

# Solving the “*GRE*<sup>®</sup> Analyze Argument Task Test” *with a simple universal logical argument design\**

## Demonstration I

“The [GRE] Analyze an Argument Task assesses your ability to understand, analyze and evaluate arguments according to specific instructions and to convey your evaluation clearly in your writing. The task consists of a brief passage in which the author makes a case for some course of action or interpretation of events by presenting claims backed by reasons and evidence.

Your task is to discuss the logical soundness of the author’s case by critically examining the line of reasoning and the use of evidence.”

[https://www.ets.org/gre/revised\\_general/prepare/analytical\\_writing/argument/prepare\\_task](https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/argument/prepare_task)

“In surveys Mason City residents rank water sports (swimming, boating and fishing) among their favorite recreational activities. The Mason River flowing through the city is rarely used for these pursuits, however, and the city park department devotes little of its budget to maintaining riverside recreational facilities. For years there have been complaints from residents about the quality of the river's water and the river's smell. In response, the state has recently announced plans to clean up Mason River. Use of the river for water sports is therefore sure to increase. The city government should for that reason devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.”

**“Write a response in which you examine the stated and/or unstated assumptions of the argument. Be sure to explain how the argument depends on the assumptions and what the implications are if the assumptions prove unwarranted.”**

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GRE TEST / ANALYTICAL WRITING / ARGUMENT SAMPLE TASK

LINKED PREMISES		SUPPORTING ASSUMPTIONS	
1	[Green box]	<	(a)
		<	(b)
2	Any (All/One) who (that) [previous predicate]...	<	(a)
		<	(b)
3	Any (All/One) who (that) [previous predicate]...	<	(a)
		<	(b)
MAIN CONCLUSION [level one]			
	[Green box]	<	
	[Red box]	<	

This is the DCIT template to provide initial scaffolding for the argument structure.

In surveys Mason City residents rank water sports (swimming, boating and fishing) among their favorite recreational activities. The Mason River flowing through the city is rarely used for these pursuits, however, and the city park department devotes little of its budget to maintaining riverside recreational facilities. For years there have been complaints from residents about the quality of the river's water and the river's smell. In response, the state has recently announced plans to clean up Mason River. Use of the river for water sports is therefore sure to increase. The city government should for that reason devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.

**Write a response in which you examine the stated and/or unstated assumptions of the argument. Be sure to explain how the argument depends on the assumptions and what the implications are if the assumptions prove unwarranted.**

LINKED PREMISES		SUPPORTING ASSUMPTIONS	
1	[Green box]	<	(a)
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3	Any (All/One) who (that) [previous predicate]...	<	(a)
		<	(b)
MAIN CONCLUSION [level one]			
	The city government ... should devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.	<	
		<	

In surveys Mason City residents rank water sports (swimming, boating and fishing) among their favorite recreational activities. The Mason River flowing through the city is rarely used for these pursuits, however, and the city park department devotes little of its budget to maintaining riverside recreational facilities. For years there have been complaints from residents about the quality of the river's water and the river's smell. In response, the state has recently announced plans to clean up Mason River. Use of the river for water sports is therefore sure to increase. **The city government should for that reason devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.**

Write a response in which you examine the stated and/or unstated assumptions of the argument. Be sure to explain how the argument depends on the assumptions and what the implications are if the assumptions prove unwarranted.

1. Fill in the MAIN CONCLUSION separating the subject and the predicate.

LINKED PREMISES		SUPPORTING ASSUMPTIONS	
1	The city government ...	<	(a)
		<	(b)
2	Any (All/One) who (that) [previous predicate]...	<	(a)
		<	(b)
3	Any (All/One) who (that) [previous predicate]... <b>...should devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.</b>	<	(a)
		<	(b)
MAIN CONCLUSION [level one]			
	The city government ... <b>...should devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.</b>	<	
		<	

In surveys Mason City residents rank water sports (swimming, boating and fishing) among their favorite recreational activities. The Mason River flowing through the city is rarely used for these pursuits, however, and the city park department devotes little of its budget to maintaining riverside recreational facilities. For years there have been complaints from residents about the quality of the river's water and the river's smell. In response, the state has recently announced plans to clean up Mason River. Use of the river for water sports is therefore sure to increase. **The city government should for that reason devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.**

Write a response in which you examine the stated and/or unstated assumptions of the argument. Be sure to explain how the argument depends on the assumptions and what the implications are if the assumptions prove unwarranted.

2. Bracket the list of *linked premises* with the MAIN CONCLUSION subject and predicate as endpoints.

LINKED PREMISES		SUPPORTING ASSUMPTIONS	
1	The city government ... ...will have a cleanup of its river according to the state.	<	(a) (b)
2	Any (All/One) who (that) [previous predicate]... ...will have for sure an increase in the use of the river for watersports.	<	(a) (b)
3	Any (All/One) who (that) [previous predicate]... ...should devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.	<	(a) (b)
MAIN CONCLUSION [level one]			
	The city government ... ...should devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.	<	

In surveys Mason City residents rank water sports (swimming, boating and fishing) among their favorite recreational activities. The Mason River flowing through the city is rarely used for these pursuits, however, and the city park department devotes little of its budget to maintaining riverside recreational facilities. For years there have been complaints from residents about the quality of the river's water and the river's smell. **In response, the state has recently announced plans to clean up Mason River. Use of the river for water sports is therefore sure to increase.** The city government should for that reason devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.

