



# The Stimulus-Based Approach

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Want to know the biggest secret in Logical Reasoning?

**The answer is in the stimulus, not in the answer choices.**



This is why reading is so important. You have to know what happened in the stimulus in order to complete the question.

Imagine you're taking a math test. You all took math at one point and have the scars to prove it. Imagine you've got a big messy equation and a bunch of possible answers to choose from. Do you think you'd give the equation a quick skim and run down to the answer choices, hoping that something about **A** will just look better than **B**? No, that makes no sense. You would stay with the equation until you really understood what it said. You would take it apart and simplify it. You would do whatever needed to be done to put yourself in a position to know the right answer. That's what anyone would do with a math test.

So why don't we do that here? Why doesn't anyone have an analogous system for the stimuli in LR? What is so different about verbally-based testing that we feel we can just "get the gist" of the stimulus before "figuring out" which answer is "better" for that specific question type? I would guess it's because a lot of us have gotten by in school skimming for as long as we can remember. We haven't had to *really* read anything deeply in order to do well enough in our classes. The LSAT requires a lot more from us, and so will law school.

Since the answer to the question is in the stimulus, you can guess that the stimulus is pretty important. Luckily, **there are only four types of stimuli** on the LSAT. Let's take a moment to introduce each of them.

## THE FOUR STIMULUS TYPES

The purpose of this book is to provide you with the toolkit to understand and analyze each of these four stimulus types. Mastering the stimulus will allow you to predict the correct answer to Logical Reasoning questions before even reading the question type.

STIMULUS	DESCRIPTION
<b>Argument</b>	Premises and conclusions
<b>Premise Set</b>	Non-contradictory premises
<b>Paradox</b>	Contradictory premises
<b>Debate</b>	Two speakers

Let's briefly talk through each stimulus type and check out a few examples. **Don't worry if you don't understand some of these concepts right now.** We're purposefully not going into depth in this section. We want to show you where you're headed and keep the purpose of the next few hundred pages at the forefront of your mind. We will go into depth with each of these types throughout the book, starting with Arguments and Premise Sets in Chapter 2.



Don't worry if you aren't super clear on premises and conclusions yet; you'll learn a ton about them in just a few pages.

## ARGUMENTS

June 2007.2.4

REAL LSAT QUESTION REDACTED

Most LSAT stimuli are Arguments. These stimuli consist of premises and conclusions. Premises are facts and conclusions are the interesting/tenuous opinions based on those facts. Together, premises and conclusions make an Argument, the cornerstone of both the LSAT and the legal profession. The next six chapters of this book are designed to prepare you to understand and analyze Arguments.

## PREMISE SET

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REAL LSAT QUESTION REDACTED

Premise Sets are the second-most prevalent stimulus type on the LSAT. They're made up of *just* the premises, no conclusion. They're a bunch of facts waiting for you to add them up. Chapter 2 discusses premises in detail.

## PARADOX

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REAL LSAT QUESTION REDACTED

Paradoxes are a specific type of Premise Set. The premises in a Paradox contradict one another, creating a stimulus that doesn't make sense. Paradoxes provoke an eyebrow raise. They make you ask, "How is that possible?" Paradoxes will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8, The CLIR.

## DEBATE

June 2007.3.3

REAL LSAT QUESTION REDACTED

Debates are two-speaker stimuli. Basically, two people have an exchange, and at least one of them will likely make an argument. The two speakers will argue the truth or falsity of a specific point. Debates will also be discussed in detail in Chapter 8, The CLIR.

## The CLIR Sneak Preview PRONOUNCED “CLEAR”



CONTROVERSY



LOOPHOLE



INFERENCE



RESOLUTION

Now that you know the stimulus types, let me give you a sneak preview into how you’ll analyze each type. Keep in mind that this will be explained in far more detail (once you have the necessary foundation to enact the methodology; that’s what Chapters 2-7 are for) in Chapter 8, The CLIR.

**When you’re doing an LR section (untimed or timed), you will always detect the stimulus type and perform an analytical task associated with that stimulus type; these tasks are collectively called the CLIR.**

The CLIR will very often give you the correct answer to the question that follows the stimulus. Here is how the stimulus types map to their associated tasks in the CLIR:

- **Debate** → **Controversy**
- **Argument** → **Loophole**
- **Premise Set** → **Inference**
- **Paradox** → **Resolution**

CLIR is an acronym to help you remember the tasks for each stimulus. In Chapter 2, we will begin discussing Loopholes and Inferences, the L and the I of the CLIR. **Pay special attention to Loopholes and Inferences in the next few chapters.** Loopholes and Inferences are not just concepts you have to understand well enough to continue reading; these are tasks *you* are going to be performing frequently when you start designing your own CLIRs. Loopholes and Inferences are associated with the most common stimuli types in LR; **45 out of 51 LR stimuli on a randomly selected recent LSAT were Arguments or Premise Sets.** So you need a mastery-level understanding of Arguments and Premise Sets, along with Loopholes and Inferences. That’s what the next few chapters are here for!

It may seem like there are a lot of pages in this book until we get to “really doing LSAT” (the question types purposefully do not start until Chapter 9). I can assure you that every minute you spend reading this book is “really doing LSAT”; you need the foundation we’re about to build. *Every single word* of this book is devoted to getting you the absolute highest LSAT score you’re capable of.



For instance, when you see an Argument stimulus, you will immediately design a Loophole and then proceed to the question stem.



Don’t worry about Controversies and Resolutions for now. They won’t appear until we go into detail with them in Chapter 8.