Charta | LESSON NOTES

Boldface questions: label every part

Verbal Reasoning

1 What the question asks

- Question line: what roles do the bold portions play?
- Each choice describes both portions, in two halves
- Both halves must be right
- Describe the argument; do not judge it

IN THE LESSON

- The question line says something like, the two portions in boldface play which of the following roles in the argument?
- On the board, the bold portions are drawn in bold and in green.
- Each answer choice describes both portions in two halves: the first is this, the second is that.
- To be right, a choice must get both halves right.
- That gives you a fast way to eliminate.
- Decide the role of the first bold portion, cross out every choice whose first half is wrong, then do the same with the second.
- You almost never need to compare all five choices in full.
- And you do not have to agree or disagree with the argument at all.
- You only describe it.

2 The labels you need

Label each sentence with one of these

Label	Its job
Main conclusion	the final point
Intermediate conclusion	supported, and supports
Evidence	a reason given
Opposing view; concession	someone else's; granted
Finding to be explained	what is explained

IN THE LESSON

- Here are the labels, and there are only a handful.
- The main conclusion is the final point the author wants you to accept.
- An intermediate conclusion is supported by evidence, and in turn supports the main conclusion.
- Evidence is a fact or reason given in support.
- An opposing view is a claim made by someone else, often introduced by words like some say, or critics claim.
- The author may reject it, or accept it and use it.
- A concession is a point the author grants even though it cuts against the conclusion, often signalled by although, or it is true that.
- And a finding to be explained is a fact the argument sets out to explain.
- Learn these labels, and every boldface question becomes a matching exercise.

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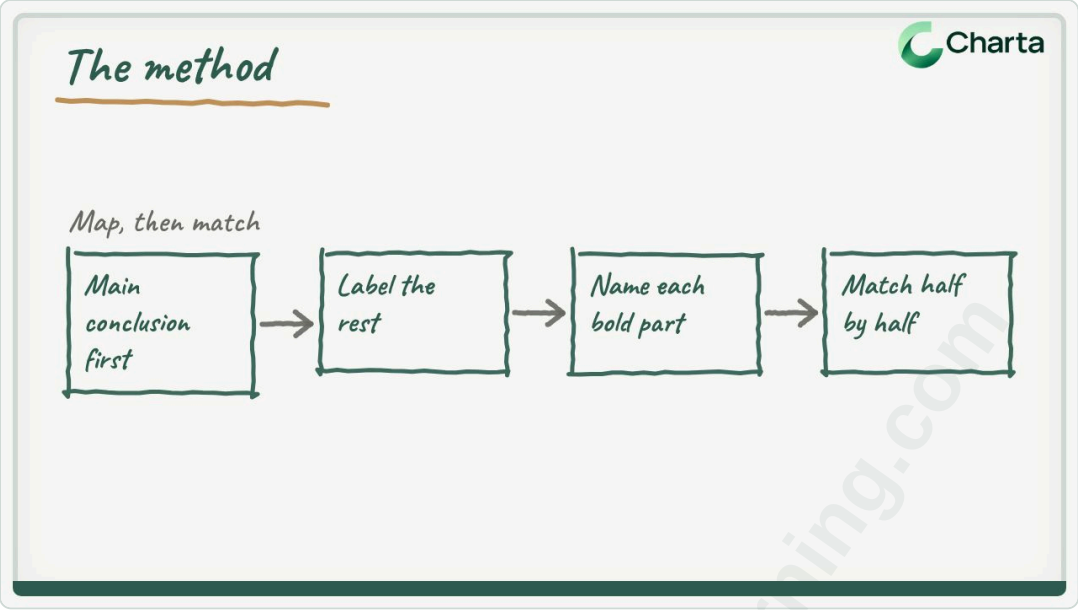
3 The method



IN THE LESSON

- Here is the method.
- Step one, find the main conclusion first.
- Look for words like therefore, so, thus, should, or a claim that everything else supports.
- The main conclusion can come first, last or in the middle, and it may or may not be in bold.
- Step two, label every other sentence: evidence, opposing view, concession, finding to be explained.
- Step three, describe each bold portion in a few words of your own, such as, the first is the conclusion, the second is evidence for it.
- Step four, match: eliminate on the first half of each choice, then on the second.
- Why this order?
- Because once you know the main conclusion, every other label falls into place.

