

Modifiers

Basics

What are Modifiers?

- A **modifier** qualifies another word or a group of words in a sentence by describing some essential characteristic(s).
- If, for instance, we say, “*Pride and Prejudice is a celebrated novel*”, “celebrated” tells us what sort of a novel (in terms of acclaim) is *Pride and Prejudice*.
- Modifiers can occur in different grammatical forms such as adjectives and adverbs. There are simple, one-word modifiers and there are also complex modifiers that are composed of multiple words.
- On the GMAT, modifying phrases are often separated by commas from the noun being modified.

Placement of Modifiers

- The modifier should be placed as close as possible to what it modifies. The meaning itself of the sentence may vary if this rule is not followed.
 - *The dog can only be given this biscuit.*
 - *Only the dog can be given this biscuit.*
 - *The dog can be given only this biscuit.*
- Depending on what the modifier “only” is modifying (“the dog”/ “be given”/ “this biscuit”), the meaning varies.
 - *The dog can only be given this biscuit; nothing else can be given to the dog.*
 - *Only the dog can be given this biscuit; nobody else can be given this biscuit.*
 - *The dog can be given only this biscuit; no other biscuit can be given to the dog.*

Ways in which Modifiers are Generally Tested

- Generally, it is modifying phrases that are tested on the GMAT.
- The phrases usually begin after or before a comma. The purpose they serve is of providing additional information about the subject or object that appears in the main clause (and is not contained within the phrase).
- The modifying phrase should be as close as possible to the subject or object that it modifies.

Modifiers in Various Forms

○ Adjectives as Modifiers for Nouns

- *The gardener has planted beautiful flowers.*
 - The noun “flowers” is modified by the adjective “beautiful”.

○ Adverbs as Modifiers for Verbs

- *Jack must continue to progress steadily.*
 - The verb “progress” is modified by the adverb “steadily”.

○ Adverbs as Modifiers for Adjectives

- *The song is absolutely mesmerizing.*
 - The adjective “mesmerizing” is modified by the adverb “absolutely”.

○ Adverbs as Modifiers for Other Adverbs

- *It is very beautifully depicted.*
 - The adverb “beautifully” is modified by the adverb “very”.

Modifiers in Various Forms

- Adverbs as Modifiers for Clauses

- *Surely you will do well, but you need to put in the required effort.*
 - The clause “you will do well” is modified by the adverb “Surely”.

- Adverbs as Modifiers for Sentences

- *Thankfully, the formalities have been completed.*
 - The sentence “the formalities have been completed” is modified by the adverb “Thankfully”.

Where to Spot Modifiers?

- Many times, modifiers appear at the beginning of a sentence. Such an opening modifier is separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma.
- Identify the modifier:
 - *Declared the winner of the competition, Stephen stood there dumbfounded.*
 - The phrase “Declared the winner of the competition” is the modifier which modifies the noun “Stephen”. This modifier is separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma.

Modifiers as Adjectives and Adverbs

- Both adjectives and adverbs are one-word modifiers.
- An adjective only modifies a noun or a pronoun.
- An adverb modifies any grammatical element other than a noun or a pronoun i.e. verb, adjective, another adverb, preposition, phrase, or clause.
- Identify the adjective and the adverb in the following sentence:
 - *The great poet observes life acutely.*
 - Adjective: great (modifies noun “poet”)
 - Adverb: acutely (modifies verb “observes”)
- The use of an adjective where an adverb is required and that of an adverb where an adjective is required are incorrect.

Modifiers as Adjectives and Adverbs

- Adjectives, not adverbs, are used with linking verbs such as “feel”. These adjectives do not modify the verb but identify a quality associated with the noun (the subject).
- In each of the following sentences, identify the function performed by the word “better”:
 - *Pearl is now feeling better.*
 - *Pearl sings better now.*
- In the first sentence, “better” is functioning as an adjective, modifying the noun “Pearl” as “feeling” identifies a quality with Pearl. In the second sentence, “better” is functioning as an adverb, modifying the verb “sings”.

