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Sentence Correction Questions & Solution Analysis

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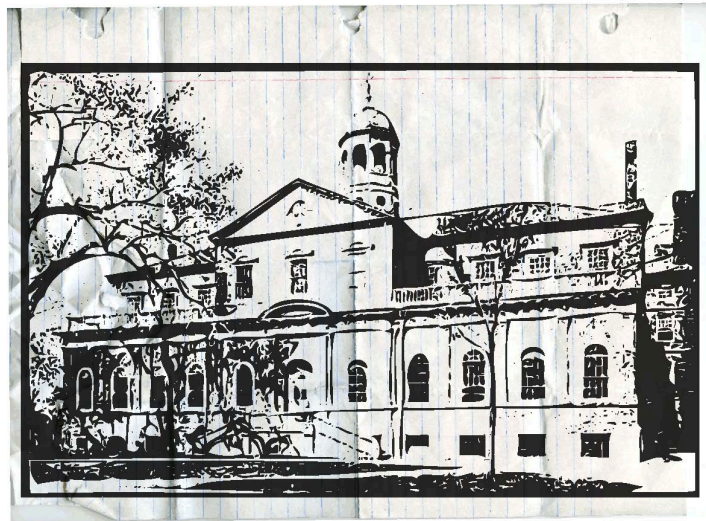
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Chapter 3 - Sentence Correction

The Grammar Review in the previous section touches on nearly all of the flaws you are likely to encounter in Sentence Correction questions on the GMAT.

The Sentence Correction section tests your knowledge of written English grammar by asking you which of the five choices best expresses an idea or relationship. This section gives you a sentence that may or may not contain errors of grammar or usage. You must select either the answer that best corrects the sentence or the answer stating that the sentence is correct as is. The questions will require you to be familiar with the stylistic conventions and grammatical rules of standard written English and to demonstrate your ability to improve incorrect or ineffective expressions.

This section tests two broad aspects of language proficiency:

- Correct expression
- Effective expression
- Proper Diction

A correct sentence is grammatically correct and structurally sound. It conforms to all the rules of standard written English such as subject-verb agreement, verb tense consistency, modifier reference and position, idiomatic expressions and parallel construction.

In addition to being correct, a sentence needs to be effective. It should express an idea or relationship clearly and concisely, as well as grammatically. A best choice should have no superfluous words or unnecessarily complicated expressions. This does not mean that the shortest choice is always the best answer. Proper diction is another important part of effectiveness. It refers to the standard dictionary meanings of words and the appropriateness of words in context. In evaluating the diction of a sentence, you must be able to recognize whether the words are well-selected, correctly presented, and suitable for the context.

One common error that test takers often make in the Sentence Correction section is choosing an answer that sounds good. Do not go on with your gut feeling in this section. Remember your grammar and look for errors in construction (e.g., noun-verb agreement) and eliminate answers that you are sure are incorrect.

3.1 How to Tackle

The following is a step-by-step process that you should follow to tackle Sentence Correction questions:

1. Read the whole sentence for structure and content.

You have to understand the entire sentence to be able to pick the best choice later. You should read the sentence for meaning as well as structure. Two questions you should ask yourself are:

- What is the author trying to say?
Some answers to GMAT questions are grammatically correct but change the meaning of the sentence. Such answers are wrong.

- What is the structure of the sentence?

As you read the sentence, try to identify the subject and verb, prepositions, conjunctions, and participles. These parts of speech are associated with the common errors found in Sentence Correction questions. You won't have to identify the grammatical function of each word, phrase and clause in the sentence, but please just be familiar with the common errors and watch for **signals** (which we will discuss later) that the question is testing a specific error.

2. Try to predict the correct answer.

You may already have an idea of how to correct the sentence. Before you plunge into the answers for the question, try to predict what the correct answer is going to be.

For example, in the sentence "Shelly have three items in her pocket," the correct answer choice is likely to contain the verb "has".

While your ability to predict the correct answer will improve with practice, you will not be able to correctly predict the correct answer choice all the time.

3. Don't read the first answer choice.

Reading the first answer choice is **always** a waste of your time. You have already read it in the original sentence! The first answer choice is **always** the same as the underlined portion of the original sentence.

Remember that 1 of 5 Sentence Correction questions contain no error. If you think that the original sentence is correct, then go ahead and scan through answers 2-5, but do not become flustered if none of the answers are correct. After all **20% of the Sentence Correction problems need no correction.**

4. Scan through the answer choices.

Each Sentence Correction problem in the GMAT is created usually with two or three different possible errors where you have to pay attention. The various combinations of these possible errors result in the options you are given.

If you have predicted the correct answer, you need only to identify the choice that matches your prediction. Sometimes you will find an exact match, but more often you will be able to narrow the answer choices to two or three.

If you were not able to predict the correct answer, look for evidence in the answer choices to determine what is being tested by the question in order to pick the best answer. For example, if more than one answer choice is similar except for a few words, your investigation should begin with the answers that are similar.

