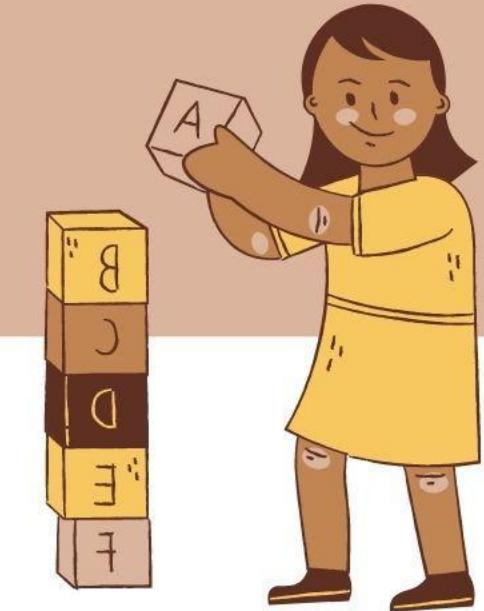


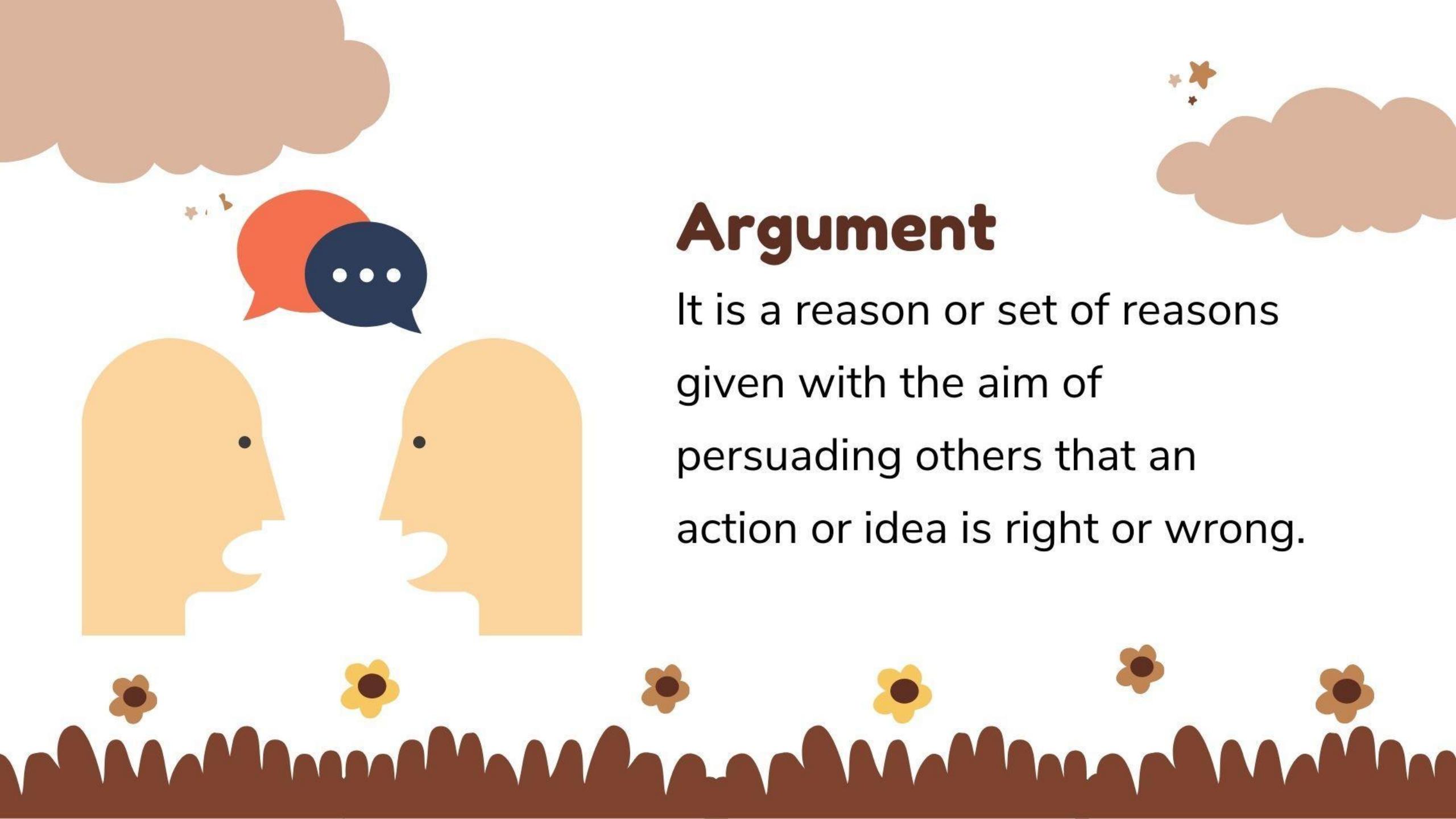


# Thinking Skills:

## Strengthening & Weakening of Arguments

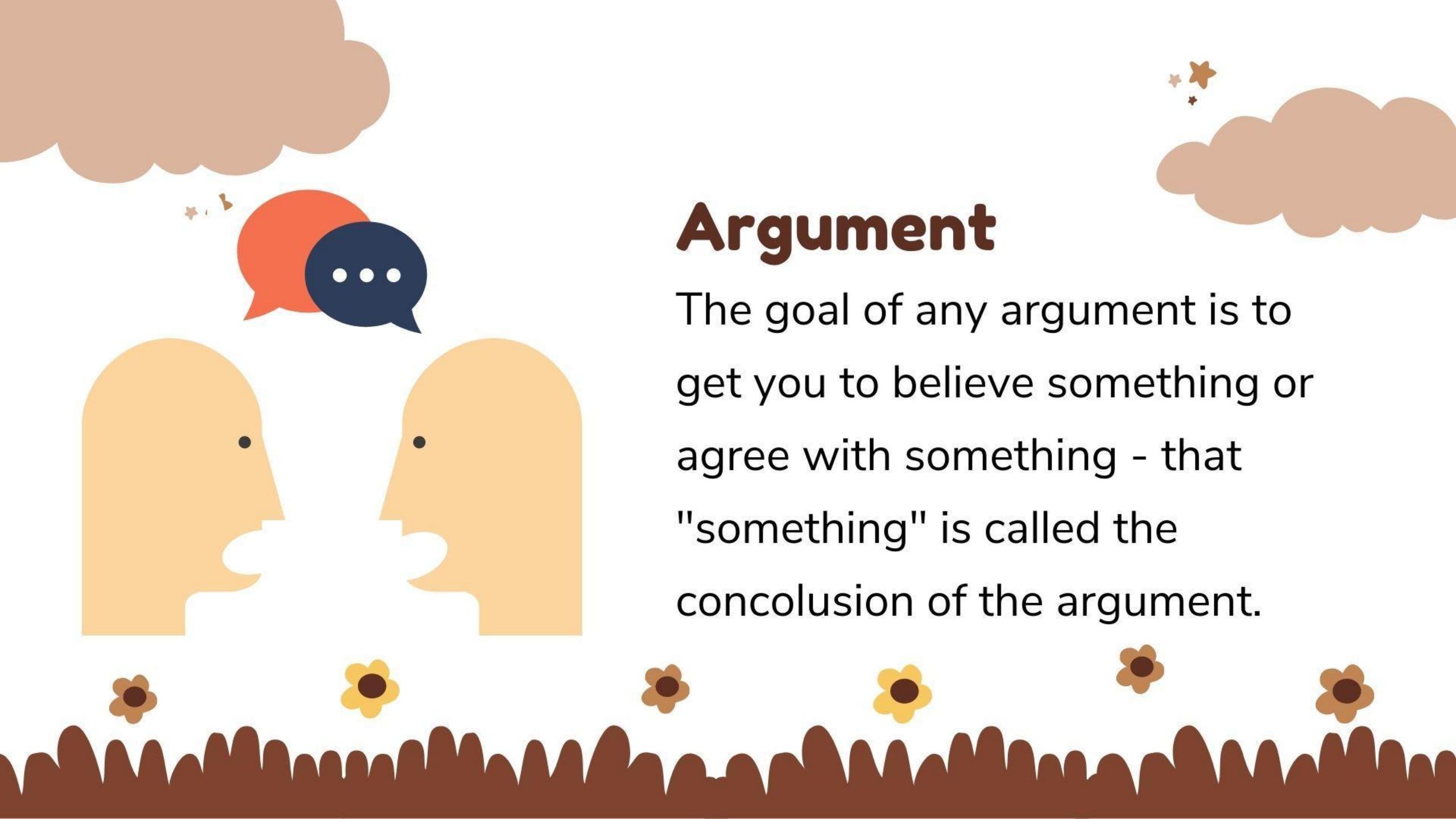


# Argument



# Argument

It is a reason or set of reasons given with the aim of persuading others that an action or idea is right or wrong.



# Argument

The goal of any argument is to get you to believe something or agree with something - that "something" is called the conclusion of the argument.

# **Strengthening Argument**

# What is Strengthening Arguments?

The key to strengthening an argument is finding the answer choice that confirms that the central assumption is correct.



# What is Strengthening Arguments?

If you encounter an answer that would be correct on the assumption question, it would be correct on the strengthen question as well.



# What is Strengthening Arguments?

The correct answer can confirm by citing a study, survey or any other relevant piece of evidence that makes the assumption to be more likely to be true.



# Example: Strengthening Arguments?

## Premise

- The argument would be weakened if
