

Business project coordination aptitude: study guide

Business, consulting, management, and operations · suite

apt-276-business-project-coordination-aptitude · generated 2026-09-15T15:28:58.531Z

Detail	Value
Title	Business project coordination aptitude: study guide
Generated	2026-09-15T15:28:58.531Z
Fixture/version	apt-276-business-project-coordination-aptitude
Sector	Business, consulting, management, and operations
Guide version	v2

Private practice result. Not an official exam certificate, employer decision, hiring signal, admissions decision, or guaranteed outcome. Scores stay on this device unless you export them.

Answer keys and scoring logic stay server-side and are never included in any download or export.

How to use this guide

This file contains the whole study outline for this suite: every skill it draws on, the full lesson for each of those skills, worked examples, practice tips, a glossary, and where each piece of material comes from. Nothing here is a summary of a page you still have to visit.

1. Read the skills section end to end once, without timing yourself.
2. Work the guided practice mode for the suite, using the practice tips as a checklist.
3. Move to the mini-test only when guided practice feels unhurried.
4. Sit the full simulation last, once, in the conditions you expect on the day.

Practice attempts are stored on the device you used, never on an account. Exporting a result is the only way anything leaves that device.

Practice modes and durations

Practice modes for Business project coordination aptitude

Mode	Duration	What it is for
Guided practice	15 minutes	Untimed, with feedback after every item.
Mini-test	18 minutes	A short timed set for checking pace.
Full simulation	45 minutes	Full length and full time, in one sitting.

- Start guided practice:
<https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/aptitude/practice/new?bank=apt-276-business-project-coordination-aptitude&mode=guided>
- Start mini-test:
<https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/aptitude/practice/new?bank=apt-276-business-project-coordination-aptitude&mode=mini>
- Start full simulation:
<https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/aptitude/practice/new?bank=apt-276-business-project-coordination-aptitude&mode=full>

Skills covered, in full

This suite draws on 5 skill constructs. Each one below carries its complete lesson.

Planning and scheduling exercises

Resources, dependencies, deadlines, constraints, and contingency planning.

Learn to build a feasible schedule from dependencies, resource limits, deadlines, and uncertainty. A strong plan makes the critical sequence visible and includes triggers for replanning.

What you should be able to do after this lesson:

1. Convert a task list into durations, predecessors, resource needs, milestones, and constraints.
2. Identify the chain of dependent tasks most likely to control the finish date.
3. Add proportionate buffers, checkpoints, and contingencies without hiding an impossible deadline.

Worked examples and pitfalls

Worked scenario: a four-hour shutdown: Inspection takes 30 minutes before either repair can start. Two repairs take 90 and 120 minutes, but both need the same technician; testing takes 45 minutes after both finish. The minimum sequence is $30 + 90 + 120 + 45 = 285$ minutes, longer than the shutdown. The correct response is to surface the conflict and change scope, staffing, or window, not to place overlapping bars on a chart and call the plan feasible.

Dependency and contingency check: Draw arrows between tasks, then mark scarce resources and approval gates. For the highest-risk dependency, define an early warning and a response: for example, if a permit is not approved by noon, defer nonessential work and notify the owner rather than discovering the conflict at start time.

How to practise this skill

- Check resource conflicts as well as task order; parallel work is impossible when both tasks need the same person or asset.
- Protect the completion milestone with visible review points, not an unexplained buffer at the end.
- When a constraint makes the plan impossible, state it early and propose the smallest viable change.

Glossary

Dependency: A rule that one task or milestone must precede or enable another.

Critical path: The dependent task sequence that determines the earliest possible finish under the stated plan.

Slack: The time a task may move without delaying a dependent milestone or final completion.

Study this next

- Scheduling: <https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/search?q=Scheduling>
- Critical path method: <https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/search?q=Critical%20path%20method>
- Resource allocation: <https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/search?q=Resource%20allocation>
- Planning and scheduling exercises lesson on Novus Learn:
<https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/aptitude/skills/planning-scheduling/lesson>

Where this material comes from

- Novus Learn original scheduling, project-coordination, dispatch, and operations suite scenarios.
- Novus educational framework: tasks, durations, dependencies, resources, constraints, milestones, and contingencies.

