

Sentence Correction

Recommended studying strategy

1. Keep this guide next to you when you study
2. If you get something wrong, review the entire section for that error type
3. Highlight light the information on areas that you find yourself getting wrong often
4. Make your own note page on the computer
5. My personal notes are at the end of each chapter
6. Do at least 5 sentence correction problems every day before the test

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Getting Started: The Basics

In sentence correction the GMAC will test your ability to evaluate sentences for **grammar, meaning, and concision**. Grammar is the primary objective whereas meaning and concision come as secondary, and are really only important on the toughest of questions. **You must master the Big Eight grammar topics if you want to score a 700 or better on the GMAT.** It is almost certain that GMAC is testing you on your knowledge in one of the following areas:

The Big Eight

1. Subject/Verb Agreement
2. Parallel Construction
3. Pronouns
4. Misplaced Modifiers
5. Verb Tense
6. Comparisons
7. Idioms
8. Quantity

Parts of a Sentence

You do not need to “memorize” these, however understanding them is important to the process of learning grammar and being able to understand the rules and patterns presented in this guide.

Sentence

A sentence is a group of words that express a complete thought while adhering to the rules of grammar. The simplest sentence must have both a main subject and a main (working) verb. “*Jack talks.*” is a very simple sentence. Jack is the main subject, and the main verb is talks. A sentence without a working verb is a fragment.

X “*The alien discovered in 1894.*” X

The above, although it looks like a sentence, it is in fact not. The alien didn’t discoverer anything in 1894 and the alien was not discovered in 1894. Although discovered in a verb, it is not a working verb. To fix, add a working verb or make the past participle here become a working verb (depending on the original intended meaning of the sentence).

“*The alien was discovered in 1894.*”

“*The alien discovered a new planet in 1894.*”

Subject

The **main subject** of a sentence is always the noun that performs the main action. Think of the main subject as the person, place, or thing that the sentence is talking about. A subject can also be a group of words such as a noun and the adjectives that describe the noun. In this case, the subject is known as a **noun phrase**.

“*The dog that urinated on the table is Kate’s favorite.*”

In the above sentence, the underlined portion is the noun clause and is the subject of the sentence. **Gerunds** and **infinitives** can be the subjects as well.

“*Cheating for a test is not a good idea.*”

“*To cheat on a test requires no skill.*”

Cheating is the subject and is used as a noun in the first sentence, while the infinitive of the word is the subject of the second sentence.

Adjective

Adjectives modify nouns. In other words, they help describe people, places, and things.

"I prefer to take the black BMW into the city for work."

In the above sentence, the adjective black modifies, or describes, the noun BMW and is therefore an adjective. Get comfortable with being able to realize when a word is modifying or describing a noun.

Adverb

Adverbs are words that modify verbs. They can also modify adjectives, another adverb, or a **clause**. Most (not all) adverbs will end in *-ly*, making them easy to spot. The adverb is underlined and the thing it is modifying is in bold.

*"The football **fell** slowly."*

*"Gary, I **work** diligently on my school studies so that I can become rich one day."*

*"A ghastly **scary** costume."*

*"I did not want to get caught, so I ran very **quickly**."*

Pronouns

A pronoun takes the place of a noun and is used to avoid repetition. In the following sentence, the word *he* is a pronoun for the **antecedent** John. The antecedent is simply the noun that the pronoun is referring to.

"John likes carrots for a snack. In fact, he is a vegetarian."

Clause

A clause is a group of words that contain a subject and a working verb, also known as a **predicate** (the verb that is doing something with the subject). There are two types of clauses, **dependent** and **independent**. An independent clause can stand alone as a sentence because it has its own subject and verb, whereas a dependant clause does not.

Subject/Verb Agreement

Every sentence must have a subject and a verb, and together they must make logical sense and agree in number. Every sentence must have a main subject and a working verb (see definition of a sentence in part one).

Isolating the Subject and Verb

In general it is almost always preferred in English to have the **subject before the verb**. One easy way to remember this is to think of the title of this chapter: “Subject/Verb Agreement”, not “Verb/Subject Agreement”.

To isolate the subject and the verb try eliminating unnecessary phrases that are placed before the subject, or between the subject and the verb. Manhattan GMAT calls these the *warm-up* and *middlemen*.

Prepositional phrases, subordinate clauses, and other modifiers are red paint for spotting a warm-up or middleman.

Prepositional Phrases

A **preposition** is a word that indicates a relationship between an object (most likely a noun, but also could be a pronoun) and something else within the sentence. A preposition can be one word or more. Treat prepositions as warm-ups... Block them out to find the true subject and the true verb of a sentence.

“of cats”

“by 1926”

The words *of* and *by* are prepositions. Other common prepositions on the GMAT include *for*, *in*, *with*, *at*, *to*, *on*, *from*, *about*, *into*, *between*, *through*, *over*, *against*, *under*, *out of*, *next to*, *upon*.

