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GMAT Overview
What Is Adaptive Scoring?

It is not a stretch to say that many test takers are unsure of how GMAT scoring is achieved.

What if I propose to you that GMAT scoring is very similar to a first date?

I would be intrigued.

It will become clear why GMAT scoring is initially like a first date as we proceed. In the meantime, let's also break some myths. You have probably heard an array of theories as to what creates your GMAT score.

Which of the following determines your GMAT score?

Which questions I get right.

Which questions you get right is the most important factor in the GMAT score. Each question is assigned a level, and the higher the level of the questions you succeed with, the higher your score will be. But what determines the level of the questions you get in the test?

In such an adaptive exam, **the difficulty level of your question will be based on how you answered the previous ones**.

Theoretically, you begin with average level questions (and score). As you get questions right, the algorithm reevaluates your level each time and sets it to a higher level, whereas if you get them wrong, it sets the score at a lower level. The GMAT algorithm will attempt to identify your true level. The more you prove that you can tackle high level questions, and the earlier you do so, the better your score will be.

This is also part of the reason why scores can vary greatly from one exam to another, even if you hit the same percentage of correct and incorrect. You can get a 20 in the Quantitative section, yet have gotten more answers right than someone who got a 35.

This can be demonstrated via the following graph. Notice that already after the first few questions, a similar performance can start to yield a different score:

[So, early mistakes can ruin my score?](#)

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Well, you may as well simply order the cheque, pay your half, apologize to your date, and simply go home!

Not quite.

As you can see, a 'bad' first impression will drop the score. While it is possible to climb back up, you may need to work harder and it is possible your score would be at a lower level than had you performed strongly on the first bunch (the first ten or so).

So back to that first date analogy: A first impression is important!! The only difference is: You do not want another date with the GMAT no matter how much fun you will have this time around!

[So are the first questions the most important?](#)

No. They are important to get you to the higher levels as early as possible but they are NOT the most important questions as other factors affect your score as well.

Remember, you still have the rest of the exam to complete. You want to start off well, but you also certainly do not want to ruin all your good work.

Let's look at another couple of factors that are important to bear in mind:

If you begin to make **several errors in a row**, for example, this too will hurt your score as the algorithm will begin to drop the level you were previously at. Remember your level changes as you get questions right or wrong.

Therefore, **making several mistakes in a row anywhere on the exam can be detrimental to your score**.

OK, so what if I run out of time?

This is something you should definitely NOT do!

Leaving questions unanswered at the end carries the highest penalty. You *must* finish the adaptive sections.

Having the test end with **a few unanswered questions at the end is worse than guessing those questions**.

If you leave, say, 3 blank questions in the end, the algorithm calculates what your score would have been had you failed these 3 questions - and deducts from that score.

Cruel, isn't it?

So guessing is OK?

Guessing is better only insofar as you want to finish the exam, but you should **try to avoid guessing**, otherwise you risk making mistakes that would allow the algorithm to set your score at a lower level.

Later, if necessary we will help you with proper time management so that you can maximize your score by learning to avoid guessing and figuring out which questions you should go after or avoid.

Now is the time to acquire knowledge and techniques.

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So, remember the following:

GMAT Scoring is based on <u>several</u> factors.

As an adaptive exam, the GMAT calibrates the level of the next question you see based on how you answered the previous questions. As you get questions right the level rises; if you make errors the level drops.

You should try to do the following:

- **Make a strong first impression** (roughly the first 10 questions of each adaptive section).

- **Never leave questions unanswered**.

- **Avoid guessing the last bunch of questions**.

- **Avoid making several mistakes in a row** - this decreases your score more than making the same number of mistakes interspersed throughout the exam.

Remember: *Which* questions you get right and *where* you end up are more crucial than *how* many questions you correctly answer.

Verbal Section Overview

The Verbal Section is the fourth and last section of the GMAT. It comes after the Analytical Writing Assessment Section, the Integrated Reasoning Section, and the Quantitative Section.

Let's see what sort of challenges it presents:

QUESTIONS & TIMING

You will be required to answer 41 questions in 75 minutes - a little less than two minutes per question on average, although some question types (Reading Comprehension) usually take longer than others (Sentence Correction).

Each question is a multiple choice question with 5 answer choices. Once you answer a question you cannot go back to review it or change your answer.

ADAPTIVITY

This section is adaptive - based on your answer on each question, the Computer Adaptive Test chooses a harder or easier question for your next question.

SCORING

The *Scaled Score* of this section ranges from 0 to 60, although a score below 7 or above 51 is rare (as in the Quantitative section).

For the vast majority of test takers, the verbal score will be significantly lower than the quantitative score. Verbal scores of over 40 are already in the 90th percentile of the population - the equivalent of a 49-50 quantitative score.

ENVIRONMENT

In this section, you cannot use a dictionary or any other aid, digital or otherwise. Scratch paper is provided in the form of an erasable noteboard (5 legal-sized pages laminated in clear plastic) and a thin-tipped erasable marker pen.

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Now, what do you think the Verbal Section tests?

Cognitive skills such as analytical thinking, logic and, most of all, how well I take the GMAT

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Good! You've got it. GMAC, the organization behind the GMAT, wants you to think that the questions in the Verbal Section are only about knowing **English** language and **grammar**, but we know better!

To some extent, knowledge of English **vocabulary**, **syntax** and **grammar** is needed for the Verbal Section, but focusing solely on **English** is usually the longer way to the wrong answer choice.

Using logic, analytical thinking, etc. will get you a lot further.

Remember that **quantitative** or **verbal** skills are mere techniques for the GMAT to test how well you take the GMAT.

Okay. What about question types in this section?

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The 41 questions in the Verbal Section are comprised of three question types:

14-17 Sentence Correction questions, where you are asked to choose the correct version of a sentence out of five options.

View sample

13-15 Reading Comprehension questions (4 reading passages, 3-4 questions on each passage), where you are required to read a passage and answer various questions about its content and structure. When you get Reading Comprehension questions, the screen splits into an area for the passage and an area for the question and answer choices.

View sample

10-12 Critical Reasoning questions, where you are required to analyze an argument and find the logical solution to the question stem, such as point the main logical flaw in the argument, choose a sentence that weakens/strengthens the argument, etc.

<u>View sample</u>

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A word about **vocabulary:**

There are some GMAT terms that you need to be familiar with as part of your preparation for the GMAT. Some of them are words that you might know, but which are used in a certain specific way on the GMAT. Others are words you might encounter for the first time in this course.

We'll teach you all these terms and words, elaborate on their GMAT use, and make sure you understand and remember them.

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So, as we said:

The Verbal Section is the 4th section of the GMAT

Questions & Timing: 75 minutes / 41 multiple choice questions = ~2 minutes per question on average

Adaptive: Yes

Scoring: 0-60 (effectively 7-51, the average scores are lower than Quantitative scores)

Environment: no dictionary or aids whatsoever, laminated noteboard

Question types: Sentence Correction, Reading Comprehension, Critical Reasoning

Remember that the Verbal section does not test your level of English; it uses English to test your **<u>logic</u>**.

Let's start!

Critical Reasoning Section

To solve Critical Reasoning questions:

1. Read the **QUESTION STEM** first

2. Read the **ARGUMENT** and map it, breaking it down to its components (i.e., premise, conclusion)

3. **Think** of a possible answer/direction/lead to the question

4. Go over the answer choices. **Look** for one that is similar to the one you thought of

5. **Scan** the remaining answer choices to make sure there isn't a better choice

You may find it easier to remember the **Work Order** through the acronym **QATLS**.

It is crucial to map out the argument because if you don't, you increase your chances of answering the question incorrectly. For example, if the question stem asks you to strengthen the conclusion, you need to identify the conclusion and choose an answer choice that is directly related to it.

Mapping the argument only takes a few seconds (you can do so while you read the argument: stop after each sentence and decide whether it's a premise or a conclusion), and not mapping the argument is not worth your while: it only means you'll answer the question more quickly, but not correctly.

A general rule of thumb for all the question types in the Verbal Section is that you don't want to read the answers before you thought about the question yourself. This way, you'll get to the answers more focused, knowing what to look for. It will make identifying the right answer choice easier and faster.

If you don't stop for a moment after reading the **question stem** and the **argument** to think about what the answer could be, but rather go over the answer choices first, you're at a risk of being caught by answer choices that seem to make sense although they're not exactly the answer to the question asked.

(These are known as **distractors**; we'll teach you how to avoid them later, just to be safe.)

John is a doctor. Therefore, he is highly intelligent.

The argument above relies on which of the following assumptions?

(A) John has a GMAT score of 760.
(B) John's ex-girlfriend, who is highly intelligent, thinks highly of him.
(C) All doctors are bright.
(D) John's twin brother is highly intelligent.
(E) John graduated Med School with average grades.

Let's solve the above question according to the recommended order. **First of all, we read the question stem** and understand that we have to identify an <u>assumption</u> the author makes. An assumption links the **premise** with the **conclusion**. In other words, it's what the author will say if we ask him or her, "based on these premises, why did you reach this conclusion?"

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The second step is reading the argument and mapping it according to its components. The first part of the argument is a **premise**, and the second part of the argument is the **conclusion**.

John is a doctor. Therefore, he is highly intelligent.

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The third step is **to think of a possible answer to the question.** What assumption would lead the author from the **fact** that John is a doctor to the **conclusion** that he is highly intelligent? The assumption is what connects the two - doctors are intelligent.

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Now that we have the answer, we follow the fourth step and **go over the answer choices in search of a similar one.**This way, you know what you're looking for and are not distracted by any of the incorrect answer choices. We read answer choice (A), do not find a similarity between it and the answer we thought of ourselves. The same is true for answer choice (B). We read answer choice (C) and realize that's the one.

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Finally, in the fifth step, we **go over the remaining answer choices** ((D) and (E), in this case) **to make sure they're not better** than (C)**.** They're not, so we choose answer choice (C).

Critical Reasoning: Logic over Content

You will now learn one of the most important principles on the GMAT, so pay close attention.

Please compare the below arguments:

Argument 1:

In a study published in 2008, scientists were able to show that a mutation in the gene HERC2, which regulates the expression of the gene OCA2, is partly responsible for blue eyes in humans. The scientists suggested that a genetic test for that specific mutation could predict if a child would have blue eyes.

Argument 2:

The venture capital fund analyst has concluded that investing in the submitted web start-up would be profitable because the founder has a profound understanding of the target market and because recent statistics have shown that such insight is a key element in the success of new enterprises.

Do you see a similarity?

[No](#)

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Here's a hint: try to break the arguments down as you've learned. Pay special attention to the **logical relations** between premises and conclusions.

See a similarity yet?

[Yes, I see it now.](#)

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What is the similarity?

[They both have the same logical relations between premises and conclusions](#)

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True.

Both questions have the following **logical structure** (ignore the order of appearance):

Premise(s): X is one of the factors in determining Y

Conclusion: if X is present, Y will definitely be present

In the first argument, X is HERC2 and Y is blue eyes.

In the second argument, X is market insight and Y is start-up success.

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This conclusion is flawed because there are clearly other factors besides X that determine Y. Notice the words *partly* and *element* in the argument, which indicate X is only a part of the equation that determines Y - not all of it.

Argument 1:

In a study published in 2008, scientists were able to show that a mutation in the gene HERC2, which regulates the expression of the gene OCA2, is partly responsible for blue eyes in humans. The scientists suggested that a genetic test for that specific mutation could predict if a child would have blue eyes.

Argument 2:

The venture capital fund analyst has concluded that investing in the submitted web start-up would be profitable because the founder has a profound understanding of the target market and because recent statistics have shown that such insight is a key element in the success of new enterprises.

Notice how two apparently different arguments on different topics actually share the exact same logical structure.

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Despite appearances, the **content** of a question is really the shell, the cover for a certain **structure.**

Your attention should be focused on the **logical relations** between the argument's components: the underlying **assumptions** in the argument that link the **premise** to the **conclusion**, how **logical** the conclusion is, etc.

Therefore, if you see an argument that deals with microbiology, which happens to be a field you know nothing about, have no fear. You don't need to be familiar with any of the subjects of the arguments on the GMAT. Instead, you only need to be able to look beyond the content and identify the **logical structure**.

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Try focusing on **structure** while reading the following argument. Notice how the rich text is trying to distract you from the underlying **logic:**

Argument 3:

One of the quality of life indicators in the Multidimensional Poverty Index used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the availability of cooking fuel in the country. Therefore, countries with large oil or natural gas reserves or countries that are rich in forests will not be classified as poor countries using this index.

Does this argument have the same structure as the previous two? (i.e. if X is present, Y will definitely be present)

Correct.

This question follows the same logic as the previous two, but with a different X and Y. It connects the availability of cooking fuel with quality of life, concluding that where there is cooking fuel there will definitely be a high quality of life (and hence no poverty).

If you get distracted by **content**, it can (and will) be used against you when you reach the answer choices. Imagine that you eliminated three of the answer choices in the following question and remained with the following:

In a study published in 2008, scientists were able to show that a mutation in the gene HERC2, which regulates the expression of the gene OCA2, is partly responsible for blue eyes in humans. The scientists suggested that a genetic test for that specific mutation could predict if a child would have blue eyes.

Which of the following points to the most serious logical flaw in the argument?

(E) The test would not cover other genetic influences leading to blue eyes

Correct.

(E) is the answer choice which correctly points out that the conclusion ignores other factors or causes ('would not cover other ... influences').

(B) is a classic distractor based on content rather than logic. It relates to the background "story", but this story has no direct relevance to the argument's logical structure. As much as this "story" can be appealing and seem true, don't let it distract you -- **use your x-ray vision and look at the logical structure!**

Practice this until you can see through answer choices like this:

(B) The scientists assume that people want to know their babies' future eye color
You: "This is some content-related babble that the GMAT writers put here to distract me!"

(E) The test would not cover other genetic influences leading to blue eyes

You: "This actually says that X doesn't always mean Y because there are additional factors - sounds right!"

Continue

Critical Reasoning: The Straight and Narrow Principle

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The correct answer to Critical Reasoning questions is the one that answers the question in the simplest, shortest, most immediate way.

For example, if the **question stem** asks you on which **assumption** the argument relies, the correct answer is an **assumption** that does not presuppose any other **assumptions** or any other logical steps.

Do not fall for an answer that **could** be correct if we assume certain things or that would be correct in certain cases only. In the journey to success in Critical Reasoning, the long and winding road is not the right way to take...

What is Assumption in GMAT Critical Reasoning.

Assumption is something that is usually unsaid, something that the author needed to hold as true to get from the premises to the conclusion. In order to conclude something from facts (premises) certain assumptions need to be made or certain information needs to be taken for granted.

EG If I say: My watch is broken. I need to tell the time. Therefore I need to buy a new watch.

This assumes that only a watch can tell time (maybe my phone, the radio, a clock etc can also do the trick), that Ineed to buy a new watch (perhaps I can borrow one etc), and that I need to buy a new one (perhaps a second hand one is also good?). These are three assumptions that had to be made in order for me to come to such a conclusion.

Critical Reasoning: Argument Structure - Identifying Conclusion/Premise by Conjunctions

Conjunctions - words such as *but*, *because*, *therefore* and *moreover* - are a great tool for identifying the argument's components:

Conclusion conjunctions help us identify the **conclusion**, which normally appears AFTER such words. This group includes *therefore, thus, consequently, hence, so, which means that, it follows that*, etc. For example:

Structure: [premise]. **Therefore,** [conclusion].

Example: Jane is hungry. **Therefore,** she will be making herself a sandwich soon.

Reason conjunctions also help identify the **conclusion**, which appears BEFORE these words. Reason words include words such as *because, since,* and *as*.

Structure: [conclusion] **because** [premise].

 Example: Jane will be making herself a sandwich soon **because** she is hungry.

Naturally, this means **reason conjunctions** can also help us identify the **premise**, which will appear

Conjunctions: Semantic Categories of Conjunctions - Conclusion

Conclusion conjunctions inform the reader that the second sentence is a **conclusion** based on the first sentence. They include:

therefore, so, as a result, consequently, thus, hence

Example: John has back problems. Therefore, he cannot lift the table.

immediately AFTER these words, as can be seen in the example above.

Critical Reasoning: Argument Structure - Identifying the Conclusion by Recommendation

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One clue which can help you identify a **conclusion** is that conclusions are often **recommendations** made by the argument's author:

Examples (the **premise** is in green, the **conclusion** in blue):

1. The company lost money last year. The company **should** do so and so.

2. The company lost money last year. It is **recommended** that the company do so and so.

Critical Reasoning: Argument Structure - Identifying the Premise by Findings

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One sign by which a **premise** can be identified is the use of phrases relating to scientific research or the findings of such research, such as "**A study** conducted in 1999 **showed** that...", or "**A researcher** studying X **found that...**"

Example (the **premise** is in green, the **conclusion** in blue):

A recent study has found that satisfied employees are more productive. Next year, company X plans to invest $20,000 in increasing employee satisfaction in order to increase productivity and therefore sales.

Critical Reasoning: Argument Structure - Identifying the Conclusion by Words which are not Conjunctions

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An argument's **conclusion** may also be identified by words that describe a judgment, an opinion, a prediction, or (of course) a conclusion. Some of the most commonly used words in this group are *conclude that, contend that, believe that, hypothesize that, clearly*.

Examples:

1. **[premise]**. The researcher **concluded that** >> **[conclusion]**.

2. It was **hypothesized that** >> **[conclusion]**. **[premise]**.

3. **[premise]**. The mayor **believes that** >> **[conclusion]**.

4. **Clearly,** >> **[conclusion]**. **[premise]**.

Critical Reasoning: Assumption Questions

Assumption Questions are a common type of Critical Reasoning question which asks you to pinpoint the gap between the **premise** and the **conclusion** of an argument - a gap which the author has automatically bridged, even though this connection is not supported by the **premises**. In other words - you are looking for something the author **assumes**. Let's look at an example of such a question, which we will later solve:

Jane is a professional writer. Therefore, she will ace the Verbal Section on the GMAT.

The argument above relies on which of the following **assumptions**?

(A) Jane has won a Pulitzer for her work.
(B) Unfortunately, Jane is not so great in math.
(C) Jane has quite a broad vocabulary.
(D) Being a writer confers the skills needed for the Verbal Section.
(E) The Verbal Section has undergone many changes in recent years.

Since the assumption is hidden - that is, it is not written in the argument - identifying it requires thinking. The assumption is the link connecting the premise with the conclusion. We can find the hidden assumption in several ways:

1. The **assumption** is what the argument's author would say if asked, "How did you get to that conclusion? Why?"

2. The **assumption** is the completion of the sentence "The **conclusion** is true only if we **assume** that..."

3. **Premise + Assumption = Conclusion**
   Assumption = Conclusion - Premise

4. **Premise --> Assumption --> Conclusion**

Jane is a professional writer. Therefore, she will ace the Verbal Section on the GMAT.

The argument above relies on which of the following **assumptions**?

(A) Jane has won a Pulitzer for her work.
(B) Unfortunately, Jane is not so great in math.
(C) Jane has quite a broad vocabulary.
(D) Being a writer confers the skills needed for the Verbal Section.
(E) The Verbal Section has undergone many changes in recent years.

First of all, we read the **question stem** and identify the question as an **assumption** question.

The next step is breaking the argument down to its components:

Premise: Jane is a professional writer.

Conclusion: she will ace the Verbal Section on the GMAT.

Now, the **assumption** is the missing link. What's the relation between the indisputable fact (premise) that Jane is a professional writer and the **conclusion** that she will ace the Verbal Section? What connects the two? One mentions writing, the other mentions acing a test.

The **assumption** is what bridges over that gap: that being a writer gives you what it takes to ace the Verbal Section (of course, that's an outrageous assumption but it's okay - it's the author's assumption, not ours). Going over the answer choices (Step 4 of the Work Order) you will find (D) is the correct answer choice. All the others simply don't bridge the gap between premise and conclusion.

How can I identify an Assumption Question?

It's quite easy to identify **Assumption Questions,** because the word *assumption(s)* will often appear in the question stem. For example:

1. Which of the following is **an assumption** underlying the conclusion?

2. The author's conclusion relies on **which of the following assumptions**?

3. The argument above is based on **which of the following assumptions**?

Common Distractors

The most common distractor for **Assumption Questions** is an answer choice that introduces a **new premise** rather than links the existing **premise** to the **conclusion**. Usually such premises will be somehow connected to the topic. For example, in the question we have just solved, answer choices A, B, C, and E are **new premises**:

(A) Jane has won a Pulitzer for her work.

This answer choice tells us something we didn't know, so it's a **new premise**; in addition, it only relates to the fact Jane is a writer.

(B) Unfortunately, Jane is not so great in math.

This answer choice is not related to either writing or acing the test; it only provides **new information**indirectly connected to the GMAT.

(C) Jane has quite a broad vocabulary.

This answer choice provides **more information** in support of the conclusion, but we are not looking for that - we are looking for the **assumption**.

(D) Being a writer confers the skills needed for the Verbal Section. - the **assumption**

(E) The Verbal Section has undergone many changes in recent years.

This is a **new premise** relating only to the test aspect of the argument.

Note that the **assumption** isn't necessarily valid or logical. Some **assumptions** are quite dodgy and questionable. It's okay, though, because it's not YOU who makes these sometimes absurd **assumptions**.

Your job is to identify the **assumptions** made by the argument's AUTHOR. Therefore, if you encounter a Critical Reasoning Assumption question, bear in mind that the correct answer can be a very incorrect-looking statement; choosing it doesn't mean that you think the statement made in this answer choice is **true** - it just means that the ridiculous statement made in this answer choice is the correct answer to the question you were asked: which of the following is an **assumption** underlying the argument's conclusion?

That's all. You now know all you need to know about **Assumption Questions**. Good luck!

Critical Reasoning: Inference Questions

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Unlike most Critical Reasoning questions, in which the argument consists of both a **premise** and a **conclusion**, in Inference Questions, the argument consists of **premises** only - there's no **conclusion**. The question stem asks you to draw a **conclusion** based on these **premises**.

Example:

John was late for work 6 times during the past month. Moreover, John's new boss does not like him. Finally, John's company has recently lost close to $24,000 as a direct result of a mistake John had made.

Which of the following conclusions can most properly be drawn from the information above?

Continue

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Tip #1 for Inference questions:

The correct answer choice is the one that makes a **small** step beyond the **premises**. The inference is not a giant leap, and should not presuppose any **assumptions**, but rather be the immediate, closest conclusion that directly results from the premises.

For example, a possible answer to the question in example 1 is the following:

Correct: John is unlikely to get a promotion or a raise any time soon.

The following sentence, on the other hand, is unlikely to be a correct answer to the question:

Incorrect: Jane will break up with John after he loses his job.

In other words, we are looking for the conclusion that **must** stem from the argument, not for a conclusion that **could** stem from it.

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Tip #2 for Inference questions

The same **tone** (positive, negative, neutral) that is felt in the **argument** should also be present in the **correct answe**r.

For example, the data in example 1 presents John in a **negative** light, so the conclusion should also be **negative**. This enables us to eliminate answer such as the following:

Incorrect: John is likely to be voted employee of the year.

How do I identify Inference Questions?

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We identify this question type by its common phrasings which often use the words **conclude**, **conclusion**, **infer** or**inference**.

Examples:

1. The statements above, if true, best support which of the following as a **conclusion**?

2. Which of the following **inferences** is best supported by the statement made above?

3. Which of the following **conclusions** can most properly be drawn from the information above?

4. Which of the following can properly be **inferred** from the statement above?

5. If the statements above are correct, they most strongly support which of the following?

6. If the statements above are true, which of the following must be true?

Oh, and what about those Distractors? You know, the wrong answer choices that attempt to confuse me?

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Common Distractors for Inference Questions

1. An answer choice that introduces a new **premise** rather than draws a **conclusion** on the basis of the existing **premises**. An example of such an answer choice to the question above could be:

Distractor: Jane repeatedly tells John that he should make an effort to get to work on time.

2. An answer choice that draws a far-fetched **conclusion**, one that goes too far from the **premises** presented in the **argument**. We saw an example of such an answer choice in the above example:

Distractor: Jane will break up with John after he loses his job.

You now know everything you need to know about Inference Questions. Good luck!

Practice

Radio talk show host Winfra Opry promotes books on her show. Every show begins with Winfra reading the first chapter of a recently published book on air. Every book that was thus promoted became a national bestseller. In addition, Winfra's show pays royalties to the books' authors.

Which of the following conclusions is most strongly supported by the information above?

Books that are written by men are less likely to be chosen by Winfra to be promoted on her show.

Books whose first chapters are very long are less suitable for promotion through Winfra's show.

If a book is not promoted by Winfra on her show, its chances of becoming a best seller are lower than those of books promoted in Winfra's show.

The effectiveness of using the services of a public relations office to promote one's book is lower than the effectiveness of promoting a book through Winfra's show.

A recently published book that gains access to a promotional spot on Winfra's show is likely to become a bestseller.

Well done!

This is an **Inference** question, so the argument is comprised of **premises** only, on which basis you are asked to draw a **conclusion**:

Premise A: Winfra promotes books on her radio show

   +

Premise B: she reads the first chapter at the beginning of every show

   +

Premise C: every book she promotes this way becomes a bestseller

   +

Premise D: Winfra's show also pays royalties to the author of the book being promoted

   =

Conclusion: ?

The **premises** in the argument definitely provide a logical basis for the **conclusion** that a promotional spot on Winfra's show is likely to boost a book to bestseller status.

In a recent press conference, the government promised the citizens of Town Y that the new national highway will not pass through existing archaeological heritage sites neighboring Town Y, including Site Z. However, the new highway will pass within a mile of Site Z, which is situated at the center of an area rich in archaeological sites yet to be completely discovered.

Which of the following inferences is best supported by the statements made above?

The government has broken its promise to the citizens of Town Y.

The citizens of Town Y are worried that the noise the new highway will generate might discourage tourists from visiting Site Z.

Unless the national highway plan is changed, undiscovered archaeological sites will possibly be damaged during the highway's construction.

Now that the government has shown its commitment to preserving archaeological heritage sites, there is no longer a threat to Site Z or to whatever undiscovered archaeological sites there are in its vicinity.

It is not that important if the area around Site Z is damaged by the highway since interest in archaeology is decreasing and the site would not receive many visitors anyway.

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Correct!

This is an **Inference** question, so the argument is comprised of **premises** only, on which basis you are asked to draw a **conclusion**:

Premise A: the government promised that the highway would not pass through Site Z
  +
Premise B: the highway will pass within a mile of Site Z, in an area that contains other archaeological sites that have not been fully uncovered
  =
Conclusion: ?

This answer choice provides a likely **conclusion** to the argument's **premises**. We are told that the area around Site Z has many undiscovered sites, and that the highway will pass near Site Z, that is, within the area. It is logical to **conclude** that these undiscovered sites may be damaged in the process.

Every year a large percentage of the population of loggerhead and leatherback turtles are killed by deep-sea fishing. To protect land animals, habitats of endangered species are fenced off and monitored. This method of protection cannot be implemented in ocean habitats that change position in three dimensions.

If the statements above are correct, they most strongly support which of the following?

A method for the protection of moving habitats would have to be developed and implemented to solve the problem of endangered turtles.

Conservationists are not working hard enough to develop a protection method for every kind of habitat.

In a matter of a few years, loggerhead an leatherback turtles will no longer inhabit the oceans.

Other sea animals are also harmed by the fishing industry, and will also become endangered unless the problem is solved.

To control and monitor a three-dimensional ocean habitat, an infrared tagging system should be used.

?Ask a tutor

Good work!

This is an **Inference** question, so the argument is comprised of **premises** only, on which basis you are asked to draw a **conclusion**:

Premise A: Deep-sea fishing kills many loggerhead an leatherback turtles every year.
   +
Premise B: When land animals become endangered, their habitats are closed off with fences so that they can be protected.
   +
Premise C: Fences cannot be used for ocean animals since they swim freely in different directions and areas of the ocean.
   =
Conclusion: ?

This answer choice correctly **concludes** that in order to save the turtles, a specific method of protecting ocean habitats would have to be developed (because the land methods are ineffective in the sea).

To produce an exceptional chocolate, the use of the highest quality and most expensive ingredients, and the optimization of the complex heating and cooling process known as *tempering,* are both imperative factors. Chocolatier Q makes the most exceptional chocolate on the market although her production costs are lower than any in the industry. The ingredients and tempering process account for 90% of the expenses of chocolate production. The other 10% is spent on packaging done by an external company that provides the same service to all the chocolatiers in the industry, and at the same price.

The statements above, if true, best support which of the following as a conclusion?

Errors in the tempering process can result in the chocolate not reaching its correct solidified state.

Q's production costs can amount to almost 90% less than those spent by other chocolatiers in the industry.

Chocolatier Q cuts her costs by using a slightly lower grade of one of her ingredients while compensating for this with the highest standard for all the others.

Chocolatier Q enjoys a lower price for the packaging process.

Chocolatier Q has the most efficient tempering process of any chocolatier in the industry.

How long do you think it took you to solve this question?

1 minutes

?Ask a tutor

You underestimated the time this question took you. You actually solved it in 1 minutes and 23 seconds.

Excellent work!

This is an **Inference** question, so it is made up of **premises** only; you need to find a **conclusion** stemming from those premises:

Premise A: Two factors are critical in producing exceptional chocolate: (a) using the best and **most expensive ingredients**; and (b) correct tempering.
    +
Premise B: Chocolatier Q makes exceptional chocolate. **Her (total) costs are the lowest** in the industry.
    +

Premise C: The expenses can be broken down to 90% ingredients and tempering process, and...

    +

Premise D: 10% packaging. Packaging costs are **the same** for all the chocolatiers.

    =

Conclusion: ?

According to the argument, Q uses the most expensive **materials** and pays the same price for the **package** as other chocolatiers do. However, she still boasts the lowest total costs so the secret must be in the only remaining factor - her **tempering** process, which is the most efficient (and therefore cheap).

Critical Reasoning: Boldface Type Questions

In Boldface Type questions, two portions in the argument are in **boldface type** (i.e., thicker letters), and you are asked to identify their function in the argument.

Look at the following question:

The shoe company Steps wants to collaborate with the fashion brand Suave. However, **the latter wants to promote its own line of shoes**. Therefore, although a collaboration could be very profitable, **Suave is not likely to accept Steps's proposal**.

In the argument given, the two portions in **boldface** play which of the following roles?

(A) The first is the argument's conclusion, and the second is a piece of evidence supporting this conclusion.

(B) The first is a conclusion made by Suave, and the second is the entire argument's conclusion.

(C) The first is a conclusion made by Steps, and the second is the entire argument's conclusion.

(D) The first is a piece of evidence, and the second is a conclusion that is based on this evidence.

(E) The first is a piece of evidence, and the second is a conclusion that seems to contradict this evidence.

Tip for answering Boldface Type questions more quickly:

If you begin reading an answer choice and see that it incorrectly defines the role of the **first boldface type** portion, there's no need to continue reading it. Eliminate it and save time.

Look at the first part of the answer choices in the above question. The first three define the first portion in **boldface** as a **conclusion** of some sort. The other two define the first portion in **boldface** as a **premise**.

What do you think, is the first portion in **boldface** a **premise** or a **conclusion**?

A premise

?Ask a tutor

You're right! This means we can eliminate answer choices (A), (B) and (C) immediately after reading the word*conclusion*.

This leaves us with answer choices (D) and (E). Which one do you think is the correct answer?

(D) The first is a piece of evidence, and the second is a conclusion which is based on this evidence.

?Ask a tutor

That's right. The second part in **boldface type** is a conclusion that is based on the premise - not one that contradicts it. Good job!

?Ask a tutor

Boldface Type questions are really about breaking down the argument correctly, and identifying its various components. Breaking down the argument(s) into **Premises** and **Conclusion** and correctly identifying the specific roles of the **Boldface type** sentences are <u>critical</u> for this question type.

Both the **distractors** and the correct answer choice in these questions may use synonyms to mask which component they refer to:

A **premise** may also be called *evidence*, *support*, *reason*, *basis*

A **conclusion** may also be called *position*, *objection*, *explanation*, *claim*, *prediction*

... so keep your eyes peeled. Good luck!