When you have found the parts of the sentence being varied, look for evidence in the remaining part of the sentence to determine which option to choose. Start with whatever is dictated by the unchanging part of the sentence. For example, if a verb is provided in singular and plural forms, find the subject of the sentence.

5. Eliminate wrong answers.

By now, you should have an idea of what answers are grammatically or stylistically incorrect. Eliminate these answers and focus on the differences among the remaining choices.

6. Read your choice back into the sentence.

Remember that the GMAT test-writers will often create answer choices which are grammatically correct, but either change the meaning of the sentence or are not stylistically the best answer. Since the GMAT tests not only grammar but also efficiency and effectiveness of communication, you have to look for redundancy, ambiguity, and uncommon or confusing expressions.

Reading your choice back into the sentence will help you decide which answer communicates the meaning of the sentence most effectively and prevent you from making careless errors.

3.2 *Special Advice*

Sentence Correction accounts for 13-16 of the 41 questions in the verbal section of the GMAT. While you have an average of almost 2 minutes to answer each question on the verbal section, we recommend that you spend less time on each Sentence Correction question. In fact, we recommend that you should practice getting your speed down to one minute or less!

Answering Sentence Correction questions rapidly will allow you to "bank" time in the verbal section that you can use to concentrate on a difficult reading comprehension passage or to focus on a challenging critical reasoning question. Remember that the verbal section is the last section on the GMAT, and your endurance is likely to be fading at this point in the test. You may find that you need a few moments of the additional time you have saved to recover your energy to push through to the last question.

The Sentence Correction questions in the GMAT have several types of errors, most of which reoccur frequently throughout this section of the test. A close and thorough study of Manhattan Review's Grammar Review will help you rapidly identify and correct these errors. We often recommend to students who are pressed for preparation time that they spend the lion's share of their studies on Sentence Correction. The time you spend concentrating on Sentence Correction and practicing spotting the common errors quickly is among the most productive time you may spend studying for the GMAT.

While trying to answer each question correctly in such a short amount of time may seem daunting, practicing the steps outlined earlier will help you answer the questions efficiently, effectively and most important, correctly.

3.3 *Common Errors and Tested Topics*

3.3.1 *Misplaced Modifiers (and Dangling Participles)*

Modifiers are phrases that modify another part of the sentence. In order to be correct, the modifying phrase must be as close as possible to what it modifies.

For example:

Disgusting and pus-filled, Enrico nursed his festering wound.

In this example it sounds as if Enrico is disgusting and pus-filled, rather than his wound. As soon as you read this sentence, you should immediately realize that the correct answer choice will place *disgusting and pus-filled* as close as possible to wound. To wit:

Enrico nursed his *disgusting and pus-filled* festering wound.

Signals

- An introductory phrase is a common signal of a Misplaced Modifier.
- Any modifying phrase that is not close to what it modifies may also indicate this error.

Another example:

Career switchers often schedule interviews with high-level managers, believing that the insight of professionals will help narrow down the many choices of careers available to graduating MBAs.

- A. Career switchers often schedule interviews with high-level managers, believing that the insight of professionals will help narrow down the many choices of careers available to graduating MBAs.
- B. Career switchers, believing that the insight of professionals will help narrow down the many choices of careers available to graduating MBAs, often schedule interviews with high-level managers.
- C. Career switchers believing that scheduling interviews with the insight of high-level professional managers will help narrow down the many choices of careers available to graduating MBAs.
- D. Career switchers, believing that interviews with high-level managers whose insight will help narrow down the many choices of careers available to graduating MBAs, often schedule them.
- E. Career switchers often schedule interviews to narrow down the many choices of careers available to graduating MBAs, believing that the insight of professionals with high-level managers will help them.

3.3.2 Agreement (Concord)

A very common Sentence Correction error centers on the agreement between the subject of a sentence and the verb. The subject and verb must agree in number, that is, a plural verb must have a plural subject and a singular verb must have a singular subject.

This is particularly important with *of* constructions:

A *flock* of birds, flying south for the winter, *was* above us.

Another example:

My *group* of fourth graders *are* so well behaved.

The singular subject *group* demands the singular verb *is*. Thus the corrected sentence should read:

My *group* of fourth graders *is* so well behaved.

If the verb is inverted, care must be taken to find the subject:

I journeyed to the graveyard *where once stood my father's tomb*.

Agreement is based on formal grammar, and plurals do not depend on meaning but on the grammatical relationships between words. Two single subjects joined by *and* take a plural verb, but an addition in parentheses, such as *as well as*, *not to mention*, takes a singular verb.

Signals

- Collective nouns such as team, audience, staff, family, public or committee are singular.
- An intervening phrase which separates the noun from the verb is used to confuse the unwary test-taker.
- A sentence structure with the verb before the subject may indicate an Agreement error.
- A conjunction such as *and*; *either/or*; *neither/nor*, can be used as a trap.

3.3.3 Tense

Many GMAT questions center upon the relationships between tenses. While the tenses in a sentence do not have to be the same, they must relate to each other in a way that makes the sequence of actions clear to the reader. The term sequence of tenses refers to the rules that govern how we alter verb tenses to make clear that all events, past, present or future, are not simultaneous.

