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BEST INSPIRING

BEST COMEBACK STORIES

700 CLUB

NGUFO = (Never Give Up - Fight On)

I just scored a 720 in my GMAT last tuesday. I screamed in the exam center with sheer disbelief and excitement. People may have thought

I am a complete gone case - but I can tell you, I believe I got the best score I possibly can, I couldn't have asked for more. I am writing this blog because I believe that my story can and will help other average people out there, sum up the courage to live their dreams. If I can do it - ANYONE CAN. I am a very average student, whose only strength is that I am willing to work hard.

I also believe that with the right study plan chalked out, and going with your target with determination - ANYONE can score a 700 and above. The path is not easy, but who said anything is impossible - it just takes that little much longer.

It took me 6 months.....

Context:

I am an asian indian female who did her masters in computer science from RPI, who has hated maths all her life. Surprisingly my whole life has involved studying maths and sciences since day 1. I have been meaning to write the GMAT for the last three years. But just the thought of Maths, had the motivation peter down... I finally decided to write my GMAT this year - I knew this would be my last chance. I also work full time, and have a stressful job in a small startup in the bay area. This was going to be hard...

Someone once told me that whatever happens in life happens two times - once in your mind, once in reality. I started with the dream of acing my GMAT and going to Harvard - "If you can see it, you can be it, if you JUST BELIEVE IT, there is nothing to it.....I believed I was going to Harvard"....

Study Details:

My preparation started May 15th, 2007 - I first came to this web site, and read Eric's blog, then I read Ursula's blog (<http://beatthegmat.blogspot.com/2005/08/ursulas-debriefing.html>), and I also read "Twinsplitters" blog. I felt a little intimidated - these guys sounded sharp smart and well smart again. Then started the most important part of my preparation, the planning. I knew that I was very weak, both in Maths and Verbal, and neither came naturally to me. I didn't remember any of the maths formulas, and even a simple ratio

and proportion problem was stumping me - I needed to start bottoms up. By reading the blogs, and asking around I created a very extensive study schedule for me.

Step 1: Understand concepts, and formulas

Time frame: May 15 - July 1st.

A. Princeton Maths (http://www.amazon.com/GMAT-Math-Workout-Princeton-Review/dp/0679783733/ref=sr_1_7?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1205779092&sr=8-7)

B. Princeton Verbal (http://www.amazon.com/Verbal-Workout-GMAT-Princeton-Review/dp/0375754172/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1205779145&sr=1-3)

C. Princeton GMAT 2005 (the Maths and Verbal book) (http://www.amazon.com/Cracking-Sample-Tests-CD-ROM-Graduate/dp/0375764089/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=

D. Download the Flash Cards link that Eric has provided -its a big big help.
<http://www.beatthegmat.com/download-my-gmat-flashcards-t32.html>

Study pattern: I would put in two hours every day from 5 -7 in the evenings on weekdays, and would put in 4 hours each on a Saturday as well as Sunday over the weekend. Sundays for me were for writing my practice GMATs. Saturday for making sure I completed anything I may have missed over the weekdays (revising things before my practise test on sunday)

Princeton was the key for me. I read every single line of the book, made notes. I spent all of May 15th, to end of June

ensuring that I had gone thru the Maths and Verbal of princeton, and understood the basics of both. I was so bad in maths

and verbal, that I held off on writing the diagnostic test, until I had read a little from the books.

Diagnostic Test: GMAT Prep 1 (didn't do the essays) - Score 460 (It didn't surprise me, it didn't de-motivate me, I just knew. I had to study harder).

The key part of my studies was making sure of the following:

-That any mistake I made any time, I made sure I would not make it again. I also followed Ursula's recommendation, when you make a mistake, don't read the answer immediately. Try to solve it on your own

how much ever time it takes, only when you are really stumped look at the answer. It will help you more.

- Another thing that helped me is, in all the books read the answer to every question. The author provides cool new ways to answer questions (techniques that can help you solve questions better. Sometimes when you answer a question right and don't read the explanation, you can miss some cool techniques that could help you do the question faster

- I timed every question I did. Would have a watch next to me. My goal was to do every maths question within 2 minutes, and every verbal within 1.8 mts. I did this timing for every question in OG. It helped me pace myself.

- Note answering all questions on the exam is very very important, even if it means guessing some of the questions. By being able to time myself by what I said above, it helped better my speed a lot.

- Make sure for both maths and Verbal you make flash cards earlier on. In maths for the important formulae, in verbal I mostly did it for Sentence Correction for any good question, for questions with idiom, or any question I got wrong. The way I made my verbal flash cards were the following

Sentence Correction

Write the questions

where question came from say Princeton Verbal: Page x: question x: Difficulty (HARD, Very hard, medium okay)

Hint - Idiom, parallel, anything else that helps get answer

Answer

The above format from my flash cards helped me a lot. By the end of my exam prep I had 3 full boxes of flash cards, which I read and went before the exam. I believe flash cards are one part of my prep that made a tremendous difference. The above is a tedious effort, and I would get tired of writing flash cards (considering the number of questions I was getting wrong - but really do the best you can, this is important)

Princeton Exams Scores:

Princeton CAT 1 (July 1st, 2007): 640

Princeton CAT 2: (July 15th, 2007): 660

Princeton CAT 3: (Aug 11th, 2007): 670

Note I didn't write essays on either of these exams. I was too overwhelmed and just wanted to focus on the Maths/Verbal.

For Princeton I followed Ursula's recommendation of creating detailed spreadsheets showing what I was weak in, what took more time etc.

I am not sure how much this helped me, because I never got a chance to review these again before the exam. It helped me at that time, as it ensured that every question I had done wrong, I had analyzed the same, made flash cards, and could answer them if they came again.

I've attached a sample of what I created, but again not sure how useful this is.

Step 2: Studies Taken further (Kaplan)

Time Frame: July 1st - August 1st

A. Kaplan GRE & GMAT Math Workbook (http://www.amazon.com/Kaplan-GMAT-Exams-Workbook-Third/dp/0743233549/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1206818286&sr=1-2)

B. Kaplan Verbal (http://www.amazon.com/Kaplan-GMAT-Verbal-Workbook/dp/1419551418/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1206818333&sr=1-1)

C. Kaplan GMAT 2005 with CD (http://www.amazon.com/Kaplan-GMAT-2005-CD-ROM-CD-Rom/dp/0743251687/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1206818366&sr=1-1)

Kaplan Exam Scores:

Kaplan CAT 1: July 29th, 550 (was really devastated 😞).

Kaplan CAT 2: August 15, 560 (devastation continues)

I don't have my Kaplan 3, 4 scores with me right now, but I remember they were all in the 500 range...

Was pretty disappointed with my Kaplan scores. The exams were very tough. I had read that what you get is generally 50-60 points below your actual score, but that didn't help me much. I was way behind.

Step 3: Gmat Official Guide: Verbal/Maths

Time frame: August 1st - September end.

1. Maths Official Guide workbook (http://www.amazon.com/Official-Guide-GMAT-Quantitative-Review/dp/0976570920/ref=cm_lmf_img_21_rsrssi0)
2. Verbal Official Guide workbook (http://www.amazon.com/Official-Guide-GMAT-Verbal-Review/dp/0976570912/ref=cm_lmf_img_20_rsrssi0)

Step 4: GMAT Official guide Main book

Time Frame: October 1st - November 26th

1. Official guide 10th Edition (http://www.amazon.com/Official-Guide-GMAT-Review-10th/dp/0886852404/ref=cm_srch_tsr_rtr)
2. Sentence Correction (Manhattan GMAT) - (http://www.amazon.com/Sentence-Correction-Preparation-Manhattan-Guides/dp/0979017572/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1206818436&sr=1-1)
really good book, that helped me hone my SC skills. Studied it in between with my OG prep.
3. Kaplan 800 - (http://www.amazon.com/Kaplan-GMAT-800-2005-2006-Gmat/dp/0743265289/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1206818366&sr=1-2) I bought this book (but it was too tough, and given that I was focusing on finishing my OG, I never got to do this)

While studying from the Official guides I re-took all my Princeton tests again - I wanted to see if I had improved at all. Also I wanted to write all the exams with essays this time to ensure I had the stamina. I didn't prepare for my essays at this point 😞. I was still overwhelmed with the Maths/Verbal studies.

Princeton Test 1: 09/30/2007 - 720 (my first 700 and above)

Princeton Test 2: 10/07/2007 - 720

Princeton Test 3: 10/14/2007 - 640

Princeton Test 4: 10/20/2007 - 640

Note I wrote essays for all the above tests (and the essays were really bull shitty). I hadn't prepared for essays at this time, was just trying to build my stamina.

I just remember being very depressed and down at this time. I was getting erratic results, and couldn't for the life of me figure out what the hell I was doing wrong. I just decided I didn't have a choice any more. I would focus on my OG, and then write the GMAT CAT 1, 2, Power Prep 1, 2 all four test are

available for free - and would give me a final evaluation of what my score would be. I was trying my best what more could I do?