A prepositional phrase is a group words headed by a preposition.

*“Under the table, a **mouse** near the poisoned cheese **is about** to die.”*

The prepositions are underlined. The true subject and verb are in bold. A noun in a prepositional phrase cannot be the subject of a sentence. *Table* is a noun in the prepositional phrase “*under the table*” and therefore can not be the subject of the sentence.

Subordinate Clauses

A subordinate clause is a dependent clause – it depends on something else in order to be part of a sentence. Without that “something else”, it must be deleted because it would be a fragment. **These clauses can be treated like giant adjectives, adverbs** (sometimes they can be like giant nouns). If you think of them this way, you will see that all they are doing is actually modifying something – so they must not be the true main subject or verb.

Subordinate clauses are introduced by connecting words such as *who* and *which*. Connecting words are discussed in a later chapter because there is more detail to them.

Compound Subjects (And vs Additive Phrases)

Certain words can help you identify if you need to use plural or singular verbs.

And

When the word *and* links two singular subjects it forms a plural compound subject.

*“Mike and Jodi **are** the coolest **players** on the team.”*

Mike is a cool player, Jodi is a cool player, and together **they are both** cool **players**. And is the only word that can link two singular subjects in a sentence and make them plural compound subjects.

Additive phrases

These phrases can *add* to the subject, but they do not form compound subjects, they actually can be looked at as modifiers.

*"Mike, along with Jodi, **is** the coolest **player** on the team."*

Compare this sentence with the one previous one about Mike and Jodi. Notice how this sentence uses singular verbs. Other additive phrases besides *along with* are, *in addition to*, *as well as*, *accompanied by*, *together with*, and *including*.

Either or / Neither nor

When used alone without "or/nor", the subject is singular and takes only singular verbs.

*"Either of the players **is** cool"*

However, when these words are used with their paired "or/nor", the verb takes the form that agrees with the noun closest to it.

*"Neither the coach nor the **players are** cool"*

*"Neither the players nor **coach is** cool"*

The Number / A number

When the word "number" stands alone without "the" or "a", there is no rule.

"The number" of things is always singular.

"A number" of things are always plural.

Collective Nouns: Almost always singular

Words that represent entire groups are usually singular. They usually don't end in -s, but sometimes can which is why they are tricky. Examples: agency, army, class, committee, crowd, team, baggage, citrus, equipment, fleet, fruit, furniture.

School subjects and **diseases** can count as collective nouns and are always singular as well. Mathematics, economics, and diabetes. **Some activities** such as aerobics and calisthenics.

Indefinite Pronouns

An indefinite pronoun is not specific about the thing to which it refers. They are all always singular except for the MANAS group which is talked about below.

Anyone, Anybody, Anything

Everyone, Everybody, Everything

No one, Nobody, Nothing

Someone, Somebody, Something

Whatever, Whoever

MANAS

These pronouns can be singular or plural depending on the what they are referring to in the "of phrase" before they are used.

More/Most

All

None

Any

Some

*"Some of the **money** was stolen"*

*"Some of the **documents** were stolen"*

Money is singular in the first sentence, and documents is plural in the second.

Each and Every: Closer Look

"Each" and "every" require singular verbs. Even if each is followed by a compound subject or a plural noun, it needs a singular verb.

However, if the word "they" comes right before the word "each", then the subject is plural, because the subject is actually "they".

Quantities and Parts

The noun "half" or "majority" can act like an indefinite pronoun. The rule for them is to treat them like MANAS and look at the -of phrase to see if the verb should be plural or singular.

*"Half of the **pie** is pepperoni."*

*"Half of the **slices** are pepperoni"*

*"The majority of the **pie** is pepperoni"*

*"The majority of the **slices** are pepperoni"*

Subject Phrases & Clauses: Always singular

If the subject of the sentence is a clause, or a **subject phrase**, a singular verb will be used. Subject phrases are those that start with -ing words: *"Eating good food **is** great".*

*"Whoever they choose as a leader **is** fine with me"*

In the above, the underlined is a clause, but is also the subject.

Summary

1. Isolate the subject and verb by blocking out the *warm-up* and *middlemen*
2. Treat prepositional phrases and subordinate clauses as filler
3. Subordinate clauses just modify the subject. They are often triggered by *connecting words*
4. Compound subjects made with the word *and* need plural verbs
5. Additive phrases do not make compound plural subjects and need singular verbs
6. Neither/Nor and Either/Or use the verb closest to the noun to see if singular or plurality is needed
7. Either and neither alone is always singular
8. Remember the indefinite pronouns, they are always singular except for MANAS
9. MANAS pronouns need to use the -of phrase to tell if singular or plural
10. *A number* is plural, and *The number* is singular
11. Collective nouns are singular. These include school subjects, diseases, and some activities.
12. Each & Every require singular verbs, except when you have *they each*
13. Quantity "pronouns" use the MANAS rule with the -of phrase
14. Clauses that are subjects always need singular verbs
15. When an -ing word is a subject, it will use a singular verb

Parallelism

Comparable sentence parts must be structurally and logically similar.

