

Few two-syllable proper nouns connote brilliance quite like Newton: Sir Isaac, obviously; the Newton Hills along the Boston Marathon course that lead to Boston College; the Newton unit of force; even Las Vegas lounge singer Wayne Newton is supposedly quite intelligent.

Perhaps, however, no Newton has displayed the kind of GMAT brilliance that Nabisco brought us with the introduction and expansion of the world's most beloved Newton:

The [Fig Newton](#).

The beloved Fig Newton has been a staple of the snack-and-light-dessert market for nearly a century (and is based on an ancient recipe that has been delicious for centuries). It has inspired a great many spinoffs, including the not-quite-as-good play-on-words competitor from Newman's Own, the Fig Newman.

Fig Newtons have grown into one of the most powerful brand names in the snack food industry, and as such are something for any aspiring brand manager to consider. How, specifically, can Fig Newtons help you on the GMAT?

Data Sufficiency questions rely on your ability to consider all of the potential options. Consider the question:

Is $x > y/z$?

1) $xz > y$

2) $x^2 > y/z$

Statement 1 looks awfully tempting, as one could simply divide by z on both sides to arrive at exactly $x > y/z$. However, this is not necessarily the case — if z were negative, then dividing by z would require the $>$ inequality sign to be flipped to $<$. Accordingly, the statement can give either answer: Yes or No.

Plugging in quick numbers can demonstrate this point even more clearly. If $x = 3$, $y = 2$, and $z = 1$, then statement 1 yields:

Is $x > y/z$?

$3 > 2/1 \rightarrow$ YES

But if x and z were negative, statement 1 is still satisfied ($-3 * -1 = 3$, which is greater than 2), and that would yield:
 $-3 < 2$ NO

We need to consider the possibility of negative numbers (and nonintegers, and 0...numbers with unique properties) whenever looking at Data Sufficiency questions. Which is what the brand managers at Fig Newton did to expand that brand significantly. Is there anything particularly spectacular about the Fig? Or was it the packaging, the cookie type, the size and texture, etc. that drove such demand? Nabisco rolled out Apple Newtons (a natural with the Newton tie-in), Strawberry Newtons, Raspberry Newtons, and did so to substantial success. The Newton family considered all of the options and didn't allow itself to be pigeonholed into one type of Newton, the same way that you, on Data Sufficiency questions, need to consider all allowable numbers and not allow yourself to focus specifically on one type.

Statement 2, similarly, does not guarantee a positive or negative value for x , and continues to allow itself to support both answers. The answer to this question is thus E — even given both statements, we cannot eliminate the possibility of negative values for x , y , and z , and therefore need to recognize that both answers to the main question are possible.

Learn from the experts at Fig Newton — when you consider the entire array of possibilities, you enable yourself to be capable of higher success...be it on Data Sufficiency questions, in the snack food markets, or in physics.