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[5 STRATEGIES THAT GMAC USES TO CHANGE MEANING]

The purpose of this document is to outline 5 strategies that GMAC uses to distort the intended logical meaning of the sentence in a “grammatically correct” answer choice. This document also outlines the process that GMAT aspirants can follow so that they don’t fall into this trap.

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5 STRATEGIES THAT GMAT USES TO DISTORT MEANING

The purpose of this article is to help you with the following:

1. 5 Strategies that GMAC uses to distort the intended logical meaning of the sentence in a “grammatically correct” answer choice.
2. A process to approach SC questions to answer such questions successfully
3. Official examples and exercise questions for practice.

Note, in addition to this article, we also have a full (audio-visual) concept available free of charge to all registered users. I recommend you also review that.

HOW IS THIS ARTICLE ORGANIZED

This initial article will summarize the 5 strategies and describe the first strategy – placement of modifiers - in detail. The second strategy will be discussed on 9th December and so on. Those who want to be notified as soon as the next part is published may register at e-GMAT.

THE 5 STRATEGIES GMAC USES TO DISTORT MEANING

GMAT Sentence Correction questions test the test taker on how effectively he/she can express the idea or relationship using correct expression conforming to the rules of standard written English. Many times an answer choice may be grammatically correct but may not be the correct choice because it distorts the intended logical meaning of the original sentence. The table below provides a quick summary on strategies that GMAC deploys to achieve the same.

Strategy for changing Meaning	Description	Official Question Reference
Change placement of modifiers	By changing the placement of modifier, the modified entity can be changed, thereby causing a shift or distortion in meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OGVR2#37 • OG12#115
Use different modifiers	By changing the type of modifier, meaning of the sentence can be changed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OG12#126 • OGVR2#108
Use different conjunctions	By changing the conjunctions in a sentence, meaning can be changed in several ways – independent items may be made dependent or vice versa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OGVR2#31 • GMATPrep – Largest Trade-Book Publisher • GMATPrep – Edith Abott • OG12#84
Change Voice of the sentence	By changing voice of the sentence, the focus of sentence can be shifted enough to cause a shift in the meaning of the sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GMATPrep – Declaration of Sentiments • GMATPrep – Synthetic Growth Hormone
Remove/add words that provide context or use word differently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By removing or adding certain words that add context to the sentence, the meaning of the sentence can be changed. • By changing the way in which words can be used, the meaning of the sentence can be changed. This includes use of different prepositions with the word. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OGVR2#43 • OGVR2#52

STRATEGY 1 - CHANGE PLACEMENT OF MODIFIERS

How does GMAC use this strategy: Modifiers provide additional or descriptive information about another entity in the sentence. So if these modifiers are placed at different locations in the sentence, the meaning of the sentence changes. This is how GMAC may introduce such meaning based errors. In these cases, both the placements result in logical meaning but only one is correct and that is determined by what the intended meaning of the sentence is.

Lets take a simple example below:

SIMPLE EXAMPLE

The **cat** with black stripes **is running** after the rat.

So here is the scene that I picture. Cat is running after the rat. Cat has black stripes. Now let's check this sentence below.

The **cat is running** after the rat with black stripes.

Now the scene that I picture is – cat is running after the rat. The rat has black stripes. So per this sentence, I no longer have any information about the stripes on the cat. But I have information about the stripes on the rat.

So simply by placing “with black stripes” differently, the meaning communicated by the sentence changes.

This is exactly how GMAT may introduce a difference in meaning.

OFFICIAL QUESTION 1 – VERBAL REVIEW 2 – Q#37

Now let's take an official question:

Some buildings that were destroyed and heavily damaged in the earthquake last year were constructed in violation of the city's building code.

- A. Some buildings that were destroyed and heavily damaged in the earthquake last year were
- B. Some buildings that were destroyed or heavily damaged in the earthquake last year had been
- C. Some buildings that the earthquake destroyed and heavily damaged last year have been
- D. Last year the earthquake destroyed or heavily damaged some buildings that have been
- E. Last year some of the buildings that were destroyed or heavily damaged in the earthquake had been

Intended meaning from Choice A: The intended meaning of the sentence from choice A can be inferred as follows:

1. Some buildings had been destroyed in the earthquake last year.
2. (Prior to the destruction) These buildings were constructed in violation of the city's building code

Some buildings that were destroyed in the earthquake last year **were constructed** in violation of city's building code.

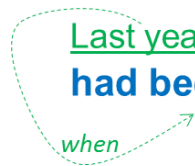
Note that this sentence has two verbs and based on where “last year” is placed, it can modify either of the two verbs.

