

Para-Summary — Practice Questions

20 Practice Questions with Detailed Solutions | CAT Verbal Ability

This set covers the Para-Summary question type tested in CAT VARC: identifying the central idea of a short passage while avoiding common traps such as overly narrow, overly broad, distorted, or reversed summaries. Difficulty spans Easy (E), Medium (M) and Hard (H), with passages ranging from everyday topics to abstract, concept-driven arguments.

Key Tips

HOW TO APPROACH PARA-SUMMARY

Principle	What to Look For
Main idea, not details	The summary must reflect the passage's core point, not a supporting example or minor detail.
Avoid "too narrow"	Eliminate options that capture only one part of a multi-part argument.
Avoid "too broad"	Eliminate options that generalize beyond what the passage actually claims.
Avoid "distorted"	Eliminate options that add certainty, causation, or claims not stated in the passage.
Avoid "reversed / opposite"	Eliminate options that contradict the passage's actual conclusion or tone.
Preserve balance & nuance	If the passage presents both sides of a debate, the correct summary should reflect that balance, not favour one side.

Difficulty Legend

QUESTION DISTRIBUTION

Level	Questions	Q Numbers	Border Colour
 Easy	4	Q1 - Q4	Green
 Medium	11	Q5 - Q15	Orange
 Hard	5	Q16 - Q20	Red

Practice Questions

EASY

Q1 - Q4

Q1. The Value of Reading

EASY

Reading regularly strengthens vocabulary and comprehension skills. It also improves focus and reduces stress by providing an escape from daily routines. Furthermore, exposure to diverse perspectives through books fosters empathy and broadens one's worldview. For these reasons, many educators encourage students to read for pleasure, not just for academic requirements.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Reading is only useful for improving vocabulary and grammar in students.
- (B) Reading offers cognitive, emotional, and social benefits, making it valuable beyond academics.
- (C) Educators believe students should read exclusively for pleasure rather than for exams.
- (D) Books are the only way to reduce stress and build empathy.

Q2. Urban Green Spaces

EASY

Urban green spaces such as parks and community gardens do more than beautify cities. They lower local temperatures by absorbing heat, improve air quality by filtering pollutants, and provide residents with spaces for physical activity. Studies also link access to greenery with improved mental health among city dwellers. As cities expand, planners are increasingly prioritizing green infrastructure alongside roads and buildings.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Green spaces are primarily used to make cities look more attractive.
- (B) City planners now build parks instead of roads to combat pollution.
- (C) Green spaces provide environmental, physical, and mental health benefits, prompting planners to prioritize them.
- (D) Mental health problems in cities are solely caused by a lack of parks.

Q3. The Shift to Remote Work

EASY

The shift to remote work during the pandemic revealed both advantages and drawbacks. Employees gained flexibility and eliminated commute time, but many also reported feelings of isolation and difficulty separating work from personal life. Companies, meanwhile, saved on office costs but struggled to maintain team cohesion. As a result, many organizations have now adopted hybrid models that attempt to balance these competing concerns.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Remote work is more beneficial for companies than for employees.
- (B) Hybrid work models eliminate all the drawbacks of remote work.
- (C) The pandemic forced every company to permanently close their offices.
- (D) Remote work brought mixed outcomes for employees and companies, leading many to adopt hybrid models.

Q4. The Decline of Honeybees

EASY

Honeybee populations have been declining worldwide due to pesticide exposure, habitat loss, and disease. Since bees pollinate a significant share of the crops humans consume, their decline threatens global food security. Conservationists are urging farmers to reduce pesticide use and plant wildflower strips to support bee populations. Some governments have already introduced restrictions on the most harmful pesticides.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Bees are becoming extinct because farmers refuse to change their practices.
- (B) Declining bee populations threaten food security, prompting conservation efforts and policy action.
- (C) Wildflower strips are the only solution to save bee populations.
- (D) Pesticides are the sole cause of the global decline in bee populations.

