

Manhattan Review®

Test Prep, Training & Admissions

GMAT® in a Nutshell

Joern Meissner, PhD (Columbia Business School)

Tracy C. Yun, MBA (Columbia Business School)

www.manhattanreview.com

Turbocharge Your GMAT®

GMAT and GMAT CAT are registered trademarks of the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC). GMAC does not endorse nor is it affiliated in any way with the owner of this product or any content herein.



Chapter 1

GMAT and Its Relevance

1.1 Overview of GMAT

Business School applicants, depending on admissions criteria, are usually required to take the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT). Unlike academic grades, which have varying significance based on each school's grading guidelines, the GMAT scores are based on the same standard for all test takers and they help business schools assess the qualification of an individual against a large pool of applicants with diverse personal and professional backgrounds. The GMAT scores play a significant role in admissions decisions since they are more recent than most academic transcripts of an applicant and they evaluate a person's verbal, quantitative and writing skills.

The GMAT is a 4-hour Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) and can be taken at any one of many test centers around the world 5 or 6 days a week. The GMAT consists of four separately timed sections. Each of the first two 30-minute sections consists of an analytical writing task, also known as Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA). The remaining two 75-minute sections (Quantitative and Verbal) consist of multiple-choice questions delivered in a computer-adaptive format. Questions in these sections are dynamically selected as you take the test to stay commensurate with your ability level. Therefore, your test will be unique. Just one question is shown on the screen at a given time. It is impossible to skip a question or go back to a prior question. Each problem needs to be answered before the next question.

You may take the GMAT only once every 31 days and no more than five times within any 12-month period. The retest policy applies even if you cancel your score within that time period. All of your scores and cancellations within the last five years will be reported to the institutions you designate as score recipients. You will receive an unofficial copy of your scores immediately after completing the exam and prior to leaving the testing center. Your official score report will be available to you on-line via an email notification 20 days after test day. Paper score report will be available via mail upon request only.

2006 has ushered in a wave of changes in the administration process (not the actual test content) of the GMAT. This is a result of the General Management Admission Council (GMAC)'s decision to switch from its previous test administrator ETS (Educational Testing Service) to Pearson VUE, the electronic testing business of Pearson. There have not been any test content changes. Rather, some logistics have been revised and improved, such as the replacement of scratch paper with erasable laminated graph paper and the requirement of completing the AWA sections before proceeding to the Quantitative and Verbal sections.

The scores necessary to get into top schools are increasing year by year. Studies indicate that applicants who prepare for the GMAT score substantially higher than those who don't. In addition to the admissions process, GMAT scores are also considered in job recruitments and scholarship awards. A good GMAT score can save you thousands of dollars in tuition. Disciplined and dedicated preparation for the GMAT will allow you to get the best score possible on the exam and get into the school of your choice.

1.2 GMAT Scores and Sections

Total GMAT scores range from 200 to 800. About 66% of test takers score between 400 and 600. The Verbal and Quantitative scores range from 0 to 60. The Verbal and Quantitative scores measure different things and cannot be compared to each other, however, each section's score can be compared across different GMAT tests. Scaled scores of 750 out of 800 on the combined test generally correspond to the 99th percentile. 680 out of 800 corresponds to the 90th percentile.

There are two categories in the Quantitative Section with 37 questions in total: Problem Solving and Data Sufficiency. The Verbal Section is comprised of three groups with 41 questions in total: Sentence Correction, Critical Reasoning, and Reading Comprehension. In both the Quantitative and Verbal sections, everyone starts out with an average difficulty level. For each correct answer you give, you are given a harder question for each subsequent question and for each incorrect answer you are given an easier question. This process will continue until you finish the section, at which point the computer will have an accurate assessment of your ability level in that subject area. In each section, all test categories can appear in a random order and a mixed manner. Your score is determined by three factors: 1) the number of questions you complete; 2) the number of questions you answer correctly and; 3) the level of difficulty and other statistical characteristics of each question. To derive a final score, these questions are weighted based on their difficulty and other statistical properties, not their position in the test. For the AWA section, one person and one computer programmed for grading (E-rater) score each essay based on essay content, organization, grammar and syntactic variety. Graders assign scores out of 6.0 based on intervals of 0.5 points. Your final, single score is an average of both individual scores obtained on the issue and argument essays. AWA scores are computed separately from other sections and have no effect on the Verbal, Quantitative, or Total scores.

