**Deliberate Practice**

When I was growing up I had a Taekwondo teacher.  The teacher would always tell us to practice.  We’d say, “right because practice makes perfect”, to which he responded: “No, practice does not make perfect, perfect practice makes perfect”.  When you’re studying for the GRE, it is not enough to just do GRE prep.  You must be deliberate in your practice to make sure you’re actually getting better. I actually did quite a lot of research before and during my studying into the subject of Deliberate Practice.  The term actually stems from a branch of psychology focused on making experts.  Proponents include Anders Ericsson and Malcolm Gladwell. The essential story behind deliberate practice, is to well, be deliberate when you practice. It is not enough to only and mindlessly do GRE practice problems, for example. You will not always get better just by practicing.

Three + 1 ways to deliberate practice:

* WORK HARD.  There’s no way around this one.  If you want to get good at the GRE, and you’re not already fantastic for some reason. You need to constantly push yourself. When you feel content with what you’ve done so far, **you haven’t done enough**.  As terrible as it sounds, you need to be consistently pushing yourself.  If you don’t fail, you won’t know what you still need to be improved.  **Practicing should not be fun**.  Hard work is, by definition hard, but you already knew that.  If you’re reading this, you are more concerned with the end goal.  So all of the hard work will be worth it.
* LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES.  Can’t stress this one enough.  If you have failed a problem, spend as much or more problem figuring out why you got it wrong (*or solved too slowly*!), and what you need to get it right the next time.  For every single problem I got wrong, **I came back and retested myself on it**, at the same fast rate, to make sure I could do every single problem.  When doing this, try not to rely on your memory of the answers, **remember how to do the problem**.
* GOOD FEEDBACK.  Don’t reinvent the wheel.  Time you spend figuring every single problem out, could be spent remembering how to do the problems.  Good instruction is key.  For many people self-learning books should be sufficient, but make sure the explanations for the problem are **excellent.**Likewise, if you can afford a good private tutor, it’ll probably help, **just make sure you go into the session with very direct questions.**See specific prep for my exact suggestions on prep material.
* DURATION.  Similar to working hard, there’s no way around this one.  Lots of improvement comes from lots of deliberate practice.  I spent 160 hours this summer, spread across 3 months. Daily practice is incredibly important -- or as close to daily as you can manage.  Study when you’re tired, study when you’re hungry (but make sure you eat :), study in noisy places and quiet places.  Then on test day there’s no condition you can’t excel in. Just make sure you study as much as you need to get you to your goal.

**Test Scores**

My Scores were as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Test Type** | Q | V | Notes |
| Manhattan Prep I | 157 | 163 | After 30 hours studying, pretty disappointed.  Picked myself up though and kept going. |
| Manhattan Prep II | 161 | 161 | Maybe 60 hours total now.  Happy I improved, but nowhere near where I needed to be. |
| Manhattan Prep III | 161 | 159 | Exhausted, took without essays.  Maybe 90 hours in. |
| Manhattan Prep IV | 163 | - | Low point, only Q this time.  Super tired again, but very glad I’m still improving.  Maybe 100 hours now. |
| Manhattan Prep V | 163 | 159 | Low V again, but same Q.  So happy I can do it with the full test. 115 hours and worried I’ll run out of time. |
| Paper ETS 1 | 170 | 159 | Woah.  This test felt easier than the MP tests, but very glad I’d been pushing myself.  Time to start studying V again. 125 hours? |
| Manhattan Prep IV | 164 | 161 | Really shooting for improvement.  Glad Q still going up. 140 hours. |
| PowerPrep I | 167 | 162 | Psyched myself out I think. 145 hours.  Really good to practice on the actual software.   Still working hard to improve Verbal. |
| **ACTUAL TEST** | **170** | **165** | Dude.  This test was super stressful.  Got an extra Q section and by the last section, felt super drained.  I made sure I exercised a little, especially during my long break.  Ate healthy food on test day.  Still felt really pushed and was a little surprised at the score.  My last week of studying was mostly Q maintenance out of 5lb book and lots of reading V strategy and practicing flashcards.  Glad it was over. |

**Specific Prep Recommendations**

I used the entire **Manhattan Prep 2016 GRE Strategy Guide series with the 5lb book**, which costs about $120.  For people studying on short schedule (1 month or so ~50 hours), I’d actually strongly recommend going through study books 1-8 before doing the 5lb book.  I think quick improvement will more likely come from darting through those books and doing all of the problems (not the drill sets unless you need serious improvement) versus using just doing problems in the 5lb book.  For people on very short schedules (25 or less hours), I’d recommend doing a super random assortment of problems through the five pound book.  **In the 5lb book, don’t go chapter to chapter!**The actual gre will take from all subjects, not just Arithmetic, Algebra, etc.