Unlike most Critical Reasoning questions, which consist of both a **premise** and a **conclusion**, in Paradox questions the argument consists of **premises** only - there's NO **conclusion**. The premises seem to contradict each other, thus creating a **paradox** or a **discrepancy**. The question stem asks you to choose an answer choice that resolves this paradox. The correct answer is a **new premise** that resolves the paradox successfully and logically.

Example:

Company X made a very small profit last year. However, the company's CFO received a bonus as well as a raise.

How can we resolve this paradox?

A possible answer: **Company X was predicted to lose a lot of money, and the CFO, through hard work, managed to change this. Had it not been for her, the company would have made no profit at all and would have lost money.**

We identify this question type by the following common phrasings:

1. Which of the following, if true, best resolves the above **paradox**?
2. Which of the following, if true, best reconciles the seeming **discrepancy** described above?
3. Which of the following, if true, would most contribute to an explanation of the facts above?

You are now ready to answer paradox questions. Good luck!

Example:

The percentage of cases of chemical poisoning in which workers in the AB adhesive factory are involved, such cases being characterized by symptoms including vomiting, blurry vision, and constricted respiration, is not nearly as high as the percentage constructed by correctly consolidating the figures from reports conducted by similar chemical production industries and forming an accurate average. However, despite complaints about their inherent capability to cause discomfort to the face and neck area and to reduce the vision field by up to 40%, gas masks equipped with twin filters are a mandatory item for all employees working in the operational sectors of the AB adhesive factory.

Which of the following, if true, best reconciles the seeming discrepancy described above?

The percentage of chemical poisoning cases, or, in the case of companies that produce consumer products, the percentage of physical injuries, is often an indication of a manufacturer's professionalism.

Whether of the single or twin filter type, gas masks, despite being extremely effective for protection from the inhalation of toxic substances, are completely redundant in cases of exposure to gases that enter through skin pores.

Since all adhesives contain ethanol and exylene, when comparing the frequencies of toxicity cases in factories, the inclusion of manufacturing industries that do not produce such chemicals in any step of their processes would only lead to misinformation.

Before the policy of the obligatory wearing of twin-filter gas masks had been employed, it was not at all rare that the AB adhesive factory's frequency of chemical poisoning cases would match the industry average.

The AB adhesive factory, prior to the implementation of the rule concerning the wearing of twin-filter gas masks, employed a higher number of people, both in the operational and administrative sectors, than it does today.

This is a **Paradox** question, so it is made up of **premises** only; you need to find a **new premise** which best resolves the apparent **discrepancy** between the existing premises:

Premise A: toxic poisoning is less frequent in AB adhesives factory than it is in similar factories on average

   +

Premise B: gas masks can be uncomfortable and block one's vision

   ✖

Premise C: the adhesives factory makes all the employees in its operational sector wear gas masks

?Ask a tutor

Argument Flaw questions ask us to find **a logical flaw** in the argument. Since the **premise** cannot be flawed, the flaw will be either in the **conclusion** or in an **assumption** underlying the conclusion.

We identify this question type through one of the following phrasings:

1. A major **flaw** in the argument above is that

2. The argument is **flawed** primarily because the author

3. Which of the following indicates a **flaw** in the reasoning above?

4. Which of the following points to the most serious logical **flaw** in the argument?

5. The argument is **flawed** because it fails to consider that...

Show me an example, please

 People between the ages 35-40 buy more chocolate than does any other age group. Therefore, the common belief that children love chocolate more than adults do is clearly wrong.

The argument is flawed in that it _____.
confuses purchasing with consuming

Correct! The fact that someone **buys** chocolate does not necessarily mean that he or she will eat it. Perhaps it's the parents who **buy** the chocolate, but it's their children who actually **eat** it.

Many times, detecting the flaw in the argument involves carefully looking for differences in terminology/parameters between the **premise** and the **conclusion**. While these differences may seem trivial at first, a closer look will reveal that they are the key to solving the question.

In the above question, for example, the **premise** deals with *buying* chocolate while the **conclusion** deals with *loving* chocolate. This difference reveals the invalid **assumption** that the two are same, which solves the question.

That's it - you're ready to start solving **Argument Flaw** questions. Good luck!

Company A and Company B both produce gold watches. Company A's watches are more expensive than those sold by Company B. Therefore, the watches produced by Company A are of a higher quality than those produced by Company B.

The argument is flawed primarily because the author

directly relates the price of a product to the quality of a product

Nice!

This is an Argument Flaw question. You are required to locate the inherent flaw in the argument's conclusion or its underlying assumption. In this argument, sentences 1 and 2 are premises, citing facts. Sentence 3 is the argument's conclusion, as it begins with the conclusion conjunction *Therefore*:

Premise A: Company A and Company B produce gold watches
   +
Premise B: Company A's watches cost more than Company B's
   ≠
Conclusion: Company A's watches are of better quality than Company B's

The author's error is a faulty assumption that because something costs more, it is of better quality. This assumption can be defined as an incorrect relationship between price and quality, as stated by this answer choice.

John and Jane have been trying to conceive for several years without success. Their friends Luke and Lara have also been trying to have a baby for a few years. Three months ago, Luke and Lara moved to Germany. Two days ago, Lara called Jane and told her she was pregnant. Therefore, if Jane and John are serious about having a baby, they must move to Germany.

A major flaw in the argument above is that it

draws an analogy between two fundamentally different cases

assumes a cause and effect relationship between events that merely happened one after the other

fails to provide evidence to support its conclusion

The events do not follow a logical chronological order.

Incorrect.

This is an **Argument Flaw** question. You are required to locate the inherent **flaw** in the argument's **conclusion** or its underlying **assumption**. In this argument, sentences 1, 2, 3, and 4 are **premises**, citing **facts**. Sentence 3 is the**conclusion**, as it begins with the **conclusion conjunction** *Therefore*:

Premise A: John and Jane have been trying to have a baby for years
    +
Premise B: Luke and Lara have been trying to have a baby for years
    +
Premise C: 3 months ago Luke and Lara moved to Germany
    +
Premise D: 2 days ago Lara told Jane she was pregnant
    ≠
Conclusion: if John and Jane move to Germany, Jane will fall pregnant

The **conclusion** is indeed based on a specific case (that of Luke and Lara), but it does not **overgeneralize** it as it refers to one couple only. An **overgeneralization** would be to conclude that **all** couples who have been unsuccessfully trying to conceive must move to Germany.

John and Jane have been trying to conceive for several years without success. Their friends Luke and Lara have also been trying to have a baby for a few years. Three months ago, Luke and Lara moved to Germany. Two days ago, Lara called Jane and told her she was pregnant. Therefore, if Jane and John are serious about having a baby, they must move to Germany.

A major flaw in the argument above is that it

assumes a cause and effect relationship between events that merely happened one after the other

 Correct!

The **assumption** underlying the argument's **conclusion** is that the reason that Lara got pregnant is that she moved to Germany with Luke. In other words, it is assumed that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between moving to Germany (cause) and getting pregnant (effect). However,

the **premises** merely states that the two occurrences happened in close proximity rather than because of one another.

Critical Reasoning: Conclusion Weakening Questions

This question type is the most common Critical Reasoning question type. You will undoubtedly encounter Conclusion Weakening questions in the GMAT.

Conclusion Weakening questions ask you - surprise, surprise - to **weaken** the argument's **conclusion**. The correct answer is a **new premise** which weakens the argument's **conclusion**.

[Okay. How do I weaken the **conclusion**?](#)

?[Ask a tutor](#)

There are several ways of weakening a conclusion:

1. Questioning or invalidating an **assumption** underlying the conclusion.

Example 1:

On Wednesday, John was late for work. On Thursday, John was fired. Therefore, if Jane does not want to lose her job, she should get to work on time.

Which of the following, if true, most seriously weakens the above conclusion?

An **assumption** that underlies the conclusion is that John was fired BECAUSE he was late for work. In other words, being late was the CAUSE of John losing his job. However, this assumption is shaky - all we know is that there is a TEMPORAL (i.e., time) relation between being late and being fired. One happened closely after the other. There is no **premise** stating that being late was THE REASON for firing John.

Therefore, we can weaken the conclusion by showing this **assumption** to be invalid:

John was fired because he did not get along with his boss.

[Let's look at another example](#)

?[Ask a tutor](#)

Example 2:

Men do better than women on the GMAT. Therefore, men are more intelligent than women.

Which of the following, if true, most seriously weakens the above conclusion?

An underlying **assumption** in this argument is that the GMAT measures intelligence. We can show that this **assumption** is invalid. For example,

Women score as highly as men do on intelligence tests.

2. Questioning or invalidating the **conclusion** itself:

Let's illustrate this method through example 1:

On Wednesday, John was late for work. On Thursday, John was fired. Therefore, if Jane does not want to lose her job, she should get to work on time.

Which of the following, if true, most seriously weakens the above conclusion?

We can weaken this conclusion by adding information that makes it improbable or impossible:

Jane has won the Employee of The Year Award for the past 3 years.

3. Providing an **alternative explanation**. This explanation does not challenge the argument's **premise(s)** - it just offers an alternative explanation to what happened that replaces the author's **conclusion**.

We'll illustrate an **alternative explanation** by reviewing example 2:

Men do better than women on the GMAT. Therefore, men are more intelligent.

Which of the following, if true, most seriously weakens the above conclusion?

Let's look for an **alternative explanation** to the indisputable **fact** that men do better than women on the GMAT (alas, it's true). Top MBA programs aspire for gender and race diversity. A lot more men than women apply for top MBA programs. This means that men, on average, need a higher GMAT score to be accepted to top MBA programs than women do. Knowing that before taking the test might influence men and women's ambition, preparation for the GMAT, etc.

An answer choice that stated, for example, that men are generally more ambitious than women, would provide an alternative explanation, thus weakening the conclusion.

[Are there any more ways of weakening a **conclusion**?](#)

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

Yes, there is one last method:

4. Citing similar cases in which the conclusion does not hold. Let's illustrate this way through example 1:

On Wednesday, John was late for work. On Thursday, John was fired. Therefore, if Jane does not want to lose her job, she should get to work on time.

Which of the following, if true, most seriously weakens the above conclusion?

12 of John's colleagues were also late for work on Wednesday, and none of them was fired.

[How do I identify Conclusion Weakening questions?](#)

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

We can often identify Conclusion Weakening questions through one of following words or phrases:

weaken, call into question, cast doubt, undermine

Examples:

Which of the following, if true, **casts** the most **doubt** on the argument's conclusion?

Which of the following, if true, **undermines** the author's conclusion?

Which of the following, if true, **calls** the argument's conclusion **into question**?

[Are there any common distractors in this question type?](#)

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

<u>Common distractors</u>

1. Answer choices that **strengthen** the conclusion rather than **weaken** it.

For example, in example 1 above, the following answer choices strengthen the conclusion:

Jane's boss has been known to fire excellent employees simply because they were late for work.

12 of John's colleagues were also late for work on Wednesday, and all of them were fired too.

2. Answer choices that neither strengthen nor weaken the conclusion.

For example, in example 1 above, the following answer choices neither strengthen nor weaken the conclusion:

Jane works in Chicago.

John is an accountant.

You now know everything there is to know about Conclusion Weakening questions. Good luck!

Example:

A new advertisement is hanging in many of the East Coast subway stations. The poster proclaims: "Let the new biological pesticide containing micro-organisms be your new best friend! Because it's used by 4 out of every 5 florists, you can be sure that this product will answer your pesticide needs."

Which of the following, if true, most seriously undermines the advertisement's argument?

Though an efficient pesticide on the East Coast, the new biological pesticide has yet to undergo satisfactory experimentation in other areas.

The company promoting the new biological pesticide sent free samples of it to all florists in the urban centers of the East Coast.

Two years ago, most florists were using a chemical pesticide that was popular at the time while two years prior to that, another brand of chemical pesticide was considered the norm.

The Nursery Newsweek, published at the time of the advertisement, called on florists to move from chemical pesticides to biological ones, elaborating on the latter's advantages.

Pesticides are needed more in nurseries than in florist shops, where plants and flowers are usually held for short periods of time.

Good Job!

To solve this **Conclusion Weakening** question, first break down the argument. The first sentence is a **premise** providing factual data. The second sentence begins with a **reason conjunction** (*because*) so it's first part is a **premise** and its last part is the **conclusion**:

Premise A: new ads have been posted in the East Coast subway stations

+

Premise B: 4 out of 5 florists use the pesticide

=

Chairperson's claim: the pesticide is really good

Possible assumption: the florists objectively chose to use the pesticide

Weakening Data: ?

You are asked to find the answer choice that most **weakens** the advertisement's conclusion that people living on the East Coast should use the new biological pesticide, based on the **premise** that 4 out of every 5 florists chose it. The correct answer could be one that exposes the argument's **assumption**.

This answer choice **undermines** the **assumption** that florists chose the new pesticide objectively for its merits and quality, not because they received free samples. Once this is revealed to be incorrect, the **conclusion** that the pesticide should be regarded as really good because of this is **weakened**.

Critical Reasoning: Conclusion Strengthening Questions

Critical Reasoning **Conclusion Strengthening** questions ask you - surprise, surprise - to **strengthen** the argument's **conclusion**. The correct answer is a **premise** which strengthens the argument's **conclusion**.

These questions are very similar to another Critical Reasoning question type - **Conclusion Weakening** questions.

How exactly do I *strengthen* a **conclusion**?

There are several ways of strengthening a **conclusion**:

1. Identifying and strengthening an **assumption** underlying the conclusion.

Example 1:

On Wednesday, John was late for work. On Thursday, John was fired. Therefore, if Jane does not want to lose her job, she should get to work on time.

Which of the following, if true, most strengthens the above conclusion?

An **assumption** that underlies the conclusion is that John was fired BECAUSE he was late for work. In other words, being late is the CAUSE of firing John.

Therefore, we can **strengthen** the **conclusion** by choosing an answer choice which **shows this assumption to be valid**, such as:

Jane's boss has been known to fire excellent employees simply because they were late for work.

What are the other ways?

2. Strengthening or validating the **conclusion itself**:

Example 2:

Old way school requires that students submit handwritten papers. Modern way school requires that students type and print their papers. The average GPA of Modern way school's students is higher than that of Old way school's students. Therefore, schools should encourage students to type assignments rather than write them.

Which of the following, if true, would most strengthen the conclusion above?

The **conclusion** favors typing over handwriting. Strengthening it **directly** can be done by pointing out an advantage of typing or a disadvantage of writing. It is recommended to write down the following on the scratch paper:

type +

write -

This will help us focus on the answer we are looking for, and to have something measure answer choices up against. The correct answer could be the following, as it cites an advantage of typing:

More students neglect to submit assignments when they are required to write them than when they have to type them.

[Are there any more methods of strengthening a **conclusion**?](#)

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

3. Ruling out **alternative explanations**.

An alternative explanation can weaken a conclusion. So an answer choice that says that an alternative explanation is wrong serves to strengthen the explanation.

Let's illustrate this way through example 2:

<u>Example 2</u>:

Old way school requires that students submit handwritten papers. Modern way school requires that students type and print their papers. The average GPA of Modern way school's students is higher than that of Old way school's students. Therefore, schools should encourage students to type assignments rather than write them.

Which of the following, if true, would most strengthen the conclusion above?

If someone wanted to **weaken** our conclusion, they could try to give an alternative explanation to the difference in the average GPA of the schools - perhaps the cause is not the different paper writing styles, but rather a difference in IQ and socioeconomic background of the student bodies, for example. So an

answer choice that **eliminates** an alternative explanation will strengthen the conclusion, and might be the correct answer choice. For example:

Students in Old way school have the same average IQ and socioeconomic background as students in Modern way school.

[Are we done yet?](#)

4. Citing similar cases in which the **conclusion** holds. Let's illustrate this way through example 1:

On Wednesday, John was late for work. On Thursday, John was fired. Therefore, if Jane does not want to lose her job, she should get to work on time.

Which of the following, if true, most strengthens the above conclusion?

By choosing an answer choice which provides more examples that support the **conclusion**, we strengthen it. Here's an example of such an answer choice:

12 of John's colleagues were also late for work on Wednesday, and all of them were also fired.

[That's great, but you still haven't taught me how to identify **Conclusion Strengthening** questions.](#)

We identify Conclusion Strengthening questions through their common phrasings, which usually include the words **strengthen** or **support**:

Examples:

Which of the following, if true, most **strengthens** the author's conclusion?

Which of the following, if true, **supports** the argument's conclusion?

[Oh, and any common distractors I should avoid?](#)

Common Distractors

1. Answer choices that **weaken** the **conclusion** rather than **strengthen** it.

2. Answer choices that neither strengthen nor weaken the **conclusion**.

You now know everything there is to know about **Conclusion Strengthening** questions. Good luck!

Example:

Many energy bars contain vitamin supplements. Some of these bars provide 100% of the recommended daily vitamin consumption amounts. Nevertheless, a well-balanced meal, including a variety of food types, is a better source of vitamins than eating energy bars alone.

Which of the following, if true, would most strongly support the position above?

People who regularly eat energy bars that contain vitamin supplements often neglect to eat foods that contain these vitamins naturally.

Energy bars that contain vitamin supplements are as easy to digest as similar energy bars that do not contain vitamin supplements.

In many kinds of foods, the natural combination of vitamins with other nutrients results in these vitamins' higher usability to the body than the vitamin supplements that energy bars contain.

Few meals, as balanced and varied as they may be, provide the body with 100% of the recommended daily vitamin consumption amounts.

Energy bars containing vitamin supplements come in a variety of flavors and sizes.

Well done!

To solve this Conclusion Strengthening question, first break down the argument. The first two sentences are premises providing factual data. The last sentence is a judgment put forward by the author and should be treated as the argument's conclusion:

Premise A: many energy bars contain vitamins that have been added to them

   +

Premise B: some energy bars contain all the vitamins a person should consume in a day

   =

Conclusion: eating an actual meal with a few kinds of foods is better than eating an energy bar

Possible assumption: there is something about "real" food that makes it healthier to eat than an energy bar

Strengthening Data: ?

You are required to find data that strengthens the conclusion that an actual well-balanced meal is better than an energy bar. The correct answer could be one that confirms the argument's assumption.

This answer choice confirms the argument's assumption. Although the premises provide positive data about energy bars, the author concludes that actual meals are better. Therefore, by presenting an advantage that natural foods have over energy bars, this answer choice strengthens the author's position.

Critical Reasoning: Investigation Questions

Critical Reasoning Investigation Questions ask us to identify what information would be most valuable in assessing whether the argument's conclusion is correct. For example:

John spends hours every day driving through the congested city center to work. To save time, John is considering using the subway.

Which of the following would be most useful in determining whether John's plan will work?

The answer choices are questions or statements that describe factors in this judgment or plan, such as

(A) Whether a subway ticket is cheaper than the money John spends on gas

Your job is to find which answer choice contains a factor that is *relevant to evaluating* the conclusion. The correct answer choice refers to the factors which, if known, would indicate *whether or not* the conclusion is valid.

Note that the correct answer to this question will

describe a detail which, when checked, might help decide whether or not John's plan will succeed.

Correct!

In Investigation questions, we are looking for a question or variable which is crucial to the conclusion and is most significant in determining whether it is correct. The right answer choice will usually not strengthen or weaken the conclusion; it will simply present the most relevant factor that would help decide whether the conclusion is right or wrong.

We need to find out whether John's conclusion that taking the subway will take less time is valid. What is most important for us in this investigation?

Let's have a go at the question.

John spends hours every day driving through the congested city center to work. To save time, John is considering using the subway.

Which of the following would be most useful in determining whether John's plan will work?

(A) Whether a subway ticket is cheaper than the money John spends on gas

(B) Whether there are tram lines that can get him to work faster than the subway

(C) Whether there are future plans to build a bypass around the city center

(D) Whether reaching the nearest subway station from John's house would take a long time

(E) Whether there are fast food diners on his way to work

Very good!

This question is indeed crucial to the success of John's plan to save time by taking the subway. If it takes John too long to reach the nearest subway station, it will lower the chances of John's plan succeeding; if it doesn't take very long, John's plan could succeed.

At any rate, it is clear that out of the above factors, this answer choice is the most significant in determining whether John's plan will work.

So how do I approach Investigation questions?

As with all Critical Reasoning questions, begin with a breakdown of the argument. Establish what needs to be evaluated (the conclusion, the plan, the goal, etc.).

Test each answer choice for relevance: the four wrong answer choices simply refer to factors that are irrelevant to whether the argument's conclusion is right or not. The factor in the correct answer choice, however, could make or break the conclusion.

[What are the common phrasings for this question type?](#)

The phrasing of the question stem of Investigation Questions usually, but not always, includes the words investigation, evaluation, or useful.

1. Which of the following investigations is most likely to yield significant information that would help evaluate the researcher's hypothesis?

2. Which of the following, if it could be carried out, would be most useful in an evaluation of...

3. Which of the following would be most important to know in determining whether...

4. Which of the following would it be most useful to establish in order to evaluate the argument?

You now know all you need to know about Investigation Questions. Good luck!

Examples:

At the end of each day, Mr. Red takes a bag holding the daily earnings of his business to the bank. A week ago, when Mr. Red arrived at the bank, he noticed that the bag had been replaced by another similar bag, but one without any earnings in it. Mr. Red accused Mr. Green, a competitor, of the robbery. However, on that specific day Mr. Green claims to have been playing golf on a course far from Mr. Red's offices. Therefore, Mr. Green cannot be guilty of stealing the earnings.

Which of the following would it be most useful to establish in order to evaluate the argument?

[Whether the amount of money in Mr. Green's bank account is larger than the amount stolen](#)

[Whether it was the first time Mr. Green had played at that particular golf course](#)

[Whether the replacement bag had been bought at the same shop that Mr. Red had bought the original bag from](#)

Whether an employee of Mr. Red's business can verify the fact that Mr. Red indeed went to the bank that day

Yes!

To solve this **Investigation** question, first break down the argument. The first four sentences are **premises**. The last sentence begins with the **conclusion conjunction** *Therefore* so it's the argument's **conclusion**:

Premise A: every day Mr. Red takes his earnings to the bank

    +

Premise B: one week ago, Mr. Red's earnings were stolen

    +

Premise C: Mr. Red accused Mr. Green of stealing the earnings

    +

Premise D: Mr. Green claims to have been playing golf while the robbery took place

    =

Conclusion: Mr. Green is not responsible for the robbery

Vital factor: ?

You are required to find the **factor** which is **most crucial** to the author's conclusion. The correct answer is a question which could support or weaken the conclusion depending on its answer.

This answer choice suggests a way to test Mr. Green's side of the story. If someone can testify that they had seen Mr. Green playing golf, then his position would be strengthened. If no such witness can be found, then he has no evidence to prove himself innocent.

Critical Reasoning: "Complete The Argument" Format

"**Complete the Argument**" questions are Critical Reasoning questions that do not appear in the standard format of an argument, a question stem, and answer choices. Instead, this type of question begins with the question stem, which is then followed by an **incomplete argument**. You are required to choose the answer choice that most logically completes the argument:

Example:

Which of the following best completes the passage below?

According to archaeological evidence, the city of Neyrook, which lies at the feet of the volcanic Mt. Rangar, was populated roughly between the 9th and the 3rd centuries BCE. Geological surveys of the region show that Mt. Rangar erupted circa 254 BCE. Clearly, this data suggests that _____.

(A)

(B)

...

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However, despite their different **format**, "Complete the Argument" questions are in fact standard questions in disguise. Any question type can appear in this format, but the most common ones are **Inference** and **Conclusion Strengthening**.

In order to correctly solve these questions, you should first identify **what is the function of the missing argument part**. This can be done by breaking down the argument to **premises** and **conclusions**, and by using indicative words, figuring out what should come in place of the blank space.

Let's give it a try:

In the argument below, which words can help us identify the **function** of the blank space?

According to archaeological evidence, the city of Neyrook, which lies at the feet of the volcanic Mt. Rangar, was populated roughly between the 9th and the 3rd centuries BCE. Geological surveys of the region show that Mt. Rangar erupted circa 254 BCE. Clearly, this data suggests that _____.

suggests

Correct. The phrase *this data suggests* indicates that the last sentence is a judgement based on the premises - the argument's **conclusion**. This means that the **missing part** of the argument is the **conclusion**. This is supported by the **conclusion word** *clearly.*

Now, in which question type are you required to find the argument's **conclusion**?

[Inference](#)

Correct!

Inference questions require that you find the argument's **conclusion**. Since this incomplete argument is missing a **conclusion**, it is in fact an **Inference** question. The only difference is that it appears in the "**Complete the Argument**" format.

Let's try another one:

Which of the following most logically completes the argument?

Playroom surveys have shown that children are most attracted to action-figures that depict currently popular characters from films and TV shows, and care little about the action-figure functionality. However, manufacturers should still invest in developing unique action-figure functionality because _____.

What is the missing part in this argument?

[a premise](#)

Correct!

The argument ends with the word *because*, which is a **reason conjunction**. Reason conjunctions are usually followed by **premises**, not conclusions.

The **conclusion** of the argument is already stated in the argument - it is the **recommendation** (*should*) for manufacturers to invest in developing unique toy functionality.

This question asks that you complete the argument with a premise that supports the conclusion. Which standard question type requires the same?

[Conclusion Strengthening](#)

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Correct.

Conclusion Strengthening questions require that you find a premise that supports the conclusion. Therefore, the above "Complete the Argument" question is in fact a **Conclusion Strengthening** question, only in a different format.

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To conclude:

"**Complete the Argument**" questions begin with a question stem and include an **incomplete argument**. You are required to find the answer choice which most logically completes the argument.

To solve these questions:

1) **Break down** the argument and identify what part is missing (**premise**, **conclusion**, etc.)
2) According to the missing part, **identify the question type**
3) **Solve the question** as a standard question

==Example:==

Which of the following best completes the passage below?

Happygo, a car rental company, lowered its prices dramatically gaining many more customers than it once had. Consequently, the railway companies have reported a decrease of roughly 30% in the number of commuters traveling on their intercity routes. However, the urban bus companies claim that the numbers of commuters on their lines fluctuate but maintain an average that has not changed for the better or for the worse since Happygo made its price changes. It seems quite clear that _____.

[even at competitive prices, some people prefer buses over rented cars for travelling within cities](#)

[commuters using public transportation, such as buses, are far more punctual, on average, when compared to those using private vehicles](#)

[to compensate for the market shift created by Happygo's strategy, the urban bus companies lowered their prices as well.](#)

<mark>public transportation, whether by bus or by train, is always a compromise for commuters</mark>

<mark>Incorrect.</mark>

<mark>This answer choice is a new premise and not a conclusion drawn from the given **premises**; therefore, it cannot logically complete the argument. The data in the argument tells us that even though Happygo rented out cars at low prices, people continued using buses. Therefore, it could even be said that, in certain cases, they preferred buses above cars at any price and didn't compromise.</mark>

[Happygo's changes have affected the railway companies' revenues due to the latter's relatively low advertising budget](#)

How long do you think it took you to solve this question?

1 minutes and 10 seconds

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You underestimated the time this question took you. You actually solved it in 1 minutes and 48 seconds.

Very well done!

This is a "**Complete the Argument**" format question. The missing argument part follows the phrase *It seems quiteclear that* which indicates it is based on the premises. Therefore, the missing part is the **conclusion**, and this is an**Inference** question:

Premise A: Happygo lowered its prices gaining many more customers than it once had

　　+

Premise B: this caused the railway companies a decrease of 30% in the number of commuters traveling on their intercity routes

　　+

Premise C: the urban bus companies have not experienced any change in the number of their commuters

　　=

Conclusion: ?

This answer choice provides a logical **conclusion** to the argument. If after Happygo lowered its prices fewer people used trains, but the same number used buses, then it is likely that they simply prefer taking buses in the cities, regardless of price.

Critical Reasoning: Dialog Format (only practice)

Not all the **arguments** in Critical Reasoning questions follow the common format of a short paragraph. In some of the Critical Reasoning questions, the argument appears as a dialog between two speakers:

Example:

John: We need to make more money. I think you should ask for a raise.

Jane: I think you should look for a better paying job.

This type of argument format is called the **Dialog** format.

The Dialog format may be followed by question stems of any question type, but is most commonly followed by stems typical to **Conclusion Strengthening** or **Conclusion Weakening** questions.

Which of the following, if true, would contribute most to Jane's claim? [Conclusion Strengthening]

Which of the following casts the most doubt in John's assertion? [Conclusion Weakening]

Jane's argument is based on which of the following assumptions? [Assumption]

Luckily, arguments in the Dialog format still follow the same structure as regular arguments do, that is, they are made of **premises** and, usually, **conclusions**. Therefore, answer questions in the Dialog format in the same way you answer **Conclusion Strengthening**, **Conclusion Weakening**, or **Assumption** questions (or any other question type).

The only thing to remember is to focus on the speaker the question stem relates to. If, for example, the question stem relates to Jane's **conclusion**, look for judgments, opinions, predictions, or positions expressed by Jane.

Not everything the speakers say is an opinion. Some of the speakers use facts or givens (**premises**), upon which they base their arguments.

At this time, we would like to stress a point particular to **Conclusion Strengthening and Weakening in the Dialog format**

In the case of two people with opposing views, we might be asked to **strengthen** or **weaken** one of them. Note that in these cases, **weakening** person A is equivalent to **strengthening** person B and vice versa.

Thus, the correct answer to the following question is one that **strengthens Jane's claim**. This can be done directly by **strengthening Jane's claim**, or indirectly, by **weakening John's claim**. Give it a shot:

John: We need to make more money. I think you should ask for a raise.

Jane: I think you should look for a better paying job.

Which of the following, if true, would contribute most to Jane's claim?

John has already changed four jobs this year.

Looking for a fifth job in a year is bad for job stability, so this answer choice directly **weakens Jane's claim**. and thus is the opposite of what the question asks.

Jane just got a raise two weeks ago.

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Correct!

This answer choice **weakens John's claim** because the chances of getting another raise two weeks after the last one are low. Weakening John's claim **indirectly strengthens Jane's claim**, which is what we were asked to do. Thus, answer choice (A) is the correct answer.

That's it - you are now ready to solve questions in the Dialog format. It isn't that different from the questions you've solved so far. Good luck!

Examples:

Franjel: It has been reported that 10% of our adult population is illiterate. This is clearly the outcome of a flawed educational system.

Almosk: Technological progress has provided many solutions to assist people that are illiterate through audio. It is not the educational system, but these alternative forms of communication that have reduced the importance of being literate, allowing people to avoid having to learn how to read and write.

Which of the following, if true, most weakens Almosk's response to Franjel's explanation?

The educational system has undergone drastic reforms in the last 25 years, including changes in teacher training programs which were proven to be successful.

How long do you think it took you to solve this question?

1 minutes and 20 seconds

You slightly underestimated the time this question took you. You actually solved it in 1 minutes and 40 seconds.

Incorrect.

This is a Conclusion Weakening question in the Dialog format. You are asked to choose the answer choice which weakens Almosk's response (or strengthens Franjel's explanation):

Speaker	Franjel	Almosk
Premises	10% of the population is illiterate.	Technology helps people who are illiterate through the use of sound.
Conclusion	This is a result of the inefficiency of the educational system.	This sound technology means that people don't really need to learn to read or write.

This answer choice weakens Franjel's explanation and, therefore, strengthens Almosk's. If the educational system has been improved over the last 25 years, then it is less likely that it has flaws that are contributing to the illiteracy problem. Unfortunately, you were suppose to weaken Almosk's position.

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Franjel: It has been reported that 10% of our adult population is illiterate. This is clearly the outcome of a flawed educational system.

Almosk: Technological progress has provided many solutions to assist people that are illiterate through audio. It is not the educational system, but these alternative forms of communication that have reduced the importance of being literate, allowing people to avoid having to learn how to read and write.

Which of the following, if true, most weakens Almosk's response to Franjel's explanation?

Incorrect.

If anything, this answer choice strengthens Almosk's explanation by stating that to get a job doesn't require being able to read or write. It follows that if people can earn a living without having to learn how to read and write, they won't make the effort to do so.

Franjel: It has been reported that 10% of our adult population is illiterate. This is clearly the outcome of a flawed educational system.

