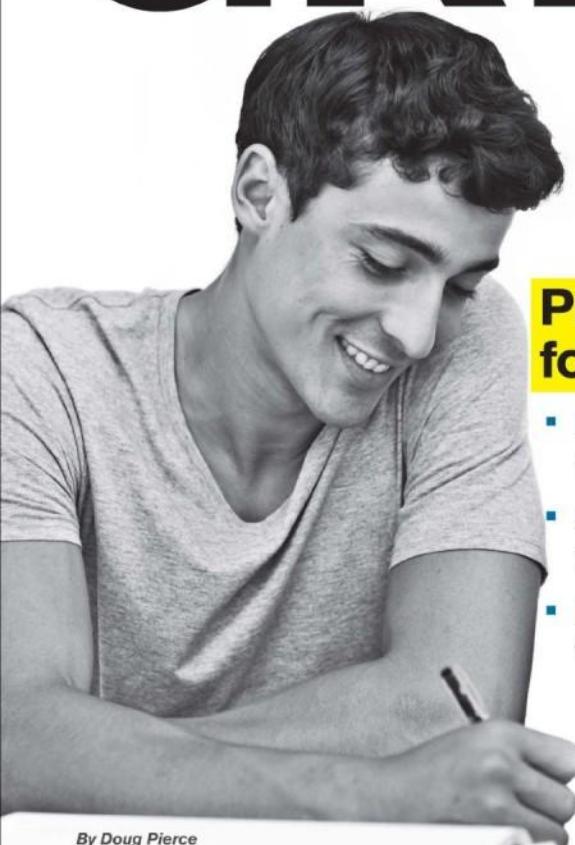


Cracking the New

GRE®

2012



**Proven techniques
for a higher score.**

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By Doug Pierce

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Using Your Resources

The DVD and online tools that accompany *Cracking the New GRE with DVD* are specifically designed to enhance your book's presentation. Here's how you can make the most of these resources.

DVD: Start Out Strong

A great way to begin your preparation for the GRE is to watch the enclosed DVD. Our expert instructors will give you an overview of what's on the test and will identify some of the most critical issues to look out for as you prepare. Armed with this information, you'll be in great shape to begin your studies.

You can return to the DVD at any point during your preparation to refresh your memory or to reinforce key concepts that give you trouble. Look for the DVD icon in the book, which indicates the topics that are also covered in your DVD.



Watch it on
your DVD

Online Tools: Just a Few Clicks Away

In order to access our online tools, you must register the serial number at the bottom of the inside back cover of your book at PrincetonReview.com/cracking. After you receive confirmation of your registration, follow the directions to reach the site and be sure to do the following:

- **Access Your Study Plan**—Will you be ready when test day comes? Visit our website to access a customized study plan that will help you stay on track with your studies. We'll guide you through every step of your preparation based on how much time you have to study, so you'll be in top form on test day.
- **Take Full-Length Practice Tests**—By working through a full-length test early on, you'll be able to identify your strengths and weaknesses and better focus your studies. As you get closer to test day, taking simulated tests will help you practice techniques, build your stamina and confidence, and gain familiarity with the kinds of questions you're going to see.
- **Target Your Preparation**—If you come across a particular GRE concept or question type that gives you trouble, don't worry. Our online activities will allow you to quickly gain mastery over even the trickiest topics.
- **Research Schools**—Visit our Grad Schools and Careers website, where you'll find a wealth of information about schools that match your specific criteria. You can also use the site to manage your application process and even submit applications directly to schools!

Part I Orientation

- 1 Introduction
- 2 General Strategy

Chapter 1

Introduction

What is the GRE? Who makes the test? What's a good score? What's with this “new” GRE? The answer to these questions and many others lie within in this chapter. In the next few pages, we'll give you the lowdown on the things you need to know about the new GRE.

CRACKING THE GRE

For a lot of people, taking a standardized test like the GRE usually engenders a number of emotions—none of them positive. But here's the good news: The Princeton Review is going to make this whole ordeal a lot easier for you. We'll give you the information you will need to do well on the GRE, including our time-tested strategies and techniques.

The GRE has just been rather significantly revised. The new test supposedly allows graduate schools to get a better sense of an applicant's ability to work in a post-graduate setting—a goal that is unrealistic indeed, considering that the people who take the GRE are applying to programs as diverse as physics and anthropology.

However, it's safe to say that neither GRE—new or old—is a realistic measure of how well you'll do in grad school, or even how intelligent you are. In fact, the GRE provides a valid assessment of only one thing:

The GRE assesses how well you take the GRE.

Need more info? Check out the DVD.

Got it? Even so, you still want to do well on the GRE, because you still want grad schools to take you seriously when they consider your application. With this in mind, there are several very important skills to cultivate when you're preparing for the test, and each of them is attainable with the right guidance (which we'll give you), a strong work ethic (which you must provide), and a healthy dose of optimism. Who knows? Maybe after working through this book and learning how to crack the test, you'll actually look forward to taking the GRE.

So what exactly is this test you've heard so much about?

WHAT IS THE GRE?

The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is a 3-hour, 40-minute exam that's used to rank applicants for graduate schools. The scored portion of the new GRE consists of the following sections:

- One 30-minute Analysis of an Issue essay
- One 30-minute Analysis of an Argument essay
- Two 30-minute Verbal Reasoning sections
- Two 35-minute Quantitative Reasoning sections

The Verbal Reasoning sections test your skills on three different types of questions:

- Text Completion
- Sentence Equivalence
- Reading Comprehension

The Quantitative Reasoning sections measure your prowess in four areas:

- Basic Math
- Algebra
- Geometry
- Data Analysis

What Exactly Is New About the GRE?

The GRE has been around in one form or another for decades, and this newest version represents the latest set of "improvements" on the test. The following are the most significant differences between the current GRE and the former GRE:

- The old GRE was adaptive by question, which means that your performance on one question influenced the selection of the next one, and you couldn't skip or go back to questions. The new GRE is adaptive by section. This means that the difficulty of the second section depends upon your performance on the first, but you can jump around within a section.
- The new test is longer; while the old test was 2 hours and 30 minutes long, as we previously mentioned, the new test is a bloated 3 hours and 40 minutes—and that's without any introductory modules or an experimental section.
- You get to use an on-screen calculator on the GRE now!
- There are a bunch of new question types, including multiple-choice questions, multiple-choice questions with more than one answer, fill-in-the-blank questions, select-in-passage questions, and other strange-looking questions.
- The new test has a new scoring system; the old test was graded on the same 200–800 scale as the SAT, but the new test is graded on a 130–170 scale.
- Some of the types of questions have been eliminated, including antonyms and analogies.

So why was the test changed? Well, ETS, the company that makes the GRE, claims that the changes were made to "increase the validity of the test, address security concerns, increase worldwide access to the test, [and] make better use of advances in technology and psychometric design."

We at The Princeton Review are a bit reluctant to trust the word of ETS, though. While the test writers claim that the new GRE will be a more valid measure of student ability and will allow graduate schools to better gauge their applicants, we're not convinced. After all, the test is now longer and less convenient to take, and it contains a number of new question types that have yet to be tested in depth.

Need more info? Check out the DVD.

WHY DO SCHOOLS REQUIRE IT?

Even though you will pay ETS \$160 to take the GRE, it is important to note that you are not their primary customer. Their primary customers are the admissions offices at graduate programs across the United States. ETS provides admissions professionals with two important services. The first is a number, your GRE score. Everyone who takes the test gets a number.

Applicants could come from all over the world and will certainly have an enormous range in academic and professional experience. How does one compare a senior in college with a 32-year-old professional who has been out of college working in a different industry for the past 10 years? A GRE score is the only part of the application that allows for an apples-to-apples comparison among all applicants.

The second service that ETS provides is mailing lists. That's right; they will sell your name. You can opt out, but when you sit down to take the test, ETS will ask you a whole bunch of questions about your educational experience, family background, race, and gender, as well as other biographical data. All of this information goes into their database. In fact, ETS is one of the most important sources of potential applicants that many graduate programs have.

Another reason for the GRE is that it ensures that most applicants to graduate school are qualified. It helps to weed out the people who might be considering grad school, but who can't get their act together enough to fill out applications. It is difficult for admissions committees to make a decision between a candidate with a 3.0 and a 3.2 GPA from drastically different schools and in two different majors. A GRE score, on the other hand, provides a quick and easy way for busy admissions offices to whittle a large applicant pool down to size. When you ask a program how important the GRE score is to the application, they may say, "it depends" or "not very" and that may be true as long as your score is in the top half. If your score is in the bottom half, however, it may mean that your application never gets seen.

