

The Silent Timer Time Management Guide:

Get the Most from Your Silent Timer

WHY TIME IS SO IMPORTANT

Time management is the key to getting the test score you deserve. If you could take your test with no time limit, you would probably answer most of the questions correctly. Developing your time management skills will help you decrease the effects of time pressure and increase your chances of answering questions correctly.

By learning good time management skills, you will almost certainly increase your score. Even if you only get two extra questions correct on your test, you can increase your chances of beating out your competition and getting into the school of your choice. These days competition to college, graduate school, law school, and medical school is fierce. Each year the applicant pool gets bigger and bigger, and students find it harder to differentiate themselves from their peers. A small increase in your score can boost your chances at getting the future you want for yourself and the career of your dreams.



Your exam plays a large role in determining the path taken the rest of your life.

Better scores made possible by enhanced time management make it more likely that you will earn the professional degree you are seeking. It also improves your odds of being accepted to the school of your choice. In addition to helping you into a career that will give you the esteem and satisfaction you are seeking, these improvements could easily add hundreds of thousands of dollars in enhanced earning power during your career.

PRACTICE UNDER TIMED CONDITIONS

Once you have a feel for your test structure and the types of questions that you will be answering, start timing yourself. Practicing under timed conditions prepares you for the time pressure you will face in the exam room. As in competitive sports, “*you will play as you practice.*”

It is easy to be ‘lazy’ and let yourself take as much time as you need on your questions while practicing. But this hurts you on test day when you need to be familiar with answering questions in a small amount of time under real test pressure.

HOW TO USE THE SILENT TIMER™

The Silent Timer™ is your ticket to good test time management, and it serves as the core of your time management strategy. Using its time-per-question features will help you track your test time down to the second on each question.

Using your timer is simple:

1. Enter your “Test Time.”
2. Enter your “Number of Questions” (“# of Q’s”).
3. Press “Start.”
4. Press the red “Answer” button on top of the timer after each question.



Your average time per question appears on the left of the timer screen. The Silent Timer™ not only tracks your total test time, but it also counts down for each of your test questions.

**See your manual for further details.*

MAKE IT A GAME!

You already know how important it is to practice under timed conditions. One way to increase your testing speed and accuracy is to use your timer to make each question on the practice tests a competitive game against the clock.

Pretend you are racing the clock on each question of the test, and that you will receive 10 points each time you finish a question before the timer reaches zero. Make a notation in the margin for every question where you “beat the clock,” then add up your points after each practice test. If you use this technique on each test you take, you should see your scores improving as you begin mastering test time management.

Note that the timer automatically adds any time you have left after answering a question to the remaining questions. Therefore, proceeding quickly through every question gives you extra time on all the questions to follow.

The more times you try this, the more time you will have left, and the faster you will get at answering your questions. On test day, you will be confident. You know that you can easily complete the amount of questions necessary to score well. Along with subject proficiency and time management skills, confidence is very important for you in being able to score at or closer to your test day potential.

SKIPPING QUESTIONS

In some cases, you will find that you are unable to finish your questions before the average time on your question reaches “00:00.” If this is the case, you might want to consider skipping some questions in order to buy time on your remaining questions.

The idea here is, instead of rushing through all of your questions, you spend time on a smaller number of your problems and get them all correct, instead of missing all of them or a much higher percentage of them. This technique can help you earn a higher score, even though you skip some questions (Depending on your test, give an educated guess, or leave blank the questions you skip. Always mark them on your test booklet so you can return to them if you have time remaining at the end of your test.)

For example: If you have 25 questions to answer in 35 minutes, you have an average of **one minute and 24 seconds** per question. If you cannot answer your questions this fast, consider skipping a question or two. When you get to a hard question that you think you would miss anyway, skip it. This increases the time you have to spend on easier questions that you are more likely to get correct.

Know Your Comfort Zone

While practicing for your test, figure out how much time you need to spend on a question to get it correct without rushing. Rushing only causes you to make silly mistakes on easy questions that you should be getting correct every time.

For each test section, determine how many questions you would like to try to answer. If there are 25 questions, maybe you only want to answer 20 of them. This way, you know you have **one minute and 45 seconds** per question. Throughout your test, you can pick *five* difficult questions to skip, or guess on, in order to keep with your schedule, and answer more questions correctly.

Buy Yourself Some Time

If you realize you have fallen behind on your time and spent too much time on prior questions, you can skip a question or two.

For example:

You know your comfort zone, so you know you need **one minute and 24 seconds** to reliably answer a question. If you look up at your Silent Timer and realize that you only have **one minute and 10 seconds** per question, you can decide to skip some questions (by pressing the red “Answer” button) in order to get back to your desired amount of time per question.

