

GMAT™ Official Guide 2026–2027

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1.0 What Is the GMAT™ Exam?

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The Graduate Management Admission Test™ (GMAT™) is used in admissions decisions by more than 7,700 graduate management programs at over 2,400 business schools worldwide. Unlike undergraduate grades and courses, whose meanings vary across regions and institutions, your GMAT scores are a standardized, statistically valid, and reliable measure for both you and these schools to predict your future performance and success in core courses of graduate-level management programs.

Hundreds of studies across hundreds of schools have demonstrated the validity of GMAT scores as being an accurate indicator of business school success. Together, these studies have shown that performance on the GMAT predicts success in business school even better than undergraduate grades.

The exam tests you on skills expected by management faculty and admissions professionals for incoming graduate students. These skills include problem-solving, data analysis, and critical thinking, which all require complex judgments and are tested in the three sections of the GMAT exam: Quantitative Reasoning, Data Insights, and Verbal Reasoning. These three sections feature content relevant to today's business challenges and opportunities, ensuring you are prepared for graduate business school and beyond.

Your GMAT Official Score is meant to be an objective, numeric measure of your ability and potential for success. Business schools will use it as part of their holistic admissions processes, which may also consider recommendation letters, essays, interviews, work experiences, and other signs of social and emotional intelligence, as well as leadership. Even if your program does not require a GMAT score, you can stand out from the crowd by doing well on the exam to show you are serious about business school and have the skills to succeed.

The exam is always delivered in English on a computer, either online (such as at home) or at a test center. The exam tests your ability to apply foundational knowledge in the following areas: algebra and arithmetic, analyzing and interpreting data, reading and comprehending written material, and reasoning and evaluating arguments.

Myth -vs- **FACT**

M – My GMAT score does not predict my success in business school.

F – The GMAT exam measures your critical thinking skills, which you will need in business school and your career.

1.2 Why Take the GMAT™ Exam?

Taking the exam helps you stand out as an applicant and shows you're ready for and committed to a graduate management education. Schools use GMAT scores in choosing the most qualified applicants. They know an applicant who has taken the exam is serious about earning a graduate business degree, and they know the exam scores reliably predict how well applicants can do in graduate business programs.

No matter how you do on the exam, you should contact schools that interest you to learn more about them, and to ask how they use GMAT scores and other criteria in admissions decisions. School admissions offices, websites, and publications are key sources of information when you are researching business schools. Note that schools' published GMAT scores are *averages* of the scores of their admitted students, not minimum scores needed for admission.

While you might aim to get a high or perfect score, such a score is not required to get into top business school programs around the world. You should try your best to achieve a competitive score that aligns with the ranges provided by the schools of your choice. Admissions officers will use GMAT scores as one factor in admissions decisions along with undergraduate records, application essays, interviews, letters of recommendation, and other information.

To learn more about the exam, test preparation materials, registration, and how to use your GMAT Official Score in applying to business schools, please visit www.mba.com/gmat.

Myth -vs- **FACT**

M – If I don't get a high GMAT score, I won't get into my top-choice schools.

F – Schools use your GMAT score as a part of their holistic evaluation process.

1.3 GMAT™ Exam Format

The GMAT exam has three separately timed sections (see the table on the following page). The Quantitative Reasoning section and the Verbal Reasoning section consist of only multiple-choice questions. The Data Insights section includes multiple-choice questions along with other kinds of graphical and data analysis questions. Before you start the exam, you can choose any order in which you will take the three sections. For example, you can choose to start with Verbal Reasoning, then do Quantitative Reasoning, and end with Data Insights. Or you can choose to do Data Insights first, followed by Verbal Reasoning, and then Quantitative Reasoning. You can take one optional ten-minute break after either the first or second section.

All three GMAT sections are computer adaptive. This means the test chooses from a large bank of questions to adjust itself to your ability level, so you will not get many questions that are too hard or too easy for you. The first question will be of medium difficulty. As you answer each question, the computer uses your answer, along with your responses to earlier questions, to choose the next question with the right level of difficulty. Because the computer uses your answers to choose your next question, you cannot skip questions.

Computer adaptive tests get harder as you answer more questions correctly. But getting a question that seems easier than the last one doesn't always mean your last answer was wrong. At the end of each section, you can review any question(s) and edit up to three answers within the allotted section time.

Though each test taker gets different questions, the mix of question types is always consistent. Your score depends on the difficulty and statistical traits of the questions you answer, as well as on which of

your answers are correct. If you don't know how to answer a question, try to rule out as many wrong answer choices as possible. Then pick the answer choice you think is best. By adapting to each test taker, the exam can accurately and efficiently gauge a full range of skill levels, from very high to very low. Many factors may make the questions easier or harder, so don't waste time worrying if some questions seem easy.