Adjectives v/s Adverbs – Meaning is Critical

- Understanding the intent of an expression is crucial. On the GMAT, you may be given a sentence containing [Adjective + Adjective + Noun] wherein both the adjectives modify the noun or a sentence containing [Adverb + Adjective + Noun] wherein the adverb modifies the adjective, which in turn modifies the noun. Both grammatical constructions are correct but they do not mean the same. The right one in terms of the intended meaning should be picked.

Adjectives v/s Adverbs – Meaning is Critical

- Some examples of adjectives alternating with corresponding adverbs on GMAT questions are 'corresponding', 'frequent', 'independent', 'rare', 'recent', 'seeming', 'separate', 'significant', 'supposed', and 'usual'.
- Choose the better option:
 - a) Miss Catherine is in her usual pensive mood.*
 - b) Miss Catherine is in her usually pensive mood.*
- While Miss Catherine, it seems, usually remains in a pensive mood, the intended meaning here is that she is in such a mood at the present moment. Therefore, sentence (a) is better as the noun “mood” is modified by the adjective “usual”(She is in her usual mood).

Noun Modifiers

- A noun modifier is a phrase or clause that modifies a noun or a pronoun.
- A noun modifier performs the function of an adjective.
 - *The exceptional skills of the dancer enthralled the audience.*
 - *Paul, happy at the prospect of success, continued to slog.*
- In the first sentence, “exceptional” modifies the noun “skills”, and in the second sentence, “happy at the prospect of success” modifies the noun “Paul”. Both the modifiers, in providing some description of the respective nouns, function as adjectives.
- There are a number of types of noun modifiers. The type is determined by the initial one or two words of the modifier.

Types of Noun Modifiers

- Adjective: The first word (or a group of words) is an adjective. Such noun modifiers are placed either before or after the noun.
 - *The renowned orator addressed the crowd.* (before the noun)
 - *The orator, renowned for his skill, addressed the crowd.* (after the noun)
- Preposition: The first word of the modifier is a preposition. Such modifiers are placed after the noun.
 - *The orator from the podium addressed the crowd.*

Types of Noun Modifiers

- Past Participle: The first word of the modifier is a past participle. Such modifiers are placed either before or after the noun.
 - *The thrilled orator addressed the crowd.*
(before noun)
 - *Thrilled at the party's victory, the orator addressed the crowd.*
(before noun)
 - *The orator, thrilled at the party's victory, addressed the crowd.*
(after noun)

Types of Noun Modifiers

- Present Participle: The first word of the modifier is a present participle. Such modifiers are placed either before or after the noun.
 - *The grieving orator addressed the crowd.*
(before noun)
 - *The orator grieving for his assassinated leader addressed the crowd.*
(after noun)
- Note that no commas are put to separate such modifier from the rest of the sentence.

Types of Noun Modifiers

- Relative Pronoun: The first word of the modifier is a relative pronoun. Such modifiers are placed after the noun.
 - *The orator, who is a member of the ruling party, addressed the crowd.*
 - *The party that won the election is rejoicing.*
 - *The liberal party, which the renowned orator is a member of, won the election.*
 - *The place where the orator grew up was on the outskirts of the capital city.*

Types of Noun Modifiers

- Another Noun: A noun that modifies another noun is called an appositive. Appositive nouns are placed either before or after the noun.
 - *A believer in liberalism, the orator exercises great influence over the youth.* (before noun)
 - *The orator, a man known for his belief in liberal ideology, addressed the crowd.* (after noun)
- In the second sentence, the appositive noun “man” is itself modified by a past participle modifier- “known for his belief in liberal ideology”.

