

Getting Prepared for *GMAT*: Tips and Resources

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I. Introduction to the Graduate Management Admission Test

To assess the qualifications of applicants for advanced study in business and management, a university needs the *GMAT* test. It is a test which helps to predict the academic performance in an MBA program or in other graduate management programs.

Why is the *GMAT* needed as a basis for MBA performance?

The *GMAT* is formatted in a way which measures the verbal, mathematical, and analytical writing skills that are developed by a student in his/ her work or academic career. This is why it must be a basis for admitting students to the graduate studies - especially MBA.

Sections of the *GMAT*

It consists of the Analytical Writing Assessment section (*AWA*) Quantitative section, and the Verbal section (briefly summarized later).

Timing of the *GMAT*

The *GMAT* requires three and one-half hours. Two and one-half (75 minutes each for the verbal and quantitative sections) are for the multiple-choice items and one hour (30 minutes each for the two essays) for the *AWA*. Two breaks (five minutes each) are optional.

Students must not be afraid of the *GMAT*

Although the *GMAT* is a demanding test, you shouldn't be afraid of taking this test .This is because it neither measures your knowledge of business or job skills nor does it measure a specific content in your undergraduate course work.

II. GMAT Preparation

A- Overall views about preparations

Preparation is the best way of doing your best on any test, and this is also true for the *GMAT*. While the *GMAT* does not test you on subjects you can study for in advance, you can practice successful test-taking techniques and strategies to maximize your thinking skills.

As may be expected, different test takers choose different ways. After reading about methods of preparation, it seems that some prefer to enroll in preparation courses while others decide to use preparation books. If a preparation book is to be used, *The Official Guide for GMAT Review* is recommended. In addition, there is a software program called *GMATPrep* available free and can be downloaded from www.mba.com. Also, a free CD-ROM version can be mailed to you upon registration for the test.

In short, whether preparation is through a course, preparation book, tutor, or an individually designed program of study, one should prepare well for the test. Typically, there is no specific duration of time for *GMAT* preparation, but it is important to start preparing early so that the information wouldn't be compressed in a small period of time and you develop your skills in an effective and efficient way.

B- Resources for studying

Books

There are a number of books available to help test-takers prepare for the *GMAT*. Test-preparation books can be a valuable resource because they can help a test-taker determine whether he or she needs further preparation, while requiring a small initial investment. Many *GMAT* preparation books contain full or partial

sample exams (sometimes on CD-ROM) along with tips and techniques for succeeding on each type of question. There are also entire books devoted to each of the main test sections - verbal, quantitative, and essay - if you find that you primarily need preparation in one area. *GMAT* preparation books are available at most retail books ("Preparations").

Online resources

Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC)

<http://www.gmat.org/mba/taketheGMAT>

This is the official home of the *GMAT*, with answers to all of your questions about the logistics of taking the exam. The *GMAC* website also has practice questions, free downloadable test preparation software called POWERPREP, and a study guide that you can purchase.

USF Educational Outreach

<https://registration.outreach.usf.edu/wconnect/wc.dll?acecode~GroupCatalog~GROUP~TESTPR~Test+Preparation>

Educational Outreach offers courses designed specifically to assist you in preparation for the *GMAT* exam. You may register for courses online through their website.

C-Preparation Strategies for the GMAT

It might seem for some people an easy thing to prepare for tests and maybe the *GMAT* too, but in general, everything needs planning. So, this is a sum-up of 6 strategies which will help students plan effectively and efficiently for the *GMAT*.

1) As a general basis, you should be familiar with the types of

questions in each section. As a matter of fact, you should refresh your skills in basic grammar and mathematics as well as practice test questions and sample exam until you are comfortable with every question type.

2) You should know the duration of time you have to complete each section and budget your time accordingly.

3) You shouldn't waste time reading the instructions on the test day. While preparing, you should read them thoroughly and make sure you understand them. This will save you several minutes on the actual test day.

4) You should find a strategy to tackle the questions in each section according to their level of difficulty. Remember, each question (regardless of its difficulty) is worth one point. So, you must learn to recognize and seek out the types of questions you are good at. It's better to answer as many "easy" ones first, returning later to tackle more difficult, time-consuming math problems, passages and arguments.

