

The GMAT **AVENGERS** **GUIDE**

Helen Xia



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INTRODUCTION

As the Community Manager on [Beat The GMAT](#), I always try to cater to the needs of our members. That's why I was happy to work with Helen Xia when she joined the School Champions team. Helen expressed a strong interest in forming a study group—she wanted to find a group of GMAT enthusiasts who would meet regularly to prep for the test. I instantly loved the idea, so we started working on making it happen. Helen's vision came to life when we launched the GMAT Avengers series on October 5, 2013.

GMAT Avengers is not only a series of events, it's also a way for students to learn to think through questions without the help of a tutor, a way for them to develop their own strategy and approach when it comes to beating the GMAT. The practice problems—varying from basic, to really difficult challenge questions—enable participants to be well prepared on test day and to eventually obtain a 700+ score.

Since our first live session, GMAT Avengers has grown in audience, reaching more than 100 participants every week. It's due to Helen's commitment and dedication that this has become one of the most beautiful Beat The GMAT success stories.

After a deep dive into each section of the GMAT exam, we felt that GMAT Avengers had reached the end of its first chapter. That's when I approached Helen and suggested putting together an e-book containing all the great content shared during the Facebook events. A few months have passed and we are finally ready to share this e-book with you, our amazing community.

Please note that this is not a book per se. It is more a collection of transcripts, tips, strategies, recommended readings, best practices, and challenge problems that should help you beat the GMAT. In addition to the main sections, we also included three Q&As in which reputed GMAT experts from Veritas Prep, Manhattan GMAT, and Economist GMAT Tutor have answered your questions on how to study for the exam.

The completion of this e-book does not mark the end of the GMAT Avengers initiative. As part of the second phase of the project, we invite you to join us every Saturday at noon (EST/EDT) on Facebook as we tackle specific question types.

Sorin Istrate

Beat The GMAT Community Manager

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hello, my name is Helen Xia. I am one of the Beat The GMAT MBA Watch School Champions for the 2013-2014 application cycle, and my goal is to help you with the entire GMAT preparation and B-school application process.

To give you a little bit of my background, I was born and raised in Mainland China until I was 10 years old. In 2002, my parents and I moved to Cambodia, where I lived until I came to America in 2009. At the age of 18, I traveled halfway across the world on my own to pursue my college education.

My four years at Campbell University went by in the blink of an eye. I feel like I've accomplished so much yet so little. I started out in the professional golf management program and completed a total of 16 months of internships around the United States before I changed my major ... during my last semester of college. You might think I'm crazy but I managed to finish with two majors, marketing and business administration, and only six credit hours away from my golf management degree. I just want to say that if you put your mind to something, you will get there!

College wasn't exactly what I had expected. To be honest, I am a little disappointed. I thought I was going to learn so much more; but that's what grad schools are for, right? In 2012, I started researching business schools and the GMAT. That's when I discovered Beat The GMAT. In August 2013, I took on the role of an MBA Watch School Champion with Beat The GMAT.

Preparing for the GMAT is a daunting task. As we all know, studying for the GMAT is a rather long process and even a struggle, especially when you are doing it on your own (and I am sure a lot of you are in the same boat). Since it requires a lot time and dedication, I find it hard to stay motivated time after time.

My personal struggle with the GMAT has led to the birth of the GMAT Avengers Study Group. Study groups are very effective because group members can motivate one another and act as your accountability buddies. I have gotten so much positive feedback from our weekly sessions that we decided to compile the transcripts from earlier sessions into an e-book. I hope you find these transcripts, along with the practice questions, helpful in your GMAT studying.

The GMAT Avengers Study Group meets every Saturday at noon EST/EDT. If you are in need of a little motivation or encouragement, please [join us on Facebook](#) next Saturday!

Helen Xia



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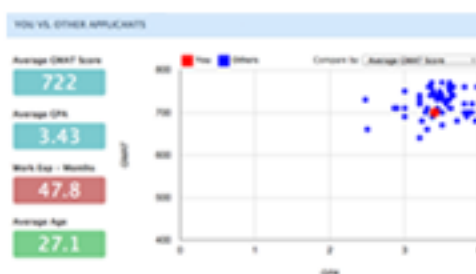
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Arithmetic

Basic Operations: Order of Operations

P – Parentheses

E – Exponents

M – Multiplication

D – Division

A – Addition

S – Subtraction

Basic Operations Model Questions

Example Problem 1

$$30 - 5 \times 4 + \frac{(7 - 3)^2}{8} = ?$$

Example Problem 2

The symbol “x” represents one of the following operations: multiplication, division, addition, or subtraction. What is the value of 1×1 ?

1. $4 \times 2 = 2$

2. $0 \times 3 = 0$

Number Properties: Key Terms

Real Numbers – all numbers on the number line. All of the numbers on the GMAT are real.

Integers – all of the numbers with no fractional or decimal parts: multiples of 1. Negative numbers and 0 are integers too.

Rational Numbers – all of the numbers that can be expressed as the ratio of two integers (all integers and fractions).

Irrational Numbers – all real numbers that are not rational, both positive and negative (e.g., π , $\sqrt{3}$)

Number Properties: Signed Numbers

| Multiplication | Division |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| $(-) \times (+) = (-)$ | $(-) \div (+) = (-)$ |
| $(-) \times (-) = (+)$ | $(-) \div (-) = (+)$ |
| $(+) \times (+) = (+)$ | $(+) \div (+) = (+)$ |

Number Properties: Divisibility

- 2 – Even integer
- 8 – Integer is divisible by 2 three times
- 3 – Sum of digits are divisible by 3
- 9 – Sum of digits is divisible by 9
- 4 – Integer is divisible by 2 twice or last 2 digits are divisible by 4
- 10 – Last digit is 0
- 5 – Last digit is 0 or 5
- 11 – Take the 1st digit, subtract 2nd, add 3rd, subtract 4th, add 5th...If the sum is divisible by 11 (may be 0), the number is divisible by 11
- 6 – Integer is divisible by 2 AND 3

Number Properties: Odd/Even Properties

- $(\text{even}) + (\text{even}) = (\text{even})$
- $(\text{even}) \times (\text{even}) = (\text{even})$
- $(\text{odd}) + (\text{odd}) = (\text{even})$
- $(\text{odd}) \times (\text{odd}) = (\text{odd})$
- $(\text{even}) + (\text{odd}) = (\text{odd})$
- $(\text{even}) \times (\text{odd}) = (\text{even})$

Number Properties Model Questions

Example Problem 3

The sum of 5 different positive 2-digit integers is 130. What is the highest possible value of the largest of these integers?

A) 88

B) 84

C) 78

D) 74

E) 68

Example Problem 4

If a and b are integers and the sum of ab and b is odd, which of the following could be true?

A) a and b are both odd
B) a is even and b is odd
C) a is odd and b is even

Example Problem 5

A wire is cut into 3 equal parts. The resulting segments are then cut into 4, 6, and 8 equal parts, respectively. If each of the resulting segments has an integer length, what is the minimum length of the wire?

Decimals

Get familiar with the following:

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| $\frac{1}{2} = 0.5$ | $\frac{1}{6} = 0.166$ | 315.246 |
| $\frac{1}{3} = 0.33$ | $\frac{1}{8} = 0.125$ | 3 – hundreds |
| $\frac{2}{3} = 0.66$ | $\frac{1}{9} = 0.11$ | 1 – tens |
| $\frac{1}{4} = 0.25$ | $\frac{1}{10} = 0.10$ | 5 – units |
| $\frac{1}{5} = 0.20$ | $\frac{1}{11} = 0.09$ | 2 – tenths |
| | | 4 – hundredths |
| | | 6 – thousandths |

Decimal Model Questions

Example Problem 6

Is the hundredths of the decimal D greater than 5?

1. The tenths digit of 10D is 7
2. The thousandths digit of D/10 is 7

Example Problem 7

$0.675 \times 0.42 = ?$

Example Problem 8

$\frac{0.675}{0.25} = ?$

Percentage

Get familiar with:

- $\frac{1}{4} = 0.25 = 25\%$
- $\frac{1}{2} = 0.50 = 50\%$
- $\frac{1}{3} = 0.33 = 33\%$
- $\frac{1}{5} = 0.20 = 20\%$

Move the decimal place:

- 10% of 6 = 0.6
- 10% of 60 = 6
- 10% of 600 = 60

Percentage Model Question

Example Problem 9

A grocer buys apples for 63¢ per pound. If 10% of the apples go bad and he still wants to make a 20% profit over his purchase price, what should be the sales price?

- A) 66¢
- B) 70¢
- C) 75¢
- D) 77¢
- E) 84¢

Fractions

$\frac{x}{y}$ ← numerator

← denominator

- To multiply fractions, just multiply the numerators together and multiply the denominators together
- To add/subtract fractions, find the common denominator and then add/subtract the numerators as necessary

Ratios

$x = 5$: $y = 2$

↑

↑

women men

$x : y$ 5 women : 2 men

7 people in total ($x + y$ = the whole)

- Ratios can be expressed as a fraction and vice versa
- Ratios can be converted to a percentage or a decimal. They can also be cross multiplied, reduced, or expanded just like a fraction

Ratio Model Question

Example Problem 10

If $\frac{1}{2}$ of the number of white mice in a certain laboratory is $\frac{1}{8}$ of the total number of mice, and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the number of gray mice is $\frac{1}{9}$ of the total number of mice, then what is the ratio of the number of gray mice to the number of white mice?

