



GMAT FAQ

Most Frequently Asked Questions About the GMAT

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Test Day FAQs

1. What is the registration process for taking the test?

Signing up for the GMAT is the easiest part of your process. Here is a web URL:
<http://www.mba.com/mba/TaketheGMAT>.

Popular testing days fill up in advance, so if your schedule requires you to take the test on a certain day, be on top of it and sign up early. You need to pay the fee with a major credit card

2. Can I cancel my score, or have it not be reported?

You can cancel your score, but you must do so before you see it. Once you see it, it must be reported; you do not have the option of withholding it. We do not recommend canceling a score unless you were tested under adverse circumstances, like illness. If you do poorly and still report your score, it is not the end of the world. An improvement between two test scores may be highly regarded by your school of choice. If you cancel, the cancellation is still reported to the schools.

3. How many times can I take the GMAT?

There is technically no limit but we do not recommend taking the test more than three times. Taking the test many times may look bad. Plan on taking the test twice and reporting both scores (unless of course you do very well the first time). The admissions committee will take the best score of all your tests but will take a look at the history of the tests as well.

4. Are there any rules regarding how often I can take the GMAT in a certain number of days?

You can take the GMAT five times every year (12-month period). Within that year, you must wait 31 days between tests, regardless of score cancellations.

5. Is it common to retake the GMAT? If so, what kinds of results are common?

It is less common than you might think. Studies show that approximately 21% of the exams are taken by those who are retesting. Of those re-testers, it is uncommon that they take the test more than 3 times in a given year. Regarding results, the average increase between tests is 30 points on the total score. It is not unheard of that scores can go down with repeat testing. Your increase will depend on how much preparation you do in between. If you prepare well enough, odds are you won't be compelled to retest!

6. What should I do if I don't feel well on the day of the test?

If you don't feel well, you should not take the test. You should be healthy and prepared when you take the GMAT. It will be an ordeal to sit through a 4-hour test while you are not at your best. You may end up canceling the score anyway. So do not get hung up on the rescheduling fee (US\$50 if you reschedule before 7 calendar days of the test date or you will lose the entire US\$250 test fee). Your bad score might become an anchoring point later on hindering your progress and hurting your self-confidence. Meantime, a bad score gets reported to schools as all your scores in the last five years will be shown.

However, if you are sure that you can achieve a high score based on your prior practice tests, you should take the test even when you don't feel well. That way you don't waste the test fee and have a chance to experience the real test while having the option to cancel it at the end.

7. Should I arrive early at the test center?

Yes. Make sure you find out in advance where the test center is, and get there at least 30 minutes early because there is a check-in procedure. If you are more than 15 minutes late, the test administrators may not let you take your test and your US\$250 test fee could be forfeited.

8. What should I bring to the test center on the day of my test?

You do not need to bring much to the test center. In fact, you will not be allowed to bring any of your personal belongings such as cell phones, backpacks, purses, or handbags into the testing room. If you do bring your belongings with you, you will be required to put them in a storage area such as a small locker. So just bring the essential items (including clothes) you need before, during and after the test in a bag with flexible surface. The test administrator will provide you with everything you need to take the test, including a pencil and scratch paper/erasable booklets.

9. What is the test center like? Will they let my family in with me?

The test centers are typically very small. Depending on their locations and relationships with Pearson Vue, they might be owned by Pearson VUE or just an affiliated one in the network. If they are the latter, they may administer other tests for non-Pearson VUE entities. Therefore the condition of the test center and your test center experience may vary.

There is a waiting area. Depending on the number of staff members on duty at the test center and the number of test takers waiting, your wait time may vary. Feel free to relax. If you want to continue to read notes or books while waiting, lock your belongings away in the locker first except for a book or some notes. When you get called, you can quickly go to your locker and lock the last item before proceeding. But please be quick, otherwise the staff may become impatient.

Your family or friends will not be permitted to wait for you at the test center while you are taking your test. They will also not be able to contact you while you are being tested.