5) It would be good to answer every question, even if you are clueless about how to approach it. In many cases, you are better off guessing than wasting a ton of time on a problem you aren't able to solve. The test questions will vary widely in their level of difficulty. Some questions will be extremely difficult for all students and should not consume a disproportionate amount of your time.

6) You shouldn't try to cram a lot of studying into the last few days before the test. Your best bet is to prepare a few hours a day for several weeks before the exam and to relax (or try to relax) the day or so before the actual test.

D- The Day of the Test

Wake up plenty of time before you are supposed to arrive at the test center. Eat a reasonable breakfast. Try to do some activity that gets your brain into gear, such as reading a newspaper or a magazine. Do a few *GMAT* problems (not to learn anything new, but to get 'warmed up'). Do a short mental review. Think through some of the main techniques that you've practiced, focusing on what you're good at.

At this point, completely forget about the question types that give you headaches. Think of some sort of celebratory or relaxing activity for when the exam is over. Do not think about your score or interviews with business school admissions officers.

Most of all, stay calm. Remember that you are prepared! A lot of other test takers are in a panic because they don't know what they're getting into. By this time, if you've properly prepared, you will surprise yourself during the test by remembering how to solve problems that in the beginning of your preparation seemed nearly impossible. ("The Day of the Test")

Concluding Remarks:

Before taking the *GMAT*, you should be thoroughly familiar with the test. You should know the timing, content, and the structure of the test. It is not worth cramming for this test. The *GMAT* is not suited to intense, last-minute study sessions. There

is not a great deal to memorize for the test - while it is arguably unadvisable to cram for any test, you are more likely to succeed on a university history test, for example, than the *GMAT*, after staying up all night studying.

"You can do well on the history test by memorizing all the facts in the appropriate chapters of the appropriate books. You cannot know in advance exactly what questions you will see on the *GMAT*." ("The Best Way for Preparation"). So, the only way to make significant progress is to learn techniques and apply them to practice questions as often as possible.

III. Sections of the GMAT

A- The Verbal Section

The Verbal section of the *GMAT* measures your ability to:

- read and comprehend written material,
- reason and evaluate arguments, and
- correct written material to conform to standard written English.

Three types of multiple-choice questions are used in the Verbal section of the *GMAT* exam—Reading Comprehension, Critical Reasoning, and Sentence Correction.

Reading Comprehension Questions

Reading Comprehension passages are up to 350 words long. Topics contain material from the social sciences, physical or biological sciences, and business-related areas (marketing, economics, human resource management, etc.).

Because the Reading Comprehension section of the *GMAT* exam includes passages from several different content areas, you may be generally familiar with some of the material; however, no specific knowledge of the material is required. All questions are to be answered on the basis of what is stated or implied in the reading material.

Reading Comprehension passages are accompanied by interpretive, applied, and inferential questions.

What Is Measured

Reading Comprehension questions measure your ability to understand, analyze, and apply information and concepts presented in written form.

This section evaluates the following abilities:

- **Understanding words and statements in reading passages:** Questions of this type test your understanding of and ability to comprehend terms used in the passage and your understanding of the English language.
- **Understanding the logical relationships between significant points and concepts in the reading passages:** Questions of this type ask you to determine the strong and weak points of an argument or to evaluate the importance of arguments and ideas in a passage.
- **Drawing inferences from facts and statements in the reading passages:** Questions of this type ask you to consider factual statements or information and, on the basis of that information, reach a general conclusion.
- **Understanding and following the development of quantitative concepts as they are presented in verbal material:** Questions of this type involve the interpretation of numerical data or the use of simple arithmetic to reach conclusions about material in a passage.

Critical Reasoning Questions

Critical Reasoning questions are designed to test the reasoning skills involved in making arguments, evaluating arguments, and formulating or evaluating a plan of action. Questions are based on

materials from a variety of sources. No familiarity with the specific subject matter is needed.

