

The LNAT distractor field guide

Find the changed role, degree, owner, condition or cause in a near-miss option.

THE SHORT ANSWER

The official register describes close options rather than random errors. Across 84 analysed questions, the largest distractor families change scope, function or qualification while keeping the passage's subject familiar. Read the option against the exact stem and the exact passage claim.

Checked against the sources named in this guide, August 2026. British English. Free to share.

1 The eight near-miss families

The 84 analysed questions use distractors that are often plausible on the topic. The trap is usually a changed relationship. A true detail can still be wrong when it answers a different question or belongs to a different speaker.

Family	What changed	Count
Literal or qualification trap	Polarity, scope, referent or a condition	21, 25.0%
Function or relationship swap	The role of a phrase, example or contrast	16, 19.0%
Central-claim near miss	A true point replaces the main point	16, 19.0%
Close paraphrase	Meaning shifts while the wording stays familiar	8, 9.5%
Contextual vocabulary	A nearby dictionary sense replaces the local one	6, 7.1%
Cross-source attribution	A claim is attached to the wrong voice	6, 7.1%
Causal or principle transfer	The governing relation is changed	5, 6.0%
Tone or attitude valence	Approval, criticism or commitment is overstated	4, 4.8%

The first three families account for 53 of 84 questions, or 63.1%. Train the change in the option, not a vague feeling that the answer sounds less sensible.

1 The tell

When two options both sound reasonable, put the stem beside each one. The wrong option often answers a nearby question perfectly.

2 Audit an option in five moves

1. Mark the stem polarity. Nineteen of the 84 official questions select what is *not*, *except* or *incorrect*.
2. Underline the option's controlling word: *all*, *some*, *only*, *because*, *proves*, *merely* or *should*.
3. Find the passage sentence that supports the option and check who owns it.
4. Compare the option's degree, condition and relationship with the passage.
5. Reject outside knowledge. The official advice says the solution is in the passage.

Option says...	Ask...	Likely trap
The author proves X	Does the passage say proves, or only suggests?	Evidence promotion
The example supports X	Is the example support, objection or illustration?	Function swap
Speaker A believes X	Did Speaker A say it, report it or reject it?	Attribution error
The policy always works	Where is the limit or exception?	Scope expansion

3 The noun can stay while the claim changes

Worked example Do not confuse a recommendation with a condition

Passage. A museum is considering free entry. The author says free entry may widen access, but warns that a crowded building can make the collection harder to use. The museum should measure who attends and how visitors move before adopting a permanent policy.

Question. Which statement is most directly supported?

- A. Free entry always improves access.
- B. A permanent free-entry policy should be adopted immediately.
- C. The museum should gather evidence before making the policy permanent.
- D. Crowded museums are less valuable than quiet museums.

Correct: C. The third option preserves the recommendation's condition and does not turn a possibility into a general result.

Misreading: A and D overstate the passage. B removes the evidence-gathering step that controls the recommendation.

After a miss, make the repair portable:

1. Record the family, such as scope expansion or function swap.
2. Copy the exact word that changed the answer.
3. Write the passage claim in one sentence without the option's extra strength.
4. Find a fresh item with the same family but a different subject.

4 Sources

LNAT Consortium, Hints and tips

The official passage-bound method, close distractors and no negative marking. [Read the official advice.](#)

LNAT Consortium, Practice Tests 2010 Commentary

Published explanations of argument structure, examples, inference and close reading. [Open the commentary.](#)

LNAT Consortium, Practice tests

The two official paper tests and the warning that their five options are historical, while the current test uses four. [Check the practice inventory.](#)

The family names and counts are the evidence document's analysis of 84 official questions. They are a study taxonomy, not official labels printed on the test. The worked passage is original.