



1.

It has been shown that men are much less likely to use preventive medical care than women: men tend to wait for a crisis before seeking help, whereas women are quick to consult a doctor when they have only minor symptoms. The effect of this is that doctors are seeing men with advanced conditions which are more difficult – and expensive – to treat. Time and money spent on persuading men to seek advice at an earlier stage would easily be offset by savings on treating advanced conditions.

Which **one** of the following, if true, weakens the above argument?

- A Men are more reluctant to discuss health problems with their doctor.
- B Early consultation for minor symptoms incurs high costs in doctors' time.
- C Women are advised by magazines to consult their doctor whenever they are worried.
- D It would be difficult to persuade men to change their behaviour.
- E Treating advanced conditions usually involves other health professionals.

BMAT Q20 (2003)

**Here, the answer is B.**

The argument here is that late consultation in men with more advanced conditions leads to their treatments being more expensive and difficult to treat. Therefore, men should seek medical advice at earlier stages to prevent this. However, the argument is weakened if early consultation for minor symptoms leads to high costs too.



## Weakening Questions

2

"We worry that the pesticides used on crops may get into our food, but few people know that plants make natural pesticides to protect them against threats to their existence. Every day we eat fruit and vegetables containing these natural pesticides. Since our consumption of natural pesticides vastly outweighs that of synthetic pesticides, our health is at greater risk from natural pesticides than from synthetic ones."

Which **one** of the following, if true, most weakens the above argument?

- A Natural pesticides in some plants can harm animals.
- B Humans have evolved to tolerate natural pesticides in food crops.
- C Every natural pesticide is toxic if consumed in sufficient quantity.
- D Traces of synthetic pesticides have been found in fruit and vegetables.

BMAT Q6 (2005)

**Here, the answer is B.**

The passage concludes that 'since our consumption of natural pesticides vastly outweighs that of synthetic pesticides, our health is at greater risk from natural pesticides than from synthetic ones.' Therefore, statement B is correct because if humans can tolerate pesticides in food crops then our health is not at risk from natural pesticides.

**Statements A, C & D** do not weaken the argument if true. In fact, if statement C would be correct, this would strengthen the above argument.



## Weakening Questions

3.

"Is cannabis really as dangerous as some people have claimed? This is an important question, since the use of cannabis has increased, and even children under 15 are known to use it. It is said that smoking cannabis is just as dangerous as smoking tobacco, in that it is equally likely to lead to death from heart disease. A number of recent studies have suggested that smoking cannabis may increase the risk of developing schizophrenia, and that those who start smoking it before age 15 have a much higher risk of becoming schizophrenic in later life. Yet since the incidence of schizophrenia in the population has remained stable whilst the use of cannabis has been increasing, it cannot be true that smoking cannabis causes schizophrenia."

Which **one** of the following, if true, weakens the above argument?

- A Most people who use cannabis do not develop schizophrenia.
- B Cannabis smoke contains high levels of substances that cause cancer.
- C Drugs that alter one's mood cause chemical changes in the brain.
- D Cannabis smokers have higher amounts of tar in the lungs than tobacco smokers.
- E The use of cannabis by those aged under 15 is a recent development.

BMAT Q12 (2005)

**Here, the answer is E.**

The passage concludes that because the incidence of schizophrenia in the population has remained stable and the use of cannabis has increased, it cannot be inferred that smoking cannabis causes schizophrenia. However, the passage specifically mentions the use of cannabis in under 15 year olds and the increased rate of schizophrenia developing in later life. Therefore, if there is little data about the use of schizophrenic people who started using cannabis under the age of 15 years, then the conclusion is weakened. This is summarised in statement E.

**Statement A** supports the argument.

**Statement B** is irrelevant to the conclusion as it discusses increased rates of schizophrenia rather than cancer.

**Statement C** is incorrect because it is too general to weaken the argument.

**Statement D** is incorrect because it is also irrelevant to the conclusion.



## Weakening Questions

4.

"The UK government is committed to economic growth of 2% per year. If this goal is achieved, energy consumption in the UK will have doubled by 2050. The government is also committed to a huge reduction in carbon emissions by 2050. If energy consumption has doubled, this would require a massive increase in energy from sources other than fossil fuels, i.e. from nuclear power or from renewables such as wind, tidal and solar power. At the present rate of development of wind, tidal and solar power, these sources will be unable to meet the shortfall in supply. So although nuclear power is seen as problematic because it produces dangerous waste, it will have to continue to be used in 2050."