Almosk: Technological progress has provided many solutions to assist people that are illiterate through audio. It is not the educational system, but these alternative forms of communication that have reduced the importance of being literate, allowing people to avoid having to learn how to read and write.

Which of the following, if true, most weakens Almosk's response to Franjel's explanation?

Incorrect.

This answer choice neither strengthens nor weakens Almosk's objection. The statistical method that produced the figure of 10% is beside the point. Since this figure was presented as a premise, we accept it as true - end of story. Focus on your goal of finding a statement to weaken Almosk's explanation or to strengthen that of Franjel.

Franjel: It has been reported that 10% of our adult population is illiterate. This is clearly the outcome of a flawed educational system.

Almosk: Technological progress has provided many solutions to assist people that are illiterate through audio. It is not the educational system, but these alternative forms of communication that have reduced the importance of being literate, allowing people to avoid having to learn how to read and write.

Which of the following, if true, most weakens Almosk's response to Franjel's explanation?

Incorrect.

This answer choice strengthens Almosk's objection while you're required to weaken it. It does so by giving us an actual example of a product that allows people to read without actually knowing how. This example supports the idea that since people don't have the need to know how to read or write, they don't make an effort to learn.

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Franjel: It has been reported that 10% of our adult population is illiterate. This is clearly the outcome of a flawed educational system.

Almosk: Technological progress has provided many solutions to assist people that are illiterate through audio. It is not the educational system, but these alternative forms of communication that have reduced the importance of being literate, allowing people to avoid having to learn how to read and write.

Which of the following, if true, most weakens Almosk's response to Franjel's explanation?

The increased number of audio stimulii and high volume levels to which humans of all ages are being subjected has resulted in hearing problems in one third of the population.

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Impressive!

This answer choice weakens Almosk's explanation for the decrease in illiteracy. If people can't hear, an audio product will not be able to help them "read" or "write". Therefore, it is not logical that such audio products allowed people to give up on the need to become literate.

Critical Reasoning: Dialog Analysis Questions

Dialog Analysis questions are a relatively uncommon type of question on the GMAT, but one which appears from time to time. In this question type, the argument usually appears in the **Dialog** format, citing the arguments of two sides. You are required to assess, explain, or describe the second side's response to the first:

Example:

Sous chef: Since the new dish requires twice the chicken we've used for our previous dish, I think we should order twice the chicken we normally order.

Chef: Don't forget that new dishes sell well, so we should order four times the chicken we normally order.

The chef responds to the sous chef's opinion by

In a way, **Dialog Analysis** question resemble **Boldface Type** questions - you are asked to analyze the relationship between the first side's argument and the second's response, and find the answer that best explains your analysis.

How am I supposed to *explain* the reply?

You can better understand the second side's response by properly breaking down the first sides' argument. Let's look at the sous chef's argument again: *since* is a **reason conjunction** so it's followed by a **premise**:

Premise: Since the new dish requires twice the chicken we've used for our previous dish

I think is a **conclusion phrase** meaning the sous chef's **conclusion** follows; the **conclusion** is also recognized by the fact that it is the sous chef's **recommendation** (*should*):

Conclusion: I think we **should** order twice the chicken we normally order

Possible Assumption: we will sell just as many of the new dish as we did of the old dish

Now, try to establish whether the second side agrees with the first or not. Then, determine in what way the second side attacks or supports the first side's argument. The chef replies by adding new information that the sous chef overlooked (i.e., the sous chef **assumed** otherwise)...

Premise: new dishes sell well,

...and adds an alternate **recommendation**, which follows the **conclusion conjunction** *so*:

Conclusion: so we **should** order four times the chicken we normally order

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Now try to answer the question:

The chef responds to the sous chef's opinion by

[providing new information that enhances the sous chef's argument](#)

While the chef adds new information (new dishes sell well), he does not do so to *enhance* the sous chef's argument.

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You can better understand the second side's response by properly breaking down the first sides' argument. Let's look at the sous chef's argument again: *since* is a **reason conjunction** so it's followed by a **premise**:

Premise: Since the new dish requires twice the chicken we've used for our previous dish

I think is a **conclusion phrase** meaning the sous chef's **conclusion** follows; the **conclusion** is also recognized by the fact that it is the sous chef's **recommendation** (*should*):

Conclusion: I think we **should** order twice the chicken we normally order

Possible Assumption: we will sell just as many of the new dish as we did of the old dish

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Now, try to establish whether the second side agrees with the first or not. Then, determine in what way the second side attacks or supports the first side's argument. The chef replies by adding new information that the sous chef overlooked (i.e., the sous chef **assumed** otherwise)...

Premise: new dishes sell well,

...and adds an alternate **recommendation**, which follows the **conclusion conjunction** *so*:

Conclusion: so we **should** order four times the chicken we normally order

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Now try to answer the question:

The chef responds to the sous chef's opinion by

[adding information that exposes the sous chef's assumption and offering an alternative conclusion](#)

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Correct!

The chef presents information that attacks the sous chef's assumption (Don't forget that new dishes sell well) and suggests an alternative conclusion based on this new information (so we should buy even more chicken).

What are the common phrasings of this question type?

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The most common phrasing of a Dialog Analysis question stem is X responds to Y by. However, other versions for this stem exist, for example:

X challenges Y's argument/opinion/position by doing which of the following?

Be on the lookout for those weird ones!

That's it - you are now ready to solve some **Dialog Analysis** question. Good luck!

Examples:

Adviser: Flights and accommodation for members of our administration to overseas destinations seriously depleted last year's annual budget. I propose a reduction in the number of such administrative journeys in order to complete the upcoming year with a more significant profit than that of last year.

Foreign minister: Such visits often lead to financial partnerships that can form the basis for economic growth through cooperation.

The foreign minister responds to the advisor's proposal by

[challenging the position taken by the adviser by highlighting a flaw in the logical reasoning that was used to connect the visits to the low profits](#)

How long do you think it took you to solve this question?

1 minutes and 10 seconds

Close enough - you took 1 minutes and 18 seconds to answer this question.

Incorrect.

To answer this Dialog Analysis question, first break down the adviser's argument. The first sentence provides information (a premise) while the last sentence begins with the phrase *I propose,* letting us know that it's the planand the argument's conclusion:

Premise: overseas visits last year carried high costs
    =
Conclusion/Plan: this year let's have fewer visits overseas

Possible Assumption: the visits don't earn anything

Next, break down the foreign minister's response:

(i) the visits often lead to the creation of revenue

The link suggested by the adviser seems quite logical - the visits are expensive and, therefore, affect the profits. The foreign minister doesn't not argue with this point. Therefore, it would be wrong to say that the foreign minister was *highlighting a flaw* in the adviser's logic.

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Adviser: Flights and accommodation for members of our administration to overseas destinations seriously depleted last year's annual budget. I propose a reduction in the number of such administrative journeys in order to complete the upcoming year with a more significant profit than that of last year.

Foreign minister: Such visits often lead to financial partnerships that can form the basis for economic growth through cooperation.

The foreign minister responds to the advisor's proposal by

Right on!

The foreign minister does not deny the adviser's *facts*, but has a problem with the suggested plan of limiting the visits. The counter premise is the fact that visits ultimately lead to further revenues (*economic growth*) and, therefore, make the costs of the visits less significant, and even negligible to a certain point.

Critical Reasoning: Causality Questions

When GMAT argument uses evidence of a correlation to support a conclusion of causation (X→Y), consider whether:

1. Something else is the cause of one or both of the correlated items (Z- Y or Z-X and Y).
2. Causality is reversed; the purported effect is actually the cause(Y →X).
3. The correlation is more coincidence(X and Y are unrelated).

Critical Reasoning: Representativeness Questions

On the test day if you're asked an assumption question and you notice that the stimulus focuses on a study, survey, poll, or experiment, know that a choice that essentially says: " The sample was representativeness," is likely to be correct.

When you encounter an argument based on the findings of a study, survey, experiment, or analogy, compare the population of the evidence and check the simple with that of the conclusion.

Critical Reasoning: Plans, Proposals, and Predictions Questions

For any argument involves plans or proposals, any answers that introduces an alternative and competing consideration weakens the argument, any answer that rules out a possible alternative consideration strengthens it.

For any argument involves predictions, in order to weakens such an argument, you want to find an answer choice that says the trend will change or on longer hold truth. To strengthen it, look for an answer choice that says: " future events will unfold as expected."

When you see a question regarding a statement about the future, identify assumptions about the feasibility, usefulness, and relevance of the future conditions.

1. To weaken an argument whose conclusion is a plan or proposal, show that the plan or proposal on its own term, will not work.
2. To weaken an argument whose conclusion is a prediction, show why the prediction is unlikely to come to pass.
3. To weaken an objection to a plan, proposal, or prediction, seek evidence that it will work or come true.

Critical Reasoning: Profit/Revenues/Expenses Questions

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So far we have categorized Critical Reasoning questions into types according to what the **question stem** asked us to do (e.g., Assumption questions and Paradox questions).

Profit/Revenues/Expenses questions are different. They deal with the content of the argument. These questions deal with business. If the argument mentions **revenues**, **expenses** and **profit** (at least two out of the three), you might find it useful to write down the following on your erasable noteboard:

profit = revenues - expenses

Show me an example, please

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Last year, there was a sharp rise in the price of movie tickets in Country X. However, the profit of the entertainment industry went down 15%.

The first premise deals with **revenues**, telling us they went up. We would expect that in such a case, profit will go up as well (assuming that the number of tickets sold remained approximately the same). The second premise, however, tells us that **profit** went down, which creates a paradox.

When the question provides information on two out of the three parameters (in this case, **revenues** and **profit**), this indicates the answer choice should revolve around the third parameter (**expenses**). In this case, the expenses of the movie industry should account for the paradox.

Contrary to a former estimation made by the head of the tourism industry of Country X, there was no rise in the number of tourists or in the average sum of money spent by each tourist in the past year. There was, however, a steep increase of almost 20 percent in profits from the tourist industry in that time span.

Which of the following statements, if true, help to explain the rise in profits?

The tourists last year came mostly from developed countries, whereas previously most tourists came from developing countries.

A rise of 20% was estimated for last year in the amount of tourists expected to frequent Country X.

Following a long strike, employers in the tourism industry were forced at the beginning of last year to raise salaries by 20%.

A change in the foreign ministry of Country X, which was authorised at the beginning of last year, has made it much easier for tourists to enter the country.

A general rise in unemployment throughout the country enabled employers in the tourism industry to significantly cut salaries at the beginning of last year.

How long do you think it took you to solve this question?

1 minutes and 10 seconds

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Very good! You took 1 minutes and 12 seconds to answer this question.

Paradox resolved!

This is a **Paradox** question, so it is made up of **premises** only; you need to find a **new premise** which best resolves the apparent **discrepancy** between the existing premises:

Premise A: There hasn't been any increase in the number of tourists or the sum each tourist spent on average, i.e.**no rise in revenues**.

✖

Premise B: There has been an increase of almost 20% in profits from the tourist industry, i.e. **a steep rise in profits**.

Resolving Premise: ?

A steep decrease in salaries lowers the **expenses**, a fact which goes a long way to help explain how even though the **revenues** stayed the same, the overall **profits** (=revenues-costs) grew by almost 20%.

Critical Reasoning: Trend vs. Absolute Number

Fluctuating (changing) values, such as rates, currencies, prices, population, etc., may be described by:

(a) An absolute number, which is an exact value at a given moment. e.g. 5$, 17 per hour; or
(b) A trend, which is a consistent change in this value, such as rise, fall, growth, etc.

The fact that a value exhibits a trend of rising\falling does not mean its absolute number is high\low and vice versa.

Example:

Car prices are falling and food prices are rising. [trend]
Still, a car costs much more than a banana. [absolute number]

Critical Reasoning: Product vs. Brand

A product is the type of object or service that consumers purchase.
A *brand* is the name of a specific variety of the product sold by a certain company.

The two are not interchangeable, just as not all jeans are *Levis* and not all tissues are *Kleenex.*

Example:

Car sales dropped by 12% this year.[Product]
However, *Toyota* sales leapt up by 31%.[*Brand*]

Vocabulary for Critical Reasoning: Flaw/Flawed

A *flaw* (noun) is a defect, fault or imperfection.

The word *flawed* is an adjective meaning defective, faulty or imperfect.

Example:
John is not perfect. He is **flawed**. He has several **flaws**, which is only human.

These words are very important in the GMAT. They are used in both Critical Reasoning and in the Analysis of an Argument essay.

Vocabulary for Critical Reasoning: Underlie

To underlie means to be at the basis of, to lie under something or be situated under something.

Example:
A defect in a single part of the brain **underlies** the reading difficulties of dyslexics.

In the GMAT Verbal section, you are likely to see the word *underlie* (or *underlying*) in assumption Critical Reasoning questions.

Example:
Which of the following is an assumption **underlying** the argument's conclusion?

Vocabulary for Critical Reasoning: Call into question

Call into question means about the same as *weaken*.

Example:
A Canadian court decision **calls into question** thousands of Toronto traffic tickets because a sign was not written in both English and French.

The phrase *call into question* is often used in Critical Reasoning Conclusion Weakening questions.

Example:
Which of the following, if true, **calls into question** the argument's conclusion?

Other words/phrases that are also used in Critical Reasoning Conclusion Weakening questions and are similar in meaning are *cast doubt and undermine.*

<mark>Vocabulary for Critical Reasoning: Cast doubt</mark>

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Cast doubt means about the same as *weaken*.

Example: A recent study **casts doubt** on the theory that there is water on Mars.

The phrase ***cast doubt*** is often used in Critical Reasoning Conclusion Weakening questions.

Example: Which of the following, if true, **casts** the strongest **doubt** on the argument's conclusion?

Other words/phrases that are similar in meaning are *undermine and call into question.*

<mark>Vocabulary for Critical Reasoning : Undermine</mark>

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Undermine means about the same as *weaken*.

Example: A presidential candidate tries to **undermine** his or her political rivals.

The word ***undermine*** is commonly used in Critical Reasoning Conclusion Weakening questions.

Example: Which of the following, if true, **undermines** the author's conclusion?

Other words/phrases that are also used in Critical Reasoning Conclusion Weakening questions and are similar in meaning are *cast doubt and call into question.*

Sentence Correction Section:

Out of 41 questions in the Verbal section, 14-17 questions are Sentence Correction questions.

Recommended Time: 1:30 minutes per question

Structure:

- Sentence with underlined part, with 0-2 mistakes

- Answer choice A repeats the original underlined part (may or may not be correct)

- Answer choices B-E are alternatives

Method of Operation: eliminate incorrect answer choices and choose the last answer choice standing:

- **Grammatically incorrect / logical answer choices are immediately eliminated**

- **Stylistically flawed answer choices may or may not be eliminated based on the other options**

- **Answer choices that change the meaning are eliminated**

So in Sentence Correction sentences you may expect the following types of mistakes:

1. Grammatical / illogical mistakes (immediately eliminate the answer choice)

2. Stylistic flaws (weigh this answer choice against others)

3. Meaning change (eliminate, but we check this last)

You will not find any spelling mistakes on the GMAT.

We want to identify and correct them, but sometimes there just isn't a perfect answer choice: sometimes there are only **grammatically correct** but **stylistically flawed** answer choices and **grammatically incorrect** but **stylistically correct** answer choices.

In these cases, we'll choose grammatical correctness over style. The correct answer to a Sentence Correction question can be **stylistically** flawed - it can be **redundant** or **ambiguous** - but it can **NEVER** be **grammatically** incorrect.

Sentence Correction: Concise vs. Short & Redundant vs. Long

The GMAT preference for **concise** sentences does not mean that the **shorter** an answer choice, the better. If an answer choice is short because it omits parts of the original sentence and thus creates a loss of meaning, it is not more **concise** than the original - it's just shorter. Being **concise** means saying **the same** thing in fewer words.

Examples:
1. John loves Jane with all his heart.
2. John loves Jane.
3. John loves Jane wholeheartedly.

Sentence 2 is shorter than sentence 1 is, but it is not more concise than sentence 1 is because sentence 2 **loses** some of the meaning expressed by sentence 1.

Sentence 3, on the other hand, is both shorter and more concise than sentence 1 is as it expresses the **same** meaning in fewer words.

The same goes for **redundancy**. Not every long answer choice is **redundant**. An answer choice is **redundant** only if we can express the **exact same meaning** in fewer words.

The lesson to be learned here is that you shouldn't **automatically** choose the shortest answer choice under the assumption that the longer ones are **redundant**. By the same token, do not **automatically** eliminate the longest answer choice under the assumption that it is **redundant**.

Make sure that shorter answers contain **everything** that's been stated in the original sentence. If they don't, they're probably incorrect.

Sentence Correction Work Order

1. **Read** the entire sentence and identify 0-2 mistakes.

2. Go over the 5 answer choices **vertically**, focusing **only** on the part(s) in which the **original** sentence is mistaken. Eliminate answer choices that **repeat** the **original** mistake(s). If you're left with one answer choice only - choose it.

3. If you're left with more than one answer choice, eliminate all **grammatically incorrect/ illogical** answer choices. If you're left with one answer choice only - choose it.

4. If you're left with more than one answer choice, eliminate all **stylistically flawed** answer choices (i.e., **redundant**and/or **ambiguous** ones). If you're left with one answer choice only - choose it.

Read and eliminate: **O**riginal -> **G**rammatical errors / illogical -> **S**tylistic -> **M**eaning change -> Doesn't **F**it

Sentence Correction: What to do if we don't find a mistake in the original sentence

We don't know on which part of the answer choices we should focus, so we must read answer choices (B)-(E) from beginning to end. This means that solving the question will probably take longer than usual, but we have no choice. Of course it's better to answer questions both **quickly** and **correctly**, but if we cannot do so, it's better to answer **correctly** and a bit more slowly than to answer **quickly** but **incorrectly**.

The elimination process is the same as always: we eliminate **grammatically** incorrect and **illogical** answer choices first. If we're left with more than one answer choice, we eliminate **stylistically** flawed answer choices (i.e.,**redundant** and **ambiguous** ones). If we're left with more than one answer choice, we eliminate answer choices that change the **meaning** of the original sentence and, finally, if we're still left with more than one answer choice, we eliminate answer choices that do not **fit** into the original sentence.

Sentence Correction: What to do if we don't find a mistake in the original sentence

?Ask a tutor

If we don't find a mistake in the original sentence, it can be because

A. There's no mistake in it

B. There is a mistake but we didn't identify it.

?Ask a tutor

Since we cannot be absolutely sure that there is no mistake, it is too risky to simply choose answer choice (A) and move on to the next question. Remember that a mistake can

be **redundancy** or **ambiguity**, not just a **grammatical** mistake, so even if the sentence looks perfectly OK from the point of view of **grammar**, (A) might still not be the correct answer.

?Ask a tutor

We don't know on which part of the answer choices we should focus, so we must read answer choices (B)-(E) from beginning to end. This means that solving the question will probably take longer than usual, but we have no choice. Of course it's better to answer questions both **quickly** and **correctly**, but if we cannot do so, it's better to answer **correctly** and a bit more slowly than to answer **quickly** but **incorrectly**.

The elimination process is the same as always: we eliminate **grammatically** incorrect and **illogical** answer choices first. If we're left with more than one answer choice, we eliminate **stylistically** flawed answer choices (i.e., **redundant** and **ambiguous** ones). If we're left with more than one answer choice, we eliminate answer choices that change the **meaning** of the original sentence and, finally, if we're still left with more than one answer choice, we eliminate answer choices that do not **fit** into the original sentence.

?Ask a tutor

Example 1

Heart disease and cancer rank as the nation's leading causes of death

(A) and cancer rank as the nation's leading causes
(B) and cancer ranks as the nation's leading cause
(C) and cancer ranks as the nation's leading causes
(D) as well as cancer rank as the nation's leading causes
(E) and also cancer rank as the nation's leading causes

We read the original sentence and find no mistake. We have to read answer choices (B)-(E). The first answer choices to be eliminated are the **grammatically** incorrect ones - (B) and (C) – in which the **plural subject** *Heart disease and cancer* does not agree with the **singular verb** *ranks*.

We're left with (A), (D) and (E). Now we look for **stylistically flawed** answer choices, and we eliminate answer choices (D) and (E) because they're **redundant** (*as well as, and also*).

That leaves us with only one answer choice – (A). Now we know it's **correct** and that we didn't miss anything when we originally read it.

?Ask a tutor

Example 2

In 1812, Dietrich Nikolaus Winkel invented the metronome, <u>which is a device that produces a regulated</u> audible pulse usually used to establish a steady tempo for the performance of musical composition s

(A) which is a device that produces a regulated
(B) which is a device that produces a regular
(C) a device that produce a regulated
(D) which is a device that produce a regulated
(E) a device that produces a regulated

We read the original sentence and find no mistake. We have to read answer choices (B)-(E). The first answer choices to be eliminated are the **grammatically incorrect** ones. Answer choices (C) and (D) are thus eliminated<u>first</u> because the **singular subject** *device* does not agree with the **plural verb** *produce*.

We're left with (A), (B) and (E). Now we look for **stylistically** flawed answer choices. We can eliminate answer choices (A) and (B) because the words *which is* are **redundant**.

That leaves us with only one answer choice, (E), which is the correct answer.

In this case, even though the **original** sentence was **grammatically correct**, it was **redundant**. It's really hard to detect the **redundancy** when we read the **original** sentence. We probably realize that the **original** sentence is **redundant** only when we see answer choices (C) and (E). That's exactly why when we don't find a mistake in the **original** sentence, we cannot assume that it's fine and choose answer choice (A). Rather, we have to read all answer choices before making our decision.

?Ask a tutor

You may also have noticed that the sentence includes other variations. e.g *regular/regulated*. These are minor changes which do not really affect the meaning of the sentence - both are fine, without any context or evidence to the contrary. Often, variations are introduced in the sentence without impacting the correctness of the answer choice. Make sure you distinguish changes that **correct** the sentence or **create mistakes** from changes that are mere variation, and may **distract** you from finding significant errors.

<mark>A **subject noun** in the form of an **unconjugated verb** - **Verb+ing** or **to Verb** - is considered a **singular subject**.</mark>

<u>Examples</u>:

J. K. Rowling, in her Harry Potter <u>books, frequently and cleverly using Latin, Latin-like and Latin-based</u> words.

<u>books, frequently and cleverly using Latin, Latin-like, and Latin-based</u>

<u>volumes, frequently and cleverly use Latin, Latin-based, and Latin-like</u>

<u>book, frequently and cleverly using Latin, Latin-based, and Latin-like</u>

<u>books, frequently and cleverly uses Latin, Latin-based, and Latin-like</u>

<u>series, frequently and cleverly using Latin, Latin-based, and Latin-like</u>

How long do you think it took you to solve this question?

1 minutes and 10 seconds

You overestimated the time this question took you. You actually solved it in 26 seconds.

Incorrect.

This answer choice repeats the **original grammar** mistake.

This sentence does not utilize a **conjugated verb**; every sentence must have at least one. *Using* is not a **conjugated verb**.

?Ask a tutor

J. K. Rowling, in her Harry Potter books, frequently and cleverly using Latin, Latin-like and Latin-based words.

books, frequently and cleverly uses Latin, Latin-based, and Latin-like

?Ask a tutor

Great!

This answer choice corrects the original mistake by replacing the **un-conjugated verb** *using*, with the **conjugated verb** *uses.* The **singular verb** *uses* correctly matches the **singular subject** *J. K. Rowling.*

Continue session

Example

1. **Preparing** well for the GMAT **is** essential.

2. **To take** the GMAT without preparing well for it **is** not a smart move.

Only the word *problem* can be the **subject** of a sentence as only it can **perform actions** (in this case the action is simply being).

Normally, the **subject** is what comes BEFORE the **verb**, but sometimes the **subject** comes <u>after</u> the **verb,** as in this case in which the **subject** is *a problem*, not *There*. Let's turn this sentence into **plural**:

There **are** problem**s** here.

Once the **verb** became **plural** (*are*), what changed is the **subject**: the **singular** *a problem* became **plural** - *problems.*The word *There* did not change. This proves further that *There* is not the **subject** of the sentence.

It is important in the GMAT to look at the **verb** and ask what the **subject** of the **verb** is, i.e., what or who **performs that action,** and to be aware that the **subject** can come <u>after</u> the **verb.**

<mark>Sentence Correction: Subject Verb Agreement - A Complex Subject/Long Distance between Subject and Verb</mark>

?Ask a tutor

In order to create challenging **Subject Verb Agreement** questions, GMAT writers use several tricks that are meant to confuse us.

The mistake in the sentence "John are a man" stands out, and it's hard to imagine anyone missing it or failing to correct it. Unfortunately (but not really surprisingly), the **Subject Verb Agreement** mistakes on the GMAT are more subtle.

?Ask a tutor

The first trick that GMAT writers use is creating **long and complex sentences**, in which identifying the **subject** and the **verb** is not trivial, or creating sentences in which the **subject** and the **verb** are so far apart, that by the time you reach the **verb**, you've already forgotten whether the subject is **singular** or **plural**.

<u>Example</u>: **Jane**, an intelligent attractive woman of 28 who has many hobbies, **love** John.

This sentence is incorrect: the **subject** (*Jane)* is **singular**, and the **verb** *love* is **plural**. However, this mistake is not so easy to spot since the **subject** and the **verb** are so far apart. If the part between the commas were omitted, the mistake would become a lot more obvious:

Jane love John.

Another factor adding to the difficulty of identifying the mistake in this sentence is that the word that appears right before the **plural verb** *love* is also **plural** - *hobbies*. Using a **plural** noun before a **plural** verb makes the sentence sound correct.

Continue

STOP SIGNS

This brings us to the extremely important notion of Stop Signs - certain structures whose appearance in the sentence helps us identify the **topic** that the question tests as well as the **mistake** in that sentence. Since so many topics are checked in Sentence Correction questions, it'll take forever to check each and every one of them in each and every Sentence Correction question. Stop Signs are much fewer, and they're easier to spot in the sentence - assuming, of course, that you understand them, remember them and actively seek them in every one of the 14-17 Sentence Correction questions you'll encounter in the Verbal Section.

Our first Stop Sign is:

A long, complex subject or a great distance between subject and verb

What does it mean? A stop sign is a sentence structure, a particular phrase, or a situation which might indicate a possible grammar/logic/style error. For example, if you read a long sentence and realize that by the time you have reached the **verb** of the sentence, you have forgotten what is the **subject**, i.e. who is the 'doer' of the 'action', that is a stop sign of the 'long distance between subject and verb' structure. This stop sign is an indication that you should go back, find the subject, and see if it agrees with the verb, as separating the subject and the verb is a common tool used by the GMAT question writers to confuse and hide SVA errors.

A stop sign will not *always* lead to an error, but it is an indication of a **possible** error. Sometimes the stop sign will seem to lead to a dead end, e.g. on reviewing the **subject** and the **verb**, you may find that they agree and there's no error in the original sentence after all. However, it is still worth it to actively seek and recognize the various stop signs, as they may provide a way to evaluate and eliminate a few other answer choices and increase your chances of quickly and accurately answering the question. For example, even if the **original sentence** ends up not committing a **subject verb agreement** error, some of the other answer choices may do so. Recognizing the stop sign gives you a clue as to what to look for in the remaining answer choices in order to eliminate them.

One way GMAT writers create confusing Subject Verb Agreement questions is by using a **complex subject** in the form of *X of Y*.

Example: Three members **of** an organization

In these cases, the verb should agree with the *X* part of the subject - the part that comes **before** *of*.

Thus, if *X* is singular, then the **entire subject** is singular and the **verb** should be singular.

Example: **A test** of 150 questions **is** long (The test is long, not the questions).

If *X* is plural, then the **entire subject** is plural and the **verb** should be plural.

Example: **Three members** of an organization **are** waiting outside (the three members are waiting, not the organization).

Whenever you see a Sentence Correction question whose subject is in the form of *X of Y*, chances are that this is a Subject Verb Agreement question. This makes it a Stop Sign:

an X of Y subject

The number of individuals of historically under-represented minorities, notably African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, who earn degrees in physics and pursue successful careers in physics in the United States is increasing thanks to the work of the APS Committee on Minorities (COM).

The numbers of individuals of historically under-represented minorities, notably African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, who earn degrees in physics and pursue successful careers in physics in the United States has been

How long do you think it took you to solve this question?

1 minutes

You slightly underestimated the time this question took you. You actually solved it in 1 minutes and 15 seconds.

Incorrect.

This answer choice is **grammatically** incorrect. The **plural subject** *numbers* does not agree with the **singular verb** *has been*.

Two Stop Signs help us identify this question as a **Subject Verb Agreement** question and identify this possible error:

- A long complex subject / a long distance between the subject and the verb

- The subject is in the form of *X of Y*

?Ask a tutor

The number of individuals of historically under-represented minorities, notably African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, who earn degrees in physics and pursue successful careers in physics in the United States is increasing thanks to the work of the APS Committee on Minorities (COM).

The number of individuals of historically under-represented minorities, notably African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, who earn degrees in physics and pursue successful careers in physics in the United States are

Incorrect.

This answer choice is **grammatically** incorrect. The **singular subject** *number* does not agree with the **plural verb** *are*.

?Ask a tutor

The number of individuals of historically under-represented minorities, notably African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, who earn degrees in physics and pursue successful careers in physics in the United States isincreasing thanks to the work of the APS Committee on Minorities (COM).

A number of individuals of historically under-represented minorities, notably African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, who earn degrees in physics and pursues successful careers in physics in the United States is

?Ask a tutor

Incorrect.

This answer choice is **grammatically** incorrect. The **singular verb** *pursues* does not agree with the **plural subject** *African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans*.

In addition, this answer choice **changes the meaning** of the original sentence, by changing the **subject** from *The number* to *a number* (=several), and thus making the sentence **illogical**.

Why did you choose this answer choice?

I didn't see that 'pursue' changed to 'pursues'

It's very important to pay attention to every small detail in Sentence Correction questions. Whether a **verb** agrees in number with the subject often depends on the presence or absence of the letter **-s**.

?Ask a tutor

The number of individuals of historically under-represented minorities, notably African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, who earn degrees in physics and pursue successful careers in physics in the United States isincreasing thanks to the work of the APS Committee on Minorities (COM).

The number of individuals of historically under-represented minorities, notably African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, who earn degrees in physics and pursue successful careers in physics in the United States is

?Ask a tutor

Excellent!

This answer choice is the only **grammatically correct** one. The **singular subject** *number* must agree with the **singular verb** *is*.

What helps us identify this question as a **Subject Verb Agreement question** and helps us detect these mistakes are the following Stop Signs:

A plural subject made up of singular nouns connected by *and*

An X of Y subject

Characterizing the various eras of the comic book industry is quite a complicated thing to do and involves identifying the dominant trends in each era, such as naturalistic stories in the Silver Age.

is quite a complicated thing to do and involves

How long do you think it took you to solve this question?

50 seconds

You overestimated the time this question took you. You actually solved it in 26 seconds.

While this answer choice is **grammatically** correct, it is not the best of the five answer choices. There is another **grammatically** correct answer choice which is **stylistically** better than this one.

Did you read the other answer choices?

Yes, I went over all of them

Good! That's what you should have done. It's a shame you didn't see that one of them was stylistically better than this answer choice. Better luck next time (which is when you click **Try again**).

Characterizing the various eras of the comic book industry is quite a complicated thing to do and involves identifying the dominant trends in each era, such as naturalistic stories in the Silver Age.

is quite complicated and involves

Excellent!

While the original sentence is **grammatically correct**, this answer choice improves on it by discarding the **redundant** phrase *"thing to do"*. The presence of the phrase, while grammatically correct, is not necessary - the sentence works quite well without it (*Characterizing...is complicated*).

In a choice between two answer choices which are **grammatically** and **logically correct**, the one with the better **style** wins. The more **concise** manner of expressing the same idea is considered better **style**.

Sentence Correction: Subject Verb Agreement - Verb Precedes Subject

?Ask a tutor

As you already know, in 95% of English sentences, the **subject** comes BEFORE the **verb**. In these cases, we know how to identify the **subject**: it's everything that comes before the first **verb** except what's separated from it by a comma.

