



Suppressed premises

In the exercises below there are premises missing, unstated assumptions that are needed to make the arguments and explanations clear. In the first two you are given options from which to choose. In the last two you are asked to create the missing premise yourself.

Exercises

- 1 Some telephone companies have diversified their businesses by combining into one package line rentals, broadband and TV. Consequently, they are no longer providing the same quality of service to their original telephone customers. Therefore, if they want to keep their customers, they must concentrate exclusively on one of these different markets.

For this argument to be logically valid, it must make which one of the following assumptions?

- A. Most customers do not want a package that includes all three things: line rental, broadband and TV.
 - B. If a telephone company specialises exclusively in the provision of line rentals, then it will be successful.
 - C. The primary responsibility of a telephone company is to be a successful business.
 - D. If a telephone company is to be successful, it must serve its customers well.
 - E. None of these three elements – line rental, broadband and TV – have much in common.
- 2 Scientists have discovered a chemical, known as EPPS, that destroys toxic amyloid plaques that build up in the brain in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. When added to drinking water it cleared the plaques from the brains of mice with Alzheimer-like symptoms and restored their cognitive function to normal.

Which of the following, if true, most helps to explain why using this chemical to clear the plaques is effective in restoring cognitive functions to normal?

- A. Amyloid plaques contribute to neurodegeneration by killing off brain cells.
- B. The chemical used to destroy amyloid plaques, known as EPPS, is not detectable in the water.
- C. The tests done on the mice to measure their cognitive function resemble the sort of functions that are done in the human brain.
- D. Amyloid plaques produce neurodegeneration by blocking proteins that sustain the connections between the neurons.
- E. EPPS binds with the amyloid plaques and then breaks them down.



- 3 Identify the suppressed premises in the following arguments:
- 3.1 This year Dishglow washing up liquid outsold its three nearest competitors combined. It's clearly the best washing up liquid on the market.
- 3.2 If you don't believe him, who *can* you believe? After all, he is a member of the clergy.
- 3.3 The incidence of obesity in small village communities is 30% lower than it is in large cities. Therefore, city councils should place stricter controls on the planning permission they give for the setting up of fast food outlets.
- 4 Assess the reasoning in the following arguments by framing the suppressed premises. In some cases, more than one will be necessary to show how the argument is developed. Are these premises true? Does the conclusion necessarily follow from them?
- 4.1 The weather forecast for the next three days says there will be no snow. So we can go ahead with our plans to travel tomorrow?
- 4.2 I admit, I copied most of my essay from the internet. What's the problem with that? Everybody does it!
- 4.3 Over the past year the manufacturer has recalled 50,000 of those cars, because of a problem with the steering. You won't get me buying one of those cars. They are obviously not safe.
- 4.4 There is no evidence that William Shakespeare was capable of writing the plays that are attributed to him. After all, he was just a minor Elizabethan actor. This proves he didn't write them.
- 4.5 If it is possible for airlines to offer charter flights that are significantly cheaper than scheduled flights, it is clear that the ticket prices on scheduled flights are far too high and the airlines are making an extortionate profit from them.
- 4.6 The United Nations must do all it can to limit the birth rate in countries whose food supply is inadequate.
- 4.7 Although we can argue that most TV programmes are an insult to our intelligence, we ought not to blame the TV companies or the advertisers. They are just giving viewers what they want to see. Just take a look at the viewing figures for these programmes.
- 4.8 When universities introduce programmes designed to recognise and reward outstanding teachers, this usually involves conducting polls among students. But this is far from being the fairest or the most accurate way of doing it. This sort of thing always degenerates into a mere popularity contest.

Answers

1 D

2 A