1.3 GMAT Preparation and Test-taking Logistics

High quality preparation is essential to achieving your best score on the GMAT. High quality preparation means becoming intimately acquainted with the test structure, format, and the types of questions that are being asked. It means improving upon your weak areas through practice and repetition. It means developing your ability to answer correctly the tougher questions. It also means becoming aware of the types of answers that tend to be the correct ones.

Are there any advantages of taking a top-quality GMAT Prep course versus studying alone with the books and CDs available on the market? It really depends on your academic background, study habits, availability and, ultimately, your desired test score. Preparing on your own can save you some financial resources, but may not be as effective as learning from instructors who dissect each answer and impart knowledge and advice from their own GMAT-taking and MBA experiences. Studies show that visualization and discussion in a seminar environment will enable you to recognize complex structures better than learning the same material in a non-interactive way.

When setting a test date and look up test centers at <http://www.mba.com/mba/TaketheGMAT>, keep in mind the following: 1) Consider the times of day you tend to be able to concentrate best. Take your test in the morning or afternoon accordingly. 2) Make sure the week before your test day will not be a stressful one. This will help you concentrate, be well rested, calm and in the right frame of mind to ace the GMAT. 3) Be aware of application deadlines and do your best to provide yourself with enough time after the exam to focus on the other parts of your Business School applications.

The fee to take the GMAT is U.S. \$250 worldwide. The fee for rescheduling the date, time, or location of the test is US\$50 for each appointment you change. When you want to reschedule the GMAT, to avoid the forfeiture of your test fee, you must allow at least 7 calendar days between the day you reschedule your appointment and your test day. On your test day, you may select up to five schools to receive your scores before you take the test. Once you have made your selection, you will not be able to change or delete the list of schools. If you would like to send your scores to more schools, you may order additional score reports, at a cost of U.S. \$28 per school. Your unofficial score report containing Total score and Quantitative and Verbal section scores is available upon your completion of the test. The only opportunity that you will have to cancel your scores is immediately after you complete the test, but before you view your scores. You cannot cancel your scores after they are displayed or reported to you.

1.4 Quantitative Section

You'll have 75 minutes to answer 37 quantitative questions after completing one hour of essays and a 5-minute break. Out of 37 quantitative questions, 23-24 are Problem Solving questions, the remaining 13-14 questions are Data Sufficiency.

Please note that not all of the quantitative questions are scored. Approximately 33 of the 37 questions are scored. The un-scored questions are there for the purpose of gauging results for future tests.

The Quantitative section measures your basic mathematical skills, understanding of elementary concepts, and the ability to reason quantitatively, solve quantitative problems, and interpret graphic data. Problem Solving and Data Sufficiency questions are intermingled throughout the section.

The rough distribution of quantitative questions is the following:

- 65% - Arithmetic (Including Statistics, probability and combinatorics)
- 25% - Algebra
- 10% - Geometry

Basic Concepts:

- Integers and Prime numbers
- Fractions and Percentages
- Mark-up and Margin
- Exponents and Roots
- Equations and Inequalities
- Probability, Permutations and Combinations
- Statistics, Graph and Data Interpretation
- Coordinate Geometry, Area and Volume of Various Geometrical Objects
- Others to Be Discussed in Class

Major Question Types:

- Solving Equations
- Profit, Cost and Break-Even Calculations
- Distance-Rate-Time Problems
- Divisibility
- Averages and Weighted Averages
- Word Problems
- Data and Graph Interpretation
- Area and Volume of Geometrical Shapes
- Mixture Problems
- Others to Be Discussed in Class

1.5 Key Preparation and Test-taking Strategies

During your GMAT preparation, be sure to incorporate the following approaches:

- Ascertain your preferred and most effective learning style (accelerated timeline vs. steady progress; controlled vs. self-paced study environment; studying in groups vs. individually; classroom learning vs. one-on-one private tutoring)
- Manage your test anxiety. Minimize your worries and pay attention to good nutrition and adequate exercise. Maintain adequate sleep with a consistent schedule leading up to your test.
- Make a special effort to improve your weaknesses along with strengthening your expertise during practice.

During the weeks and days before the test:

- Take a few days off work right before the test. Depending on your own test-taking and learning style, either relax completely or do one practice test at your scheduled test time each day. Then review the result and relax for the remainder of the day. You may want to take the day before the test off entirely so that your brain can relax more right before the test day. Be sure not to over-study the day before the test.
- Memorize the most typical problems and answer types.
- Review all prior mistakes along with explanations.
- Make a list of those typical errors you tend to make and consciously remind yourself of them and refrain from making the same mistakes.
- Save the free GMATPrep software from www.mba.com for right before the actual test and practice the tests in a mock test setting of your choice so that your memory of the actual question types and difficulty levels which have appeared in prior GMAT tests stays fresh.

