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# SIX MONTHS **STRATEGY** **GUIDE TO** CRACK CAT





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## **Strategy Guide for CAT Preparation**

Human beings are funny creatures. Our basic instinct, when faced with challenges, is to dive deep down into the problem-solving process without taking a step back and thinking about the action plan required by the problem at hand. Preparing for CAT is actually one such problem which requires you to get the right strategy in place in order to get the maximum possible impact when it comes to results. In this strategy guide we will provide the six-month plan from June to November. But, before we get started with the actual strategy and plan you need to adopt for CAT preparation, let's take up some of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that come to us.

### **Can there be a strategy for an aptitude exam?**

Yes, most definitely. In fact, CAT preparation is a lot more about getting your plan right than actual conceptual knowledge. Being an aptitude -based exam, it makes a lot of sense to prepare for the exam in the right manner.

### **Can there be a unified strategy for all students preparing for CAT?**

Well, this question has a plain and simple common-sense answer: NO. There cannot be a single strategy for the different types of students that appear for the CAT exam.

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In fact, individual plans will have to be tailored according to individual learning needs. Some of you might be weaker in one particular area in comparison to the others and this might require you to tweak the general plan we suggest according to your needs.

### **What are the key criteria upon which this plan is based?**

Our strategy guide is based on years of experiences of CAT trainers, who understand the pulse of students and can figure out what is required of students. At the cost of repetition, we are again stating that individual plans will vary but the general guidelines in this strategy guide are applicable to all.

### **What is the kind of effort required of you to get through a top college?**

Majority of the students who prepare for CAT generally want a tangible number or statistic that they can use to establish the kind of effort required of them. Remember, it is not about the number of hours that you spend on your preparation; it is about the learning you derive from the preparation process. The one thing you need to do right through your preparation is to constantly evaluate your learning and ensure that you are achieving your learning milestones.



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Well, this gets the basic questions out of the way. Let's delve into the plan details now and figure out what you need to do for the exam.

### **Month-by-Month CAT Preparation Plan (June to November)**

The first thing that you need to understand about CAT is that it does not have a huge syllabus. CAT is also not based on mugging up formulas but more focused on application. It is actually an aptitude test more than anything else. However, this does not mean that it does not require any preparation. You require roughly 300 to 500 hours of serious study hours to achieve your peak potential in CAT. For a student starting in June, it leaves him with approx six months before CAT, meaning on an average, three hours of preparation is required on a daily basis till CAT exam this year.

Now, three hours of serious study each day from now till December might look daunting for those with full-time jobs and college, however, it isn't impossible. With a proper strategy in place, a student can achieve optimum preparation levels before the exam day in November.



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## Month 1 (June):

Firstly and most importantly mark the **registration dates** in your calendar. Having done this, you won't have to worry about forgetting to register for the exam in midst of preparation.

Second most important thing is to **familiarize yourself with the CAT exam pattern**. You can do that by watching the demonstration on the official Prometric website. Or take a Mock CATs and get a broad idea of the different sections and question types.

Once you are familiar with how a CAT exam looks like, take a diagnostic test – one with all three sections. You can do that by creating a free account on [HitBullseye.com](https://www.hitbullseye.com) and taking a Bull Mock CAT test. However you will not be able to access most of the mock tests and study material. Since you have time for preparation, we would recommend you to create **[a paid account](#)** and get unrestricted access to live lectures, articles, mock test etc. You will get a score on your mock test performance, but don't fret over it. Save your result for later.

Next day, study the explanations of the mock test, analyzing your **strong and weak areas**. Understand areas



where you scored the lowest and the highest. Compile a list of areas that need the most improvement, as well the ones that require the least improvement. This will help you ascertain your **study priorities**, both immediate and long term. Keep updating study priorities as you take more mocks, which should ideally be **one per week**.

Once your strengths and weaknesses are in place, focus on building conceptual understanding of your weak areas through video lectures and articles. After completing each lesson of each of your weaker areas, drill yourself with practice questions and tests present on your hitbullseye.com dashboard.

Also at this stage, begin **to read extensively on a daily basis**. Pick up a newspaper like The Hindu and read the editorial section every day. Also start keeping notes either on OneNotes on your mobile, or on Flashcards to remember difficult words, as well as important Quant formulas.

### **Month 2 (July):**

Continue working on concepts and supplement them with practice questions and tests. By the first week of July, you should ideally know your strongest and weakest sections among Quant, Verbal and DI. You

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should devote approximately 50% of your time on your weakest section, and 25% each on the other two sections. Later, if you are able to score evenly in all three sections – you can divide your time evenly as well. At that stage, begin to focus on your weakest topics within each section.