- The stated premises are contradicted by some contradicting facts

## Assumption

- The hidden assumptions are attacked by some contradicting facts,

## Conclusion

- The conclusion itself is contradicted by some contradicting facts



# **2 ways of Strengthening an Argument:**

1

The correct answer can simply be a rewording of the assumption itself.

If you encounter an answer choice that would be correct on an assumption question, it would also be correct on a strengthen question

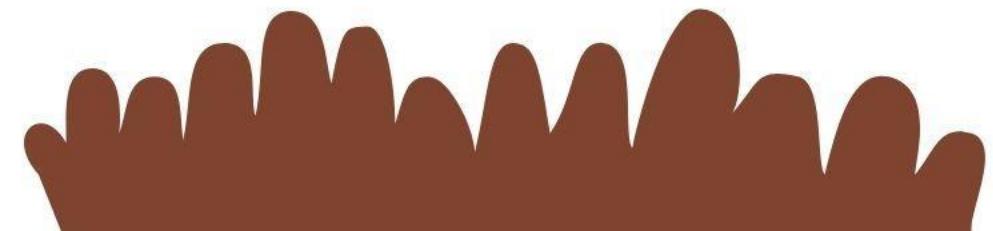
## 2 ways of Strengthening an Argument:

The correct answer can confirm the assumption by citing a study, survey or any other relevant piece of additional evidence that makes the assumption more likely to be true.



## Remember:

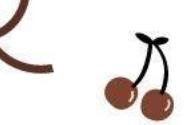
You only need to make the argument more likely to be correct; you do not need to make the argument certain to be correct.



# What is Weakening Arguments?

Finding a statement that weakens an argument follows the same process, only backward.