Which of the following identify/identifies a weakness in the above argument?

- 1 The government's goal for economic growth may not be achieved.
- 2 By 2050 we may have discovered how to store nuclear waste safely.
- 3 It may be possible to speed up the development of renewable energy sources.

- A 1 only  
B 2 only  
C 3 only  
D 1 & 2  
E 1 & 3  
F 2 & 3



BMAT Q14 (2005)

Here, the answer is E.

**Statement 1** is correct because if the rate of economic growth may not be achieved by 2050 then there will be no need for the additional energy supply and thus no need for a massive increase in energy demand from fossil fuels, nuclear energy or renewable energies.

**Statement 2** is incorrect because it is irrelevant to the argument concerning the increased future demand of energy given the desired goal of increasing economic growth.

**Statement 3** is correct because if renewable energy sources were developed then they could be used to meet future energy demands rather than having to rely on fossil fuels or nuclear energy to meet that increased demand to meet the increased economic growth goal.



5.

"According to scientists who have studied fingerprinting, no one knows whether it is reliable because its accuracy has never been measured, even though it has been used for over a hundred years. But we should not doubt its reliability because fingerprint examiners are the experts in using the technique, and they all agree that it is a completely reliable method of identifying criminals."

Which one of the following identifies a weakness in the above argument?

- A Sometimes experts in any technique fail to apply their method correctly.
- B Scientists do not know enough about fingerprinting to judge whether it is accurate
- C The opinion of experts does not guarantee the reliability of their method.
- D The fact that a technique has been used over a long period does not prove its reliability.

BMAT Q14 (2006)

Here, the answer is C.

The conclusion of the passage states that fingerprinting as a method used to identify criminals should not be challenged as experts in the field agree that it is a 'completely reliable method of identifying criminals.' Therefore, it is assumed that the opinion of experts can be considered the truth for the method to be a reliable method. However, the argument is weakened when the opinion of experts cannot guarantee how reliable fingerprinting is as a method. This is summarised in statement C.

**Statement A** is irrelevant because there is no mention regarding how experts apply the method correctly.

**Statement B** is irrelevant as well because the conclusion discusses the reliability rather than the accuracy of fingerprinting.

**Statement D** is incorrect because it does not directly weaken the main conclusion concerning experts.



## Weakening Questions

6.

In the UK the accident rate for male drivers aged under 25 is much higher than for any other group. More than 1000 young male drivers, many of whom had passed their driving test at the first attempt, were killed or seriously injured last year. To reduce this loss of young life, the driving test should require a much higher level of mastery of driving skills than it does at present. In this way, failure at the first attempt would become the acknowledged norm, and drivers would not be allowed on the roads unsupervised until they had more driving experience.

Which of the following, if true, would weaken the above argument?

- 1 Many of the young male drivers involved in serious accidents are highly skilled in driving techniques.
- 2 Serious accidents are more likely to occur when young drivers are accompanied by a number of young passengers.
- 3 Accident rates are lower in countries where young drivers are required to have 100 hours of driving experience before taking the test.

A 1 only

B 2 only

C 3 only

D 1 and 2

E 1 and 3

F 2 and 3



BMAT Q4 (2007)

Here, the answer is A.

The passage concludes that young male drivers should require a 'much higher level of mastery of driving skills than it does at present,' in order to reduce the accident rate for male drivers under the age of 25. Therefore, the argument assumes that young drivers are considered to not have the sufficient skills or experience to avoid car accidents. Therefore, the argument is weakened by statement 1 as it states that if many young male drivers are highly skilled in their driving techniques that the cause of accidents is due to another reason, therefore weakening the conclusion.

**Statement 2** is incorrect because there is no mention how an increase in number of passengers accompanying the driver contributes to an increase in accidents.

**Statement 3** is incorrect because this strengthens the main conclusion.



## Weakening Questions

7.

The best way to reverse the trend towards increasing violence amongst the young is to encourage more young men to take up boxing. Boxing is not primarily about aggression; it is about discipline and self-restraint. It also provides an activity to keep young men occupied during their leisure time. In every instance in which a boxing club has been set up in a high-crime area there has been a reduction in violent crime and drug use.

Which one of the following identifies a weakness in the above argument?

