ScoreArchitect

CHEAT SHEET

12 reasoning traps the GMAT™ sets for you

The most common traps across Quant, Verbal and Data Insights, with how to spot and avoid each one.

Free resource from www.scorearchitect.com/gmat

GMAT™ and GMAC™ are trademarks of the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC). GRE® is a registered trademark of ETS (Educational Testing Service). Score Architect is not endorsed or approved by GMAC or ETS, and is not affiliated with them.

Why traps matter

Many GMAT errors are not knowledge gaps. They come from a predictable flaw in reasoning that the question is designed to provoke. Learn to name the trap and you stop repeating the mistake.

QUANT

1. Reversing an implication

"If k is divisible by 12, it is divisible by 6" does not mean the reverse. Check direction before you apply a rule.

How to avoid it: Test a counterexample: k = 6 is divisible by 6 but not by 12.

QUANT

2. Forgetting negatives, zero and fractions

A statement that holds for positive integers may fail for 0, negatives or fractions.

How to avoid it: When a question says "number" not "integer", test 0, a negative and a fraction.

QUANT

3. Answering a different question

You solve for x, but the question asks for 2x or x + y.

How to avoid it: Underline what is asked before you start and re-read it before you choose.

QUANT

4. Percent of what?

A 20% rise followed by a 20% fall is not a return to the start.

How to avoid it: Always name the base of each percentage change. Use 100 as a starting value.

QUANT

5. Average of averages

Two groups averaging 60 and 80 do not average 70 unless they are the same size.

How to avoid it: Weight each average by its group size.

Score Architect
GMAT™ and GMAC™ are trademarks of the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC).
GRE® is a registered trademark of ETS (Educational Testing Service).
Score Architect is not endorsed or approved by GMAC or ETS, and is not affiliated with them.

VERBAL

6. Out-of-scope answers

In Critical Reasoning, an answer can sound relevant but address a different group, time or outcome.

How to avoid it: Check that the answer touches the exact conclusion, word for word.

VERBAL

7. Extreme wording

Choices with "always", "never" or "all" are rarely supported in Reading Comprehension.

How to avoid it: Prefer answers the passage clearly supports, even if they seem modest.

VERBAL

8. Correlation treated as cause

Two things happening together does not prove one causes the other.

How to avoid it: Look for alternative causes, reverse causation or coincidence.

VERBAL

9. Strengthen versus assumption

An answer that helps the argument is not always one the argument needs.

How to avoid it: For assumptions, negate the choice: if the argument falls apart, it is the assumption.

DATA INSIGHTS

10. Solving instead of judging sufficiency

In Data Sufficiency you only need to know whether a single answer exists, not the answer.

How to avoid it: Stop as soon as you know the statement fixes one value or cannot.

DATA INSIGHTS

11. Carrying statement (1) into statement (2)

Each statement must first be judged alone.

How to avoid it: Cover statement (1) with your hand when you evaluate statement (2).

Score Architect
GMAT™ and GMAC™ are trademarks of the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC).
GRE® is a registered trademark of ETS (Educational Testing Service).
Score Architect is not endorsed or approved by GMAC or ETS, and is not affiliated with them.

ALL SECTIONS

12. Sunk-cost timing

Spending 4 minutes on one question because you have already spent 2.

How to avoid it: Set a 3-minute cut-off. Guess, bookmark and move on.

Train the reasoning, not just the answer. Score Architect's Reasoning Focus questions ask you to identify the trap, the best approach or the quickest method, so you build the habit before test day. Start free at mba.scorearchitect.com.

Score Architect, www.scorearchitect.com/gmat, support@scorearchitect.com. This guide is not endorsed or approved by GMAC. Exam details reflect the GMAT Focus Edition as described by GMAC at the time of writing; always confirm on mba.com before booking.

Score Architect
GMAT™ and GMAC™ are trademarks of the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC).
GRE® is a registered trademark of ETS (Educational Testing Service).
Score Architect is not endorsed or approved by GMAC or ETS, and is not affiliated with them.