

a long face

'Why have you got such a long face?' 'I just lost all my money in the casino.'

ability to

Correct Usage: Bats have the ability to fly in the dark

Incorrect Usage: Bats have ability of flying in the dark

act as

A big tree can act as an umbrella in the rain.

act like = behave in a certain way

"Please stop acting like a child", said the mother to the teenager.

agree (up)on

Let's try to agree upon a date for the vacation

We agreed to go to the play together.

agree to

We agreed to share the lottery prize.

aid in

The explorers needed aid in finding drinking water.

allow for

Allowing for his youth and lack of experience, I forgave him completely for his oversight.

appeal to

The idea of a vacation to Florida this winter appeals to me a lot.

are in danger of

Correct Usage: These days, fewer people are in danger of dying due to bacteria related diseases.

Incorrect Usage:

- These days, fewer people are in danger to die due to bacteria related diseases.

- These days, fewer people have a danger of dying due to bacteria related diseases

as an adolescent

Correct Usage: As an adolescent, he suffered from acne.

Incorrect Usage: While in adolescence, he suffered from acne.

as good as

She owes me an apology - she as good as called me a liar.

ask for

The child asked for a glass of water

The diners asked the waiter for a type of wine the restaurant didn't have.

associate with

I always associate Water with pizza for some reason

attend to

Please attend to your teacher's instructions

attribute to

We attribute our success to your good advice

base on

I based my opinion upon my own seasoned judgment.

begin to see daylight

I've been working on my thesis for two years, and at last I'm beginning to see daylight.

between x and y

Correct Usage: He had to choose between studying or going to play.

Incorrect Usage: He had to choose between studying with going to play.

burn the candle at both ends

She'd been burning the candle at both ends studying for her exams and made herself ill.

care about

I care very much about my family.

care for

I don't care for sweet desserts

choose for

I chose a funny card for his birthday.

choose as

We will choose her as our representative.

claim to or claim that

He claims that he can run backwards.

Columbus laid claim to America through the cunning use of flags.

come to a dead end

I've come to a dead end. I'm fresh out of ideas.

He compared himself to one of the knights of the round table.

compare with

Let's compare the virtues of savings accounts with investing in bonds.

composed of

The committee is composed of people from every department.

consider (as)

I don't consider you as a possible candidate

I consider myself an excellent athlete.

contend with

I don't want to have to contend for the job with Ed

continue with

Do you mind if I continue with my knitting as we talk?

conform to

Does my casual dress conform to your regulations?

conform with

Does this part conform with the specifications?

consider x y

Correct: Michael Owen is a good football player, but not generally considered an all time great.

Incorrect: Michael Own is a good football player, but not generally considered to be an all time great.

In Contrast to

In contrast to previous reports, one senior British official suggested an attack was not imminent,

contrast with

The black one contrasts nicely with the white one.

count on

We can count on Bill to get the job done.

to credit with

Correct Usage: Newton is credited with discovering the laws of motion

Incorrect Usage:

- Newton is credited as discovering the laws of motion
- Newton is credited to having discovered the laws of motion
- Newton is credited for discovering the laws of motion

credit for

Mary should get a lot of credit for the team's success.

credit to

We had to credit much of our success to simple good luck.

credit with

We have to credit Jeff with saving us a lot of money.

debate about

The candidates debate about taxes tomorrow

debate on

Are they still debating on the question?

decide on

I decided on the chocolate flavored ice cream.

declared unconstitutional

Correct Usage: The Dictator declared all fundamental rights unconstitutional.

Incorrect Usage: The Dictator declared all fundamental rights as unconstitutional.

define as

We have to define that comment as careless and unthinking.

delighted to

I'm delighted to make your acquaintance,

different from

I am very different from my twin sister.

disclose to

Please disclose the names to me at once.

distinguish between

Psychopaths cannot distinguish between right and wrong.

distinguish from

Psoriatic arthritis can be difficult to distinguish from rheumatoid arthritis

draw a line

Let's draw a line under the whole episode and try to continue our work in a more positive frame of mind.

draw attention to

Now, I would like to draw your attention to Fred, the gentleman we have all heard so much about

draw (up)on

By the end of the contest I had drawn upon all the energy I had

draw to

He was drawn to the sports car.

