

Comprehensive SC Guide – Whiplash Style

2010

ZOMG! ZOMG! ZOMG!

The Monster SC Strategy Guide

Disclaimer

This is not intended to be a reproduction of any guides available on the internet and was just produced by me as a comprehensive means of studying this section. Don't sue me! The content was not produced by me; it was merely assimilated from various sources and reworded for my convenience. I have not included many examples since these are available in plenty on the internet or through preparatory material and I only intended this guide to be a quick run through of all the possible errors and solutions.

Method of Organization:

Each error subtype is presented in the following format:

Error Type

1. Main Rules to Remember (Highlighted in green)
2. Miscellaneous Pointers to Watch Out For

The Bang-Bang SC Guide



BASIC DECONSTRUCTION

There are approximately 15-16 SC questions on the GMAT

Step 1: Look at the underlined portion and try to figure out if there are some really apparent discrepancies with subject-verb agreement, parallelism, or tense usage.



Step 2: Read the answer choices. The answer choices can generally be split into two or three groups depending on a common structure.



Step 3: One of the common structures WILL be wrong. Identifying this wrong structure will help you eliminate two to three choices at once and hence you will be left with two or three other choices.



Step 4: Perform the same splitting action again within this subgroup to determine what the differences in answer choices are. Once you have identified the change that needs to occur in the original question, try to correlate that change with the answer choices remaining to pick the best answer.



Step 5: Read the final answer choice you've chosen, along with the original question. Make sure to pick an answer that only modifies what is necessary and no more than what is necessary. You might get tricked into believing that a change is necessary, but if something reads right in the original question, there is absolutely no need to change it.

ERRORS TESTED

Structure/ Meaning/Concision	Subject-Verb Agreement
Tense Errors	Pronouns
Modifiers	Comparisons
Idiomatic Constructions	Parallelism

STRUCTURE/CONCISION ERRORS**Avoid:**

1. Redundancy
2. Having Been/Being
3. Awkward Gerund Phrases
4. Introduction of New Pronouns

Remember:

1. All sentences must have a main subject and verb. Any clause beginning with a relative pronoun (dependent clause) cannot contain the main subject or the verb.
2. Independent Clauses are those that can be sentences on their own. For connecting these clauses use one of the following:
 - a. Semi Colon
 - b. Comma + Coordinating Conjunction (For, And, Not, But, Or, Yet and So)

Order of preference in a sentence: Verbs > Adjectives > Nouns

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT ERRORS

There must be a main subject and a verb. Singular subjects have singular verbs and plural subjects have plural verbs.

1. **Additional Information:** If there is additional information between the subject and the verb (for example, a dependent clause), remove this information and then read the sentence. Remember that the main subject/verb cannot be in a dependent clause.
2. **Usage of AND vs. ADDITIVES:** Only the term “and” will give you a plural subject; any other additive such as “along with”, “in addition to” etc only modify the main subject and hence will not change the number of the original subject. Exception to this rule are two words that are connected by “and” but thought of as one unit (strawberries and cream) – then use singular.
3. **Either Or/Neither Nor:** Use the plurality of the noun that is closest to these. If neither or either is used separately, then they are always singular.
4. **Collective Nouns:** Almost always singular.
5. **Each and Every/Anybody/Nobody (Indefinite pronouns):** Always singular. Except in the case of 5 pronouns (Some, Any, None, All, More/Most) – In this case, you have to look at the “Of” phrase that follows these indefinite pronouns and then use the plurality of that word. Quantity Phrases like majority, minority etc are also treated the same way
6. **The Number vs. A number:** The number is singular while a number is plural.
7. **Gerund Subjects:** Always singular.

Singular	Plural	Conditional
Singular Subject	Plural Subject	Or/Nor
Collective Pronouns	A number of < >	Numerical words/phrases
Indefinite Pronouns (Except those mentioned above)	Subjects joined by AND, unless they are one unit	Some, Any, None, All, More/Most
Each/Every		
The number of < >		
Subject Phrases/Gerunds		

PRONOUN ERRORS

A pronoun should refer back to a specific noun (antecedent) and must agree in number with this noun. It should also be unambiguous.

1. **Usage of which vs. that:** “Which” is used to describe a dependent clause. It follows a comma while relating to a noun directly before it.
2. **Usage of who vs. whom:** Use the question test. If the answer is “I/he/she” then use “who”; if the answer is “him/her” then use whom. If the word follows a preposition, use “whom”
3. **Do it vs. do so** – “It” is an ambiguous pronoun, so it’s better to use “do so” in most cases.
4. **One vs. you** – If “one” is used it has to be followed up appropriately. You cannot mix both.
5. **It, its, they, them, their** – Always check the antecedent if you spot one of these. It and its are singular while they, them and their are plural.
6. **This, that, these and those:** These are also used as adjectives sometimes, but if they are used as a pronoun, make sure to check the viability of the antecedent.