- A) 2:3
- B) 3:4
- C) 4:5
- D) 8:9
- E) 16:27

Answer Key

1., 2; 2., C; 3., B; 4., B; 5., 54; 6., D; 7., 0.2835; 8., 2.7; 9., E; 10., B



Geometry

NOTE:

Be sure to have a pen and paper close by to illustrate the questions. Figures given are usually not drawn to scale; therefore, do not rely on the figures, but rather your logic.

Lines

Line – a geometrical object that is straight, infinitely long, and infinitely thin. Two points determine a straight line. Given any two points, there is exactly one straight line that passes through them.

Segment – a section of a straight line of FINITE length with two endpoints.

Midpoint – the point that divides a line segment into two equal parts.

Angles

Angle – formed by two intersecting lines or line segments. The point of intersection is called the vertex of the angle.

Types of Angles

Acute angle – measures between 0 and 90 degrees

Right angle – measures exactly 90 degrees

Obtuse angle – measures between 90 and 180 degrees

Straight angle – half of a circle, measure exactly 180 degrees

- The sum of the measures of the angles on one side of a straight line is 180 degrees.
- The sum of the measures of the angles around a point is 360 degrees.

Supplementary angles – two angles that together make up a straight angle

Complementary angles – two angles that together make up a right angle

Vertical angles – a pair of opposite angles formed by two intersecting line segments

Slope

Slope = Rise/Run = Change in Y/Change in X

Model Questions

Example Problem 1

What is the slope of the line containing the two points (8, -4) and (-13, 10)?

- A) -3
- B) $-\frac{3}{2}$
- C) $-\frac{2}{3}$
- D) $\frac{2}{3}$
- E) $\frac{3}{2}$

Example Problem 2

The slope of the line that passes through K (-3, -4) and T (w, -2) is -1. What is the value of w?

- A) -5
- B) -3
- C) -1
- D) 1
- E) 3

Example Problem 3

The midpoint between A (3, 2) and B (5, -6) is on the line given by the equation $kx + 3y - 6 = 0$. What is the value of k?

- A) -3
- B) -2
- C) 1
- D) 2
- E) 3

Example Problem 4

If an arc with length 12π is $\frac{3}{4}$ of the circumference of a circle, what is the shortest distance between the endpoints of the arc?

- A) 4
- B) $4\sqrt{2}$
- C) 8
- D) $8\sqrt{2}$
- E) $8\sqrt{3}$

Example Problem 5

The volume of a solid cube is 64cm^3 . If a bug is walking on the surface of the cube from point A to point Z, what is the shortest distance it can travel?

- A) 8
- B) $4\sqrt{3}$
- C) $4 + 4\sqrt{2}$
- D) $4\sqrt{5}$
- E) $16\sqrt{2}$

Example Problem 6

A cylindrical piece of wood will be cut into identical cubes. The diameter of the cylinder is $6\sqrt{2}$ ft. and the height is 16 ft. If the edge of the cubes must be at least 4 ft., what is the greatest total volume of the resulting cubes?

- A) 256 ft^2
- B) 375 ft^2
- C) 432 ft^2
- D) 459 ft^2
- E) 496 ft^2

Answer Key

1., C; 2., A; 3., E; 4., D; 5., D; 6., C



Word Problems

Not sure if you have noticed a pattern but I love lists. Every session includes a “steps method” and we are going to do the same for Word Problems this session.

- Read the question stem and assign variables. Do NOT! I repeat, do NOT read the entire word problem all at once. Reading the question stem first will help you determine what exactly you are solving for. I personally like to assign the variable x to what I am solving for. However, if there are more than one variable, I like to use easily identifiable letters.
- Translate the question. This is the most important part of solving any word problem. To solve each problem, you must be able to translate the question into math equations correctly. Some of the most common word problem types are: speed/distance, work/rate, and interest rate. I will talk about each one with the corresponding formulas in just a moment.
- Solve for the variable. Once you have the equations set up, all you need to do is simple math. Remember, the GMAT doesn't really test your math skills so setting up the equations correctly has won you half the battle.

Example Problem 1

Jacob is now 12 years younger than Michael. If in 9 years Michael will be twice as old as Jacob, how old will Jacob be in 4 years?

- A) 3
- B) 7
- C) 15
- D) 21
- E) 25

If you started by reading the question stem you would know that the question is asking for Jacob's age. Since both Jacob and Michael's ages are unknown, let Jacob's age be J and Michael's age be M .

Next, let's set up the equations:

- $J = M - 12$
- $M + 9 = 2(J+9)$
- $J + 4 = ?$

Use equations 1 and 2 to solve for J (Jacob's current age) and then find out his age in 4 years. So how old would Jacob be in 4 years?

Now let's take a look at the different question types. Along with the formulas, one model question of each question type will be provided for you to solve.

Speed/Distance

- D – distance
- R – rate or speed
- T – time
- $D = r \times t$ or $r = \frac{d}{t}$ or $t = \frac{d}{r}$

Example Problem 2

A car drove from Town A to Town B without stopping. The car traveled the first 40 miles of its journey at an average speed of 25 miles per hour. What was the car's average speed, in miles per hour, for the remaining 120 miles if the car's average speed for the entire trip was 40 miles per hour?

- A) 28
- B) 48
- C) 50
- D) 55
- E) 70

Work/Rate

This question type is quite tricky because the rate is 1/time taken to complete the task.

$1/\text{time taken by A} + 1/\text{time taken by B} \dots = 1/\text{time taken by A, B, } \dots \text{ together}$

Example Problem 3

Working together, John, David, and Roger require $2\frac{1}{4}$ hours to complete a certain task, if each of them works at his respective constant rate. If John alone can complete the task in $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours and David alone can complete the task in 9 hours, how many hours would it take Roger to complete the task, working alone?

- A) $2\frac{1}{3}$
- B) $4\frac{1}{2}$
- C) $6\frac{3}{4}$
- D) 9
- E) 12

Interest Rate

- P – principal
- R – interest rate (%)
- T – time
- $P \times R \times T = \text{total yield}$

Example Problem 4

Last year a certain bond with a face value of \$5,000 yielded 8% of its value in interest. If that interest was approximately 6.5% of the bond's selling price, approximately what was the bond's selling price?

- A) \$4,063
- B) \$5,323
- C) \$5,351
- D) \$6,000
- E) \$6,154

Answer Key

1., B; 2., C; 3., D; 4., E



Data Sufficiency

Overview

According to GMATPrepNow, DS tests your ability to:

- analyze a quantitative question
- determine whether information is relevant
- determine whether information is sufficient to solve a problem

Data Sufficiency makes up about 40% of the quantitative section (about 15 out of 37 questions).

Answer Choices

Since the 5 answer choices are ALWAYS the same, it is important to memorize them to save you time on the test.

- A) Statement 1 ALONE is sufficient, but statement 2 alone is not sufficient to answer the question asked.
- B) Statement 2 ALONE is sufficient, but statement 1 alone is not sufficient to answer the question asked.
- C) BOTH statements 1 and 2 TOGETHER are sufficient to answer the question asked, but NEITHER statement ALONE is sufficient to answer the question asked.
- D) EACH statement ALONE is sufficient to answer the question asked.
- E) Statements 1 and 2 TOGETHER are NOT sufficient to answer the question asked, and additional data specific to the problem are needed.

Elimination

If Statement 1 is sufficient, immediately eliminate answer choices B, C, and E.

If Statement 1 is insufficient, immediately eliminate answer choices A and D.

If Statement 2 is sufficient, immediately eliminate answer choices A, C, and E.

If Statement 2 is insufficient, immediately eliminate answer choices B and D.

Examples:

Example Problem 1

What is the value of x ?

1. $x < 10$ 2. $2x = 6$

Example Problem 2

What is the value of x ?

1. $2x = 6$ 2. $x + 2 = 5$

DS Strategies

Decide if the question is a YES/NO question or a VALUE question.

YES/NO: Is $x < y$?

VALUE: What is the value of x ?

Identify the range of possible answers after reading the question.

- Using example from earlier, what is the value of x ? Possible answers are ANY NUMBER!
- EXAMPLE: If x is a positive integer less than 10 and $x + 2$ is a prime number, what is the value of x ? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, ~~7~~, 8, 9.

Simplify the question by writing it out in an equation. To me, math is meant to be written in numbers and equations. Using the last example, I would write $0 < x < 10$ (this immediately tells you that x is between 0 and 10). $x + 2 = \text{prime number}$. Try writing those down on a piece of paper. Don't these equations tell you more than the word question does? This strategy also really helps when you are evaluating the statements separately.

Determine what information is needed to answer the question.

Example: What is the average of w , x , and y ?

$$\text{Average} = \frac{w + x + y}{3}$$

In this case, as long as you know the sum of w , x , and y , you can find the average of the 3 variables.

Tackling Data Sufficiency 1-2-3

Step 1: Focus on the question stem! All 4 strategies discussed above help you focus on the question stem. Going forward with the model questions, try using these strategies as a guideline to answer each question.

Step 2: Evaluate each statement SEPARATELY! A lot of people start analyzing statement 2 with the information statement 1 gives in mind. This very common mistake is dangerous because you are not giving statement 2 a chance to be analyzed alone and you have already jumped into evaluating both statements TOGETHER. You do NOT need to analyze statement 1 first and move on to statement 2. Read both statements and choose the easier one to begin with! When you move on to the next statement, forget what was told in statement 1 and focus ONLY on the question stem. Writing each question out in equations comes in handy because you have already summarized the question.

