

Chapter 1

All About the MAT

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If you're thinking about going to graduate school, you've probably realized by now that schools don't let you in based on your good looks and charm. Most programs require a standardized test score so the admissions committee can see how you compare to other applicants. If you're reading this book, the program you're interested in probably accepts a MAT score for that very purpose.

Or you may be studying for the MAT because your employer, or prospective employer, wants to see how well you can do on it. You may be applying for financial aid that requires a MAT score. You may even be trying to get into Mensa or another high-IQ club that accepts a high MAT score as a criterion for admission. Whatever your reason for taking the MAT, it's a good idea to learn as much as you can about the test and prepare for it intelligently before taking it.

What Is the MAT?

MAT stands for Miller Analogies Test. Its format is simple. You have 60 minutes to answer 120 questions, all of which are analogies. In each question, part of the analogy is missing. Your job is to pick the correct choice out of four possibilities to complete the analogy. Sounds simple, right? Well, it's a bit more complicated than that. Much like *Trivial Pursuit*, the MAT tests your knowledge of a wide variety of subjects, ranging from astronomy to math, to vocabulary, to zoology — and everything in between.

When you realize just how many subjects the MAT potentially covers, you may be a little discouraged — after all, you're not a walking Wikipedia, nor are you Alex Trebek or the host of any other brainiac TV trivia program (at least, probably not). But don't worry — the MAT doesn't require you to know *everything* about the subjects it covers. If you have some time to prepare, you can significantly increase your knowledge of the subjects you're less familiar with. And you'll be able to learn how to intelligently attack analogy questions.



If you're reading this book, you're off to a great start in preparing to take the MAT. Another good reference for the MAT is the test publisher's website, milleranalogies.com, which has current information about the test. The site has a Candidate Information Booklet that contains much of the info you'll need. Browse as much of the site as you can: As G. I. Joe said, knowing is half the battle. Perhaps most important, the site has a link for purchasing three full-length computer-based MAT practice tests. These tests can (and should) become part of your preparation plan.

What the exam looks like

As I mentioned, the MAT has 120 questions, all of which are analogies. For the purposes of the MAT, an analogy is a relationship between two pairs of terms. For example:

Big is to small as fast is to slow.

The relationship between the terms **big** and **small** is similar to the relationship between the terms **fast** and **slow** — they're both opposites. Several types of relationships between analogy terms show up on the MAT. We discuss some of the more common types in Chapter 2.

If, like most people, you're taking the MAT on a computer, you'll see only one question at a time. Each question looks like the following example:

FISH : SCALES :: BEAR : _____

- (A) feathers
- (B) fur
- (C) spines
- (D) wool

This analogy includes four terms: FISH, SCALES, BEAR, and then one of the multiple choices (a. feathers, b. fur, c. spines, d. wool).

The part of the question enclosed in parentheses (a. feathers, b. fur, c. spines, d. wool) can appear as any of the four terms. For example, the question can be rewritten as follows:

_____ : BEAR :: FISH : SCALES

- (A) feathers
- (B) fur
- (C) spines
- (D) wool

Your job is to pick the choice that makes the first and second terms have the same relationship to the third and fourth terms, or to make the first and third terms have the same relationship as the second and fourth terms. If you pick Choice B, **fur**, as the missing term, then a logical analogy is formed:

A **fish** is covered with **scales**, like a **bear** is covered with **fur**.

As the MAT progresses, the questions get harder and the topics vary, but you can be sure that analogies will be the only question type you'll encounter.

Cultural literacy

The MAT does more than test your ability to solve analogies. It also tests you on your general knowledge of a variety of topics, similar to the GRE or other standardized test but in a different question format. So preparing for the MAT also means brushing up on your knowledge in the following areas, to name just a few:

- ✓ Anthropology
- ✓ Art
- ✓ Biology
- ✓ Chemistry
- ✓ History
- ✓ Math
- ✓ Music
- ✓ Philosophy
- ✓ Vocabulary

When you realize just how many subjects the MAT can cover, it can seem like you may have to take every course in a college catalog or watch the last 20 years of *Jeopardy!* Of course, you probably can't do either of those things. What you can do is study the lists of terms we've included in this book. If you aren't that knowledgeable about a certain subject, learning some important concepts, terms, and figures can mean getting a few more questions right on the real test. Don't stress out — you don't need to learn everything to do well on the MAT. Learn as much as you can in the time you have, and it will make a difference in your score.

