

This weekend, there is a high likelihood that you will unknowingly engage in one of the GMAT author's greatest devices of trickery. Via Christmas shopping (9 days left... thank Heaven for Amazon Prime shipping) you may try to misdirect your gift recipient by bringing home a bag from a different store (He went to Lowe's? I thought he went to Jared.) or wrapping a tiny gift in a larger box. Or you may wait on the shopping and watch the Tim Tebow vs. New England game, and in doing so watch Tebow's option-style offense employ all kinds of misdirection tactics to open up running lanes.

However you view misdirection this weekend, bring some of that back to your GMAT studies and notice misdirection wherever it's employed. Consider, for example, this question:

Babies develop audial recognition abilities months before being born, lending credence to the notion that prenatal exposure to classical music can aid in intellectual development and apparently assisting newborns, who cannot yet visually recognize shapes and colors, in distinguishing their own mothers from those of others.

- (A) apparently assisting newborns, who cannot yet visually recognize shapes and colors, in distinguishing their own mothers from those of others
- (B) apparently assisting newborns that cannot yet visually recognize shapes and colors in distinguishing their own mothers
- (C) assisting apparent newborns, who cannot yet visually recognize shapes and colors, in distinguishing their own mothers from those of others
- (D) apparently assisting newborns, who could not yet visually recognize shapes and colors, in distinguishing their own mothers
- (E) apparently assisting newborns, who cannot yet visually recognize shapes and colors, in distinguishing their own mothers from others.

If you've studied the GMAT much, you see the construct "distinguish X from Y" and recognize that it should be in parallel form. Knowing that the initial construct is "their own mothers", you likely want to see "those of..." on the back end so that you have a possessive paralleled with a possessive. But does that really make sense? The babies aren't distinguishing "mothers from other mothers", they're distinguishing their own mother from any other people. The possessive is unnecessary and creates an illogical, unintended meaning. But the GMAT nonetheless gives you the "those of" option.

Why? It's classic misdirection — there's a mold for parallel structure questions, and you can do quite well to a certain point of difficulty by simply employing the mold. Possessive on the first → "that of" or "those of" on the second. But that's more recognition/memory than "thinking", and so the GMAT authors will find pieces of subject matter in which the mold is broken — in which the logical meaning goes counter to the quick recognize-and-employ tactics that you can often do through rote recitation.

Look for this misdirection on the GMAT — the harder the question, the more likely the test is to try to sell you the wrong answer by making it look like what you normally expect to see. Always consider the logic behind your answer (this is true on RC and CR questions, too) — what *looks like* a correct answer may not logically work. The GMAT misdirection tactic is to make the illogical choice look like exactly what you want, baiting you to answer quickly and incorrectly. Like Tim Tebow or a master Christmas shopper, you can become adept with misdirection — think about that this weekend and carry it on to your studies.

(for the record, the correct answer is E)