

# The revised GRE general test

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# What is the GRE?

- The Graduate Record Examination is written by ETS (Educational Testing Service).
- The exam you will take is a computer-based test, which replaces the pencil and paper version that previous generations took.

# Why do we take it?

- Because graduate schools need a way to compare students from different institutions.
- Like the SAT, the test is designed to measure your capability, not your memorization skills.
- Like the SAT, the GRE tests how well you can take the GRE.

# How do we take it?

- First, you register.
- Go to [ets.org/gre](https://ets.org/gre)
- Pay about \$175

# How do we take it?

- Then, you go to the test center.
- Leave your cell phone in the car or at home.
- There will be a clock at your computer station.
- Bring a sweater – you will probably not have any control over the temperature of the room you are in.
- Bring Identification.
- Do not bring food or drink.

# How do we take it?

- Get a good night's sleep before the test.
- Leave home early and arrive early to the test center. (Practice the drive? Scout parking?)
- Eat a good dinner the night before and a good breakfast the morning of the test.
- Breathe!

# The word REVISED in the name?

- In August 2011, the GRE revised General Test replaced the GRE<sup>®</sup> General Test. Featuring the new test-taker friendly design and new questions, the revised test more closely reflects the kind of thinking you'll do in graduate or business school and demonstrates that you are ready for graduate-level work.

# Timing

- The overall testing time for the computer-based GRE<sup>®</sup> revised General Test is about three hours and 45 minutes. There are six sections with a 10-minute break following the third section.
- An unidentified unscored section may be included and may appear in any order after the Analytical Writing section. It is not counted as part of your score.
- An identified research section that is not scored may be included, and it is always at the end of the test.
- The Analytical Writing section will always be first, while the other five sections may appear in any order.

# Sections

- Analytical Writing (One section with two separately timed tasks) One "Analyze an Issue" task and one "Analyze an Argument" task 30 minutes per task
- Verbal Reasoning (Two sections) Approximately 20 questions per section 30 minutes per section
- Quantitative Reasoning (Two sections) Approximately 20 questions per section 35 minutes per section
- Unscored
- Research

# 10 minute break

- Maximise your time!
- Walk around, get the blood flowing to your brain.
- Yoga? Wash your face? Jumping jacks?

# Section Adaptive

- The old CBT GRE was question-adaptive, so the questions became harder as you did better, and easier as you did worse.
- The new CBT GRE is section-adaptive over the Verbal and Quantitative sections, so the second section may be more or less difficult than the first, depending on how well you did.

# Good news

- Questions within a section are now static, so you can go forward and backward through a section.
- You don't have to answer every question the first time you see it.
- There are 20 questions in each section, of varying difficulty.

# Strategy

- Two-pass / Take the easy test first: when you encounter a new section, read every question and answer the easy ones immediately. Save the harder or more complicated questions for later.
- The difficulty of questions within each section is randomized.
- Each question is weighted the same.

# Test Design Features

- The GRE revised General Test design features advanced technology that allows you to freely move forward and backward throughout an entire section.
- Preview and review capabilities within a section
- A "mark and review" feature to tag questions, so you can skip and return later
- The ability to change/edit answers within a section
- An on-screen calculator for the Quantitative Reasoning section
- New answer formats, including tasks such as numeric entry and highlighting a sentence in a passage to answer a question

# Strategy

- Use the Mark and Return function wisely.
- Mark questions you know you can answer, but that might take a little more time. Use the section menu to return to these questions after your initial pass.

# Strategy

- You can change answers! It's not always the best idea to change something you thought was good, but if you're inspired by a later question in the same section, make a change.

# Critical preparation

- Aside from the academic preparation, you need to download
  - POWERPREP® II Software: Preparation for the computer-based GRE revised General Test from the ETS website, so that you get used to the format of the interface (calculator, highlighter, selection tools, etc).

# How is the test scored?

- By a computer. The computer doesn't want you to show all work, it doesn't care how you get an answer, it only cares that you got the right or wrong answer.

# Strategy

- You don't have to work the questions the way your in-class professors hope you do.
- You don't have to show all work.
- You don't have to use fancy calculations.
- You can eliminate bad answers.
- You can use trial – and – error.

# How is the test scored?

- Verbal and Quantitative scores are 130-170, in 1 point increments, and Analytical writing is 0-6, in half point increments.

# But that's new!

- Percentile rank—the percent of examinees in a group or subgroup who obtained scores below a specified score on a particular test.
- Percentile score should be consistent across 2010 and 2011 and 2012 GRE test scores, although calculated score will not be.

# Score calculation

- The raw score is converted to a scaled score through a process known as equating. The equating process accounts for minor variations in difficulty among the different test editions as well as differences in difficulty among individuals' tests introduced by the section-level adaptation. Thus a given scaled score reflects approximately the same level of performance regardless of which section was selected and when the test was taken.

# Guessing

- The subject tests DO penalize .25 for guessing wrong on a question, but the general test does not differentiate between a wrong answer and a blank question.

# Strategy

- When the clock has 2 minutes left in a section, start answering every question. Eliminate the obviously wrong answers, and start guessing.
- The test will not subtract from your score if a question is wrong, but blank answers won't help you.

# How often do I have to take it?

- When you apply to graduate schools, most will ask for a general GRE score. Some will also ask for a subject test GRE score.
- If you've taken the GRE before, your score is typically good for 5 years, but double-check with the program you're applying to.
- (Law schools use the LSAT, Medical schools use the MCAT, and Business schools use the GMAT.)

