



Time Management Guide

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I. 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 can certainly increase your score. Even if you only answer two extra questions correctly on your test, you will increase your chances of beating out the competition and getting into the school of your choice. These days the competition to get into college, graduate school, law school, and medical school is fierce. The applicant pool gets bigger and bigger, and each year students find it harder to differentiate themselves from their peers. A small increase in your score can boost your chances of getting the education you want for yourself and the career of your dreams.

Your exam plays a large role in determining the path you will take for the rest of your life.

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

II. General Timing Tips

A. 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. Doing this, however, hurts you on test day when you need to be familiar with answering questions in a small amount of time under real test pressure.

with The Silent Timer™

Using The Silent Timer™ when practicing maximizes your ability to perform well on test day. It is completely silent so it will not disturb other test-takers. It alerts you with a flashing red light which can be disabled.

Practicing with The Silent Timer™ is essential. Not only will you hone your timing skills, but you'll also get comfortable with the timer and its features. The last thing you need on test day is another reason to stress out!

B. Skipping Questions

In some cases, you will find that you are unable to finish your questions before time is up. 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.

Using the 'Skipping Questions' technique depends on your test. Some tests take off points for wrong answers (guessing is not a good idea), and others only give points for right answers (so guessing is a good idea). Always mark the questions you skip in your test booklet so you can return to them if you have time remaining at the end of your test. Most testing companies only look at answers that are bubbled, so be sure to bubble the answers on your sheet.

EXAMPLE

You are taking a 30 question test and you have 30 minutes. That gives you an average of one minute per question. If you cannot answer your questions this fast, consider skipping a few questions. When you get to a hard question that you think you would miss anyway, skip it.

If you decide that you are only going to answer 26 questions, your average time per question jumps from only one minute to one minute and 9 seconds. Reducing the number of questions you answer allows you to spend more time getting the easier questions correct.

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If you know before you start the test that you are not going to answer all of the questions, then input only the number of questions you plan on answering.

If you are already in the test, and you come across a question you would like to skip, press the Red Button to move on. The time for that question is added to the remaining questions. The only problem with this technique is that the timer will not tell you how many questions you skipped. It is very important to mark these questions in your test booklet or on your answer sheet, to remind you which questions you skipped.

C. 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 “Make 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.

D. 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 increases the time you have to spend on the remaining questions. 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.

with The Silent Timer™

Know your comfort zone. For example, let's say you need **1 minute and 24 seconds** to reliably answer a question. If you look up at your Silent Timer™ and realize that you only have **1 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.

E. 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.

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.

F. 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 solve, you end up missing four questions, instead of getting three easy questions correct and missing just the hard question. 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. If you mark the ones you skip, you can always go back at the end of the test if you have extra time.

G. 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 answering some of the hardest problems correctly, 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.

H. 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.

III. Reading Passages & Logic Games with The Silent Timer™

We devoted an entire section to Reading Passages and Logic Games because these are areas where students have the most trouble budgeting their time. The techniques we present are only related to timing and utilizing The Silent Timer™; they may not include other techniques about actually reading the passage.

Sometimes you must read a short passage and answer questions based on the reading. In this situation, you can use your timer in several different ways to track your test time efficiently. Pick the method that works best for you. The Silent Timer™ has a new feature called Passage Mode. Passage Mode is designed specifically for reading passages and logic games. Older versions do not have this feature.

The first two methods work best with any version. The third method is only for the models with Passage Mode (any model sold after 2005 will have the Passage Mode).

If you wish to upgrade to the latest version, contact us at 800-552-0325 or email info@silenttimer.com.

A. Passage Method 1 – Passage Techniques (All Versions)

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 4 reading passages and 26 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 7 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 questions. By not doing one set of questions and answering more of your other questions correctly, you can increase your score.

Advantages:

- You always know how much time you have to complete the entire “passage-question 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.

B. Passage Method 2 – Questions & Passages (All Versions)

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

If there are 26 questions and 4 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 along you are on your test, and the more questions and passages you complete, the more accurate your timer per question becomes.

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.

C. Passage Method 3 – Passage Mode (Only models with Passage Mode)

The Silent Timer™ comes equipped with Passage Mode. Read “The Silent Timer™ Manual” about how to physically input the times and number of questions into the timer.