Step 3: Evaluate the statements together ONLY IF NECESSARY! ONLY evaluate the statements together when statement 1 AND statement 2 are INSUFFICIENT.

Model Questions

Example Problem 3

When k is divided by t , the quotient is 6 and the remainder is 4. What is the value of k ?

1. $t = 4$ 2. $k = 2t + 20$

Example Problem 4

If x is a positive integer less than 10 and $x + 2$ is a prime number, what is the value of x ?

1. $x + 3$ is the square of an integer 2. $x + 7$ is the cube of an integer

Example Problem 5

What is the area of rectangle ABCD?

1. Perimeter = 24 2. The lengths of AB and BC are prime numbers

Example Problem 6

Store X sells every hat for the same price and store X sells every tablecloth for the same price. What is the total cost of 5 hats and 7 tablecloths at store X?

1. The total cost of 4 hats and 12 tablecloths at store X is \$184.
2. The total cost of 1 hat and 3 tablecloths at store X is \$46.

Answer Key

1. B; 2. D; 3. D; 4., D; 5., C; 6., E



Recommended Reading

[*Don't Be Fooled by Graphs on the GMAT*](#) by Veritas Prep

[*Tackling Multi-Shape Geometry on the GMAT*](#) by Manhattan GMAT

[*Three Steps to Better Geometry*](#) by Manhattan GMAT

[*Recognizing Similar Triangles*](#) by Veritas Prep

[*The 4 Math Strategies Everyone Must Master- Part 1*](#) by Manhattan GMAT

[*The 4 Math Strategies Everyone Must Master-Part 2*](#) by Manhattan GMAT

[*Top 10 Data Sufficiency Tips*](#) by Knewton

[*Making Abstract Data Sufficiency Questions More Concrete*](#) by Veritas Prep

[*Tonya Harding Teaches Data Sufficiency*](#) by Veritas Prep

[*GMAT Quant: Reflect Before You Work*](#) by Manhattan GMAT

[*GMAT On Demand: Testing Cases in Data Sufficiency*](#) by Knewton

[*GMAT On Demand: Don't Solve Data Sufficiency Problems!*](#) by Knewton

[*Intelligence Is Insufficient on GMAT Data Sufficiency*](#) by Kaplan GMAT Prep

[*Avoiding the C-Trap in Data Sufficiency*](#) by Manhattan GMAT

[*The Data Sufficiency Award System*](#) by Veritas Prep

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Sentence Correction

NOTE: Each SC question is either partially or entirely underlined. Answer choice A is ALWAYS the same as the underlined portion. Answer choices B, C, D, and E are four alternative ways to express the underlined portion.

Stacy Koprince published an article on Beat the GMAT titled [*How to Do Any Sentence Correction Problem—Part 1*](#). I highly recommend reading it thoroughly to learn this test-taking skill.

Below is my summary of the 5 steps along with some additional thoughts.

Step 1: Take a first glance (look at the problem type, the length of the sentence, and the length of the underlined portion or the answers). With short answer choices, it is easier to spot the errors. Errors can sometimes be spotted from the answer choices. However, with long answer choices, you must determine if the error lies in the meaning, structure, modifiers, or parallelism.

Step 2: Read the sentence. Make sure to carefully read the entire sentence and not just the underlined portions. Fully understanding the meaning of the sentence can help you spot the error.

Step 3: Find a starting point. Hopefully by the time you finished reading the sentence, you have a pretty good idea of what the error is. If not, let's move on to the next step.

Step 4: Eliminate answers. Immediately cross off answer choice A when you spot an error in the original sentence. If you are unsure of the error, start grouping answer choices.

Step 5: Repeat steps 3 and 4.

Grouping/Eliminating Answers

I usually look at the verbs, modifiers, and generally just the first word in the answer choices. For the example below, I would group answer choices A with D; B with E; leaving C on its own.

Example Problem 1

Several consumer protection agencies have filed suit, seeking to bar distributors from advertising treatments for baldness that brings no discernible improvement and may even result in potential harm.

- A) that brings no discernible improvement and may even result in potential harm.
- B) that bring no discernible improvement and may even prove harmful.
- C) bringing no discernible improvement and even being harmful.
- D) that brings no discernible improvement and may even potentially result in harm being done.
- E) that bring no discernible improvement, maybe even resulting in harm

This question is obviously testing the verb form. Now take a minute to read the sentence and determine if there is an error. If you spot an error, immediately cross off answer choices A and D. Here is a little trick for you: always identify the subject and verb of the sentence! If you did that when you first read the sentence, you would know that the sentence is wrong because the subject is plural but the verb is singular. From there you would only have B and E left. What do you think is the correct answer?

5 Most Commonly Tested Errors

The 5 errors you'll see most often on the GMAT have to do with idioms, subject-verb agreement, pronouns, parallelism, and modifiers. Here are summaries of each type, along with study tips and a sample questions

Idioms

These are expressions that are specific to the English language. You have to be familiar with a variety of idioms that can show up on GMAT questions in the Verbal Section.

How to study: Idiom flashcards (I recommend the free flash cards provided by Beat the GMAT on SC) and idiom study sheet (you can find one online). I have put together a list of common idioms and you can [find that here](#). One of the best ways to learn these idioms is to have a handwritten list of your own. Every time you encounter a new idiom in a practice problem, write it down. And of course, make sure you review the list regularly.

Example Problem 2

According to some economists, the July decrease in unemployment so that it was the lowest in two years suggests that the gradual improvement in the job market is continuing.

- A) so that it was the lowest in two years
- B) so that it was the lowest two-year rate
- C) to what would be the lowest in two years
- D) to a two-year low level
- E) to the lowest level in two years

Subject-Verb Agreement

The subject and verb of a sentence must agree. A singular subject goes with a singular verb; a plural subject goes with a plural verb. It all sounds really easy right? Well, on the GMAT, test makers like to throw a long phrase between the subject and the verb.

How to study: Identify the subject and the verb of each SC question you come across, even if the error does not lie in subject-verb agreement. This makes it a lot easier when you have to identify this error type.

Example Problem 3

Reduced income, often caused by job loss, rank currently as the leading reason that homeowners face foreclosure, surpassing even mortgage payment increases, health problems, and divorce.

- A) rank currently as the leading reason that homeowners face foreclosure, surpassing even mortgage payment increases, health problems, and divorce
- B) ranks currently as the leading reason that homeowners face foreclosure, surpassing even mortgage payment increases, health problems, and divorce
- C) are the leading reason that homeowners face foreclosure, even surpassing mortgage payment increases, health problems, and divorce
- D) have been ranked as the leading reason that homeowners face foreclosure, surpassing even mortgage payment increases, health problems, and divorce
- E) ranking currently as the leading reason that homeowners face foreclosure, even surpassing mortgage payment increases, health problems, and divorce

Parallelism

Parallelism is characterized by a list of phrases or items in a sentence. All phrases or items in a sentence must be in the same grammatical form (e.g., all nouns,

adjectives, prepositions, gerunds, clauses, etc.) to be parallel.

How to study: Look for commas and recurring trends (in list form) in the sentence and find the answer that best aligns the trends.

Example Problem 4

After the Vietnam war Bettye Granther, a U.S. Army nurse, continued her efforts on behalf of injured Vietnamese children, providing medical care, helping to reunite estranged families, and the establishment of a fund for the children's future education.

- A) the establishment of a fund for the children's future education
- B) the establishing of a fund for the future education of children
- C) establishing a fund for the children's future education
- D) establishing a fund for the childrens' future education
- E) the establishment of a fund for the childrens' future education

Pronouns

Pronouns are words that replace a noun, such as they, he, she, and it. The nouns that are replaced by pronouns are called antecedents. The most commonly tested pronoun error is pronoun-antecedent agreement. The pronouns are either ambiguous or do not agree with the noun in number.

How to study: Get in the habit of identifying pronouns and antecedents in all SC questions, even if the error does not lie in pronoun-antecedent agreement. This reinforces your skill to identify the error more quickly and easily.

Example Problem 5

Although the term "customer service" may imply supporting and assisting customers, they have come to signify widely ranging work in the financial sector, from managing basic inquiries and complaints to supplying analysis and investment advice.

- A) imply supporting and assisting customers, they have come to signify widely ranging
- B) imply supporting and assisting customers, it has come to signify a wide range of
- C) imply customer support and assistance, it has signified widely ranging
- D) have implied customer support and assistance, it has signified a wide range of
- E) have implied supporting and assisting customers, they have come to signify a wide range of

Modifiers

Modifiers are words and phrases that describe nouns and verbs. Remember that adjectives only modify nouns and adverbs modify verbs and adjectives. On the GMAT, modifiers either do not agree with the modifying nouns or verbs, or they are incorrectly placed. Look out for sentences with modifying clauses that are separated by commas. Those are often incorrectly placed to alter the meaning of the sentence.

How to study: Modifiers are very tricky. A lot of the times a sentence may sound correct but has a misplaced modifier. I recommend studying from a good grammar book since it is a more difficult topic. Make sure to identify what each modifier is describing. As long as you understand the meaning of the sentence, it should be easy to determine what the modifier describes.

Example Problem 6

Currently 26 billion barrels a year, world consumption of oil is rising at a rate of 2 percent annually.