MEDIUM

Q5 – Q15

Q5. Nudge Theory

MEDIUM

Traditional economic models assume individuals make rational decisions to maximize their utility. However, behavioral economics has shown that people often rely on mental shortcuts, or heuristics, that lead to systematic errors in judgment. Recognizing this, policymakers have begun using "nudges" — subtle changes in how choices are presented — to steer people toward better decisions without restricting their freedom to choose. Critics argue that nudging can be manipulative, even when the underlying intent is benevolent.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Behavioral economics proves that classical economic theory is entirely wrong.
- (B) Nudges are a controversial tool policymakers use to counter cognitive biases identified by behavioral economics.
- (C) People always make irrational decisions, so nudging is the only ethical policy tool.
- (D) Critics believe nudging should be banned because it restricts consumer choice.

Q6. Antibiotic Resistance

MEDIUM

The overuse and misuse of antibiotics in both healthcare and agriculture have accelerated the emergence of drug-resistant bacteria. When bacteria are exposed to antibiotics repeatedly, only the strains capable of resisting the drug survive and multiply. This evolutionary pressure has created "superbugs" resistant to multiple treatments, complicating infection management worldwide. Public health experts now advocate for more judicious prescribing practices and continued investment in new antibiotic research.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Antibiotic overuse has driven bacterial resistance, creating a global public health challenge that demands more careful drug use and new research.
- (B) Bacteria evolve resistance regardless of how antibiotics are used.
- (C) Superbugs can only be defeated by discovering entirely new categories of medicine.
- (D) Doctors are solely responsible for the rise of drug-resistant infections.

Q7. Automation and the Future of Work

MEDIUM

As automation technologies advance, concerns about job displacement have intensified. Historically, technological revolutions have eliminated certain jobs while creating new ones, often in unforeseen sectors. Economists debate whether the current wave of automation, driven by artificial intelligence, will follow this historical pattern or represent a more disruptive break, given the speed and breadth of the changes involved. What is generally agreed upon is that workforce retraining will be essential regardless of which scenario unfolds.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Automation will definitely create more jobs than it destroys, just as in the past.
- (B) Economists agree that AI-driven automation is unlike any previous technological shift.
- (C) There is debate over automation's disruptive potential, but retraining is widely seen as necessary either way.
- (D) Job displacement caused by automation cannot be addressed through retraining.

Q8. The Urban Heat Island Effect

MEDIUM

Cities tend to be significantly warmer than their surrounding rural areas, a phenomenon known as the urban heat island effect. This occurs because concrete and asphalt absorb and retain heat far more than natural landscapes, while tall buildings restrict airflow that would otherwise dissipate warmth. The effect intensifies energy consumption, as residents rely more heavily on air conditioning, which in turn contributes to further heat generation. Some cities have begun installing reflective roofing and expanding tree cover to counteract this self-reinforcing cycle.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Urban heat islands are caused only by the use of air conditioning in cities.
- (B) Rural areas are becoming hotter than cities due to a lack of tree cover.
- (C) The urban heat island effect creates a self-reinforcing cycle of heat and energy use that cities are trying to counteract through design changes.
- (D) Reflective roofing has completely eliminated the urban heat island effect in most cities.

Q9. Cultural Globalization

MEDIUM

Globalization has facilitated the widespread exchange of cultural products, from music and film to cuisine and fashion. While this has enriched cultural diversity in many societies by exposing people to traditions beyond their own, critics contend that dominant cultures, backed by greater economic and media power, often overshadow local traditions, leading to a homogenization of global culture. Supporters counter that local cultures frequently adapt and hybridize foreign influences rather than being erased by them.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Globalization has destroyed all local cultures in favor of dominant ones.
- (B) Cultural exchange from globalization is universally regarded as beneficial.
- (C) Globalization's cultural effects are debated — some see homogenization, others see adaptive hybridization amid diversity.
- (D) Only economically powerful nations benefit from cultural globalization.

Q10. The Placebo Effect

MEDIUM

The placebo effect demonstrates that a patient's belief in a treatment can produce real physiological changes, even when the treatment itself has no active therapeutic ingredient. This phenomenon complicates the design of clinical trials, since researchers must control for the psychological impact of simply receiving care. Interestingly, some studies suggest placebos can retain partial effectiveness even when patients are explicitly told they are receiving one, hinting that ritual and expectation alone may trigger genuine biological responses.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Placebos are proven to be as effective as real medication in all cases.
- (B) The placebo effect reveals that belief and expectation can trigger real biological responses, complicating clinical research.
- (C) Clinical trials no longer need control groups because of the placebo effect.
- (D) Patients who know they are receiving a placebo experience no benefit at all.

