

Weaken

1. Choice (A) uses a false claim ploy. We have no way of knowing whether the Bernese language contains words for automobile or airplane (it probably does not); regardless, automobiles and airplanes are not universal terms. Choice (B) is true but irrelevant, not to mention silly.

Choice (D) is irrelevant [unlike with choice (B), we have no way of knowing whether it is true or false]. Notice how this answer-choice is baited with terms, *common origin* and *human language*, that use the same language as in the argument.

Choice (E) overstates the claim. The author says only that some, not all, concepts are universal. This is the only incorrect choice with any merit.

Finally, choice (C) is the correct answer because if all people are subject to similar stimuli, then one would expect that they would all create words for those stimuli.

2. The *false* assumption of the argument is that, all things being equal, there is no reason to prefer locating the sites in sparsely populated areas. To weaken the argument, we need to show it is not true that all things are equal. In other words, there are advantages other than safety in locating the sites in sparsely populated areas. Choice (C) gives two possible advantages—cost and ease. Hence (C) is the answer.
3. The counter-premise in this argument is the sentence “It is true that a sustained increase [in atmospheric carbon] would threaten human life.” By making this concession, the author shows that he is aware of the alternatives and the poten-

tial seriousness of situation; it also provides a hedge against potential criticism that the situation is too important to risk following his advice.

The question asks us to weaken the argument. As mentioned before, to weaken an argument typically you attack a premise (either expressed or suppressed) of the argument. Now someone who did not fully understand the author’s main point might mistake the counter-premise for a premise. Look at answer-choice (B); it directly attacks the counter-premise by implying that it may not be true. The LSAT writers offer (B) as bait. They know that some people will fall for it because it attacks a statement in the argument, as should the answer. The best answer, however, will attack the main premise.

One possibility the author did not account for is that the natural adjustment process may require many years and that in the short run dangerous levels of carbon could accumulate. This directly attacks the main premise of the argument, “Nature *constantly* adjusts the atmospheric carbon level.” Hence the answer is (E).

4. Typically, to weaken an argument, one of its premises must be shown to be false or flawed. The argument implies that when boat owners buy new engines for their boats, their old engines will be discarded or destroyed. Selection (C) contradicts this assumption by explaining that old boat engines are in high demand in countries with less rigorous pollution standards and that old engines are often sent overseas to satisfy that demand. Thus, these old engines may still be in use. Selection (C) is the right answer.
5. This argument does not consider that an outside factor may cause some people to have both poor vision and dry eyes. Selection (A) provides an outside factor for both conditions. It is the correct answer.
Selection (D) is tempting, but don't be misled. Even if most people who wear contact lenses do not have dry eyes, this does not weaken the argument because it is based on the incidence of dry eyes between people who wear contact lenses and those who do not. Secondly, the author does not argue that wearing contact lenses *must* cause dry eyes, only that it *can* cause dry eyes.
6. Remember that in order to weaken or undermine an argument, one of the premises of the argument must be disproved. The implied premise of this passage is that robots cannot be programmed to understand the principles of sound production and the other criteria of a quality musical instrument, and thus they will not replace skilled craftsmen.

(A) No. Whether or not the industry can afford to pay skilled craftsmen is irrelevant to the question of whether

robots could be programmed to perform the craftsmen's work at the same skill level.

(B) No. This selection is also irrelevant to the argument, which considers whether robots can perform the skilled work of craftsmen.

(C) Yes. The implied premise of the argument is that robots cannot understand the workings of musical instruments or how to produce a high quality musical instrument. If robots can be programmed with these understandings, the author's conclusion would be seriously undermined.

(D) No. This statement is true, but the tasks in issue are not mundane assembly tasks. Rather, they involve the more sophisticated understandings and nuances of musical instruments.

(E) No. This statement does not weaken the argument. Instead, it reinforces it.

7. (A) No. The study is concerned only with the effects of electromagnetic fields. Determining what other factors might impact children's growth rates would be irrelevant to determining the effects of electromagnetic fields.
- (B) No. Since the growth rate for both groups of children was the same, it does not appear that the type of housing was important in determining the effects of exposure to electromagnetic fields.
- (C) No. The growth rate of children in the 1920s is insignificant to the purpose of this study—to determine whether proximity to electromagnetic fields has any harmful effects.
- (D) Yes. The scientists assume that the only negative effect from living near electromagnetic fields would be a lower growth rate in children. Perhaps adults and children who live near the lines suffer from other ailments. These would not be reflected in a study of children's growth rates and thus, this statement, if true, would seriously jeopardize the scientists' conclusion.
- (E) No. Children's growth rates were the same, so how much time children who lived near the power lines spent at home would appear to be irrelevant.
8. (A) No. The apparent fact that wasting disease does not afflict moose or bighorn sheep has no relevance to the incidence of the disease in deer and elk.
- (B) **Yes.** If wasting disease makes deer and elk more lethargic and less able to escape from hunters, then this could account for the increased incidence of the disease in deer and elk killed by hunters, but it would not necessarily mean that the incidence of the disease has increased in the general deer and elk population.
- (C) No. Simply because the disease has spread geographically does not mean its incidence in the deer and elk population in the Rocky Mountains has increased.
- (D) No. This statement could actually strengthen the argument because it suggests that the disease could actually be more prevalent than reported. Hunters may not be reporting their kills to avoid the risk of losing their meat if wasting disease is diagnosed in their animals. If all animals were reported, a greater incidence of the disease might be found.
- (E) No. This statement also strengthens the argument because it suggests that more cases of wasting disease would be discovered if diagnoses could be made within a twenty-four hour period after the animals' death.
9. Although a pill with 44 percent fiber sounds good, the more important issue is "How much of the fiber we need each day does the 44 percent represent?" If we need 100 grams of fiber daily and the pill though almost half fiber contains only one gram of fiber, then we would have to take 100 pills a day to get our daily intake. In this case, the fact that the pill is 44 percent fiber is insignificant, and it is therefore misleading for the advertisement to focus on the percentage of fiber instead of the absolute amount. The answer is (E).