Be smart about which questions you skip. Skip difficult questions or questions that you think you will have trouble with. Always mark the questions you skip so you can return to them at the end of your test.

The “Stubborn Phenomenon”

We all pride ourselves in having the tenacity to stick with the problem until it’s solved, as this is a trait that serves us well. However, in the world of standardized tests, this tendency can really hurt our scores.

We know it’s tough to skip a question or move on without thinking you have given it your best effort. Sometimes you find yourself fighting with a question for over two minutes, getting nowhere. You feel defeated and, in some cases, keep trying until you get an answer.

We like to call this the *stubborn phenomenon*. You can't stand moving on without getting the answer. No matter how much you hate not getting an answer, spending too much time on questions can ruin your chances of reaching your potential on test day. In fact, if you spend too much time on **one question**, you could miss up to three other *easy* questions because you don't have enough time and you have to rush. If you miss the difficult question that you adamantly tried to get an answer for, you end up missing four instead of getting three correct and missing one. And what if you spend too much time on two questions??? You could miss up to **six** questions as a result.

DO NOT spend too much time on a question just because you 'know' you can do it. Instead, skip it in order to save three or more of your other questions. Remember, your goal is to maximize your total score-- not get any one particular question right.

Difficult Questions, a Reality Check

Most people race through the test, making careless mistakes and falling into traps on easy problems **just to spend most of their time on the hardest problems that they'll probably get wrong anyway**.

Less than 10% of the country is getting some of the hardest problems right, which means if you aren't getting a score in the 90th percentile, those problems are not for you. Those hard problems are there to separate the 95th percentile student from the 99th percentile student. Due to the curve of the test, you are better off spending more time on each problem and increasing your accuracy, even if this means skipping some problems.

Doing too many, too fast, means *sloppy mistakes* on problems you should not have missed and *time wasted* on problems that were really hard and **almost everybody missed!**

Plan on skipping the difficult problems to help your score and give you plenty of time for the ones you want to be sure you get right.

Marking Skipped Questions

Always mark questions that you skip so you can easily find them when you want to come back to them. Also, create your own symbol system to mark the difficulty of your omitted questions. For example: use an “XX” for extremely difficult, and use an “X” for “I tried and made an educated guess,” etc. This way, when you come back to your skipped questions, you will have a good idea of which ones you should attempt first and what you were thinking when you looked at them before.



MAXIMIZE RESULTS FOR READING PASSAGES & LOGIC GAMES



Sometimes you must read a short passage and answer questions based on the reading. In this situation, you can use your timer in a couple different ways to track your test time efficiently. Pick the method that works best for you.

Passage Method 1 – Passage Technique

If your entire test section is passages, and you know how many passages there will be:

For the number of questions on your test, enter the number of passages. This way, you can easily track your time on each passage/question set. For example, if there are four reading passages and 28 questions, enter only “04” for your number of test questions.

Then, you must read the passage and answer its questions within the time allotted for each question on the timer. For example, the timer may tell you that you have seven minutes and 30 seconds to answer your first passage set. So, if you can finish at or before this time on the countdown, you will have enough time for your remaining passages and finish your test on time.

This offers flexibility for your passage testing. Sometimes you may not want to answer all of the questions or read all of the passages. You may decide that you only want to answer three of four passage sets in order to have more time to spend on each question. This may be the right choice for you if you feel like you are rushing through problems. By not doing one set of questions and getting more of your other questions correct, you can increase your score.

Advantages:

- You always know how much time you have to complete the entire “passage-set.”
- You have flexibility in how many passages you must complete.

Disadvantages:

- You don’t know exactly how much time you took to read.
- You don’t see exactly how much time you have to answer each question.

Passage Method 2 – Questions & Passages

If your entire test section is passages and you know how many passages there will be:

If there are 26 questions and four passages on your test section, enter “30” for your number of questions. Here you are taking the number of passages and adding them to your total number of questions.

With this method, you know exactly how much time you are spending on each question and how much time you spend reading each passage.

After you read your passage, press the red “Answer” button, then start on your questions. Towards the beginning of your test, the amount of time you can spend on each question will be slightly inaccurate because you must spend a little more time reading passages.

However, the further you get into your test, and the more questions and passages you complete, the more accurate your amount of time gets that you can spend on each question.

Advantages:

- You know how much time you take to read your passages.
- You still have an idea of how much time to spend on each question.

Disadvantages:

- You have incorrect average times per question toward the beginning of the test.
- You have less flexibility in planning to skip passages.

Reading Passage Tips

Reading a passage and answering complicated questions in a limited time is challenging. To improve your reading results, practice spending as little time as possible reading the passage and more time reading the questions. This way, you refer back to the passage to find the information you need. The test passages are complicated and full of information. So don't spend too much time trying to understand every detail; just get the general idea and move on to the questions.

