



## GRE Preparation

The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) was designed to measure and compare your qualifications for graduate school to others who are applying, independent of your background or what college you attended. Those who make decisions about your admissibility into a particular graduate program use your score in combination with your undergraduate GPA to determine how competitive you are with other candidates who apply. The test questions are designed to test the skills and knowledge you acquired over a long period of time. The test is given as a Computer Based Test.

This allows Educational Testing Service to administer the test year-round in a variety of locations. Computer Based Testing also allows you to immediately see the objective parts of your score or to cancel the administration as though you never took the test. You cannot select both options in any given administration. You can immediately request that your scores be sent to four schools of your choice, and additional score reports, may be ordered at a later date for a fee. Your official score will be mailed to you and the institutions you selected in 10-15 days.

Beginning in August of 2011, a test known as the GRE revised General Test (aka the new GRE) will be the only option for GRE test takers.

### Time and Content of the new GRE

While the total time allotted for test administration is up to four hours, the timed portion of the test lasts a little over three hours. The four hours allows for a tutorial on the computer, answering some research questions, breaks and score reporting.

### Exam Delivery

#### Section adaptive exam

Your performance on the first section of each type (math and verbal) determines the difficulty of the second section of the same type.

The new GRE old format of the test is as follows:

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Sections/Timing</b> | 2 ~ 30-minute essay sections<br>2 ~ 30-minute verbal sections<br>2 ~ 35-minute math sections |
| <b>Scoring</b>         | 1 Essay score (0-6)<br>1 Verbal score (130-170)<br>1 Math score (130-170)                    |

### Format Changes

The first and most noticeable change in the exam is in the overall format. The new GRE will be given in a *section adaptive* format. In this format, once you have completed the Analytical Writing section, you will get either a verbal or quantitative section. You will then have a set amount of time (30 or 35 minutes depending on the type of section) to complete that section. Unlike the old GRE, the new test will allow you to skip questions, meaning you can preview all questions in a given section before beginning to answer them (it's probably not a good idea to actually do this, but you could if you wanted to). You will also have the ability to mark and review your answers before submitting them so long as you stay within the section time limit. This new format provides you with a chance to work on a section freely, meaning you are less likely to get stuck

wasting time on one particular question. However, the test requires more questions to draw an accurate picture of your ability level, meaning the new GRE is a longer test.

Your performance on the first verbal section will determine the difficulty level of your second verbal section, and your performance on your first quantitative section will determine the difficulty level of your second quantitative section.

Another big format change is the shift from an entirely multiple-choice test to one with varying question types. Whereas the old GRE consists only of multiple-choice questions that have a single correct answer, the new GRE will be a mix of multiple-choice questions with one correct answer, multiple-choice questions with more than one correct answer, text-interactive questions (in which you must highlight a relevant section of a reading comprehension passage), and numeric entry questions (quantitative questions that require you to type your numeric answer into a text box).

The final change in the format of the new GRE is in the scoring. The verbal and quantitative sections of the exam will shift from the old scale of 200-800 in ten-point increments, to a new scale of 130-170 in one-point increments. The Analytical Writing section will continue to be scored on a scale of 0-6 in half-point increments.

## New Question Formats in Detail

### Verbal

You will see the biggest changes to the GRE in the verbal section. The old GRE features four types of questions: Reading Comprehension, Sentence Completion, Antonyms, and Analogies. The new GRE will completely do away with Antonyms and Analogies, so there will be no more questions that test vocabulary out of context. These will be replaced by two new question types: Sentence Equivalence and Text Completion. For Sentence Equivalence questions, the test taker must select two words that could each fill the same single blank in a sentence such that the sentence would have the same meaning using either selection. Text Completion questions may include up to three blanks. Unlike old Sentence Completion questions in which answers were selected in set pairs, the new Text Completion problems ask you to select a word for each blank independently. There will be no partial credit given for these questions.

Reading Comprehension questions will go largely unchanged, with a few exceptions. On some questions, you will be asked to highlight a portion of the passage rather than selecting an answer from a list. Also, on some RC questions, you will be asked to choose all correct answers from a list of three choices. Anywhere from one to three choices could be correct.

### Math

The math section will not change much in terms of the content covered on the exam. However, there will be a few new question formats. The first change is the addition of Numeric Entry questions. These questions will ask you to calculate a numerical answer and enter it into a box (instead of selecting an answer from a list of choices). The second is the addition of multiple choice questions with more than one correct answer. These questions will ask you to select all correct answers. As with the verbal questions with more than one correct answer, there is no partial credit given on these questions.

Finally, the new GRE will include an on-screen calculator. This change will NOT necessarily make the test easier. This likely signals a shift away from computation based questions toward questions that cannot be solved with a calculator alone.

