

19 English: purpose, focus and argumentative support

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ Total: 13 marks

KEY WORDS counterargument • counterclaim • frequency
• relevance • evidence • argument • detail

Objective

- Infer a paragraph’s purpose from the passage before judging an addition
- Select evidence that directly supports the writer’s particular claim
- Evaluate a counterclaim without mistaking relevance for agreement

Original public practice; marks below are classroom self-check points, not official criteria.

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

Enhanced ACT English uses passage-based editing, including argument . Read the surrounding paragraph and its role in the complete passage; a proposed addition may be grammatical yet irrelevant. Name the writer’s purpose in a short phrase, such as explain a constraint, defend a choice or acknowledge a limitation. Then compare the sentence’s contribution to that purpose.

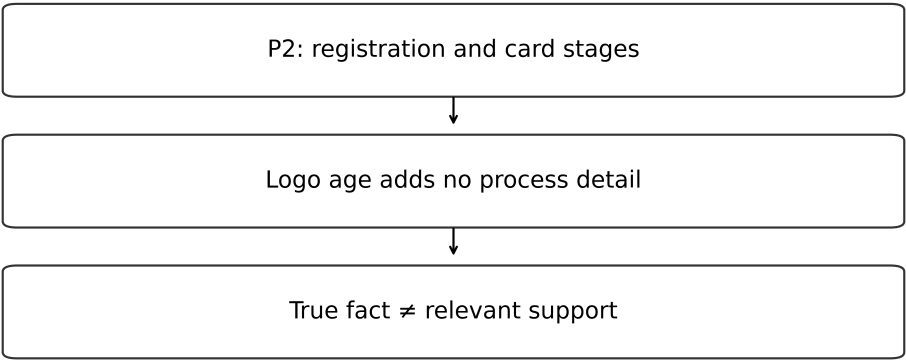
For a question asking whether to add or delete material, decide first and choose the reason second. A detail supports a claim when it addresses the actual relationship asserted. Evidence of popularity does not automatically demonstrate accessibility, affordability or reliability. A plausible anecdote can illustrate an idea without proving a universal conclusion.

An argument can acknowledge a competing view while maintaining its central claim. A useful counterclaim is specific enough to answer; caricaturing an opponent weakens reasoning. Qualification words such as some, during the trial or in this building limit a claim to the evidence. Do not broaden a passage merely to make its conclusion sound confident.

The original passage below is a targeted editing case, not a complete official English form. Practise the exam’s passage context by rereading the whole paragraph after each edit. Judge options against the supplied goal, including an explicit focus in the stem; the most interesting detail is not necessarily the most relevant one.

Relevance asks whether a detail serves the paragraph’s actual purpose. In a paragraph about queue management, an arrival log can support a claim about waiting. A true fact

about a logo may still interrupt that purpose. A counterargument can remain useful when the writer responds with a practical limit.



Worked steps: P2: registration and card stages → Logo age adds no process detail → True fact ≠ relevant support

Worked example. Original passage: “The library should reserve a small quiet room for online interviews. Last month, three applicants had to leave the shared computer area because nearby conversations interrupted their calls. Some readers worry that reserving a room would reduce study space. Booking interviews only during the two least busy afternoon hours would limit that cost.” Proposed addition after sentence 2: “The library also owns a rare nineteenth-century atlas.” Delete it: the atlas does not support the case for interview space. An appropriate addition would report the duration and frequency of interrupted interviews, or evidence that the proposed hours are less busy. The counterclaim about study space is relevant and the final sentence answers it without claiming that all inconvenience disappears.

■ Practice material

Original continuous editing passage – A place to mend

[P1] On the first Saturday of each month, a group of volunteers opens a repair table in the public library. [S1] The project began when librarian Noor noticed a row of broken desk lamps outside a nearby building. [S2] Some needed specialist work, but others had loose switches or damaged cables. [S3] Noor did not want untrained visitors to try unsafe electrical repairs. [S4] She invited a qualified repairer to explain which items the group could inspect and which should go to a professional. The first session accepted only battery-powered objects, with damaged batteries excluded. Visitors registered their items and described the faults before any work began.