A) world consumption of oil is rising at a rate of

B) the world is consuming oil at an increasing rate of

C) the world’s oil is being consumed at the increasing rate of

D) the rise in the rate of the world’s oil consumption is

E) oil is consumed by the world at an increasing rate of

Answer Key

1., B; 2., E; 3., B; 4., C; 5., B; 6., A



Critical Reasoning

Are you a logical thinker? Do you tend to think critically and analyze the situation from many different aspects? If you answered yes to these questions, your critical thinking skills may be of big help to your GMAT verbal section. However, if you answered no, don't worry! I am going to discuss a few strategies to help you tackle Critical Reasoning. Fortunately, it is a skill that you can learn and practice.

Just like AWA topics, CR topics are very general and do not require any specific knowledge. Out of the 41 verbal questions, approximately 12 questions are Critical Reasoning.

When tackling CR questions, you first need to stay calm. I don't know about you, but I get overwhelmed when I see longer passages. Turns out I was approaching the questions wrong. Instead of going straight to the argument, you should be reading the question stem first. If you are at all familiar with CR, you know that question stems provide you a general guideline.

4 Steps to Answering CR questions

Step 1: Identify the question type. The most common CR question types are weakening/strengthening the argument, inference, and assumptions. Every CR question stem contains a key word or phrase that helps you identify the question type.

Step 2: Paraphrase the argument. Now you can go ahead and read the argument. Do not just read the argument, but read the argument with the question stem in mind. Paraphrasing each argument not only helps you better understand the argument, but also helps you look for potential problems.

Step 3: Predict an answer. Before looking at the answer choices, form ideas of possible answers to each question.

Step 4: Evaluate the answer choices. If you have already predicted one or more answers, you should have a pretty good idea what the right answer would be when you read the answer choices. Eliminate any that are not remotely close to what you have predicted and then evaluate each of the remaining. Remember to pick the BEST answer!

Here are sample questions for each type:

Strengthen the Argument

Example Problem 1

If participation in the honors creative writing class were limited to graduate students and those undergraduates who had received at least a B+ in composition, most of the undergraduate students would be forced to take the regular creative writing class. Such a reduction in undergraduate enrollment would reduce the percentage of failing grades in the honors class.

Which of the following, if true, would most strengthen the conclusion drawn in sentence 2 above?

- A) Graduate students have all scored at least B+ in composition.
- B) The honors creative writing course is experiencing overcrowding due to increases in graduate enrollment.
- C) Many undergraduates would work harder to score B+ in composition rather than be excluded from honors creative writing.
- D) The number of failing grades in honors creative writing has decreased in recent years.
- E) Undergraduates who scored lower than B+ in composition are responsible for a disproportionate percentage of failing grades in honors creative writing.

Weaken the Argument

Example Problem 2

In a certain state, the rate at which inhabitants of City X contract a certain disease is significantly lower than the rate at which inhabitants of City Y contract the disease. So if a couple originally from City Y relocates to City X and raises a family there, their children will be significantly less likely to contract this disease than they would had they remained in City Y.

Which of the following, if true, would most seriously weaken the conclusion drawn in the passage?

- A) Many health experts do not believe that moving to City X will lead to a significant increase in the average person's immunity to the disease.
- B) The mayor of City Y has falsely claimed that statistics relating to the incidence of the disease in his city are not accurate.
- C) The lower incidence of the disease in City X can be ascribed mostly to genetically determined factors.
- D) Some inhabitants of City Y possess a greater immunity to the disease than do the healthiest inhabitants of City X.
- E) Smog levels in City X are significantly lower than those of any other city in the state.

Conclusion/Inference

Example Problem 3

A researcher has discovered that steel containing Element X is stronger and more flexible than ordinary steel because Element X reduces the occurrence of microscopic fractures. The level of Element X in much of the steel produced in Canada is naturally high because the ore deposits from which the steel is produced also contain Element X.

Which of the following can be correctly inferred from the statements above?

- A) Steel from Canada is stronger and more flexible than steel from any other country.
- B) Steel that is not from Canada is highly likely to develop microscopic fractures after years of use.
- C) Producing steel from ore deposits containing Element X is the best way to make steel that is stronger and more flexible.
- D) Some steel produced in Canada is less likely to develop microscopic fractures than other steel.
- E) Steel produced from Canadian ore deposits contains the highest levels of Element X found in any steel.

Assumption

Example Problem 4

Retail clothing stores should hold “one-day-only” sales to clear merchandise that has been returned because it is defective in some way. The stores should sell this merchandise for up to 70 percent less than the original retail price. Stores will find these sales to be an effective way of getting rid of defective merchandise as long as they inform customers that the discounted merchandise is nonreturnable.

The author assumes which of the following about the “one-day-only” sale merchandise in predicting the effectiveness of these sales?

- A) The defects in the merchandise are not so significant that customers will be unwilling to pay even the sale price.
- B) The rate of returns when merchandise is new makes these “one-day-only” sales key to a store’s profitability.
- C) Too few shoppers purchase merchandise at full retail price.
- D) If these sales become popular, stores will have to have them more often.
- E) The majority of the “one-day-only” sale merchandise will be purchased by shoppers who would otherwise not shop at those stores.

Flawed Argument

Example Problem 5

Time and time again, it has been shown that students who attend colleges with low faculty/student ratios get the most well-rounded education. As a result, when my children are ready for college, I'll be sure they attend a school with a very small student population.

Which of the following, if true, identifies the greatest flaw in the reasoning above?

- A) A low faculty/student ratio is the effect of a well-rounded education, not its source.
- B) Intelligence should be considered the result of childhood environment, not advanced education.
- C) A very small student population does not, by itself, ensure a low faculty/student ratio.
- D) Parental desires and preference rarely determine a child's choice of a college or university.
- E) Students must take advantage of the low faculty/student ratio by intentionally choosing small classes.

Answer Key

1., E; 2., C; 3. D; 4., E; 5., C



Reading Comprehension

Besides problem solving, reading comprehension is probably the question type that you are most familiar with, especially if you have taken the SAT or ACT. Even if you haven't, you still read something every day and process the information.

On the GMAT you will see 4 RC passages on the topics of business, social science, biological science, or physical science. You might be wondering why we are being tested on science when we are trying to get our master's degree in business. It's because RC tests our critical reading skills rather than our knowledge on the subject matter.

According to Kaplan, RC tests your ability to do the following:

- Summarize the main idea of a passage.
- Understand logical relationships between facts and concepts.
- Make inferences based on information in a text.
- Analyze the logical structure of a passage.
- Deduce the author's tone and attitude about a topic from the text.

There are 4 main types of RC questions: Global, Detail, Inference, and Logic. However, we are going to discuss only the general strategies for Reading Comprehension today.

Read the Entire Passage

This is a controversial topic. While many people say skim over the passage or read only the first sentence of each paragraph to get a general idea of the passage, many others suggest reading each and every word the first time. We will talk a bit more about how to read the passage in just a little bit.

Jot Down Notes

While reading the passage for the first time, make good use of your note board so you don't have to re-read the passage before even going into the questions. I remember taking the TOEFL 5 years ago and writing down notes for the Short Passage section. Sadly, I think I totally defeated the purpose of note taking. Knowing what the questions generally ask can help you take more effective notes. Below are the most tested areas in RC:

- Main idea or purpose
- Organization/structure of the passage
- Tone/attitude of the author

Look for Key Words

There are many words used in these passages that tell us important information. For example, “moreover” tells us that the author is continuing with a stated idea; “therefore” leads to a conclusion; and “however” brings up a contradiction. [Here is a list](#) of transitional words that can help you read the RC passages more effectively.

Refer Back to the Passage

There is a reason that the passage remains on the monitor through all 3-4 questions. USE IT! Your notes are there to help you remember the idea of the passage, but DO refer back to the passage for the best answer! Here’s an expert exclusive from Kaplan: “Many Reading Comprehension questions have wrong answers based on information that is actually true but not mentioned in the passage. So if you know the subject, be careful. And if you don’t know the subject, be happy—some wrong answers won’t be tempting!” Either way, going back to the passage to find THE answer will get you some points.

5 Common Errors

While doing research on RC, I stumbled upon [this article](#) by David Ragsdale, in which he writes about the five errors in reading comprehension strategy. Feel free to read the article on your own, but I am going to share my take on these 5 errors.

1) Reading the passage in too much detail the first time

Like I said earlier, how to read the passage is quite controversial. I’m sure you’ve heard from some people that you should read each RC passage slowly and carefully before getting to the questions. I once studied with a fellow test taker and he told me to read each word and summarize each paragraph. Although this reading strategy may help some test takers, it is NOT necessary to read the entire passage in great detail the first time.

Mostly likely, when you reach the Verbal section, your brain is tired from the AWA, IR, and Quant sections and you are feeling anxious to finish the test. We get caught up trying to understand the subject matter of each passage when it’s not necessary. Don’t let the little details stress you out!

2) Not clarifying the question

Have you ever gone back to the passage to look for an answer with a couple of words in mind? Let's take a look at these three questions used in the article:

- “According to the passage, which of the following is one of the mating rituals of the moth?”
- “The author mentions the mating rituals of the moth in order to”
- “Which of the following can be inferred about the mating rituals of the moth?”

When reading any of these three questions, your eyes may be drawn to these words: “mating rituals of the moth” because this is what the question is asking about, right? So you go back to the passage where it talks about the mating ritual and then you think, wait what do I have to answer again? Now that is a waste of time because you now have to go back to the question and process the question. Make sure you fully process and understand the question stem rather than the subject matter before looking for the correct answers.