Placement of Modifiers

- Many modifiers are separated from the modified noun by commas.
 - *The orator, thrilled at the party's victory, addressed the crowd.*
- Sentences with long opening modifiers may not be common in everyday speech, but they are grammatically correct and can certainly be used in writing.
 - *Thrilled at the party's victory, the orator addressed the crowd.*

Position of Noun Modifiers

- The noun modifier should be placed next (just before or just after) the noun.
- When the modifier is placed next to a noun which is not the one it modifies, the case is of a misplaced modifier.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *The siblings roamed the daisied fields in the afternoons, which were lush.*
 - In the given sentence, the modifying phrase, “which were lush”, is meant to describe the “daisied fields”, not the “afternoons”. The modifier should, therefore, be placed next to “daisied fields”.
 - *In the afternoons, the siblings roamed the daisied fields, which were lush.*

Dangling Modifiers

- When the noun to which the modifier is meant to refer is absent from the sentence, the case is of a dangling modifier. In such instances, the GMAT requires you to insert a suitable noun.

Example:

- *Disturbed by the unexpected attack, there was deathly silence.*
 - The sentence should contain a reasonable noun- specifying who was disturbed.
- *Disturbed by the unexpected attack, the people became deathly silent.*

Dangling Modifiers Involving Present Participle

- Often, a present participle (*-ing* form) at the beginning of a sentence is dangling. 'Technically' a verb modifier, it does need a reasonable noun. **A frequently tested concept on the GMAT.**
- *Deciding in favor of the falsely implicated, happiness was spread.*
 - The modifier “Deciding in favor of the falsely implicated” must refer to someone who actually decided. So, a suitable subject (noun) must be introduced.
- *Deciding in favor of the falsely implicated, the judge spread happiness.*

Dangling Modifiers Involving Present Participle

- **Important:** On the GMAT, when a sentence starts with an '-ing' word, it is most likely testing modifier. The noun that is doing the action of the '-ing' word should come immediately after the comma (or after the next comma, in case of extra information following the participle phrase).
- *Deciding in favor of the falsely implicated, the judge spread happiness.*
- *Deciding in favor of the falsely implicated, setting a precedence, the judge spread happiness.*
- In both the sentences, “Deciding in favor of the falsely implicated” refers to “the judge”. Both the sentences are correct.

More on Placement of Modifiers

- It is possible to place such a modifying phrase, beginning with a present participle, at the end of the sentence.
 - *For the attainment of self-sufficiency slogged the village's women, utilizing their skills at cooking to earn.*
- A verb modifier, unlike a noun modifier, is not necessarily to be placed next to the subject. But, of course, it must be ensured that the verb modifier and the subject make sense together.
 - *The poet wrote with great freshness of thought, taking inspiration from everyday objects.*
- More than one long modifiers that modify the same noun must be avoided. Two long modifiers in a row before or after a noun may lead to awkwardly constructed or incorrect sentences.
 - (Please refer an example on the next slide)

Misplaced Modifiers

- Incorrect placement of modifier, commonly referred to as the error of ‘misplaced modifier’, is a frequently tested concept on the GMAT.

Example:

- *Coming out of the concert, mobile phone was lost by Jack.*
- The modifying phrase “Coming out of the concert” is referring to “mobile phone”, leading to a meaning that the mobile phone was coming out of the concert.
 - To correct this error, we correct the error in placement.
- *Coming out of the concert, Jack lost his mobile phone.*

Misplaced Modifiers: Another Example

- *Stephen, assigned the politically-charged projects by the club, who himself is believed by many to possess racist tendencies, is writing a play attacking racism.*
 - In the given sentence, the modifier “who himself is considered by many to be possessing racist tendencies” is misplaced- it should have been placed next to “Stephen”. However, putting the two modifiers on either side of “Stephen” would still sound awkward. Therefore, the rephrasing.
- *Assigned the politically-charged projects by the club, Stephen is writing a play attacking racism though ironically, he himself is believed by many to possess racist tendencies.*

Misplaced Modifiers: Beware of the Possessive

- At times, in sentences containing possessive nouns, misplaced modifiers are present.
 - *Trained in the dance form, Liza's performance was wonderful.*
 - The modifier “Trained in the dance form” should modify “Liza”, not “Liza's performance”. The possessive form “Liza's” should be replaced with “Liza”.
 - *Trained in the dance form, Liza performed wonderfully.*
- Or
- *Trained in the dance form, Liza gave a wonderful performance.*