dream about

I dreamed about you all night last night.

dream of

I dreamed of a huge chocolate cake.

dwindle away

noise dwindled away to nothing.

easier said than done

finding a good job is easier said than done.

easy to come by

A good job is not very easy to come by

either x or y

The money is either in my wallet or I have lost it.

elect as

She was elected as our president.

elect to

We elected you to office, so do your job.

emerge as

The caterpillar would emerge as a butterfly in a short time

enable to

This money will enable me to open my own business

encourage in

We want to encourage her in her musical career

encourage to

We encouraged her to develop her musical talents

enough to

Correct Usage: The Kid was not tall enough to go on to the ride.

Incorrect Usage: The Kid was short enough not to go on the ride.

escape from

I wish to escape from my addiction.

escape to

Max escaped from prison to a hideout in Alabama.

escape notice

I'm sorry. Your letter escaped my notice.

essential to

Heat is essential to life.

estimated to be

Correct Usage: The antique picture was estimated to be worth much more than the floor price.

Incorrect Usage: The antique picture's worth was estimated at much more than the floor price.

except for

The car is beautiful and perfect, except for one thing - the price

Except for being good with numbers, she wasn't anything great.

expected to

Correct Usage: The king was expected to protect his people.

Incorrect Usage: The king is expected that it should protect his people.

explain oneself

Jo Cooper? You had better explain yourself, and it had better be good.

explain to

Please explain the experiment to me.

explain away

You will find it hard to explain away all these mistakes

expose to

Do not expose the film to the light.

fail on

The teacher failed half the class on the assignment

fail in

I hope I do not fail in math.

flee from

The children fled from the wrath of the old man.

flee to

The little mouse fled to its hole in the wall when the cat came around.

focus on

Let's focus our attention on Tom and discuss his achievements so far.

forbid to

They forbade them to enter the castle

forbid from

They forbade them from entering the castle.

go to the mat

When he believes in a project, he's willing to go to the mat for it.

grow from

Can you grow a mango tree from a seed?

grow into

The child grew into a tall, powerful athlete.

grow out of

A big argument has grown out of a tiny disagreement!

have a run of something

I had a run of bad luck at the casino

help (someone) (get) over something

I helped the puppy over the barrier.

in contrast to or in contrast with

Correct Usage:

- In contrast to his earlier self, the athlete appeared weak & frail.
- In contrast with his earlier self, the athlete appeared weak & frail.

Incorrect Usage:

As contrasted with his earlier self, the athlete appeared weak & frail

include someone out

I am not interested in your games. Include me out of them.

independent of

His reasoning was flawed, and appeared to be independent of any logic.

independent from

'The children have been independent from their parents

indicate that

Studies indicate that women actually live longer than men.

indicate to

Fred indicated his assent to me.

indifferent towards

Can you make yourself indifferent towards someone you might love?

in order to

Correct Usage: She began dating the playboy in order to go to the best parties.

Incorrect Usage: She began dating the playboy in order that she got to go to the best parties.

inherit from

My dark hair was inherited from my father.

invest in

I invested five weeks of my time building this model ship.

invest with

The constitution invests the vice president with the authority to act on the president's behalf in certain conditions.

isolated from

We isolated the children from the source of the disease

just as x, so y

Just as Kate was considered for a seat at Harvard Business School, so was Tina.

known to

Correct Usage: Even as a young boy he was known to explore different ways of doing things.

Incorrect Usage: Even as a young boy, he was known as wanting to explore different ways of doing things.

lead away

The trainer led away the dog from the other animals.

lead to

a life of crime will lead to inevitable sorrow.

left, right and centre

The rebels were firing at people left, right and centre.

localized in

Are International Charities Becoming More Localized in the Economic Crisis

manage with

I am sure we can manage with the money that we have

a means to

Correct Usage: For some people, mobile phones are just a means to an end.

Incorrect Usage:

- For some people, mobile phones are a means for an end.