- A It assumes that boxers are never aggressive.
- B It ignores the possible effects on the crime rate of other leisure activities.
- C It assumes that most young men lack discipline and self-restraint.
- D It ignores the possibility that young men take up boxing because they enjoy violence.

BMAT Q6 (2007)

Here, the answer is B.

The main conclusion of the passage is that boxing clubs in areas with high crime rates act by reducing the violent crime rate in that area. Therefore, it assumes that if there is a reduction in the crime rate, that it will be due to the boxing club rather than any other factor. Hence, statement B is correct because it states that the passage fails to consider the role of other leisure activities and its effect on the crime rate i.e. that say football as another leisure activity could be contributing to the reduction in crime rates in young men.

**Statement A** is incorrect because it is irrelevant to the main conclusion.

**Statement C** is also irrelevant because the conclusion considers the link between crime and boxing clubs, rather than considering how young men committing these crimes may lack discipline and self-restraint.

**Statement D** is incorrect because it does not act to weaken the main conclusion.



## Weakening Questions

8.

It would not be surprising to discover that today's smokers find it harder to give up than did their predecessors, since smokers are now inhaling more nicotine. Data supplied by tobacco companies reveals that the amount of nicotine inhaled by a typical smoker increased by 11 % per cigarette between 1998 and 2005. This is because the nicotine content of cigarettes has increased, no doubt because tobacco companies want their product to be more addictive.

Which of the following, if true, weakens the above argument?

- 1 Today's cigarettes burn at the same rate as those of ten years ago, allowing the same number of puffs per cigarette.
- 2 The higher the nicotine content of a cigarette, the fewer the cigarettes smoked by a typical smoker.
- 3 Drugs which could partially block nicotine in the nervous system are currently being tested.

- A 1 only  
B 2 only  
C 3 only  
D 1 and 2  
E 1 and 3  
F 2 and 3



BMAT Q17 (2007)

Here, the answer is B.

The main conclusion of the passage states that tobacco companies have increased their nicotine content in their cigarettes in order to make their product more addictive. The assumption made here is that the higher the nicotine content of the cigarette, the more addictive the product and thus the greater the consumption. However, statement 2 weakens the argument (if considered to be true) because a higher content of nicotine would mean that fewer cigarettes would be smoked and thus decreasing consumption and weakening the conclusion that cigarette companies have increased nicotine content to increase the addictiveness of cigarettes.

**Statement 1** is incorrect because there is no mention how the rate at which a cigarette is consumed, in terms of puffs, affects the addictiveness of the product.

**Statement 3** is incorrect as it is irrelevant to the main conclusion.





## Weakening Questions

9.

A conflict diamond is a diamond mined in a war zone and sold in order to finance the military rebellion of groups opposing legitimate and internationally recognised governments. While rough diamonds can be traced with some degree of accuracy to their source, once in their commercial, polished state, they can no longer be identified. Until regulations are brought into place that enable you to judge with confidence the true origins of a diamond, the purchasing of diamonds is morally unjustifiable. Diamonds are an unnecessary luxury, and at present the human cost for the war-torn countries that they may have come from is simply too high.

Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the above argument?

- A It may never be possible to know with certainty the origins of the diamond you wish to produce.
- B Military intervention has regularly proved more decisive when dealing with rebel insurgents than economic sanctions.
- C Sales of diamonds are an important source of revenue for the 'recognised governments' of war-torn countries.
- D Some people believe precious stones to have a deeper significance than that of wealth or luxury.

BMAT Q29 (2007)

Here, the answer is C.

The passage concludes that no diamonds should be purchased without knowing their true origin as they may be fuelling rebellion groups in war-torn areas. Therefore, the conclusion assumes that diamonds could be fuelling rebellion groups and not other bodies such as the recognised government of a country. Therefore, statement C weakens the main conclusion because if diamonds were an important source of revenue for the recognised government of war-torn countries, then their purchase would be important and would thus be morally justifiable.

**Statement A** is incorrect because this serves as evidence to the argument rather than weakening the main conclusion.

**Statement B** is irrelevant because there is no mention of military intervention.

**Statement D** is also incorrect because it is irrelevant to weakening the main conclusion.



## Weakening Questions

10.