That leaves us with 5% of the sentences in which the **subject** comes AFTER the **verb**. In these sentences, the subject is not where we expect it to be, and identifying it is not trivial. That's exactly why GMAC, the GMAT writers, uses such sentences a lot more frequently than in 5% of Subject Verb Agreement questions. If you encounter such a sentence, be sure that what it checks is Subject Verb Agreement.

Stop Sign: The verb precedes (comes before) the subject

How can we identify such sentences? Simple: our rule for identifying the subject does not work.

Example: There is a boy in the playground.

Normally, the **subject** is what comes BEFORE the **verb**, but in this case the **subject** is *a boy*, not *There*. In order to further identify the problem, turn this sentence into **plural**:

There are boys in the playground.

Once the **verb** became **plural**, whatever else had to be changed to agree with it is the **subject**: the **singular** *a boy* became **plural** - *boys*. *There* did not change. This further proves that *There* is not the **subject** of the sentence.

Here is how it works with a few other examples:

Beneath the tree sleeps **a child** --> Beneath the tree sleep **children**.

In the shadows lurks **a dangerous animal** --> In the shadows lurk **dangerous animals**.

Crucial to health is **avoiding smoking** ---> Crucial to health are **avoiding smoking and exercising regularly**.

It is important in the GMAT to look at the **verb** and ask what the **subject** of the **verb** is, what or who performs that action and to be aware that the **subject** can come after the **verb**.

Sentence Correction: Subject Verb Agreement - A Plural Subject Consisting of Singular Nouns that are Connected by 'and'

?Ask a tutor

Often GMAT writers create challenging Subject Verb Agreement questions by using a **subject** that makes you wonder whether it is **singular** or **plural**. One way of doing this is using a **plural subject** that's made up of two or more **singular** nouns that are connected by the word *and*. For example:

The man Jane loves and <u>the man who loves Jane is</u> not the same man.

(A) the man who loves Jane is
(B) a man who loves Jane is
(C) the man who love Jane is
(D) a man who loves Jane are
(E) the man who loves Jane are

The **subject** is **plural**: The man Jane loves **and** the man who loves Jane. However, if you're not careful or you don't read the entire sentence, you might be fooled to think that the **subject** is **singular** and that the **singular verb** *is* is thus fine.

So how do we bypass this trap? Through the help of a Stop Sign, of course.

Stop Sign: A plural subject made up of singular nouns that are connected by *and*

Whenever we see a Sentence Correction question that includes this Stop Sign, we know that the topic this question checks is Subject Verb Agreement and that we should make sure that the **verb** is **plural**.

Let's solve the above question: The original Subject Verb Agreement mistake eliminates answer choices (A), (B) and (C). Answer choice (D) is eliminated because of the unnecessary change of *the* to *a*. The correct answer is (E).

Continue

?Ask a tutor

Pay Attention!

Only the word *and* makes the **subject** automatically **plural**. If other words, such as *as well as* or *along with*, connect the **singular** nouns that make up the **subject**, the **subject** is the **first** noun only.

Examples:
1. John **and** Jane **are** lovers.
2. John **as well as** Jane **is** American.
3. John **along with** Jane **goes** on vacation once a year.

Students often wonder about Subject Verb Agreement with a **subject** that's made up of nouns connected by the word *or*. This is not something that's checked on the GMAT, so you needn't know or memorize it. However, we will give you the answer just so that you know: the **verb** should agree with the noun that comes **after** *or*.

Examples:
1. Many people or **just John is**...
2. John or **two women are**...

Sentence Correction: Subject Verb Agreement - A Pseudo-Plural Singular Subject

One way of creating confusing Subject Verb Agreement questions is to use a **singular** subject that seems to be **plural**.

There are TWO reasons why a **singular subject** seems to be **plural**:

1. Subject ends with -s
The following words are considered **singular subjects** although they end with -s:
news, thesis, hypothesis, crisis, analysis, politics, physics, mathematics, economics, ethics, athletics
Example: The **crisis was** solved.

2. Collective Nouns
Collective nouns are nouns which refer to more than one person/animal. They are considered **singular subjects**. The following words are examples of common collective nouns:
audience, committee, congregation, family, flock, group, staff, team.
Example: The **team is** playing really well tonight.

The use of such words as **subject** is quite common in the GMAT, and we have to look out for them. Words or structures that are indicative of a certain topic or mistake are called Stop Signs. Here's the Stop Sign that's indicative of the aforementioned Subject Verb Agreement mistake:

Stop Sign: a pseudo-plural **singular** subject

Whenever you see one of these words as the subject of a Sentence Correction question, check Subject Verb Agreement and make sure that the **verb** is **singular**.

An opposite confusion - that is, of a **plural** subject that seems to be **singular** - is also something to look out for although it includes only a single word: *police*, and is thus much less common. For some reason, the word *police* is considered a **plural** subject. Thus, we should say, "The **police are** looking for the serial killer".

Sentence Correction: Advanced Work Order

Now that you've learned the concept of Stop Signs, you're ready for the advanced and final work order in Sentence Correction questions. It is basically the same work order, with the integration of Stop Signs into stage 1:

1. **Read** the ENTIRE sentence and identify 0-2 mistakes in it with the help of Stop Signs.

2. Go over the 5 answer choices **vertically**, focusing **only** on the part(s) in which the **original** sentence is mistaken. Eliminate answer choices that **repeat** the **original** mistake(s). If you're left with one answer choice only - choose it.

3. If you're left with more than one answer choice, eliminate all **grammatically incorrect / illogical** answer choices. If you're left with one answer choice only - choose it.

4. If you're left with more than one answer choice, eliminate all **stylistically flawed** answer choices (i.e., **redundant** and/or **ambiguous** ones). If you're left with one answer choice only - choose it.

5. If you're left with more than one answer choice, eliminate all answer choices that change the **meaning** of the original sentence. If you're left with one answer choice only - choose it.

6. If you're left with more than one answer choice, eliminate all answer choices that **do not fit** into the rest of the sentence (i.e., the part of the original sentence which is **not** underlined).

You may find it easier to remember the work order according to the acronym ROGer iS Mean and Fit (**R**ead and eliminate --> the **O**riginal mistake --> **G**rammatical errors / illogical sentences --> **S**tylistic flaws --> change of **Mean**ing --> answers that don't **Fit**.

Sentence Correction: Tenses - Verb Forms Conjugated vs. Unconjugated Verbs

Verbs may be either conjugated or unconjugated. A conjugated verb is a verb which distinctly points out the time of the action it describes. For example, the following verbs indicate either past, present or future tense:

write --> present
writes --> present
wrote --> past
will write --> future

An unconjugated verb is a verb which is not attributed to any specific time. Notice how each of the verbs below remain the same in sentences which describe actions taken at different times:

writing:

John is writing (present); *Jane had been writing* (past); *John will start writing* (future)

to write:

John wants to write (present); *Jane's boss refused to write her a check* (past); *Jane will try to write a novel*(future)

written:

It is written in the stars (present); *Jane had written a complaint letter* (past); *John's name will be written down in the chronicles* (future)

Okay. So there are certain verb forms that are conjugated and other verb forms which are unconjugated.

?Ask a tutor

Correct.

The conjugated verb forms are:

present (V1): wait, waits, give, gives
past (V2): waited, gave
future: will
future past: would

The unconjugated verb forms are:

Verb+ing (also called *present participle*): waiting, giving 现在分词
To + Verb (also called *infinitive*): to wait, to give 不定式
the third form or V3 (also called *past participle*): waited, given 过去分词

Note: Sometimes the conjugated **verb** form of the **past** (V2) will be the same as the unconjugated **verb** form V3. Therefore a **verb** like waited has the same form, whether conjugated or unconjugated. The same is true for **verbs** like work or talk - both the conjugated V2 and unconjugated V3 forms are the same (worked/talked).

However, if it is an exception **verb**, then the V2 and V3 forms are different: The V2 form of the **verb** eat is ate and the V3 form is eaten.

An easy way to see this is: If the **past** tense (**V2**) ends with 'ed' (e.g. walked), then the **V3** form will be the same (walked).

Conjugation Rule

There is a simple rule in the English language that applies to <u>all sentences</u>:

The first, and only the first, verb in a sentence (or a clause) must be conjugated.

In other words, the first verb in a sentence/clause must be conjugated and all other following verbs must be unconjugated. <mark>The reason behind this rule is that we need one indication - no more, no less - of the tense of the sentence.</mark>

In sentences with only one verb, the single verb (being the first) must be conjugated:

John gives (1st) to charity every year.
Jane smiled (1st) at John.

In sentences that contain two verbs (which are not separated by a conjunction or a comma), the first verb is conjugated and the second is unconjugated:

John is (1st) singing (2nd) at the bar.
They had (1st) to listen (2nd) to him for hours.
The karaoke was (1st) stopped (2nd, V3 form).

The same goes for three- or four-verb sentences:

Jane had (1st) been (2nd) worrying (3rd) about John all night.
The police have (1st) been (2nd) trying (3rd) to help (4th) John.

Base Form vs. Present Form

Base form is the simplest and most basic form of the verb, without any additions or alterations: *give, fly, drink*.

Most verbs are used in the present time just as they are - *I give, they fly, we drink* - when they do not describe singular third person (*he gives, she flies, it drinks*). In these cases, the base form and the present form are **identical**.

In order to understand the difference, the best verb to look at is *be*:

Base form: *be*
Present form: *am, is, are*

However, since in all other verbs these forms are identical, **there is no way to tell the two apart by looking at the verb only** - the answer must be extracted from the context.

Examples:

1. Children laugh a lot.
2. John made Jane laugh.

In example1, laugh is conjugated - it is the **present** form (V1).

In example 2, laugh is unconjugated - it is the **base** form.

Sentence Correction: Sentence vs. Clause vs. Fragment

?Ask a tutor

Achieving a high score on the Verbal section of the GMAT requires clear thinking. That's why it's important to brush up on both advanced and basic ideas. Let's take a look at a few of the building blocks of English sentences.

What is a sentence, actually?

?Ask a tutor

What makes a sentence a sentence?

A **sentence** is a group of at least two words that consists of a **subject** and a **conjugated verb**. A **sentence** typically expresses an independent statement, question, request, or command. The first word in a **sentence** begins with a capital letter. A **sentence** must end with one of the following:

- period (.)

- question mark (?)

- exclamation mark (!)

Sentences can consist of one **clause** or more.

One what? What's a clause?

?Ask a tutor

What's a clause?

A **clause** is a pair of words or a group of words that consists of a **subject** and a **conjugated verb**.

A **sentence** consists of at least one **clause**.

Example: John is tired because he didn't get enough sleep last night.

This example is a single **sentence** that consists of two **clauses**:

1. John is tired

2. he didn't get enough sleep last night

And last but not least - a fragment

?Ask a tutor

What's a fragment?

A **fragment** is a pair of words or a group of words that does not consist of both a **subject** and a **conjugated verb**. A **fragment** either contains a **verb** but not its **subject** or a **subject** but no **verb**.

Let's do some "sentence surgery" to see how the following example can be divided into the building blocks we've learned about:

<u>Example</u>: I didn't know that the cat ran across the street.

The above example is a **sentence**, as can be seen from the fact it ends with a **sentence** ender (a period).

We can divide this **sentence** into two **clauses**:

1. I didn't know

2. the cat ran across the street

We can also divide the sentence into several **fragments**, such as *the street, across the street, ran across the street, the cat*, etc.

[Why do I need to know all this?](#)

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This knowledge is useful in the GMAT in both **Sentence Correction** questions and the essay writing section (called AWA).

In Sentence Correction, all the questions should be **sentences**, and they all end with a period. If the question is not a **sentence**, but rather a **fragment**, that's the original mistake. Eliminate answer choice (A) and look for answer choices that create a complete **sentence**.

<u>Example</u>:

John <u>driving home</u> fast.

(A) driving home

(B) to drive home

(C) driven home

(D) home

(E) drives home

In the above question, there is no **conjugated verb** (*driving* is **unconjugated**). Therefore, the question is a **fragment** rather than a **sentence**.

This enables us to eliminate answer choice (A) right away.

Answer choices (B) and (C) can be eliminated because they repeat the **original** mistake as they use **unconjugated verb forms**.

Answer choice (D) has no **verb** at all and can thus be eliminated.

The correct answer is (E), which uses the **conjugated verb** *drives*. It creates a complete **sentence**: *John drives home fast*.

OK. What else?

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All Sentence Correction questions consist of a **single** sentence, ending with a period. There are no Sentence Correction questions that are made up of more than one **sentence**. You'll never see a sentence ender, such as a period, in the middle of a Sentence Correction question.

Finally, some Sentence Correction questions consist of one clause, but most consist of **several clauses**.

Example:

1. John drives home fast. (one clause)

2. John drives home fast <u>and</u> he usually arrives on time. (2 clauses)

2. John drives home fast <u>because</u> he is late. (2 clauses)

Note that clauses within a sentence MUST be suitably connected, usually by a **conjunction** (and, but, or, so, because, although, while, when, etc.), a **semicolon** (;), or other forms such as the **relative clause** (which, who, whose). Omitting this connecting element, and especially replacing it with a **comma** (,), is a grammatical mistake.

Incorrect: John drives home fast he is late

Incorrect: John drives home fast, he is late.

Sentence Correction: Tenses - Present Simple and Progressive

Present Simple

Present Simple is used to describe the following actions:

1. Actions that occur at a certain **frequency** (e.g., usually, sometimes).

2. Facts and generalizations. For example, *The Earth **revolves** around the sun*.

The structure for **Present Simple** sentences is simple - the first (and often only) verb in the sentence must be in the **present form (V1):**

It **rains** here all the time.
Birds from Scandinavia **fly** south every winter.
I **am** rarely cold.

The following time expressions are used in **Present Simple** sentences to describe the frequency of the action the sentence discusses. These expressions indicate that the sentence is in the **Present Simple** tense (underlined in the above examples):

always, all the time, usually, generally, regularly, often, sometimes, rarely, seldom, hardly ever, never

every (second, minute, hour, day, week, month, year, evening, morning, winter, etc.)

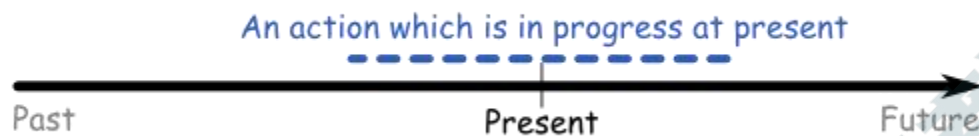once (a day, a week, in a lifetime, etc.)

Present Progressive

Sentences in **Present Progressive** describe an action that is in progress **at present**.

An action which is in progress at present

Past   Present   Future

The structure for **Present Progressive** sentences is as follows: the **first verb** in the sentence is **am**, **is** or **are**, depending on the subject; the **second verb** in the sentence is in the **Verb+ing** form.

Present Progressive: **am / is / are   +   Verb+ing**

Examples:

It **is raining** here <u>right now</u>.
Birds from Scandinavia **are** <u>currently</u> **flying** over Germany.
Jane **is mixing** the salad <u>at the moment</u>.

The following time expressions are used in **Present Progressive** sentences to indicate that the action is taking place at the present time. These expressions indicate that the sentence is in **Present Progressive** (underlined in the above examples):

now, right now, at the moment, currently, presently

A sociological study of medical students, conducted in 2001, reveals that <u>many of the reasons respondents cited for choosing a career in medicine stem</u> from early childhood perceptions of what it means to be a 'good doctor'.

<mark>Stem from= originated from, come from.</mark>

<mark>many of the reasons respondents cited for choosing a career in medicine stem</mark>

[many of the reasons respondents cited for choosing a career in medicine stems](#)

[much of the reasons that respondents cited for choosing a career in medicine stem](#)

[much of what respondents cited as reasons for choosing a career in medicine stems](#)

[many of the reasons respondents cited for choosing a career in medicine are stemming](#)

How long do you think it took you to solve this question?

1 minutes and 10 seconds

You slightly overestimated the time this question took you. You actually solved it in 59 seconds.

Incorrect.

This answer choice is **grammatically incorrect**. The **singular verb** *stems* does not agree with the **plural article** *many (of the reasons ...)*.

What helps us identify this question as a **Subject Verb Agreement** question as well as identify the mistake is the following Stop Sign:

x of y subject

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A sociological study of medical students, conducted in 2001, reveals that <u>many of the reasons respondents cited for choosing a career in medicine stem</u> from early childhood perceptions of what it means to be a 'good doctor'.

Well done!

This answer choice makes correct use of the **article** *many* to describe a **count noun** *reasons*.

Sentence Correction: Tenses - Past Simple and Progressive

Past Simple

Past Simple is used to describe the following actions:

1. Historical facts: e.g., *The Egyptians **built** the pyramids*.

2. Actions that occurred at a specific point in the past: e.g., *John **met** Jane in 2005.*

The structure for **Past Simple** sentences is simple - the first (and often only) verb in the sentence must be in the **past form (V2):**

John **missed** the bus to work <u>yesterday</u>.
Jane **worked** hard on her thesis <u>during the summer</u>.
Churchill **was** the English Prime Minister <u>between 1951 and 1955</u>.

The following time expressions are used in **Past Simple** sentences to describe the time in which the action was performed. These expressions indicate that the sentence is in the **Past Simple** tense (underlined in the above examples):

yesterday, the day before yesterday

last (Friday, week, month, year, winter, etc.)

(a second, a minute, an hour, a day, 400 years) **ago**

during (the summer, the exam period, World War II, the celebrations)

in (835 A.D, the past, the 1860s)

when (followed by another sentence in the past simple tense: when he met her, when the custom was common, when they were married, when she sliced the onion)

Past Progressive

Sentences in **Past Progressive** describe an action that was **in progress** (a) at a certain point in the past; (b) when another action occurred; or (c) while another action was taking place.

Examples:

(a) Last night at 20:00 John and Jane **were having** dinner.
(b) John almost fell asleep while he **was driving** home.
(c) John **was watching** TV while Jane **was working** out.

The structure for **Past Progressive** sentences is as follows: the **first verb** in the sentence is **was** or **were**, depending on whether the subject is singular or plural; the **second verb** in the sentence is in the **Verb+ing** form.

Past Progressive: **was / were + Verb+ing**

Examples:

Last night at 20:00 John and Jane **were having** dinner.
John almost fell asleep while he **was driving** home.
John almost fell asleep as he **was driving** home.
John **was watching** TV while Jane **was working** out.

The following time expressions indicate **Past Progressive.**

while, as (followed by Past Progressive)

Sentence Correction: Tenses - Present Perfect

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Present Perfect is used to describe the following actions:

1. Actions that occurred at an **unknown** or **unspecified** time in the past.
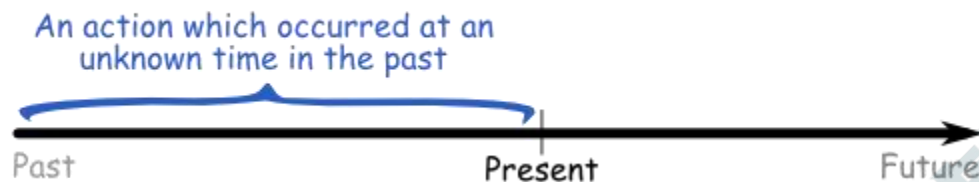
Example:

John **has** already **been** to Paris.

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2. Actions that occurred **several times** in the past.

Example:

John **has been** to Paris five times.

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3. Actions that **began** in the **past** and are still **relevant/in progress** at **present**.
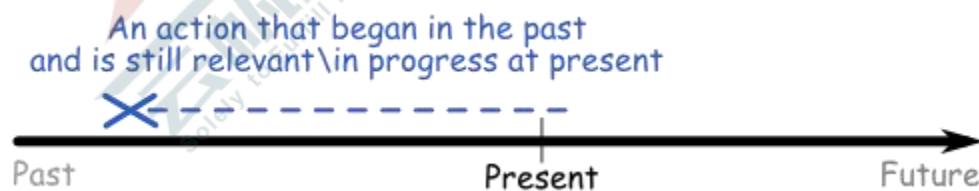
Example:

John **has known** Jane for six years.

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The structure for **Present Perfect** sentences is as follows: the first verb is **has/have**, depending on the subject, and the second verb is in the **third form (V3)**.

Present Perfect: **has / have** + **Verb in the third form (V3)**

Examples:

John **has known** Jane <u>for six years</u>.
John **has** not **cooked** dinner <u>yet</u>.
John and Jane **have lived** in Seattle <u>since 2005</u>.

The following time expressions indicate that the sentence is in the **Present Perfect** tense (underlined in the above examples):

for, since, already, just, yet, recently, lately, so far, ever, never, several times

Present Perfect or Past Simple?

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In Sentence Correction Tense questions on the GMAT, you'll often need to decide between **Present Perfect** and **Past Simple**. Therefore, the distinction between the two is important.

We use the **Present Perfect** to indicate that an action happened at an **unspecified** time before now. The exact time is not important. Therefore, we cannot use the **Present Perfect** with specific time expressions, such as *yesterday*, *ago*, and *last*. Such specific time expressions indicate **Past Simple** as **Past Simple** describes actions that took place at a **specific** point in the past.

So, which of the following sentences is correct?

John has already cooked dinner.

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Correct! We don't know when **exactly** John cooked dinner, so the sentence shouldn't be in **Past Simple**. Also, *already* is a time expression that's indicative of **Present Perfect**.

Sentence Correction: Tenses - Past Perfect

Past Perfect is used to describe the following actions:

1. Actions that had been completed before a certain **point** in time in the **past**.

Example:

John **had moved** to Seattle before 2006.

2. Actions that had been completed before **another action** in the **past**.

Example:

John **had moved** to Seattle before he met Jane.
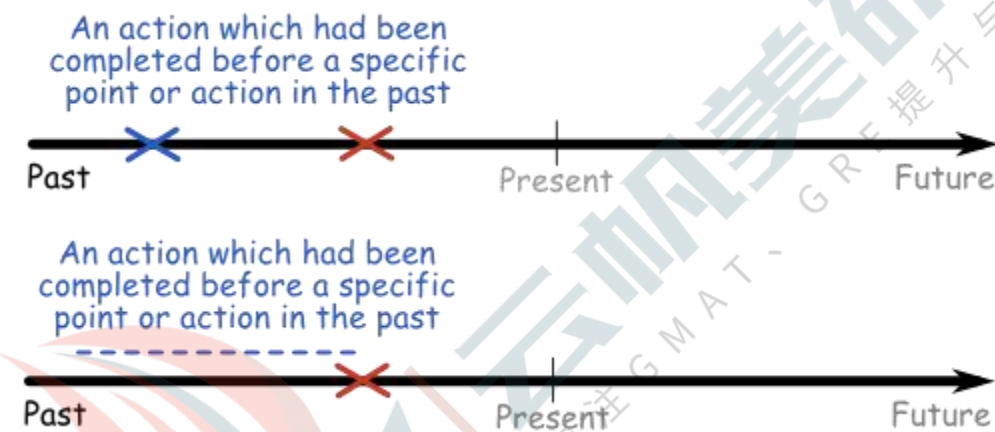
The structure for **Past Perfect** sentences is as follows: the first verb is **had**, and the second verb is in the **third form (V3)**.

Past Perfect: **had** + **Verb in the third form (V3)**

Examples:

John and Jane **had met** two years before they got married.

John and Jane got married two years after they **had met**.

The following time expressions indicate that the sentence is in the **Past Perfect** tense (underlined in the above examples):

before, after, by the time, until

Sentence Correction: Tenses - Reported Speech

In GMAT **Sentence Correction** questions, the correct use of tenses in **Reported Speech** is also checked.

What is **Reported Speech**? When we **report** what another person has said, asked, claimed, etc. rather than cite the person's exact words.

Example:
Direct Speech: "I will love you forever", John told Jane.
Reported Speech: John told Jane that he would love her forever.

In **Reported Speech**, when the **reporting** verb (e.g., *told*, *asked*, *claimed*, *argued*) is in the **Past** tense, the following verbs (i.e., what is reported) should also be in the **Past**. That's why in the above example, the **Future** tense verb *will love* was changed to **Future Past** (*would love*).

The **Stop Sign** to look out for is:

Reported Speech with a reporting verb in Past tense

When you spot a question with this **Stop Sign**, make sure that the following verbs are in the **Past** Tense.

Incorrect: Jane **said** that she **will** arrive at noon.
Correct: Jane **said** that she **would** arrive at noon.

Incorrect: The taxi driver **asked** the man where he **wants** to go.
Correct: The taxi driver **asked** the man where he **wanted** to go.

Here are some commonly used reporting verbs in GMAT Sentence Correction **Reported Speech** questions:

- announced

- maintained

- claimed

- argued

In a public announcement, the deputy president of the regional workers union stated in a passionate way that verbal consolation on the government's part would not relieve the despair and demoralization felt by union members.

stated in a passionate way that verbal consolation on the government's part would

stated in a passionate way that verbal consolation on the government's part will

passionately stated that verbal consolation on the government's part would

stated passionately that verbal consolation on the government's part will

have passionately stated that verbal consolation on the government's part would

How long do you think it took you to solve this question?

1 minutes and 20 seconds

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You overestimated the time this question took you. You actually solved it in 36 seconds.

Very well done!

This answer choice is both **grammatically** correct and **stylistically** effective.

In **Reported Speech**, when the **reporting** verb is in the **Past** tense (*stated*), the following conjugated verbs should also be in the **Past**, as is indeed the case in this answer choice (*would relieve*).

Stylistically, replacing the **four-word phrase** *in a passionate way* with the **single word** *passionately* resolves the original **redundancy**.

Sentence Correction: Once in the Past Always in the Past

Now that you have learned the six tenses checked in the GMAT - Present Simple, Present Progressive, Present Perfect, Past Simple, Past Progressive and Past Perfect - you're ready to learn a tense-related rule that has to do with sequences of tenses, specifically, the correct use of **Past** tenses.

Can you see anything wrong with the following sentence?

> As a toddler, John loved animals and is always eager to play outside.

Yes.

The rule here is:

> Once in the **Past**, always in the **Past**.

Put differently, if a sentence is anchored in the past, it cannot include verbs in Present or Future tense.

Let's look at the example again:

> **As a toddler**, John **loved** animals and **is** always eager to play outside.

Sentences in the **Past** tense often begin with a certain word or phrase that informs us about when the events described in them took place. Let's call these words or phrases **anchors**. In our example, the **anchor** is *As a toddler*. It anchors the rest of the sentence in the Past because the rest of the sentence describes what John did as a toddler, which was in the past.

The example then correctly continues with an action in the **Past** tense - *John loved animals*. However, the following phrase *and is always eager* is in the **Present**. This unexplained change is both a **logical** and a **grammatical** error. When a sentence begins in the **Past** tense, logic has it that it continues in the **Past** tense by default.

Incorrect: As a toddler, John loved animals and **is** always eager to play outside.
Correct: As a toddler, John loved animals and **was** always eager to play outside.

Exceptions:

Well, when a sentence begins in the **Past**, it should continue in the **Past** by default except when there is a clear indication of a tense change. Let's look at an example:

There **was** a time when it was believed that Cancer **could** not be overcome, but with **today**'s medical advancements, more and more patients **are** beating the disease.

The sentence begins with a Past **anchor** - *There was a time* - and an action in the **Past** - *it was believed*. The next phrase - *but with today's medical advancements* - is a clear indication that a change of tense is needed. The sentence is no longer giving us information about the **Past**, but instead about the **Present**. Therefore, the rest of the sentence appears in the **Present** tense (*are beating*).

In December 1980, John Lennon was shot four times in the back outside his Manhattan apartment building and has died on the way to the hospital.

John Lennon was shot four times in the back outside his Manhattan apartment building and has died on the way to the hospital

shot four times in the back outside his Manhattan apartment building, John Lennon died on his way to the hospital

John Lennon shot in the back four times outside his Manhattan apartment building and died on his way to the hospital

John Lennon died on the way to the hospital after being shot four times in the back outside his Manhattan apartment

outside his Manhattan apartment building, John Lennon was shot four times in the back and has died on his way to the hospital

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Incorrect.

While this answer choice corrects the **original** mistake, it changes the **meaning** of the original sentence. In the **original** sentence, John Lennon *was shot* whereas in this answer choice he *shot*. This change also creates a **grammatical** mistake because the verb *shoot* requires an object (i.e., shoot someone/something), which is missing in this answer choice.

Did you notice the change from *was shot* to *shot*?

[No, I didn't.](#)

The lesson to be learned here is the importance of paying close attention to details in the answer choices.

Do not assume that the only thing that changes in the answer choices is the part which was flawed in the **original** sentence. Different answer choices can make changes in various parts of the sentence.

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In December 1980, <u>John Lennon was shot four times in the back outside his Manhattan apartment building and has died on the way to the hospital</u>.

[John Lennon died on the way to the hospital after being shot four times in the back outside his Manhattan apartment](#)

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Incorrect.

While this answer choice corrects the **original** mistake and is **grammatically** correct, it changes the meaning of the original sentence as a result of the omission of the word *building*.

Did you notice this omission?

[No, I didn't.](#)

The lesson to be learned here is the importance of paying close attention to details in the answer choices.

Do not assume that the only thing that changes in the answer choices is the part which was flawed in the **original** sentence. Different answer choices can make changes in various parts of the sentence.

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In December 1980, <u>John Lennon was shot four times in the back outside his Manhattan apartment building and has died on the way to the hospital</u>.

[outside his Manhattan apartment building, John Lennon was shot four times in the back and has died on his way to the hospital](#)

Incorrect.

This answer choice repeats the original mistake. The sentence begins in the **Past** tense with the anchor *In December 1980* and continues in the **Past** tense with the phrase *John Lennon **was** shot*. By default, this sentence should remain in the **Past** tense. *Has died*, however, is in the **Present** (**Present Perfect**). Remember our rule:

Once in the **Past**, always in the **Past**.

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In December 1980, <u>John Lennon was shot four times in the back outside his Manhattan apartment building and has died on the way to the hospital</u>.

[shot four times in the back outside his Manhattan apartment building, John Lennon died on his way to the hospital](#)

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Very good!

The sentence begins in the **Past** tense with the anchor *In December 1980.* This answer correctly uses the **Past** tense verb *died*.

Note that in this answer choice the verb *shot* is not in the *Past* but in the **third form** (V3).

Sentence Correction: Parts of Speech - Overview

1. What are parts of speech?

Parts of speech are a way of categorizing words not according to their **meaning** but according to their **syntactic function**.

For example, categorizing the word *table* as a **noun** does not relate to its **meaning** but rather to the fact that it has **singular** and **plural** forms (*table* and *tables*, respectively). Similarly, classifying the word *big* as an **adjective** does not relate to its **meaning** but rather to the fact that it describes a **noun** (e.g., *big table*), has one form only (there's no **singular/plural** - there's no such thing as *bigs*, there's only *big*), etc.

Often we can tell which **part of speech** a word is without even knowing its **meaning**. For example, we can tell that the word *prorogation* is a **noun** because it ends with *-tion* - a typical **noun** suffix - although most of us don't know what it **means**. And in order to do well in **Sentence Correction** questions, it is much more important to identify which **part of speech** a word is than to know what that word **means**.

2. Which parts of speech are there?

There are eight main categories of words, or eight **parts of speech**. The five parts of speech that we need to know in order to answer Parts of Speech questions are the following:

A. Noun

A **noun** is a word used to name
a **person** (e.g., *John*, *Clinton*, *woman*, *president*), **animal** (e.g., *cat*, *lions)*, **place**(e.g., *Rome*, *China*, *school*, *home*), **thing** (e.g., *chair*, *game*) and **abstract idea** (e.g., *dream*, *freedom*, *love*).

B. Adjective

An **Adjective** describes a **noun**. In English, an **adjective** usually comes before the **noun** it describes. Examples of adjectives are *big*, *red*, *beautiful*, *incredible* and *good*.

C. Verb

A **verb** expresses actions, events, or states of being. Examples of **verbs** are *loves*, *walked*, *to sleep*, *driven*, *will*, *be*, *have* and *talking*.

D. Adverb

The main function of an **adverb** is to describe a **verb**. An **adverb** indicates the manner of or the degree to which an action was performed and answers questions such as *how?* and *how much?* **Adverbs** typically end with a ly suffix*(examples: diligently, sufficiently, incredibly),* but not always so: *fast* and *slow* can also be used as **adverbs** to describe verbs: *he ran fast.*

E. Article

An **article** (e.g., *a*, *some*, *many*) describes a **noun**, giving us mostly **quantitative** information about the **noun**.

