

## Sentence Correction

Sentence Correction questions require you to be familiar with the stylistic conventions and grammatical rules of standard written English. A limited number of rules are tested on the GMAT-SC, so you do not need to learn each and every grammar rule. To obtain an impeccable score on SC, you need to study the common errors, apply them on questions by the procedure taught to you in class and practice till you become perfect.

### Let's check an example:

- Overjoyed by the phenomenal growth of revenue in the first quarter of the financial year, the decision of the branch manager had been to give the staff a raise.  
(A) the decision of the branch manager had been to give the staff a raise  
(B) a raise was given to the staff by the branch manager  
(C) it was decided by the branch manager to give the staff a raise  
(D) the staff was given a raise by the branch manager  
(E) the branch manager decided to give the staff a raise

As you can see, Sentence Correction questions present a sentence in which a part or the whole sentence is underlined. The first option is always an exact repeat of the underlined part of the given sentence. The rest of the four options present a variation of the given underlined part. You are supposed to tick and confirm one option which is better than others.

The credited answer- the answer for which you get marks is not the one that is intuitively right, instead it is the one which is right according to the GMAT. So you need to learn the specific rules followed by GMAT.

## The Grammar Issues Tested On GMAT

GMAT Sentence Correction section tests you for identifying ten grammar errors:

- 6 Main Grammar Errors
- 4 Sundry Grammar Errors

### ***Main Grammar Errors – These errors are never present in the credited answer***

90% of Sentence correction questions can be solved if you are adept at identifying the main grammar errors. GMAT tests for seven main grammar errors – Idioms, Pronoun usage, Subject–Verb-Agreement, Verb-Tenses, Parallel Structure (Lists & Comparisons), and Modifiers. Apart from these six errors, GMAT also tests you for certain uncommon language structures. Above all the credited answer should follow common sense and avoid changing meaning of the given underlined sentence.

### ***Sundry Grammar Errors***

Knowledge of sundry grammar errors is used when you are left with two or more options which have no main errors. Examples of secondary errors are Subjunctive, Passive voice, Redundancy and Brevity.

## **Approach for Sentence Correction questions:**

### **1. Avoid:**

- Using intuition while solving SC. You will use your Conversational English skills when you use intuition and Conversational English is very different from the Written English tested on the GMAT- SC.
- Looking for the right answer. Many questions may not have a perfectly right answer. Use elimination process to kick out four options and choose whatever remains.
- Solving questions horizontally by reading each answer choice into the original sentence. It works on the “intuition method” and wastes a lot of time.
- Fixing each sentence your way first. Don’t do this as your corrected sentence may not be part of the answer choices and it may work on the “intuition method”.

### **2. The Right Approach:**

- Eliminate four options based on rules taught to you.
- Compare the answers vertically and focus on differences.
- Right answers will conform to common sense.
- Avoid changing the original meaning of the given underlined sentence (unless it is wrong according to common sense).
- Shorter answers are better answers if they do not break any grammar rule.

## **Cracking a Sentence Correction question**

- Carefully read the given sentence to understand it better.
- Do a vertical comparison of the answer choices and look for differences among them.
- Take a decision based on rules and kick out the options which have the error.
- Compare vertically again and kick out options that break another rule.
- Repeat this process till you end up with one answer. Tick this chosen one.

## **Pronouns**

A pronoun is a word used instead of the noun. Pronouns help to avoid the repetition of the noun every time we make a reference to the same noun (antecedent), so sentences become less cumbersome and less repetitive by using pronouns.

Example: Annie loves dancing and swimming, but Annie hates soft pop music.

We can rewrite the above in the following manner:

Annie loves dancing and swimming, but **she** hates soft pop music.

**On the GMAT, types of errors are framed on Pronoun usage are as given:**

1. Pronoun Ambiguity
2. Pronoun Inconsistency
3. Pronoun Agreement
4. Implied Reference

## 5. Incorrect pronoun usage

### 1. Pronoun Ambiguity or Pronoun Reference

*Let's look at the following sentence:*

Margaret went to visit Anne, as she was lonely. (Incorrect usage)

(It's not clear who was lonely? – Margaret or Anne)

Margaret went to visit Anne, as Margaret was lonely. (Correct usage)

Or

Margaret went to visit Anne, as Anne was lonely. (Correct usage)

So, Pronoun ambiguity is an error in a sentence where a pronoun does not clearly refer to one clear and right antecedent or noun. Check one more example:

If your child dislikes spinach, try boiling it in milk. (Incorrect usage)

(What is the antecedent of **it** – the **child** or **spinach**? So what do we boil?)

If your child dislikes spinach, try boiling the spinach in milk. (Correct usage)

Always make sure that if you see a pronoun in a sentence, it should have a clear antecedent.

### 2. Pronoun Inconsistency – Refers to usage of **one** / **people** / **person**

Let's look at the following sentences:

**One** should take care of **their** belongings. (Incorrect usage)

(Correct usage - People should take care of their belongings.

Or - One should take care of one's belongings.)

So Pronoun inconsistency is an error in a sentence where one pronoun is replaced by another pronoun in the same sentence even though the antecedent remains the same. One more example:

### 3. Pronoun Agreement

Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in gender, person, and number.

