

Gonna take these questions in reverse order.

It doesn't matter how you compute or how you submit (automated, api, direct upload). You are delivering a prediction file to Numerai one way or another, doesn't matter how.

Even though there are 4 overlapping "open" rounds at any given time, only the most recent is eligible for submissions. So new data comes out each Saturday for a new round. For that submission to "count" – be stake eligible and to count towards your "rep" score, predictions must be submitted for that round before the Monday morning deadline. However, if you miss that deadline, you can still submit for that round up until the next round data comes out but it will be "late" (so you can submit monday through early saturday morning). But you can't submit two weeks into a round for that round.

Important but confusing note: although you can overwrite your submission with a new upload during the submission window, the "before the deadline" and "after the deadline" windows are a bit different. If you submit something before the deadline (meaning on the weekend when the data comes out) so that it is an "on time" submission, you can't replace that after monday morning (because it "counts"). However, if you wait until that deadline has passed so your submission is "late", then you can replace it as many times as you want before the next round starts – some people do this just to see the diagnostics when they upload. So "late" submissions are possibly actually more useful for newbies if you think you want to replace your model while you are tinkering. You can replace an "on time" submission though while you are still in the "on time" window.

What is the test data for? Numerai internal backtesting and validation of your model. They need predictions for which they have the targets but you don't (so you can't overfit to it, it is clean).