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LSAT vocabulary

Surprise—this is going to be a very short lesson (though maybe not quite as short as it may first appear). If you’ve made it this far in the book, you definitely deserve a break. Please, take the rest of the study time you’ve allotted to do something fun.

As you are by this point most certainly aware, the LSAT is full of complex and unusual words and phrases. However, as we’ve discussed many times, when it comes time to answer questions, it is the small, common words *between* those unusual ones—the common words that define reasoning relationships—that are most important. We’ve been highlighting many of these important reasoning words throughout the book. In this lesson, we’re going to take a quick break from Logical Reasoning to have a concentrated lesson just on LSAT vocabulary. And, not so coincidentally, I hope you find the work we do in this lesson helpful as you conquer Inference questions in the next one.

When it comes to mastering LSAT vocabulary, there are two different aspects to consider:

Understanding the Words Correctly

Duh. The good news is that nearly all of the important terms are easy and simple to understand. The bad news is that certain terms are very easy to misunderstand no matter how much you prepare. Oftentimes, getting a question correct requires that we translate and utilize many different words in a very short amount of time—your understanding of most key terms needs to be absolute and automatic; furthermore, you need to have a good sense of which words tend to cause you trouble, and you want to make sure you have systems for dealing with these terms.

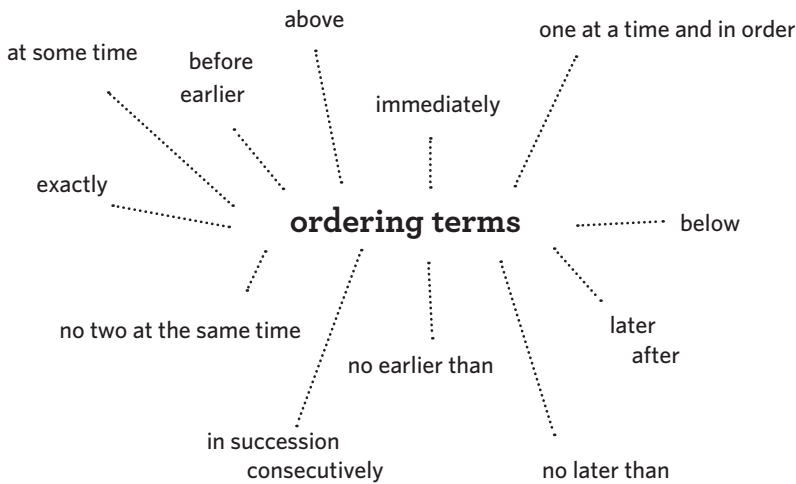
Prioritizing Key Terms

This second issue is of far more importance than the first. These key terms shape reasoning structure and reasoning relationships—the two things LSAT questions happen to be about. Students who perform poorly, or who spend far more time than they should, invariably waste energy focusing on the wrong parts of an argument or a passage. The main reason I’ve put this lesson in is not to remind you of what words mean, but rather to remind you of which words to pay attention to.

I’ve also included a couple of challenging mini-drills at the end, just for fun.

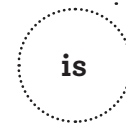
Logic Games

The key terms for Logic Games are the ones that define the various relationships and complications we've already discussed: assignment, ordering, grouping, subsets, mismatches, conditional rules, and "or" rules. Nearly all of the terms used in a typical Logic Games section will be very easy to understand. One key is slowing down and being careful for those few statements (such as "only if") that happen to cause you some trouble. Another key is to keep clear on statements that mean different things but can easily be mistaken for one another ("before" and "no earlier than," for example, are two statements that often mean the same thing, but don't always mean the same thing—such as in a situation that allows for ties).

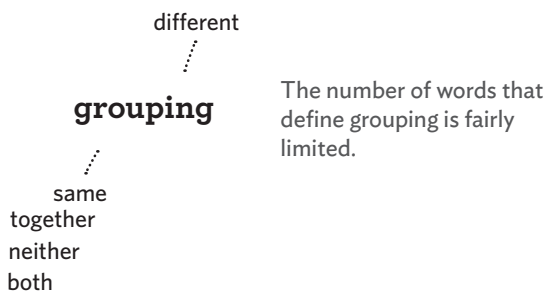


Ordering rules are the most common and varied of all games rules, and it's important that you feel comfortable with all of them and that you are exact in your understanding of all of them.