- For some people, mobile phones are a means of an end.

mistake x for y

Correct Usage: Because of the sisters' similar looks, one was often mistaken for the other

Incorrect Usage: Because of the sisters' similar looks, one was often mistaken as the other

modeled after

Robot Modeled After Bat And Dolphin Echolocation Behavior

more than ever

Correct Usage: I regret more than ever not getting into HBS

Incorrect Usage: I regret more than never not getting into HBS

much as

Much as she needed the job, she had to refuse.

native of

Svetlana is a native of Poland

native to

The cobra is native to Africa

necessary to

Lisa deemed it necessary to go home.

originate from

Some of our customs originate from old beliefs

originate in

All your troubles originate in your lungs.

originate with

This idea originated with the committee.

permit (someone) through

Would you permit me through the door?

permit up

She would not permit me up the ladder

prized above

He prized his only daughter above everyone else in the world

prized as

pink corals have been prized as jewelry for 5000 years

prized for

Gold Jewellery Has Been Prized for Thousands of Years

prohibit from

Correct Usage: Only when we prohibit people from driving fast will we reduce the number of accidents.

Incorrect Usage: Only when we prohibit people to drive fast will we reduce the number of accidents.

promise the moon

My boss promised the moon, but never gave me a raise

promise to

Is this book promised to anyone?

range from

The winter weather ranges from bad to terrible in this part of the north.

range over

These animals range over a very large territory

reluctant to

Correct Usage: The child was reluctant to jump into the deep end of the pool.

Incorrect Usage: The child was reluctant about jumping into the deep end of the pool.

refer to

My doctor referred me to a specialist.

regard as

I have always regarded you as my friend.

required to

The employees were required to hand over the pass when they quit the company.

require of

What is required of me in this job?

resemble in

This resembles vanilla ice cream in flavor, but not in consistency.

result from

It will be interesting to see what results from your efforts.

result in

I hope that this will result in the police finding your car.

rival in

No one rivals Ted in pitching a baseball.

sacrifice for

Would you sacrifice your bank account for a chance to go to Europe?

sacrifice to

I sacrificed a lot of money to a fancy lifestyle

seem like

seemed like such a nice person when I met you.

seem to

Correct Usage: The officer went to question the man who seemed to be hiding something.

Incorrect Usage: The officer went to question the man who seemed like hiding something.

seek out

Liz sought out a helper for Karen.

seek from

We will seek an injunction from the judge

seek after

will continue to seek after the thief who stole my car.

seek revenge

I will not seek revenge for what he did to me.

sequence of

The sequence of events folded step by step

speak about

And now I will speak about Abraham Lincoln.

speak against

Please don't speak against cats in my presence.

speak down to (Talk in simple language)

There is no need to speak down to me. I can understand anything you are likely to say.

speak from

Believe me, I speak from experience.

speak up

I want to speak up for the rights of students.

speak volumes

The unsightly yard and unpainted house speaks volumes about what kind of people live there.

speak with

He did what? I will speak with him!

speak for

Is the experiment a success? I think the numbers speak for themselves

think of or think to be

Correct Usage:

- I think of him as my best friend.
- I think him to be my best friend.

train to

Correct Usage: He was trained to become an athlete ever since he was a child.

Incorrect Usage: He was trained as an athlete ever since he was a child.

try to or try and

Correct Usage: He tried to start afresh after the set back.

Incorrect Usage: He tried and started afresh after the set back.

unlike x, y

Unlike Tom, Brenda loves to go shopping

used as

Correct Usage: language can be used as a weapon

Incorrect Usage: language can be used like a weapon.

Other idioms rules generally tested on the GMAT

Among Vs Between

Among is used when more than two items are in question, between is used when there are only two items:

e.g. I have to choose between studying & watching a movie.

I have been admitted to several schools. I now need to choose the best among them.

Both Vs Each

Use "both" to point similarities, "each" to point differences. "Each" is always singular

Twice Vs Double

Use "twice, thrice" for comparison; "double, triple" is used as a verb only.

Each Other Vs One another

"each other" is for two things; "one another" for more than two.

If v/s Whether

If there is a choice between the two, use "whether". On GMAT, "if" is primarily for if/then type sentences.

like v/s such as

Use "such as" when possible. On GMAT. "like" is used when implying "similar to"