Anasazi culture in North America, had massive buildings. ****It must have been a major Anasazi center.**** Analysis of wood samples shows that some of the timber for the buildings came from Chuska and San Mateo Mountains, 50 miles from Chaco Canyon. ****Only a major cultural center would have the organizational power to import timber from 50 miles away.****

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

- (A) The first is **premise** used to support the argument's main conclusion; the second is the argument's **main conclusion**.
- (B) The first is the argument's **main conclusion**; the second is **a premise** used to support that conclusion.
- (C) The first is **one of the two premises** used to support the argument's main conclusion; the second is the **other of those two premises**.
- (D) The first is **premise** used to support the argument's main conclusion; the second is **a premise** used to support another conclusion drawn in the argument.
- (E) The first is inferred from another statement in the argument; the second is inferred from the first.

#2

Columnist: The idea that many historical events can be explained by postulating as yet undiscovered conspiracies is generally rejected by historians because ****it is quite unlikely that complex arrangements involving large numbers of conspirators would be kept secret for years.**** Yet to argue in this way is a mistake. A conspiracy need not be gargantuan and intricate to explain why a country, for instance, decided to act in a certain way: ****it need involve nothing more than two top decision makers sharing an ulterior motive and keeping it secret.****

In the columnist's argument, the two portions in boldface play which of the following roles?

- (A) The first is the conclusion of an argument the columnist purports to refute; the second is a premise offered in support of the columnist's conclusion.
- (B) The first is the conclusion of an argument the columnist purports to refute; the second is the columnist's conclusion.
- (C) The first is a premise the columnist contends is mistakenly thought to support a given conclusion; the second is a conclusion the columnist believes that premise does support.
- (D) The first is a premise the columnist contends is mistakenly used to support a given conclusion; the second is a premise given to support the columnist's contention.
- (E) The first is a premise the columnist contends is mistakenly thought to support a given conclusion; the second is a premise the columnist contends better supports that conclusion.

Difference first, Core first

Columnist: The idea that many historical events can be explained by postulating as yet undiscovered conspiracies is generally rejected by historians because ****it is quite unlikely that complex arrangements involving large numbers of conspirators would be kept secret for years.**** Yet to argue in this way is a mistake. A conspiracy need not be gargantuan and intricate to explain why a country, for instance, decided to act in a certain way: ****it need involve nothing more than two top decision makers sharing an ulterior motive and keeping it secret.****

In the columnist's argument, the two portions in boldface play which of the following roles?

- (A) The first is the **conclusion of an argument** the columnist purports to refute; the second is a **premise** offered in support of the columnist's conclusion.
- (B) The first is the **conclusion of an argument** the columnist purports to refute; the second is the columnist's **conclusion**.
- (C) The first is a **premise** the columnist contends is mistakenly thought to support a given conclusion; the second is a **conclusion** the columnist believes that premise does support.
- (D) The first is a **premise** the columnist contends is mistakenly used to support a given conclusion; the second is a **premise** given to support the columnist's contention.
- (E) The first is a **premise** the columnist contends is mistakenly thought to support a given conclusion; the second is a **premise** the columnist contends better supports that conclusion.

...Then Modifier

Columnist: The idea that many historical events can be explained by postulating as yet undiscovered conspiracies is generally rejected by historians because ****it is quite unlikely that complex arrangements involving large numbers of conspirators would be kept secret for years.**** Yet to argue in this way is a mistake. A conspiracy need not be gargantuan and intricate to explain why a country, for instance, decided to act in a certain way: ****it need involve nothing more than two top decision makers sharing an ulterior motive and keeping it secret.****

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Let's Add Some Prompt during Review

- Draw a mind map for this passage. (The basic unit is “clause”, not “sentence”)
- Explain the meaning of each logical term in the five answer choices.

#3

Under laboratory conditions, fruit flies can learn to respond to odors that elicit no response from them in nature. Mutant fruit flies that cannot produce a certain enzyme are, however, incapable of such learning. ****These mutant flies respond to other odors just as ordinary fruit flies do.**** Thus it is unlikely that the enzyme's absence impairs the fruit flies' perception of odors, since presumably ****fruit flies would not have an enzyme that was needed only for the perception of odors that fruit flies do not respond to in nature.**** Given that many researchers believe that this enzyme is somehow involved in the process of forming memories, what the enzyme's absence probably impairs is the fruit flies' ability to learn.