## Question Type Breakdown

|               | Old GRE   | New GRE   |
|---------------|---|---|
| <b>Verbal</b> | I. Reading Comprehension<br>- Standard Multiple Choice<br><br>II. Anonyms<br>- Standard Multiple Choice | I. Reading Comprehension<br>- Select One<br>- Select One or More<br>- Select in Passage<br><br>II. Sentence Equivalence |

|                     |   |  |
|---------------------|---|--|
|                     | III. Analogies<br>- Standard Multiple Choice<br><br>IV. Sentence Completion<br>- Standard Multiple Choice                   | - Select Two<br><br>III. Text Completion<br>- One Blank<br>- Two Blanks<br>- Three Blanks  |
| <b>Quantitative</b> | I. Quantitative Comparison<br>- 4-choice Multiple Choice<br><br>II. Multiple Choice Questions<br>- Standard Multiple Choice | I. Quantitative Comparison<br>- 4-choice Multiple Choice<br><br>II. Multiple Choice Questions<br>- Select One<br><br>III. Multiple Choice Questions<br>- Select One or More<br><br>IV. Numerical Entry Questions |

### General Test Taking Strategies

The most important strategy for doing well on the GRE is to prepare. You may do this by practicing using the free GRE Power Prep software, buying a book with CD-Rom and studying, or by taking a class. Download a copy of the software at

<http://www.ets.org/portal/site/ets/menuitem.1488512ecfd5b8849a77b13bc3921509/?vgnextoid=e1752d3631df4010VgnVCM10000022f95190RCRD&vgnnextchannel=f72e46f1674f4010VgnVCM10000022f95190RCRD>

Familiarity with the format and content will build your confidence. Practice answering all the questions in each section in order, as though you were at a real test administration. Pace yourself, as you have one minute for every verbal question and one minute fifteen seconds for every quantitative question. Make sure you keep moving; however, when time becomes an issue, use the process of elimination and guess. Your goal is to balance accuracy with speed, so as to finish each section. Last but not least, stay focused.

Be especially careful in the first portion of every section. Successful answers to the earliest questions will lead to higher scores. You can write on the scratch paper provided. Use the process of elimination to cross out wrong answers; do scratch work. Easy questions usually precede hard ones. Double check your work and answer before you click on the screen bubble. You cannot skip any question and you cannot go back after you've answered a question.

Answer every question, making educated guesses if you have to. Just try to eliminate one or more choices before guessing. Don't spend too much time on any one question. You should spend only seconds on the easiest questions, and hesitate to spend more than 1-2 minutes on even the hardest ones. Be sure to answer the question asked and not the question you recall from a practice test. Know the Question

### Day of Test Details

Check-in at the Computer Based Testing site 30 minutes before your test administration is scheduled to begin. You will sign-in and fill out a confidentiality statement. Bring a photo-ID to check-in. If you are a non-citizen of the country where you are testing, you must show a passport as your photo-ID. You will be assigned a computer station and your session will be recorded on video tape. Testing rooms vary in temperature, depending on the time of year, building conditions and number of computer stations, so dress comfortably in layers. Testing administrators will provide you with pencils and scratch paper. You are not allowed to bring any food or beverage into the test room itself but you can bring such items, and they will be stored until break time. You'll be given a ten-minute break after the Analytical Writing section and one minute breaks between the other sections. A clock at the top of your computer monitor will prompt you when five minutes remain in each section. You may not write down any formulas or notes until the actual test begins. A proctor will watch to ensure you follow ETS guidelines. Earmuffs (for blocking sound) and headphones are available if you are sensitive to peripheral noise from other test takers or the ventilation system in your testing room.

## **Conclusion**

Taking the GRE is just one step that may lead you to graduate school and open doors to the career of your dreams. Career Services can help you with other key steps, such as writing a graduate school admission essay, preparing for a graduate school-related interview, or selecting the school that best matches you and your professional goals. Stop by to ask more detailed questions about the process.

## **GRE Subject Tests**

Some graduate programs recommend that you ALSO take a GRE Subject Test. Even if the program doesn't recommend it, taking a GRE Subject Test allows you to show admissions officers how much you know about your particular area of study. There are 8 different GRE Subject Tests, each one measuring specific skills in one of the following disciplines: science, math, computers and English.

## **Useful Books About the GRE and/or Graduate School**

Preparing to Take the GRE General Test  
Graduate Admissions Essays  
Petersons Graduate Programs in the U.S.  
GRE Subject Test Manuals  
U.S. News Report - Best Graduate Schools

## **Online reference to help you study:**

<http://www.gre.org>

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Additional guides available at: <http://careerservices.colorado.edu/students/MajorCareerInfo.aspx>