3) Failing to go back to the text to prove your answer

Again, make sure you go back to the passage to find each answer. Like the article said, not using the passage is like taking an open book test and not using the textbook. Of course, there is a chance of answering the questions correctly based on your memory of the passage. But since the answers are already there, why not double check to make sure you have the right answer?

4) Turning to the answer choices too soon

This is very similar to not clarifying the question. Instead of going straight to the answer choices after reading the question, go back to the passage and find the relevant information first. Re-read that sentence or paragraph, process the information, and form an answer in your head before looking through the answer choices. That way, you won't be as tempted by those distracting answer choices that look good.

5) Looking only for good stuff in the answer choices

The last step to answering any GMAT question is to evaluate answer choices. Elimination is a very helpful method to narrow down your answer choices. But sometimes, it's hard to eliminate because we are so focused on finding THE answer and not eliminating an answer that could be right. The best way to eliminate an answer choice is to find flaws in each. For each answer choice that you are unsure about, ask yourself “what is the strongest case I can make AGAINST this answer choice?”



Recommended Reading

[How to do Any Sentence Correction Problem- Part 1](#) by Stacey Koprince

[How to do Any Sentence Correction Problem- Part 2](#) by Stacey Koprince

[SC: Get the Most out of Your First Glance](#) by Manhattan GMAT

[The Perils of Grammar Puritanism on GMAT SC](#) by Knewton

[Test Your GMAT Sentence Correction Skills: The Explanations](#) by Kaplan GMAT Prep

[Become a Sentence Correction Master](#) by Veritas Prep

[Critical Reasoning Assumptions](#) by Kaplan GMAT Prep

[Easily Solve Method of Reasoning Questions](#) by Veritas Prep

[Relevant Information in Critical Reasoning Problems](#) by Economist GMAT Tutor

[Using Common Knowledge on GMAT Critical Reasoning: The Solution](#) by Kaplan GMAT Prep

[Critical Reasoning Tip: What's the Difference Between a Conclusion and an Argument?](#) by Knewton

[Be Proactive with Critical Reasoning!](#) by Veritas Prep

[5 Errors in Reading Comprehension Strategy](#) by Princeton Review

[What You should Avoid in Reading Comprehension](#) by Veritas Prep

[Beat GMAT Verbal: Reading Comprehension in a Nutshell](#) by Kaplan GMAT Prep

[Determine Scope in Reading Comprehension Questions](#) by Veritas Prep

[High Level GMAT RC Practice: Analysis and Answers](#) by Kaplan GMAT Prep

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INTEGRATED REASONING:

If you didn't look into the GMAT in 2011 (or earlier), you probably don't know that the Integrated Reasoning section is relatively new, and therefore, it is still in the experimentation stage. The IR section follows after the AWA, and, like the AWA, it is not considered to be a part of your overall GMAT score. However it is still important to do well! A good IR score could be a valuable asset to your MBA application, as the skills it measures are extremely important to business leaders.

Veritas Prep sums up the purpose of this section nicely: "The Integrated Reasoning section was designed to measure the test taker's ability to discern patterns and combine verbal and quantitative reasoning to solve problems." (read more in the full article, [How Important is Your Integrated Reasoning Score?](#)) This section includes 12 questions and you are allotted 30 minutes to complete it.

For some beginning strategy ideas for the IR section, check out Stacey Koprince's [article](#), which includes this summary of scores and percentile rankings:

Percentile | Score

92% | 8

81% | 7

67% | 6

52% | 5

37% | 4

24% | 3

12% | 2

0% | 1

In her article, Stacey tells us that the mean score is 4.34—and you obviously want to beat it to be above average. My goal is score a 6. What's yours? And yes, setting a goal is extremely helpful to your studying. I suggest that you set goals for each section of the test.

Don't Try to Answer Every Single Question

For those of you that have taken a full-length practice test, do you find the IR section extremely mind exhausting? I do! It is filled with data and information for us to analyze and interpret. Some of you might think that 30 minutes is not enough to answer all 12 questions. Well, you are probably right, but don't worry. You are just

trying to beat the mean score, not to score a perfect 8, which means you can afford to guess on some questions. HOWEVER, pick your “to-skip” questions strategically. Although IR tests a combination of your verbal and quantitative reasoning skills, some are more verbal-heavy, and some are more quant-heavy. If you are an expert in verbal, then go easy on the quant-heavy questions, and vice versa.

Here is a list of question types that are included in the IR section:

- Table questions
- Two-part questions
- Graph questions
- Multi-source reasoning questions

Ready to start practicing? [Check out 14 free IR questions provided by Veritas Prep.](#)

INTEGRATED REASONING:

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Recommended Reading

[*How Important is Your Integrated Reasoning Score?*](#) by Veritas Prep

[*3 Keys to Success on Integrated Reasoning*](#) by Manhattan GMAT


[*Strategies to Ace the Integrated Reasoning Section*](#) by Veritas Prep

[*8 Steps to an 8 on the Integrated Reasoning Section*](#) by Veritas Prep

[*How to Analyze an IR Graph Problem*](#) by Manhattan GMAT

[*How to Analyze an IR MSR Question*](#) by Manhattan GMAT

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The Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA) is the first thing you see on the GMAT. You have 30 minutes to analyze and write about an argument.

Although the essay score is not considered as apart of your MBA admission requirement, you obviously don't want to bomb it. You want to show the admission officers that you care and that you can write an articulated analytical essay.

Before I learned about the AWA template, I stressed over the essay. I definitely did not want to flunk it, but I also did not want to put in that much effort into an essay that doesn't really matter that much. Today, I want to break down the essay and talk about the template to make AWA less daunting.

But first I want to give you an overview of how the AWA is scored. Essays are scored based on the following:

- Overall quality of ideas about the issue and argument presented
- Overall ability to organize, develop, and express those ideas
- The relevant supporting reasons and examples used
- Ability to control the elements of standard written English

Essays are scored from 0-6:

- 6 is outstanding
- 5 is strong
- 4 is adequate
- 3 is limited
- 2 is seriously flawed
- 1 is fundamentally deficient
- 0 is unscorable

For a more detailed scoring guide, refer to the [Official GMAT](#).

The format of the essay is very straightforward, including an introduction, 2-3 body paragraphs, and a conclusion. An essay between 400 and 500 words is ideal. Remember that you are NOT to provide personal opinions on the issues addressed in the AWA, but to critique a given argument. Just like Critical Reasoning and Reading Comprehension, AWA does not require you to know the topic well. AWA generally covers essay topics of general interest. [Here is a list of essay questions that are currently being used on the GMAT.](#)

Let's move on to the actual template now. Yes a template! A template that you can get really familiar with and fill in the blanks on for test day. If you still remember those critique essays you have written in high school, this will look very basic to you.

Introduction (3-4 sentences)

Use this paragraph to show the scorer that you understand the argument fully. Summarize the argument and state what the author claims. Next, state that the argument is flawed because of whatever reason. A couple of phrases to stay away from are "I agree" and "I disagree."

Body Paragraph 1 (4-6 sentences) – Flaw 1

Lack of evidence is one of the most common flaws in the AWA. Analyze all given evidence and state why it are inadequate or ambiguous for the author to make his/her conclusion.

Body Paragraph 2 (4-6 sentences) – Flaw 2

Weak assumption is another common flaw in the AWA. Most conclusions stated in the passages are based on assumptions, rather than facts. Make sure you spot them and use them as a part of your analysis.

Body Paragraph 3 (4-6 sentences) – Flaw 3

This paragraph is optional. If you can only find two flaws and are running out of time, then go ahead and write your conclusion. But if you are able to spot three flaws, then devote this paragraph to the third flaw. Another common flaw in the AWA is vague information. Important information to a conclusion is either not present or ambiguous.

Conclusion (2-4 sentences)

Like all good essays, a strong conclusion is needed. For the AWA, it is not necessary to restate the flaws in the conclusion. Instead you should focus on providing suggestions of how the argument could be strengthened.

You can find a lot of pre-written templates for the AWA online, but I recommend taking a day of your GMAT prep to develop your own. First of all, it's never good to plagiarize. Second, you are more likely to remember the template using words and phrases that you are familiar with.



Recommended Reading

[*The AWA Isn't That Important...So Can I Blow It Off?*](#) by Knewton

[*6 Steps to Conquering the AWA*](#) by Economist GMAT Tutor

[*Writing the GMAT Argument Essay*](#) by Kaplan GMAT Prep

[*Scoring on the GMAT AWA Section*](#) by Economist GMAT Tutor

[*Avoid Writer's Block on the AWA*](#) by Veritas Prep

[*7 Tips for Writing a Successful Argument Essay*](#) by Veritas Prep

[*Seeing the Other Side on the AWA*](#) by Kaplan GMAT Prep

[*How to Best Approach the AWA Essay*](#) by Veritas Prep

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3 Stages of Your GMAT Prep

Content below is taken from a live Q&A between GMAT expert [Matt Douglas](#) from Veritas Prep and our fellow GMAT Avengers.

Rahul: *Could you please provide some detail on the stages of GMAT Prep?*

Matt: There are 3 stages.

Stage 1 is Conceptual Understanding. What sort of things does the GMAT test, what do all these words in these questions mean, what are some effective strategies for solving common problems (inequalities, assumption questions, DS number properties, etc.), and so on. This is the longest stage, and the amount of time you spend here is determined by what you already know and how much time you have before your exam.