MANHATTAN PREP IS HARDER.  This is the advantage.  The tests are harder, the practice problems are harder, everything will push you.  That’s exactly what you want.  **Push yourself till you succeed**.  Verbal practice was sufficient but a little lacking.  Only memorized the first 500 words and knew about ¼th of the advanced words.

Magoosh I suspect also has excellent quality instruction.  I’ll also forever be indebted to their prolific author Chris Lele.  I think by now I’ve read most everything he’s posted on the internet. Their adaptive problem-solving I think will also give you the challenges you’ll need to succeed.  I think Magoosh is definitely worth giving a spin as an alternative to the Manhattan Prep, and about the same price.

Finally, follow the conventional wisdom from [Magoosh on test day](https://www.google.com/url?q=http://magoosh.com/gre/ultimate-gre-guide/gre-test-day/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1650980117901713&usg=AOvVaw1bg-gGTWv7ntXBS4UMYDbG).  Don’t study the day before the test or on test day.  You should plan to be completely ready ahead of time so you can take those days to relax.  Eat healthy food, etc.

**Exercise & Health**

One last quick plug.  Exercise is so important.  Aerobic exercise (about 20 mins of brisk walking) helps so much to clear your head.  If possible, I think the best schedule would be to do some light exercise before every 1.75 hours of studying.  Of course your body might be different, but I think this is a helpful schedule if you have the time and inclination.

Avoid foods high in saturated fats or simple carbs too.  These go straight to your brain and they’ll bog you down as you try to focus. Also stay as hydrated as possible.  If you find yourself going to the bathroom a lot, just consider it under the “exercise” category ;).

**Specific Tips**

Advanced(ish) Q tips and formulas I think should be memorized and known by heart.

1. Area of Equilateral triangle = 
2. Rate \* Time = Distance   &      Rate \* Time \* Number of Workers = Work done
3. Number of factors of some number if that number is made of primes  axbycz etc then number of factors equals (x+1)\*(y+1)\*(z+1).  Example: 60 = 315122so the total number of (positive) factors is 2\*2\*3 = 12
4. Third (unknown) side of a triangle x must be within the range:         (Bigger side – smaller side) < x < (Bigger side + smaller side)         always perform this check if it seems vaguely relevant.
5. If you’re the one taking the square root, don’t forget positives and negatives.  If you see  then only take positive.
6. 30-60-90 triangles have sides x - - 2x.  30 side corresponds to the x side, 60 side is , 90 side is 2x.   is less than 2, don’t forget it!
7. Distance formula is the x and y coordinates of a right triangle.  If your total x distance is 3 and your total y distance is 4, your distance is 5.  Don’t think twice about it.
8. Total = CategoryA + CategoryB – Both + Neither

**Prep Materials and Strategy before Test #1:**

General

I studied for two months (May and June) while working full time. I would study from 6-8am and/or 7-10pm, but I mostly studied in the mornings and on weekends as my job is quite intellectually demanding and I was too burnt out to study after work, in most cases. On the weekends, I would study from 7am – 3pm, with many breaks in between. We were deep in lockdown for May and June, so there wasn’t much else to do!

The only serv’ces I paid for were (i) Magoosh and (ii) ETS official books. I thought Magoosh was a great practice for quant, but their hard questions were indeed much more difficult than the actual test. For verbal, I saw little use for Magoosh. Their practice Q’s often had seemingly arbitrary correct answers, and as Greg Mat points out in his videos: ETS is careful, tricky, and always only had one right answer – this is why their materials are bar none.

The ETS offic–al material is limited, so use it wisely. I only used the ETS verbal material in a timed fashion, and in the two weeks leading up to the test when I was already confident in my vocabulary. Don’t ‘waste’ this material – if you use the material, along with Greg Mat’s verbal vids, you’ll have a great understanding of how the section works. Quality > quantity when it comes to GRE prep, and ETS official materials have unmatched quality!!