**Sheena** believes that success has eluded **him** even after working efficiently. (Incorrect usage)

**Sheena** believes that success has eluded **her** even after working efficiently. (Correct Usage)

Any **person** who maintains a saving account in a bank has to take care that **he** also keeps an eye on the financial stability of the bank. (Incorrect usage)

Any **person** who maintains a saving account in a bank has to take care that **he or she** also keeps an eye on the financial stability of the bank. (Correct usage)

Certain singular pronouns are not specific to a particular gender. To replace them we need a **he or she / his or her** - Everyone, Somebody, someone, everybody, everyone, nobody, no one, anybody, and anyone

The **International Monetary Fund** holds \$12 billion in loans that are seriously delinquent or in such trouble that **they** do not expect payments to be made when they are due. (Incorrect usage)

The **International Monetary Fund** holds \$12 billion in loans that are seriously delinquent or in such trouble that **it** does not expect payments to be made when they are due. (Correct usage)

#### 4. Implied Reference

When John finally proposed, **it** was only because he had learned of her inheritance. (Incorrect usage as “**When John finally proposed**” cannot act as a noun antecedent for **it**)

*Rewrite the above in the correct manner:*

*When John finally proposed, he did so only because he had learned of her inheritance.*

OR

*John finally proposed only because he had learned of her inheritance.*

The storm lasted all weekend long, which made us feel depressed. (Incorrect usage)

*Rewrite the above in the correct manner:*

*Because the storm ..., we felt depressed.*

OR

*We felt depressed because the storm lasted ...*

OR

*The storm's lasting all weekend long made ...*

During World War II, the French strategy for protection was a wall of staggered forts and lookout points called the Maginot Line, but its weakest section ultimately led to their invasion. (Incorrect usage)

*Rewrite the above in the correct manner:*

*During World War II, the French strategy for protection was a wall of staggered forts and lookout points called the Maginot Line, but its weakest section ultimately led to France's invasion.*

## 5. Usage of Personal Pronouns

After this teach them the four tables which clearly demonstrate usage of right form of pronouns. Let's look at various personal pronouns. Don't worry about jargon; you just need to be good at using the various pronouns.

**Nominative Case** – Where the pronoun is the subject of the sentence and is not being possessive. As in case of – **I** completed the project. Here 'I' is pronoun, subject of the sentence and is not being possessive. Now observe how substituting I with various forms of 1st, 2nd and 3rd as well as plural and singular forms work.

Use the same sentence - **I** completed the project.

|                                    | <b>Singular</b> | <b>Plural</b> |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>First person (speaker)</b>      | <b>I</b>        | we            |
| <b>Second person (listener)</b>    | you             | you           |
| <b>Third person (spoken about)</b> | he, she, it     | they          |

**Objective Case** - Where the pronoun is object of the sentence and is not being possessive. As in case of – The project was completed by **me**. Here '**me**' is pronoun, object of the sentence and is not being possessive. Now observe how substituting **me** with various forms of 1st, 2nd and 3rd as well as plural and singular forms work.

Use the same sentence - The project was completed by **me**.

|                                    | <b>Singular</b> | <b>Plural</b> |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>First person (speaker)</b>      | <b>me</b>       | us            |
| <b>Second person (listener)</b>    | you             | you           |
| <b>Third person (spoken about)</b> | him, her, it    | them          |

**Nominative Possessive Case** - Here the pronoun is subject and is possessive.

As in case of – **My** book is on the table.

Here '**my**' is pronoun, possessive, and subject of the sentence. Now observe how substituting **my** with various forms of 1st, 2nd and 3rd person as well as plural and singular forms work.

Use the same sentence - **My** book is on the table.

| <b>Singular</b> | <b>Plural</b> |
|-----------------|---------------|
|-----------------|---------------|

|                      |               |       |
|----------------------|---------------|-------|
| <b>First person</b>  | my            | our   |
| <b>Second person</b> | your          | your  |
| <b>Third person</b>  | his, her, its | their |

**Objective Possessive Case** - Here the pronoun is object and is possessive.

As in case of – The book on the table is **mine**.

Here *my* and *mine* are pronoun, possessive, subject and object respectively of the sentence. Now observe how substituting *my* and *mine* with various forms of 1st, 2nd and 3rd person as well as plural and singular forms work.

Use the same sentence - The book on the table is **mine**.

|                      | <b>Singular</b> | <b>Plural</b> |
|----------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>First person</b>  | <b>mine</b>     | ours          |
| <b>Second person</b> | yours           | yours         |
| <b>Third person</b>  | his, hers, its  | theirs        |

The number - Singular - **The number** of chartered accountants choosing management as a career **is** on the rise.

A number - Plural – **A number** of chartered accountants **are** choosing management as a career.

Who – Used for Humans and animals with a name

Which – Used for Non living and animals without a name

That – Used for Humans, Non living and animals

WHICH / THAT – Finger pointing rule - Clauses

## **Parallelism**

*Parallelism is a technique for matching the form of your sentence to its meaning: when your ideas are equally important, or parallel, you express them in similar, or parallel, grammatical form.*

Eric likes swimming, dancing, and to jog.

*Rewrite in the correct manner: (Three correct variations possible)*

Eric likes swimming, dancing, and jogging.