10. This passage is an example of an argument that generalizes from the purported success the reporting program has had in reducing burglary rates. In order for the conclusion to be valid, it must be based upon all other things being the same. If some other factor is instrumental in reducing the burglary rate, then concluding that the reporting program is responsible for the reduced crime rate would be weakened. Look at selection (A). If people who travel take additional precautions, for instance, if they installed motion detector lights on the outside of their homes, then perhaps increased lighting is responsible for lowering the burglary rate rather than the new travel reporting procedure.

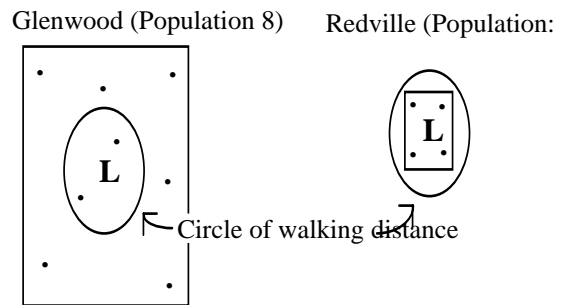
The other selections are irrelevant to determining what caused the lower burglary rate in the community under study. What happens in other communities doesn't impact results in the subject community. Selection (C) is a tempting choice because the answer might suggest that the security guards and police are observant and taking action as a result of the reporting procedure. But (C) does not suggest a reason that might weaken the validity of the conclusion. Selection (A) does, and it is the correct answer.

11. This is a rather straightforward question. The essence of the argument is that if production costs were reduced to the point that operas could be developed without corporate sponsors, then the opera companies would be able and willing to produce less famous operas. Choice (C) directly attacks this claim by stating that without corporate sponsorship only the most famous operas could be produced. This is the antithesis of the argument. The answer is (C).

12. The answer is (C), which commits the true-but-irrelevant fallacy. The passage is about the commercial production of honey, not about pollination, nor for that matter about ornamental trees.

13. The assumption in this argument is that the network hurt itself by not predicting the winner of the presidential race, or at least did not help itself. To strengthen the argument, we need to show that this assumption is true. Choice (B) implies that this is the case by stating that the network expected to lose ratings if it did not predict a winner. Hence the answer is (B).

14. This question hinges on the population densities of the two cities. Suppose Glenwood's population is twice Redville's but that the area of Glenwood is 10 times as large as the area of Redville. Then the population density of Glenwood would be one-fifth that of Redville. Hence, fewer people in Glenwood would be within walking distance of the library. The figure below illustrates the situation:



However, if the areas covered by Glenwood and Redville are roughly the same, then the population density of Glenwood would be greater than that of Redville. Hence, there would probably be more people within walking distance of the library in Glenwood than in Redville. The answer is (B).

15. The argument presumes that the comments in the evaluation forms are representative of all the people who attended the seminar. So the reliability of the preferences expressed in the evaluation forms depends upon how representative they are of all seminar participants. If the evaluation comments were representative of all participants, then reliance upon them would be warranted in determining the schedule for next year.

Upon first glance, selection (A) looks correct. But a close reading of selection (A) suggests there might be a problem with how many people actually received the evaluation forms. If the evaluation forms were handed out only at every other table, then the comments might be representative of only half of the participants. Selections (B) and (D) are irrelevant to the argument here. Selection (E) weakens the reliability of the results rather than strengthens them because it appears that a rather small number of people would have a big impact on the results. Selection (C) is correct because it strengthens the connection between the sample and the general population. It states that the percentage results would be the same for the sample who returned evaluation forms and for all people who attended the seminar.

16. (A) **Yes.** Since presumably the distemper virus that affects seals would not affect such disparate animals as shellfish and seabirds, it is likely that another agent caused all three populations to decrease—pollution.

(B) No. This would weaken the argument. If pollution is being reduced, then pollution is less likely now to be the cause of the weakening of the seals' immune system than in the past.

(C) No. We don't know how this has affected the immune system of humans. If humans are becoming more susceptible to similar viruses, then it would support the argument. However, if humans are not becoming more susceptible to similar viruses, then it would weaken the argument.

(D) No. This is irrelevant. The passage is about the general population of seals. We don't need to know the distribution of the various species.

(E) No. This would weaken the argument. If the seals' immune system were unprepared for the new strain of virus, then the spread of the virus probably would have occurred even without the pollution.

17. To strengthen a claim that a substance has a certain health effect, we often test the substance against a placebo, an inert substitute. If the substance tested produces results that the placebo does not, we attribute these differences to the action of the substance. In choice (E), some of the volunteers were given cellulose instead of Vita-plus, and these volunteers did not show the same increased energy as those who received Vita-plus. This strengthens the conclusion that Vita-plus increased one's energy. The answer is (E).

Choice (A) suffers from the weakness that those who believe in the efficacy of Vita-plus and take increased doses may convince themselves that it truly has an effect. Choice (B) shows the same weakness: maybe only "true believers" are willing to pay for the cost of the capsules.

As for (C), this choice is required to properly compare the two levels, but it is not sufficient to show Vita-plus caused any differences. Finally, choice (D) weakens the claim by stating that another substance shows the same results as Vita-plus.