So the GRE may have little relevance to any particular field of study you might be pursuing, but as long as it helps graduate programs uncover potential candidates, and as long as it is the only tool available to compare a diverse candidate pool, the GRE is here to stay.

WHO IS ETS?

Like most standardized tests in this country, the GRE is created and administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), a big, tax-exempt, private company located in New Jersey. ETS publishes the GRE under the sponsorship of the Graduate Record Examinations Board, which is an organization affiliated with the Association of Graduate Schools and the Council of Graduate Schools in the United States.

ETS is also the organization that brings you the SAT, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the National Teacher Examination (NTE), and licensing and certification exams in dozens of fields, including hair styling, plumbing, and golf.

TEST DAY

The GRE is administered at Thompson Prometric Centers. This is a company that specializes in administering tests on computer. They administer citizenship exams, professional health certifications, dental exams, accounting exams, and hundreds of other exams on computer. As professional proctors, they are a particularly humorless lot. When you arrive at the center, they will check your ID, give you a clipboard with a form to fill out, and hand you a locker key. Despite the fact that they already have your information, you will be asked to fill out a long form on paper. This form includes an entire paragraph that you have to copy over—in cursive (they specify this)—that states that you are who you say you are and that you are taking the test for admissions purposes. This process will take you about ten minutes, and you can complete it while you wait for them to call you into the testing room. The locker is for all of your personal belongings, including books, bags, phones, bulky sweaters, and sometimes even watches. You are not allowed to take anything with you into the testing room.

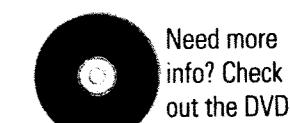
When they call you into the testing room, they will first take a photo of you, and, in some cases, fingerprint you before you go in. They will give you four or six sheets of scratch paper and two sharpened pencils with erasers. Then they lead you into the room where someone will start your test for you. The room itself will hold three or four rows of standard corporate cubicles, each with a monitor and keyboard. There will be other people in the room taking different tests than the GRE. Some of these tests have oral components, so people may be talking into microphones. Because of the noise, you will be provided with optional headphones.

Test Day Tips

- Dress in layers, so that you'll be comfortable regardless of whether the room is cool or warm.
- Don't bother to take a calculator; you're not allowed to use your own—just the one on the screen.
- Be sure to have breakfast, or lunch, depending on when your test is scheduled (but don't eat anything weird). Take it easy on the liquids and the caffeine.
- Do a few GRE practice problems beforehand to warm up your brain. Don't try to tackle difficult new questions, but go through a few questions that you've done before to help you review the problem-solving strategies for each section of the GRE. This will also help you put your "game-face" on and get you into test mode.

What to Take to the Test Center:

1. Your registration ticket
2. A photo ID and one other form of ID
3. A reliable watch
4. Several pencils
5. A snack



- Make sure to take photo identification to the test center. Acceptable forms of identification include your driver's license, photo-bearing employee ID cards, and valid passports.
- If you registered by mail, you must also take the authorization voucher sent to you by ETS.
- Stretch, drink some water, go to the bathroom, and do whatever you need to do in order to be prepared to sit for this four-hour test.

TEST STRUCTURE

While your test structure may vary, you should expect to see something like this when you sit down to take the exam:

The first section of the test collects all of your biographical information. If you fill this out, you will start getting mail from programs that have bought your name from ETS. In general, this is not a bad thing. If you don't want them to sell your name, or you don't want to spend the time answering their questions, you can click on a box that tells ETS not to share your information.

Next, you will get a tutorial. If you have taken practice tests in a similar computer setting and you feel comfortable, you can skip this section. Remember: The GRE is a four-hour exam. Save your brain-time and your eyeball-time for when it counts. The tutorial will tell you how to use a mouse, how to click on a button, and how to scroll. Chances are that you know this already. At this point, you have probably spent between ten and twenty-five minutes working at the computer, and you haven't even seen a scored question yet.

Once all of that is done, you will begin your first scored section, the essays. Your two essays will be back to back. You have thirty minutes for each essay. If you know for sure that your programs don't care about the essay score, click out of this section. Immediately after your second essay, you will get your first multiple-choice section. It may be math or verbal. You will have a one-minute break between sections. Here is the structure of the test:

Section	Time	# of Questions
Biographical Information	+/- 10 minutes	—
Tutorial	+/- 10 minutes	—
Issue Essay	30 minutes	1
Argument Essay	30 minutes	1
Section 1	30 or 35 minutes	approximately 20
Break	10 minutes	—
Section 2	30 or 35 minutes	approximately 20
Section 3	30 or 35 minutes	approximately 20
Section 4	30 or 35 minutes	approximately 20
Section 5	30 or 35 minutes	approximately 20
Possible Research Section	Optional	Depends
Select Schools/Programs	5 minutes	Up to 4
Accept Scores	1 minute	—
Receive Scores	1 minute	—

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- You will see five multiple-choice sections, but only four will count. The fifth is an "experimental" section. It can come at any time after the essays. At the end of the exam, you will know, based on the number of math or verbal sections, if the experimental section was math or verbal, but you will not know which section will not count toward your score.
- Math Sections are 35 minutes. They have approximately 20 questions. The exact number may vary by one or two. If your experimental section is math, your test will be five minutes longer than someone whose experimental section is verbal.
- Verbal sections are 30 minutes. They have approximately 20 questions. The exact number may vary by one or two.
- The 10-minute break always comes after the third section. You have a 1-minute break between each of the other sections.
- You may or may not get a research section. If you do, it will come last; it does not count toward your score, and it is optional.
- You must accept your scores and, if you choose, send your scores to selected programs prior to seeing your scores.
- If you choose not to accept your scores, neither you nor any program will ever see them.
- You may choose to send your scores to up to four graduate programs on the day of the test. This service is included in your testing fee.

The Experimental Section

When most companies want to test a new product, they provide free samples, test it on animals, or pay for some user testing. Not ETS. ETS uses the experimental section of the test to assess new questions that it will give to later testers.

Research Section

At the end of the test, you may also have an unscored Research section. At the beginning of this section, you will be told that it is an unscored Research section, and that it will be used only to help develop and test questions for the GRE. If you want to skip it, you have the option of skipping it. You may be offered some sort of prize to induce you to take it, but by that point in the test you will probably be exhausted. If you're offered a Research section, just go ahead and decline, get your scores, and go home.

The Tutorial and the 10-Minute Break

Start to finish, the GRE is about a four-hour experience. In normal life, you don't do anything for four hours straight. You get up, you go to the bathroom, you check your e-mail, you grab something to drink. You're lucky if you can sleep for four uninterrupted hours. Taking a four-hour multiple-choice test, therefore, does not come easily. Anything you can do to cut down on the amount of time you spend staring at that computer screen is a good thing. This starts with the tutorial. You should have taken practice tests prior to the real thing, so feel free to skip the tutorial altogether. Save yourself the eyeball time.

You are given one minute between sections except after section three, when you get a 10-minute break. During this break, stand up, leave the testing room, leave the testing center, and go walk around. Go the bathroom, splash water on your face, wave your arms around. You want to re-oxygenate your brain. The goal, as much as it is possible, is to hit your brain's reset button. When you sit back down for section four, you want it to be as if you are just sitting down at that computer for the first time that day. They don't give you much on this test, so you want to take full advantage of all that you can. That means making the most of your break.

Accepting and Sending Your Scores

Before you see your scores, you will be given the opportunity to cancel your scores. There are very few reasons to do so. First, if you cancel your scores, you will never see your scores and you will have to go through the whole experience (and pay another \$160) again. Second, the GRE is a tough test, but scores are curved. Most people believe that they are doing worse than they actually are. And third, most programs will look at the highest scores on record. You might as well accept your scores. If you don't get the scores you need, you will have to take the test again anyway. At least give yourself a chance to get it right the first time around. If

you are not sure how the admissions folks will view multiple scores, call them up beforehand and ask. This is a legitimate question. Knowing that they will look at only the highest scores also takes a ton of pressure off your first sitting. It's nice to know that if something goes wrong, you can always take the test again.

The same goes for sending your scores. The minute you walk out of the testing center, ETS will charge you \$20 every time you want to send off a set of scores. You might as well max out the ones they give you on test day. You will have to send your scores before you see your scores, but again, there is little downside to sending them. If you can't get into your first-choice school with your first set of scores, you have to take the test again, no matter what. When you send your new and better scores, schools will see both sets of scores anyway.

WHAT DOES A GRE SCORE LOOK LIKE?