Eric likes to swim, dance, and jog.

Eric likes to swim, to dance, and to jog.

Minnie wanted to work on the project, playing at the rink and complete her shopping.

*Rewrite in the correct manner: (Three correct variations possible)*

Minnie wanted to work on the project, play at the rink and complete her shopping.

Concept of Break Point

In a sentence with a list, **Break Point** is the location just before the first element or after the last element of the list.

All the elements of the list should make sense with the word before or after the Break Point respectively.

Incorrect: The air is dirtied by *factories belching smoke* and *vehicles that spew exhaust*.

Break point↓

Procedure: The air is dirtied by | *factories belching smoke*

and

*vehicles spewing exhaust*.

Parallel: The air is dirtied by *factories belching smoke* and *vehicles spewing exhaust*.

*Be careful not to omit needed words in parallel structures.*

Many workers find it difficult to have faith and work for the future.

*Rewrite in the correct manner:*

Many workers find it difficult to have faith and work for the future.

**A. Parallelism** with *and, but, or, nor, yet*

The coordinating conjunctions *and, but, or, nor, and yet* signal a need for parallelism.

The industrial base is *shifting* and *shrinking*.

Politicians seldom *acknowledge the problem* or *propose alternatives*.

Industrial workers are understandably disturbed *that they are losing their jobs* and *that no one seems to care*.

**FAULTY** Three reasons why steel companies kept losing money were that their plants were inefficient, high labor costs, and foreign competition was increasing.

**REVISED** Three reasons why steel companies kept losing money were *inefficient plants, high labor costs, and increasing foreign competition.*

**NOTE:** *As the preceding example shows, parallel elements match in structure, but they need not match word for word.*

## **B. Parallel Comparison**

### **We can compare only comparable things**

The rules of written English are more stringent than conversational English.

*Rewrite in the correct manner:*

The rules of written English are more stringent than the rules of conversational English.

The rules of written English are more stringent than those of conversational English.

## **C. Parallelism with *both... and*, *either... or*, and so on**

Correlative conjunctions stress equality and balance between elements. Parallelism confirms the equality. The correlative conjunctions include *both...and*, *either... or*, *neither... nor*, *not...but*, *not only... but also*, *whether... or*, *not so much.....as....*, *Like X, Y.....*, *Unlike X,Y...*, *X is similar to Y*, *Likening X to Y*, *more than*, *greater than*, *less than*, *X is different from Y*, *as good as*, *as much as*, *compared to*, *Compared with*, *In contrast to*, *In contrast with*, *.etc.*

At the end of the movie, Angelina both rejects the loan proposal and the restructuring the shareholding proposed by the bank.

*Rewrite in the correct manner:*

At the end of the movie, Angelina rejects both the loan proposal and the restructuring of the shareholding proposed by the bank.

With correlative conjunctions, the element after the second connector must match the element after the first connector.

## **Subject Verb Agreement**

Encircle one of the two underlined words:

The original building and loan associations was / **were** organized as limited life funds, whose members made monthly payments on their share subscriptions and then took turns drawing on the funds for home mortgages.

The verb in any sentence should agree with the proper subject. The following are major areas where errors can be committed:

**In the following concepts, encircle one of the two underlined options:**

Error of proximity – This is a very frequent error - the verb is made to agree in number with a noun near it and not with its proper subject.

A panoply of tax exemptions coupled with easier and cheaper corporate loans has / have led to a boom in entrepreneurial ventures in the Guangzhou region of Western China.

A **panoply** of tax exemptions coupled with easier and cheaper corporate loans **has** / have led to a boom in entrepreneurial ventures in the Guangzhou region of Western China.

The results of the recognition of importance of Oral Rehydration Therapy is / are very encouraging for WHO.

The **results** of the recognition of importance of Oral[ Rehydration Therapy is / **are** very encouraging for WHO.

Two or more singular nouns or pronouns connected by ‘**and**’ need a plural verb, with few exceptions.

The unique construction and finance associations was / were organized as limited life funds, whose members made monthly payments on their share subscriptions and then took turns drawing on the funds for home mortgages.

The original residential society **and** finance association was / **were** organized as limited life funds, whose members made monthly payments on their share subscriptions and then took turns drawing on the funds for home mortgages.

Parenthetical information does not decide the verb in the sentence, so keep your eyes open for ‘with’, ‘along with’, ‘as well as’ etc.

- The ship and its crew, were / **was** lost.
- The ship, with its crew, were / **was** lost.
- The ship, as well as its crew, **was** / were lost.
- The ship, along with its crew, were / **was** lost.

Two or more singular subjects connected by ‘or’ or ‘nor’ should have a singular verb. If one subject is singular and the other one is plural then the verb used should be consistent with the subject nearer to it.

- Either the dog or the cat were / **was** responsible.
- Either the cats or the dogs **were** / was responsible.
- Either the cats or the dog were / **was** responsible.
- Either the dog or the cats **were** / was responsible.

Same applies to **neither-nor** situations

A singular verb must follow 'either, neither, each, everyone, etc.

- Each of these birds are / **is** found in the forests.
- Neither of the two laborers were / **was** working.
- Every one of the hotels are / **is** full.

