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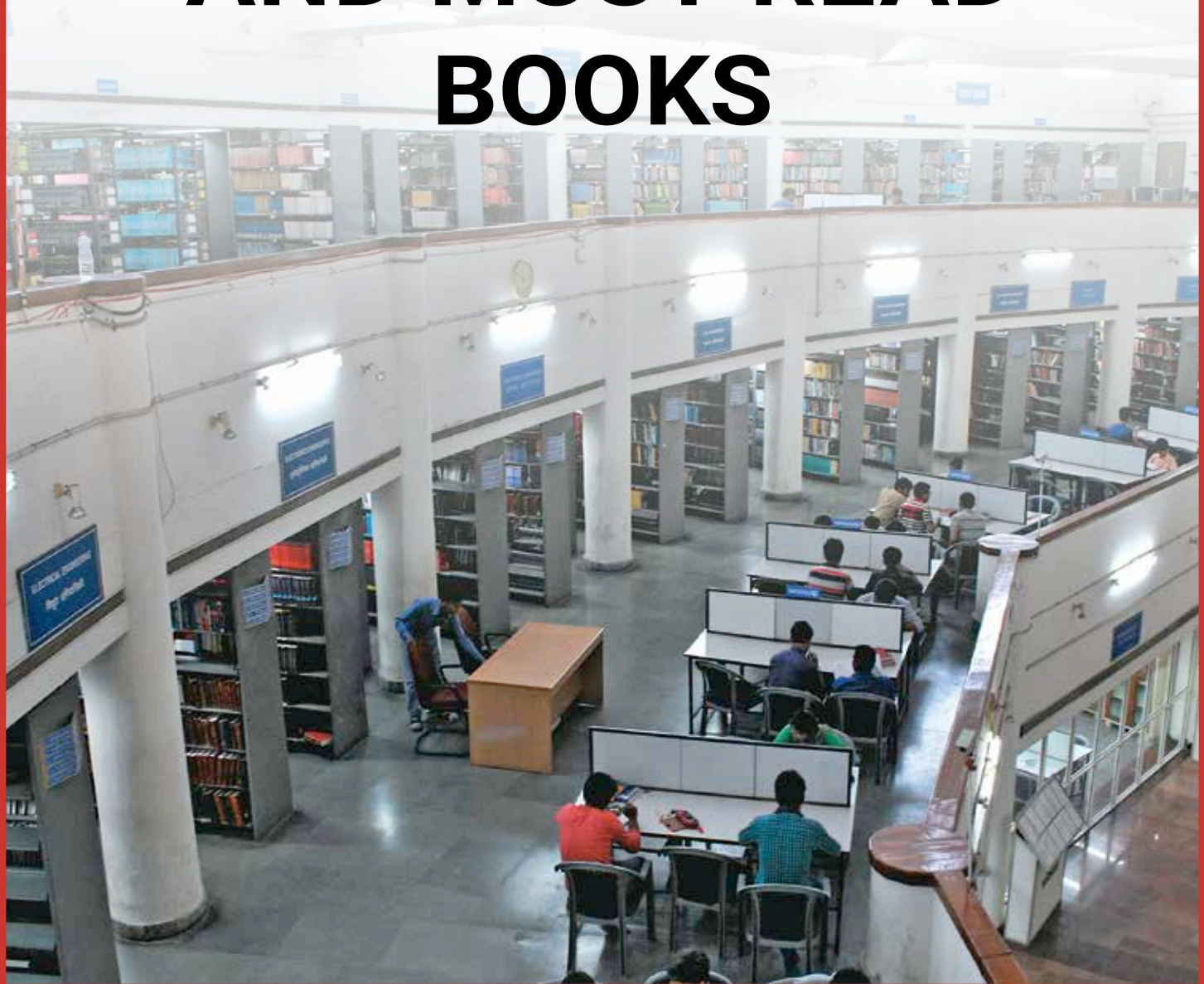
CAT

IMPORTANT TOPICS AND MUST READ BOOKS



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Introduction

Way before the announcement of CAT, aspirants start preparing for this biggest national level test. But usually doubts and concerns about the topics arises which are to be covered during the preparations. Although there is no specific CAT syllabus to prepare from, but aspirants must know the important topics they should cover. This e-book by Careers360 will guide students to know about the important topics and books, suggested by toppers and experts, for CAT preparations

CAT is divided into three sections namely, Quantitative Aptitude (QA), Data Interpretation & Logical Reasoning (DILR) and Verbal and Reading Comprehension (VRC). Each section of the test aims at testing candidates on different parameters, so it important to prepare for each section wisely, and cover every topic. Let us have a look at section wise topics for CAT preparations.