Every GRE score has two components: a scaled score and a percentile rank. As we previously mentioned, GRE scores fall on a 130–170 point scale. However, your percentile rank is more important than your scaled score. Your percentile rank indicates how your GRE scores compare to those of other test takers. For example, a scaled score of 150 on the GRE translates to roughly the 50th percentile, meaning that you scored better than 50 out of every 100 test takers—and worse than the other 50 percent of test takers. A score of 150 is about average, while scores of 162 and above are very competitive. Get the latest reported scores and percentiles at PrincetonReview.com and at www.gre.org, the official ETS website for the GRE.

The essays are scored a little differently than are the Verbal and Quantitative sections. All essays receive a scaled score of 0–6, in half-point increments. The corresponding percentiles are:

Score	Analytical Writing Percentile
6	96
5.5	86
5	71
4.5	52
4	32
3.5	17
3	7
2.5	3
2	1
1.5	0
1	0
0.5	0

In other words, a score of 5 on the essay portion of the GRE means you performed better than 71 percent of test takers.

Remember that the new GRE may be new for you, but it is new for the admissions folks as well. For years now they have been used to thinking about a 500-level or a 600-level applicant. Now they will have to think about a 142-level applicant. Also, scores are good for five years, so programs will be receiving both old and new scores for many years before the transition is complete. During this changeover, admissions departments are likely to rely far more heavily on percentiles than on scores.

How Much Does the GRE Matter?

The simple answer is “It depends.” Some programs consider the GRE very important, while others view it as more of a formality. Because the GRE is used for such a wide range of graduate studies, the relative weight it is given will vary from field to field and from school to school. A master’s program in English literature will not evaluate the GRE the same way as a PhD program in physics, but it’s hard to predict what the exact differences will be. A physics department may care more about the Math score than the Verbal score, but given that nearly all of its applicants will probably have high Math scores, a strong Verbal score might make you stand out and help you gain admission.

Do Your Research

GRE scores are used in a number of different ways. The first step in figuring out how to prepare for the GRE is figuring out how your scores will be used. The only way to do that is to contact the programs to which you plan to apply. Larger programs may have many of these questions already spelled out on their websites. Smaller programs, on the other hand, may not want to be pinned down to specific answers, and the answers may change from year to year. If you are applying to a smaller program, you will have to dig a bit deeper to get answers to some of these questions. Here are some things you should be asking:

1. **What scores do I need to be accepted?** The answer to this question is always “It depends.” The GRE is not the only part of the application, and the quality of the applicant pool varies from year to year. Nevertheless, you need to have a target score so you can figure out how much work you need to put in between now and test day. If the school doesn’t have or won’t quote you a cutoff score, see if you can at least find out the average scores for last year’s incoming class.
2. **Will you look at all parts of my score?** Some programs may care about your math score, but not your verbal score, and vice versa. Many programs don’t use the essay scores at all. If a program doesn’t care about your math or your essay score, then you know exactly where to put your prep time.

3. **Are scores used for anything else?** If your scores are to be used for placement or for scholarship, it would be good to know that now, while you still have time to prepare.
4. **How important are my scores?** In many ways, the importance of scores is a function of how competitive the program is. The scores may not matter much, but if it is a competitive program, every number will count.
5. **What do you do with multiple scores?** Depending upon your first scores, you may have to take the test a second time. It would be good to know, however, the importance of that first score. If a school is going to take the highest score, then you can relax a bit on test one, knowing that you can take it again if you need to.

In any case, remember that the GRE is only one part of an application to grad school. Admissions officers also consider many other factors, including:

- Undergraduate transcripts (i.e., your GPA, relevant courses, and the quality of the school you attended)
- Work experience
- Any research or work you’ve done in that academic field
- Subject GREs (for certain programs)
- Essays (Personal Statements or other essays)
- Recommendations
- Interviews

The GRE can be a significant part of your graduate school application (which is why you bought this book), but it certainly isn’t the only part.

SCHEDULING A TEST

You can schedule a test session for the GRE by calling 800-GRE-CALL or by registering online at www.gre.org. You can also register through a local testing center (the list of centers is available online). After you get the list of local testing centers from ETS, you can call the one nearest you and set up an appointment. You can also call ETS at 609-776-7670 or send them an email at gre-info@ets.org to ask any general questions you have about the GRE.

Students registering to take the exam in August or September of 2011 may be eligible for a 50% discount on testing fees. Check www.gre.org for the latest pricing details. If you are not eligible for the discount, the test fee is likely to be \$160, but this may change. Again, check www.gre.org for the latest pricing.

Note: If you take the test between August 1 and October 31, 2011, you will not receive your official scores, nor will schools receive official scores, until mid-November.

Computer Testing Facts

- You can take the GRE almost any day—morning or afternoon, weekday or weekend. Appointments are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. You may take the test only once per calendar month.
- There's no real deadline for registering for the test (technically, you can register the day before). But there's a limited number of seats available on any given day and centers do fill up, sometimes weeks in advance. It's a good idea to register in advance, to give yourself at least a couple of weeks of lead time.
- The GRE is technically simple. Selecting an answer and moving to the next question involves three easy steps. All you need to do is point the mouse arrow at the answer and click, then click the "Next" button, and then click the "Answer Confirm" button to confirm your choice.
- You don't have a physical test booklet, which makes it impossible to write directly on the problems themselves (to underline text, cross out answer choices, etc.). Thus, all of your work must be done on scratch paper. Although the amount of scratch paper you may use is unlimited, requesting additional paper takes time. You should be efficient and organized in how you use it; learning to use your scratch paper effectively is one of the keys to scoring well on the GRE.
- When you've finished taking the test, you will be given the option to accept or cancel your scores. Of course, you have to make this decision before you learn what the scores are. If you choose to cancel your scores, they cannot be reinstated, and you will never learn what they were. No refunds are given for canceled scores, and your GRE report will reflect that you took the test on that day and canceled (though this shouldn't be held against you). If you choose to accept your scores, they cannot be canceled afterward. We suggest that unless you are absolutely certain you did poorly, you accept your score.
- You will receive your Verbal and Math scores the instant you finish the exam (provided that you choose not to cancel your score), but your Analytical Writing scores and "official" percentile scores for all three sections won't get to you until a few weeks later, in the mail. You will not see your actual test ever again unless you make a special effort. ETS offers the GRE Diagnostic Service (grediagnostic.ets.org) as a free option for test takers to have a limited review of their tests. This service allows you to see how many questions you missed and where they fell on the test, but you cannot review the actual questions. The diagnostic service also claims to let you know the difficulty of the questions you missed, but the scale used—a simple scale of 1 to 5—is not particularly useful.

Accommodated Testing

If you require accommodated testing, please see the Appendix at the end of this book. It contains information on the forms you'll need to fill out and procedures you'll need to follow to apply for accommodated testing. Be sure to start that application process well in advance of when you want to take your test, as it can take many weeks to complete.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is chock full of our fail-safe GRE test-taking techniques, some of which, at first, might seem to go against your gut instincts. In order to take full advantage of our methods, however, you'll have to trust them and use them consistently and faithfully.

Make sure to use the techniques on all of the practice problems you do and to thoroughly review the explanations for all of the questions—even the ones you get right. That way, the techniques will become second nature to you, and you'll have no problem using them on test day.

If you want to change your score, you have to change the way you take the test.

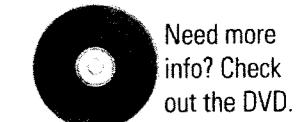
Practice for Technique, Not for Result

There is a finite amount of GRE material available in the world. Once you have used it all up, that's it. You don't get any more. Many people will work through the books, doing problems, looking for answers. When they get a problem right, they are happy. When they get a problem wrong, they are frustrated, and then they go on to the next problem. The problem with this approach is that you can churn through lots and lots of questions without ever actually getting better at taking the GRE. The techniques you use and the way you solve a problem are what matters. The results just tell you how you did. When you are practicing, always focus on your approach. When you get good at the techniques, your score will take care of itself. If you focus on just the results, you do nothing more than reinforce the way you are taking the test right now.

Additional Resources

In addition to the material in the book, we offer a number of other resources to aid you during your GRE preparation.

This book includes a DVD, which contains a number of live instructor lessons and demonstrations of some of the key techniques in this book.



Need more info? Check out the DVD.

With your purchase of this book, you gain access to the many helpful tools on The Princeton Review website as well as to additional lessons and practice GRE tests, which will help reinforce what you've learned in the book. Go to PrincetonReview.com/cracking to register. PrincetonReview.com also contains a ton of useful information on graduate programs, financial aid, and everything else related to graduate school.