The other three **parts of speech** are **Pronoun**, **Conjunction** and **Preposition**. We will discuss them in detail separately throughout the course.

3. Parts of Speech Mistakes in GMAT Sentence Correction questions

There are two types of Parts of Speech mistakes in Sentence correction questions.

A. using the wrong part of speech

Incorrect: John is not a **violence** man.
Correct: John is not a **violent** man.

The mistake in the incorrect sentence is using the **noun** *violence* instead of the **adjective** *violent*. The **meanings** of the words *violence* and *violent* are related, but their **syntactic** function is different.

B. Missing/Wrong article

Incorrect: In 1980, John was baby.
Correct: In 1980, John was **a** baby.

The mistake in the incorrect sentence is that there is no **article** when there should be one. The correct sentence adds the article *a* before the **noun** *baby*.

In other cases, the mistake is not the absence of an **article** but using the wrong **article**. For example,

Incorrect: John knows **much** things.
Correct: John knows **many** things.

Sentence Correction: Parts of Speech – Possession

's can only be used when the subject is concrete(tangible and real not abstract)

Of should be used when the subject is abstract.

Using *'s* to express **possession** is only allowed with **concrete nouns**. In the case of an **abstract noun**, the correct way to express **possession** is by using *of*.

Remember: anything you can perceive with your senses is a **concrete** noun: table, chair, cheese, sister, boulevard, landscape, bacteria, etc.

Anything you cannot perceive with your senses is an **abstract** noun: mood, happiness, theory, idea, freedom, equality, etc.

Many people envy those who <u>work from home, but what these people do not realize is that working from home requires being disciplined</u>.

work from home, but what these people do not realize is that working from home requires being disciplined

works from home, but what these people do not realize is that working from home requires being disciplined

works from home, but what these people do not realize is that working from home requires discipline

work from home, but what these people do not realize is that working from home requires discipline

work from home, so what these people do not realize is that working from home requires being disciplined

Incorrect.

This answer choice repeats the **original** Parts of Speech mistake: **verb+ing** can be used as a **noun** replacement only when there's no actual **noun**. Since there is a real **noun** - *discipline* - it is preferable to *being disciplined*.

In addition, this answer creates a Subject Verb Agreement mistake: *those who works*.

1. What is an article?

An article (e.g., *a*, *some*, *many*) describes a noun, giving us quantitative information about it.

Examples:
1. John is a man.
2. John has many friends.

In the first example, the article *a* describes the noun *man*, informing us that there is one man.

In the second example, the article *many* describes the noun *friends*, informing us that there is (a lot) more than one friend.

An exception is the article *the*, which does not give us quantitative information about a noun. *The* is used to inform the reader that the noun it describes is a specific, particular noun.

Examples:
1. a man - any man.
2. the man - a specific man

Article GMAT Mistakes: Missing Article

A singular count noun MUST be preceded by an article.

Incorrect: John is sitting on chair.

Correct: John is sitting on a chair.
          John is sitting on the chair.

Article GMAT Mistakes: Using The Wrong Article

Some articles, such as *the*, can be used with all nouns: singular nouns (e.g., *the cat*), plural nouns (e.g., *the cats*), count nouns (again, *the cat*) and non-count nouns (e.g., *the air*). Other articles can only be used with count nouns, and still others can only be used with non-count nouns.

count noun	non-count noun
many	much
a few	a little
few	little
fewer	less
the number of	the amount of
several	-

Examples:
Incorrect: There are less <u>tigers</u> today than there were in 1900.
Correct: There are fewer <u>tigers</u> today than there were in 1900.

Common mistakes native English speakers make are using non-count articles with count nouns. For example, many people will generally use *less*, no matter whether the following noun is count or non-count: *less milk* (which is correct as the noun *milk* is non-count), *less students* (which is incorrect as the noun *students* is count), *less chairs*(incorrect as the noun *chairs* is count).

Thus, the non-count articles are a Stop Sign. Whenever we see them in a sentence, we focus our attention on them and on the noun that follows them. If it is a non-count noun, the sentence is OK. However, if it is a count noun, we spotted our mistake.

Stop Sign: much, (a) little, less, the amount of

Sentence Correction: Parts of Speech - Adverb

1. What is an adverb?

The main function of an **adverb** is to describe a **verb**. An **adverb** indicates the manner of or the degree to which an action was performed and answers questions such as *how?* and *how much?*

Example: John speaks **clearly**.

An **adverb** usually comes AFTER the **verb** it describes, but can also appear BEFORE the **verb**.

Example: John **clearly** meant no harm.

2. Adverb identification through suffixes

An **adverb** has only one typical suffix: *-ly.* Often, adding *-ly* to an **adjective** turns it into an **adverb**.

Example: nice + *-ly* = nicely

Similarly, deleting the *-ly* suffix from an **adverb** often results in an **adjective**.

Example: politely - *-ly* = polite

3. Additional functions of adverb

Although the main function of **adverbs** is to describe **verbs**, **adverbs** can also describe **adjectives** (as in example 1 below) and other **adverbs** (as in example 2 below).

Examples:
1. John is an **extremely** nice man.
2. John speaks **extremely** clearly.

4. Common adverbs without an -ly suffix

fast, hard, very, well

Examples:
1. John drives **fast**.
2. John works **hard**.
3. John drives **very** carefully.
4. John speaks French **well**.

5. Common words that end in -ly but are not adverbs

Although the following words end in *-ly*, they are **adjectives** and not **adverbs**:

friendly, homely, lovely, lonely

1. A **friendly** man.
2. A **lovely** woman.

Sentence Correction: Parts of Speech - Noun/Adjective vs. Verb+ing

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When there is no real **noun** or real **adjective** in a sentence, in some cases **Verb+ing** can serve as a **noun** replacement or an **adjective** replacement.

Examples:
1. The **meeting** went well.
2. Jane is reading an **interesting** book.

In example 1, *meeting* functions as a **noun**, as can be seen from the fact it is preceded by an **article** (*The*).

In example 2, *interesting* functions as an **adjective**, as can be seen from the fact it describes the **noun** *book*.

This is fine and correct. If there is no **noun**/**adjective**, at least there is a **noun/adjective** replacement in the form of **verb+ing**.

OK. **Verb+ing** can be used both as a **verb** and as a **noun/adjective** replacement.

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However, using **Verb+ing** as a **noun/adjective** replacement when there **is** an actual **noun/adjective** is a mistake in both English and GMAT. Why use a replacement when you have the real thing?

Examples:
Incorrect: The **presenting** went well.
Correct: The **presentation** went well.

Incorrect: Jealousy is a **destructing** quality in a relationship.
Correct: Jealousy is a **destructive** quality in a relationship.

Note that a **noun/adjective** is preferable to **Verb+ing** only when the sentence calls for using a **noun/adjective**. In other words, do not **automatically** eliminate answer choices that use **verb+ing**. Check whether **Verb+ing** attempts to replace a **noun/adjective** first, and whether there's an actual **noun/adjective**. Only if the answer to **both** tests is positive can you eliminate the answer choice that uses **Verb+ing**.

Example: John is **preparing** for a marathon .

In this example, *preparing* is correct and should not be replaced by the **noun** *preparation*.

?Ask a tutor

What is a pronoun?

A **pronoun** is a **noun** replacement used in order to avoid repetition.

Example: Bill Clinton is a former president. **He** is no longer a president.

It is more **concise** to use the **pronoun** *He* than to repeat the **noun** *Bill Clinton*.

Here's the list of **pronouns**:

Personal Pronouns

Singular 1st person	I, me, my, mine
Singular 2nd person	you, your, yours
Singular 3rd person	he, him, his, she, her, hers, it, its
Plural 1st person	we, us, our, ours
Plural 2nd person	you, your, yours
Plural 3rd person	they, them, their, theirs

Other pronouns

Singular: this, that, each, either, neither, one, everybody, everyone, everything, nobody, no one, nothing, someone, somebody, something, anybody anyone, anything

Plural: these, those, both, some

Continue to Pronoun Agreement Rule

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Pronoun Agreement Rule

A **pronoun** must agree with the **noun** to which it refers in number (**singular/plural**), gender (male/female/neutral), and person (first, second, third; also human/non human).

Number:

Incorrect: <u>John is tall</u>. **They** are 1.95 meters tall.
Correct: <u>John is tall</u>. **He** is 1.95 meters tall.

Gender:

Incorrect: <u>Bill Clinton</u> is a former president. **Her** second term ended in 2000.
Correct: <u>Bill Clinton</u> is a former president. **His** second term ended in 2000.

Person:

Incorrect: <u>John is tall</u>. **It** is 1.95 meters tall.
Correct: <u>John is tall</u>. **He** is 1.95 meters tall.

Use of pronouns in the GMAT

While **first** and **second person pronouns** (e.g. *I* and *you*, respectively) are used in Sentence Correction questions, Pronoun questions focus on **third person pronouns** only.

Pronoun Stop Sign

Every **pronoun** in the underlined part of the sentence or after it

Whenever you come across this Stop Sign, check the agreement between the **pronoun** and the **noun** to which it refers. If they do not agree, you have found your mistake.

If the **pronoun** is <u>underlined</u> but the **noun** is not, the correct answer will use a different **pronoun** so that it agrees with the **noun**.

If the **noun** is <u>underlined</u> and the **pronoun** is not, the correct answer choice will change the **noun** so that it agrees with the **pronoun**.

If **both** the **noun** and the **pronoun** are <u>underlined</u>, check them **both** in ALL answer choices and eliminate all answer choices in which they do not agree.

Example:

Abigail Adams is still remembered nowadays, almost 200 years after her death, <u>due to the fact that it was the wife of President John Adams, the mother of President John Quincy Adams, and</u> a supporter of women's rights.

<u>due to the fact that she was the wife of President John Adams, the mother of President John Quincy Adams, and</u>

You're right!

This answer choice corrects the **original Pronouns** mistake by changing the **non-human pronoun** *it* to the **feminine human pronoun** *she*, which agrees with Abigail Adams.

What helps us identify this mistake is the following Stop Sign:

Any pronoun in the underlined part of the sentence or after the underlined part

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, concerning the way language and culture determine thought, exercised a significant influence on cognitive psychology, <u>based as they were on empirical field-work conducted among native American tribes, such as the Hopi</u>.

<u>based as it was on empirical field-work conducted among native American tribes, such as the Hopi</u>

 Very Good.

This answer choice corrects the **Pronoun Agreement** mistake in the original sentence, by changing the **pronoun** *they,* which refers to the **singular subject** hypothesis, to *it.* It also correctly changes the matching **plural verb** *were* to the **singular verb** *was*.

Notice that the pronoun *it* in the corrected sentence is **ambiguous** because it can refer to more than one noun in the earlier parts of the sentence (either *hypothesis* or *psychology*). This makes answer choice D **stylistically flawed** even though it is **grammatically correct**.

Remember that if there are no other answer choices that are <u>both</u> **grammatically** and **stylistically correct**, an **ambiguous** sentence will be preferable to answer choices that are **grammatically** incorrect.

Sentence Correction: Pronoun Questions – Ambiguity

In addition to **grammatical** Pronoun mistakes, in which the **pronoun** does not agree in number, gender or person with the **noun** to which it refers, there are also **stylistic** Pronoun mistakes of **ambiguity**. In these cases, the problem is not that the **pronoun** does not agree with the **noun** to which it refers, but the opposite: the **pronoun** agrees with more than just the **noun** to which it refers.

Example:
The cat is lying on the floor. **Its** eyes are closed.

In the above example, the **pronoun** *Its* agrees with both the cat and the floor, which makes the sentence **ambiguous**. Although it is clear that *Its* refers to the cat - the floor has no eyes - the sentence is still grammatically **ambiguous**.

[How do I correct ambiguity mistakes?](#)

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

Solving an **ambiguity** mistake involves avoiding the use of the **ambiguous pronoun**.

Example: The cat is lying on the floor. **The cat's** eyes are closed.

> OR
>
> The cat, whose eyes are closed, is lying on the floor.

[So far, so good. Is it really that simple?](#)

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

Simple? the GMAT? We wish.

Note that since **ambiguity** is a **stylistic** mistake, it will not always be corrected. **Grammatical** mistakes must always be corrected, but not **stylistic** mistakes. The correct answer to a Sentence Correction question can be **ambiguous**. Remember, **grammar** and **logic** come first, **style** is secondary to them.

That's not to say that if we spot an **ambiguity** mistake, we can ignore it. Any mistake we find, we aspire to correct. However, if we don't find a perfect answer choice, one that is both **grammatically** and **stylistically** correct, we might have to settle for an answer choice which is **stylistically** flawed.

In 1980, the U.S. Supreme Court awarded the Lakota nation a settlement for the taking of the Black Hills in violation of the Treaty of Fort Laramie, <u>but the Lakota rejected it</u> and continued to demand that their ancestral land be returned to them.

<u>but the Lakota rejected the settlement</u>

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Very good!

This answer choice corrects the **original** ambiguity mistake by replacing the **ambiguous pronoun** *it* with *the settlement.*

Sentence Correction: Pronoun Questions – The word/term

Let's look at the following example:

The word jewelry **is** accessories such as earrings, bracelets, necklaces and rings.

This sentence is **logically** flawed. It equates a **word** with what this word defines/describes:

word = accessories (e.g., earrings, bracelets, etc.)

Instead of the correct equation:

jewelry = accessories (e.g., earrings, bracelets, etc.)

The logical problem here is that the word is not accessories: you can't wear the word "jewelry". At best, the word "jewelry" can describe or *refer to* accessories.

Thus, the GMAT way of correcting such mistakes is as follows:

Incorrect: The word jewelry **is** accessories such as earrings, bracelets, necklaces and rings.

Correct: The word jewelry **refers to** accessories such as earrings, bracelets, necklaces and rings.
Correct: The word jewelry **describes** accessories such as earrings, bracelets, necklaces and rings

Is there a Stop Sign so I can identify these questions quickly?

There sure is. The appearance of the words *the word/term* in a Sentence Correction question is <mark>a Stop Sign</mark>:

<mark>**The word/term…   it is…**</mark>

The word/term appears, then there are more words, and then we see the pronoun *it*, which refers to *the word/term*, followed by the verb *is*.

<u>Example</u>:
Incorrect: The word *guys* is commonly used to refer to both sexes although, grammatically speaking, **it is** males only.

Correct: The word *guys* is commonly used to refer to both sexes although, grammatically speaking, **it refers to** males only.

Whenever we see this Stop Sign, we know that the topic that the question checks is **pronouns**, specifically using *refers to/defines/describes* after *the word/term* (and not *is*).

<mark>Eg</mark>

The term "malfunction" <u>is a failure to function or</u> abnormal functioning.

<u>describes a failure to function or</u>

Nice work!

This answer choice corrects the **logical mistake** in the original sentence. The **subject** of the sentence is *The term malfunction*, not an actual *malfunction*. A malfunction (not the term *malfunction*) is the failure to function or abnormal functioning. The term *malfunction* **refers to/defines/describes** this failure.

<mark>Sentence Correction: Pronoun Questions – To do so/doing so</mark>

Using the **pronoun** *it* to refer to a **verb** is incorrect (*it* may only refer to a **noun**).
Instead, use the phrase *to do so* or *doing so*.

Incorrect: John is **playing** tennis. He enjoys **it**.
Correct: John is **playing** tennis. He enjoys **doing so**.

1 Many people that run, either to have a hobby or to stay fit, <u>is unaware that exercising in urban areas during peak traffic hours is unhealthy as doing so</u> increases the intake of harmful gases.

[are unaware that exercising in urban areas during peak traffic hours is unhealthy as doing so](#)

Well done!

This answer choice uses the plural verb *are* to match the plural subject *Many people* and uses *doing so* to refer to a previously mentioned verb.

2 Construction companies have been <u>builds a lot recently as doing so</u> is lucrative, in the current economic climate.

[building a lot in recent times as doing so](#)

Incorrect.

Although this answer choice corrects the **original Tenses** error by keeping only the first **verb** of the sentence (or section) **conjugated**, it creates **redundancy** by using the wordy phrase *in recent times* instead of the more **concise** *recently*.

Construction companies have been <u>builds a lot recently as doing so</u> is lucrative, in the current economic climate.

[building a lot recently as to do so](#)

Very good!

Only the **first verb** of a sentence (or section) should be **conjugated**. This answer choice corrects the **original Tenses** error by using the **unconjugated verb** *building* after the **conjugated verb** *been.*

Sentence Correction: Pronoun Questions – It

It is a unique **pronoun** as it can do more than just refer to a previously mentioned **noun** (as in example 1 below). *It* can also serve as a **subject** in a sentence that has no "real" subject (as in example 2 below).

Examples:
1. The company is growing. **It** is hiring new employees.
2. **It** is snowing.

In example 1, *it* fulfills the traditional **pronoun** function: referring to a previously mentioned **noun** (*The company*).

In example 2, on the other hand, *it* does not refer to any **noun**. Every sentence needs a **subject**, and in the absence of one, *it* comes to the rescue.

It is perfectly OK with me that *it* can serve two functions.

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So when you see *it* in a sentence, remember it can either be a **pronoun**, in which case we treat it the same way as we do all other **pronouns** - check whether it agrees in number, gender and person with the **noun** to which it refers, or it can be a **subject** replacement, in which case it does not have to agree with anything.

Difficult Sentence Correction Pronoun questions can use *it* in the **original** sentence in one way, and in one or more of the answer choices in the other way, so do not assume that the *it* you see in the **original** sentence is the same *it* you see in answer choices (B)-(E). If *it* served as a **subject** replacement in the **original** sentence, this does not necessarily mean that it will serve as a **subject** replacement in all the answer choices, and vice versa: if *it* served as a **pronoun** in the **original** sentence, it will not necessarily serve as a **pronoun** in all the answer choices. In addition, when the word *it* occurs more than once within one sentence, it may even be used in one way in one occurrence and in different way in another occurrence of the word.

Oh, by the way - although *it* refers to nonhumans, it is also used to refer to a baby.

Example: The **baby** cried all night, and **its** parents were very tired the following day.

Sentence Correction: Pronoun Questions – This

This is a unique pronoun in that it can do more than just refer to a noun (as in example 1 below). *This* can also refer to a previously described situation (as in example 2 below).

Examples:
1. Jane tried on several outfits before she picked this <u>dress</u>.
2. <u>Jane is always trying on several outfits before she finally picks one while John waits for her impatiently and tells her to make up her mind already or they will be late</u>. This is becoming a problem in their relationship.

In example 1, *this* fulfills the traditional pronoun function: referring to a noun (*dress*).

In example 2, on the other hand, *this* does not refer to any specific noun. It refers to the general situation that was described in the previous sentence.

[So what should I do when I see *this* in a Sentence Correction question?](#)

[?Ask a tutor](#)

As *this* is a pronoun, it is a Stop Sign. Thus, when you see *this* in a question, you should stop and check its correctness.

Ask yourself to what *this* refers. The fact that *this* can refer to both a noun and a situation makes it prone to ambiguity. Therefore, if you are not sure to what *this* refers, it probably means that there is an ambiguity mistake in the sentence.

If you think that *this* refers to a noun, treat it the same as any other pronoun and check whether it agrees with the noun in number (*this* is singular, so it agrees with singular nouns).

Although previous reversals of Earth's magnetic polarity do not seem to have caused any sort of extinction, present society may suffer <u>partial or total technological incapacitation next time this happens</u>.

[partial or total technological incapacitation next time such a reversal occurs](#)

Good!

In the **original** sentence, the pronoun *this* is **ambiguous** because it may refer to a **singular noun** which preceded it - for instance, *extinction* - or to a **situation**, such as the fact that the reversals of Earth's magnetic poles did not cause extinction.

This answer choice corrects the **original Pronoun Ambiguity** mistake by replacing *this* with the specific *such a reversal*. Replacing the word *happens* with *occurs* does not constitute a meaning change, as both have the same meaning.

Freud's original conception of psychoanalysis was of a treatment method that would be accessible to everyone, rich and poor alike; ironically, it evolved to be a sectarian, elitist practice, understood only by the initiated.

Freud originally conceived of psychoanalysis as a treatment method that would be accessible to everyone, rich and poor alike; ironically, it has evolved into

How long do you think it took you to solve this question?

50 seconds

Very good! You took 47 seconds to answer this question.

Well done!

This answer choice corrects the **stylistic mistake** by using the idiomatic and concise phrase *originally conceived of psychoanalysis as.*

Note that this question asks you to choose between stylistically flawed answer choices -- answer choices A, B, C, and D all use the ambiguous pronoun *it* or *its*. When you vertically scan these answer choices (and after having eliminated answer choice E), you can safely ignore this common stylistic flaw and look for other grammatical mistakes and/or stylistic flaws.

Remember, you are looking for the **best** answer choice, not the perfect one.

The **pronoun** *one* agrees with itself only.

Why?

One is **singular**, so it does not agree with the **plural** pronouns (*they*, *them*, *their*).

One is **gender neutral**, so it does not agree with the **gender specific** pronouns (*he*, *him*, *his*, *she*, *her*). We could use*he or she*, but this is **redundant**.

One refers to **humans**, so it does not agree with the pronouns *it* and *its*.

<u>Example</u>: **One** must love **one**'s children.

Sentence Correction: Pronoun Questions – that vs which

That is restricted pronoun to be used when the information following " that" is necessary to the sentence, whereas which is not followed by necessary content.

For example if someone said " read the book that on the shelf" , you are presumably in a room that contains multiple books in various location, so " on the shelf" is necessary information if you want to locate and read the right book. However if someone says " read the book, which is on the shelf," you are in a room where there is only one book that book just happens to be on the shelf. In this case " on the shelf " is not necessary information.

Eg: States now have an incentive to lower the blood alcohol <u>level that constitutes drunk driving by a federal law that withholds</u> the highway funds from those states that don't enforce the applicable standard.

<u>that constitutes drunk driving by a federal law that withholds</u>

<mark>that constitutes drunk driving, because a federal law withholds</mark>

<u>that constitutes drunk driving, because a federal law withhold</u>

<u>which constitutes drunk driving by a federal law that withholds</u>

<mark>which constitutes drunk driving, because a federal law withholds</mark>

"constitutes drunk driving" is necessary content proceed by that

Sentence Correction: Parallelism

Common stop signs for parallelism: Not only A but also B, (N) Either A (n) or B, A is/means B, A rather than B, A and/or/but/B.

Remember when you express a number of ideas of equal importance and function in the same sentence, you should always be careful to make them all the same grammatical form(that is, all noun, all adjectives, all gerunds, all clauses, or whatever). That's called parallel structure or parallelism.

Coordinate ideas: coordinate ideas occur in pairs or in series, and they are linked by conjunctive such as *and, but, or, and nor, or,* in certain instances, by linking verbs such as *is:*

Wrong: To earn credits, an American college student can take up folk dancing, ballet, or study belly dancing.

Right: To earn credits, an American college student can take up folk dancing, ballet, or belly dancing.

Note that once you begin repeating a word in a series like the following you must follow through:

Wrong: A wage earner might invest her money in stocks, in bonds, or real estate.

Correct: A wage earner might invest her money in stocks, in bonds, or in real estate.

Also correct: A wage earner might invest her money in stocks, bonds, real estate.

This principle applies equally to prepositions(in , on, by, with, etc.) , articles (the, a, an), helping verbs(has, had, would, etc) and possessive pronouns(his, her, their, etc.). You must either repeat the preposition, helping verb, or whatever, in front of each element in the series, or include it only in front of the first item in the series.

Correlative Constructions:

There is a group of words in English that are called correlative conjunctions. They are used to relate two ideas in some way. Here's a list of them:

Both …and…

Either…or…

Neither…nor…

Not only…but (also)…

You should always be careful to place correlative conjunctions immediately before the terms they're coordinating.

Wrong: Isaac not only studied physics but also theology.

The problem here is that the author intends to coordinate the two nouns physics and theology, but makes the mistake of putting the verb of the sentence (studied) after the first element of the construction(not only), and in so doing destroys the parallelism. Note that the solution to an error like this is usually to move one of the conjunctions.

Correct: Isaac studies not only physics but also theology.

Compared or contrasted ideas:

Frequently, two or more ideas are compared or contrasted within the same sentence. Compared or contrasted ideas should be presented in the same grammatical form.

Certain phrases should clue you in that the sentence contains ideas that should be presented in parallel form. These phrases include *as…as…* and *more(or less) x than y*.

Wrong: skiing is as strenuous as to run.

Correct: skiing is as strenuous as running.

Wrong: skiing is less dangerous than to rappel down a cliff.

Correct: to ski is less dangerous than to rappel down a cliff.

To be:

In certain cases, sentences with forms of to be must be expressed in parallel form.

Wrong: to drive while intoxicated is risking grave injury and criminal charges.

When an infinitive is the subject of to be, don't use gerund after the verb, and vice versa. Pair infinitives with infinitives and gerunds with gerunds.

Correct: to drive while intoxicated is to risk grave injury and criminal charges.

Note that we wouldn't change both words to gerunds in this sentence because it wouldn't sound idiomatic.

Sentence Correction: Comparative Questions- Overview

Signs of comparative sentence: As vs. Like   Like/Unlike, more than, rather than, similar to, different from, distinguished from, distinction.

On GMAT, you will see a number of sentences that make comparisons. A sentence that makes a comparison must do two things: it must be clear about what is being compared, and it must compare things that logically can be compared. A sentence that makes an unclear or illogical comparison is grammatically unacceptable. When you see a comparative expression such as like, as , more than, unlike,

less than, similar to, or different from, it should remind you to ask yourself two questions about the comparison in the sentence: is it clear? Is it logical?

Unclear comparisons: sometime it isn't clear what the author is trying to compare.

Wrong: Byron admire Dryden more than Wordsworth

There are two ways to interpreted this sentence: that Dryden meant more to Byron than Wordsworth did, or that Byron thought more highly of Dryden than Wordsworth did. Whichever meaning you choose, the problem can be cleared up by adding more words to the sentence.

Correct: Byron admired Dryden more than he did Wordsworth.

Also correct: Byron admired Dryden more than Wordsworth did.

Illogical Comparisons: sometimes what the author meant to say is clear enough, but what the author meant to say is not what he ended up saying:

Wrong: The peaches here are riper than any other fruitstand.

This sentence is comparing peaches to fruitstands, even though that's clearly not the intention of the author. We can correct it so that we are comparing peaches to peaches by inserting the phrase those at.

Correct: The peaches here are riper than those at any other fruitstand.

Now the pronoun those is standing in for peaches, so the sentence is accurately comparing things that can be reasonably compared: the peaches here and some other peaches.

Incomplete comparison like this one are normally corrected by inserting a phrase like those of, those in, those at, that of , that in, and that at.

Incomplete comparison can also be corrected by use of possessive.

Wrong: Many critics considered Enrico Caruso's voice better than any other tenor.(this is actually comparing a voice to a person.)

Correct: Many critics considered Enrico Caruso's voice better than any other tenor's.

(Note that this is a shortened version of : Many critics considered Enrico Caruso's voice better than any other tenor's voice.)

The second sort of incomplete comparison occurs when one thing is being compared to a group it is a part of. This error is corrected by inserting either the word other or the word else.

Wrong: Astaire danced better than any men in the world.

This is wrong because he couldn't have danced better than himself.

Correct: Astaire danced better than any other men in the world.

Comparative forms:

The comparative form is used when comparing only two members of a class, and the superlative for three or more.

Loretta's grass grows more vigorously than Jim's.

Loretta's grass grows the most vigorously of any in the neighborhood.

Of Buchannan and Lincoln, the latter was taller.

Of Mckinley, Roosevelt , and Taft, the last was heaviest.

Sentence Correction: Passive

In general, the GMAT favors the active voice. However, sentences written in the passive voice can still be correct if every other choice has a grammatical flaw. The first time you look through the answer choices on a question, don't eliminate an option just because it's passive. If you've narrowed the answers down to two grammatically correct options, though, and the ONLY difference is that one is passive and the other is active, then you can eliminate the passive choice.

The use of the passive voice isn't really considered an error in GMAT Sentence Corrections; it's more of a style issue. The GMAT favors concise writing: statements should be as succinct as possible. The use of the passive voice tends to clutter sentences up, making them lengthier and more complicated than necessary. But if every other choice has definite error—a misplaced modifier, subject-verb disagreement, or a pronoun without a clear antecedent, for instance—a choice using the passive voice can be correct. Let's look at an example:

The company's owner said that the new regulations should be enacted at every franchise location before the end of the quarter.

A. the new regulations should be enacted at every franchise location before the end of the quarter.
B. the new regulations being the subject of enactment at every franchise location before the end of the quarter.
C. the new regulations enacted at every franchise locations before the end of the quarter.
D. the franchise locations enacting the new regulations before the end of the quarter.
E. the company's franchises should have enacted to the new regulations before the end of the quarter.

In this Sentence Correction, the sentence as written displays the passive voice, although it is otherwise correct. Each of the other choices has a distinct error: choice B uses "being," which is virtually never correct on the GMAT; in choice C, "every" doesn't agree with the plural "locations" and the omission of

"should be" makes the sentence into a fragment; choice D's use of the gerund creates a sentence fragment as well; choice E uses an incorrect idiom ("enacted to"). Therefore, the passive construction is correct.

However, an active construction would be the preferred style, and that would look like this:

The company's owner said that every franchise location should enact the new regulations before the end of the quarter.

Passive voice is a *stylistic issue* on the GMAT, and shouldn't be your first concern when evaluating answer choices. When you're going through the answers and eliminating them, look first at errors like subject-verb agreement and parallelism. However, when two choices are both error-free, the use of passive voice can make the difference. This should help you determine whether the passive voice matters as you are choosing an answer.

Sentence Correction: Relative Clauses-Overview

Choosing the Correct Relative Pronoun who, whom, where, which, that, etc.

One of the + plural noun+ who/which/that should follow the plural forms

Eg: He is one of the persons who bake spectacular cakes.   'who' is modifying 'persons' and not 'he' .

A relative clause, a clause which begins with a relative pronoun such as who, that, or which, can be used the same way as a clause that begins with a present participle. GMAT usually preferred relative clause over present participles.

(Using a present participle) 1. The price of produce is rapidly increasing, a trend eventually culminating in a consumer's revolution.

(Using a relative clause) 2. The price of produce is rapidly increasing, a trend that will eventually culminate in a consumer's revolution.

So, what's the lesson to take away from all this? Because the tense of the present participle modifier is contingent upon the tense main verb, using this form is much more limited than using the relative clause. So, if you want to express freedom of tense, use the relative clause.

Sentence Correction: Conditionals –Conditional

Conditional sentences are if then statements:

If you go, then I will go, too.

Note that many conditional sentences imply rather than state the word then, and this is also correct usage:

If you go, I will go, too.

We use conditional sentences when we want to speculate about the results of a particular situation. There mainly three types of conditional sentences.

Statement of Fact: There is a real possibility that the situation described in the if clause really happened, or is happening, or will happen:

If top military officials resign, there will be protests in the capital city.

If john Milton met Galileo, they probably discussed astronomy.

Contrary to fact: the situation in the if clause never happened, so what is said in the then clause is pure speculation:

Blaise Pascal wrote that if Cleopatra's nose had been shorter, the face of the world would have changed.

Alexander the great said, " if I were not alexander, I would want to be Diogenes."

Future speculation: Some conditional sentences speculate about the future, but with the idea that the situation in the if clause is extremely unlikely to happen:

If Shakespeare's manuscripts were to be discovered, the texts of some of his plays would be less uncertain.

Sentence Correction: Redundancy Questions- Overview

" at least"

" to such a large degree"

"amount to a sum"

one/two/three/four times

annual& year

Double Conjunctions or Phrases

Double Negative and Redundancy

" The reason …because"

" as well as"

Sentence Correction: Subjunctive Questions

On the GMAT, you may come across an item that tests your knowledge of the subjunctive. Sub junctive verb forms are used in two different ways.