Q11. Deepfake Technology

MEDIUM

Deepfake technology, which uses artificial intelligence to create hyper-realistic fake audio and video, has advanced rapidly in recent years. While it holds promise for applications like film production and language dubbing, it also raises serious concerns about misinformation, fraud, and reputational harm, since fabricated content can be nearly indistinguishable from genuine footage. Legislators in several countries are now debating regulations that would require the disclosure of AI-generated media, though enforcement remains a significant technical challenge.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Deepfake technology is being banned worldwide due to its dangers.
- (B) Deepfakes have legitimate uses but also pose serious risks, prompting difficult-to-enforce regulatory debates.
- (C) Deepfakes are indistinguishable from real footage and therefore cannot be regulated.
- (D) Film production is the primary reason deepfake technology was developed.

Q12. Microfinance and Poverty

MEDIUM

Microfinance institutions provide small loans to individuals who lack access to traditional banking, aiming to spur entrepreneurship and alleviate poverty. Early enthusiasm portrayed microfinance as a transformative tool for economic development, but subsequent research has produced mixed results, with some borrowers falling into debt cycles due to high interest rates or lack of financial literacy. Proponents now advocate pairing microloans with financial education to improve outcomes.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Microfinance has been proven an unqualified failure across the developing world.
- (B) Microfinance's impact on poverty has been mixed, leading advocates to pair it with financial education for better results.
- (C) High interest rates are the only issue affecting microfinance borrowers.
- (D) All microfinance borrowers eventually fall into unmanageable debt.

Q13. Monocultures vs. Polycultures

MEDIUM

Agricultural monocultures — the practice of growing a single crop over a large area — boost short-term yields through efficient mechanization and specialization. However, this uniformity leaves crops highly vulnerable to pests and diseases, since a pathogen that thrives on one plant can spread unchecked across an entire field. Polyculture systems, which grow multiple crops together, sacrifice some short-term efficiency but offer greater resilience and support broader biodiversity. Some researchers advocate blending both approaches to balance productivity with ecological stability.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Monocultures are always more productive than polycultures in the long run.
- (B) Polycultures should completely replace monocultures to solve pest problems.
- (C) Monocultures raise short-term yields but increase vulnerability, prompting some to seek a balance with more resilient polyculture practices.
- (D) Pests only attack fields that use mechanized farming methods.

Q14. Cognitive Dissonance

MEDIUM

Cognitive dissonance theory holds that people experience psychological discomfort when their beliefs and actions conflict, and that they are motivated to reduce this discomfort, often by altering their beliefs rather than their behavior. This helps explain why individuals sometimes rationalize poor decisions after the fact rather than admitting error. The theory has been used to explain behaviors ranging from consumer regret to the persistence of beliefs even after supporting evidence is discredited.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Cognitive dissonance always leads people to change their behavior to match their beliefs.
- (B) People experience discomfort from conflicting beliefs and actions, often resolving it by adjusting beliefs rather than behavior, which explains various rationalizing behaviors.
- (C) Consumer regret is the primary cause of cognitive dissonance.
- (D) Cognitive dissonance theory proves that all beliefs are irrational.

Q15. Universal Basic Income**MEDIUM**

Universal Basic Income (UBI) proposes providing all citizens with a regular, unconditional cash payment regardless of employment status. Advocates argue it could reduce poverty and provide a safety net amid growing automation-driven job losses, while critics warn it could be prohibitively expensive and might reduce the incentive to work. Small-scale pilot programs conducted in various countries have yielded mixed results, with some showing improved well-being and others showing negligible effects on employment behavior.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) UBI pilot programs have conclusively proven the policy works everywhere.
- (B) UBI is universally rejected by economists due to its high cost.
- (C) UBI is a debated policy with potential benefits and drawbacks, and pilot programs so far show mixed results.
- (D) UBI eliminates the need for any other social safety net programs.