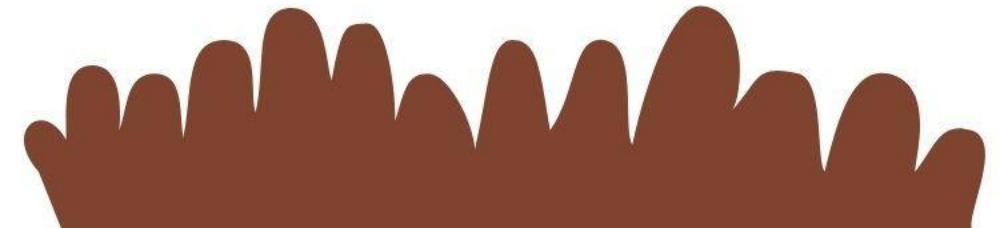


## 2 ways of Weakening an Argument:



1

An answer that weakens the argument can directly refute the assumption. Any choice that states that the assumption is wrong will weaken the argument.



## 2 ways of Weakening an Argument:

Just a new pieces of evidence can strengthen the argument, new pieces of evidence can weaken the argument.

Any information presented in an answer choice that makes the assumption less likely to be correct will act to weaken the argument as a whole.

## 3 Components of an Argument

- The stated premises
- The hidden assumptions
- The conclusion



Premise:

- The argument would be strengthened if
- The stated premises are supported by some more facts of the same nature,

Assumption:

- The hidden assumptions are supported by a fact of the same nature.

Conclusion:

- The conclusion itself is supported by a fact of the same nature.



# Example: Strengthening Arguments?

## Premise

- The argument would be weakened if
- The stated premises are contradicted by some contradicting facts

## Assumption

- The hidden assumptions are attacked by some contradicting facts

## Conclusion

- The conclusion itself is contradicted by some contradicting facts



# Example: Weakening Arguments?

## Premise

- We prove the example itself is totally correct (incorrect).

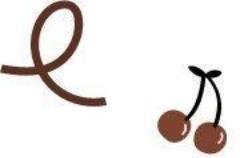
## Assumption

- We support (contradict) the assumption.

## Conclusion

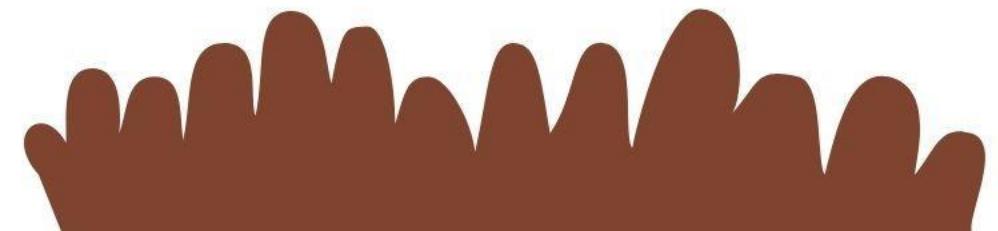
- We support (contradict) the conclusion directly or by some other means.





# Premise

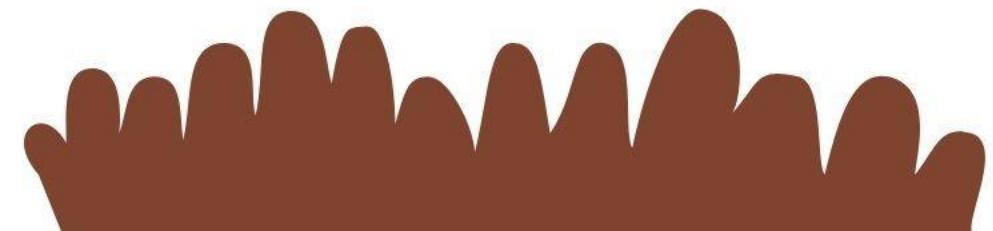
In general, argument means quarrels but in logic and critical reasoning, an argument is a list of statements one of which is conclusions and others are the premises or assumptions of the argument. In reasoning, arguments are based on certain premises.





# Assumptions

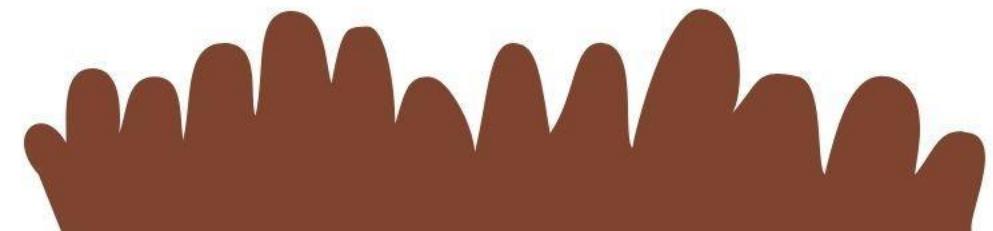
Premises / facts that are explicitly stated and acts as in support of the argument and further the arguments