To make sure every test taker gets equivalent content, the test gives specific numbers of questions of each type. While the test covers the same kinds of questions for everyone, some questions may seem harder or easier for you because you may be stronger in some questions than in others.

At the end of the exam, you will see your unofficial score displayed on the screen. A few days after your exam, you will receive your Official Score Report, which includes detailed performance insights. Once you receive your report, you can select to send your Official Score to schools of your choice.

Format of the GMAT™ Exam		
	Questions	Timing
Quantitative Reasoning Problem-Solving	21	45 min.
Data Insights Data Sufficiency Multi-Source Reasoning Table Analysis Graphics Interpretation Two-Part Analysis	20	45 min.
Verbal Reasoning Reading Comprehension Critical Reasoning	23	45 min.
Total Time		135 min.

A ten-minute optional break can be taken after the first or the second section.

Each section of the GMAT exam contains the following features:

- **Bookmarking:** Mark any questions you are unsure about so you can easily get back to them after you complete the section. Bookmarking can make the Question Review & Edit process more efficient.
- **Question Review & Edit:** Review as many questions as you would like (whether or not they're bookmarked) and change or edit up to three answers per section, within the section's allotted time.

Myth -vs- **FACT**

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

F – Many factors may make the questions easier or harder, so don't waste time worrying if some questions seem easy.

1.4 What Is the Testing Experience Like?

You can take the exam either online (such as at home) or at a test center—whichever you prefer. You may feel more comfortable at home with the online delivery format. Or you may prefer the uninterrupted, structured environment of a test center. It is your choice. Both options have the same content, structure, features, optional ten-minute break, scores, and score scales.

At the Test Center: Over 700 test centers worldwide administer the GMAT exam under standardized conditions. Each test center has proctored testing rooms with individual computer workstations that allow you to take the exam in a peaceful, quiet setting, with some privacy. To learn more about exam day, visit www.mba.com/gmat.

Online: In available regions, the GMAT exam is delivered online and is proctored remotely, so you can take it in the comfort of your home or office. You will need a quiet workspace with a desktop or laptop computer that meets minimum system requirements, a webcam, microphone, and a reliable internet connection. For more information about taking the exam online, visit www.mba.com/gmat.

Whether you're taking the GMAT exam online or at a test center, there are several accommodations available. To learn more about available accommodations for the exam, visit www.mba.com/accommodations.

1.5 What Is the Exam Content Like?

The GMAT exam measures several types of analytical reasoning skills. The Quantitative Reasoning section gives you basic arithmetic and algebra problems. The questions present you with a mix of word or pure math problems. The Data Insights section asks you to use diverse reasoning skills to solve real-world problems involving data. It also asks you to interpret and combine data from different sources and in different formats to reach conclusions. The Verbal Reasoning section tests your ability to read and comprehend written material and to reason through and evaluate arguments.

The test questions are contextualized in various subject areas, but each question provides you everything you need to know to answer it correctly. In other words, you do not need detailed outside knowledge of the subject areas.

1.6 Quantitative Reasoning Section

The GMAT Quantitative Reasoning section measures how well you solve math problems and interpret graphs. All questions in this section require solving problems using basic arithmetic, algebra, or both. Some are practical word problems, while others are pure math. Answering these questions correctly

relies on logic, analytical skills, and basic knowledge of algebra and arithmetic skills. You **cannot** use a calculator while working on this section.

Chapter 3 of this book, “Math Review,” reviews the basic math you need to know to answer questions in the Quantitative Reasoning section. Chapter 4, “Quantitative Reasoning,” includes test-taking tips, as well as practice questions and answer explanations both in this book and in the Online Question Bank.

1.7 Data Insights Section

The GMAT Data Insights section tests the skills that today’s business managers need to analyze intricate data sources and solve complex real-world problems. It tests how well you can assess multiple sources and types of information—graphic, numeric, and verbal—as they relate to one another. It also tests how well you can analyze a practical math and non-math problem to determine if enough data is given to solve it.

The Data Insights section has five types of questions:

- **Data Sufficiency:** Measures your ability to analyze a quantitative or logical problem, recognize which data is relevant, and determine at what point there is enough data to solve the problem. Questions can be presented in mathematical or non-mathematical real-world contexts.
- **Multi-Source Reasoning:** Measures your ability to examine data from several sources including text passages, tables, or graphics, and analyze each source of data carefully to answer multiple questions. Some questions will require you to recognize discrepancies among different sources of data, while others will ask you to draw inferences, or require you to determine whether data is relevant.
- **Table Analysis:** Measures your ability to sort and analyze a table of data, similar to a spreadsheet, in order to determine what information is relevant or meets certain conditions.
- **Graphics Interpretation:** Measures your ability to interpret the information presented in a graph or other graphical image (scatter plot, x/y graph, bar chart, pie chart, or statistical curve distribution) to discern relationships and make inferences.
- **Two-Part Analysis:** Measures your ability to solve complex problems. They could be quantitative, verbal, or a combination of both. The format is intentionally versatile to cover a wide range of content. These questions measure your ability to evaluate trade-offs, solve simultaneous equations, and discern relationships between two entities.