HARD

Q16 - Q20

Q16. The Self-Correcting Nature of Science**HARD**

The strength of the scientific method lies not in its ability to produce absolute certainty, but in its capacity for self-correction. Hypotheses are provisional, subject to revision or rejection as new evidence emerges, and even well-established theories remain, in principle, falsifiable. This built-in tentativeness is often misunderstood by the public as a weakness — as if changing scientific consensus signals unreliability — when in fact it reflects the method's core strength: an iterative refinement toward better approximations of truth, rather than a claim to have reached it.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Scientific theories are always wrong until they are eventually replaced.
- (B) The provisional, self-correcting nature of science, often mistaken for weakness, is actually its defining strength.
- (C) Scientific consensus should never change once a theory is well-established.
- (D) The public correctly understands that changing consensus proves science is unreliable.

Q17. Path Dependence in Institutions**HARD**

Path dependence describes how early decisions, even seemingly minor or arbitrary ones, can lock in particular trajectories for institutions or technologies, making alternative paths progressively costlier to adopt over time. This occurs because initial choices generate complementary investments, standards, and expectations that reinforce the status quo, even if a rival approach would have been more efficient had it been adopted from the outset. Recognizing path dependence complicates simple narratives of institutional design as purely rational, since history and contingency play persistent roles in shaping present arrangements.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Path dependence proves that all institutions are designed irrationally from the start.
- (B) Early, sometimes arbitrary choices can entrench trajectories that later resist change, showing institutional design isn't purely rational.
- (C) Alternative technological paths are always more efficient than the ones eventually adopted.
- (D) Path dependence only affects technology, not broader institutions.

Q18. The Overjustification Effect**HARD**

The overjustification effect occurs when offering an external reward for an activity that a person already finds intrinsically enjoyable diminishes their internal motivation to engage in it. Once the reward is introduced, the individual's perception of why they are performing the activity shifts — attributing their engagement to the external incentive rather than genuine interest — such that if the reward is later removed, motivation may fall below its original level. This has implications for how organizations design incentive structures, particularly for creative or inherently satisfying work.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) External rewards always increase motivation regardless of the activity.
- (B) Introducing external rewards for intrinsically enjoyable activities can undermine internal motivation, with implications for incentive design.
- (C) Removing a reward has no effect on a person's motivation levels.
- (D) Organizations should avoid giving any rewards for creative work.

Q19. Survivorship Bias**HARD**

Survivorship bias arises when analysis focuses disproportionately on entities that succeeded or persisted, while overlooking those that failed or disappeared, thereby producing a distorted picture of what factors actually drive success. A classic illustration involves examining returning aircraft for damage patterns to reinforce armor, when the more informative data lies in the planes that never returned. The bias is pervasive in fields from finance, where failed funds vanish from performance databases, to entrepreneurship, where successful founders' habits are studied while the far larger population of failed founders with similar habits is ignored.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) Survivorship bias means that studying successful entities is always the wrong approach.
- (B) Analyzing only surviving entities skews conclusions about success, since the causally revealing failures are excluded from the data.
- (C) Failed aircraft always provide less useful information than surviving ones.
- (D) Survivorship bias is a problem unique to the finance industry.

Q20. The Paradox of Choice**HARD**

While conventional wisdom holds that more options improve consumer welfare by better matching preferences, research on choice overload suggests that beyond a certain threshold, additional options can reduce satisfaction and even suppress decision-making altogether. This occurs partly because evaluating numerous alternatives imposes cognitive costs, and partly because greater choice raises the bar for what counts as a satisfactory outcome, making people more prone to post-decision regret over paths not taken. Retailers have experimented with curated, limited assortments partly in response to these findings, though the effect's magnitude appears to vary considerably depending on context and individual disposition.

Which of the following best summarizes the passage?

- (A) More choices always lead to better decisions and greater satisfaction.
- (B) Beyond a certain point, excess choice can impose cognitive costs and reduce satisfaction, prompting some retailers to curate limited assortments, though effects vary by context.
- (C) Retailers have proven that limited assortments always outperform large ones.
- (D) Decision fatigue affects everyone equally, regardless of context or individual differences.

