

Idioms

Look for these common idiom tricks on GMAT questions:

- **Consider, regard...as, think of...as:** there is no *as* after *consider*, while both *regard* and *think of* need the *as*.
- **To be/being:** In general, avoid the construction to be/being because they are usually passive. *To be/being* are commonly used in junk answer choices. Idioms in **Bold** tend to be more common on the GMAT

A

access to	<i>The company has access to large capital reserves.</i>
act as	<i>The poison pill in the contract acts as a preventative measure against hostile takeovers.</i>
allows for	<i>The design of the robot arm allows for great flexibility.</i>
as....as	<i>Chocolate tastes as good as ice cream.</i>
associate with	<i>He associates beer with potato chips.</i>
attribute to	<i>The poor first quarter results are attributed to the restructuring.</i>
a responsibility to	<i>The CEO has a fiduciary responsibility to all shareholders.</i>
a result of	<i>The recent Nasdaq decline is a result of higher interest rates.</i>
a sequence of	<i>The Sumerian text was a sequence of incomprehensible symbols.</i>
agree with	<i>The Teamsters do not agree with the Republicans on many issues.</i>
among	Used when discussing more than two items. <i>He was the finest policeman among the hundreds of rookies.</i>
as good as/or better than	<i>The new software is as good as or better than anything on the market</i>
as great as	<i>The new house looks as great as I had hoped.</i>

attend to (someone) *The emergency room doctor attended to the injured victim.*

attribute X to Y/X *We attribute the results to the new management.*

attributed to Y *The extinction of the dinosaurs has been attributed to an asteroid collision.*

B

based on *The results are based on a comprehensive ten year study.*

begin to *He will begin to study twelve hours before the test.*

believe X to be Y *After seeing the flying saucer, I believe UFOs to be a real phenomenon.*

between *Used when discussing two things (if there are more than two, then use **among** instead). He could not decide between Corn Flakes and Raisin Bran.*

C

care about *How much do business schools care about your score?*

centers on + noun *The GMAT centers on the knowledge of basic math and writing/reading skills.*

choose to *The number of students who choose to go to business school has increased in the last ten years.*

consistent with *Your grades are not consistent with your abysmal GMAT scores.*

contend that *He contends that the GMAT has a cultural bias.*

consider + noun *How important do you consider the test?*

continue + to *If you continue to study, you will succeed.*

contrast A with B *If you contrast A with B, you can see the difference.*

convert to	<i>You may convert muscle to fat if you study too much.</i>
compare A to B	<i>(compare to stresses <u>similarities</u>). The music critic favorably compared him to Bob Dylan.</i>
compare A with B	<i>(compare with stresses <u>differences</u>). Broccoli is good for you compared with ice cream.</i>
count on + noun	<i>He counts on management support.</i>
concerned with	<i>They are concerned with investor relations more than actual profitability.</i>
conform to	<i>When you work at a new company, you should try to conform to its corporate culture.</i>

D

decide to	<i>We decided to continue.</i>
decide on	<i>We decided on the new format.</i>
depend on	<i>The global economy depends on improving productivity.</i>
different from	<i>The CAT is very different from the paper and pencil GMAT.</i>
difficult to	<i>Many students find the CAT difficult to take.</i>
distinguish between X and Y	<i>Distinguish between domestic and international production.</i>
distinguish X from Y	<i>Juries must attempt to distinguish truth from falsehood.</i>
depends on whether	<i>Our place in the playoffs depends on whether we win tonight.</i>

E

to be + essential to + noun	<i>Speed is essential to success in the Internet marketplace.</i>
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except for

He did well on the GMAT, except for the sentence correction questions.

F

flee from

The convict fled from the country.

G

grow from

Dell Computer grew from a start-up to a Fortune 500 company in less than fifteen years.

grow out of

Needless to say, they quickly grew out of their first office.

H

help + noun + to

Their direct business model helped them to grow rapidly.

I

indicate that

Dell's recent stock trouble may indicate that their growth will not continue to be as rapid.

invest in

He is too risk-averse to invest in the stock market

identical with

His DNA is identical with his twin's.

in contrast to

The candidate claims to support tax cuts, in contrast to his prior statements.

independent from

The Federal Reserve Board is supposed to be independent from political considerations.

indifferent towards

Some countries are indifferent towards human rights.

