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# [ALIEN WORDS ARE NOT SO ALIEN]

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## ALIEN WORD NOT SO ALIEN

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Generally, GMAT test takers are very wary of a new word or words in the answer choices. Their instinct is to eliminate an answer choice the moment they see alien words in any of the answer choices. Doing so blindly is certainly is not advisable.

It is not necessary that a new word or words will introduce errors. In some instances these “alien words” may enhance the meaning of the sentence or clarify the actual intent of the original choice (choice A). In such instances, the answer choices with these “alien” words are actually the correct answer choices. Let’s explore:

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### CHARACTERISTICS OF ALIEN WORDS IN CORRECT CHOICES

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Our analysis shows that alien words in a correct answer choice can do two things:

- A. **Impart logic to the original sentence:** We may come across a sentence where the original choice (A) might actually convey illogical meaning. In such instances, the addition of alien words in the correct answer choice helps communicate the intended meaning logical.
  
- B. **Enhance the meaning of the original sentence:** Many a times, the original choice (A) may communicate the intended meaning. In such cases, the alien words may actually enhance the intended meaning of the sentence. They may add such an aspect to the sentence that conveys the logical meaning even more appropriately.

Thus alien words in the correct answer choice may perform any one of the two roles as stated above or in some instances even both. The take away here being that understanding the intended logical meaning of the sentence is the key.

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### OFFICIAL EXAMPLE - 1

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Let’s first take a look at an official example to see these functions of the alien words. Following is **question#137 from OG 12**. Since OG 12 has 140 questions and since the questions appear according to their difficulty level, number 137 suggests that this question is of 700 difficulty level.

Joachim Raff and Giacomo Meyerbeer are examples of the kind of composer who receives popular acclaim while living, often goes into decline after death, and never regains popularity again.

- A. often goes into decline after death, and never regains popularity again
- B. whose reputation declines after death and never regains its status again
- C. but whose reputation declines after death and never regains its former status
- D. who declines in reputation after death and who never regained popularity again
- E. then has declined in reputation after death and never regained popularity

If you want to first solve this problem, get to the correct answer, and then resume reading this article, you can. However, that is not necessary because here I give out the OA – Choice C.

Let me just compare the correct answer choice (C) with the original answer choice (A):

- A. often goes into decline after death, and never regains popularity again
- C. but whose reputation declines after death and never regains its former status

The first thing to notice here is that Choice C has far many new words than Choice A. These words are “**but, whose, reputation, former, status**”. Yet, this choice is the correct answer.

Now let’s analyze both these answer choices from meaning standpoint to better understand the role of the alien words in choice C.

**Choice A:** Per this choice, the sentence says that a certain kind of composer gains popularity while alive, declines after death and never regains his popularity. This **meaning just does not make sense** because **once the composer has died, he cannot decline any further**. This choice conveys absolutely **illogical meaning**.



**Choice C:** Per this answer choice, a certain kind of composer gains popularity when alive, but after death, his reputation declines and it never regains its previous status. Indeed. This answer choice makes all the sense and hence is the correct answer choice.

## EVALUATION OF ALIEN WORDS

### Meaning enhancement Vs. Meaning Change

Many may ask, "Does not enhancement in meaning lead to change in the original meaning of the sentence?"

The answer to this question is "No". At this juncture, we must realize that "enhancing the meaning" is significantly different from "changing the meaning".

**MEANING ENHANCEMENT:** In this process, the original meaning of the sentence remains the same. Some aspect that remains hidden or understood in the original sentence is made visible or explicitly clear by omission or commission of few words.

In both the OG examples presented in this article, the original meaning of the sentence does not change at all but the alien words in correct answer choices certainly improve the implied meaning in the original choice.

While in OG 12#137, "but" brings out the implied contrast in the original sentence, in OG 12#134, "while" makes the simultaneous action explicit in the correct answer choice. (For details, refer to Official Examples 1 & 2)

So the alien words certainly impart logic to the otherwise illogical sentence. Let's evaluate the role of important alien words in choice C to see if they are just making the meaning of the sentence logical or also enhancing the intended meaning.