10. What is the testing room environment like?

You will take your GMAT at an individual computer workstation next to many other computer workstations in a testing room. Your computer workstation is similar to a basic small office cubicle. Please note that there will be audio/visual monitoring during the test.

11. What should I wear? Is there a dress code?

There is no dress code. You should dress comfortably and possibly bring extra layers in case the room gets cold.

12. What is the check-in procedure?

You will need to show the test administrator valid ID. Please prepare two to three valid IDs such as a passport, driver's license, or a major credit card with your photo. That way in case one expires or somehow cannot be found at the test center, you are still good to go.

The administrator will also take your photograph, signature, and take your fingerprint digitally. You will be asked to agree to the GMAT Examination Testing Rules & Agreement. When you sign for the paperwork, please slow down and make your signature very legible and correspond to the full name on your ID. Otherwise you may be asked to re-sign your name multiple times which might affect your mood for the test later on. If you refuse to comply with any of these procedures, you may be asked to leave and forfeit your fee.

13. How long does the GMAT take? Are we given breaks?

The test takes around 4 hours. You are given two 5-minute breaks at scheduled intervals. It is important to not take more than 5 minutes during these breaks because you will be docked the amount of time you go over.

14. Can we leave during the test?

Not besides the scheduled breaks. If there is an emergency, raise your hand and the test administrator should let you leave; however the timer on your test will not stop. Be careful about leaving, because if you are gone too long or leave too many times, your test administrator may report you to Pearson VUE or GMAC. Note that you will need to provide your fingerprint at re-entry.

15. Can I bring a snack?

Yes, but not into the testing room. You can only eat, drink, or use tobacco during the scheduled breaks. If you need to smoke or go outside for any reason, be sure to alert the test administrator. Note that rules about leaving vary from center to center, so you should clearly understand those rules before making any decisions in order to avoid any problems. We recommend you bring some chocolates, power bars and water for two short five-minute breaks in order to maintain your momentum through the test.

16. What are the rules for cell phone and PDA use?

You cannot use your cell phone or PDA during the test or on your break. We recommend you turn off any electronic devices stored in the locker. Please do not check your voicemail or emails during your break. You will be violating the test center rules and may be asked to leave immediately.

17. What happens if there are extreme circumstances such as severe weather or computer malfunctions?

Usually, the start of the test will be delayed or will be rescheduled. If such action is not possible, you can choose either a full refund or to sign up for a different test date free of charge.

18. When I sit down at the computer, do I take the test right away?

You will have to begin your test as soon as possible, but first you will have to agree to the GMAT Nondisclosure Agreement and General Terms of Use statement including that you will not use any non-

permitted devices. You must agree to this statement, or risk not being allowed to complete the test and forfeiting your test fee

19. What should I do if my computer does not work?

You should raise your hand and tell the test administrator. You should not try and fix it yourself.

20. What if something happens to disrupt the test?

Based on the policies listed on the websites of GMAC®, Pearson VUE and ACT, if anything happens during the test that serves as an interruption or causes a mistiming, or if anything is out of the ordinary or deviates from normal testing procedure, GMAC and/or Pearson VUE will conduct an examination of the situation. One of those organizations will then decide if they should pursue disciplinary action including score cancellation. If any organization decides to take any action against an examinee or on behalf of one, the affected parties will have the option of A) take their test again at no additional charge, or receive a refund UNLESS that person is found to be the cause or source of the disruption. If you should opt to take the test again, you must take it in its entirety.

21. Can I use a testing aid such as a calculator?

No, you cannot use a calculator or any other type of aid including laptops, PDA's, translators, dictionaries etc.

22. Can the test administrator kick me out? What for?

Yes. There are many reasons for dismissal. These include providing false information or not providing it at all, bringing a test aid, not complying with an administrator's reasonable requests, helping another test taker or letting them help you, tampering with the operation of the computer, and not following any rules or procedures.

23. Is there a plagiarism policy, regarding the writing section?

You must write two essays for the Analytical Writing Section of the GMAT. If there is evidence of plagiarism, your scores can and will be cancelled. Please note that your essays become the property of GMAC.