If two nouns are connected by 'and' but are qualified by 'each' or 'every' need a singular verb.

- Every door and every window were / **was** painted in a different shade at the museum.

Singular nouns which end with an s sound plural, and are matched with a plural verb incorrectly.

- The news has/have started started (Incorrect)  
The news is bound to be true. (Correct)
- Mathematics are not offered in my college. (Incorrect)  
Mathematics is not offered in my college. (Correct)
- The wages of labor are sweet. (Incorrect)  
The wages of labor is sweet. (Correct)

**Nouns, which are singular in, form but plural in meaning use a plural verb.**

A dozen costs / **cost** \$30.

A dozen oranges costs / **cost** \$30.

**'None' can take singular or plural forms.**

None is / **are** eligible for the test.

None of them **is** / are eligible for the test.

A collective noun takes a singular verb when collection is thought of as a whole; though if we think of individuals of the collective then a plural verb is used.

The jury **is** / are going to take its decision today.

The members of the jury **is** / **are** divided on the sentence to be given.

Other examples of collective nouns are - Jury, senate, parliament, committee, pride, bench, team, group, family, audience, congregation, The United Kingdom, the United States

If a plural noun is a proper name for a single object or a collective unit, it must have a singular verb.

The United Kingdom **has** / have no overseas interests in oil exploration.

If a plural noun denotes some specific quality or amount considered as a whole, the verb is singular.

In the seminar, 30 minutes **is** / are allowed for each participant.

Sixty lakhs **is** / are a large amount for a car.

A number and the number-When you refer to *a number* of things, you're talking about many things, and you need a plural verb. When you refer to *the number* of things, you're talking about one particular number, and you need a singular verb.

*The number* of box-office hits this year **is** / are unprecedented.

*A number* of IT start ups **are** / is going to file for bankruptcy this year.

## Idioms

The best way to learn idioms is through repetition and memorization. Don't get hung up on the "why." Accept that, as someone wisely put it, "that's the way it is." We've made the process a little easier by providing a list of the idioms commonly tested on the GMAT-CAT. Review the idiom list below, and note any idioms that give you difficulty. Spend time learning those expressions.

Remember, you need to have this precise list on your fingers and coming across a part of the idiom should ring a bell in your memory and help you recall the rest of the idiom.

## Idiom List

The following list contains the idioms tested most frequently on the GMAT:

**Both ..... and** I want **both** coffee **and** crackers.

**OG 10 – 7, 66, 109, 135, 139,**

**Not....but**

Arnold is **not** an idiot **but** a fool.

The review was **not** mean-spirited **but** merely flippant.

**OG 10 – 12, 16, 21, 48, 51, 59, 83, 87, 91, 94, 102, 136, 144, 153, 208, 215, 255, 22, 24, 182, 189, 232,**

**Not X but rather Y (rather is optional/ redundant, but not wrong)**

**OG 10 – 172,**

**Rather than OG 10 – 40, 55, 116, 143, 147, 186, 264,**

**Not only ,,. but also**

**OG 10 – 94, 125, 216, 248,**

She is **not only** beautiful, **but** also smart.

**Not only in .....but also in**

**OG 10 –166,**

Annette is gifted **not only in** accounts **but also in** macroeconomics.

**Not only on ....but also on**

**OG 10 – 166**

Annie achieved a high score **not only on** GMAT **but also on** IELTS.

**Not only of....but also of**

**OG 10 – 241,**

**but (alone) but alone Q 21 og10**

All meteorologists had warned against scheduling the Antarctic expedition during the stormy month of March, but the scientists did not heed to the warnings as only a window of two months was available before the glaciers would start melting in May.

### **Consider / considered... (nothing)**

Art historians **consider** the Mona Lisa one of the greatest works of art.

OG 10 – 41, 43, 65, 73, 79, 154,

I **consider** him an idiot. (Correct Usage)

I **consider** him **to be** an idiot. (Incorrect Usage)

I **consider** him **as** an idiot. (Incorrect Usage)

I will **consider** him **for** the post. (Incorrect Usage)

People **consider** abortion **is** a crime. (Incorrect Usage)

People **consider** games **are** an integral part of life. (Incorrect Usage)

### **Worry..... About a condition / worry ...over an action**

OG 10 – 42,

If you **worry** too much **about** the GMAT, you'll develop an ulcer.

Don't **worry about** your failures too much

### **So.....as to**

OG 10 – 88,

She is **so** beautiful **as to** be exquisite.

He is **so** good as a guitarist **as to** be a gift to this world.

### **so .....that**

OG 10 – 20, 67, 103, 114, 136, 153, 163, 171, 177, 180

He was **so** late **that** he missed the main course.

### **Key- so adjective as to be adjective/ noun/**

- **so** verb **that**

so as to (Unidiomatic)

“so” can also be used to show result OG 10 – 98, 215, 227,

### **Think-of.....as**

OG 10 – 182

**Think of** it more **as** a promise than a threat.

**Think of** it more **as** a challenge than a job.

### **See ..... as**

OG 10 – 180

Many people **see** elections **as** a time to pay back the politicians.

Many people **see** euthanasia **as** an escape from pain.