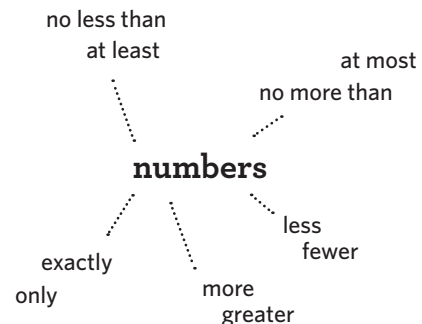
action verbs such as "wears" or "speaks"



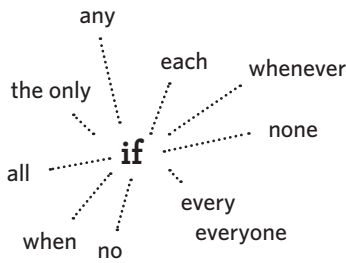
Assignment and subsets are often recognizable because of action verbs: "John is third," "Shannon wears a red hat," "Neither of the morning presenters speaks Russian."



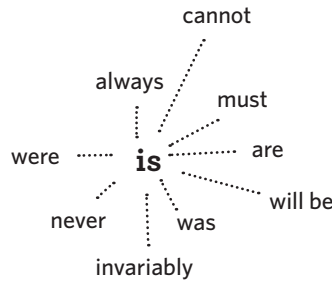
Words that define numbers are always important and easy to mistake and should be treated with the utmost care.



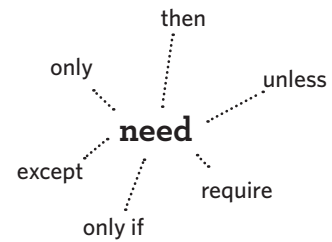
CONDITIONAL TERMS



words that indicate sufficiency

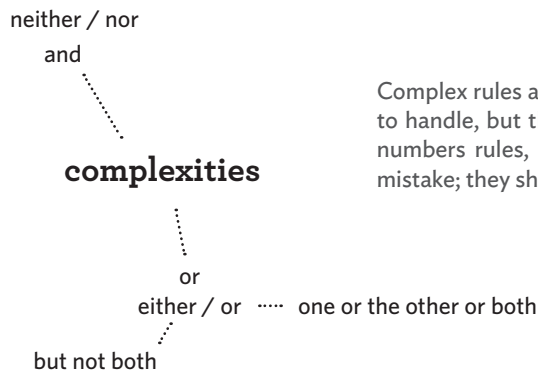


words that indicate guarantees



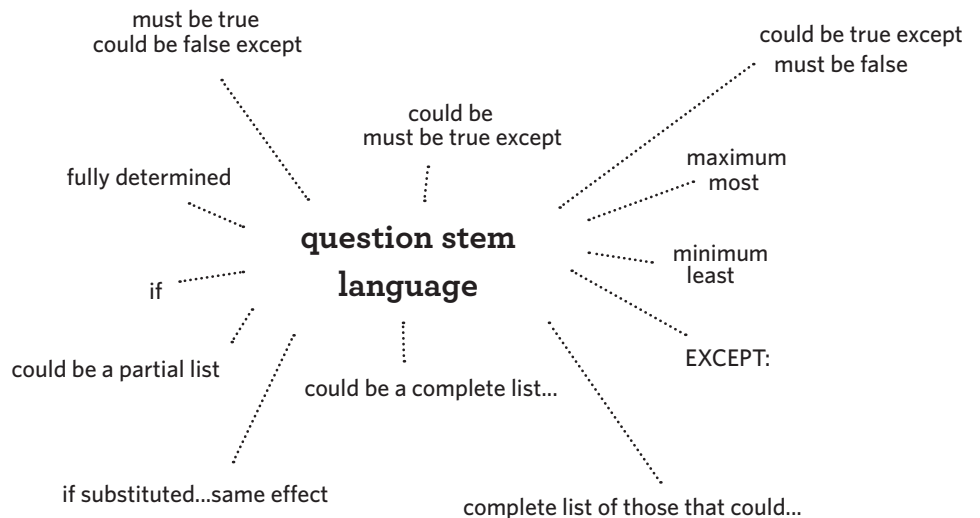
words that indicate a necessary result

And, of course, there are always a variety of ways to express conditional rules. Note that a word like “is” can always be thought of conditionally, but it will only be helpful for us to do so in certain situations.