24. What happens after the test?

After the test you will answer some questions about yourself and your plans for graduate school, and whether you would like to take part in various surveys or receive further information. Your answer choices to these questions may reflect information that you previously provided, earlier in the registration process.

25. How do I send my scores to schools?

There are a few options for sending your scores. After you take the test, you will have the option of selecting 5 programs to send your scores to at no extra charge. Be careful, because this action cannot be undone and also be sure to select the correct program.

Later, you will have the chance to choose more schools to send your scores to. You will need to order an “Additional Score Report” (ASR). You can pay by credit card or check. Each additional school costs \$28 USD.

26. How can I tell if my GMAT score is high enough?

It depends what you mean by high enough. Different schools have different expectations as to what GMAT scores admitted students should have. Some schools have a minimum requirement – you will need to research this on a program-by-program basis, including research on what the range of scores was for the last entering class. Your GMAT score is only one third of your application, so let your score be a rough guide to where you apply but do not limit yourself. Also, if you are unhappy with your score, it is fairly common to take the GMAT twice. If you take it twice, be sure to prepare thoroughly in order to achieve a higher score.

General GMAT FAQs

1. What is the GMAT?

The GMAT is the standardized test that you take when applying to business school. It lasts between 3.5 and 4 hours. The format is as follows: First you write two essays that last a half hour each, after which you have a 5 minute break. Second, you spend 75 minutes on the quantitative section, which has 37 questions, and you take another 5-minute break. Last is the 75-minute verbal section, which is 41 questions long.

The GMAT, along with your undergraduate grade point average (GPA) and your work experience are the three things that admissions committees look at when considering you for admission. The GMAT is important and should be taken seriously, especially by those who are not happy with their undergrad GPA or have very little work experience.

Please visit our [GMAT web pages](#) containing a vast amount of information to allow you to do just that.

2. Does the GMAT have more or less influence on your application than other things, like GPA, work experience, recommendations and interviews?

Your GMAT score is very important to the application process, but what is *most* important is determined per individual. A high score can serve to undermine a lower GPA or less job experience, or set you apart from those with a very high GPA and outstanding recommendations, but who are poor test takers. Conversely, if you have a very high GMAT score, a good GPA and job experience can set you apart from others with high GMAT scores.

3. Is there any way I can apply to business school without reporting a GMAT score?

No, unless the schools or the programs (such as some executive MBA programs) don't require it. Otherwise, you must report a GMAT score to be considered for admissions at any accredited MBA program.

4. Can you explain the three parts of the test in more detail?

Yes. The three parts are the Analytical Writing Assessment, Quantitative section, and Verbal section. Here is some more information on each:

Analytical Writing Assessment

The exam begins with two essays. You are given 30 minutes for each essay. The essays are intended to demonstrate two writing skills: Analysis of an Issue and Analysis of an Argument

Quantitative Section

After your 5-minute break, you move on to the quantitative section of the exam. There are 37 questions in two categories: data sufficiency and problem solving. You will have 75 minutes to complete this section.

Verbal Section

After your second 5-minute break, you move on the verbal section. There are 41 questions of 3 types: Reading Comprehension, Critical Reasoning, and Sentence Correction. Again, you will have 75 minutes to complete this section.

5. How is the GMAT scored?

The GMAT is scored between 200 and 800, with 540 being close to the average score. In recent years, there have been more test takers yielding higher scores however. Breaking 650 could get you into many schools, but some top schools require above a 680.

In addition to your overall score, you receive a sub score for the verbal and quantitative sections, and a percentile. The percentile means that you did better than that percent (the one they gave you) of the testing population in the last three years. The percentiles for quantitative and verbal refer to different scores, because more people do well in quantitative on the GMAT. This goes to show that in your GMAT prep, you should be thorough and cover both sections. Cover whichever you are weaker in more.

Along with your scores, your essays will be sent to your schools of choice.

6. Do I need any special computer skills to take the GMAT on a computer?

No you don't. But the better you are with computers, the more comfortable you will feel with taking a computer test, making it more likely for you to receive a higher score.