Your approach will vary depending on your test. On the LSAT, try to spend no more than four minutes reading each passage. Underline important concepts, and make notes in the column to help you find things when answering questions.

Spend More Time on Fewer Passages

You might find yourself unable to finish all of your reading passages and questions, or your score might not be as good as you would like it to be. In this case, you can raise your score by skipping one of your passage-question sets. This gives you more time on the passages and questions you choose to answer. By taking more time on your questions, you can get more of them correct. If you can get more points correct by skipping a passage than by rushing through all of them, then you might want to go this route.

For example: If you have four passage-question sets to complete in 35 minutes, you must complete each set in approximately eight minutes and 45 seconds. Therefore, if there are seven questions in that set, and you spend four minutes reading, you have approximately 40 seconds to answer each question.

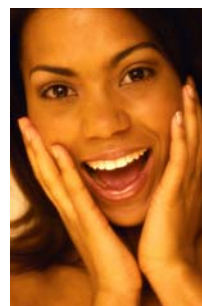
It can be tough to answer a complicated question in 40 seconds!

By skipping one of the four passages and only completing three of the sets, you can gain valuable time to get your questions correct. Then, instead of having eight minutes 45 seconds, you will have **11 minutes 40 seconds** to answer each passage set. And if there are seven questions in that set, and you spend four minutes reading, you have **one minute and five seconds** to answer each question. This way, you have **gained 25 seconds** on each question, which can significantly increase your chances at getting your questions correct.

FINISHING YOUR TEST EARLY

If you happen to finish your test early, congratulations! You have mastered your time and correctly managed your test

Spend the remaining time going over the most difficult questions that you decided to omit. We also encourage you to check your answers to the easy questions as you should be able to quickly catch any careless mistakes that would have otherwise cost you a "gimme" question. Don't stop working until the proctor says to.



TOP TIMING TECHNIQUES

1. **Keep careful track of your time.**
2. **Don't read the directions or look at the sample questions.**

Learn them now! **Do not waste even a few seconds of your valuable test time reading them.**

3. **Be aware of the difficulty level of each question.**

Know which types of questions are difficult for you and which are easy. Know the structure of your test; sometimes the easiest questions come first, and the harder ones come last.

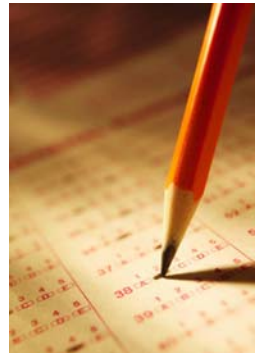
Easy questions can be answered very quickly. Don't read very much into

them. Your first hunch is probably right.

Difficult questions require a bit of thought. Be wary of an answer that strikes you immediately. You may have made an incorrect assumption or fallen into a trap. Reread the question and check the other choices before answering too quickly.

4. Fill in the answers on your answer sheet in blocks.

As you answer each question, circle the correct answer in your question book. Then before going on to the next page, enter your answers on your answer sheet. This is more efficient than moving back and forth between your question booklet and answer sheet after each question. You can use the same method to push the red “Answer” button on your timer.



CAUTION: When you get to the last two or three minutes of each section, enter your answers as you go. You don’t want to be left with a block of questions that you have answered but not yet entered when the proctor calls time up.

5. Remember your pacing strategies: never get bogged down on any one question.

Set realistic goals for how many questions you can answer in the allotted time. Stick to your plan. Don’t panic and try to race through more questions.

Keep moving forward. You don't have to get everything right to get a good score. **So don't linger out of desperation on a question that is going nowhere even after you've spent considerable time on it.** The best test takers know when to eliminate answer choices and make educated guesses.

6. Remember that you don’t have to answer every question to do well.

You know you don’t have to answer all the questions to do well. It is possible to omit more than half of the questions and still be in the top half of all students taking the test. You can omit a few questions in order to increase your overall score.

After you set your final goal, *pace yourself to reach it.*

7. Practice with real practice tests.

The best advice we can offer you is to practice, practice, practice. You should feel completely comfortable with your test questions and your time limits. The only real way to get this feeling is to take as many old tests that you can get your hands on. As important as practicing is to applying your knowledge in the subject area, mastering your time strategies is just as crucial.

In order for the practice tests to give you the greatest chance of maximizing your score on test day:

- a. Take each practice test as if your score will determine whether or not you get in the school of your choice;
- b. Use your Silent Timer as your core tool in optimizing your time;
- c. “Practice like you play.”

THE 5 Ps

Plan. Prepare. Practice. Practice. *Practice.*

If you will follow these simple, straightforward principles, you’ll be ready on test day. You will be more confident, less stressed, and more likely to reach the score that you are capable of achieving.

So, what are you waiting for?

Good luck!

-THE SILENT TIMER Team