Quant

For **month 1**, I followed Dan Mahr’s Phase 1 (quant only), and used Magoosh – webpage is here <http://dmahr.com/2016/07/seven-week-gre-study-plan/>.

For **month 2,** I took practice tests (timed and test-like setting) every weekend, and used the Manhattan 5Lb. book to target all my weak math areas. Like Dan Mahr, I found the main utility in this book to be that it separated quant problems by subject, so I could drill standard deviation or probability problems until I understood all their ins and outs. Much easier to polish your weak areas with heavy concentration on that subject, rather than doing mixed practice (although mixed practice better simulates the actual test). Also, I blazed through Greg Mat’s YouTube channel, which was such a fun way to take a study break from drilling Qs, etc.

Verbal

Tl;dr 🡪 I’m a native English speaker, and didn’t have any friends as a kid so I read a lot, and at quite an advanced level.

I did not study for the Verbal section until the last 2 weeks before Test #1. I used Dan Mahr’s flashcards (details in above link) and Magoosh’s Basic and Intermediate deck (Advanced was a waste of time as the words are too niche, IMO).

GREG MAT is the **reason I score a V169**. You can learn as many words as you want, but without a solid strategy the GRE will still trick and trap you, and confused all the definitions in your head. Greg Mat’s Reading Comprehension and Sentence Equivalence strategies truly saved me and showed me how to best use all the words I knew. The top 5 videos/areas I would recommend on his channel: (i) GRE Issue Essay, (ii) GRE Argument Essay, (iii) The Pairing Strategy: GRE’s Weakness, (iv) **all** the GRE Reading Passage Strategy vids, (v) all the advanced quant walk-throughs, especially if you’re aiming for 165+.

I get very impatient and distracted when watching YouTube, but Greg Mat’s vids had me glued and made a tangible impact on my score.

AWA

From my limited experience, the GRE seems to reward people who can write a lot of material in a very short period of time. I have developed into a fast writer (required by my job), and all four of my essays (Test #1 and Test #2) were likely 750 – 1000 words (5 paragraphs of 150-200 words). I only wrote one practice essay before Test #1 (following Greg Mat’s videos), but I **did memorize Greg Mat’s “recipe” for both the Issue and Opinion essays**, and it was the ability to quickly craft an effective outline that I gained from his videos that allowed me to score so well in AWA.

**What I did in between the two attempts:**

Week #1: no studying. I don’t mean “haha I only studied 1 hour a day and leafed through notes and went on [r/GRE](https://www.reddit.com/r/GRE/)” I mean I literally **did not allow myself to think about the GRE.** This was incredibly difficult but released a mental weight I didn’t know I had.

Week #2 and #3: Probably 30 mins/day on Greg Mat’s YouTube videos for verbal and quant, leafed through Manhattan 5 lb. book, and slowly re-worked practice tests. Did nothing gruelling, and reviewed no material that I hadn’t seen before (YouTube videos, practice questions, etc.).

**Practice Test Scores (all before Test #1), timed and in test-like setting:**

1st practice test – ETS Powerprep 2, 162 math, 161 verbal (4 weekends before test)

2nd practice test – Manhattan Prep, 166 math, 161 verbal (3 weekends before test)

3rd practice test – ETS Paper 1, 170 math, 165 verbal (2 weekends before test)

4th practice test – ETS Powerprep 1, 169 math, 166 verbal (weekend before test)

5th practice test – ETS Paper Test 2, 170 math, 169 verbal (1-3 days before first test)

The most popular formula in GRE Quant is a^2-b^2=(a+b)(a-b)

If a 5-digit integer is written as “abcde”, then its value=10000a+1000b+100c+10d+e

For integer questions about even and odd, never forget 0 is an even number. However, 0 is neither positive nor negative

The product of three consecutive positive integers must be divisible by 1,2,3,6.

The square of a prime number has exactly 3 positive divisors; the square of an integer has odd numbers of positive integers.

Prime numbers:

[2, 30]:2,3,5,7,11,13,17,19,23,29

2 is the only even prime number

**Some numbers you must remember:**

2^6=64

5^6=15625

the cycle of unit digits of

3^n: 3,9,7,1

7^n: 7,9,3,1

Remainder:

If an integer is divided by 5 or 10, the remainder equals to when the unit digit of the integer is divided by 5 or 10.

