Command of evidence: quantitative (data displays)

A quantitative command-of-evidence question presents a data display (a graph...



Lesson `rw.infoideas.I4`

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The idea

A quantitative command-of-evidence question presents a data display (a graph or table) and asks which statement is best supported by the data, or which data point best completes or supports a claim. Read the specific values, trends, and comparisons the display actually shows, then choose the option grounded in them.

What does the display actually show: specific values, a trend, or a comparison? What exact claim must the evidence support?

Read the relevant values or trend directly. Match a choice to what the data show, without overreaching to causation and without backing a different claim.

Watch every step

A line graph shows a company's monthly sales rising steadily from $10,000 in January to $25,000 in June.

Which statement is best supported by the graph?

- **A.** Sales increased over the six-month period.
- **B.** Sales decreased over the six-month period. ✗ *trend-direction error*
- **C.** Sales stayed about constant across the period. ✗ *trend-direction error*
- **D.** Sales were highest in January. ✗ *misreads-value*

Why A — "Sales increased over the six-month period." Select the statement grounded in the displayed data.

Now a harder one

A bar graph shows average test scores by study method: flashcards 85, rereading 72, practice tests 90. A student claims that practice tests were associated with the highest scores.

Which data point best supports the claim?

- **A.** Practice tests averaged 90, the highest of the three methods.
- **B.** Rereading averaged 72. ✗ *supports-different-claim*
- **C.** Flashcards averaged 85. ✗ *supports-different-claim*
- **D.** Practice tests averaged 72. ✗ *misreads-value*

Why A — "Practice tests averaged 90, the highest of the three. . . ." Select the statement grounded in the displayed data.

The method, in one line

Command of evidence: quantitative (data displays)
Read the relevant values or trend directly. Match a choice to what the data show, without overreaching to causation and without backing a different claim.

Did I read the values and direction correctly? Did I avoid inferring cause from correlation? Does my choice support the SPECIFIC claim asked?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

misreads-value
Reads a wrong number, year, or category from the display.

overreach/causation
Claims more than the data support, especially inferring that one variable causes another from a correlation.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

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