

Graduate Records Examination (GRE)

The Revised GRE

In August of 2011, the GRE underwent what has been referred to by Kaplan Test Prep and Admissions as ‘the most significant overhaul of the GRE in its 59 year history’ (“The Revised GRE is Coming in 2011.” *Kaptest.com* Kaplan Test Prep and Admissions). According to the ETS website, changes from the previous exam format include:

- All vocabulary will be contextualized in questions- no more direct antonym or analogy questions.
- Text completion questions, which require test takers to complete sentences by choosing words and phrases.
- Sentence Equivalence questions, which require test takers to evaluate how to complete a sentence.
- Enhanced reading comprehension questions with different kinds of multiple choice answers, and questions involving portions of highlighted text from larger writing samples.
- The addition of an on-screen calculator, which speaks to a shift from arithmetic towards more mathematical reasoning. For paper-based exams, a four function handheld calculator will be provided.
- More fill-in questions (as opposed to Multiple Choice questions) for the Quantitative section.
- Multiple Choice questions with more than one correct answer, where multiple answers must be chosen
- The ability to review and preview questions.
- The ability to mark and skip questions, and the ability to return to skipped questions within a section.
- The introduction of an unscored research section that will be identified as such.
- ETS will introduce a new scoring system where the verbal and quantitative sections will be scored in one point increments from 130 to 170.
- The test is adaptive, but not within a section. The test adapts from section to section. On any give exam, there will always be at least two verbal sections and two quantitative sections. The first of each section will determine the level of the following section. E.G., if a test taker does well on the first verbal section, the following verbal section will be more difficult.

The overall test time will be longer and the sections will be as follows:

Section	Details
Analytical Writing	One section featuring an issue question and an argument question. Up to 30 minutes per essay.
Verbal Reasoning	Two separate sections of about 20 questions and 30 minutes per section.
Quantitative Reasoning	Two separate sections of about 20 questions and 35 minutes per section.
Unscored Section	Will vary.
Research Section	Will vary.

The changes in the exam appear to be a shift towards more critical reasoning; more in-context problem solving that reflects the kind of work done in graduate school more directly than the previous format of the exam.

Scores for exams taken from August to October of 2011 will not be available until November of 2011. All test takers, international and domestic, will be affected by this blackout period, which is necessary for ETS to analyze and accurately report scaled scores and percentiles.

Score Validity

GRE scores remain valid and are usually accepted by institutions for up to 5 years.

How the GRE is used by Universities

The GRE generally is required by all U.S. graduate programs with the exception of some law and MBA or other business-related programs which usually require the GMAT, although some business programs

will consider the GRE for admission. The GRE is used by universities to get a sense of a test taker's academic potential and to determine his or her performance in analyzing and evaluating data.

Note: The GRE is not an exam that tests English as a foreign language nor is it geared specifically to international students. It is taken by native and non-native speakers of English alike.

Depending on the university and the program, performance on the GRE sections is often weighed differently. For some programs, such as engineering or mathematics, the quantitative section is weighed more heavily in admission decisions than the verbal section. For other programs, such as literature or linguistics, the verbal and analytical writing sections may be weighed more than the quantitative section. Nonetheless, a good overall score on the GRE helps universities make positive decisions in terms of admissions and financial aid.

While it is not generally advisable to take the test too many times, you may be requested to retake the exam in order to meet minimum standards or to be more competitive for particular programs.

Test Taking Tips

Overall Tip 1: It's important to study for the GRE in English. The GRE tests your reasoning skills in English. It can be difficult for native speakers of English. While it's acceptable to look up certain things in your own language, just for reference (e.g. math vocabulary: in French an **odd** number is *impair*, and an **even** number is *pair*), it's important to study for the exam in English as much as possible. You will not have time to translate effectively while taking the exam. You must be as accustomed to answering questions in English as quickly and accurately as possible.

Overall Tip 2: Now the GRE allows test-takers to skip questions. Depending on how you take tests, you may want to focus on easier questions first, and go back to more difficult questions later. However, it's important to remember if you've skipped questions to go back and answer them. It's very important to understand the interface of the exam, and be comfortable skipping questions and going back to them. There is no penalty for guessing, so even if you don't know an answer, go back and answer the question with your best guess.

Verbal Reasoning Section

Tip 1: It's important to study vocabulary. It's often helpful is to study word roots. In this way, you can get a sense of a word even if you don't know exactly what the word means. For example, if you know that **TERRA** has something to do with land, you may be able to get at the meanings of the words **terrestrial**, and **territory**. While the vocabulary you'll be tested on in the new GRE will be in-context, you'll still need to know what the words mean, and studying unfamiliar vocabulary will be helpful.

Tip 2: Try to make a quick review of English grammar. It's very helpful both for the Analytical writing and the Verbal sections. Grammar is tested both directly and indirectly throughout the verbal section of the exam. Get a grammar book and try to brush up on the fine points of English grammar. You may find the following websites helpful.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_grammar

http://esl.about.com/library/lessons/blgr_beginner_review1.htm

Tip 3: For the computer-based exam, it's important to get accustomed to reading a lot of text on a computer screen. You cannot take notes on text when it's on a computer screen. Also, it may be distracting to scroll up and down the screen at first. Practice thoroughly reading articles on computer screens. This is different than casually surfing the internet. Try to read a few articles in English every day to get comfortable reading on the computer screen. This does make a difference.

