INFORMATION AND IDEAS / 01 UNDERSTAND

Evidence-based inferences

An illustrated lesson ▪ Theory, reasoning and worked examples

An inference is constrained by evidence

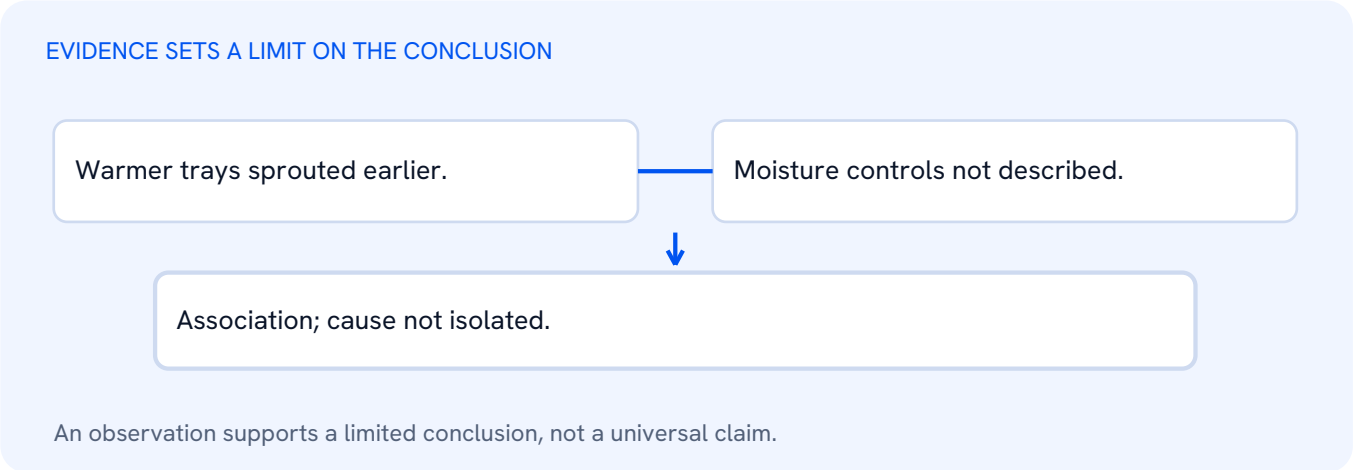
An inference goes beyond repeating a sentence but must follow reasonably from the information supplied. It connects observations, explanations or comparisons already in the passage. It is not an invitation to invent a cause, predict a dramatic future event or import a fact from outside the text.

Match the strength of the evidence

If a study observes a pattern in one small group, a claim about every person is usually too broad. If the author offers a possible explanation, the answer should not call it established fact. Qualifiers such as some, in this trial and may can be essential parts of an accurate conclusion.

Observation does not automatically establish cause

Two events occurring together may be associated without one causing the other. Other variables could explain the pattern. A passage must supply enough information about comparisons or controls before a causal conclusion is justified. A cautious description of what was observed is often better supported than a sweeping explanation.



Illustrative teaching diagram. Values and examples are explained in the lesson.

THE ESSENTIAL IDEA

An inference must follow from the information given.

INFORMATION AND IDEAS / 02 BUILD THE METHOD

From idea to method

Write the evidence before the conclusion

Identify the sentence or pair of facts that would support your answer. Then state the smallest conclusion connecting them. This sequence makes it easier to detect an attractive choice that depends on an unstated assumption. If you cannot point to supporting evidence, reconsider the inference.

Track comparisons precisely

If A is larger than B and B is larger than C, then A is larger than C. But if A and B both exceed C, their relationship to each other is unknown. Similar care applies to passages: two methods outperforming a baseline does not show which of those methods is better.

Use absence of evidence carefully

A passage that does not mention an effect has not necessarily shown that the effect does not exist. Distinguish not reported from ruled out. Likewise, failure to detect a signal can reflect limitations of the instrument rather than proof that no signal was present.

WORKED EXAMPLE / A SUPPORTED, LIMITED CONCLUSION

Researchers found that seeds in warmer trays sprouted earlier than seeds in cooler trays. The report did not describe how moisture was controlled.

01 Set up the reasoning

The established observation is earlier sprouting in the warmer trays.

02 Apply the relationship

Temperature could be relevant, but an uncontrolled moisture difference could also contribute. The information does not isolate the cause.

03 Interpret and check

A justified inference keeps to the observed association in this trial. It does not claim warming always accelerates sprouting in every species.

INFORMATION AND IDEAS / 03 CONNECT & REMEMBER

See the deeper pattern

Prediction requires an explicit pattern

A passage may support predicting the next observation if it describes a stable relationship and the relevant conditions remain the same. Even then, match the author's certainty. A model-based expectation is not a guarantee, especially when the passage identifies sources of variability or limits to the data.

ONE MORE WORKED APPLICATION

In a trial, Theo placed 9 seedlings in each of two rooms. Only the room with a fan showed a decrease in humidity. What limited conclusion is supported?

1. The passage describes an observation in two rooms.

2. It does not establish that fans always cause humidity to fall, because other factors are not controlled.

Answer: In this trial, the room with the fan showed lower humidity afterward.

Mistakes to recognize

- Do not upgrade an association into a proven cause.
- Always and never require stronger evidence than some or may.
- A plausible real-world claim can still be unsupported by this passage.

A quick understanding check

What is the best first step before selecting an inference?

Explanation: Identify the exact evidence and the limits it places on a conclusion.

MORE PRACTICE IN YOUR DASHBOARD

Open prepvora.com/app/ and use the SAT question bank. Work on Information and Ideas, then look for evidence-based inferences questions. Solve independently before reviewing the explanation. Use this guide for the theory; use the dashboard for a longer practice session.

Open your dashboard → | Explore the resource library →

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