

Quick Ref Guide on GMAT Data Sufficiency Questions by CrackVerbal

A quick review of GMAT Data Sufficiency

The objective of a Data Sufficiency question is singular- can you answer the question uniquely using the data provided??

A lot of GMAT aspirants face this common problem of not knowing the rules of solving a DS question and end up falling for the trap answers. Because of this, they may have a low accuracy rate on DS questions during the initial stages. If you are in a similar situation, don't worry! This is natural since you may not have solved Data Sufficiency questions at all, before you started prepping for the GMAT. With persistent efforts and the right strategies, you will be able to come up the curve rapidly.

The first thing you need to be familiar with is the structure of a DS question and the answer options in a DS question.

A DS question has a question statement (which may or may not provide data) and a question stem followed by 2 statements, I and II, each of them providing some data. The data given with the question is called Question Data and can be used at any point during the solution.

The answer options on a GMAT DS question are standard and they will always look like the following:

- A. Statement (1) ALONE is sufficient, but statement (2) alone is not sufficient to answer the question asked.
- B. Statement (2) ALONE is sufficient, but statement (1) alone is not sufficient to answer the question asked.
- C. BOTH statements (1) and (2) TOGETHER are sufficient to answer the question asked, but NEITHER statement ALONE is sufficient to answer the question asked.
- D. EACH statement ALONE is sufficient to answer the question asked.
- E. Statements (1) and (2) TOGETHER are NOT sufficient to answer the question asked, and additional data specific to the problem are needed.

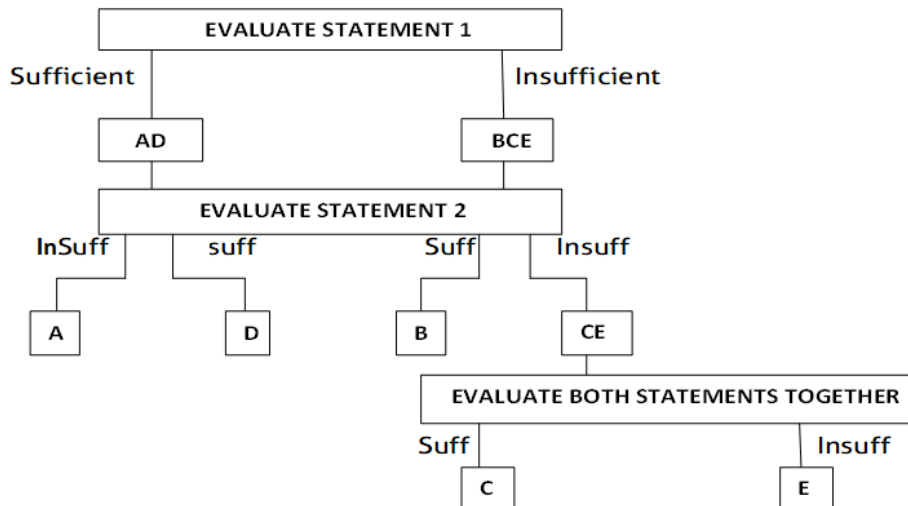


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The following image represents an algorithm which can be followed to eliminate the answer options when solving a DS question.

The flowchart below explains the step by step procedure to solve a DS problem. We always first evaluate Statement 1 alone. If Statement 1 alone is sufficient to answer the question then the possible answers are AD and if Statement 1 alone is insufficient then the possible answers are BCE. Thus this procedure is referred to as the AD/BCE technique.



Dos and Don'ts on GMAT DS Questions

Dos:

1. Remember the cardinal rule of DS - Evaluate the individual statements alone; only when you know that they are insufficient can you combine the data given in the statements.
2. Always look for a unique answer for the question asked.
3. Do not try to find the exact answer in all DS questions. Stop at the stage where you know for sure that a certain piece of information is sufficient.
4. Know the answer options like the back of your hand. This will help you focus on the question than having to worry about what the options are.
5. Read the question statement carefully and do not miss out on reading the entire statement.
6. Pay attention to vital cues like numbers, constraints and keywords. Remember that every word on a GMAT question may have an implication.
7. Quickly jot down important information/constraints/keywords as you read the question.



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8. Deconstruct the question - this means converting the question to a simpler version of itself which will tell you what data to look for in the statements.
9. In questions related to Numbers, make a list of numbers based on the constraints.
10. In questions on Algebra, develop variables, expressions and equations based on the Question data.
11. In questions on inequalities, analyse rather than plugging in values.
12. In questions on Geometry, draw the figure if it's not given. If the figure is given, redraw the figure in such a way that YOU understand it well.
13. Learn to eliminate options at different stages using the AD/BCE technique.
14. If you answer a question well within
15. the 2-minute mark, do a quality check by checking your answer with the question.

Don'ts:

1. Do not skip/overlook any information (very obvious, right?)
2. Do not make assumptions. For example, a number need not necessarily be a positive integer.
3. Do not attempt to solve the whole question mentally - this can be very taxing and can drain you out very quickly.
4. Do not try to prove a 'YES' as an answer.
5. Do not try to find the exact answer all the time.
6. Do not combine the statements until you have made sure that they are insufficient when considered individually.
7. Do not always use values to combine the statements.
8. Do not start analysing the statements before de-constructing the question stem.
9. Do not forget the importance of the number 0 in questions on inequalities.
10. Do not combine the statements if you see a pair of linear equations, without testing them individually.
11. Do not forget that a perfect square can have both negative and positive roots.
12. Do not trust the figure on a Geometry DS question.



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