Parallel Markers

These are words that link or contrast items, and force those items to be parallel.

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| • And | X <u>and</u> Y | X,Y, <u>and</u> Z |
| • Both/And | <u>Both</u> X <u>and</u> Y | |
| • Or | X <u>or</u> Y | |
| • Either/Or | <u>Either</u> X <u>or</u> Y | |
| • Not/But | <u>Not</u> X <u>but</u> Y | |
| • Not only/But also | <u>Not only</u> X <u>but also</u> Y | |
| • Rather Than | X <u>rather than</u> Y | |
| • From/To | <u>From</u> X <u>to</u> Y | |

Parallel Elements

Must realize that nouns, adjectives, verbs, infinitives, participles, prepositional phrases, and subordinate clauses can be made parallel.

One rule to note is that prepositional phrases (on, in, next to, etc) do not need to be the same, it just needs to be another prepositional phrase: “Leave the money in the desk rather than on the chair” is correct.

Another rule is that parallel clauses need to start with the same word

X “I want to retire to a place where I can relax and that has low taxes” X
“I want to retire to a place where I can relax and where the taxes are low.”

Idiomatic Parallel Markers

- X acts as Y
- As X, so Y
- Compared to X, Y
- Consider XY
- In contrast to X, Y
- Declare XY
- X develops into Y
- X differs from Y
- Distinguish X from Y
- Estimate X to be Y
- X instead of Y
- Regard X as Y
- X is good, and so too is Y
- X is thought to be Y
- View X as Y
- Whether X or Y
- forbids X to do Y

Linking Verbs

Linking verbs instead of expressing what a subject does, it expresses what the subject is or the condition the subject is in. In better words, they connect the subject of the verb to additional information. “To Be” is the largest used linking

verbs in its many forms. Linking verbs must be treated as parallel markets. If you can plug in: “*am, is, are*” in place of a verb in a sentence – and it still makes logical sense - it is a linking verb.

- To Be: is, are, was, were, am, been, be, being
- Appear
- Become
- Feel
- Grow
- Look
- Remain
- Represent
- Resemble
- Seem
- Smell
- Sound
- Stay
- Taste
- Turn

Adjectives, not adverbs, follow linking verbs. This is because the linking verb “links” the noun to the adjective, which describes the noun.

{Noun + Linking Verb + Adjective That Refers Back to the Noun}

Summary

1. Learn parallel markets to know when things must be parallel
2. Understanding that linking verbs are a noun, a linking verb, and something about the previous noun that describes it such as a feeling or compliment.
3. Sometimes items are not 100% parallel, but 100% logical... this is okay.
4. Adjectives (not adverbs) follow linking verbs

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun so that the noun does not need to be repeated. The GMAT frequently has pronoun errors in which the pronoun is ambiguous, or it does not agree in number with the antecedent. You can not use a pronoun if there is no antecedent for it. An antecedent is the noun that a pronoun is replacing.

Pronoun Case

There are three cases of pronouns: Subject, Object, and Possessive.

Parallel Clause & Pronouns

In some cases you will have a parallel structure with two clauses, in which the second clause starts with a pronoun. This is okay because of the parallel structure.

*“Supernovas destroy their environment in vast explosions, **BUT** by synthesizing heavy chemical elements, THEY provide the universe with biochemistry based life as we know it.*

Watch Out for Possessive ‘S Nouns

They are bad antecedents. It is better to make the antecedent a non possessive noun.

It, Its, They, Them, Their

Singular: It, Its

Plural: They, Them, Their

This, That, These, Those

These are known as demonstrative pronouns. They can be used as adjectives in front of nouns.

That and those

That and those may be used to indicate “new copies” of the antecedent. The new copy must be modified to show how it is different. **The new copy must also agree in number with the old copy on the GMAT.** Otherwise you must just use the noun over.

This and these

This and these do not replace nouns (neither do that or those unless there is a new copy). Instead use *it, they, or them* to replace nouns

Summary

1. Pronouns replace a noun so that the noun does not need to be repeated
2. The noun that is replaced is referred to as the antecedent
3. There must be an antecedent if there is a pronoun
4. Make sure that there is no pronoun ambiguity: that each pronoun can surely be matched with a correct antecedent
5. There are three pronoun cases, subject, object, and possessive
6. Pronouns work for clauses when parallel structure is in place
7. Possessive’s make for bad antecedents, try making the antecedent a non possessive
8. It and Its are singular
9. They, them, and their are plural
10. This and These are not pronouns that replace nouns, they modify nouns by acting as adjectives
11. That and Those are used to indicate new copies. The new copy must be modified to show difference from original

Modifiers

We are already familiar with simple one-word modifiers such as adverbs and adjectives. On harder GMAT problems the GMAC likes to put more complicated modifiers that are entire clauses and phrases. **Many (not all) modifying phrases are separated by commas from the noun being modified.**

Adjective

Adjectives modify nouns. In other words, they help describe people, places, and things.