Complex rules are a blessing and a curse—they can be tough to handle, but they always tell us a lot about the game. Like numbers rules, they are always important and very easy to mistake; they should always be handled with the utmost care.

And as we’ve discussed many times, it’s important that we understand the question stem correctly and that we use it to define how we go about solving the question. Expect to spend a bit more time on “if substituted...same effect” questions, and be careful to not confuse “could be a complete list...” with “complete list of those that could...”

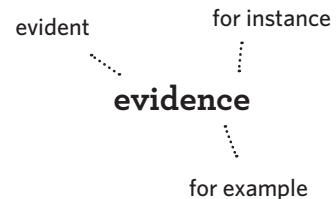
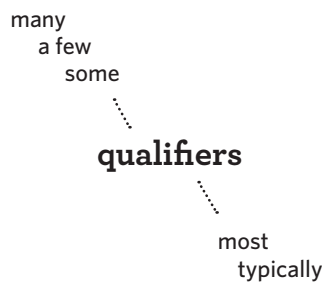
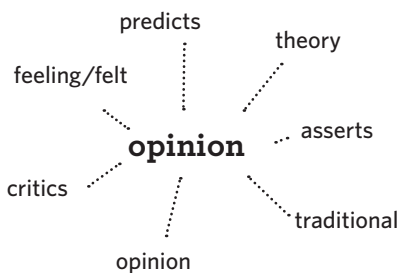
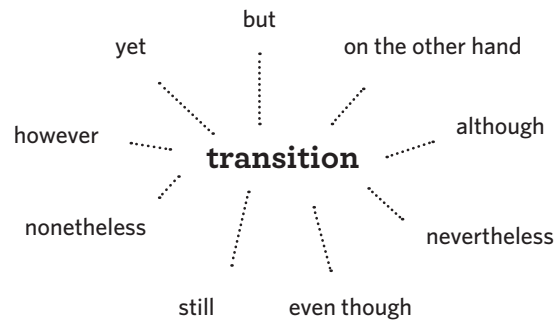
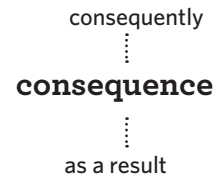
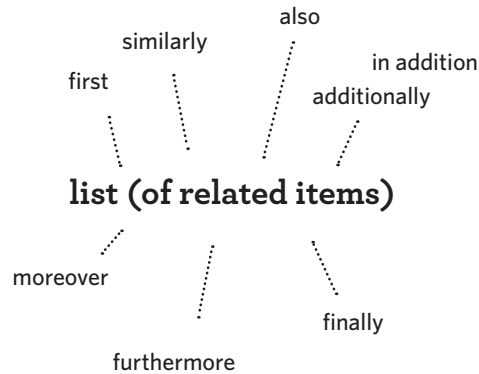


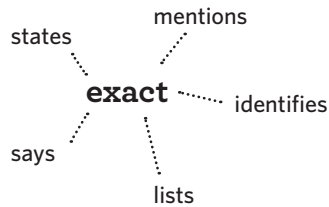
Reading Comprehension

As you might imagine, the Reading Comprehension section is not as dependent on consistent and exact terminology as the Logic Games section is. For example, there are numerous ways for an author to present his or her opinion. For Reading Comprehension, specific terms are less important; the roles these words play are more important. Still, the words listed here are ones used again and again to define reasoning structure, words you will find on every LSAT.

