

List of common idiomatic expressions for the GMAT

This is an excerpt from PrepForTests.com's Idiomatic Expressions Tutorial (<http://www.prepfortests.com/gmat/tutorials/idiomaticexpressions>).

You can find the most up to date copy of this document at <http://www.prepfortests.com/gmat/tutorials/idiomaticexpressions/list.pdf>

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We cannot give you all of the idiomatic expressions in English, but here are some that consistently appear on GMAT tests.

The ones marked with the asterix (*) often appear on the GMAT - please take note of them, and memorize them. They are very important.

The correct idiomatic expression is given on the LEFT, while a sentence demonstrating how the expression is used can be found on the RIGHT.

A

able + infinitive	<i>Tom is able to play the guitar with his toes.</i>
access to	<i>Steve never has access to his dad's bank account.</i>
act as	<i>Tom acts as a scout for GQ here in South America.</i>
agree on + noun	<i>We agreed on the plan.</i>
agree on + gerund	<i>We agreed on going to town.</i>
agree to	<i>We agreed to go away.</i>
aid + person/thing	<i>The magnifying glass aided his search.</i>
allows for	<i>Your schedule does not allow for much time.</i>
appeal to	<i>He wants to appeal to my good sense.</i>
*as...as	<i>She is as tired as I am.</i>
ask + infinitive	<i>He asked to go home.</i>
ask + person + infinitive	<i>He asked me to go home.</i>
*associate with	<i>We never associate with Steve - he is far too tacky!</i>
*attribute to	<i>His tackiness can be attributed to too many comic books as a child.</i>

B

*base on	<i>I think that the movie Star Wars is based on a true story.</i>
begin + infinitive	<i>It soon began to rain.</i>
boom in	<i>There was a boom in the sale of yellow polka-dot bikinis as soon as Natalia Paris tried one on.</i>
built by	<i>The Avro Arrow was built by proud Canadians.</i>

C

care about	<i>Who cares about that?</i>
care for	<i>I don't care for your tone.</i>
centers on + person/thing	<i>The story centers on the struggle for meaning in a chaotic universe.</i>
choose + infinitive	<i>I do it because I choose to do it.</i>
to be + composed of + thing	<i>The atom is composed of various parts.</i>
consistent with	<i>Your story is not consistent with Joel's story.</i>
contend that	<i>Joel contends that you are lying.</i>
*consider + person/thing	<i>I consider you a friend.</i>

continue + infinitive	<i>If you continue to do that we will not be friends.</i>
contrast A with B	<i>If you contrast Bill with Bob you find....</i>
convert to	<i>The new device will convert matter to energy.</i>
*compare A to B (compare to stresses similarities).	<i>Caliban is compared to a beast in Shakespeare's The Tempest.</i>
*compare A with B (compare with stresses differences).	<i>Compared with you I cannot sing well at all.</i>
*count on + person/thing	<i>I count on you for the correct answers.</i>
to credit with	<i>Columbus is credited with discovering the Americas.</i>
give credit for	<i>I have to give you credit for working so hard.</i>
D	
are in danger of + gerund	<i>The robber was in danger of being captured.</i>
decide + infinitive	<i>We decided to leave the party early.</i>
decide on + thing/person	<i>We decided on the all-meat pizza.</i>
delighted by	<i>Steve was delighted by the new findings.</i>
depend on	<i>Steve depends on Joel for financial support.</i>
*different from	<i>Canadians are very different from Americans.</i>
difficult + infinitive	<i>Steve finds it difficult to dance to Latin music.</i>
disclose to + person/organization	<i>Joel decided to disclose to the world the truth about Steve's crazy ideas.</i>
*distinguish between X and Y	<i>I want to distinguish between London and Paris.</i>
*distinguish X from Y	<i>If you distinguish London from Paris....</i>
draw on (take out)	<i>Unlike Felix, Steve can draw on funds from Joel's bank account.</i>
draw + thing	<i>The tattoo artist drew a lovely flower on Joel's left bicep.</i>
to be drawn to + thing/person	<i>Women are drawn to Steve's bulging muscles.</i>
*dream of/about	<i>Natalia Paris often dreams about Steve.</i>
dwindle from	<i>Mr. Bolton's bank account dwindled from one thousand dollars to less than half that in less than a week.</i>
E	
easy to	<i>It's easy to see why Mark is so popular.</i>
elect to	<i>Mark will be elected to the Congress in 2016.</i>
elect + person	<i>We elected Steve as our office "gopher".</i>
emerges from	<i>The snail emerges from its shell.</i>
*enable + person + infinitive	<i>My job enables me to travel.</i>
*encourage + person + infinitive	<i>We encouraged him to paint.</i>
escape from	<i>Steve wishes to escape from grinding poverty.</i>

to be + essential to +
person/thing

Coffee is essential to me, especially in the morning.

except for + person/thing

Everyone is here except for the teacher.

except for + gerund

Except for being handsome, he wasn't very special.

explain to

Juan explained to Steve the difference between salsa and merengue.

expose to

Steve is exposed to intense ridicule every day of his life.

