

## LESSON 6

# Classify Valid and Invalid Evidence

READING ASSESSMENT TARGETS: R.8.2, R.8.3, R.8.4, R.8.5

### 1 Learn the Skill

When you classify evidence as valid or invalid, you evaluate the evidence to determine whether it supports a claim effectively. **Valid evidence** is relevant, or directly related to the claim. It must also be reliable. Reliable evidence comes from a trustworthy source, such as an expert in the field. Reliable evidence is fair and complete.

Evidence can be **invalid** (not valid) for several reasons. Evidence that does not come from a reliable source is invalid. Similarly, evidence that does not relate directly to the claim is invalid. If evidence does not fully support a claim or reflects faulty reasoning, it is invalid. Being able to classify evidence will help you decide whether an argument is convincing.

### 2 Practice the Skill

By practicing the skill of classifying valid and invalid evidence, you will improve your study and test-taking abilities, especially as they relate to the GED® Reasoning Through Language Arts Test. Read the passage below. Then answer the question that follows.

#### SOLAR IS THE SMART WAY TO GO

The sun is an abundant source of energy. Every hour, more energy reaches Earth from the sun than humans use in a year. Harnessing the energy of the sun to power and heat our homes makes sense for our environment and our economy.

Solar energy is a renewable, nonpolluting resource. Unlike burning fossil fuels, changing solar energy into electricity or heat does not produce greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming. If we do not take steps to switch to energy sources such as solar, we could soon find ourselves on a planet with unpredictable weather, unstable food supply, and widespread political upheaval.

Developing solar energy also makes sense from an economic perspective. According to the Solar Foundation's National Solar Jobs Census 2012, the solar industry added 13,872 jobs from September 2011 to September 2012. That figure represents a 13% growth rate in employment in the industry. At a time when employment in other industries is lagging or shrinking, "going solar" is a strategy with no downside!

**a** The author says that without solar energy, the planet could face terrible consequences. The author ignores other options for dealing with global warming. Incomplete evidence often signals bias.

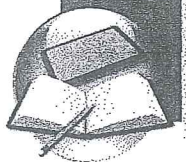
**b** Most issues have pros and cons. The statement suggests that the author is ignoring opposing viewpoints, and the evidence is likely incomplete.

#### USING LOGIC

Remember that appeals to emotion or ethics are not necessarily invalid forms of evidence. However, consider whether support would be strengthened if the author included facts or specific information.

1. Which statement is valid evidence in support of the author's argument that solar energy is good for the economy?
  - A. "Every hour, more energy reaches Earth from the sun than humans use in a year."
  - B. "Developing solar energy also makes sense from an economic perspective."
  - C. "... the solar industry added 13,872 jobs from September 2011 to September 2012."
  - D. "At a time when employment in other industries is lagging or shrinking, 'going solar' is a strategy with no downside!"





# Identify Faulty Evidence

READING ASSESSMENT TARGETS: R.8.2, R.8.3, R.8.4, R.8.5

## 1 Learn the Skill

It is important to review arguments to identify claims supported by **faulty reasoning or evidence**. Faulty reasoning involves arguments that are not logical. Faulty evidence may involve inaccurate, insufficient, or irrelevant information, or it may appeal to readers' emotions to support a claim. For example, authors may try to make readers feel afraid or feel as though they belong to or are superior to a particular group.

## 2 Practice the Skill

By practicing the skill of identifying faulty reasoning and evidence, you will improve your study and test-taking abilities, especially as they relate to the GED® Reasoning Through Language Arts Test. Read the information and study the table below. Then answer the question that follows.

- Gluten is a protein found in wheat flour. The examples in this table are intended to support the claim that avoiding gluten increases energy and weight loss.

**a** A generalization with too little information is faulty reasoning. For example, "Three friends have gone gluten-free, and they feel great. Going gluten-free improves your health!"

**b** Authors also may try to make readers feel patriotic. This emotional appeal is considered part of bandwagon appeal.

| Faulty Reasoning               | Explanation   | Example   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Inaccurate cause and effect    | Suggesting that events have a cause-and-effect relationship because the events occur together | After I removed gluten from my diet, I lost weight.   |
| Irrelevant information         | Providing evidence that does not relate to the claim  | One in 100 people cannot digest gluten. Like them, you could gain energy by eating gluten-free foods. |
| Inaccurate either/or situation | Suggesting there are only two options or viewpoints when there are more                       | If you want to have more energy, you must remove gluten from your diet.                               |
| Faulty Evidence                | Explanation   | Example   |
| Bandwagon appeal               | Arguing in favor of an idea because the idea is popular                                       | Join the thousands of people who have found better health, gluten-free!                               |
| Scare tactics                  | Exaggerating a danger or using threatening language   | Do you want to be condemned to a future of obesity and disease?                                       |
| Testimonial                    | Supporting an idea by featuring the endorsement of a celebrity                                | Performer Miley Cyrus believes in the benefits of going gluten-free!                                  |

### USING LOGIC

Some authors exhibit bias—they write about only one side of an issue or ignore information that contradicts their claims. Biased arguments are unreliable. So are arguments without enough support.

- Why is the fact that one in 100 people cannot digest gluten irrelevant to the claim that gluten-free food increases energy?
  - The fact inaccurately suggests an either/or situation.
  - The fact is intended to persuade readers to give up gluten because many people have removed gluten from their diets.
  - The fact is stated in strong language intended to frighten.
  - The fact does not give any indication of the likely effects of gluten on an individual with his or her own health needs.