Chapter 2 – Evaluating arguments
Answers to select "Getting familiar with…" exercises.

Getting familiar with… extraneous material.

There are a number of ways to express the intended meaning of each these. Some of them could mean just about anything, and our answers here by no means exhaust the possibilities. But they give you a sense of possible interpretations. Experiment with others and talk them over with your instructor and peers.

1. The wind blew against the sea wall for a long time.

3. To succeed at any job well, you must be able to work with others who act differently than you.

5. Circumstances are unfortunate. We must all do things we do not like to keep things from getting worse.

7. Evaluate yourself or others in a way that helps you or them see their performance accurately.

9. I will not run for office if I don't believe I see what needs to be done to make people better off than they are and if I don't have the ability to do those things.
    (It is difficult to make this much more precise because it isn't clear what sorts of things could be done, what it would mean for someone to be "better off," or what it would mean to have the ability to do those things. Politicians are slippery.)

11. Please work hard and do your job well.

13. We need to design and create products that no one else has thought of.

15. We're trying out some new policies this year that we hope you'll like.

17. Don't be afraid to be creative. Experiment with new ways of doing things.

19. Don't waste time.

Getting familiar with... implicit claims.

We have placed the implied claims in brackets.

1. Missing. God made dirt. [Anything God makes is not harmful.] Dirt doesn't hurt. [Therefore, you can eat(?) dirt.]

3. Disguised. You have to be registered to vote. You are not registered to vote. [Therefore, you should register to vote.]

5. Missing. Every religion is a story about salvation. [Buddhism is a religion.] So, Buddhism is a story about salvation.

7. Missing. [You should not put young children on trial.] That child is only 4 years old. Therefore, you should not put that child on trial.

9. Disguised. All liberals are elitist atheists. You're not an elitist atheist. [Therefore, you are not a liberal.]

11. Missing. You have to score at least a 90 to pass this exam. You only scored an 87. [Therefore, you did not pass this exam.]

13. Missing. It's not over until the music stops. The band plays on. [Therefore, it's not over.]

15. Missing. [If it is five o'clock somewhere, I am having a beer.] It's five o'clock somewhere. So, I'm having a beer.

17. Disguised premise. Missing conclusion. If Creationism were true, there wouldn't be any vestigial organs. The tailbone are appendix are vestigial organs. [There are vestigial organs. Therefore, Creationism isn't true.]

19. Missing. Most terrorists say they are members of Islam. [A religion is violent if its practitioners are violent.] Therefore, Islam is a violent religion.

Getting familiar with… ambiguity and vagueness.

1. Syntactic ambiguity.
       a. The lab mice assaulted him.
       b. He was assaulted next to the lab mice.

3. Lexical ambiguity: prescription
       a. He gave her a medical prescription for a medication that alleviates pain.
       b. He gave her advice about how to cause pain.

5. Syntactic ambiguity.
      a. They were discussing cutting down the tree that is growing in her house.
      b. While they were in her house, they were discussing cutting down the tree.

7. Vague. It is unclear what counts as "unfair" in this context Some options:
      a. the test was more difficult than the student expected
      b. the test did not give all students an equal chance at success
      c. the test did not give students a reasonable chance at success

9. Vague. It is unclear what counts as "nice" in this context. Some options:
      a. She is friendly.
      b. She is morally good.
      c. She is charitable.
      d. She is pleasant.

11. Syntactic ambiguity (but the syntactic ambiguity trades on a lexical ambiguity with the word "duck").
      a. He saw the duck that belongs to her.
      b. He saw her lower her head quickly.

13. Vague. It is unclear what counts as "terrible" in this context. Some options:
      a. Unsuccessful at his job.
      b. Supporting policies that harm citizens.
      c. Supporting policies with which the author disagrees.
      d. Not communicating well or much with citizens.

15. Vague. It is unclear what counts as "great" in this context. Some options:
      a. Locke was an intriguing writer.
      b. Locke defended many claims that turned out to be true.
      c. Locke argued for his views very ably.
      d. Locke was a well-known philosopher.
      e. Locke was a well-respected philosopher.

17. Lexical ambiguity. "Match."
      a. He could not find where the tennis match was being held.
      b. He could not find the complement to his sock.
      c. He could not find the wooden matchstick.

19. Syntactic ambiguity.
      a. My uncle, the priest, got married to my father.
      b. My uncle, the priest, performed the marriage ceremony for my father.

Getting familiar with… validity.

1. "All monotheists believe in one god."

3. "Hence, they should act wickedly."

5. "You're not serious."

7. "Therefore, we either stay or we go."

9. "All chemists are scientists."

Getting familiar with… argument strength.

1. c: somewhat unlikely. Given that you have only one past experience with the dog, and that the dog has a track record of being much calmer, you are unlikely to be bitten again. This conclusion would be highly unlikely if we had the premise that dogs that are castrated are much less likely to be aggressive.

3. b: somewhat likely. There is no guarantee that Brown is the murderer, and without further information, it isn't clear that it is likely. However, if this is the only evidence we have, it does suggest that Brown is the murderer.

5. d: highly unlikely. Given only these premises, we have no idea whether Frank loves Tom. The evidence does not support the conclusion to any degree.

7. d: highly unlikely. The evidence suggests that it is highly likely that the next bean will be red. Therefore, it is unlikely that the conclusion is true.

9. b: somewhat likely. Every sporting match is different, so even these things might increase the likely that the Tigers will win, it is not clear how much (as many people who bet on such things find out the hard way).