

Crushing The GRE

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THE BASICS

For many careers, having only a baccalaureate degree may not be sufficient. Some professions require a Master's degree or even a Ph.D. as a minimum qualification. If the field you are considering requires an advanced degree, you will be required to complete at least one graduate entrance examination. The type of entrance exam required varies by discipline and graduate programs, e.g., graduate business programs require the Graduate Management Aptitude Test (GMAT), law schools require the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), and medical schools want scores from the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). The most widely used graduate entrance examination is the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and it is the focus on this testing guide.

The GRE is similar to the SAT that you might have taken in high school. The GRE tests your verbal, mathematical, and analytical skills. Your raw score is reported for these three sections. Much like the SAT, there is a verbal section worth 800 points and a mathematical section worth 800 points. There is a written section worth 6 points that measures your analytical skills.

In addition to the GRE general test, there are 8 subject tests that you may or may not have to take depending on your intended graduate program. These tests include:

Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology	Literature in English
Biology	Mathematics
Chemistry	Physics
Computer Science	Psychology

For more information on these subject tests, go to <http://www.gre.org/pbstest.html>

The recommendations and tips offered in this guide are for the GRE computer-based general tests. It should be used to help prepare for general questions and is not intended to replace commercially marketed preparation programs.

STRUCTURE OF THE GRE

The computer-based GRE has four components: Analytical writing, Verbal, Quantitative, and an unidentified pretest component.

Analytical Writing Component

Scored on a 6 point scale with half-point increments

- One Issue Task (45 minutes allotted)
 - You will choose one of two topics presented and take a position.
 - Assesses your persuasive writing skills.
 - Sample: *“In our time, specialists of all kinds are highly overrated. We need more generalists – People who can provide broad perspectives.”*

- One Argument Task (30 minutes allotted)
 - You are assigned an argument and expected to analyze and evaluate its claims.
 - Assesses your critical thinking skills.
 - Sample: *“Hospital statistics regarding people who go to the emergency room after roller skating accidents indicate the need for protective equipment. Within this group of people, 75 percent of those who had accidents in streets or parking lots were not wearing any protective clothing (helmets, knee pads, etc.) or any light-reflecting material (clip-on lights, glow-in-the-dark wrist pads, etc.) Clearly, these statistics indicate that by investing in high-quality protective gear and reflective equipment, roller skaters will greatly reduce their risk of being severely injured in an accident.”*

Verbal Component (30 questions) – 30 minutes

Scored on an 800 point scale with 10-point increments

- This section is adaptive. If you get a question right, the next question will be a question from a higher tier of difficulty. Likewise, if you get a question wrong, the following question will be from a lower difficulty tier.
- Four Types of Questions:

Antonyms – Choose the word that is most nearly opposite in meaning to the word in capital letters.

- Sample: MOROSE:
 - Overawed
 - Agitated
 - Cherubic
 - Decisive
 - Cheerful

Analogies – Select the pair that best expresses a relationship similar to that expressed in the original pair

- Adult : Child
 - Horse : Mare
 - Cat : Kitten
 - Swine : Sow
 - Human : Animal
 - Cow : Herd

Sentence Completions – These questions include a sentence that has one or two blanks, each blank indicating something has been omitted. Beneath the sentence are five words or sets of words. Choose the word or set of words for each blank that best fits the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

- During the opera’s most famous aria the tempo chosen by the orchestra’s conductor seemed _____, without necessary relation to what had gone before.
 - Tedious
 - Melodious
 - Capricious
 - Compelling
 - Cautious

Reading Comprehension – The questions in this group are based on the content of a passage. After reading the passage, choose the best answer to each question. Answer all questions following the passage based on what is stated or implied in the passage.

- Questions are in regards to reading passages about theme, mood, and inference among other topics.

Quantitative Component (28 questions) – 45 minutes

Scored on an 800 point scale with 10-point increments

- Like the Verbal component, this section is also adaptive.
- Tests mathematical skills of algebra, fractions, percentages, geometry, and data analysis. There are no questions requiring knowledge of calculus.

Unidentified Pretest Component

Score is irrelevant to your final score

- May or may not appear when taking the test.
- It may be Verbal or Quantitative.
- Used to identify questions to be used in future GRE examinations.
- You will never know if the section you’re taking is a pretest or a component that will affect your score, so treat every section as if it were a valid component.

Upon completion of the exam, the system will generate automatically your quantitative and verbal scores. Your analytical writing section will be mailed to you.

GENERAL TIPS AND TRICKS

- **Frontload your attention** - Since the Quantitative and Verbal sections are adaptive, focus your attention on the first ten questions. Getting the majority of the first ten questions right will set you up for a great score. Conversely, if you struggle on the first ten questions, you will have to do exceptionally well on the latter questions to make up for it. Don't ignore the last 20 questions though.
- **Get to the test site early** - Arrive at the testing center at least 30 minutes early. There are several administrative tasks to be completed prior to the examination, such as writing and signing an agreement of honesty. Use any extra time to relax and mentally prepare.
- **Wear layered clothing** - You may be unfortunate to end up in a room that feels like a sauna during the winter or a room that is freezing during the summer. Wear clothing that will allow you to adapt to any temperature.
- **Become familiar with the types of questions** – Knowing what to expect and the format and structure of the questions on the examination will enable you to use time efficiently. You will not have to read the directions for each section.
- **Practice, Practice, Practice** – Review and answer the practice questions. There are some great on-line tools and resources that are available free-of-charge. While there are some great resources online, in print, and full services, it is important to note that no resource is endorsed over another by the BGSU Career Center.
 - POWERPREP software includes questions of all types, samples of writing prompts, and elaborate practice tests. It was developed by the same people who created the GRE so you know it's a valuable tool.
<http://www.gre.org/pprepdwld.html>
 - University of California site at <http://www1.ucgateways.org/gre/> allows you to take practice examinations and compare your scores to others taking the practice examinations.