Suggestions that there should be a national database storing DNA samples from all citizens should be resisted. At present the police take DNA samples from everyone who has been arrested, and they store the samples regardless of whether the suspect is subsequently convicted. This database has provided evidence for the arrest and conviction of rapists and murderers. However, the database should contain the DNA only of those convicted of a sexual or violent crime. To store the DNA of innocent people is an infringement of the right to privacy of those who have never committed a crime. Moreover it is unnecessary, since the police need access to the DNA only of those convicted of a serious offence in order to solve cases of sexual and violent crime.

Which of the following identify/identifies a weakness in the above argument?

- 1 Some cases of sexual and violent crime are first offences.
- 2 Some people who are found not guilty of a crime may have committed it.
- 3 Some cases of sexual and violent crime are solved without DNA evidence.

- A 1 only  
B 2 only  
C 3 only  
D 1 and 2  
E 2 and 3  
F 1, 2 and 3



BMAT Q26 (2008)

Here, the answer is D.

The passage concludes that 'the database should contain the DNA only of those convicted of a sexual or violent crime,' and that holding DNA of innocent people would compromise their privacy and those who have never committed a crime before.

**Statement 1**, if considered true, weakens the argument as first offenders would not have their DNA in the database despite having committed their first crime.

**Statement 2** is also correct because those people who are found not guilty of a crime despite having committed it, should have their DNA collected as they have committed the crime.

**Statement 3** is incorrect as solving crimes without DNA evidence is not relevant to the main conclusion.



## Weakening Questions

11. There has been far too much fuss about the dangers of young people using the drug ecstasy. We need to get things in proportion. The use of ecstasy causes only 30 deaths per year in Britain, whereas horse riding causes 100 deaths per year. Thus campaigns over recent years to discourage young people from using ecstasy are not necessary. As the comparison with horse riding clearly shows, taking ecstasy is nowhere near as dangerous as many people believe.

Which of the following identify/identifies a weakness in the above argument?

- 1 More young people may use ecstasy if there were no campaigns about its dangers.
  - 2 The argument assumes that horse riding should not be considered too dangerous.
  - 3 There may be fewer young people using ecstasy than engaging in horse riding.
- A 1 only
  - B 2 only
  - C 3 only
  - D 1 and 2 only
  - E 1 and 3 only
  - F 2 and 3 only
  - G 1, 2 and 3



BMAT Q6 (2009)

Here, the answer is G.

The passage concludes that ecstasy is not as dangerous as horse riding and therefore it is not necessary to have campaigns that discourage young people from using ecstasy.

**Statement 1** is correct because if more young people start using ecstasy in the absence of campaigns about its dangers then it is fair to assume that the campaigns help may deter people from using ecstasy.

**Statement 2** is correct because the passage only compares ecstasy to horse riding. If horse riding is not considered that dangerous then it weakens the argument that ecstasy is nowhere near as dangerous as horse riding.

**Statement 3** weakens the argument because the passage only includes how many deaths per year rather than consider the proportion of people that have died as a result of the activity i.e. the proportion of young males killed from ecstasy maybe be higher than horse riding.



## Weakening Questions

12.

A magic pill that makes you slim with no side effects would be the 21<sup>st</sup> century's 'goose that laid the golden egg'. With 13 million people forecast to be obese by 2010, the market for a miracle cure is huge. Consumer groups are concerned, however, that "slimming pills" are at best expensive and useless, as they will not have any effect unless people also reduce their intake of food. At worst they can cause side effects and be addictive. People who are worried about their weight often fail to be cautious about what looks like a miracle cure. So why are manufacturers allowed to sell these pills and make grand claims for their effectiveness? Because most slimming pills are not licensed as medicines and so are not subject to strict controls: they are controlled by food regulations. The government should act now to protect people from their own ignorance, and make slimming pills subject to the same strict controls as medicines.

Which of the following, if true, most weakens the argument in the passage above?

- A People waste their money on many products besides slimming pills.
- B The government is introducing legislation for slimming pills to carry clear warning labels.
- C The demand for slimming pills is likely to grow as people get fatter.
- D Subjecting slimming pills to strict regulation would be a cost to the taxpayer.
- E Most people who take slimming pills do not also control their food intake.

BMAT Q12 (2009)

**Here, the answer is B.**

The passage concludes that that the government should protect people from slimming pills by imposing the same strict controls that exists for medicines.

**Statement B** implies that the government is already introducing legislation for slimming pills. Therefore this weakens the argument that the government should 'act now'.