What Is Measured

This section measures your ability to reason effectively in three areas:

- **Argument construction:** Questions of this type may ask you to recognize the basic structure of an argument, properly drawn conclusions, underlying assumptions, well-supported explanatory hypotheses, or parallels between structurally similar arguments.
- **Argument evaluation:** Questions of this type may ask you to analyze a given argument, recognize factors that would strengthen or weaken an argument, reasoning errors committed in making an argument, or aspects of the methods by which an argument proceeds.
- **Formulating and evaluating a plan of action:** Questions of this type may ask you to recognize the relative appropriateness, effectiveness, or efficiency of different plans of action; factors that would strengthen or weaken a proposed plan of action; or assumptions underlying a proposed plan of action.

Sentence Correction Questions

Sentence Correction questions ask you which of the five choices best expresses an idea or relationship. The questions will require you to be familiar with the stylistic conventions and grammatical rules of standard written English. You must also demonstrate your ability to improve incorrect or ineffective expressions.

What Is Measured

This section tests two broad aspects of language proficiency:

Correct expression: A correct sentence is grammatically and structurally sound. It conforms to all the rules of standard written English, e.g., noun-verb agreement, pronoun consistency, pronoun case, and verb tense sequence. A correct sentence will not have dangling, misplaced, or improperly formed modifiers, unidiomatic or inconsistent expressions, or faults in parallel construction.

Effective expression: An effective sentence expresses an idea or relationship clearly and concisely, as well as grammatically. This does not mean that the choice with the fewest and simplest words is necessarily the best answer. It means that there are no superfluous words or needlessly complicated expressions in the best choice. In addition, an effective sentence uses proper diction—the standard dictionary meanings of words and the appropriateness of words in context. In evaluating the diction of a sentence, you must be able to recognize whether the words are well chosen, accurate, and suitable for the context.

B- The Quantitative Section

The Quantitative section of the *GMAT* measures the ability to reason quantitatively, solve quantitative problems, and interpret graphic data. Two types of multiple-choice questions are used in the Quantitative section of the *GMAT*—Problem Solving and Data Sufficiency.

Problem-Solving and Data-Sufficiency questions are intermingled throughout the section. Both types of questions require knowledge of:

- arithmetic,
- elementary algebra, and
- Commonly known concepts of geometry.

Problem-Solving Questions

Problem-Solving questions are designed to test:

- basic mathematical skills,
- understanding of elementary mathematical concepts, and
- the ability to reason quantitatively and solve quantitative problems.

Data-Sufficiency Questions

Data-Sufficiency questions are designed to measure your ability to:

- analyze a quantitative problem,
- recognize which information is relevant, and
- determine at what point there is sufficient information to solve a problem.

Data-Sufficiency questions are accompanied by some initial information and two statements, labeled (1) and (2). You must decide whether the statements given offer enough data to enable you to answer the question. You must choose one of the following answers:

- Statement (1) ALONE is sufficient, but statement (2) is not sufficient.
- Statement (2) ALONE is sufficient, but statement (1) is not sufficient.
- BOTH statements TOGETHER are sufficient, but NEITHER statement ALONE is sufficient.
- EACH statement ALONE is sufficient.

- Statements (1) and (2) TOGETHER are NOT sufficient

C- The Analytical Writing Assessment Section

The Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA) of the GMAT is designed as a direct measure of your ability to think critically and to communicate your ideas. The AWA consists of two 30-minute writing tasks—Analysis of an Issue and Analysis of an Argument.

The issues and arguments presented on the test concern topics of general interest related to business or a variety of other subjects. A specific knowledge of the essay topic is not necessary; only your capacity to write analytically is assessed.

Analysis of an Issue

For the Analysis of an Issue section, you will need to analyze the issue presented and explain your point of view on the subject. There is no correct answer. Instead, you should consider various perspectives. Use relevant reasons or examples drawn from your experience, observations, or reading to develop your own position on the issue.

What Is Measured

The Analysis of an Issue tests your ability to explore the complexities of an issue or opinion and, if appropriate, to take a position that is informed by your understanding.

Analysis of an Argument

For the Analysis of an Argument section, you will need to analyze the reasoning behind a given argument and write a critique of that argument. You are not being asked to present your own views on the subject.

Consider the following when developing your essay:

- What questionable assumptions underlie the thinking behind the argument?
- What alternative explanations or counterexamples might weaken the conclusion?
- What sort of evidence could help strengthen or refute the argument?

What Is Measured

The Analysis of an Argument section tests your ability to formulate an appropriate and constructive critique of a specific conclusion based on a specific line of thinking.

