

Admit it: at some point over the last few months you've debated over the following Lil Wayne lyric:

*I've got my gun in my boot purse, and I don't bust back because I shoot first*

What is a boot purse? Or does he, as the theory now goes, actually say "boo purse", referring to his girlfriend's handbag? The discussion rages, and in doing so it may well distract you from the fact that Weezy is using his track (featuring Drake) *Right Above It* as a blueprint for beating the GMAT. In fact, he might as well have titled it *700: Score Right Above It*. As you break down the lyrics, you'll find that Wayne drops quite a few GMAT hints, starting with a line from the chorus:

*If you ain't running with it, run from it...*

Here, Weezy is talking about Young Money, the latest group of hip-hop artists to threaten to rise to Death Row Records levels (editor's note: apologies to the G-Unit). But he may as well be talking about the GMAT. One of the easiest mistakes a novice test-taker can make is to "not run with it", instead trying to beat the test with tricks, shortcuts, and memorization. But if you work with the test, and learn to think like those who write it, it becomes quite a bit easier. Consider a Data Sufficiency question like:

If  $a$  and  $b$  are nonzero integers, is  $a^b$  an integer?

(1)  $b^a$  is negative

(2)  $a^b$  is negative

For those who simply "studied algebra", this question is tough...there aren't any equations or even inequalities given, so one cannot solve this problem just by "doing math", as many want to do. A question like this requires you to "run with" the test, learning the way that the GMAT likes to test Data Sufficiency and knowing its tendencies. Using integers,  $a^b$  should almost always be an integer, right? The only exception would be if  $b$  were negative, then creating a  $1/a^{-b}$  setup in which  $a^b$  is a fraction. So given the parameters of this question, we need to determine whether  $b$  could be negative. Statement 1 provides exactly that. Regardless of  $a$ , the only way for  $b^a$  to be negative is for  $b$  to be negative (and for  $a$  to be odd). So if  $b$  is negative, then that makes  $a^b$  a fraction, right?

Here's where "running with the test" comes into play. The GMAT loves to use Data Sufficiency to see whether you'll check for special circumstances in numbers. Certain numbers have incredibly unique properties but (as Wayne will warn you about below) they tend to be easy to overlook. Here, we know that with a negative value of  $b$  our  $a^b$  number will be equal to  $1/(a^{-b})$ . But there's a chance that we would still have an integer, if  $a$  is equal to 1 or -1. For any other value of  $a$ , we'll have a denominator larger than the numerator, but 1 and -1 have unique properties when it comes to division/multiplication. They don't change the absolute value of the number that they divide or multiply! Knowing that the GMAT likes to test "special circumstance" numbers like 0, 1, and -1, you should immediately be asking yourself whether you can find such a number. Because statement 1 doesn't rule out that possibility, it is not sufficient.

Statement 2, similarly, is not sufficient. We know that we can find an integer value for  $a^b$  if  $a$  is 1 or -1, and statement 2 doesn't rule that out, either. Even together, we know that  $a$  is negative, but it can still be -1 in which case we'd get an integer; or it could be -3 or -5 in which case we'd get a noninteger. Because we can't answer the question, the correct answer is E.

Most importantly, heed Lil Wayne's advice – run with the test...learn to think about it like the testmakers do, looking for special circumstance numbers, understanding how certain question types require certain thought processes, etc. And if you ain't running with it, run from it – the GMAT isn't for the faint of heart!

As mentioned above, Weezy also includes the lyric:

*You can't see me, but never overlook me*

Clearly, this is a thinly veiled reference to those special circumstance numbers that you should never overlook! We just talked about 1 and -1, but the biggest culprit is the number 0. 0 has incredibly unique properties:

$$0x = 0$$

$$0/x = 0$$

$$x/0 = \text{undefined}$$

$$x^0 = 1$$

0 is even, but neither positive nor negative

It's an amazingly unique number (much like rapper [Ol Dirty Bastard](#), you could say there's no father to it's style...), but it also literally means "nothing". In a way, 0 doesn't really exist – it's the absence of value, and its inclusion in mathematical systems was a subject of debate for the early Greeks, Romans, and Babylonians. 0 can easily say "you can't see me", because it's not a counting number...it can't really be seen. But it's also right to warn you to "never

overlook me". Because of its unique properties and easy-to-overlook nature, 0 is the key to many a GMAT math problem. As we've noted in this space for [years](#), to succeed on GMAT math you should be keenly aware of the potential for 0 to impact a question. You can't see it, but never overlook it.

Wayne follows up that warning-about-zero with another GMAT-relevant lyric (this one borrowed from Tupac):

*And I ain't a killer but don't push me*

Weezy knows as well as anyone – when we're at our best in a vacuum, we're as clear-minded, smart, and professional as possible, but when we're pushed by pressure and stress we're vulnerable to mistakes. You may not be a careless person, but the time pressure and test-day stress of the GMAT can easily push you to make careless mistakes. As we've campaigned for in this space [many times](#), you should take note of the "silly" and "careless" mistakes that you make in practice, and never write them off as "but I knew that". Test day is often the most likely time that you'll make these mistakes again; when you're at your best, you may not be a (GMAT score) killer, but don't let yourself be pushed. Know the mistakes that you may make, and keep a quick-reference checklist on your GMAT noteboard so that you can double-check for the [usual suspects](#).

Perhaps Wayne's greatest lyric of the entire album follows his biggest-picture GMAT strategy tip (and, yes, it also violates Sentence Correction rules by ending with a preposition...):

*Do it big and let the small fall under that (Damn, where you stumble at? From where they make gumbo at?)*

The easiest mistake for a GMAT test-taker to make is to lose oneself in details: when studying (memorizing shortcuts, formulas, and tricks instead of focusing on concepts and strategies); when reading (focusing on details instead of the author's organization); when approaching [Sentence Correction](#) (worrying about unique idioms and missing big-picture errors); and throughout the study and test-day process. But Weezy is spot-on with this line – do it big, and the small will fall into place. The GMAT is a reasoning test, not a knowledge test. If your study time is spent on big-picture strategies and concepts, you'll avoid the need to stress over small details. Learning to think like the testmaker and to recognize the bigger concepts is "running with it"; if you find yourself bogged down and mired in details, you should really "run from it" until you can change your thinking. Business schools want leaders and big-picture strategic thinkers. So do it big, and let the small fall under that. Then know where you'll stumble at? 700 on the GMAT-CAT.

(Next in the Lil Wayne teaches future MBAs series: "Young Money" – why investing in your retirement funds in your 20s is much more impactful than doing so in your 40s. )