

# MANUAL



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# **SENTENCE CORRECTION**

**Modifiers, Pronouns, Verbs, Comparisons, Lists, and Idioms**

## Verbs | Rules

### Knowledge:

Definition: A verb is a word that is used to show action (e.g., *ran*), state of existence (e.g., *is*), or occurrence (e.g., *saw*).

Rule(s):

- Verbs must agree in number with the noun that is performing the action. A singular noun doing the action must have a singular verb, and a plural noun must have a plural verb. *Singular verbs commonly end in “s,” while plural nouns often end in “s.” This can be a source of confusion, so pay attention to the number of each.*
- The tense of all verbs must be correct and logical. The correct tense depends on the time frame within which the action or state of being is described.

Commonly tested complex tenses:

- **Present Perfect** (*has/have* + another verb)  
Uses the present tense of the verb *have* and a past participle (which looks like the past tense of a verb) such as *played*, *bought*, or *been*. This tense is used to describe actions or states of being that either
  - (1) began in the past and continue up to the present or
  - (2) happened in the past but have a consequence relevant to the future.
- **Past Perfect** (*had* + another verb)  
Uses the verb *had* and another past participle. This tense is used to order two events that take place in the past. The event using the past perfect occurred *before* events using the simple past tense.

### Recognition:

Any time verbs appear in the underlined portion of the sentence, verbs are probably being tested. There are, however, other indicators that you should become familiar with to help you recognize possible verb errors:

- Sentences that include multiple nouns, some of which are singular and some plural
- Sentences that mention or refer to different time periods
- Collective nouns such as: *the team*, *the group*, or *the family*

### Execution:

In order to identify whether the verb is being used correctly, answer the following questions:

- *Who or what is doing this action?*
- *Do the verb and the subject of the verb agree?*
- *When are things happening in relation to the time when the author was writing?*
- *When are things happening in relation to each other?*

**Example:**

**Incorrect:** The number of boys who is running for prom king *have* increased each year.

**Correct:** The number of boys who are running for prom king *has* increased each year.

You should recognize that the verbs in this sentence are separated from their respective nouns, which is a common way the GMAT makes spotting verb errors more difficult. Each noun and verb combination must agree in number. In this pair of sentences, we have two pairs of noun-verb combinations: “The number *has/have* increased” and “boys *is/are* running.” In each case the noun-verb combination must agree in number. “The number” is singular, so the correctly conjugated verb is “*has* increased.” “Boys” is plural, thus the correctly conjugated verb is “*are* running.” Pay particular attention to *which* noun is doing *which* action.

**Example:**

**Incorrect:** Long before the race *was* over, the runner *gave up* on any hope of winning.

**Correct:** Long before the race *was* over, the runner *had given* up on any hope of winning.

The time trigger “Long before” should indicate that verb tense may be tested. Verbs in a sentence must correctly and consistently use the proper tense. When two events occur in different time frames, the verb tense must indicate that distinction. In the incorrect version of the sentence, the two time periods both use the same verb tense. In the correct version of the sentence the past perfect (*had* + past participle) is used for the event that occurred first.

## Verbs | Walkthrough

1. The Netherlands, one of many European countries with traditions of liberal tolerance, have seen sharp increases in the number of immigrants from African and Middle Eastern nations.

What are the verbs in the sentence?

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

2. Justina noticed her son's grouchiness during dinner that evening, but she only found the courage to speak up and inquire about his dour mood later that night.

What are the verbs in the sentence?

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

3. Automakers in the United States lack a sufficient motivation for change to such an extent that they are constantly threatened by bankruptcy in a market becoming ever more attentive to the ecological damage caused by automobiles.

What are the verbs in the sentence?

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

4. The increase in national crime trends indicate that the decrease in crime that had occurred several years ago has now reversed, but that crime levels have not yet reached pre-1980 levels and should not elicit large-scale changes in crime-fighting tactics.

What are the verbs in the sentence?

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

## Verbs Walkthrough | Answer Key

### Question 1

What are the verbs in the sentence?

“have seen”

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

**No.** A verb must agree in number with the noun that is doing the action. Here, “the Netherlands” is a collective noun, which is singular. A singular noun requires that the verb must also be singular.

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

**Yes.**

Possible Corrections:

The Netherlands, a country with a tradition of liberal tolerance, **has** seen sharp increases in the number of immigrants from African and Middle Eastern nations.

### Question 2

What are the verbs in the sentence?

“noticed”

“was”

“did not dare”

“were eating”

“found”

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

**Yes.**

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

**No.** Verb tenses must be logically and consistently used. In the sentence, Justina “noticed” that her son was upset before she found her courage, and she “did not dare to ask” *until* she found her courage, which indicates a problem with verb tenses. Events that occur in the past *before* other events require the past perfect (“had noticed”). Thus, the verb “did not ask” should also be changed to the past perfect, “had not asked.”

Possible Corrections:

Justina **had** noticed that her son was grouchy but had not **asked** why until, as they were eating their freshly prepared dinners that evening, she found the courage to speak up and inquire about his dour mood.