Educational preparation only. Novus Learn does not administer official exams and does not guarantee scores or hiring outcomes.

Situational judgment

Evaluating workplace responses against role-relevant principles.

Learn a repeatable way to compare workplace responses: establish the facts, identify duties and risks, respect role boundaries, then choose a proportionate first action. This is educational preparation, not an official scoring guide.

What you should be able to do after this lesson:

1. Separate facts stated in a scenario from assumptions that the scenario does not support.
2. Rank response options by immediate risk, policy or role obligations, proportionality, and follow-through.
3. Explain why a strong first action is better than passive, punitive, or unauthorized alternatives.

Worked examples and pitfalls

Worked scenario: an unverified safety concern: A colleague reports a possible equipment fault while a deadline is approaching. First distinguish the known fact, the report, from the unverified cause. A strong response protects people and affected work, checks the concern through the right channel, tells the relevant lead, and records what was done. Ignoring the report underreacts; shutting down unrelated work or accusing someone before checking the facts overreacts.

Method: facts, duties, risks, response: Write four short notes before ranking options: what is known, who may be affected, which duty or boundary applies, and what safe next step is available now. Prefer an action that addresses the immediate issue and creates useful follow-through. Do not reward an option merely because it sounds decisive.

How to practise this skill

- Answer the question asked: best first action, worst action, or complete response are different tasks.
- Check whether an option acts within the person's authority and escalates only as far as the risk requires.
- When two options look reasonable, prefer the one that gathers missing facts and communicates ownership.

Glossary

Proportionality: Matching the urgency and scope of a response to the evidence, likely impact, and authority available.

Role boundary: The limit of what a person may decide or do without approval, specialist help, or escalation.

Follow-through: Confirming ownership, recording the decision, and checking that the issue was actually resolved.

Study this next

- Situational judgement test:
<https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/search?q=Situational%20judgement%20test>
- Workplace ethics: <https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/search?q=Workplace%20ethics>
- Decision-making: <https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/search?q=Decision-making>
- Situational judgment lesson on Novus Learn:
<https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/aptitude/skills/situational-judgement/lesson>

Where this material comes from

- Novus Learn original situational-judgment suite scenarios and published construct mapping.
- Novus educational framework: facts, duties, risks, role boundaries, proportional action, and follow-through.

Educational preparation only. Novus Learn does not administer official exams and does not guarantee scores or hiring outcomes.

In-tray and e-tray exercises

Prioritizing messages, deadlines, stakeholders, and competing tasks.

Learn to triage a busy inbox by impact, deadline, authority, and dependency, then turn that ranking into a realistic action plan with clear owners and follow-up.

What you should be able to do after this lesson:

1. Extract deadlines, consequences, dependencies, and decision rights from mixed messages.
2. Distinguish work that must be done now from work that can be scheduled, delegated, acknowledged, or declined.
3. Record a defensible sequence instead of ranking items by sender seniority or arrival order alone.

Worked examples and pitfalls

Worked scenario: three messages at 09:05: Your inbox contains an active-work safety alert, a two-line briefing due at 10:00, and a newsletter marked FYI. First contain or route the safety issue, because delay may expose people. Acknowledge the briefing and reserve a short work block, or delegate a fact check with a precise return time, then defer the newsletter. The order follows impact and deadline, not who wrote the longest email.

Triage grid: impact x time x ownership: For each item, note the consequence of delay, the true deadline, whether another task depends on it, and whether you can decide it. High-impact urgent work comes forward; important non-urgent work gets scheduled; suitable work can be delegated with a checkpoint; low-value information can be filed or declined.

How to practise this skill

- Write a one-line reason for each priority so hidden dependencies become visible.
- Use acknowledgements strategically: a ten-second confirmation can reduce stakeholder uncertainty without displacing higher-impact work.
- Do not treat delegation as disposal; name the owner, expected output, deadline, and check-back point.

Glossary

Triage: Rapidly sorting incoming work by impact, urgency, dependency, and available authority.

Dependency: A relationship in which one task, decision, or person cannot proceed until another item is handled.

Timebox: A fixed period reserved for making progress or reaching a defined decision point.