# How often can I take it?

- You have to leave 60 days between retakes.
- Pay attention to when your graduate school applications are due, and try to schedule accordingly. Not everyone needs to take the GRE multiple times.
- Don't overuse this option; you can't take it more than 5 times in a calendar year.

# Analytical writing

# Essay Format

- The Analytical Writing measure tests your critical thinking and analytical writing skills. It assesses your ability to articulate and support complex ideas, construct and evaluate arguments, and sustain a focused and coherent discussion. It does not assess specific content knowledge.

# Analytical writing Scoring

- Each essay receives a score from two trained readers, using a six-point holistic scale. In holistic scoring, readers are trained to assign scores on the basis of the overall quality of an essay in response to the assigned task. If the two assigned scores differ by more than one point on the scale, the discrepancy is adjudicated by a third GRE reader.

# Analytical writing Scoring

- Otherwise, the scores from the two readings of an essay are averaged. The final scores on the two essays are then averaged and rounded up to the nearest half-point interval. A single score is reported for the Analytical Writing section. The primary emphasis in scoring the Analytical Writing section is on your critical thinking and analytical writing skills rather than on grammar and mechanics.

# Spelling?

- Save a few minutes at the end of each timed task to check for obvious errors. Although an occasional spelling or grammatical error will not affect your score, severe and persistent errors will detract from the overall effectiveness of your writing and lower your score accordingly.

# Word processing

- Individuals taking the computer-based test will use a basic word processor developed by ETS. The basic word processor contains the following functionalities: insert text, delete text, cut-and paste and undo the previous action. Tools such as a spell checker and grammar checker are not available in the ETS software, largely to maintain fairness with those examinees who must handwrite their essays at paperbased administrations.

# Scores 6 and 5.5

- Sustains insightful, in-depth analysis of complex ideas; develops and supports main points with logically compelling reasons and/or highly persuasive examples; is well focused and well organized; skillfully uses sentence variety and precise vocabulary to convey meaning effectively; demonstrates superior facility with sentence structure and language usage, but may have minor errors that do not interfere with meaning.

# Scores 5 and 4.5

- Provides generally thoughtful analysis of complex ideas; develops and supports main points with logically sound reasons and/or well-chosen examples; is generally focused and well organized; uses sentence variety and vocabulary to convey meaning clearly; demonstrates good control of sentence structure and language usage, but may have minor errors that do not interfere with meaning.

# Scores 4 and 3.5

- Provides competent analysis of ideas; develops and supports main points with relevant reasons and/or examples; is adequately organized; conveys meaning with reasonable clarity; demonstrates satisfactory control of sentence structure and language usage, but may have some errors that affect clarity.

# Scores 3 and 2.5

- Displays some competence in analytical writing, although the writing is flawed in at least one of the following ways: limited analysis or development; weak organization; weak control of sentence structure or language usage, with errors that often result in vagueness or lack of clarity.

# Scores 2 and 1.5

- Displays serious weaknesses in analytical writing. The writing is seriously flawed in at least one of the following ways: serious lack of analysis or development; lack of organization; serious and frequent problems in sentence structure or language usage, with errors that obscure meaning.

# Scores 1 and 0.5

- Displays fundamental deficiencies in analytical writing. The writing is fundamentally flawed in at least one of the following ways: content that is extremely confusing or mostly irrelevant to the assigned tasks; little or no development; severe and pervasive errors that result in incoherence.

# Score Level 0

- The examinee's analytical writing skills cannot be evaluated because the responses do not address any part of the assigned tasks, are merely attempts to copy the assignments, are in a foreign language or display only indecipherable text.

# Score NS

- The examinee produced no text whatsoever.

# Essay topic pools

- [http://www.ets.org/gre/revised\\_general/prepare/analytical\\_writing/issue/pool](http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/issue/pool)
- [http://www.ets.org/gre/revised\\_general/prepare/analytical\\_writing/argument/pool](http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/argument/pool)

# Verbal Reasoning

# Question types

- Reading Comprehension
- Text Completion
- Sentence Equivalence

# Reading Comprehension

- Each Reading Comprehension question is based on a passage that may range in length from one paragraph to several paragraphs. The test contains approximately 10 passages, the majority of which are one paragraph in length and only one or two of which are several paragraphs long. Passages are drawn from the physical sciences, biological sciences, social sciences, business, arts and humanities and everyday topics and are based on material found in books and periodicals, both academic and nonacademic.

# Reading Comprehension

- Typically, about half of the questions on the test will be based on passages, and the number of questions based on a given passage can range from one to six. Questions can cover from the meaning of a particular word to assessing evidence that might support or weaken points made in the passage. Many, but not all, of the questions are standard multiple-choice questions, in which you are required to select a single correct answer; others ask you to select multiple correct answers; and still others ask you to select a sentence from the passage.

# Reading Comprehension

- Don't forget to practice reading on a computer screen – There are new articles in the AJC, MDJ, CNN, etc. every day.
- Read blogs by literate authors – make sure that you are exposing yourself to correct grammar and vocabulary!

# Text Completion

- Passage composed of one to five sentences
- One to three blanks
- Three answer choices per blank (five answer choices in the case of a single blank)
- The answer choices for different blanks function independently; i.e., selecting one answer choice for one blank does not affect what answer choices you can select for another blank
- Single correct answer, consisting of one choice for each blank; no credit for partially correct answers

# Sentence Equivalence

- Consists of:
  - a single sentence
  - one blank
  - six answer choices
- Requires you to select **two** of the answer choices; no credit for partially correct answers.