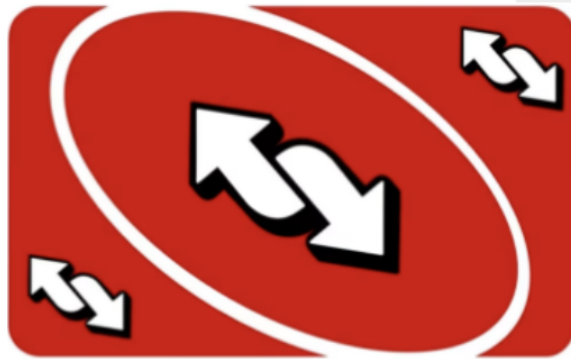# Assumptions

What is an assumption?

Imagine you're reading an argument in a passage, but something crucial isn't actually written down. That's an assumption!

It's like the invisible glue holding the argument together.

An assumption is essentially the **unstated** or **invisible** premise, acting as a bridge to support the conclusion. Without it, the whole argument falls apart and crumble. It's the unsaid 'but necessary' part that holds everything together.

The Uno Reversal Method: A Detective's Tool

To test if something is truly an assumption, try the Reversal Method.

This is like a detective asking, "What if the **opposite** were true?"

If flipping the statement makes the argument crumble, you've found your assumption. Here's how you do it:

1. Identify a potential assumption.
2. Reverse it by saying, "It is not true that [your assumption]."

For example, if the assumption is:

"People sometimes drive when they could walk,"

To reverse it, say:

"There is nobody who drives when they could walk instead"

This means nobody ever drives when they could walk, or people never choose driving over walking.

If this reversal makes the argument seem ridiculous or false, then you've hit the nail on the head – you've found a key assumption!

DRILL 2: IDENTIFYING ASSUMPTIONS IN ARGUMENT

1. A study shows that people who read regularly are more empathetic, as reading fiction allows individuals to understand and connect with others' emotions and experiences. This is supported by the fact that book club members often display strong interpersonal skills and are good at resolving conflicts.

Which one of the following is an underlying assumption of the above argument?

A. The primary reason people join book clubs is to improve their interpersonal skills.

B. Reading fiction is the most effective way to develop empathy.

C. Individuals who do not read regularly lack empathy and interpersonal skills.

D. The ability to understand others' emotions is improved through regular reading.

2. The amount of swearing in films has increased significantly over the past 10 years. To prevent our society from swearing more, governments should pass a law that limits swearing in movies.

The argument above relies on which of the following assumptions?

A. Watching swearing in films encourages real life swearing.

B. Over the past 5 years, swearing rates have risen.

C. The movie industry will do its best to prevent such legislation.

D. Every movie made in the last 10 years includes swearing.

3. Justin Bieber has been judged to be a bad music artist simply because his lyrics are often disjointed and clichéd. However, such judgement is unreasonable, since the works of many modern novelists are typically disjointed and clichéd, and yet these novelists are widely regarded as good writers.

Which one of the following is an assumption on which the argument depends?

A. The disjointed and clichéd nature of writing in modern novels can be compared to the lyrics found in songs.

B. Some people do not appreciate the art of the disjointed, cliched styles of works of art.

C. A disjointed and clichéd writing style is usually more suitable for novels and song lyrics than it is for any other written works.

D. The quality of Justin Bieber's songs is better judged by the quality of lyrics than by the quality of their musical form.

4. Environmentalists argue that reducing plastic use is essential for ocean health. They point out that areas with strict plastic regulations have clearer waters and more diverse marine life. This is seen as evidence that cutting down on plastic directly leads to healthier ocean ecosystems.

Which one of the following is an underlying assumption of the above argument?

A. The only threat to ocean health is the use of plastics.

B. Areas without plastic regulations have no concern for ocean health.

C. Strict regulations are the most effective method to reduce plastic use.

D. Reduction in plastic use is directly responsible for the improvement in ocean ecosystems.

ANSWERS:
  1.D
  2.A
  3.A
  4.D