

# MCAT CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND REASONING SKILLS: QUESTION TYPES

## QUESTION TYPES AND STRATEGIES

Question Type	Sample Wording	Strategy Tips	Common Types of Wrong Answers
1. <b>Specific: Retrieval</b>	“According to the passage, what is true of ‘X’?” “The author states that ‘X’ is:”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go back to the passage before POE: find and paraphrase the relevant information.</li> <li>Answer in your own words.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses similar language as passage but changes meaning</li> <li>good answer to a question on a different passage topic or to a different question type</li> </ul>
2. <b>Specific: Inference</b> <i>* when in doubt, guess inference.*</i>	“The passage implies/suggests/assumes that...” “Based on the passage, it is reasonable to conclude/infer which of the following regarding ‘X’?” “With which of the following statements would the author be most likely to agree?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go back to passage as soon as possible to find and paraphrase relevant information.</li> <li>Answer in your own words.</li> </ul> <p><b>AVOID ANSWERS WITH THE WORD MOST</b> <b>LOOK FOR ANSWERS WITH THE WORD SOME/MANY</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>too strong to be supported by passage</li> <li>relies too much on speculation or outside knowledge</li> </ul>
3. <b>General: Main Point/Primary Purpose</b>	“Which of the following best expresses the main point of the passage?” “The author’s primary purpose in the passage is to:”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use your Bottom Line, including author’s tone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>too narrow to represent the passage as a whole</li> <li>too broad/goes beyond scope of the passage</li> <li>too extreme</li> <li>wrong tone</li> <li>part right part wrong</li> </ul>
4. <b>General: Overall Tone/Attitude</b>	“The author’s apparent attitude towards ‘X’ can best be described as...”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use your Bottom Line.</li> <li>Look for tone indicators you have highlighted in passage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>positive or negative tone for a neutral passage</li> <li>opposite tone (e.g., negative instead of positive)</li> <li>too strong/extreme</li> </ul>
5. <b>Reasoning: Structure</b>	“The author of the passage states ‘X’ in order to...” “The author’s claim ‘X’ is based on evidence that:”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go back to the passage before POE.</li> <li>Determine if the statement is a conclusion or evidence for a conclusion.</li> <li>Pay attention to context of the cited statement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>references wrong part of the author’s argument</li> <li>can be inferred from the passage, but doesn’t describe logical structure</li> </ul>
6. <b>Reasoning: Evaluate</b>	“How well supported is the author’s claim that ‘X’?” “Which of the following represents a logical error in the passage?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go back to the passage and find the cited claim.</li> <li>Use your highlighting to help locate the support, if any, given for claim.</li> <li>If question asks for an error or contradiction, go straight to POE and then back to the passage as needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>incorrectly describes logical structure of argument</li> <li>opposite evaluation (e.g., strongly rather than weakly supported)</li> <li>Part of the passage that is NOT flawed or self-contradictory (for question asking for a flaw)</li> </ul>
7. <b>Application: Strengthen</b>	“Which of the following, if true, most strengthens/supports the passage author’s argument?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go back to the passage; find and paraphrase the relevant claim.</li> <li>Define the necessary issue and direction (consistent or inconsistent with passage) of the correct choice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>opposite</li> <li>not relevant to cited claim</li> <li>not strong enough to have a significant impact</li> </ul> <p><b>MUST include the topic listed in the question, no matter how good the other answers may seem</b> <b>AVOID ANSWERS WITH THE WORD SOME/MANY</b> <b>LOOK FOR ANSWERS WITH THE WORD MOST</b></p>
8. <b>Application: Weaken</b>	“Which of the following statements, if true, most weakens/undermines/calls into question the author’s argument in the passage?”		
9. <b>Application: New Information</b> <i>* can be: 1) new info: inference 2) new info: strengthen/weaken</i>	“Elsewhere, the author of the passage states ‘X.’ Given the information in the passage, this is most likely due to:”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarize theme of new info.</li> <li>Define the relationship of new info to relevant parts of the passage/ Bottom Line.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>not relevant to new info and/or the passage</li> <li>relevant only to wrong part of passage</li> <li>incorrectly describes the new information’s impact on or relevance to the passage.</li> </ul>
10. <b>Application: Analogy</b>	“Which of the following relationships is most similar to ‘X’ as it is described in the passage?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go back to passage; define the theme or logic of the relevant part of the passage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>similar content but different logic</li> <li>incomplete match compared to other choices</li> <li>reversal or opposite of passage logic</li> </ul>