As soon as I *hear* the dog bark, I *knew* you *were* at the door.

The above sentence sets forth a likely condition anticipated by the speaker. The use of the past tense is incorrect. The sentence may be corrected thus:

As soon as I *hear* the dog bark, I *will* know you *are* at the door.

In the above example, the future tense makes clear that the dog's barking is anticipated by the speaker.

Errors in sequence of tenses often occur with the perfect tenses, all of which are formed by adding an auxiliary or auxiliaries to the past participle, the third principal part.

Some common auxiliaries are ``had'', ``has'', and ``have''. They are used with the past participle to form perfect tenses.

Unfortunately, the rules governing sequence of tenses are a bit of a jumble. Often you will have to rely on your ear and common sense to guide you with these questions. But below are some guidelines you can use in order to sort out what the correct sentence should look like.

- In complex sentences, the tense of the verb in the main clause governs the tenses of the verbs in subsequent or dependent clauses.

<i>Tense in Main Clause</i>	<i>Purpose of Dependent Clause</i>	<i>Tense in Dependent Clause</i>	<i>Example</i>
Present	To show same-time action	Simple Present	I am eager to go for a walk because I <i>enjoy</i> exercise.
-	To show earlier action	Simple Past	He feels that she <i>made</i> a mistake last year.
-	To show a period of time extending from some point in the past to the present	Present Perfect	The congregation believes that it <i>has selected</i> a suitable preacher.
-	To show action to come	Future	My teacher says that he <i>will grade</i> the test next week.

Simple Past	To show another completed past action	Simple Past	She cooked the salmon because she knew it was fresh.
-	To show an earlier action	Past Perfect	He cooked the salmon well because he had attended culinary school.
-	To state a general truth	Simple Present	Copernicus believed that the universe is like a giant clock.
Present Perfect	To show an earlier action	Simple Past	The lawyer has handled many cases since he passed the bar.
-	To show action happening at the same time	Present Perfect	She has grown a foot because she has taken steroids.
Past Perfect	For any purpose	Simple Past	The bird had flown for miles before it landed.
Future	To show action happening at the same time	Simple Present	I will be a senator if they vote for me.
-	To show an earlier action	Simple Past	You will go to the concert if you waited in line.
-	To show future action earlier than the action of the independent clause	Present Perfect	My grandmother will finish the puzzle soon if her dog has not eaten the pieces.
Future Perfect	For any purpose	Simple Present or Present Perfect	The factory will have produced many widgets long before it closes. The factory will have produced many widgets long before it has closed.

Do not confuse between the present perfect ("has walked") and the past perfect ("had walked"). While both verbs convey past action, the present perfect verb actually represents present tense.

Signals

- Several actions occurring in different time frames.
- Multiple tenses.

Another example:

When he phones her, she tells him to stop calling, but he acted as if he had not understood her.

- she tells him to stop calling, but he acted as if he had not understood her.
- she told him to stop calling, but he acted as if he had not understood her.
- she tells him to stop calling, but he acts as if he did not understand her.
- she tells him to stop calling, but he acts as if he has not understood her.
- she tells him to stop calling, but he acted as if he does not understand her.

3.3.4 Faulty Parallelism

Parallelism is the most mathematical of the errors tested on the GMAT. Just as the expressions on each side of an algebraic equation must be equivalent, so too must the parts of speech on either side of a conjunction be the same. By thinking about a conjunction in a sentence as an equal sign, you can identify and correct this error.

For example:

Which do you like best, to swim, a drive, or jogging?

Predicting the correct answer for these types of errors presents some difficulty as often there is more than one way of restating the sentence correctly. For example the previous sentence may be corrected in three different ways:

Which do you like best, *to swim, to drive, or to jog?*

Which do you like best, *a swim, a drive, or a jog?*

Which do you like best, *swimming, driving, or jogging?*

Any of the above is correct as long as the words or phrases connected by the conjunction *or* are the same part of speech.

Signals

- Items in a list
- Long phrases or clauses connected by a conjunction

Another example:

Our firm is best suited to undertake the project because we have the financial wherewithal, vast experience undertaking similar projects, and can use our large employee base - all of which is necessary to complete the work on-time and under-budget.

- the financial wherewithal, vast experience undertaking similar projects, and can use our large employee base - all of which is necessary
- the financial wherewithal, vast experience undertaking similar projects, and a large employee base - all necessary
- the financial wherewithal, vast experience undertaking similar projects, and a large employee base - all of whom are necessary
- the financial wherewithal, vast experience undertaking similar projects, and can use our large employee base necessary
- the financial wherewithal, vast experience undertaking similar projects, and can use our large employee base since they are necessary

3.3.5 Comparisons

Comparisons are a first cousin of Parallelism. Frequently a sentence with a comparison will appear at first glance to be correct but will actually compare two or more elements that are not expressed in similar form.

For example:

The judge of the baking contest liked *the* pastry Sally made better *than* Bob.