Study this next

- Time management: <https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/search?q=Time%20management>
- Prioritization: <https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/search?q=Prioritization>
- Email: <https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/search?q=Email>
- In-tray and e-tray exercises lesson on Novus Learn:
<https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/aptitude/skills/in-tray/lesson>

Where this material comes from

- Novus Learn original in-tray, e-tray, scheduling, and prioritization suite scenarios.
- Novus educational triage framework: impact, deadline, dependency, authority, owner, and follow-up.

Educational preparation only. Novus Learn does not administer official exams and does not guarantee scores or hiring outcomes.

Data checking and clerical accuracy

Matching, filing, coding, record checking, and identifying discrepancies.

Clerical accuracy is the ability to handle a large volume of records correctly and consistently: filing them in the right order, coding them against a key, spotting duplicates that do not look like duplicates, and holding that standard on the two-hundredth record as well as the second. Where error detection asks whether two things match, clerical accuracy asks whether you can apply a rule reliably at volume. It is assessed in administrative, records, clinical admin, school office, evidence-handling and insurance operations selection, and it is exactly the skill an employer is buying when they hire for a data-heavy back-office role. Practice stays on this device; there is no account and nothing is uploaded unless you export it.

What you should be able to do after this lesson:

1. Apply an alphabetical filing rule consistently, and state whether a given system files letter-by-letter or word-by-word. The two produce different, equally correct orders.
2. Sort alphanumeric references correctly under both string ordering and natural numeric ordering, and explain why record systems zero-pad.
3. Code records against a written key, handling every boundary condition (under, up to, and over, inclusive ranges) exactly as written rather than as intuited.
4. Identify duplicate records that differ only in formatting (case, whitespace, date order, punctuation inside a reference), and route genuinely ambiguous ones to exceptions instead of resolving them by guess.
5. Measure your own accuracy decay across a long batch and use the measurement to set a realistic attempt rate.
6. Convert a stated scoring rule into a target items-per-minute figure, and show why the optimum rate moves when the penalty multiplier changes.

Worked examples and pitfalls

Word-by-word or letter-by-letter: two correct answers, one rule: File these four names: Van Dyke, Vandenberg, Van Horn, Vance. Under word-by-word filing, each space-separated unit is compared in turn

and 'nothing files before something', so the first unit 'Van' sorts ahead of both 'Vance' and 'Vandenberg'. The order is Van Dyke, Van Horn, Vance, Vandenberg. Under letter-by-letter filing, spaces are ignored entirely, so the keys are VANCE, VANDENBERG, VANDYKE, VANHORN, and the order is Vance, Vandenberg, Van Dyke, Van Horn. Both orders are correct filing; only one is correct for the system you are working in. Test items state the convention in the instructions, and the candidates who lose marks are almost always the ones applying whichever convention their previous employer used. The same fork appears with prefixes and punctuation: whether Mc and Mac interfile, whether St is treated as Saint, whether a hyphen counts as a space. Read the rule, restate it to yourself in one sentence, then apply it mechanically and do not let a name that 'obviously' belongs somewhere override it.

Alphanumeric codes: A-102 at the front or the back of the drawer: Sort the references A-7, A-12, A-70, A-102, B-3. Under natural numeric ordering, the way a person reads them, the answer is A-7, A-12, A-70, A-102, B-3. Under plain string ordering, the way most software sorts by default, each character is compared in turn, so '1' comes before '7' and the answer is A-102, A-12, A-7, A-70, B-3, with A-102 first rather than last. Both are defensible; a filing item is testing which one the stated system uses. This is also why serious record systems zero-pad their references: rewrite the set as A-007, A-012, A-070, A-102 and the string sort and the numeric sort agree, permanently. If you are ever asked to design or clean a reference scheme, pad to a fixed width and the whole class of problem disappears. In a test, the giveaway is a set that deliberately mixes one-, two- and three-digit suffixes; that mixture exists only to separate candidates who apply the stated rule from candidates who apply the intuitive one.