Also in this month, start building your mental calculation skills. Try to mentally calculate problems in your head while you are commuting, during evening walks, or whenever you get free time. Although you do get an on-screen calculator in your exam, mentally calculating will allow you to save a lot of time.

Increase your reading resources beyond newspaper. Also while reading, try to frame CAT-like questions in your mind about every passage you read. Then try to answer those questions in your head.

Keep taking one mock test per week this month and updating the list of strong and weak areas. When you take a test, make sure you recreate actual exam environment: take test on a computer for a three-hour stretch allotting an hour to each section. Get used to not taking breaks during the exam. Resist the temptation to either skip ahead or return to spend more time on a section! The CAT exam won't allow you to do this.



## **Month 3 (August):**

Continue to reassess your strong and weak areas. Keep taking video lessons available on your Hitbullseye dashboard, along with practice tests, assignments, and using flashcards. By mid-August, you should know your strengths and weaknesses within each topic. Start working on each of those weaker areas by taking topic specific video lessons, and supplementing them with practice tests.

Also in August, take an overview of all your mocks taken till date. Find out areas where you have improved the most, and ones that you still fail to answer correctly. Update your priority list and work as explained before.

## **Month 4 (September):**

Congratulations for coming this far! You are now entering the high intensity preparation phase.

The first thing to do now is to register for CAT. Then, from now onwards start taking previous years' CAT tests as your weekly mock tests.

These tests will give you confidence of taking actual CAT tests. Don't worry about your overall results since tests pattern have changed and overall results is not an indicator of your preparation level.



Keeping broadening your reading areas. It'll keep you at the top of your game for the crucial Reading Comprehension section.

### **Month 5 (October):**

In this month, start timing your practice tests. If you are falling short of time in a certain section, then this is the time to fix this. Cutting down even 15 seconds from every question will help you reduce substantial time in each section. If you already save a lot of time, focus on improving your reviewing and double-checking skills.

Continue with video lessons, drills and practice questions, practice exams, practice sections, flashcards, and outside reading. And keep altering your study topics as per your current ability levels.

### **Month 6 (November):**

This is the revision month. Go back to your strengths and weaknesses list and make sure there aren't any major topics in your weaker areas list. Re-watch any lessons in areas where you're still making mistakes. If there are some topics where you feel that you don't have enough time to take them up from scratch, leave them, and don't bother spending time on it if they come in the CAT exam.



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Also in this month, revise all topics by re-solve practice questions and tests but try to take lesser time this time around.

## **Few days before CAT**

The day is finally arriving! You have prepared for half a year, so do not fret about studying any new material at this stage. Relax and keep a light study schedule in the last couple of days before CAT exam. Make sure your mind is clutter-free and at peace. Get at least 8 hours of sleep before the night of the exam. Also avoid watching anything that makes you negative or spoils your mood.

The next day, don't over think before heading to the exam hall. Once the CAT exam starts, you'll find that all the skills you've honed have become automatic. Trust them, and yourself, to get you to that great score!



## **Topic-wise six month Preparation Plan (Detailed)**

We have prepared a three-phase topic-wise plan for you to crack CAT . This plan will show what you need to do in these three phases:

### **1. Phase-1: Build up your core Muscles**

Phase Duration: Mid-June to July

The first phase is all about building your core concepts and working on your basics. In this phase, you focus on the following:

- a. Basic Concepts for all topics
- b. Essential testing (wherein you take limited mocks a month) in order to fine-tune your preparation.

### **2. Phase-2: Build your stamina**

Phase Duration: August to September

This phase is all about making sure you build your problem-solving skills and fine tune the concepts that you have worked upon in the first phase. In this phase, you work on:

- a. Area and Section Tests
- b. Basic Topic revision
- c. Intensive Mock Testing

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### **3. Phase-3: Go the next level**

Phase Duration: October and November

This is the phase where you wrap up your preparation by taking the intensity to the next level. You push your preparation to the next level with the help of

- a. Section Tests
- b. Basic Topic revision
- c. Aggressive Mock Testing

The above are three broad phases that your preparation can be divided into. Essentially, these three phases focus on concepts, testing and revision one by one. Once you balance these three aspects of preparation, there is nothing that stands between you and success.

Let's explore each of these areas one at a time now.

**[Click here to read the article on: CAT Exam Strategy explained like never before](#)**



## **Phase-1: Work on your Concepts**

**(June & July)**

In the first phase of your preparation, you need to focus on basic concepts for different preparation areas. You need to adopt a methodical approach for your preparation and make sure you go through these concepts one at a time. Let's explore the amount of time and the topics you need to study for different topics in each section of the exam.

