

Not/But vs. Rather than

Not ... but → While comparing things that are 'linguistically equivalent'.

Pucci is not a dog but a cat
Not Todd but Taka will study
I not was sad but happy

I want a cat rather than a dog → here we are expressing a preference

I need X rather than Y ≠ I need not Y

Some idioms

Target at is correct ...
Target to is wrong ...

Rates for ...

Estimated to be ...

Due to

It should only be used if it can be substituted for 'caused by'

It does not the same as 'because of'

The game was postponed due to rain [X]
The game was postponed because of rain
The game's postponement was due to rain

Neither Nor

Neither his eloquent arguments nor the *mountains* of incriminating evidence *were* able to convince ...

The verb has to agree with the subject following nor, in this case '*mountains*', which is plural. This case is similar for either or sentences.

Neither [A or B], nor C
Not [A or B], nor C

So .. as to

Her debts are so extreme as to threaten the future of the company

'so as' is never correct on GMAT

He exercises everyday so as to build his stamina [X]
He exercises everyday in an effort to build his stamina

So [adjective] as to [verb]

'Compare to' vs. 'Compare with'

Compare to → Unlike things, stress resemblance

Compare with → Like things, show either similarity or difference but usually to stress the difference

He compared her to a summer day
He compared forged signatures with the original

Little bauble is not to be compared with this enormous jewel.

Whether vs. if

'Whether' will almost always beat 'if' on the GMAT.

Her client didn't tell her if he had sent his payment yet [X]

Her client didn't tell her whether he had sent his payment yet.

Each

Each is almost always singular, except, when it follows a plural subject; the verb and the subsequent pronoun remain in plural

Three *cats* each eat ...

Three *cats*, each of which eats ...

Not to use

1. Being, to be Both are passive
2. Unnecessary gerunds should be removed
3. Passive voice ... as far as possible
4. Preposition + Noun + Participle
5. 'Hopefully' is almost always wrong on GMAT

Preposition + Noun + Participle

With child-care facilities included ... [with=preposition; child-care=noun; included=participle]

Eating and social facilities included ... [and=preposition; social facilities=noun; included=preposition]

Consider ..

When consider means 'regard as', 'as' should not follow.

Some students consider the theories of Blaine a huge advantage in critical thinking.

Critics consider correction facilities to be an integral part of communal system. [X]

Critics consider correction facilities an integral part of communal system.

Many scholars regard the civilizations of Peru as the most impressive in South America

Object vs. Subject

If a noun is subject of a verb, the verb should end with 'ed'

If a noun is object of a verb, the verb should end with 'ing'

Local times determined
Determining local times

One of the + Noun

Remember this pattern

The noun in this case will always be plural

He is one of the persons who make money.

Parallelism

Infinitive parallelism: to salvage ... to process
Only way for farmers to salvage fruit is to process it

That parallelism: May agree that there is waste ...and that govt. is rubbish.

Can vs. Could

If you are assuming something, 'could' should be used.

Can: General ability [I can speak English], opportunity [I can help her now], request [Can I have a glass of water?], possibility [Anyone can become rich and famous].

Could: possibility [John could be the one who stole the money], condition [If I had more time, I could travel around the world], suggestion [You could spend your vacation here], polite request [Could I have something to drink?]

'Skill' countable/non-countable?

Depends on the context

Harry knows quite a few driving skills

How much skill do you have in driving a car?

Concerned for vs. Concerned with

Concerned for → worried or anxious

Concerned with → related to

He is concerned for investor relations

This is concerned with investor relations

Reduced vs. Reduction of

Reduced costs → reduction 'in' costs (cost of reduction)

Reduction of → used when reducing by a certain amount e.g. reduction of 20%

... do it

Every time you see a pronoun, especially 'it', you must check the antecedent

Never replace a sentence using 'it'

Thomas determined to find the site of ancient Troy and devoted his career to do it

My little brother said I took his cookies, but I didn't do it

'so' can replace a sentence, not 'it'

Comparison

The greatest change in my life was when I immigrated to the US. [X]

The greatest change in my life occurred when I immigrated to the US.

