

Arguments in Action 2019

You need to be able to demonstrate **knowledge and understanding** of arguments by:

- distinguishing statements from questions, commands, exclamations and arguments
- distinguishing arguments from other types of writing (for example, descriptions, explanations and summaries)
- identifying and describing the components of an argument:
 - premises/reasons and conclusions
 - inference indicators for premises and conclusions
- describing what makes the premises in an argument **acceptable**, that is, the premise:
 - is known *a priori* to be true
 - is known to be true or can be accepted as true (you should be note that while a premise may be considered true, and therefore acceptable, aspects of the premise, such as gratuitous references to a person's race, may render it unacceptable in another sense)
 - is a matter of common knowledge
 - is plausible, that is, it is reasonable to take it to be true
 - is unambiguous
 - appeals to an appropriate authority
 - properly represents the facts pertaining to the conclusion
- describing what makes the premises in an argument **relevant** to the conclusion, that is, the premise:
 - provides some justification to support the conclusion
 - gives support to another relevant premise
 - contains an appropriate analogy
 - attacks the claim rather than the person putting forward the claim
- describing what makes the premises in an argument **sufficient** to draw the conclusion, that is, the premises
 - are acceptable and relevant
 - are enough to engender a well-founded confidence in the conclusion

You need to be able to **analyse** arguments by:

- presenting an argument in standard form
- recognising, explaining and constructing diagrams that represent:
 - **linked arguments**, that is, where the premises are *dependent*
 - **convergent arguments**, that is, where the premises give *independent* support to the conclusion
 - **serial arguments**, that is, where there is at least one intermediate conclusion
- identifying whether an argument is using inductive or deductive reasoning
- identifying different methods of argumentation:
 - analogical arguments, including distinguishing analogical *arguments* from analogical *explanations*
 - the use of counter-examples to show that a universal statement is false

You need to be able to evaluate arguments by

....identifying, explaining and giving examples of the following issues.

Although issues are grouped under the headings of acceptability, relevance and sufficiency, there may be occasions when an issue might be legitimately discussed in relation to a different heading.

Issues primarily relating to acceptability:

- two types of ambiguity: lexical ambiguity (equivocation) and syntactic ambiguity (amphiboly)
- appropriate appeals to authority, including recognising the criteria that might be used to distinguish legitimate appeals to authority from fallacious appeals to authority
- slippery slopes, including:
 - what is meant by a 'slippery slope'
 - what is meant by a 'slippery slope argument'
 - the main features of slippery slope arguments
 - what would distinguish an admissible slippery slope argument from a fallacious slippery slope argument
- confirmation bias in the construction and evaluation of arguments, that is, the tendency to notice or seek out information that confirms existing opinions and to avoid or reject information that suggests our opinions are wrong

Issues primarily relating to relevance:

- *ad hominem*s, including *ad hominem* abusive, *ad hominem* circumstantial and *ad hominem tu quoque*, and discussion of when an 'attack on the person' is not fallacious
- fallacious appeals to emotion, including recognising the criteria that might be used to distinguish legitimate appeals to emotion from fallacious appeals to emotion
- inappropriate, poor analogies: explaining how pertinent differences between the things used in the analogy serve to undermine the analogical reasoning

Issues primarily relating to sufficiency:

- deductive validity, that is, an argument is valid when it is impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion to be false
- inductive strength, including being aware that, unlike deductive validity, inductive strength is a matter of degree and, however strong the argument, the conclusion is never guaranteed in the same way that it is with deductive reasoning
- conductive strength, including being aware that in a conductive argument, although the premises are assessed individually with regard to acceptability and relevance, they are considered together with regard to sufficiency and that the addition of premises strengthens an argument and the removal of premises weakens an argument
- *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, including being able to discuss whether it is ever appropriate to take temporal order as a basis for having increased confidence in a causal link
- formal fallacies, including being able to explain the distinction between formal and informal fallacies:
 - denying the antecedent, that is, any argument that has the form:
If P, then Q; Not P. Therefore, not Q
that is, the error of mistaking a sufficient condition for a necessary condition
 - affirming the consequent, that is, any argument that has the form:
If P, then Q; Q. Therefore, P
that is, the error of mistaking a necessary condition for a sufficient condition

In all 'arguments in action' cases, you should be aware of the distinction between artificial examples designed to illustrate a topic and realistic examples that might genuinely affect an argument. For example, an instance of ambiguity may effectively illustrate syntactic ambiguity and may also be used for comic effect, but the context or common sense might mean that no real confusion will occur.