If an integer is divided by 4 or 20, the remainder equals to when the last two digits of the integer is divided by 4 or 20

if an integer is divided by 6 or 11, we need to find the rules of the remainder

0.aaaaa…=a/9

0.abababab…=ab/99

0.abcabc…=abc/999

For questions involving numbers of 2 and 5, must consider 10; for 4 and 5, must think of 20

In a range of some consecutive integers, the number of multiples of n is {[(max value of multiple of n within the rage)-(min value of multiple of n within the range)]/n}+1

For example, how many multiples of 3 between the range of 1 to 100 (inclusive)?

Key: the max value of multiple of 3 in the range is 99, the min value of the multiple of 3 is 3, so the answer=(99-3)/3+1=33

The number of positive divisors of an integer=the product of (1+exponent of each prime divisor of the integer)

For example: 16000=27\*53, number of positive divisors of 16000=(1=7)\*(1+3)=32

For y=kx+b, and there are two points on the line A(a, b) and B(c, d), then k=(b-d)/(c-a)

In a right triangle with one angle of 30° and the other 60°, then the ratio of the lengths of the three sides are 1:√￣3:2

When the perimeter of a polygon is constant, then the area of this polygon will reach its maximum value when it is a regular polygon

The most popular formula in geometry is the sum of interiors of a n-sided polygon=(n-2)\*180°

Hand-shaking problems, the common way to solve them is the times of hand-shaking=(total number of people\*the number of people each one needs to shake hands with\*the times of handshakes each one will have)/2

For example, 3 people shake hands with each other, how many handshakes in total?

Key=(3\*2\*1)/2=3

The application of least common multiple in problem solving: suppose A and B start work at 8:00 AM and A schedules meetings to begin 20 minutes apart, and B schedules meetings to begin 30 minutes apart, they finish work in 1:30PM, so during the working period, when do they begin meeting at the same time?

The least common multiple of 20 and 30 is 60, so they both begin meeting every 60 minutes since 8:00AM, so totally, at 9:00am, 10:00, 11:00, 12:00 and 13:00 do they begin meeting together.

Working simultaneously problems: you only need to remember this formula:

A/x+A/y=1

A: the time it takes for X and Y working simultaneously to finish the job.

X: the time it takes for X finishing the job alone

y: the time it takes for Y finishing the job alone

Skill: If a comparison problem is about percentile and does not involve normal distribution, then the correct answers are usually D.