In this sentence, the judge is evaluating the comparative merits of Sally's pastry and Bob himself. Put it in another way, he is comparing Sally's pastry to Bob, rather than comparing Sally's pastry to Bob's pastry. The correct way of expressing the idea is thus:

The judge of the baking contest liked *Sally's* pastry better than *Bob's*.

Signals

- Key words such as than, like, unlike, as, compared to, more than, and less than should alert you to check what is being compared in the sentence.

Another example:

Unlike its competitors, Globex and MondoCorp, the revenues of Galactic Enterprises increased by cornering the widget market in the fourth quarter, thus making Galactic Enterprises the world's most profitable company and a darling of Wall Street.

- A. its competitors, Globex and MondoCorp, the revenues of Galactic Enterprises increased by cornering the widget market in the fourth quarter, thus making
- B. Globex and MondoCorp, its competitors, the revenues of Galactic Enterprises increased by cornering the widget market in the fourth quarter, thus making
- C. its competitors, Globex and MondoCorp, Galactic Enterprises increased its revenues by cornering the widget market in the fourth quarter, by making
- D. Globex and MondoCorp, its competitors, Galactic Enterprises increased its revenues by cornering the widget market in the fourth quarter, thus making
- E. its competitors, Globex and MondoCorp, the revenues of Galactic Enterprises cornered the widget market in the fourth quarter, thus making

3.3.6 Pronoun Agreement & Reference

Errors regarding pronouns fall into two broad categories: agreement and reference.

Agreement

Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in person, number and gender. If the antecedent is third person singular male, then the pronoun must be third person singular male as well.

For example:

In recent years, Fred has tried to lose *its* excess weight through numerous diets.

The correct sentence would read:

In recent years, Fred has tried to lose *his* excess weight through numerous diets.

Reference

Pronoun reference errors occur when ambiguity exists as to the antecedent of the pronoun. Additionally, the pronouns must clearly refer to only one antecedent. The sentence must leave no doubt in the reader's mind as to what the pronoun refers. Sentences with multiple nouns are a classic signal of a pronoun reference error:

The attorney argued that students who were denied the use of school facilities for political activities had lost *their* right of free assembly.

In the above sentence, the writer does not make clear to what *their* refers. It could refer to students, facilities or activities. The sentence must be constructed so that the reader has no doubt about the antecedent of the pronoun *their*:

The attorney argued that students lost *their* right of free assembly when they were denied the use of school facilities for political activities.

Signals

- Several nouns preceding a pronoun.

Another example:

The *Federalist Papers* is a compilation of articles written by Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, as well as a few by John Jay, since each of them were advocates of the Constitution.

- A. since each of them were
- B. since they were each
- C. since all of them were
- D. each of which was
- E. because all of the men were

3.3.7 Idioms, Usage, and Style

Sentence correction questions that revolve around idioms, usage and style generally test subtle errors in expression. Idiomatic expressions often have no basis in grammar or even logic but have been accepted into the language.

Especially for non-native speakers, some of the trickiest errors in this section are incorrect idioms. This includes using the wrong preposition with a verb, among many other things. Unfortunately, the only thing to do about this problem is

practice, so do as many practice questions as possible and take note of any examples in which two different versions of an idiom are used. After you check your answers, make a list of the idioms you did not know and memorize them.

Native speakers often use idioms without thinking about the literal meaning of the words.

For example:

We finished the rest of the tasks in *one fell swoop*.

The expression in one fell swoop makes little sense literally, but English speakers recognize it as meaning all at once.

Some conventions of Standard English may seem nit-picky, but you should familiarize yourself with some rules which are commonly tested.

For example:

Wrong

When *compared to* Greg's ability to carry a tune, Marsha's musical skill is unimpressive.

The correct expression in this case is *compared with* because the items being compared are dissimilar: the relative musical abilities of Greg and Marsha. The construction using *compared with* points out the differences.

Correct

When *compared with* Greg's ability to carry a tune, Marsha's musical skill is unimpressive.

Use *compared to* when illustrating similarities.

For example:

He *compared* his teacher to Bruce Greenwald, the esteemed professor famous for his Value Investing lectures at Columbia Business School.

May I *compare* thee to a summer's day? (Shakespeare, Sonnet 18)

In sum, *Compare to* is used when things are being likened. *Compare with* is used when the comparison is more specific and implies differences.

Each other refer to two entities; where more than two are concerned, use *one another*.

The two of them hated *each other* with a passion.

The four of us looked at *one another* and laughed.

3.3.7.1 GMAT Idiom List

a lot – The proper form is two words, not *alot*.

agree on – must be followed by the *-ing* form of a verb.

an instance of – is different in meaning from *an example of*. An *example* is one of a number of things while an *instance* is an *example* that proves or illustrates. People may be *examples* but never *instances*.

as vs. than – The words are not interchangeable. Use *as* for comparisons of similarity or equality and *than* for comparisons of degree or difference. Always use *than* with the comparative (-er) form of an adjective.

as good as or better than – is a cliché and should be avoided. Do not telescope a comparison of similarity - *as* with a comparison of degree - *than*. A better construction is to break the juxtaposition up into separate thoughts.

as ... as – is a grammatical way of expressing similarity: he is *as* tall *as* his sister.

such ... as – is grammatical when both words are used as prepositions in a comparison: *such* men *as* *he*. Avoid *as such* when meaning *in principle*.

based on – The phrasal verb *based on* is grammatical and can be used either actively or passively.