Misplaced Modifiers: Abstract Nouns are no Different

- Abstract nouns must not be ignored. The rules applicable to other nouns hold for them too. The modifiers that are placed next to them should be intended to modify them.
- *The ancient culture's beauty, evolved over a course of centuries, was not fully appreciated by the visitors.*
 - A more appropriate meaning is that it was not the “beauty” of the ancient culture but the ancient culture itself that “evolved over a course of centuries”. Thus, the sentence has to be rephrased so that the modifier modifies the noun “culture”.
- *The ancient culture, evolved over a course of centuries, was not fully appreciated for its beauty by the visitors.*

Misplaced Modifiers – Two Common Forms

- **Form 1:** When participle phrases are used:

Be alert to the presence of a misplaced modifier when a sentence starts with a participle phrase i.e., a phrase starting with a present or a past participle (may or may not be preceded by a preposition).

- Correct the error in the following sentence:

- *Moving through the driveway, the garden's beauty struck Jack.*

- The modifying phrase “Moving through the driveway” is meant to be used for “Jack”, not for “the garden's beauty”.

- *Moving through the driveway, Jack was struck by the garden's beauty.*

Misplaced Modifiers – Two Common Forms

- **Form 2:** When adjectives or adjectival phrases are used:

The adjectives or adjectival phrases (an adjectival phrase is a group of words that acts as an adjective) should be close to what they are meant to modify.

- Pick the correct option:
 - *A) Brave, chivalrous, and generous, Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales depicted the knight as the epitome of knighthood.*
 - *B) Brave, chivalrous, and generous, the knight in Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales was indeed the epitome of knighthood.*
 - *C) Brave, chivalrous, and generous, the epitome of knighthood was depicted in Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales in the figure of the knight.*
 - *D) Brave, chivalrous, and generous, the epitome of knighthood was the knight in Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales.*
 - *E) Brave, chivalrous, and generous, The Canterbury Tales by Chaucer depicted the knight as the epitome of knighthood.*
- **Option B:** The adjectival phrase “Brave, chivalrous, and generous” is modifying the subject, “the knight”. The subject should be placed as close as possible to the phrase that modifies it.

Noun Modifiers with Relative Pronouns

- Relative Pronouns such as 'which', 'that', 'who', 'whose', 'whom', 'where', 'when' often introduce noun modifiers.
- There are certain rules relating to the use of relative pronouns. For instance, 'who' and 'whom' must modify people and 'which' must modify things.
 - *The lieutenant colonel that commanded this battalion was extremely courageous.* - Incorrect
 - *The lieutenant colonel who commanded this battalion was extremely courageous.* - Correct

Noun Modifiers with Relative Pronouns

- 'Whose' can be used to modify either people or things.
 - *The lady whose house was robbed works at a book store.*
 - *The city whose inhabitants were attacked was the richest in the state.*
- At times, 'which' or 'whom' follow prepositions.
 - *The pedestal on which the statue stands is made of red sandstone.*
 - *The friend with whom he shared a wonderful rapport passed away suddenly.*

Noun Modifiers with Relative Pronouns

- 'Who' is used as the subject of the verb in a relative clause. 'Whom' is used as the object of the verb or of a preposition.

- *The girl who is tall is a good singer.*

- *The girl whom we saw yesterday is a good singer.*

- It is fine to remove 'that' or 'whom' when the modified noun is the object of the modifying clause.

- *The play that they performed was an adaptation of 'As You Like It'.*

Or

- *The play they performed was an adaptation of 'As You Like It'.*

Noun Modifiers with Relative Pronouns

- 'Where' can be used to modify actual, geographical places such as area, site, country, etc. 'Where' cannot modify condition, situation, circumstance, arrangement, etc. To modify these, 'in which' is used.
 - *This situation where no decision is easy is a cause of great anxiety for the team.*
 - Since 'where' is not modifying a place, it needs to be replaced by 'in which'.
 - *This situation in which no decision is easy is a cause of great anxiety for the team.*

Noun Modifiers with Relative Pronouns

- 'When' can be used to modify a time or event such as period, age, century, 2015. In these cases, 'in which' can also be used in place of 'when'.
 - *The period when the Guptas ruled is considered the Golden Age of Indian history. – Correct*
 - *The period in which the Guptas ruled is considered the Golden Age of Indian history. – Correct*

Essential and Non-Essential Noun Modifiers

- An essential modifier is one that provides necessary information. It can help identify a noun or get linked with the noun from then on.
 - *The woman dressed in the blue gown is Harry's sister.*
 - The modifier “dressed in the blue gown” is necessary to identify the woman who may be standing among a group of women. Removing this modifier is bound to create confusion as to which woman is being talked about.