Stage 2 is Efficiency. Once you understand most of the fundamentals and the common question types, you need to get used to answering lots of different types of questions quickly and effectively. Stage 1 requires a lot of books (such as our Veritas set), but Stage 2 is all about practicing batches of questions UNDER TIME CONSTRAINTS. We have an excellent website (gmat.veritasprep.com) on which you can practice timed sets of questions: these sets help you refine your test taking skills (are you wasting time trying to be 100% certain of everything? are you rushing on familiar questions? are you setting things up right but making computational mistakes due to stress?) and highlight any topics in which you're weak and need further review.

Stage 3 is Stamina. Once you understand the concepts and have developed effective test taking skills, it's time to practice doing ENTIRE TESTS. In my opinion, CATs really only help you develop one thing—stamina—and are best left until the very end of the process. Too many students do a lot of tests early on and get (1) frustrated or (2) obsessed with a certain type of question that they keep missing. But tests won't help you gain conceptual understanding, and they're too diverse and exhausting to help you really hone your efficiency, so they should be the last part of the process.

Nadia: *How much time is sufficient for adequate GMAT preparation?*

Matt: Great question! It depends when you're starting and where you want to go.

Think of it as getting into “mental shape” for a competition: if you’re already a good problem solver and you have a solid background in critical reasoning and arithmetic, you won’t have to do too much; if you very seldom do any abstract reasoning, it may take you a bit longer. In my experience, though, 3–6 months is best for 95 percent of students: after that, most students burn out and see diminishing returns. Remember, though—this test can weigh as heavily in admissions decisions as your ENTIRE COLLEGE GPA, so it’s worth spending at least a few months on. The good news about GMAT math is that the prerequisites are minimal: the questions are very tricky, but they don’t require a lot of technical knowledge, just creativity and a solid understanding of the fundamentals.

Raavi: *A) Is there any rule that to score 700+ you need to answer the questions from 1–15 correct always? Please bear with my misconception.*

B) I have taken a test and was hovering around 470 (Q35 V20). Obviously my query would be about how to crack verbal. I have just gone through your comments (reading economists, etc.); please let us know more in detail.

C) I have to beat the GMAT. Please tell me one line so that I can motivate myself daily.

Matt: A: No, and very few people will answer even the first four questions correctly. The test adapts so quickly that you’re around the 99th percentile (so to speak) in quant if you’ve gotten the first TWO questions correct.

B: I would get a set of verbal books (such as ours) and the GMAT Verbal supplement and begin practicing, in addition to the reading regimen I recommended earlier. Unfortunately there isn’t a set of rules to memorize: verbal progress requires you to develop a whole framework. You can do it, though, so get started as soon as you can. The good news is that these verbal skills will be tremendously valuable in your MBA program and in life—the ability to argue well, to see flaws and contingencies in other people’s arguments, and to express yourself well in business English (SC) is absolutely worth cultivating.

C: Studying for the GMAT is so boring and endless that I’m sure everybody who’s competing with me will give up, so that 700 is mine as long as I keep going!

Cal Han: *I’m the type of person who learns by experience, trial, and error. Therefore, I never found it effective to study concepts first then do the actual GMAT problems. I feel like I would do better just doing a high volume of Official Guide problems. Is this recommended?*

Matt: This absolutely can work: after all, the GMAT is a problem solving test that

features very few routine questions, so you won't get far simply memorizing a few formulas and grammatical "rules." That said, if you have a conceptual gap you may find that you're missing the same questions again and again, so I'd have a conceptual resource handy to check up on anything you seem to be missing. You also *must* review the questions you miss to understand why you missed them: it's more important to extract everything you can from the questions you've tried than to simply try more questions.

Nadia: *Should I wait to take a practice test until I have covered all topics or should I take the practice exams after to each topic to see how I am doing?*

Matt: Practice exams should be the LAST thing that you do. I'd start with lots of conceptual practice first, then move to our timed questions sets (we have an awesome free website, gmat.veritasprep.com, with oodles of these questions) and let those show you your weaknesses. I'd then do another conceptual review, and repeat the process until I felt comfortable in most areas.

Lamont: *How do I know that I have made significant improvement if my practice tests that I retake are always the same?*

Matt: Since CATs are remarkably accurate and progress is relatively slow, you wouldn't expect to see dramatic gains over a matter of days. You'll get there, but the progress is gradual: all you can do is thoroughly review your mistakes and brush up on any weak topic areas that the CAT seems to have brought out.

Suhas: *I gave my GMAT recently getting Q49, V27 after studying for close to 3 months! My quant score has improved but my verbal scores are in the same range 25–30! Do you suggest any particular study plan to improve verbal ability?*

Matt: I'd do a mixture of rigorous SC work (lots of grammatical rules and applications) and at least two hours a day of reading (the *Economist*, the *Guardian*, the *NYRB*, *Scientific American*, whatever you like) to get used to processing complex arguments verbally. If you have a Q49, your reasoning skills are there, so keep it up!

Aditya: *I am too confused with my Verbal part in GMAT preparation. I always start my preparation with SC but never get a feel of satisfaction as I am currently having with CR. Proper planning is missing.*

Matt: I hear you—this is perhaps the most common difficulty studying for the test. I'd try "backsolving" a lot of SC problems from the OG (or another good resource): see which answer is right, then work backwards to try to justify it. After a while, you'll start to get a feel for what sort of sentences the test writers prefer (and unfortunately that's

what SC is about). I think you want to learn the rules through practice rather than in the abstract—SEE them in action first! It makes a huge difference. Splits are my favorite way: you don't get to write your own sentence, you're stuck with the (often crappy) choices the test writers haven't given you.

Marone: *How would you recommend splitting time between studying for Math, Quant, and IG? I work 40 hours a week and figure I have about 2 hours of study time Monday through Thursday, and 4–5 hour each on Saturday and Sunday. Should I do an hour of Quant and Verbal per day, or Monday Quant, Tuesday Verbal, etc.?*

Matt: I would do a little bit of everything—math one day, verbal the next—but there are two caveats: (1) if you're strong in one subject and weak in the other, you should practice differently: do tough questions timed for the stronger and basic questions and exercises for the weaker; (2) don't study too much at the END of your workday! Tired studying time is worse than no studying time, because you aren't really processing anything but you feel like you've studied. Try to work it in the morning, during your commute, at lunch, whenever you have mental energy. After all, why waste mental energy on work—save it for the GMAT.

Sridhar: *If somebody is weak on the (1) Conceptual Understanding on the Maths, firstly what are books one should refer to improve them. Secondly is there a rule that one should spend this amount of time to master the conceptual understanding (Maths).*

Matt: Obviously I really like our books www.veritasprep.com/gmat/gmat-curriculum/. I would take as much time on conceptual understanding as you can (without procrastinating or just avoiding the test itself)—at least 6–10 weeks if you feel very rusty.

Sukhman: *When I last gave my GMAT, my timing was slow and it cost me the score, how many verbal questions to practice so as to increase speed? RC is tough enough, so how do we expect ourselves to think and solve the questions in 1 minute time-frame?*

Matt: I spend most of my time in RC reading and processing the passage: I read everything, I stop after every paragraph and summarize what I've just read in one sentence, I remember where all the details were, THEN I move on to the questions. In RC I'd rather spend 70% of the time reading the passage and 30% answering the questions than vice versa. SC should go QUICKLY, even if you aren't getting everything right: most of the time you spend on SC is just agonizing between "compared with" and "compared to," or something like that. If you aren't sure of the convention being tested but you know it's one or the other, just pick the less

comfortable answer and move on. CR is highly variable: some of these seem to go quickly (when you anticipate the correct answer) and others take a long time (when all the answers are garbage or when the argument is hard to parse)

Vishal: *I am very weak at verbal section. Please suggest me the ways to improve it? Also, which material is best for VERBAL?*

Matt: The Official Guide is the gold standard—verbal is much more arbitrary than math, so you want to experience the type of questions the test writers themselves have developed. I’m obviously partial to our SC and CR books (and video lectures)—check them out! You don’t need to know the rules by heart, but you need to be able to recognize and respond to the major ones (modifiers, subject/verb agreement, pronouns, verb tense) when you encounter them. For SC I’d work with GMAT grammar books (such as our SC book, or another reputable one) and/or some good grammar practice resources. Englishpage.com is an excellent free resource with lots of exercises; I also like Susan Thurman’s grammar books and Strunk & White’s *Elements of Style* —a book whose “rules” (customs) seem to have inspired those of the GMAC test writers.

Rahul: As already suggested, start reading GMAT-related stuff to begin with. Some of the resources that can help are *The Economist*, *The Guardian*, *The NYRB*, and *Scientific American*.

Simon: *What to do to avoid burnout while studying?*

Matt: I think it’s all psychological. If you see mistakes that you make as an opportunity to learn something and get better, you’ll have fun: challenging, interesting problems (at a level appropriate for wherever you’re at) are exciting! On the other hand, if you see this test as a bunch of random drudgery, and you see mistakes you make as proof of your own failings, you’ll be miserable. Fundamentally it’s all about enjoying HOW THINGS WORK, be they math, grammar, logic, or arguments. If you love learning about the process, you’ll love the GMAT: cultivating that attitude goes a long way, in my experience.

Rahul: *How much time one should spend doing the reviews of Practice Exams?*

Matt: At least a couple hours. The review is at least as important as the test itself. Anything you only “sort of” understand you should be trying to explain to somebody else—the great thing about GMAT questions is that no matter how awful they seem at first, you should be able to explain them to any intelligent person in about five minutes once you know what to do. Teaching a question to someone else is BY FAR the best way to learn it yourself (though you obviously have to know a little bit about it first!)

