

# Forcefulness of Arguments

We know that an argument consists of a few premises, unstated premises (Assumptions) and a conclusion. But not all the the arguments are strong enough to convince others to agree with the author. So students will be tested on his capability of judging whether a given argument is strong enough or not.

Model question:

Should women be provided more job opportunities.

Argument 1: No. They will be given household jobs to manage

Argument 2: Yes. They should also go into the outside world.

## Solving Argument questions:

### Step 1:

Remove the options based on the preliminary screening as *some arguments are just too simple, or ambiguous* and may not contain any substance to convince others clearly why this has to be followed.

### Example:

One should enjoy one's life to the fullest extent as tomorrow one has to die.

Argument 1: No because, one should strive to achieve a goal

Argument 2: No. This philosophy hardly enables us to do anything.

Analysis: Argument 1 seems to be good but it is not suggesting how achieving a goal is a priority than enjoying one's life and one can achieve a goal in his life and simultaneously enjoy his life also. So argument 1 is weak. Argument 2 is just try to oppose the statement and not suggesting any course of action. This is a simple opinion rather than an argument.

### Example:

Love marriages should be encouraged compared to arranged marriages

Argument 1: No. Both are having their good points as well as bad points

Argument 2: Yes. Arranged marriages are of no use in these days.

Analysis: Argument 1 is just an elusive answer rather than taking a stance. It is not addressing the core issue. Argument 2 is also a mere statement and not saying why arranged marriages are of no use in these days.

So both are weak arguments.

## Step 2:

*Check whether the result follows or not* if the said argument holds good. A result follows in the following cases

1. Established fact / Prevailing notions of truth
2. Experiences predict that the result will follow
3. Logically, the result will follow

Similarly we can reject an argument based on the following

1. Established fact suggests that the result may not follow
2. Experience predict that the result may not follow
3. Logically it is impossible
4. If it is an individual perception
5. If based on analogy or an example

## Example:

Government must give more funds to midday meal system to reduce the dropouts from schools

Argument 1: Yes. It act as an incentive to poor families to send their children to schools

Argument 2: No. It increases additional burden on the government

Analysis: Experience shows that midday meal system improves the attendance rate if properly executed. We are not arguing here that whether it is really successful or not, but we know that it is surely act as an incentive to many poor families to send their children to school. But second one is not so strong. Though it increases burden on the government exchequer, this action is desirable as education is a fundamental right and government must take necessary actions to make people enjoy this right.

## Step 3:

*Check whether the result is desirable to follow? Some arguments which pass the first two steps appear to be good arguments but they may not bring the desired benefits. Even though it gives the desired benefit, the course of doing it may bring more trouble or expenditure. The best way to check the validity of argument is to ask yourself "if it is true, why many people or institutions or government is not following it?"* .

## Example:

Military training must be made compulsory in schools

Argument : Yes. It brings discipline to students

Analysis: Military discipline may improve discipline as it is an established fact that as in the areas of army, navy etc.

it is highly desirable and results are proven. But the suggested argument is like killing a mosquito with an ax. There are other proven methods in place to bring discipline to students.

### Solved Examples

Statement : Should there be no place for interview in selections?

Arguments 1: Yes. It is very subjective in assessment.

Arguments 2: No, It is only instrument to judge the candidate's motives and personality.

I is strong as a subjective mode of selection is not desirable. II is of course, right.

Statement : Should higher education be completely stopped for some time?

Arguments 1: No. It will hamper the country's progress.

Arguments 2: Yes. It will reduce educated unemployment.

None is strong. Temporary stopping of higher education will not hamper the nation's progress. It will reduce educated unemployment but so what? It will then increase uneducated unemployment.

Statement : Should all news be controlled by the government in a democracy?

Arguments 1: Yes. Variety of news only confuses people.

Arguments 2: No. Controlled news loses credibility.

Second is strong. First argument is debatable while the second is an established fact.

Statement : Should there be students union in college / university?

Arguments 1: No. This will create a political atmosphere in the campus.

Arguments 2: Yes. It is very necessary. Students are the future political leaders.

I is true as it is based on experiences. And political atmosphere in the campus is not really desirable as the campus is a place of learning not politics. II is also true because tomorrow's leaders will come from today's students and it is good that they get some political training early.

Statement : Should there be only one university throughout India?

Arguments 1: Yes. This is the only way to bring about uniformity in educational standards.

Arguments 2: No. This is administratively impossible.

Second is strong. First is weak because it is not correct. (Is it the only way?) Second is perhaps correct, on logical thinking.

Statement : Should all the remote parts of a country be connected by road?

Arguments 1: No. It will disturb peaceful simple life of the villages.

Arguments 2: Yes. It must be done immediately.

None is strong. I is rejected because it may not happen (will not follow). II is rejected because it is too simple and does not have argumentative substance.

Statement : Should government jobs in rural areas have more incentives?

Arguments 1: Yes. Incentives are essential for attracting government servants there.

Arguments 2: No, Rural areas are already cheaper, healthier and less complex than big towns. So, why offer extra incentives!

Both are strong. Incentives do lure people. Second is also an established fact.

Statement : Should religion be taught in our schools?

Arguments 1: No. Ours is a secular state.

Arguments 2: Yes. Teaching religion helps inculcate moral values among children.

Second is strong. First is not very clear. If the state is secular, it means it is against religious bias but not against religion as such. Second is in consonance with the prevailing notions of truth.

Statement : Should mercy death be legalised?

Arguments 1: Yes. Patients undergoing terrible suffering and having absolutely no chance of recovery should be liberated from suffering through mercy death.

Arguments 2: No. Even mercy death is a sort of killing and killing can never be legalized.

Both are strong. They mention a positive and a negative feature of merry death; both these features are desirable/harmful respectively and both are related with important aspects of the topic of mercy death.

Statement : Should there be a world government?

Arguments 1: Yes. It will help in eliminating tensions among the nations.

Arguments 2: No. Then only the developed countries will dominate in the government.

Both are strong. On logical thinking both look probable, both are desirable (harmful in the case of second) and both touch significant aspects of the issue.

Statement : Should the institution of marriages be abolished?

Arguments 1: Yes. It is already showing cracks.

Arguments 2: No. It is necessary for the survival of society.

Second is strong. First is weak as you cannot abolish a system simply because it is showing cracks. Second is an accepted truth.

Statement : Should telecasting feature films be stopped?

Arguments 1: Yes. Young children are misguided by feature films.

Arguments 2: No. This is the only way to educate the masses.

First is strong. First is an acceptable piece of truth backed by evidence. Second is weak as it is not true.

Statement : Should agriculture in rural India be mechanised?

Arguments 1: Yes. It would lead to higher production.

Arguments 2: No. It would lead to rural unemployment.

Both are strong. Both are true (both will follow). The first is really desirable while the second it really harmful.

Statement : Should the illiterate be debarred from voting?

Arguments 1: Yes. They are easily misguided.

Arguments 2: No. It is their Constitutional right.

Second is strong. First talks of a negative feature which goes exist but is not sufficient enough to go for such a drastic action as disallowing for vote. Second is an established fact.

Statement : Can pollution be controlled?

Arguments 1: Yes. If every one realizes the hazard it may create and cooperates to be rid of it, pollution may be controlled.

Arguments 2: No. The crowded highways, factories and industries and an ever-growing population eager to acquire more land for constructing houses are beyond control.

Both are strong. Although both arguments contradict each other, yet both are based upon sound assumptions or facts and hence, independently, both are strong.