At the least, you need to know how to operate a computer generally, as well as type and use a computer mouse. There is a tutorial before you start the test that is un-timed. The tutorial will teach you how to answer questions and proceed through the test. Since there are two timed essays, you should be comfortable with typing at a reasonable speed.

7. Are there accommodations for disabled test takers?

Yes. There should be an accommodation to suit any disabled test taker, whatever the disability may be. These accommodations include but are not limited to the following:

More time, more breaks or extended breaks, allowance of medical devices like insulin pumps, a different mouse, a reader, sign language interpreter, and a larger font on the computer monitor. Some allowances or comfort require special permission through the GMAT Test Accommodations Request Form, and some do not. Those that do not are: glasses, hearing aids, a support pillow, a neck brace, and again an insulin pump. The insulin pump must be attached to the body, or else it will need special permission.

8. What level of math does the GMAT cover?

The GMAT covers through high school math. You do not need advanced math knowledge to be successful on the quantitative section of the GMAT, but you need to be able to apply your math knowledge and use your skills in diverse ways. The best thing to do is to prepare rigorously with GMAT experts and use any tools at your disposal to practice your math skills.

9. What is the content of the reading passages? Should I be prepared to read about business?

The reading passages can cover just about anything. This part of the test is not testing you on specific subject matter, but on your comprehension of the subject matter. The content, in that sense, does not matter.

However, the more knowledgeable you are about the tested topics in Reading Comprehension, the more likely you can speed through the reading with more accurate answers.

You may see as many as 4 passages in the Reading Comprehension section ranging up to 400 words in each passage, followed by 3 or 4 interpretive, applied, and inferential questions. The topics are typically related to social sciences such as politics and history, physical or biological sciences such as geology and astronomy, business-related areas such as marketing, economics and human resource management, along with other advanced subjects.

Please visit our [InFocus Blog](#) for latest observations on GMAT Reading Comprehension.

10. What is the advantage of joining a classroom prep program like Manhattan Review as opposed to just working with a study book?

Joining a prep course is a good option because you are learning from an instructor. You are able to ask the instructor questions. Asking questions is an important part of learning – a part that is lost when you learn from a book. At Manhattan Review our instructors are both experienced educators and very high scorers on the GMAT. Also, being in a classroom setting can be conducive to good study habits. You also have the option of reviewing material and studying with a fellow classmate.

There are many good reasons to join a prep course, not the least of which is that you will have an instructor who has the knowledge to answer most of your GMAT questions. At Manhattan Review, our instructors have been teaching students how to prepare for the GMAT exam for years, and they themselves have scored in the 99th percentile. To involve yourself in a classroom atmosphere also opens you to questions that your fellow students might have, questions you may not have thought of yourself. Importantly also, the classroom environment will make you a more diligent studier. Coming to class will keep you on top of your preparation and will promote good study habits.

Our proprietary Turbocharge Your GMAT 4 books are also great resources for you to have if you prefer to study on your own. We also offer 5 CATs for your own practice. Please visit [here](#) for more info.

11. Should I prepare for my GMAT with books, or with programs that simulate the CAT?

Our advice is to do both. Books will help with reviewing grammar rules, vocabulary, and math skills but you will need to practice putting yourself in a testing situation and you will want this to closely reflect the real GMAT, which is where a computer program will come in. You can determine the pace at which you should take the real test, get used to the computer atmosphere, practice your typing, and learn how to gauge your performance. If you take a practice CAT a few times, you will have a better idea of how your scores will come out and you can make a more educated decision, when the real GMAT comes, of whether to keep the score or not.

This is not to say that paper based practice tests are not worth your while. On the contrary they are worth it: any amount of GMAT practice is worth your time. Also, be sure to research the materials you plan on using. Not all software recreates the GMAT as well as others.

12. How are the essays scored?

They are scored between 1.0 and 6.0 in half point increments. This score does not factor into your GMAT total score. While your AWA score is reported to schools, it is not as important as your GMAT total score. However, schools may compare your AWA writings to your application essays to ensure that your essays are reflective of your own writing abilities.

