

Block **1**

GMAT Overview in 20 Minutes

The GMAT doesn't have to be a daunting ordeal. A little knowledge and preparation can help calm your nerves, and that's exactly what this block delivers. Here you discover your test-taking options and how to register for the GMAT, get a brief overview of what's on the test, obtain step-by-step guidance on how to prepare for it, and gain insight into how the test is scored and how your scores will be used.

Signing Up for the GMAT

Which MBA programs to apply to isn't the only decision you have to make. After you've figured out where you want to go, you have to make plans for the GMAT. You need to choose which format works best for you and determine the ideal time to take the test.

Deciding where to take the test

You can take the GMAT online at home or at a designated testing center, the choice is yours. Regardless of where you take it, the GMAT e-content and interface are the same. In this section, we present the key factors to consider when deciding whether to take the GMAT at home or at a designated testing center.

Taking the GMAT online at home

You may choose to take the GMAT online exam in the comfort of your home on your own computer. Before you take the exam, you download the special secure software and set up your test space. A human proctor virtually oversees the online exam throughout the testing

experience, and you're responsible for meeting the stringent specifications for setting up the testing environment. Here are the advantages of taking the online exam:

- » **The online format is available even more often than the options provided at testing centers.** You can take the online GMAT 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and you can register 24 hours before an open slot.
- » **The testing environment is familiar.** As long as you set up the testing environment following the required guidelines, you can test from any location.
- » **You don't have to worry about traffic or other commuting issues.** It's hard to get lost when you're commuting from your bedroom to your home office.

Taking the GMAT at a testing center

You can also opt to take the GMAT at a testing center. Although testing at home may seem more desirable, you may choose the testing center for the following reasons:

- » **The testing center provides all supplies.** You don't have to worry about a reliable Internet connection or purchasing your own whiteboard for notes.
- » **You aren't responsible for securing your environment.** To maintain the integrity of the home testing experience, you must follow stringent guidelines. Testing at a center guarantees that you won't be penalized for an interruption by a family member or fail to pass a room scan.

Registering for the GMAT

The first step in the GMAT registration process is scheduling an appointment, but don't leave it to the last minute. Depending on the time of year, appointment times can fill up quickly. You may have to wait at least a month for an open time. To determine what's available, you can go to the official GMAT website at www.mba.com. From there, you can choose an online test appointment or testing location and find out what dates and times are available. When you find a date and time you like, you can register online or over the phone.



TIP

When choosing a test date and time, consider your schedule and the time of day you generally feel most mentally alert. The GMAT is no longer just an 8 a.m. Saturday morning option. You can take the test any day of the week except Sunday, and, depending on the test center, you may be able to start at a variety of times. Many centers offer 8 a.m. testing times, but some have other options, even 6:30 at night.

Knowing What's on the Test

The GMAT is a standardized test, which means lots of questions to answer in a short period, no way to cram for them or memorize answers, and very little chance of scoring 100 percent. The skills tested on the GMAT are those that leading business schools have decided are important for MBA students: data insights, quantitative reasoning, and verbal reasoning.

Checking out how the GMAT is structured

The following table presents a summary of the structure of the GMAT by Sections:

Section	Data Insights	Quantitative	Verbal
Time	45 minutes	45 minutes	45 minutes
Number of questions	20	21	23
Question type(s)	Data sufficiency Table analysis Two-part analysis Graphics interpretation Multi-source reasoning	Basic arithmetic Algebra Statistics and probability Problem solving	Reading comprehension Critical reasoning
Avg. time/question	2 minutes, 15 seconds	2 minutes, 9 seconds	1 minute, 57 seconds



TIP

The GMAT Select Section Order option allows you to complete those three sections in any order you choose.

Knowing what you're being tested for

Standardized tests are supposed to test your academic potential, not your knowledge of specific subjects. The GMAT focuses on the areas that admissions committees have found to be relevant to MBA programs. The sections that follow are an introduction to the three GMAT sections. Most of this book explains exactly how to approach each one.

