

My GMAT students tend to be busy people juggling a lot of responsibilities and activities, and so I am always looking for ways to help them be hyperefficient... especially on GMAT problems! So with efficiency on my mind, I'd love to be able to figure out a way to help my students shortcut their way through Sentence Correction. For example, if we read a Sentence Correction passage and the underlined portion of it sounds reasonable enough, can't we avoid reading the four other possible answer choices, select "A" (the original answer choice), bank a couple of minutes to save for the next tricky Critical Reasoning problem, and move on with our lives?

The answer, alas, is, no. No way. Don't Even Try It. Sentence Correction at its heart is about process of elimination. While there's nothing wrong with keeping a favorite answer choice in mind while reviewing the others, **all** of the answer choices do need to be examined.

However, that doesn't mean we throw away our goal of efficiency. How can we ensure that we are systematically reviewing the Sentence Correction answer choices in a time-efficient and effective manner? Simple — by focusing on the Decision Points that exist in each answer choice.

To the uninitiated GMAT test-taker, the five answer choices to any given sentence correction question often look like a series of confusing, complicated text that requires a slow, painful slog in order to ascertain the right answer. The truth, however, is that the 5 answer choices are likely to have a lot of the same text repeated in them, albeit with important variations. An astute test taker can focus on those variations to help process the various answer choices. I like to call these variations "Decision Points" — namely, you as the GMAT test-taker need to **decide** which of one, two or three options of a particular grammatical form is correct.

Let's look at an example...

Animals whose natural habitats are endangered by industrial development either migrate to new environments, which leads to potential ecological imbalances, and try to survive in the dwindling areas that remain, often leading to extinction.

- (A) which leads to potential ecological imbalances, and try
- (B) leading to potential ecological imbalances, or trying
- (C) with the lead of potential ecological imbalances, or trying
- (D) leading to potential ecological imbalances, or try
- (E) with a leading to potential ecological imbalances, and try

The "Try/Trying" Decision Point. There's no particular reason to start at the beginning of the answer choices, and for this particular example it may help to focus on the last words of the answer choices. We have the Decision Point between "try" (Answer Choices A, D, or E) and "trying" (Answer Choices B or C). Making a decision on which form is correct would automatically cut out 2-3 of the answer choices.

Examining the portion of the sentence before the underlined part, I see the verb "migrate" occurring right after "either," which means that "try" would be parallel in structure to "migrate." Answer Choices B and C are out.

The "and/or" Decision Point. Next, I'll move one word back in the Answer Choices, and the Decision Point is between "and" (Answer Choices A and E) and "or" (Answer Choice D). Remembering that there is an "either" in the non-underlined portion of the sentence, I want to use an "or" so that it is idiomatically correct. This decision has now eliminated Answer Choices A and E, and I'm left with Answer Choice D.

Now that I'm left with a single Answer Choice, time allowing, I'll mentally insert it into the original passage to ensure I haven't missed any errors and that the flow sounds natural. Also, time allowing, I may do a mental scan of the other answer choices to see if any of the variations indicate another error I may have missed. But otherwise, through the use of Decision Points, I have quickly and methodically narrowed down to the correct Answer Choice for a Sentence Correction question. Another efficiency gain for my students means an extra 30 seconds in their time bank!