The subjunctive form were is used in statements that express a wish or situation that are contrary to fact:

I wish I were a rich man. (But actually I' m not)

If I were you, I wouldn't do that. (But apparently I 'm not you)

The subjunctive of requirement is used after verbs such as ask, demand, insist, and suggest- or after expression of requirement, suggestions, or demand. A subjunctive verb of requirement is in the base form of the verb: the infinitive without "to":

Airlines insist that each passenger pass through a metal detector.

It's extremely important that silicon chips be made in a dust free environment.

Sentence Correction: if/whether (or not)

Preferred whether to if. If you are ever given a choice on the GMAT choose whether over if.

Whenever discussed multiple alternatives use whether rather than if.

If is reserved for "if…then… "style.

Sentence Correction: Commonly confused words-Its vs It's

Commonly Confused Words: its vs. it's

[?Ask a tutor](#)

It's is a shortened way of writing *it is*. *Its* without an apostrophe means 'belonging to it'.

Examples:

It's 4 O'clock = It is 4 O'clock.

John has a dog. Its tail is black = The dog's tail is black.

Sentence Correction: Maybe - A Forbidden Word

Maybe is considered too simple for the GMAT. It is OK for spoken English, but in standard, written English it is preferable to use *perhaps, possibly* or *probably*.

Example:
Incorrect: John thinks that maybe Jane will arrive home late today.

Correct: John thinks that perhaps Jane will arrive home late today.
Correct: John thinks that Jane will possibly/probably arrive home late today.

Thus, whenever you see the word *maybe* in a Sentence Correction question, eliminate all answer choices that include it, and choose answer choices that use *perhaps, possibly* or *probably* instead.

Also, when you write the essays, remember not to use *maybe* but one of the other words: *perhaps, possibly, probably*.

Do not confuse the word *maybe* with the words *may be*, which are fine to use in the GMAT.

Sentence Correction: "Like" vs. "Such as"

"Such as "is better followed by examples, if you're ever given a choice on the GMAT, choose such as, the GMAT writers prefer such as to like when what follows are examples: to these writers " like" means "similar to".

I prefer salty snacks such as potato chips to sweet snacks such as candy bars.

I've never met anyone like him before.

Sentence Correction: Preposition and Idiom Questions- Overview

Sometimes the right way to say sth isn't a matter of grammar but is a matter of idiom: an accepted, set phrase or usage that's right for no other reason than that's just the way we say it.

Most of what we call " idioms" are pairs of words that are used together to convey a particular meaning, and many of " idioms errors" result from substituting an unaccepted word- usually a preposition- for a word that is always part of the idiom.

Wrong: Brigitte Bardot has joined an organization that is concerned in preventing cruelty to animals.

The adjective concerned is followed by either about or with, either of which would be idiomatic here. But the expression concerned in simply isn't idiomatic-we just don't say it that way.

Correct: Brigitte Bardot has joined an organization that is concerned with preventing cruelty to animals.

Also correct: Brigitte Bardot has joined an organization that is concerned about preventing cruelty to animals.

There are so many possible idiom errors of this kind that we can't list them all. The most frequently tested errors, however, are contained in following sections.

Idioms: "account for"

Account for something has two distinctive meanings,

First to explain the reason for something

More police on the street accounted for less street crime.

Second to form the total of an amount of something

In Florida, people over 60 accounts for more than 25 percent of total population.

Account for someone

To know the state of or where of someone

Idioms: "agree to" vs. "agree with"

?Ask a tutor

Agree to do something OR *agree to* something: to give one's consent to do something or to something.

Examples:

John **agreed to** share his work station with the new employee.

John **agreed to** the terms of the loan.

Agree with someone or something: to accept the content expressed by someone or something.

Examples:

John always **agrees with** Jane.

John always **agrees with** Jane's ideas.

John does not always agree _____ his employer.

with

Agree to should be followed by an action or a thing. *Agree with* is followed by a person (in this case, John's employer).

Idioms: "aim to" vs. "aim at"

Aim to do something. The verb following "to" is in **base form**.

Example: We **aim to** please.

Aim at something/someone.

Example: John **aims at** a consulting career.

Fill in the gap to complete the sentence:

Jane is aiming _____ a pilot's license.

at

That's right!

Here are the two uses for idioms that include the word *aim*:

Aim *at* [thing/person]   **Aim *to*** [action]

Jane aims **at** <u>a relaxed lifestyle</u>.   Jane aims **to** <u>slow</u> her pace of living.

In this question, *pilot's license* is a **thing**, so *at* should be used.

Idioms: "forbid" vs. "forbid To"

?Ask a tutor

The correct use of *forbid* (and all its related forms, such as *forbade*, *forbidden*, and *forbidding*) is as follows:

Forbid someone ***to*** do something

<u>Example</u>: The law **forbids** people **to** murder other people.

OR

Forbid something

<u>Example</u>: The law **forbids** murder.

Idioms: "Different from"

?Ask a tutor

In spoken English, people often say *different than*. In fact, it's a mistake, and the correct combination is *different from*.

Incorrect: Cats are **different than** dogs.
Correct: Cats are **different from** dogs.

So, if you see a Sentence Correction question with *different than*, remember to correct it to *different from*. Also, if you use the word *different* in an essay, remember to write *from* afterwards, not *than*.

Idioms: "credited with" vs. "given credit for"

?Ask a tutor

Credited with = ***given credit for*** = [someone who is] recognized for an action or an achievement.

credited with

<u>Example</u>:

Alexander Graham Bell is **credited with** inventing the telephone.

given credit for

<u>Example</u>:

Alexander Graham Bell is **given credit for** inventing the telephone.

Able to (ability to)

Among vs between: among referring to three or more whereas between referring to two items.

Amount vs Number: amount for uncountable quantity whereas number for countable items.

As vs like: as is for actions whereas like referring to nouns**.**

Both and each: both is used when pointing out similarities whereas each is used to indicate differences. Both followed plural vs each followed singular.

Eg. Although both cooks enjoy making goulash, each has a different take on this classic dish.

Compare to vs compare with:

On Gmat, compare with is generally preferred form. Use compare to in order to point out an abstract or figurative likeness and compare with to consider likeness and differences in general.

Shall I compare three to a summer's day.

Compared with a summer's day, it's cool outside.

Contrast follows "with" not "to"

Debate over and dispute over: only used over when both debate and dispute are used as a noun.

Distinguish from and distinguish between A and B.

Double vs twice: double, triple, quadruple is only used as verb, when making comparison the preferred form is twice.

He promised to double the company's profit by next year.

He ate twice as much as I did.

Each other and one another: each other is used to refer to two things, whereas one another refer to three or more things.

Extend to which: you should appreciate the extend to which the same idioms repeatedly appear in the GMAT.

Forbid to do sth vs Prohibited from doing sth

Native: Native to means indigenous to, use native to when discuss plants, animals, and the like. Use a native of when discussing people and where they were born.

The sugar maple is native to Canada.

Brendan is a native of Canada.

Practicing Sentence Correction

01:40

Crucial in the decision to sell the company, <u>a decision which made some 300 employees redundant, was the numerous licensing issues that</u> plagued the system that was designated to be the company's flagship product.

<u>a decision that made some 300 employees redundant, was the numerous licensing issues which</u>

How long do you think it took you to solve this question?

2 minutes

You slightly overestimated the time this question took you. You actually solved it in 1 minutes and 40 seconds.

Incorrect.

This answer choice repeats the **original Subject Verb Agreement** mistake. The **plural subject** *the numerous licensing issues* does not agree with the **singular verb** *was*.

What helps us identify this question as a **Subject Verb Agreement** question and identify this mistake is the following Stop Sign:

The verb precedes the subject

The fact that the question writer went to such effort to create a convoluted sentence structure raises suspicion of a **Subject Verb Agreement** error.

Suppose we changed the word order so that the **subject** comes before the **verb**, as in most sentences:

The numerous licensing issues which plagued the system that was designated to be the company's flagship product ***was*** crucial in the decision to sell the company, a decision that made some 300 employees redundant.

We can now see the **Subject Verb Agreement** mistake more clearly.

Crucial in the decision to sell the company, <u>a decision which made some 300 employees redundant, was the numerous licensing issues that</u> plagued the system that was designated to be the company's flagship product.

a decision which made some 300 employees redundant, was the numerous licensing issues that

a decision that made some 300 employees redundant, has been numerous licensing issues which

was the numerous licensing issues that led to a decision which made some 300 employees redundant and that has

a decision that made around 300 workers unemployed, were the numerous licensing issues that

a decision that made some 300 employees redundant, was the numerous licensing issues which

Very good!

This answer choice corrects the original **Subject Verb Agreement** mistake by changing the **singular verb** *was* to the **plural verb** *were*, to match the **plural subject** *The numerous licensing issues.*

But this answer choice uses *unemployed* instead of *redundant*. Doesn't that change the meaning?

Not really. *Redundant* means that the employees were no longer needed in the work place and were therefore fired. Using *redundant* is an indirect way of saying (in corporate-speak) that the *decision* was the cause of 300 employees losing their jobs. This means the same as saying that the decision led to their being *unemployed*. This is a slightly change of nuance or emphasis, not a radical meaning change.

Now, supposing this were a meaning change - would you be required to eliminate this answer choice?

[That depends](#)

[?Ask a tutor](#)

True, you wouldn't necessarily be required to eliminate it. Even if there were a meaning change, **meaning change** is the very **last** reason to eliminate an answer choice, according to the Work Order. The only time we use meaning changes as a criterion for eliminating is if we have already eliminated all we can by finding grammar and logic mistakes. In this question, all other answer choices include grammatical errors, and are thus eliminated before this meaning change - leaving D as the only right answer, even if it does change the meaning to a degree.

On the gravestone of Simonides of Ceos, the Greek poet <u>who was buried at Thermopylae, there is an inscription as follows</u>: go tell the Spartans, stranger passing by, that here, obedient to their law, we lie.

[who was buried at Thermopylae, there is an inscription as](#)

[who was buried at Thermopylae, there are an inscription as](#)

[buried at Thermopylae, there is an inscription as](#)

[who was buried at Thermopylae, there is an inscription that](#)

[that was buried at Thermopylae, there are an inscription as](#)

How long do you think it took you to solve this question?

1 minutes

You overestimated the time this question took you. You actually solved it in 37 seconds.

Incorrect.

While this answer choice is **grammatically** correct, it changes the **meaning** of the original sentence by replacing the word *as* with *that*.

On the gravestone of Simonides of Ceos, the Greek poet who was buried at Thermopylae, there is an inscription as follows: go tell the Spartans, stranger passing by, that here, obedient to their law, we lie.

who was buried at Thermopylae, there is an inscription as

Incorrect.

While this answer choice is **grammatically** correct, it is **stylistically flawed**. it is not the best of the five answer choices. There is another answer choice which is also **grammatically** correct and **stylistically superior**.

Did you read the other answer choices?

Yes

Good, that's what you should have done.

On the gravestone of Simonides of Ceos, the Greek poet who was buried at Thermopylae, there is an inscription asfollows: go tell the Spartans, stranger passing by, that here, obedient to their law, we lie.

buried at Thermopylae, there is an inscription as

Excellent!

This answer choice is better than answer choice A because it is more concise - it says the same thing with less words. The relative pronoun "who", accompanied by the verb "was", is grammatically correct but not really necessary.

Example:

Correct: John, who is the teacher, loves eggs.

Also correct: John, the teacher, loves eggs.

Practicing Sentence Correction

01:10

The corporation has confirmed with its subsidiary that out of the <u>entire volume of market study carried out in the parent-company's name, the foreign markets analysis remains</u> confidential.

entire volume of market study carried out in the parent-company's name, the foreign markets analysis remains

whole volume of the market study carried out in the parent-company's name, the foreign markets analysis remain

entirety of the market study carried out in the parent-company's name, the foreign markets analysis remain

complete volume of market study carried out in the parent-company's name, the foreign markets and analysis remain

entire volume of market study carried out in the parent-company's name, only the foreign markets analysis remain

How long do you think it took you to solve this question?

1 minutes and 20 seconds

Close enough - you took 1 minutes and 10 seconds to answer this question.

Incorrect.

This answer choice is **grammatically** incorrect. The **singular subject** *analysis* does not agree with the **plural verb** *remain*.

What helps us identify this question as a **Subject Verb Agreement** question as well as identify this mistake is the following Stop Sign:

A pseudo-plural singular subject

Analysis is a confusing **subject**. It ends with -s, which makes us think of it as a **plural subject**, but it is, in fact, **singular** (the **plural** form of *analysis* is *analyses*).

?Ask a tutor

The corporation has confirmed with its subsidiary that out of the <u>entire volume of market study carried out in the parent-company's name, the foreign markets analysis remains</u> confidential.

<mark>entire volume of market study carried out in the parent-company's name, the foreign markets analysis remains</mark>

?Ask a tutor

Excellent!

This answer choice is **grammatically** correct. The **singular subject** *analysis* correctly agrees with the **singular verb***remains*.

Can you explain what the words 'foreign markets' are doing in this sentence? Isn't 'foreign markets' the subject?

?Ask a tutor

Happy to explain: *foreign markets* is not the **subject** itself, but it is part of the **subject phrase** *foreign markets analysis*. The **noun** *analysis* is the kernel of this **subject phrase**.

Note that *analysis* is <u>described</u> by the brief **noun phrase** *foreign markets*. In other words the **plural noun** *foreign markets* functions as an **adjective**, modifying (=describing) *analysis*.

[Remind me - How can a noun be an adjective?](#)

?[Ask a tutor](#)

In English a **noun** can sometimes behave like an **adjective**. When **noun A** (foreign markets) appears before **noun B**(analysis), as in our example above, the function of **A** is to <u>describe</u> **B**, or in other words to answer the question, "What type of **B**?"

In this case, the **noun phrase** "foreign markets" answers the question: What <u>kind</u> of analysis? Answer: A foreign markets analysis.

[Okay - can you give me another example?](#)

?[Ask a tutor](#)

Sure:

Think of the following **noun phrases**: an *intelligence* analysis; a *news* report.

These phrases place two **nouns** side by side. In the first phrase "intelligence" functions as an **adjective** of analysis and tells us, "what kind of analysis?" Answer: an analysis made by an intelligence agency.

In the second phrase, "news" functions as an **adjective** and tells us "What kind of report?" Answer: a *news* report - a report with news in it.

Reading Comprehension Section

Reading Comprehension Questions: Overview

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Reading Comprehension constitutes about a third of the Verbal section. During the 75 minutes you spend on the Verbal Section, you should expect to be presented with 4 different reading passages. Each passage is followed by 3-4 questions, totaling 13-15 questions (out of 41 questions in the Verbal section). The questions are presented in clusters - a passage, followed by 3-4 questions.

On the GMAT, for these questions you will see a split computer screen. The written **passage** will remain visible on the left side as each question associated with that **passage** appears in turn on the right side. You will see only one question at a time, however.

There are 7 **Reading Comprehension** question types. Some are **general**, asking about the main idea of the passage or about its structure. Others are more **specific**, asking about a specific detail mentioned in the passage. You will learn how to deal with each type quickly and efficiently.

One of the 4 reading passages, along with the questions that follow it, is **experimental**. This means that the answers to the 3-4 questions asked on that passage do not count toward your score. However, since you cannot identify the experimental passage, you need to answer all questions to the best of your ability.

The **recommended time** per Reading Comprehension passage (that is, answering all 3-4 questions that follow the passage) is approximately **2 minutes 15 seconds per question**: about **7 minutes** for a passage followed by 3 questions and **9 minutes** for a passage followed by 4 questions. What it actually comes down to is about 3-4 minutes doing an initial reading of the passage, following which the questions can be dealt with in 1-2 minutes each.

The **directions** that appear before the first reading passage are:

The questions in this group are based on the content of a passage. After reading the passage, choose the best answer to each question. Answer all questions following the passage on the basis of what is stated or implied in the passage.

What do these directions tell us?

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1. Stated vs. implied

Some questions need to be answered on the basis of what is explicitly **stated** in the passage. For example, "Which of the following is **mentioned** in the passage?"

Other questions need to be answered on the basis of what is **implied** in the passage but is not explicitly stated in it. For example, "Which of the following can be **inferred** from the passage?"

2. Choosing answers based on the content of the passage vs. my personal knowledge

Suppose you're a world expert on bird migration, and you encounter a reading passage about this topic. In any case of disagreement between what you know about bird migration and what the passage states about it, the information in the passage is what you should base your answers on. After all, that's what the test writers based the question on and how they determined which answer choice is correct. Your goal is to choose that answer choice because this is the only way to get the points for it, even if you, as a world expert on the subject, know it's inaccurate or otherwise flawed.

[Understood. Anything else I need to know?](#)

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

In order to deal with **Reading Comprehension** questions quickly and efficiently, you need to know the following:

1. Passage Content Categories

2. Passage Structure

3. Logic over Content

4. Initial Reading

5. Work Order

Reading Comprehension: Passage Content Categories

Reading Comprehension passages are **scientific** and **academic**, and focus mainly on the following fields:

- business

- humanities

- life sciences

- exact sciences

- women or minorities, such as Native Americans or African Americans.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO BE FAMILIAR WITH THE PASSAGE CONTENT; the GMAT only tests your ability to analyze the passage's structure and apply logic.

Reading Comprehension: Passage Structure

All GMAT reading passages, regardless of their length and number of paragraphs, have the same structure:

- **The first paragraph** is a summary of the entire passage, like the abstract of an article.

- **All the other paragraphs** elaborate on a point, issue, or aspect related to the **main idea**. The beginning of each paragraph announces the topic it deals with.

- The last paragraph is **never** a summary. It is just like any other paragraph.

This structure does not apply to one paragraph passages.

Reading Comprehension - Logic over Content

In Reading Comprehension questions, GMAC tries to trick us by making us focus on the **content** of the passage. Instead, you should:

1. Focus on logic, structure and function rather than on content (the information that's in it).

2. Focus on meaning of expressions rather than on their wording.

In Reading Comprehension, it is strongly recommended to work at the _____ level. This means we never read more than one _____ at a time.

sentence

Very good!

The common mistake that novice test takers do is read the passage as quickly as possible in order to save time. However, moving from one sentence to the other without retaining anything is the worst thing you can do - you will end up wasting time by reading the same parts of the passage again and again, and will still have no confidence in your choice of the correct answer choice.

The correct method is to pause after each and every **sentence** in the initial reading, and ask yourself - "what have I just read? What have I just learned? How does this connect with everything else I've read so far in the passage?". Build a mental picture of the passage from the initial reading, summarize it to yourself in your own simple words, THEN go to questions.

There's a huge gap between what the **passage** is about and what the **questions** are about.

Reading Comprehension: Passage Structure

?Ask a tutor

Reading passages are divided into **paragraphs**. A typical GMAT reading passage consists of 2-4 **paragraphs**. However, there are also reading passages that consist of only one **paragraph**, and there are passages that are made up of more than four **paragraphs**.

Fortunately, all GMAT reading passages, whether long or short, whether they consist of two or six paragraphs, have the same structure which is unique to them.

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The **first paragraph** is more or less a summary of the entire passage, kind of like the abstract of a scientific journal article.

All the other **paragraphs** are structured in the same way. They go into a certain point, issue or aspect pertaining to the main idea of the passage in depth. The beginning of each paragraph announces the topic of the paragraph and is kind of a summary of or introduction to the rest of the paragraph.

The exception is one-paragraph passages. These passages are not divided into paragraphs. The whole text is one long paragraph.

What would you expect to find in the **last paragraph**?

A short summary of the passage

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The Last Paragraph Misconception

While the **first paragraph** usually consists of the main idea of the passage, the **last paragraph** is NEVER EVER a summary of the passage. On rare occasions, the last paragraph will contain a recommendation for a plan of action, but in 95% of the cases, the last paragraph is no different than all previous paragraphs. That is why we treat the **last paragraph** as we do any other **paragraph**. We do not read all of it, we do not scan it, and we definitely do not look at the last sentence, expecting it to contain valuable information.

Reading Comprehension - Logic over Content

?Ask a tutor

It would probably not come as a great shock for you to find that, just like other GMAT question types, Reading Comprehension questions have their own way of sidetracking or tricking us.

In Reading Comprehension questions, GMAC tries to trick us by making us focus on the **content** of the passage. If we approach GMAT reading passages the same way we tackle any other passages - that is, reading all of them and trying to understand them - we both **lose time** and **lower our chances of answering questions correctly.**

GMAC makes things so hard. How can I avoid the Reading Comprehension pitfalls?

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Since GMAT reading passages are taken from a wide variety of scientific disciplines, your chances of understanding the content of each of these passages in depth are slim.

Actually, Reading Comprehension questions try to establish whether we can quickly **(1) analyze the structure** of a passage, **(2) get the gist** of it, and **(3) extract specific information** from it.

So by reading the entire passage and struggling with unfamiliar, often technical terms, we actually prove to GMAC that we can't.

Trying to read a 350 word passage about a topic you know nothing about is like trying to solve a ridiculously long and complex equation in the quantitative section. Most people realize that there has got to be a shorter, saner way to solve such equations. Such a way exists in Reading Comprehension too.

I get it. I need to focus on the outline of the passage.

That's one way to avoid being distracted by **content**:

Focus on the <u>structure</u> and <u>function</u> of each sentence you read rather than on the information it presents.

To make this clearer, let's look at the following example:

Originally, scientists speculated that Mars may have liquid water on its surface. The basis for this theory was changes in light and dark areas in the polar regions seen even by the most primitive telescopes, which were attributed to seas and continents.

Which structural information can be extracted from this paragraph?

The paragraph tells us what scientists thought at first.

That's right. That's what we call identifying the **function** of the paragraph and not being distracted by its **content**.

Now we know that in Reading Comprehension questions **we must focus on what purpose and function the text serves**, NOT on its content.

Logic:1 Content:0 !

Now, let's take a look at the second pitfall - **meaning**.

The second issue we want to address in Reading Comprehension is the difference between **words** and **meaning**.

Ideas can be expressed in more than just one way. That is, the same idea can be expressed by different words. For instance, how else can we express the idea of the sentence "John is a vegetarian"?

John does not eat meat.

That's right, because the **meaning** of vegetarian is one who does not eat meat.

Sometimes, answer choices to Reading Comprehension questions will use different **wording** to express the same **meaning** and vice versa - use similar **wording** to express a different **meaning**.

It's essential that we avoid automatically choosing answer choices just because they use the same words that appeared in the passage. Rather, we should adhere to the **idea** that's expressed in the text, bearing in mind that the correct answer could express that same idea using other words.

[Can you sum it up for me? Shortly, please.](#)

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

To sum up, Reading Comprehension questions are made up to make us lose time and steer us away from the correct answer. To avoid that, we must:

1) Focus on <u>logic</u>, <u>structure</u> and <u>function</u> rather than on <u>content</u>

2) Focus on <u>meaning</u> of expressions rather than on similar <u>wording</u>

That's it. Just remember these two, and you will not be easily fooled!

<mark>Reading Comprehension: Initial Reading</mark>

Suppose you see the following reading **passage**. As always on GMAT reading comprehension, there's a question next to it. What would you do?

Tomb raiding, the act of disinterring a corpse or opening a tomb in order to retrieve the precious artifacts which may have been buried within, has long been the dread of historians and archaeologists in Egypt. Often in the process of removing such antiquities, the conditions vital to the preservation of some types of archaeological evidence, such as mummies, are not fulfilled. For instance, once a grave is opened, humidity may permeate and accelerate the decomposition of artifacts which had been preserved for centuries in relative dryness.

One known case of tomb raiders who damaged archaeological evidence in Egypt was recorded in 1881, when the mummy of Thutmose III was rediscovered in the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut. Although it was first unwrapped by Egyptologist Émile Brugsch, the mummy had already suffered extensive damage in the form of cuts and tears in its burial shrouds. One of the archaeologists who rediscovered the mummy, Gaston Maspero, recalled that the body of the mummified king was found outside of his grave as it was ripped out of it by tomb raiders, who mutilated it in their hurry to collect

the artifacts and leave. After the robbing of the tomb, the mummy was found and re-interred by locals, who, in their lack of experience in handling mummies, caused additional damage.

However, data about the time of the robbing may lead to a different perspective on the phenomenon. In the case above, the robbing was eventually dated to the time of the 20th dynasty, i.e., roughly the 11th century BC. This implies that tomb robbing was a trend which began already during times of antiquity and may in itself be a subject of archaeological and historical study. Other archaeological evidence from the period of the 20th dynasty support this approach, including records of investigation and punishment of such ancient grave robbing.

[Scan it, trying to concentrate on the important point](#)

?[Ask a tutor](#)

You're right.

The first thing to do when you come across a reading **passage** is called **Initial Reading.** The purpose of the initial reading is to understand the **main idea** and the **structure** of the **passage**.

The **Initial Reading** involves reading only a few sentences, so it should not take more than 2-3 minutes, depending on the length of the passage.

[How do I go about this Initial Reading?](#)

?[Ask a tutor](#)

As you already know, all GMAT reading **passages** have the same structure that is unique to them. The first **paragraph** is more or less a summary of the entire **passage**, somewhat similar to the abstract of a scientific journal article.

Therefore, begin the **Initial Reading** by reading the first sentence of the first **paragraph**.

Tomb raiding, the act of disinterring a corpse or opening a tomb in order to retrieve the precious artifacts which may have been buried within, has long been the dread of historians and archaeologists in Egypt.

After reading this sentence, stop and process what you've read. You might want to write the main points on the erasable note board.

What would you write down?

Correct! This summarizes the **idea** behind the sentence, and it does so in as few words as possible, thus saving time.

Next, read the second sentence of the first **paragraph**.

Tomb raiding, the act of disinterring a corpse or opening a tomb in order to retrieve the precious artifacts which may have been buried within, has long been the dread of historians and archaeologists in Egypt. **Often in the process of removing such antiquities, the conditions vital to the preservation of some types of archaeological evidence, such as mummies, are not fulfilled.**

Then, process this sentence and make sure you understand how it's connected to the first sentence.

How is this sentence connected to the first sentence?

Good. This sentence indeed explains the first sentence. It explains why tomb raiding creates a problem for archaeologists and historians - "because antiquities are removed without taking care to preserve them".

There's just one more sentence in the **paragraph**. Read it:

Tomb raiding, the act of disinterring a corpse or opening a tomb in order to retrieve the precious artifacts which may have been buried within, has long been the dread of historians and archaeologists in Egypt. Often in the process of removing such antiquities, the conditions vital to the preservation of some types of archaeological evidence, such as mummies, are not fulfilled. **For instance, once a grave is opened, humidity may permeate and accelerate the decomposition of artifacts which had been preserved for centuries in relative dryness.**

Since this sentence begins with the words *For instance*, you do not need to read it in depth to understand its function. It merely gives an example of the second sentence.

Now that you read the first paragraph, you know what the **passage** is about: tomb raiding and the damage it does to archaeological and historical study.

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

In each of the next **paragraphs**, only read the first sentence. You have to understand how this sentence is related to the content of the **first paragraph**. You have to understand what this **paragraph** is trying to do. How it develops the main idea of the **passage** portrayed by the author in the **first paragraph**.

Tomb raiding, the act of disinterring a corpse or opening a tomb in order to retrieve the precious artifacts which may be have been buried within, has long been the dread of historians and archaeologists in Egypt. Often in the process of removing such antiquities, the conditions vital to the preservation of some types of archaeological evidence, such as mummies, are not fulfilled. For instance, once a grave is opened, humidity may permeate and accelerate the decomposition of artifacts which had been preserved for centuries in relative dryness.

One known case of tomb raiders who damaged archaeological evidence in Egypt was recorded in 1881, when the mummy of Thutmose III was rediscovered in the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut. Although it was first unwrapped by Egyptologist Émile Brugsch, the mummy had already suffered extensive damage in the form of cuts and tears in its burial shrouds. One of the archaeologists who rediscovered the mummy, Gaston Maspero, recalled that the body of the mummified king was found outside of his grave as it was ripped out of it by tomb raiders, who mutilated it in their hurry to collect the artifacts and leave. After the robbing of the tomb, the mummy was found and re-interred by a family of locals, who, in their lack of experience in handling mummies, caused additional damage.

How would you summarize this sentence on the erasable note board?

[Second paragraph: a specific example of the damage tomb raiding caused.](#)

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

Correct! And that's all you need to know about the second **paragraph**. If you read the second **paragraph** any further, you'll be bombarded with details and technical terms that will not contribute to your general understanding of the **passage**.

[Continue...](#)

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

Let's recap:

First paragraph (main idea): Tomb raiding causes problems for archaeologists and historians.

Second paragraph: A specific case illustrating such a problem caused by tomb raiding.

What about the last **paragraph**? Do you treat it differently or the same as you do the second, third and other **paragraphs**?

[The same](#)

[?Ask a tutor](#)

Correct.

While the first **paragraph** usually consists of the main idea of the **passage**, the last **paragraph** in GMAT reading comprehension passages is never ever a summary of the **passage** or its conclusion - it just contains more potentially useless information. Treat the last **paragraph** as you do any other **paragraph**: do not read all of it, do not scan it, and definitely do not look at the last sentence, expecting it to contain some valuable insight regarding the passage as a whole.

[Continue...](#)

[?Ask a tutor](#)

Let's read the first sentence of the third paragraph:

Tomb raiding, the act of disinterring a corpse or opening a tomb in order to retrieve the precious artifacts which may have been buried within, has long been the dread of historians and archaeologists in Egypt. Often in the process of removing such antiquities, the conditions vital to the preservation of some types of archaeological evidence, such as mummies, are not fulfilled. For instance, once a grave is opened, humidity may permeate and accelerate the decomposition of artifacts which had been preserved for centuries in relative dryness.

One known case of tomb raiders who damaged archaeological evidence in Egypt was recorded in 1881, when the mummy of Thutmose III was rediscovered in the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut. Although it was first unwrapped by Egyptologist Émile Brugsch, the mummy had already suffered extensive damage in the form of cuts and tears in its burial shrouds. One of the archaeologists who rediscovered the mummy, Gaston Maspero, recalled that the body of the mummified king was found outside of his grave

as it was ripped out of it by tomb raiders, who mutilated it in their hurry to collect the artifacts and leave. After the robbing of the tomb, the mummy was found and re-interred by a family of locals, who, in their lack of experience in handling mummies, caused additional damage.

However, data about the time of the robbing may lead to a different perspective on the phenomenon. In the case above, the robbing was eventually dated to the time of the 20th dynasty, i.e., roughly the 11th century BC. This implies that tomb robbing was a trend which began already during times of antiquity and may in itself be a subject of archaeological and historical study. Other archaeological evidence from the period of the 20th dynasty support this approach, including records of investigation and punishment of such ancient grave robbing.

If you were to write down a summary of this sentence, which is actually a summary of the third paragraph, what would you write?

[Although tomb raiding is a problem, there is more to it than previously discussed.](#)

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

Very good!

That was the last stage of the Initial Reading of the passage. It involved reading only 5-6 sentences in the entire passage: the first 2-3 sentences of the first paragraph, the first sentence of the second paragraph and the first sentence of the last paragraph.

This both saved you time and allowed you to capture the main points of the passage quickly and efficiently. When you know where to look, finding what you're looking for is easy...

The summary of the passage, which you might have written down on the erasable note board, looks something like this:

First paragraph (main idea): Tomb raiding causes problems for archaeologists and historians.

Second paragraph: A specific case illustrating such a problem caused by tomb raiding.

Third paragraph: Although tomb raiding is a problem, there is more to it than previously discussed.

[Continue to a 3 points summary of Initial Reading](#)

==**Summary of Initial Reading: The three stages of Initial Reading**==

1. Read the first sentence of the **first paragraph**.

2. If you think you already understand the main idea, move on to the next **paragraph**. Otherwise, read the next sentence in paragraph 1. ***Carry on like this - one sentence at a time -*** until you have a firm grasp of the main idea of the **passage** or until the **first paragraph** is over.

3. In each of the following **paragraphs**, read the first sentence only. Make sure you not only understand it, but also understand how it's related to the previous **paragraphs** and to the main idea of the **passage**.

Final tips

Fine-tuning: Last words of wisdom (Guidelines) for Initial Reading

1. <u>Long first paragraph</u>: In most cases, read the **entire first** paragraph sentence by sentence. An exception to this rule is the case of a very long **first paragraph**. If the **first paragraph** consists of more than four sentences, it means that the **paragraph** does not contain only the gist of the **passage**, i.e., not just the main idea, but also starts going into detail. In this case, stop reading the **first paragraph** as soon as you realize that the information you are reading is no longer general.

