



## Red Flag Words

# “Being”

No other GMAT Prep company teaches this GMAT Pill trick

Know this trick and:

- Eliminate answer choices (for up to 30% of SC questions) so fast – it’s almost an unfair advantage
- Boost your SC accuracy and timing



No other GMAT prep company teaches this trick. If you see this elsewhere – they likely copied GMAT Pill!

This trick is:

- Easy to apply
- Almost always works – based on OG and GMATPrep examples shown below
- Improves your ability to quickly eliminate answer choices by a significant %
- Decreases the amount of time you spend on each SC question
- Improves your SC accuracy and confidence

Here's the rule:



“Being” is a red flag word

It is almost always wrong – **except** when it is used in one of the following ways:

- 1) Something is “being X” or
- 2) “Being X” is something”

Is this really true?

Yes, see the proof from actual Official Guide and GMAT Prep examples below.

## GMAT Pill Analyzed Uses of the Word “Being” in The Official Guide (GO13)...

Of the 140 available SC questions from the Official Guide 13<sup>th</sup> edition, GMAT Pill has identified 22 of the 140 questions (16%) that directly or indirectly test or tempt you with the usage of “being” in either the underlined portion of the sentence or in the available answer choices.

**These are the official guide questions with this concept in action.**

#3, 4, 30, 31, 37, 48, 49, 51, 52, 63, 67, 91, 99, 100, 108, 110, 117, 119, 122, 124, 135, 140

Out of all these examples, **only 1** of them (#100) provides a case in which the correct answer involved the use of the word “being.”

## GMAT Pill did the same with official GMAT Prep questions...

And what did GMAT Pill discover?

Out of several hundred GMAT prep questions – **only 2** questions had an answer using the word “being”

Is there any common similarity between the 1 correct usage of “being” in OG and the 2 correct usages of “being” in GMATPrep?

Yes, **all 3 correct usages of the word “being”** in OG and GMATPrep (based on the hundreds of questions we analyzed) **fall into one of these 2 categories:**

- 1) Something is “being X” or**
- 2) “Being X” is something”**

How exactly does this work? Well, let’s dive deep with example usages in OG and GMATprep.

## Example #1: OG13 SC #37 – INCORRECT usage of “being”

37. Dressed as a man and using the name Robert Shurtleff, Deborah Sampson, the first woman to draw a soldier's pension, joined the Continental Army in 1782 at the age of 22, was injured three times, and was discharged in 1783 because she had become too ill to serve.

- (A) **22, was injured three times, and was discharged in 1783 because she had become**  
(B) 22, was injured three times, while **being** discharged in 1783 because she had become  
(C) 22 and was injured three times, and discharged in 1783, **being**  
(D) 22, injured three times, and was discharged in 1783 because she was  
(E) 22, having been injured three times and discharged in 1783, **being**

Here the correct answer is (A). But notice GMAC folks included the word “being” in 3 of the 4 other answer choices.

If you were not sure about answer choice (A) and you read through (B), (C), (D), and (E) – you could have wasted a lot of time thinking through each of them.

**However, if you knew that “being” was a red flag word**, you could have quickly applied the GMAT Pill rule check and avoided such timely mistakes.

Does “while being discharged” or “being too ill to serve” fit into one of the 2 correct usages of “being”

- 1) **Something is “being X” or**
- 2) **“Being X” is something”**

Nope! They do not so we can eliminate those answer choices (B), (C), and (E) that involve the incorrect usage of “being”—leaving us with just (A) and (D).

From there, it is easy to see that the woman “was injured” (A) – instead of “injured” (D). So it’s easy to choose (A).

## Example #2: OG13 SC #48 – INCORRECT usage of “being”

48. It is called a sea, but the landlocked Caspian is actually the largest lake on Earth, which covers more than four times the surface area of its closest rival in size, North America's Lake Superior.

(A) It is called a sea, but the landlocked Caspian...

(B) Although it is called a sea, actually..

**(C) Though called a sea, the landlocked Caspian is actually the largest lake on Earth, covering**

(D) Though called a sea but it ...

(E) Despite **being** called a sea, ...

Here the answer is C. Notice the first few words of each answer choice are different. You are presented with a variety of possible sentence structures.

