aristotle

The 80/20 Principle

In Action in

The Official Guide for the GMAT Review 13th edition

What is the 80/20 Principle?

The Pareto principle or the 80/20 principle states that 80% of effects come from 20% of causes. This ratio may not always be exactly 80/20- it could be 75/25 or 65/35 but broadly the Pareto principle means that a few causes lead to a majority of results.

This principle applies to almost all areas of our personal and professional lives. For example, most of the revenues of a company usually come from a few of its clients or products, most of the taxes of a country taxes come from a few of its citizens etc.

For more on the Pareto principle google the term or read [The 80/20 Principle- The Secret of Achieving More with Less](#) by Richard Koch, an interesting book often recommended for additional reading in business schools.

The Pareto Principle applied to the Official Guide for the GMAT 13th ed.

The GMAT is a standardized test, which means that it tests you on the same concepts over and over again. We, at Aristotle Prep, were interested in understanding whether these concepts are all equally important or whether some are more important than the others. We also wanted to use this information as a guide that could help us in making the **SC Grail 3rd edition , CR Grail, and RC Grail** the best books available for Verbal.

Since the Official Guide 13th edition contains retired GMAT questions, we decided to apply the Pareto principle to questions in all the three areas tested on verbal - Sentence Correction, Critical Reasoning, and Reading Comprehension.

The results, as you will see, were very interesting: surprising in some cases and enlightening in general.

How to use this document?

This document is divided into three sections – Sentence Correction, Critical Reasoning, and Reading Comprehension. Each section starts by giving some statistics and then derives inferences from these. If the numbers don't interest you, just read the 'Takeaways' at the end of each section.

Disclaimers:

1. All the figures, especially those for the Sentence Correction section, are approximations.

2. This document is primarily a summary of our findings and is not meant to teach you concepts. While we have provided takeaways for all three question types, to learn the actual concepts please refer to the **SC Grail 3rd edition, the CR Grail, and the RC Grail**.

3. The takeaways need to be regarded more as guidelines than as fixed rules.

4. The GMAT and GMAC are in no way associated with this document.

Sentence Correction (SC)

The OG 13th edition contains a total of 140 SC questions. Some of these questions have one error, some have two, and some have three or more. These errors refer only to the errors present in the question stem; they do not include errors that may be present in individual options.

The total number of errors that we found in these 140 questions was approximately 200. Here is a break up of these 200 errors in terms of important error types:

SI. No.	Error Type	No. of times tested
1	Parallelism	43
2	Idioms	35
3	Tenses	25
4	Usage	20
5	Subject Verb Agreement	16
6	Modification	16
7	Comparison	14
8	Redundancy/Wordiness	8
9	Pronoun Agreement	8
10	Meaning	8
11	Pronoun reference	7
12	Run-ons and Fragments	5
	TOTAL	205

As you can see, 4 out of these 12 errors (i.e. 1/3rd of the error types tested) - *Parallel Construction, Idioms, Tenses, and Usage* - comprise almost 2/3rd of the total errors tested.

Major Takeaways

1. Look for Parallelism error in every question that you get. The easiest way to identify these errors is by looking for parallelism markers. We have discussed these markers in detail in the *SC Grail 3rd edition*.

2. Go through the chapter on Idioms and Usages in the SC Grail at least thrice. We have added a lot of content to the Usage chapter in the *SC Grail 3rd edition*. We have also provided you with a shorter list of commonly tested idioms, in addition the comprehensive Idiom list. Use this short list to quickly revise the important idioms before taking practice tests.

3. As you can see, tenses are important. However, do not get bogged down by the technicalities of tenses. The GMAT will not ask you to identify whether a sentence is in the simple progressive or the future perfect tense. Always check for meaning and time periods and pay special attention to the part of the sentence that is not underlined.

4. Pronoun errors have not been tested much. Interestingly, most of the pronoun reference errors that we found were between questions 80 and 120, i.e. the supposedly more difficult questions in the OG.

Critical Reasoning (CR)

Critical Reasoning questions were easier to segregate than SC questions because each question is of only one question type, leaving no possibility of overlaps. The OG 13th edition has a total of 124 CR questions; here is a breakup of these with reference to the Question type being tested:

Sl. No.	Question Type	No. of Qs
1	Strengthen question	20
2	Weaken questions	19
3	Explain questions	16
4	Logical Conclusion questions	13
5	Assumption questions	12
6	Evaluate the Argument questions	12
7	Inference Questions	12
8	Bold faced Questions	9
9	Flaw questions	7
10	Miscellaneous questions	4
	TOTAL	124

Evaluate the argument questions are almost similar to assumption questions, so if we add these to the 12 Assumption questions, then 2/3rd of the CR questions in the OG are of the following three types – *Strengthen, Weaken, and Assumption*.

Major Takeaways

1. Assumption is the most important concept in Critical reasoning since it is relevant to five question types tested in the OG – Assumption, Strengthen, Weaken, Evaluate the Argument, and Flaw – nearly 60% of total OG questions.

2. While Strengthening and Weakening arguments, be careful to always strengthen or weaken the connection between the evidence and the conclusion; don't just end up focusing on weakening the conclusion. This is covered in detail in the **CR Grail**, scheduled for launch in the first week of October.

3. Unlike in the earlier editions of the Official Guide, this edition contains a good number of 'Provide a Logical Conclusion' question types that are spread across difficulty levels. This led us to dedicate a separate chapter to this question type in the ==CR Grail==.

4. Miscellaneous questions such as "Method of Argumentation, Parallel Reasoning don't appear often so you may not want to spend a lot of time on these questions

Reading Comprehension

For Reading Comprehension, we divided the 139 questions based on the 26 passages in the OG 13th edition into the following question types:

Sl. No.	Question Type	No. of Qs
1	Inference Questions	56
2	Detail Questions	43
3	Global Questions	22
4	Miscellaneous Questions	11
5	Function Questions	7
	TOTAL	139

Major Takeaway

Close to 70% of the questions are of the two types – *Inference and Detail* so you should know what do these question test, what type of answers are incorrect for these questions and what type of answers are correct .

In fact these statistics reinforce what we have stated in the past and what we will be stating in the future in the ==RC Grail== (releasing in the first week of November). You don't need to understand everything written in a passage in order to answer questions from it correctly. It is much more important to make a passage map and to concentrate on the broader aspects of the passage so as to not end up missing the woods for the trees.

Concluding Thoughts:

Most students tend to prepare for the GMAT in the same manner in which they used to prepare for their college and school tests – by putting maximum effort in the areas in which they are weakest.

However, this may not be the best strategy while preparing for the GMAT. For example, if you struggle with Bold faced questions or with pronoun errors, you may want to spend 30-40% of your preparation time studying these concepts. This will eventually turn out to be a waste of time because you won't get too many questions from these areas. What's worse, because you spent too much time studying these concepts, you would have most likely ended up ignoring concepts such as Parallelism and Tenses, which will actually be tested on most questions that you get.

A smart test taker is one who focuses on learning those concepts, the probability of whose being tested on the GMAT is very high. This document has already given you an idea of what those concepts may be within each verbal area.

The three books in our Grail series – the SC Grail 3rd edition , the CR Grail, and the RC Grail have been written with this thought process. So while these books delve into all the concepts that can be tested on the GMAT, they emphasize and cover in much more detail those concepts that are *most likely* to be tested on the GMAT.

The books will be available for pre-order on our website from 1st October 2012. *Log on to our products section* http://www.aristotleprep.com/products *to know more.*