Note the Official Guide has a huge number of questions. To be able to complete them, and still build up my stamina I would get up at 5 in the morning, and would do 20 Questions from Problem solving 20- from Data Sufficiency, 20 from RC, 20 from CR and 20 from SC, every single day. It would take me around 3 hours to get this done every day. I would make sure whenever I got time I go thru my mistakes.

I CANNOT stress how important going thru your mistakes and making flash cards is!!! I never left a single question that I had done wrong, unrevised.

Essays Preparation

Book: Arco:GMAT Answers to the Real Essay Questions.

<http://www.buy.com/prod/gmat-answers-to-the-real-essay-questions/q/loc/106/31081426.html>

I started worrying about my essays mid October. I knew I sucked at essays, and hadn't written a single one for the initial tests. I bought the Arco Essay book and read the instructions for Analysis of the Argument/Issue. I followed instructions that helped me outline my essays much better. I just received my AWA scores and it was a 5.5 - all thanks to this book.

Final Exam Prep

Finally the date for the final exam Nov 27th. It was the thanksgiving weekend, Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday.

I wrote my practise prep tests all in that week (my timing was way off), should have written them earlier, but there had been too much of work in the office, and I had been struggling with finish OG 10th edition 3 hours every day. was tired.

GMAT CAT 1: Nov 22nd (720)

GMAT CAT 2: Nov 23rd (690)

<http://www.mba.com/mba/TakeTheGMAT/ToolsToHelpYouPrepare/GMATPrepProducts/FreeGMATPrepTestPreparationSoftware.htm>

I believe what I got on the above two tests were the best reflection of my capabilities. When I try to see the quant/verbal breakdown in the GMAT CAT tests now it doesn't show me. But I have always averaged between 38 - 40 in verbal and 47 - 49 in maths.

Power PREP 1: Nov 24rd (750): Q49V44

Power Prep 2: Nov 25th(710): Q48/40

http://www.gorillatestprep.com/gmat_resources.html

I wasn't that excited about the Power prep scores. A lot of the verbal questions were repeats from the OG

guide. Hence they were not reflective of my true score I felt.

I also believe that OG is god. Doing maths OG, verbal OG and finally the master of them all OG 10th edition, helped me get better. At the end I had become very very good at Data Sufficiency. From a complete duffer to someone who would not make silly mistakes, and do the questions well in time. it really helped me.

Day of the Exam - Drama continues.

I had bled for 6 months on this. It was excruciating. My exam was on Tuesday, on Monday I fell very badly sick. I am not sure if it was psychosomatic, or what the problem was. I had soar throat, cold, cough, and fever. I slept all of monday, got up at 8 in the night feeling like shit, and very very unhappy with life in general I could not believe what god was doing to me. How could he - it was so unfair, all this effort, all the determination for what? I called up to see if I could postpone the exam, they said i was calling too late, I would forfeit the money, unless I could produce medical records. At the back of mind, I jsut wanted to write the damn exam, I wanted to get it over with

my husband doubled me up with lots of medicine, and lots of food. I remember crying to my folks about how unfair it was on Monday night. And then something just clicked in my brain. Its happened to me before - when I am beat down, some part of me fight back. I wasnt going down that easy. I sat down from 8 - 12 in the night, and finished the last few questions from OG data sufficiency and OG Critical reasoning. I wanted to make sure my OG was all doen and complete before I went to the exam. (I dont recommend this to anyone - a proper night sleep before the exam is essential - unless you have bad luck like me)

I went to sleep at 12. I could not sleep the whole bloody night. I was awake - just didnt know how to fall asleep. At 5 with eyes wide open, I just couldnt believe my bad luck. Got up at 6 in the morning had 2 crocins, a bath. I prayed to god for 5 minutes, asking him to give me strength to go thru whatever comes my way and then went to the exam (it was at eight in the morning). There I find out as I dont have a green card yet, I needed to get my passport (I had walked in just with my driver's licence - SHIT!!!. My husband went and got me the passport). I entered the room at 8.30.

But at this time with all the stress since the previous night, I was so pissed/frustrated, that I literally started talkign to god telling him that if I didnt get a 700 this time, I would write the exam every single year 3 times for the next n years, until I hit the damn score. I WASNT GIVING UP.....

I sat down for the exam, it prompted me to write down which school I wanted my score reported (6 months, crazy effort, fever, soar throat, feeling sick) I took a deep breath, took a gulp, and with shaking hands, wrote down [Harvard business school](#). I can tell you this, when the exam started, you could have shot me, and I would hve answered the question with everything I had. Every question had 300% of me when I asnwered. I didnt have time to finish all the maths questions. But I rememberd that answering all was more important - I had to randomly select answers for the last 4 quesitons 😊 (selected all D's as the last four were problem solving questions, adn I had read, that the probability of it being a D is high). Verbal was better for me, I finished it in time.

4 hours later, when the exam prompted me if I wanted to see my score. I closed my eyes, gave a prayer

to god, asked him to help me pull up my score to 700 - and then pressed on the button.

720 showed up on screen - I acutally gave a scream of delight and tears started streaming thru my eyes. It had been so hard, so painful, so WONDERFUL.....

i sit at home today unable to believe I did it. I feel happy, delighted, but apprehensive - there is still a long way between me and my dream, but the first boulder is out of the way. I have applicaitons to write, lot of work to do, but its amazing what you can accomplish once you set your mind to something, and believethat you will go thru with it, not matter what is thrown your way.

I really hope the details I've written above help others get thru this exam too - all the information I read up on this web site and others really helped me get myself ready, I am just trying to reciprocate in kind.

this blog is specially targetted for people, who think they are average, and who are trying to step up their mind/spirit to go after there dreams - I am an example of that. Dont ever every loose faith in yourself
....

As for me right now - [HARVARD](#), LOOK OUT HERE i COME.....

My Inspiration:

Derek Redmond: Its all about giving it your "all" - its all about completing the race.....

Story: <http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/espn25/story?page=moments/94>

Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-MRoIDXeuY&feature=related>

Amazing lecture by Randy Pausch - Professor from Carnegi Mellon

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teoB65BIGis>

The attachment called commitment (any time I feel like giving up, I just read it and I am ready to go again)

Hey everyone,

I took my test today (28th March 2011) and scored 730 Overall 96 Percentile (Q49 -86 percentile, V41 - 92 percentile). I've attached the GMAT Master sheet that contains some of my strategies for the verbal and some pointers for the quant section. I hope you guys find it useful.

Update: Just got my official score report. I've scored 5.5 (77 percentile) on AWA

Chapter 1: The first battle

It was March 2010, after going through many ups and downs, I decided that it was time to meet the GMAT beast for the first time. After 1 month or so of preparation, I took my first GMAT. The Quant section was plagued with familiar timing problems - I never had enough time to finish the quant section. To add to my misery, I faced problems with my workstation during the test. I waited till the end of my Quant section to complain to the administrator. In hindsight, i should have raised the issue much earlier than I did.

My 8 minute break between Quant and Verbal sections was wasted in trying to get the administrator to log me off from one computer and to restart the test on another workstation. Before i knew it, the verbal section started. Next 75 minutes went by quicker than i could imagine. The test was over before i knew it. 670 (Q45, V38) - The screen read. I was disappointed when I left the center, but i felt much better after a number of people told me that 670 is a good score. There was a problem though, i didn't want a good score, i wanted an amazing score and i wasn't going to settle for anything less... The battle was just beginning..

Chapter 2: The battle before the battle

After the first encounter with the beast, a number of things happened. I got promoted, the responsibilities, the work pressure and work flow increased. Yet, i managed to practice my verbal and quant skills on BTG and GMATclub whenever i got time. I got serious about the second battle around late July 2010. I'd come home from work and sit down and study. Work pressure was unrelenting, but the work pressure would not stop me from getting my score. 1st September was going to be final attempt at GMAT.. but little did i know....

Chapter 3: So we meet again, Old nemesis

I was doing consistently well in verbal. I had analyzed my errors, I thought i knew all the traps that GMAT would throw at me. I believed that verbal score would really decided my overall score. I retook the MGMT tests and GMATpreps, In the month of August alone i took 5 practice tests and averaged 740.

I was all set to conquer the GMAT. I took my last practice test 2 days before the actual test and scored 760 (Q48, V47). One day before the test, I pushed myself way too hard, my mind was fatigued. To make matters worse, the night before the test, I could not get any sleep at all. I woke up 2-3 times at night and realized i had a slight headache and became more paranoid. The test day arrived.

Quant was again plagued by timing problems. Questions seemed easy but my stubbornness to solve

each question cost me at the end. I did not have enough time to effectively solve the last few questions. I was rushed and thus, my accuracy suffered. Nonetheless, i was determined to completely destroy the verbal section. I was doing fine till the 10th question mark. But then the unthinkable happened I got a humongous RC passage that went completely over my head. My strategy to make micro notes on RC passage did not help my timing at all. As i watched critical minutes tick by, I was thrown off my strategy. I merely went from one question to another without analyzing the answer choices or avoiding the traps. GMAT had delivered its finishing upper cut. As i lay on the ground i saw my final score that read 620 (Q46, V29) .. The world has just come crashing down. I somehow managed to drag myself out of the testing center vowing to return again....