Chances are – a test question such as this one will eat up your time because it takes time to consider various sentence structure possibilities. This is exactly how GMAC folks try to grind down your time. Don't let them.

Just based on the first few words alone – you can eliminate all the wrong answer choices.

For (A) – it already sounds awkward when you say:

“it is called a sea, but the landlocked Caspian”

In (B) – the word “actually” in “Although it is called sea, actually” is awkwardly positioned. Don't bother reading the rest of the answer choice.

(C) seems OK “Though it is called a sea, the landlocked Caspian...” – we know “it” is referring to the Caspian sea. We read the rest of the answer choice and (C) still seems OK – most likely it's the right answer. We can quickly glance at (D) and (E) to see if the first few words are enough for us to eliminate them.

In (D) – “though called a sea but it” – is awkward as we do not know “it” is referring to. Do not bother reading the rest of the answer choice.

Then we get to (E) which uses our red flag word “being”

Just based on the usage in “Despite being called” – **we already have a strong inclination that (E) is not correct**—even if “being” is technically OK. Because even if it is technically / grammatically OK, most likely GMAC folks will present a different answer choice that does NOT use “being.”

So that’s our inclination.

But let’s apply our rule:

“Despite being called a sea...”

**Is “being” used in one of these ways:**

- 1) Something is “being X” or**
- 2) “Being X” is something”**

No - We have a very high likelihood that (E) is NOT the correct answer—and we haven’t even read the rest of (E) as an answer choice.

At this point, we already found that (C) seemed OK. We simply glanced at (E) just in case. And it turns out, based on the fact that the usage is does not fall into one of the 2 options mentioned in red above—that most likely, (E) could not possibly be the correct answer.

**Since we have a stronger candidate (E) – we will save ourselves time by NOT reading the rest of answer choice (E) and just confidently choose (C).**

### Example #3: OG13 SC #52 – INCORRECT usage of “being”

52. To Josephine Baker, Paris was her home long before it was fashionable to be an expatriate and she remained in France during the Second World War as a performer and an intelligence agent for the Resistance.

(A) To Josephine Baker, Paris was her home long before it was fashionable to be an expatriate,  
**(D) Long before it was fashionable to be an expatriate, Josephine Baker made Paris her home,**

(E) Long before it was fashionable **being** an expatriate, Paris was home to Josephine Baker,  
Here the answer is (D). But (E) provides yet another example in which the answer choice uses “being”

As a smart test taker, we recognize “being” as a red flag word and apply our test:

- 1) Something is “being X” or
- 2) “Being X” is something”

No, it does not.

So we can eliminate (E) just like that – without wasting time reading the rest of the answer choice.

Do you see how we can quickly eliminate answer choices without even reading the entire answer choice and thinking through sentence structure and meaning?

This strategy can be immensely useful in many situations.

Other examples of OG questions using “being” in the question or answer choice include:

#3, 4, 30, 31, 37, 48, 49, 51, 52, 63, 67, 91, 99, 100, 108, 110, 117, 119, 122, 124, 135, 140

## Example #4: GMAT prep – INCORRECT usage of “being”

119. Despite there being no fundamental difference in shipbuilding traditions in Viking-Age Scandinavia from the ones in other parts of Northern Europe, archaeological evidence shows that Viking ships were lighter, slimmer, faster, and thus probably more seaworthy than the heavier vessels used by the English at that time.

A. **Despite there being** no fundamental difference in shipbuilding traditions in Viking-Age Scandinavia from the ones

**E. Although shipbuilding traditions in Viking-Age Scandinavia were not fundamentally different from those**

Within the first few seconds of reading this question, we spot the red flag word “being.”

Now, is this one of the rare situations in which this usage could actually result in a high probability that (A) is correct?

Well, we apply our test by seeing if “being” is used in **used in one of these 2 ways:**

- 1) **Something is “being X” or**
- 2) **“Being X” is something”**

No - it’s used as “despite their being” - so we can already have a strong inclination that (A) is no good. So instead of wasting time reading the rest of the sentence, we should start with (B) and then go down towards (E) since we know (A) is no good. Only if we find glaring issues with (B) through (E) do we even bother taking a second look at (A).

And, as it turns out, the correct answer here is (E) – which does not use “being” anywhere.

