

Notes: Verbal Reasoning



What is Verbal Reasoning?

Concept & Tips to Solve Verbal Reasoning Questions in CLAT (UG)

Over the years, the importance of Critical Reasoning and Verbal Logical questions in CLAT (UG) has increased considerably.

The Logical reasoning section of CLAT (UG) is designed to assess the student's ability to understand and evaluate arguments in a written form. The kinds of questions which students are tested on are:

- Recognizing an argument, its premises, and conclusions.
- Reading and identifying the arguments the passage contains.
- Analysis of reasoning patterns and identifying how premises or conclusions may be based on a particular line of reasoning.
- Derive inferences from the passage and use these inferences in new situations. Questions pertaining to strengthening and weakening of arguments, analogies, and equivalence of arguments.

We shall now discuss how to approach the verbal reasoning section, tips, and tricks to ace the same and time management.

Reading

Recognition of an argument, its premises, and conclusions involves careful reading.

- Read in such a manner that you understand the passage.
- Read with a purpose. In order to do so, give a cursory glance at the questions beforehand.
- This would give you perspective on what you are looking for.
- Your mind would automatically look for the answers the moment you read.

For instance, let us take the following example.

Passage

The National Education Policy, an ambitious and complex document, laying down a road map for the next two decades, has been adopted in the midst of a pandemic and a lockdown, which renders discussion and debate difficult. Nevertheless, it requires closer scrutiny, in terms of its implications for the marginalized, disciplinary spaces, autonomy, and constitutional values, among other things. What are its implications for the majority of those covered under the acronym SEDGs (Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups) in the text? Absent in the document, as far as I could see, is any mention of the term "caste", apart from a fleeting reference to Scheduled Castes. Also absent is any mention of reservation in academic institutions, whether for students, teachers, or other employees. Reservation, necessary but not sufficient, is the bare minimum required in terms of affirmative action in the highly differentiated socio-economic milieu in which we exist. The silence of the document on this issue is troubling, to say the least.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/national-education-policy-reservation-6531546/>

Assume one of the questions that you get from this passage is as follows:

Qs. What argument does the author give to support his premise that the discussion and debate on the National Educational Policy has become difficult?

How to solve it?

- When you read the passage, your aim should be to find a **rationale for the aforementioned premise.**
- When you read the first sentence of the passage, **you see that the author is talking about how the adoption of a complex policy during the pandemic has made its debate and discussion difficult.**
- This should be your trigger to understand that your answer lies in this sentence.
- Read the question before you read the passage.

Understand what you are looking for.

- Read it carefully.
- The first sentence of the given passage is long and complicated.
- The idea is to break it down and understand its meaning.

How can you identify what is an argument, premise, and conclusion?

A premise is a fact or a statement, while an argument is evidence or the rationale behind this premise. A conclusion is a derivation that comes out when both the premise and argument are combined.

Consider the following statement:

- *CAA's validity cannot be challenged. It was passed by the Parliament according to a set procedure. Hence, CAA is a constitutional law and cannot be called invalid.*
- Here, the first statement is a fact or a premise; the second statement is an argument that supports this fact or premise, and the last sentence is the conclusion, which is derived by combining the premise and the argument.

Time management

Let us break down the entire procedure of approaching such questions into steps.

Step 1:

Start with reading the questions. Give a cursory reading, which will be enough to understand what is being asked.

- DO NOT SPEND MORE THAN 30 SECONDS IN READING THE QUESTIONS.

Step 2:

- Read the passage with the intent to understand and answer. While reading, remember the questions you read. Try to find the answers.

Step 3:

- Go back to the questions.

Some of the questions you may be able to answer on a single reading. For others, you may have to go back to the passage again. Make sure to identify any keywords if given.

For example, '**debate and discussion**' was used in the passage. Hence, it is necessary to identify the portion of the sentence where the answer was.

How to prepare?

- Read editorials/opinion pieces and time yourself.
- Identify premises, arguments, and conclusions while reading such editorials/ opinion pieces.
- Solve as many critical reasoning passages as you can. ➤ Try to summarise an editorial or opinion after you have read it in the structure of premise–argument–conclusion.
- Learn to read quickly and smartly.

Derive inferences from the passage, and use these inferences in new situations.

An inference means implication based on stated facts. For instance, consider the following passage:

'The revenues of a certain automatic company increased dramatically after they launched a new model that consumes significantly less fuel than all of its previous models as well as those of its competitors. Despite this profitability profit as a percentage of revenues of the company fell by almost 10 percentage points, while its competitors maintained their profitability levels.'

Which of the following can be **inferred** from the statements given above?

1. The company greatly increased its advertising budget to promote its new model, which brought in more revenue.
2. The overall costs increased at a rate higher than the rate of increase in revenues.
3. The company's market share has not increased despite increased revenue from the new model.
3. The company has not been able to charge a significantly higher price for the new model over its existing models as well as over those of its competitors.

In order to answer this question, you need to understand the premise first.

- The passage talks about two things: revenue and profits.
- It talks about how the profitability percentage has gone down despite increased revenue.

Now, read the options. Assess which option would logically be inferred from the given facts.

Option 2 looks like the most apt inference that can be drawn from the given premise as it gives a rationale behind why profitability may be low despite an increase in revenue. One needs to follow the steps/strategy given below in order to approach an inference-based question.

For an inference question, all statements in the paragraph become premises.

- Since an inference has to follow logically from the premises, negating the inference should result in the premises being negated.
- Negate each option, and see if the premises still hold true. Choose the option that makes a premise fail when negated.
- Establish a connection between the premises stated, and assess what can be the most logical rationale behind the same.



Assumption-based questions

Questions based on **assumptions** assess a student's ability to apply the premises and arguments that are given to a different factual situation.

