What one person did to score 790 on the GMAT
Saw this posted on Testmagic.com. It's very a very good account of what resources and big picture progress he made as he prepared.

Disclaimer:I'm sorry if this post is a bit convoluted or too long, I just figured that since many people (especially those new to the site) use these debriefings as a guide, I would put a lot of the great resources from this site together in one, easy to find spot for them and for everyone else on this site. However, I have tried to make the transition between each section clear (by using boldface), so that if you want to only find my advice on particular sections then it will be easier.

Disclaimer #2: Before I get started on prep strategy, I want to note that I took the LSAT before I took the GMAT, and thus while it may seem like I have not prepped much for CR and RC, it is because I felt that prepping for the LSAT was more than sufficient prep for these two sections. "But I'm not taking the LSAT, so how does this advice help me" you ask? Read on...

Starting Out:
Originally, I had planned to start prepping for my GMAT as soon as I finished the LSAT, which was in early February (in fact I think it was February 12th, exactly 3 months before my GMAT). However, I was exhausted after prepping for the LSAT, and so I decided to wait until I was finished with Winter quarter finals in mid March.

I had already been frequenting this site for quite some time at that point, and so I knew that starting off with PowerPrep was a great way to know your standing. I took PP1 and the results were:

710 (q47, v40)

Upon looking at the questions I missed, I realized that in quantitative, as is the case for most people, I was mostly hurt by stupid mistakes. However, I had finished that section 15 minutes early, and I knew that if I properly distributed that extra time then I would be in much better shape. Nonetheless, I realized that I was more rusty than I would like in some areas, and so I decided that quant would be the first area I would work on.In verbal on PP1, I did not get any CR or RC questions wrong. Yup, that's right, I dropped to a v40 SOLELY based on SC. Needless to say, I realized SC was a big weakness of mine that I needed to work on. However, I think that SC is probably the easiest section to improve your skills in, as a large percentage of it is just memorizing the necessary rules.

My General View on Prep:
I liken prepping for these tests to an athlete preparing for the season. Rather than sort of work each muscle each day, they specifically target one muscle at a time, spending one day doing bicep only workouts, another doing chest workouts, etc. In the same way, I believe that you should target each specific aspect of the test, concentrating on it and really getting in the mode for it, then moving onto the next type of question. However, when you move on, still do 10 questions a day for each previous section you've done. So, for example, if you start off with quant, then two weeks later you focus on SC while doing 10 quant questions a day. Then, when you move on to CR, you do 10 quant questions and 10 SC questions a day, while still keeping your main focus on CR. Note that using this method, you will be spending progressively more time as you get closer to the test, which is probably a good idea anyways.

I think that your knowledge of each subject will become much more solid in this way than it will in the wishy washy way of just doing a little bit of everything all the time. Then, once you start getting closer to the test (i.e. perhaps two weeks before), and after you've targeted each specific section and feel you're sufficiently prepared, then just work on all of them together, the same way an athlete starts doing more general stuff rather than working out once he/she gets closer to game day.

How to Decide Which Aspects to Target First and For How Long:
I believe that, in general, 2 weeks on a specific subject will give you an absolutely solid grasp on it. However, if there are some sections that you feel need more work than others (i.e. if you're strong in CR but weak in SC), then you could spend only one week on the one you're strong at and 3 weeks on your weakness.In my opinion, it is best to put quant first for two reasons:

1) this site has a lot of great quant questions/resources, and it's easier to utilize them if you're caught up and fresh in quant,

2) Quant is the easiest to keep fresh by doing a few problems a day, so if you put it in the beginning then you still probably won't forget most of it by the time the test comes around.

As far as what to put second, I believe that it is best to put your biggest weakness in verbal second. Why? Because the topics you put near the beginning will be the ones you get the most practice on, since you'll spend 2 weeks targeting them and then will also do 10 questions a day in these topics from then on.

In other words, here's the prep plan:
I would recommend to most people:
Quant (2 weeks)
Biggest Verbal Weakness (2-3 weeks)
2nd Biggest Verbal Weakness (2 weeks)
Verbal Strength (1-2 weeks)
All Types of Questions, General Prep, and Practice Tests (2 weeks)

For a total of about 10 weeks.

My own prep was a little different from my recommended, namely in that I didn't prep for CR and RC and thus only targeted two types of questions (quant and SC). However, as I said before, I basically had already targeted CR and RC by preparing for the LSAT.My prep went as follows (spread over 8 weeks, with two weeks of non-prepping because I had midterms):Quant (2 weeks)SC (2 weeks)General Prep (2 weeks)

While I certainly spent a good amount of time preparing for this test, I didn't do some amazing number of hours (i.e. Ursula's 200 hours). I did about an hour a day on weekdays (not including time spent on TestMagic, which I found to be a great way to procrastinate!), and around 5 hours a day on weekends for a total of about 90 hours. However, if you include time spent on CR and RC for the LSAT, which was about 60 hours, then it totals to 150 hours. I really would have liked to spent more time preparing, but I knew it was impossible, since the University of Chicago is famous for its enjoyment in torturing undergraduates with a ridiculous amount of work (the school's nickname is "where fun comes to die", or "the level of hell daunte forgot").