"I prefer to take the black BMW into the city for work."

In the above sentence, the adjective black modifies, or describes, the noun BMW and is therefore an adjective. Get comfortable with being able to realize when a word is modifying or describing a noun. In the following sentences, take notice of the underlined adjective. The noun being modified is in bold.

*"The Smith family had terrible **food** served at the dinner party."*

*"The hungry **dog** barks for food at night."*

*"This **hockey game** is hosted by Verizon Wireless."*

*"That **car** over by the meter belongs to Ryan."*

These, these, that, and those, can become adjectives. In this form, they are known as **demonstrative adjectives**. In the above sentence, *that* is modifying the car. These are discussed in the "Pronouns" section.

*"Forest **fires** cause a lot of damage to the ecosystem."*

What kind of fire causes a lot of damage to the ecosystem? The noun *forest* actually becomes an adjective in this sentence. The sentence does not say that a just any fire causes a lot of damage to the ecosystem - it specifies that a certain type of fire, *forest*, do. The following is another example of a noun that actually becomes an adjective because it is modifying, or describing another noun: *"The street **performers** do not like dogs."*

*"The sinking **boat** is the first one we need to save."*

The **present participle** *changing* actually becomes an adjective in the above sentence because it is describing the boat. Which boat do you want to save first? Is it the yellow **boat** or the black **boat**? No, you want to save the sinking **boat**.

*"The cooked **chicken** is so much better than the uncooked **chicken**."*

*"The hidden **treasure** is our key to wealth"*

Cooked and *hidden* are adjectives in the above sentences. Notice that they are in **past participle** form. A noun in a past participle form can become an adjective if it is modifying a noun.

Adverb

Adverbs are words that modify verbs. They can also modify adjectives, another adverb, or a **clause**. Most (not all) adverbs will end in *-ly*, making them easy to spot. The adverb is underlined and the thing it is modifying is in bold.

*"The football **fell** slowly."*

*"Gary, I **work** diligently on my school studies so that I can become rich one day."*

*"A ghastly **scary** costume."*

*"I did not want to get caught, so I ran very **quickly**."*

GMAT Structure Trick for Adverb/Adjective Switching

Sometimes the GMAT will offer two grammatically correct phrasings in the answer, however one doesn't actually convey the original meaning of the sentence. Here is an example question.

"James Joyce is supposed Irish ancestor of Max."

- A. supposed Irish ancestor of Max.
- B. Max's supposedly Irish ancestor.
- C. Max's supposed Irish ancestor.
- D. Max's ancestor whom is a supposed Irish,
- E. supposedly Irish ancestor of Max.

Answer choices B and C are the only two actually grammatically correct choices. The structure of choice B is {Adverb + Adjective + Noun} while choice C is {Adjective + Adjective + Noun}. So which one is right? Read below for the answer and analysis.

- The original meaning is states that James Joyce is for sure Irish, but that we are not sure if she is Max's ancestor.
- We are sure that she is Irish
- We are questioning the fact that she might or might not be Max's ancestor
- What we want to say is that she may or may not have been Max's ancestor, but she is for sure Irish.

Answer Choice B says that:

- James Joyce is Max's ancestor, but that she may or may not be Irish.
- The adverb *supposedly* modifies the adjective Irish, which is not what we want
- Remember that adverbs modify almost anything but a noun!

Answer Choice C says that:

- James Joyce is Irish
- James Joyce may or may not be the ancestor of Max
- The adjective *supposed* modifies the noun *ancestor*
- The adjective *Irish* also modifies the noun *ancestor*

Therefore, answer C is the correct answer. Common adjectives that have been switched with their corresponding adverbs ending in *-ly* on recent GMAT test are:

1. *Corresponding*
2. *Frequent*
3. *Independent*
4. *Rare*
5. *Recent*
6. *Seeming*
7. *Separate*
8. *Significant*
9. *Supposed*
10. *Usual*

Just be on the lookout when an answer choice offers an adverb or an adjective in replace of one or the other. You must keep the meaning of the original sentence. The key to this is realizing that adjectives can only modify nouns, so if it is an adjective, it is modifying a noun. If it is an adverb, it is modifying anything but the noun. If you want to talk about the noun, you must use an adjective!

Noun Modifiers

You can have an entire phrase or clause that modifies a noun or pronoun. These are called **noun modifiers**, and they really just act like long adjectives. This is nothing new to us since we already talked about phrases and clauses. All this is saying is that sometimes those phrases and clauses are in a sentence because they are describing the subject (a noun).