Real GREs

The practice problems in this book are designed to simulate the questions that appear on the real GRE. Part of your preparation, however, should involve working with real GRE problems. Working with real questions from past GRE exams is the best way to practice our techniques and prepare for the test. However, the only source of real GREs is the publisher of the test, ETS, which so far has refused to let anyone (including us) license actual questions from old tests. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you obtain *GRE POWERPREP® II Software—Test Preparation for the GRE General Test*, which includes a retired question pool presented in two computer-adaptive tests. A CD-ROM version of this software is sent to all test takers when they register for the test, and you can also download *POWERPREP II* for free at www.gre.org. In addition, you should purchase the book *Practicing to Take the Revised GRE General Test*, which contains retired math and verbal questions from seven paper-and-pencil GREs. You can buy this book from any large bookstore or order it online at www.gre.org.

Of course, the GREs in the book are paper-and-pencil tests, so use them to practice content. Whatever you're using, always practice with scratch paper. As you prepare for the GRE, work through every question you do as if the question is being presented on a computer screen. This means not writing anything on the problems themselves. No crossing off answers, no circling, no underlining. Copy everything to scratch paper and do your work there. You can't give yourself a crutch in your preparation that you won't have on the actual test.

MAKING A SCHEDULE

The GRE, like other standardized tests, is not a test for which you can cram. While you may have fond memories from your college days of spending the night before the midterm with a pot of coffee and a 500-page economics textbook, that strategy won't be as effective on the GRE. Why? Because, by and large, the GRE is a test of patterns, not of facts. This book does its best to reveal those patterns to you, but without sufficient time to practice and absorb the information in this book, your GRE score is not likely to improve. Thus, you should allow an adequate amount of time to fully prepare for the GRE.

Otherwise, you should allow yourself somewhere between 4 and 12 weeks to prepare for the GRE. Obviously we can't know exactly where you are in terms of

your starting score, your target score, and the amount of time you can devote to studying, but in our experience, 4 weeks is about the minimum amount of time you'd want to spend, while 12 weeks is about the maximum. There are a number of reasons for these suggested preparation times. Attempting to prepare in fewer than 4 weeks typically does not allow sufficient time to master the techniques presented in this book. As you'll see, some of our approaches are counterintuitive and take some getting used to. Without adequate practice time, you may not have full confidence in the techniques. Additionally, vocabulary is part of the Verbal section of the GRE and it's difficult to substantially increase your vocabulary in a short period of time. Finally, as mentioned before, the GRE contains a number of patterns, and the more time you spend studying the test, the better you will be at recognizing these patterns.

On the other hand, spending an inordinate amount of time preparing for the GRE can have its downside as well. The first concern is a purely practical one: There is a finite amount of GRE practice material available. Budgeting six months of preparation time is unproductive because you'll run out of materials in less than half that time. Finally, spreading the material out over a long period of time may result in your forgetting some of the lessons from the beginning of your studies. It's better to work assiduously and consistently over a shorter time period than to dilute your efforts over a long time frame.

STAY UP TO DATE

We at The Princeton Review will continue to learn all about the new GRE as it evolves. As you prepare for your GRE, make sure you periodically check both our website at PrincetonReview.com and the GRE website at www.gre.org for the latest updates and information about the test.

Summary

- The GRE is a 3-hour, 40-minute exam used by graduate schools to rank applicants.
- The GRE tests your mathematical, verbal, and writing abilities.
- The GRE has been updated to include new question types, new content, a new scoring system, and a new way of delivering the test.
- The importance of your GRE score varies from program to program. Schools also consider your undergraduate record, your personal essays, and your relevant experience.
- GRE tests can be scheduled online at www.gre.org.

Chapter 2 General Strategy

This chapter contains some basic advice to get you into the Princeton Review mindset. You'll learn some core test-taking strategies to help you maximize your score. In addition, you'll see some of the different question formats you will probably encounter on test day.



Need more info? Check out the DVD.

CRACKING THE SYSTEM

The GRE is not an intelligence test. Although ETS claims that the GRE measures “critical thinking, analytical writing, verbal reasoning, and quantitative reasoning skills that have been acquired over a long period of time,” that isn’t quite true. What the GRE really measures is how well you take the GRE. The first step to bettering your GRE score is realizing that you can improve your score, in many cases substantially, by familiarizing yourself with the test and by practicing the techniques in this book.

I Thought the GRE Was Coach-Proof

ETS would have you believe that its tests are coach-proof, but that is simply untrue. In many ways, taking a standardized test is a skill and, as with any skill, you can become more proficient at it by both practicing and following the advice of a good teacher. Think of your GRE preparation as if you were practicing for a piano recital or a track meet; you wouldn’t show up at the concert hall or track field without having put in hours of practice beforehand (at least we hope you wouldn’t!). If you want to get a good score on the GRE, you’ll have to put in the necessary preparation time.

Why Should I Listen to The Princeton Review?

Quite simply, because we monitor the GRE. Our teaching methods were developed through exhaustive analysis of all of the available GREs and careful research into the methods by which standardized tests are constructed. Our focus is on the basic concepts that will enable you to attack any problem, strip it down to its essential components, and solve it in as little time as possible.

Think Like the Test Writers

You might be surprised to learn that the GRE isn’t written by distinguished professors, renowned scholars, or graduate school admissions officers. For the most part, it’s written by ordinary ETS employees, sometimes with freelance help from local graduate students. You have no reason to be intimidated by these people.

As you become more familiar with the test, you will also develop a sense of “the ETS mentality.” This is a predictable kind of thinking that influences nearly every part of nearly every ETS exam. By learning to recognize the ETS mentality, you’ll earn points even when you aren’t sure why an answer is correct. You’ll inevitably do better on the test by learning to think like the people who wrote it.

The Only “Correct” Answer Is the One That Earns You Points

The instructions on the GRE tell you to select the “best” answer to each question. ETS calls them “best” answers, or “credited” responses, instead of “correct” answers to protect itself from the complaints of test takers who might be tempted to quarrel with ETS’s judgment. Remember that you have to choose from the choices ETS gives you, and sometimes, especially on the Verbal section, you might not love any of them. Your job is to find the one answer for which ETS gives credit.

Cracking the System

“Cracking the system” is our phrase for getting inside the minds of the people who write these tests. This emphasis on earning points rather than finding the “correct” answer may strike you as somewhat cynical, but it is crucial to doing well on the GRE. After all, the GRE leaves you no room to make explanations or justifications for your responses.

You’ll do better on the GRE by putting aside your feelings about real education and surrendering yourself to the strange logic of the standardized test.

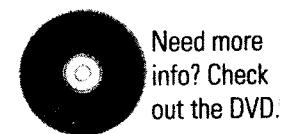
This is NOT a test of intelligence!

GENERAL STRATEGIES

Take the Easy Test First

Within a section, each question counts equally toward your score. There will inevitably be questions you are great at and questions you don’t like. The beauty of the GRE is that there is no need to bow to Phoenician numerical hegemony; you can answer questions in any order you like. The question you can nail in 25 seconds is worth just as much as the question that will torture you for minutes on end. To maximize your score, leave the questions you don’t like for last. If you are going to run out of time anywhere—and unless you are shooting for a 160 or higher, you should be running out of time—make sure that the questions that get chopped off are the ones you didn’t want to answer anyway.

This method is called Take the Easy Test First. Skip early and skip often. Doing so will result in two passes through an individual section. On the first pass, cherry pick. Answer the questions you like. Get all of those easy points in the bank before time starts running short. You know that the hard questions—or the ones that you don’t like—are going to take more time. Also, although you should never rush, everyone starts to feel the pressure of the clock as time starts running low.



Need more info? Check out the DVD.

This is often when mistakes happen. Leave those difficult, time-consuming questions for the end of the test. If you run out of time or make some mistakes at that point, it won't matter because these are low percentage questions for you anyway.

Use the Mark Function

On your first pass through the questions, if you see a question you don't like, a question that looks hard, or a question that looks time consuming, you're going to walk on by and leave it for the end. Sometimes, however, a question that looks easy turns out to be more troublesome than you thought. The question may be trickier than it first appeared. On the other hand, you may have simply misread the question, and it seems hard only because you're working with the wrong information. From start to finish, the GRE is nearly a four-hour test. Over four hours your brain is going to get tired. When that happens, misreading a question is virtually inevitable. Once you read a problem wrong, it is almost impossible to unread the problem and see it right. As long as you are still in the problem, you could read it ten times in a row and you will read it the same wrong way each time.