L

leads to

Rapid growth often leads to problems.

like Usually only used for direct comparison: *He walks **like** Joe walks.*

localized in *Most Internet venture capital is localized in a few areas of the world.*

M

mistake + noun + for *I mistook you for an old friend.*

modeled after *The judicial building is modeled after the Parthenon.*

more than ever *Companies demand MBA graduates now more than ever.*

N

native to *There is a unique business culture native to the U.S.*

a native of *It infects those who are not even a native of America.*

need to *Living in New York City is an experience everyone needs to try.*

to be + necessary + to *It is necessary to get a high GMAT score to get into Stanford.*

neither...nor *Neither Tom nor Sam has the necessary skills to finish the job.*

not only...but also *Stanford not only has the highest GMAT average, but also the highest GPA.*

P

prohibit from + gerund *You are prohibited from using a calculator on test day.*

potential to *A graduate of a top business school has the potential to make over \$100,000.*

R

range from X to Y	<i>The GMAT scores at top business schools will range from 650 to 750.</i>
refer to	<i>If you have any more questions, you should refer to a grammar book.</i>
regard as	<i>Wharton's finance program is regarded as the finest in the world.</i>
require + noun + to	<i>You require a GMAT score to go to most U.S. business schools.</i>
rivalry between X and Y	<i>The rivalry between the Boston Red Sox and the New York Yankees is one of the most celebrated in professional sports.</i>
responsible for	<i>The manager is responsible for seven entry level employees.</i>
retroactive to	<i>The tax policy change is retroactive to last year.</i>

S

save for	<i>Save for William, no one else passed the exam.</i>
save from	<i>Many people use business school to save them from dull jobs.</i>
so that	So should not be used as an adjective: GMAT preparation is so... boring. Use it with "that." <i>This guide is designed so that you may raise your score.</i>
subscribe to	<i>Business school students should subscribe to the <u>Wall Street Journal</u>.</i>

T

tie to	<i>The contract should be tied to concessions.</i>
transmit to	<i>The communications system will transmit to anyone within range.</i>

U

used + infinitive

Japan used to be the model industrial economy.

to be + used to +
gerund

*After five practice tests, he was used to the GMAT
CAT format.*

○

The most effective way to learn idioms is to practice them. Whenever you get an idiom question wrong, write down the idiom. Make a list and memorize. There are a finite number of idioms that could be tested on the GMAT, and with enough practice, you should be able to cover most of them.

Examples

1. When choosing a car you often have to choose (between/among) practicality and performance.

Between is correct. Use "between" to distinguish two things, such "practicality" and "performance." Use "among" for more than two things. The bank robbers divided the stolen money "among" the five of them."

2. A small order of french fries has much (fewer/less) fries than the super-sized order.

Fewer is correct. Fewer answers the question "How many?" relating to something that could be counted individually." Less "refers to things such as pudding, cake, or flour, which cannot be reasonably quantified

3. I prefer Mozart (to/over) Beethoven.

"Prefer **to**" is the proper expression.

4. Timothy talks (like/as) his friends do.

This is one of the few instances "like" should be used in English. "Like" is used here as a direct comparison.

5. He was studying (in/at) a rate of two practice GMATs per day.

It's "at a rate of," instead of "in a rate of."

6. The joint-venture contract covers such questions (like/as) the division of profits and costs.

"Covers... as" is better here. "Like" should be used very rarely, only for direct comparisons (Joe plays like his brother).

7. Dan Marino is regarded (as/to be) one of the greatest quarterbacks to ever play football.

The idiom is "regarded as."

a debate over
a lot
a responsibility to
a result of
a sequence of
agree with
as an instance of
as good as/or better than
as great as
as good as...or better than
as much as
attend to (someone)
attribute X to Y/X is attributed to Y
based on
believe X to be Y
both X and Y
centers on
concerned with
conform to
created with
defined as
depends on whether
depicted as
different from/differ from
distinguishes between X and Y
distinguish from
doubt that
either...or
enable to
fascinated by
forbid X to do Y
identical with
in contrast to
independent from
indifferent towards
modeled after
(no) more...than/(no) less...than
more than ever
neither...nor
not only...but also
not so much...as
prohibits X from doing Y
potential to
range from X to Y
regard as
regardless
responsible for
resulting in
retroactive to
so X as to be Y
so (adjective) that
subscribe to
such...as

the same to X as to Y
to contrast X with Y
to mistake X for Y
to result in
to sacrifice X for Y

\Com"pen*sate\, v. i. To make amends; to supply an equivalent; -- followed by for; as, nothing can compensate for the loss of reputation.

Responsibility for

Odds with

Aid in

Extent to

That should not follow **directive**

That should not follow **order**

The underlying condition prompting an action; a cause. Often used in the plural: *grounds for suspicion; a ground for divorce*. See Synonyms at [base](#)¹.