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How to Study on Your Own

Content below is taken from a live Q&A between GMAT expert and reputed author [Stacey Koprince](#) from Manhattan GMAT and our fellow GMAT Avengers.

Rahul: *Do you recommend studying using one particular set of resources from one prep company or using set of combinations from different prep companies?*

Stacey: At a minimum, everyone needs to use official resources (OG, etc.). I also recommend using practice tests from just one company (so that you know the results are internally consistent). Beyond that, pick and choose what you think works best for you! I do recommend, though, that you try to stick to one company for groups of things, for example, get all of your math study books from one company because different companies may organize the material differently. You don't want to miss something because of that.

Marco: *Hi, I'm following the Manhattan GMAT Strategy Guides and I would like to know if the GMAT Prep Now video course would be recommended or would be useless.*

Helen: I personally really like the GMAT Prep Now videos. I think they are really helpful. It is a lot of information though so you will either need to watch only a few a day or watch them multiple times to absorb the information.

Tasmiah: *Is there any way to postpone the GMAT exam? Because I have already registered for Dec. 30, but unfortunately I'm not well prepared.*

Stacey: Yes! You can reschedule anytime before the day of the test. If you reschedule more than 7 days in advance, you only have to pay \$50, not the whole \$250.

Vishal Chopra: *I am about to complete Manhattan GMAT guides. I am aiming for 700+ score. What should I do next in my preparation?*

Stacey: If it has been a while since you last took a CAT, it's time to take another to figure out where you're at. Then, analyze the test thoroughly [using this info](#).

It should take you a minimum of 1 hour to do that analysis (it takes me 30-45 minutes and I know exactly what I'm doing because I'm the one who came up

with the analysis process!). Figure out WHY your score is where it is (there are almost certainly issues with careless errors, timing/pacing, mental fatigue—so don't concentrate only on the questions' content). That will help you figure out what you need to do next.

Niraj: *I'm taking lessons from Manhattan GMAT 5th series and OG, would that be sufficient? Or do I have to refer to the difficult level section from MGMAT series?*

Stacey: Depends on your target score. If you want up to about a 670-680, you don't need to worry about the Extra/Advanced chapters in our books. If you want a higher score than that, you'll have to study at least some of the Extra/Advanced material (the higher you want to go, the more you have to know!).

Nadia: *How can I go about bringing my accuracy level up to 80% for all sections?*

Stacey: That would give you something like a 750 on the test. You don't need that kind of score (nobody does!). The test is not actually about percentage correct/improving your accuracy—if you keep that mindset, you're going to struggle!

This is a decision-making test. They're trying to see whether you can set priorities, manage your time and resources (your mental energy), and let opportunities go when they're not "worth" it. [Read this blog post for more.](#)

The best thing about this is: you do this every day at work already! They're trying to see how good of a business person you are, not how good of a mathematician or grammarian. So you already know how to do this—you just need to change your mindset so that you're taking the test like a businessperson, not like a student.

Andrew: *Do you recommend I take a few days off from work the days prior to the exam to free the mind? I work a regular 8-hour day job.*

Stacey: Yes you can do that—but don't take off the day before and then study for 8 hours. The point is to avoid overloading/stressing your brain in any way, including studying. Plan to volunteer that day, or so something that you've been putting off for a while, or whatever.

Tushar: *Although I put in lot of efforts in all three sections of verbal, my performance doesn't increase. Especially when I attempt CR questions, mostly it comes out to be incorrect. I am practicing all three sections from OG 13, in which I have seen difficulty is increasing with the question. Please suggest how to improve my score in all three sections. Also, please tell me key websites from where my verbal can be improved.*

Stacey: Most of your learning comes from analyzing problems after you're done doing them. How much are you analyzing your work (and the problems) afterwards? It should take 2-3 times as long *minimum* to analyze a problem (as it took to do the problem in the first place).

[Take a look at this](#) and pay particular attention to the part that talks about how to analyze your work.

Belisa: *Some CATs do not reflect the official test. Besides the Manhattan CATs, what else would you recommend?*

Stacey: I haven't done any CATs in years besides our own and GMATPrep (I can't actually—since I work so much on our own products, I can't use the competitors' products so that I don't inadvertently use something from someone else!). I have heard good things from other teachers about 800 Score tests. Between those three (GMATPrep, MGMAT, 800 Score), anyone will have more than enough tests.

Mohibul: *Through self study which of the materials is enough to get 700+ in GMAT. What is your opinion?*

Stacey: Definitely the OG materials. GMATPrep plus the Question pack (extra questions). Also, materials that will teach you HOW to do all of this stuff. I'm partial to my own company's materials of course: our main strategy guides for quant and verbal, the CATs, and OG Archer—that program is invaluable for both the data and the explanations (it has explanations for all OG13 quant and SC and for much of CR and RC).

A lot of people tell me they want “more”—materials, questions, whatever—but this isn't really about doing thousands of questions. Rather, you really need to learn how these questions are put together, so that you can learn how to pull them apart. That happens through a more in-depth study/analysis of a smaller number of questions—in the hundreds, not the thousands.

Andrew: *When I'm doing a CAT exam, I try not to review the reading comprehension questions afterwards because I'm afraid I'll subconsciously memorize it, and when I see the same question/passage when taking another CAT, it won't be effective. What do you recommend?*

Stacey: What CATs are you using? If you're using ours, you won't see any repeated questions/passages within the first 6 tests that you take. You also have 2 free GMATPrep tests and 2 paid ones, for a total of 10 tests without repeated questions. Which leads me to my next question: how many CATs are you taking? If more than

one every couple of weeks, [read this](#).

Kumudini: *I have the Official Guides all 3 and the Manhattan Sentence Correction, Foundation of Maths n Advanced Quant books, how do I go about starting my GMAT study?*

Stacey: Take a CAT first—that will help you to develop your priorities/study plan. Note a couple of things: you have an SC resource but not one for RC or CR. That's fine if you don't need to improve those areas... but if you do, you'll need a resource for those. Also, our Advanced Quant book assumes that you have already learned all of the regular and advanced material in our 5 regular strategy guides. If you haven't, then you will struggle with the Advanced Quant book. [Take a look at this](#).

Eman: *My exam is going to be next week and I need some advice and concentration on CR and RC so what is your advice in studying the OG and taking practice timing?*

Stacey: If your exam is in a week, then your score right now is probably about what you will score on test day. It's difficult to change/improve much in a week. At this point in the game, people should be doing a comprehensive review. You can read about how to do that [here](#) and [here](#).

Nadia: *When is the time to consider a private tutor?*

Stacey: When you have been working on your own for a while and feel like you're just not able to make any more progress (or substantial progress) on your own. When you have a short time frame and need to try to work quickly to improve your score (but even a tutor is not a miracle worker—someone's not going to help you improve 100 points in 2 weeks).

Shiny: *I am struggling to get my Quant score from 42 to 48–50 range. What are your suggestions on how I can go about achieving this? My main problem has been timing. I have been working on “quitting” problems and exploring alternate solution methods for questions. I haven't been able to see much progress because I believe this isn't something that is coming to me intuitively. Is there anything else I can do to get through this problem?*

Stacey: Practice does make perfect. What are you struggling with? Certain content areas? Question types? What are your timing problems (everyone has timing problems, so if you think you don't... then that's the first thing you need to figure out!) [Use this to analyze the data](#) from your MGMAT CATs.

[Read this](#) and then [this](#).

That will help you get the mindset down—but expect it to take several weeks of daily practice to really internalize this!

Andrew: *If I see a “How many...” question, or combinatorics question, should I just skip it and save two minutes? I’m assuming those are usually 700 level questions, meaning it won’t hurt if we skip those?*

Stacey: Sure, feel free to skip combinatorics. You will usually only have one in the entire section—you can do this for any weakness that is infrequently tested.

Raj: *How do I study while working?*

Stacey: Most people are working full time while they study for this test. Plan to spend anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours on workdays, and at least 2 hours on non-workdays. Take one day a week off. If you are working M–F, perhaps you study M, T, W, and Th for 30 to 90 minutes, and then on the weekends, you have 3 or 4 two-hour-long study sessions.

Richa: *How much time should one devote to IR while preparing, on an average?*

Stacey: That’s a tough one to answer. The importance of IR is likely going to change over the next few years, so your goal score will depend on when you are applying. This year, IR is of lesser importance—so don’t spend as much time as on Q and V. Next year... you’ll have to ask me again, once I see how the schools are talking about IR.

Also, check out our series of [interactive IR lessons](#).

Harssh: *Is the algorithm of Manhattan full length online tests same as real GMAT?*

Stacey: No, no algorithm is exactly the same as the real GMAT—the real GMAT algorithm is proprietary. Think of it as a software program that is privately owned/hasn’t been made public. (Ours is the same way—no one else’s is exactly the same as ours!) We did build our algorithm based on the same algorithmic theory (Item Response Theory) and we do our best to make it as close to the real thing as we can based upon all of the information that the real test-makers have disclosed.

Carmen: *how do you study on your own? What tools should you use? How long should you study?*

Stacey: [See this for a discussion about how to develop your study plan](#) (it addresses the overall questions that you’re asking).

Raavi: *I’m new to GMAT, started with verbal and trying to hit SC’s but not able to*

score.

