

# Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT)

## Exam Structure

The GMAT exam consists of 3 sections: *Quantitative, Verbal, and Analytical Writing*.

Section	Description	Topics Tested
<b>Quantitative</b>	Features 37 questions and lasts up to 75 minutes	Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, mathematical, problem solving, and other topics may be tested
<b>Verbal</b>	Features 41 questions and lasts up to 75 minutes	Reading comprehension, grammar, and other topics may be tested
<b>Analytical Writing</b>	Features 2 questions with 30 minutes allocated to compose a response for each question	Questions focus on an analysis of an issue and an analysis of an argument

As of this writing, the GMAT exam is **computer adaptive**. What this means is that the exam adapts itself to the test taker's performance. If a question is answered correctly, the next question received will usually be more difficult. The way to obtain a high score on the GMAT is to answer difficult questions correctly, especially at the very beginning of each section. Also one cannot skip a question and return to it later. Since the result of the performance on a question determines the next question received, questions must be answered in the order presented.

The GMAT Verbal and Quantitative sections have a score range from 200 points (the lowest possible score) to 800 points (the highest possible score). The Analytical Writing section is graded on a six (6) point scale.

*Note: Throughout the Verbal and Quantitative sections of the exam, there may be random unscored questions used by the test maker to pilot questions for future exams. You will never know which questions are not being scored, so it's important to do your best with all the exam questions.*

## Score Validity

GMAT scores remain valid and are accepted by most institutions for up to 5 years.

## Test Taking Tips

**Overall Tip 1:** It's important to study for the GMAT in English. The GMAT tests one's reasoning skills in English. It can be difficult for even native speakers of English. While it's acceptable to look up certain things in your own language, just for reference (e.g. math vocabulary in French: an odd number is **impair**, and an even number is **pair**), it's important to study for the exam in English as much as possible. You will not have time to translate effectively while taking the exam; so, you should be accustomed to answering questions in English, as quickly and accurately as possible.

**Overall Tip 2:** For both the Verbal and Quantitative sections of the GMAT Exam, you cannot skip questions. Don't spend too much time on any one question. Try to do your best, especially on the first few questions in each section, but if stuck on a question, try to disregard any obviously wrong choices, make a best guess and move on.

## **Verbal Section**

There are different question types within the Verbal section.

**Reading comprehension questions** test one's ability to interpret text and process information.

**Reading Comprehension Tip:** It's important is to get accustomed to reading a lot of text on a computer screen. You cannot take notes on text when it's on a computer screen. Also, it may be distracting to scroll up and down the screen at first. Practice thoroughly reading articles on computer screens. This is different than casually surfing the internet. Try to read a few articles in English every day to get comfortable reading on the computer screen. This does make a difference.

**Critical reasoning questions** test one's ability to evaluate and apply data.

***Critical Reasoning Tip:*** Pay close attention to the question. Make sure to understand the question fully and answer exactly what the question is asking. Sometimes there will be data in critical reasoning questions that are irrelevant to the question. Avoid information that doesn't apply to the particular question asked.

**Sentence correction questions** test English grammar.

***Sentence Correction Tip:*** This is often the most difficult question type for non-native English speaking test takers. It tests American English grammar and often is difficult for native speakers of American English. It's important to review English grammar for this section. Try to get a book or use the internet. It's not necessary to get into extremely complicated linguistic concepts. But even a general review of grammar will help with the sentence correction questions.

You may find the following websites helpful resources for review.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English\\_grammar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_grammar)

[http://esl.about.com/library/lessons/blgr\\_beginner\\_review1.htm](http://esl.about.com/library/lessons/blgr_beginner_review1.htm)

## **Quantitative Section**

The Quantitative section features two different question types: *problem solving* and *data sufficiency*. For both question types, lots of information is present in both the question and the answer choices presented.

### **Problem Solving Tips**

***Tip 1:*** Try to understand the question as much as possible before attempting to answer it. You avoid wasting time and picking incorrect answer choices this way.

***Tip 2:*** Try to use the answer choices to your advantage. Try to eliminate answer choices that are obviously wrong. This increases one's chance of picking a correct answer.

***Tip 3:*** Often it is useful to use answer choices to figure out equations or understand numerical relations within the components of the question.