IV. Some Sample Questions

A-Sample Questions on the Verbal section:

Critical reasoning

1. In Los Angeles, a political candidate who buys saturation radio advertising will get maximum name recognition.

The statement above logically conveys which of the following?

A. Radio advertising is the most important factor in political campaigns in Los Angeles.

B. Maximum name recognition in Los Angeles will help a candidate to win a higher percentage of votes cast in the city.

C. Saturation radio advertising reaches every demographically distinct sector of the voting population of Los Angeles.

D. For maximum name recognition a candidate need not spend on media channels other than radio advertising.

E. A candidate's record of achievement in the Los Angeles area will do little to affect his or her name recognition there.

Answer:B

Explanation

The family pays \$800 per year for the plan, plus (100 percent minus 80 percent) or 20 percent of the first \$1,000 in medical expenses, while the insurance company pays 80 percent of the first \$1,000, or \$800. It must pay an additional \$200 to match what the family pays out. Since the \$200 comes after the first

\$1,000 in expenses, it must represent 100 percent of additional expenses. Therefore, there must have been \$1,000 plus \$200 or \$1,200 in medical expenses altogether.

Reading Comprehension

Sample Essay:

The rich analyses of Fernand Braudel and his fellow *Annales* historians have made significant contributions to historical theory and research. In a departure from traditional historical approaches, the *Annales* historians assume (as do Marxists) that history cannot be limited to a simple recounting of conscious human actions, but must be understood in the context of forces that underlie human behavior. Braudel was the first *Annales* historian to gain widespread support for the idea that history should synthesize data from social sciences, especially economics, to provide a broader historical view of human societies over time (although Febvre and Bloch, founders of the *Annales* school, originated this approach).

Braudel conceived of history as the dynamic interaction of three temporalities. The first of these, the *evenementielle*, involved short-lived dramatic "events," such as battles, revolutions, and the actions of great men, which had preoccupied traditional historians like Carlyle. *Conjonctures* was Braudel's term for the larger, cyclical processes that might last up to half a century. The *longue duree*, a historical wave of great length, was for Braudel the most fascinating of the three temporalities. Here he focused on those aspects of everyday life that might remain relatively unchanged for centuries. What people ate, what they wore, their means and routes of travel—for Braudel these things create "structures" that define the limits of potential social change for hundreds of years at a time.

Braudel's concept of the *longue duree* extended the perspective of historical space as well as time. Until the *Annales* school, historians had taken the juridical political unit—the the nation-state, duchy, or whatever—as their starting point. Yet, when such enormous timespans are considered, geographical features may have more significance for human populations than national borders. In his doctoral thesis, a seminal work on the Mediterranean during the reign of Philip II, Braudel treated the geohistory of the entire region as a "structure" that exerted myriad influences on human lifeways since the first settlements on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

And so the reader is given such arcane information as the list of products that came to Spanish shores from North Africa, the seasonal routes followed by Mediterranean sheep and their shepherds, and the cities where the best ship timber could be bought.

Braudel has been faulted for the imprecision of his approach. With his Rabelaisian delight in concrete detail, Braudel vastly extended the realm of relevant phenomena; but this very achievement made it difficult to delimit the boundaries of observation, a task necessary to beginning any social investigation. Further, Braudel and other *Annales* historians minimize the differences among the social sciences. Nevertheless, the many similarly designed studies aimed at both professional and popular audiences indicate that Braudel asked significant questions which traditional historians had overlooked.

Questions

1. The primary purpose of the passage is to

- A. show how Braudel's work changed the conception of Mediterranean life held by previous historians.
 - B. evaluate Braudel's criticisms of traditional and Marxist historiography
 - C. contrast the perspective of the *longue duree* with the actions of major historical figures
 - D. illustrate the relevance of Braudel's concepts to other social sciences
 - E. outline some of Braudel's influential conceptions and distinguish them from conventional approaches
2. The author refers to the work of Febvre and Bloch in order to
- A. illustrate the limitations of the *Annales* tradition of historical investigation
 - B. suggest the relevance of economics to historical investigation
 - C. debate the need for combining various sociological approaches
 - D. show that previous *Annales* historians anticipated Braudel's focus on economics
 - E. demonstrate that historical studies provide broad structures necessary for economic analysis

Answers:

1. E

The purpose, or main idea, of this passage is to explain Braudel's ideas and discuss how they differ from those of traditional

historians. Choices (A) and (D) focus on details, and (B) and (C) focus on inaccurately stated details.