"**pleaded guilt to** a crime" is idiomatic.

Pleaded guilt of/for a crime is unidiomatic

First, memorize the pattern:

no sooner + inversion + than + sentence

Second, "curfew" is a singular count noun and therefore requires a determiner (eg: the).

Convicted of

1. ability in SOMETHING
2. ability TO DO SOMETHING
3. able TO DO SOMETHING
4. absent from SOMETHING
5. accept into + GROUP
6. accepted at + COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY
7. accepted into + GROUP
8. accepted to + COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY
9. access to SOMETHING
10. accused of SOMETHING BAD
11. accustom to SOMETHING
12. acquaint with SOMETHING/SOMEBODY
13. act as ROLE
14. adapt from WORK
15. adapt to SOMETHING
16. addicted to SOMETHING
17. admit of SOMETHING
18. advantage of SOMETHING
19. afraid of SOMETHING
20. X agree on + DOING SOMETHING X (change to agree to do something)
21. agree on + SOMETHING
22. agree to DO SOMETHING
23. agree to SOMETHING
24. agree with SOMEBODY
25. aid + SOMEBODY or SOMETHING
26. aid SOMETHING + in + DOING SOMETHING
27. *** aim to DO SOMETHING ***
28. *** aimed at DOING SOMETHING ***
29. allow for SOMETHING
30. angry at SOMEBODY (some grammarians consider this unidiomatic)
31. angry with SOMETHING
32. apologize for SOMETHING
33. appeal to SOMEBODY, Erin Billy, for example
34. applied to SOMETHING
35. apply to SOMETHING
36. approach (the noun, not the verb) to SOMETHING
37. approve of SOMETHING
38. argue about SOMETHING
39. argue for SOMETHING
40. arrive at SOMETHING
41. arrive in SOMETHING
42. *** as... as... ***
43. ascribe to BELIEF
44. ask + SOMEBODY + SOMETHING
45. ask + SOMEBODY + TO DO SOMETHING
46. ask + TO DO SOMETHING
47. associate with SOMETHING
48. *** attribute SOMETHING to SOMEBODY/SOMETHING ***
49. averse to SOMETHING TestMagic.com
50. aversion for SOMETHING (less common, but correct)
51. aversion to SOMETHING (most common form)
52. aversion toward SOMETHING (less common, but correct)
53. aware of SOMETHING

Accept/Except:

Accept means "to agree to" or "to receive". Except means "to object to" or "to leave out".

We will accept (receive) your manuscript for review.

No parking is allowed, except (leave out) on holidays.

Account for:

When explaining something, the correct idiom is account for:

We had to account for all the missing money.

When receiving blame or credit, the correct idiom is account to:

You will have to account to the state for your crimes.

Adapted to/for/from

Adapted to means "naturally suited for". Adapted for means "created to be suited for". Adapted from means "changed to be suited for".

The polar bear is adapted to the subzero temperatures.

For any "New Order" to be successful, it must be adapted for the continually changing world power structure.

Lucas' latest release is adapted from the 1950 B-movie "Attack of the Amazons."

Affect/Effect:

Effect is a noun meaning "a result".

Increased fighting will be the effect of the failed peace conference.

Affect is a verb meaning "to influence".

The rain affected their plans for a picnic.

All ready vs. Already

All ready means "everything is ready".

Already means "earlier".

Alot vs. A lot

Alot is nonstandard; a lot is the correct form.

Among/Between:

Between should be used when referring to two things, and among should be used when referring to more than two things.

The young lady must choose between two suitors.

The fault is spread evenly among the three defendants.

Being that vs. Since:

Being that is nonstandard and should be replaced by since.

(Faulty) Being that darkness was fast approaching, we had to abandon the search.

(Better) Since darkness was fast approaching, we had to abandon the search.

Beside/Besides:

Adding an s to beside completely changes its meaning: Beside means "next to". Besides means "in addition".

We sat beside (next to) the host.

Besides (in addition), money was not even an issue in the contract negotiations.

Center on vs. Center around

Center around is colloquial. It should not be used in formal writing.

(Faulty) The dispute centers around the effects of undocumented workers.

(Correct) The dispute centers on the effects of undocumented workers.

Conform to (not with):

Stewart's writing does not conform to standard literary conventions.

Consensus of opinion

Consensus of opinion is redundant: consensus means "general agreement".

Correspond to/with:

Correspond to means "in agreement with":

The penalty does not correspond to the severity of the crime.