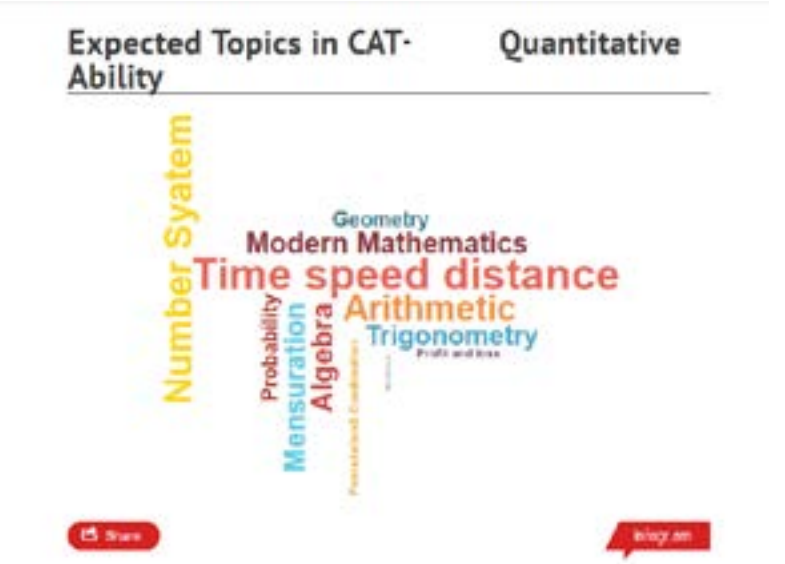
1. Quantitative Aptitude (QA)

Mathematics, in a way, is poetry of logical ideas; syncing perfectly with the QA section of CAT, wherein the mathematical questions are based on logics and theories. Solving QA section can be quite challenging for test takers as the difficulty level of this section, based on past years trend, has been of difficult to moderate level.

Students, especially from non-engineering backgrounds, who are not too comfortable in QA, must focus in this section to improve their sectional scores, which will impact their overall percentile. Since you have to clear not only the overall, but the sectional cutoff as well to get an IIM call, you must not lose the chance by compromising on sectional performance. As CAT has sectional limit of 60 minutes, it is important to strategically attempt each section of the test to score overall high percentile. Raghav Mishra, CAT Topper from IIM Indore supports by saying, "Quant is the key area and having a good hold over this section will help the aspirants crack CAT with good percentile".

Despite being weak in Quantitative Ability, Commerce graduate Surbhi Singhal cracked CAT with 99.42 percentile and secured admission in IIM Lucknow. Surbhi increased her speed of calculations, learned some mathematical tricks and cracked QA section of CAT with ease. She says, "My success strategy was my focus on fast calculation. As I had no background of engineering and anything related to calculations, it was a necessary for me to avoid any wastage of time in calculations. But practice made me perfect".

Below picture will represent a few QA topics,



List of Quantitative Ability Topics

- Number System: Ensure that you are clear with the basic concepts of this topic.
- Arithmetic: Though Arithmetic has a vast number of sub-topics, in the last 3 years, only a couple of questions have featured from this topic.
- Algebra: Considering this has been one of the most dominant topics in CAT in the last three years, it makes a lot of sense to place extra emphasis on this topic.
- Geometry: Another topic which has featured quite a lot in the last 3 years.
- Permutation & Combination/Probability: This is another topic that contributes around 1 to 2 questions to the exam.
- Miscellaneous Topics: This includes Set Theory, Trigonometry and Logarithms

Preparation Guide for Quantitative Ability

Let's start with tips and strategy of cracking Quantitative Ability in CAT.

Start with the basics

Getting your concepts clear is the key for Quant. It is important for the candidates to start by learning the concepts which are used to solve questions in this section. Raghav shares, "Quant was fairly easy and was based directly on concepts. So if you had sufficiently practiced all the quant, it is a cakewalk".

When you know the basic concepts, you must practice via examples. It is important to follow the concepts learned, and practice each concept by solving simple examples first, and gradually moving towards the difficult ones.

