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1.0 What Is the GMAT® Exam?

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The Graduate Management Admission Test® (GMAT®) is a standardized, three-part test delivered in English. The test was designed to help admissions officers evaluate how suitable individual applicants are for their graduate business and management programs. It measures basic verbal, mathematical, and analytical writing skills that a test-taker has developed over a long period of time through education and work.

The GMAT exam does not measure a person's knowledge of specific fields of study. Graduate business and management programs enroll people from many different undergraduate and work backgrounds, so rather than test your mastery of any particular subject area, the GMAT exam will assess your acquired skills. Your GMAT score will give admissions officers a statistically reliable measure of how well you are likely to perform academically in the core curriculum of a graduate business program.

Of course, there are many other qualifications that can help people succeed in business school and in their careers—for instance, job experience, leadership ability, motivation, and interpersonal skills. The GMAT exam does not gauge these qualities. That is why your GMAT score is intended to be used as one standard admissions criterion among other, more subjective, criteria, such as admissions essays and interviews.

1.1 Why Take the GMAT® Exam?

GMAT scores are used by admissions officers in over 6,000 graduate business and management programs worldwide. Schools that require prospective students to submit GMAT scores in the application process are generally interested in admitting the best-qualified applicants for their programs, which means that you may find a more beneficial learning environment at schools that require GMAT scores as part of your application.

Because the GMAT exam gauges skills that are important to successful study of business and management at the graduate level, your scores will give you a good indication of how prepared you are to succeed academically in a graduate management program; how well you do on the test may also help you choose the business schools to which you apply. Furthermore, the percentile table you receive with your scores will tell you how your performance on the test compares to the performance of other test takers, giving you one way to gauge your competition for admission to business school.

Schools consider many different aspects of an application before making an admissions decision, so even if you score well on the GMAT exam, you should contact the schools that interest you to learn more about them and to ask about how they use GMAT scores and other admissions criteria (such as your undergraduate grades, essays, and letters of recommendation) to evaluate candidates for admission. School admissions offices, web sites, and materials published by schools are the key sources of information when you are doing research about where you might want to go to business school.

Myth -vs- FACT

M – If I don't score in the 90th percentile, I won't get into any school I choose.

F – Very few people get very high scores.

Fewer than 50 of the more than 200,000 people taking the GMAT exam each year get a perfect score of 800. Thus, while you may be exceptionally capable, the odds are against your achieving a perfect score. Also, the GMAT exam is just one piece of your application packet. Admissions officers use GMAT scores in conjunction with undergraduate records, application essays, interviews, letters of recommendation, and other information when deciding whom to accept into their programs.

For more information on the GMAT, test preparation materials, exam registration, how to use and send your GMAT scores to schools, and applying to business school, visit mba.com.

1.2 GMAT® Exam Format

The GMAT exam consists of four separately timed sections (see the table on the next page). The test starts with one Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA) essay prompt, and you will have 30 minutes to type your essay on a computer keyboard. The AWA is followed immediately by the 30-minute Integrated Reasoning section, which features 12 question prompts in four different question formats. The test ends with two 75-minute, multiple-choice sections: the Quantitative section, with 37 questions, and the Verbal section, with 41.

The GMAT is a computer-adaptive test (CAT), which means that in the multiple-choice sections of the test, the computer constantly gauges how well you are doing on the test and presents you with questions that are appropriate to your ability level. These questions are drawn from a huge pool of possible test questions. So, although we talk about the GMAT as one test, the GMAT exam you take may be completely different from the test of the person sitting next to you.

Here's how it works. At the start of each GMAT multiple-choice section (Verbal and Quantitative), you will be presented with a question of moderate difficulty. The computer uses your response to that first question to determine which question to present next. If you respond correctly, the test usually will give you questions of increasing difficulty. If you respond incorrectly, the next question you see usually will be easier than the one you answered incorrectly. As you continue to respond to the questions presented, the computer will narrow your score to the number that best characterizes your ability. When you complete each section, the computer will have an accurate assessment of your ability.

Because each question is presented on the basis of your answers to all previous questions, you must answer each question as it appears. You may not skip, return to, or change your responses to previous questions. Random guessing can significantly lower your scores. If you do not know the answer to a question, you should try to eliminate as many choices as possible, then select the answer you think is best. If you answer a question incorrectly by mistake—or correctly by lucky guess—your answers to subsequent questions will lead you back to questions that are at the appropriate level of difficulty for you.

Each multiple-choice question used in the GMAT exam has been thoroughly reviewed by professional test developers. New multiple-choice questions are tested each time the test is administered. Answers to trial questions are not counted in the scoring of your test, but the trial questions are not identified and could appear anywhere in the test. Therefore, you should try to do your best on every question.

Myth -vs- **FACT**

M – Getting an easier question means I answered the last one wrong.

F – Getting an easier question does not necessarily mean you got the previous question wrong.

To ensure that everyone receives the same content, the test selects a specific number of questions of each type. The test may call for your next question to be a relatively hard problem-solving item involving arithmetic operations. But, if there are no more relatively difficult problem-solving items involving arithmetic, you might be given an easier item.

Most people are not skilled at estimating item difficulty, so don't worry when taking the test or waste valuable time trying to determine the difficulty of the questions you are answering.

The test includes the types of questions found in this guide, but the format and presentation of the questions are different on the computer. When you take the test:

- Only one question at a time is presented on the computer screen.
- The answer choices for the multiple-choice questions will be preceded by circles, rather than by letters.
- Different question types appear in random order in the multiple-choice sections of the test.
- You must select your answer using the computer.
- You must choose an answer and confirm your choice before moving on to the next question.
- You may not go back to change answers to previous questions.