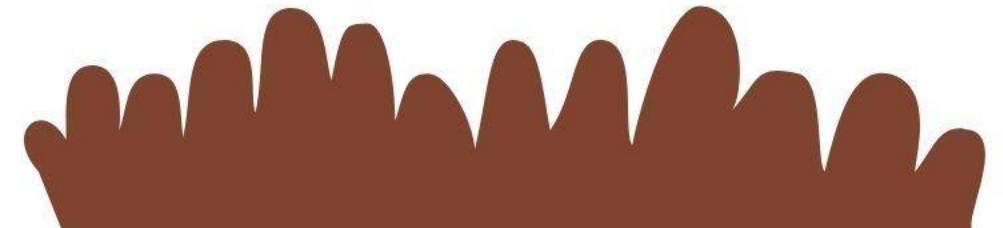
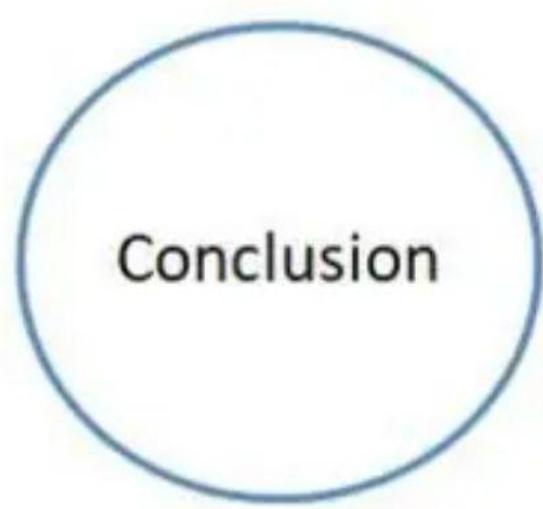
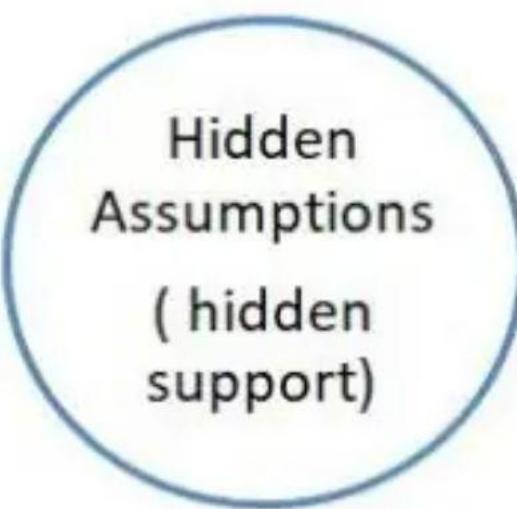
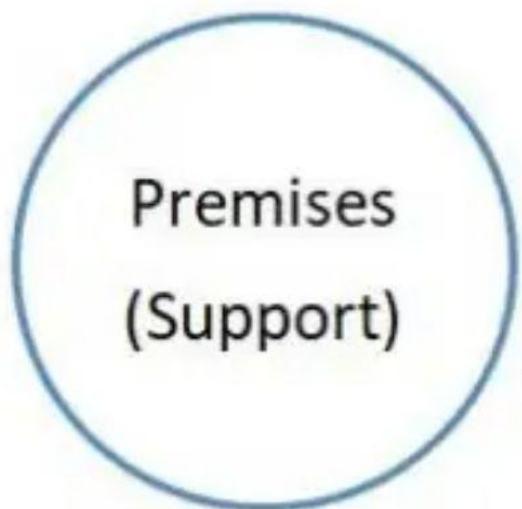
## Conclusion

These assumptions are implicit, they are not stated and they also provide support and using the support of these two, the arguments reach a certain conclusion.





e



e

1. Arguments by example: the premise is stated with the help of an example.
2. Arguments by analogy: the supporting premise is the analogy between two objects.
3. Arguments by chronology: the supporting premise is the chronological study of facts and the conclusion is based on this.
4. Arguments by cause and effect strategy: the supporting premise is a cause and the conclusion are the effect.

# Example



Example 1: We must follow the policy of non-violence because Gandhiji used to practice it.

Statements: I. Even lord buddha advocated non-violence.

1. We must follow our great leader's example.

III. Non-violence is our constitutional obligation.

1. At certain stages, Gandhi Ji also advocated violence.

2. It is not necessary, that whatever Gandhi Ji did must be correct.

3. Non-violence has been declared to be an unconstitutional policy.

Which of the following statements would strengthen and weaken the argument?





Sol: The argument is the argument by example. Now let's analyze the argument\* into the premise, hidden assumption, and conclusion.

|   | Premise   | Hidden Assumption   | Conclusion  |
|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Break-up</b>   | Gandhi ji used to practice non-violence.              | What Gandhi Ji did must be correct.                               | We must follow the policy of non-violence.                        |
| <b>Strengthened statements<br/>(supports premise/assumption/conclusion)</b> | Even Lord Buddha advocated non-violence.              | We must follow our great leader's example.                        | Non- Violence is our constitutional obligation.                   |
| <b>Weakened Statements<br/>(supports premise/assumption/conclusion)</b>     | At certain stages, Gandhi ji also advocated violence. | It is not necessary, that whatever Gandhi ji did must be correct. | Non- violence has been declared to be an unconstitutional policy. |





Example 2: Pakistan and Bangladesh have suffered defeats at the hands of Indian cricket team. So, India must defeat them in tennis as well.





## Sol 2: This is the example of Argument by analogy

|   | Premise  | Hidden Assumption   | Conclusion                                       |
|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Break-up</b>   | India has defeated both countries in cricket.                  | What happens in cricket also happens in tennis.                               | India will defeat both countries in tennis also. |
| <b>Strengthened statements<br/>(supports premise/assumption/conclusion)</b> | In fact, India has been defeating them for the past ten years. | Cricket and tennis are very similar games.                                    |  |
| <b>Weakened Statements<br/>(supports premise/assumption/conclusion)</b>     | But India has been losing to them also.                        | It is not necessary, that what will happen in cricket also happens in tennis. |  |



We could not have any statement that strengthened or Weakened the conclusion directly because the conclusion is in the future tense and we cannot support or contradict the future.



Example 3: The government has announced a devaluation of the rupee against the dollar by at least 20%. Economists have criticized the step staying that it would bring inflation into the economy.