The style of her cooking is *based on* Southern cuisine.

She *bases* her thinking *on* sound logic.

depends on whether – The construction is generally accepted and is certainly preferable to *depends on if*.

His fate *depends on whether* the governor calls back in time.

different from vs. different than (differ from) – Although strict grammarians say that *from* is the correct word to use after *different*, many authorities believe that *than* may be used in order to avoid elaborate constructions. In contrast, the authorities agree that *from* is the correct word when used with *differ*.

He is a *different* man *than* he was in 1985. Compare to: He is a *different man from the man that* he was in 1985.

Identical with/to – *Identical* may be used with either preposition without changing the intended meaning.

no less a ... than – The expression is an accepted idiom meaning great or not less impressive.

not only/but also – *Not only* is **always** followed by *but also* in a sentence.

The subways in summer are *not only* hot, *but also* humid.

regard as – The verb *regard* may be used with *as* and either an adjective or a noun.

We *regard* George's ranting *as* silly. The tribe *regards* shaking hands *as* taboo.

Do not use *regard* with an infinitive or *being*: He is regarded to be an expert; He is regarded as being an expert.

regardless – The word is correct. *Irregardless* is non-standard usage.

So ... as – The comparative construction may only be used in questions and negative statements. Otherwise, use *as ... as*.

Your house is not *so* large *as* mine.

So ... – Avoid the use of the appealing *so* as an intensifier. The weather is *so* delightful. Very would be a better choice. Similarly, when using *so* with a part participle, consider using *much* or *well* to qualify.

The car was *so much* damaged that it was not drivable.

Mary is *so well* suited to be an attorney.

3.3.7.2 **Words Frequently Misused**

Aggravate/annoy – To *aggravate* is to make a situation worse. To *annoy* is to irritate. In formal English, people cannot be aggravated, only annoyed.

When the Chairman of the Federal Reserve lowered interest rates, he *aggravated* the flailing economy and *annoyed* many Wall Street bankers.

Ago/since – *Ago* carries a thought from the present to the past. *Since* carries a thought from the past to the present.

It was twenty years *ago* that I first heard that song.

It has been twenty years *since* I first heard that song.

Among/between – Use *between* when comparing two items and *among* when comparing three or more

I was torn *between* studying finance and studying marketing.

After I was accepted into all three MBA programs, I had to choose *among* Harvard, Wharton and Columbia.

Amount/number – Use *amount* when referring to an uncountable noun and *number* when referring to a countable word.

There is a large *amount* of water in the ocean.

There are a large *number* of fish in the ocean.

Fewer/less – Use *fewer* when referring to a countable noun and *less* when referring to an uncountable noun. The usage of fewer/less is similar to amount/number.

The supermarket express lane is open to customers with ten items or *fewer*.

There is *less* rudeness at Dean and Deluca than at Fairway.

Good/well - When used as adjectives, good refers to morality or quality and well refers to health. However, only well can be used as adverb and good is always an adjective.

I feel *good* about my work.

I feel *well*.

I am *well*.

I'm doing *well*.

It is *good* to hear that you feel *well* today.

Imply/infer – *To imply* is to express a thought indirectly. *To infer* is to derive a conclusion indirectly.

While the politician never *implied* that he would raise taxes, the audience *inferred* that he would soon do so.

Like/as – Use *like* before a noun, or pronoun. Use *as* before a clause, adverb or prepositional phrase. *Like* is generally used as a preposition in such a context. *As* is generally used as an adverb while sometimes serving as a preposition with the meaning of "in the capacity of".

My mother's cheesecake tastes *like* glue.

I love frozen pizza because there is no other snack *like* it.

My mother's cheesecake tastes great, *as* a mother's cheesecake should.

There are times, *as* now, that learning grammar becomes important.

He golfed well again, *as* in the tournament last year.

He served *as* Captain in the navy.

Less than/under – *Less than* is the correct expression when making a comparison of number or amount. *Under* is limited to describing spatial relationships.

I will host the party if the guest list is *less than* fifty people.

More than/over – *More than* is the correct expression when making a comparison of number or amount. *Over* is limited to describing spatial relationships.

We processed *more than* 1,000 applications in one hour.

3.4 What to Do If You Are Completely Stumped

Sometimes you may find yourself with one or more answer choices which seem to be correct. If you have followed Manhattan Elite Prep's six-step process for Sentence Correction and still find yourself to be lost, take a step back and think about the answer choices.

Read the answers back into the sentence, again

- You should have already done this, but if you are still stumped, do it again. Remember that a correct answer retains the meaning of the original sentence. You may be analyzing an answer choice which changes the idea which the author wished to convey. Make sure that word order has not been switched in the answer to suggest a different meaning.