All other statements do not directly relate to main conclusion and therefore do not weaken it.



## Weakening Questions

13.

Scientists have created a model to show how the climate would be affected if, in fifty years' time, the world suddenly stopped the burning of fossil fuels which produces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The model assumed that by then CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations in the atmosphere would be double pre-industrial levels. The scientists calculated that although levels of CO<sub>2</sub> would fall as the oceans absorbed it, only one quarter of the CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere would have been absorbed in this way by the time the oceans had reached saturation point. The result would be a very small reduction in average global temperatures over the next 1000 years, there would be regular droughts, and sea levels would rise by up to a metre. So if the calculations as to the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> that the oceans can absorb are correct, we cannot avoid the disastrous consequences of climate change.

Which of the following identify/identifies a weakness in the above argument?

- 1 It will be impossible suddenly to stop the burning of fossil fuels throughout the world.
- 2 It may be possible to reduce carbon dioxide levels significantly during the next fifty years.
- 3 Some predictions made in the past about climate change have not turned out to be accurate.

- A 1 only  
B 2 only  
C 3 only  
D 1 and 2  
E 2 and 3  
F 1, 2 and 3



BMAT Q6 (2010)

Here, the answer is B.

The main conclusion of the passage is that even if the world suddenly stopped burning fossil fuels, which produce carbon dioxide emission, it would not be enough to mitigate the 'disastrous consequences of climate change'.

**Statement 2** therefore weakens the argument because carbon dioxide levels could be reduced. It is correct because the model used in the passage is one that assumes that 'carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere would be double preindustrial levels.' This would not be possible if carbon dioxide levels were to be reduced significantly.

**Statement 1** is incorrect because this would act to strengthen and support the final conclusion.

**Statement 3** is incorrect as there is no mention of previous predictions in the passage.



## Weakening Questions

14.

The UK should not comply with the ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) that prisoners should be allowed to vote in general and local elections. European member states are bound to respect human rights, and the ECHR is the organisation that defines those rights. However, although freedom and democracy are human rights, voting is not. It is a constitutional right, because it is conferred by nations that practise democracy. It is a fundamental aspect of the relationship between individuals and the state. Obedience to the law is also an aspect of this relationship. Thus it is entirely proper that the state should be free to decide that those who are imprisoned because they have broken the law should temporarily be deprived of their right to vote.

Which of the following could be a weakness of the above argument?

- 1 It assumes that individual states should define human rights.
- 2 It assumes that a constitutional right cannot be a human right.
- 3 It assumes that prisoners want to be allowed to vote in general elections.

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C 3 only
- D 1 and 2 only
- E 1 and 3 only
- F 2 and 3 only
- G 1, 2 and 3



BMAT Q15 (2011)

**Here, the answer is B.**

The main conclusion of the passage is that those who have been imprisoned should temporarily not have the right to vote. The passage assumes that something cannot be both a constitutional and a human right, but rather that it has to be one or the other. Therefore, statement 2 if considered true, is correct.

**Statement 1** is incorrect because the passage does not discuss who defines human rights.

**Statement 3** is incorrect because there is no mention of the prisoners wanting to be allowed to vote in general elections.



## Weakening Questions

15.

Oxytocin, known as the 'love hormone', is a hormone that is released in mothers' bodies during childbirth. Research has shown that when people are exposed to it by means of a nasal spray they can become better at recognising the emotions of others, and are more likely to perceive others as trustworthy and approachable. As a result of its apparently positive influence on sociability, there is optimism that it could help to treat conditions such as autism and schizophrenia. Oxytocin sprays are readily available online, and are being used by parents to treat children with autism. Although clinical trials are now under way, the use of oxytocin as a treatment has not yet been approved. So parents of children with autism are damaging their children's health by using the sprays.

Which one of the following, if true, would weaken the above argument?

- A Some studies reveal that oxytocin can stimulate feelings of envy.
- B The scientific studies of oxytocin have never used children as subjects.
- C The amount of oxytocin in the sprays sold online is too low to have any effect in children.
- D The effects of oxytocin on individuals vary depending on the type of culture they live in.
- E Oxytocin reduces trust and co-operation in people who are anxious and sensitive to rejection

BMAT Q15 (2012)

Here, the answer is C.