1. Official Guide to the GRE General Test by ETS. This was my main study material. The math review is maybe more in depth on specific topics/equations than you’ll need on the test, but I found it very helpful as I wanted to be overprepared.
2. The two free PowerPrep tests on the ETS website. These helped me practice timing and just get experience with the style of questions. They don’t give explanations for wrong answers, but the internet has figured them out, so look around.
3. GRE Premier 2017 with 6 Practice Tests by Kaplan. I used this book only for practice questions and not their material review. I felt their setup was kind of clunky but I was given the book as a PDF for free so I used it anyways.
4. Kaplan’s Online Free GRE Practice Test. You can take it timed or untimed. They give a very nice breakdown of what kinds of questions you got right or missed.
5. The Magoosh GRE Vocabulary Flashcards. The Common Words sets were very helpful for me having a good vocabulary but not knowing some words specifically used on the GRE. The other sets are also great but I only found them two weeks before test day so I didn’t have time for them all.
6. Khan Academy also came in handy for specific math topics (looking at you, permutations and combinations).
7. Free Online GRE AWA Essay Grader at MBA Crystal Ball. I don’t know how accurate it is overall, but I got the same score on my real GRE as it gave my practice.
8. Google! Used for question explanations, etymology of vocab words, practice essays, and finding free GRE resources all over. If you think, “there should be a way to do or find this” someone has probably made a tool to help.
9. **Took a baseline test.** I took the [free Manhattan Test](https://www.manhattanprep.com/gre/free-gre-practice-test/), but taking an ETS test like PowerPrep 1 might have been more helpful. I used it to identify my areas of weakness.
10. **(I did this actually as step #4, which I regret – I would have saved time doing it in this order):** [Green Light Prep Course](https://www.greenlighttestprep.com/prices). I found this on another post on [r/GRE](https://www.reddit.com/r/GRE/), but this course is terrific bang for your buck (only $40!). I completed the videos in about 5-6 days, spending 2-4 hours per day watching videos, always on 2x speed (I did the GLP course when I was on a several-day vacation). I always answered the questions in the videos, and if I was struggling with a section I did the reinforcement questions. Brent is EXCELLENT about responding quickly to commented questions on videos, so take advantage of this! I didn’t even take advantage of his office hours, but the value and personal attention I got for $40 was astounding. Reading some of his blog posts also really soothed my mind the day before the test.
11. **Did the quantitative problems in the Official Test Guides**. These are as representative as it gets!
12. **Improved areas of weakness with Manhattan 5LB with consistent daily practice.** Not hard to find a PDF of this online if you choose, though I had the book. I ripped out the table of contents and wrote on it which questions I completed and had a separate sheet listing the questions I had missed. I tried to expose myself to at least 10-15 problems in each chapter. In chapters on areas where I struggled, as identified by my baseline test and the GLP course, I tried to do most of the questions. I found it was best for me to do about 15 questions from a chapter at a time, and I would aim to do somewhere between 30-60 questions per day (however, I am working full-time so this often worked out to be about 30 questions per day). In the last week or two of prep I re-did a lot of the Manhattan 5LB questions I missed the first time around, and only then did I start mixing in about 20 of the advanced quant questions.
13. **Took a LOT of practice tests.** After the GLP course cleared up any areas of conceptual misunderstanding (especially in geometry and counting). I tried to take at least one practice test per weekend, but this increased to two per weekend in the weeks closer to the exam. I recommend the Manhattan 6-test pack ($50). The Manhattan tests are EXTREMELY realistic to the real thing, if not a little harder.
14. **Carefully tabulated my practice test and tracked my question errors.** For each test I took, I wrote a page of what lessons I learned on each question I missed (e.g. conceptual, like that there are n(n-3)/2 diagonals in a polygon, or approach-oriented, like that I need to remember to test 0 on more QC questions). Towards the end I entered all of these errors into an Excel sheet with common categorizations (e.g. not correctly reading math questions, calculation errors, didn’t know a fundamental geometry concept, ran out of time, etc.). I re-did the questions I missed the day after the test, and reviewed these sheets of lessons learned frequently. I wish I did the Excel tabulation earlier because it turns out a lot of my problems were based on not reading the question carefully enough rather than mathematical misunderstanding. Most of my practice in the last few days was spent addressing this.
15. **Saved the ETS Tests for the end**: In my last two-three weeks I took all the ETS tests – the two print ones from the official guide (OG), the two PowerPrep free exams, and I paid for two PowerPrep Plus exams ($80 total). I would really vouch for the value of doing at least one PowerPrep Plus exam if you are able. I found these to be much more similar to the actual GRE than the free Power Prep and OG print tests. The questions were more challenging but you could miss more and still get a great score. I would NOT recommend paying for the Score It Now service ($20) unless you really need more scoring, because the PowerPrep Plus tests will also score your essays for you! Another thing I didn’t know was that only the PowerPrep Plus tests provide detailed explanations for questions, though it is easy to find PowerPrep explanations on the web.
16. **Built some extra confidence with challenging questions with** [GREPrep Club Questions](https://greprepclub.com/forum/gre-quantitative-section-3/?fl=menu" \t "_blank). I found this resource really helpful in filtering for challenging questions. Even if I didn’t get them all right, I thought it was helpful to expose myself to such challenging questions so that if I saw one or two on the exam, I wouldn’t get flustered and miss other easier questions due to that. It was nice to use the filters and try out questions from test prep resources I hadn’t tried (e.g. Kaplan, Magoosh). I would recommend using the timer feature so you can check that you’re not going well over 2 minutes on anything.
17. **Did vocab review using a combination of Manhattan Prep GRE iPhone App ($15/month) and** [GLP’s quizlets](https://quizlet.com/Greenlight-GRE). As I mentioned, I have a fairly strong foundation in reading and vocabulary from reading a lot. However, there are some really weird words on the GRE! I tried to chug along on one these vocab sets for at least 15 minutes a day, typically while I was watching TV. There were still about a hundred or two Advanced words from the app I didn’t know by the time of the exam, but having learned more words I was able to rule out enough answers to make good guesses.

This is not to say this will work for everyone, and there are a lot of resources out there (e.g. Magoosh, Princeton Prep, Kaplan, etc.). This is what worked for me in a pretty reasonable budget ($185 total), which was decent considering the cost of GRE tutoring and courses (hundreds to thousands of dollars).