F

fail to

We fail to see the humor in these sentences.

flee from

Steve fled from their sharp criticisms.

*forbid to

We forbid you to go.

force + thing/person +
infinitive

This mishap forces me to plan ahead.

focus on + thing/person

I want to focus on our mutual problem.

G

get credit for/give credit for

I have to give you credit for your good work.

grow from

Joel predicts that PrepForTests will grow from a small company to a major multinational within five years.

grow out of

Steve grew out of his overalls just last year.

H

help + thing/person +
infinitive

Music helps me to think.

I

indicate that

Studies indicate that people with gray hair are smarter than the majority.

indicate to + person

Steve's constant worrying over his gray hair indicates to me a serious self-esteem problem.

inherit from

Steve inherits his gray hair from his mother's family.

invest in

Steve should invest in hair dye.

L

leads to

Lack of exercise leads to obesity.

likelihood that

In the likelihood that he comes to town...

localized in

The pain is localized in my left foot.

M

manage to

You've managed to screw this up again, Steve.

*make + thing/person + verb
(simple form)

Chocolate makes me think of Switzerland.

*mistake + thing/person + for

I'm sorry. I mistook you for someone else.

N

*native to

Penguins are native to the Antarctic.

*a native of

Steve is a native of Canada.

need to

Steve needs to think of some better sentences.

to be + necessary + infinitive

It is necessary to be creative.

not only...but also

Derek is not only an old age pensioner but also a DJ.

O

originate in

Liberalism, as we know it, originated in 17th century England.

P

*permit + thing/person + infinitive

Money permits us to live a comfortable life.

prized as

Stephen is prized as a teacher in Bogota.

prized for

Stephen is prized for his ability to dance the salsa.

*prohibit from + gerund

In school, we were prohibited from fighting.

promise of + thing

The promise of success drove us to the mountain's peak.

promise to

I promise to tell the truth more often - I swear.

published by

Sabih's first novel 'Love and the GMAT' is published by Penguin.

published in

Steve's first novel will be published in March.

R

*range from X to Y

His clients range from multinationals to the smallest businesses.

refer to

I wish to refer to the latest work by Foucault....

*regard as

She is regarded as an expert.

require + thing/person + infinitive

My work requires me to travel.

required of + thing/person

The GMAT is required of most students applying for admission to an MBA program.

resemble + thing/person

Steve resembles a young Charles Atlas.

results in

Rough play often results in injuries.

results from

Injuries often result from rough play.

rivalry between X and Y

The rivalry between Joel and Enrique Iglesias is legendary.

*the rivals X and Y

The rivals Enrique and Joel quarreled often.

S

save for

Save for that inconvenience, the trip was a success.

save from

They saved me from another boring party.

seek + infinitive

He seeks to save your soul.

seek + thing/person

I seek the truth.

seem + infinitive

You seem to be sleepy today.

sleep with

I can sleep with whoever I want!

speak to + person

I spoke to my secretary about the report I wanted.

speak with + person *I spoke with my colleague about the upcoming report.*

T

take advantage of *Steve loves to take advantage of those around him.*

teach + person + infinitive *She taught Jim to dance.*

teach + person + thing *She taught Jim the lambada.*

tell + person *She told him that he was a terrible dancer.*

tie to *The rope is tied to the chair.*

transmit to *We transmitted the e-mail to him.*

U

use + person/thing + infinitive *I use a light to read.*

used + infinitive *Years ago, he used to walk every day to work.*

to be + used to + gerund *He is used to walking to work.*

W

to be + willing + infinitive *Fortunately, he was willing to help us.*

will try to *Cindy will try to improve next year.*

Remember to add any other idiomatic expressions to this list if you find them in the GMAT questions you take in practice.

If you have any questions about idiomatic expressions on the GMAT exam that are not covered here then please contact us.

The bare minimum that you should do is make sure that you are familiar with all those marked with an asterix (*).