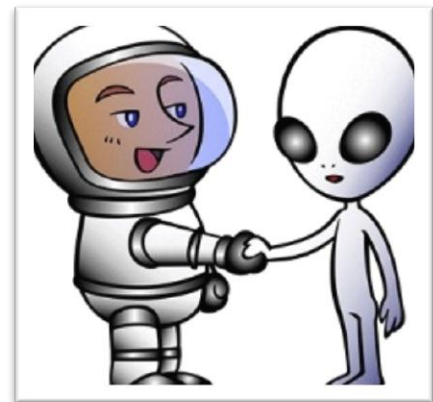
**Reputation:** This alien word certainly imparts logic to the sentence. After death, the composer himself does not decline. It is his reputation that declines. So we need this word to make the meaning of the sentence logical.



**But:** Presence of "but" correctly introduces contrast in the sentence. Many of you may ask, "How do we know that there should be a contrast in this sentence. There is no mention of any contrast in the original sentence." Well, **the context of the sentence tells us that we need a contrast in this sentence.**

Logically analyze the sentence. It talks of two scenarios for a composer – one he experiences when he is alive and the other after his death. Both these scenarios are contrasting to each other. When the composer is alive, he gains popularity, but after death his reputation declines. This indeed is contrasting and "but" beautifully brings out that contrast otherwise absent in the original sentence. This is what I call enhancement in the meaning of the sentence.

"But" adds this necessary implied contrast, an important aspect in the sentence, and makes the meaning even better. So the alien words in this sentence not only add logic to the sentence but also enhance the overall meaning of the sentence.



## OFFICIAL EXAMPLE - 2

Let's take one more example here. This is from **OG 12#134**, again a 700 level question.

**MEANING CHANGE:** In this process, the answer choice does not contain any grammatical error, but it certainly changes the original intended meaning of the sentence.

For example, let's assume that in OG 12#134, option C read: and fatigue among shift workers but have raised. Now grammatically, this choice is sound. However, inclusion of "but" introduces a contrast in this sentence. But this contrast is not intended in the original sentence because implementation of equations lead to two positive outcomes together. We could have used a contrast if the sentence spoke of one positive and one negative effect of the new equations. For example:

The recently implemented "work-shift equations" have reduces sickness,... but have reduced their productivity.

Here the use of "but" makes sense because the sentence talks about two contrasting outcomes of the equations.

Recently implemented "shift-work equations" based on studies of the human sleep cycle have reduced sickness, sleeping on the job, fatigue among shift workers, and have raised production efficiency in various industries.

- (A) fatigue among shift workers, and have raised
- (B) fatigue among shift workers, and raised
- (C) and fatigue among shift workers **while** raising
- (D) lowered fatigue among shift workers, and raised
- (E) and fatigue among shift workers was lowered while raising

Here, the correct answer choice is choice C, with a new word "while". Let's see what makes this alien word friendly here and what role it is playing in this one.

### EVALUATION OF ALIEN WORD

As always, the key factor is to understand the meaning of the sentence. The sentence says that based on studies of the human sleep cycle, "shift-work equations" have recently been implemented. These equations have done two things:

- a. they have reduced sickness, sleeping on the job, and fatigue among shift workers and
- b. they have raised production efficiency in various industries.

So there is no problem in comprehending the intended meaning of the sentence. Now let's compare the original choice and the correct answer choice with the alien word.

**Choice A:** fatigue among shift workers, and have raised: Notice that the sentence has two lists. The first has been mentioned above. The second is the sub-list in the first entity. This sub-list contains three entities – "sickness, sleeping on the job, and fatigue". We need and "and" before "fatigue" to make the entities in this list clear. This faulty sentence structure makes choice A incorrect.

Now let's talk about the meaning per this choice. The two entities in the first list has been separated by using "and". This means that both the entities are at the same level. The new implemented equations do two things.