Coding to a key: every mark is at a boundary: A claims routing key: under 500 pounds with no injury reported goes to CS1; under 500 with injury goes to CI2; 500 to 4,999 with no injury goes to CS3; 500 to 4,999 with injury goes to CI4; 5,000 and over goes to CE5 regardless of injury. Now code five records. R-118 at 499.99, no injury: CS1, since 499.99 is under 500. R-119 at exactly 500.00, no injury: CS3, because 'under 500' excludes 500 itself and the second band starts there. R-120 at 4,999.00 with injury: CI4, since the band is inclusive at its top. R-121 at exactly 5,000.00 with no injury: CE5, because the top band is 'and over' and its 'regardless of injury' clause overrides the injury split that governs the lower bands. R-122 at 86.40 with injury: CI2. Four of those five decisions turn on a boundary, and that is not an accident, coding items are written so that the interior cases are trivial and every discriminating mark sits on an edge. Before coding anything, underline the boundary words: under, up to, and over, between, inclusive. Then decide, once, what each one does to the endpoint, and apply that decision to every record in the batch.

Duplicates that are not textually identical: Three rows arrive in a merge. Row 1: SMITH, JANE | 07/04/1988 | AB123456C. Row 2: Smith, Jane | 1988-04-07 | AB 123456 C. Row 3: SMITH, JANE | 04/07/1988 | AB123456C. Rows 1 and 2 are the same person: normalise case, strip the spaces from the reference, and convert the ISO date and they match exactly. Row 3 is the genuinely hard one. If the file is in day/month order it is a different date of birth and possibly a different person; if that row came from a system using month/day order it is the same record again. You cannot tell from the row itself, so the correct action is to send it to the exception queue with the ambiguity noted, not to merge it and not to discard it. This is the judgement that separates competent records work from the appearance of it: the goal is not to make every row disappear, it is to make every decision defensible. In test form the item usually asks 'how many distinct individuals are represented', and the answer is often given as a range or accompanied by a 'cannot determine' option for exactly this reason.

Where accuracy actually decays on a long batch: Run a self-measurement rather than trusting a number from anyone: take 200 record pairs, split them into four blocks of 50, and log errors per block. Most people find block 1 slightly worse than block 2, a warm-up cost, and then a rise across blocks 3 and 4 as vigilance falls. The reason to measure it is that the arithmetic of small percentages is brutal at volume. Checking 200 pairs at 98 percent accuracy passes 4 bad records; at 99.5 percent it passes 1. Scale that to a realistic month of 20,000 records and the same two accuracy rates mean 400 defects against 100: a four-fold difference in downstream rework from a 1.5 point difference that would look like noise on a single test. Once

you know where your own curve turns, the intervention is cheap: a deliberate twenty-second break at that point, or splitting the batch so the hardest records fall in your strongest block. Practice sessions on this site are recorded on your own device, so building a block-by-block picture across several sessions costs nothing but the logging.

Setting an attempt rate from the scoring rule: A 120-item checking test with a 10-minute limit, scored as correct minus incorrect. Suppose practice has told you that you hold 92 percent at ten items a minute and 96 percent at seven and a half. Fast: $10 \times 10 = 100$ attempted, 92 correct and 8 wrong, score 84. Careful: $10 \times 7.5 = 75$ attempted, 72 correct and 3 wrong, score 69. Fast wins by 15. Now change the rule to correct minus three times incorrect: fast scores $92 - 24 = 68$, careful scores $72 - 9 = 63$, and the 15-point gap has shrunk to 5. Now suppose your real accuracy at ten a minute is 80 percent rather than 92. A gap most people do not discover until they measure it. Fast now gets 80 right and 20 wrong: under simple correct-minus-incorrect that is 60, already behind the careful strategy's 69, and under the triple penalty it is $80 - 60 = 20$ against 63. Same test, same person, opposite advice, and the two deciding variables are the penalty multiplier, which the instructions hand you, and your own accuracy-at-speed, which only measurement gives you. Do not pick a pace from temperament. Measure two rates in practice, write both accuracy figures down, and do this arithmetic before the test rather than during it.

How to practise this skill

- Before the first record of any batch, write the filing or coding rule at the top of the page in your own words. The single largest source of clerical error is applying a remembered rule from a previous system.
- Underline the boundary words in a coding key (under, up to, and over, inclusive), and resolve each endpoint once. Interior cases carry almost no marks; the edges carry nearly all of them.
- Normalise before you compare: mentally strip case, spaces and punctuation from references, and restate dates in one fixed order. Half of apparent duplicates are formatting, and half of apparent non-duplicates are too.
- When a record is genuinely ambiguous, mark it and move on. Time spent resolving one unresolvable row is taken from thirty rows you could have done correctly, and a guessed merge is worse than a flagged one.
- Measure your accuracy at two different speeds in practice and write both numbers down. You cannot choose an attempt rate rationally without them, and the fast rate is almost never as accurate as it feels.
- Practise on batches long enough to hit your own fatigue point, not on ten-item samples. The construct is specifically about sustained accuracy, and a ten-item drill measures the part of the curve that was never in doubt.