When you are ready to take the practice CATs, **we recommend:**

- Create a study environment that is as similar as possible to the actual testing setting, which typically includes a quiet space, possibly a computer room or office environment. For example, locate or set up a serious test-taking environment in your house or a public library or a park or another facility so that you can exclusively focus on taking the mock tests.
- Use a systematic approach to your test. Take all questions seriously and answer them. Skipping questions is not helpful on the GMAT CAT.
- Do not take prolonged breaks during a practice test. In the actual test center, you will not be allowed coffee breaks etc. during sections. There is only one 5-minute break after the 60-minute AWA section and another 5-minute break after the 75-minute Quantitative section.
- Eliminate distractions and be conscious of time. Especially when you taking practice tests, be as aware of the clock as you will need to be on the actual exam.
- After completing a practice test, be sure to go over the questions you answered incorrectly. This is the only way to improve. You must understand your mistakes so that you will not make them on the test. (Manhattan Review provides you with over 100 pages of detailed solution guides!)
- AND practice, practice, practice!

Remember that the actual exam is on the computer so take advantage of opportunities to practice with Computer Adapted Tests. For many test-takers, reading large amounts of material on the screen is not easy. It not only dries out their eyes but also makes it hard to absorb the material. Simply practice reading etc. on the computer. The only way to improve is to practice, but be sure to practice with the right approach in a smart and effective way.

When scheduling your test, please remember to select:

- The best possible time of day for you
- A low stress week
- AND give yourself sufficient time to prepare fully for the test

In addition, **we recommend** a few general GMAT taking strategies:

On the day of the test:

- Keep a light-hearted and positive attitude on the test day.
- Bring something warm to put on in case the room is too cold. According to test center rules, you have to wear the sweater or coat instead of just putting it around your shoulders. So make sure that the additional layer of sweater or coat is comfortable in a test-taking setting.
- Also be sure you can remove a layer of clothing in case the room is hot.
- Bring something light to drink or eat such as a small piece of chocolate or protein bar. A bottle of water or a soft drink with a cap is preferred over a can so that you can minimize the chances of spilling. (Though you can not take anything into the testing room, you will be assigned a small locker. During your 5-minute breaks, you can have a few sips to stay hydrated or a bite to eat if you get hungry. Normally test centers allow you to put it outside on a desk or at an easily reachable spot or inside your locker so that you can quickly grab the drink or the food.)
- No testing aids such as study notes, calculators and PDAs are allowed. Normally 1 booklet of 10 pages of yellow laminated graph paper will be provided.
- Bring earplugs if you feel comfortable with using them to stay focused.
- Follow your normal routine.
- Arrive at the test at least 30 minutes early.

At the test:

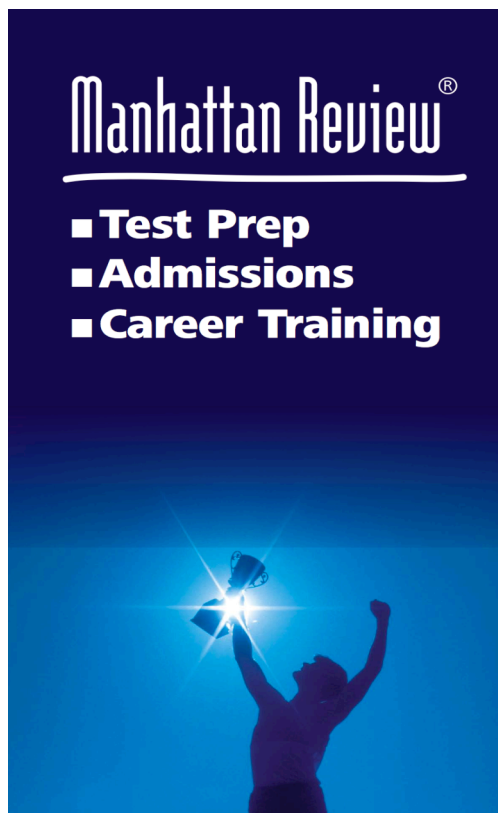
- Do concentrate on the first 10 questions of each section most. At the beginning of each section, the total number of questions and the total time allowed are stated.
- Guess and estimate when necessary.
- Do not panic. Focus on one question at a time. Focus on one section at a time. Do not think beyond your current section and lose your concentration.
- Do not get fixated and spend unreasonable time on any single question. It will not make or break your score. Because the score per section is partially based on the number of questions you answer, try to answer as many questions as you can.
- Do not leave any questions unanswered before the section time runs out. Always submit an answer after some educated or blind guesses. Remember that you cannot skip questions or change an answer once you confirm it.

