

GRE EXAM GUIDE

With sample papers



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About the GRE exam



The GRE (Graduate Record Examination) is a multiple-choice, standardized test conducted by ETS. Universities use the GRE scores of applicants to gauge their preparedness for graduate programs. Although these scores only form one part of your application profile, you should consider taking the exam seriously. This is because colleges use GRE scores as a benchmark to filter through their list of applicants.

It's common for students to scratch their heads and wonder what GRE is. For starters, it's a broad-based assessment of a student's aptitude. The exam measures a student's skills in essay evaluation, critical thinking, analytical writing, and problem-solving. More importantly, the test assesses how you manage time and the way you work under stress. This is why it's globally accepted as a good measure of a student's aptitude and readiness for a graduate-level program. Consequently, more than half a million students take the test every year before applying.

GRE exam pattern

Paper-based		GRE Sections	Computer-based	
Duration	No. of Sections		Duration	No. of Sections
60 min	2 Sections, 2 tasks	Analytical Writing	60 min	1 Section, 2 tasks
70 min	2 Sections, 50 questions	Verbal reasoning	60 min	2 Sections, 40 questions
80 min	2 Sections, 50 questions	Quantitative reasoning	70 min	2 Sections, 40 questions
		Unscored	Varies	Varies
		Research	Varies	Varies

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The GRE exam, also known as the General Test, lasts for the average duration of 3 hours 40 minutes. It is divided into 3 main sections:

- Analytical Writing
- Verbal Section
- Quantitative Reasoning

Apart from these, there is also one Unscored and Research section, which ETS does not count in the actual GRE score. This section is variable in nature, ie, it can either be quantitative or verbal.

GRE registration

The registration process for GRE is pretty straightforward. First, create an account on the ETS website. To register online, go to “My GRE Home” page, select “Register”, and then “Find Test Centers.” Note that ETS administers the GRE at Prometric test centers. Pay the registration fee for the exam, which is \$205, and there you are! You’ll receive a confirmation email from ETS regarding your test date and time.

At a later stage, if you want to change the test center, or reschedule your test, it can cost you an extra \$50. ETS offers fee reductions to students who prove their financial hardship.

For cancellation, ETS asks that you cancel your exam at least 4 days in advance so you can get a partial refund.

GRE scores

As we mentioned earlier, the exam comprises of three main sections:

Analytical Writing - scores range between 0-6

Verbal Section - graded on a scale of 130-170

Quantitative Reasoning - graded on a scale of 130-170

Some colleges require additional test sections to be taken with the GRE test, but they’re not graded in the final score of the test.

So, your GRE test score will be out of **340 marks**, and it’ll stay valid for **5 years**.

GRE Syllabus

Each section of the GRE will challenge your reasoning and problem-solving skills differently. Let's look at them one by one:

1) Analytical Writing

This section examines your ability to interpret and express your thoughts on complex issues and arguments. It consists of two tasks-

The “Analyze an Issue” task – 30 minutes

The first task is “Analyze an Issue”, where you will be given an opinion on a topic of general interest. Once you've understood the pros and cons of the opinion, things become easy. All you have to do is support your argument well.

The “Analyze an Argument” task – 30 minutes

The second task is to “Analyze an Argument”. Here, you'll have to look at the two sides of an argument. Then, you'll have to take a side and strengthen your argument accordingly.

You can read sample essays [over here](#) and learn more about how the analytical section is scored.

Tips-

- Read the directions listed before each question thoroughly. Misinterpreting a question is a common mistake among students.
- Try to create statements that demonstrate both pros and cons of the matter being discussed.
- Relate all examples and reasoning back to your original theory.

2) Verbal Reasoning

In these sections, you are asked to understand the written-content and answer queries accordingly.

You'll encounter 10 Reading Comprehension questions which will assess your ability to read and understand a passage.

There will be 6 Text Completion and 4 Sentence Equivalent questions. These questions test your vocabulary and your ability to understand the context of a sentence.

Tips-

- If you face difficulty with vocabulary, try to think like a writer and use the kind of vocabulary the writer is using.
- Try to avoid wastage of time, don't get stuck on any one answer.
- Practice more and read different kinds of content.

3) Quantitative Section

This section analyzes your problem-solving skills and basic mathematical concepts such as Algebra, Geometry, Data analysis, etc. In this section, you'll encounter 7-8 Quantitative Comparison questions, which will test your problem-solving speed.

The second kind of questions you'll encounter are Problem Solving questions. Here, you have to correctly understand the context and gather the needed data. It assesses your ability to think laterally.

Tips-

- Try to practice fast calculation.
- Double check the numbers you have entered/written.

GRE Sample papers

Attempting a mock test is the best way to see where you stand with your GRE scores. This will give you a clear idea of what sections and question types you need to improve on.

It's difficult to find a GRE sample test online, but ETS, the official GRE exam conducting organization, has an excellent set of questions prepared:

1. [Analytical Writing sample questions](#)
2. [Verbal reasoning sample questions](#)
3. [Quantitative reasoning sample questions](#)


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