STRUCTURAL TERMS

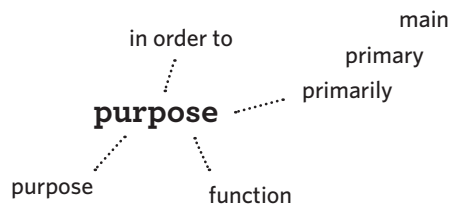
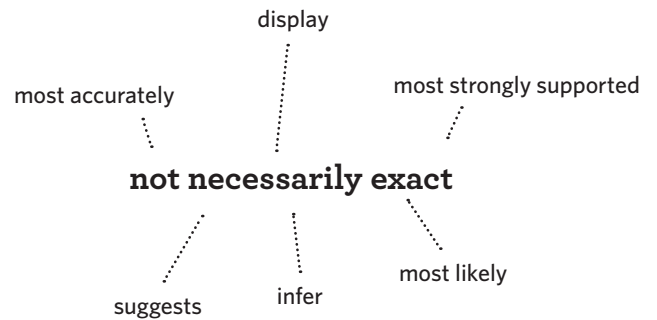
As we read LSAT Reading Comprehension passages, we want to focus less on subject matter (what is the author discussing?) and more on reasoning structure (why is the author discussing this?). Here are some words that commonly help define this reasoning structure.





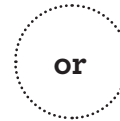
QUESTION STEM TERMS

As we've discussed, LSAT writers are extremely careful about how they write question stems, and they don't throw in superfluous terms. When you see any of these terms (or related ones), they will have a significant impact on the type of answer that you should expect. If a question stem uses the word "states," you should expect to find exact proof for the right answer; if, instead, a question stem uses the word "suggests," you know you will not find exact proof for the right answer—you should expect to have to make a small leap.

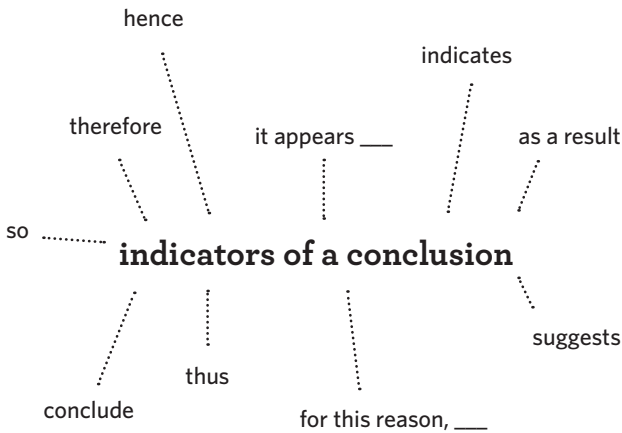


Logical Reasoning

Many of the same terms that are important for Logic Games and Reading Comprehension—terms that define reasoning structure and reasoning relationships—are important for Logical Reasoning. Like Reading Comprehension, Logical Reasoning also has many key words that are argument-specific.

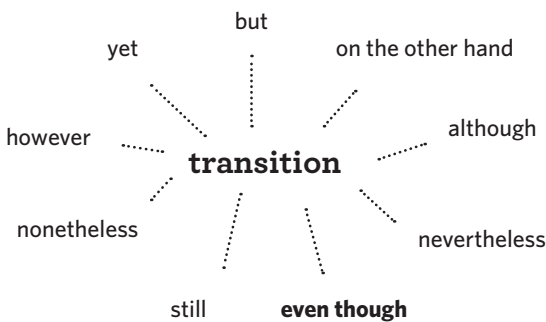
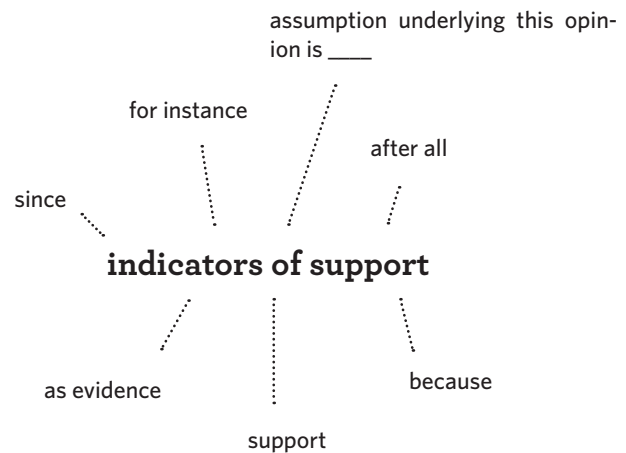


It's always important to correctly understand *or* when we see it.