The main conclusion of the passage is that 'parents of children with autism are damaging their children's health by using the sprays,' since oxytocin is not an approved treatment form for autism. Statement C, if considered true, is therefore correct. If there are negligible amounts of oxytocin in the sprays (considered to be 'too low to have any effect in children') then this weakens the argument as having low effects may lead to reduced levels of damage produced by oxytocin.

**Statement A**, if considered true, acts to strengthen the final conclusion as the feeling of envy could be considered a negative attribute.

**Statement B** is incorrect because this too would to some extent strengthen the argument as oxytocin sprays could be considered to damage the health of children if no prior tests have been conducted on them.

**Statement D** is incorrect because there is no mention of the differing levels of oxytocin in different cultures.

**Statement E** is also incorrect as this would strengthen the final conclusion.



## Weakening Questions

16. The ski holiday industry has been accused of damaging the environment. But this is nonsense. If you say that we should stop people skiing, you would have to conclude that we should stop everyone going on holiday. What causes the glaciers to melt is not skiing, it's everyone wasting energy by travelling when they don't need to. It has been calculated that tourist transport to and from a ski resort accounts for 74% of the resort's energy consumption, so the amount of energy used in the resorts themselves is relatively small. Because many ski lifts are run on renewable energy, people may actually be responsible for the production of less CO<sub>2</sub> when they are on the ski slopes than in their daily lives back home.

Which of the following identifies a weakness in the above argument?

- 1 The fact that all travel damages the environment does not prove that the ski holiday industry does not damage the environment.
  - 2 26% of a ski resort's energy consumption may be a high amount of energy compared with other types of resort.
  - 3 The ski holiday industry may damage the environment in ways unrelated to the level of energy consumption.
- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C 3 only
- D 1 and 2 only
- E 1 and 3 only
- F 2 and 3 only
- G 1, 2 and 3



BMAT Q28 (2012)

Here, the answer is G.

**Statement 1** is correct because the author states that transportation to ski resorts accounts for 74% of a ski resort's energy consumption. This argument is weakened because even if travel damages the environment, it may still be that the ski industry may continue to destroy the environment (other than through transportation).

**Statement 2** is correct as this weakens the argument that energy consumption levels in other ski resorts are normally lower.

**Statement 3** weakens the conclusion as the author only mentions energy consumption as a form that is destroying the environment. However, there may be other factors to consider.





## Weakening Questions

17. Risk of death contradicts the very concept of sport, since sport is generally considered to belong to the less serious side of life. Sport is what people do to counter the stress and pressure of work, not to increase them. The growth in the popularity of so-called extreme sports, where there is a real risk of death, is therefore puzzling; particularly since the modifications in equipment which are designed to make the sports safer do not lead to fewer accidents but to ever higher performance levels and greater exposure to danger.

Which one of the following, if true, most weakens the above argument?

- A Improved performance in extreme sports does not lessen the risk of death.
- B Most people want to escape from the modern obsession with safety at work.
- C By claiming to enhance safety, sports-equipment designers merely encourage risk-taking.
- D The popularity of extreme sports means that sport is sometimes a serious matter.

BMAT Q15 (2013)

Here, the answer is B.

**Statement B** offers the best option amongst all statements that act to weaken the argument. The paragraph states that people take part in sports in order to 'counter the stress and pressure of work.' However, statement B states that people look to escape the safety they experience at work.

**Statements A & C** strengthen the conclusion that improved performance and more developed equipment both respectively do not decrease the risk of death and encourage risk-taking behaviour. Thus supporting the conclusion that extreme sports and modification in sports gear may lead to an increased risk of death caused by extreme sports.

**Statement D** is incorrect because there is no mention how the link between the popularity and threat of death may increase with extreme sports.



## Weakening Questions

18. Lack of sleep is known to adversely affect our attention, alertness, concentration, judgement and problem-solving abilities. Every human faculty deteriorates with age, and the ability to sleep well is no exception. Old people have more difficulty falling asleep, and thus on average have less sleep than young people. This must account for the impairment in memory which often occurs with ageing.

Which of the following identify/identifies a weakness in the above argument?

1. Impairment in memory may cause worry which leads to lack of sleep.
  2. Individuals may vary in the extent to which they experience memory loss and lack of sleep.
  3. Changes in the brain due to ageing may cause deterioration in memory and sleep patterns.
- A 1 only  
B 2 only  
C 3 only  
D 1 and 3  
E 2 and 3  
F 1, 2 and 3

BMAT Q17 (2013)

Here, the answer is D.

