

2014

gmatkum

[SENTENCE CORRECTION ON THE GMAT]

This document will give a comprehensive understanding of all the aspects of Sentence Correction. It is one of the easiest yet difficult topics in the Verbal Section.

Sentence Correction on the GMAT

The Verbal section of the GMAT will include about 14 Sentence Correction questions, which are mixed in with Critical Reasoning and Reading Comprehension questions. These questions test your mastery of grammar, style and the proper usage of words. To a lesser extent, the section also tests mechanics, such as punctuation and capitalization.

To do well on these questions, you must demonstrate your ability to recognize correct and effective expression and choose the best of several suggested revisions. Each question begins with a sentence, all or part of which has been underlined. The answer choices represent different ways of expressing the underlined portion. Choice A always repeats the original wording, while the other choices offer different alternatives. The right answer will correct all of the errors without introducing any new mistakes.

Here are the directions for Sentence Correction questions:

Directions: The following questions consist of sentences that are either partly or entirely underlined.

Below each sentence are five versions of the underlined portion of the sentence. Choice (A) duplicates the original version. The four other versions revise the underlined portion of the sentence. Read the sentence and the five choices carefully, and select the best version. If the original seems better than any of the revisions, select choice (A). If not, choose one of the revisions.

These questions test your recognition of correct grammatical usage and your sense of clear and economical writing style. Choose answers according to the norms of standard written English for grammar, word choice, and sentence construction. Your selected answer should express the intended meaning of the original sentence as clearly and precisely as possible, while avoiding ambiguous, awkward, or unnecessarily wordy constructions.

Most Popular Question Areas

The Sentence Correction section primarily tests six major categories of standard written English:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| a) Pronoun Errors | d) Parallelism |
| b) Subject & Verb Agreement | e) Verb Tense |
| c) Modifiers | e) Faulty Use of Words |

a) Pronoun Errors

A pronoun is a word that stands for a noun, known as the antecedent of the pronoun. Pronouns must agree with their antecedent in both number (singular or plural) and person (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.).

Example: Karen is waiting to pick up her dry cleaning.

The pronoun Her refers to the noun Karen.

The most common pronouns in standard English include:

Singular:

I, me	she, her	he, him	it	anyone	either
each	many a	nothing	one	another	everything
mine	his, hers	this	that		

Plural:

we, us	they	them	these	those	some
that	both	ourselves	any	many	few
several	others				

Both Singular and Plural:

any	none	all	most	more	who	which	what	you
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Basic Pronoun Rules:

1) Pronouns should be singular when referring to one noun and plural when referring to nouns joined by and.

Example: Rick and Amy believe they won the lottery.

The plural pronoun they refers to the compound subject Rick and Amy.

2) A pronoun should be singular when it refers to two nouns joined by *or* or *nor*.

Incorrect: Neither Rick nor Amy believes they won the lottery.

Correct: Neither Rick nor Amy believes she won the lottery.

3) A pronoun should refer to one and only one noun or compound noun. This is the most common error in test questions. If a pronoun follows two nouns, it is often unclear which of the nouns the pronoun refers to.

Incorrect: The destabilization of the economy has left unstable stocks in the hands of frightened investors. It is imperative that they be more tightly controlled.

Should the unstable stocks be controlled or the frightened investors? Either interpretation is possible from the structure of the sentence.

Correct: The destabilization of the economy has left unstable stocks in the hands of frightened investors. It is imperative that the unstable stocks be more tightly controlled.

Incorrect: In Europe, they use perfume judiciously.

This construction is incorrect because the pronoun does not have an antecedent. The sentence needs a noun, rather than a pronoun.

Correct: In Europe, women use perfume judiciously. Correct: European women use perfume judiciously.

4) A pronoun must also agree with its antecedent in person.

Incorrect: One enters the university with no friends. Then comes the stress of classes, choosing a major and qualifying for financial aid. No wonder you long to quit school!

The subject of the sentence changed from one (third person) to you (second person).

Correct: One enters the university with no friends. Then comes the stress of classes, choosing a major and qualifying for financial aid. No wonder one longs to quit school!

Correct: You enter the university with no friends. Then comes the stress of classes, choosing a major and qualifying for financial aid. No wonder you long to quit school!

b) Subject & Verb Agreement

1) The subject and verb must agree in number and person.

Both of the following sentences are correct:

We have surpassed our wildest expectations

She has surpassed her wildest expectations.

2) Intervening phrases and clauses do not affect the subject-verb agreement.

Correct: Only one of the classes was cancelled.

Incorrect: Only one of the classes were cancelled.

The subject "one" is singular and requires a singular verb. The intervening phrase "of the classes" does not alter the number or person of the verb.