Sarthak Nayak, CAT Topper from IIT Bombay, explains, "My strategy for Quantitative Ability & Data Interpretation Section was to learn concepts, understand and workout on simple examples, then attempt difficult questions. By learning concepts and understanding them through examples, it was easy to understand and attempt difficult questions.

To prepare for Quant section of CAT, books are the best source to learn the concepts and enhance your knowledge on a topic. Abishake Koul, CAT Topper, prepared from books and practiced from the practice papers available in the books. He says, "The best strategy to prepare for your weaker section is to follow a book. I followed Arun Sharma for QA and also practiced from the same".

Plan your preparation schedule

Besides learning the concepts for Quant, it is equally important that you do not leave any topic uncovered. One of the important strategies to cover each topic is to make a Day-wise preparation plan and schedule some number of days to prepare for that topic. Allot the following number of days to the below given quant topics,

- Number System: 5 days
- Algebra: 8 Days
- Geometry: 8 Days
- Permutation & Combination/Probability: 5 Days

- Miscellaneous Topics: 5 Days

Take sectional Mock Tests on QA

A mock test is a practice exam or a revision test to make student prepare for an upcoming examination. After taking a mock test, a candidate can evaluate his performance and check in which areas he requires hard work. The same applies for CAT, where Mock test plays a vital role to determine the level of preparation for the actual test.

IIM Udaipur student Balkesh Narang says, "From Day 1 itself, I used the reverse strategy for it, took mock paper, tried to solve it with timer, and later analyzed it from solutions available".

Adding to the importance of Mock Test for Quant, Anuraag Ready, a 100 percentiler in CAT says, "My weak area was QA, for which I took mock test classes, which are important to keep a track of your performance".

It is important for a candidate to put all his focus on his weak topics in QA and take mock tests to prepare for the same. Whether, you take coaching or not, practicing from Test series and Sectional Mocks will support in securing a high in quant section.

Practice with sectional time-

Since CAT has a sectional time limit of 60 minutes to answer one section, the strategy is to solve the entire section before time. Keeping a buffer time of minimum 10 minutes to complete one section while taking mock tests will let you complete the exam beforehand, thus saving the time. But candidates will only be able to save time in a section, only if they follow the same strategy on the D-Day.

CAT Topper Rubal allocated equal time in each section during mock tests, keeping buffer time. She says, "During mocks I practiced for proper time allotment to both sections with the buffer time. Buffer time was kept for half solved questions, or to review the test. This prepared me for the D-Day".

Focus on Weak topics

The thumb rule of a great preparation is to focus and maximize your efforts on your weak areas. While preparation, one must focus on learning, practicing and revising the QA

topics they are weak in.

Even on the exam-day, start with attempting comfortable questions as they are less time consuming. Manish Kumar, IIM Raipur student with 99.47 percentile in CAT shares his strategy as, "I solved questions in which I was more comfortable first and then went for the rest. It is the best Time management formula to follow as it lets you not to get stuck with one question and waste time answering that."

Practice with calculator

In CAT 2015 the IIMs decided to introduce an on screen calculator for carrying out basic computations, which is a pleasant surprise for the students who are not too well versed with calculation. In order to be able to utilize the on screen calculator for quant section to the fullest, you must practice before hand.

Use the calculator on your computer screen while taking mock tests for QA. This will give you an idea how much time it takes for you to solve a problem with or without the calculator. Vinayak Kudva, Product Head, IMS Learning says, "While the CAT never had too many calculation-intensive questions in the past, the introduction of the calculator will definitely help students while performing calculations in Data Interpretation and maybe a few Quantitative Ability questions."

2. Data Interpretation (DI) and Logical Reasoning (LR) section

A logical thinking process is one of the basic requirements of a good manager. MBA aspirants crack CAT to pursue their dream of acquiring an MBA degree and prevail their career as a successful manager in future.

CAT assesses the aptitude of logical thinking aptitude of the candidates, and the Data Interpretation (DI) and Logical Reasoning (LR) section of the test is closest in resemblance to the kind of problems one might face as a manager. This section tests your decision-making ability and speed using limited input.

Needless to say, that practice is the key to crack this section. But it is also important to prepare while keeping an eye on the watch. As there is a sectional limit to attempt one section, not focusing on time will only hamper your preparation.

Good scores in this section will impact your overall percentile. Since you have to clear not only the overall, but the sectional cutoff as well to get an IIM call, you must not lose the chance by compromising on sectional performance. Abishake Koul, CAT Topper from IIM Lucknow, agrees by saying, "For, DI & LR, all types of questions should be bread and butter for you before the exam. This is the section which makes the difference between a mediocre and a good percentile".