For example, “Tired from chasing mice, the **cat** took a nap”. The cat is the noun, and the underlined is a phrase that is telling us something about the cat – also known as modifying the cat – hence a noun modifier.

Rules for Noun Modifiers

A few rules you should know for the GMAT about modifiers. The most important rule of noun modifiers is the touch rule.

1. **A noun and a modifier should touch each other.**

If the noun meant to be modified is not touching its modifier, you have a misplaced modifier.

*“John drove on the highway to get to his **house**, which was filled with potholes.”*

The sentence above says that the house was filled with potholes. We have a misplaced modifier here. The correct sentence would be, “To get to his **house**, John drove on the highway, which was filled with potholes.”

2. **The noun being modified must actually be in the sentence**

If the noun is missing, then you have what is known as a dangling modifier. This is a little harder to spot, but just ask yourself, what the hell is being modified here? If you can't explicitly say what is being modified, then you know there is a problem!

X “Angry about the missed foul shot, there was no interview after the game” X

Who was angry? What was angry? Fix this sentence! Add a noun... “Angry about the missed foul shot, the players did not have an interview after the game.”

3. **Present participle (-ing) at the beginning of a sentence is often made to be dangling**

You need a noun that could be doing the present participle. These are actually verb modifiers, but they are easier to think of as noun modifiers. The only difference here is that verb modifiers don't need to touch the subject.

X “Using the latest technology, the problem was identified” X

X “The problem was identified, using the latest technology” X

Both these sentences are grammatically wrong. They don't make logical sense either. “the problem” can't be using the latest technology. Insert a reasonable noun that can be the subject of “using” such as an engineer.

*“Using the latest technology, the **engineer** identified the problem.”*

*“The **engineer** identified the problem, using the latest technology.”*

4. **Avoid long sequences of modifiers that modify the same noun**

This can lead to you having a misplaced modifier. Instead, you could put one of the modifiers before the noun, and one after the noun. Or you could even rephrase the sentence to turn on modifier into just a simple phrase. Take a look at how we fix the following sentence.

X “John Travolta, impressing audiences across the globe, who also struggled with drug abuse, became the first white actor to win the MovieColor Award.” X

“Impressing audiences across the globe, John Travolta, who also struggled with drug abuse, became the first white actor to win the MovieColor Award.

"Impressing audiences across the globe, John Travolta became the first white actor to win the MovieColor Award, even as he struggled with drug abuse."

5. **Possessives often lead to misplaced modifiers**

X "Bad in math, Bill's score on the exam was poor." X
"Bad in math, Bill received a poor score on the exam."

6. **Noun Modifiers are Often Introduced by Relative Pronouns**

Relative pronouns are words like: *Which, That, Who, Whose, Whom, Where, When*. When noun modifiers are introduced by relative pronouns, they are called relative clauses. They each have little rules that must be followed.

That/Which

1. That cannot modify people
2. Which must modify things

That can also sometimes be dropped when it makes sense.

Who vs Whom and Whose

Who and Whom modify people only. Whose can modify both people and things.

1. Who is used as a **subject** of a verb in a relative clause
2. Whom is used as the **object** of a verb or preposition

Whom can also sometimes be dropped like the word "that" when it makes sense.

Where/When vs Which

1. Where must modify an actual place. Not a metaphorical place, like a situation or condition or circumstance
2. Which should be used in place of "where" when the place is not an actual place and is a metaphorical place
3. When must modify an actual event or time such as a period, age, or a year like 1987. You may also when appropriate, use in which in place of when.
4. **Which can only modify a noun immediately preceding it, never an entire clause**

Essential vs Non-essential Noun Modifiers

Essential modifiers are necessary to identify the subject and non-essential are just there and are not needed, they just add extra information.

1. Essential modifiers use no comma between modifier and noun
2. Non-essential modifiers use a comma between modifier and noun

The decide between the use of that and which when both make sense:

1. Which + "," means the modifier is non-essential
2. That and no comma means the modifier is essential

If the choice is just between Which and Which + "," because "that" cant be used, then use a "," for non-essential and no comma for essential.

1. In general, commas are used only with non-essential modifiers.

Verb Modifiers

We already know one type of verb modifier, an adverb. But other items can modify a verb. These modifiers answer questions about the verb such as *“how, when, where, and why”*. Words like *“because, although, if, unless, while, and so that”* are subordinators words for these modifiers.

