

Evaluating Reasoning Worksheet #1

Exercise #1

A patient enters a doctor's office complaining of a severe headache, nausea, fever, and a sore throat. He says that he has been feeling this way for a week, without showing signs of improvement. He says that he took antibiotics, but that they did not help. The doctor tells the patient that since antibiotics combat bacterial infections, he must have a virus. The doctor explains that there are no medicines to fight viruses, and sends the patient home to rest.

What would be the best evaluation of the doctor's reasoning?

- A. **Good reasoning.** If the patient does not have a bacterial infection, he must have a viral infection.
- B. **Good reasoning.** Patients often exaggerate their symptoms without giving the sickness time to go away.
- C. **Poor reasoning.** The patient may have some kind of malady that is neither viral nor bacterial.
- D. **Poor reasoning.** Doctors should always draw blood to make sure that a patient does not have something serious.

Exercise #2

An army sergeant is trapped with his men by a group of guerilla fighters in an isolated jungle region. The men are badly outnumbered by the guerillas, and they have few supplies left. The sergeant has strict orders not to attack the guerillas unless the guerillas attack first. Since the guerillas know this, they hope to keep the soldiers surrounded until they surrender peacefully due to hunger. With little time left before his men will begin to experience dangerous hunger, the sergeant orders his men to attack the guerillas on the grounds that it is their only hope for survival.

What would be the best evaluation of the sergeant's decision?

- A. **Good reasoning.** He could not simply sit by and watch his men starve.
- B. **Good reasoning.** His best chance for preserving his men's lives and escaping was through a surprise attack.
- C. **Poor reasoning.** The sergeant had strict orders not to attack unless provoked.
- D. **Poor reasoning.** The sergeant could have surrendered and saved his men's lives.

Evaluating Reasoning Worksheet #2

Exercise #3

Suppose that someone argues in the following way:

"Identity theft is becoming one of the most prevalent crimes in the world. The US faces the significant problem of prosecuting offenders who don't live in the US. Even when offenders are identified, local authorities in other countries are often powerless to prosecute offenders because identity theft may not be a crime in their country. One possible solution to this problem would be to make identity theft an international crime, punishable by international courts."

What would be the best evaluation of the proposed solution?

- A. **Good reasoning.** The solution seems tenable, although particulars would have to be worked out.
- B. **Good reasoning.** The threat of punishment for all would strongly deter identity theft.
- C. **Poor reasoning.** The author has given no thought to the rights of citizens of other countries.
- D. **Poor reasoning.** An international court, by definition, has no rights to punish—only to prosecute.

Exercise #4

One of the biggest problems facing community colleges across the US is remediation. Remediation is the process of enrolling students in pre-collegiate courses because they are not adequately prepared for college level courses. These courses place a huge strain on college finances and on local taxpayers. If we want to reduce the financial burden on colleges and taxpayers, we have no choice but to eliminate remediation.

What would be the best evaluation of the reasoning and the proposed solution?

- A. **Good reasoning.** It is the only logical solution to the stated problem.
- B. **Good reasoning.** There is no evidence to suggest that remediation actually helps prepare students for college.
- C. **Poor reasoning.** Students need to go to college, no matter the costs.
- D. **Poor reasoning.** There may be ways to reduce taxpayer expense without eliminating remediation.

Evaluating Reasoning Worksheet #3

Exercise #5

In his article, "There Are No Lessons To Be Learned From Littleton", Gary Kleck argues that by focusing on uncommon mass murders rather than more common forms of violence, we lose sight of what really causes more prevalent forms of violence: poverty. If he is correct, the solution to much of the violence in the United States is not to take measures to prevent highly unusual crimes (such as multiple shootings in schools), but to combat poverty in areas in which violence is most prevalent.

What would be the best evaluation of this passage's reasoning?

- A. **Good reasoning.** If poverty is the real problem behind violence, it makes sense to combat poverty to curb violence.
- B. **Good reasoning.** Mass murders happen very infrequently.
- C. **Poor reasoning.** School violence is a large and disturbing problem that needs to be prevented and corrected.
- D. **Poor reasoning.** There is no evidence that violence is caused by poverty.

Exercise #6

A scientist conducted an experiment in which he froze large fish that live in deep parts of the Pacific Ocean. He was able to keep them frozen for almost two hours before bringing them back to life successfully. From this experiment, he concluded that there is hope that human beings could be frozen and brought back to life.