Chapter 4: Time to bite the Knewtonian Apple

I spent hours reliving the test and charting out everything that went wrong. I realized what i had done wrong

1. I did not have an effective strategy for my quant section. Timing issues needed to be fixed.
2. I needed to pen down exact approach for each question type and practice each question type using this strategy.
3. The strategy to write as i read the RC passage did not work, further, i needed to hone my RC skills
4. I had become too familiar with [Manhattan GMAT](#) and GMATprep content. I needed some other material to practice my new strategy.

Sir Isaac [Knewton](#) came to the rescue. Lured by the 50 point guarantee and half price, I ended up enrolling in the [Knewton Course](#) in January 2011 and got free access to [GMATclub tests](#). [Knewton course](#) was exactly what i needed. As i went through the amazing video lessons by Jen Rugani and David Ingber for Verbal and Jess Nepom and Rich Zwelling for Quant, the errors that i had made in my first two attempts became more apparent. I did all the homework, extra exercises and all the practice tests. My scores ranged from 670-700 on [Knewton](#) practice tests. Contrary to what many people have said about the [Knewton](#) scoring algorithm, I believe that [Knewton](#) tests force you to cut down on your errors. This strategy is effective in bringing your overall score up.

Chapter 5: The End..

28th March 2011, It was time for the final stand. I took a week off work and did very little in last 3-4 days leading up to the test. The day before the test i watched "Iron Will" and loved this quote from the movie - "When you come to face the thing you fear, let the creator guide you". Further, i also changed my phone wallpaper to exactly what the heading of this post says - "Keep Calm and Carry on" - This message was a gentle reminder to keep my cool. Surprisingly, I had a decent sleep the night before the test. I woke up and i knew it was going to be the day that i will finally conquer the beast.

I reached the test center half and hour before time. After preliminary verification procedures, I was escorted to my workstation. Test began. It was the time to write the essays - I think i completely destroyed the poor author's argument [strike](** I could be proved wrong though **[/strike]). The issue essay wasn't that hard either. I took my 8 minute break and munched on some Five Star to get the sugar rush. As soon as i was done, I jumped into the quant session. I got an easy question to start with but after the 5th question, the things got tough. I had my timelines defined - 75-57-37-16 and i was hell bent on meeting them. I fell behind a couple of times, each time i fell behind my planned time, i

guessed the next hard question i encountered. Questions were a whole mix bag of PS and DS with topics ranging from number properties, equations, co-ordinate geometry, statistics, geometry to probability. I finished my quant section 1 minute before the allotted 75 minutes. I felt i did a reasonable job with the quant section.

I took the next 8 minute break, munched on the remaining five star and rushed back in. I had about a minute to go, I quickly type 10-12 rows containing A - E to use on hard questions. The SC's were definitely a class apart. The sheer brilliance with which each trap was crafted made me want to stand up and applaud the test maker. Each trap whether it be hiding the main verb in an adjective clause or joining two independent clauses using conjunctions other than FANBOYS (such as however) was crafted very subtly. I think only the SC's in the verbal challenges of [Knewton](#) came close to the quality of SC's on the real test. The RCs seemed pretty straight forward and easy to comprehend. Critical reasoning questions had familiar traps. I had a very simple strategy in handling the RC and CR questions that i will discuss a little later. I think I must have got 90-95 percent of my RC and CR questions right. I finished my verbal section with approximately 2 minutes to spare.

The test was over. I didn't exactly know what to expect. I was too scared to even guess my score. I kept on clicking next till i reached the dreaded screen. Do you want to Report your scores - The magic screen asked. Hell yeah!! - I didn't go through 3 plus hours to walk home with a cancelled score now. Seconds passed. Each second felt like a minute. The screen read 730 (Q49, V 41) - I practically jumped from my seat. I felt like Mario who had just jumped over the dragon. I closed a book today and picked up another. Its time to move on to the next hurdle.....

Takeaways

Material

1. Only rely on official material - OG's or on material that is closely modeled on the Official material. I think [Knewton](#) does a very good job at recognizing the patterns in official problems.
2. BTG practice questions are a good resource to practice your strategies if you run out of the official material. I got them at half the price and I enjoyed working through these questions.
3. [GMATclub tests](#) are useful. However, i only went through 4-5 of these tests.
4. I'd suggest you use [MGMAT guides](#) to build the base for Quant and SC, [Powerscore CR](#) bible for CR and [Knewton](#) tips for RC.

Quant

1. Formulate an approach for each question type. For example if it was a work or a speed problem, my first step was to create a table. If it was a number properties problem, my first step was to simplify the prompt and understand exactly what the question asked.
2. As Jess Nepom from [Knewton](#) brilliantly puts it - Read the question part of the question. Most of my errors on quant were silly mistakes. This simple advise helped me cut down my silly mistakes in quant.
3. Focus only on whats important. I barely spent a day to study probability, permutations and combinations. I never quite got the hang of tougher problems on these concepts. Therefore, my strategy was that if i were to encounter difficult problems in these areas on test day, I'd simply skip and get that additional time for questions that i could solve.
4. Have a timing strategy and adhere to it - 75-57-37-16 worked for me. The toughest challenge is to

teach yourself to let go of a problem. Every time i spent 4 odd minutes on a problem i got it wrong. Each problem on GMAT is solvable in 2-4 minutes. If it takes you longer than 2-3 minutes to solve a problem then clearly, you've adopted a wrong approach and therefore, not only are you more likely to get the question wrong, but also lose out on time that you could have used to solve other more solvable questions.

5. Be weary of the traps - This is what [Knewton](#) taught me. DS questions are the ones which GMAT uses to lay down its traps. If it looks too good to be true, chances are that its not true. Having such a questionable attitude towards answer choices on the quant section helps in reducing the number of errors and thus increasing the overall quant score.

Verbal

1. Make a note of each error you make in SC. All of us differ in the type of grammar concepts that we are comfortable with. For example i was always slightly better at spotting S-V errors than at spotting verb tense errors. Its important to recognize where you trip so that you pay extra attention when such a question appears.

2. You cannot get better at verbal overnight. You need to work on it consistently. Verbal is all about grasping critical concepts and recognizing patterns. On certain questions, I could merely guess the answer by simply skimming through the CR passage and then quickly going through the answer choices. (Not a recommended strategy).

3. CR and RC questions fall under various categories, figure out what you need to do to solve each type. My strategy was simple, I'd read the stimulus in the CR questions. Read the question type and then tell myself exactly what was required. For example on assumption questions, i'd tell myself that the correct answer choice when reversed would destroy the conclusion or on weaken questions, i'd tell myself that the answer choice can bring outside information and that the correct answer would either fall under the category of "general principle" or "Situational detail" (These i learned from my [Knewton Course](#)).

4. When struck between 2 answer choices on a SC question. Give yourself 30 seconds to quickly analyze both the choices again and at the end of the 30 second period. Pick an answer choice and move on. On CR questions, if you're struck between 2 choices, figure out that killer word that makes one answer choice wrong. Again, if nothing works, pick one and move on. As you get better at recognizing patterns, you'll start picking correct answer more often.

5. On RC questions. Don't waste too much time on reading the passage. Do a quick read through. Read the question, figure out which category the question belongs to - Global, Inference or Detail - and follow through on the strategy. For example for global questions, consider the entire passage while picking an answer choice, for detail questions, go back to the passage and lastly, for Inference questions, make small logical leaps.

I sought out help from Forum members when i was down and out and i wasn't disappointed. Thank you so much.

As far as the heading of this post goes - Keep Calm and Carry On was a poster produced by the British government in 1939 during the beginning of the Second World War, intended to raise the morale of the British public under the threat of impending invasion. It was little known and never used. The poster was rediscovered in 2000 and has been re-issued by a number of private sector companies, and used as the decorative theme for a range of other products

Worried about having a low GMAT score? Read this...

Guys, I don't know what to say. Got the two easiest essay questions you could possibly imagine and math seemed to be right in line with GMATPrep.

Took a break (had to go three floors down to use the bathroom) between Q and V and then encountered a little confusion with the fingerprint confirmation (had to rescan four times). Finally returned to the station only to see the computer interface flash "break time exceeded by 4 min 12 sec., this time will be deducted from your actual test."

Knowing that I was going to be under the gun of "time pressure" from that point forward, I proceeded to dive into Verbal question #1 with the clock starting at 70:48. To stay keep from panicking, I hid the clock and systematically read each question as they came. SCs were a breeze compared to some of those posted on this site; especially the brutal 100 list. CRs were tricky and much more cleverly worded than I had ever seen before. RCs were, well RCs.