Choice C: "*and fatigue among shift workers while raising*": Firstly, this choice corrects the structure issue we have in the original choice. Use of "and" before "fatigue" properly lists all the three entities.

Notice that this choice has a completely new word "while". Now "while" has two functions. It presents either simultaneous action or contrast. Per the context of this sentence, "equations" have reduced something and have increased something. Both the actions are positive actions, and both the actions are taking place together. While something has reduced, something else has increased.

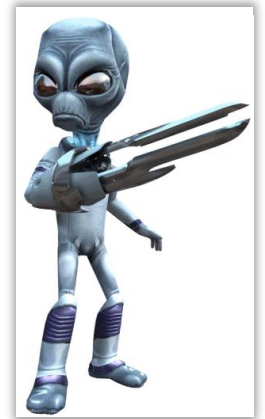
Inclusion of "while" denotes simultaneous action. This sense of simultaneous action could not be derived from the original sentence. Hence, the alien word "while" here has added a new aspect to the sentence that is actually enhancing the meaning of the sentence now.

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## AN ALIEN WORD THAT INTRODUCES ERROR

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While some alien words impart logic to the sentence or enhance the intended meaning of the sentence, there are many that actually bring about errors with them. Hence, it is very important to analyze the function of new words in an answer choice and the effect they have on the intended meaning.



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## CHARACTERISTICS OF UNFRIENDLY ALIEN WORDS

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The unfriendly alien words do just the opposite of what the friendly alien words do. There are three things that they can do:

- A. **Make the sentence illogical:** Sometimes alien words can make a logical sentence absolutely illogical. In such cases they must be rejected right away.
- B. **Introduce grammatical error:** Presence of alien words may lead to grammatical errors such as incorrect sentence structure, redundancy, wrong grammar, etc.
- C. **Change Meaning:** In a grammatically correct choice, we may come across alien words that can change the intended meaning of the sentences. We should be wary of such inclusion in an answer choice.

## OG EXAMPLE

For example, take a look at this **OG Verbal 2#103** question:

Inuits of the Bering Sea were in isolation from contact with Europeans longer than Aleuts or Inuits of the North Pacific and northern Alaska.

- (A) in isolation from contact with Europeans longer than
- (B) isolated from contact with Europeans longer than
- (C) in isolation from contact with Europeans longer than were
- (D) isolated from contact with Europeans longer than were
- (E) in isolation and without contacts with Europeans longer than

Let's first get to the meaning of this sentence. Both the Inuits of the Bering Sea and the Aleuts or Inuits of the North Pacific & northern Atlantic were isolated from contact with Europeans. However, the former was in isolation longer than the latter was.

Choice D correctly communicates this meaning. Now look at choice E. It has a few alien words there "and without". This answer choice is anyway incorrect because it lacks "were" which is needed to make logical comparison clear in the sentence.

Moreover, these new words create new error in the answer choice. The original sentence means that the Inuits of the Bering Sea were isolated from contact with Europeans. But choice E now says that they were in isolation and they were also without contacts from the Europeans. The alien words split the single idea into two ideas. The new words add information here which is not present in the original sentence.

Suppose if this choice had no grammatical error but only these two words – and without – then also the choice would have been incorrect because these new words actually introduce error in the sentence by splitting one idea into two.

Let's take a quick glance at the characteristics of friendly alien words and unfriendly alien words.

Type	Characteristics
<b>Friendly Aliens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Impart logic ("reputation" in OG 12#137)</li> <li>b. Enhance original meaning ("but" in OG 12#137 &amp; "while" in OG 12#134)</li> </ul>
<b>Unfriendly Aliens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Introduce grammatical errors</li> <li>b. Change Meaning</li> <li>c. Make sentence illogical</li> </ul>

## TAKE AWAY

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1. Do not reject an answer choice just because they contain some words that do not appear in the original answer choice.
2. **Meaning is Key** .Evaluate the new word in the answer choice first. If it introduces an error, then reject it for good. But if it actually enhances the intended meaning of the sentence, then you must retain it. This choice with alien words can be the correct answer choice.