Shorter is better

- Wordy or long-winded ways of expressing thoughts are often not the best means of expression. Sometimes the best answer is the one with the fewest words.

Eliminate answers with passive voice

- You will seldom encounter a correct answer that employs the use of the passive voice. While use of the passive voice is not in and of itself grammatically incorrect, expressing an idea actively is preferable. Given the choice between The ball was hit by me and I hit the ball, the latter is the better choice.

Avoid redundancy

- The best answer should be clear and concise. An answer which repeats elements of the sentence unnecessarily is incorrect.

Don't choose the answer with being

- Don't choose such answer if there are options which don't include the word being. Unless you are positive that being is a necessary and useful part of the sentence, it is probably just confusing the issue and is better left out.

If you review the rules discussed in the Grammar Review section and follow the six-steps for Sentence Correction questions, you should have little trouble identifying the best answer among your choices.

Answers to Prior Examples

- 3.3.1 Misplaced Modifier (B)
- 3.3.3 Tense (D)
- 3.3.4 Faulty Parallelism (B)
- 3.3.5 Comparison (D)
- 3.3.6 Pronoun Agreement & Reference (E)

3.5 Detailed List of Typical Errors

Based on our close examination of all the Sentence Correction problems in the Official Guides and released old exams, we compiled the following list for your easy reference.

TIP: PLEASE FOCUS YOUR INITIAL ATTENTION ON BASIC GRAMMAR ELEMENTS ONLY - SUBJECT, VERB AND OBJECT. Then examine the sentence in detail. That way you will not get bogged down by verbiage.

Goal I: Effectiveness of the Language

To achieve conciseness & clarity in a sentence, you should pick the choices that contain:

- A. No wordiness or fragment

B. No redundancy

Example: the remarkable growth in increased revenue

C. No ambiguous double negative meanings

D. No possibility for multiple interpretations of the sentence

E. No change in meaning or intent

Also, be suspicious of any answer choice containing:

``being"

``thing"

Goal II: Correctness of the Language

3.5.1 Modifiers

Be aware:

A. A participle at the start of a sentence must modify the subject of the sentence. Otherwise, it is a dangling participle.

Wrong

Having read the book, there is no question the book is better than the film.

Correct

Having read the book, I have no doubt that the book is better than the film.

Also please pay attention to:

B. Misplaced modifying clause.

Wrong

Whether baked or mashed, Tom loves potatoes.

Correct

Tom loves potatoes, whether baked or mashed.

C. Ambiguous modifying clause

Example

People who jog frequently develop knee problems.

To eliminate ambiguity, you can change it to:

People develop knee problems if they jog frequently.

Or

People frequently develop knee problems if they jog.

D. Proximity between the modifier and the modified object

Limiting modifiers (*just, only, hardly, almost*) must be used immediately before what they modify:

Wrong

The priest only sees children on Tuesdays between 4pm and 6pm.

Correct depending on meaning

The priest sees only children on Tuesdays between 4pm and 6pm.

-or-

The priest sees children only on Tuesdays between 4pm and 6pm.

-or-

The priest sees children on Tuesdays only between 4pm and 6pm.

E. Correct use of *that* vs. *which* modifying clauses

As relative pronouns the two words "*that*" and "*which*" are often interchangeable:

The house *that/which* stands on the hill is up for sale.

The school *that/which* they go to is just around the corner.

(When *that* or *which* is the object of a following verb, it can be omitted altogether, as in The school they go to.)

When the relative clause adds incidental (non-essential) information rather than identifying the noun it follows, *which* is used and is preceded by a comma:

The house, *which* stands on the hill, is up for sale.

It means:

The house is up for sale. It happens to be on the hill.

When the relative clause identifies the noun it follows with essential information rather than adding incremental information, *that* is used without a comma:

The house *that* stands on the hill is up for sale.

It implies:

The house on the hill is up for sale. Not the house on the lake.

In other words, you can remove *which* from the sentence without affecting the meaning, while you have to keep *that* in the sentence to understand it fully.

F. Correct usage of the modifier, such as "little" vs. "few"

G. Difference between adjective and adverb as modifiers

3.5.2 Agreement

In grammar, Concord (also known as Agreement) refers to the relationship between units in such matters as number, person, and gender. Consider the following examples:

- "THEY did the work THEMSELVES" (number and person concord between THEY and THEMSELVES).
- "HE did the work HIMSELF" (number, person and gender concord between HE and HIMSELF).
- If there is no agreement, then grammatical errors occur. Consider the following example:

"The apples is on the table." (Apples is plural; therefore, for concord to occur, the sentence should read: "The apples are on the table.")

A. **Number and Person Concord:** In Standard English, number concord is most significant between a singular and plural subject and its verb in the third person of the simple present tense:

"That book seems interesting" (singular BOOK agreeing with SEEMS), and

"Those books seem interesting" (plural BOOKS agreeing with SEEM).

Number concord requires that two related units must always both be singular or both be plural.

