

3

Month
Strategy
Guide

to Crack
CAT



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Introduction to CAT Strategy

The preparation journey of any competitive exam is laden with a number of challenges which students have to overcome. CAT or Common Admission Test is one such entrance exam which many students aspire to crack in order to secure admission in prestigious IIMs or other top B-Schools.

- The journey to a successful career in the corporate world starts with getting oneself management education and CAT is the doorway to that coveted degree. It may be noted here that the competition for CAT is getting tougher every year with increase in number of students and the rising difficulty level of exam.
- As the clock has started ticking for the CAT exam, it is time for you to carve out a strategy and begin your preparation earnestly to stay ahead of the curve.

However, in order to achieve the right results, you need to possess the right strategy. In this strategy guide we will provide the three-month plan from September to November to help you prepare for CAT.



A must do list:-

- As the CAT exam is conducted online, therefore it is advisable that you understand the test pattern by going through the **Prometric CAT** demonstration
- You must go through previous years' CAT papers to be able to assess the level of preparation that is expected of you.

Before we get started, let's look at some of the commonly asked doubts.

Frequently Asked Questions

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. The number of hours you put in for preparation might actually not matter and what might matter more is the approach that you adopt for the exam.



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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. 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.

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.

Key Points to be kept in mind:-

- Know the specifics regarding the various MBA exam patterns
- It is advisable that you must know the specific dates on which the exam is held, the syllabus, exam pattern etc.
- Time management is the key to your success. If you are able to understand the correlation between the number of hours of self-study and the output, then it will become easier for you to crack the MBA entrance.
- Understand your strengths and weaknesses
- Focus and systematic approach to MBA preparation is of utmost importance.



General Tips for CAT Preparation

Make a study schedule:

It is very important to set clear goals with deadline and then working hard to achieve them. This way one never loses sight of the target and stays motivated. When goals are defined with timelines, it is also easier to assess how far one has come and in what time revisions can be done. However, when doing so it is important to set realistic goals that you can achieve. Further, your schedule should always accommodate short breaks in between.

Focus on Concepts over Rote Learning:

Focus on understanding the concepts throughout your preparation. Do not adopt rote learning technique. Understanding helps you to remember the concepts for a very long period of time. You can also create your memory tips or interesting acronyms to remember formulae or equations or difficult terminologies.

Self-Evaluation is Critical:

Studying alone doesn't make your preparation complete. You must evaluate yourself from time-to-time for an effective preparation. You must write mocks to keep analyzing your preparation. Also, while attempting



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papers, give in an exam type environment. Sample papers help gain confidence along with helping in devising your own strategy of attempting the questions.

Stay Positive and Confident:

'Belief' is a very powerful tool. You must believe in yourself and your preparation. Ensure that you study the same way throughout the year, to avoid last minute rush and stress. Spend 10-15 minutes before going off to sleep to quickly recap all that you learnt throughout the day.





Month-by-Month CAT Preparation Plan

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 out in September – with almost 3 months to the CAT exam day – a minimum of average four hours on weekdays and a minimum of six hours on weekends till the exam day. (Please note: this is a rough estimate for an average student. It increases or decreases as per students aptitude level)

Now, putting four to six hours of serious study from September till exam day 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.



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Month 1 (September)

Perform a strong and weak area analysis.

Take a previous-year CAT paper or any CAT-level mock test online. Once you do that, study the explanations of the 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. Keep updating study priorities as you take more mocks, which should ideally be one per week throughout September.

Find from the right study resources and start using them

Once your strengths and weaknesses are in place, focus on building conceptual understanding of your weak areas through video lectures and preparation books. Talk to CAT experts and mentors to get hold of the most relevant sources of preparation. You don't have time to spend studying from sources that isn't relevant for CAT. Also when the time is short, watching Video lectures are a better option viz. a viz. studying from books. After you build the concepts, drill yourself with practice questions and tests.