Write a response in which you examine the stated and/or unstated assumptions of the argument. Be sure to explain how the argument depends on the assumptions and what the implications are if the assumptions prove unwarranted.

3. Select the predicates that connect to “The city government” and that create the *linked premises* that lead (e.g., a nested categorical membership string) to the predicate of the MAIN CONCLUSION.

LINKED PREMISES		SUPPORTING ASSUMPTIONS	
1	The city government ... will have a cleanup of its river according to the state. ...	<	(a) (b)
2	Any (All/One) who (that) [previous predicate]... will have for sure an increase in the use of the river for watersports.	<	2(a) <i>The river actually needs a cleanup.</i> 2(b) <i>There will actually be a cleanup.</i> < 2(c) <i>The residents avoided using the river because of a lack of a needed cleanup.</i>
3	Any (All/One) who (that) [previous predicate]... should devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.	<	3(a) <i>The Mason residents will want to use that river for watersports.</i> < 3(b) <i>The original budget was inadequate.</i>
MAIN CONCLUSION [level one]			
	The city government ... should devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.	<	

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4. Add the *supporting assumptions* that support the acceptability or probability of any of the *linked premises* using those that are explicit and implicit based on your imagination and understanding of how the world functions.

LINKED PREMISES		SUPPORTING ASSUMPTIONS	
1	The city government ... will have a cleanup of its river according to the state. ...	<	(a) (b)
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<b>MAIN CONCLUSION [level one]</b>			
	The city government ... should devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.	<	

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5. Review the additional premises in the argument to determine if they (1) fit within an additional line of *linked premises* for the Main Conclusion, (2) provide secondary *supporting assumptions* to the original *supporting assumptions*, or (3) provide *linked premises* as evidence for the original *supporting assumptions*.

LINKED PREMISES		SUPPORTING ASSUMPTIONS	
1	The city government ... will have a cleanup of its river according to the state. ...	<	(a) (b)
2	Any (All/One) who (that) [previous predicate]... will have for sure an increase in the use of the river for watersports.	<	2(a) <i>The river actually needs a cleanup.</i> 2(b) <i>There will actually be a cleanup.</i> < 2(c) <i>The residents avoided using the river because of a lack of a needed cleanup.</i>
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For example, the premise “For years there have been complaints from residents about the quality of the river’s water and the river’s smell” is evidence that supports **Assumption 2(c)**. Thus, it is part of *linked premises* that lead to the acceptability of **Assumption 2(c)** as shown in the new template in next slide.

LINKED PREMISES		SUPPORTING ASSUMPTIONS	
1	The residents ... contained a group who complained about the quality of the river's water and the river's smell.	<	1(a) < 1(b)
3	Any (All/One) who (that) [previous predicate]... avoided using the river because of a lack of needed cleanup.	<	2(a) <i>The quality and smell was a deterrent to using the river.</i> < 2(b) <i>The group was a representative sample of the population of residents.</i>
CONCLUSION			
	The residents ... avoided using the river because of a lack of needed cleanup.	<	

In surveys Mason City residents rank water sports (swimming, boating and fishing) among their favorite recreational activities. The Mason River flowing through the city is rarely used for these pursuits, however, and the city park department devotes little of its budget to maintaining riverside recreational facilities. For years there have been complaints from residents about the quality of the river's water and the river's smell. In response, the state has recently announced plans to clean up Mason River. Use of the river for water sports is therefore sure to increase. The city government should for that reason devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.

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This is a new DCIT template providing scaffolding for *linked premises* and supporting assumptions for the original (level 1) supporting **Assumption 2(c)** which is now treated as a separate **CONCLUSION**.

Main Conclusion:

**The city government should devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.**

LINKED PREMISES

1. **The city government...**[will have a cleanup of its river according to the state.]

2. One that [*repeat previous predicate*]...[will have for sure an increase in the use of the river for water sports.]

SUPPORTING ASSUMPTIONS to Linked Premise 2.

(a) The river actually needs a cleanup.

(b) There will actually be a cleanup.

(c) **The residents avoided using the river because of a lack of a needed cleanup.**

LINKED PREMISES to Supporting Assumption 2(c).

1.1 **The residents...**[contained a group who complained about the quality of the river's water and the river's smell.]

2.1 One who [*repeat previous predicate*]...**avoided using the river because of a lack of needed cleanup.**

SUPPORTING ASSUMPTIONS to Linked Premise 2.1.

(a) The quality and smell was a deterrent to using the river.

(b) The group was a representative sample of the population of residents.