A few topics that you must cover in DI section and that you must prepare, and are also presented in the picture below,

1. Bar Graph
2. Data Sufficiency
3. Pie Chart
4. Caselets
5. Line Graph, etc

A few topics in LR section that has to be covered are represented below

- Data Arrangement
- Blood Relations
- Family Tree
- Assumptions
- Sets
- Binary Logics
- Venn diagrams
- Statements
- Match
- Prepositions

Preparation Guide for DI &LR

Read Business Newspaper and Magazines-

Business Newspapers and magazines are the best source to prepare for DI&LR. As this section deals with business aptitude and interoperating data, business newspapers will help you learn how charts and bar graphs are analyzed.

Newspapers and magazines also support in sharpening your thinking abilities and reasoning through different case-studies and analysis in the form of pictorial and graphical representations.

CAT Topper Sarthak Nayak, now studying in IIT Bombay, explains by saying, "For DI & Logical Reasoning Section, I did a lot of reading, especially newspapers and magazines".

Be familiar with Caselets -

Be familiar with the topics and types of questions to expect in this section. The questions will be in the form of caselets, where each case will be followed by 3 to 4 questions. For DI, the questions will be in the form of line and bar graphs, pie charts etc. The LR questions will be mainly on arrangements, blood relations, family tree, venn diagrams etc.

Initially, to get familiar with the caselets, start with sectional mock tests. The focus should be on making yourself familiar all the types of caselets. CAT Topper Balkesh Narang, shares, "I focused the most on being familiar with versatile forms of data representation like pie chart, bar chart, line graph, piled bar chart, spider chart and complex combinations of these".

Mock Tests-

A mock test is a practice exam or a revision test to make student prepare for an upcoming examination. Start with small, easy questions and move towards bigger logical based caselets. Always analyze your performance after every mock test and review to have a genuine feedback about your performance. An important thing you need to work on is the judicious selection of questions. Utilize mock tests for this purpose in the best possible way.

Sandeep Manudhane, Chairman, PT Education suggest a trick about utilizing mock tests, he says, "Make a micro plan splitting your effort into weeks and days. Write down that plan, and stick to it religiously. Remember that a weekly revision for different topics must be a key part of the plan. Do not work on any one test area for too long a stretch. Rotate across topics. It will keep you energized, interested and alive!"

Utilize Calculator-

The DI questions for CAT are known for being calculation intensive. Utilize the on screen calculator to the fullest in this section. "The introduction of the calculator will definitely help students while performing calculations in Data Interpretation questions," mentions Vinayak Kudva, Product Head, IMS. Knowing the fast calculation tricks is another strategy for solving the questions accurately without making it much time consuming. Surbhi Singhal, 99.42 percentiler in CAT and IIM Lucknow student suggests, "Though I knew about the DI type of questions, the main task was to increase the speed of calculations as they are time consuming. For that I learnt some Vedic math tricks online."

Brainstorming activities-

Logical Reasoning is all about understanding the trick hidden in the question. After you are done with your daily preparation, take out time for some brainstorming sessions, like solve crossword puzzles, Sudoku, riddles on blood relations, family tree etc. "I have always been involved in some brainstorming activities like playing chess, minesweeper, Sudoku etc. Apart from these, I did not put any specific efforts to improve this section." says Balkesh. These activities, in simpler terms are way to prepare you for LR section of CAT.

Books-

To prepare for DI&LR section of CAT, books are the best source to learn the concepts and enhance your knowledge on a topic.

Abishake Koul, CAT Topper, prepared from books and practiced from the practice papers available in the books. He says, "The best strategy to prepare for your weaker section is to follow a book".

Practice-

The more you practice the questions from DI & LR, better will you perform. Since there is no theoretical aspect in this section, you can only practice to excel the areas. "For LR and DI, I used to practice solving at least 3-4 sets with a time limit every day. This helped me get exposure to a diverse set of problems in both LR and DI areas. ," says Ishaan Anaokar, CAT 99.39 percentiler and SPJIMR Mumbai student.

3. Verbal and Reading Comprehension (VRC)

English is spoken by students, professors, professionals, in short by almost everyone, making the proficiency in the language a basic requirement in every field. We have studied English at every level of our education and it is the primary language for the corporate world as well, which is why; it is mandatory to clear this language test for the management entrance exams. Similarly, it is important to crack the Verbal and Reading Comprehension (VRC) section of CAT or the Common Admission Test, which tests your language skills.

