A lot of people have been asking me about the GRE and things to keep in mind while preparing for it. Though there are a lot of resources available online, I guess I understand the need to ask someone who's nearby, in multiple interpretations of the term. So, here's a small (I tried) reference that could help you.

I scored a 170Q/166V/5.0 (AWA) with a prep time of around 1.5 months (with around 1.5 hours per day, and 4-5 hours per day in the last 4-5 days), and yeah, it's doable with regularity.

Your background/base level doesn't matter much except for in deciding how much time you should give to the prep. Most of us will not have a problem with the Quants section, except for some speed and accuracy issues. It's generally the Verbal section which needs a little bit of an extra effort.

(Also, **remember to take your passport for the test**. Apparently, it's the only Indian identification that works, though feel free to check whether something else works or not over [here](#).)

Overview

(I'm going to mention the details of the Computer Based Test, which is what most of us go for, the paper based test is slightly different only in terms of timings per sections, I think.)

[ETS](#) is the official organisation and word for all your doubts and queries. They also provide official material which I'll mention later.

There are 3 types of sections in the GRE.

Quants: 20 questions per section, 30 minutes per section. Maximum Possible Score: 170
Verbal: 20 questions per section, 35 minutes per section. Maximum Possible Score: 170

(In the actual exam, there will be 5 sections, 3 of either of quants/verbal, and 2 of the other. One of the 3 sections will be unscored, though you will have no way of knowing which one that is, so you will have to attempt all 5 sections seriously.)

Analytical writing: You're scored separately on this, and unis are not super strict about this in general, so it's a relatively less important section as compared to the other two. Two timed tasks. 1. Analyse an issue. 2. Analyse an argument. 30 minutes per task. Scoring from 1-6 per task, an average reported score of both the tasks.

Preliminary Step

Give the Barron's diagnostic test to estimate your current level. It's a shorter test (around 1 hour, I think) and gives a projected range of score. If you are getting >310, 1.5-2 months should be more than enough for prep, otherwise you could consider giving some more time to it.

Material

While preparing, some of us had this compiled folder with most of the required material. I'll give the links for the material that I mention from this folder itself.

(I'm going to give a rough 1.5 month schedule that I followed, feel free to mould it according to your requirements, of course.)

(Start the word lists and the ETS material (especially quants) parallely.)

Word Lists/Vocabulary

1. Magoosh Vocabulary Flashcards:
   a. Has three types of decks. Around 1000 words AFAIK. You should target doing this exhaustively.
   b. Target getting at least the Common and Basic Decks done in the first 10-15 days.
2. CrunchPrep 101 High Frequency Words
3. Barron's 333 High Frequency Words

Some of these will have some overlapping words, I'd recommend doing them multiple times and not skipping them. It's pretty much mugging up, do it well. It's important. It's not sufficient, but it's necessary.

Official ETS Guides

1. Combined Q+V Book
   a. Do this end to end (including solved examples etc). Read even the boring shiz written in here. Would recommend getting a hard copy of this.
2. Quants Book
3. Verbal Book

Do all the questions from 2 and 3. One tip is to time the individual sections just for practice.

Manhattan

Huge Book. Level is slightly higher than ETS level, but very good for practice, and for preparing to a level that's a notch higher than you might need.

There are 3 types of Verbal questions - Reading Comprehension, Sentence Completion and Text Equivalence. (Look them up.) This book has around 150 questions on each of these (AFAIK, again), do them all (once you're done with at least 50% vocab and all of the ETS material).

- One thing you could try to do is note down the words that you don't know, that you encounter in the questions as well as the options. It's not super necessary that you know these words well by the end, but it would benefit to have some list of sorts if you're left with some extra time.
- Another thing you could try while practicing Verbal questions, if you see that you're not able to do so well on this - is to write reasons for why you're selecting the option which you are, and see where it doesn't agree with the explanations for the correct answers. Will help you figure out holes in your general approach, if any.

For Quants, you don't need to do it all. Just practice questions from the sections that you think you're weak in, or need some extra practice with.

Mocks

The most underrated requirement for prep. There are around 5-7 mocks I think that are possible to take, free of cost. Take them! All that practice is going to be useless if you get bored after 2 hours. The first time I took a mock, I took 2 sittings to get through it. You need to build the ability to keep concentrating throughout the 3 hours and 45 minutes of the test. (Try doing the AWA section as well, even though they aren't scored on the mocks.)

These are the tests I can remember:

1. Manhattan
2. Kaplan
3. Princeton
4. 2 paper based tests in the ETS guide (you'll have to time and score these yourselves)
5. 2 online mocks from the ETS Powerprep software
   a. These are the most accurate ones, take them in the beginning of the last week or so.

This doc has some more ways of availing non-free tests, check it out if you think you have the room for it.

Barron's

This book has some good tips on reading comprehension questions. Just take a look at them if you think you need to. (And try to incorporate those tips while practicing).

- RCs can be a bit tough even when you're good with vocab etc. In general, keep an eye out for options which make statements that are slightly too broad or slightly too narrow. Or options which include information that is not mentioned or implied in the passages. Elimination works well for such questions.
- Try out the pass technique for timing your verbal section well. In the first pass get done with all the easy questions. (Attempt all questions in this pass, but don't dwell on any). In the second pass, give all the questions a little more time. And in the last pass, take estimated guesses for all the leftovers.

Appendix: The AWA Section

Try out [this website](#) (testbig) to practice some writing. There are 2 pools for the issue and argument tasks on the official ETS website, just pick up some questions from those and submit your responses on testbig. You get an automated score, which is probably not VERY accurate, but it'll give you some confidence in the best case, and some writing practice in the worst.

- In general, write as much as you can. 4-5 meaty paragraphs should be good. You can cover one important point per para. Support every point well with examples. (The examples can be hypothetical or made up, so don't hold back.)
- For the argument section, point out as many holes and criticisms for the given argument that you can.
- For the issue section, you don't need to restrict yourself to one stance. Your stance can be conditional and subjective. For example, technology (bleh) can be great if used well and in moderation and very very very bad if not kept in check. (I hope the point is clear, here.)

Read the 4, 5, 6 scored essays given in the ETS books. They'll help.

(All this may seem like a lot of stuff to do, but once you take the test date, you should automatically feel like covering it all. And it's not a lot, just be regular. Good luck!)

P.S: If you're giving the GRE, chances are you'd be giving TOEFL as well, and just since some of us (including me) miss(ed) out on reading some instructions - I'm adding it here - please remember that the free TOEFL scores need to be sent before 10 pm on the day before the test. So just keep it in mind!