

## CRITICAL REASONING: AN INTRODUCTION



### What Is the Point of Critical Reasoning?

The Critical Reasoning questions in Thinking Skills are designed to assess your ability to...

- **Grasp Reasoning Structure:** Reasoning structure refers to how a passage is organised concerning its purpose
- **Understand and Apply Specific Words:** These words, like "or," "only," "therefore," "must," and "unless," play a vital role in reasoning relationships
- **Connect Multiple Ideas:** Analyse scenarios where combining two or three statements leads to additional inferences or deductions. Understand how ideas interconnect, and evaluate reasoning leading to conclusions.
- **Identify Weak Reasoning:** Alongside recognising valid conclusions, you should identify situations where reasoning fails. Work out why given reasons don't justify a conclusion.
- **Critically Evaluate Evidence:** This involves understanding reliability, representativeness and accuracy of evidence.
- **Prioritise Relevant Information:** The key isn't absorbing every detail but rather prioritising relevant information.
- **Understand Truth:** Work out which statements are 1) definitely true 2) definitely false, or 3) possibly true/false. Importantly, you need to know the difference between possibly vs definitely true.

# General Approach to in Critical Reasoning Questions

1. **First, Examine the Questions:** Begin by reading the questions to understand what you're looking for, such as identifying a logical mistake or determining whether to strengthen or weaken an argument. Underline keywords.
2. **Read Stimulus:** Aim to understand the stimulus in a single reading, although a second read might be needed sometimes.
3. **Identify the Argument Elements:** Pay special attention to identifying the author's main point (main conclusion) in the passage and assess its persuasiveness.
4. **Restate the Passage in Your Own Words:** This helps to confirm your understanding and breaks down the argument's core elements, making it easier to pinpoint the conclusion and assumptions. Often, your restatement will closely mirror the conclusion, as it's the central point supported by evidence.
5. **Revisit the Question:** Review the question again, now with a deeper understanding of its requirements. A second reading ensures that your response addresses the question precisely.
6. **Formulate an Answer Before Viewing Choices:** There are two advantages to this:
  - (i) If you can predict the correct answer or the direction it should take, you'll more quickly recognise it among incorrect options, saving time usually spent on examining each choice.
  - (ii) It prevents being misled by the answer choices' phrasing, which might echo the passage's language and wrongly appear more correct.
7. **Evaluate the Answer Choices:** Scan the options for the best answer