As might have easily predicted, I got to question #30 when the red "4:59" countdown timer flashed on the screen.

At this point I knew that it was GAME OVER.

Knowing that it was virtually impossible to finish 12 verbal problems in less than five minutes, I decided that this test was destined for disaster. Consequently, I just took my hand off the mouse, pushed my chair back from the monitor and did some serious self-introspection for about 30 seconds; why did you put yourself through a month of intensive study only to poorly manage your break timing? As a foreign language major, are your critical reading skills really up to par with those of your future b-school counterparts??? Why are you taking this test when you can't even focus clearly?? What the hell is your problem with computerized tests???

Anyway, I scanned the remaining problems just to see what PVue was testing. Had one moderately lengthy RC and the usual mixture of SCs/CRs remaining.

Clicked through those eight survey pages, and when the ultimate decision came, do you wish to cancel your score? I knew that this was going to be far below any performance in the past, but was still very curious to see how the math turned out because so many people on this site had given me so much help in that area: Jon, Laxie, U2Lover, Haas, Dahiya, Yurik, Ak, Yezz, Vivek ... and many others.

SHOULD HAVE JUST CANCELED THE TEST THEN AND THERE.

Rather than lie by saying that I did cancel, which is exactly what I should have done, I will tell all of you here at GMAT club exactly how miserably I underperformed.

Q38 V22 (Overall 500).

Nearly 100 points lower than last year's GMAT (590) and the worst of any practice CAT or paper test,

GMATPrep included. I not only shamed those who supported me over this past month, I have disgraced myself to the point of utter humiliation. How can somebody be a GMATClub moderator, score consistently in the 600s on practice CATs, only to walk in and underperform when it counts the most?

If there is a hell on earth, I'm living in it right now.

The truth of the matter is, when it comes to the GMAT I only have partial confidence in one aspect of the exam: SCs. Because I am a translator. But even those comprise a mere 1/6 of the test. My math sucks, my reading comprehension ability (under pressure) is downright pathetic, and I have some inherent disability to critically read in a timed environment.

That being said, I'm going to take a week off and reevaluate the GMAT, whether or not I am a suitable candidate for b-school, and life in general.

For the greater benefit of my fellow club members preparing to take the test, here is a debriefing, if it can help a fellow member in any way??

Environment

1. The test is aesthetically identical to GMATPrep.
2. The markers do tend to dry out, so request a minimum of three upfront.
3. Security is tighter than the Pentagon. Be sure to bring your passport if you are not a citizen of the country in which you intend to take the test. No wristwatches or jewelry permitted.

AWA

Questions are straightforward from the OG. First one was the argument of "reducing campus housing rates to increase dorm revenue." Second was the issue do you agree that "in defining success, results are more important than effort."

Quantitative

IMHO slightly more difficult than GMATPrep. I scored a 620 and 580 on GMATPrep #1 and #2, respectively. Both had a Q range of 40/42. Dahiya once mentioned that, "GMAT tests an finite number of math problems in an infinite number of ways." This is absolutely true. The root of every possible standardized question is the same, just each is cleverly disguised in a unique way. First problem #1 was based on weighted averages. #2 was something like (changed) $1234 \cdot 342 \cdot 23$, which digit would change the total product by less than 1000? #3 was similar to (not the same) In the series $S(1,2,3,\dots)$ $S(400)=x$ and the function $f(x)=(x-n)$ where n is an interger > 500 , what is the value of $S(4999)-S(4998)\dots$ or something like that, which required my feeble brain to just guess. Subsequently got a string of DSs requiring the visualization of inscribed figures, overlapping sets, calculating the mean of the sum of a consecutive set of numbers $1 \dots 250$. One problem on mut ex probability. followed by your standard mixture of absolute values, inequalities, number properties, special triangles, distance formulas, and ratios. Somewhere towards #29 they started getting really easy, something like (changed) $9^x=1/3$, what is the value of x ? Given two points, which is the equation of a line. Got to problem #37 and the clock had 1 second left. Went to click the answer and time expired, so I know for sure the problem was recorded as incomplete. Surprisingly, didn't get one work/rate problem or even one problem on combinatorics or SD. But then again, I didn't score highly either.

Verbal:

Started off with 70:12 and decided to hide the clock. Rolled with the punches as they came, first a few inference CRs followed by an RC on the hierarchical status of the Anasazi Indians (spent 10 minutes on these four questions) then a half dozen SCs interspersed between CRs of all types; assumption, weaken, strengthen, etc. The SCs were a little more lengthy than the OG, but not quite as difficult as some MGMAT style that I have seen posted on this site. Know your semicolon/colon usage, the S-V for "one of + group + verb" and inversion.

CRs were not overly difficult. Problem is I couldn't concentrate on many because I kept worrying about having to rush through to make up for lost time. Not one bold facer, but did get a inference logic CR early in the game that looked just like a disguised BF. Could have been experimental.

RCs were shorter, like two long CRs vertically stacked, and only 1/4 required the use of a scroll bar. Make sure you understand the difference among the following meanings: explain, detail, qualify, refute, and substantiate. Topics were centered on history, government fiscal policy, astronomy, anddidn't even get a chance to read the last one.

In retrospect, I took this exam with low levels of confidence and concentration, partly because of work related problems and partly because of personal issues. Having taken both versions almost exactly a year apart, I can honestly say to those of you who facing the beast, don't worry because I truly believe there is not much difference in difficulty between PVue and ETS, other than cosmetics and shorter, more detailed RCs. PVue screens are easier on the eyes with portions of the RCs "highlighted" for reference (vs. refer to line #35...).

On Tuesday, August 16, 2005, I took the GMAT and scored a 720 (90th percentile quant/85th percentile verbal/96th percentile overall). The result was slightly lower than what I had anticipated, but I am still satisfied. I worked very hard over the last few months to obtain this score.

Background

I am a recent non-engineering graduate from a top university in the United States. I will soon be starting my first full-time job out of school at a major software company, and I plan to work for several years before applying to business schools. Since I had some leisure time between my graduation and my first day of work, I decided to take this opportunity to get the GMAT out of the way. In hindsight, I should have spent my summer drinking more and traveling around the world--oh well.

I was born and raised in the United States.

Overview of How I Studied

My first step in this process was doing a search on Amazon.com and determining which books seemed worthwhile for my preparation. After reading some reviews on Amazon as well as doing some significant Googling, I decided to buy the following texts:

- Official Guide for GMAT Review, 10th Edition
- [Kaplan](#) GMAT 2005 with CD
- [Kaplan](#) GMAT & GRE Math Workbook
- [Princeton Review](#) Cracking the GMAT 2004 (I bought this one a while ago)

As I got into my prep, I added the following:

- The Delta Course (an online math review)
- [Kaplan](#) GMAT 800

I was initially confused about how I would design my study plan, but fortunately I discovered two incredible TestMagic posts by two incredible people: Ursula and TwinnSplitter. Both were high scorers themselves, and each had an excellent methodology for attacking the GMAT. I urge all future GMAT test prep folk to check out their posts.

I devised the following study plan for myself:

First, I familiarized myself with the GMAT as a whole. Before I started studying, I had no knowledge of the GMAT. Period. I didn't know what subjects were tested, how many questions each section had, etc. I initially learned about the GMAT and its subtleties by reading through [Princeton Review](#) Cracking the GMAT, [Kaplan](#) GMAT 2005, [Kaplan](#) Math Workbook, and Delta Course (since I assumed I was weak in math) cover-to-cover in that order. I spent the first half of my studies just reading through these books linearly and not emphasizing any single topic, just to get a general feel for the test.

After thoroughly reviewing the aforementioned texts, as well as the problem sets featured in those texts, I systematically attacked each section/problem type on the GMAT--reading comprehension, sentence

correction, critical reasoning, data sufficiency, and problem solving--by practicing with Official Guide (OG) and [Kaplan](#) 800. Here, I employed TwinnSplitter's approach for tackling each section: for a given section I would rigorously practice problems of that type from OG and Kap800. I would do about 40 problems a day and would carefully review all explanations and analyze all errors. To help me analyze my errors, I recorded all my answers onto an Excel grid originally created by Ursula. This grid greatly aided me in determining where my weaknesses were in each section. Usually after about a week or a week and a half, I would feel like I had gained sufficient proficiency in the given section and would move on to another section, applying the same methodology but also doing 10 review questions from the previous section(s). I was able to finish all of Kap800 and most of OG through this strategy.

Finally, in my prep strategy I made it a point to take as many practice tests in front of the computer as possible. I tried to take a practice test every week using tests from PowerPrep, [Princeton Review](#), [Kaplan](#), and GMATPrep. These practice tests were crucial for helping me build the stamina I needed to sit through a 3.5-hour test.

Also, throughout my prep I handwrote close to 300 flashcards. Whenever I encountered some piece of information that I thought was critical to my GMAT success, I wrote it down on a flashcard. I tried to make it a point to review my flashcards everyday. Doing so helped me stay fresh on topics that I had covered well in the past.

