



This exercise sheet accompanies my video: “Syllogisms and Summaries”. In the video, I show how to use a special form of summarizing to boost the power of your arguments. Watch the video and have a go at the exercises below.

How strong are the arguments below? For each argument, decide whether you find the argument basically plausible, or basically implausible overall.

Identify the weakest parts of the arguments below: the Premise(s), the Conclusion, or the argument’s overall validity (the connection between the premises and the conclusion).

1. Premise 1: International treaties mean no one has ever laid claim to Antarctica  
Premise 2: International treaties never last for long when real land claims are at stake  
Conclusion: Antarctica is not a continent but a 360 degree ice mass, and the earth is flat.
2. Premise 1: The Crusades were sanctioned by the Church  
Premise 2: Crusaders pillaged and massacred as they travelled  
Conclusion: The Church condoned massacres in the name of God
3. Premise 1: There are similar-sounding words in languages around the globe  
Premise 2: Word similarities are too extensive to be a coincidence  
Conclusion: All natural languages must have a single origin (aka: ‘Proto-World’ language)
4. Premise 1: Languages vary by how much they make speakers attend to gender  
Premise 2: Emphasizing gender makes people less likely to support gender equality  
Conclusion: Genderless languages liberalize attitudes toward gender equality
5. Premise 1: Justice is nothing but the advantage of the stronger  
Premise 2: Justice is obedience to laws  
Conclusion: Injustice, if it is on a large enough scale, is stronger than justice

6. Premise 1: It is hard for states generally to maintain the rule of law at times of crisis  
Premise 2: Colonial Burma faced rebellion in the 1930s but retained the rule of law  
Conclusion: *Colonial* states are particularly in need of the rule of law at times of crisis
  
7. Premise 1: Americans no longer report racist attitudes or support segregation  
Premise 2: When people stop reporting racist attitudes or supporting segregation, they also support programs to redress racial discrimination, such as affirmative action.  
Conclusion: Affirmative action programs are popular
  
8. Premise 1: The will of God is identical with the laws of nature.  
Premise 2: A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature.  
Premise 3: Necessarily, God's will is inviolable.  
Conclusion: Miracles cannot happen.