***Tip 4:*** Brushing up on general mathematical topics will be helpful for the problem solving questions. Understanding concepts like odd, even, prime, composite, geometrical relationships, multiplicative properties, etc., will allow you to answer questions more quickly without a lot of confusing arithmetic. It's easy to make careless errors when you're taking the exam; so, it is good to have a basic understanding of math topics. You can streamline your efforts to answer the questions.

### **Data Sufficiency Tip**

***Tip 1:*** While problem solving questions are more familiar to test takers, data sufficiency questions are particular to the GMAT. The goal of Data Sufficiency questions is not to necessarily solve problems, but to understand if enough information is present in the question in order to solve it. This is where test taking skills and knowledge of math concepts comes in most handy. For example, in a circle the measure of a radius is equal to twice the measure of the diameter. If you know the size of the radius, you have enough data to calculate the size of the diameter.

***Overall Quantitative Tip:*** ETS has a topical math review for the GRE that you can download at the link below. While the GMAT and the GRE are different exams and the GRE does not feature data sufficiency questions, many of the underlying math concepts serve as a good review for both exams. Visit <http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/GRE/pdf/GREmathPractice.pdf>

## **Analytical Writing Section**

When writing essays don't try to impress the readers by using words or sentence structures that you find difficult. Writing in a style with which you are comfortable is important. Answer the question as clearly as possible.

***Tip 1:*** A good way to structure your essay is to introduce your point in the first paragraph, state your point, and give examples in the middle paragraphs, and then summarize your point in the last paragraph.

***Tip 2:*** Try to use your experiences when answering questions. If you can relate an unfamiliar topic to something familiar to you, usually you can write a stronger essay. Remember to stay on topic though.

***Tip 3:*** Try to save the last 5 to 10 minutes of the essay time to review what has been written. The best essays will be clear and answer the question effectively.

## **Structuring your Study**

It's important to practice before taking the actual exam. Lack of familiarity with this type of exam can create many obstacles. Starting with a general review, then working on practice questions, and finally building up to full practice exams will help increase your performance on the exam.

**Tip 1:** Toward the beginning of your preparation, try to review topics broadly. This is the time to refresh your knowledge of English grammar and mathematical concepts.

**Tip 2:** Acquire some practice questions. Start out just trying to answer the questions, applying the information from one's review. Don't worry about timing at first. After answering a few questions, review the answer choices and try to understand why certain answer choices are correct and why certain answer choices are incorrect. This will help you eliminate choices when you come across similar questions later.

**Tip 3:** As studies progress, try practicing with groups of questions. Start to time yourself pay attention to the kinds of questions and topics that are difficult for you. Review any content material with which you have trouble.

**Tip 4:** Closer to the test date, try to take at least one timed, practice GMAT exam. It's possible to find practice exams in paper format from bookstores and sometimes online. Try to take the paper exams first and then progress to the computer exams. This will best prepare you for your computer exam.

You can download a practice computer exam at the following link.

<http://www.mba.com/mba/TaketheGMAT/ToolsToHelpYouPrepare/GMATPrepProducts/FreeGMATPrepTestPreparationSoftware.htm> (Note, you will have to register with this MBA website.)

Additional test preparation materials may be purchased from [www.mba.com](http://www.mba.com) as well.

## **Changes to the GMAT**

The GMAT changed vendors some time ago, and as a result paper-based exams will no longer be administered. No changes to the content of the GMAT exam have been planned as of this writing other than cosmetic ones, e.g. some of the screens are different colors, etc. Also, instead of pencils and scrap paper, students taking the GMAT will be given markers and 2 erasable note boards.

## **Registering for the Exam**

Registration is online at [www.mba.com](http://www.mba.com). For sponsored students receiving payment vouchers, you just need to provide the voucher number at the time of online registration.

For students who work with IIE on university placement, it is very important that you identify IIE as a score recipient at the time of registration. **IIE's code is F0F-4J-28.**

## **When to take the exam**

Ideally, students seeking admission for the following August or September term should sit for the GMAT exam in October of the preceding year. Many U.S. business schools conduct first round selections in November or December of the preceding year. If you decide that you want to retake the exam, sufficient time remains to retake and have schools receive scores in time for admission consideration.

While it is not generally advisable to take the test too many times, you may be requested to retake the exam in order to meet minimum standards or to be more competitive for particular programs.

## **Sources**

[www.gmac.com](http://www.gmac.com) and [www.mba.com](http://www.mba.com)