What would be the best evaluation of this passage's reasoning?

- A. **Good reasoning.** Since most vertebrates share much of the same genetic information, the experiment might apply to other forms of life.
- B. **Good reasoning.** Since both fish and humans are made of cells, and the cells of the fish were brought back to life, the experiment might work for humans.
- C. **Poor reasoning.** We do not know enough about the fish to conclude that this experiment applies to humans as well.
- D. **Poor reasoning.** The fish were from the deep regions of the Pacific Ocean, which commonly freezes, thereby adapting the fish to these conditions.

Evaluating Reasoning Worksheet #4

Exercise #7

Every day, Suzie walked home from school on the same route at the same time. Often, she saw the same people doing the same thing every day. She especially liked seeing Mrs. Rothburn watering her roses because Mrs. Rothburn always let Suzie water the flowers, and then she always gave Suzie a piece of candy before she continued walking home. One day, Mrs. Rothburn wasn't there. Suzie walked by her house every day for two weeks, yet she was never there. Suzie was very upset when she got home and she cried and told her mother that Mrs. Rothburn didn't like her any more. Suzie's mother told her not to worry, that Mrs. Rothburn was probably on vacation.

What would be the best evaluation of the mother's reasoning?

- A. **Good reasoning.** Mrs. Rothburn's flowers were dying, indicating that no one was watering them.
- B. **Good reasoning.** Suzie didn't do anything to make Mrs. Rothburn not like her any more.
- C. **Poor reasoning.** Mrs. Rothburn was too old to go on vacation for two weeks.
- D. **Poor reasoning.** Older people often get tired of young children.

Exercise #8

The governor explained to the committee that the state was in a budget crisis because revenues were down because unemployment was high, leading to fewer taxes for the state. He said that because of this situation there were two possible solutions: to reduce services to the citizens of the states (thereby decreasing expenditures), or to increase employment (thereby increasing taxes paid to the state). A state senator objected to this, saying that the state could also rely on both means simultaneously to reduce the budget crisis.

What would be the best evaluation of the senator's reasoning?

- A. **Good reasoning.** A senator's job is to point out the inconsistencies in a governor's policies.
- B. **Good reasoning.** If both reduction in services and increased employment would help the state, a combination of those strategies may help even more.
- C. **Poor reasoning.** While one strategy or the other might work, combining them will have the opposite effect.
- D. **Poor reasoning.** It's impossible to know who is right and who is wrong in complex situations like this one.

Evaluating Reasoning Worksheet #5

Exercise #9

Recently, a court tried a malpractice case. In this case, the plaintiff argued that his doctor had prescribed a medication that made him break out in a severe rash. The rash was so bad that he missed a month of work, leading to him being fired from his job. The plaintiff asked that the court award him damages for losing his job and requested a year's pay. The defense argued that the man's employer had warned him previously that if he missed more work, he would be fired because he had missed so much work prior to this incident; therefore, the doctor should not be held responsible for the man losing his job.

What would be the best evaluation of the defense's reasoning?

- A. **Good reasoning.** The man should have been more responsible.
- B. **Good reasoning.** The defense did not deny that the medicine was the cause of the rash.
- C. **Poor reasoning.** While the man missed work before, the doctor could still be held responsible for doing something to cause him to miss work again.
- D. **Poor reasoning.** Everyone has a different opinion about what is right and what is wrong.

Exercise #10

A rock group decided to go on tour to promote its most recent album. The group's promotional manager studied sales histories and located where the album was selling well, and where it was selling poorly. Since the album was selling well in large cities on the East and West coasts and poorly in the Midwest and South, the promoter recommended that the group tour the South and Midwest.

What would be the best evaluation of the manager's reasoning?

- A. **Good reasoning.** It makes sense to promote the album where sales are down.
- B. **Good reasoning.** Most people in the South and Midwest live in smaller towns than the larger cities on the coasts.
- C. **Poor reasoning.** He should promote sales where they are already strong.
- D. **Poor reasoning.** Sales are more likely to go up in large cities, where people listen to that kind of music.

Answer Key

1. C
2. D
3. A
4. D
5. A
6. C
7. B
8. B
9. C
10. A