- If a few questions or passages are difficult to understand, do not let that prompt you to cancel your score entirely. You never know.
- If something is wrong with the computer, or if someone is bothering you, or if it's miserably hot etc., signal to an exam proctor. The proctor walks around in the test room every 15-20 minutes.
- Pace yourself and keep track of your progress by checking the amount of time you have left on the test screen. Each section is 75 minutes. You have about two minutes per Quantitative question and about 1.75 minutes per Verbal question.
- Pay attention to the number of questions that remain in a section. There are 37 quantitative section questions. There are 41 verbal section questions.
- Clicking on "HELP" or hiding the "TIME" information doesn't pause or stop the time.
- Between test sections, replenish your supply of laminated graph paper.
- Take advantage of breaks. Rest your eyes, as the computer screen is difficult to stare at for 4 hours straight.
- Maintain a focused mind and a positive winning attitude throughout the entire test. Remember the final problems can sometimes be equally as important as the initial ones.
- Answer all questions on the test!

Student Notes:

Special Valued Customer Reward – 10%/15%

Please come to our free info sessions either online or in-person! As a token of our appreciation of your attendance, we will offer you an exciting new Valued Customer Reward – 10% off any of our courses or services or 15% off any combination of our different courses and services!



How does it work?

- Register for any of free our in-person or online info sessions online or by calling our offices
- Show up and participate in the entire info session
- Your presenter will share with you the coupon codes
- Visit our website at www.ManhattanReview.com! (click on the country website if you are located outside of the US)
- Choose your desired in-person/online course or services such as private tutoring or admissions advisory packages
- If you pay by cash, check or wire transfer, just email us with the coupon code
- If you pay by credit card, just enter the coupon code on the payment page

Additional Notes

- The 10% coupon code is valid for each separate registration for one of our courses or services.
- The 15% coupon code is valid for a combined registration of two or more of any of our courses (different course format) and services (different service type).
- One student per coupon; Cannot be combined with any other coupon or discount certificate for the same course/service
- Valid for a limited time per our announcement at the event
- Test prep course and service availability varies by location
- Other terms and conditions may apply.

Achieve YOUR HIGHER SCORE and get into TOP SCHOOLS!
Visit Manhattan Review NOW to invest in your future!



Free MBA Candidacy Evaluation (via Phone or Email)

Manhattan Review's Admissions Consulting staff will:

- Get to know your strengths, personality, and goals
- Help you market yourself to business schools effectively
- Help you select & articulate the experiences most favorable to application in a convincing manner
- Give you the competitive edge needed to gain admission into the most selective business schools

How does it work?

We offer free MBA Candidacy Evaluations over emails and on the phone to all students globally. You can arrange a consultation via the following steps:

Step 1:

Email mba@manhattanreview.com to set up for the call or email consultation. *(Make sure you are already on the distribution list of our InFocus Newsletter by signing up for Info Request form on our website.)*

Note for students in India: Please email info@manhattanreview.in or call our Indian office to set it up.

Step 2:

Attach to the email

1. An updated resume
2. An outline of special circumstances that might be admissions impediments
3. A list of MBA program of choice by your own preference
4. A list of target application deadline and school year.
5. A list of your strengths and weaknesses based on your self-evaluation.

Step 3:

Up to three email exchanges or an equivalent of 20 minutes of phone conversation are included in this offer. We are specialized in assisting applicants with:

▪ Special Circumstances

- Recent Immigrant
- Recent College Graduate
- Older Applicant
- Married with Children
- Family Business
- Joint Degree Candidate
- Re-ApPLICANT / Waitlist
- Lower Ranked Undergraduate
- Low GMAT or GPA
- Multiple Course Failings
- Learning Disability
- Difficulty to Get Recommendations
- Unemployed
- Many Job Jumps
- Business Failures

▪ Professional Background

- College Athlete
- Entrepreneur
- Finance / Consulting
- Engineer / Scientist
- Military Background
- Nonprofit / Government
- Unusual Career Path

▪ Ethnic/Cultural Background

- European
- Latin American
- East Asian
- South Asian
- African
- Oceanian

We look forward to assisting you in the arduous MBA application process!

Email us at MBA@ManhattanReview.com or Call +1 (212) 997-1660