Also, there also print resources and preparatory services that can be purchased including the following:

- **Kaplan** – provides books, private tutoring, on-line and classroom instruction, and preparatory software, which is accessible on-line at www.kaptest.com
- **Princeton Review** – provides books, private tutoring, on-line and classroom instruction, and preparatory software, which is accessible at <http://www.princetonreview.com/grad/testprep/>

- **Examples of Books** – There are a myriad of books including these popular titles:
 - *How to Prepare for the GRE Test with CD-ROM*
 - *The Ultimate Math Refresher for the GRE, GMAT, and SAT*
 - *GRE: Practicing to Take the General Test*
 - *The GRE for Dummies*
- **Guess** - There is no penalty for guessing, so if you can't determine the answer, make an educated guess by eliminating as many choices as possible.

VERBAL TIPS & TRICKS

- **Study vocabulary** - There are certain words that appear over and over again on the GRE. Hands down, the best way to increase your verbal score is to increase your vocabulary. Make word lists and set a goal of learning new words each day. There are many GRE word lists on the Internet, such as:
 - <http://www.wordhacker.com/en/article/freegrewordlist.htm> - a list of approximately 3200 commonly used words
 - <http://www.soundkeepers.com/GRE> - an interactive, on-line program that can be tailored to your vocabulary needs
- **Analogies** - Turn the relationship between the two words into a sentence.
- **Antonyms** - Try to pick the word apart if you don't know it. If you still have no luck, try to determine the mood of the word. If you feel it is a negative word like morose, choose a positive word like cheerful.
- **Sentence Completion** - Before you look at the choices, fill in the sentence in your own words. Then look at the options and see if any of the choices match or are similar to the words you chose.
- **Reading Comprehension** - Read the section very carefully and attentively. Oftentimes, the sections are quite boring. They are designed this way on purpose.

QUANTITATIVE TIPS & TRICKS

- **Process of elimination**- Sometimes long arithmetic problems may not have to be completed to determine the answer.

What is 267 multiplied by 189?

- a. 49,578
- b. 51,694
- c. 50,890
- d. 50,463

You don't need to do the math in this example. Look at the last digit in each number. $7 \times 9 = 63$. The answer must end in 3. The only possible answer is d. You just saved yourself 2 minutes. Move on to the next problem.

- **Brush up** - Brush up on your geometry, algebra, fractions, and graph-reading. You learned most of the math tested on the GRE by your Junior or Senior year in high school. The trouble is remembering it.
- **Think like a test-designer** - Before answering a question, ask yourself, "What is the test-designer trying to test?" In the previous example of 267×189 , the test-designer wasn't trying to see if you can multiply. He or she was testing you if you can figure out the shortcut and save yourself the time.
- **Use the scrap paper**- Use the scrap paper. It's there for a reason. If you're not comfortable with mental math, then why strain yourself?

REGISTRATION

In general, appointments are scheduled on a first-come first, served-basis. How far in advance you need to schedule depends on the time of the year and the demand placed on the testing schedule. There are certain times during the year that the majority of graduate school applicants take the exam. It is recommended that you schedule early as soon as you know your desired date.

Cost: The fee is \$115 in the United States

Schedule Online: <http://www.gre.org/generalreg.html>

- Click on Online Registration (Credit Card Only)

Schedule by Telephone: Call the test center directly or the Prometric Candidate Services Call Center at **1-800-GRE-CALL** (1-800-473-2255). They can be reached Monday through Friday, 8am-8pm, EST, (excluding holidays).

Testing Location: The closest location for the GRE general test is the University of Toledo. For directions, call: 419-530-3266.

Exam Day: When you get to the testing center, the testing administrators will ask you to copy a statement of honesty in cursive and sign it. Next, they will check your photo IDs. You will then be asked to place all personal items in a locker and take the key.

In the testing room, you will be assigned to one of the computers. Since each section of the exam is timed separately, you may take breaks between sections without penalty. The testing administrators will provide you with earplugs to block out auditory distractions, scrap paper, and a pencil. You may begin when are ready.

Relax. All your preparation has been completed. Do well, and don't stress out about it.

Sources

“Graduate Record Examination.” ETS. <http://www.gre.org>

“An Introduction to the Analytical Writing Section of the GRE General Test.” ETS.
<http://ftp.ets.org/pub/gre/awintro.pdf>

POWERPREP Software. ETS. <http://www.gre.org/pprepdwld.html>

“So You Wanna’ Ace the GRE.” Soyouwanna.com
<http://www.soyouwanna.com/site/syws/acegre/acegre.html>