### **Section-1: Quantitative Aptitude**

The complete syllabus for CAT Quantitative Aptitude can be divided into clear cut lessons/topics. Each of these requires you to cover a certain set of concepts. We have outlined each of these topics along with the time you need to spend on these topics. This assessment is generally made on the difficulty level and conceptual requirements of different topics.

**Go through the list of topics here:**

#### **Number System – 1.5 weeks**

- Digital Root
- Euler Number





- Cyclicity + negative remainder
- HCF LCM
- Divisibility
- Remainder theorems
- Factorial
- Number of divisors / Sum / Product
- Unit Digit/ tens digit
- Integral Solutions
- Base System
- Fractions, Bodmas, decimals
- Factors

## **Logarithm - 1/2 week**

- Theory, basic properties and graphs

## **Vedic Maths - 1/2 week**

- Multiplication and tables
- Square Cubes, square root, cube root

## **Sequences and Series - 1 week**

- Basics and concept of AP, GP , HP
- Basics and concept of AM GM HM



- Advanced/ Specia series

## **Permutation Combination - 1 week**

- Basics of Permutation and Combination
- Typical Questions- Cards, numbers, rank, dice, Chessboard problems
- Special Cases with Repetition/ No Repetition
- Circular Arrangement

## **Probability - 1 week**

- Basics
- Baey's Theorem+ Conditional Probability
- Typical Questions- Cards, numbers, dice, etc

## **Time Speed Distance - 1.5 weeks**

- Theory
- Relative speed- Trains, stationary object
- Boats and Streams
- Races and Games
- Escalator
- Circular Arrangement



## **Shares and Stocks - 1/2 week , Clock- ½ week**

- Gaining and losing of time
- Finding angle at a given time, time at given angle, Concept of interchanging of the hands.

## **Calendar - 1/2 week**

- Concept of odd day, finding date, days, etc

## **Set theory- 1/2 week**

- Basics

## **Venn diagram - ½ week**

- Basics,
- Concept of Maxima Minima

## **Time and Work - 1week**

- Basic Theory
- Pipes and Cistern
- Unitary method/ chain rule

## **Partnership-1/2 week**

## **Ratio and Proportion - 1/2 week**

- Basics
- Ratio and its use



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- Proportion
- Variation

### **Mixtures and Alligation - 1/2 week**

Theory + some typical situations where Alligation can be used

### **Geometry - 1.5 weeks**

- Coordinate Geometry
- Polygons, Quadrilaterals- Figures and Its properties
- Pythagorean Triplets
- Trigonometry
- Heights and Distances ( trigonometry)
- Line and Area
- Similarity+ Congruency
- Circles
- Triangles- Orthocentre, Incentre, Circumcentre
- Volume and area- cube, cuboid, sphere, cylinder, (3D figures)

### **Statistics - ½ week**

Basics- Mean median mode

### **Percentage- 1 week**

- Concept of percentage change + Word problems



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- Basic fraction %age conversion

### **Algebra- 1 week**

- Inequalities-Wave curve method
- Functions- odd even periodic functions, GINT, etc
- Quadratic equations, cubic equations
- Polynomials
- Range and Domain of equations

### **Simple and Compound interest - $\frac{1}{2}$ week**

- Basics
- Shortcuts + word problem
- Installments concept

### **Profit & Loss and Discount - $\frac{1}{2}$ week**

- Basics, Terminologies
- Advanced- shortcuts and tricks

### **Averages - $\frac{1}{2}$ week**

- Basics to advanced

[Click Here to know: What are the IIMs looking for in CAT Quantitative Aptitude?](#)



## **Section-2: Verbal Ability**

The second section of preparation is the tricky Verbal Ability section. Even though there is no precise syllabus for topics such as Reading Comprehension, you can adopt the following guidelines to go through all the topics for this section.

### **Reading Comprehensions: Basics and Concepts- 3 weeks**

- Basics of Reading
- Speed Reading
- Basic Comprehension Techniques
- Types of questions and how to handle them
- Subject-wise important terminology
- Reading Comprehensions: Practice
- Daily RC Practice: Solve 1 RC a day

RC practice is a constant part of your preparation and will accompany you at all stages of your preparation. You can begin with 1 RC a day and then build up to higher levels of practice.



## **Verbal Reasoning- 2 weeks**

- Para-jumbles
- Misfit Sentences
- Summary Writing
- Critical Reasoning
- Para-completion
- FIJ
- Misc. Reasoning topics

The next two topics in Verbal Ability preparation have been absent from CAT for the last three years. But these topics are a part of most other MBA entrance exams. Also, these topics can make a comeback at any time in CAT and you need to be ready for any eventuality.