Essential and Non-Essential Noun Modifiers

- A non-essential modifier is one that provides only additional information. This information is not instrumental in identifying the noun, which is identified in some other way. Such a modifier does not remain linked with the noun in later references to the noun.
- *The Director, nicely dressed in the blue gown, is Harry's sister.*
 - The phrase “The Director” identifies the woman being talked about. Here, the modifier “nicely dressed in the blue gown” is not necessary. This modifier can be removed without affecting the essential meaning of the sentence.

Use of Commas for Essential and Non-Essential Noun Modifiers

- Commas should be put before and after a given non-essential modifier.
 - *The Director, nicely dressed in the blue gown, is Harry's sister.*
- Commas are not needed before and after a given essential modifier.
 - *The woman dressed in the blue gown is Harry's sister.*

'Which' and 'That'

- With non-essential modifiers, 'which' (and commas) is used.
- With essential modifiers, 'that' (and no commas) is used.

'Which' and 'That'

- Fill in the blanks with 'that' or 'which':
 - *This necklace, _____ was gifted to Lucy by her mother, is made of pearls and precious stones.*
 - *This necklace, which was gifted to Lucy by her mother, is made of pearls and precious stones.*
 - The sentence refers to “This necklace” so a specific necklace is already identified, which makes the modifier non-essential.
- *Necklace _____ was gifted to Lucy by her mother is made of pearls and precious stones.*
- *Necklace that was gifted to Lucy by her mother is made of pearls and precious stones.*

Verb Modifiers

- Verb modifiers, as the name suggests, modify verbs. They provide answers to questions about the verb- 'how', 'when', 'where', 'why', etc.
- The most basic of these modifiers is an adverb. The modifiers in this category also function like adverbs.
- Please see examples on the next slides.

Types of Verb Modifiers

- Adverb: The first word of the modifier is an adverb. Such modifiers are placed either before or after the verb.
 - ***Eagerly**, Tim listened to her story about how things unfolded.*
 - *Tim **eagerly** listened to her story about how things unfolded.* (before verb)
 - *Tim listened **eagerly** to her story about how things unfolded.* (after verb)
- Preposition: The first word of the modifier is a preposition. Such modifiers are placed either before or after the verb.
 - ***During** the long journey, Tim listened to Ida's story.* (before verb)
 - *Tim listened to Ida's story **during** the long journey.* (after verb)

Types of Verb Modifiers

- Subordinator: A subordinator is a word that begins a subordinate clause i.e., a clause that cannot stand alone and needs a main clause to make sense. Some examples of subordinators are: 'because', 'although', 'if', 'unless', 'while', 'when', 'so that'. Modifiers that have subordinators as their first words are placed either before or after the verb.
 - *Although Tim could not bring himself to trust Ida, he listened to her complete story. (before the verb)*
 - *Tim listened to Ida's complete story **although** he could not bring himself to trust her. (after the verb)*

Types of Verb Modifiers

- Present Participle (with commas): The first word of the modifier is a present participle. Such modifiers are placed either before or after the verb.
 - ***Walking along the beach,** Hanna wondered about the significance of nature.* (before the verb)
 - *Hanna wondered about the significance of nature, **walking along the beach.*** (after the verb)

Types of Verb Modifiers

- Preposition + Simple Gerund: Such modifiers are placed either before or after the verb.

- *Amid blessing, Hanna wondered about the significance of nature.*
(before the verb)

- *Hanna wondered about the significance of nature amid blessing.*
(after the verb)

Types of Verb Modifiers

- Infinitive of Purpose: The infinitive appears at the beginning of the modifier. Such modifiers are placed either before or after the verb.