This pen is a bargain because it's only ten cents. [X]

Pick the original

If two or more answer choices are grammatically correct, but have different meanings, pick the original

Noun + Be-Verb + Noun/Adjective

The change was good for me

The change was good one for me

The change was an important step in my life

The change was when I came to US [X]

Preposition + Noun

After every preposition, we must have a noun, and only a noun; never can we have a verb after preposition.

After lunch, I felt sleepy [lunch is a noun]

After I worked twelve hours, I felt tired
[after is a subordinating conjunction and is followed by a sentence 'I worked twelve hours']

I worked until I felt tired
[until is a subordinating conjunction and is followed by a sentence]

The ...

Although about 99% of the more than 50million Turks are Muslims...

Although about 99% of more than 50million

If we use 'the' we are saying that there are only 50million Turks in the whole world; if we don't use 'the' we're saying that there are possibly more than 50million Turks in the world.

'Invest in' vs. 'Invest into'

All things being equal 'invest in' is slightly preferable to 'invest into'

Invest in → for more traditional investments such as stocks, bonds

Invest into → *could* be used for more metaphorical investments, such as time, energy

Like vs. As

Like → two nouns

As → two nouns doing two actions

'just as' can replace 'in the same way that'

My Siamese cat moved across the floor just like a lion stalking its prey

My Siamese cat moved across the floor in the way that a lion stalking its prey [X]

My Siamese cat moved across the floor just as a lion stalking its prey moves

Countable vs. Uncountable

Majority of the water is dirty [X]
[unidiomatic]

Quantifier + of + *Noun* + verb

The *Noun* determines whether is verb is singular or plural

Most of the people are
Most of the water is

A number of vs. The number of

A number of is always plural

The number of is always singular

A number of people have gone

The number of people has increased

Credit with/for/to

Credit with → give responsibility for.

Thomas Edison is credited with inventing the light bulb

Credit X to Y [verb] → give money or credit to

The bank credited \$1million to trebla's account

Credit for [noun] → money received for or in exchange for something

Customer received \$20 credit for the interruption in service

'Thinking' words

Thinking words → believe, belief, idea, theory, notion, concept etc

GMAT typically likes to follow these words with 'that'

Lucise's belief that the Earth is flat was easily accepted

Lucise's belief that the Earth being flat was easily accepted [X]

Theory of relativity [it is okay to use of with noun]

Having + past participle

Used to express actions that are finished and to show that one thing comes after another

Having eaten already, I turned down her offer

Having been sick and having felt tired, Alan did not want to work [X]

[all things are happening at the same time, so can't use having + past participle here]

Three C's of SC

- Concision
- Correctness
- Clarity

Concision: Redundancy

Past experience reveals that cancer patients rarely ever exhibit the exact same symptoms [wordy]

Past experience reveals that cancer patients rarely ever exhibit the same symptoms

The three prices sum to a total of \$3 [wordy]
The three prices total \$3

Clarity of meaning

All the children are covered with mud
The children are all covered with mud

Only the council votes on Thursdays
The council votes only on Thursdays
The council only votes on Thursdays

Stick to the original meaning

Clarity: Certain vs. Uncertain

The sudden drop in interest rates will create favorable opportunities [certain]

The sudden drop in interest rates may create favorable opportunities [uncertain]

The court ruled that the plaintiff must pay full damages [certain]

The court ruled that the plaintiff should pay full damages [uncertain]

Stick to the original meaning

Clarity: Hypothetical vs. Actual

The colors of the sky were as if painted by a thousand angels

The colors of the sky were painted by a thousand angels

Words such as may, might, should, ought, would, can and could must be checked to see whether the original sentence requires doubt or certainty.

