



## Detecting Reasoning Errors

1. Some disabled people find it difficult to gain access to some of our older public buildings because the entrances have steps. The problem is most often solved by installing ramps. All public buildings must be accessible to everyone therefore they must all install ramps.

Which one of the following identifies the flaw in this argument?

- A Disabled people must have access to all buildings not just public ones so all buildings should have ramps.
- B Installing ramps in all public buildings would be extremely expensive.
- C It is unreasonable to suggest that disabled people should be able to access all public buildings.
- D Some older public buildings without ramps may be accessible to disabled people.
- E Inaccessible public buildings should be replaced by buildings accessible to all.

IMAT Q15 (2011)

2. When mobile phones were introduced there were concerns about the microwaves produced and the effects that these could have on the brain, given that phones would be held close to the ear when being used. These concerns have been shown to be mistaken since mobile phones are used for sending text messages far more than for making phone calls. Sending a text message does not require the phone to be anywhere near to the brain so it cannot cause any problems.

Which one of the following identifies the flaw in this argument?

- A It ignores research showing that microwaves from the phones cannot penetrate far enough to reach the brain.
- B It ignores evidence suggesting that text messaging is only popular in certain age groups.
- C It does not consider uses of mobile phones other than making phone calls and sending text messages.
- D It does not consider other technology such as wireless internet which could cause similar problems.
- E It ignores the possible effects of the phone calls that are made.

IMAT Q27 (2011)



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3. Over the last twenty years the number of people, including children, classed as overweight, and therefore at risk of serious health problems, has risen alarmingly. This trend could be caused by an increase in the amount people eat or by a decrease in the amount of exercise they take. Most of us exercise less than people did twenty years ago, and the average number of calories consumed per person is now less than it was twenty years ago. So the increase in the number of overweight people is clearly caused by lack of exercise. Thus the government does not need to worry about trying to change people's diets.

Which one of the following identifies the flaw in this argument?

- A Some people may exercise more than the average.
- B Some individuals may have increased their calorie intake.
- C The government may need to worry about costs to the health service.
- D Children may use up more calories through exercise than adults.
- E Some individuals may have health problems which cause an increase in weight.

IMAT Q33 (2011)

4.

In 2010 there were over 110,000 incidents of arson (deliberately setting fire to buildings) in the UK in which over 100 people were killed, usually in attacks on people's homes. Only a small percentage of homes have smoke alarms. If more homes had smoke alarms, the number of domestic fires would be significantly reduced. There should be a campaign to persuade people to install smoke alarms in their home as this would reduce the number of deaths.

Which one of the following identifies the flaw in the above argument?

- A It assumes that having smoke alarms will prevent fires.
- B It assumes that all deaths in fires are from arson attacks.
- C It overlooks the fact that smoke alarms may not work.
- D It assumes that people will be willing to install smoke alarms.
- E It assumes that all arson attacks are on people's homes.

IMAT Q2 (2012)

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5. The National Farmer's Union (NFU) approves of controlled killing of badgers to reduce their numbers, saying that it is needed to help farming. Badgers are animals believed to be responsible for the spread of *bovine tuberculosis* which results in large numbers of cows having to be destroyed every year. Animal rights supporters have criticised the proposal, but it is clear that the lives of more cattle can be saved by destroying a smaller number of badgers. This controlled killing should be allowed to go ahead.

Which one of the following is the best statement of the flaw in the above argument?

- A It attacks the animal rights supporters rather than their argument.
- B It assumes that the animal rights supporters believe that animals that are living freely have a greater right to life than those that are being bred on farms.
- C It assumes that the animal rights supporters believe that badgers have a greater right to life than cows.
- D It assumes that the arguments from the animal rights supporters are about the number of deaths.
- E It assumes that animal rights supporters always disagree with the NFU.

IMAT Q13 (2012)

6. One of the fastest-growing beauty treatments in Britain, fish pedicures - where tiny toothless fish called *garra rufa* smooth feet by eating dead skin - has come under scrutiny from animal rights campaigners. One campaigner said, 'Fish are covered by the Animal Welfare Act. They need a stable environment and clean water, uncontaminated by perfume or lotions.' A spa in London's West End was closed recently by the local council when many of the fish in its pedicure pool died. There should be a complete ban on this type of pedicure, or else there will soon be no *garra rufa*.

Which one of the following is the best statement of the flaw in the above argument?