### Question 3

What are the verbs in the sentence?

- “lack”
- “are threatened”
- “becoming”

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

**Yes.**

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

**No.** Verb usage must be consistent in a sentence. Since a situation is ongoing, the present progressive (present continuous) is the appropriate tense. Thus, the verb “lack” should be changed to “are lacking.”

Possible corrections:

Automakers in the United States **are lacking** a sufficient motivation for change to such an extent that they are constantly threatened by bankruptcy in a market becoming ever more attentive to the ecological damage caused by automobiles.

### Question 4

What are the verbs in the sentence?

- “indicate”
- “had occurred”
- “has reversed”
- “have not reached”
- “should not elicit”

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

- “indicate” –**No**
- “had occurred” –**Yes**
- “has reversed” –**Yes**
- “have not reached” –**Yes**
- “should not elicit” –**Yes**

“Indicate” is the plural form of the verb. The subject of that verb, however, is “the increase,” which is singular. The correct verb form should be “indicates.”

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

**No.** Verb tenses must be used logically and consistently. In this example, most of the verbs are in some form of the present tense. The period that is referred to that occurred prior uses “had occurred,” which is the past perfect. The past perfect is used to describe events in the past that occurred prior to another event in the past. Since the rest of the sentence is in the present tense, the simple past tense would suffice. Thus, “had occurred,” should be changed to “occurred.”

Possible Corrections:

The increase in the national crime trends **indicates** that the decrease in crime that **occurred** several years ago has now reversed, but that crime levels have not yet reached pre-1980 levels and should not elicit large-scale changes in crime-fighting tactics.

## Verbs | Drill

1. Another factor is the manner in which some of the biggest customers of satellite radio equipment—car manufacturers—is rallying in support of the deal.

What are the verbs in the sentence?

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

2. The upshot is that observers, especially on Wall Street, have slowly latched onto the possibility that the XM-Sirius merger may actually get done.

What are the verbs in the sentence?

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

3. As technology becomes more advanced, people in societies with access to this technology have been increasing their share of the world's wealth at a disproportionate rate.

What are the verbs in the sentence?

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

4. Dr. Ferndon is one of those professors who seems distracted most of the time.

What are the verbs in the sentence?

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?



5. After the decline in the housing market, analysts lamented mightily that although the market has several of the signs indicative of an impending downturn, it was impossible to determine with any complete degree of accuracy if and when such a circumstance would occur.

What are the verbs in the sentence?

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

6. From an increased emphasis on materialism and wealthy lifestyles have developed a social perspective by which people worship commercialism over compassion.

What are the verbs in the sentence?

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

## Verbs Drill | Answer Key

### Question 1

What are the verbs in the sentence?

“is” (twice)

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

**No.** “Is” does not agree with the plural pronoun “some.”

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

**Yes.**

Possible Correction:

Another factor is how some of the biggest customers of satellite radio equipment—car manufacturers—**are** rallying around the deal.

### Question 2

What are the verbs in the sentence?

“have slowly latched”

“is”

“may”

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

**Yes.**

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

**Yes.**

### Question 3

What are the verbs in the sentence?

“becomes”

“have been increasing”

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

**Yes.**

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

**No.** “Have been increasing” does not agree in tense with “becomes.” Since this sentence is talking about an event in the present tense and a consequence of that event, “have been increasing” should also be in the present tense.

Possible Correction:

As technology becomes more advanced, people in societies with access to this technology **are increasing** their share of the world’s wealth at a disproportionate rate.

### Question 4

What are the verbs in the sentence?

“is”

“seems”

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

**No.** “Seems” does not agree with the plural noun “professors.”

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

**Yes.**

Possible Correction:

Dr. Ferndon is one of those professors who **seem** distracted most of the time.

**Question 5**

What are the verbs in the sentence?

“lamented”

“has”

“was”

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

**Yes.**

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

**No.** The verb “has” needs to agree with the other past tense verbs in this sentence such as “lamented” and “was.”

Possible Correction:

After the decline in the housing market, analysts lamented mightily that although the market **had** several of the signs indicative of an impending downturn, it was impossible to determine with any complete degree of accuracy if and when such a circumstance would occur.

**Question 6**

What are the verbs in the sentence?

“have developed”

“worship”

Does each of the verbs in the sentence agree with the noun that is its subject?

**No.** The verb “have developed” does not agree with the singular noun “perspective.”

Are the verb tenses used in the sentence logical and correct?

**Yes.**

Possible Correction:

From an increased emphasis on materialism and wealthy lifestyles **has developed** a social perspective by which people worship commercialism over compassion.



# **SENTENCE CORRECTION II**

**Grammar Rule Application and Sentence Correction Approach**

## SENTENCE CORRECTION APPROACH

### 1. Identify

Actively think through the list of common errors and identify the type of error being tested. Common error types include: modifiers, idioms, pronouns, comparisons, lists, and verbs. If you can't recognize the errors, you can't fix them.