2. <u>Short/friendly Reading passage</u>: Even if you come across a reading **passage** which is short and is taken from the field you're an expert in, do not be tempted to do what you would intuitively do when you see a reading **passage**. That is, do not read the entire **passage**. If you read the entire passage, you'll end up remembering bits and pieces from its content rather than its main idea and structure.

Reading Comprehension: One Paragraph Reading Passages

?Ask a tutor

Reading passages comprised of a *single paragraph* require an **initial reading** which is slightly different from that of multi-paragraph passages. Look at the following passage and consider how you would approach it.

One of the world's most long-lived lizards, the Grand Cayman Iguana is a unique species previously thought to be a subspecies of the Cuban Iguana, but, as DNA research has shown in 2004, is in fact a distinct species of the same origin as that of the Cuban Iguana. Unfortunately, the Grand Cayman Iguana, also known as the Blue Iguana, is one of the most imperiled species on the planet. Fossil research has shown that the species was abundantly present in the region before the European conquest of the Americas. However, in modern times, the scarcity of Blue Iguanas became known to the Grand Caymans government in 1988, a condition which has deteriorated into a count of less than 15 animals in the wild in 2003. During the 1990s, a conservation program was initiated in the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park in the Grand Caymans, which aimed to breed Blue Iguanas and rear them in their natural, albeit captive, environment and set them free in their old territories once they gained the required resilience and ability to withstand real-world threats. And yet, despite having raised several generations of captive

Blue Iguanas, until present time the QEII team has decided not to release captivity-bred iguanas into the wild. The rationale behind this decision is based on the observation that captive iguanas are not yet ready to handle wild environment, as genetic diversification projects are still working on enhancing the captive iguana's resistance to natural diseases.

Phew, that's long! I don't need it all. I'll just read the first few sentences and get the gist of it.

?Ask a tutor

You're right about the fact that the **main idea** of the passage will be found in the first few sentences. **We begin the Initial Reading just as we would the Initial Reading of a passage with a long first paragraph***: one sentence at a time until we understand the main idea*.

Wouldn't it be great if we could read just that? It would, but the harsh reality of the GMAT is different. One paragraph passages contain more than just their main idea. In fact, they contain sentences which could just as well be separate short paragraphs. By locating the "first sentences" of such hidden subsections within the single-paragraph passage, we can map a passage with one long paragraph just as we do in a standard **Initial Reading**.

In order to identify the "first sentences" within the long paragraph, we must look for **structural words/phrases**, such as *however*, *alternately,* or *for example*. Each of these words/phrases indicates that we should stop and read the sentence carefully, treating it as we would the first sentence of each of the paragraphs (beyond the first) in a passage that consists of more than one paragraph.

Quickly scan the passage again and try to identify at least one **structural word/phrase**:

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One of the world's most long-lived lizards, the Grand Cayman Iguana is a unique species previously thought to be a subspecies of the Cuban Iguana, but, as DNA research has shown in 2004, is in fact a distinct species of the same origin as that of the Cuban Iguana. Unfortunately, the Grand Cayman Iguana, also known as the Blue Iguana, is one of the most imperiled species on the planet. Fossil research has shown that the species was abundantly present in the region before the European conquest of the Americas. However, in modern times, the scarcity of Blue Iguanas became known to the Grand Caymans government in 1988, a condition which has deteriorated into a count of less than 15 animals in the wild in 2003. During the 1990s, a conservation program was initiated in the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park in the Grand Caymans, which aimed to breed Blue Iguanas and rear them in their natural, albeit captive, environment and set them free in their old territories once they gained the required resilience and ability to withstand real-world threats. And yet, despite having raised several generations of captive Blue Iguanas, until present time the QEII team has decided not to release captivity-bred iguanas into the wild. The rationale behind this decision is based on the observation that captive iguanas are not yet

ready to handle wild environment, as genetic diversification projects are still working on enhancing the captive iguana's resistance to natural diseases.

However

That's right. *However* is a **structural word** which points to a new section, one which will contain information which contradicts previous information. Carefully reading the sentence after it is now part of the **initial reading** of this one-paragraph passage.

Using this method, we can map the entire passage just as we do in the Initial Reading of passages with several paragraphs.

What should we do next?

Scan the rest of the passage and look for more structural words or expressions.

Yes, that's exactly it.

Let's summarize the method for the Initial Reading of one-paragraph passages:

1) Read the first sentences of the passage (no more than two or three) until you understand the **main idea.** Stop when you start reading specific information.

2) Scan the rest of the passage, looking for **structural words/phrases**. Read the sentences which begin with such a word/phrase. Each such sentence points to the beginning of a new subsection and explains its **function**.

That's it. You are ready to handle one-paragraph passages. Good luck!

Does the **Initial Reading** of the following passage involve reading sentence (1)?

(1) The quagga, or *Equus quagga*, an extinct subspecies of the zebra, is not only one of the most intriguing phenomena in the animal kingdom but also an important milestone in genetic research, specifically DNA research. **(2)** The front part of the quagga was striped and looked like that of any

zebra. **(3)** In the mid-section, the stripes faded and the dark, inter-stripe spaces became wider. **(4)** The rear part of the quagga was plain brown, devoid of any stripes. **(5)** <mark>Interestingly,</mark> Okapi markings are nearly the reverse of the quagga, with the forequarters being mostly plain and the hindquarters being heavily striped although the okapi is a relation of neither the quagga in particular nor the zebra in general - its closest taxonomic relative is the giraffe. **(6)** The quagga became extinct in the 19th century, possibly as a result of being hunted for its meat or hide, or to preserve feed for domesticated stock. **(7)** Fortunately, there is a photograph of a living quagga specimen, taken at a London zoo. **(8)** <mark>Still,</mark> the quagga's story did not end with its extinction: the quagga was the first extinct creature to have its DNA studied. **(9)** Part of this genetic research was conducted at the Smithsonian Institution. **(10)** DNA from mounted specimens was successfully extracted in 1984, but the technology to use recovered DNA for breeding does not yet exist. **(11)** Hope may arise from the Quagga Project in South Africa, which attempts to recreate the quagga by selective breeding from plains zebra stock, a related zebra subspecies.

Yes

?Ask a tutor

That's correct. The Initial Reading of each and every reading passage on the GMAT begins with the first sentence.

What about sentence (2), is it also a part of the **Initial Reading**??

No

?Ask a tutor

Good! Sentence (2) already goes into detail. That's when we stop reading and scan the passage for the next **structural** anchor.

Is there such an anchor? That is, does the **Initial Reading** involve reading any other sentence that appears after sentence (3)?

Yes

You're right, it does.

Which sentence should be read next? Please type the **number** of the sentence without parentheses, e.g., 9

The first sentence of the passage tells us that this passage is concerned with the quagga, specifically, with two characteristics of the quagga:

1. It's an intriguing phenomenon

2. It's a milestone in genetic research

Sentence (2) begins delving into the depth of the **first** characteristic. This means that the next significant sentence, the next sentence we should read as part of the Initial Reading, is a sentence which moves on to the **second** characteristic.

Sentence (5), despite beginning with the promising *Interestingly*, still deals with the **first** characteristic, as can be seen from the fact that it does not mention the second issue, namely, genetic research.

You're right, it does.

Which sentence should be read next? Please type the **number** of the sentence without parentheses, e.g., 9

 Very good.

Still is an **opposition** word. It indicates a change of direction in the passage.

Is this the last sentence we should read as part of the **Initial Reading**?

 Actually, it is.

The first sentence of the passage tells us that this passage is concerned with the quagga, specifically, with two characteristics of the quagga:

1. It's an intriguing phenomenon

2. It's a milestone in genetic research

Sentences (2)-(7) deal with the **first** characteristic. Sentence (8) is the next significant sentence, as it is the first sentence that deals with the **second** characteristic. The rest of the passage continues discussing the second characteristic.

The **Initial Reading** of this passage is, thus, officially over after reading sentence (8) .

Reading Comprehension: Work Order

?Ask a tutor

1. Start with an **Initial reading** of the passage.

2. Read the **question stem. STOP!** *paraphrase* the question in your own words and understand what you're being asked.

3. **Diagnose** the question type (**general** or **specific**, based on what is **stated** or **implied**)

4. **Find** the **answer** to the question:

If the question is a **general** one, the answer is in your initial reading notes - refer to those. *No need to go back to the passage.*

If the question is a **specific** one, *go back to the passage*: find the necessary sentence in the passage part (more on that later) and read around it. **Do not rely on your memory - go back to the passage.**

Important - whether you're referring to your **initial reading** notes or the passage itself -
 STOP! *Paraphrase* the **answer** to the question in your own words before moving on to the next phase:

5. Scan the answer choices, looking for one that is similar to the one you found.

6. Go over the **remaining** answer choices to make sure they're not better.

Let's practice

?Ask a tutor

   Tomb raiding, the act of disinterring a corpse or opening a tomb in order to retrieve the precious artifacts which may have been buried within, has long been the dread of historians and archaeologists in Egypt. Often in the process of removing such antiquities, the conditions vital to the preservation of some types of archaeological evidence, such as mummies, are not fulfilled. For instance, once a grave is opened, humidity may permeate and accelerate the decomposition of artifacts which had been preserved for centuries in relative dryness.

One known case of tomb raiders who damaged archaeological evidence in Egypt was recorded in 1881, when the mummy of Thutmose III was rediscovered in the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut. Although it was first unwrapped by Egyptologist Émile Brugsch, the mummy had already suffered extensive damage in the form of cuts and tears in its burial shrouds. One of the archaeologists who rediscovered the mummy, Gaston Maspero, recalled that the body of the mummified king was found outside of his grave as it was ripped out of it by tomb raiders, who mutilated it in their hurry to collect the artifacts and leave. After the robbing of the tomb, the mummy was found and re-interred by locals, who, in their lack of experience in handling mummies, caused additional damage.

However, data about the time of the robbing may lead to a different perspective on the phenomenon. In the case above, the robbing was eventually dated to the time of the 20th dynasty, i.e., roughly the 11th century BC. This implies that tomb robbing was a trend which began already during times of antiquity and may in itself be a subject of archaeological and historical study. Other archaeological evidence from the period of the 20th dynasty support this approach, including records of investigation and punishment of such ancient grave robbing.

Step 1: We begin with an **Initial Reading** of this passage, which as you may remember, we have already done a short while ago. The **Initial Reading** involves reading and processing the portions in **boldface type**.

Now let's move on to the first question:

1. Which of the following best describes the organization of the passage?

(A) A phenomenon is defined, an example is given, and a conclusion is drawn.

(B) A problem is presented, an example is given, and a conclusion is drawn.

(C) A problem that arises from a phenomenon is discussed, an example is given, and a different view of the phenomenon is proposed.

(D) A general statement is made, a proof for its validity is provided, and an exception is described.

(E) A phenomenon is discussed, its consequences are presented, and an exceptional case is presented.

Step 2: Paraphrase the question stem and understand what you're being asked. Here, it's fairly straightforward: "how is the passage organized?"

[?Ask a tutor](#)

Step 3: Let's diagnose the question type: Is this question **general** or **specific**?

[General](#)

Correct! This question is **general**, which means that we can answer it based on the **Initial Reading** - no need to return to the passage.

Step 4: Find the answer.

Refer to your **initial reading** notes, and sum up the organization of the passage in simple words:

The first paragraph discusses tomb raiding and the problem it poses for archaeologists and historians.

The second paragraph illustrates this problem through an actual case of tomb raiding.

The last paragraph begins with *However*, which indicates a change of tone.

Step 5: Now we can go over the answer choices and look for the one which is the most similar to our own.

A problem that arises from a phenomenon is discussed, an example is given, and a different view of the phenomenon is proposed.

Well done!

Now, let's solve another question.

2. According to the passage, when did the 20th dynasty rule Egypt?

(A) In 1881

(B) In the 20th century

(C) In the 11th century

(D) In the 11th century BC

(E) From the 11th century BC to 1881

Step 2: Paraphrase the question stem and understand what you're being asked.

Again, fairly straightforward: "when did the 20th dynasty rule Egypt?"

Step 3: Diagnose the question type: Is this a **general** or a **specific** question?

Correct! This question is **specific**, which means that the Initial Reading is not enough for **step 4**: find the answer. We'll have to look further into the passage in order to find the answer. Remember that we work at the **sentence** level. This means we have to find the **sentence** in which the answer is stated.

The question stem of a **specific** question will include a 'keyword' - this is the writer's way of telling you where to look for the answer. Look for that keyword in the passage, and read 1-2 sentences around it. If the **initial reading** points you to the right paragraph, start there. Otherwise, quickly **skim** the passage without bothering to actually read anything - just looking for the **keyword**. When you find it, stop and read the previous 1-2 sentences.

In this case, the number **20th** stands out in the text, which makes it easy to locate. We read the sentence:

In the case above, the robbing was eventually dated to the time of the 20th dynasty, i.e., roughly the 11th century BC.

STOP! What was the answer to the question? *Paraphrase* the answer to the question in your own words before moving on to the next phase.

Step 5: Now we can go to the answer choices in search of the one that's most similar to what is stated in this sentence.

Well done! That was indeed an easy question - if you work in a smart, efficient manner and don't let the passage confuse you into choosing a trap answer.

Two important pointers:

You'll notice that the work order includes 2 places to **STOP!** and *paraphrase*: stage 2 and stage 4. These are important: the classic rookie mistake is to try and save time by rushing from the question to the passage to the answer choices, without pausing to figure out what you're looking for. Unlike the examples above, some question stems are long and complicated. In such cases you need to "translate" the question stem: you want to understand what you're being asked in a simple, concise manner, rather than the technical long speech the question stem uses. If you don't understand the question, how can you find the answer?

Making these 'pauses' is THE KEY to quickly and accurately solve Reading Comprehension questions. Consciously Pausing along the way to

1) "Translate" the question and clarify to yourself what is being asked (stage 2)

and

2)"Summarize" to yourself, in your own simple words, what the expected answer to the question is (before going to the answer choices)

will actually end up **saving** you time by enabling you to quickly discard the wrong answer choices that do not match your prediction.

?Ask a tutor

And something about stage 5:

5. Scan the answer choices, looking for one that is similar to the one you found.

Some answer choices present the information that's stated in the **passage** in a seemingly different manner. For example, the answer choice may express the same idea that was expressed in the passage using a **different word order** or **different words** altogether. This calls for "translating" answer choices to see which **paraphrases** the information in the passage and says it in different words and which **deviates** from the idea stated in the passage.

?Ask a tutor

This is the Reading comprehension work order. Review it in the summaries. Remember it. Use it.

Reading Comprehension: Passage Content Categories

?Ask a tutor

The **content** of the reading passages is **scientific** and **academic** in nature.

Which types of texts do you think you'll see on the GMAT?

[Texts about a recent research finding, a theory or a chronological review of a scientific phenomenon.](#)

Correct!

There is a wide variety of **disciplines** from which reading passages are taken, from **archaeology** and **history**, through **business**, to **biology**, **chemistry** and **astronomy**.

Popular disciplines from reading passages can be roughly categorized into five main groups:

Business - usually at least one passage per test.

Humanities - mainly history and archaeology

Life sciences - mainly biology, marine biology, zoology and botany

Exact sciences - mainly chemistry and astronomy

Minorities - these passages are mainly about women, Native Americans, African Americans. Usually one of the four reading passages deals with such a minority. These groups take the GMAT less than other groups and their GMAT score is, on average, lower. They are also underrepresented in MBA programs. Including such passages in the GMAT is an attempt at affirmative action of a sort. The assumption is that just like a passage about **biology** would be easier for a biologist than it would for a non biologist, a passage about **women** would be easier for a woman than it would to a man.

[How on earth can this predict my chances of doing well in an MBA?](#)

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

How is understanding a passage about **archaeology** an indicator of how well you'll do in business graduate studies?

Well, the answer is that the **content** of the passage is almost irrelevant. Similarly to **Critical Reasoning** questions, **Reading Comprehension** questions focus on **logic**, **sentence structure**, etc. and not on the specific **content** of the passage.

GMAC deliberately chooses a wide range of topics to minimize the chances that a test taker will be familiar with all of them. The purpose is to test what you do when you have to quickly process unfamiliar information from an unknown field. This separates high level thinkers, who would find a

shortcut, from lower level thinkers who would miserably approach the text in the traditional manner: read it, trying to understand every word in it.

Also, the questions mainly deal with the **structural** elements of the passage and its **logic** rather than with its specific **content**. There's a huge gap between what the **passage** is about and what the **questions** are about.

[A word of caution](#)

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

You don't need to be familiar with any of these subjects in order to do well in **Reading Comprehension**. However, people tend to feel more confident and at ease when they read passages that deal with topics they have some familiarity with, and they tend to feel anxious and disoriented when they read a long passage about a topic they know little of, especially if it includes long technical terms.

Therefore, if any of the above topics is one you know absolutely nothing about and you're worried that you won't be able to deal with a passage about this topic effectively because of anxiety, you might want to familiarize yourself with it by reading a little bit about it. The Internet offers plenty of material on these subjects in the form of **online magazines**, **E-journals**, **Wikipedia**, etc.

Reading Comprehension: Main Idea Questions

Main Idea questions, as their name suggests, ask what the main idea of the passage is. They come in a variety of phrasings, the most common of which are:

1. The **primary purpose** of the passage is to...

2. Which of the following most accurately states the **main idea/point** of the passage?

3. The author/passage is **chiefly/primarily** concerned with which of the following?

4. Which of the following best **summarizes** the contents of the passage?

Which parts of the passage do we need to read in order to answer **Main Idea** questions?

Very good! **Main Idea** questions can and should be answered on the basis of the **Initial Reading**. There's no need to go back to the passage for more information. Reading anything else beyond the sentences you read in the **Initial Reading** will waste precious time and expose you to **supporting ideas**, unimportant details and many technical terms that will just confuse you.

Also, GMAC often uses this unimportant information in the answer choices, so reading anything beyond the gist of the passage actually **decreases** your chances of answering **Main Idea** questions correctly because you'll recognize the information you read in answer choices, and they will seem right to you.

If, on the other hand, you do not read sentences that contain unimportant information, when you see this information in the answer choices, you'll have no problem realizing that these answer choices are **distractors** and you'll be able to easily eliminate them.

The question of the existence of liquid water on the surface of Mars has been fascinating scientists for over three centuries, with new information repeatedly shedding new light on the subject. Other than the significance of water in the geological research of Mars and its relevance to the study of the solar system as a whole, the existence of water also sparked the imagination of many in regards to the possibility of life on the Red Planet. Such speculations arose from the assumption that a planet's capability to develop and sustain life is highly dependent on the prevalence of liquid water on its surface.

Originally, scientists speculated that Mars may have liquid water on its surface. The basis for this theory was changes in light and dark areas in the polar regions seen even by the most primitive telescopes, which were attributed to seas and continents. Furthermore, long dark lines visible across the surface were suggested by certain scientists to be irrigation channels, carrying liquid water. However, the dark features were consequently proven to be optical illusions, and after the first flyby of the Mariner 4 spacecraft in 1965, new data was discovered that discredited such assumptions.

Information gathered by spacecrafts at the end of the 20th century and during the early years of the 21st century indicated that although liquid water was previously present on Mars' surface, it cannot exist there today due to Mars' low atmospheric pressure and distance from the sun. This information was collected by a group of orbiting spacecrafts, adjoined by telescopic observation of the planet from space and several landers and rovers which explored the planet's surface. These data brought scientists to believe Mars was previously largely covered in water, with geyser-like eruptions occurring even up to recent years.

Still, the debate over liquid water on Mars is far from being resolved and is continually fueled by new evidence. Currently, two rovers – Spirit and Opportunity – continue to explore the surface and broadcast information back to earth. In June 2007, an image from Mars of blue patches resembling water puddles was published by NASA; however, speculations were soon dismissed as the picture taken was of a sloped wall of a crater. Despite such disappointments, some scientists still argue that as long as conclusive evidence regarding the nonexistence of liquid water on Mars is not found, the search must go on.

The passage is primarily concerned with which of the following?

(B) Presenting information about the possible existence of liquid water on Mars

?Ask a tutor

Correct!

The last thing you need to know and beware of is two common **Distractors**:

1. Answer choices that are too **narrow/specific**, usually details that appear in the passage but are not its main idea.

Two examples of this type of distractor are answer choices (A) and (D) in the above question:

(A) Arguing in favor of the existence of liquid water on Mars

(D) Suggesting that Mars was previously largely covered in water

Answer choice (A) is the primary concern of the second paragraph, not of the **entire** passage.

Answer choice (D) is a **detail** that is mentioned in the last sentence of the **third** paragraph.

The most effective way to deal with this type of distractor is not to read anything beyond the **Initial Reading** when solving a **Main Idea** question. This way, you do not come across the information that's contained in these distractors during the Initial Reading, and eliminating these answer choices will be easy.

Reading the passage beyond the Initial Reading, on the other hand, might expose you to information which is beyond the scope of the main idea, thus making it harder for you to eliminate answer choices that contain it when you'll see them.

2. Answer choices that are too **general** or too **broad**.

An example of this type of distractor is answer choice (E) in the above question:

(E) Acquaint the reader with Mars and its surface geology

Congratulations, you now know all you need to know about **Main Idea** questions!

Structure questions deal with the **structure** and **organization** of the passage. They strip the passage from its **content** and focus on the ways in which the author presents his or her ideas throughout the passage. For example, the passage may begin with a general statement, continue with several examples and end with a conclusion.

Are Structure questions **general** or **specific**?

General

Correct! Like Main Idea questions, with which you're already familiar, Structure questions are **general** questions. This means that we can answer them based on the **Initial Reading**. There's no need to go back to the passage for more information.

How do I identify Structure Questions?

We identify this question type through one of the following phrasings:

1. One **function** of the third **paragraph** is to...

2. The last **paragraph** performs which of the following **functions** in the passage?

3. Which of the following best describes the **relation** of the first **paragraph** to the **passage** as a whole?

Let's practice, shall we?

The question of the existence of liquid water on the surface of Mars has been fascinating scientists for over three centuries, with new information repeatedly shedding new light on the subject. Other than

the significance of water in the geological research of Mars and its relevance to the study of the solar system as a whole, the existence of water also sparked the imagination of many in regards to the possibility of life on the Red Planet. Such speculations arose from the assumption that a planet's capability to develop and sustain life is highly dependent on the prevalence of liquid water on its surface.

Originally, scientists speculated that Mars may have liquid water on its surface. The basis for this theory was changes in light and dark areas in the polar regions seen even by the most primitive telescopes, which were attributed to seas and continents. Furthermore, long dark lines visible across the surface were suggested by certain scientists to be irrigation channels, carrying liquid water. However, the dark features were consequently proven to be optical illusions, and after the first flyby of the Mariner 4 spacecraft in 1965, new data was discovered that discredited such assumptions.

Information gathered by spacecrafts at the end of the 20th century and during the early years of the 21st century indicated that although liquid water was previously present on Mars' surface, it cannot exist there today due to Mars' low atmospheric pressure and distance from the sun. This information was collected by a group of orbiting spacecrafts, adjoined by telescopic observation of the planet from space and several landers and rovers which explored the planet's surface. These data brought scientists to believe Mars was previously largely covered in water, with geyser-like eruptions occurring even up to recent years.

Still, the debate over liquid water on Mars is far from being resolved and is continually fueled by new evidence. Currently, two rovers – Spirit and Opportunity – continue to explore the surface and broadcast information back to earth. In June 2007, an image from Mars of blue patches resembling water puddles was published by NASA; however, speculations were soon dismissed as the picture taken was of a sloped wall of a crater. Despite such disappointments, some scientists still argue that as long as conclusive evidence regarding the nonexistence of liquid water on Mars is not found, the search must go on.

The boldface type sentences are what the Initial Reading of the passage should include. Please answer the following Structure question based on these sentences only.

?Ask a tutor

One function of the second paragraph of the passage is to

begin a chronological review by detailing an early hypothesis

?Ask a tutor

Good!

?Ask a tutor

In the context of Structure questions, the most important/helpful part in the first sentence of the second paragraph is

[Originally](#)

Correct. When we solve **Structure** questions, we should focus on **structural** words such as *However*, *Still,* and *For example*.

Remember: Focusing on **logic** and **structure** will take you a lot further and higher on the GMAT than focusing on **content** ever will.

Armed with this final word of advice, you are now ready to face Structure questions. Good luck!

Reading Comprehension: Detail Questions

Unlike Main Idea questions and Structure questions, which are general questions, Detail questions are specific questions that ask about a specific detail mentioned in the passage.

Do you think the Initial Reading is enough to answer Detail questions?

[No](#)

You're right, the Initial Reading is not enough. We also need to find the detail about which we're being asked and read the sentence in which it appears.

[OK, let's practice.](#)

The question of the existence of liquid water on the surface of Mars has fascinated scientists for over three centuries, with new information repeatedly shedding new light on the subject. Other than the significance of water in the geological research of Mars and its relevance to the study of the solar system as a whole, the existence of water also sparked the imagination of many in regards to the possibility of life on the Red Planet. Such speculations arose from the assumption that a planet's capability to develop and sustain life is highly dependent on the prevalence of liquid water on its surface.

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According to the passage, which two rovers are currently exploring the surface of Mars?

First, we do the Initial Reading. Then, we have to find the detail about which the question asks, namely, the names of the two rovers that are currently exploring the surface of Mars.

How do you find this detail?

The Initial Reading can guide me to a certain paragraph

?Ask a tutor

That's right. To which paragraph?

Note that the question includes the word *currently*. This is a major hint.

[The last](#)

[?Ask a tutor](#)

Very good!

Now you can answer the question:

According to the passage, which two rovers are currently exploring the surface of Mars?

[(E) Spirit and Opportunity](#)

Good!

We identify this question type through one of the following phrasings:

1. Which of the following is mentioned in the passage?

2. All of the following are mentioned in the passage EXCEPT...

3. The passage does not state which of the following?

4. According to the passage...

5. Which of the following statements about... is supported by information in the passage?

[Look out! Distractors! Common ones!](#)

Common distractors

1. answer choices that contain details that appear elsewhere in the passage

Example: Answer choices (A), (B), (C), (D) in the above question.

2. distortions of the detail

Example: The passage mentions a hill, an answer choice replaces it with a mountain.

Masking the correct answer

If the information in the passage is identical to that which appears in the correct answer, realizing that the correct answer is correct is quite easy. However, this will not always be the case. In harder Detail questions, **GMAC will attempt to *mask* or *disguise* the correct answer so that you think it is different from what you're looking for and eliminate it.**

GMAC does so in two different ways:

1. using synonyms

Example: The passage uses the word *cheap*, and the correct answer uses the word *inexpensive*.

2. changing word order

Example: The passage says, "If the researcher had realized x, she would have done y."

The correct answer says, "The researcher would have done y if she had realized x."

Reading Comprehension: Detail Function Questions

Detail Function questions focus on a detail that appears in the passage, such as a word the author uses. True to GMAT form, they deal with logic rather than content. That is, they do not ask you what the word means or what the sentence in which it appears is about, but rather deal with the function that this detail serves in the passage. In other words, how the author uses this detail to deliver his or her ideas. For example, a Detail Function questions can ask the following:

The author uses the word "simple" most probably to emphasize that...

Are these questions general or specific?

Specific

Correct!

Since Detail Function questions are specific, the Initial Reading is not enough in order to answer them. We also need to find the detail about which we're being asked and read the sentence in which it appears. Then we need to think about the correct answer - that is, about the function that this detail fulfills in the passage - and only then do we go over the answer choices and look for one that matches the one we thought of ourselves.

Is the answer to Detail Function questions stated in the passage or implied?

Implied

 Correct!

Show me an example, please

The question of the existence of liquid water on the surface of Mars has fascinated scientists for over three centuries, with new information repeatedly shedding new light on the subject. Other than the significance of water in the geological research of Mars and its relevance to the study of the solar system as a whole, the existence of water also sparked the imagination of many in regards to the possibility of life on the Red Planet. Such speculations arose from the assumption that a planet's capability to develop and sustain life is highly dependent on the prevalence of liquid water on its surface.

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Still, the debate over liquid water on Mars is far from being resolved and is continually fueled by new evidence. Currently, two rovers – Spirit and Opportunity – continue to explore the surface and broadcast information back to earth. In June 2007, an image from Mars of blue patches resembling water puddles was published by NASA; however, speculations were soon dismissed as the picture taken was of a sloped wall of a crater. Despite such disappointments, some scientists still argue that as long as

conclusive evidence regarding the nonexistence of liquid water on Mars is not found, the search must go on.

The author uses the word "Originally" to emphasize that

(C) the hypothesis described in the rest of the sentence is an original perspective on the subject discussed

This answer choice focuses on the meaning of the related word *original* rather than on the function that the word *originally* serves in the passage.

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was of a sloped wall of a crater. Despite such disappointments, some scientists still argue that as long as conclusive evidence regarding the nonexistence of liquid water on Mars is not found, the search must go on.

?Ask a tutor

The author uses the word "Originally" to emphasize that

(D) the existence of liquid water on Mars originated from scientists' speculations.

This answer choice focuses on the meaning of the related word *originate* rather than on the function that the word *originally* serves in the passage. It is also illogical. Speculations cannot create water, and water does not originate from speculations.

?Ask a tutor

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?Ask a tutor

The author uses the word "Originally" to emphasize that

(A) scientists speculated that Mars may have liquid water on its surface

This answer choice copies information from the passage. Remember that the answer to Detail Function questions is not stated in the passage but rather implied in it.

?Ask a tutor

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?Ask a tutor

The author uses the word "Originally" to emphasize that

(B) the hypothesis described in the rest of the sentence is the earliest one regarding the existence of liquid water on Mars

Correct!

Common phrasings

We identify this question type through one of the following phrasings:

1. The author of the passage most probably discusses X in order to...

2. The author's discussion of X is meant to...

3. The author uses the word X most probably to emphasize that...

4. The author refers to X in order to point out...

Common Distractors

The main distractor is an answer choice which copies the information about the detail, that is, focuses on the content rather than on the function of the detail.

Examples of this distractor are answer choices (A), (C) and (D). Answer choice (A) copies the information from the sentence in which the detail appears. Answer choices (C) and (D) deal with word meanings. They focus on the meanings of words that are similar to the word *Originally* rather than analyze the reason the author uses this word and how this word serves a function in the author's way of conveying his or her point.

Example

Until the mid-twentieth century, most historians considered the Early Middle Ages, the period between the 6th and 11th centuries, a dark age in which civilization almost disappeared from Europe. According to this narrative, a series of invasions by Germanic peoples and other barbaric tribes led to the collapse of the Roman Empire. This political disaster triggered catastrophic economic and demographic decline

By 800 A.D. there were no large cities in Europe, the largest political units were tiny chiefdoms and the glorious antique culture lay in ruins.

In recent decades, a group of historians known as the Late Antiquity School has challenged this popular view of the Early Middle Ages. According to these historians, the Roman world did not collapse or disappear but was transformed. The Germanic peoples, they argue, settled in the lands of the Roman Empire not by the right of conquest but after a series of agreements in which they promised allegiance to the Roman Empire in exchange for land. Soon, the Germanic tribes intermingled with Roman citizens and adopted their religion, customs and high culture. Although the Empire eventually disappeared, the religious, cultural and political structures of the Roman world served as the basis of a new European civilization.

Unfortunately, the archaeological record does not agree with the picture drawn by the Late Antiquity School. The numerous archaeological digs in sites identified with settlements of the Early Middle Ages reveal a striking economic and cultural decline. Stone buildings, which existed even in the most humble of Roman settlements, disappeared. Roman Britain, a backwater province, imported a large amount of pottery, yet archeological digs from Early Middle Ages settlements show no trace of imported ceramics, a sure sign of decreased economic activity and disappearing markets. Cemetery digs from across Europe show that the population in the 7th century was half of what it had been in the Roman era, indicating that the notion of the catastrophic Dark Ages is more than a myth.

