

10.3. “Because of” Vs “Due to”

In colloquial English, *because of* and *due to* are often used almost synonymously, but not on GMAT. In formal English, *due to* can be used only as an *adjective*, whereas *because of* can be used only as an *adverb*.

Following two ways can help assess the usage of *due to* vs *because of*:

- 1) To ascertain that the usage of *due to* is appropriate in a sentence, check if *due to* can be substituted with *caused by*.
- 2) If we *remove* the portion of the sentence starting with *due to*, the leftover sentence *cannot* stand on its own as complete sentence. On the other hand, we *remove* the portion of the sentence starting with *because of*, the leftover sentence *can* stand on its own as complete sentence.

For example, consider the following sentence:

The athlete could not compete due to injury.

- The usage of *due to* is *incorrect* in the above sentence. Let’s apply both the above techniques to this sentence. Substituting *due to* with *caused by*, the sentence is: *The athlete could not compete attributable to injury*. Clearly, this doesn’t make sense. Also, if we *remove* the portion of the sentence starting with *due to*, the leftover sentence is: *The athlete could not compete*. Clearly, this leftover sentence *can* stand on its own as complete sentence. Hence, we should be using *because of*:

The athlete could not compete because of injury.

Let’s now look at another sentence:

The delay in delivery of the merchandise was due to bad weather.

- The usage of *due to* is *correct* in the above sentence. Let’s apply both the above techniques to this sentence. Substituting *due to* with *caused by*, the sentence is: *The delay in delivery of the merchandise was caused by bad weather*. Clearly, this makes sense. Also, if we *remove* the portion of the sentence starting with *due to*, the leftover sentence is: *The delay in delivery of the merchandise was*. Clearly, this leftover sentence *cannot* stand on its own as complete sentence.

A sentence based on official question (# 8, OG-13: *In late 1997, the chambers...*):

In 2012, the Washington monument was closed to visitors for repair due to the earthquake, which damaged the stones at the top of the monument, creating a crack that ran 4-feet long and an inch wide.

Analysis: In the above sentence, the usage of *due to* is incorrect. Let’s apply both the above techniques to this sentence. Substituting *due to* with *caused by*, would read: *...closed to visitors for repair caused by the earthquake...* But this is nonsensical, because *repair* was *not* caused by earthquake; the *closure* (of the Washington monument) was caused by earthquake. Also, if we *remove* the portion of the sentence starting with *due to*, the leftover sentence is: *In 2012, the Washington monument was closed to visitors for repair*. Clearly, this leftover sentence *can* stand on its own as complete sentence. Hence, we cannot use *due to*. So, the correct sentence is:

In 2012, the Washington monument was closed to visitors for repair because the earthquake had damaged the stones at the top of the monument, creating a crack that ran 4-feet long and an inch wide.