Glossary

Word-by-word filing: An alphabetical convention that compares space-separated units in turn, with a shorter first unit filing before a longer one. Under it, Van Horn files before Vance.

Letter-by-letter filing: An alphabetical convention that ignores spaces and punctuation entirely, comparing the run of letters. Under it, Vance files before Van Dyke.

Natural sort: Ordering that reads embedded digit runs as numbers, so A-7 precedes A-12. Contrasted with string ordering, which compares characters one at a time and puts A-102 first.

Zero padding: Writing references to a fixed width by adding leading zeros (A-007 rather than A-7) so that string ordering and numeric ordering produce the same result. The standard structural fix for alphanumeric filing errors.

Primary and secondary sort key: The field sorted on first and the field used to break ties within it. A batch sorted by site then by surname will look wrong if the two keys are applied in the opposite order.

Canonicalisation: Converting records to a single standard form (one case, no stray whitespace, one date

order, punctuation stripped from references) before any comparison, so that formatting differences stop masquerading as data differences.

Exception queue: The destination for records that cannot be resolved from the information available. Routing an ambiguous record here is a correct outcome; guessing it into a merge is not.

Boundary condition: The endpoint of a coded band, where wording such as under, up to or and over decides which side a value falls. Coding tests concentrate their discriminating items here.

Study this next

- Data checking and clerical accuracy skill hub:
<https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/aptitude/skills/clerical-accuracy>
- Clerical accuracy practice in the Cognitive Skills Lab:
<https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/cognitive-skills/clerical-accuracy>
- Error detection lesson: <https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/aptitude/skills/error-detection/lesson>
- Administrative and clerical entry suite:
<https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/aptitude/tests/administrative-and-clerical-entry>
- Clerical checking suite: <https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/aptitude/tests/clerical-checking>
- Data checking and clerical accuracy lesson on Novus Learn:
<https://learn.novusstreamsolutions.com/aptitude/skills/clerical-accuracy/lesson>

Where this material comes from

- All filing sets, reference codes, routing keys and records above were invented for this lesson. The two filing orders, the two sort orders and every score calculation in the attempt-rate example were worked through and checked by recomputation.
- Filing and sorting conventions cross-checked against standard public descriptions such as the Wikipedia articles 'Alphabetical order', 'Natural sort order' and 'Collation'. Terminology only; the examples are original.
- Novus Learn aptitude construct registry (catalog seed) for construct scope and suite mapping.
- Public educational framing only: not affiliated with any official exam board, publisher or employer, and no copyrighted test item is reproduced.

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Verbal reasoning

Drawing conclusions from written information without relying on outside assumptions.

Verbal reasoning is the discipline of answering strictly from a passage: deciding whether a statement is True, False, or Cannot Say on the evidence given, and refusing to import anything you happen to know about the topic. It is the workhorse construct in graduate and civil-service screening, banking and consulting sifts, and language-focused public-service batteries, where a passage about parcel volumes or grant conditions is followed by four statements to classify. The same discipline is what stops a contract review, a grant assessment or an incident summary from quietly acquiring facts nobody wrote down. Practice here is device-local: no account, and nothing leaves this device unless you export it.

What you should be able to do after this lesson:

1. Classify a statement as True, False, or Cannot Say, and state in one sentence which words in the passage force the classification.
2. Explain the difference that costs the most marks: 'Cannot Say' means undetermined by the passage, while 'False' means contradicted by it.

3. Spot quantifier drift between passage and statement (all, some, most, only, none) and show why 'all A are B' never licenses 'all B are A'.
4. Refuse a causal upgrade: recognise when a passage reports co-occurrence or sequence and a statement claims cause.
5. Separate what a passage asserts from what it reports somebody else asserting, and classify statements about each correctly.
6. Do the small arithmetic hidden inside verbal items - percentage changes, fractions of a stated total - without leaving the passage for outside data.