Some general pieces of advice:

* Practice in a timed fashion as much as possible. The timing on the GRE is hard. The only way for it to get better is to get used to it! Sometimes I would even time myself in my 15-question sets of Manhattan 5LB problems.
* Try to take full practice tests rather than chunks. The GRE is exhausting, and if you're like me and focused on quant, the last 40 minutes of a grueling 4.5 hour exam are the most important ones. Even taking the full hour of essays helps simulate the real testing experience and helps you build stamina.
* Try to emulate the testing conditions as much as possible. I took mine in person, so this meant taking my last practice test with a mask on! Not the most fun, but doing this really helped me feel less flustered the day of.
* I can get bad test anxiety, so if this applies to you too and it is reasonable to do so, consider visiting the testing location beforehand. This helped me not get stressed about getting lost, and also helped me understand more about the space (e.g. that there would be noise canceling headphones, what it looked like, etc.), which helped reduce a lot of my ambiguous anxiety about the exam.
* Have a mantra written down that you look at before your test. For me, this was a reminder to smile, breathe, and write down exactly what the question was asking me to solve. Find what works for you.
* Don't think that your practice test scores completely determine your potential. My test-day score was actually higher than almost all my practice test scores, especially those from Manhattan. I think my really careful attention to analyzing my mistakes in the last week of studying helped make me make the jump in the last few days, which I didn't know would be possible.

Got finalized results today, 170/170/4, (guess I should have looked at AWA a bit more, oh well) and since I found a lot of good tips here, I figure I'd contribute what study materials I found most useful:

**The official ETS tests**

Buy all of these, they are considerably better than any practice material available (especially in reading passages, the ones from other books just never feel the same) and the $40 each for the additional ones after the first four is super valuable

**Manhattan 5 Lb Book**

Just having more problems to do was an enormously helpful resource. Their quant section is about as hard as the test and verbal is significantly harder (especially the pick two word questions). If strapped for time, can do what I did and just pick 5-6 random questions from each chapter and do multiple chapters in bursts.

**Magoosh Account**

I don't think this was particularly helpful overall, but learning about what's expected in an answer helped a lot, especially their verbal lessons. I work inside a quantitative field so don't feel my opinion on the math lessons would be broadly applicable. Probably not worth the money if on a tight budget.

**Barron's Essential Words for the GRE**

This by far did the most to help me on the exam. Most of the words from this book show up in the official practice exams and it should also cover most corner cases you run into. I made a [small python app](https://github.com/dipplestix/gre_quiz) to quiz myself on the words form the book and found that kind of reinforcement helpful. I didn't have time to complete the roots section so no comments on that. The practice questions they give suck, so be wary of getting anything from them

[Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/Essential-Words-GRE-Barrons/dp/0764144782)

[wordlist](https://wordpowermadeeasy.files.wordpress.com/2007/12/gre_wordlist.pdf)

**Quantitative Reasoning Prep Overview**

* Watched Gregmat's 1-month plan Quant videos at 2x Speed and solved all questions. Strictly followed Greg's plan and only used ETS material: GRE Big book, Official Guide, and Quantitative Reasoning Practice Book.
* Once I finished all ETS Math material (Official Guide and QR Practice Book), I moved onto the Manhattan 5lb Book. I solved problems from Manhattan and not the Big Book, because I felt that the Big Book problems were a little easier than the actual test. If math isn't your forte, I would definitely first do more Big Book problems before moving onto Manhattan 5lb.
  + I first went through a couple sections in the Manhattan 5lb book to go over concepts I didn't feel 100% confident about (I did the rates/work, standard deviation, & word problems chapter)
  + A couple days before the exam, I did all of the Advanced Quant problems from the 5lb book and also some GMAT problems. Even if you can't solve some of the GMAT problems it's fine, I just did it to solve new problems and keep my 'math muscles' in shape.
* Bottom line: Gregmat+, Manhattan 5lb, ETS Material