The passage concludes that ageing increases the difficulty to fall asleep, which leads to memory impairment.

**Statement 1** weakens the argument because it states the opposite of the conclusion. If people were worried about memory impairment as they were ageing, this could lead to a lack of sleep.

**Statement 3** weakens the argument too because it states that changes in the brain due to ageing cause memory deterioration and sleep patterns to be altered. Therefore, it is not sleep patterns that cause memory deterioration, but rather structural changes in the brain.

**Statement 2** is incorrect because the passage does not discuss the extent of memory loss incurred by different individuals.



19. Although many schools have banned the sale of energy drinks filled with sugar and caffeine on the school site, this policy may backfire on those schools and on the results their students achieve in public examinations. Caffeine has been shown to improve focus, which could benefit students both in their studies before an examination and during the examination itself. Recent trials have also shown that caffeine can boost the effectiveness of short-term memory, which could help students to recall key information.

Which of the following statements taken together weaken the above argument?

- 1 Caffeine has been shown to reduce quality and duration of sleep.
  - 2 Caffeine withdrawal symptoms can include headaches.
  - 3 Sleep deprivation can cause lack of focus and poor memory.
  - 4 Any negative effects of moderate caffeine consumption are limited.
  - 5 Memory is an important factor in examination success.
- A 1 and 2
- B 1 and 3**
- C 2 and 4
- D 3 and 5

BMAT Q24 (2015)

**Here, the answer is B.**

The passage concludes that caffeine can be beneficial as it improves focus as well as boosts short-term memory in students.

**Statements 1 & 3** weaken the overall conclusion because if caffeine leads to reduced quality of sleep and therefore sleep deprivation, this may cause a lack of focus and poor memory. This therefore contradicts the main points raised by the conclusion that caffeine acts to improve focus and boost short term memory.



20.

It has been shown that most people are either 'Night Owls', who describe themselves as naturally more active and alert in the evening, or 'Morning Larks', who wake early and become less alert once daylight decreases. These patterns are linked to changes in the levels of the hormone melatonin (which is associated with feelings of sleepiness). Those who follow a 'Morning Lark' pattern show high levels of melatonin early in the evening and low levels by the early morning, with the opposite being true in 'Night Owls' with higher levels of melatonin still present in the morning after waking. Therefore employers should allow for flexible working hours to accommodate people's sleep patterns

Which one of the following, if true, most weakens the above argument?

- A Melatonin levels rise and fall as a result of 'Owl' or 'Lark' behaviour.
- B Melatonin tablets have been used to treat jet-lag by adjusting the sleep-wake cycle.
- C Changing patterns of shift-work have a negative effect on health.
- D The amount that we sleep usually changes throughout our lifespan.
- E Analysis of changes in body temperature have shown that shift workers' bodies take a long time to adjust to changes in routines.

BMAT Q28 (2015)

**Here, the answer is A.**

The passage concludes that people are either 'naturally' 'Night Owls' or 'Morning Larks.' This implies that people are genetically or at least born with either being one or the other throughout their lives and therefore cannot change between being a 'Night Owl' and a 'Morning Lark', which is dependent on the amount of melatonin levels that are expressed both in the morning and evening.

**Statement A** weakens the argument because it states that behaviour influences the level of melatonin that is expressed in the mornings and evenings rather than having naturally occurring levels of melatonin.

**Statements B-E** are irrelevant to the main conclusion.



21. A brisk 30-minute walk five days a week is more effective than any other form of exercise for keeping weight down regardless of age, a major study has concluded. The effectiveness of 'high impact' walking in keeping weight down is greater than that from keep-fit activities including running, swimming and working out in the gym. Men who walked briskly for 30 minutes five days a week for four weeks had a BMI one unit lower than average; for women the difference was 1.8 units. For those who exercised or participated in sporting activities over similar periods, however, the results were less marked: men's BMI was 0.3 units lower and women's about one unit lower. The explanation for this is likely to be that calorie burning is optimised when walking because it is a constant, uninterrupted activity, unlike games such as tennis which are more stop-start.

Which one of the following, if true, would most weaken the above argument?