Notice that choice A is incorrect since it uses the simple past – were constructed. The correct verb should be “had been constructed” to illustrate correct sequencing with respect to “were destroyed” to show that the buildings were constructed prior to the destruction.

Correct: Choice B corrects this error and is the correct choice.

Grammatically Correct but Incorrect choice (E)– Notice how in choice E the test takers have cleverly moved “last year” in the clause that with SV pair - “some of buildings had been constructed” such that it now describes when some of these buildings were constructed. It no longer describes the timing of the earthquakes.

Last year some of the buildings that were destroyed in the earthquake had been constructed in violation of city’s building code.



The intended meaning communicated by Choice E is the following:

1. Some of the buildings had been constructed in violation of city’s building code last year.
2. These buildings were destroyed in the earthquake.

Note that in choice E we now know that the buildings were constructed last year. This is the information that we did not have in choice A. Thus, the meaning communicated by this choice is certainly different from the meaning communicated by choice A. Hence, while choice E is grammatically correct, it changes the logical intended meaning and is not the correct choice.

PS: Access our free concepts on sentence structure if you want to know how to break a compound sentence into simple sentences. Just register at e-gmat.com

OFFICIAL QUESTION 2 – OG 12 – Q#112

Now let’s take another official question. This time from OG 12.

Gall's hypothesis of there being different mental functions localized in different parts of the brain is widely accepted today.

- A. of there being different mental functions localized in different parts of the brain is widely accepted today
- B. of different mental functions that are localized in different parts of the brain is widely accepted today
- C. that different mental functions are localized in different parts of the brain is widely accepted today
- D. which is that there are different mental functions localized in different parts of the brain is widely accepted today
- E. which is widely accepted today is that there are different mental functions localized in different parts of the brain

Intended meaning from Choice A: The sentence is written in an awkward manner but we can certainly infer the intended meaning.

- A specific hypothesis of Gall is widely accepted today.
- What is the hypothesis? Per this hypothesis - different mental functions are localized in different parts of the brain.

Notice how we know precisely what the hypothesis is.

Error in the original choice: Choice A is not the correct choice since it is not written in concise manner. The expression “of there being” is very wordy.

Choice C corrects this error and is the correct choice.

Gall's hypothesis **that different mental functions are localized** in different parts of the brain **is widely accepted** today.

Grammatically Correct but Incorrect choice B: Notice how the *test makers have moved the descriptive “that” modifier here. Also, the information presented by “that modifier” has also been changed to make logical sense in the changed context.* The change in meaning in choice B happens because of placement and wording of “that” modifier. Instead of now stating the hypothesis, now “that” modifier talks about the mental functions. The meaning communicated by choice B is as follows:

1. Gall has certain hypothesis about different mental functions.
2. This hypothesis is widely accepted today.
3. These different mental functions are localized in different parts of the brain
4. Notice carefully that per this choice we do not know precisely what the hypothesis is. All we know is that some hypothesis of different mental functions is widely accepted and we know where the different mental functions are located.

Gall's **hypothesis** of different mental functions **that are localized** in different parts of the brain **is widely accepted** today.

HOW TO EVALUATE CHOICES THAT CHANGE THE MEANING?

1. Understand the logical meaning of the original choice. (note placement of modifiers)
2. Look for the answer choice that best communicates the same meaning in un-ambiguous and grammatically correct manner.
3. Ignore choices that may be grammatically correct but change the meaning.

Exercise Sentences

EXAMPLE 1 – HEARTLESS HUMAN BEINGS

Heartless human beings are like wild animals, which will rip its own kin at the slightest of need and that too without a sign of remorse.

- A. Heartless human beings are like wild animals, which will rip its own kin at the slightest of need
- B. Heartless human beings were like wild animals, which have ripped their own kin at the slightest of need
- C. Human beings are like heartless wild animals, which rip their own kin in the slightest of need
- D. Human beings are like heartless wild animals, which rip at its own kin in the slightest of need
- E. Heartless human beings are like wild animals, which rip their own kin in the slightest of need.

EXAMPLE 2 – MRS MERCKEL

At the heart of euro crisis is Mrs. Merckel's lack of quick or bold reaction, the reason for lack of halting of the downward spiral of the euro.

- A. Mrs. Merckel's lack of quick or bold reaction, the reason for lack of halting of the downward spiral of the euro
- B. Mrs. Merckel, whose lack of quick or bold reaction is the reason that the downward spiral on the euro has not halted
- C. the lack of quick or bold reaction by Mrs. Merckel, the reason that the downward spiral on the euro has not halted.
- D. Mrs. Merckel, whose lack of quick or bold reaction is the reason of lack of halting of the downward spiral of the euro.
- E. the lack of quick or bold reaction by Mrs. Merckel, resulting in the downward spiral of the euro.