**Verbal Reasoning Prep Overview**

* Similar to quant: Watched Gregmat's 1-month plan Verbal videos at 1.5x Speed and solved everything. Take notes on Greg's RC tips (e.g. simplifying & simplying on steroids) because they are awesome! Only used GRE Big Book, Official Guide, and Verbal Reasoning Practice Book.
* **Extra RC**: I went beyond what the 1-month plan covered and solved a ton of Big Book RC questions. Sometimes untimed, sometimes not.
* **Extra SE**: Vocab practice with [Gregmat's Vocab List](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1jRATLVV34vATsL4Y67fZZXQc7qZPYc0c0Yk7Bykh4fw/edit" \l "gid=0" \t "_blank). Did all of Gregmat's vocab quizzes (1~28) on [Youtube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1EJC-E_VM4&list=PLFzybs-0YWa2Qz9o2ujq_wLPisdXhmD1L" \t "_blank), and I made a list of words I got wrong. Once I felt pretty confident with all 840 words (around 3 weeks into the prep), I looked at [Vince's List](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1K4gS--jbDYbdlqem6Hir3FAwvLB9dFxNCLftE3ePduk/edit#gid=2009214833) and went over some of the words on the Magoosh list (BUT some of Magoosh words are definitely not gonna pop up so only study them once you're confident with Greg's). I also wrote down some "word bubbles" - words with similar meaning and tried to memorize it as one chunk. I also recommend Greg's [Quizlet](https://quizlet.com/in/501823268/set-1-flash-cards/)! Perfect for on the go.
* **Extra TC**: I did some Big Book problems, to practice the "Math Skill" strategy that Greg uses. The rest was strengthening my vocab.
* Bottom line: Gregmat+, ETS Material, Vocab Lists

**Analytical Writing Prep Overview**

* Watched Gregmat's videos on Youtube and on his website. He gives incredibly useful tips on structuring the Issue and Argument Essays.
* Issue Essay: Practiced making quick 5-minute outlines, and spent a bit of time reading up on common issue topics (education, politics, society, science...etc.) to have some real-world examples ready.
* Argument Essay: Mostly just watched Gregmat videos and memorized the format.

**My Real 1-Month Study Plan**

* **Day 1 ~ Day 14**: **Gregmat+ 1-month plan** - Watched (usually at 1.5x~ 2x speed) and solved everything, all 30 days of classes. Did the PP1. I also occasionally tried the "Extreme Quant" questions on Gregmat+.
* **Day 15**: **Dedicated Review Day #1** - Went back and solved every question I'd gotten wrong on Gregmat's 1-month plan. Make sure to make a spreadsheet to keep things organized!
* **Day 16**: **Mock** **Test Day #1**- Took PP2 on the ETS website. I was kind of disappointed because I got 12 points lower than the PP1 that I took a week before.
* **Day 17**: **Dedicated Vocab Day #1** - Went through all of Greg's Vocab quizzes on Youtube (completed them at 1.5x ~ 2x speed) and starred all the wrong words on Greg's Quizlet.
* **Day 18**: **Dedicated Vocab Day #2**- Went back to the starred words and studied them. Wrote the words and definitions, explained it to myself out loud, tried to make example sentences... the tedious kind of memorization. Annoying, but it works.
* **Day 19 ~ Day 24:** **Solving ETS Problems** - Just solved a bunch of questions on the ETS official material and exhausted everything (Official Guide, Verbal Reasoning Practice Book, Quant Reasoning Practice Book). Of course I had solved a lot of them through the Gregmat+ 1 month plan but there were a bunch of unsolved ones too. I made sure to not just blindly work through them but actually use Greg's strategies. Towards Day 23~24 I had no math questions left so I started doing Manhattan 5lb questions as well.
* **Day 25**: **Mock Test Day #2**- Powerprep Plus 1 Test. The test only has 4 sections, so I solved two extra sections from the Big Book (so I did the official VQVQ + VQ from the Big book) to mock the real thing. This helped me get used to the exhaustion. Of course, I reviewed the questions I got wrong afterwards.
* **Day 26**: **Dedicated AWA Issue Task Day -** Kind of a rest day. I grouped the prompts by topic type and read a bunch of articles on different issues. If you're an avid reader you probably don't need to do this, but unfortunately I didn't really have good examples for essays so I needed to do this.. I left this task till the end because I have goldfish memory lol
* **Day 27: Dedicated Review Day #2 -** Went back and solved every question I'd gotten wrong on days 16 ~ 25. I also did the Advanced Quant questions on Manhattan 5lb. By this time, I felt comfortable with Quant.
* **Day 28: Mock Test Day #3** - Powerprep Plus 3 Test. Like last time, I did two extra sections (Verbal and Quant) immediately after the PP3+ by randomly choosing sections from the Big Book. The quant on the Big Book is a little easier than the real test, but I made sure I wasn't making silly errors after ~3 hours of testing.
* **Day 29: Final Review** - Re-solved problems I had gotten wrong on Dedicated Review Days #1 and #2, did a set of random Issue and Argument task, and went over lots of Vocab. By this point I was comfortable with almost all of Greg's vocab so I studied maybe 40 new Magoosh words on this day. Didn't expect to remember all 40 new words, but it's okay, it was kind of as a bonus.
* **Day 30: Vocab & Chill**. I couldn't really focus because my grandfather passed away on this day and I was in shock, but I tried to calm down and told myself I was ready. In the evening, I packed my bag for the next day and went to bed early.
* **GAME DAY**: Passport / ID (✓), Food + Water (✓), Earplugs (✓), Paracetamol (✓ - I get headaches but thankfully didn't get any on this day). Watched a Gregmat Quant walkthrough video on the morning of, to calm myself down and be confident.