Correspond with means "to exchange letters":

He corresponded with many of the top European leaders of his time.

Different from/Different than:

The preferred form is different from. Only in rare cases is different than acceptable.

The new Cadillacs are very different from the imported luxury cars.

Double negatives:

(Faulty) Scarcely nothing was learned during the seminar.

(Better) Scarcely anything was learned during the seminar.

Doubt that vs. Doubt whether

Doubt whether is nonstandard.

(Faulty) I doubt whether his new business will succeed.

(Correct) I doubt that his new business will succeed.

Farther/Further:

Use farther when referring to distance, and use further when referring to degree.

They went no further (degree) than necking.

He threw the discs farther (distance) than the top seated competitor.

Fewer/Less:

Use fewer when referring to a number of items. Use less when referring to a continuous quantity.

In the past, we had fewer options.

The impact was less than what was expected.

Identical with (not to):

This bid is identical with the one submitted by you.

In contrast to (not of):

In contrast to the conservative attitudes of her time, Mae West was quite provocative.

Independent of (not from):

The judiciary is independent of the other branches of government.

Not only . . . but also:

In this construction, but cannot be replaced with and.

(Faulty) Peterson is not only the top salesman in the department and also the most proficient.

(Correct) Peterson is not only the top salesman in the department but also the most proficient.

On account of vs. Because:

Because is always better than the circumlocution on account of.

(Poor) On account of his poor behavior, he was expelled.

(Better) Because he behaved poorly, he was expelled.

One another/Each other:

Each other should be used when referring to two things, and one another should be used when referring to more than two things.

The members of the basketball team (more than two) congratulated one another on their victory.

The business partners (two) congratulated each other on their successful first year.

Plus vs. And:

Do not use plus as a conjunction meaning and.

(Faulty) His contributions to this community are considerable, plus his character is beyond reproach.

(Correct) His contributions to this community are considerable, and his character is beyond reproach.

Note: Plus can be used to mean and so long as it is not being used as a conjunction.

(Acceptable) His generous financial contribution plus his donated time has made this project a success.

In this sentence, plus is being used as a preposition. Note, the verb has is singular because an intervening prepositional phrase (plus his donated time) does not affect subject verb agreement.

Regard vs. Regards:

Unless you are giving best wishes to someone, you should use regard.

(Faulty) In regards to your letter, we would be interested in distributing your product.

(Correct) In regard to your letter, we would be interested in distributing your product.

Regardless vs. Irregardless

Regardless means "notwithstanding". Hence, the "ir" in irregardless is redundant. Regardless is the correct form.

Retroactive to (not from):

The correct idiom is retroactive to:

The tax increase is retroactive to February.

Speak to/with:

To speak to someone is to tell them something:

We spoke to Jennings about the alleged embezzlement.

To speak with someone is to discuss something with them:

Steve spoke with his friend Dave for hours yesterday.

The reason is because:

This structure is redundant. Equally common and doubly redundant is the structure the reason why is because.

(Poor) The reason why I could not attend the party is because I had to work.

(Better) I could not attend the party because I had to work.

Whether vs. As to whether

The circumlocution as to whether should be replaced by whether.

(Poor) The United Nations has not decided as to whether to authorize a trade embargo.

(Better) The United Nations has not decided whether to authorize a trade embargo.

Whether vs. If

Whether introduces a choice; if introduces a condition. A common mistake is to use if to present a choice.

(Faulty) He inquired if we had decided to keep the gift.

(Correct) He inquired whether we had decided to keep the gift.

Example:

The studio's retrospective art exhibit refers back to a simpler time in American history.

The studio's retrospective art exhibit refers back to

The studio's retrospective art exhibit harkens back to

The studio's retrospective art exhibit refers to

The studio's retrospective art exhibit refers from

The studio's retrospective art exhibit looks back to

Choice (A) is incorrect. Retrospective means looking back on the past. Hence, in the phrase refers back, the word back is redundant.

Choice (B) is incorrect because harkens back is also redundant.

Choice (C) is correct. Dropping the word back eliminates the redundancy.

Choice (D) is incorrect because the preposition from is non-idiomatic.

Choice (E) is incorrect because looks back is also redundant.

Note: One could argue that the phrase American history also makes the sentence redundant. However, it is not underlined in the sentence. It is not at all uncommon to find questionable structures in parts of the sentence that are not underlined. In fact, you may even find questionable structures in the underlined part of the sentence that are not corrected by any of the answer choices because the writers are testing a different mistake. Concern yourself with correcting only the underlined part of the sentence.