I normally studied about 2-4 hours per day, but during my prep I took several long vacations that disrupted the consistency of my schedule. I usually did not work during the weekends.

Thoughts on Each Section of the GMAT

QUANT

On my test day, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the quant questions I saw on the real GMAT were virtually identical to those found in Official Guide, 10th Edition. I'm referring specifically to the medium/hard bin questions in OG. While I took my GMAT, I arrived at the conclusion that ETS was lazy. So many of the same question patterns I had seen in OG were tested on the actual test. Even the language of certain questions was the same, except for some slight changes in numbers used. It was really great!

Therefore, I believe that the best way to prepare for the quantitative section of the GMAT is to practice with OG, practice with OG, practice with OG! Be sure to pay special attention to the medium/hard bin questions in this book. If you are using 10th Edition, you can identify the difficulty level of each question using this grid. If you have time, try to do all the questions in OG. If you are pressed for time, do the last 100 questions of the problem solving and data sufficiency sections--they are the most representative of the real test because they come from the most recently retired GMAT exams.

Data Sufficiency

Data sufficiency (DS) caused me a lot of problems early into my studies. Like many GMAT takers, I hadn't

seen this question type before and I was initially confused about figuring out the best ways to attack these questions. Eventually, I was able to master DS by: (1) practicing as many DS questions as possible and reviewing my errors; and (2) systematically approaching each question:

Here's the DS strategy I wrote about in my Day 52 blog entry:

1. First, I read the question prompt very carefully, making sure I understand the information being presented. A common error I make is in misreading.
2. Next, I determine the question type-whether it is a "YES/NO" or "Asking for Value" question. WRITE DOWN the question type on your scrap paper. I've discovered that writing down the question type has been the most important factor in improving my DS proficiency. It keeps me on track for determining what kind of sufficiency I am seeking in a given problem.
3. Finally, keep the statements separate when solving. Very standard and important advice.

One thing that pissed me off about the books I read was that I couldn't find a single book that addressed DS strategy well. I had to figure out my own methodology. But trust me, once you have had a lot of practice with these question types, they become easy. Future GMAT test takers: be sure to review plenty of number property DS questions before you take your real exam (questions like, is " $x > y$?" or "is integer N odd?").

VERBAL

Sentence Correction

As I mentioned before, I am a native English speaker, a fact that gave me a huge advantage in sentence correction over non-native speakers. The GMAT tests a lot of idioms and subtle American English grammar that, in my opinion, cannot be easily learned unless you practice American English on a regular basis. Don't get me wrong-it's still possible for any person to master these question types on the GMAT!

The great thing about the GMAT is that it tests only a limited set of rules. [Princeton Review](#) and [Kaplan 800](#) provide a good overview of the various SC question patterns. Two free guides that I found critical to my study of SC were Spidey's Sentence Correction Notes, and Sahil's Sentence Correction Notes. These guides, created by two really generous guys, contain incredible information and no bullshit. Everyone should download them.

Even though I am an American native and had plenty of OG practice, SC was by far my greatest weakness on the GMAT. I never did get a complete grasp on the various question patterns to be found on the test. If I could do it all over again, I would have purchased the [Manhattan GMAT Sentence Correction Guide](#). I've heard only phenomenal reviews about this book. This is especially a must have for non-native English speakers.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension (RC) was probably my strongest section on the GMAT. I had a very reading-intensive major in college so I was all ready used to breaking down passages like those found on the GMAT. The best advice I can give to someone about mastering RC is not to follow anyone's advice too closely.

I believe that RC is particularly hard to advise people on because a person's approach to these types of questions is very personal. [Princeton Review](#) and [Kaplan](#) say that skimming is the best method for tackling RC—which may be true for some people. However, I've found that reading carefully works best for me (but [quickly](#)--reading each passage in under 5 minutes), while simultaneously taking notes. Thus, different strategies for RC work for different people, so it will be up to you to experiment and determine what works best for you.

In any event, here's the strategy I used for attacking RCs. The following can be found in my Day 44 blog posting:

1. Immediately write down the topic and scope after reading the first paragraph of a given passage. Doing so will help you think about questions relating to the main point or main purpose.
2. Try to go into an RC passage with an attitude that you are excited to learn about the information it contains. It takes some practice, but this strategy helps you maintain your focus while you read.
3. Read linearly. That is, try not to read sentences or parts of passages over and over again--doing so will slow you down dramatically and actually confuse you because the ideas in the passage are not being read in logical order.
4. Do not skim, but read [quickly](#). This is a personal strategy. I find that I digest information better when I don't gloss over too much detail.

I also cycled the following questions in my mind while reading an RC passage:

1. Why is the author writing?
2. What is being said?
3. How does the author accomplish her goal?

This strategy worked for me, but it may not for you. Once again, it's all about experimentation and a ton of practice.

Critical Reasoning

I developed a fairly systematic approach for critical reasoning (CR). Usually CR didn't cause me that much problems, but I did tend to make a lot of careless errors because of lapses in concentration. This is the big challenge when it comes to CR: staying focused! I think that my verbal score suffered on the real GMAT because I started getting sloppy with these types of questions--I guess I'll never really know for sure.

Here's the method I came to rely on for CR--an excerpt from my Day 66 blog entry:

1. Read the question prompt first and WRITE DOWN the question type (weaken, assumption, etc.)
2. Read the CR passage actively, noting the location of the conclusion and premises.
3. Look at answer choices and immediately eliminate choices that are out of scope, moving top to bottom. Remember, the CR passage provides a limited set of information. There tends to be a lot of answer choices with out-of-scope information.
4. Review answer choices that are left and pick the one that best answers the question.

As for anything related to the GMAT, practice makes perfect when it comes to CR. After you do a lot of problems you will get a feel for the patterns and question types that ETS loves to test. In my actual exam, I found that ETS was particularly fond of strengthen/weaken questions.

Be sure to be familiar with boldface question patterns. None of the textbooks I reviewed addressed boldface questions, which are a new format for CR. Official Guide only had one boldface practice question in the entire book. I encountered two of such questions on my actual GMAT, and I was stumped for both. The only resource I have seen for tackling these types of questions was a post from TestMagic Forum. OG 11th Edition may address boldface questions better, but I haven't had the opportunity to check out this new text. In any case, be sure to do your research on these types of questions!

AWA ESSAYS

I found preparing for the essays to be the easiest aspect of my entire GMAT prep. The first thing I did was download the official list of AWA topics. GMAC is nice enough to publish this list of topics that can be tested on the GMAT. Next, I tried to figure out what it takes to score a '5' or a '6' on these essays by looking around for examples of high-scoring essays online.

I did several practice essays under timed conditions using topics from the official list. In total, I did 5 analysis of issue practice essays and 5 analysis of argument practice essays. This is how I would typically spend my time for each 30 minute essay:

- 5 minutes for brainstorming, creating an outline.
- 20 minutes for writing.

- 5 minutes for proofreading and editing.

I recommend that you all do a few practice essays before your GMAT, just so you can get a sense of how to organize your time and ideas. Also, check out TwinnSplitter's discussion of AWAs--he lists some useful additional resources.

My Review of the Materials I Used

Official Guide for GMAT Review, 10th Edition

Many people refer to OG as the Bible of GMAT prep. But it's so much more than that. Official Guide is the Bible, the Koran, the Torah, and the Gita of GMAT prep. Every person should buy this book.

If you have time, do all the problems in OG. If you are under time constraints, emphasize the last 100 or so questions from each section, as they contain the most recently retired GMAT questions and also tend to be the hardest questions of each section.

Be sure to carefully analyze your mistakes and to read the explanations to ALL the problems. ETS likes to test the same patterns over and over again in their tests. Be keen on learning these patterns--this can only be done through rigorous practice. Like I said, on my actual GMAT many of the quant problems were virtual replicas of problems I saw in OG.

A few weeks ago, a new Official Guide 11th Edition was released. I have yet to review this latest edition, but I would advise future test prep folk to invest in this book because it is always best to practice with the most recently retired GMAT questions.

[Princeton Review](#) Cracking the GMAT 2004 with CD

A lot of people bad mouth this book because they complain that PR's practice questions are too easy, and that the book in general isn't too helpful for people who wish to score 700+ on the GMAT. In my opinion, many of their complaints are valid. The problems do seem a bit basic. Additionally, it's true that PR is designed specifically for people who wish to score in the 500s or 600s.

However, if you are starting off your GMAT studies without any prior knowledge of the GMAT (like I did), of all the books I have reviewed, PR offers the best introduction to the test. What makes this book terrific is that it is an easy read. The authors of PR have a great sense of humor and they organize their material well.

I liked the practice tests that were featured on the PR CD. Do them all if you have the time. Watch out for practice CAT 2 though--I found a bug in the scoring algorithm.

I highly recommend people to read the PR book first in their prep. From this book you'll get a good sense of what this test is all about as well as pick up some handy general test-taking strategies.

