



Framework #5:

[To do something]

VS

[For/from doing something]

Which to choose?

A Secret Idiomatic Best Practice for the GMAT



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Oftentimes on the GMAT, you will be picking between 2 options.

- 1) sometimes both options are actually OK
- 2) sometimes 1 option is preferred by GMAC folks over the other (even though both can be argued to be technically correct)

Now why would a #2 situation come up?

Well, you see – the GMAT directions are to choose the BEST of the available options. So even though two options can be technically / grammatically OK – only one is the PREFERRED GMAT answer.

Our job is to help you quickly and easily identify that PREFERRED answer.

So we came up with a rule to help you – a rule that holds true for virtually all Official Guide and GMATPrep questions.

Here's the rule:

In the specific idiomatic case of “to do X” vs
“for/from doing X”

→ Always choose “to do X”

In the specific idiomatic case of “for doing X”
vs “does X”

→ Always choose “does X”

Not convinced? Read on...

GMAT Pill has done the homework on Official Guide and GMATPrep questions to provide you specific examples supporting the rule above.

Example #1: Official Guide (OG13) SC18

18. Warning that computers in the United States are not secure, the National Academy of Sciences has urged the nation to revamp computer security procedures, institute new emergency response teams, creating a special nongovernment organization to take charge of computer security planning.

(D) and create a special nongovernment organization **for taking**
(E) and create a special nongovernment organization **to take**

Notice the only difference between (D) and (E) is the last two words. You are tasked to choose between “for taking” and “to take.”

Well, the official answer is (E) “to take” – supporting our rule that “to do X” is preferred on the GMAT over “for doing X.”

Some grammar experts will argue that both are OK – but on the GMAT, we at GMAT Pill know that answer choice (E) is the one to pick.

Now, not all answer choices will be so clear cut in terms of differing from other answer choices by only that one concept. Below are more real examples from OG and GMAT Prep.

Example #2: Official Guide (OG13) SC51

51. A new study suggests that the conversational pace of everyday life may be so brisk it hampers the ability of some children for distinguishing discrete sounds and words and, the result is to make sense of speech.

(A) it hampers the ability of some children **for distinguishing** discrete sounds and words and, the result is, to make

(B) that it hampers the ability of some children **to distinguish** discrete sounds and words and, as a result, to make

Is it “the ability to distinguish” or “the ability for distinguishing” ?

Here (B) is the answer – so we know “ability to distinguish” is the right one.

Sure, there are other elements wrong with (A).

For example, (A) is missing the word “that” in the very beginning. The phrase should read:

“...so brisk THAT it [the conversational pace...] hampers the ability...”

So yes, (A) has problems BESIDES the concept we are discussing here.

But even IF (A) and (B) were exactly the same except for “for distinguishing” vs “to distinguish” – we would STILL choose “to distinguish” (answer B).

Example #3: Official Guide (OG13) SC34

34. Beyond the immediate cash flow crisis that the museum faces, its survival depends on if it can broaden its membership and leave its cramped quarters for a site where it can store and exhibit its more than 12,000 artifacts.

(D) **its ability for broadening** its membership and leaving

The official guide explanation specifically says that (D) should be “its ability to broaden, not for broadening”

So this provides further support to the thesis that GMAC folks do not like the “for doing X” option.

Example #4: Official Guide (OG13) SC34

2 examples in 1

68. Outlining his **strategy for nursing** the troubled conglomerate back to health, the chief executive's plans were announced on Wednesday for cutting the company's huge debt by selling nearly \$12 billion in assets over the next 18 months.

First, let's look at the first few words of this sentence:

“Outlining his strategy for nursing...”

Clearly, this is the non-underlined portion of the sentence so we can safely assume that the grammar here is correct.

This does not necessarily mean the other option is wrong. It does not necessarily mean that “Outlining his strategy to nurse...” is wrong.

Remember, both options can technically be correct. Just because GMAC prefers the “to do X” option does not necessarily mean they can't use the “for doing X” option in its sentences.

So be open-minded to both possibilities being correct when you read through GMAT test questions.

Now, let's get back to the question:

68. Outlining his **strategy for nursing** the troubled conglomerate back to health, the chief executive's plans were announced on Wednesday for cutting the company's huge debt by selling nearly \$12 billion in assets over the next 18 months.