13. If I take the GMAT a number of times, will my scores vary?

There is a degree of error with the GMAT as with all standardized tests. The standard error of difference for the total GMAT score is about 41, according to Graduate Management Admissions Council. This means that the difference between the total GMAT scores actually received by two test takers could be within 41 points above or below the difference between the test takers' scores of true ability. The standard error of difference for the Verbal scaled score is 3.9, and for the Quantitative scaled score 4.3.

Research also indicates that a test-taker will most likely earn a Total score within about 30 points of a score of true ability. Your Verbal and Quantitative scaled scores are probably within about 2.9 points of your true scores.

It is important that not everyone's experience will be in accord with this purely mathematical understanding of the test. There are situations where a person can score dramatically lower (probably not higher) than what their score should be. For example if you are very sick, or your beloved dog dies, you could score significantly lower than 29 points below your previous score.

GMAT scores are a relatively reliable predictor of academic performance in the first year of a business school program. Studies have shown that the median correlation between GMAT scores and first-year grades was 0.41 (perfect correlation is 1.0). Comparing 0.41 to the median correlation of 0.28 between undergraduate grade point average and first-year grades, you can conclude that business schools do have a strong incentive to see good GMAT scores from applicants. Because there is a degree of error, we all should exercise caution in comparing two scores. That is why other parts of your business school application are also as crucial to your admission.

14. How does the CAT work, as in, how does the test adapt to the individual user?

The multiple choice sections of the test are able to gauge how you respond to questions of various difficulties, and to give you questions based on that information.

In each question type, for example, sentence correction you will get a question of average difficulty first. If you answer this question correctly, your next questions will be more difficult. The more questions you answer correctly, the more difficult they will become. If you answer incorrectly to the first, average-difficulty question, your second question will be less difficult. This has two consequences: The first is that as you take the test, you will get fewer questions that are very easy for you, and fewer that are too hard. Also, no other test taker will see the same question combinations. In those ways, the CAT is able to better gauge your performance.

An ideal item pool for a computer adaptive test would be one with a large number of highly discriminating items well distributed at each ability level. The information functions for these items would appear as a series of peaked distributions across all levels of ability estimate.

15. Should I respond incorrectly to the harder questions in the beginning on purpose, so that the questions I get later I can answer easily?

This may seem like a valid strategy, but you should not do it. You are not only scored on the number questions you answer correctly, but also on the level of difficulty of those questions. So, answering 10 hard

questions correctly counts for more points than 10 easier questions.

16. Are there other factors involved in the scoring?

Yes there is one more. If you can answer a number of questions correctly that cover a range of question *types*, your score will improve. For example, if you can answer questions on algebra, geometry, and statistics in both data sufficiency and problem solving correctly, you will score higher than doing so in only one of those areas. This third factor however is less important in determining your score.

The logic behind having the third factor is simple: A business manager must be well rounded. He or she cannot just be an expert mathematician or a powerful analytical thinker. It is more important that the test taker prove that he or she are able to do both at a high level.

17. In this system, do you advise against random guessing?

Yes, we do advise against random guessing, for the most part. The only benefit of a random guess is that it will save you time on a question that leaves you particularly stumped. However with the odds at 1 in 5, the benefit is not worth the risk. Since the odds are that you will get it wrong, your next question or questions will be easier, and you will be losing the opportunity to answer difficult questions, thus losing the opportunity to max out your score. Also, the GMAT only gives the test taker 37 Quantitative and 41 Verbal questions, 10 of which on each are un-scored. It follows that you need to do you best on each question because you don't have that many chances.

The problem with this advice is that there is a penalty for leaving a section blank. This penalty is worse than an incorrect answer. That being said, if you cannot figure it out, you can probably narrow it down to 3 or 4 options. Make educated guesses, not random ones, UNLESS you are scrambling for time at the end of the exam. That is the only situation in which completely random guessing would be suitable.

It is even more important to not guess in the beginning of the test. These first few questions more or less determine the difficulty level of the rest of the test. It will be nearly impossible to "convince" the CAT to change the difficulty level in the middle. If you guess incorrectly on one or more of the first few questions, you will be stuck in a low-difficulty testing situation, and will not be able to make up points later. It is unlikely that after establishing a low difficulty level, the CAT will randomly introduce more difficult questions.