Leveraging your data literacy skills

The GMAT Data Insights section has 20 questions consisting of two question types:

- » **Data sufficiency questions** present you with two statements and ask you to decide whether the problem can be solved by using the information provided by the first statement only, the second statement only, both statements, or neither statement.
- » **Integrated reasoning (IR)** questions test your ability to read and evaluate charts, graphs, and other forms of presented data. You'll examine a variety of data representation and answer questions based on the information. IR questions come in the following three types:
 - Table analysis and graphics interpretation questions require you to glean insights from data presented in a graphic format (table or chart).
 - The two-part analysis questions present a problem and related data, provided in two columns, and instruct you to choose a piece of information from each column to solve the problem.
 - Multi-source reasoning questions provide you with a bunch of information from which you have to decide what piece or pieces of data actually give you what you need to know to solve the problem.

Quizzing your quantitative skills

The GMAT Quantitative section consists of 21 questions to assess your proficiency in arithmetic, algebra, data interpretation, and probability and statistics. This section is comparable to other standardized math assessments in terms of its format and question types. To succeed on this section, you will need to employ your problem-solving skills to answer multiple-choice questions, choosing the best response from five possible options.

Validating your verbal skills

The GMAT Verbal section consists of 23 multiple-choice questions of two general types:

- » **Reading comprehension** requires you to answer questions about written passages on a number of different subjects.
- » **Critical reasoning questions** require you to analyze logical arguments and understand how to strengthen or weaken those arguments.

Navigating the computerized test

All three sections of the computerized GMAT are available only in *computer-adaptive test* (CAT) format. The first question of each section is of medium difficulty. If you consistently answer questions correctly, the computer will challenge you with more difficult questions. Conversely, if you choose enough wrong answers, the computer presents you with easier questions. Your score isn't based solely on how many questions you answer correctly or incorrectly, but also on the average difficulty level of the questions you answer correctly. Theoretically, you could miss several questions and still get a very high score, so long as the questions you missed were among the most challenging.

At the conclusion of each section, you are assigned a level of ability, which is used to score your performance. This method of evaluation is designed to ensure that test takers are assessed based on their individual capabilities.

Answering in an orderly fashion

Because each question is based on your answers to previous questions — you can't skip questions, nor can you return to a previous question to revise your answer, although you do have an opportunity to review and edit your responses after completing the section. You can edit only three answers, time permitting.

Observing time limits

The time limit for each section is 45 minutes, and this has two important implications for your test strategy: First, your score is based on the number of questions you answer correctly, so if you run out of time before answering all the questions, you miss those points. Second, you won't have a chance to go back to review any questions.



REMEMBER

Technically challenged, take heart! You need only minimal computer skills to take the computerized GMAT. All you need to know is how to select answers by using either the mouse or the keyboard.

Preparing for the GMAT

During the weeks or months leading up to your scheduled GMAT exam, you'd be wise to prepare for it so you're ready to answer even the trickiest questions. To use your remaining time most efficiently, take the following steps to prepare:

1. Set a target score.

Research the programs you're applying to and find out the average score of accepted students. Generally, a score between 650 and 690 is good and anything over 700 is great. 800 is perfect, not to mention rare.

2. Take a practice test to establish your baseline score and identify your weakest areas.

You can take the abridged practice GMAT in Block 5 of this book or another practice test. The GMAT Official Starter Kit + Practice Exams 1 & 2 software is available for free download at www.mba.com/exam-prep/gmat-official-starter-kit-practice-exams-1-and-2-free. This kit provides two full-length official practice exams — a total of 90 IR, quantitative reasoning, and verbal practice questions that adapt in difficulty as you improve. Better yet, it provides a computer version of the test that simulates the real test-taking experience.



TIP

Use one of the tests in the GMAT Official Starter Kit as your diagnostic. Work through Blocks 2, 3, and 4 to review your weakest subjects. Then take the second official GMAT practice test to gauge your improvement.

3. Develop a detailed study plan and put it in writing.

Include dates and times of your study sessions and practice exams and how long you're willing to commit to each study session. The blocks in this book facilitate your ability to plan your study sessions. For example, if you have five weeks between now and your scheduled GMAT, you can plan to complete Blocks 2–5 over the course of the first three weeks, take a second practice exam the fourth week, and review during week 5.

4. Identify fundamentals in math and verbal subject areas that you struggle with.

Although the GMAT isn't like a typical math, reading, or English test, it requires foundational knowledge and skills in all those subject areas. To answer certain math questions, for example, you'll need to know how to solve for variables or calculate the area of basic shapes. To answer Verbal questions, you'll need to understand concepts such as thesis and tone and grammar rules such as subject-verb agreement and parallel structure.