Data Insights questions may require math, data analysis, verbal reasoning, or all three. You will have to interpret graphs and sort data tables to answer some questions, but you won’t need advanced statistics or spreadsheet skills. For both online and test center exam delivery, you will have access to an on-screen calculator with basic functions. It should be noted that this calculator is provided for the Data Insights section **only**, and **not** for the Quantitative Reasoning section.

Chapter 5 of this book, “Data Insights Review,” reviews the basic data analysis skills you need to answer questions in the Data Insights section. Chapter 6, “Data Insights,” explains the Data Insights question types, provides practice questions and answer explanations both in this book and in the Online Question Bank, and offers test-taking tips.

Because the Data Insights questions need to be rendered online, certain question types, such as Multi-Source Reasoning, Table Analysis, and Graphics Interpretation, are only available in the **Online Question Bank** that is included as a part of this guide.

You can access the **Online Question Bank** by going to www.mba.com/my-account and using your unique Access Code on the inside front cover of this book.

1.8 Verbal Reasoning Section

The GMAT Verbal Reasoning section measures how well you reason, understand what you read, and evaluate arguments. The Verbal Reasoning section includes passages about many topics. Verbal Reasoning questions do not assume you have any background knowledge on the topic. Therefore, all of the information you need to answer the questions correctly is contained in the passages.

The Verbal Reasoning section has two types of questions:

- **Reading Comprehension:** These questions measure your ability to read and understand written statements, understand logical relationships between significant points, and draw inferences and conclusions. More specifically, you'll be asked to identify main and supporting ideas, draw inferences from information presented in the passage, apply knowledge learned from the passage to unrelated contexts, and recognize the logical structures and style of the passage.
- **Critical Reasoning:** These questions measure your ability to make valid arguments, evaluate different lines of reasoning, and formulate or assess a plan of action. Critical Reasoning questions are based on a short reading passage, usually fewer than 100 words. Typically, the short text is followed by a question that asks you which of the five answer options strengthens or weakens the argument, tells why the argument is flawed, or strongly supports or damages the argument. You will not need specialized knowledge of the subject matter to answer the questions.

Chapter 7 of this book, “Verbal Review,” reviews the basic verbal analysis and reasoning skills you need for the Verbal Reasoning section. Chapter 8, “Verbal Reasoning,” explains the Verbal Reasoning question subtypes. It also provides test-taking tips for each subtype, as well as practice questions and answer explanations both in this book and in the Online Question Bank.

1.9 How Are Scores Calculated?

The Quantitative Reasoning, Data Insights, and Verbal Reasoning sections are each scored on a scale from 60 to 90, in 1-point increments. You will get four scores: a Section Score each for Quantitative Reasoning, Data Insights, and Verbal Reasoning, along with a Total Score based on your three section scores. The Total Score ranges from 205 to 805. Your scores depend on:

- Which questions you answered correctly.
- How many questions you answered.
- Each question's difficulty and other statistical characteristics.

There is a penalty for not completing each section of the exam. If you do not finish in the allotted time, your score will be penalized, reflecting the number of unanswered questions. Your GMAT exam score will be the best reflection of your performance when all questions are answered within the time limit.

Immediately after completing the exam, your unofficial scores and percentile for the Quantitative Reasoning, Data Insights, and Verbal Reasoning, as well as your Total Score, are displayed on-screen. You are **not** allowed to record, save, screenshot, or print your unofficial score. You will receive an email notification when your Official Score Report is available in your **www.mba.com** account.

The following table summarizes the different types of scores and their scale properties.

Score Type	Scale	Increment
Quantitative Reasoning	60–90	1
Data Insights	60–90	1
Verbal Reasoning	60–90	1
Total	205–805	10

Your GMAT Official Scores are valid for five years from your exam date. Your Total GMAT Score includes a percentile ranking, which shows the percentage of tests taken with scores lower than your score.

In addition to reviewing your Total and Section Scores, it's important to pay attention to your percentile ranking. Percentile rankings indicate what percentage of test takers you performed better than. For example, a percentile ranking of 75% means that you performed better than 75% of other test takers, and 25% of test takers performed better than you. Percentile ranks are calculated using scores from the most recent five years. Visit **www.mba.com/scores** to view the most recent predicted percentile rankings tables.

To better understand the exam experience and view score reports before exam day, we recommend taking at least one GMAT official practice exam to simulate the test-taking experience and gauge your potential score. The more practice exams you take, the better prepared you will be on your actual testing day. Visit **www.mba.com/examprep** to learn more about the practice exams offered by GMAC.

To register for the GMAT™ exam, go to www.mba.com/register