**see** can also be used to mean **to find by observation** OG 10 – 236

**see** can also be used for **visually seeing** OG 11-63,94

### **The same ... as** OG 10 – 12, 54, 80, 109, 141,

Mom and Dad gave **the same** punishment to me **as** to you.

I received **the same** rewards **as** you got.

OG 10 141 - Unless the transplant involves identical twins who have the same genetic endowment, all patients receiving hearts or other organs must take ant rejection drugs for the rest of their lives.

### **As .....as**

Memorizing idioms is not **as** fun **as** playing cricket.

Studying can never be **as** fun **as** chilling out with friends.

### **Target ....at**

The commercials were obviously **targeted at** teenage girls.

The last republican campaign was **targeted** solely **at** neo-conservatives.

### **Responsible for (an event, situation, something) / Responsibility to (a person, group)**

You are **responsible for** the child. OG 10 - 21, 67

You have a **responsibility to** take care of the child.

### **To do X is to do Y**

The only way for growers **to salvage** frozen citrus is **to have it quickly processed** into juice concentrate before warmer weather returns and rots the fruit

### **Doing X is like doing Y**

#### **Encourage...to**

We will always encourage **you to work hard.**

#### **Prohibit.....from**

He was **prohibited from** entering the public library after he accidentally set the dictionary on fire with a magnifying glass.

#### **Different ..... from**

Democrats are not so **different from** Republicans in the United States.

### **Difference**

### **Hypothesis that**

The **hypothesis that** aspartame causes brain tumors has not been proven yet

#### **Believe ..... to be**

His friends do not **believe** the ring he bought at the auction **to be** Jackie O's: they all think he was tricked.

I **believe in** god. (Incorrect Usage)

Many people **believe about** ghosts. (Incorrect Usage)

#### **Estimate ..... to be**

The time he has spent impersonating Elvis is **estimated to be** longer than the time Elvis himself spent performing.

I want an **estimate of** expenses. (Incorrect Usage)

I want an **estimate for** expenses. (Incorrect Usage)

### Ability ..... to

If you take the GMAT enough times, you might develop the **ability to** choose the credited responses without reading the questions

### Attribute .... to

Many amusing quips are **attributed to** Dorothy Parker

### Require ..... to

Before you enter the house you are **required to** take off your hat.

### Permit ..... to

I don't **permit** my children **to** play with knives in the living room.

### Superior ....to

My pasta sauce is far superior to my mother-in-law's

### Try ... to

**Try to** stay awake during the verbal section of the test.

### Credit ...with

Many people **credit** Christopher Columbus **with** the discovery of America, but Native Americans were here first.

We will have to give him **credit for** winning this game. (Incorrect Usage)

This money has to be **credited to** Annie's account. (Incorrect Usage)

The **credit of** winning should go to him. (Incorrect Usage)

### Associate .., with

Most politicians prefer not to be **associated with** the Mafia

### Contrast... with

My father likes to **contrast** my grades **with** my brother's.

In contrast to my brother, I prefer coffee to tea. (Incorrect Usage)

### **Distinguish...from**

I can **distinguish** day **from** night.

### **Distinguish between ... and**

I can **distinguish between** black **and** white

### **Native (noun)...of (citizenship)**

Kylie Minogue is a **native of** Australia.

### **Native (adjective)...to (species)**

The platypus is **native to** Australia

### **Either...or**

Either of us has to be present in office for troubleshooting. (Incorrect)

I must have **either** chocolate ice cream **or** carrot cake to complete a great meal.

### **Neither... nor**

Because Jenny was grounded, she could **neither** leave the house **nor** use the telephone.

### **More than; Less than**

The chimpanzee is much **more** intelligent **than** the orangutan.

### **The more ...the - er**

**The more** you ignore me, the **closer** I get.

### **From.....to**

Scores on the GMAT range **from** 200 **to** 800

### **Just as,, so too**

**Just as** I crossed over to the dark side, **so too** will you, my son

### **Each vs. all or both**

Use each when you want to emphasize the separateness of the items.

Use both (for two things) or all (for more than two things) when you want to emphasize the togetherness of the items

**Each** of the doctors at the hospital is specialized in a different area.

**Both** Annie and Vinnie went to Bryn Mawr for their undergraduate degrees.

**All** of the letters received before January 15 went into the drawing for the \$10 million prize.

### **Whether vs. if**

Use whether when there are two possibilities.

Use if in conditional statements

Eduardo wasn't sure **whether** he could make it to the party

**If** Eduardo comes to the party, he will bring a bottle of wine.

### **As vs. like**

As is used to compare actions

Like is used to compare nouns.

He did not vote for the Libertarian Party, **as** I did.

Her coat is just **like** mine.

### **Like vs. such as**

Like means similar to

Such as means for example.

The mule, like the donkey, is a close relative of the horse.

Many of my favorite ice cream flavors, **such as** chocolate chip and strawberry, are also available as frozen yogurt.

Range from x to y / from X to Y

To do X is to do Y

Size of X and not Size of X's

No less ....than

Introduced into

Method of

So X as to be Y

Seem to

except for

assure that

ruled that

demanded that

revealed that

required that

claimed that

claim to

ordered X to do Y

Using X as Y

Use X to simulate Y

Unlike X....., Y .....