Both number and person concord are involved in the use of pronouns and possessives, as in "I hurt MYself," and "MY friends said THEY WERE COMING in THEIR car."

B. **Gender Concord:** Gender concord is an important part of the grammar of languages like German and French. In English, gender concord does not exist apart from personal and possessive pronouns, such as "Elizabeth injured HERself badly in the accident," and "Thomas lost HIS glasses." These errors are generally couched in a longer sentence, so the test taker is distracted and misses the simple error.

C. **Subject-Verb Agreement:** The easiest kind of trick the GMAT will pull is to give you subjects and verbs that do not agree in time or in number.

TIP: One of the things you always have to look out for is that the GMAT will throw in lots of extra words to confuse you about what subject the verb is referring to.

Example

Although the sting of brown honey locusts are rarely fatal, they cause painful flesh wounds.

Please remember:

- a. **Certain words ending in ``s" such as ``Diabetes" and ``News" are singular.**

Other examples include:

two hundred dollars

five hundred miles

United States

- b. **Compound subject is plural.** Exception: ``Romeo and Juliet" is a singular noun when it is referred to as a play.

- c. **``Each" and ``Everyone" are singular.**

- d. **Collective nouns are singular.**

Common examples include group, audience, etc.

Note that if the subject of a sentence is an entire phrase or clause, you should use a singular verb, regardless of the plural words inside this phrase or clause.

Example

Networking with professionals certainly helps a lot when you first start your career.

- e. **Indefinite Pronouns are singular.**

Examples: each, either, anything, everything, nothing, anyone, everyone, no one, neither, anybody, everybody, nobody

- f. **No verb should be missing in a sentence.**

- g. **Subject and verb should ALWAYS be in agreement.**

3.5.3 Verb Tense, Voice & Mood

Please remember to avoid:

- a. Inconsistent tense
- b. Passive voice
- c. Incorrect use of verbs in the subjunctive mood

3.5.4 Parallelism

Please pay attention to the inconsistent use of:

- a. Clauses
- b. Phrases (verb phrases, noun phrases, prepositional phrases, adjective phrases, etc.)
- c. Gerunds
- d. Infinitives (If an infinitive is repeated once in a list, it must be repeated each time.)

Wrong

I like to jog, swim and to run.

Correct

I like to jog, to swim and to run.

(Occasionally acceptable: I like to jog, swim and run.)

3.5.5 Comparisons

Please pay attention to the use of:

- a. *Like vs. As vs. Such As*
- b. *As Old As vs. Older Than*
- c. Illogical Comparison
- d. Ambiguous Comparison

3.5.6 Pronoun Agreement & Reference

Please remember:

- a. Antecedent and pronoun should be in agreement.
 - b. No ambiguity with antecedent
 - c. No missing antecedent
 - d. Use of the relative pronoun should be correct
- Which is for things only; Who/Whom for people only
 - Who vs Whom – nominative vs. objective case forms.
 - They/them is not correct as a singular pronoun, nor is it correct as a pronoun with no antecedent.

3.5.7 Idioms, Usage and Style

Here are some selected examples of common words and phrases tested on the GMAT.

From _____ to _____

Between _____ and _____

The same to _____ as to _____

No less _____ than _____

The more _____ the greater _____

Better served by _____ than by _____

Not only _____ but also _____

Both _____ and _____

Different from _____ (not ``than" or ``to")

Either _____ or _____

Neither _____ nor _____

Whether to do something or not

They do not know x or y (NOT x nor y)

Doubt that

At the urging of somebody

Between (2) vs Among (>2)

Affect (verb) vs Effect (noun)

Assure (give an assurance) vs Ensure (make sure something happens) vs Insure (financially guarantee)

Equivalent in number (vs ``as many as people")

A number of (not ``numbers of")

Whether vs. If - ``I had to decide whether", not ``I had to decide if"

Whether is typically used to introduce doubt regarding two equal possibilities or two alternatives.

We should try to have a dinner with them *whether* it's snowing or not.

He wonders *whether* it's worth the try.

She said she'd get here *whether* by train or by flight.

It is preferred to use ``whether" over ``if" when the word ``if" is not used to signal a condition and instead takes the meaning of ``whether". This is particularly true with the GMAT. Using ``whether" exclusively avoids the possible confusion between different possible meanings of ``if".

Wrong

I don't know *if* I am ready to take the test now and *if* I will ever be ready in the future.

Correct

I don't know *whether* I am ready to take the test now and *whether* I will ever be ready in the future.

``Despite" is not the same as ``Although". ``Despite" means 'with intention, in the face of an obstacle'.

Wrong

Despite having 5% of the world's population, the USA uses 30% of the world's energy.

Correct

Despite his poor education, he succeeded in becoming wealthy.