Whether a question is harder than it first appeared, or made harder by the fact that you missed a key phrase or piece of information, the approach you've taken is not working. This is where the Mark button comes in.

Reset your brain by walking away from the problem, but Mark the question before you do. Do two or three other questions, and then return to the marked problem. When you walk away, your brain doesn't just forget the problem, it keeps on processing in the background. The distraction of the other questions helps your brain to consider the question from some other angles. When you return to the problem, you may find that the part that gave you so much trouble the first time is now magically clear. If the problem continues to give you trouble, walk away again.

Staying with a problem when you're stuck burns time but yields no points. You might spend two, three, five, or even six minutes on a problem but still be no closer to the answer. Spending five minutes to get one point will not get you enough points on a 30- or 35-minute section. In the five minutes you spend on a problem that you've misread, you could nail three or four easier questions. When you return to the question that gave you trouble, there is a good chance that you will spot your error, and the path to the correct answer will become clear. If it doesn't become clear, walk away again. Any time you encounter resistance on the test, do not keep pushing; bend like a reed and walk away. Use the Mark button to facilitate this key skill. Skip early and often so that you always have questions to distract your brain when you get stuck.

Review

Within a single section you can mark an answered or unanswered question and return to it later. In fact you can skip any question you like and return to any question at any time you like. Navigating around a section is easy with the new Review Screen, which looks like this:

Question Number	Status	Marked
1	Not Answered	
2	Not Answered	
3	Not Answered	
4	Not Answered	
5	Not Answered	
6	Not Answered	
7	Answered	
8	Answered	
9	Answered	✓
10	Answered	✓
11	Answered	
12	Not Answered	

Simply click on a question and hit the button marked "Go To Question," and you will return directly to that question. This opens up a whole new realm of strategic opportunities for the savvy test taker.

Pacing

Speed kills on the GRE. The clock has a way of infecting your brain. Just knowing that there is a ticking clock, however, provokes mistakes. The trick is to take each section as if there is no clock. As long as you are skipping the hard ones and using the Mark button and coming back every time you run into trouble, you should get very few questions in a section wrong. Wrong answers drag your score down and often take up even more time than the right ones!

Remember that it is not the number of questions that you answer that gives you your score; it is the number of questions you answer correctly. Accuracy is everything. Ignore the clock. Slow down and work for accuracy only. If you run into a brick wall, don't keep spending time; do an easier question and come back. The minute you try to go faster, however, your accuracy will go down and bring your score along with it.

Accuracy is all that matters. Walk away often.

There is only one exception to this, and that is the last two minutes of a section. A skipped question and a wrong answer count the same. In other words, there is no penalty for “guessing” on a question you don’t know. When two minutes remain on your clock, stop what you’re doing and bubble in answers to any remaining unanswered questions. Use the Review button to quickly see which questions you haven’t answered. A few lucky guesses will pay off. If you don’t get any of them right, no harm done.

To avoid careless mistakes and to make the best use of your time, we suggest the following:

1. **Be Aware of Your Personal Order of Difficulty.** Spend your time on the questions that are easiest for you. Work through them methodically and accurately and collect points.
2. **Use the Two-Pass System.** The Two-Pass system involves taking each section in two parts, or passes. During the first pass, focus on all the questions that you’re comfortable with. On the second pass, return to the tougher questions and do the best you can on them in the remaining time.

GENERAL STRATEGY:

POE—PROCESS OF ELIMINATION

Because there are many more wrong answers on the GRE than there are credited answers, on some of the more difficult questions (those you do on your second pass) you’ll actually be better served not by trying to find the *best* answer, but instead by finding the wrong answers and using POE, Process of Elimination.

ETS Doesn’t Care How You Get the Best Answer

Remember when you were in high school, and even if you got a question wrong on a test, your teacher gave you partial credit? For example, maybe you used the right formula on a math question, but miscalculated and got the wrong result, but your teacher gave you some credit because you understood the concept?

Well, those days are over. ETS doesn’t care how you get an answer; it cares only about whether or not you click on the right answer choice or choices. You might as well benefit from this by getting questions right without really knowing how to do them, using POE. POE is the way to go: Learn it, live it, love it.

Also, keep in mind that on multiple-choice, multiple-answer questions, you must click on all the correct answers in order to get credit. If there are three correct responses, but you click on only two of them, you will not get any points.

The Importance of Wrong Answers

By using POE, you will be able to improve your score on the GRE by looking for wrong answers instead of right ones, on questions you find difficult. Why? Because, once you’ve eliminated the wrong ones, picking the right one can be a piece of cake.

Wrong answers on standardized multiple-choice tests are known in the testing industry as “distractors,” or “trap answers.” They are called distractors because their purpose is to distract test takers away from correct choices. Trap answers are specifically designed to appeal to test takers. Oftentimes, they’re the answers that seem to scream out “pick me!” as you work through a question. However, these attractive answers are often incorrect.

Remembering this simple fact can be an enormous help to you as you sit down to take the test. By learning to recognize distractors, you will greatly improve your score.

Improve Your Odds Indirectly

Every time you’re able to eliminate an incorrect choice on a GRE question, you improve your odds of finding the best answer; the more incorrect choices you eliminate, the better your odds.

For this reason, some of our test-taking strategies are aimed at helping you arrive at ETS’s answer indirectly. Doing this will make you much more successful at avoiding the traps laid in your path by the test writers. This is because most of the traps are designed to catch unwary test takers who try to approach the problems directly.

POE and Guessing

If you guessed blindly on a five-choice GRE problem, you would have a 1-in-5 chance of picking ETS’s answer. Eliminate one incorrect choice, and your chances improve to one in four. Eliminate three, and you have a fifty-fifty chance of earning points by guessing. Get the picture? You must answer each question to get to the next one, so you’ll have to guess sometimes. Why not improve your odds?

Guess, but guess intelligently.

Use That Paper!

In order for POE to work, it’s crucial that you keep track of what choices you’re eliminating. By crossing out a clearly incorrect choice, you permanently eliminate it from consideration. If you don’t cross it out, you’ll keep considering it. Crossing out incorrect choices can make it much easier to find the “credited response,” because there will be fewer places where it can hide. But how can you cross anything out on a computer screen?

By crossing out a clearly incorrect choice, you permanently eliminate it from consideration.

Even though on the GRE the answer choices have empty bubbles next to them, you're going to pretend that they are labeled A, B, C, D, and E (and so are we, throughout this book).

A	A	A	A
B	B	B	B
C	C	C	C
D	D	D	D
E	E	E	E

A	A	A	A
B	B	B	B
C	C	C	C
D	D	D	D
E	E	E	E

Carve up at least a couple of pages (front and back) like this. This will give you a bunch of distinct work areas per page, and is especially helpful for the Math section; you don't want to get confused when your work from one question runs into your work from a previous question.

By doing this, you can physically cross off choices that you're eliminating. Do it every time you do a GRE question, in this book or anywhere else. Get used to not writing near the question, since you won't be able to on test day.

More About Scratch Paper

You'll get six sheets of scratch paper at the beginning of the test. If you run out, you can request more, but be aware that the proctor will take away your old scratch paper as he or she gives you the new paper. Also, if you're in the middle of a section, you'll have to put your hand in the air and wait for a proctor to notice it, enter the testing room, and give it to you. In short, don't be profligate with your scratch paper. Use it wisely and try to refresh your supply during the break. (If you're not sure what *profligate* means, look it up! ETS likes putting that word on the GRE.)

By training yourself to avoid careless errors, you will raise your score.

Double-Check

Get into the habit of double-checking all of your answers before you click on your answer choice—or answer choices. Make sure that you reread the directions and have done everything they asked you to—don't get the answer wrong just because you chose only one answer for a question that required you to choose two or more.

The only way to reliably avoid careless errors is to adopt habits that make them less likely to occur. Always check to see that you've transcribed information correctly to your scratch paper. Always read the problem at least twice and note any important parts that you might forget later. Always check your calculations. And always read the question one last time before selecting your answer.

Let It Go

Every time you begin a new section, focus on that section and put the last section you completed behind you. Don't think about that pesky synonym from an earlier section while a geometry question is on your screen. You can't go back, and besides, your impression of how you did on a section is probably much worse than reality.

