



SENTENCE CORRECTION

Verbal Strategy Guide

This essential guide takes the guesswork out of grammar by presenting all the major grammatical principles and minor grammatical points known to be tested on the GMAT.

Do not be caught relying only on your ear; master the rules for correcting every GMAT sentence.

Sentence Correction GMAT Strategy Guide, Fourth Edition

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Dear Student,

Thank you for picking up one of the ManhattanGMAT Strategy Guides—we hope that this book refreshes your memory of the grammar that you learned a long time ago. Maybe it will even teach you a new thing or two.

As with most accomplishments, there were many people involved in the various iterations of the book that you're holding. First and foremost is Zeke Vanderhoek, the founder of ManhattanGMAT. Zeke was a lone tutor in New York when he started the Company in 2000. Now, nine years later, MGMAT has Instructors and offices nationwide, and the Company contributes to the studies and successes of thousands of students each year.

Our 4th Edition Strategy Guides are based on the continuing experiences of our Instructors and our students. We owe much of these latest editions to the insight provided by our students. On the Company side, we are indebted to many of our Instructors, including but not limited to Josh Braslow, Dan Gonzalez, Mike Kim, Stacey Koprince, Ben Ku, Jadran Lee, David Mahler, Ron Purewal, Tate Shafer, Emily Sledge, and of course Chris Ryan, the Company's Lead Instructor and Director of Curriculum Development.

At ManhattanGMAT, we continually aspire to provide the best Instructors and resources possible. We hope that you'll find our dedication manifest in this book. If you have any comments or questions, please e-mail me at andrew.yang@manhattangmat.com. I'll be sure that your comments reach Chris and the rest of the team—and I'll read them too.

Best of luck in preparing for the GMAT!

Sincerely,

Andrew Yang
Chief Executive Officer
Manhattan GMAT

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PART I: GENERAL

This part of the book covers both basic and intermediate topics within *Sentence Correction*. Complete Part I before moving on to Part II: Advanced.

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Chapter 1

of
SENTENCE CORRECTION

SENTENCE
CORRECTION
BASICS

In This Chapter . . .

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- Question Format
- “Best” Does Not Mean Ideal
- Splits and Re-Splits
- Reading the Entire Sentence

SENTENCE CORRECTION BASICS

Sentence Correction is one of three question types found in the verbal section of the GMAT. Sentence Correction tests mastery of the rules of formal written English. If you master the rules, you can make significant gains in your performance on this question type.

Question Format

The format of a Sentence Correction question is extremely consistent. Read through the sample question below:

Although William Pereira first gained national recognition for his movie set designs, including those for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations remember him as the architect of the Transamerica Tower, the Malibu campus of Pepperdine University, and the city of Irvine.

- (A) including those for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations
- (B) like that for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations will
- (C) like those for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations
- (D) including that for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations will
- (E) including those for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations will

The question consists of a given sentence, part of which is underlined. As in the example above, the underlined segment may be only a small part of the entire sentence. However, the underlined segment may include most or even all of the original sentence. The five answer choices are possible replacements for the underlined segment (if the entire sentence is underlined, each of the answer choices will be a complete sentence). If you look closely at the example above, you may notice something about answer choice (A). In the example above, and in **all Sentence Correction** questions, choice (A) is exactly the same as the underlined portion of the sentence above it. The other choices, however, offer different options. The question you are answering in Sentence Correction is always the same: **which of the answer choices, when placed in the given sentence, is the best option of those given, in terms of grammar, meaning and concision** (all of which will be discussed in depth in later chapters). By the way, answer choice (A) is not always wrong. The original sentence, (A), is the correct answer just as often as the other answer choices—about 20% of the time.

“Best” Does Not Mean Ideal

It is very important to recognize that Sentence Correction questions ask for the best option of *those given*, not the best option in the *universe*. Indeed, often you will feel—and rightly so—that all the answers, including the correct one, “sound bad.” Correct GMAT Sentence Correction answers can sound very formal or awkward, so it is important to keep in mind that **your task is to evaluate the given answer choices, not to create the ideal sentence**. The ideal sentence often is not an option, and the right answer may sound rather wrong. To complicate matters, incorrect answer choices often sound right. Indeed, the GMAT exploits the fact that the English we hear is commonly riddled with grammatical mistakes.

Do not rewrite the sentence in your own words! You must choose the best answer choice from among those available.

Splits and Re-Splits

If you have not already chosen an answer for the sample question, go ahead and do so now:

Although William Pereira first gained national recognition for his movie set designs, including those for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations remember him as the architect of the Transamerica Tower, the Malibu campus of Pepperdine University, and the city of Irvine.

- (A) including those for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations
- (B) like that for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations will
- (C) like those for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations
- (D) including that for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations will
- (E) including those for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations will

Usually, the easiest splits to spot are at the beginning or end of the answer choices.