Tip 4: For some question types, you'll need to pick several correct answers, or combinations of correct answers. Read the instructions for the questions carefully, and understand what the exam is asking for as best you can before attempting to answer a question. In some question types, failure to select all correct answers, or the correct combination of answers will result in getting the entire question marked incorrect.

Quantitative Section

For the Quantitative section, please remember that a lot of information is given in the question and the answer choices presented. Quite often the GRE Quantitative section doesn't ask you to solve a question, but to compare equations or evaluate different topics.

Tip 1: Try to understand the question as much as possible before attempting to answer it. You avoid wasting time and picking incorrect answer choices this way. For example, if the test gives a set of two equations and asks you to evaluate which equation results in a larger sum, it may not be necessary to solve the equations to answer the question. You won't get any points if you solve the equations but don't answer the question correctly.

Tip 2: Pay close attention to the wording of questions. The actual mathematical content in many questions will need to be derived from the verbal information given in the question. You will often need to devise solutions based on non-numerical information. Please read questions carefully.

Tip 3: Often it is useful to use answer choices to figure out equations or understand numerical relations within the components of the question. Try to eliminate answer choices that are obviously wrong. This increases your chance of picking a correct answer.

Tip 4: Brushing up on general mathematical topics will be helpful. Understanding concepts like odd, even; prime, composite; geometrical relationships, multiplicative properties, etc., will allow you to answer questions more quickly without a lot of confusing arithmetic. Even with a calculator, it's easy to make careless errors when you're taking the exam; so, it is good to have a basic understanding of math topics. ETS has a topical math review that you can download at:

<http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/GRE/pdf/GREmathPractice.pdf>

Tip 5: The GRE will provide an onscreen calculator for examinees taking the computer based test. There's a helpful feature on that lets examinees transfer answers into questions that require fill-in-the-blank answers. This will help eliminate any issues of copying the answer incorrectly from the calculator to the answer space.

Analytical Writing Section

When writing essays, don't try to impress the readers by using words or sentence structures that you find difficult. Writing in a style with which you are comfortable is important. Answer the question as clearly as possible

Tip 1: A good way to structure your essay is to introduce your point in the first paragraph, state your point, and give examples in the middle paragraphs, and then summarize your point in the last paragraph.

Tip 2: Try to use your experiences when answering questions. If you can relate an unfamiliar topic to something he or she is familiar, usually one can write a stronger essay. Remember to stay on topic, though.

Tip 3: As a rule of thumb, try to write clear sentences, and keep one main idea per paragraph.

Tip 4: Try to save the last 5 to 10 minutes of the essay time to review what has been written. The best essays will be clear and answer the question effectively.

Structuring your Study

It's important to practice before taking the actual exam. Lack of familiarity with this type of exam can be a major obstacle. Starting with a general review, then working on practice questions, and finally building up to full practice exams will help increase your performance on the exam.

Tip 1: Toward the beginning of your preparation studies, try to review topics broadly. This is the time to refresh your knowledge of mathematical concepts and English grammar and vocabulary.

Tip 2: Acquire some practice questions. Start out just trying to answer the questions and applying the information from your review. Don't worry about timing at first. After answering a few questions, review the answer choices and try to understand why certain answer choices are correct and why certain answer choices are incorrect. This will help you eliminate choices when you come across similar questions later.

Tip 3: As studies progress, try practicing with groups of questions. Start to time yourself and pay attention to the kinds of questions and topics that are difficult for you. Review any content material with which you have trouble.

Tip 4: Closer to your test date, take a few timed, practice GRE exams. Computerized practice tests are often available when you register to take the GRE. It's also possible to find practice exams in

paper format from bookstores and sometimes online. ETS has at least one paper exam online at <http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/GRE/pdf/gre%20practice%20general%20test.pdf>

Note: When practicing, try to take the paper practice exams first, and then progress to the computer practice exams. This will best prepare you for a computer-based exam. If taking a paper-based exam, you won't need to work on computer-based practice tests.

Many practice materials can be downloaded for free at www.gre.org.

Registering for the Exam

Generally applicants can register by phone, fax or on the internet. However, for sponsored students receiving payment *vouchers*, registration must be done by fax or mail using the form in the center of the GRE Registration Bulletin. For online registration go to www.gre.org. On test day, remember to bring a government-issued ID and your voucher.

For students working with IIE on university placement, it is very important that you identify IIE as a score recipient at the time of registration. **IIE's code is 2326.**

When to take the exam

Ideally, students seeking admission for the term beginning in August or September should sit for the GRE exam in October of the preceding year. Many U.S. universities have admission deadlines in December. Also, if you decide to retake the exam, sufficient time remains to retake and have schools receive scores in time for admission consideration.

Personal Potential Index

ETS launched the GRE PPI (Personal Potential Index) as a service through which test takers can submit evaluations to Universities online. The PPI is a stand alone piece, but can be registered for at the same time that applicants register for the GRE. At this time, IIE does not recommend using the PPI, as US Universities do not appear to require the PPI.

Resources:

- ETS FAQ about the new GRE: http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/faq/
- Free test prep materials from ETS, including materials for the revised GRE: http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare
- List of international test centers offering the GRE Computer Based Test: <http://etsis4.ets.org/tcenter/tcenterIntl.jsp>
- List of international test centers offering the GRE Paper Based Test: http://www.ets.org/s/gre/pdf/gre_tclist.pdf

Sources

www.gre.org

<http://www.kaptest.com/GRE/Home/revised-gre.html>

http://ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/content