3) When the subject and verb are reversed, they must still agree in both number and person.

Both of the following sentences are correct:

Attached are copies of my travel receipts.

Copies of my receipts are attached.

c) Modifiers

1) A modifier should be placed as close as possible to what it modifies.

Incorrect: Following are some useful tips for protecting your home from the police.

Correct: Following are some useful tips from the police for protecting your home.

In the first statement, the placement of the modifier implies that the police are a threat to your home.

2) When a phrase begins a sentence, make sure it modifies the subject of the sentence.

Incorrect: Coming from the mall, a few houses with Christmas lights caught my eye.

Correct: Coming from the mall, I saw Christmas lights on a few houses.

d) Parallelism

1) When two adjectives modify the same noun, they should have similar forms.

Incorrect: The exercise program was rigorous and a challenge.

Correct: The exercise program was rigorous and challenging.

2) When a series of clauses is listed, the verbs in each clause must have the same form.

Incorrect: During her trip, Jade will talk to the hotel about job opportunities, offer to work for minimum wage and trying to learn how to speak better Spanish.

Correct: During her trip, Jade will talk to the hotel about job opportunities, offer to work for minimum wage and try to learn how to speak better Spanish.

3) Both halves of a sentence should have the same structure.

Incorrect: To acknowledge Divine wisdom is taking the first step to nirvana.

Correct: Acknowledging Divine wisdom is taking the first step to nirvana.

Correct: To acknowledge Divine wisdom is to take the first step to nirvana.

e) Verb Tense

1) Present Tense

- a) Used to express the present
Sam studies all the time.
- b) Used to present general truths
During war time, people are more patriotic.
- c) Used with will or shall to express the future
She will go to Europe next summer.

2) Past Tense

- a) Used to express the past
She went to Europe last summer.

3) Past Participle

- a) Used to form the present perfect tense, indicating that an action was started in the past and its effects are continuing in the present.
She has prepared thoroughly for her trip to Europe.
- b) Used to form the past perfect tense, which indicates that an action was completed before another action.
She had prepared thoroughly for her trip to Europe.
- c) Used to form the future perfect tense, which indicates that an action will be completed before another future action.
She will have prepared thoroughly before traveling to Europe.

4) Present Participle (-ing forms of verbs)

- a) Used to form the present progressive tense, which indicates that an action is ongoing.
She is preparing thoroughly for her trip to Europe.
- b) Used to form the past progressive tense, which indicates that an action was in progress in the past.
She was preparing for her trip to Europe.
- c) Used to form the future progressive tense, which indicates that an action will be in progress in the future.
She will be preparing thoroughly for her trip to Europe.

5) Passive Voice

The passive voice removes the subject from the sentence by combining the verb "to be" and the past participle of the main verb. The active voice is always preferred.

Passive: A decision was made.

Active: The group made a decision.

f) Incorrect Word Use

The test writers tend to use the same idiom and usage errors on every exam. Here are the concepts tested most often:

1) Commonly misused words and phrases. The words and phrases in the left column are NOT correct in standard English. They should be replaced with the correct word or phrase in the right column:

Incorrect	Correct
Alot	A lot
Being that	Since
Center around	Center
Conform with	Conform to
Consensus of opinion	Consensus
Different than	Different from
Doubt whether	Doubt that
Identical to	Identical with
Independent from	Independent of
In contrast of	In contrast to
Not only..... and	Not only.... but also
On account of	Because
The fact that	Because
Regardless	Regardless
Retroactive from	Retroactive to
The reason is because	The reason why
As to whether	Whether

2) **Commonly confused words:**

a) Accept/Except: Accept means "to agree to" or "to receive", while 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.

b) 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.

c) Adapted to/for/from:

Adapted to means "naturally suited for."

The flamingo is adapted to the tropical temperatures.

Adapted for means "created to be suited for."

For any directive to be successful, it must be adapted for the continually changing economy.

Adapted from means "changed to be suited for."

Billy Joel's latest release is adapted from the 1993 soundtrack from *Cats*.

d) Affect/Effect:

Effect is a noun meaning "a result."

Increased spending money will be the effect of the proposed tax decrease.

Affect is a verb meaning "to influence."

The accident affected their plans for a leisurely drive.

e) All ready vs. Already:

All ready means "everything is ready."

The supplies are all ready to be packed in their boxes.

Already means "earlier."

Susan already visited the mall.

f) Among/Between:

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

The bride must choose between two gorgeous gowns.

The guilt is spread evenly among the three thieves.

g) Beside/Besides:

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

Jill sat beside (next to) Kyle at the movie.

Besides (in addition), the salary offered was less than desirable.

h) Correspond to / correspond with:

Correspond to means "in agreement with":

The punishment does not correspond to the severity of the offense.