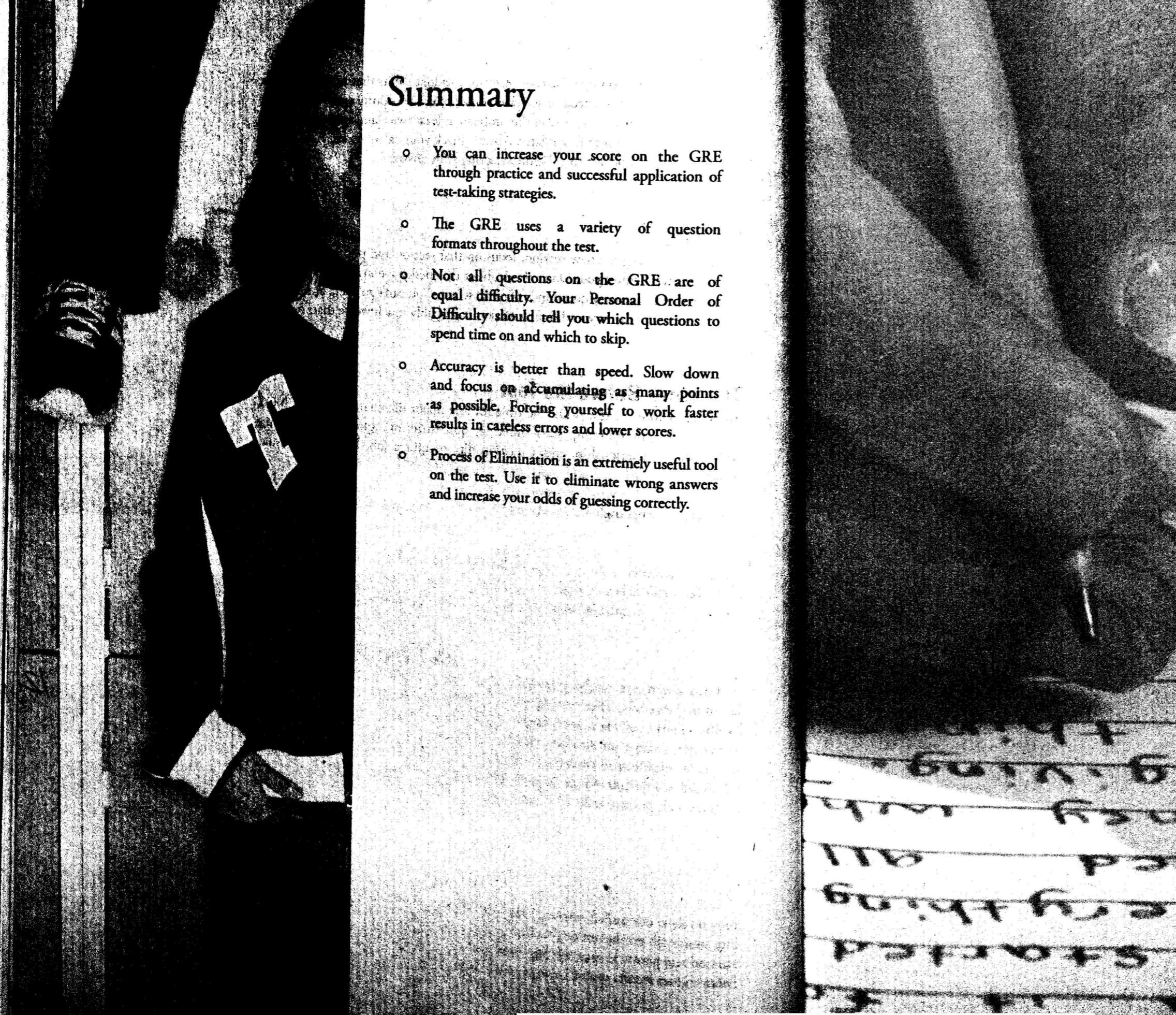
The Week Before the Test

The week before the test is not the time for any major life changes. This is NOT the week to quit smoking, start smoking, quit drinking coffee, start drinking coffee, start a relationship, end a relationship, or quit a job. Business as usual, okay?

Now let's get cracking!



Need more info? Check out the DVD.



Summary

- You can increase your score on the GRE through practice and successful application of test-taking strategies.
- The GRE uses a variety of question formats throughout the test.
- Not all questions on the GRE are of equal difficulty. Your Personal Order of Difficulty should tell you which questions to spend time on and which to skip.
- Accuracy is better than speed. Slow down and focus on accumulating as many points as possible. Forcing yourself to work faster results in careless errors and lower scores.
- Process of Elimination is an extremely useful tool on the test. Use it to eliminate wrong answers and increase your odds of guessing correctly.

Part II How to Crack the Verbal Section

- 3 The Geography of the Verbal Section
- 4 Text Completions
- 5 Sentence Equivalence
- 6 Reading Comprehension
- 7 Vocabulary for the GRE

Chapter 3

The Geography of the Verbal Section

The Verbal section of the GRE is designed to test your verbal reasoning abilities. This chapter will explain what types of questions ETS uses to accomplish that. You'll also see how the concepts of Personal Order of Difficulty and Process of Elimination apply to the Verbal section. Finally, you'll learn what role vocabulary plays in achieving a good score on the Verbal section.

Need more
info? Check
out the DVD.

WHAT'S ON THE VERBAL SECTION

Now that ETS has redesigned the GRE, the company claims that the new Verbal section will accomplish the following:

- Place a greater emphasis on analytical skills and on understanding vocabulary in context rather than in isolation
- Use more text-based materials
- Contain a broader range of reading selections
- Test skills that are more closely aligned with those used in graduate school
- Expand the range of computer-enabled tasks

While those sound like lofty and admirable goals, what they really translate into are the following changes:

- There won't be questions that involve analogies or antonyms on this test, as there have been on past tests (and good riddance!).
- You'll see new question types that weren't on the old version of the test: Critical Reasoning questions and Sentence Equivalence (in which you search for synonyms—somewhat easier and more reasonable than the antonyms questions, but not by much).
- The test writers made minor tweaks to the Text Completion and Reading Comprehension questions (we'll get into how these are constructed later in this section).
- You'll see some wacky-looking question formats that you've probably never seen before.
- Though they say the new version of the test de-emphasizes vocabulary, there's no getting around the fact that the more vocabulary you know when you sit down to take the test, the better off you'll be.

Of course, ETS claims that the new GRE is a better and more valid test than the previous incarnation, but we have our doubts. For one, there hasn't been much testing done on the new question types. In other words, ETS hasn't extensively tried these questions out on test takers to see how well they evaluated knowledge or ability. Second, the new test is longer and less convenient for students—but more on that later. Suffice it to say that we're not totally convinced that this test represents an improvement over those of the past.

There are three types of questions on the verbal section of the test. They are:

Text Completions

These consist of a short section of text, between one and five sentences, with one to three blanks. A one-blank text completion will have five answer choices while a two-blank or three-blank text completion will have three choices per blank. Your job is to find the best word for each blank.

They look like this:

Fables often endure due to their (i) _____, often telling one simple narrative, based around one character. This is both by design, because direct statements are more easily remembered than florid ones, and by accident: As fables are passed from teller to teller, (ii) _____ details fall away, leaving only the essential story.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
bombast	superfluous
objectivity	requisite
simplicity	apocryphal

Reading Comprehension

Reading Comprehension makes up the lion's share of the verbal portion of the test. You will be given a passage that may vary in length from one to five paragraphs with one to five questions per passage. Reading comprehension questions might ask you for the main idea of the passage; they might ask about specific pieces of information in the passage; they might ask you about the structure or tone of a passage; they might ask you about vocabulary in the passage, the point of view of the author, or about the argument being made in the passage. The good news about reading comprehension questions is that they are rarely dependent upon vocabulary, and the answers are always in the passage.

There are three question formats:

Multiple Choice

After examining the bodies of a dozen beached whales and finding evidence of bleeding around the animals' eyes and brains as well as lesions on their kidneys and livers, environmental groups fear that the Navy's use of sonar is causing serious harm to marine animals. A leading marine biologist reports that sonar induces whales to panic and surface too quickly, which causes nitrogen bubbles to form in their blood.

The argument above relies on which of the following assumptions?

- Marine biologists have documented that other marine animals, including dolphins and sea turtles, have exhibited kidney and liver lesions.
- No studies have been conducted on the possible detrimental effects of sonar on marine animals.
- Whales in captivity panic only when exposed to man-made, rather than natural, sound waves.
- The presence of nitrogen bubbles in the blood has been demonstrated to cause damage to various internal organs.
- It is unlikely that the symptoms found in the beached whales could be caused by any known disease.