[P2] At the entrance, two volunteers record each visitor’s name and item. This record helps the group reunite objects with their owners. A blue card goes beside an object awaiting inspection; a white card marks one ready for collection. The cards do not certify safety or guarantee a repair. They simply show where an item is in the process. [S5] The library’s logo was designed many years ago. Beside the cards, a sign asks visitors to stay while their object is examined. Staying allows owners to explain an intermittent

fault that might not appear immediately. It also gives them a chance to learn a simple maintenance habit.

[P3] Space soon became a problem. The repair table shared an alcove with readers who wanted a quiet place to work. During the first two sessions, a visitor log recorded six complaints about conversation near the alcove. Noor proposed moving the table into a meeting room. The room could hold fewer people, so a move alone would not solve the problem. The group introduced short arrival windows and kept two spaces for visitors without bookings. [S6] This totally amazing system fixed every problem forever. In fact, one visitor still waited outside, and the group had to improve the signs leading to the room. The log recorded one noise complaint during the next two sessions; attendance also fell, so the group did not attribute the whole reduction to the move.

[P4] Volunteers were careful about how they described success. An object leaving the table might work again, need another part, or require professional attention. They recorded these outcomes separately. During the trial, forty objects were inspected. Eighteen worked after a permitted minor adjustment, twelve needed a part, and ten were referred elsewhere. Counting all forty as repaired would hide important differences. [S7] The volunteers recorded the outcomes and wrote the results down in their record. Noor used the figures to decide which spare parts might be useful at later sessions. She did not use them to promise that any particular object could be repaired.

[P5] The project now has a practical aim: help visitors make an informed next decision about a broken object. For some, that means a working lamp. For others, it means knowing when further work would be unsafe or too costly. The group plans to keep the arrival windows for another trial and ask readers whether noise remains a problem. It will also compare attendance and waiting times before adding more spaces. A repair table succeeds through careful limits as well as useful repairs.

2 Practice

2.1 Which detail best supports the interview-room proposal ? [1]

- A The number of colours in its logo
- B The librarian’s favourite novel
- C A log showing four calls disrupted by nearby conversation
- D The age of the library’s atlas

2.2 Why retain the concern about study space? [1]

- A Every argument must agree with its opponents
- B It proves the proposal cannot work
- C It supplies unrelated historical background
- D It provides a relevant objection that the schedule addresses

2.3 A detail must contribute to the paragraph’s stated _____ rather than merely be interesting. [1]

2.4 Any factually true detail should be added to an argument. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

Use the complete original case context in section 1.

3.1 Should S5 remain in P2? Explain the decision by the paragraph’s purpose, and propose a relevant replacement detail. [3]

3.2 Which existing evidence supports the claim that noise was a problem? Why retain the sentence saying the meeting room holds fewer people? [3]

3.3 Write a qualified conclusion about the change in noise complaints, including the attendance limit. Explain why “the move eliminated noise” fails. [3]

Solutions

Accept equivalent correct methods and supported interpretations. The marks check reasoning; they are not an official grade.

2.1 C – Interrupted calls directly concern the need for a quiet interview area. A and D concern design or history unrelated to interruption; B is a personal reading preference, not evidence of quiet-room need.

Correct response linked to the given case.

2.2 D – Acknowledgement and response strengthen this limited argument. A wrongly requires agreement with all objections; B treats a manageable cost as disproof; C misidentifies a practical objection as unrelated history.

Correct response linked to the given case.

2.3 purpose – Purpose determines whether information belongs.

Correct response linked to the given case.

2.4 False – Truth alone does not establish relevance or support.

Correct response linked to the given case.

3.1 Remove it; P2 explains registration and card use, while the logo's age contributes neither. A useful replacement could explain how a volunteer updates a card when an inspection finishes. Label that proposed detail as a suggestion requiring confirmation, not a fact already supplied.

Sound conclusion or proposed method. Relevant supporting steps or textual evidence. Accurate conditions, checks or qualification.

3.2 Six recorded complaints in the first two sessions support a local noise concern. The smaller capacity is a relevant objection to moving, motivating arrival windows and walk-in spaces. It does not show the move is worthless.

Sound conclusion or proposed method. Relevant supporting steps or textual evidence. Accurate conditions, checks or qualification.

3.3 “Recorded complaints fell from six to one in the next two sessions, but attendance also fell, so the move's separate effect is uncertain.” One complaint remains, contradicting eliminated, and other conditions changed.

Sound conclusion or proposed method. Relevant supporting steps or textual evidence. Accurate conditions, checks or qualification.