18. Why are there un-scored questions?

There are constantly new questions being added to the GMAT. A new question will be in the bank of un-scored questions so the testers can determine the difficulty level, before making it an officially scored question. You will not be able to tell the difference between a scored and an un-scored question, we do not recommend that you try.

19. Are there any strategies unique to the CAT?

Yes. You should be careful and take your time in the beginning of the multiple-choice sections, and whenever you see the first question of a given type. Firstly, the beginning of the sections determines, to a large extent, the level of difficulty in the remaining questions. Secondly, since you want to answer the widest variety of questions as possible correctly, when you get to a new question type it is important that

you do your best to get it right; meaning read carefully and double check your answers. Please note that with any kind of testing, it is important to take your time, but you need to budget your time such that you can complete the whole test without feeling rushed. Also, while it is always good to double check, it can be problematic to change your answers from what you thought first. Multiple-choice tests tend to rely on intuition, and changing your answer could result in a *wrong* answer.

20. How does the CAT produce a reliable measurement with so few questions?

An adaptive test, whether computer or paper based, yields a wider range of scores than a non-adaptive test. A wider range of scores can serve as a more accurate way of comparing test takers. That CAT yields a wider range of scores because the easier questions count for less. We know that someone who answers 10 easy questions correctly will get fewer points than a person who answers 10 hard questions correctly. It follows that the first person may have less cognitive ability, and in turn have a much lower score.

21. Even if the GMAT CAT produces a more accurate measurement in terms of scores, it still seems unfair that there are so few questions.

Yes, we feel that it is possibly unfair but so do other test takers and even GMAT administrators! The same problem goes for the SAT, the GRE and other major standardized test. There are two ways to explain the length of the GMAT: When designing and administering a standardized test, the test needs to be fair and accurate while also being efficient and inexpensive to administer. The increasing number of test takers validates this concern. While it is true that more questions equals a more accurate measurement, a long test introduces fatigue and failing endurance into the set of factors that help determine a test takers score. Fatigue and endurance are not necessarily components that the GMAT is intended to measure.

22. Can you discuss the CAT algorithm?

Yes. The algorithm is an iterative process.

1. Given the currently estimated ability level of a test-taker at a given point (usually the first question is started at mid ability level), the program evaluates all the items that have not yet been administered to determine which will be the best one to administer next.

In this approach, the “best” next item would be the one that provides the most information about the test-taker. Typically difficulty level of an item is the most important parameter. However, in order to be able to clearly discriminate the ability among individual test-takers, the test-maker also incorporates other factors in the item selection process on a particular exam. They include different question types (data sufficiency vs. problem solving; critical reasoning vs. sentence correction), content (e.g., algebra, ratios, combinatorics, topic and inference questions for the same reading comprehension passage, etc.), and exposure (i.e., the number of times the question has been seen by other test takers already during a given period).

Demonstrating to the CAT that you can handle a variety of substantive areas in all question formats will increase your GMAT score. The greater the variance among your ability in different tested topics, the lower your score. In other words, the GMAT rewards generalists—test takers who demonstrate a broad spectrum of competencies. This approach does make sense as in a business world, being well-rounded and knowledgeable can be positively correlated to a manager’s decision-making skills and managerial ability in general.

2. The "best" next item is administered and the test-taker answers
3. The program computes a new ability estimate based on the answers to all of the previous items
4. Steps 1 through 3 are repeated until a stopping criterion is satisfied.

23. What are some differences between the CAT and the old style test?

The Cat is a more efficient test taking process. The old paper and pencil test had 61 questions in each section, all of varying difficulty. The test taker would, in affect, waste time answer questions that were too easy for them, and stumbling around difficult questions that they would probably get mostly wrong. The CAT is shorter, and avoids questions that are either gimmees, or much too hard.

Manhattan Review Course FAQ

Please visit:

<http://www.manhattanreview.com/courses/gmat-preparation/faq.html>