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

- (A) The first is an explanatory hypothesis provisionally put forward in the argument; the second provides evidence in support of that hypothesis.
- (B) The first is evidence that has been used to support a hypothesis that the argument challenges; the second states an assumption explicitly made in challenging that hypothesis.
- (C) The first is evidence that has been used to support a hypothesis that the argument challenges; the second is a modified version of that hypothesis that is adopted in the argument.
- (D) The first is evidence used in ruling out a potential explanation that the argument rejects; the second presents an explicit assumption used in arguing against that explanation.
- (E) The first is evidence used in ruling out a potential explanation that the argument rejects; the second is the explanatory hypothesis that the argument as a whole seeks to support.-

Core first, Difference first

Under laboratory conditions, fruit flies can learn to respond to odors that elicit no response from them in nature. Mutant fruit flies that cannot produce a certain enzyme are, however, incapable of such learning. ****These mutant flies respond to other odors just as ordinary fruit flies do.**** Thus it is unlikely that the enzyme's absence impairs the fruit flies' perception of odors, since presumably ****fruit flies would not have an enzyme that was needed only for the perception of odors that fruit flies do not respond to in nature.**** Given that many researchers believe that this enzyme is somehow involved in the process of forming memories, what the enzyme's absence probably impairs is the fruit flies' ability to learn.

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

- (A) The first is an **explanatory hypothesis** provisionally put forward in the argument; the second provides **evidence** in support of that hypothesis.
- (B) The first is **evidence** that has been used to support a hypothesis that the argument challenges; the second states **an assumption** explicitly made in challenging that hypothesis.
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#4

Sonex Corporation Executive: ****Vision-related problems such as blurred vision and headaches have been experienced by employees of Sonex Corporation who use video-display terminals every day for extended periods.**** These problems are quickly and entirely reversible through modifications to individual terminals and work spaces. ****Precisely what modifications need to be made depends on knowing the individual user's specific problems.**** Since we cannot predict what these problems will turn out to be and since our standard design for employees' work spaces keeps the incidence of such problems lower than any other design we know of, it is clear that our policy of undertaking modifications only when an employee reports vision-related problems is as responsive to employees' legitimate health concerns as current circumstances permit.

In the Sonex Corporation executive's argument, the two boldfaced portions play which of the following roles?

- (A) The first describes a circumstance that is addressed by the policy response that the argument seeks to justify; the second provides evidence to support the main conclusion of the argument.
- (B) The first describes a circumstance that is addressed by the policy response that the argument seeks to justify; the second is evidence that has been used to argue that no coherent policy can be formulated.
- (C) The first provides evidence to support the main conclusion of the argument; the second is a claim that the argument acknowledges as an unanswered objection to that main conclusion.
- (D) The first provides evidence to support the main conclusion of the argument; the second is a consideration that has been used to argue that there might never be more evidence than is already available.
- (E) The first is an objection that has been raised against a policy defended in the argument; the second provides evidence to support the main conclusion of the argument.

Difference first, Clear first

Sonex Corporation Executive: ****Vision-related problems such as blurred vision and headaches have been experienced by employees of Sonex Corporation who use video-display terminals every day for extended periods.**** These problems are quickly and entirely reversible through modifications to individual terminals and work spaces. ****Precisely what modifications need to be made depends on knowing the individual user's specific problems.**** Since we cannot predict what these problems will turn out to be and since our standard design for employees' work spaces keeps the incidence of such problems lower than any other design we know of, it is clear that our policy of undertaking modifications only when an employee reports vision-related problems is as responsive to employees' legitimate health concerns as current circumstances permit.

In the Sonex Corporation executive's argument, the two boldfaced portions play which of the following roles?

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Final Decision

Sonex Corporation Executive: ****Vision-related problems such as blurred vision and headaches have been experienced by employees of Sonex Corporation who use video-display terminals every day for extended periods.**** These problems are quickly and entirely reversible through modifications to individual terminals and work spaces. ****Precisely what modifications need to be made depends on knowing the individual user's specific problems.**** Since we cannot predict what these problems will turn out to be and since our standard design for employees' work spaces keeps the incidence of such problems lower than any other design we know of, it is clear that our policy of undertaking modifications only when an employee reports vision-related problems is as responsive to employees' legitimate health concerns as current circumstances permit.

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- Below is my thought process transcript. Compare it with the problem-solving process above and identify any errors in my reasoning.
- Dustin's GMAT CR: Boldface Interactive Tutor



Remember:

Follow our 5 principles to conquer BF questions.

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