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 One Notes on your mobile, or on Flashcards to remember difficult words, as well as important Quant formulas.

Follow the 80/20 principle

The 80/20 rule of Pareto holds true for CAT as well. Eighty percent of questions in CAT come from only twenty percent of the topics. Usually, these are the topics that are most talked/discussed by MBA aspirants.

In Quantitative Aptitude, there are:

- Number System
- Geometry
- Algebra
- Time, Speed and Distance

In Data Interpretation, there are:

- Tables
- Case-lets
- Pi-charts and Bar Graph



In Verbal Ability, there are:

- Reading Comprehension (20-plus questions expected)
- Para-Jumbles
- Sentence Correction
- Para completion and FIJ

In Logical Reasoning, there are:

- Data Arrangement
- Seating Arrangement
- Blood Relations

Trouble learning concepts of any of the topics above?

Attend interactive live lectures of these topics and speed-up your learning. With just three months left, focusing more on these topics makes more sense since majority of the questions should feature from these topics.



Discipline is the bridge
between goals and
accomplishment.

Jim Rohn

Month 2 (October)

Smartly divide your preparation time

By the first week of October, you should ideally know your strongest and weakest sections among Quant, Verbal and DI. With almost fifty days for the exam, you need to play smartly while dividing time for your strong, moderate and weak areas. Keep honing your stronger areas – that's where you'll get the highest accuracy - while you continue to practice questions of your moderate area to increase accuracy, and focus **ONLY** on building the concepts of your weak areas.



How you divide time:

50 percent time on topics where you achieve Moderate accuracy (40 to 70 percent accuracy). For an average student, this area will cover most topics. Practice more questions from these areas as they will form the core of your preparation.

25 percent time on topics where you achieve low accuracy (0 to 40 percent accuracy). Focus on building conceptual clarity and DO NOT delve too much into solving difficult questions from these areas.

25 percent time on topics where you achieve high accuracy (70- 100 percent accuracy). You are doing well in this section. Keep solving practice questions from these topics. Also, take some tests of high difficulty levels from these topics.

Later, if you are able to score evenly in all three sections – you can divide your time evenly as well.

Also in this month, start working 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. Also get your friends who are preparing for CAT to answer the same question and try to come up the best possible solution after discussing with them.

Start taking two mock tests this month and keep updating the list of strong and weak areas. When you take tests, 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 (November)

- In the first week of November, 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.



In the last 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.

Few days before CAT

The day is finally arriving! You have prepared for almost three months, so do don't fret about studying any CAT study material at this stage from 48 hours before your exam. Relax and have some fun (in moderation) a couple of days before the 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!



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Topic-wise Three Month Plan

Earlier you read about the month-wise plan for CAT for three months. Now, let's have a look at a topic-wise preparation plan for CAT.

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

Phase-1: Build up your core (Muscles Phase)

Duration: September

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.

Phase-2: Build your stamina

Duration: October

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



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

Phase-3: Go the next level

Duration: 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

- 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 phases in detail now:



Phase-1: Work on your Concepts

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 important topics 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 for you. This assessment is generally made on the difficulty level and conceptual requirements of different topics.

Go through the list of topics here:

1. Number System

- Digital Root
- Euler Number
- Cyclicity + negative remainder
- HCF LCM



- Divisibility
- Remainder + CRT
- Factorial
- Number of divisors / Sum / product
- Unit Digit/ tens digit
- Integral Solutions
- Base System
- Fractions, Bodmas, decimals
- Factors

2. Vedic Math

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

3. Sequences and Series

- Basics and concept of AP, GP , HP
- Basics and concept of AM GM HM
- Advanced/ Tricky series



4. Permutation Combination

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

5. Time Speed Distance

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

6. Time and Work

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



7. Ratio and Proportion

- Basics
- Ratio and its use
- Proportion
- Variation

8. Mixtures and Alligation

Theory + some typical situations where Alligation can be used

9. Geometry

- 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



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- Volume and area- cube, cuboid, sphere, cylinder, (3D figures)

10. Percentage

- Concept of percentage change + Word problems
- Basic fraction %age conversion

11. Algebra

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

12. Profit & Loss and Discount

- Basics, Terminologies
- Advanced- shortcuts and tricks

Click Here to Know:

<https://mba.hitbullseye.com/CAT/Quantitative-Aptitude.php>



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 Comprehensions, you can adopt the following guidelines to go through all the topics for this section.