5. Review math and verbal subject areas you struggle with.

Consult the relevant blocks in this book to review the areas you have the most trouble with on the test. If you feel that you need additional information and practice, consult books or websites for more guidance and sample questions/problems.



REMEMBER

Whether you're planning to take the GMAT online at home or at a testing center, a couple days before your scheduled test, confirm your appointment date, time, and time zone in your email confirmation.

If you're taking the exam at a testing center, take the following steps the day before your scheduled exam:

1. Review the Exam Policies.

GMAT policies are extensive and cover everything from eligibility and identification requirements to minimum system requirements for taking the online version at home. Visit www.mba.com/exams/gmat-exam/register/exam-policies.

- 2. Plan your route to the test center location and account for travel time and potential delays.**

Take a test run to the facility, so you're familiar with the route and the location of the specific building and test room. Know how you're getting to the test center (for example, driving your car, getting a ride, or using public transportation or a rideshare service).
- 3. Plan to arrive 30 minutes early, so you have plenty of time to find the room and check in.**
- 4. Bring a valid photo ID (with your photo and your name that exactly matches the name you used to register for the exam).**
- 5. Get a good night's sleep before the exam, so you'll wake up feeling well rested.**

If you're planning to take the GMAT online at home, take the following steps a week before your scheduled exam time, so you have time to procure the hardware and whiteboard you'll need:

- 1. Review the system requirements to ensure that your computer (desktop or laptop) meets the specifications of the GMAT software. (Tablets and other mobile devices are prohibited.)**

Visit www.mba.com/exams/gmat-exam/plan-for-exam-day/taking-the-exam-delivered-online for details. This page includes a link for running a system check to ensure that your computer has a functioning webcam and microphone and that your operating system, browser, and Internet connection meet the minimum requirements.

- 2. If you plan to use a whiteboard during the exam, obtain one that meets the GMAT requirements.**

The board can be no larger than 12 x 20 inches (30 x 50 centimeters). You can have up to two dry-erase markers and one dry-erase eraser.

- 3. Clear your desk and workspace of any prohibited items.**

Basically, you can have your computer, whiteboard (with markers and eraser), water in a clear container, a box of tissues and any medical devices or supplies you need. Mobile phones, headphones, earbuds, watches, wallets, purses, bags, books, notepads, and just about anything else is prohibited, so the sparser your surroundings, the better. For additional details, visit www.mba.com/exams/gmat-exam/plan-for-exam-day/taking-the-exam-delivered-online.

Prior to the exam, the person supervising your exam session will inspect your testing area via your webcam to identify and have you remove any prohibited items.



REMEMBER

- 4. Get a good night's sleep before the exam, so you'll wake up feeling well rested.**

Getting Up to Speed on GMAT Scoring

Okay, you know the GMAT's format and how many questions it has and so on. But what about what's really important to you, the crucial final score?

Interpreting your score

Each section of the GMAT is scored on a scale from 60 to 90, in 1-point increments, and contributes equally to the GMAT total score. The GMAT total score is on a scale of 205 to 805, in 10-point

increments. So, the maximum total score you can earn on the GMAT is 805. However, your section scores are determined by more than just the number of questions you get right. Scoring is based on three factors:

- » **The difficulty of the questions you answer:** The questions become more difficult as you continue to answer correctly, so getting tough questions means you're doing well on the test.
- » **The number of questions you answer:** If you don't get to all the questions in a section, your score is reduced by the proportion of questions you didn't answer. So, if you failed to answer 5 of the 21 Quantitative questions, for example, your raw score would be reduced by about 24 percent: After converting the raw score to the scaled measure, this loss could significantly decrease your percentile rank.
- » **The number of questions you answer correctly:** In addition to scoring based on how difficult the questions are, the GMAT score also reflects your ability to answer those questions correctly.

Deciding whether to retake the test

If you're not satisfied with your GMAT score, retaking the test may be advantageous, especially as most selective MBA programs prioritize high scores. Fortunately, the GMAT administrators let you take the test up to five times during a 12-month period and up to eight total times over the course of your life. Having multiple opportunities to take the test increases your chances of improving your score, thereby enhancing your prospect of getting accepted into your desired program.

