

Tips for solving GRE Data Interpretation Questions.

'Data' is the plural of datum which means a piece of information.. Today, data is used in English both as a plural noun meaning "facts or pieces of information" and also as a singular mass noun meaning "information".

'Information' refers to data being arranged and presented in a systematic or an organized form, so that some useful inferences can be drawn from the same. By data we generally mean quantities, figures, statistics, relating to an event.

Data Interpretation is using or analysing available information or data to make objective decisions or to scientifically understand the underlying reasons of an outcome, phenomenon or events.

The data interpretation questions usually appear in sets and are based on data presented in tables and graphs.

The most common type of graphs are:

Line Graphs

Bar Graphs

Circle Graphs (Pie Chart)

The Data Interpretation (DI) questions test your ability to interpret the data that has been provided. You will either have to do further calculations using the data or make an inference from the given data.

The challenge is the DI section is not just solving the questions accurately, but also solving them as quickly as possible as DI questions usually take more time to solve as compared to the other question types.

Let's see some tips to tackle Data Interpretation questions.

1) Calculations- Check to see if the question asks for an approximation. If so, you can safely try to solve the questions using approximations instead of spending time in doing lengthy calculations. You may estimate numbers by rounding off.

Approximation is the best tool to arrive at answers quickly but using it is an art. You will have to learn this through trial-and-error and practice.

2) Learn short-cut methods that work for you. Also try doing mental calculations and minimise the use of pen and paper.

For instance, here are two most widely used short cuts in DI:

i. Doubling the value of variable is equivalent to an increase of 100 per cent, tripling is equivalent to an increase of 200 per cent, quadrupling to 300 per cent and so on.

ii. $A\% \text{ of } B = B\% \text{ of } A$ i.e. 97.6% of 25 is simply one-fourth of 97.6

3) **Don't confuse percents and number.** This is a commonly observed mistake amongst students. They often fail to distinguish between absolute numbers and percents.

4) Often you can arrive at the correct answer by the process of elimination of the choices. Whenever possible, use the elimination method.

For some questions you may find that some of the given options are quite far-fetched. Eliminating those will make it easy to select the right answer. Again, this method needs practice to be perfected.

5) Make sure to express your answer in the correct units. If the units of measurement in the question and the given answer do not match, then conversion is required.

6) Take 15-30 seconds to study the graphs before you attempt to answer a data interpretation question. Try to get a general idea about information (Titles, scales, notes and keys) that is being displayed.

7) Don't confuse "**change in the value of variable** (production /sales /profit etc)" with "**percentage change in the variable**". You must understand that a change in the value is just the difference between the new and old value, while on the other hand, percentage change is given by

% age change = (Ratio of change in value of the variable with the old value) X 100.

8) The questions are to be answered only on the basis of the data presented, everyday facts (such as the number of days in a year) and your knowledge of mathematics.

9) Be very thorough with the basics of all topics such as Profit, Loss, Ratios, Percentages, fractions and formulas of sectors of circle (for pie charts).

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- a) The ratio of two quantities a and b in the same units, is the fraction a/b
- b) Percentage Increase = $(\text{New value} - \text{old value}) / \text{Old value} \times 100$
- c) Percentage Decrease = $(\text{Old value} - \text{New value}) / \text{Old value} \times 100$