Now, how did you solve this question? Did you read the full sentence and then compare the answer choices by re-reading the sentence with each of the possible answers? That is a very common strategy, but it is one that you cannot afford. In order to complete the entire Verbal section, including the many time-consuming Reading Comprehension and Critical Reading questions, you should take no more than 90 seconds on average to answer a Sentence Correction question. In fact, consider setting your goal to 1 minute per Sentence Correction question.

The key to answering Sentence Correction questions within this time frame is to **split the answer choices** after you have read the given sentence. Follow these steps:

1. Write down “A B C D E” on your paper (or yellow tablet if you are taking the actual test). It does not matter if you write this horizontally or vertically.
2. Read the sentence, noting any obvious errors as you read.
3. Scan the answer choices vertically—do not read them—looking for differences that split the answer choices. For example, in the sample question above, you can split the answers between those that begin with *including* and those that begin with *like*. Similarly, at the end of the answers, there is a split between those with *will* and those without *will* (essentially a split between the present and the future tense of *remember*). Ideal splits will divide the answer choices into a 2–3 split (two choices with one option, three with the other). Sometimes you will find a three-way split (for example, another problem might have *have lifted*, *lifted* and *have been lifted* among the answer choices). A three-way split is useful as long as you can eliminate at least one of the options. If you identify a split that distinguishes only one answer choice from the others (a 1–4 split) and you eliminate the choice represented by only one answer choice, you will end up eliminating only that one answer. Thus, 1–4 splits are less useful than other kinds of splits, though they should still be considered.
4. Choose a split for which you **know the grammatical rule and which side of the split is correct**. Sometimes you find a split, but you do not know which side is correct. In this case, maybe you did not yet master the relevant rule. Alternatively, the split might be a “red herring split,” meaning that both sides of the split are grammatically correct.

5. On your paper, cross out the answer choices that include the incorrect side of the split.
6. Compare the remaining answer choices by **re-splitting**. Continue to find differences in the answers, but make sure you use only the answer choices that remain from your initial split.
7. Continue to split remaining choices until you have one answer left.

Splitting and Re-Splitting is the foundation of the Manhattan GMAT approach to Sentence Correction questions, so it is worth walking through the process with our sample question:

Although William Pereira first gained national recognition for his movie set designs, including those for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations remember him as the architect of the Transamerica Tower, the Malibu campus of Pepperdine University, and the city of Irvine.

- (A) including those for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations
- (B) like that for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations will
- (C) like those for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations
- (D) including that for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations will
- (E) including those for the 1942 film “Reap the Wild Wind,” future generations will

After reading the sentence and scanning the answer choices, you may notice that the answer choices have a 3–2 split between *including* and *like*. Let us assume that we do not know the rule for this issue (or whether it is a red herring split); another split needs to be found. Fortunately, there is another 3–2 split at the end of the answers: *will remember* versus *remember*. The rule for this split is clear. Since the subject of that verb is *future generations*, any action assigned to those generations, including remembering, must be in the future tense. Therefore, answer choices (A) and (C) can be eliminated.

Next, as we compare (B), (D) and (E), we find a split between *those* and *that*. Since the word *that* or *those* refers to *movie set designs*, a plural noun, it is incorrect to use the singular pronoun *that*. We must use the plural pronoun *those*. Therefore answers (B) and (D) can be eliminated, leaving us with the correct answer, (E).

In fact, we could have split the answer choices using *including* versus *like*. According to the GMAT, *like* cannot introduce examples (*such as* must be used instead). Since the underlined segment begins with an example of a set that William Pereira designed, answer choices (B) and (C) can be eliminated. Using *like* alters the meaning of the sentence, suggesting that William Pereira’s designs were simply *similar to* the designs for “Reap the Wind.”

If it seems daunting to master every rule of the English language tested by the GMAT, it may be comforting to know that, as we saw in the sample question above, most Sentence Correction questions test several different rules at once. Therefore, most answer choices can be eliminated for multiple reasons. During your review, you should master all the rules tested by a particular problem, but on test day, you only need to find one way to the right answer. Moreover, the GMAT tests only a finite number of grammatical principles, all of which are discussed in the following chapters.

Most Sentence Correction problems test multiple issues of grammar and style. During the exam, you need only one path to the right answer.

Reading the Entire Sentence

Using Splits and Re-Splits focuses your attention appropriately on the answer choices, so that you avoid repeatedly (and inefficiently) re-reading the given sentence with each possible answer inserted. However, you must begin by reading the entire sentence. For example, consider this underlined part of a sentence:

and so was unable to go to recess

You cannot decide whether this version is correct until you see the sentence in its entirety:

The students came to school without their mittens and so was unable to go to recess.

If you somehow completely ignore the non-underlined section of the sentence, you cannot know that the use of *was* is incorrect. (The subject of the verb *was* is *students*, a plural noun, so the verb should be *were*.)