Select all that Apply

What was it about Oscar Wilde's only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, that caused it to create such an uproar when it was published in 1891? While critics attacked the quality of Wilde's formal elements, their denunciation merely masked the true concerns of many nineteenth-century critics. What these critics were actually railing against was the thematic content of Wilde's work, specifically his illustration of a lifestyle devoted to useless beauty. For many a nineteenth-century moralist, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was nothing more than a primer for spiritual depravity. Wilde's ultimate sin was his leniency toward his protagonist, an unabashed hedonist. To the critics, allowing an evil character to escape his just desserts was an unforgivable sin. In their minds, Wilde's work was corrupting the genteel reading public by failing to show the proper consequences of immoral behavior.

Consider each of the choices separately and select all that apply.

The author of the passage would probably agree with which of the following statements?

- Most critics of Oscar Wilde's novel objected primarily to the lifestyle of its author.
- If *The Picture of Dorian Gray* were written in the twentieth century, the critical reaction would be less severe.
- Some critics of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* believed that an author of a book had a moral responsibility to the book's audience.

Select in Passage

Called by some the "island that time forgot," Madagascar is home to a vast array of unique, exotic creatures. One such animal is the aye-aye. First described by western science in 1782, it was initially categorized as a member of the order Rodentia. Further research then revealed that it was more closely related to the lemur, a member of the primate order. Since the aye-aye is so different from its fellow primates, however, it was given its own family: *Daubentonidae*. The aye-aye has been listed as an endangered species and, as a result, the government of Madagascar has designated an island off the northeastern coast of Madagascar as a protected reserve for aye-ayes and other wildlife.

Click on the sentence that would most seriously weaken the author's claim that "this practice may result in the loss of a superb example of life's variety."

Sentence Equivalence

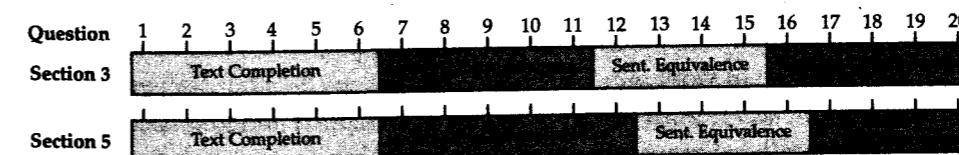
These are similar to text-completion questions. You will be given a single sentence with one blank and six answer choices. Your job is to select two words from the answer choices that could fit in the blank. Here's what they look like:

He was a man of few words, _____ around all but his closest friends.

- laconic
- garrulous
- ascetic
- taciturn
- tempestuous
- ambiguous

HOW IS THE GRE VERBAL SECTION STRUCTURED?

The GRE now has two scored multiple-choice verbal sections. Each will be 30 minutes long with 20 questions per section. The way you perform on one verbal section will affect the questions you see on the next verbal section (more on this later). Verbal sections tend to follow the same order. Roughly your first six questions will be Text Completion, your next five or six will be Reading Comprehension, followed by about four Sentence Equivalence, and then another four or five Reading Comprehension questions. In profile, your two verbal sections will look something like this:



BASIC STRATEGIES FOR THE GRE VERBAL SECTION

Here are some strategies that will help you on the Verbal section. We'll show you how to use them as we go through specific question types in the chapters ahead, but for now read through the strategies and get a sense of what they are before moving on.

Scratch Paper

You may be tempted to do the verbal questions in your head. Don't. Use your scratch paper, not only for jotting down strategy, but also for POE. Always write down A, B, C, D, E on your scratch paper so you can physically cross out choices you're eliminating.

Personal Order of Difficulty

One very important thing to keep in mind as you go through the verbal section is that you can control which questions you do and when you do them. Once again, you're able to skip around the test, so do the questions in any order you like. If you come to a question that stumps you, skip it and move on to the next one. Go back to the hard ones at the end of the section if you have time—remember that all questions are worth the same number of points, so you won't get any more credit for answering a hard question than answering an easy one—use your time wisely.

We call this method the Two-Pass system. In the Two-Pass system, you do the following:

1. **First Pass:** Go through the test, doing all the questions you feel confident on. Skip any questions that are confusing or seem to be taking you a while to work out.
2. **Second Pass:** Return to the questions you skipped and give them a shot; you'll feel more relaxed because you'll have completed most of the section and done well on it, and you can settle in and give them your full attention.

Process of Elimination (POE)

One important point to keep in mind here is that on verbal questions, your goal is to find the “best” answer. Note that this doesn’t mean the same thing as finding the “right” answer or the “correct” answer. On this section, it’s essential that you get into the habit of considering every answer choice, even if you’re pretty sure you’ve already found the answer. After all, there’s no way of saying one answer is the “best” unless you’ve compared it to all the others.

Sometimes it's far easier to find the wrong answer to a verbal question than the right one; after all, statistically there are far more wrong answers on the test than correct ones. This is where the Process of Elimination comes into play. If you can recognize a bad answer and eliminate it, you will greatly increase your odds of choosing the right answer if you must guess on a question.

Intelligent guessing—guessing after eliminating at least one answer choice—is a good way to get the best GRE verbal score you can get. Consider the following question:

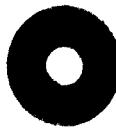
1 of 20

When studying human history, one must be aware that the _____ between historical periods are arbitrary; certainly none of the people alive at the time were aware of a shift from one era to another.

judgments
ideologies
innovations
demarcations
episodes

Here's How to Crack It

If you encountered this question on the GRE, you might not know what the best answer is (you'll learn how to approach questions like this in Chapter 4). However, you might see that some of the answers simply don't make sense. Choices (A), (B), and (C) don't seem to fit the sentence at all. By eliminating these wrong answers, you've suddenly given yourself a great chance of choosing the correct answer just by guessing, since only answer choices (D) and (E) are left. And if you realize that choice (E) doesn't make sense either, then you know the correct answer is (D), even if you're not sure what “demarcations” means. Sometimes it's easier to find the wrong answer than the right answer.



Need more info? Check out the DVD.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCABULARY

Although ETS says that vocabulary is de-emphasized on this test, having a wide vocabulary will still help you on the GRE. Text Completion questions and Sentence Equivalence questions rely heavily on vocabulary, and reading passages can and will contain some tough words in both the passages and in the answer choices.

To that end, working on improving your vocabulary can translate into higher scores on the GRE. We've provided you with the Hit Parade in Chapter 7; it's a list of words commonly used on the GRE, but that's only the beginning. As you read books and newspapers, watch movies or television, or talk to your smarter friends, keep track of any and all new vocabulary words you read or hear, write them down, look them up, and remember them. Chances are they'll come in handy on test day.

Three Kinds of Words

As you encounter difficult words throughout this book, put them in one of these three categories:

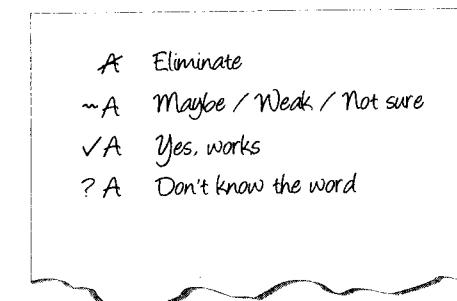
- **Words you know**—These are words you can define accurately. If you can give a definition of a word that's pretty close to the dictionary definition, then it is a word you know.
- **Words you sort of know**—These are words you've seen or heard before, or maybe even have used yourself, but can't define accurately. You may have a sense of how these words are used, but beware! Day-to-day usage is often different from the dictionary meaning of words, and the only meanings that count on the GRE are those given in the dictionary. ETS likes using words that have secondary meanings, and some of the words in this category may have secondary definitions that you're not aware of. You have to treat these words very differently from the words you can define easily and for which you know all the meanings. Every time you encounter a word you sort of know in this book, be sure to look it up in the dictionary and make it a word you know from then on.
- **Words you've never seen**—You can expect to see some words in this book you've never seen before. After you encounter a word like this, look it up! If it's been on the GRE one year, there's a good chance it will show up again.

GENERAL STRATEGIES FOR THE GRE VERBAL SECTION

Scratch Paper—Say No to Multitasking

Scratch paper is every bit as important on the verbal side of the test as it is on the math. When you answer a verbal question in your head, you are really doing two things at once. The first is evaluating each answer choice; the second is keeping track of which answer choices are still in and which ones you don't like. This is multitasking, and the problem with multitasking, studies have shown, is that you end up doing both tasks worse! Multitasking leads to inefficient use of time as you end up revisiting answer choices that you've already evaluated, and it leads to errors as you distract your brain with other tasks while making crucial choices.