Practice makes perfect

Getting a *perfect* score on the MAT is nearly impossible because of the breadth of the subjects it covers, but in general, the more you practice, the better you'll do. In addition to learning as much as you can about the test's content, we recommend you take every practice test in this book. Also, it's worth purchasing the three practice tests that the MAT's publishers make available. You can buy a year's worth of access to each official practice test on milleranalogies.com. Even though access to each test costs \$30 at the time of this book's publication, it's worthwhile since those tests are the closest you can get to the actual MAT exam you'll be faced with on your test date.

Make sure that, no matter how you practice, you come up with a workable, memorable method of approaching analogy questions. In Chapter 3, we outline a step-by-step method designed to maximize your score and help you tackle even tough questions.

Who invented the MAT, anyway?

The MAT is brought to you by the good folks at Pearson Education, Inc. It's been around for more than 60 years as a test of reasoning ability. Analogies have been a part of standardized tests for even longer than that.

What does the MAT measure?

The MAT is marketed as a measure of two main things: your cultural literacy and your reasoning ability. In other words, it claims to measure how much you know about subjects like art, history, science, and math, as well as your ability to make connections between concepts from those subjects. It's also marketed as a good predictor of how you'll do in graduate school.

The MAT's way of measuring your ability is to see how many questions you answer correctly on the test and then compare you to other test takers — in particular, by comparing you to people with your intended major. This data gives graduate programs, or an employer, concrete data with which to help with decisions.



Keep in mind that the MAT isn't an IQ test, nor is it a predictor of your future success. It's certainly true that some people who do well in graduate school scored poorly on the MAT, and some people who fare poorly in graduate school aced the MAT. At the end of the day, your MAT score is an important part of your graduate school application — but it's not the only part.

The MAT vs. the GRE

The graduate program you're interested in may accept a GRE score instead of a MAT score. The GRE test is much different from the MAT. Here's a comparison of the two exams' major differences.

<i>MAT</i>	<i>GRE</i>
60 minutes long	About 4 hours long
1 question type: analogies	2 types of vocabulary questions, several reading comprehension question types, and several types of math questions
Tests cultural knowledge	Doesn't test cultural knowledge
No essays	2 types of essays

If you have a strong vocabulary, you're a skilled reader and writer, and/or you're good at tricky math questions, you may do better on the GRE. On the other hand, if you have a solid foundation of cultural knowledge and you're not excited about doing a lot of math or writing essays, the MAT may be better for you. Another factor that may be important is cost: Taking the GRE is about twice as expensive as taking the MAT. And, don't forget about how long it takes to complete each test. The MAT is a lightweight at one hour, and the GRE tips the scales at more than four hours.

Ultimately, you can take a computer practice test of each and see both which test feels more comfortable and how your scores stack up. You can purchase three official MAT computer tests on www.MillerAnalogies.com. You can download two real computer GRE tests from ets.org, the GRE publisher's website. (As of this book's publication date, the downloadable GRE tests are PC compatible only. Sorry, Mac users.)

Registering for the MAT

When you've made up your mind to take the MAT, you need to find a place to actually take the test. More than 600 CTCs, or Controlled Testing Centers, administer the MAT throughout the U.S. and Canada, and even overseas. Go to milleranalogies.com to find a link (called something like "Find a MAT Testing Center") that provides a list of testing centers by location. If you live more than 100 miles from the nearest center, you can request an alternate site (if you pay an additional fee).

Each one of these Controlled Testing Centers makes up its own schedule for administering the MAT — and has its own fee. As of the publication date of this book, fees average around \$90.



Before you sign up for a certain test date, ask the center how long, on average, it takes schools to receive a test-taker's official score report. Then find out your desired graduate school program's admission deadlines so that you can make sure you allow enough time for the official results to be sent to the school. The center where you sign up can tell you more about the dates the MAT is offered, how to register, and what's required when you get to the center. But in general, you have to provide a government-issued photo ID and a supplemental form of identification on test day.