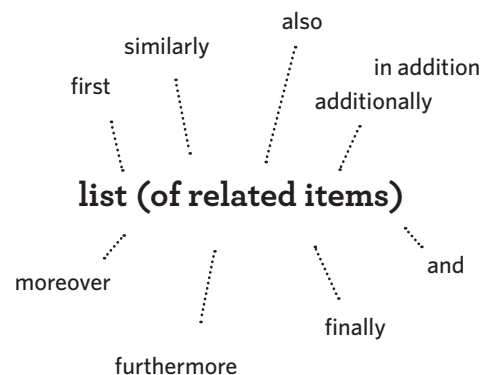
Not only do these words indicate the conclusion, they often indicate the location of the support. For example, the phrase “suggests” tells us that what follows is the conclusion, and what comes before is the support.

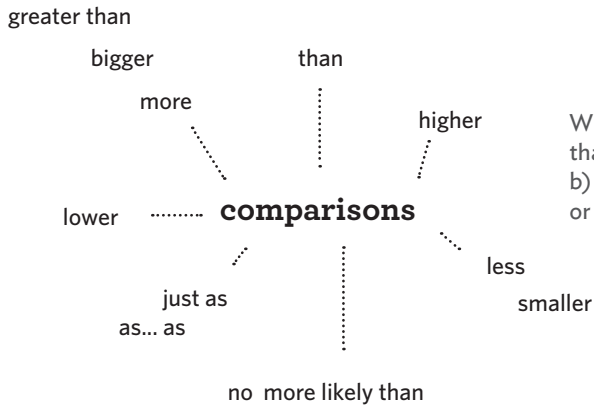
For many arguments, the indicators of support are the biggest clues we have about overall structure (for example: John likes steak. He will love Roscoe’s Restaurant because they have lots of steaks).



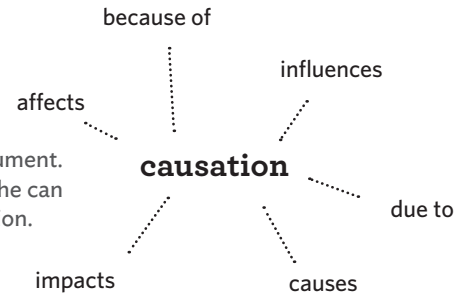
For Logical Reasoning arguments, transitions are typically used to pivot off an opposing viewpoint or opposing evidence to either the main point or support for the main point.

These words are less common in Logical Reasoning than they are in Reading Comprehension, but when they appear they typically signal a list of supporting premises. Once in a while, they will signal two conclusions—an intermediate conclusion that leads to a final one.

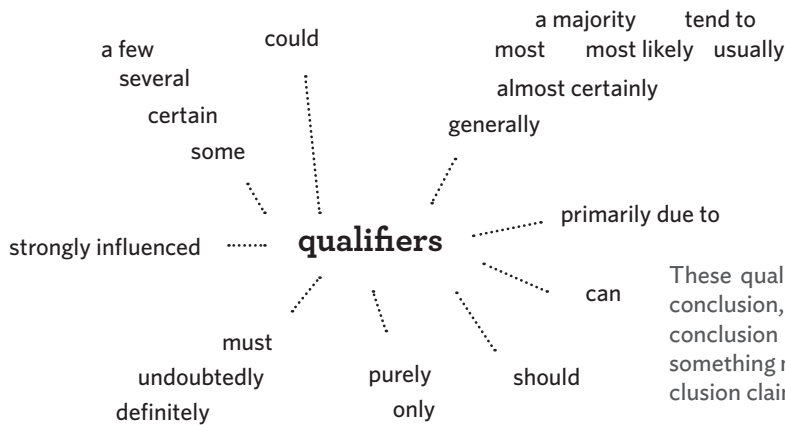




When Logical Reasoning arguments involve comparisons, it's often true that a) the support uses a comparison, but the conclusion doesn't need it, b) the conclusion is a comparison, but the support isn't about a comparison, or c) the support and the conclusion offer two mismatching comparisons.