Like X....., Y.....

**The growing number**

**the rising cost**

**due to / because of**

**between / among**

**no sooner than**

**Unlike**

**For / Since**

**In order that (Unidiomatic)**

**So as to (Unidiomatic)**

### ***Modifier***

A modifier reports the quality, quantity, or condition of a word or group of words in an English-language sentence. As we shall see, modifiers can be a single word (such as adjectives and adverbs) or a word group that collectively has a single function.

**A modifier tells us more about something in the sentence.**

Check these sentences:

He ran.

He ran **fast**.

He ran **very** fast.

He ran as fast **as a panther in mortal danger would**.

In second sentence **fast** modifies (or tells us more) about ran.

In third sentence, **very** modifies (or tells us more) about fast

In fourth sentence, **as fast as a panther in mortal danger would** modifies (or tells us more) about ran

These three (**fast** , **very** , and , **as fast as a panther in mortal danger would** ) act as modifiers.

In conversational English we take a lot of liberties, as we are present in front of the listener to clarify any ambiguous information. For clarity of written English, modifiers generally must fall close to the words they modify.

However, you must be careful to avoid **errors while using most modifiers** -modifiers that are positioned so that they appear to modify the wrong thing.

### **MODIFIER ERRORS**

When a modifier falls in the wrong place in a sentence, it may be awkward, ambiguous, confusing, or even unintentionally funny.

A misplaced modifier falls in the wrong place in a sentence. It may be awkward, confusing, or even unintentionally funny.

He served burger to the kids *on paper plates*. (Hey! were the kids on paper plates?)

He served the kids burger *on paper plates*. (That's acceptable)

Many dogs are killed by trucks ***roaming unleashed***. (Hey! that gives the impression that trucks were roaming unleashed)

Many dogs ***roaming unleashed*** are killed by trucks.

I heard the bird near the nest ***that was singing***. (Hey! that gives the impression that nest was singing)

I heard the bird ***that was singing*** near the nest.

Limiting modifiers include *only, even, just, almost, quickly, hardly, merely, exactly, nearly, scarcely, and simply*. They should fall immediately before the word or word group they modify.

They ***only*** saw each other during meals. Does it seem ambiguous? (This doesn't make it clear whether "they only looked at each other during mealtime and did not look at anyone else" **or** "they met each other only at mealtime and did not meet at any other time")

They saw ***only*** each other during meals. OR They saw each other ***only*** during meals.

***Running down the alley***, a brick hit my head. It seems the brick was running down the alley- but doesn't that happen only in cartoon movies.

While I was running down the alley, a brick hit my head.

Running down the alley, I was hit by a brick on my head.

**When only four**, my mother taught me to read.

When I was only four, my mother taught me to read.

When only four, I was taught by my mother to read.

**While sleeping in the park**, someone stole his wallet.

*Passing the building*, the vandalism became visible.

*As we passed* the building, the vandalism became visible.

*Trying to understand the causes*, vandalism has been extensively studied.

Trying to understand the causes, *researchers have* extensively studied vandalism.

Suddenly, while walking down the road, you are thrashed. (So, who thrashed you? Isn't the doer missing?)

After fixing the motor, the car started again.

After Vinay fixed the motor, the car started again.

To read well, good light is needed.

To read well, everyone needs good light.

### **Split infinitive**

A split infinitive—a modifier placed between **to** and the **verb**—can be especially awkward and annoys many readers. The infinitive form of the verb consists of the word "to" followed by the base form of the verb: "to be," "to serve," "to chop," etc. Inserting a word or words between the "to" and the verb of an infinitive creates what is known as a **split infinitive**.

In general, you should avoid modifiers between the "to" and the verb of an infinitive.

### **Comparison and Adjectives**

Adjectives can be compared and there are three degrees of comparison-Positive, comparative and superlative adjectives.

The positive degree states the quality of an object. Example: good, poor, etc.

The comparative degree compares two things. It is formed by using **less** or **more** adding **er** to the positive. Example: better, poorer, etc.

The superlative degree compares three or more things. It is formed by using **least** or **most** or adding **est** to the positive. Example best, poorest

| <b><i>Positive</i></b> | <b><i>Comparative</i></b>          | <b><i>Superlative</i></b>            |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Easy                   | easier; more easy; less easy       | easiest; most easy; least easy       |
| Pretty                 | prettier; more pretty; less pretty | prettiest; least pretty; most pretty |

### **Do not use two forms together:**

She is the most prettier. (Incorrect) She is the prettiest. (Correct)

She is the less prettier. (Incorrect) She is less pretty. (Correct)

She is the more prettiest.(Incorrect) She is most pretty. (Correct)

She is the most prettiest (Incorrect) She is prettiest. (Correct)

## VERB TENSES AND TIME

GMAT uses incorrect verb tenses in many Sentence Correction questions. Usually test writers will try to trap you by inserting long modifying phrases and clauses between the subject of the sentence and the verb. But they will also try to confuse you with clauses about when an action occurs. Answer the following questions and understand the traps.

The variations within the basic categories of past, present, and future allow us to express ideas more precisely. If a tense uses a helper verb, such as a form of **to be** or **to have**, use the helper verb to determine the tense. For example,

‘**I was**’ is in the past tense because **was** denotes the past.