Correspond with means "to exchange letters":

Dana corresponded with many of the most desirable stars in Hollywood.

i) Double negatives:

Incorrect: Scarcely nothing was left after the picnic.

Correct: Scarcely anything was left after the picnic.

j) Farther/Further: Use farther when referring to distance, and use further when referring to degree.

They went no further (degree) than making veiled threats.

Shawn drove farther (distance) than Dave to reach the picnic.

k) Fewer/Less: Use fewer when referring to a number of items. Use less when referring to a continuous quantity.

We had fewer choices in the deli.

The cost was less than what Carrie expected.

l) 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 six cast members congratulated one another on opening night.

Bridget and Carla congratulated each other on their college acceptances.

m) Regard vs. Regards: Unless giving best wishes to someone, use regard.

Incorrect: In regards to your request, we are happy to comply.

Correct: In regard to your letter, we are happy to comply.

n) Speak to/with:

To speak to someone is to tell them something:

We spoke to Jane about her planned trip abroad.

To speak with someone is to discuss something with them.

Sara spoke with Jane several weeks ago.

o) Whether vs. If: "Whether" introduces a choice, while "if" introduces a condition.. A common mistake is to use "if" to present a choice.

Incorrect: He asked if we wanted to accompany him.

Correct: He asked whether we wanted to accompany him.

Tips & Strategies for Sentence Correction Questions

1) Read the entire original sentence carefully and identify whether an error is present. Never waste time reading Choice A, as it's the same as the underlined portion of the text.

2) If no error is present, determine whether the sentence:

a) is grammatically correct

c) uses correct diction

b) is properly structured

3) If you find an error, scan the answer choices that makes the necessary corrections.

4) If you cannot find an error, scan the answer choices for differences. Sometimes you will discover an error that you overlooked. In 20% of sentence correction problems, no error is present (you should select Choice A).

5) Eliminate a choice as soon as you find an error in it.

6) Pay special attention to typical traps:

a) long modifying phrases or clauses that follow the subject

d) sentences in which the verb precedes the subject

b) clauses in commas between the subject and verb

e) collective nouns, particularly majority, system, data and committee

c) subjects joined by either/or or neither/nor

f) errors in parallelism and logical structure

7) Check for multiple errors. The correct answer choice will fix ALL of them.

8) On verb tense questions, the -ing form is usually wrong.

6) If you get stuck, use your "ear" to detect grammatical mistakes. If your native language is English, you learned to speak before you learned to write. If something doesn't sound correct to you, it probably isn't.

Ten Sentence Correction Questions (and Explanations)

1) Most teenagers struggle to be free both of parental domination but also from premature responsibilities.

(A) both of parental domination but also from premature responsibilities.

(D) both of parental domination and of premature responsibilities as well.

(B) both of parental domination and also from premature responsibilities.

(E) of parental domination and their premature responsibilities as well.

(C) both of parental domination and also of premature responsibilities.

2) The president of the Women's Freedom Association tried to convince her peers they should join forces to prevent discrimination in the workplace rather than continuing to be underpaid.

(A) they should join forces to prevent discrimination in the workplace rather than continuing to be underpaid.

(B) that they should join forces to prevent discrimination in the workplace rather than continue to be underpaid.

(C) about joining forces to prevent discrimination in the workplace instead of continuing to be underpaid.

(D) for the joining of forces to prevent discrimination in the workplace rather than continue to be underpaid.

(E) to join forces to prevent discrimination in the workplace rather than continuing to be underpaid.

3) Although Tonya is as gifted as, if not more gifted than many of her literary peers, she is extremely modest and her romance novel is unpublished.

(A) Although Tonya is as gifted as, if not more gifted than, many of her colleagues, she is extremely modest and her romance novel is unpublished.

(B) Although Tonya is as gifted, if not more gifted, than many of her colleagues, she is extremely modest with her romance novel remaining unpublished.

(C) Although Tonya is as gifted as, if not more gifted than, many of her colleagues, she is extremely modest and will not publish her romance novel.

(D) Despite his being gifted, if not more gifted than her colleagues, Tonya is extremely modest and will not publish her romance novel.

(E) Being as gifted as, or more gifted than, many of her colleagues, Tonya is extremely modest and her romance novel is unpublished.

4) Although the human resource manager agreed to an abbreviated holiday schedule, he said that it must be posted on the corporate web site so that both management and labor will know what everyone is assigned to do.

(A) he said that it must be posted on the corporate web site so that both management and labor will know what everyone is

(B) he said it had to be posted on the corporate web site so that both management and labor knows what everyone is

(C) he said that they would have to post the assignments on the corporate web site so that management and labor knew what everyone was

(D) he said that the schedule would have to be posted on the corporate web site so that both management and labor would know what everyone was

(E) saying that the schedule had to be posted on the corporate web site so that both management and labor would know what everyone had been

5) With just several quick strokes of the brush, the cherubic infants were drawn by the painter, capturing their natural beauty.