Go through the list of topics here:

Reading Comprehensions

- Basics of Reading
- Speed Reading
- Basic Comprehension Techniques
- Types of questions and how to handle them
- Subject-wise important terminology

Do you know: Developing parallel thought processes can help you gain mastery over the Reading Comprehension passages – something that happens from getting diverse view points.

Daily RC Practice: Solve 1 RC a day

RC practice should be a constant part of your preparation and should accompany you at all stages of



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your preparation. You can begin with 1 RC a day and then build up to higher levels of practice.

Join 24/7 Reading Comprehension Discussion Group and engage in peer-learning. Click the below link:

<https://t.me/joinchat/NWDF7hXu8p4spoFIKtfBvg>

Verbal Reasoning

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

Some of the aforementioned topics of Verbal Ability have been absent from CAT since some 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.

Click the below link for Practice questions

<https://www.hitbullseye.com/Critical-Reasoning-Questions.php>

Grammar

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

Vocabulary

- 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

To improve your reading section: Click the below link

<https://mba.hitbullseye.com/CAT/Reading-Comprehension-for-CAT-Tips.php>



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
- Matrix Arrangement
- Circular Arrangement

Click the below link to know more Reasoning Questions

<https://www.hitbullseye.com/Logical-Reasoning-Example.php>

Data Interpretation

- Percentage to fraction conversion
- Vedic Maths
- Bar Graph
- Column Graphs
- Data Sufficiency
- Line Charts
- Pie Charts



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- Tables and Caselets
- Venn Diagrams

Click here for more practice questions

<https://www.hitbullseye.com/Bar-Graph-Questions-and-Answers.php>

Data Interpretation is one of the most scoring topics in CAT if prepared well. Gain mastery over various DI topics by solving meticulously-structured assignments.

Practice Mock Tests

One-Mock test per week

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

Click the below link to take mock tests based on CAT

<https://mba.hitbullseye.com/CAT/CAT-mock-test.php>



Phase-2: Practice and Revision

The next phase of your preparation must be all about practicing thorough tests and monitoring your progress along the way. Let's put into a place a few guidelines that you can use for this phase of preparation.

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. Students often skip area tests and simply place too much focus on Mock CATs. Remember, even though it is important to take mocks, you should focus on topic-wise practice as well. This helps you to work on different types of questions you will encounter for different areas of the exam.

Sectional Tests

Sectional 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.

How many section tests do you need to solve at this stage? Make sure you solve two section tests a week for each of the exam areas.



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Mock Tests

This is the time to intensify your testing practice. You need to shift to at least four mocks a month at this stage, and you need to make sure you take one 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. You need to analyse mocks and make sure you learn all of these shortcuts. In fact, you can make revision notes and flashcards which contain these shortcuts and key learning.

Mock Tests are to CAT-preparation what green-veggies are to a healthy body. You can't just do without them. Take CAT-level Mocks with comprehensive analysis tools to be at the top of your game before the CAT exam.

Phase-3: The Finishing Touch

It is finally time to work and improve your speed and accuracy factor. Make sure that you address each of mistakes and find ways to minimize them.



Step 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.

Step -2: Focus on your strength areas and fill up your loopholes

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 for these areas.
- 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 judgment. 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 ones who performs the best.
- Focus on the process and not the results. The only thing in your hands is to improve in the topics one step at a time and that is all you should be focused on.

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.

Dream Big, Work hard, and Stay Focused!

All the Best!!