‘**I am**’ walking is in the present because **am** denotes the present. Let's look at the variations in more detail. Knowing the names of the tenses isn't necessary, but you need to be able to classify them as past, present, or future.

## PRESENT TENSE

The **simple present tense** expresses a habitual action, a fact, or something that is happening now.

Ajay *jogs* three miles every morning.

The sun rises from the east.

Both baseball games *are* on television right now.

When you want to describe something that's in progress right now, use the **present progressive tense**. (It's sometimes called the present continuous tense.) **Present progressive tense** uses a form of “to be” followed by the *-ing* form of the verb ( also known as the present participle).

The kids on the playground *are laughing* loudly

The **present perfect tense** describes an action that started at an indefinite time in the past and either continues into the present or has just been completed. This tense uses the helping verb *has* or *have* followed by the past participle.

Astrid *has read* a book a week since she was twelve.

The **present perfect continuous tense** describes an ongoing that started at an indefinite time in the past and continues into the present. This tense uses the helping verb *has* and the *-ing* form.

Astrid *has been reading* a book a week since she was twelve.

## PAST TENSE

The **simple past tense** indicates a completed action or condition.

I *wrote* my final paper over the weekend.

Use **past progressive tense** to describe an action that was ongoing in the past.

We *were sleeping* when the fire alarm went off.

Use the **past perfect tense** when you want to make it clear that one action *in* the past happened before another.

This tense requires the helping verb *had*.

Before she began college last fall, she *had never been* more than twenty miles from home.

In the example above, the past perfect action was cut off by an intervening event in the more recent past. The past perfect cannot stand alone as the only verb in a sentence.

Use the **past perfect continuous tense** when you want to make it clear that one ongoing action *in* the past happened before another. This tense requires the helping verb *had*.

We *had been sleeping* on the terrace when the storm woke us.

## FUTURE TENSE

**Simple future tense**, as you would expect, describes an action that will take place in the future.

This tense requires the use of the helper verb *will*.

I *will repair* my bike tomorrow.

Use **future progressive tense** to describe an ongoing action that takes place in the future. The tense is formed by using the future form of the helping verb *to be* plus the *-ing* form of a verb.

I *will be cleaning* my room when you arrive.

Use **future perfect tense** to indicate an action that will be completed by a specified time in the future.

We *will not* have finished dinner by the time you arrive.

Use **future perfect continuous tense** to indicate an ongoing action that will be completed by a specified time in the future.

By December, we will have been living in New York for ten years.

**Remember,**

None of the three tenses is wrong.

It is not permitted to use more than one tense in a sentence unless common sense permits it.

Most questions on tense errors will actually test you for Common sense.

Do not unnecessarily change the tense of the given sentence unless and until the tense used doesn't make sense.

### QUANTITY WORDS

On most questions involving Quantity Words, the issue is whether the items in the sentence are countable (such as tables, pencils, coins, or people) or not countable (such as love, rice, or soup). Once you decide whether the noun is countable, the rules are clear. Just memorize them.

#### Countable

fewer

number

many

#### Not Countable

less

amount or quantity

much

Here are some samples of the proper uses of these Quantity Words:

If there were **fewer cars** on the road, there would be **less traffic**.

The **number of cars** on the road contributes to the **amount of traffic**.

There's too **much traffic** on this road because there are too **many cars**.

Here's a side note about example #2 above that links with subject-verb agreement.

It's the distinction between the number of and a number of:

**The number** of is a definite quantity, so it is a singular subject:

*The number of students in MBA programs increases every year.*

**A number** of is an indefinite quantity or approximation, so it's a plural subject:

*A number of students in MBA programs have no business experience.*

A second Quantity Words issue involves comparatives. There are two separate situations: comparing two things and comparing three or more things. The key to getting them right is determining how many things are being compared. Just memorize these straightforward rules:

### 2 Things

-er  
more  
between

### 3 or More Things

-est  
most  
among

Examples: *Between you and me, I am taller.*

*Among the four of us, I am the tallest.*

## Clauses and Connectors

Occasionally, the GMAT tests your ability to use conjunctions and connect clauses correctly.

*Many investors withdrew their money from the stock market because the market was erratic.*

If you were to take ‘**because**’ away from the dependent clause, it would become an independent clause. Here **because** serves as a connector of the two clauses.

Whenever a sentence consists of two connected clauses, you need one and only one connecting word. If you have no connecting words, you get a **run-on sentence**:

*Many investors withdrew their money from the stock market, it was erratic.*

*The nineteenth century philosopher Nietzsche inspires many thinkers of today he wrote many of his works while extremely ill.*

**Run-on sentences** can be corrected either by adding an appropriate conjunction or by adding a full stop.

**Comma-splice** – If comma is placed in place of semi-colon or a conjunction

*Among the bands I listen to most is Bauhaus, another that I find interesting is Joy Division.*  
*Among the bands I listen to most is Bauhaus; another one that I find interesting is Joy Division.*

Sentence fragment is a dependent clause which can be part of a complete sentence but cannot stand alone.

