A "prelogical" response to the surprise exam paradox

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Abstract. In this paper, I present a response to the surprise exam paradox which may be of some use to someone. It is somewhat frightening for me.

I wish to examine a problem I have taken up quite recently (Edward 2022). The teacher says that there will be surprise exam at some point during the next school week, which lasts from Monday to Friday. It will not happen on Friday, students reason, because it will not be a surprise on that day. The night before, you know that Friday is the only day left. It will not happen on Thursday, students reason, because it will not be a surprise on Thursday, because we have already ruled out Friday and the night before there is only this day left. And so on for the other days in the school week. At this point, people posing the puzzle usually say that the students ended up surprised when the exam was given in the designated school week and ask where the argument went wrong.

Suppose the day was Wednesday. Then according to this response, the students' argument worked for Thursday and Friday, but not Wednesday. Suppose it was Thursday. Then according to this response, the students' argument worked for Friday but not Thursday. The place where the error is to be located changes depending on when the day of the exam is. If the teacher should set two surprise exams, one for students of class A and another for students of class B, on different days in the same week, then the error is in one place for students of class A and in another place for students of class B. I am presenting this, because perhaps one day people will know how to make sense of this response.

Reference. Edward, T.R. 2022. The memory skepticism solution to the surprise exam paradox.

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