Worked examples and pitfalls

The three-way rule on one short passage: Passage: 'The Riverton depot handled 4,200 parcels in March, a 12 percent increase on February. A night shift was introduced in January; in March it processed 40 percent of the parcels the depot handled.' Now take four statements. (1) 'The depot handled 3,750 parcels in February.' February is March divided by 1.12: $4,200 / 1.12 = 3,750$ exactly, so this is True - the passage determines it even though the number is not printed. (2) 'The night shift caused the March increase.' Cannot Say. The passage puts the night shift and the increase in the same depot in the same period; it never claims one produced the other, and it never denies it either. Most candidates mark this False, reasoning correctly that correlation is not causation but then choosing the wrong label: False is reserved for statements the passage contradicts. (3) 'The night shift processed more than 1,700 parcels in March.' Forty percent of 4,200 is 1,680, which is not more than 1,700, so this is False - contradicted by arithmetic on the passage's own figures. (4) 'The depot handled more parcels in March than in January.' Cannot Say: January is mentioned only as the month the shift started, and no January volume is given.

Quantifier drift and illicit conversion: Passage: 'All accredited suppliers submit quarterly audits. Some suppliers in the northern region are accredited.' Statement A: 'Some suppliers in the northern region submit quarterly audits.' True, and it is worth seeing why the chain holds: at least one northern supplier is accredited, and every accredited supplier submits, so at least one northern supplier submits. Statement B: 'Every supplier that submits quarterly audits is accredited.' This reverses the first sentence. 'All accredited suppliers submit' leaves the door wide open for unaccredited suppliers to submit as well - perhaps voluntarily, perhaps under another rule - so the answer is Cannot Say. Turning 'all A are B' into 'all B are A' is called illicit conversion and it is the single most productive trap in this format, because the reversed sentence sounds like a paraphrase. Statement C: 'No unaccredited supplier submits quarterly audits' is the same reversal wearing a negative coat, and it is Cannot Say for the same reason. Statement D: 'All northern suppliers submit quarterly audits' is also Cannot Say: 'some are accredited' says nothing about the rest.

Asserted versus reported: Passage: 'The committee's report claims that the scheme cut waiting times by a third. Two of the four regional boards have disputed that figure.' Statement A: 'The scheme cut waiting times by a third.' Cannot Say. What the passage asserts is that a report claims this; the claim's truth is never settled, and the dispute does not settle it either. Statement B: 'At least two regional boards disagree with the report's waiting-time figure.' True, and note 'at least' - the passage says two disputed it, and two of four disputing is consistent with 'at least two'. Statement C: 'All four regional boards accept the figure.' False, directly contradicted. Statement D: 'The report is wrong.' Cannot Say. This item type appears constantly in policy and diplomacy passages, where a paragraph stacks a claim, a source, and a reaction, and the reader has to keep three different truth-conditions apart. The reliable habit is to underline the reporting verb - claims, argues, estimates, alleges, projects - and remember that everything downstream of it belongs to the source, not to the passage.

Percentages are not symmetric: Passage: 'Membership fell from 8,000 to 6,000 over two years, then recovered by 25 percent in the third year.' Statement: 'Membership at the end of year three was higher than at the start.' The fall is 2,000 on a base of 8,000, which is 25 percent. The recovery is 25 percent of the new base: $6,000 \times 1.25 = 7,500$. That is below 8,000, so the statement is False. The trap is elegant, because a 25

percent fall followed by a 25 percent rise feels like it should cancel. It does not: to get back from 6,000 to 8,000 you need a 33.3 percent rise, since $2,000 / 6,000 = 0.333$. Whenever a verbal item states a change as a percentage, write down what the percentage is a percentage of before you touch it. A related version supplies the recovery as an absolute number instead - 'recovered by 2,000 members' - which does return the total to 8,000, and candidates who answered the first version from memory get the second one wrong.