The author most likely uses the words "according to this narrative" in order to

express the author's viewpoint of the collapse of the Roman Empire

show how the Roman Empire collapsed

argue against the Late Antiquity School's viewpoint of the collapse of the Roman Empire

suggest that this interpretation of the collapse of the Roman Empire is not historically accurate

indicate that this interpretation of the collapse of the Roman Empire is not agreed upon by all scholars

Nicely done!

This is a **Detail Function** question. We should begin by reading the **second** sentence of the **first** paragraph in which the author uses the words according to this narrative. By reading the first

sentence of that paragraph, we see that this narrative refers to how **most** historians believed the Roman Empire fell.

The words according to this narrative tell us that although most scholars agree on this account of the fall of the Roman empire, it is not the only one - some scholars have other accounts.

Reading Comprehension: Inference Questions

Reading comp inference questions, like critical reasoning inference questions ask you to find something that must be true based on the passage but not mentioned explicitly in the passage. In other words you need to read between the lines. Here are some sample inference question stems:

Which of the following is suggested about X?

Which of the following can be most reasonably inferred from the passage?

The author would most likely agree that…

Inference questions come in two types. The first uses key phrases or highlighting to refer to a specific part of passage. To solve this kind of question, find the relevant detail in the passage and consider it in the context of the material surrounding it. Then make a flexible prediction about what the correct answer will state.

Consider the following inference question, once again asking about the guinea pigs that we discussed earlier:

 Which of the following is implied about the guinea pigs mentioned in the highlighted portion of the passage?

Just like last time, you want to review the context around the highlighted portion. Doing so, you will find that until recently where was no obvious evidence that temperature affected the flu; however last year there guinea pig records appeared. The logical inference is not explicitly stated, but you can easily put the information from the two sentence together. The answer will be sth like this:

Their deaths provided new evidence that influenza may be more dangerous in lower temperatures.

Other inference makes no specific references, instead asking what can be inferred from the passage as a whole or what opinion the author might hold. Valid information can be drawn from anything in the passage, from big picture issues like the author's opinion to any of the little details. **But you will probably be able to eliminate a few answers quickly because they contradict the big picture.**

Then you will investigate the remaining answers choice by choice, looking to put each answer in one of the three categories- 1 prove right 2 proved wrong 3 not prove right but not prove wrong either. It's distinguishing between the second and third categories that will lead to success on inference questions, don't throw away an answer because you aren't sure about it or don't like it.

If you can't find material in the passage proves that an answer choice wrong, don't eliminate it. <mark>Since the correct choice to an inference question is something that must be true based on the passage, you can often find your way to the correct answer by eliminating the four choices that could be false.</mark>

Tips:

- On inference questions search for the answer choice that follows from the passage.
- When it's difficult to predict a specific answer to an inference question, **you still know that the right answer must be true based on the passage.**
- Wrong answer choices on inference questions often use **extreme language, or they exaggerate views expressed in the passage.**

<mark>Reading Comprehension: Application Questions</mark>

?Ask a tutor

Application questions ask you to apply an idea that appeared in the passage to a context outside the passage itself. For example, you may be asked to apply ideas given in the passage to a situation not mentioned by the author or select a statement that would provide the most logical continuation of the final paragraph of the passage.

Are Application questions general or specific?

Specific

?Ask a tutor

Correct! Application questions are specific, which means that in addition to the Initial Reading, you also need to find a specific sentence on which the question focuses.

Is the answer to Application questions stated in the passage or implied?

Implied

?Ask a tutor

Correct! Application questions are the ones that stray the farthest from the information presented in the text. The answer to a question such as "Which of the following statements would provide the most logical continuation of the final paragraph of the passage?" is not stated in the passage.

To answer Application questions correctly, you have to do more than recall what you read. Much like in Critical Reasoning questions, you have to be able to strip a process from the content that embeds it, or to be able to recognize a similar process masked in a different context.

[Show me an example, please](#)

[?Ask a tutor](#)

Do the Initial Reading of the following passage and press continue

   Tomb raiding, the act of disinterring a corpse or opening a tomb in order to retrieve the precious artifacts which may have been buried within, has long been the dread of historians and archaeologists in Egypt. Often in the process of removing such antiquities, the conditions vital to the preservation of some types of archaeological evidence, such as mummies, are not fulfilled. For instance, once a grave is opened, humidity may permeate and accelerate the decomposition of artifacts which had been preserved for centuries in relative dryness.

   One known case of tomb raiders who damaged archaeological evidence in Egypt was recorded in 1881, when the mummy of Thutmose III was rediscovered in the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut. Although it was first unwrapped by Egyptologist Émile Brugsch, the mummy had already suffered extensive damage in the form of cuts and tears in its burial shrouds. One of the archaeologists who rediscovered the mummy, Gaston Maspero, recalled that the body of the mummified king was found outside of his grave as it was ripped out of it by tomb raiders, who mutilated it in their hurry to collect the artifacts and leave. After the robbing of the tomb, the mummy was found and re-interred by locals, who, in their lack of experience in handling mummies, caused additional damage.

   However, data about the time of the robbing may lead to a different perspective on the phenomenon. In the case above, the robbing was eventually dated to the time of the 20th dynasty, i.e., roughly the 11th century BC. This implies that tomb robbing was a trend which began already during times of antiquity and may in itself be a subject of archaeological and historical study. Other archaeological evidence from the period of the 20th dynasty support this approach, including records of investigation and punishment of such ancient grave robbing.

[?Ask a tutor](#)

Which of the following is most similar to the relationship between tomb raiding and archaeology, as it is described in the first paragraph?

Good!

Like tomb-raiding (as it is portrayed in the passage), whaling is often done for material gain and in the process it kills whales, damaging the evidence studied in the field of marine biology, just like tomb-raiding damages the evidence studied in the field of archaeology.

One last thing: we identify this question type through one of the following phrasings:

1. The author is most likely to agree with which of the following statements about (something that was mentioned in the passage)?

2. (Something that was mentioned in the passage) is most similar to which of the following?

3. Which of the following statements would provide the most logical continuation of the final paragraph of the passage?

4. Which of the following, if true, would best support the author's theory regarding (something that was mentioned in the passage)?

That's it. You now know all there is to know about application questions. Good luck!

Examples:

Passage 1

Answer the question below based on the following passage:

In the 1980s, many U.S. police departments embraced the model of community policing, a crime prevention approach that relies on the regular patrolling of neighborhoods by beat officers, whose physical presence could instill a sense of greater trust in law enforcement and provide a human face to crime deterrence. A decade later, however, an integrated management approach named CompStat, which was first developed and then implemented by the New York City Police Department with striking results, completely overhauled the established methods of crime control in U.S. urban centers.

Evoking the proverbial "friendly neighborhood policeman" of childhood memory, community policing favors the decentralization of authority and seeks to cement relationships between the police and community residents, while also allowing the community to voice its own priorities for increasing safety on the street and at home. But, following on the success of the 911 emergency alert system, the

professionals who developed CompStat in the 1990s proposed a managerial and organizational approach that relies on information technology and operational strategy to identify hotspots of crime, quickly allocate available resources and provide effective responses to problems in real time, while holding command staff and middle management chiefly accountable for curbing crime.

Resistance to CompStat emerged, as expected, from rank-and-file beat officers, who felt that the new approach risked undermining some of the most valuable aspects of community policing: the devolvement of responsibility to the level of the individual beat patrol and the partnership between law enforcement and the community in addressing a variety of quality of life concerns. Yet, with its use of integrated feedback systems, the CompStat strategy also created possibilities for more collaborative, immediate and flexible solutions to problems arising in troublesome precincts. Following the implementation of the CompStat approach in New York City, in the seven years between 1993 and 2000 the number of reported crimes for the seven major crime categories declined dramatically by more than 57 percent.

The author is most likely to agree with which of the following statements about the role of the community in crime control?

It was overrated by the Community Policing approach

It merits respect, but is secondary in the effort to maximize and optimize crime control

It is the foundation, which, if undermined, would render all other professional interventions useless

It is indispensable for defining the priorities of law enforcement activity in any given location

It can only be significant if the community earns the trust of law enforcement agents

Well done!

This is an **Application** question. The author refers to the role of community **three times** in the passage, in each of the three paragraphs. Since the question does not send us to a specific part of the passage, prepare for it by generally estimating the author's attitude to the role of community. Does he think the comunity's role is important? Unimportant? Does the author takes a positive or negative stance on the issue of community in crime control?

In all three paragraphs, the author describes the rationale of "community policing" as an approach that relies on favorable relations with the community. These relations instill trust in the police, while allowing the community to voice priorities, regarding safety and quality of life. So the author carries a favorable stance towards Community overall. But you also want to pick up on the fact that Compstat's implementation *reduces* the role of community, and the author is clearly favoring that implementation as well.

In discussing the community's role, the author's tone is respectful. The author further recognizes that Compstat's implementation risks undermining the valuable partnership with the community. Yet, while he recognizes the value of the community's role, he still suggests that the integrated CompStat system can enhance crime control.

 Passage 2

The question of the existence of liquid water on the surface of Mars has fascinated scientists for over three centuries, with new information repeatedly shedding new light on the subject. Other than the significance of water in the geological research of Mars and its relevance to the study of the solar system as a whole, the existence of water also sparked the imagination of many in regards to the possibility of life on the Red Planet. Such speculations arose from the assumption that a planet's capability to develop and sustain life is highly dependent on the prevalence of liquid water on its surface.

Originally, scientists speculated that Mars may have liquid water on its surface. The basis for this theory was changes in light and dark areas in the polar regions seen even by the most primitive telescopes, which were attributed to seas and continents. Furthermore, long dark lines visible across the surface were suggested by certain scientists to be irrigation channels, carrying liquid water. However, the dark features were consequently proven to be optical illusions, and after the first flyby of the Mariner 4 spacecraft in 1965, new data was discovered that discredited such assumptions.

Information gathered by spacecrafts at the end of the 20th century and during the early years of the 21st century indicated that although liquid water was previously present on Mars' surface, it cannot exist there today due to Mars' low atmospheric pressure and distance from the sun. This information was collected by a group of orbiting spacecrafts, adjoined by telescopic observation of the planet from space and several landers and rovers which explored the planet's surface. These data brought scientists to believe Mars was previously largely covered in water, with geyser-like eruptions occurring even up to recent years.

Still, the debate over liquid water on Mars is far from being resolved and is continually fueled by new evidence. Currently, two rovers – Spirit and Opportunity – continue to explore the surface and broadcast information back to earth. In June 2007, an image from Mars of blue patches resembling water puddles was published by NASA; however, speculations were soon dismissed as the picture taken was of a sloped wall of a crater. Despite such disappointments, some scientists still argue that as long as conclusive evidence regarding the nonexistence of liquid water on Mars is not found, the search must go on.

Which of the following statements would provide the most logical continuation of the final paragraph of the passage?

Scientists today look back to the scholars of medieval times, who were sadly fooled by optical illusions.

In this spirit, NASA has begun preliminary work on the first manned mission which may allow mankind to examine Mars first hand for signs of liquid water.

Needless to say, Mars enthusiasts were outraged that such a small detail was overlooked.

Although Mars seems to have been previously covered in water, it is hard to believe that liquid water will be found on it, so funds may be put to better use in other areas of space science.

Even if liquid water is found on the Red Planet, it does not necessarily mean there has ever been life on it.

Excellent!

The question stem of this **Application** question points us to the final paragraph of the passage. The function of the last paragraph should have been established in the **Initial Reading**: it is about new evidence which fuels the ongoing debate about the existence of liquid water on Mars.

In addition to the first sentence of the last paragraph, which was read in the **Initial Reading**, we also need to read the final sentence, so that we may see which of the answer choices provides the most **logical continuation** to it:

Despite such disappointments, some scientists still argue that as long as conclusive evidence regarding the nonexistence of liquid water on Mars is not found, **the search must go on**.

This answer choice is in-line with the subject of the **last paragraph** (obtaining new evidence) while also providing a **logical** continuation to the **last sentence**, which discusses the continuation of the search for conclusive evidence.

Reading Comprehension: Style and Tone Questions

Style and Tone questions are concerned with the author of the passage: his or her tone, attitude and style.

Example:

The author's attitude toward the theory mentioned in the second paragraph can best be described as one of

(A) respect
(B) skepticism
(C) contempt
(D) astonishment
(E) criticism

Style and Tone questions can be specific, asking about attitude toward something specific he or she mentions in the passage, or more general.

Is the answer to Style and Tone questions stated or implied?

Implied

?Ask a tutor

Very good!

GMAC puts an emphasis on political correctness. This dictates three principles for answering Style and Tone questions correctly:

1. Moderation - you can automatically eliminate radical answer choices. The author is a cool scientist, and his or her language reflects this fact.

2. Respect for experts and for the people about which the author writes - experts are the author of the passage and any other researcher/scientist mentioned in the passage. Answer choices that portray these people - or anyone else, for that matter - negatively can be automatically eliminated. It is perfectly acceptable for the author to express objection or criticism, but it is unacceptable to show contempt for others or to ridicule them.

3. Respect for mainstream American Values - answer choices that seem to undermine the existing order are outside the scope of a plausible correct GMAT answer. Being innovative or progressive, on the other hand, is fine.

The following words violate the above principles, and seeing them in an answer choice is enough to eliminate it:

absolute, absolutely, complete, completely, extreme, extremely, total, totally, utter, utterly

abusive, agitated, condescending, cynical, denunciatory, derogatory, fervent, harsh, perplexed

amusement, astonishment, contempt, disdain, dismay, ridicule, scorn, skepticism

If you see one of these words in an answer choice to a Style and Tone question, you can eliminate it automatically. There's no need to look it up in the passage or otherwise consider it at all.

Let's look at the sample question again:

The author's attitude toward the theory mentioned in the second paragraph can best be described as one of

(A) respect
(B) skepticism
(C) contempt
(D) astonishment
(E) criticism

How many answer choices can be automatically eliminated?

What is the first answer choice that can be eliminated?

[(B) skepticism](#)

Good! Skepticism is indeed one of the forbidden words.

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What is the next answer choice that can be automatically eliminated?

[(C) contempt](#)

Correct!

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What is the last answer choice that can be automatically eliminated?

(D) astonishment

?Ask a tutor

Very good!

The three answer choices that can be automatically eliminated are (B), (C) and (D).

Continue to common phrasings

 We identify Style and Tone questions through one of the following phrasings:

1. The attitude of the author of the passage toward X is best described as

2. X is regarded by the author with

That's it. You now know all there is to know about Style and Attitude questions. Good luck!

In Reading Comprehension Style and Tone questions, some answer choices can be automatically eliminated, without having to consult the passage.

True

 Correct! Politically incorrect answer choices that use such words as *derogatory* or *abusive* can be automatically eliminated

Example:

One of the world's most long-lived lizards, the Grand Cayman Iguana is a unique species previously thought to be a subspecies of the Cuban Iguana, but, as DNA research has shown in 2004, is in fact a distinct species of the same origin as that of the Cuban Iguana. Unfortunately, the Grand Cayman Iguana, also known as the Blue Iguana, is one of the most imperiled species on the planet. Fossil research has shown that the species was abundantly present in the region before the European conquest of the Americas. However, in modern times, the scarcity of Blue Iguanas became known to the Grand Caymans government in 1988, a condition which has deteriorated into a count of less than 15 animals in the wild in 2003. During the 1990s, a conservation program was initiated in the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park in the Grand Caymans, which aimed to breed Blue Iguanas and rear them in their natural, albeit captive, environment and set them free in their old territories once they gained the required resilience and

ability to withstand real-world threats. And yet, despite having raised several generations of captive Blue Iguanas, until present time the QEII team has decided not to release captivity-bred iguanas into the wild. The rationale behind this decision is based on the observation that captive iguanas are not yet ready to handle wild environment, as genetic diversification projects are still working on enhancing the captive iguana's resistance to natural diseases.

The author's attitude toward the fact that the Blue Iguana is in severe danger of extinction can best be described as

harshly indifferent

mildly delighted

somewhat relieved

completely dismayed

seriously concerned

Well done!

This is a Style and Tone question. In order to find out the author's attitude toward the fact that the Blue Iguana is in severe danger of extinction, we need to read the sentence in which this danger is described. This sentence is the second sentence of the passage:

Unfortunately, the Grand Cayman Iguana, also known as the Blue Iguana, is one of the most imperiled species on the planet.

The word Unfortunately reveals that the author views the near extinction of the Blue Iguana as a negative situation.

Quantitative Section

?Ask a tutor

Inexperienced GMAT test-takers make the common mistake of thinking that the quantitative section simply tests their knowledge of formulas and how accurately they can calculate figures.

The truth is, there is tremendous variation in GMAT scores among candidates with similar math levels.

Why do you think two candidates with similar math skills would score so differently on the GMAT quantitative section?

Because the GMAT is designed to test business skills, not just math and English.

?Ask a tutor

That's true.

Efficiency, analytic ability, goal-oriented thinking, flexibility and more - these are a few of the business-thinking skills tested by the GMAT.

We have seen (and helped!) a great many test takers with a strong math degree who could not score higher than a certain quantitative score because they were just not thinking GMAT.

?Ask a tutor

So now let's look at how a question that appears to test specific math knowledge actually tests GMAT thinking skills. Are you ready?

Yes, let's start.

?Ask a tutor

Solve the following question in **no more than** 2 minutes:

?Ask a tutor

What is the value of the following expression:

$$\sqrt{5\sqrt{24} + \frac{5}{5+2\sqrt{6}}}$$

$$\sqrt{5 - 2\sqrt{6}}$$

Sorry, that's incorrect.

There is, of course, a full mathematical solution to this question, but something seems to have gone wrong here.

You might have suffered from one or more of the following:

- the situation was stressful

- your math skills are rusty

- not enough time

- a tiny calculation mistake

- a serious, embarrassing mistake

- the mouse cursor jumped and clicked the wrong answer

Now, what do you think would help you improve your chances of success on a similar question?

I need to use efficient and goal-oriented solving methods

Right you are.

Using the right tool for the job reduces the chances for error.

The GMAT is an adaptive test. The test adapts itself to your level: whenever you get a question right, you get a harder one – until after 5-6 questions you're pushed to the limit of the **math** you can apply in 2 minutes.

As you advance in our course and acquire stronger business-thinking skills, you are more likely to solve the question above by *Ballparking*.

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Ballparking is an expression that comes from the American game of baseball: when a batter hits a ball too far afield, but it doesn't go out into the stadium bleachers - we say that it is still "in the ballpark".

On the GMAT, ballparking means estimating *approximate* values instead of trying to make *precise* calculations.

When you reach an approximate value for the expected answer, you can eliminate all of the answer choices that do not meet that estimation - that are not "in the ballpark".

Let's see how you could ballpark your way to solving this question in *far less* than 2 minutes.

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

Take a look at the expression $\sqrt{5\sqrt{24} + \dfrac{5}{5+2\sqrt{6}}}$

Now, take a closer look at the first part: $\sqrt{5\sqrt{24} + \ldots}$

No test taker is supposed to know the value of **√24** precisely.

However, you can ballpark this value with ease, if you just put your mind to it. Think of a close enough approximation to **√24** that is easy to work with. Which integer is closest to **√24?**

[5](#)

[**?**Ask a tutor](#)

Very good.

Ok, let's break things down a little: **24** is a very close to **25** (which, by the way, is a *perfect square* - an integer whose square root is also an integer. But more on those later).

Therefore we can replace $\sqrt{24}$ with the close approximation $\sqrt{25}$

This makes life a lot easier, since unlike 24, 25 has an integer square root: $\sqrt{25} = 5$

If you replace the offending $\sqrt{24}$ with an easier ballpark of 5, the expression now looks as follows:

$$\sqrt{5 \cdot 5 + \frac{5}{5 + 2\sqrt{6}}} =$$

$$\sqrt{25 + \frac{5}{5 + 2\sqrt{6}}} =$$

?Ask a tutor

Much better.

Ok, now what about that fraction?

$5 + 2\sqrt{6}$ is harder to ballpark around, but we do know that it's more than 5 (adding 2√6 to 5 results in more than 5).

How about we just call the denominator "more than 5"?

$$\sqrt{25 + \frac{5}{More\ than\ 5}}$$

?Ask a tutor

This means that the second part of the square root is indeed a fraction, which will have an insignificant effect on the value of the square root. Therefore we can ignore it and say that the result of the square root is in the ballpark of $\sqrt{\approx 25}$

?Ask a tutor

At this point we can guesstimate that the correct answer is **around 5** and **eliminate** answer choices that are **not "around 5".**

?Ask a tutor

Let's emphasize that last bit - we can't tell if the expected answer is 5.2 or 4.9, but we can clearly say that it's not 7, or 3, or 9 or any other number that is not **approximately the square root of 25, which is 5**.

Now check each of the answer choices and see which of them can be eliminated through comparison with this ballpark.

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Let's start with the first answer choice. You need to decide whether it's in the ballpark or not:

$$5 + 2\sqrt{6}$$

[Eliminate it! it's too far from 5](#)

[?Ask a tutor](#)

Correct! This answer gives you a 5, and adds a quantity that is greater than 2 - resulting in something greater than 5.

Quickly, let's move on to the next one - is this very close to 5?

[?Ask a tutor](#)

$$\sqrt{5 - 2\sqrt{6}}$$

[Eliminate that one too! Move on, move on!](#)

[?Ask a tutor](#)

You're starting to get the hang of it - this answer choice is far too small.

Move on in the elimination process to the next answer:

[?Ask a tutor](#)

$$5$$

So you don't eliminate it. But we still need to check the rest of the answer choices.

How about the next answer? Is it close to 5?

$$\sqrt{120}$$

Absolutely right! You should eliminate it. The value of this answer is nearly 11, and not 5.

And one last answer to consider:

$$\frac{5}{2\sqrt{6}}$$

Good work - you've eliminated all answers but choice C: 5

What's your next step?

Excellent. That's the way to go.

Remember - one of the characteristics tested here is the ability to reach a decision despite a certain degree of uncertainty.

Now, let's make the most out of this very important sample question.

We just found the right answer to a problem without really *solving* it. Many of the questions you see on the GMAT surrender to such approaches.

Why do you think this is the case?

Because the GMAT tests more than just math skills

Correct! GMAC aims to predict how fit you are to become a successful business professional, or at the very least, a successful MBA student.

The ability to make a quick, yet correct decision based on a general overview of the data is a fundamental business skill. The GMAT tries to identify test takers who display such skills and reward them.

That's why you should always make use of mathematical **concepts** instead of long calculations whenever possible: this allows you to analyze the question effectively without getting lost in details.

Time to wrap things up for now with a few useful take-home messages:

- The GMAT quantitative section tests how well you understand concepts more than how well you perform calculations.

Ballparking is one of the chief methods that will help you acquire the right problem-solving approach to the GMAT. Ballparking is the skill of turning the following unappetizing formula:

$$\sqrt{5\sqrt{24} + \frac{5}{5+2\sqrt{6}}}$$

into this much more digestible one:

$$\sqrt{5 \cdot 5 + \dfrac{5}{More\ than\ 5}} = \sqrt{\approx 25}$$

- Use approximate, easy-to-handle numbers to make the math easier and quicker.

- Arrive at a ballpark answer, and **eliminate all answer choices that are not within the ballpark.**

Above all: Always look out for a shorter, more elegant way to solve GMAT problems. If a problem seems to ask for long calculations, look for an alternative method**.**

Analytical Writing Assessment:

Writing Guidelines - Capitalization

?Ask a tutor

Note that unlike Microsoft Word, the GMAT software does not automatically capitalize letters for you. Therefore, you need to master the following rules of capitalization and apply them when you write the essays. When proofreading your essay, make sure you capitalized all the words/letters you should have.

A. Capitalize the first letter of the first word of every sentence.

?Ask a tutor

A. Capitalize the first letter of the first word of every sentence.

Example:

Incorrect: the man is nice. he is also kind.

Correct: The man is nice. He is also kind.

B. Capitalize the first letter of each word in a proper noun.

?Ask a tutor

B. Capitalize the first letter of each word in a proper noun

Proper nouns are names of people, places, companies, etc.

Examples: **J**ohn, **N**ew **Y**ork, **D**ell

C. Capitalize all the letters of an acronym.

?Ask a tutor

C. Acronyms

Acronyms are words in which each letter stands for a word in itself.

Examples:

CFO = **C**hief **F**inancial **O**fficer

AIDS = **A**cquired **I**mmune **D**eficiency **S**yndrome.

GMAT = **G**raduate **M**anagement **A**dmission **T**est

All the letters of an acronym should be **capitalized**:

CFO, AIDS, GMAT

Analytical Writing Assessment: Writing Guidelines - Punctuation Marks - Overview

?Ask a tutor

Punctuation marks, such as a period (.) and a comma (,) are important in the AWA section for two reasons.

First, the GMAT essays are partially scored on correct use of language, and part of correct language usage is using punctuation marks correctly.

Second, punctuation marks help the essay reader and essay grader understand your essay better.

An essay that is not punctuated or that is badly punctuated is an essay that is hard to follow, no matter how bright your ideas, examples and analysis are.

The main punctuation marks are the following:

- period (.) short sentence

- question mark (?) <mark>restrained to use</mark>

- exclamation mark (!) <mark>restrained to use</mark>

- comma (,)

- colon (:)

- semicolon (;)

- dashes (-)

- parentheses ()

We'll go over each of the above separately and teach you how to use it correctly and whether you should use it in the GMAT essays.

<mark>Analytical Writing Assessment: Writing Guidelines - Punctuation Marks - The Colon</mark>

?Ask a tutor

A **colon** informs the reader that what follows is a list, an example or an explanation of what is referred to before.

The word that follows a **colon** does NOT begin with a capital letter.

Examples:

John likes the following colors: black, white and blue. (A list)

There is only one woman John loves more than he loves Jane: his mother. (An explanation)

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Another, no less important issue is when NOT to use a colon

?Ask a tutor

The phrase *such as* serves the same purpose as a colon does. Therefore, a colon will never follow the phrase *such as:*

Examples:

I like classic ice cream flavors <u>such as:</u> chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry. (Incorrect)

I like classic ice cream flavors, <u>such as</u> chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry. (Correct)

?Ask a tutor

One of the most commonly misplaced (or omitted) punctuation marks is the **comma** (**,**). Correct use of the comma helps readers understand the structure of the sentence and therefore the meaning behind it. Alternate placements of a comma can change the meaning of the sentence, as in the following example:

John said Jane could win the competition.
John**,** said Jane**,** could win the competition.

Both sentences are grammatically correct, but in the first John talks about Jane, while in the second it is Jane who is speaking. However, **incorrect** use of a comma can create awkward sentences or even sentences that cannot be understood properly or don't make sense.

Let's begin. What do you think is the most common use of a comma?

Separating different parts of a sentence

?Ask a tutor

Actually, both are correct. The comma has 3 uses. Let's now look at an example of each usage.

(Don't worry if you are not familiar with all the grammatical elements of the following sentences: any grammar issues you may have with the following examples will be cleared in due time. For now, just focus here on the **punctuation**.)

?Ask a tutor

The **first** use of a comma is to separate different clauses within a sentence. As you may remember, clauses are parts of sentence comprised of a subject and a verb. In order to tell clauses apart, we separate them with a comma. If the clause appears in the middle of the sentence, it is separated by a comma on both sides:

I. Separate clauses (each clause is in a different color):

John is 26 and lives in Germany**,** while Jane is 28 and lives in France.
John, who works for Doodle, is an excellent programmer.
If John were rich, he would buy a yacht.

However, notice the following example:

John would buy a yacht if he were rich.

A comma isn't always used between clauses. There are specific rules for each type of clause, which will be taught separately. For now, you only need to know that a comma **can** be used to separate clauses.

The **second** usage of a comma is when a part of the sentence is moved to the beginning of the sentence, creating a sentence that does not begin with the subject. In such cases, the relocated sentence part should **always** be separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma.

II. separate a non-subject sentence beginning from the rest of the sentence.

John married Jane **in 2007**.
In 2007, John married Jane.

This also applies to certain conjunctions that begin sentences (called Marginals):

Consequently, Jane will have to resign.

The **last** and most familiar usage of the comma is to separate items on a list. Even the last item on the list, the one preceded by *and*, can be separated by a comma. The only case when this does not apply is in lists of two items.

III. separate items on a list from each other.

The GMAT consists of two essays**,** a quantitative section**,** and a verbal section.

John and Jane are married. People like John and Jane. (no commas!)

Among the people who attended my birthday were my brother, my sister, and mom and dad. (the last item on this list is a two-item list in itself - mom and dad)

That's it, you know all the uses of a comma. Remember to place it just where it is needed; over-using the comma is just as confusing as under-using it.

Conjunctions - Semantic Categories - Overview

The GMAT essays are scored on **content, organization of ideas** and **language use**. The following guidelines are related to all three.

1. Conjunctions - Definition

Conjunctions are words that connect two sentences and show the relation between them.

Example:

John is tall. Jane is short.

The relation between these two sentences is one of **opposition**. Using a **conjunction** expresses this relation explicitly:

John is tall, **but** Jane is short.

2. Conjunction Categories

There are five main semantic (i.e., meaning) categories of **conjunctions**:

A. **Addition** - and, also, in addition, moreover, furthermore

B. **Opposition** - but, however, yet, nevertheless, although, despite, in spite of, while, whereas

C. **Reason** - because, since, as, for

D. **Conclusion** - so, therefore, thus, as a result, consequently

E. **Time course** - before, after, while, when, since, as long as, as soon as

Each category will be elaborated on later on.

3. Conjunction Use in AWA

When you write the GMAT essays, use **conjunctions** whenever suitable to help the reader understand your flow of ideas.

Example:

Many people drink coffee. Jane drinks tea. She likes it better than coffee. She believes it is healthier.

Adding **conjunctions** makes this text clearer and emphasizes the logical relations between the different sentences:

Many people drink coffee. Jane, **however**, drinks tea **because** she likes it better than coffee **and** she believes it is healthier.

Conjunctions: Semantic Categories of Conjunctions - Conclusion

Conjunctions that belong to the category of **Conclusion** appear between the two sentences they connect. Using them informs the reader that the second sentence is a **conclusion** based on the first sentence.

Example:

1. Jane and John love Italian food.
2. John often cooks pasta for dinner.

Jane and John love Italian food. **Therefore**, John often cooks pasta for dinner.

Here are the most common **conclusion** words:

therefore (which we have just learned)

John is sick. **Therefore**, he stayed at home.

so

John is sick, **so** he stayed at home.

as a result

John is sick. **As a result**, he stayed at home.

consequently

John is sick. **Consequently**, he stayed at home.

thus

John is sick and **thus** stayed at home.

hence

John is sick and **hence** stayed at home.

Adaptive Model: Experimental Questions

?Ask a tutor

About a quarter of the questions in the GMAT - 9 questions out of 37 questions in the Quantitative Section and 11 questions out of 41 questions in the Verbal Section - are **experimental questions**. These questions do not count towards your score. For example, you can get all 9 **experimental questions** in the Quantitative Section wrong and still get a perfect score (assuming, of course, you answered all the other 28 questions correctly).

Great. Then I won't spend precious time on these questions and simply guess them.

?Ask a tutor

Unfortunately, it is impossible to identify **experimental questions**, so you should treat ALL questions the same way: seriously! The only assumption you can make regarding **experimental questions** is that the first question in each section (i.e., the Quantitative Section and the Verbal Section) is not likely to be an **experimental question**.

Why are there experimental questions on the GMAT?

Each GMAT question is assigned a difficulty level. If you get a sequence of questions wrong, you'll notice that the difficulty level of the next question is lower, and vice versa. If you get the first 7-8 questions right, you'll find the next ones harder.

However, in order to determine a question's difficulty level, GMAC needs to check what percentage of test takers solve it correctly. The higher this percentage, the easier the question. That's why newly-written questions are placed in the **experimental** pool. These questions will pop up at random on numerous GMATs. Eventually, a large population will have seen and attempted these questions, and GMAC will have an accurate measure of their difficulty levels.

This means that the existence of **experimental questions** can explain sudden fluctuations in difficulty levels. For example, a weak test-taker can suddenly get a question that's really hard, not because he or she have been doing well so far but because everybody tested that day got the same experimental question. Therefore, do not treat much easier/harder questions as an indication of your success/failure.

POE Process of Elimination

Writing down all the A B C D E simple and mark down the choices you eliminated.