- A Beauty spas which offer fish pedicures are not especially numerous at present.
- B It would be less harmful if people washed their feet before using the spa.
- C Fish in the wild are likely to die if their environment changes.
- D The death of the fish in the London spa may not be a typical occurrence.
- E The public does not immediately associate fish with the Animal Welfare Act.

IMAT Q15 (2012)



## Detecting Reasoning Errors

7.

A restaurant owner who has put grey squirrel on the menu has called it the 'ultimate ethical food'. The grey squirrel, a small, tree-dwelling rodent introduced to Britain over a century ago, is breeding so rapidly that the native red squirrel is disappearing. Encouraging the consumption of the grey species as food may help protect the red one, in her view. The owner added that squirrel meat was free range, low fat and low on air miles. However, we can challenge this, as it is all just a cheap publicity stunt to increase business in the restaurant. Squirrels should not be on the menu!

Which one of the following is the best statement of the flaw in the above argument?

- A It attacks the owner's motive rather than her reasons.
- B It assumes the disappearance of the red squirrel justifies eating the grey squirrel.
- C It attacks the whole notion of an ethical food.
- D It assumes that eating grey squirrels will protect the red squirrel.
- E It assumes that red squirrels don't need protecting.

IMAT Q38 (2012)

8.

After looking at interviews conducted with a number of adult learners, our research suggested that the learners who felt they were most successful were all highly motivated. We noticed that early success had heightened motivation in some cases and saw that both success and motivation may be due to a special aptitude for learning. We also noticed that many of those who felt they were most motivated were also learning in favourable conditions or for fun, which meant they may have become motivated since starting their classes. Though these conditions seemed persuasive, the results led us to the same conclusion. It's impossible to learn anything without motivation.

Which one of the following is **NOT** a flaw in the above argument?

- A It assumes that those who felt they were successful actually were.
- B It assumes that those who felt they were motivated actually were.
- C The research does not establish that there are no successful learners who lacked motivation.
- D The research is only concerned with adult learners.
- E It assumes that in order to be motivated you have to have a special aptitude for learning.

IMAT Q5 (2013)

Detecting Reasoning  
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9. A nationwide survey showed that the majority of people would not be willing to give up their car in favour of public transport. However, in a recent survey of people living in an area with heavy traffic problems, 76% stated that they would prefer to travel to work by public transport if the system was made more reliable. This shows that the previous findings were wrong. We should, therefore, restrict car use and start a programme of improving the nation's public transport network as soon as possible.

Which one of the following is the best statement of the flaw in the argument above?

- A It fails to specify which types of public transport are to be improved.
- B The counter arguments are not explained in detail.
- C The statistic presented may not be representative of the whole population.
- D It does not consider the 24% who would not prefer to use public transport.
- E It fails to explain how the public transport system can be improved.

IMAT Q8 (2013)

10. According to a recent analysis of university entrance records, you are more likely to go to university if your name is John than if it is Wayne. Therefore, if you want your child to go to university, you are better off calling him John than Wayne.

Which one of the following is the best statement of the flaw in the argument above?

- A It draws a general conclusion from specific evidence.
- B It confuses a necessary condition with a sufficient one.
- C It jumps to a conclusion without any evidence.
- D It confuses a correlation with a cause.
- E It fails to consider other names than Wayne or John.

IMAT Q17 (2013)

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11. Research reveals that, in a given period of the 20th century, top footballers (defined as those who had played for their country's team) lived, on average, almost 5 years longer than middle ranking footballers. We can conclude therefore that for the top footballers, success had a beneficial effect on their lifespan.

Which one of the following is the best statement of the flaw in the argument above?

- A Life expectancy increased generally in the 20th century.
- B It assumes that the longer lifespan could not be explained by other factors.
- C Living longer is not necessarily a good thing.
- D Playing football regularly may have health benefits which contribute to longer lifespan.
- E The study was limited to footballers in a given period of time.

IMAT Q6 (2014)

12. We constantly split our attention between the people we are with and what's happening on our mobile phone screens. On-screen multi-tasking makes us less efficient as well as less emotionally engaged with others. It takes 64 seconds to recover our train of thought after interruption by a message (that's 8.5 hours a week wasted if we check our screens every five minutes) and when we've sent an email or SMS text message, the brain goes through a series of semi-conscious calculations as we wonder when and how the recipient will reply. The result is that we're not 'present' for several minutes afterwards. In order to function effectively in the workplace, we need to switch off our communication hardware.

Which one of the following is the best statement of the flaw in the above argument?