2. D

Febvre and Bloch are mentioned only in the first paragraph. There, it's said that they "anticipated [Braudel's] approach."

Sentence Correction

1. The concert this weekend promises to attract an even greater amount of people than attended the last one.

- A. an even greater amount of people
- B. an ever larger amount of people
- C. an amount of people even greater
- D. a number of people even larger
- E. an even greater number of people

2. Records of the first 736 British convicts deported to Australia reveal convictions for crimes against property in all cases and they ranged from highway robbery to forgery.

- A. convictions for crimes against property in all cases and they ranged
- B. convictions in all cases were crimes against property and ranging
- C. the ranging of convictions for crimes against property in all cases

D. that all were convicted of crimes against property ranging

E. that all of them had convictions for crimes that were against property; the range was

Answers.

1. E

Notice that three choices contain the word *amount* and two choices contain *number*. People, because they can be counted, come in numbers rather than amounts. (E) is best because of the remaining two because the phrase *an even greater amount of people* clearly refers to more people, while a *number of people even larger* could be referring to bigger people.

2. D

(A) is awkwardly worded and the pronoun *they* has more than one possible antecedent. In (B) the two verbs linked by *and* aren't parallel; "were convicted" doesn't match "ranging." In choice (C), "the ranging of convictions" is awkward and unidiomatic. Choice (E) is wordy. (D) is the best choice.

B- A Sample question on the Quantitative Section

Data Sufficiency:

Directions: In each of the problems, a question is followed by two statements containing certain data. You are to determine whether the data provided by the statements is sufficient to answer the question.

Answer choices:

A. if statement (1) by itself is sufficient to answer the question, but statement (2) by itself is not;

B. if statement (2) by itself is sufficient to answer the question, but statement (1) by itself is not;

C. if statements (1) and (2) taken together are sufficient to answer the question, even though neither statement by itself is sufficient;

D. if either statement by itself is sufficient to answer the question;

E. if statements (1) and (2) taken together are not sufficient to answer the question, requiring more data pertaining to the problem

Questions

1. Does $x = y$?

(1) $x^2 - y^2 = 0$

(2) $(x - y)^2 = 0$

A. B. C. D. or E.

2. If R is an integer, is R evenly divisible by 3?

(1) $2R$ is evenly divisible by 3

(2) $3R$ is evenly divisible by 3

A. B. C. D. or E.

Answers:

1. B

(1) *Insufficient.* It may look like the two are equal, but not necessarily. All the statement tells us is that x^2 is equal to y^2 . That doesn't mean that x equals y , because one could be negative and the other positive.

(2) *Sufficient.* This tells us that $(x - y)(x + y) = 0$. So, $(x - y) = 0$. The only way the difference between the two variables can be 0 is if they are the same.

2. A.

(1) *Sufficient.* Since the quantity $2R$ is divisible by 3, one of those two factors must be divisible by 3. Since 1 isn't; R must be.

(2) *Insufficient.* We know that quantity $3R$ is evenly divisible by 3, which means that at least one of the factors must be divisible by 3. The problem, though, is that 3 is evenly divisible by 3, making it impossible for us to determine R ("Practice Tests").

C- The Analytical Writing Assessment Section:

This section involves writing an essay. There are different topics that can be given, but what is essential here is to provide you with the following skills to excel in the AWA section .

1. **Be particularly concerned with structure.** Clearly divide your essay into the introductory paragraph, two to three content paragraphs, and a conclusion. Take time out before you start writing to set up an organizational structure.
2. **Use transitional phrases** such as "first", "therefore" and "because" to help the computer identify concepts between and within the paragraphs. Make sure you spell these transition words correctly so that the computer may identify them. The E-rater does not have a spell-checker built in.
3. **Be a conformist.** The E-rater is not programmed to appreciate individuality, humor, or poetic inspiration; it will be comparing the style and structure of your essay to that of other high-scoring essays. If your essay looks like the high-scoring essays in the E-rater's memory banks, you will get a high grade; if not, you will get a low grade. Our Essay Guide has 20 sample high score essays to give you a sense of the proper writing style for the AWA.
4. **Clearly state your critique in the Analysis of Argument essay.** The Analysis of Argument question will show you an essay loaded with logical fallacies, such as the *unwarranted assumption* or *fallacy of equivocation*. These are buzzwords that the E-rater detects to see if you have correctly identified the argument's logical flaws.