The better approach is to engage your hand and take a load off your brain by parking your thinking on the page. The answer choices represent ETS's suggested answers. They are carefully designed to mislead the tired test taker. Because of this, you should always have a clear sense of what you're looking for before you get to the answer choices. When you do get to the answer choices, it's a simple assessment: Does it match your answer or not? This is an easy call to make. If the answer is a vocabulary word, either you know the word and it works, you know the word and it doesn't work, or you don't know the word. If it is a reading comprehension question, either the answer matches your answer, it does not match, or you're not sure. As you evaluate each answer choice, mark your assessment on your scratch paper. Verbal scratch paper looks like this:



We will discuss different strategies for setting up scratch paper for specific question types later in the chapter, but there are four basic symbols you will use for all questions:

- × **Eliminate**—When an answer choice is clearly wrong, get rid of it. Having it there as an option is nothing but a distraction, so make it go away.
- ~ **Maybe**—Don't be afraid of the Maybe. GRE students often get hung up considering a particular answer choice. On the first pass through the answer choices, this is time wasted. It is entirely possible that

the other four answer choices are wrong, or that you find one that is clearly better. Before you invest too much time (too much time means more than 5 seconds) on any one answer choice, give it the *Maybe* and move on. You can always come back to it and give it more time *if you have to*, but you never want to give it more time *than you have to*. If you're not sure or you don't love it, just give it the *Maybe* and move on.

✓ **Yes, Works**—When you have one that works, give it the check mark.

? **Question Mark**—If you don't know the meaning of a word, mark it with a question mark. You must be honest with yourself here. You do yourself no favors by acting like you know a word more than you actually do. You cannot eliminate a word just because it looks bad. You don't have to pick it, but if you don't know it, you can't eliminate it.

You are taking a two-pass approach through the answer choices. On the first pass, it's a simple question of *Maybe* or *Gone*? Park your thinking on the page and nine out of ten times your scratch paper will be able to answer the question for you. If you have two question marks and a check, you're done. The check is your answer. If you have two maybes and a check, you're done; the check is your answer. If you have four eliminates and a question mark, the question mark is your answer.

Using scratch paper on the Verbal section is a habit. It's something you do every time. Over time, it should just become automatic. When you're working on a verbal question, your hand should be moving. This will save you time and mental effort. Remember that it is a four-hour exam, and over four hours, your brain will get tired. Saving mental effort makes a difference and helps to avoid mistakes. The job of the techniques is to help you with the hard problems, but it is also to ensure that the questions you should be getting right, you are getting right. Both jobs are equally important. Start using scratch paper now and force yourself to keep doing it until it becomes habit.

Take the Easy Test First

The GRE is all about accuracy. It's not the number of questions you answer that determines your score; it's the number of questions you answer correctly. It is more important to get questions correct than to get to answer all questions. Since all questions within a given section count equally toward your score, you might as well do the easy ones first. If you love text completion, but hate reading comprehension, then do the text completion first.

Work slowly. Work for accuracy. Skip often. When a question pops up that you don't like, click to the next one. You can always come back and answer it later, time provided, but take the easy test first. Invest your time in those questions you like. That way, when you run short on time, you have nothing left but the questions you don't like doing anyway. Another way to think about it is to play to your strengths. As you work through this book and learn new techniques, the types of questions you decide to skip might change. Just because they give you questions in a specific order doesn't mean you have to answer them in that order.

You are in control of question order. Take the easy test first!

Bend—Don't Push

Over a period of four hours, your brain will get tired. When that happens, you will misread a question, a sentence, or an answer choice. It is inevitable. When you go back and look at these questions later, you will smack your forehead and think, "That was so stupid! Why did I do that? That's not what it says at all. I thought..." Everyone has these moments. It happens because most of us no longer read things word for word. We read in chunks. We don't read words anymore; we recognize words. Sometimes, especially when our brains get tired, we get these chunks wrong or we recognize a different word. The problem is that once you have seen a question or a word wrong, it is all but impossible to un-see it and see it correctly.

The solution is to walk away. Distract your brain by working on a few other questions. The minute you run into any resistance, walk away. When you are left with two answer choices and you would swear that both are correct, walk away. When you have eliminated all of the answer choices, walk away. When a sentence isn't quite coming into focus, walk away. Do not continue to push on a question that is giving you problems. Walk away.

The time that you would otherwise spend struggling with a hard question, you can now invest in an easier one. Then, when you have two minutes left, use the Review screen to guess on all unanswered questions.

Got it? Now you're ready to move on and learn more about the types of questions you'll see on the Verbal section. Let's get cracking!

Summary

- The GRE Verbal section consists of two, 30-minute sections, each containing 20 questions.
- The Verbal section is made up of sentence completion, argument, reading comprehension, and synonym questions.
- Use the Two-Pass system along with your own Personal Order of Difficulty to focus your time on the questions you feel more comfortable working on.
- Success on the Verbal section of the exam involves using Process of Elimination to eliminate “worse” answer choices.
- Vocabulary is an important aspect of success on the GRE Verbal section. Classify words on the GRE in three categories: words you know, words you kind of know, and words you’ve never seen before. Work on your vocabulary.

Chapter 4

Text Completions

If you took the SAT, you probably remember sentence completion questions. Well, they’re back, retooled and renamed for the GRE. Text-completion questions test your ability to figure out which word or words best complete a given sentence or group of sentences. On the GRE, the sentence can have one, two, or even three blanks that you must fill. This chapter will show you the Princeton Review approach to text completions, a tried-and-true approach that will help you focus on exactly the parts of the sentences that you’ll need to figure out the best answer. Along the way we’ll provide you with some valuable tips on using Process of Elimination to help you when you don’t know all the vocabulary on a question.

THE FORMAT

Text Completion Directions

On the test, the directions will look something like the italicized blurb below. Make sure you learn them now so you don't waste time reading them on test day.

For the following questions, select one entry for each blank from the corresponding column of choices. Fill all blanks in the way that best completes the text.

Text-completion questions often use difficult vocabulary words. Make sure you look up any words you don't know.

The "best" answer is what ETS says is the "best" answer.

On each Verbal section of the GRE you can expect to see about 6 text completions. Text-completion questions on the GRE will have one, two, or three blanks. One-blank text completions will have five answer choices, while two- and three-blank questions will have three choices for each blank.

Some blanks are designed to test vocabulary, and others are designed to test comprehension. The vocabulary blanks have hard words; the context blanks often include prepositions and trigger words.

The blanks may operate independently or in conjunction with each other. If they operate in conjunction, the word you select for one blank will affect the meaning of the sentence, and therefore the word that might fit in another blank. This is a big help! When you find the word for one blank, it can help you determine all of the others.

The first thing to note is that every answer choice will fit grammatically into the sentence, and quite a few of them will make a degree of sense.

The answer choices represent ETS's suggestions for what to put into the blank. The answer choices have been carefully selected and tested by thousands of students for their ability to tempt you into the wrong answer. As a test taker, don't trust their suggestions and certainly don't rely on them. They are there to mislead you. If you plug them into the sentence to see what "sounds" the best, ETS will get the better of you. They're good at it.

The answer choices represent ETS's suggestions for what to put into the blank. They are carefully selected to mislead you. Don't use them.

The first step, therefore, is to cover up the answer choices. That way they can't distract you while you find the story, and there will always be a story. The question above lacks a complete story. You will never see a text-completion question like this on the test.

Here's a more realistic example:

Robert Ingersoll, although virtually unknown today, was the _____ orator of the nineteenth century; people traveled hundreds of miles to hear his eloquent speeches.

domineering
consummate
unobjectionable
conventional
execrable

Here's How to Crack It

1. Set up your scratch paper with a column of answer choices, A through E.
2. Cover up the answer choices. That's right, literally take your hand, put it on the screen, and cover up your answer choices. Don't trust the answer choices; they are there to mislead you.
3. Find the story. Who or what is this sentence about, and what are we told about this person or thing? In this case the sentence is about Robert Ingersoll. What are we told about him? He was some kind of orator, but we don't know what kind because that is the blank. What else are we told about him? The sentence is like a small reading composition passage, and you can use only things you are specifically told in the text. Robert Ingersoll gave eloquent speeches, and people travelled hundreds of miles to hear them. That's all we know.
4. Speak for yourself. Use the information you're given in the sentence to come up with your own word for the blank. Be as literal as you can. If you can recycle part of the sentence, feel free to do so. In this case we can say that Robert Ingersoll was the most *sought out* or *eloquent* orator of the nineteenth century. That is all we can say because that is the only information we are given in the text.
5. Use Process of Elimination. Only when you have come up with your own word from the blank are you protected against the mind games in the answer choices. You now know exactly what the blank needs, and you therefore have a way of evaluating the answer choices. Use your words as a filter to eliminate wrong answers. Use your scratch paper to track your progress. Don't get hung up on any individual