4 The traps in the wrong choices

- Reversed roles
- Half right: check the second half too
- Wrong direction: for, or against?
- A hidden conclusion that is really in bold

IN THE LESSON

- Now the traps.
- The first is reversed roles: it calls the evidence the conclusion and the conclusion the evidence.
- The second is half right: the first half matches, but the second is wrong, and students who stop reading half way fall into it.
- The third gets the direction wrong: it says a portion counts against the conclusion when it supports it, or the other way round.
- The fourth invents a hidden conclusion: it says the main conclusion is unstated, or not in bold, when one of the bold portions is the conclusion.
- And the fifth confuses a claim the author uses with one the author rejects.
- For each choice, check both halves against your labels.

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5 Question 1: the four-day week

- **Kestrel Labs' switch to a four-day workweek has not reduced the output of its programmers.** In the six months since the switch, **the programming team has completed more planned software features than in any earlier six-month period,** and the number of defects reported by customers has not risen.
- The two portions in boldface play which of the following roles in the argument?

IN THE LESSON

- Question one is an easy one.
- Read it with me.
- The bold parts are in green.
- Kestrel Labs' switch to a four-day workweek has not reduced the output of its programmers.
- In the six months since the switch, the programming team has completed more planned software features than in any earlier six-month period, and the number of defects reported by customers has not risen.
- The question: The two portions in boldface play which of the following roles in the argument?
- Before reading the choices, find the main conclusion.

6 Question 1: label each part

Kestrel Labs: two bold portions

Bold one	output has not fallen	**conclusion**
Bold two	record number of features	**evidence**
Not bold	defects have not risen	**evidence**
Prediction	conclusion, then evidence	**the map**

IN THE LESSON

- Step one, the main conclusion.
- Which sentence does the rest support?
- The first sentence claims that the switch to a four-day week has not reduced the programmers' output.
- The rest of the passage gives reasons: more planned features than ever, and no rise in defects.
- So the first bold portion is the main conclusion.
- Notice that it comes first.
- Many students expect the conclusion at the end, but it can open the argument.
- Step two, the second bold portion: the team completed more planned features than in any earlier six months.
- That is a fact offered to show output has not fallen.
- It is evidence.
- Prediction: the first is the main conclusion; the second is evidence for it.

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7 Question 1: the five choices

- A. The first is evidence offered in support of the second; the second is the argument's main conclusion about the four-day week.
- B. The first is a position that the argument rejects; the second is evidence that the argument offers against that position.
- C. The first is a prediction about the firm's future output; the second is evidence that weighs against that prediction.
- D. Both portions are evidence for a conclusion that the argument leaves unstated.
- E. The first is the main conclusion of the argument; the second is evidence that the argument offers in support of it.

IN THE LESSON

- Here are the five choices.
- Choice A.
- The first is evidence offered in support of the second; the second is the argument's main conclusion about the four-day week.
- Choice B.
- The first is a position that the argument rejects; the second is evidence that the argument offers against that position.
- Choice C.
- The first is a prediction about the firm's future output; the second is evidence that weighs against that prediction.
- Choice D.
- Both portions are evidence for a conclusion that the argument leaves unstated.
- Choice E.
- The first is the main conclusion of the argument; the second is evidence that the argument offers in support of it.
- Eliminate on the first half, then the second.