(A) executive's **plans** were announced on Wednesday **for cutting** the company's huge debt by selling nearly \$12 billion in assets over the next 18 months

(C) executive's **plans for cutting** the company's huge debt by selling nearly \$12 billion in assets over the next 18 months were announced on Wednesday

(D) executive announced **plans Wednesday to cut** the company's huge debt by selling nearly \$12 billion in assets over the next 18 months

Notice you are now asked to choose between “plans for cutting” or “plans to cut”

GMAC folks prefer the simpler version “plans to cut” instead of “plans for cutting.” And it turns out the correct answer here is (D) – which supports this idea.

As was the case with the previous question – yes, there are other issues wrong with (A) and (C). Namely, the word “executive” cannot appear in its possessive form “executive’s” if it is positioned at the SUBJECT of the sentence when there is an –ING verb “Outlining” that is structurally positioned to modify “executive.” When we have this –ING verb “outlining” positioned in this way (see GMAT Pill Framework #3), then the subject must appear in its original natural form ---not the possessive form.

So yes, both (A) and (C) have this problem.

But if everything else were the same besides the “plans for cutting” vs “plans to cut” concept – we would choose “plans to cut” as the answer.

Example #5: GMAT Prep

181. In some species of cricket, the number of chirps per minute used by the male for attracting females rise and fall in accordance with the surrounding temperature, and they can in fact serve as an approximate thermometer.

A. **for attracting** females rise and fall in accordance with the surrounding temperature, and they can in fact serve.

B. **for attracting** females rises and falls in accordance with the surrounding temperature, which can in fact serve

C. in attracting females rise and fall in accordance with the surrounding temperature, in fact possibly serving.

D. **to attract** females rises and falls in accordance with the surrounding temperature, and it can in fact serve.

E. **to attract** females rises and falls in accordance with the surrounding temperature, in fact possibly serving.

Here the answer is (D) – yet another example for a question that asks you to choose between “for attracting” and “to attract” and the answer is “to attract.”

Example #6: GMAT Prep SC

184. The global-warming effect of ocean white caps are one of the many aspects of the ocean environment that are not yet incorporated in any detail into computer models **used for predicting** how rising greenhouse gas concentrations could affect climate.

- A. The global-warming effect of ocean white caps are one of the many aspects of the ocean environment that are not yet incorporated in any detail into computer models **used for predicting**
- B. The effect of ocean white caps on global warming is one of the many aspects of the ocean environment that are not yet incorporated in any detail into the computer models used to predict**
- C. That ocean white caps have an effect on global warming is one of the many aspects of the ocean environment not yet having been incorporated in any detail into the computer models that are **used for predicting.**

In this GMATPrep example, you are asked to choose between “used for predicting” and “used to predict.”

The answer is (B) – which mentions “used to predict” instead of “used for predicting” as we expect.

What if “to do X” is not an option?

What if you are asked to choose between “for doing X” vs “that does X” ?

Answer: Choose “that does X”

Here are examples:

Example #7: GMAT Prep SC

179. In a blow to those who still harbored the illusion that E-mail exchanges are private, a watchdog group recently **uncovered a trick for enabling** an interloper to rig an E-mail message so that this person will be privy to any comments that a recipient had added as the message is forwarded to others or sent back and forth.

A. who still harbored the illusion that E-mail exchanges are private, a watchdog group recently **uncovered a trick for enabling** an interloper to rig an E-mail message so that this person will be privy to any comments that a recipient had added

B. who had still been harboring the illusion that E-mail exchanges are private, a watchdog group recently **uncovered a trick for enabling** an interloper to rig an E-mail message so that this person was privy to any comments that a recipient might have added.

C. who still were harboring the illusion that E-mail exchanges are private, a watchdog group recently **uncovered a trick enabling** an interloper to rig and E-mail message so that this person is privy to any comments that a recipient would add.

D. still harboring the illusion that E-mail exchange are private , a watchdog group recently **uncovered a trick that enables** an interloper to rig an E-mail message so that this person will be privy to any comments that a recipient might add

E. still harboring the illusion that E-mail exchanges had been private, a wathchdog group recently **uncovered a trick that will enable** an interloper to rig and E-mail message so that this person was privy to any comments that a recipient might add.