Stacey: It's going to take some time. Progress on the GMAT is typically not linear—people struggle for a while, then they've had enough experience that something “clicks” and the score jumps a bit, then they struggle for a while again. [Take a look at this.](#)

Jessica: *Besides exponents and roots, what else is tested frequently?*

Stacey: Most common algebra topics are exponents and roots, linear and quadratic equations, inequalities; most common number properties are division and prime, odds/evens, positives and negatives. Fractions and percentages are also common as are word/story problems in general and stats.

Andrew: *When we do sentence correction, should we aim to finish the problem in a minute, then, when we review, we look for all the errors in each answer choice? Or should we look for all the errors in the answer choices and allow for about 3 minutes per question?*

Stacey: SC questions need to average about 1m20s. You never need to find ALL the errors in an answer—as soon as you find one error, you know that one is wrong. Verbal is all about process of elimination: find one reason to cross something off, then cross it off and never look at it again. [Take a look at this description of the SC process.](#)

Ritesh: *There are times, when I very well know the right answer but still end up marking the wrong option...as if it were a temporary loss of concentration and it causes me about 3 to 4 extra mistakes...how do I ensure that I am able to maintain my focus all throughout the exam?*

Stacey: We all make careless mistakes—I can sympathize. It's really important to try to figure out why you made the mistake that you made. Then you can put mechanisms in place to help you minimize those kinds of mistakes. [See this.](#)

Also, if you feel that you need to work on concentration/mental stamina, [take a look at this.](#)

Marco: *I'm a little bit worried about the AWA section. I aim at 4.5, do u have any suggestion on how to reinforce that part?*

Stacey: 4.5 is generally considered “good enough” for most schools. My own “template”/advice is [here.](#)

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What to Do on Test Day

Content below is taken from a live Q&A between GMAT expert [Will Langley](#) from Economist GMAT Tutor and our fellow GMAT Avengers.

This session will likely be a bit different from others you've experienced. We're going to focus less on content and more on context. What I mean by context is everything in the environment surrounding the test that has an impact on your success. For the purposes of today's session, we'll assume that you have found a good test prep system and just want to make sure you do your best on test day.

Disclaimer: I'll be making some general recommendations about sleep, diet, and exercise. I am not a medical doctor, and these opinions are not medical advice. Always consult a physician before you alter your diet or exercise regimen.

Much of what I am about to post can also be found in condensed form [here](#).

The title of this event is "What to do on Test Day," but success on "test day" really depends on planning and preparation beginning much earlier. The test is really the culmination of everything leading up to that point. So, we'll begin today's discussion a week before the test.

Week before the test:

Ideally, you'll be finishing up new topics and concepts around this point so that you can go into reviewing and refining mode.

The week of the test:

Alternate simulation tests and review with strategic practice. Now is the time to simulate actual test conditions (time, environment, etc.) as much as possible.

Take full-length tests if possible. It can be exhausting, but you don't want your first encounter with the format to come on test day.

Also, now is the time to think about sleep and exercise. You'll need your entire system at its best on test day. If you don't already have a good sleep routine, begin one as soon as possible so that you are well rested for the test. Some sort of light exercise may help with the nerves as well.

Elizabeth: *How much time should we be studying the week before the test?*

Will: Ideally, at this point you want to study enough to stay in test mode but avoid exhaustion. It will vary a bit with each person, but your efforts should be focused on diagnostics during that time. You want to shift your focus to correcting and refining at this point, so you'll want to track your performance carefully.

Day before the test:

4:00 p.m.: STOP studying! Anything you "cram" in at this point may do more harm than good. You'll probably be working on the most difficult concepts and items at this point, and incorrect answers can shake your confidence and add to your stress.

At this point, create your test bubble. This is a sphere of peace and quiet in which you'll remain until the end of the test. Give friends and family advance notice that any conflicts or problems will have to wait until after the test. Let them know how important the test is for your career and future, and ask for their help in advance.

Elizabeth: *Should you do anything test related the night before the test?*

Will: Not after the 4:00 p.m. cutoff; you can expect severely diminished returns this close to the test.

Nadia: This is so true. I scored 120 points less than my CAT exams, because I was up going over material, and trying to keep up with my MGMAT homework. Never again! My next attempt I will not study GMAT for 36 hours before the test.

Will: 6:00 p.m.: Go for a walk. Eat a healthy dinner. Read a magazine or some other light material. Try to avoid screens (like the one in front of you now) for a few hours before bedtime.

Elizabeth: *Do you recommend taking the test earlier in the day vs. later? Or is this just a personal preference of the test taker?*

Will: Ideally, you'll take the test during your optimal performance time. This is different for each person, but you can easily find yours out by tracking your energy level for a few days. Whenever you find yourself at your most productive, on average, that's a good time to schedule your test. If you're most productive at midnight, you may have to go with your second best time. Or, you could take your test in a different time zone, if you're really committed.

9:30-10:30 p.m.: Go to bed. Yes, I am an old man, so this sounds like a good bedtime every night. Nevertheless, there is no substitute for a good night's rest. Of

course, you can't cure a chronic lack of sleep in one night, so hopefully you followed the advice above and started this routine several days in advance.

Test Day:

5:30-6:30 a.m.: Wake up feeling refreshed and confident. This is when all of your hard work pays off. We'll assume that your test is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. You can modify this schedule according to your actual test day.

The morning of the test: Plan for some light exercise and possibly some stretching. Have an outlet for your nervous energy. Eat a healthy meal, but don't eat anything too heavy too close to the test. Your body will prioritize digestion over thinking, and you can't afford to lose that energy.

At some point during the morning of the test, you'll want to get into the right mindset for the test. This may mean prayer or meditation, or it may mean a specially created playlist of your favorite music. Whichever you choose, take a few minutes to get into test-mode. The GMAT will take total focus and concentration for several hours. You'll want to be prepared.

Elizabeth: *What happens if you DON'T wake up feeling refreshed and confident? Any tips on how to relax or how to boost confidence?*

Will: Absolutely. Go for a quick walk. Play with your pet if you have one (my dog never has a bad day). Do you all have any other suggestions for hitting "reset" on an off morning?

Rahul: I would try listening to some of my favorite music to calm my nerves down.

Helen: Light exercise should help. It will wake you up and put you in a good mood.

Will: Great ideas. Don't underestimate the power of endorphins to brighten your day!

9:15-9:30 a.m.: Arrive at the testing center (which you mapped out ahead of time) with the essentials (ID, snacks, etc.) and nothing else if you can help it. Read the testing center rules carefully so you don't have the frustration of being told to take off your watch, hat, or other items just before the test starts.

Helen: Do NOT forget your ID. I did that for my SAT and had to go back home to get it...not the best start of my morning

Rahul: Please make sure that your name on the ID card appears exactly the same as entered while registering for the exam.

Kristi: *What about food? Food is crucial for a hyperactive hypoglycemic person!*

Helen: Bring healthy, brainy snacks with you!

Just Before the Test

Do a few warm-up exercises to get into critical thinking mode. You can do brainteasers or math puzzles, but, again, stay away from difficult test questions so that you don't shake your confidence.

And now, for the moment you've all been waiting for...

The Test:

- Take a few moments to make sure all of your materials function properly. Check both pens on the scratch paper before starting the test.
- You read the instructions ahead of time, right? Take the few allotted seconds here for a last minute breathing exercise.
- Treat the AWA as more warm-up. Take it seriously, but don't stress over it or expend too much energy.
- The IR section is basically where the test begins. Sure, it's a separate score, and we don't know yet how admissions committees are using it, but if feedback from GMAC is to be believed, this could become an important component of the test. Do your best here!
- Ask for more scratch paper before starting the Quant section, even if you only used a bit. Breathe between questions. Psychology often follows physiology, so relax your muscles and breathe deeply and regularly.

Elizabeth: *Why shouldn't we stress over the AWA too much?*

Will: Essentially, the payoff for a high score isn't enough to make it worth the extra energy. You don't want to brush it off completely. A low score might raise red flags, but a good prep program will prepare you for a decent score with minimal effort.

After the Test:

Breathe (again). Hopefully, the celebration begins at this point. If not, give yourself a break. You did your best, and you can plan your next steps tomorrow.

Helen: *Will, do you suggest choosing to send the score to your target schools or*

waiting and ordering the score later only if you are satisfied with the score?

Will: It's a bit of a financial and strategic decision. The only penalty for waiting, assuming you are not up against admissions deadlines, is an extra cost for more reports. Then again, they'll see all the reported scores anyway, but you have a chance to make a better first impression if you have a higher score to offset your lower score.

Elizabeth: *If you don't do as well as you hoped, how long do you have to wait before you can schedule your next GMAT exam?*

Rahul: 30 days, as the questions of the exam are reset after every 30 days. So, you can plan a retake only after a month.

Elizabeth: *Is there any disadvantage in terms of applications if you take the GMAT more than once?*

Will: Admissions committees seem to vary on their treatment of retakes. I would say don't be afraid to retake after a low score or even two, but don't expect a 700 in a sea of 500's to make them forget all of the earlier scores. Anybody can have an off day, but the committee can spot a pattern. On the upside, quite a few schools look at your highest score, so never give up!

When you complete the test, you'll be faced with a screen asking you if you want to see your score. It seems silly after all that to even ask, but you have to remember that your score will be recorded if you click yes. You don't get to see it and then pretend it never happened.

At this point, unless you have no recollection of the last four hours, click yes. The only thing worse than seeing a low score is wondering for the rest of your life if you threw away a great score.



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