- *To understand life, I read the works of philosophers.*
(before the verb)

- *I read the works of philosophers to understand life.*
(after the verb)

A Note on Infinitive of Purpose

- When passive voice is used, infinitives of purpose can be used with unnamed agents.
 - *The tax was removed to save the poor.*
 - 'who removed the tax' is unknown but it is sure that whoever did so, wished to save the poor. The sentence is acceptable.
- But, if we have...
 - *The tax decreased to save the poor.*
 - It would mean that 'the tax wanted to save the poor' which doesn't make sense. The sentence is incorrect.

A Note on Infinitive of Purpose

- Verb modifiers can be placed more freely than noun modifiers. But it must be ensured that a verb modifier is placed such that there is no ambiguity regarding the verb it modifies.
- *The long-forgotten treasure was discovered, after years of futile searches, last Saturday.*
 - The given sentence is awkwardly constructed. The “futile searches” did not happen “last Saturday”- on the contrary, “last Saturday” the search yielded result. So, “last Saturday” must be placed closer to the verb it is meant to modify- the verb “discovered”.
- *The long-forgotten treasure was discovered last Saturday, after years of futile searches.*

Which v/s the Present Participle *-ing*

- 'Which' is used to refer to a noun that comes just before it, and should never be used to refer to an entire clause.
 - *Online courses are gaining popularity around the world, which has changed the way knowledge was disseminated.*
 - “which” cannot refer to the clause “Online courses...around the world”. In the given sentence, it is referring to “the world”, leading to an awkward meaning.
 - The first part can be changed into a noun phrase and made the subject of the verb contained in the “which” clause, removing “which”. So,
 - *The increasing popularity of online courses around the world has changed the way knowledge was disseminated.*

Or

- The present participle (*-ing* form) can be used.
- *Online courses are gaining popularity around the world, changing the way knowledge was disseminated.*

The Flexibility of the *-ing* Form

- The *-ing* form can modify nouns.
 - *Chirping* birds greet me each morning.
- It can modify verbs and their subjects.
 - *Singing to herself*, Rose cooked the meal.
- It can even modify an entire clause (if this clause when converted into a noun phrase can function as the subject of the verb that has taken the *-ing* form). This use is helpful when the result of a main clause is to be expressed.
 - *Online courses are gaining popularity around the world, changing the way knowledge was disseminated.*
 - A frequently used construction on the GMAT, indicating cause-effect relationship in sentences.
 - A must know!

Special Cases

Exceptions to the General Rule for Modifiers – Case I

- The general rule is that noun modifiers must be placed next to the nouns they modify. But there are certain exceptions to this general rule.
- **Case I:** A modifier important for describing the noun is placed between the noun and another modifier.
- This important modifier is often an 'of'-phrase. The other modifier refers not only to the noun but also to this important modifier.
- Please refer to an example on the next slide.

Exceptions to the General Rule for Modifiers – Case I

Example:

- Identify the noun and the noun modifiers:
 - *Rita has a style of teaching students that impresses the observers.*
 - The noun “style” is defined by the important modifier “of teaching students”. The less important modifier “that impresses the observers” refers to both the noun and the first modifier- it modifies the entire noun phrase “a style of teaching students”.
 - **Note:** On the GMAT, “that” cannot refer to nouns such as “students”.

Exceptions to the General Rule for Modifiers – Case I

- Sentences such as the one in the previous example make no sense if the order is reversed. For instance, it is nonsensical to say:
 - *Rita has a style that impresses the observers of teaching students.*
- The issue can be avoided by rephrasing the sentence:
 - *Rita's style of teaching students impresses the observers.*

Exceptions to the General Rule for Modifiers – Case II

- A modifier important for defining the noun is also used in cases wherein parts of a whole are to be indicated. For instance,
 - *This generous man donates to an orphanage 10 percent of his income, an amount good enough to take care of the basic needs of all the children housed there.*
 - The modifier “of his income” is needed to define “10 percent”. The modifier “an amount good enough to take care of the basic needs of all the children housed there” does not modify the noun “income” but the entire phrase “10 percent of his income”.