## Sol 3: This type of Argument is based on cause-and-effect relationship.



|   | Premise  | Hidden Assumption   | Conclusion                              |
|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Break up</b>   | Economists have criticized the devaluation of the rupee by 20%       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Economists are correct*.</li><li>Devaluation is a cause and, inflation is its effect.</li><li>Inflation is not desirable</li></ul>  | There will be inflation in the economy. |
| <b>Strengthened statements<br/>(supports premise/assumption/conclusion)</b> | Devaluation of rupee could be avoided by taking some other measures. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Economists must have some merit in their criticism.</li><li>Whenever there is devaluation, inflation follows.</li><li>Inflation is not good for the health of the economy.</li></ul>  |   |
| <b>Weakened Statements<br/>(supports premise/assumption/conclusion)</b>     | Devaluation was long overdue in the economy.                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>It is not necessary, that whatever economists say is correct.</li><li>Devaluation may not always result in inflation.</li><li>Inflation is not very harmful to the economy.</li></ul> |   |



Note 1: Again, since here we are talking about future we don't have strengthened or weakened arguments based on the conclusion as future is unknown.

Note 2: \* When the argument says the economists have criticized the move because it will bring inflation it becomes apparent that the argument assumes

- That the economists are correct.
- That inflation is undesirable.

But all these are secondary assumptions. The argument is based on cause and effect relationship and in such cases the major assumption is the one where cause leads to the effect and in this context, the major cause is devaluation and the effect is inflation. Thus, the assumption is devaluation leads to inflation.





# STRATEGIES/TIPS



## Consider the situation

Think of all aspects of the communication situation. What are the subject and purpose of your message?

What medium will you use? Who is the receiver? What is the context?

## Consider the situation



- As sender, what role do I have?
- What subject is my message about?
- What purpose do I have?
- What medium am I using?
- Who is the receiver? How can I convince that person?
- What is the context? When and where will the message arrive?



# Consider the situation

Sender: I'm writing less as a high school student and more as a concerned American citizen.

Message Subject: I'm writing about the national debt.

Message Purpose: I'm calling for spending cuts and tax increases to address the debt.

Medium: This should be a letter to the editor, so it can reach a general audience.

Receiver: My audience is all Americans who are worried about federal fiscal responsibility.

Context: This message will appear in a newspaper locally, and it could be picked up by a wire service to appear in national papers.

## Clarify your thinking.

Think about the pros and cons of each side of the issue, and do some preliminary research so that you understand the subject well.

## Clarify your thinking.

Before you can convince others, you must be clear in your own mind about your position. What are you trying to prove? Why do you feel the way you do? What kind of proof do you have? In addition, you should consider both sides of the issue.

## Clarify your thinking.

### Pro

Reducing the national debt ...

- is the right choice for the future.
- requires us to live within our means.
- improves our country's credit scores.
- sets an example for other nations regarding fiscal responsibility.
- creates a sustainable budget.

### Con

Reducing the national debt ...

- may slow the economy.
- requires bipartisan support.
- requires tax increases.
- requires cuts to spending.
- impacts those receiving entitlements.
- impacts the military.



## Construct a claim.

After you have thoroughly investigated an issue, you are ready to construct a claim about it. Arguments develop three types of claims :

## Construct a claim.



## Arguments develop three types of claims :

1. **A truth claim** indicates that you believe something is or is not true.

The national debt threatens the future of our nation.

2. **A value claim** indicates the worth that you assign to something.

A balanced budget would be the best gift we can give our children.

3. **A policy claim** says what you think should or should not be done.

The federal government must cut spending to reduce the national debt.



## Construct a claim.



To formulate a claim, name your subject and express the truth, value, or policy you want to promote.

Subject

Truth, Value, or Policy

Claim (Position) Statement

The national debt

+

downsize post-war  
military spending and  
social programs

=

To reduce the national debt, the U.S. government must cut wasteful spending.



## Collect evidence.

Research the issue in depth, using primary, secondary, and tertiary sources. Investigate to make sure your claim holds up, and change it if it doesn't. Gather a variety of key evidence to support your claim.

## Collect evidence.

After stating a claim, you must support it.

Different types of details provide different types of support:

## Collect evidence.

■ **Facts and statistics** connect your claim to specific realities.

Each taxpayer's portion of the U.S. national debt is over \$140,000.

■ **Reasons and results** show the causes and effects of a situation.

The debt-ceiling debacle of 2011 caused the U.S. credit rating to slip.

■ **Examples and anecdotes** show how the claim works.

A person who makes \$46,000 can't spend \$71,000—but the government does.

■ **Quotations and reflections** get at the feelings of the audience.

"We must not let our rulers load us with perpetual debt," said Thomas Jefferson.

## Consider key objections.

Think about other viewpoints related to the argument. What reasons could people cite to support opposing positions? What major problems could they see with your argument? Decide how you will answer those objections—by countering them (saying why they are unimportant) or by conceding them (saying they are important but can be overcome).

## Consider key objections.

Any debatable issue has at least two, and often many, points of view. When you build an argument, you need to consider alternate positions. Just as you have gathered support for your position, those with other perspectives will have gathered objections. Start by identifying them.

## Consider key objections.



- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>Objection 1:</b> | The debt matches our gross domestic product, which means that the debt has not yet reached an unmanageable size. |
| <b>Objection 2:</b> | The boom of the '90s balanced the federal budget, and the next boom will balance this budget.                    |
| <b>Objection 3:</b> | The time to cut government spending is not during a recession but during a boom.                                 |



## Consider key objections.



### Answering Objections:

Ignoring the objections to your argument weakens rather than strengthens it. You need to face objections head-on.

The following strategies have been applied to each of the example objections.