**General Test Prep Advice**

* Be **organized**: make spreadsheets to keep track of questions you're getting wrong. I also downloaded a copy of Greg's Vocab spreadsheet and highlighted words I kept forgetting.
* Be **flexible**: It's hard to break out of old habits. For me, it was hard to be flexible about reading comprehension, but I kept an open mind and tried all the strategies that Greg suggested. For me, the simplifying strategy worked really well, and I took notes while reading. This might work for some and not so much for others, but you just have to try it out.
* **Review** before solving new problems: Every now and then, you should do a dedicated review day, to go back to the wrong questions. I feel like some people just endlessly look for new questions to solve, but remember that previously solved questions are valuable! Especially if it's ETS material!! It's also important to redo questions, even the "dumb error" ones, because it could be a systemic error and not a careless one.
* **Imitate** the real thing...: First of all, definitely do practice tests. Secondly, when you do them, I would try to make it as similar to the real test as possible. I took mine at the same time as the scheduled test, took the same amount of breaks, ate the same thing as I would on the test day, put a passport on my desk...etc. sounds a little extreme but it was good simulation for the actual test.
* ... but make it **harder**: I would purposely exhaust myself a bit more by solving extra Big Book questions during mock tests so that it would feel easier on the real day, especially since nerves eat up a little bit of your energy on its own. I built test-taking stamina by doing this.
* **Frequently** do Vocab: I used Greg's Quizlet all the time - while on the train, before bed, while standing in line at shops (covid-19's made the waiting line longer...)

**Frequently Asked Questions**

* Was the real test harder than ETS material?
  + Short answer is No. The prep material, especially Powerprep Plus tests very closely imitate the real thing, so I definitely didn't encounter new concepts that I'd never seen before. However, keep in mind that the GRE is like a marathon. The hard part is doing all those sections one after the other. Exhaustion can make problems seem harder than it actually is.
* What was the unscored section like?
  + I'm not 100% sure, but I'm almost certain my final Quant section was the unscored section because it was harder than what I solved before (I know I'm contradicting what I said in the first question, but I had pretty good test-taking stamina and this one felt objectively harder). I guess I was lucky that I had this research section in the end and not in the 1st or 2nd quant section.
* Is the Big Book any good?
  + YES, especially for RC. The questions are endless, and I definitely didn't exhaust all of them. They are pretty close to the real thing. The math is definitely easier than the real test, but it was good for getting a solid foundation.
* How much did you study per day?
  + This one's hard to answer but I'd say an average of 4.5 hours a day on weekdays and 6~7 on the weekends. In the final week of prep, I tried to make more time so probably 5 hours on weekdays as well.
* Did you solve GMAT questions?
  + Barely. The "Extreme Quant" questions in Gregmat+ are often pulled from gmatclub so I solved those occasionally (like 1~2 every other day or so) and I think there was a video on the Gregmat website where they just did a bunch of hard problems so I did that. The harder questions e.g. GMAT and Manhattan 5lb Advanced Quant should only be attempted once you've exhausted all the other ETS GRE materials.
* 3rd party test prep material? Yay or nay?
  + Besides a bit of Manhattan 5lb and some of the words on the Magoosh vocab app, I'd give a big no. Magoosh subscription only made me unmotivated because my "estimated score" would never go up, and it was expensive. If you have time and money maybe it's worth exploring, but the smartest / most efficient way is DEFINITELY sticking to official ETS material. And **I 100% recommend Gregmat+.**