Exceptions to the General Rule for Modifiers – Case III

- When a modifier is extremely lengthy, the sentence may become confusing if the modifier is placed next to the noun and the predicate is placed late in the sentence.
- Example:
 - *The young revolutionary who had given people hope by encouraging them through his powerful oration to fearlessly rebel against the authorities has been killed.*
 - Because of the long modifier “who had...against the authorities”, the placement of “has been killed” is making the sentence sound confusing and awkward.
 - *The young revolutionary has been killed who had given people hope by encouraging them through his powerful oration to fearlessly rebel against the authorities.*
 - The sentence is acceptable.

Exceptions to the General Rule for Modifiers – Case IV

- It is important to place a phrase logically. If the phrase makes logical sense when placed between a noun and modifier, it should be placed thus (provided the phrase is short).
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *Stella is interested in the study of narratives that are contingent upon memories, perspectives, and firsthand experiences such as autobiographies.*
 - It is logical to put the phrase “such as autobiographies” between the noun “narratives” and its modifier “that are contingent upon memories, perspectives, and firsthand experiences”.
 - *Stella is interested in the study of narratives, such as autobiographies, that are contingent upon memories, perspectives, and firsthand experiences.*

Exceptions to the General Rule for Modifiers – Case V

- If a modifier is parallel to another modifier that is placed right next to the noun being modified, the modifier placed away from the noun is also considered well-placed.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *The tourists enjoyed having the dish cooked in the traditional style and serving steaming hot.*
 - *The tourists enjoyed having the dish **cooked in the traditional style and served steaming hot.***
 - Since the second modifier is also modifying the noun “dish”, it should be made parallel to the first modifier.

Possessive Nuances

- The construction Y of X's to mean 'Y belongs to X' is not considered correct by the GMAT. You must choose either Y of X or X's Y.
- Correct the following sentence:

- *Pemberley, the estate of Mr. Darcy's, was beautiful.*

- *Pemberley, the estate of Mr. Darcy, was beautiful.*

Or

- *Pemberley, Mr. Darcy's estate, was beautiful.*

Possessive Nuances

- GMAT usually avoids the plural possessive form (-s') because a possessive noun can neither be easily modified nor be used to express a relationship besides 'of' and the plural possessive can be misread as the singular. Do not pick answer choices that contain the plural possessive form, unless necessary.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *Many survivors' stories have brought to light the bone-chilling details of atrocities committed during the war.*
 - The construction is awkward. The intended meaning of the sentence is that the bone-chilling details have surfaced because the survivors related them. Thus, “stories by survivors” is more precise than “stories of survivors”.
 - *Many **stories by survivors** have brought to light the bone-chilling details of atrocities committed during the war.*

Subgroup Modifiers

- When a modifier is used to describe a part of a larger group, a Subgroup Modifier construction must be chosen.
- Subgroup Modifier constructions use '...some of which...', '...some of them...', '...some...' to indicate subgroups. Note that only the construction using 'which' has a working verb.
- 'Any', 'none', 'all', 'more', 'most', 'many', 'each', 'either', 'neither', 'half', 'one' and any other number or pronoun that indicates a subgroup can be substituted in place of 'some'.
- On the GMAT, the correct constructions are scrambled in the wrong answer choices. Three constructions that are often tested are
 - '...of which some were...'
 - '...some of them which were...' (generally incorrect)
 - '...some of which...'

Please see examples on the next slide.

Subgroup Modifiers

- Examples (all correct usages):
 - *The book describes Renaissance sculptures, **some of which** were exceptionally beautiful.*
 - *The book describes Renaissance sculptures, **some of them** exceptionally beautiful.*
 - *The book describes Renaissance sculptures, **some** exceptionally beautiful.*
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *Stella submitted a number of paintings, **of which most were** shortlisted for display at the international exhibition.*
 - *Stella submitted a number of paintings, **most of which were** shortlisted for display at the international exhibition.*

Relative Clauses v/s Participles

- In a number of instances, it is possible to interchange a relative clause (a clause starting with a relative pronoun) and a present participle modifier.
 - *The woman who is talking on the phone is a suspect in Mr. Wickam's murder case.*
 - *The woman talking on the phone is a suspect in Mr. Wickam's murder case.*
 - Both the sentences are correct.