Answer Key**Q1-Q4****Q5-Q8****Q9-Q12****Q13-Q16****Q17-Q20****Q1****(B)****Q5****(B)****Q9****(C)****Q13****(C)****Q17****(B)****Q2****(C)****Q6****(A)****Q10****(B)****Q14****(B)****Q18****(B)****Q3****(D)****Q7****(C)****Q11****(B)****Q15****(C)****Q19****(B)****Q4****(B)****Q8****(C)****Q12****(B)****Q16****(B)****Q20****(B)****Solutions & Explanations**

Q1. Answer: (B)

The passage lists cognitive (vocabulary, comprehension), emotional (stress relief), and social (empathy) benefits of reading. (A) and (D) narrow this to a single benefit; (C) distorts "encourage" into an exclusive claim.

Q2. Answer: (C)

The passage covers environmental, physical, and mental health benefits of green spaces, leading planners to prioritize them. (A) is too narrow, (B) distorts the passage (parks are "alongside," not "instead of" roads), and (D) overstates causation with "solely."

Q3. Answer: (D)

The passage presents both benefits and drawbacks for employees and companies, concluding with hybrid adoption. (A) is unsupported, (B) overstates with "all," and (C) is an extreme distortion not stated in the passage.

Q4. Answer: (B)

The passage links bee decline to food security risk and describes conservation/policy responses. (A), (C), and (D) all introduce absolute claims ("only," "sole," "refuse") not supported by the text.

Q5. Answer: (B)

The passage explains nudges as a policy response to cognitive biases, while noting the criticism of manipulation — this balance is captured only in (B). (A), (C), and (D) all overstate or distort the passage's claims.

Q6. Answer: (A)

This captures the cause (overuse), effect (resistance/superbugs), and the recommended response (careful prescribing, research). (B), (C), and (D) each introduce absolute or unsupported claims.

Q7. Answer: (C)

The passage frames automation's impact as debated, with retraining as the one point of agreement. (A) and (B) state certainties the passage does not support; (D) contradicts the passage directly.

Q8. Answer: (C)

The passage describes a self-reinforcing heat/energy cycle and counter-measures. (A) narrows the cause to one factor, (B) reverses the claim, and (D) overstates the effectiveness of reflective roofing.

Q9. Answer: (C)

The passage presents two competing views (homogenization vs. hybridization) without endorsing either fully — only (C) preserves this balance. The other options pick one extreme side.

Q10. Answer: (B)

The core idea is that belief/expectation can cause real biological effects, complicating trials. (A), (C), and (D) all overstate or contradict the nuanced claims in the passage.

Q11. Answer: (B)

The passage balances deepfakes' legitimate uses against risks and regulatory difficulty. (A) and (C) are unsupported absolutes; (D) misstates the passage's emphasis.

Q12. Answer: (B)

The passage describes mixed results and a proposed remedy (financial education) — exactly what (B) states. (A) and (D) overstate failure; (C) narrows the cause to one factor.

Q13. Answer: (C)

The passage weighs monoculture yield gains against vulnerability, and polyculture resilience against reduced efficiency, ending with a call for balance — captured only by (C).

Q14. Answer: (B)

The passage's core claim is that people resolve belief-action conflict by adjusting beliefs (not behavior), which explains rationalizing behaviors. (A) reverses this; (C) and (D) are overly narrow or absolute.

Q15. Answer: (C)

The passage frames UBI as debated with mixed pilot results — precisely what (C) states. The other options assert certainties the passage does not support.

Q16. Answer: (B)

The passage's central argument is that science's tentativeness, often seen as weakness, is actually its strength. (A) and (C) misrepresent the argument, and (D) directly contradicts the passage's stance.

Q17. Answer: (B)

The passage explains how early, possibly arbitrary decisions entrench trajectories, complicating the idea of purely rational design. (A), (C), and (D) all overstate or misstate this nuanced claim.

Q18. Answer: (B)

The passage explains how external rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation, with implications for incentive design — exactly (B). The other options state absolutes not supported by the text.

Q19. Answer: (B)

The passage's core point is that excluding failures distorts conclusions about success, illustrated across multiple fields. (A), (C), and (D) each misstate or narrow this general principle.

Q20. Answer: (B)

The passage nuances the "more choice is better" assumption, noting cognitive costs and variable effects — captured only by (B). (A) contradicts the passage; (C) and (D) overstate certainty.

Note: This practice set is intended for concept revision and self-assessment only. Passage style, topics, and question format are illustrative and may differ from the exact pattern, difficulty, or wording of actual CAT question papers.