MODIFICATION ERRORS

What is the phrase modifying? Is it a misplaced modifier? Is it a dangling modifier? The modifier **MUST be placed closest to what it's modifying.**

Two types of modifiers:

1. **Adjectives and Adjectival Clauses:** These modify nouns and noun ideas
2. **Adverbs and Adverbial Clauses:** These modify verbs, adjectives, clauses or phrases.

MISPLACED MODIFIERS

These are modifiers that are placed in the wrong part of the sentence.

1. If an adjective is the modifier, it must be placed right NEXT to the noun it modifies.
2. If an adjective modifies a noun idea, it can modify either of the two nouns, but it must be placed next to it as well.
3. If the modifier is a participial phrase, and is not set off by a comma, it should be closest to the noun described. If there is a comma, it can be anywhere.
4. If a sentence begins with a participial phrase, the first word after the phrase should be what the phrase is describing.
5. An appositive should always be placed closest to the noun.
6. Adverbs have more relaxed rules and are hence not as frequently tested on the GMAT.

DANGLING MODIFIERS

These are modifiers that don't have anything specific that is being modified.

1. An answer choice that corrects this would usually add a new word.

Choosing between adjectives and adverbs on the GMAT

1. Look at the word that the phrase is modifying. If the word is a noun, choose the adjective. If the word is a verb, choose the adverbs.
2. Adverbs are easily identified, mostly, because they end with "ly" – quickly, slowly etc.

PARALLELISM ERRORS

The parallel structures should be grammatically, logically and idiomatically consistent.

These are introduced by means of the following:

1. Lists
2. Correlative Conjunctions (conjunctions that give equal weightage to the objects described)
3. Comparisons

They can be parallel in terms of:

1. Nouns
2. Adjectives
3. Adverbs
4. Verbs
5. Infinitives
6. Gerunds
7. Clauses
8. Correlative Conjunctions

Always check to make sure that they are logically consistent and grammatically, make sure that only the same parts of the speech are compared.

COMPARISON ERRORS

The compared items must be logically similar, grammatically similar and idiomatically similar.

Common Error Types:

1. Unclear Comparisons
2. Illogical Comparisons
3. Comparative vs. Superlative forms – Use comparative for two objects and superlative for more than two objects.
4. Like vs. As: Like is used to compare nouns. As is used for all other comparisons.

TENSE ERRORS

Always check to make sure that the tenses are consistent

1. If different actions are performed at different time periods, make sure the tense is consistent for each of them.
2. Choosing between simple tense and perfect tense when both occur together: Simple goes with the near past, and perfect goes with the far past.
3. Simple and Continuous: Use simple unless the action is actually ongoing.
4. Has had/had had: Has had is present perfect and had had is past perfect.
5. If ... Then Clauses:
 - a. If <present> --- will <verb>
 - b. If <past> --- would <verb>
 - c. If <had-future> --- would have <verb>

IDIOM ERRORS

Idioms are phrases that have no grammatical origin but are just used in the English language.

To master this, you will have to memorize some of the common ones used.

Please refer to the Flashcards I have posted or a book like MGMAT SC/Aristotle Grail for a comprehensive list of idioms. Some of the most common ones I've encountered are as follows:

1. Among/Between X and Y
2. As a result of
3. Believe to be (Not believe as)
4. Distinguish X from Y
5. From X to Y
6. In contrast to/with X, Y ...
7. Just as X, so Y
8. Not only X but also Y
9. So X as to Y
10. So X that Y
11. Whether to

MISCELLANEOUS ERRORS

1. Subjunctive Mood – This refers to either hypothetical situations or situations where something is being ordered or demanded. In the former case, use “were” or “would” (If I were rich) even if the subject is singular. In the latter case, the verb should be followed by a “that” (She demanded that I leave)
2. Number words – Countable vs. uncountable. Make sure to check for plurality.
3. Where/When – Where has to represent a location and when has to represent a time.
4. Each other/One another – Each other is used for two things; one another for many.
5. Whether/If – Whether is used to provide a list of alternative possibilities, while “if” represents a conditional statement.
6. Everyday/Every day – The former is an adjective, while the latter means daily.
7. Preposition/Conjunction – When these are interchangeable or you have a word that can represent either, separate the sentence into two parts and see if they are independent clauses. If they are, then use a conjunction.
8. Sentences ending with prepositions could be correct.
9. Like vs. Such As – Use like to suggest similarity, and such as to list examples.
10. Compare to vs. Compare with – Compare to is for relating something to something else that’s usually unrelated and compare with is used for actual comparisons.