- A 'High impact' walking as a form of exercise is typically preferred by older people.
- B There are ways of playing tennis that make it less stop-start.
- C People who play sport often drink beers together afterwards.
- D Keeping weight down is seldom cited as the principal reason why people play sport.

BMAT Q24 (2016)

Here, the answer is C.

The passage concludes that 30-minutes of brisk walking five days a week 'is more effective than any other form of exercise for keeping weight down.'

**Statement C** weakens the argument because it offers a reason as to why weight loss may be lower in other sports (and thus why the BMI reduction per unit is lower).

**Statement A** is incorrect because the passage discusses that 'high impact' walking is effective for all age groups ('regardless of age') rather than just for older people.

**Statement B** is incorrect because it does not specifically mention a sport (e.g. tennis) that is then compared to 'high impact' walking.

**Statement D** is incorrect because the passage compares BMI rather than weight loss in 'high impact' walkers to those who play sports.



22.

Nuclear power is often suggested as a 'cleaner' or 'greener' alternative to power production using fossil fuels such as coal and oil. Nuclear power may be less air-polluting than fossil fuels, but it still poses an unacceptable risk to the environment and to humanity. The expansion of all nuclear power production should therefore be stopped and existing plants shut down. Despite what the nuclear industry tells us, building enough nuclear power stations to make a meaningful reduction in greenhouse gas emissions would create tens of thousands of tons of lethal, high-level radioactive waste. Instead, we need an energy system that can fight climate change, based on a mix of renewable energy sources (such as wind, solar and tidal) and energy efficiency. Nuclear power already delivers less energy globally than renewable energy.

Which one of the following, if true, most weakens the above argument?

- A There are established procedures for managing and safely storing nuclear waste, funded by electricity users.
- B The share of global energy delivered by nuclear power will continue to decrease in the coming years.
- C Wind power typically costs much more than nuclear power and cannot provide power on demand.
- D Currently, nuclear energy saves the emission of 2.5 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> relative to coal.

BMAT Q4 (2017)

**Here, the answer is A.**

The passage concludes that nuclear power plants should no longer function ('expansion of all nuclear power production should therefore be stopped and existing plants shut down.') as it would 'create tens of thousands of tons of lethal, high-level radioactive waste.'

**Statement A** outlines that there are 'established procedure for managing and safely storing nuclear waste.' This therefore means that the tons of lethal waste that would be created would be safely stored, thereby weakening the main conclusion.

**Statements B-D** are irrelevant to the main conclusion, as it does not directly challenge the link between nuclear energy being banned because the waste it produces is unsafe and lethal.



## Weakening Questions

23.

Biofuels are an energy source derived mainly from plants and widely thought to offer a better alternative to petroleum and other fossil fuels. In particular, when biofuels are burned to generate electricity or power a car, they produce lower emissions of carbon dioxide, the gas largely responsible for human-caused climate change. Concerns do exist about other consequences of switching to biofuels. For instance, using biofuels to meet the energy needs of even a few industrialised nations would likely require converting large amounts of forest and land now utilised for growing food to the production of crops only suitable for manufacturing biofuels. Such land use change could harm biodiversity and also reduce food availability for some of the world's poorest people. Yet the planet-wide threat posed by climate change is so significant that a transition from fossil fuels to biofuels must be pursued.

Which of the following, if true, would weaken the main conclusion of the above argument?

- 1 Longer growing seasons and other likely impacts of climate change will lead to increased food harvests in some areas.
- 2 Technology exists to manufacture biofuels cheaply and efficiently from waste products associated with existing food production arrangements.

- A 1 only  
B 2 only  
C both 1 and 2  
D neither 1 nor 2



BMAT Q30 (2018)

**Here, the answer is D.**

The passage concludes that biofuels should largely replace fossil fuels as a source of energy, as they emit lower carbon dioxide levels. However, they do pose threats to biodiversity and food availability in certain parts of the world. The passage ultimately concludes that the benefit of using biofuels outweighs the negative aspects.

**Statements 1 and 2** both strengthen the argument and are therefore incorrect.

**Statement 1** strengthens the argument as climate change can lead to longer harvesting seasons and therefore implying that food shortages may not be an issue. Therefore supporting that the benefits of biofuels outweigh the negatives.

**Statement 2** strengthens the argument as it explains that biofuels could be produced from waste products rather than through deforestation. This also helps to support the argument that the benefits outweigh the negatives.