## Example #5: GMAT prep – INCORRECT usage of “being”

82. Appearing to be the only candidate whose views would be acceptable to its membership, the Youth Canorous finally endorsed Gorge for city council.

A) Appearing to be

B) Seeming to be

**C) Because he appeared to be**

D) Because he seemed

E) **Being**

First, we recognize that “Appearing” in the underlined portion is an –ING verb. We also spot the comma after “membership.” We know structurally that “appearing” must modify the subject of the main part of the sentence after that comma.

That subject is “Youth Canorous”---does it make sense that the “Youth Canorous” is the one “appearing to be the only candidate” ?

No! It doesn’t make sense because we see the phrase “Youth Canorous finally endorsed Gorge” – so whoever receives the endorsement must be candidate— not the other way around.

Hence we know (A) is no good.

As we glance at the other available answer choices, do we even bother looking at (E)? Most likely, it is not the correct answer. As always, we can apply our quick check:

**Is “being” used in one of these ways:**

**Something is “being X” or “Being X” is something”**

Here we have “Being the only candidate whose views would be acceptable to its membership, the Youth...”

We’re missing a verb at the end.

It should say “Being the only candidate....is (or some verb)....”

But instead, we have

“Being the only candidate, [subject]” – this is incorrect usage.

No – so very likely, (E) is no good as we suspected.

It turns out the answer here is (C) – so this is yet another example of a question in which “being” is wrong.

### Example #6: GMAT prep – INCORRECT usage of “being”

The investigations of many psychologists and anthropologists support the generalization of there being little that is a significant difference in underlying mental processes manifested by people from different culture.

A of there **being** little that is a significant difference

B of there **being** little that is significantly different

C of little that is significantly different

**D that there is little that is significantly different**

E that there is little of significant differences

Here the answer is (D). Notice both (A) and (B) start with “of there being.” Right off the bat, we can already have a strong inclination that (A) and (B) will not work out because the usage of “being” here does not fall into one of these two categories:

- 1) **Something is “being X” or**
- 2) **“Being X” is something”**

Most likely, we can eliminate (A) and (B) within a second. From there, we can pretty much start looking at (C) – (E).

## So... in what situations is “being” used in a correct answer?

Well, as noted earlier, GMAT Pill analyzed OG and GMATprep questions for all cases in which “being” is mentioned in the correct answer. We only found 1 case in OG13 and 2 cases in GMAT Prep. All 3 cases have a commonality:

They all use “being” in one of these two ways:

- 1) **Something is “being X” or**
- 2) **“Being X” is something”**

- 1) **GMAT Prep: “Simply being genetically engineered” – “simply being X...does not...”**
- 2) **GMAT Prep: “The survival ... is being threatened” – “Something is being X”**
- 3) **OG13 #100: “Being heavily committed...is likely... - “Being X...is likely..”**

Notice each of these 3 rare cases fall into one of those 2 usages of “being.”

Contrast these 3 examples with the 6 INCORRECT usages of “being” in the examples from further above:

- 1) GMAT Prep: “...of there being..”
- 2) GMAT Prep: “Being X, the Youth...”
- 3) GMAT Prep: “Despite there being...”
- 4) OG13 #52: “It was fashionable being X...”
- 5) OG13 #48: “Despite being called a sea...”
- 6) OG13 #37: “...while being discharged..”

Notice none of these 6 are used in the form “something is being X” or “Being X is something.”

But for the usages that ARE correct, let’s take a deeper look:

## Example #7: OG13 SC #100 – Correct Usage of “Being”

100. Heavy commitment by an executive to a course of action, especially if it has worked well in the past, makes it likely to miss signs of incipient trouble or misinterpret them when they do appear.

(D) Executives' being heavily committed to a course of action, especially if it has worked well in the past, makes them likely to miss signs of incipient trouble or misinterpreting them when they do appear.

(E) Being heavily committed to a course of action, especially one that has worked well in the past, is likely to make an executive miss signs of incipient trouble or misinterpret them when they do appear.

This is an example of an SC question in which the entire sentence is underlined. These long sentences tend to eat up the most time – so it's important to know which answer choices to pay extra attention to and which ones to eliminate.