With the addition of non-MCQs, there will be changes in the overall question pattern in the VRC section. It would be better to revise your preparation strategy accordingly. This section can be the most scoring, resulting in improving your sectional as well as overall scores.

CAT Topper, Abishake Koul says, "In Verbal Ability, RC is the most important topic. With the changed format, there might be around 3-5 RC and there is no escaping them. I spent a lot of time reading working in RCs". RC is one of the important topics in this section. The passage can be from different areas and the questions can be either factual or inferential.

There might be 3-4 passages and each passage will have around 4 questions to answer, which holds 45-60% of the marks of the whole Verbal Ability part. This is the important section where more attention and detailing are required.

The foremost step to prepare for reading comprehension is to read on regular basis. Read newspapers, novels, magazines such as 'The Economist', India Today etc.

Another CAT Topper, Surbhi Singhal of IIM Lucknow suggests, "To improve the reading speed for comprehensions, one must diligently read the editorial section of The Hindu".

Some of the topics are:

- Reading comprehensions
- Para jumbles
- Grammar
- Sentence corrections
- Vocabulary
- Para corrections

Preparation Guide for VRC

The preparation strategy for VRC section must be divided topic wise, as each topic requires different techniques to learn. But before starting, let us first understand the type and number of questions in this section.

Area	Topic	Number of Questions per topic
Reading Comprehension (16 Questions)	4- 5 Reading Comprehension Passage	16
English Usage (18 Questions)	Jumble Paragraph	4
	Deductive Logics	4
	Sentence Correction	3
	Critical Reasoning	4
	Para Completion	3
	Grammar	3

Vocabulary Questions

Questions related to analogies, synonyms & antonyms, sentence correction etc are part of this. This section can be answered correctly, only if you have explored English language and know meaning for most of the words. Hence, a good vocabulary is the key to crack these topics. Having a reading habit of newspapers and magazines will support in developing a good vocabulary.

Besides reading the important step to prepare is from the CAT sample papers or mock tests. The sample papers will make you learn the words that are important in terms of examination. Topper Ishaan Anaokar also agrees and says, "For Verbal Ability, take ample of mock tests, to learn get familiar with kind of words and read to get familiar with new words".

Critical reasoning and Para completion

These questions can be answered only if you understand logics. The type of questions to be prepared under this section is,

- Questions on conclusion/inference
- Questions on identifying an assumption
- Questions on weakening the conclusion
- Questions on identifying a paradox/contradiction/inconsistency
- Questions on identifying a parallel situation

As a preparation strategy, Topper Sarthak says, "For the reasoning part, resort to the method of practicing as many different varieties of questions you can get your hands on"

Deductive Logic and Para Jumbles

These are non-logic based questions; hence preparations from short puzzles, quizzes can prepare you to successfully attempt these questions. While preparing, you must make sure that you understand the question. CAT Topper Rubal Bagde shares, "I used to solve the quizzes available in newspapers. This, sort-of prepared me to analyze and eliminate incorrect options and answer the questions correctly".

Sentence Correction

These questions are based on basic grammar rules and are knowledge based. For preparation, it is must to read editorial sections of newspapers and magazines and concentrate on the use of grammar. While preparing from mock tests, make sure you do not waste time on these questions and avoid guesswork.

In the end, quick tips to prepare for overall VRC section,

1. Read a lot of books, magazines and newspapers
2. Prepare from Mock tests and Sample Papers while maintaining speed and accuracy
3. Focus of improvising grammar and vocabulary by reading editorial sections
4. Mark difficult words and learn their meaning from dictionary
5. Underline and take brief notes as you read
6. Practice critical thinking questions
7. Practice Non-MCQ's
8. Solve Puzzles

CAT - Must read books for preparation

To prepare for an exam, books are the best source as they enhance knowledge and provide insights about a topic. Preparing for a highly competitive exam like CAT, aspirants often face the problem of plenty. There is no dearth of books and resources, but to choose the right one, and preparing strategically along with adequate practice is the key to success.

Not only us, or the experts, even CAT toppers suggest preparing from the available books. They say to prepare for his weak section in CAT, prepared from books and practiced from the practice papers of the books.

When it comes to books, there are some highly reliable authored materials for beginner and advanced level preparations'. Let us have a look at the some of the books cum study material available for different sections of CAT. These will support you to have CAT section wise preparation in the best possible way.

