

In what Veritas Prep staffers are calling the greatest internet meme since [Cigar Guy](#), US gymnast McKayla Maroney's silver-medal-podium "not impressed" face is sweeping across cyberspace and now the television talk show circuit. With her amazing athletic abilities supplemented by an uncanny ability to laugh at herself, McKayla – who trains around the corner from a Veritas Prep classroom – has emerged as one of the breakout stars of the 2012 Olympics. Not only that – by virtue of being hard to impress, McKayla may just unlock the secret to Data Sufficiency for you.

How?

McKayla's "not impressed" meme works in two ways:

- 1) You shouldn't be immediately impressed by Data Sufficiency statements without digging a little deeper to make sure that they're really as excellent/sufficient as they seem.
- 2) The GMAT is "not impressed", at least not as much as you think it is, by your ability to perform high-school-level math. Hard questions typically require some true thought and logical progression, and not just the rote application of a geometry rule or algebraic process.

Let's take a look at a couple examples to see how being #notimpressed can vault your GMAT score to the top of the podium.

In isosceles triangle LMN, what is the measure of angle N?

(1) Side LN measures 4 inches

(2) Side MN measures $4\sqrt{2}$ inches

If you're salivating right now at the opportunity to employ your knowledge of isosceles right triangles – the sides will have ratio $x, x, x\sqrt{2}$ – that's understandable. But remember – you shouldn't be impressed by these statements and the GMAT isn't overwhelmingly impressed by your ability to memorize that side ratio. And therein lies the trap and the reward here. You don't know that this is a right triangle! Side LM could match either the 4 side (in which case this is a 45-45-90 triangle) OR it could match the $4\sqrt{2}$ side, in which case this is not a right triangle. And there's no evidence either way. The trap here is that the GMAT knows you're in a hurry to use the knowledge that you've gained by studying content, but this is a reasoning test. They'll reward you for being #notimpressed and for playing devil's advocate. Are these statements really sufficient, or is the test baiting you into making an assumption? This is the thought process you need to have – don't be easily impressed by the statements or by your own ability to remember geometry rules. The test, particularly at that "olympic" level above 650, is played on a higher level.

So with that in mind, let's look at one more example:

The product of integers a, b, c, and d is 120. What is the value of integer d?

(1) a, b, c, and d are consecutive integers

(2) $a > b > c > d$

Again, you have an opportunity here to be impressed with your math ability. If you recognize 120 as $5!$ (or "5 factorial"), you can quickly see four consecutive integers that will multiply to 120: 2, 3, 4, and 5. So with both statements 1 and 2 you may see that the integers are 2, 3, 4, and 5, and that d is the smallest so it will be 2. Right?

McKayla is not impressed. And neither is McCombs (the University of Texas' business school) or any other top 15 business school. Above the 600 level everyone can factor small numbers, so you shouldn't be immediately impressed by having done just that. Think a little more about whether there's a catch. And here there is: -2, -3, -4, and -5 are also four consecutive integers that multiply to 120, and that also means that d could be -5. The answer to this question is E, and those who are #notimpressed by their own math ability or by the *possibility* that the statements are sufficient will recognize that.

In a less meme-of-the-moment way, we call this strategy "Play Devil's Advocate". The most common trap on data sufficiency questions is one in which you think you have enough information, but you actually don't. And you often don't have as much information as you think you do because you're making an assumption – that a triangle is right (because all the familiar symptoms are there); that a number is positive or an integer (because how often do you think of negative numbers or fractions?); that the variable you're dividing out of an equation isn't 0; etc. If you want to impress admissions committees with your GMAT score, you can't be immediately impressed by Data Sufficiency statements – you need to dig deeper. The same will be true in business – proposals will always be designed to impress you ("this is why you need our SEO services to maximize your sales"), but you need to summon your inner McKayla and scowl in the face of almost-greatness.

The best way to impress business school admissions committees with your GMAT score? On Data Sufficiency questions, make sure you're #notimpressed.