8 Question 1: test each choice

Prediction: the first is the conclusion, the second evidence

A: evidence, then conclusion	the roles are swapped	**reversed**
B: rejected, then evidence against	the argument accepts it	**direction**
C: prediction, then against it	a past claim, supported	**direction**
D: both evidence, none stated	the first is the conclusion	**hidden**
E: conclusion, then evidence	matches the map	**the answer**

IN THE LESSON

- First halves.
- Our first portion is the main conclusion.
- Choice A calls it evidence, so A is out: it reverses the roles.
- Choice B says the argument rejects it, but the argument accepts it, so B is out.
- Choice C calls it a prediction about the future, but it is a claim about the past six months, and the second portion supports it rather than weighing against it.
- Out.
- Choice D says both portions are evidence for an unstated conclusion, but the conclusion is stated, in bold, right at the start.
- Out.
- That leaves choice E: the first is the main conclusion, and the second is evidence for it.
- Both halves match.
- The answer is E.

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9 Question 2: the new ward

- **The new ward at Hollin Hospital will not shorten the waiting list.** Referrals in the area are rising faster than the ward will add to capacity, and a list shortens only when capacity grows faster than demand. Moreover, **the list has lengthened in every year in which referrals outpaced capacity,** which suggests that the same will happen again.
- In the argument above, the two portions in boldface play which of the following roles?

IN THE LESSON

- Question two is a medium one.
- Read it with me.
- The new ward at Hollin Hospital will not shorten the waiting list.
- Referrals in the area are rising faster than the ward will add to capacity, and a list shortens only when capacity grows faster than demand.
- Moreover, the list has lengthened in every year in which referrals outpaced capacity, which suggests that the same will happen again.
- The question: In the argument above, the two portions in boldface play which of the following roles?
- Look for the claim that everything else supports, and notice the word moreover.

10 Question 2: label each part

Hollin Hospital: two bold portions

Bold one	the ward will not cut the list	**conclusion**
Not bold	referrals outpace capacity	**evidence**
Bold two	the list grew in such years	**evidence**
Prediction	conclusion, then evidence	**the map**

IN THE LESSON

- Step one, the main conclusion.
- The first sentence predicts that the new ward will not shorten the waiting list.
- Everything after it gives reasons: referrals are rising faster than the ward adds capacity, a list shortens only when capacity grows faster than demand, and history shows the list lengthens in such years.
- So again, the first bold portion is the main conclusion, and it comes first.
- Step two, the second bold portion: the list has lengthened in every year in which referrals outpaced capacity.
- The word moreover tells us it is one more reason, and it describes the past.
- So it is historical evidence.
- Prediction: the first is the main conclusion; the second is historical evidence for it.

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11 Question 2: the five choices

- A. The first is the argument's main conclusion; the second is a prediction that the argument draws from it.
- B. The first is the argument's main conclusion; the second is a consideration that the argument grants but regards as outweighed.
- C. The first is a conclusion supported only by the second bold portion; the second is a premise stated without support.
- D. Both are intermediate conclusions drawn from the referral figures, and the main conclusion is not in bold.
- E. The first is the argument's main conclusion; the second is historical evidence offered in support of it.

IN THE LESSON

- Here are the five choices.
- Choice A.
- The first is the argument's main conclusion; the second is a prediction that the argument draws from it.
- Choice B.
- The first is the argument's main conclusion; the second is a consideration that the argument grants but regards as outweighed.
- Choice C.
- The first is a conclusion supported only by the second bold portion; the second is a premise stated without support.
- Choice D.
- Both are intermediate conclusions drawn from the referral figures, and the main conclusion is not in bold.
- Choice E.
- The first is the argument's main conclusion; the second is historical evidence offered in support of it.
- Three choices start correctly, so the second half decides.