Relative Clauses v/s Participles

- The tense of the Present Participle is determined by the tense of the main verb in the sentence.
 - *Past: I heard the mob shouting slogans.*
 - *Present: I hear the mob shouting slogans.*
 - *Future: I will hear the mob shouting slogans.*
- “shouting” is taking place at different points of time, depending on when the action of hearing is taking place.

Relative Clauses v/s Participles

- If the action indicated by the present participle takes place at a different point in time from the action indicated by the main verb, the sentence is incorrect. A relative clause, not a present participle, should be used when actions taking place at different points of time are mentioned.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *Audience admire the skills of the actress playing Juliet.*
 - *Audience admire the skills of the actress **who played** Juliet.*

Relative Clauses v/s Participles

- Correct the following sentence:

- *The debate on the complex issue is still going on, an intentional act hopefully resulting in greater comprehension.*

- “hopefully” implies that the action (“resulting”) is yet to happen. Using “resulting”, however, implies the action in the present tense (since the main verb is in the present tense). To indicate different points of time, a relative clause is used. “will” suggests future.

- *The debate on the complex issue is still going on, an intentional act **that will** hopefully result in greater comprehension.*

Absolute Phrases

- Absolute phrases contain a noun and a noun modifier. These phrases modify the main clause in the sentence. They do not necessarily have to modify the element they are placed next to.
- *His eyes moist with tears, Philip talked about the tragedy.*
 - The absolute phrase “His eyes moist with tears” indicates the way Philip talked about the tragedy. This phrase, therefore, functions as a verb modifier. Hence, “His eyes moist with tears” refers to “Philip” and the sentence is alright.

Absolute Phrases

- An absolute phrase placed at the end of a sentence can be used to articulate a second thought. The use of 'which' to do so is incorrect as 'which' must refer to the noun that immediately precedes it.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *Researchers have used Planetarium Software to calculate the date of the Kurukshetra war based on the positions of heavenly bodies indicated in the text, which seems to give more credence to the claim of the historicity of the war.*
 - The corrected sentence contains an absolute phrase- “results...of the war”.
 - *Researchers have used Planetarium Software to calculate the date of the Kurukshetra war based on the positions of heavenly bodies indicated in the text, **results that seem to give more credence to the claim of the historicity of the war.***

Absolute Phrases

- If the sentence in the previous example is written thus...
 - *Researchers have used Planetarium Software to calculate the date of the Kurukshetra war based on the positions of heavenly bodies indicated in the text, and **this** seems to give more credence to the claim of the historicity of the war.*
- ...it will be considered incorrect on the GMAT although such constructions are common in everyday speech. 'This', 'that', 'these', 'those' are seen to have vague antecedents unless they are attached to a noun (for example, 'this research').

Absolute Phrases

- A comma is used to separate an absolute phrase from the rest of the sentence. If an absolute phrase is placed at the end of the sentence, a dash (-) can also be used.

- *The teacher recommended that the students engage in reading and travelling, activities that are considered capable of providing lasting happiness.*

Or

- *The teacher recommended that the students engage in reading and travelling - activities that are considered capable of providing lasting happiness.*

- Both the sentences are correct.

Absolute Phrases

- An *-ing* form placed after the comma can be used in place of the absolute phrase in some cases.
- Results of a preceding clause can be indicated by placing an *-ing* form or an absolute phrase at the end of the sentence.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *Scientists have recently discovered methane plumes and carbon-based molecules on Mars, and this strengthens the case that Mars could support life.*
 - *Scientists have recently discovered methane plumes and carbon-based molecules on Mars, **strengthening the case that Mars could support life.***
 - “strengthening the case...support life” is the result of the preceding part of the sentence; the *-ing* form aptly conveys the cause-effect relationship here.

thank you



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