The example above is elementary, but as you encounter more Sentence Correction questions, you will see that the relationship between the underlined and non-underlined parts of the sentence is both complex and crucial. Without understanding that relationship, you will miss errors and perhaps choose the wrong answer. Always read the entire sentence, as the GMAT often places important words far from the underlined portion. In fact, after you have made your choice, you should double-check that your answer works in the context of the entire sentence.

Make sure that the answer you choose works in the sentence as a whole.

Problem Set

A. Meaning

The underlined portion of each sentence below may contain one or more errors. Each sentence is followed by a **boldface** sample answer choice that changes the meaning of the original sentence. Select (A) if the original version is correct, (B) if the boldface version is correct, and (C) if neither is correct.

If you select (A), explain what is wrong with the boldface version. If you select (B), explain how the boldface version corrects the original version. (Remember that in Sentence Correction a change of meaning is ONLY justified if the meaning of the original sentence is illogical or unclear.) If you select (C), explain why both versions are incorrect. Note: several of these questions refer to rules and distinctions that will be discussed further in upcoming chapters.

1. No matter how much work it may require, getting an MBA turns out to be a wise investment for most people.
Even though it requires much work
2. The driver took the people for a ride who had been waiting.
the people who had been waiting for a ride
3. Rising costs to raw materials may impel us to rise prices farther.
costs of raw materials may impale us to raise prices further
4. She is the most dedicated gardener on the block, every day watering the more than 50 plants in her yard.
every day watering more than the 50 plants in her yard
5. Hector remembers San Francisco as it was when he left ten years ago.
as though he had left ten years ago
6. Students at Carver High School are encouraged to pursue extracurricular activities like student government, sports, and the arts.
activities such as student government, sports, and the arts

B. Concision

Rewrite each of the following sentences more concisely. Justify the changes you make.

7. After the fact that the test format was changed, scores subsequently dropped by more than a 25% decrease.
8. Electronic devices can constitute a distraction to a driver.
9. It is possible that the earthquake may have been causal to the building's collapse.

A. Meaning

1. (A). The original sentence does not say that getting an MBA requires a lot of work. The expression *no matter how much work it may require* simply says that the amount of work (whether large or small) does not matter. The revised version eliminates the word *may*, so that the new sentence does say that an MBA requires a lot of work. This change of meaning is UNJUSTIFIED.

2. (C). In the original sentence, the modifier *who had been waiting* does not clearly modify *the people*. It appears, illogically, to modify the closer noun (*the ride*). The boldface version moves *who had been waiting* next to *the people*, thus making clear that it is *the people* who *had been waiting*. This change of meaning is JUSTIFIED.

However, the boldface version also makes another change of meaning. The words *for a ride* now come right after *waiting*, so it seems that these people had been *waiting for a ride*. This change of meaning is UNJUSTIFIED.

3. (C). The boldface version makes several changes to the meaning of the original sentence. Most of these changes are justified, but one of them is not—so the answer has to be (C).

The switch from *cost to* to *costs of* is JUSTIFIED. *Costs to X* are what X has to pay, whereas *costs of X* are how much somebody must pay to buy X. The latter meaning makes much more sense here, because *raw materials* are being paid for, not doing the paying.

The switch from *impel* to *impale* is UNJUSTIFIED. To *impel* is to *force* someone to do something. To *impale* something is to pierce it with a sharp instrument!

The switch from *rise* to *raise* is JUSTIFIED. *Raise* is a verb that always takes a direct object: *The Fed* (subject) *raised the interest rate* (object) *in March*. *Rise* is used only in contexts where there is no direct object: *Interest rates* (subject) *rose in March*. In our sentence, *prices* are a direct object, so the verb must be *raise*.

The switch from *farther* to *further* is JUSTIFIED. *Farther* refers only to distance (*I can throw a javelin farther than you can*) whereas *further* refers to degree of something other than distance (*We need further time and money for this project*).

4. (A). The original version contains the phrase *the more than 50 plants*. Here the words *more than* modify the number 50. The sentence therefore means that she waters her plants, of which there are more than fifty. In the boldface version, we have the phrase *watering more than the 50 plants*. Here the words *more than* are separated from the number 50, and therefore do not modify that number. The new version tells us that she waters something *more than* (i.e., in addition to) the *plants* – for instance, she might water her gravel walkway or her garden gnomes. This change of meaning is UNJUSTIFIED because there was nothing wrong with the original sentence.

5. (A). The boldface version makes two UNJUSTIFIED changes to the original version.

The original sentence tells us that Hector actually DID leave San Francisco ten years ago. The revised version tells us that he did NOT leave San Francisco ten years ago: the expression *as though* is used to discuss things that are untrue or did not happen (*You behave as though you were richer than Bill Gates!*).

Another important change in meaning comes because the revised version takes out the words *it* (i.e., San Francisco) *was*, and therefore does not refer directly to the state of affairs in San Francisco ten years ago.