12 Question 2: test each choice

Prediction: the first is the conclusion, the second past evidence

A: conclusion, then prediction	the second is past evidence	**half right**
B: conclusion, then outweighed	it supports, not outweighed	**half right**
C: supported only by bold two	other reasons support it too	**too narrow**
D: both intermediate conclusions	the first is the main one	**hidden**
E: conclusion, then past evidence	matches the map	**the answer**

IN THE LESSON

- This time three choices start correctly, so the second half decides.
- Choice A says the second portion is a prediction drawn from the first.
- But it is a fact about past years, offered as support, not drawn from the conclusion.
- Half right, so out.
- Choice B says the second is granted but outweighed.
- No, it supports the conclusion.
- Half right again.
- Choice C says the first is supported only by the second portion, but the rising referrals and the point about capacity support it too.
- Choice D says the main conclusion is not in bold, but the first bold portion is the main conclusion.
- Choice E: the main conclusion, then historical evidence for it.
- Both halves match.
- The answer is E.

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13 Question 3: the sea eagles

- Biologists have found that **the number of nesting sea eagles on Skarra island has halved in ten years.** Climate and food supply are unchanged, so the likeliest cause is disturbance by tourists: **nesting success is lowest on the stretches of coast that visitors use most.** Visitor access to the nesting coasts should therefore be limited.
- In the argument above, the two portions in boldface play which of the following roles?

IN THE LESSON

- Question three is another medium one.
- Read it with me.
- Biologists have found that the number of nesting sea eagles on Skarra island has halved in ten years.
- Climate and food supply are unchanged, so the likeliest cause is disturbance by tourists: nesting success is lowest on the stretches of coast that visitors use most.
- Visitor access to the nesting coasts should therefore be limited.
- The question: In the argument above, the two portions in boldface play which of the following roles?
- This argument explains something, then recommends something.
- Find the main conclusion, and notice that it is not in bold.

14 Question 3: label each part

Skarra island: two bold portions

Bold one	nesting eagles halved	**the finding**
Not bold	tourists are the likeliest cause	**explanation**
Bold two	worst where visitors go	**evidence**
Main conclusion	limit access (not bold)	**therefore**

IN THE LESSON

- Step one, the main conclusion.
- The word therefore appears in the last sentence: visitor access to the nesting coasts should be limited.
- That is the main conclusion, and it is not in bold.
- Step two, label the rest.
- The first bold portion, the number of nesting eagles has halved, is a finding: the problem the argument sets out to explain.
- Next comes the explanation the author favours: disturbance by tourists, the likeliest cause.
- Then the second bold portion: nesting success is lowest where visitors go most.
- Why is that there?
- To support the tourist explanation.
- So it is evidence for the favoured explanation.
- Prediction: the first is a finding to be explained; the second is evidence for the favoured explanation.

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15 Question 3: the five choices

- A. The first is a finding that the argument seeks to explain; the second is a further finding that it also seeks to explain.
- B. The first is a finding that the argument seeks to explain; the second is evidence for the explanation it favours.
- C. The first is a finding that the argument explains; the second is a subsidiary conclusion drawn from the favoured explanation.
- D. The first is a finding that the argument explains; the second is the explanation that it favours.
- E. The first is a finding that the argument seeks to explain; the second is a consideration that counts against the explanation.

IN THE LESSON

- Here are the five choices.
- Choice A.
- The first is a finding that the argument seeks to explain; the second is a further finding that it also seeks to explain.
- Choice B.
- The first is a finding that the argument seeks to explain; the second is evidence for the explanation it favours.
- Choice C.
- The first is a finding that the argument explains; the second is a subsidiary conclusion drawn from the favoured explanation.
- Choice D.
- The first is a finding that the argument explains; the second is the explanation that it favours.
- Choice E.
- The first is a finding that the argument seeks to explain; the second is a consideration that counts against the explanation.
- All five start the same way, so everything rests on the second half.