Passage Mode is a new feature designed for test sections with passages or logic games (logic games sections are in the LSAT). These sections include multiple reading passages (or logic games), each followed by a series of questions.

The advantage of this feature is that it takes into account the amount of test time you will spend *reading* each passage and lets you know exactly how much time you can spend *answering* each question.

In order to use Passage Mode, you need to have an idea of how much time you want or need to spend reading each passage. Sometimes it is recommended to spend three minutes or five minutes per passage (depends on your test). Check with your testing company, your prep course, or a test preparation book to get an idea of how much time you should need.

Decide the amount of time you want to spend reading each passage. When you input that time into the timer, along with the number of passages, you will know how much time you will spend *reading* the passages. The total time spent reading all of the passages is subtracted from the total time of the test. The remaining time is then spent on answering the questions.

This mode is best described using an example:

EXAMPLE

You are taking a 45-minute test. You have four reading passages and a total of 28 questions to answer. You decide to spend 4 minutes and 30 seconds reading each passage.

Passage	Time Reading	Questions to Answer
#1	4:30	7
#2	4:30	8
#3	4:30	6
#4	4:30	7

Spending 4:30 on each passage means you are spending 18 minutes out of your 45-minute test reading the passage. The remaining time (27 minutes) is divided among the 28 questions, yielding an average time of 58 seconds per question.

If you finish a reading passage one minute early, that extra minute is added to the original 27 minutes, and divided among any remaining questions. Same goes for the time saved when finishing a question early.

The idea is that as you answer your questions, your Silent Timer™ will continually update to tell you how much time you have to answer your questions. Taking too long in the beginning will decrease your per question time from 58 seconds. Finishing quickly adds more time.

Advantages & Disadvantages

- It may seem complicated at first, but practice will make you comfortable with the process.
- When you go faster on the Passages and do not use your full time, the extra time is distributed among the remaining questions, not passages. You always have the same amount of time to read each passage.
- The Silent Timer™ Manual gives the specifics on how to setup your timer in Passage Mode. If you do not have a copy, contact us at 800-552-0325 or info@silenttimer.com.

D. 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 answer more of them correctly. 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.

To determine if this is a good strategy for you, take two timed practice tests. On one test, answer all 4 passages in the time given, and on the other, only answer 3 of them in the same amount of time. After you score these practice tests, you should get an idea of what might be best for you.

EXAMPLE

If you have 4 passage-question sets to complete in 35 minutes, you must complete each set in approximately 8 minutes and 45 seconds. Therefore, if there are 7 questions in that set, and you spend 4 minutes reading, you have approximately 41 seconds to answer each question.

Calculations:

- 35 minutes total test time / 4 passage-question sets = 8 minutes 45 seconds per passage-question set
- 8 minutes 45 seconds per passage-question set – 4 minutes reading = 4 minutes 45 seconds to answer 7 questions in one set
- 4 minutes 45 seconds / 7 questions = 41 seconds per question

It can be tough to answer a complicated question in 41 seconds!

By skipping 1 of the 4 passages and only completing 3 of the sets, you can gain valuable time to correctly answer your questions. Then, instead of having 8 minutes 45 seconds, you will have **11 minutes 40 seconds** to answer each passage set. Furthermore, if there are 7 questions in that set, and you spend 4 minutes reading, you have **1 minute and 5 seconds** to answer each question. In this manner, you have **gained 24 seconds** on each question, which can significantly increase your chances at getting your questions correct.

Calculations:

- 35 minutes total test time / 3 passage-question sets = 11 minutes 40 seconds per passage-question set
- 11 minutes 40 seconds – 4 minutes reading time = 7 minutes and 40 seconds to answer 7 questions in one set
- 7 minutes 40 seconds / 7 questions = 1 minute 5 seconds per question

III. 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 have 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 booklet. 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.

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 bubbled on your answer sheet when the proctor calls time.



with The Silent Timer™

You can use the same method to push the **red "Answer" button** on your timer. Instead of pressing the button after every questions, wait for 5 questions, and then press it 5 times in a row to catch 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, make educated guesses, and then move on.

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. Keep in mind that attaining your ideal score requires more than just 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."

IV. The 5 P's

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

If you will follow these simple, straightforward principles, combined with The Silent Timer™, you'll be ready for 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

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