Note: Any time I found some helpful information on this site, I copy and pasted it into a word document. In general I think this is a good way to keep track of all of the important stuff you see on the site. And, because I did that, now I have a ton of stuff to share with you guys (see resources for each section).

How I Targeted Each Section

Quant:
General Strategy:
My prep for quant consisted of three parts (in this order):

1) Going through Kaplan's Math Workbook, underlining all of the important concepts, making notecards of these concepts, and doing the practice problems to strengthen these concepts.

2) Scouring TestMagic for all of the great resources that I knew it had on quant, and making notecards of the concepts in these resources. (resources listed below).

3) Doing tons of quant problems from my many question sources (sources listed below).

I think the most important thing in quant is knowing how to set up an equation from a word problem. If you can do this, you will get 95% of your quant questions right, guaranteed. How can you get good at this? Through practice. See my list of sources of quant questions below to see where you can get practice at this.

Probably my biggest weakness starting out in quant was number theory, as I believe is the case for many people. My advice on cracking this type of question would be to do several of these problems, because it's really just the kind of thing that you get better at with practice. There are several great number theory problems on this site, as well as in the sources I'll list below. As you do more of them, you just get a knack for knowing how to go at it.

Here's how I went at number theory problems: First, I would try to use mathematical logic to lead me to the correct answer. Most of the time, this would work, and I would pretty much know what kind of numbers are relevant to the question (i.e. negative fractions, positive intergers). I would then think what would occur with these types of numbers, and this would lead to the answer.

However, if I was unable to crack it using mathematical logic, I would simply try to plug numbers in, using Alakshma's strategy of plugging in (-2, -1, -0.5, 0, 0.5, 1, 2).

Generally, I would come to the answer sooner or later.

For permutations and combinations, I initially spent way too much time on them (hence the plethora of probability and comb/perm links below) but then realized that I need to take everyone's advice and stop paying attention to them so much. All of you would be well advised to do the same! There's much more important things to spend your time on.

For Statistics, as I said, I just took a class on it last quarter and thus didn't prepare much for it. However, even had I not taken the class, I still feel that most statistics on the GMAT is fairly easy, perhaps because they know that most people don't really know the concepts in statistics. So just learn the basic concepts (i.e. what a median is, the fact that standard deviation measures spread, how it is calculated--although I doubt you'll actually have to calculate it, it is helpful to understand how to get it when trying to analyze what it means).

Sources of Quant Questions:
1) Kaplan's Math Workbook did every problem in the book
2) Kaplan 2005 (with the CD) did every problem in the book, as well as all the Problem Solving and Data Sufficiency Tests on the CD. However, I didn't do any of the CAT full length tests, which I'll discuss in practice tests.
3) Official Guide only did the questions categorized as hard bin by this document.
4) I bought Kaplan 800 but never ended up having enough time to get to it. However, I've heard great things about it, and would thus recommend getting it.
5) TestMagic--Quant Section. Like Grey said, if you search all topics started by Nuthan in the DS section, you'll get hundreds of DS questions to practice on. Also, searching posts made by Lego, Grey, and Shaq can be a great way to find the best problems on this site, and it will also show you how the math geniuses approach problems. But while we're on the subject of math geniuses--don't be intimidated if they come up with brilliant solutions you never would have thought of. Many of the quant questions on this site are much more difficult than what you'll see on the real GMAT.

Quant Resources (note--I probably shouldn't even include all the comb/perm stuff on here b/c I know you guys will spend too much time on it then , but I figure if you're going to waste your time on it, might as well have an easier time finding the stuff):

Must Have:
Great Math Review
Arithmetic and Geometric Progressions
Overview of Combinations
Overview of Permutations
HCF and LCM Stuff -- The beginning is simple, but further down there are some helpful tricks I didn't know about
Venn Diagram -- check out my post second from the bottom on the first page. Has everything you need to know about 3 category sets.Note: For two category sets, it's simply P(AuB) = P(A) + P(B) - P(AnB)
Everything You Need For Prob/Comb/Perm
Compilation Of Prob/Comb/Perm Questions
Compilation of Tough Problems

Also Helpful:
How to do well in quant
Basic info on standard deviation (math reference in Kaplan tells you how to calculate it)
Info on Probability
More Permutations
More Combinations
More Prob/Comb/Perm
Angles and Arcs