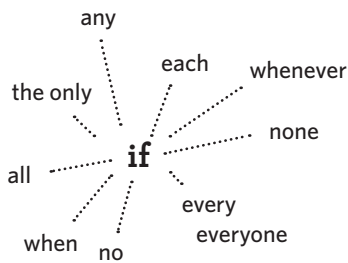


Keep in mind that causation is also often wordlessly implied in the reasoning of an argument. For example, "Ken is doing poorly in school, so I am going to limit how much television he can watch" implies a causal relationship between school performance and watching television.

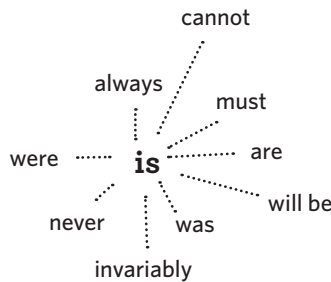


These qualifiers are most important when they appear in the conclusion, for if our job is to be critical, the qualifiers in the conclusion will almost always be wrong. If a conclusion says something must be, expect that it won't have to be, and if a conclusion claims something is most likely, expect that it won't be.

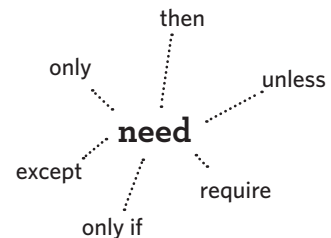
CONDITIONAL TERMS



words that indicate sufficiency



words that indicate guarantees



words that indicate a necessary result

As we've discussed many times, just because statements can be thought of in conditional terms doesn't mean they have to be. If you read an argument, "Jan is Canadian. Therefore, he must love Arcade Fire," hopefully you can see what's wrong with the reasoning without having to think about it in conditional terms. Still, there will certainly be situations for which you need to think about statements in terms of conditional guarantees (typically for Sufficient Assumption, Inference, and Matching questions), and it's certainly important for you to feel confident in your ability to do so.

do you know what some and most mean?



some

(a.k.a. several, a few, certain)

an unknown amount
greater than zero

most

(a.k.a. a majority, usually, generally)

an unknown amount
greater than half

Some and *most* are both words that in real life take on a great deal of contextual meaning—these are words that mean different things in different situations. However, as we’ve discussed, the LSAT requires us to utilize an absolute, non-contextual understanding of words such as *some* and *most*. *Some* does not mean less than half, and it does not exclude the possibility of all. It simply means an unknown amount greater than zero. Thus, knowing that *some* people like jazz does not prove that a majority do not, or even that *any* do not like jazz. *Most* also does not exclude the possibility of all, and thus knowing that *most* of a pie was eaten does not prove that some of it is left. We want to understand these words exactly, and, as always, we want to be careful not to over-infer.

qualifier math

What happens when you bring together a statement about *some* elements of a certain group having one characteristic, and *most* in that same group having another characteristic? What, if anything, can be inferred? Occasionally, a challenging Logical Reasoning question will require us to bring together a combination of “qualifier” statements to see what can be inferred, and, more importantly, what cannot. Here are the rules that you need to know.

some + some = no inferences	“Some bears dream” and “some bears swim” doesn’t prove there are any bears that dream and swim.
some + most = no inferences	“Some bears dream” and “most bears swim” doesn’t prove there are any bears that dream and swim.
most + most = inferences!	“Most bears dream” and “most bears swim” combine to mean some bears dream and swim.

The ice cream store

Imagine the following twelve statements, each of which could be made about a certain ice cream store. For five of the statements, the reasoning is perfectly valid—the reasoning provided is enough to prove the conclusion reached. For the remaining seven statements, the reasoning provided does not validate the conclusion reached. Do your best to figure out which statements are valid, and which ones are not.

1. Most customers eat their ice cream in the store. Therefore, some take it to go.

2. Some customers prefer vanilla to chocolate, and no customer has no preference in the matter. Therefore, most customers prefer chocolate.