5. **Write in effective American style.** Both the human and the E-rater will detect poor writing style. The E-rater's memory banks have essays written in American grammar/style, which is slightly distinct from the English used outside of the United States.
6. **Practice.** Try to do the essays in the 30-minute time frame. That is half of the challenge. Always practice under timed conditions on a computer. ("GMAT Essay Section Guide").

V. GMAT Scores

A-Students receive four GMAT scores:

- **Quantitative** scaled sub score, ranging from 0 to 60 (effectively 51 is the max score)
- **Verbal** scaled sub score, ranging from 0 to 60 (effectively 48 is the max score)
- **Overall** 0 to 60 Math and Verbal scores (hence, the name **800score.com**: an 800 is perfect score). The 200 to 800 cumulative score is what business schools primarily use.
- **Analytical Writing Assessment** score, ranging from 0 to 6. This is a separate score that is less important than the 200 to 800 cumulative score. (discussed later)

The test is graded on a preset curve so that your scaled score will correspond to a certain percentile. An overall score of 630, for example, corresponds approximately to the 90th percentile, meaning that 90 percent of test takers scored at or below this level

Sample approximate percentiles within the score range of 200-800.

96th-99th percentile	720 score
79th-90th percentile	630 score
61-75th percentile	570 score
37-50th percentile	500 score

Please note that, if you do not finish in the allotted time, you will still receive scores as long as you have worked on every section.

However, your scores will be calculated based upon the number of questions answered, and your score will decrease significantly with each unanswered question. ("Scores ")

B- The Analytical Writing Assessment Score

The Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA) score is an average of the ratings given to the Analysis of an Issue and the Analysis of an Argument sections.

Each response is given two independent ratings. Once both essays have been scored, the scores are averaged to provide an overall score. Scores for the AWA range from 0 to 6 in half-point intervals.

Writing scores are computed separately from the multiple-choice scores and have no effect on the Verbal, Quantitative, or Total scores.

How Is AWA Scored?

Each of your essays in the AWA section will be given two independent ratings, one of which may be performed by an automated essay-scoring engine. The automated essay-scoring engine is an electronic system that evaluates more than 50 structural and linguistic features, including organization of ideas, syntactic variety, and topical analysis.

If the two ratings differ by more than one point, another evaluation by an expert reader is required to resolve the discrepancy and determine the final score.

College and university faculty members trained as readers for the AWA will consider the following:

- the overall quality of your ideas about the issue and argument presented
- your overall ability to organize, develop, and express those ideas
- the relevant supporting reasons and examples you used
- your ability to control the elements of standard written English.

VI. GMAT Preparatory Courses in Lebanon

There are basically two places whereby the *GMAT* is being offered.

A- Preparatory courses in Amideast

At Amideast, courses are offered in three centers: Beirut Central District, Antelias, and Bliss. However, there is also private tutoring available on demand as well as courses on Saturdays. Furthermore, Amideast can design some courses for schools or universities either in their offices or on campus.

With respect to their schedule, it is mentioned that *GMAT* courses are offered three times a week: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays (5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. (" *GMAT*"))

B- Preparatory courses at New Horizons.

VII. A Recommended Profile for a *GMAT* instructor.

A *GMAT* instructor must be a person who is knowledgeable in different fields. It is not required that the instructor have a specific degree in Business .However, this instructor must have at least a specific degree in the field of sciences.

Most importantly, this instructor must be very strong in the English Language. He/she should have the ability to understand English carefully and understand the meaning between the lines because most of the time, there is a trick in each sentence. Besides, one must have logic skills and be able to develop these skills in students.

Furthermore, it would be recommended that the instructor had taken the *GMAT* before since he/she would ,in this way, help the students in a more effective and efficient way.

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