## **Grammar- 4 weeks**

- Parts of Speech
- Subject-verb Agreement
- Parallelism
- Modifiers
- Verb Tense errors
- Idioms and Usage



- Punctuation errors

## **Vocabulary- 3 weeks**

- Vocabulary Development: Cover the Bulls Eye Visual Word List
- Vocabulary Development: You can complete one Vocabulary Building book (**Word Power Made Easy by Norman Lewis** or **Six Weeks to Words of Power by Wilfred Funk**).
- Sentence Completion/Fill in the blanks
- Analogies

## **Section-3: Logical Reasoning and Data Interpretation**

This is another section where the syllabus for preparation is fluid in nature. We have outlined the major topics you need to cover for this area and the time you should take to cover these topics.

### **Logical Reasoning**

- Linear Arrangement-1 week
- Matrix Arrangement-1 week
- Circular Arrangement-1 week
- Blood Relation and Family Tree-1 week
- Group/Team Formation, etc.-1 week





- Games and Tournaments-1 week
- Paths & Routes-1 week
- Directions-1 week

## **Data Interpretation**

- Percentage to fraction conversion-1/2 week
- Vedic Maths-1-1.5 weeks
- Bar Graphs-1 week
- Column Graphs-1 week
- Data Sufficiency-1 week
- Introduction to Data Interpretation-1 week
- Line Charts-1 week
- Pie Charts-1 week
- Tables and Caselets-1 week
- Venn Diagrams-1 week

## **Section-4: Mock Tests**

- 2 Mocks a month at this stage.

You might feel that you have not covered the complete syllabus and that you shouldn't be taking mocks at this stage. Do not allow yourself to go down this road. CAT is aptitude exam and majority of the topics you encounter in the exam are ones you should have studied before. If



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not anything else, mocks allow you to understand the demands of the exam better and help you refine your preparation.

[Click here to take mock tests based on CAT](#)



## **Phase-2: Practice and Basic Revision**

**(August & September)**

The next phase of your preparation must be all about practice and revision. Let's put into a place a few guidelines that you can use for this phase of preparation.

### **Section-1: Area Tests**

One way by which you can club practice and revision is by taking area and topic tests. By taking tests of specific topics, you can revise the topic and practice questions for the topic at the same time.

### **Section-2: Section Tests**

Section tests are nothing else but mini-mocks. By exposing you to a complete section, these tests help you learn how to navigate through a section and how to solve the right set of questions in a given section.

### **Section-3: Mock Tests**

This is the time to intensify your testing practice. You need to shift to 4 mocks a month at this stage, and you need to make sure you take 1 test every week.

Remember, the most important thing with Mock CATs is that you need to make sure you analyse every mock test you take. Mock CATs contain a wealth of knowledge with



them and generally employ a host of shortcuts to solve questions.

## **Phase-3: The Finishing School**

**(October & November)**

This is where you close out your preparation on a high and make sure you address each of your problem areas.

### **Section-1: Mock Tests**

At this stage of your preparation, you should ideally take 6 to 8 mock tests a month. As with the previous month, the key aspects with respect to your mock-tests are:

- Make sure you spend sufficient time on analysis
- Make sure you are honest with your attempts and stick to strict time limits.
- Try to mimic exam environments and make sure you attempt these tests with complete seriousness.

### **Section-2: Focus on your strength areas and filling up the gaps**

It is easy to say that you should focus on revision at this stage of your preparation but how should you go about it? You should keep the following in mind:



- Make sure you keep working on strength areas and keep improving in these areas. You can take area and section tests.
- Pick your weaknesses one at a time and revise the basic concepts for these.

### Keep your wits about yourself

CAT preparation in the last phase is all about keeping your wits. You need to make sure you are calm and composed at this stage and do not let negative thoughts cloud your judgement. Remember, at the end of the day, CAT is simply an exam and not the be all and end all of your life. The key things you need to keep in mind are:

- All students are going through the same amount of stress and pressure that you are. The person who best copes with it is the one who performs the best.
- Focus on the process and not the results. The only thing you should care about is to put in consistent effort and continuously improve the topics and take one step at a time. Remain **positive and focused**.



### **How to modify this plan according to your needs?**

You can always adjust and modify this plan according to your needs. In fact, there might be areas where you might feel you are doing well and you do not need to spend the kind of time we have mentioned. You can adjust your preparation accordingly. Make sure you adopt the broad framework of this preparation plan that highlights what you need to do over the next six months.