3. One that [*repeat previous predicate*]...**should devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.**

## ETS SUGGESTED ASSUMPTIONS

The assumption that people who rank water sports "among their favorite recreational activities" are actually likely to participate in them. (It is possible that they just like to watch them.) This assumption underlies the claim that use of the river for water sports is sure to increase after the state cleans up the Mason River and that the city should for that reason devote more money to riverside recreational facilities.

The assumption that what residents say in surveys can be taken at face value. (It is possible that survey results exaggerate the interest in water sports.) This assumption underlies the claim that use of the river for water sports is sure to increase after the state cleans up the Mason River and that the city should for that reason devote more money to riverside recreational facilities.

The assumption that Mason City residents would actually want to do water sports in the Mason River. (As recreational activities, it is possible that water sports are regarded as pursuits for vacations and weekends away from the city.) This assumption underlies the claim that use of the river for water sports is sure to increase after the state cleans up the Mason River and that the city should for that reason devote more money to riverside recreational facilities.

The assumption that the park department's devoting little of its budget to maintaining riverside recreational facilities means that these facilities are inadequately maintained. This assumption underlies the claim that the city should devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities. If current facilities are adequately maintained, then increased funding might not be needed even if recreational use of the river does increase.

The assumption that the riverside recreational facilities are facilities designed for people who participate in water sports and not some other recreational pursuit. This assumption underlies the claim that the city should devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.

The assumption that the dirtiness of the river is the cause of its being little used and that cleaning up the river will be sufficient to increase recreational use of the river. (Residents might have complained about the water quality and smell even if they had no desire to boat, swim or fish in the river.) This assumption underlies the claim that the state's plan to clean up the river will result in increased use of the river for water sports.

The assumption that the complaints about the river are numerous and significant. This assumption motivates the state's plan to clean up the river and underlies the claim that use of the river for water sports is sure to increase. (Perhaps the complaints are coming from a very small minority; in which case cleaning the river might be a misuse of state funds.

## ETS SUGGESTED ASSUMPTIONS

The assumption that the state's clean-up will occur soon enough to require adjustments to this year's budget. This assumption underlies the claim that the city should devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.

The assumption that the clean-up, when it happens, will benefit those parts of the river accessible from the city's facilities. This assumption underlies the claim that the city should devote more money to riverside recreational facilities.

The assumption that the city government ought to devote more attention to maintaining a recreational facility if demand for that facility increases.

The assumption that the city should finance the new project and not some other agency or group (public or private).

Should any of the above assumptions prove unwarranted, the implications are:  
that the logic of the argument falls apart or is invalid or is unsound  
that the state and city are spending their funds unnecessarily.

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## SAMPLE TOP SCORING RESPONSE

While it may be true that the Mason City government ought to devote more money to riverside recreational facilities, this author's argument does not make a cogent case for increased resources based on river use. It is easy to understand why city residents would want a cleaner river, but this argument is rife with holes and assumptions, and thus, not strong enough to lead to increased funding.

Citing surveys of city residents, the author reports city resident's love of water sports. It is not clear, however, the scope and validity of that survey. For example, the survey could have asked residents if they prefer using the river for water sports or would like to see a hydroelectric dam built, which may have swayed residents toward river sports. The sample may not have been representative of city residents, asking only those residents who live upon the river. The survey may have been 10 pages long, with 2 questions dedicated to river sports. We just do not know. Unless the survey is fully representative, valid, and reliable, it can not be used to effectively back the author's argument.

Additionally, the author implies that residents do not use the river for swimming, boating, and fishing, despite their professed interest, because the water is polluted and smelly. While a polluted, smelly river would likely cut down on river sports, a concrete connection between the resident's lack of river use and the river's current state is not effectively made. Though there have been complaints, we do not know if there have been numerous complaints from a wide range of people, or perhaps from one or two individuals who made numerous complaints. To strengthen his/her argument, the author would benefit from implementing a normed survey asking a wide range of residents why they do not currently use the river.

Building upon the implication that residents do not use the river due to the quality of the river's water and the smell, the author suggests that a river clean up will result in increased river usage. If the river's water quality and smell result from problems which can be cleaned, this may be true. For example, if the decreased water quality and aroma is caused by pollution by factories along the river, this conceivably could be remedied. But if the quality and aroma results from the natural mineral deposits in the water or surrounding rock, this may not be true. There are some bodies of water which emit a strong smell of sulphur due to the geography of the area. This is not something likely to be affected by a clean-up. Consequently, a river clean up may have no impact upon river usage. Regardless of whether the river's quality is able to be improved or not, the author does not effectively show a connection between water quality and river usage.

A clean, beautiful, safe river often adds to a city's property values, leads to increased tourism and revenue from those who come to take advantage of the river, and a better overall quality of life for residents. For these reasons, city government may decide to invest in improving riverside recreational facilities. However, this author's argument is not likely significantly persuade the city government to allocate increased funding.

[https://www.ets.org/gre/revised\\_general/prepare/analytical\\_writing/argument/sampleresponses](https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/argument/sampleresponses)

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