Format of the GMAT® Exam		
	Questions	Timing
Analytical Writing Analysis of an Argument	1	30 min.
Integrated Reasoning Multi-Source Reasoning Table Analysis Graphics Interpretation Two-Part Analysis	12	30 min.
Optional break		
Quantitative Problem Solving Data Sufficiency	37	75 min.
Optional break		
Verbal Reading Comprehension Critical Reasoning Sentence Correction	41	75 min.
Total Time:		210 min.

1.3 What Is the Content of the Exam Like?

It is important to recognize that the GMAT exam evaluates skills and abilities developed over a relatively long period of time. Although the sections contain questions that are basically verbal and mathematical, the complete test provides one method of measuring overall ability.

Keep in mind that although the questions in this guide are arranged by question type and ordered from easy to difficult, the test is organized differently. When you take the test, you may see different types of questions in any order.

1.4 Quantitative Section

The GMAT Quantitative section measures your ability to reason quantitatively, solve quantitative problems, and interpret graphic data.

Two types of multiple-choice questions are used in the Quantitative section:

- Problem Solving
- Data Sufficiency

Problem solving and data sufficiency questions are intermingled throughout the Quantitative section. Both types of questions require basic knowledge of:

- Arithmetic
- Elementary algebra
- Commonly known concepts of geometry

To review the basic mathematical concepts that will be tested in the GMAT Quantitative questions and for test-taking tips specific to the question types in the Quantitative section of the GMAT exam, sample questions, and answer explanations, see *The Official Guide for GMAT® Review*, 2017 Edition, or *The Official Guide for GMAT® Quantitative Review*, 2017 Edition; both are available for purchase at mba.com.

1.5 Verbal Section

The GMAT Verbal section measures your ability to read and comprehend written material, to reason and evaluate arguments, and to correct written material to conform to standard written English. Because the Verbal section includes reading sections from several different content areas, you may be generally familiar with some of the material; however, neither the reading passages nor the questions assume detailed knowledge of the topics discussed.

Three types of multiple-choice questions are used in the Verbal section:

- Reading Comprehension
- Critical Reasoning
- Sentence Correction

These question types are intermingled throughout the Verbal section.

For test-taking tips specific to each question type in the Verbal section, sample questions, and answer explanations, see chapters 3 through 5.

1.6 What Computer Skills Will I Need?

You only need minimal computer skills to take the GMAT Computer-Adaptive Test (CAT). You will be required to type your essays on the computer keyboard using standard word-processing keystrokes. In the multiple-choice sections, you will select your responses using either your mouse or the keyboard.

To learn more about the specific skills required to take the GMAT CAT, download the free test-preparation software available at mba.com.

1.7 What Are the Test Centers Like?

The GMAT exam is administered at a test center providing the quiet and privacy of individual computer workstations. You will have the opportunity to take two optional breaks—one after completing the Integrated Reasoning section and another between the Quantitative and Verbal sections. An erasable notepad will be provided for your use during the test.

1.8 How Are Scores Calculated?

Your GMAT scores are determined by:

- The number of questions you answer
- Whether you answer correctly or incorrectly
- The level of difficulty and other statistical characteristics of each question

Your Verbal, Quantitative, and Total GMAT scores are determined by a complex mathematical procedure that takes into account the difficulty of the questions that were presented to you and how you answered them. When you answer the easier questions correctly, you get a chance to answer harder questions—making it possible to earn a higher score. After you have completed all the questions on the test—or when your time is up—the computer will calculate your scores. Your scores on the Verbal and Quantitative sections are combined to produce your Total score. If you have not responded to all the questions in a section (37 Quantitative questions or 41 Verbal questions), your score is adjusted, using the proportion of questions answered.

Your GMAT score includes a percentile ranking that compares your skill level with other test takers from the past three years. The percentile rank of your score shows the percentage of tests taken with scores lower than your score. Every July, percentile ranking tables are updated. Visit mba.com/percentilerankings to view the most recent percentile rankings tables.

1.9 Analytical Writing Assessment Scores

The Analytical Writing Assessment consists of one writing task: Analysis of an Argument. Your essay is scored on a scale of 0 to 6, with 6 being the highest score and 0 the lowest. A score of zero is given for responses that are off-topic, are in a foreign language, merely attempt to copy the topic, consist only of keystroke characters, or are blank.

The readers who evaluate the responses are college and university faculty members from various subject matter areas, including management education. These readers read holistically—that is, they respond to the overall quality of your critical thinking and writing. (For details on how readers are qualified, visit mba.com.) In addition, responses may be scored by an automated scoring program designed to reflect the judgment of expert readers.

Each response is given two independent ratings. If the ratings differ by more than a point, a third reader adjudicates. (Because of ongoing training and monitoring, discrepant ratings are rare.)

Your Analytical Writing Assessment and Integrated Reasoning scores are computed and reported separately from the other sections of the test and have no effect on your Verbal, Quantitative, or Total scores. The schools that you have designated to receive your scores may receive your responses to the Analytical Writing Assessment with your score report. Your own copy of your score report will not include copies of your responses.

1.10 Test Development Process

The GMAT exam is developed by experts who use standardized procedures to ensure high-quality, widely appropriate test material. All questions are subjected to independent reviews and are revised or discarded as necessary. Multiple-choice questions are tested during GMAT test administrations. Analytical Writing Assessment tasks are tested on mba.com registrants and then assessed for their fairness and reliability. For more information on test development, see mba.com.

To register for the GMAT exam go to mba.com