## Consider key objections.



### Answering Objections:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>■ Rebut the objection.</b>                                   | If our gross domestic product goes down, our debt goes up as we try to stimulate the economy. Allowable debt can't be based solely on GDP.                  |
| <b>■ Recognize part of the objection but overcome the rest.</b> | It is true that the boom of the '90s resulted in a balanced budget, but a balanced budget fixes only that year's deficit, not the compounded national debt. |
| <b>■ Concede the objection and move on.</b>                     | Yes, during a recession, government spending is needed to get the economy moving again. Now that the recession is over, we need to reduce spending.         |



## Craft your argument.

Use your claim statement and the evidence you have gathered to argue persuasively for your position. Appeal to the needs of your reader, and answer any key objections.



## Craft your argument.



How you structure your argument depends a great deal on how receptive or resistant your audience is. For a receptive audience, you can provide support up front and rebuttal of objections near the end. For opposed audiences, you may want to start with rebuttals.



## Craft your argument.



Receptive

Position

Support

Support

Support

Rebuttal

Position

Skeptical

Position

Support

Rebuttal

Support

Rebuttal

Position

Resistant

Position

Rebuttal

Support

Rebuttal

Support

Position

Opposed

Position

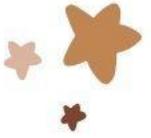
Rebuttal

Rebuttal

Rebuttal

Support

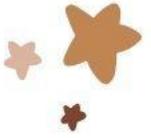




Confirm your main point.

Wrap up your argument by stating your claim in a new way, connecting it to real life and to the future.





## Confirm your main point.

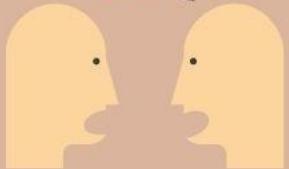
Complete your argument by stating your main point in a new way and connecting it to the future. Leave your audience with a strong final thought.



# QUESTIONS



# **Identify if strengthening or weakening argument**

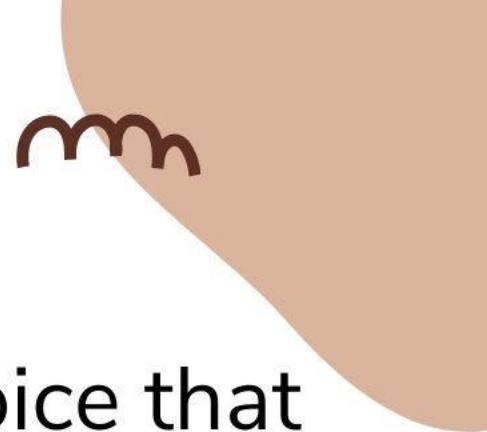


It is finding the answer choice that confirms that the central assumption is correct.





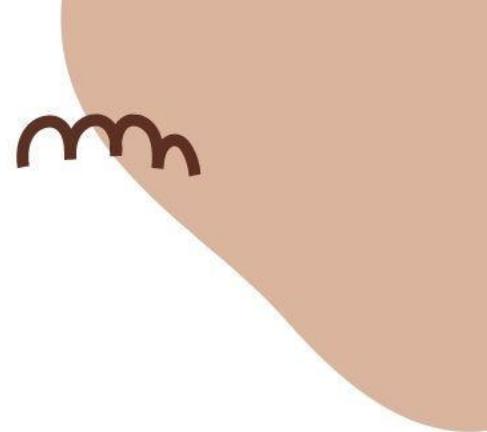
# **Identify if strengthening or weakening argument**



It is finding the answer choice that confirms that the central assumption is correct.

## **STRENGTHENING ARGUMENT**

# **What are the 3 components of an argument?**





# What are the 3 components of an argument?



- The stated premises
- The hidden assumptions
- The conclusion



# What are the 3 components of an argument?



- The stated premises
- The hidden assumptions
- The conclusion



# Give 1 strategy for an effective argument and explain.



- The stated premises
- The hidden assumptions
- The conclusion



**What are the  
things/situation you  
should consider to start  
an argument?**

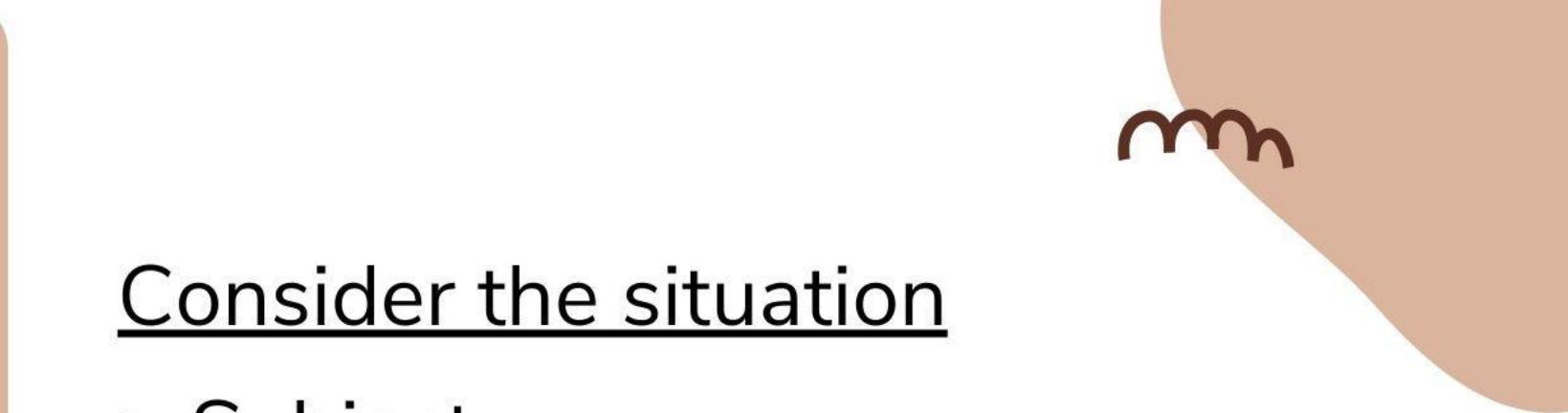




**What are the things/situation you should consider to start an argument?**



### Consider the situation

- > Subject
  - > Purpose of your message
  - > Medium
  - > Who will be the receiver
  - > What is the context?
- 