Let's focus on (D) and (E) – the two answer choices that have “being” in them.

**Do we eliminate them or do we consider them?**

(D) “Executives’ being heavily committed...makes them likely to miss...”

(E) “Being heavily committed...is likely to make an executive miss..”

**Actually, both (D) and (E) are used in the form of: “Being X is something..”**

(D) “Executives’ being heavily committed... makes them..” - OK

(E) “Being heavily committed.. is likely to...” – OK

**So in this case, we do NOT eliminate them.**

Is there a better way to word this? Yes.

(D) would be better if it were:

“Executives’ heavy commitment to a course of action...makes them..”

And (E) would be better if it were:

“Heavy commitment to a course of action...will make an executive miss..”

**But since these alterations are not available answer choices, we cannot eliminate (D) or (E).**

It turns out (D) has an issue with the word “misinterpreting” as it should be “misinterpret” to match the infinitive “miss” that is on the other side of the keyword OR.

(E) has no such issue and is therefore the correct answer.

**So this is an example of correct usage of “being” and a rare example of an official GMAT question that has a correct answer using “being.”**

## Example #8: GMAT Prep – Correct Usage of “Being”

The survival of coral colonies, which are composed of innumerable tiny polyps living in a symbiotic relationship with brilliantly colored algae, are being threatened, experts say, not only by pollutants like agricultural runoff, oil sticks, and trash, but also by dropped anchors, probing divers, and global warming.

- A. are **being** threatened, experts say, not only by pollutants like
- B. are **being** threatened, experts say, by not only pollutants such as
- C. is not only **being** threatened, experts say, by pollutants such as
- D. is not only **being** threatened, experts say, by pollutants like
- E. is **being** threatened, experts say, not only by pollutants such as

Here’s a rare OG example that has a correct answer using “being” – but notice it is used correctly.

- 1) **Something is “being X” or**
- 2) **“Being X” is something”**

Each answer choice uses “being” in form #1.

They all say: “The survival...is being threatened” – OK.

In this case, all 5 answer choices use it correctly – and elimination involves recognizing other subject-verb agreement issues. But it’s still good to know, in case you see other answer choice variations – that this is an example case in which you should NOT be eliminating the answer choice because of the red flag “being.” It’s not that common, but this is one of those rare exception cases.

## Example #9: GMAT Prep – Correct Usage of “Being

71. Simply because they are genetically engineered does not make it any more likely for plants to become an invasive according to a decade-long study published in the journal Nature.

- A. because they are genetically engineered does not make it any more likely for plants to
- B. because it is genetically engineered does not make a plant any more likely to
- C. **being** genetically engineered does not make it any more likely that plants will
- D. **being** genetically engineered does not make a plant any more likely to
- E. **being** genetically engineered does not make a plant any more likely that it will become

Here’s our last example from GMATPrep that shows a rare example of a correct answer that uses “being”

Can we categorize the usage of “being” into one of these 2 forms?

- 1) **Something is “being X” or**
- 2) **“Being X” is something”**

Yes, it falls into #2.

“Simply being genetically engineered does not make” – OK.

Notice when we say “is something” – you don’t necessarily need to use the word “is” – we just need some verb. So “does not make” counts as OK in fitting this form.

So in this case, (C), (D), and (E) – are all fair game. You should NOT eliminate them. Instead, you should look at them more closely. In this case, it turns out one of them (D) is the correct answer.

What do all 3 examples of correct usage of “being” have in common?

- 1) GMAT Prep: “Simply being genetically engineered”
- 2) GMAT Prep: “The survival ... is being threatened”
- 3) OG13 #100: “Being heavily committed...is likely...”

Answer: They all use “being” in one of these 2 forms:

- 1) Something is “being X” or
- 2) “Being X” is something”

All the incorrect usages of “being” in OG and GMATPrep do NOT fall into these 2 categories.

That’s the difference!

**So that’s the magic formula:**

In order for “being” to be used in a correct manner on the GMAT – it needs to be used in those 2 forms above. Otherwise, it’s relatively safe to eliminate it.

Knowing the rare instances in which “being” could possibly be correct can help you more confidently eliminate all those other situations in which “being” is NOT used correctly – saving you valuable time and boosting your accuracy.

