

As you study for the GMAT, it is important that you recognize that the GMAT is not a test of memory or knowledge, but rather of higher-order thinking, problem solving, and true understanding. If you've begun studying at the memorization/knowledge level, you may already be appalled at the title of this post ("Being! It's wrong...it's wrong!"). But that title – which employs correct usage of "being" – should indicate a better way of studying for a reasoning-based test. In this post, we'll explain how.

First things first: Dr. Lawrence Rudner is considered by most to be the guru of the GMAT. He oversees the administration of the GMAT for the Graduate Management Admissions Council, shaping the scoring algorithm and the direction of question creation and implementation. So as you aspire to "Think Like the Testmaker" to fully understand the GMAT and how to succeed on it, in a way you're hoping to think as much like Dr. Rudner as possible. Hopefully you learned in high school and college that the topics most favored by your professor were the most likely to appear on the exam; similarly, on the GMAT, if you can understand how questions are written and what they are trying to assess, you can become a much more effective studier and examinee.

So first an aside regarding the word "being". While many GMAT students have committed to memory the not-altogether-true rule that "Being = Wrong", "being" can be used properly. As a present-tense verb, it is used properly to indicate a temporary state. "My boss is being a jerk"; "The restaurant is being reviewed by the health inspector" – these are proper usages. So your goal as you study the test might be "being Larry Rudner" (or "being more like Larry Rudner") – temporarily, you want to get inside the mind of those who create the GMAT so that you can understand their motivations and techniques. One of those is to reward understanding over memorization, and to force people to *think*. Which is why "being" will be used correctly on some Sentence Correction questions – on such questions, those who take the time to consider the meaning behind that usage will be rewarded, and those who apply a knee-jerk technique that doesn't always apply will be punished.

That at least covers the word "being" (which is indeed used incorrectly in many cases, too – it's just not *always* wrong as some may teach or learn). But to truly train yourself to think like the testmaker, consider what their job really is:

- 1) They need to reward the best problem solvers and critical thinkers, and in doing so "punish" those who aren't able or willing to do so.
- 2) They need to do so working within the construct of the major question types (e.g. "Data Sufficiency") and content areas (like Algebra)
- 3) Ultimately they need to create questions that the absolute best candidates get right and the almost-but-not-quite-elite candidates get wrong. In other words, they have to create compelling, tempting wrong answers.

So as you study, you should pay attention to the wrong answers.

- Why were you tempted by them?
- What fatal flaws made them, indeed, incorrect?
- How did the test hide the correct answer while tempting you with the wrong one?

Perhaps your best opportunity to do this is by creating your own Data Sufficiency questions with the goal of trapping a fellow GMAT student. In doing so, you'll force yourself to learn the techniques that the authors of these questions will use to trap you. Say, for example, you wanted to trap someone with a question about ratios. You'd need to think to yourself:

- What is a common rule or technique that people can usually get correct in a ratio problem within a minute or less?
- What is an exception or special case in which, if you're not aware of it, that rule or technique doesn't hold?
- How can I use numbers or a situation that makes it likely that people won't recognize that I'm using the exception case?

And in doing so, you might come up with:

A computer store sells only desktops and laptops. At the beginning of a particular day, the ratio of desktops to laptops

was 11 to 7. If the store only received one shipment of new computers during the day, and did not sell any computers that day, what was the ratio of desktops to laptops at the end of the day?

(1) The store received a total of 84 laptops in the shipment

(2) The store received a total of 132 desktops in the shipment

How is this a tricky question? It looks like E all the way – without any indication of the total number of computers, you typically cannot determine how individual numbers added or subtracted will change the ratio. UNLESS! The addition is in the same ratio as the original. And here it is: $132 = 11 \times 12$ and $84 = 7 \times 12$. So we're adding 11 desktops for every 7 laptops. The ratio will not change – both statements together guarantee that. So the answer is C, even though many who consider themselves to be experts on "GMAT ratios" would say E. And what makes this one really tough? It's that 84 and 132 aren't "obvious" multiples of 7 and 11.

They go just beyond the standard multiplication table. If the statements provided, say, 33 and 21, you would likely see that $33 = 3 \times 11$ and $21 = 3 \times 7$, so you'd more quickly know to look for the ratio to stay unchanged. To make the question harder, just make the numbers a little less accessible.

So to summarize: In order to become a better GMAT test-taker, try to think like the test-maker. Write a few DS questions and see which techniques trap your friends and classmates. In doing so, you'll better understand how the test is trying to trap you.