## **Question:**

NoSick, a new drug that can cure a common ailment that until now has been fatal for 50% of those infected, is made from the root of the Kentucky banjobush. The banjobush is rare in Kentucky, and large quantities of the root are necessary in order to make NoSick. Therefore, if NoSick remains in production, the banjobush will eventually become extinct.



## **Question:**

If true, which of the following most calls into question the conclusion?

- a) The company that holds the patent to NoSick has exclusive rights to produce the drug for another 12 years.
- b) NoSick is expensive, and is not currently covered by any major insurance plans.
- c) Banjobush stems are considered a gourmet delicacy in many countries.
- d) The banjobush, although native to Kentucky, can easily be grown in other parts of the United States.
- e) Producing NoSick is time-consuming and costly for the drug manufacturer.

## **Tip:**

You should always read the question first, and here the commonly-used phrase “calls into question” means that this question is asking for a weakener.

Looking at the argument, we can see from the clue word “therefore” that the conclusion is the last sentence of the argument: “if NoSick remains in production, the banjobush will eventually become extinct.” Now our job is to find a way to attack the argument, and the easiest way to do that is to identify an existing weakness and exploit it.

## Evaluating the answer

- a) The company that holds the patent to NoSick has exclusive rights to produce the drug for another 12 years.

This choice would require another assumption in order to weaken the conclusion: that the one company producing NoSick would not produce enough of it to kill off the banjobush. Weakeners, like strengtheners, shouldn't require so much work to fit into the argument.

## Evaluating the answer

b) NoSick is expensive, and is not currently covered by any major insurance plans.

This choice, like choice a), is not closely enough related to the argument.

c) Banjobush stems are considered a gourmet delicacy in many countries.

This choice makes it more likely that the bush will be in demand and will face extinction. The argument is strengthened, not weakened, by this choice.

## Evaluating the answer

d) The banjobush, although native to Kentucky, can easily be grown in other parts of the country.

This is the correct answer, since it exploits the unstated assumptions by explicitly disproving that one of them is true.

e) Producing NoSick is time-consuming and costly for the drug manufacturer.

This choice has the same problem as choices a) and b): it takes extra assumptions to fit it into the argument, and that's not what we want.

## Evaluating the answer

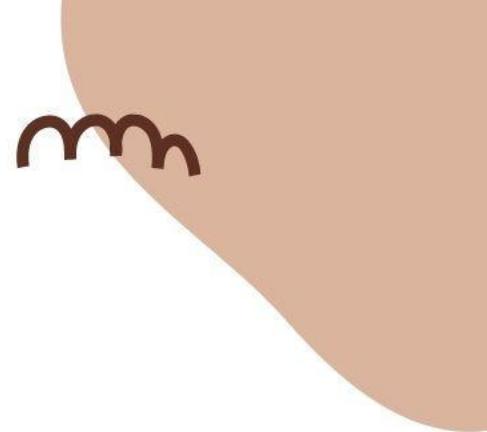
d) The banjobush, although native to Kentucky, can easily be grown in other parts of the country.

This is the correct answer, since it exploits the unstated assumptions by explicitly disproving that one of them is true.

e) Producing NoSick is time-consuming and costly for the drug manufacturer.

This choice has the same problem as choices a) and b): it takes extra assumptions to fit it into the argument, and that's not what we want.

# Evaluating the answer



The correct answer just has to make the conclusion less likely to follow from the evidence; it doesn't need to completely disprove the conclusion, although sometimes it will. So make sure that you're not looking for unnecessarily extreme answers.

## Question



Beasley & Halpert Law Firm has instituted an Employee Wellness Program that will provide attorneys and support staff with free access to Smokers Anonymous programs, diabetes monitoring, and discounted memberships to a local gym. Similar programs at other firm have been shown to improve workplace attendance and performance, and reduce the employer's costs for employee health insurance. Thus, the Employee Wellness Program will be good for both the employees and the firm.

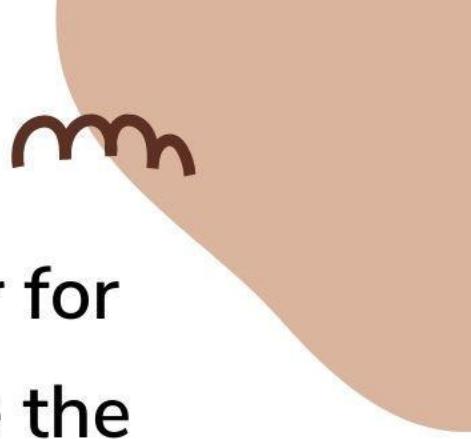
## Question



If true, which of the following would best support the conclusion of the argument?

- a) Many employees take advantage of free diabetes monitoring when it is offered by employers.
- b) Smokers Anonymous programs are only effective for 20% of those smokers who use them.

## Question



- c) Discounted memberships at a local gym will make it easier for employees to improve their cardiovascular health and reduce the incidence of serious illness.
- d) Exercising without the help of a personal trainer can often lead to injury due to incorrect use of weight-training equipment.
- e) Beasley & Halpert will give employees taking part in the Smokers Anonymous program one paid hour off each Friday afternoon to attend the group meetings.

