

Practice Questions (Part 1)

1. Containing at least one premise is _____ for counting as an argument.
 - a. A causal condition
 - b. A necessary condition
 - c. A sufficient condition
 - d. Both a necessary and sufficient condition

2. Oxygen is _____ for human life.
 - a. A necessary condition
 - b. A sufficient condition
 - c. Both a necessary and sufficient condition

3. A job ad says, “Qualified candidates for this job must speak fluent Latin.” This means that...
 - a. Speaking fluent Latin is a sufficient condition for getting the job
 - b. Speaking fluent Latin is a necessary condition for getting the job
 - c. Speaking fluent Latin is both a necessary and sufficient condition for getting the job

4. Earning a score of 100% on every assignment and quiz and showing up to class consistently is _____ for getting an A in this course.
 - a. A sufficient condition
 - b. A necessary condition
 - c. Both a necessary and sufficient condition

Answer Key

Question 1: The most straightforward answer is (b). As we'll understand it, an argument is a set of claims (more precisely: propositions) of which one is a conclusion and the others are premises, which are intended as support for the conclusion. As a result, it is absolutely impossible for a set of claims to be an argument without containing any premises. If a set of claims does not contain at least one premise, then it is a set of unsupported claims, not an argument. It might be argued that (d) is the correct answer—that containing at least one premise is also *sufficient* for a set of claims to be an argument—but the plausibility of this suggestion requires a different sense of the term “argument.”

Question 2: The answer is (a). It is absolutely impossible that there be human life without oxygen, because the human respiratory system requires oxygen to operate. (I'm barring science fiction scenarios in which human brains are placed into robot bodies, which raise complicated questions about what is required for individuals to belong to a given *species*.) Answers (b) and (c) are incorrect for the same reason. The presence of oxygen does not absolutely guarantee the presence of human life; human life depends for its survival on a number of other factors.

Question 3: The answer is (b). So long as the hiring committee stands by the stipulation made in the ad, it is absolutely impossible to get the job without speaking fluent Latin. Answers (a) and (c) are incorrect for the same reason. As far as the ad is concerned, speaking fluent Latin is not an absolute guarantee that one will get the job. What if a fluent Latin speaker bombs the interview, for example?

Question 4: The answer is (a). Given the way this course is structured, if you earn a score of 100% on every assignment and quiz and show up to class consistently, you're absolutely guaranteed to get an A. You should be grateful that none of those conditions is *necessary* for getting an A!