It is different from an inference-based question as it does not infer the essence from the given statements but applies the logic to a third statement.

Consider the following passage:

'In order to combat Bombay's rampant problem of homelessness, the municipality announced a ban on sleeping on pavements, under flyovers, in parks and gardens, etc. Their justification was that this ban would either force the homeless to move out of Bombay or find other alternative places to sleep.'

Which of the following, **if true**, will show that the municipality's ban will be successful?

1. Several homeless persons sleep outside the public library at night.
2. The percentage of homeless people has been declining in the past four years.
3. Nagpur and Nashik have even more stringent measures to tackle the homeless population.
4. Prior to the ban coming into effect, occupancy of the city's homeless shelters was less than 40%. After the imposition of the ban, this has risen to 90%.

Answer: D

What you need to do in assumption questions, especially questions that involve strengthening/weakening of argument, is to first identify the premise.

- In this passage, the author has linked the ban on sleeping on pavements to the rampant problem of homelessness.
- If you have to identify an option that makes the ban successful, then it would automatically be the one that shows comparative data before and after the ban. **Hence, option D is the answer.**

You can also choose the method of negating each option by considering how they would affect the basic premise of the passage, which is that the ban would reduce homelessness.

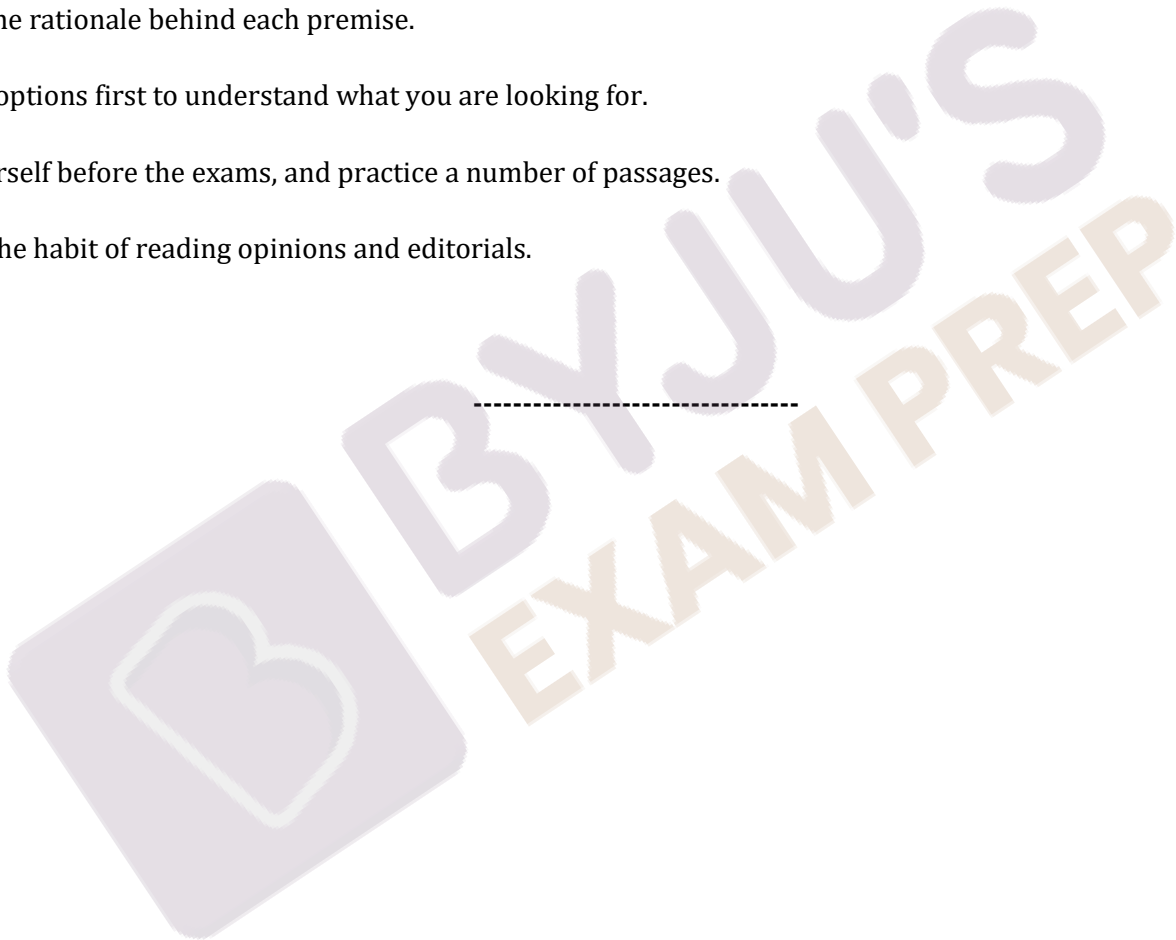
You can follow the steps/strategy given below for assumption-based questions.

- Read the passage carefully.
- Identify the core premise.
- Identify the connection between the premises or the premise and the argument that are given.
- Apply the logic to the options that are given.
- You can choose to negate each option, and then the one that is left would be your correct answer.
- See what the author is arguing and the conclusion that he is deriving. While reading the options, you would understand which ones are unrelated and which ones actually strengthen or weaken the author's premise or argument.
- To save time while reading, take note of keywords that are given

General tips for Verbal Reasoning Section

While a strategy should be formulated for different types of verbal reasoning questions, a general strategy on how to approach the verbal reasoning section is also required. We shall discuss some of the general preparation techniques, which you may adopt in order to score more in this section.

- Read the passage with an intent to understand.
- Break down the passage into the premise, argument, and conclusion.
- Identify the rationale behind each premise.
- Read the options first to understand what you are looking for.
- Time yourself before the exams, and practice a number of passages.
- Develop the habit of reading opinions and editorials.



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