

# Meaning

Beyond the Grammar...

# An Overview

# Meaning

- Please understand that the GMAT's sentence correction is not a test of English grammar. The Grammar Nazi may falter on this question type while a smart test taker, with average knowledge of English grammar but a strong ability to spot and rectify the standard GMAT errors, may perform at ~90% accuracy!
- Therefore, while grammar helps, it is not 'sufficient' to handle the GMAT's sentence correction, which is more 'analytical' than 'grammatical' in nature.
- Hence, you must devote only limited time & emphasis on developing grammar; enhancing the competence to spot and rectify errors is a lot more important.

# Meaning

- Further, the standard errors (covered in great detail, in further chapters) will only rarely help you in eliminating 4 (of the 5) answer choices; generally, they will help you in eliminating only 2-3 answer choices. For the best answer choice among the remaining 2-3 choices, it will often boil down to...

‘Meaning’



# Meaning

- Therefore, to master GMAT's sentence correction, one needs a combination of...
  - I. Basic English grammar skills
  - II. Competence to spot and rectify the standard errors
  - III. Ability to understand and conserve the intended meaning
- In this unit, we emphasize on the virtue of 'meaning'.

# Meaning

- A correct sentence must convey the intended meaning. The GMAT often tests a candidate's ability to differentiate among grammatically correct answer choices for the intended, logically-and-contextually-correct meaning.
- Further, if a sentence is not clear or lends itself to multiple interpretations, it is not considered a good sentence. The choice of words (and their placement) must make the intended meaning clear. Ambiguity in a given sentence must be resolved and the intended meaning must be restored.
- You must choose an option that most lucidly expresses the intended meaning of the given sentence. Avoid options that involve ambiguity.

# Meaning

- If a given sentence unambiguously expresses intended meaning, correct all other errors without altering this meaning.

## Tip:

In a rare case where two answer choices lead to correct sentences - grammatically as well as meaning-wise, go with the answer choice that conserves the meaning suggested in the mother (original) sentence.

# Common Instances



# Choice of Words

# Choice of Words

- It is important to determine whether the meaning and usage of chosen words are correct. If a particular word has multiple meanings, you must ascertain whether the right meaning, in view of the context, is being reflected.
- Slight changes in the choice of words can have much impact on the meaning that the sentence seeks to convey. The following words and expressions, for example, vary slightly but the meanings are quite different:
  - *Aggravate* (worsen) v/s *aggravating* (irritating)
  - *Rate of* (speed/frequency of) v/s *rates for* (prices for)
  - *Known as* (named) v/s *known to be* (acknowledged as)

# Choice of Words

- Which of the following sentences is correct?
  - *Stephen was dejected because of the loss of his ancestral property.*
  - *Stephen was dejected because of the loss in his ancestral property.*

“loss of” means “no longer in possession of” while “loss in” means “decline in value”. Since the intended, non-awkward meaning of the sentence is that Stephen was dejected owing to losing the possession of his ancestral property, the first sentence is correct.

# Position of Words

# Position of Words

- Different positioning of words in a sentence, may lead to different meanings.

Example:

- *In the class of 60, only Stella can paint beautiful landscapes.*
- *In the class of 60, Stella can paint only beautiful landscapes.*
- *In the class of 60, Stella can only paint beautiful landscapes.*

The first sentence indicates that Stella alone (in her class) is capable of painting beautiful landscapes.

The second sentence indicates that all that Stella can paint are beautiful landscapes.

The third sentence indicates that all that Stella can do is to paint beautiful landscapes!

# Position of Words

Key:

- Whenever you see answer choices with different positions of the same word(s), look for the nuanced change in the reflected meaning.
- Eliminate the answer choices that distort the intended meaning.
- Ascertain that the choice you made restores the intended meaning.

# Position of Words

Example:

- *The Governor granted the authority to give orders to his immediate subordinate.*

The given sentence is ambiguous because of the positioning of the words.

The unambiguous sentence would be:

- *The Governor granted his immediate subordinate the authority to give orders.*

Or

- *The authority to give orders to his immediate subordinate was granted by the Governor.*

( Note: Although grammatically correct, this is in passive voice and therefore, a less preferred option.)

# Usage of Helping Verbs



# Usage of Helping Verbs

- Meaning is altered on the GMAT by changing helping verbs such as *may*, *will*, *must*, and *should*. These helping verbs indicate varying levels of certainty and obligation.
- Which of the following sentences is correct?
  - *Mark will come tomorrow.*
  - *Mark may come tomorrow.*
- While grammatically, both these sentences are correct, the level of certainty expressed is different. The option you choose must conserve the intent of the mother sentence.

# Usage of Helping Verbs

- In common parlance, 'should' is often used to express likelihood. However, technically (and so on GMAT), 'should' refers to a 'moral obligation'.

Example:

*Jack should start his performance in ten minutes.*

Colloquially, it may mean that...

*Jack is likely to start his performance in ten minutes.*

However, on GMAT, it means...

*Jack is obliged to start the performance in ten minutes.*

# Usage of Helping Verbs

Another example:

Choose the correct answer choice.

- A) *The Headmaster announced that all students involved in the prank must pay for the damage to the school property.*
- B) *The Headmaster announced that all students involved in the prank should pay for the damage to the school property.*

Contextually, the Headmaster is not likely to impose a 'moral obligation' on the students; rather, he is likely to impose his authority on the students (to pay, even against their will). So, the use of *must* is correct. Hence, A is a better answer choice.

thank you



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