3. Most people use napkins, and some use a spoon. Thus more people use napkins than use spoons.

4. Some customers use coupons, and most customers pay with cash. So, at least some customers who pay with cash do not use coupons.

5. Most customers prefer a cone to a cup, and most customers ask for toppings. So, most customers who prefer a cone ask for toppings.

6. All of the ice cream is kept in the freezer, and there are chocolate chips in some of the ice cream. So, there are some chocolate chips in the freezer.

7. Most of the customers order ice cream, and most customers come with friends. So, at least some of the customers come with friends and order ice cream.

8. Some customers ask for extra toppings, and no customers refuse extra toppings when offered. So there are fewer customers who are offered free toppings than there are customers who ask for extra toppings.

9. Most customers order chocolate ice cream, and most customers get toppings. All customers who get toppings get a free toy. So, some people who order chocolate ice cream get a free toy.

10. Everyone who orders a sundae gets offered a free extra cherry, and most people say yes to the extra cherry. Some people who order the banana split get offered a free extra cherry, and less than half of those people say yes. Therefore, more customers get a free cherry with a sundae than they do with a banana split.

11. Everyone who orders a sundae gets offered a free extra cherry, and most people say yes to the extra cherry. Some people who order the banana split get offered a free extra cherry, and less than half of these people say yes. Therefore, people who order a sundae are more likely to say yes to a free cherry than are people who order a banana split.

12. Everyone who orders a sundae gets offered a free extra cherry, and most people say yes to the extra cherry. Some people who order the banana split get offered a free extra cherry, and less than half of these people say yes. So, some people who order the banana split do not get an extra cherry.

Solutions

Valid: 6, 7, 9, 11, 12 Not valid: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10

EXTREME LINKS

Certain challenging Logic Games and Logical Reasoning questions require us to evaluate how a complicated set of conditional statements links together. Here's one more drill aimed to help you solidify your linking skills. Note that the last two samples complicate the conditional situation with *some* and *most*. As we've just discussed, this will happen in certain challenging Logical Reasoning questions. I've left space for you to jot down some notations,

Fred won't attend unless Leon does, and Leon will only attend if Sarah does not. If Terrence attends, both Sarah and Rich will attend as well. Either Fred or Jessica, but not both, will attend.

Note which ones are provable and which ones are not.

If Leon attends, Rich will not.
If Sarah attends, Fred will not.
If Fred attends, Sarah will not.
If Rich attends, but Leon does not, Terrence will attend.
If Jessica attends, Leon will not.
If Terrence attends, Leon will not.
If Leon attends, Jessica will not.
If Fred attends, Terrence does not.
Terrence and Leon can't both attend together.
If Sarah does not attend, Jessica will.

Every student is required to wear a uniform, and only those wearing uniforms are allowed to ride on the bus. Those who ride on the bus must wear a name tag. Parents are not allowed to wear uniforms, but some nonetheless wear name tags.

Note which ones are provable and which ones are not.

Only students wear uniforms.
Only students ride the bus.
Every student is allowed to ride on the bus.
Parents are not allowed to ride on the bus.
Every student with a name tag is allowed to ride on the bus.
Some people who wear name tags are not allowed to ride on the bus.
No adults are allowed to ride on the bus.
Everyone on the bus wears a uniform and a name tag.
Those without uniforms or name tags cannot ride on the bus.
Those who do not ride on the bus are not students.

and you'll probably want to do so. However, also keep in mind that it may be easier in many instances to check the answer directly against the text itself. Finally, keep in mind that these samples are *extreme*—more challenging and complex than what you should expect on test day; if you can nail these, you are in great shape. As always, you should do your work on separate paper if you want to repeat the drill.

Cheaters never win, and winners never brag. And yet all cheaters dream of winning and bragging about it. All winners dream about both of those things too. The public always adores those who win and do not brag about it.

Note which ones are provable and which ones are not.

The public adores all winners.
The public never adores a cheater.
One cannot be adored unless one does not brag.
If one wants public adoration, one must win.
Cheaters do not get to do everything they dream about.
All winners do something they dream about.
Those who never brag always win.
Cheaters get to do at least one thing they dream about.
No one who dreams of bragging is adored.
All winners don't do something they dream about doing.