16 Question 3: test each choice

Prediction: a finding, then evidence for the explanation

A: also a finding to be explained	it is used as evidence	**wrong role**
B: evidence for the explanation	matches the map	**the answer**
C: a conclusion drawn from it	it supports, not drawn from	**reversed**
D: the explanation itself	the explanation is tourists	**wrong role**
E: counts against the explanation	it supports it	**direction**

IN THE LESSON

- All five choices describe the first portion as a finding the argument explains, so the second half decides everything.
- Choice A says the second is also a finding to be explained.
- But the argument does not try to explain it.
- It uses it as evidence.
- Choice B says the second is evidence for the explanation the argument favours.
- That matches our label.
- Choice C says it is a conclusion drawn from the explanation, which reverses the direction of support.
- Choice D says it is the explanation itself.
- But the explanation is disturbance by tourists, and the second portion is a fact that supports it.
- Choice E says it counts against the explanation, the wrong direction.
- The answer is B.

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17 Question 4: the metro extension

- Opponents of the metro extension say that **the extension will draw passengers away from the buses on the same routes.** That is a reason to build it, not to scrap it: those bus routes are run at a loss, and **the council pays a subsidy for every passenger the buses carry.** Moving riders to the metro would therefore cut the council's subsidy bill, and the extension should go ahead.
- In the argument above, the two portions in boldface play which of the following roles?

IN THE LESSON

- Question four is a hard one, because the author takes an opponent's claim and turns it around.
- Read it with me.
- Opponents of the metro extension say that the extension will draw passengers away from the buses on the same routes.
- That is a reason to build it, not to scrap it: those bus routes are run at a loss, and the council pays a subsidy for every passenger the buses carry.
- Moving riders to the metro would therefore cut the council's subsidy bill, and the extension should go ahead.
- The question: In the argument above, the two portions in boldface play which of the following roles?

18 Question 4: label each part

Metro extension: two bold portions

Bold one	riders will leave the buses	**accepted**
Bold two	a subsidy per bus passenger	**evidence**
Together	fewer riders, less subsidy	**the reason**
Main conclusion	build it (not bold)	**therefore**

IN THE LESSON

- Step one, the main conclusion: the final sentence, the extension should go ahead.
- Not in bold.
- Step two, the first bold portion is a claim by opponents: the extension will draw passengers away from the buses.
- Here is the twist.
- The author does not reject it.
- The author says, that is a reason to build it.
- So the author accepts the opponents' claim and uses it as support.
- Step three, the second bold portion: the council pays a subsidy for every bus passenger.
- That is a further premise.
- Put it with the first: fewer bus passengers, so less subsidy, so build the extension.
- Prediction: the first is the opponents' claim, accepted and used; the second is further evidence for the same conclusion.

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19 Question 4: the five choices

- A. The first is the opponents' claim, which the argument accepts and uses; the second is the argument's main conclusion.
- B. The first is the opponents' claim, which the argument accepts and uses; the second is further evidence for the same conclusion.
- C. The first is a concession that weighs against the argument's conclusion; the second is a consideration that outweighs that concession.
- D. The first is a consideration that the opponents raise against the extension; the second is the argument's reason for thinking that consideration is false.
- E. The first is a claim that the argument accepts as a cost of the extension; the second is a claim that the argument rejects.

IN THE LESSON

- Here are the five choices.
- Choice A.
- The first is the opponents' claim, which the argument accepts and uses; the second is the argument's main conclusion.
- Choice B.
- The first is the opponents' claim, which the argument accepts and uses; the second is further evidence for the same conclusion.
- Choice C.
- The first is a concession that weighs against the argument's conclusion; the second is a consideration that outweighs that concession.
- Choice D.
- The first is a consideration that the opponents raise against the extension; the second is the argument's reason for thinking that consideration is false.
- Choice E.
- The first is a claim that the argument accepts as a cost of the extension; the second is a claim that the argument rejects.
- Ask of the first portion: does the author reject it, or use it?

