

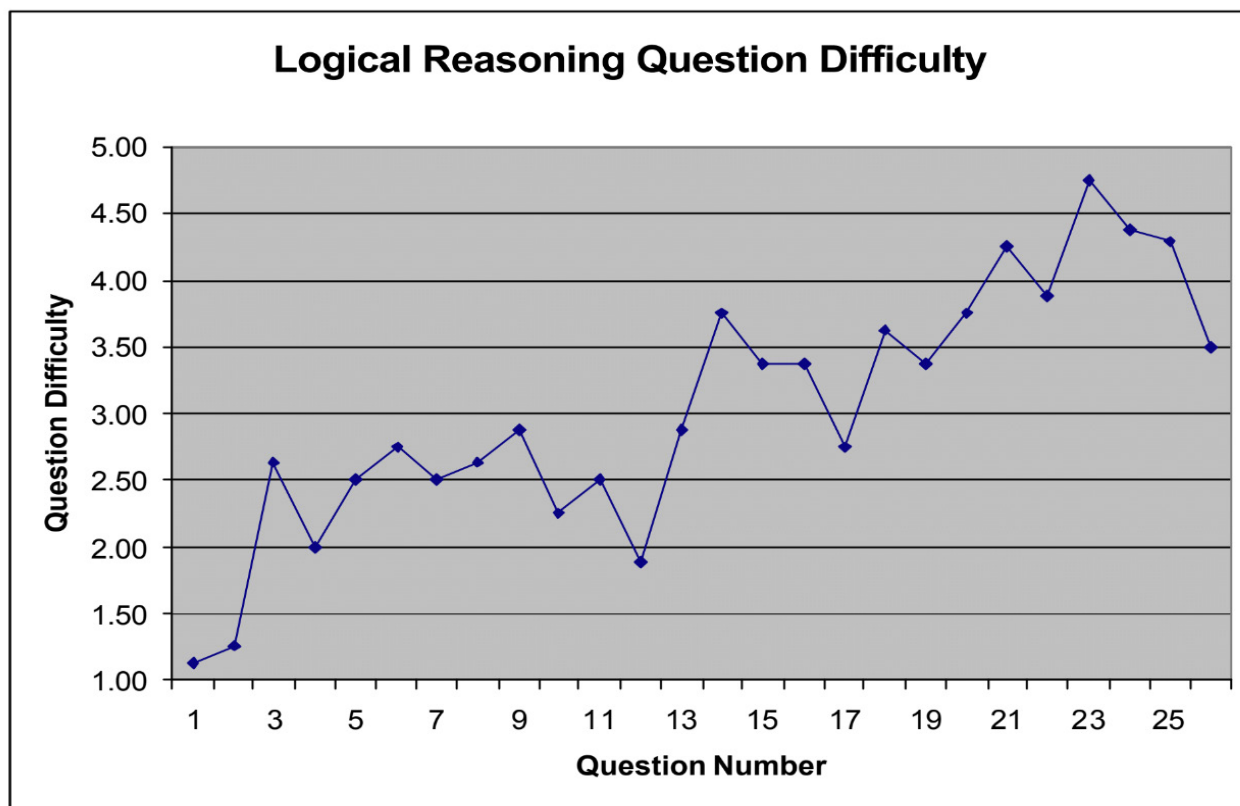
Logical Reasoning Question Difficulty

On the first page of Chapter Twenty-Two of the *PowerScore LSAT Logical Reasoning Bible* we discuss the order of question difficulty in a typical Logical Reasoning section. Occasionally we are asked how we derive our information, and how accurate that information is. First, years of experience working with LSAT problems and LSAT students has given us great insight into which questions are difficult and why they are difficult. Second, we have detailed statistical information on thousands of LSAT questions from using them as practice tests in our courses. Third, we use information available from Law Services to confirm that our information is correct. For example, Law Services has released explanations to four separate LSATs (February 1996, February 1997, February 1999, and February 2000) and in these explanations they have included an evaluation of question difficulty on a 1 (easy) to 5 (very difficult) scale. Since this information comes from the people who make the test (and have access to the results of all test takers), the accuracy of this information is incontrovertible.

Below, we use the information from those four tests to give you a clear picture of how the difficulty in a given section changes.

Question By Question Difficulty

When compiled and averaged out, the difficulty in Logical Reasoning section is roughly as follows:



Note that the graph represents an average of question difficulty, and individual sections will vary. Regardless, certain truths are immediately evident:

- On average, the first ten questions are always easier than the last ten questions.
- As the section moves into the teens, the difficulty begins to rise, and several questions in the ten through twenty range will be very difficult.
- Most, but not necessarily all, of the questions in the twenties will be medium to very difficult.

These facts support the advice given in the *Logical Reasoning Bible* that you must maximize your opportunities in the first ten questions in order to set yourself up to bring home a good score.

Individual Question Difficulty Statistics

When you examine the difficulty rating for individual questions and sections, the above pattern continues to hold true, but you can also make several more useful inferences:

- The first question is always easy or relatively easy (seven of the eight sections began with a level 1 (easy) question; the other section began with a level 2 (relatively easy) question. In other words, the first question will not be hard. The same is true for the second question.
- Individual question difficulty statistics for questions #1 through #10:

The earliest appearance of the first level 4 (difficult) question: question #3

The earliest appearance of the first level 5 (very difficult) question: question #8

The latest appearance of the first level 4 or 5 question: question #13

Minimum number of level 4 (difficult) questions in the first ten: 0

Maximum number of level 4 (difficult) questions in the first ten: 4

Minimum number of level 5 (very difficult) questions in the first ten: 0

Maximum number of level 5 (very difficult) questions in the first ten: 1

Minimum combined number of level 4 and 5 questions in the first ten: 0

Maximum combined number of level 4 and 5 questions in the first ten: 4 (the first ten questions of this particular test contained no level 5 questions and four level 1 questions)

The one section notwithstanding, you will probably see one or two level 4 questions in the first ten, and zero or one level 5 questions in the first ten. Compare that to the statistics for questions #16 through #25:

Minimum number of level 4 (difficult) questions: 1 (this section contained only 24 Questions)

Maximum number of level 4 (difficult) questions: 4

Minimum number of level 5 (very difficult) questions: 2

Maximum number of level 5 (very difficult) questions: 5

Minimum combined number of level 4 and 5 questions: 4

Maximum combined number of level 4 and 5 questions: 9 (yes, nine of the ten questions in questions #16 through 25 of this particular section were relatively difficult or difficult)

Overall Section Difficulty

The difficulty level statistics also allow us to create a composite of the overall average difficulty of each section:

<u>Section</u>	<u>Overall Average Difficulty</u>
February 1996, Section #1	2.88
February 1996, Section #2	3.12
February 1997, Section #1	2.96
February 1997, Section #2	3.08
February 1999, Section #1	3.31
February 1999, Section #2	2.68
February 2000, Section #1	2.83
February 2000, Section #2	3.16
Total Average	3.03

Thus, although the typical section does vary in overall difficulty, the average hovers around level 3 (medium difficulty). Furthermore, when a section is unusually easy or hard, the other section offsets the difficulty and acts as a counterbalance (see the February 1999 section numbers above for an excellent example of how section difficulty is balanced).

In the final analysis, your knowledge of the question difficulty of LSAT Logical Reasoning sections should give you confidence that you can get off to a fast start.