Subject	Verb	Object	Verb Modifier
He	went		home
Robert	teaches	English	five nights a week
We	turned		left
He	answered	me	promptly

Summary

- Adverb can modify verbs, other adverbs, adjectives, and clauses
- Adjectives can only modify nouns
- Be careful of the meaning and structure of the sentence, what is actually being modified and meant.
- Noun modifiers modify nouns or pronouns and can be entire an entire phrase or clause
- A noun and modifier should always touch each other or you have a misplaced modifier
- The noun being modified must actually be in the sentence of you have a dangling modifier
- *-ing* present participles at the beginning are often a sign of a dangling modifier. Make sure there is an appropriate noun that is being referred to that can be doing the *-ing*
- Watch out for long sentences with two modifiers that modify the same noun. Can have a hidden misplaced modifier
- Possessives are often a sign of a misplaced modifier
- Noun modifiers are often introduced with relative pronouns such as *Which, That, Who, Whose, Whom, Where, When*. In this case, they become known as relative clauses
- If you see a relative clause, it should be a sign to look for it breaking the rules
- That can not modify people
- Which must modify things
- Who and whom modify people only
- Who is subject, and whom is an object
- Whose can modify both people and things
- Where must have an actual non-metaphorical place
- When must refer to a time
- Which and in which can replace when and where
- Which + “,” for non-essential
- That with no comma for essential
- In general for relative pronoun use: non-essential information will have a comma
- Know when a word is modifying a verb

Verb Tense, Mood, & Voice

Verb tense lets readers know when the action the verb takes place. Verb mood lets the reader know what the writer believes about, or wants to do with the action. Two main verb moods, the indicative and the subjunctive. Verb voice indicates who or what is doing the action, and there are two voices on the GMAT: active and passive.

Simple Tense

1. Present: Sandy plays well with John
2. Past: Sandy played well with John
3. Future: Sandy will play well with John

We use the simple present for general definitions of things.

Progressive tense

This means something is ongoing. It uses to be and a present participle (-ing).

1. Present progressive: Sandy is playing soccer
2. Past progressive: Sandy was playing soccer yesterday
3. Future progressive: Sandy will be playing soccer tomorrow

A common mistake on the GMAT is to use present progressive for the future: *"John is meeting Harvey for lunch tomorrow."* Is wrong. You must use the future progressive: *"John will be meeting Harvey for lunch tomorrow."*

Present Perfect: Still in Effect (Have/Has)

The **action** or **effect** happened in the past and continues to the present. We use Have/Has and a past participle, which is usually a verb ending in *-ed* or one of many irregular verbs like *go=gone* in the past participle.

{Present Perfect = Have/Has + Past Participle}

"We have lived in a hut for three days." = we are still living in the hut

"We lived in a hut for three days." = the three days are over, we no longer live in the hut

- Action: *"We have lived in a hut for three days."*
- Effect: *"The child has drawn a square in the sand."* = the square is still there

Using "Since"

If you use the word since, you must use the present perfect

X *"Since 1986 no one broke the world record."* X

"Since 1986 no one has broken the world record."

"Within" phrases

Must be used with within phrases

X *"Within the past five days, John broke the world record."* X

"Within the past five days, John has broken the world record."

Past Perfect: Earlier action (Had)

If two actions happened in the past, the past perfect is used for the earlier, and the simple past for the later one.

{Past Perfect = Had + Past Participle}

"The film had started by the time we arrived at the theater."

"The teacher thought that Jimmy had cheated on the exam."

Sometimes the past perfect can be omitted if it is obvious which action happened first:

"Ricky drove to the store and bought some ice cream."

- Clauses linked by and or but generally do not need past perfect
- If there is a date, like 1945 or "two years go", you can sometimes forego the second past participle

In general, the perfect tenses should only be used when necessary otherwise they are not as concise.

Present to Future and Past to Conditional

When someone is announcing, or believing, or predicts, etc, you must follow these rules:

"John believes the machine will be wonderful."

Present

Future

"John believed the machine would be wonderful."

Past

Conditional

Hypothetical Subjunctive

Hypothetical subjunctives use the simple past of every verb. **Irregular exception is when to be is used, only use were.**

How do you know if it's a hypothetical? They usually come after "**if**, **as if**, or **as though**". One way to remember this is to think of the song "If I WERE a rich man".

If...Then Constructions

There are five "if...then" patterns you must learn. Note that the "if" part does not need to appear first, and that the "then" can sometimes be omitted.

1. Certain: {IF present... THEN present}
"If Sophie eats pizza, then she becomes ill."
 2. Some certainty: {IF present, THEN + can/may}
"If Sophie eats pizza, then she may become ill."
 3. Certain with future: {IF present... THEN future (will)}
"If Sophie eats pizza later, then she will become ill."
 4. Unlikely case in future: {IF Hypothetical subjunctive... THEN conditional (would/could)}
"If Sophie ate pizza then she would become ill."
 5. Case that never happened in the past: {IF past perfect... THEN conditional perfect (would have)}
"If Sophie had eaten pizza, then she would have become ill."
- Never put would in the "IF" part of the sentence
 - Never use should anywhere in an "IF...THEN" statement

Command Subjunctive

Bossy verbs, which tell people to do things such as **proposals, desires, and request along with the word "that"** indicate you have a command subjunctive. That is not optional in command subjunctive. Not all of these verbs use the command subjunctive though such as the verb "want" which does not use command subjunctive. You must memorize the idiom list for command subjunctives.