Verbal analogies: name the relation as a sentence: Item: 'ANTISEPTIC is to INFECTION as ____ is to ____.' Options: (a) vaccine : immunity, (b) insulation : heat loss, (c) medicine : illness, (d) bandage : wound. Write the stem relation as a full sentence first: 'An antiseptic is applied in order to prevent an infection from occurring.' Now test each option against that exact sentence. Option (a) runs the other way - a vaccine is given to produce immunity, not to prevent it. Option (c) is the right family but the wrong specificity: medicine typically treats an illness that has already started. Option (d) is applied after the wound exists. Option (b) fits precisely: insulation is applied in order to prevent heat loss from occurring. The general method is the same on the simpler item types. 'BOOK is to LIBRARY as PAINTING is to ____' has canvas (the material), artist (the maker), and gallery (the place a collection is kept and shown) among its options; all three are genuine relations to 'painting', and only the third matches the stem sentence. Options in analogy items are chosen to be true statements about the words, just not the stated relation.

Two premises with 'some' prove nothing: Argument: 'Some depot managers are qualified engineers. Some qualified engineers hold a rigging certificate. Therefore some depot managers hold a rigging certificate.' This is invalid, and the way to prove it is a counter-model rather than an argument. Let the depot managers be Ana and Ben; let the qualified engineers be Ben and Cara; let the certificate holders be Cara alone. Premise one holds: Ben is a manager and an engineer. Premise two holds: Cara is an engineer with the certificate. The conclusion fails: neither Ana nor Ben holds the certificate. Since a single consistent world makes both premises true and the conclusion false, the argument cannot be valid, so in a True / False / Cannot Say framing the conclusion is Cannot Say. Two premises that both begin 'some' never combine into a conclusion, because 'some' gives you an overlap without telling you where the overlap sits. Contrast a valid pair: 'All accredited labs are inspected annually. No inspected facility is exempt from the fee.' Every accredited lab is inspected, and no inspected facility is exempt, so no accredited lab is exempt - True.

How to practise this skill

- Answer from the passage even when you know the subject. Candidates with a background in the topic score worse on verbal items than they expect, because their own knowledge quietly supplies the missing premise that turns a Cannot Say into a True.
- Run the two-worlds test on every candidate 'Cannot Say': can you imagine a world where all the passage's sentences hold and the statement is true, and another where they hold and it is false? If both, it is Cannot Say. If only the false world exists, it is False.
- Underline the quantifiers and hedges in the statement (all, some, only, most, may, must, likely) and find their counterparts in the passage. Roughly half of the wrong answers in this construct come from a single word swapped between the two.
- Budget about 25 to 30 seconds per statement rather than per passage, and read the passage once for structure before touching the statements. Re-reading the whole passage for each statement is what causes candidates to run out of time on the last set.
- Keep a wrong-answer log with one label per error: quantifier, causation, reported-versus-asserted, arithmetic, outside knowledge. A clear pattern almost always emerges within about forty items, and it is usually a single label.
- Work untimed until the three-way rule is automatic, then add the clock. Attempts are stored on this device only, so a slow first pass through a passage set costs you nothing but the time you spend on it.

Glossary

Entailment: A statement is entailed by a passage when it cannot be false while every sentence of the passage is true. Entailment is the only thing that earns a 'True' in this format; being plausible, likely, or well known does not.

Cannot Say: The verdict for a statement the passage neither entails nor contradicts. It is a claim about the passage, not about the world, which is why a statement you know to be true in real life can still be Cannot Say.

Quantifier: A word fixing how much of a group a claim covers: all, most, some, few, none, only. Swapping one quantifier for another changes the logical content completely while barely changing how the sentence reads.

Illicit conversion: The invalid move from 'all A are B' to 'all B are A', or from 'if P then Q' to 'if Q then P'. It preserves the words and destroys the logic, which is why converted sentences make such effective wrong answers.

Counter-model: A concrete, consistent scenario in which the premises hold and the conclusion fails.

Producing one is the fastest possible proof that an argument is invalid, and it takes two or three named individuals.

Hedge: A qualifier such as may, could, is expected to, or is associated with. A hedged sentence in a passage cannot support an unhedged statement, and an unhedged passage sentence is not weakened by a hedged statement.

Reporting verb: A verb such as claims, argues, estimates, or alleges that attributes the following content to a source. Everything downstream of it is the source's assertion, and the passage takes no position on it.

Analogy relation: The specific link between the two stem words in an analogy item - tool and user, item and container, action and purpose. Naming it as a full sentence before reading the options removes almost all of the guesswork.

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