Sentence CorrectionGeneral Strategy:
As I said when discussing my PP1 results, I only got around 65% of these right on my first test. By the time of the test, I averaged 1 wrong out of every 100 questions. Here's how I improved so much:First thing I did was buy Manhattan GMAT's Sentence Correction Guide. While it's true that, as everyone says, OG is the bible for practicing verbal, I would say that this book is the bible for learning the rules of SC. This book is so comprehensive it's amazing. I cannot emphasize enough what an important role this book played in achieving my score. Also, the friend I told you about who got a 750 without studying did actually spend a couple of days studying. The only thing he studied was this book, and as a result his verbal score jumped from 40 on PP1 to 44 on the actual GMAT.

Here's how to utilize the book:
First, go through Manhattan GMAT's SC guide, highlighting every important point (which, in my opinion, is almost every point in the book) and then making notecards out of those points. Memorize them every chance you get (I did this whenever I rode the bus). At the end of each chapter, Manhattan GMAT lists a set of problems in OG which test the concept you learned about in that chapter. Doing the problem set knowing what type of error you're looking for will make you adept at noticing that problem.

Then, once you have gone through every chapter in Manhattan GMAT, and done the corresponding problems in OG, do OG again, starting from problem number 1. This time, you won't know what type of error you'll be looking for, but you'll have become so good by doing the problem sets that you will start noticing that you've gotten MUCH better at SC.

Regarding doing the problems in OG more than once: I remember someone saying in their debriefing that as long as you're not memorizing the answers in OG, you can do the problems over again, and you can also take PP and have it be an accurate predictor. I couldn't agree more. Read the explanations, but don't memorize them, so that you can practice as much as possible on real GMAT questions.One final note: I never ended up using the 1000 SC doc because I

found that repeating OG was enough, but if you feel like you're running out of questions, there are several great questions in 1000 SC as well as in the FREE ETS paper tests that I'll provide links to later.

Resources for SC:
Spidey's SC Notes
1000 SC's
Grammar Reference Didn't use it myself, but looks pretty comprehensive for anyone who wants to check it out.

Critical Reasoning

General Strategy:
The way I approached CR problems was much different than the way Kaplan (and most books) recommend it. Unlike most people, I don't read the question stem before I read the stimulus. Rather, I read the stimulus first, trying to get a thorough understanding so that regardless of what the question is, I'm ready to attack it. I really think that this helped build my logic skills, so that I was better prepared for any kind of CR question than I would have been if I had a more question-type-specific approach. I feel that had I tried to read the question first, I'd be so focused on trying to find the assumption/implication that I wouldn't understand the argument as a whole intricately enough to analyze the answer choices appropriately. One reason I trusted this approach is that TestMasters, the company known for being the best LSAT prep course, recommends it (and the LSAT is 1/2 CR, so you figure an LSAT prep course would be particularly privy to how to approach the problems). However, each person should take the approach they feel is best!

Recommended Prep Approach:
I think that the reason I was so good at CR is because, as I said above, the LSAT is half CR, and its CR questions are MUCH more difficult than those on the GMAT. They are extremely nitpicky, which helps you become very logical and helps you spot the errors in GMAT arguments in a second. Thus, I would recommend buying the "Next Ten Actual, Official LSAT PrepTests", which contains 500 LSAT CR questions. If you don't want to buy the book but still want a few LSAT questions, download this free LSAT test. Do those when you're targeting your CR skills, and then start doing the CR in the OG once you start getting closer to the test (just to get used to the GMAT's style of CR).As far as boldfaced questions, I didn't specifically prep for them, although the LSAT contains some questions which are similar (argument structure questions). Like others have said, process of elimination is pretty helpful in the boldface.For those of you still looking for boldface questions, I heard that akasans has posted a lot of boldfaced CR's on the site.

Resources for CR:I don't have any, I'm sorry. (Dave - I'd suggest the Manhattan GMAT CR/RC book. It's great. Probably the best book I've seen that walks you through drills and practice methods.)

Reading ComprehensionGeneral Strategy: I don't really have much of a strategy on reading comprehension, I just sort of read it and answer the questions. One thing that I found was that reading on the computer was very easy for me, perhaps because I read articles online all the time. Many people suggest using the economist online, but that costs $$. Instead, check out McKinsey Quarterly, which will help your ability to read on a computer screen, your knowledge of business examples (if you get a business issue on AWA), and will probably help your career too by making you knowledgeable on several business issues!

One thing which I think helped me a lot on both my RC and AWA was the fact that I read the editorial section of the Wall Street Journal every morning on the way to school. It does several things for me:

1) Exposes me to complex arguments similar to those in RC and CR
2) Gives me practice reading on topics which I am often unfamiliar with

3) Keeps me informed, so that I have more real life examples to use in AWA.