- A People may be unwilling to make less use of their mobile phones.
- B We may need to have some 'down time' in order to recharge our mental batteries.
- C In many work environments you may not be allowed to use personal mobile phones.
- D Without the means to send and receive information instantly, our effectiveness may be compromised.
- E It may only be the younger workers who use mobile phone technology to excess.

IMAT Q19 (2014)



## Detecting Reasoning Errors

13.

It is common practice to look online for a loan or a mortgage. This has led to a large number of 'comparison websites' where you type in your details and they search a range of companies for you based on these details. Night after night, there are adverts on television emphasising how much time and money comparison sites could save you. The experience of one user should make you consider the wisdom of using such sites. She gave her details to a comparison website and received no useful results. However, for weeks afterwards she was bombarded with emails and phone calls from companies she had never heard of.

Which one of the following is the best statement of the flaw in the above argument?

- A It assumes using the internet is the only way to get a loan.
- B It attacks the website and not what the company does.
- C It assumes that comparison websites save customers money.
- D It assumes everyone uses comparison websites.
- E It draws a conclusion based on one example of how a company operates.

IMAT Q10 (2017)

14.

Widespread underage drinking in certain countries prompted their governments to place restrictions on selling alcohol to young people. The aim was to protect young people's health, but the result was not as intended. Soon after the restrictions were in place, hospitals saw several cases of young people becoming ill as a result of drinking alcohol-based liquids such as medical spirits, ethanol solutions and perfumes. The young people claimed that the restriction on legal alcohol was the main reason they were drinking other substances. If the restrictions were abolished, the health risk would be reduced.

Which one of the following is the best statement of the flaw in the above argument?

- A It assumes that restrictions encourage young people to drink alcohol.
- B It ignores the role of education in encouraging young people to drink alcohol responsibly.
- C It ignores the problem of people drinking dangerous substances because they cannot afford to buy alcohol legally.
- D It does not take into account the social and cultural importance of drinking alcohol.
- E It ignores the fact that if there had been no restrictions more young people would have suffered from drinking alcohol.

IMAT Q19 (2017)



15.

One of the populations with the highest life expectancy is Iceland. The people there are very healthy, as indicated by the low incidence of diabetes, obesity, heart disease and diet related cancers. Their diet is rich in good quality local fish, and meat and dairy products from grass fed animals. The fish and meat is all caught, produced and processed on a small scale. If we want to live long and healthy lives we should adopt the Icelanders' diet.

Which one of the following is the best statement of the flaw in the above argument?

- A There may be other reasons for the Icelanders' health and longevity.
- B People may not like being told what they should eat.
- C The Icelandic diet may be prohibitively expensive elsewhere.
- D There may be insufficient space in many countries to raise grass fed animals.
- E Vegetarians may not be able to live on an Icelandic diet.

IMAT Q11 (2018)

16.

Recent research in the USA has found that areas with more dentists per person have much lower rates of obesity than neighbouring areas of similar population size. Clearly, public health authorities concerned with obesity rates should focus more resources on the provision of dental care. Dentists are a neglected asset in the struggle against the serious health problems associated with obesity.

Which one of the following is the best statement of the flaw in the above argument?

- A It assumes dental care in the USA is somewhat similar to that found elsewhere.
- B It assumes that obesity rates should be a priority concern for public health authorities.
- C It ignores factors that might prevent public health authorities from spending more on obesity and related conditions.
- D It ignores the fact that help and advice concerning obesity can be delivered in a variety of ways.
- E It assumes that a higher number of dentists causes lower obesity rates.

IMAT Q12 (2018)





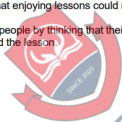
17.

Increasingly, the quality of a teacher, and of his or her lessons, is to be judged by feedback from their pupils. This is dangerous, as pupils have a tendency to focus too much on whether or not they enjoyed the lesson, in other words, on how much 'fun' they found it. The purpose of education, however, is not to keep children entertained; it is not to make their lives more fun. Arguably, it is not even to make them happier, per se. The purpose of schools is to make their pupils better, more educated people. This is all that matters, and therefore it is whether the teacher succeeds at this – not at being a children's entertainer – that counts.

Which one of the following is a flaw in the above argument?

- A By simply asserting that the purpose of education is not even to make people happier, the argument rests on a questionable contention.
- B It doesn't specify precisely what it means by making someone a better, more educated person.
- C The comparison with being a children's entertainer is an unfair exaggeration of what a teacher tries to do by making lessons more fun.
- D It fails to consider that enjoying lessons could result in pupils ending up better educated.
- E It patronises young people by thinking that their judgement will be based solely on how much fun they found the lesson.

IMAT Q2 (2019)



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