Find out whether you're allowed to bring a watch (highly recommended) and whether you have to supply your own pencils if you're taking the paper version of the MAT.

Paper vs. computer

Each testing center determines whether to offer a computer-based MAT or a pencil-and-paper MAT. The questions on each test are the same — the only difference is the kind of test administration you prefer. Each version allows the test taker to skip back and forth between questions. If you like using computers, you'll probably prefer the computer-based version — especially because you won't have to erase any changed answers. A downside to a computer-based test may be that it takes longer to skip between questions, since you have to click with your mouse each time (as opposed to just looking at the question you'd like to skip to on a paper test).

Score reporting

When you take the MAT, you have the opportunity to send your score to as many as three schools — for free. If you want score reports sent later, each report costs about \$25. In addition to seeing your most recent MAT score, these schools will see every one of your

MAT scores within the past five years. If you have a score that's more than five years old, that one isn't reported to schools. The personal score report you receive in the mail isn't an official transcript; schools receive an official transcript of your scores directly from the test publisher.

Accommodations

Most testing centers can offer special accommodations: Braille, audio editions, and so on. Be sure to notify the testing center that you need a certain accommodation several weeks before your test date, and fill out the necessary paperwork from milleranalogies.com.

How the MAT Is Scored

Although the MAT has 120 questions, only 100 of them count. The MAT's publisher uses the other 20 questions for future exams. Since the difficulty level of the MAT's questions increases as the test progresses, the publisher needs to know where to put the difficult questions and where to put the easy ones. Seeing how many people get each experimental question right helps. If most people get a certain experimental question right, that question will appear closer to the beginning of a future MAT. If most people got the question wrong, it will appear closer to the end of a future exam.

The MAT's publisher uses this method so that a MAT given this year has a similar difficulty level to a MAT given last year. It's also a more accurate way of determining which questions are truly hard and which are easy, instead of just having a committee of people vote on each question's difficulty level. So just think, you're helping pave the way for future MAT test takers. Doesn't that make you feel warm and fuzzy? Also keep in mind that you won't know which questions are experimental, so answer them all as if they're real.



One of the most important points to remember about the MAT is that questions left blank are automatically counted as wrong. Unlike some standardized tests, there's no penalty for guessing. Make extra sure you at least answer every question, even if it's a random guess because you're running out of time. It's all too easy to get wrapped up in a question as time is running out and then forget to answer a few questions. Don't let this happen to you! Always save a couple minutes at the end of the test so that you have time to answer every question, even if you have to guess randomly on some of them. Also remember that later questions aren't worth more; every correct answer improves your score by the same amount.

If you really think you failed the MAT after taking it, or if something goes horribly, tragically wrong for you that day, you can exercise what is known as the "no-score" option. This cancels your score — no one will even find out that you took the test. However, you won't get your money back and you won't be able to find out how you did on the test. So use this option only as a last resort.

The After (MAT)h

If you're taking a computer-based MAT, you'll receive a preliminary score right on the screen after you complete the exam. You'll receive your official MAT score in the mail about two weeks after you take the exam. This report will show you the following:

- ✓ Your scaled score, which ranges from 200 to 600 (400 is average)
- ✓ Your percentile rank for your desired major
- ✓ Your percentile rank among all test takers
- ✓ The codes for the schools your scores will be sent to

Note that schools that receive your MAT score will also receive *all* your MAT scores within the last five years. Schools usually consider your highest score, but the fact that they'll see all your scores may motivate you to postpone the test until you're fully confident.

You'll also receive a "Re-Test Admission Ticket" along with your score report, and you'll need to bring the ticket if you want to retake the test. This ticket allows the testing center to make sure they don't give you the exact same MAT you took previously (wouldn't that be nice?) if you decide that your first attempt wasn't good enough. **Be warned:** If you retake the test but don't bring your ticket, your new score will be cancelled.

Remember, if you are taking the MAT for graduate school admission, that it is just one factor graduate schools consider when deciding whether to offer you a place in a program. However, we won't pretend that it's not an important factor. Don't let preparing for the MAT consume your life, but don't underestimate it, either. Intelligent preparation will make you comfortable with the test's format, build your analogy-solving skills, and help you improve the skills you need to get an impressive score.