Kaplan GMAT 2005 with CD

This book also offers a good introduction to the GMAT. It is not as readable as the PR book, but the Kaplan book is certainly more thorough and features rigorous practice problems.

A special caveat to those people unfamiliar with Kaplan: Do not worry too much if you have difficulty solving Kaplan's practice problems. They are very hard--much harder than what you will see on the actual GMAT--and many of the problems are also poorly written.

IMPORTANT WARNING: Do not fret about your Kaplan practice test scores. The scores tend to be skewed down dramatically--from 70-120 points below what you should actually expect on your real exam. This is just a ploy by Kaplan to scare people into buying their expensive classroom test prep services. Nevertheless, it's still worth practicing the tests on the KaplanCD because you should have as much GMAT simulation as possible before your real exam.

Kaplan GRE & GMAT Math Workbook

I'm lukewarm about this book. I didn't find it too useful in my preparation. At first, I thought I was going to like this book because it seemed to comprehensively cover the fundamentals of GMAT math--which it does in fact do adequately. However, by the time I finished I felt like this book was too basic and didn't offer much strategy.

This book may be well suited for people who have been out of college for a long time or have not touched math in a long time. But the regular Kaplan and Princeton Review books are probably sufficient to cover the fundamentals. Save your money.

Kaplan 800, 2005-2006

I bought this book on a spontaneous Amazon.com shopping spree. What surprised me about this book is that it does not offer that many practice problems, in comparison with the aforementioned books. However, it does feature very thorough and very clear explanations to each problem. This is a great book to buy if you are looking for decent strategies to obtain a 700+.

Kaplan 800's math review is simply fabulous. The math review alone is reason enough to buy this book.

Purchase this book and review it slowly, if you have the time.

The Delta Course

I feel like I wasted my money and time investing in the Delta Course. Don't get me wrong--this online advanced math review will teach you a lot of great tips for solving probability, permutation, and combination problems.

Nevertheless, the reality is that people overemphasize the necessity of preparing for these kinds of questions. In my actual GMAT, I only encountered one permutation/combination problem. It was so easy that I didn't even need to apply my fancy Delta Course knowledge.

To do well on the quant section of the GMAT, you are best served by thoroughly practicing arithmetic and algebra. Don't waste your money by buying this service like I did.

PowerPrep and GMATPrep

The great thing about these software programs is that they are free, so definitely download them.

PowerPrep is a great resource. Be sure to look through the quantitative review. It is very comprehensive and also contains some good strategies for solving some hard problems. The look and feel of the practice tests on this software are exactly the same as what I saw on my actual GMAT. The only bad thing about this software is that the questions employed in the practice tests are drawn directly from Official Guide 10th Edition. Do one practice test at the beginning of your prep, before you touch OG, and one after your prep, after you reviewed OG. The two scores have traditionally served as an accurate predictor of the range of your real GMAT score. One complaint that a lot of people have had about PowerPrep is that its tests' quant sections are too easy in comparison with the real GMAT. In my actual test experience, I didn't find this to be the case.

GMATPrep is the new software that is supposed to replace PowerPrep. In the near future, all GMAT tests will have the same look and feel as the tests found in GMATPrep. The makers of this software claim that these practice tests do not overlap with questions found in OG 10th Edition; unfortunately I found some overlap, but not too much. GMATPrep also features tests with more difficult quant sections than can be found on PowerPrep. Consequently, I think that GMATPrep is presently the most accurate representation of an actual, typical GMAT exam.

Practice Tests

I took a ton of practice tests. Do as many as you can during your own prep. Here's a breakdown of my scores:

4/7/05 - PowerPrep 1 - 690 (45Q, 39V)

4/20/05 - [Princeton Review](#) CAT 1 - 690 (46Q, 40V)

4/29/05 - [Kaplan](#) Diag CAT - 670 (42Q, 41V)

5/6/05 - [Princeton Review](#) CAT 2 - 690 (43Q, 42V) [Skewed down from a bug]

5/16/05 - [Kaplan](#) CAT 1 - 610 (39Q, 35V)

5/25/05 - [Princeton Review](#) CAT 3 - 720 (45Q, 45V)

6/2/05 - [Kaplan](#) CAT 2 - 590 (38Q, 33V)

6/17/05 - [Kaplan](#) CAT 3 - 620 (38Q, 36V)

6/24/05 - [Kaplan](#) CAT 4 - 590 (37Q, 35V)

7/15/05 - [Princeton Review](#) CAT 4 - 720 (45Q, 45V)

8/1/05 - GMATPrep 1 - 720 (47Q, 41V)

8/8/05 - GMATPrep 2 - 740 (49Q, 42V)

8/15/05 - PowerPrep 2 - 760 (51Q, 41V)

8/16/05 - ACTUAL GMAT - 720 (96th Percentile)

Final Advice

My apologies for this post being so long. If you are still reading--I am amazed. Here are some concluding thoughts I have about preparing for the GMAT:

- **To Recent Grads:** If you are a recent college graduate thinking about business school down the road, consider taking the GMAT in the near future. This test will probably be a lot easier to study for as a student or a recent graduate because your study habits will still be fresh. Your GMAT scores are good for 5 years, so get the test out of the way early if you can.

- **Flashcards:** Record all your critical notes about the GMAT onto blank flashcards and make it a point to review your flashcards frequently. This is such an effective method for drilling strategy points and knowledge into your head. Start making flashcards from the first day of your studies. By the time I took the test, I had close to 300 cards--I was really glad I made the effort because they made my last-minute review a breeze.

- **Online Forums:** I wish I had done this more myself, but participate on online fora like Beat The GMAT and TestMagic. These fora foster excellent discussion on all things GMAT, from general strategy to answers to specific questions. Participate a lot and solve the problems that are posted--it's an excellent way of mastering the test. Careful though: these fora can be addictive!

- **Keep it short:** I did about 12 weeks worth of prep over the span of four and a half months. In

hindsight, I wish that I had maintained a tighter schedule so that I could have taken my test earlier. Try to keep your test prep within 2-3 months. Extending your prep too much can lead to burnout as well as forgetfulness.

- **Read about others' successes:** If you find yourself slumping in your studies or becoming jaded, read about the successes of other test takers on the online fora mentioned above. These people have a lot to share in their happy posts. It's a surefire way of gaining insight about the exam and boosting your own morale.

- **Confidence:** You must walk into your test with a leave-no-prisoner-behind attitude. No matter what happens during your prep or during your test, NEVER lose faith in yourself. Prepare well for your test, expect to score high, and reach your target. Shaky confidence will lead to disaster.

- **Blog it:** Consider blogging your own test prep experience. It's a great way of staying on track with your studies, and you will be helping future generations of GMAT prep people through your documentation. E-mail me your blog address and I will create a link to it on Beat The GMAT. Let's create a new online community of people who have successfully studied for the GMAT on their own! Set up your free blog at Blogger.

- **Finally, Enjoy!:** Don't forget to enjoy what you are doing. Don't you remember a time when math problems were kinda fun? Don't you sometimes think that the reading comprehension passages you read contain some interesting information? Find a way to have some fun with your GMAT preparation. It's probably something very different from what you do on a normal basis, so appreciate the experience for what it is. Once you can convince yourself that what you are doing is fun, the process becomes a whole lot easier.

That's all I got. I apologize if I left out some details or if I made some grammar/spelling mistakes.

I'd like to send out my sincerest thanks to all of you who have read my blog and supported me throughout my GMAT preparation. Beat The GMAT! has received visitors from every continent in the world (except Antarctica-maybe soon). It has been so satisfying for me to know that my blog serves such a large and diverse community. I hope to continually show my thanks and commitment to you all by maintaining my website for the future.

Remember: You can Beat The GMAT too! Best of luck!

I have been preparing for GMAT for over 10 months. Having seen multiple ups and downs, joys and sorrows, I am elated to score over 730 (my goal) on the exam. I hope that this score with my experience will help me get into one of the top B schools, probably with some scholarship. I would appreciate inputs from other's who have some experience with the same.

I got a lot from the communities at BTG and GC . Here are the things that I learned.

First phase: Study hard and solve lots of questions

I started preparing in November 2011 using [the Princeton review's](#) cracking the GMAT. The book is a great introduction but little beyond that. It just lacks any depth and is quite inadequate for non-natives. I took a mock test after completing the book and scored a pathetic 23 on verbal. That's when I joined BTG. I saw [MGMAT](#) highly recommended and purchased the entire pack. The [MGMAT](#) books were much better and dealt with things in unbelievable detail. The quant books especially the one on number properties and sets are excellent. I have TATA McGraw Hill's CAT book that deals with the same topics but it in no way compares to the [MGMAT](#) series. I also liked the Verbal books for they helped me improve my Verbal score to from 23 to 32 ([MGMAT](#) mocks) but somehow I could not improve beyond that. This was a very frustrating period as I kept on revising the books but without much improvement. I solved a number of questions on GC (Kudos to BB for the tagging system) but that did not help.