### 2. Rules

Make sure that you know what the rules are (pronouns must be unambiguous, lists must be structurally similar, etc.). Recall the most common ways the GMAT fixes the error presented.

### 3. Process of Elimination

Once you have identified an error in the original sentence, cross off all answer choices that do not correct that error. Do not worry yet about the right answer; just make sure you get rid of the wrong answers.

### 4. Compare Remaining Choices

You now know that if there is more than one answer choice remaining, every choice is wrong except one. Identify the differences between the remaining answer choices to discover any other common errors.

### 5. Reread and Choose

Take the remaining answer choice and put it back into the sentence and reread the entire sentence to ensure that there are not any errors you have overlooked.

### Example

Children, the sick, the elderly, and indeed anyone who cannot extricate themselves from dangerous situations should be evacuated by family members at the first hurricane or tornado warning.

- (A) anyone who cannot extricate
- (B) anyone not extricating
- (C) anyone not being extricated
- (D) those for whom extrication
- (E) any people who cannot extricate

### Explanation

#### Identify

“Anyone” is a singular pronoun.

“Who cannot extricate themselves” modifies “anyone.”

#### Rules

“Anyone” is supposed to agree with “themselves” but does not. (“Themselves” is plural and “anyone” is singular.)

Since we cannot change “themselves,” we’ll have to change “anyone.”

#### Process of Elimination

We have identified “anyone” as an incorrect pronoun and can thus get rid of all the answer choices that use “anyone”—that’s (A), (B), and (C).

#### Compare Remaining Choices

- (D) those for whom extrication
- (E) any people who cannot extricate

(D) ends with a noun (“extrication”), while (E) ends with a verb (“extricate”). Placing answer choice (D) back into the sentence results in the following construction: “those for whom extrication themselves,” which lacks a verb and consequently is not a complete sentence.

#### Reread and Choose

Take our last answer choice, (E), and reread the sentence with it; we get “any people who cannot extricate themselves...,” which is clear and error-free.

## Sentence Correction | Approach Applied

1. Hyena packs have members that take on different duties, such as defending the carcasses of their prey, by acting as security guards and by the circling defensively around the protected area, and scouting for fresh prey and feasting sites.
- (A) by acting as security guards and by the circling  
(B) acting as security guards and to circle  
(C) to act as security guards and circle  
(D) acting as security guards and circling  
(E) to act as security guards circling
- Identify
- Rules
- Process of Elimination
- Compare Remaining Choices
- Reread and Choose
2. Although the ACT is also an achievement test that measures what a student has learned, the SAT differs in that they ask questions relating to critical thinking, as it is an aptitude test.
- (A) differs in that they ask questions relating to critical thinking, as it is an aptitude test  
(B) differ in that it asks questions relating to critical thinking, as it is an aptitude test  
(C) differs in that it is an aptitude test that measures critical thinking  
(D) differs in that it is an aptitude test that asks questions relating to critical thinking  
(E) is an aptitude test, differs in that they ask questions relating to critical thinking
- Identify
- Rules
- Process of Elimination
- Compare Remaining Choices
- Reread and Choose

## Sentence Correction Approach Applied | Answer Key

### Question 1 | Lists and Verbs

**Identify:** A list can be spotted by noticing the conjunctions and/or multiple descriptions. The list here is signaled by “such as.” The primary list is comprised of the activities “defending” and “scouting.” The second “and” indicates also the presence of a nested list that must be considered. The nested list is composed of the two descriptions of how the hyenas defend: “by acting” and “by the circling.”

**Rules:** A list must be logically similar and must be grammatically balanced.

**Process of Elimination:** (A) uses “by acting” and “by the circling,” which is not balanced. Neither answer choice (B) nor (E) balance the form of the nested list.

**Compare Remaining Choices:** Compare (C) with (D). (C) uses “acting” and (D) uses “to act,” the use of “circling” creates a modifier that describes how the pack members go about defending the pack. The use of “to” and “to circle” make no clear sense as to what is doing that action.

**Reread and Choose:** Choose (D).

### Question 2 | Pronouns and Logical meaning

**Identify:** Pay attention to pronouns in the underlined part of the sentence. The presence of “they” and “it” in the underlined portion of the sentence should alert you to a pronoun error being tested.

**Rules:** A pronoun must clearly (unambiguously) and correctly (agreeing in gender and number) refer to only one thing.

Since “SAT” is singular, look for an answer choice that uses “it” and not “they.”

**Process of Elimination:** (A) uses a plural pronoun, so eliminate that answer choice and any other that commits a similar error. This eliminates (A) and (E).

**Compare Remaining Choices:** Compare (B) with (C). Choice (B) has a second “it” that is ambiguous. Eliminate (B).

Compare (C) with (D).

The difference between the two is “measures critical thinking” versus “asks questions relating to critical thinking.” Choice (C) is unclear and has an illogical meaning. Be careful to consider the literal meanings when presented with similar phrasings; the GMAT is always literal. People ask; tests measure.

Eliminate (D).

**Reread and Choose:** Choose (C).