If a doll wears a red dress, it will wear the clear glass slippers. If it doesn't wear the red dress, it will wear purple slippers. The doll can only wear one dress at a time, and it can only wear a hat when it wears a purple dress. The doll can't wear a necklace unless it wears a hat.

Note which ones are provable and which ones are not.

If a doll wears clear glass slippers, it wears a red dress.
If a doll does not wear glass slippers, it will wear a purple dress.
If a doll wears a purple dress, it must wear purple slippers.
If the doll wears a necklace, it wears purple slippers.
If a doll does not wear a purple dress, it will wear a red one.
If the doll wears a red dress, it cannot wear a necklace.
Every doll that wears a hat will wear a necklace.
If the doll does not wear purple slippers, it cannot wear a hat.
If a doll doesn't wear a necklace, it must wear the red dress.
If the doll wears a necklace, it also wears a purple dress.

Francine’s Lumberyard sells an equal amount of two different categories of wood: lumber and plywood. They sell no other types of wood. Some of the lumber is cut to exact dimensions, some of it is not. All of the plywood is cut to exact dimensions. Most of the wood that is cut to exact dimensions is stored inside; the rest is stored outside. Only wood that is not cut to exact dimensions is currently discounted.

Most of the dishes at Oldie’s Diner are unhealthy, and most are offered on special during lunchtime. The dishes on special come with the customer’s choice of free fries or a free soda. All of the dishes offered on special are written up on the chalkboard.

Note which ones are provable and which ones are not.

- Most of the lumber is currently discounted.
- Most of the wood is inside.
- If wood is currently discounted, it is lumber.
- At least some plywood is currently discounted.
- Less than half of the wood is not cut to exact dimensions.
- No plywood is currently discounted.
- Most of the wood stored inside is plywood.
- Most of the wood stored outside is lumber.
- Most of the wood is not currently discounted.
- Most of the wood inside is not currently discounted.

Note which ones are provable and which ones are not.

- There are at least some dishes on special that are unhealthy.
- One can get free soda with at least one unhealthy dish.
- All dishes on the chalkboard come with free fries or a free soda.
- There are at least some dishes on the chalkboard that are unhealthy.
- All the dishes on the chalkboard are specials.
- Most of the dishes on the chalkboard are unhealthy.
- Most healthy dishes are not on special.
- Most of the dishes are written on the chalkboard.
- Most of the dishes on the chalkboard are on special.
- There is at least one healthy dish that is not offered on special.

Solutions

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Fred	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N
Cheaters	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y
Student	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N
Dolls	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Lumber	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N
Oldie’s	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N

Lesson Review

That was a pretty challenging drill—I hope you found it useful, and at least somewhat fun. In terms of Logical Reasoning, keep in mind that the scenarios in the drill were more complicated than what you should expect in a real question. Also keep in mind that, even for the most difficult conditional questions, most wrong answers are very obviously wrong, and require very little work to eliminate. Don't get in a habit of overthinking these types of answers. If you have a strong understanding of the stimulus, typically only one or two answers warrant serious consideration.

If the material before that drill made you think about LSAT vocabulary in a somewhat new way, or if you want to reinforce some of the lessons we discussed here, or if you just happened to recognize a few terms that you either need to pay more attention to, or need to understand more clearly, here is a suggested drill for you to do on your own:

Go through past Logical Reasoning questions, Logic Games, and Reading Comprehension passages that you have already worked on. Take the time to systematically circle the key terms mentioned on the previous pages, and take note of how they influence the reasoning relationships in the questions you've solved. Also take note of situations that use unique variations of these terms or that don't use these terms at all (such as a Logical Reasoning argument that doesn't use any specific terminology to point us to the conclusion). This drill will help you see the importance of these key terms, and also help you lock in the intimate connection between these key terms and the tasks you must perform during the exam.

During the real exam, prioritizing these key words should not take much conscious effort (or any conscious effort at all, for that matter). Hopefully, by test day, it's just how you naturally read LSAT passages; these words define reasoning relationships, and if you are focused on reasoning relationships, you will naturally prioritize these words.