Idiomatic Prepositions:

based *on*

composed *by* meaning ``created by" vs. composed *of* meaning ``made up of"

credit *with* (not credit to)

depend *on*

differ *with* (meaning ``disagree with") vs. differ *from* (meaning ``be different from")

discourage *from* doing something/encourage to do something (from is a preposition here; to is the infinitive here)

prefer _____ to _____

prevent *from*

prohibit *from*

Idiomatic Phrases Involving or Omitting ``As"

consider x y (not *to be* y)

defined *as*

depicted *as*

regard x *as* y

regarded *as*

think of x *as* y

view x *as* y

Idiomatic Phrases Involving or Omitting the Infinitive ``to"

Help someone do something

Make someone do something

Enable someone to do something

Forbid x to do y

Words Associated with Subjunctive Mood in "that" Clause

Demand *that*

Mandate *that*

Request *that*

Require *that* something be (not are/is)

Different Applications Involving "use"

Use (verb): I use a pencil to write.

Used to (to is the infinitive): I used to teach every night.

Be used to something/doing something (to is preposition):

I am used to challenges.

I am used to being challenged.

It + adjective

After verbs such as *believe, consider, feel, find, think*, we can use *it + adjective* before a "that" clause or the infinitive.

I find it impulsive to talk to the CEO directly in an elevator without being introduced.

He felt it dreadful that his wife was diagnosed with anemia.

Avoid Run-On Sentence

A run-on sentence consists of two or more main clauses that are run together **without** proper punctuation. People often speak in run-on sentences, but they make pauses and change their tone so others can understand them. But in writing, we must break our sentences into shorter units so that all the readers can understand us.

Wrong

It is nearly six o'clock we have not gone through all the practice problems yet.

There are several acceptable ways to correct this:

- Insert a semicolon between the clauses:

It is nearly six o'clock; we have not gone through all the practice problems yet.

- Write the two clauses as two separate sentences:

It is nearly six o'clock. We have not gone through all the practice problems yet.

- Insert a comma and a conjunction between the clauses:

It is nearly six o'clock, and we have not gone through all the practice problems yet.

3.6 Useful Examples

Here are some examples of the types of questions you will be faced with in the Sentence Correction section.

Q1. Unlike Lee Ang whose films transcend ideology, Zhang Yi Mou is frequently dismissed with being merely a photographer for a visually impressive production with little meaning.

- A. with merely being a photographer
- B. as being a photographer merely
- C. for being merely a photographer
- D. as a mere photographer
- E. merely for being a photographer

The problem with the sentence as it stands: dismissed with is not idiomatic, it should be dismissed as or dismissed for. These two idioms mean different things - you can be dismissed for something from a job, but by critics, etc. one is dismissed AS something.

This leaves you with choices B and D. B includes the word being, which automatically makes it suspect. Also, it is the longer choice, which makes it less likely to be correct. The adverb merely is placed very far away from the verb, causing an awkward construction.

This makes D a better choice.

D is correct.

Q2. Once almost covered under centuries of debris, skilled artisans have now restored some original famous paintings during the Italian Renaissance.

- A. skilled artisans have now restored some original famous paintings during the Italian Renaissance.
- B. some original famous paintings during the Italian Renaissance now have been by skillful artisans restored.
- C. the restoration of some original famous paintings during the Italian Renaissance has been done by skilled artisans.
- D. skilled artisans during the Italian Renaissance have now restored some original famous paintings.
- E. some original famous paintings during the Italian Renaissance have now been restored by skilled artisans.

What was covered? Some original famous paintings. The rest are like certain garnishes in a cocktail.

With modifying phrases at the beginning of the sentence, just determine what is being modified and select the answer which places that item directly after the phrase. Which have the correct opening? *B* *E*

B needlessly separates subject from verb, creating a very awkward construction.

This makes *E* the better choice.

Example

Janowitz, as other writers in New York City, considered Woolf as one of the foremost female modernist literary figures of the twentieth century.

2 mistakes:

Like vs. As in the first part (Janowitz like other artists...)

The second ``As" is unnecessary (consider as is not idiomatic).3pt

Another example:

In many rural provinces, the so-called party leaders are more powerful, wealthy and **wield more influence as any other illicit group.**

2 mistakes:

For sake of parallelism, third item in the list should be an adjective, not a verb phrase

It should be ``more than", not ``more as".3pt

Q3. With centuries of seasonal roaming in search of pasture for their herds or food and water, the Nomads still found the goal of a bawdy, prolonged adventure an elusive one.

- A. With
- B. Following
- C. Despite
- D. Having spent
- E. As a result of

C is the best choice to indicate the emphasis of the Nomads' unchanging mentality after all the journeys.3pt

Q4. The uniformized set of characters, which some historians date in the late Qing dynasty, was the key to the sustainability and prosperity of the Chinese culture over thousands of years.

- A. The uniformized set of characters, which some historians date
- B. The uniformized set of characters, which some historians have thought to occur
- C. Uniformizing the set of characters, dated by some historians at
- D. The uniformization of a set of characters, thought by some historians to have occurred
- E. The set of characters' uniformization, dated by some historians to have been

Before we look at the answers, let's answer the question: what is occurring? Historians are dating something. What are they dating? Not the uniformized set of characters itself, but the time when the characters became uniformized (the uniformization of the characters).

Therefore the correct answer must be *D*.

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