Phase 2, focused study

Desperate for improvement I looked for help. I found two companies that fit my budget - GMATPill and [e-GMAT](#). After asking people around, I went for [e-GMAT](#) (thanks Vinnik for your recommendation). The course was really helpful in pushing my score from 32 to 40. These folks at [e-GMAT](#) have a very different approach. They teach SC using logic, something that came very intuitively to me. I knew most of the rules but was not aware of the logic behind those. Once you understand those, applying them became a lot easier. This helped me improve. SC became fun. In CR, the Prethinking approach helped a lot in improving accuracy for more difficult questions. Overall, the course gave me much more structured approach towards my prep. Overall, the course provided me with a lot more clarity. Check it out if you need help on Verbal.

This also helped me focus on quant and improve to 50. I read the number properties book again (very important if you want to reach 50), did all the difficult DS problems that I found from any source and revised my mocks diligently. The last point helped me a lot. As I solved my mocks, I realized that in every mock I would answer 2-3 questions incorrectly due to silly mistakes. I focused just on weeding those mistakes out and was able to do that in 2 weeks.

My learnings:

1. Do not give up: GMAT is a very logical exam and if you are good with logic you should be able to do reasonably well. Focus on the basics if you are not improving. Define your weak areas and work on them.
2. Keep time for Sentence Correction: SC is vast, especially for non-natives. The best way to master SC is to build a foundation. Learn clauses and phrases well. Then, learn all the rules but focus especially on Verb-ing modifiers, Verb ed, FANBOYS. Work on your ability to identify lists. We are not trained to do that. (look at the helpful resources section for help there)
3. Understand the logic in CR: Most of us are good in CR. However, to score 40, you need to be better. Focus on why the correct answer is correct and the wrong answer is wrong. This was one thing I struggled with. I wish I had created a document of all the good solutions. Look for good solutions either on forums but pose a question if you are satisfied with the logic.

4. Read properly in Reading Comprehension: Build your vocabulary (not GRE level but definitely better than regular English), get comfortable with the various topics and learn how to read and retain information. My ability to retain information was limited when I started. I had to take a lot of notes. As I stretched myself, I realized that I could retain more and consequently the speed improved and the reliance on notes went down. Also read a few good magazines/journals (if you can read journals, they help a lot)
5. Quant: Aim for a 50 and work on it. 700+ score becomes a lot easier if you can get 50 on quant. Work on your weak areas. Do not leave DS for the end of your prep. Do it early. Do not hesitate to brush up the basics even if you are very good.
6. Focused prep: As you isolate your weaknesses, find good theory material and questions. Work on it till you are satisfied with it.
7. Selective Sacrifice: GMAT prep requires time and everyone is busy. One of the biggest challenges I faced was to decide where to cut off. I stopped attending all but important social visits. I did lighten up on my gym schedule but realized that it was counter productive. I also realized that short sport stints such as playing a game of badminton really helped me. I would recommend that you don't give up on sports while preparing. One more thing, I also took half my vacation during for my prep.

Helpful resources:

There are many helpful resources available on the web. Here are some that I have

AWA:

<http://gmatclub.com/forum/how-to-get-6-0-awa-my-guide-64327.html> - the best one.

<http://www.beatthegmat.com/supporting-your-position-and-refuting-others-t104987.html>

<http://www.beatthegmat.com/developing-positions-t104985.html>

GMATprep questions:

<http://gmatclub.com/forum/gmatprepsc-105446.html>

<http://gmatclub.com/forum/gmat-prep-critical-reasoning-collection-106783.html>

Sources to improve reading

1. NyTimes: <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html> The opinion column is full of great articles. Read those that are not too long.
2. WSJ: A good place to get started for business articles. There are some articles on policy too.
 - a. Economic section: http://online.wsj.com/public/page/news-economy.html?mod=WSJ_topnav_na_us
 - b. Life and culture: http://online.wsj.com/public/page/news-lifestyle-arts-entertainment.html?mod=WSJ_topnav_%27lifeculture_main
3. Discover magazine: <http://discovermagazine.com/>
4. Scientific American: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/> (lots of short articles)
5. HBR blog: <http://hbr.org/> (short and long articles, excellent sentence construction)
6. Journal of American history: <http://www.journalofamericanhistory.org/>
7. Competition Success Review: Print only, for people in India.
8. Creativity post: <http://www.creativitypost.com/> - bio sciences related articles

Use Evernote: This is a very helpful tool to catalogue whatever you read. There are times when you stumble upon something that you are unable to complete. Use this tool to tag and archive. Why use this tool: It has excellent search capabilities and it works on every smartphone, tablet and computer. Give it a try. You will not be disappointed. This is one life saver free tool.

I know it has been a log debrief. I hope it helps you.

The day that I had fantasied about for long is finally here. I may not have won a gold medal on the GMAT by scoring 760+, but I think that I have definitely won a silver medal with a 740. I have been active on these forums for almost a 1 year now and would like to thank the members here greatly who have motivated me immensely to achieve this score and also a lot of thanks to the experts reading whose explanations I benefited greatly

My background : I graduated with B.com degree from Delhi University in 2007 and am working with one of the Big4 auditing firms for the last 5 years. MBA seems to be the natural progression for me as I have had fairly good exposure with international stints in HongKong, USA and South Africa. I'm targeting one of the top consulting schools. Apart from this, I'm an ardent F1 follower(any admirers of late Ayrton Senna here?)so you'll see glimpses of F1 in this story as I love relating everything to it.

An average Joe wants to race...

Given the kind of number crunching I have to do daily, I can play with numbers fairly well and reading is something I love doing to keep myself updated with the current business scenario in the world. At the same time, I am not exceptional at GMAT Quant like an engineer would be or at Verbal like a liberal arts graduate would be. So I'd consider myself an average GMAT candidate who needed to put in the effort to crack the GMAT

Prep gets shelved

I had initially started preparation in Feb and had planned to take the GMAT by May so that I had enough time to apply in R1 but an opportunity to work on a on-site project in Hong Kong came up and i didn't want to miss it and this lead to my prep plan getting shelved. The workload was too much in the on-site project and didn't leave me with much time to pick up the GMAT books but I visited Beatthegmat regularly and soaked in all the wisdom and knowledge that was available here

Prep engine revs up again...

After coming back from HK, I started my prep in July beginning with a target of taking the GMAT by Sept first week so essentially I had just 70 days to prepare. I also told my boss that I'm planning for the GMAT and would need 1 month leave in Aug. Unlike the other bosses who don't take their subordinates preparing for the GMAT in the right vein, he encouraged me maybe because he had graduated from a top business school himself recently and allowed me to take 1 month break(quite unheard of in my company) to prepare for the GMAT.

The fuel :

Initially I had started with [Princeton Review's](#) Crack the GMAT as the cover enticed me. However, the book didn't prove to very good. This book is similar to driving a Tata Nano and participating in an F1 race. It definitely helps you move forward but doesn't have the engine to help you zoom forward. Good for getting introduced to the GMAT. I realized that I need better stuff and while in HK, I chalked out my study plan, booked my GMAT appointment and bought the following resources and in hindsight I think that planning in advance helped me greatly

1. The Official Guide 13th edition - This is the air of the GMAT world. You can't live without it.
2. Manhattan SC Guide - Great SC Book.
3. Ultimate One Minute Explanations to OG13 SC-Could never understand the OG SC Explanations,loved

this book's

4. Powerscore CR Bible- Awesome book.
5. Aristotle RC Practice Sets- Excellent resource as I was quite weak in RC
6. Manhattan Number Properties - Good book
7. Manhattan Advanced Quant- Great theory for getting 48+ on Quant
8. Aristotle PS & DS Boosters- Good resources for math practice

Preparation for the Race :

I divided my prep strategy into three parts

Phase-I-30 days- Before I go on leave

Phase-II-30 days -During leave

Phase-III-15 days- Post leave

Phase-I-Concept Building

During the first phase in July, my goal was to learn all the concepts that are tested on the GMAT without bothering too much about practice so that when I would go on leave, I could focus more on practicing questions.

Week-I

I started with SC and finished the theory in the first week using the Manhattan SC Guide and Aristotle SC Grail . Gave 2-3 hours everyday after office and 1-2 hours during the office. Did a couple of problems from each error type

Week-II

Did a combination of RC and Maths. Learned the basic strategies for RC, RC Question types etc from the forums here .Also practiced around 10 passages from the OG and Aristotle RC. Also started with the Number properties book of [MGMAT](#) during this week

Week-III

Did the CR Bible. Finished the concepts and did a few practice questions in one week. Gave me a good understanding of how to approach CR, question types and application of concepts in questions. Also started with Manhattan Advanced Quant Guide. Since it is a thick book, it's not possible to finish it with a week

Week-IV : Kept 1 day each for SC, CR and RC revision and finished the Advanced Quant guide

Phase II-Practice

This time my goal was on practicing questions so that my application skills become good.I used the OG this time to practice questions. So kept one week for OG SC ,second week for OG CR and third week for OG RCs+ Aristotle RCs. RC was the area which I had a lot of trouble in but by practicing a lot of RCs, I was able to understand what to look for and what to avoid in RCs and was able to take my accuracy from 60+ to 85-90%.