20 Question 4: test each choice

Prediction: accepted and used, then further evidence

A: accepted; then the conclusion	the conclusion is not in bold	**half right**
B: accepted; then further evidence	matches the map	**the answer**
C: a concession against it	it is used as a reason for	**direction**
D: the second shows it false	the author accepts it	**rejects**
E: accepted cost; second rejected	both are accepted	**rejects**

IN THE LESSON

- Choice A gets the first half right: the opponents' claim, accepted and used.
- But it calls the second portion the main conclusion, and the conclusion is the final sentence, not in bold.
- Half right.
- Choice B: the opponents' claim, accepted and used, then further evidence for the same conclusion.
- Both halves match.
- Choice C calls the first a concession that weighs against the conclusion.
- But the author presents it as a reason for the conclusion.
- Wrong direction.
- Choice D says the second portion shows the opponents' claim to be false.
- The author never says it is false.
- Choice E says the author rejects the second portion, but the author relies on it.
- The answer is B.

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21 Accurate and quick

- Question line first: look for structure
- Main conclusion first: is it in bold?
- A tiny map: C, E, O, F
- First halves, then second halves
- Watch the direction words

IN THE LESSON

- Some habits that keep you accurate and quick.
- First, read the question line first, so you read the passage looking for structure, not for flaws.
- Second, find the main conclusion before anything else, and check whether it is in bold.
- Third, write a tiny map: C for conclusion, E for evidence, O for an opposing view, F for a finding.
- Fourth, eliminate on the first half of the choices, then on the second, and never pick a choice after reading only half of it.
- Fifth, watch the direction words in the choices: supports, weighs against, rejects, accepts.
- A single word like against can turn a right description into a wrong one.

22 What the four questions taught

- The conclusion can come first
- Three right first halves: the second decides
- Finding, explanation, evidence, recommendation
- An opponent's claim can be accepted and used

IN THE LESSON

- Look back at the four maps.
- In questions one and two, the main conclusion came first, in bold, and the second bold portion was evidence for it.
- Do not expect the conclusion at the end.
- In question two, three choices had the right first half, so the second half decided.
- In question three, the main conclusion was a recommendation, not in bold, and the bold portions were a finding and evidence for its explanation.
- In question four, the author accepted an opponent's claim and used it as a reason, which is why choices that said rejected or against were wrong.
- Every time, labelling first made the matching quick.

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23 Quick check

1. A choice gets the first half right. Choose it at once?
   Answer: No: check the second half too.
2. 'Some critics say it will fail ... therefore go ahead.' The critics' claim?
   Answer: An opposing view: rejected, or accepted and used?
3. The main conclusion is always the last sentence. True?
   Answer: False: it can come first, middle or last.

IN THE LESSON

- A quick check.
- Pause after each question.
- Question one.
- A choice gets the first bold portion right.
- Can you choose it straight away?
- The answer is no.
- Check the second half too.
- Half right is a common trap.
- Question two.
- An argument begins, some critics say the plan will fail, and ends, therefore the plan should go ahead.
- What is the critics' claim?
- The answer: an opposing view.
- Check whether the author rejects it or accepts and uses it.
- Question three.
- The main conclusion of an argument must always be the last sentence.
- True or false?
- The answer is false.
- The main conclusion can come first, in the middle, or last.

24 Recap: the boldface method

- Main conclusion first
- Label every part
- Describe each bold portion
- Match half by half; name each trap

IN THE LESSON

- Let us recap.
- Find the main conclusion first, and check whether it is in bold.
- Label every other part: intermediate conclusion, evidence, opposing view, concession, or a finding to be explained.
- Describe each bold portion in your own words.
- Then match the choices half by half, crossing out any choice with a wrong first half, then any with a wrong second half.
- Name the trap each time: reversed roles, half right, wrong direction, a hidden conclusion that is really in bold, or a claim the author uses called rejected.
- Practise this until labelling a passage takes you less than a minute.

Summary notes for the Charta whiteboard lesson. Figures are from the lesson's made-up examples.

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