Between these 5 answer choices, notice the correct answer is (D) – which uses the simplest version: “uncovered a trick that enables”

This is effectively choosing “that does X” over “for doing X”

Remember, the GMAC folks prefer simplicity – so when “to do X” is not available but “that does X” IS available, then you want to chose “that does X.”

In this case, you choose “uncovered a trick THAT enables X” – answer choice (D).

Example #8: GMAT Prep SC

111. The two oil companies agreed to merge their refining and marketing operations in the Midwest and the West, forming a new company for controlling nearly fifteen of the nation’s gasoline sales.

A. forming a new company **for controlling**

B. forming a new company **that would control**

Here’s yet another example when you choose between “for controlling” vs “that would control”

Another alternative, if it were an available answer choice, would be:

“forming a new company that controls nearly fifteen of the nation’s gasoline sales”

But since this is not an available answer choice, then between (A) and (B) above, we choose the simpler choice (B).

Any Counter Examples?

So with so many of examples of official questions that prefer the “to do X” form over “for/from doing X” form – then when would the “for doing X” version be correct?

Well, again, both forms can technically be correct – it’s just that in test questions, GMAC prefers the simpler version.

GMAC itself uses “for doing X” in some of its explanations.

One example is in the OG explanation for #75 on page 740 where it says:

“The idiom **as a means to** correctly communicates that **stressing the arts** is a **method for achieving greater economic development.**”

“For achieving” is only used when there is a NOUN (rather than a VERB) before the “for verb+ing” phrase.

- 1) “Stressing the arts is a method for achieving greater economic development” is OK
- 2) “Stressing the arts is a method to achieve greater economic development” can also be OK.

The fact that GMAC uses (1) instead of (2) does not necessarily mean (2) is wrong. Quite the contrary, in fact – as we have noted in all the previous examples above.

Yes, there are select examples that violate the rule...

But the ONLY real example we could find in which “for doing X” is a correct answer is with idiomatic exceptions.

And these idiomatic exceptions are from OLD editions of the official guide – the 11th edition.

GMAC folks are recognizing that non-native students have a tough time understanding these idiomatic intricacies – so they have removed them from the most recent official guide editions and probably from their database of currently active GMAT questions for test takers.

What do I mean by idiomatic exception?

Well, here’s one.

IDIOMATIC EXCEPTION (“provide support FOR doing X”)

Again, these types of exceptions are likely not common in current GMAT questions. But if you really wanted to know – past questions included ones that show “for doing X” as the correct answer:

Example #9: OG11 #11 (old OG edition, less relevant)

OG11 #11 New genetic evidence-together with recent studies of elephants' skeletons, tusks, and other anatomical features-//provide compelling support for classifying//Africa's forest elephants and its savanna elephants as separate species.

C.provides compelling support to the classification of

D.provides compelling support for classifying

E.provides compelling support to classify

Idiomatically, you provide support TO someone or some group or organization.

You can't provide support to a verb.

The sentence above boils down to:

“Evidence provides support to do something...”

But we know idiomatically that “Evidence cannot provide support to do something.”

You can only provide support TO someone or some organization or group – not to an action verb.

What you CAN say is this:

“Evidence provides compelling support to scientists for classifying..” (answer choice D)

In this case you are providing support TO SOMEONE.

But even if we left out “to scientists” assuming it is implied, we are still left with:

(D): “Evidence provides compelling support for classifying” (NOT “to classify”)

So it boils down to the fact that the word SUPPORT is an idiomatic exception that requires someone or some organization to be the recipient of that support as in:

“Evidence provides compelling support to scientists for X...”

“Nurses provide help/aid to patients for their illnesses...”

So the problem with (E) is that “provides compelling support to classify” – represents a unique idiomatic exception.

So besides this idiomatic exception, GMAC generally does not like answer choices involving “for + verb-ing”

We’ve supported this statement with the numerous examples above. That’s why:

When given the task to choose between “to do X” vs “doing X” - you should choose the simpler form “to do X.”

Here’s the rule:

In the specific idiomatic case of “to do X” vs “for/from doing X”

→ Always choose “to do X”

In the specific idiomatic case of “for doing X” vs “does X”

→ Always choose “does X”