Clarity: Ambiguous Meanings

Look for an answer choice that provides a definite, fixed meaning

The light fabric makes the shirt easy to fold

The shirt is easy to fold and is very light

'Such as' vs. 'Like'

Such as → to indicate examples

Like → to indicate similarity

Animals such as lions and zebras live on the Serengeti plain

Animals like lions and zebras live on the Serengeti plain

Subj-Verb Agreement: 'Of' is a Middleman

'of' constructions are just clever middlemen to disguise the true subject

The ~~discovery of new lands~~ was vital

The ~~building of tall skyscrapers~~ has increased

The ~~actions of my friend~~ are not very wise

'And' vs. Additive

And → plural

Additive* → singular

*along with, in addition to, as well as, accompanied by, together with, including

Joe and his friends are going to the beach

Joe, along with his friends, is going to the beach

Subject phrase: Singular

Sometimes the subject is an entire phrase or clause. These subjects are always singular.

Having good friends is a wonderful thing

Whatever they want to do is fine with me

Subj-Verb Agreement: Flip It!

There is a young man and an older woman at the bus stop [Incorrect]

A young man and an older woman are at the bus stop [Flip it]

There are a young man and an older woman at the bus stop [Correct]

Near the office building sit a lonely house, inhabited by squatters [Incorrect]

A lonely house, inhabited by squatters, sits near the office [Flip it]

near the office buildings sits a lonely house, inhabited by squatters [Correct]

Infinitives

To + verb, is called the infinitive form

Avoid sentences that insert a word between *to* and *the verb*

I need you to quickly run out to the store [X]

I need you to run quickly out to the store

Tenses: Sequence of events

Tenses should always represent sequence of events (verbs)

Keep it simple!

Unless the actions do not take place at the same time, verb tenses in a sentence should be kept same

Verb tenses

Past → action ended in past

Present → action continues

Future → will happen in future

Past perfect → more than one action occurred at different times in the past

Present perfect → action started in past but continues into the present

Past participles

Hang [object] | Hung | Hung

Hang [person] | Hanged | Hanged

Lay [to put] | Laid | Laid

Lie [to recline] | Lay | Lain

Lie [untruth] | Lied | Lied

If ... then

If she wins, she will give to charity

If she won, she would give to charity

If she had won, she would have given to charity

Would/Could never appear in the if clause

Subjunctive Mood

If I was rich, I would donate money
If I were rich, I would donate money

Uncertainty: hopes, proposals, desires and requests.
'that' + infinitive form [without 'to']

It is urgent that she sign the permission slip
I respectfully ask that he be allowed
My advice is that he simply love her

It is imperative that he found a job quickly [X]
It is imperative that he find a job quickly

Active vs. Passive Voice

Passive usually makes a sentence wordy and awkward.

The pizza was eaten by the hungry students
The hungry students ate the pizza [active]

After they advertised, sales were increased by 45%
[passive]

After they advertised, sales increased by 45%

Pronoun reference

- Shouldn't be ambiguous
- Pronoun should agree with the antecedent in number

Possessive pronouns

Joe's room is so messy that his mother calls him a pig
[X]

Possessive pronouns → possessive nouns Subject/Verb
pronouns → Subject/Verb nouns

Joe's room is so messy that his mother calls Joe a pig

Adjective and Adverbs

Adjectives → modifies a noun or pronoun
Adverb → modifies a verb, but it can also describe
adverb, adjective, a preposition or a phrase

Katy is a real interesting person [X]
Katy is a really interesting person

Really is an adverb, while real is an adjective

Dangling modifier

Using the latest technology, the mechanical problem
was identified quickly [X]

Using the latest technology, the mechanic identified the
problem quickly

Modifying phrases

A modifying phrase should not be separated from the noun that it modifies

Kendra is happy, *like Katy*, to be on leave [X]
Kendra, *like Katy*, is happy to be on leave
Like Katy, Kendra is happy to be on leave

Jim biked along a dirt road to get to his house, *which was long and windy* [X]