Top Books for Quantitative Ability (QA):

This section tests the problem solving approach of the aspirants. With high difficulty level, QA covers topics like Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Number System, Modern Mathematics and other questions related to Higher Maths. The top books to prepare for this section of CAT are,

1. Arun Sharma's 'How to prepare for Quantitative Ability for CAT', published by Tata McGraw Hill- This book is most recommended for CAT aspirants to prepare for QA section. The book follows the latest pattern of CAT with focus on one of the most important components of the CAT exam is Quantitative Aptitude. Each chapter has questions at the end that have been split up into three sections, based on the level of difficulty. Mock papers are also available in this book.
2. Arun Sharma's The Complete CAT Digest, by Tata McGraw-Hill, is a must-have for any CAT aspirant. It covers the basics of CAT entrance examination with the QA examination as its main focus.
3. How to Prepare for the CAT Common Admissions Test by Muhamed Muneer, published by Om Books, is another book that is simple and easy to understand, and has mock tests and solved CAT papers from previous years.
4. Quantitative Aptitude for Competitive Examinations by Abhijit Guha (Tata McGraw-Hill) has a comprehensive step-by-step problem solving guide.
5. Quantitative Aptitude for CAT and Other MBA Entrance Exams by Trishna Knowledge Systems (Pearson) has many practice exercises in increasing difficulty for a gradual transition.

Top Books for Verbal and Reading Comprehension (VRC):

This section basically tests the English language skills of the test takers. The question types are divided in 2 parts, Reading Comprehension and English Usage. The English Usage questions can be further classified into Vocabulary, Grammar and Verbal Reasoning. The books to prepare are,

1. How to Prepare for the Verbal Ability and Reading Comprehension for the CAT by Arun Sharma and Meenakshi Upadhyay (Tata McGraw-Hill) is a workbook with practice questions and tips based on previous CAT papers.
2. Nishit Sinha's The Pearson Guide to Verbal Ability and Logical Reasoning (Pearson) covers a wide range of topics explained in an easy-to-understand manner.
3. Word Power Made Easy by Norman Lewis.
4. Barron's Pocket Guide to Vocabulary.

Top Books for Data Interpretation & Logical Reasoning (DILR):

The questions from this area are mainly in the form of caselets. The test takers have to analyze the data given in various ways and answer the questions. The topics covered in this area are, Data Arrangement, Seating Arrangement, Blood Relations, Bar Graph, Data Sufficiency etc. The books to prepare are,

1. How to Prepare for Data Interpretation & Logical Reasoning for CAT (Tata McGraw-Hill) by Arun Sharma covers all the fundamental concepts of Data Interpretation and Logical Reasoning.
2. Trishna's Verbal Ability And Logical Reasoning For The CAT And Other MBA Examinations by TIME Publisher: Pearson

Below is the list of books which are recommended by both toppers and experts for students to prepare for CAT sections:

Book	Author
The Pearson Guide to Quantititive Aptitude and Data Interpretation for the CAT	Nishit K Sinha
Quantitative Aptitude for Competitive Examination	Abhijit Guha
Quantitative Aptitude Quantum CAT Common Admission Tests for Admission into IIMs	Sarvesh K Verma
How to prepare for Quantitative Aptitude for CAT	Arun Sharma
How to prepare for Data Interpretation for CAT	Arun Sharma
How to prepare for Logival Reasoning for CAT	Arun Sharma
The Pearson Guide to Logical Reasoning and Data Interpretation for the CAT and other MBA entrance examinations	Nishit K Sinha
How to prepare for Data Interpretation and Logical Reasoning for CAT	Arun Sharma
Trishna's Verbal Ability and Logical Reasoning for the CAT and other MBA exams	TIME
A Modern Approach to Verbal & Non-Verbal Reasoning	R.S Aggarwal
The Pearson Guide o Verbal Ability and Reading Comprehension for CAT	Nishik K Sinha
How to Prepare for Verbal Ability and Reading Comprehension for CAT	Arun Sharma
Face to Face CAT Common Admission Test	B.S Sijwalii and Indu Sijwalii
How to prepare for Data Interpretation for the CAT	Arun Sharma
30 Days to a More Powerful Vocabulary	Funk
The Students' Companion	Wilfred Best
High School English Grammar & Composition PB	Martin Wren
Word Power Made Easy	Norman Lewis