# Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills High Yield Guide
## By Zach Dereniowski

**How To Approach CARS:** Quality > Quantity

**CARS Timeline (Passages):**
1st Week: 30 minutes per passage x 3 day
2nd Week: 20 minutes per passage x 3 day
3rd Week: 15 minutes per passage x 3 day
4th Week: 12 minutes per passage x 3 day
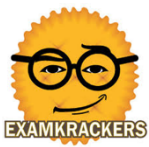5th Week + BEYOND: 3 Passages in 30 minutes/day

**Once CARS prep has started – you need to do 3 CARS passages EVERY SINGLE DAY. Consistency is of the highest importance for CARS. Consistency builds confidence which builds score improvement and success on test day.**

First month of CARS preparation, you should be focusing on why 3 out of 4 answer choices are wrong. There is usually more than one reason per answer choice. Make sure IT MAKES SENSE TO YOU. It needs to click in your mind. AAMC/3rd party resource explanations mean nothing if they don't make sense to you and it's not internalized.

**HOW TO READ PASSAGES & NOTE-TAKING STRATEGIES:**

Read for big picture. Don't try to memorize every word. Read for why would the author write these words – what's the greater purpose?
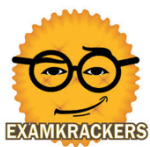
| Accelerate When Reading | Break/Slow Down When Reading |
|---|---|
| 1. Repetitive list-like sentence with several commas – elaborating on a previously described idea/concept that you understood. Use the list to affirm. <br> 2. Highly-convoluted sentences in which you didn't understand what you just read. Have the faith in knowing – if that sentence was important, the sentence following will describe it in normal English. | 1. Change of tone (however, but, except, although). Highlight these words. <br> 2. Extreme words (totally, always, etc.,). Use +/- & neutral symbols to indicate extremely positive or negative words. Highlight these words. <br> 3. Between EVERY PARAGRAPH – What was the big picture of the previous paragraph? Write 1-2 words per paragraph. Where is this passage going? Predict. The goal isn't to be correct; it's about actively predicting. Allowing you to actively retain much more material and maximize your score. <br> 4. Last paragraph – usually when you find the summation of passage/author's opinion. This takeaway allows you to tackle most questions sufficiently – high importance. |

In total, we need to change how we read. Not reading for substance/content. We are reading for purpose. **Much different.** This takes constant practice, proper review and revisions in order to perfect. But if done correctly & consistently – should be mastered within 4-5 weeks.

# HOW TO TACKLE QUESTIONS

1. Read question, reword question in "street language", predict the answer, go to the answer choices. Follow this four-step formula EVERY QUESTION. If you don't make a prediction, out of scope and wordy answer choices will always seem "valid", even though we know they don't match one bit with our predictions.

2. Each question should take approximately one minute to accomplish. 45 seconds should be spent reading, rewording and predicting. 15 seconds should be sent on actually looking at the answer choices. Essentially you already have the answer, you just need to find it at this point.

3. Branching from the previous point – always choose an answer stem that ANSWERS the question being asked. Just because it's true and stated in the passage, doesn't make it the right answer choice. If it's not answering that specific question – automatically wrong.

4. Verbs in answer choices are your friend (indicating – extremes and opposites). Ex. If the question stem is really +, and one of the answer choices is -, it is automatically wrong. Doesn't matter what's it's stating, + ≠ -. Simple.

5. Double Negative Questions – Always write 2 negative symbols     Scratch out and put one positive symbol. You are looking for something that agrees/supports/advantage – something positive. Not negative. Don't overthink it. Symbols are your friend.

6. Parallel Answer Choices – 2 of the 4 answer choices are the same – except for one word differentiating them. One of these two answer choices will be the correct response. Compare ONLY the two words that are different. Choose the right one based on your prediction you made.

7. Inference Questions – If something is specifically stated in the passage and lines up with the answer you predicted, it is automatically wrong. The fact that is was STATED in the passage makes it incorrect. Inferences are beyond the text, they cannot be stated in the text.

8. Extremes – 95% of the time extreme answer choices (totally, every, all, etc.,) are wrong. Very, very rarely are passages written in extreme language. That's the whole purpose of CARS. Most passages will be close to neutral (slight positive or slight negative) and may even be hypocritical. But extreme verbs/words need to always be highlighted and eliminated from answer choices.

# HOW TO REVIEW CARS PASSAGES

A daily example from one of my strongest CARS students properly and efficiently completing our CARS Data & Journal Sheet.

# MCAT CARS Data and Journal

Date:
Resource:
Workbook passages:

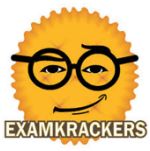| Passage Number | 4 |
|---|---|
| Time | 13:30 |
| Total Correct | 5/7, 71% |
| Questions Incorrect | 4. Inference Question, passage indicated opposite to my thought<br>7. Inference Question, the definition of the verb that was correct did not match what I thought the word meant so I selected wrong |

| Passage Number | 5 |
|---|---|
| Time | 8:45 |
| Total Correct | 4/5, 80% |
| Questions Incorrect | 3. Retrieval/EXCEPT Question, my answer was implied in the passage so I was wrong b/c it was an except question |

| Passage Number | 6 |
|---|---|
| Time | 11:54 |
| Total Correct | 5/7, 71% |
| Questions Incorrect | 1. Inference Question, not sure why, answer didn't seem spoken of, so I missed it<br>2. Inference Question, 50:50, B sounded better to me than C, C was stated in the passage |

| Passage Number | 7 |
|---|---|
| Time | 11:56 |
| Total Correct | 4/7, 57% |
| Questions Incorrect | 1. Inference Question, 50:50, fell for decoy<br>3. Inference Question, 50:50, fell for decoy a second time…<br>5. New Info, 50:50, My answer out of scope, not mentioned, actual answer seemed too simple |

TOTAL TIME: 46:05- 4 passages                     TOTAL CORRECT: 18/26, 69%

Within 7-10 days, you'll notice repetitive question types/answer choices that you make errors in. For this student, it was inference based questions. Over the next week, just focus on CARS passages with a large majority of inference-based questions. Do this every time you notice a weakness. It's that simple. Don't be scared of your weakness. Make your weaknesses your strengths and move on. On test day, you'll have to face your fears regardless, so you might as well do it now when you have time to build confidence, endurance and STRONG habits.

We can always dive into a few passages to help show you! You are in full control and if you need more help that is fine but let us know!

Remember, you can do anything!