

Verbal Question Type: CRITICAL REASONING

Number of Critical Reasoning Questions
About 11 (out of 41 total Verbal questions)

Recommended Time per Question
2 minutes

Here's an Example of a GMAT Critical Reasoning Question:

A pharmaceutical company is trying to enter a competitive field of research. In a meeting with shareholders, the company's public relations representative stated, "In order to attract and retain the best science managers, we offer salaries and bonuses at double the industry standard. Our engineers work with the best science managers in the industry. Consequently, we can expect our engineers to produce the best results."

Which of the following, if true, most strengthens the public relations representative's argument?

- (A) The company's managers are themselves top engineers.
- (B) The bonuses received by the company's science managers are based on performance, as measured by objective metrics of successful research by the engineers they manage.
- (C) The company's science managers are paid only after passing a rigorous, specialized certification program.
- (D) Making a difference in the field of medicine is not the primary motivation of the best pharmaceutical science managers.
- (E) Current market conditions permit science managers to change employment from one pharmaceutical company to another.

And Here's How a Kaplan-Trained GMAT Test Taker Would Answer This Question:

Step 1—Identify the Question Type: To find out how we need to approach this question, the first thing we look at is the question stem, located between the initial paragraph (which we call the "stimulus") and the answer choices. We always want to start with the question because reading the paragraph of information first without having a clear goal of what to look for would be inefficient. By reading the question first and identifying what it asks, we'll know what to look for when we read the stimulus paragraph. Here, the word "argument" tells us that the stimulus is making a point of some kind, "public relations representative's" tells us whose point or argument we need to focus on, and "strengthens" tells us that we need to identify what kind of information would support the PR representative's argument.

Step 2—Untangle the Stimulus: For GMAT Critical Reasoning questions dealing with arguments, we always look for three components that will help break us down the paragraph into the essentials of the argument: conclusion (the main point), evidence (the reasoning, data, or opinions that support the conclusion), and assumptions (things that are not stated but that must be true for the conclusion to follow from the evidence). Here, the PR rep's conclusion is that having the best managers will enable the company's engineers to produce the best results. The evidence given is that the company offers generous pay to attract the best managers. For this to make sense, the PR rep must be assuming that this compensation strategy actually works—the generous pay motivates the best science managers to work for the company.

Step 3—Predict the Answer: We have a much better chance of finding what we're looking for (the correct answer) if we know what it will contain. By predicting the correct answer before reading the answer choices, we avoid being misled by incorrect answers. In this case, we know the correct answer will refer to the assumption we identified: that money, and not anything else, is what primarily motivates the best science managers to work for the company.

Step 4—Evaluate the Choices: By knowing what to look for, we can now confidently evaluate the answer choices to find our correct answer, without being distracted by the wrong answer choices. Our prediction leads us to correct answer choice (D), which tells us that the best science managers are not motivated primarily by a desire to make a difference. This makes it more likely that they are motivated by the salary this company offers. Notice that this answer choice does not make the argument airtight, but it does directly address the central assumption in a way that makes the argument more likely to be true. In other words, it "strengthens" the argument.

Key Takeaway:

Through practice and repetition, you will master the many different types of arguments tested in GMAT Critical Reasoning. Kaplan will teach you how to tackle every question using a proven, consistent approach.