Finally, perhaps my most important piece of advice on RC is to use the RC's that come in that LSAT book (linked above in the CR section) as practice. The LSAT passages are much more complex, and the questions are much more specific, so that you'll be forced to get better at remembering what you read! Use the LSAT book when targeting RC, and then as the test nears, start doing the OG RC's.

Resources for RC-- I'm not sure regarding the quality of any of these because I haven't gone through them, but I did copy good links whenever I saw them in case I needed more practice for RC, so I figured I might as well share :-) :
Ten Vocabulary Learning Tips if you feel like not knowing some of the words in the RC's is hindering your ability to do well (although it's very normal not to know some of them).
More RC MaterialsEven More

Analytical Writing Assessment

General Strategy: Spend a couple days before your test thinking of some big fancy words (my words of choice were eludicate, juxtapose, paucity, dearth, and some other ones that I have now forgotten), as well as some real life examples. I have found that if you have 6 real life examples, odds are 3 of them will be moldable (if that's a word) to become relevent to your topic in analysis of an issue. Attached are my AWA templates (sorry Stormgal, I only know how to attach things in threads!). They are essentially a hybrid of Erin's, Sybersport's, and several other templates that I have found on this site.

As far as prep for AWA, I didn't have any. I simply checked a couple topics out, thought about what I'd say for them to get my mind in the writing mode, and that's about it. However, if you would like a book to build your AWA, Spiderman recommended this book which seems like it would be helpful because you can see how others approach it and steal some of their arguments!

Resources for AWA:
Erin's Template for Analysis of an Issue
Template for Analysis of an Argument
Sybersport's (who got a 6.0) Advice
Formatting Rules (makes the grader nice to you!)

More General ResourcesThere's tons of good (free) stuff I found through TestMagic! Here it is:
All 9 Paper Tests
Calculating Paper Test Scores
OG Softcopy
Free Manhattan GMAT CD
Dave's Categorization of OG Questions (I know I've linked to it already, but just wanna make sure everyone gets it, it's really helpful!)
Too many resources to name
Answer Grid that Times You
Dave's Prep Strategy Site
Dave's Prep Strategy Site #2
Prep Strategy Site #3

Timing:
I didn't put much effort into working on timing, mostly because the LSAT is far more time constrained than the GMAT and I was thus able to work very quickly on everything. In other words, by working in high-pressure, time-constrained situations, my timing got better. Thus, I would recommend doing the same, e.g. only giving yourself 15 minutes to do 10 problems rather than 20 minutes. However, only do this once you know the concepts, because otherwise what's the point of going quickly when you don't even know what it is that you're doing quickly!I think

Kaplan's CD is really good for improving timing in Quant...while giving you only 25 minutes for 20 DS questions may seem ridiculous, it sure makes the actual GMAT, with 2 minutes per question, seem much easier.

Practice Tests:
I know it's really helpful to see what people's practice test scores were so that you know where you stand relative to them. Unfortunately, I don't have many practice scores to give you guys! I knew my timing was alright, and so I felt that doing more problems and learning more concepts was more beneficial for me than doing more practice tests. But again, this is pretty unique to my situation because the LSAT had improved my timing so much. For most people, I would recommend taking SEVERAL practice tests. Anyways, here's the scores on the tests that I did take:

PP1 (before any prep): 710 (q47, v40)
PP2 (after targeting math and SC): 780 (q50, v47)
Kaplan diagnostic--the one in the book: 700 (q49, v45).

Don't know how the hell this score breakup comes out to a 700, but I didn't care b/c I knew Kaplan's tests were horrible.

Day Before the Test:
Unlike most people, I didn't go out to dinner or relax the day before my test. Instead, I did several practice problems, because I noticed that whenever I would take a couple days off from the GMAT, my mind would get out of the GMAT mindset. So, as I've said earlier, do what you feel best fits your own situation!

Hit Rates:
Problem Solving (in the beginning, when I was making stupid mistakes): 90%

Problem Solving (once I got better at preventing stupid mistakes): 97%

Data Sufficiency (when making stupid mistakes): 85%

Data Sufficiency (once I got better at preventing stupid mistakes): 93%

Sentence Correction (first time around, going category by category as assigned by Manhattan GMAT's book): 95%Sentence Correction (second time around): 98-99%

Critical Reasoning (did about 80 q's from OG): 95%

Reading Comp: Only ones I did were on the practice tests, and I think my hit rate was around 97%.

Note, however, that pre-LSAT, my CR was around 84% and my RC was 92%, so don't be discouraged if yours are below mine. Also, for SC, remember that my hit rate before Manhattan GMAT was 65% on that one test. So regardless of where you're at, you can get much better by prepping appropriately.