(A) the cherubic infants were drawn by the painter, capturing their natural beauty.

- (B) the painter sketched the cherubic infants, capturing their natural beauty.
- (C) the painter captured the natural beauty of the cherubic infants, sketching them.
- (D) the painter sketched the cherubic infants and also capturing their natural beauty.
- (E) the cherubic infants and their natural beauty were sketched by the painter.

6) The Gamma Xi fraternity has accused the Delta Lambda fraternity of using dirty tricks by planting a spy on the Gamma Xi's rush committee and then used the information to sabotage the Gamma Xi's recruitment efforts.

- (A) used the information to sabotage
- (B) used the information they had obtained to sabotage
- (C) of using the information they had obtained to sabotage
- (D) using the information obtained to sabotage
- (E) to have used the information obtained to sabotage

7) Regarding the legalization of medicinal marijuana, the Governor is not concerned so much by its potential impact on elderly cancer patients but instead by its potential nationwide impact on innocent schoolchildren.

- (A) but instead
- (B) so much as
- (C) rather
- (D) but rather
- (E) as

8) Stacey, along with her three closest girlfriends, are traveling to Europe, Asia and Africa during the summer of 2002.

- (A) Stacey, along with her three closest girlfriends, are
- (B) Stacey, along with her three closest girlfriends, is
- (C) Stacey, in addition to her three closest girlfriends, are
- (D) Stacey, as well as her three closest girlfriends, are
- (E) Stacey and her three closest girlfriends is

9) In comparison with the films produced by the classic 40's directors, today's filmmakers have produced nothing worth watching.

- (A) In comparison with the films produced by the classic 40's directors, today's filmmakers have produced nothing worth watching.
- (B) In comparison with the films produced by the classic 40's directors, the films from today's filmmakers are containing nothing worth watching.
- (C) Compared to that of the classic 40's filmmakers, today's filmmakers have produced nothing worth watching.
- (D) Compared to those produced by the classic 40's filmmakers, the films of today's directors are not worth watching.
- (E) Compared to the classic 40's films, today's directors have produced nothing worth watching.

10) Having discovered the gifted artist Tolkien to be suffering from AIDS, it is now thought that this was a major cause of his depression and erratic work schedule.

- (A) Having discovered the gifted artist Tolkien to be suffering from AIDS,
- (B) To have discovered the gifted artist Tolkien to be suffering from AIDS,
- (C) Since historians have discovered that the gifted artist Tolkien suffered from AIDS,
- (D) Since the suffering of AIDS by the gifted artist Tolkien was discovered by historians,
- (E) Due to the fact that the gifted artist Tolkien was suffering from AIDS was discovered by historians,

Solutions to Sentence Correction Questions

- 1) Choice D is correct. The phrase "but also" implies a contrast, but the original does not contain a contrast. Choice D contains the simple conjunction "and", which correctly joins the parallel ideas. The other answer choices include "also", which is superfluous.
- 2) Choice B is correct. The error in the original sentence is faulty parallelism. Only Choice B has both elements in the same form, "join rather than continue". Choice C is incorrect because it uses the incorrect phrase "convince about".
- 3) Choice C is correct. The first part of the sentence is correct (from "although" to "colleagues"). The error is the use of the word "and", which does not logically connect the writer's modesty to her failure to get published. Choice C supplies the connection.
- 4) Choice A is correct. The original statement is correct, while each of the answer choices contain errors in verb tense or subject/verb agreement.
- 5) Choice B is correct. The original sentence contains a misplaced modifier. Choice B places the modifier closer to the element it modifies. The remaining choices make unnecessary changes that result in awkward sentences.
- 6) Choice C is correct. The phrase "of using" is parallel to the phrases "of using" and "by planting" in the original statement. Choice C also uses the past perfect "had obtained" to correctly express that the spying was a past action that occurred before the fraternity rushing.
- 7) Choice E is correct, as it provides the correct structure "not so much by....as by....".
- 8) Choice B is correct. Stacey is the singular subject of the sentence, which requires a singular verb. The phrase about her closest friends is parenthetical and does not affect the singular verb.
- 9) Choice D is correct, as it contains correct parallelism (aligning film from the 40's with film from today). Choice B achieves parallelism, but includes an incorrect verb.
- 10) Choice C is correct. The introductory phrase must modify the people who made the discovery. "It" is impersonal and not the correct subject. Choice D is a distant second choice, but its structure is awkward and inferior to Choice C.