In order to get to his house Jim biked along a dirt road, *which was long and windy*

Modifiers: Possessive Poison

Unskilled in math, Bill's score was poor [X]
Unskilled in math, Bill did not score well

Adverbial Modifiers

The group arrived in NYC and decided to stay in a fancy hotel a week before Christmas [X]

The group arrived in NYC a week before Christmas and decided to stay in a fancy hotel

When the word being modified is not a noun, the modifying phrase is called adverbial phrase

The running back ran towards the end zone, faster and harder than he had ever run before

Modifiers with Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns (RP) → which, that, where, who, whose, whom

We drove a car *having* engine trouble [X]
We drove a car that had engine trouble

Italians, never *liking* to lose, practice daily [X]
Italians, who never like to lose, practice daily

It is better to use RP and a simple tense than using gerunds

Which vs. That

Which → preceded by comma; can replace a noun, not a sentence; should apply to 'things'; extra information
That → no commas; imp information

Please get me the book, which is mine
Please get me the book that is mine

Essential vs. Non-essential

This is my Uncle John, who lives in NYC [NE]
This is my Uncle John that lives in NYC [E]

NE information → preceded by a comma

John found the *murder weapon*, which made his job easier [X]
John *found the murder weapon*, making his job easier

'finding weapon' made job easier not 'weapon'

Parallel structures

Adverbial Phrase: I've noticed that you howl *in anger* after you cower *in fear*

Adverbs: I've noticed that you howl *angrily* after you cower *fearfully*

Participial Phrases: The rain continued to fall, *providing water* for the thirsty but *flooding the streets* as well

Verb infinitives: I decided *to swim* across the river rather than *sail* around the world

Parallelism with pronouns

I prefer to hire employees who work hard to those that don't [X]

I prefer to hire employees who work hard to those who don't

Ralph likes variety of people, including those who are popular and who are not [X]

Ralph likes variety of people, including those who are popular and those who are not

Use the same pronoun in parallel items

Superficial vs. Actual Parallelism

Ken traveled around the world, *visiting* historic sites, *eating* native foods, and *learning* about new cultures

Traveled is the main verb and the other verbs provide additional information

Ken traveled around the world, *visited* historic sites, *ate* native foods, and *learned* about new cultures [distorts meaning]

Parallelism: Verbs of 'being'

The flower bouquet was the husband's *giving of love* to his wife

The flower bouquet was the husband's *loving gift* to his wife

Verbs of being → to be, is, am, are, was, were, been, being

The attitude of that politician always seem to be attacking *the poor* [X]

Because of his intolerant attitude, *that politician* always seems to be attacking *the poor*

Comparative and Superlative forms

She is shorter than her sister [C]

She is the shortest of her five siblings [S]

You are more interesting than she [C]

You are the most interesting person here [S]

X has less than Y

X has the least

Parallel comparisons

I enjoy flying by plane more than I like to drive in a car [X]

I enjoy flying by plane more than driving by car

Frank, like his brother, has a broad build

Frank's build, like that of his brother, is broad

Quantity words

Countable → many, few, number of

Non-countable → much, little, less, amount of

Connecting words

Watch out for sentences that have no logical connectors between independent clauses

I need to relax, I have so many things to do [X]

I need to relax, but I have so many things to do

She is not interested in playing games, and she likes watching them on TV [X]

She is not interested in playing games, but she likes watching them on TV

Almost always wrong

Do it: He said that I took his cookies, but I didn't *do it*

Whether or not: He couldn't decide *whether or not* to apply to Harvard

The numbers of: The politicians were amazed at *the numbers* of anti-war protestors

Connecting punctuation

Andrew and Lisa are inseparable; doing everything together [X]

Andrew and Lisa are inseparable; they do everything together

I love listening to: classical, rock, and pop music [X]

I love many kinds of music [namely]: classical, rock, and pop

Gerunds

Gerunds when not modifying, are almost always wrong