

### **Hypothetical reasoning. 'If.....then....'**

- Used to test reasons without committing to them.
- There is a condition, the 'if'.
- There is a consequence, the 'then'.

"If Joe is going to be in the chess team, then he needs to practice his game everyday."

This differs from "Joe is going to be in the chess team therefore he should practice his game everyday" in that the hypothetical construction is speculative, not assertive.

Here, we are able to consider the likelihood of the condition and whether or not the consequence is defensible; because of the hypothesis.

Joe may not want to play chess, or be able to play well enough to be in the team. If he is a potential team member, then the condition is largely satisfied.

Practicing his game every day seems a reasonable recommendation for team membership, although there are still some assumptions being made, such as that he won't become bored or stale by practicing daily.

'If', & 'then' are not always written down, "My M.P. wants my vote, but she won't get it unless she deals with anti-social behaviour in the town." - 'If my M.P. wants me to vote for her, then she will have to pay attention to the issue of anti social behaviour locally'.

In longer argumentation, hypothetical reasoning is often used in association with explicit reasoning and it will be part of evaluation to identify hypotheses, and explain to what extent their use affects the strength of the argument.

"There are very few general rules, but one must be that everyone would benefit from doing more aerobic exercise. Even the elderly and the infirm cannot avoid their responsibility to make themselves healthier. Having role models such as grandparents actively engaged in improving their fitness would encourage children to become more involved in sports. National teams will benefit from there being more sportsmen and women and the obesity epidemic will be past."

1. What is the main conclusion of this argument?
2. What is the hypothetical reasoning involved in the claim 'National teams will benefit from there being more sportsmen and women.....'?
3. Evaluate the condition and the consequences of this hypothesis. Mention both strengths and weaknesses in you evaluation.