The command subjunctive verb form is as follows: Use the **bare form**, which is the infinitive without the "to". Also use it without an "S" for singular. Remember not to conjugate "to be" into another form such as "is" or "are". It is just "be" without the "to".

{Bossy verb + that + subject + {infinitive without to, and no 'S' for singular}} =

{Bossy verb + that + subject + command subjunctive}

Bossy Verbs That Only Take Command Subjunctive

1. Demand
2. Dictate
3. Insist
4. Mandate
5. Propose
6. Recommend
7. Request
8. Stipulate
9. Suggest
10. Essential that

Bossy Verbs That Take Only Infinitive

1. Advise
2. Allow
3. Forbid
4. Persuade
5. Want

Bossy Verbs That Take Either

1. Ask
2. Beg
3. Intend
4. Order
5. Prefer
6. Urge
7. Require (very frequently used on the GMAT)

Prohibited... From

1. Prohibited always “from” instead of “that”

Whether

1. Never use the command subjunctive form after the word “whether”
X “Whether it be good or bad for you I do not care” X
“Whether it is good or bad for you I do not care”

Passive vs Active Voice

Active voice is preferred, but sometimes a passive voice may be correct. If you use the passive voice and the word by is in the sentence, you **MUST** place the actual doer after “by”.

- To form the passive voice is formed with the verb to be + past participle: {To be + Past Participle}. Conjugate to be (for example, was).
- If the underlined portion of a sentence is followed by the word by, then you probably need the passive voice.

Summary

- Use the simple present for general definitions
- Do not use the present progressive for the future (is playing), use the future progressive (will be playing)
- Present Perfect: {Have/Has + Past Participle} = happened in past and effects or action continues now
- If you use “since” or “within”, then use the present perfect. *“Since 1986, John has played...”*
- Past Perfect: {Had + Past Participle} = Two things happened in the past, one before the other
- Past Perfect: {Had + Past Participle} for the first thing that happened, and the simple past for the later
- If you announce or predict something in the present, then will be... is used

- If you announced or predicted something in the past, then would be... is used
- For hypothetical's, use the simple past of the verb, except for to be which only uses were. "If I WERE a rich man"
- If, as if, and as though often introduce hypothetical's
- Remember the five IF...THEN clauses
- Never put would in the IF part of the clause
- And never use should with an IF...THEN statement
- Command subjunctive: {Bossy verb + that + subject + command subjunctive}
- Command subjunctive is the bare form (no TO from the infinitive, and never an S for singular)
- Memorize the list of bossy verbs and their respective rules
- Whether never takes the command subjunctive! Never say "*whether it be*"
- To form the passive voice is formed with the verb to be + past participle: {To be + Past Participle}. Conjugate to be (for example, was).
- If the underlined portion of a sentence is followed by the word by, then you probably need the passive voice.

Comparisons

Comparisons are a form of parallelism that needs special attention. Both parts being compared must be truly parallel in both structure and logic. You must learn the difference between *like* and *as*

Four most common comparison signals

1. Like
2. Unlike
3. As
4. Than

Other common comparison signals

5. More than
6. Less than
7. Faster than
8. Different from
9. In contrast to
10. In contrast with
11. As (adjective) as
12. As much as
13. As little as
14. As fast as
15. The same as

"The difference in color is more important than the difference in size" is correct, but "The difference in the color of the apple and the color of the pear..." is not correct. Instead, it should be "The difference between the color of the apple and the color of the pear..."

When to use "Like"

1. Like is a preposition, therefore it must be followed by a noun, pronoun, or a noun phrase.
2. Never put a prepositional phrase or clause (clauses have main/working verbs) after like (because like itself is a preposition)
3. Like compares nouns
"Like John, Timmy aced the math test"
"Like swimming, running is good for the body"

When to use "As"

1. As can be either a preposition (appearing with a noun) or a conjunction (appearing with a clause)
2. You can use as to compare two clauses
3. Essentially, as = verb somewhere in the comparison

"Like" is used to compare the similarities between things, while "as" is used in comparisons that show equality.

Keeping Comparisons Parallel

1. Comparisons must be logically parallel

"Frank's build, like his brother's, is broad."

"Frank's build, like that of his brother, is broad."

"Frank, like his brother, has a broad build"

"Frank's toes, like those of his brother, are hairy."

Go through the sentence and look for the comparison signals. After you find one, make sure that both the comparisons are parallel. Sometimes the GMAC will try and trick you by having middlemen and warm-ups. Ignore them, and look for the second thing being compared, and see what it is trying to be compared to.