## Tip:



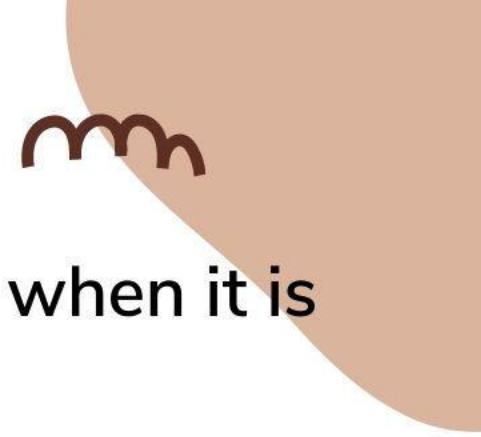
Your first step here is to read the question itself, and notice that it's asking you to find the answer choice that supports, or strengthens, the conclusion. Then, as you read the argument, notice the word thus, which is a great clue to guide you to the argument's conclusion, which is that "the Employee Wellness Program will be good for both the employees and the firm."

## **Tip:**



The argument's evidence provides several examples of how to program is good for the firm—it will “improve workplace attendance and performance, and reduce the employer’s costs for employee health insurance.” But the conclusion talks about benefits for employees as well as the firm, and the argument doesn’t state explicitly how the program will benefit them.

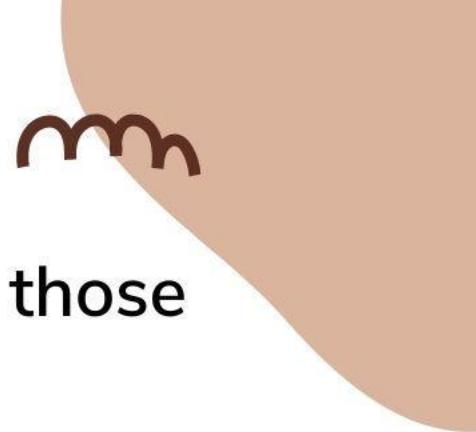
# Evaluating the answers



a) Many employees take advantage of free diabetes monitoring when it is offered by employers.

The monitoring's popularity might indicate that it is beneficial to the employees, but it might not. This choice doesn't clearly demonstrate that the Employee Wellness Program benefits the employees, and is a good example of a wrong answer that makes the test-taker work too hard in order to justify choosing it. Here, one would have to assume that employees take advantage of the program because it is beneficial to them. A strengthener shouldn't require a major assumption, and therefore this choice is not the best answer. Wrong answers like this are common, so watch out for them.

## Evaluating the answers



b) Smokers Anonymous programs are only effective for 20% of those smokers who use them.

This choice makes it LESS likely that the programs will benefit either the employees or the firm. This answer choice may catch your eye if you didn't read the question closely enough, and are mistakenly looking for a weakener instead of a strengthener.

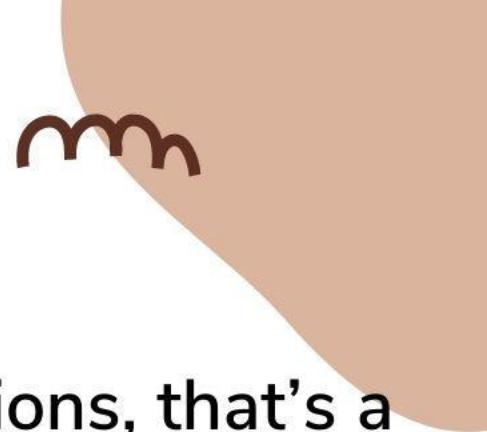
## Evaluating the answers



- c) Discounted memberships at a local gym will make it easier for employees to improve their cardiovascular health and reduce the incidence of serious illness.

This is the correct answer. The argument seems to imply that the increased attendance and performance and reduced health insurance costs are due to improved employee health, which would naturally benefit the employees. This choice makes that unstated implication clear, and fills the gap in the argument.

# Evaluating the answers



If words like unstated and gap remind you of assumption questions, that's a good thing! Often, the weakness in an argument is due to the gap left by an unstated assumption, and the best way to strengthen the argument is by explicitly stating the assumption.

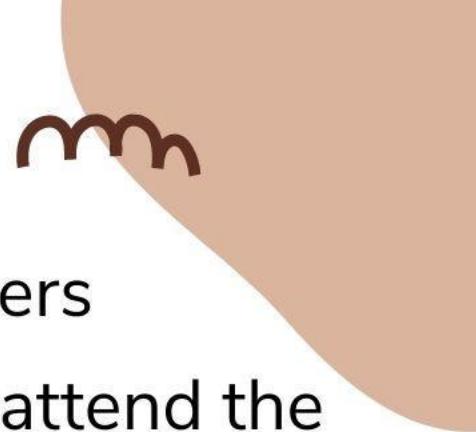
## Evaluating the answers



d) Exercising without the help of a personal trainer can often lead to injury due to incorrect use of weight-training equipment.

This answer might be tempting, but again, it requires too many assumptions to tie it into the argument as a strengthener. In order for this to strengthen the argument, one must assume that employees would still exercise without the personal training services, and that they would incorrectly use the weight-training equipment. That's too much work for the question, and so this answer choice must be rejected.

## Evaluating the answers



e) Beasley & Halpert will give employees taking part in the Smokers Anonymous program one paid hour off each Friday afternoon to attend the group meetings.  
This might benefit the employees, but it would be a burden to Company X. Therefore, it's not the best choice.



**Thank You!**