*Many investors withdrew their money from the stock market because the market was erratic.*

*Many investors withdrew their money from the stock market. Because the market was erratic.*

**Incomplete Sentence:**

These include a main clause that lacks a verb.

The releasing of personal information by many school districts to third parties.

Many school districts prohibit the releasing of personal information to third parties.

### **Gibberish**

If you have two connecting words, you get gibberish:

***Since** many investors withdrew their money from the stock market, **because** it was erratic.*

### **Gerunds**

You already learned that when the **-ing** form of a verb takes on the role of a noun, it's called a gerund. Whenever you use a gerund, make sure that any nouns or pronouns are possessive, as in these sentences:

*My learning Japanese made my trip to Tokyo much more enjoyable.*

*Adam's biting the apple caused his banishment from Paradise.*

In general, it's best to avoid gerunds (remember the gerund being, which is almost always wrong). Whenever you see a gerund, there's usually a noun form that's better to use.

Okay: *My knowing about calculus helped me fill out my tax forms.*

Better: *My knowledge of calculus helped me fill out my tax forms.*

### **Where or When**

People often misuse **where** in conversational sentences. The most common mistakes look something like these:

*The essay section is one where I always have difficulty.*

*The harassment got to the point where she had to threaten to sue him.*

In each of these cases, **where** is not used properly because you should use **where** only when referring to an actual location:

*The linen closet is **where** I keep my sheets.*

Here's how to fix the sentences above:

*The essay section is one in which I always have difficulty.*

*The harassment got to the point that she had to threaten to sue him.*

Similarly, people often use **when** inappropriately. When refers only to actual moments in time:

*I'll apologize to that creep **when** Hell freezes over.*

### **Passive vs. Active Voice**

Notice the difference between the two sentences below.

*John completed the project.*

*The project was completed by John. .*

Both of these sentences convey the same meaning unambiguously. Still the first sentence said to be in active voice has a subject (John) who is the action doer, while in the second sentence said to be in passive voice the subject (the project) is not the action doer. Some GMAT questions present you with a choice between the active and passive voices. Choose the active voice whenever possible.

### **Subjunctive**

In addition to tense, the GMAT occasionally tests your ability to use the subjunctive mood. The term “subjunctive” makes most people’s eyes glaze over. You might have learned the subjunctive in another language in high school. Relax. It’s not that complicated.

### **Mood**

Grammatical mood is not a diagnosis of emotional instability – it describes the speaker’s attitude toward the factuality or likelihood of the action or condition expressed. There are three moods in English:

1. **Indicative**: used to make statements and ask questions
2. **Imperative**: used to give commands and make requests
3. **Subjunctive**: used to make statements contrary to fact, talk about hypothetical situations or express wishes.

Check out these INCORRECT sentences:

1. If politicians would tell the truth, then voters would not be so cynical.
2. I wish I was back in Bahamas.
3. I insist that you are careful with my copy of the Bible.

The first two sentences are called ‘**counterfactuals**’, which just means that one part of the sentence is most likely not true. This part is usually an “if” clause. The third sentence expresses a command or desired outcome.

DO NOT use **would** in an “if” clause. Use either the past tense or **were** in the “if” clause (or part of the sentence that is not true).

After verbs that express a wish (insist, recommend, prefer, demand require, mandate, law, rule .....), use the base form of the verb, which is the infinitive form without the “to” (run, be, go, buy...). So the corrected sentences will be :

1. If politicians were to tell the truth, then voters would not be so cynical.
2. I wish I were back in Bahamas.
3. I insist that you be careful with my copy of the Bible.

### Subjunctive Part I

Use the subjunctive to express an idea that’s contrary-to-fact or to speculate about a hypothetical situation.

1. I wouldn’t do that if I were you.
2. If Air Force One were to crash with the president on board, the vice president would become president.

In the first sentence, I’m obviously not you, so the situation is contrary to fact. However, I’m speculating that if I were in your place, I would not do that.

Normally, you wouldn’t use were with I, and the sentence might sound strange for that reason. However, subjunctive conjugation is different. No matter what the subject is, the **“if” clause** uses the verb **were**.

The second example discusses the hypothetical situation of Air Force One crashing. In that case, the vice president would become president.

When you speculate about a situation that is hypothetical or contrary to fact, use the verb **‘were’** in the **“if” clause**, no matter what the subject is. Use the verb **would** in the ‘then’ clause. The format is:

1. If x were, y would
2. Y would if x were

Vice-versa for were/were not and would / would not

### Subjunctive Part II

Use the second form of the subjunctive with **‘that’** clauses of order or recommendation.

1. The manager requested that the staff stay late to finish the project.
2. We recommend that you arrive on time for the GMAT.
3. The princess demanded that the toad be brought to her.

The regular conjugation in the first example would be the staff stays late, but subjunctive conjugation is different. The proper construction looks like this:

**Subject Verb1 that Object Verb 2 Rest of the Sentence**

You need the word that and Verb 2 must be in the infinitive form without the ‘**to**’ in front of it.

Don’t use the word **should** with the subjunctive.

### **Short and Sweet**

If you are left with two answers and both of them are grammatically correct, choose the shorter and simpler one.

### **Redundancy**

Don’t be repetitive. Don’t be redundant. The reason for this is that you shouldn’t say the same thing more than once.