X *"Mozart's music, which broke a number of world record sales, is considered less popular than Bach."* X

"Mozart's music, which broke a number of world record sales, is considered less popular than Bach's." (or 'than that of Bach')

2. Comparisons must be structurally parallel

X *"I like to run through the forest more than I enjoy walking through crowd."* X

"I like running through the forest more than walking through the crowd."

"I like to run through the forest more than I like to walk through the crowd."

In the incorrect first sentence above, the first half is a {infinitive} while the second half is a {gerund}. This is not parallel. Make sure both sides have the same structure.

3. In keeping both sides parallel, you can omit unnecessary words, such as with the use of possessives.

"My car is bigger than Brian's car" → *"My car is bigger than Brian's"*

"I walk faster than Brian walks." → *"I walk faster than Brian."*

Comparative and Superlative Forms

When two things are compared, you use the comparative form. When its more than two, a superlative form is needed.

Comparative (always use <u>than</u>)	Superlative
Shorter than	Shortest of
More interesting than	More interesting
Less interesting than	Least interesting

- If the adverb ends in *-ly*, do not change it to end in *-er* in the comparison. The word "more" must be added.
"John runs quickly. He runs more quickly than Mike."
"John runs fast. He runs faster than Mike."
- If there is a comparison, there must be the word "than" on the GMAT! It must be made explicit that there is a comparison.
X *"With winter coming, I will have a higher energy bill."* X
"With winter coming, I will have a higher energy bill than that of fall."
"I will have a higher bill than last season."

Summary

- Comparisons must be BOTH logical in sense AND parallel in grammatical structure
- Learn the signal words
- The four most popular are: like, unlike, as, then
- Like is used to compare nouns
- Like is a preposition, must be followed by a noun, a noun phrase, or a pronoun
- Never put a prepositional phrase or a clause after like because it does not make sense
- As can be a preposition or a conjunction
- As compares verbs or clauses
- Understand the comparative vs superlative structure
- Always use than when there is a comparison on the GMAT, it MUST be explicitly stated.

Idioms

About

- Worry... about

As

- Define... as
- Regard... as
- Not so... as
- *So... as to be (suspect)...* *So... That - is better.*
- Think of... as
- See... as
- View... as
- Perceived... as
- The same... as
- As... as

At

- Target... at
- Dated... at

For

- Responsible... for
- Substitute... for
- Except... for
- Has Mistaken... for

By

- Determined... by

From

- Prohibit... from
- Different... from
- Distinguish... From (but **between... and** is preferred)
- Sick... from

Over

- Dispute (as a noun)... over
- Debate (as a noun)... over

That

- So... that
- Hypothesis... that
- Indicate... that
- Confidence... that (confidence in the Market's ability to recover... is correct as well).

To be

- Believe... to be (also, believes THAT... is)

- Estimate... to be

To

- Forbid... to
- Ability... to
- Able... to
- Attribute... to
- Decide... to
- Require... to
- Responsibility... to
- Permit... to
- Superior... to
- Try... to
- Seem... to
- Continue... to
- Likely... to
- Means... to

With

- Credit... with
- Associate... with
- Contrast... with

Of

- Consequence... of
- One chance in 10... of winning

To which

- Extent... to which

After

- Modeled... after

In

- Succeed... in

No preposition

- Consider (nothing)
- Declare XY

More than one preposition

- Distinguish... From (not preferred)
- **Distinguish between... and (preferred)**
- Native (noun)... of (for people)
- Native (adj)... to (indigenous, plants)

Comparisons and links

- Not only... but also
- Both... and
- More... than
- Less... than

As vs Like

- As is used to compare actions
- Like is used to compare nouns

Like vs Such As

- Like means similar to
- Such as means for example

From... To

- From... 200 to 400

Just as... so too

- Just as I drove, so too will you

Whether vs If

- Whether is for two possibilities
- If is for conditional statements

Number vs Amount

- Number is for countable
- Amount is for uncountable

Double vs Twice

- Double (triple etc) is only used a verb
- Use twice for comparison

Affect vs Effect

- Affect is to have an impact or influence on
- Effect is a result or impact

Rather Than

- X rather than Y

Use

- Use a hammer to break concrete

- Use a hammer as a weapon
- Never use a hammer like a weapon
- Never use a hammer for breaking

Contrast

- In contrast with
- In contrast to X, Y
- *As contrasted with is wrong!*

Confidence

- Confidence THAT market WILL recover
- Confidence in the MARKET'S ability to recover

Economic vs Economical

- Economical means efficient (or at a low cost)
- Economic means dealing with the economy and money

Due to the fact that (ALWAYS WRONG)

- IS ALWAYS WRONG. NEVER DUE TO THE FACT THAT

Lie and Lay

- Lie is present
- Will lie is future
- Lay is past (yesterday... lay)

Loss

- Loss of = decline of quality
- Loss in = decline of investment

Only

- The word only should be placed in front of what it modifies, not a verb

Odds & Ends