For Maths practice, practiced using Aristotle PS Booster & DS Booster apart from the OG maths questions which are below average in difficulty level . Whenever I got a question wrong, I made sure that not only

did i read the explanation, but I also referred to the relevant concept in the Manhattan Maths guides

By the end of this phase, I felt confident in most of the areas as I had done intensive practice and was ready to test my skills in the next stage

Phase III- Testing myself

During this phase, all I did was take full length tests. Took one test every alternate day & focused on addressing the areas on that day and the next day. Analyzing a test in excruciating detail is the key to improve and not merely taking the test. Scored consistently between 710 and 760 with an exception on one test in which I scored a 680.

The Race Day

As the F1 drivers prepare themselves psychologically before a race, I did the same for the GMAT too. I kept on visualizing what to avoid and what to do during the test. I also prepared myself about what to do if things go wrong- say I screw up the first part of the maths section, then how to pull myself back instead of throwing up my hands.

I reached the test center on time, did all the formalities and started the exam. The first thing that surprised me was that the appearance of the actual GMAT screen was exactly the same as that of the GMATPREP. I think this boosted my confidence to a great extent as I realized that the exam will not be very different from what I have already practiced and fortunately the exam went smoothly. I did mess up things at a couple of places but no regrets; after all that's what an exam is- you would try to avoid the dangerous corners but still you will bang into some of them but what is important is to not spend a lot of time recovering and get back in action **quickly**.

Final thoughts:

- 1.Planning your prep well in advance is very important ;otherwise you will end up sailing rudderless without having a clue about what is going wrong.
- 2.Maintaining an error log helped me a log as it helped me revise the things to remembers easily.
3. Keep visiting this forum regularly even if you don't post here regularly. It will ensure that you don't lose the motivation to study.
4. Ideally, try to finish your prep within 3-4 months. Stretching your prep beyond that may lead to you losing momentum because of some project ,family commitments etc.
5. Stick to the trusted resources.
6. Classroom coaching is not a must but can be helpful if you are looking for discipline.As long as you can maintain discipline on your own and meet the targets you have set for yourself, you probably don't require classroom training.
- 7.**The most important point:You don't need to reinvent the wheel; all you have to do is follow a plan which the high GMAT scorers use and customize it to suit your needs.**

Applying for the Early Action rounds [Fuqua](#) is my next target and I just hope that I'm able to finish the application race as successfully as the GMAT one.

Cliff's Notes Version on How to Get a 770

- 1) Read "The Big, Overarching Principle" section below.
- 2) Buy the OG12 and four [Manhattan GMAT](#) books: Sentence Correction, Number Properties, Geometry, and Word Translations.
- 3) Work through those four [MGMAT](#) books carefully, taking notes on any content points that you don't already know cold (which will be a lot).
- 4) Search for a guide on absolute value and inequality problems and learn the techniques for attacking those questions. Or buy the Equations, Inequalities, & VICs [Manhattan GMAT](#) book.
- 5) Once you've learned all the content from [Manhattan GMAT](#) and those two minor math points, take the OG12 diagnostic exam, untimed.
- 6) Review any knowledge that the diagnostic exam showed that you didn't know cold.
- 7) Take the first official GMATPrep computer adaptive exam under timed conditions to see where you stand speed-wise.
- 8) Time yourself doing OG questions to improve your speed.
- 9) Once you've worked through the entire OG, do all 6 of the [Manhattan GMAT](#) online CATs that come free with your book purchase.
- 10) Set an exam date once you are able to finish the entire [Manhattan GMAT](#) exams in the time period and are answering questions accurately.
- 11) About a week before the exam, start studying outlines for the AWA.
- 12) Crush the GMAT.

Intro

I'm going to skip a detailed narration of how I studied, because: 1) everyone is going to work with a different timeframe and I want my advice to be as generally applicable as possible, and 2) the fundamentals behind a study plan are much more important than the specifics of the study schedule. Let's jump into it.

The Big, Overarching Principle: Content First, Then Speed

There is a finite amount of knowledge that the GMAT tests, and it is 100% learnable. Once you have mastered the content, all the GMAC can do to make the test difficult is:

- a) find new ways of asking the same question
- b) combine multiple concepts into a single question
- c) throw in simple tricks that might lead to careless errors
- d) ask a lot of questions in a short period of time (such as 37 math questions in 75 minutes)

In my mind, it is pointless to study for speed until you know every concept the GMAT is going to throw at you. Until you know ALL the concepts, big and small--for example, that when a triangle is inscribed in a circle and one side is a diameter, then the triangle is by definition a right triangle--it doesn't matter how fast you are at answering GMAT questions in general. When you face a question that relies on you knowing that specific piece of knowledge, you'll either be forced to guess or you'll have to find a circuitous route to answering the question that may not be logically sound anyway.

Know the content backwards and forwards. Take as much time as you need to learn it, and forget about speed.

Once I had finished studying content, I took the OG untimed Diagnostic Exam. I got a 100% on both verbal and math. Your goal should be the same: know everything. It's really not that much information in the grand scheme of things.

The Best Way to Learn Content is [Manhattan GMAT](#)

I did my research on these boards first and concluded that the first step in my GMAT studying process should be the series of [Manhattan GMAT](#) guides. That turned out to be entirely correct.

I can't speak to other guides since I didn't use them, but [Manhattan GMAT](#) will cover 100% of the content that will be on the GMAT. On the actual exam, I don't think I saw a single question that tested something I didn't know, and any questions I missed were because I made a careless error or I was running low on time and had to guess (and that was only one question). The [Manhattan GMAT](#) guides are also very compact: they don't include any extraneous content that isn't tested on the exam.

The 4 absolutely essential [Manhattan GMAT](#) guides are:

- 1) Sentence Correction - As everyone here points out. Even if you are an excellent native speaker and writer, there are many, many grammar rules that the GMAT tests which you won't know. What "sounds right" to your native ear is in many cases wrong.
- 2) Number Properties - Because no matter how naturally good you are at math, you won't be able to figure out the properties of a consecutive set of integers in the 2 minutes you have to answer a question.
- 3) Geometry - Same as #2, except insert "properties of an angle inscribed in a circle" instead.
- 4) Word Translations - Nothing in here is too advanced, but this book fills in the topics that aren't covered in Number Properties and Geometry: rates & work, combinatorics, probability, statistics, and overlapping sets.

I also purchased Equations, Inequalities, & VICs, but the knowledge in there can be attained by searching for guides on inequalities and absolute value problems. The guide has a few other tips for how to approach different types of questions, but it's not nearly as essential as the four I mention above.

How to Use the [Manhattan GMAT](#) Guides

There are probably a few ways to approach this, but the method that worked for me was:

- 1) Read through each section carefully and take notes on everything I didn't already know cold (which was most things). For example, I knew that all triangles have interior angles that add up to 180 degrees and I remembered the formula for area, but I didn't remember that the sides of a 30-60-90 triangle were

in the ratio of 1-2-root 3.

2) Make those notes comprehensive enough that I wouldn't have to refer back to the book later. This will save you a ton of time in the long run, because you WILL need to review these concepts repeatedly in order to know them cold.

3) Do the problems at the end of each section. It's really helpful to apply all that knowledge you just learned.

This will take you a long time. The Sentence Correction guide in particular will take forever, as it is gigantic and there will be many things you don't already know. However, going through these books will be far more effective than just whipping through questions in the OG and trying to learn concepts from their explanations of the answers.

Once you've worked through the [Manhattan GMAT](#), take the OG untimed diagnostic

It's important to take the diagnostic untimed, because you want to see the upper limits of your knowledge of the exam's content. If you're working too [quickly](#), you may make some careless errors or not have time to think through the complexities of the more difficult problems. Focus on getting the answer right, and you'll work on speed later.

The diagnostic will tell you if you need to work on any areas not covered by the 4 essential [Manhattan GMAT](#) guides. (Personally, I was naturally very strong in verbal, so I didn't have any trouble with Reading Comprehension, and I did well enough in Critical Reasoning that it wasn't worth putting too much focus on it. You may be different.)

The diagnostic will also tell you if there are any areas in the 4 [Manhattan GMAT](#) guides you need to re-focus on. If you missed any questions because you didn't 100% know the concepts behind it, go back and review.

Once you know the content, take a GMATPrep exam to test for speed

Once your untimed diagnostic proves you know the content (or proved that you didn't and you went back to review), take one of the official GMATPrep computer adaptive exams. This will show you how you perform under timed conditions and will reveal where to put your focus on next.

It turned out that I was 100% fine on verbal and could finish the section with >10 minutes to spare. However, I really had trouble finishing math when I took my first GMATPrep, and I didn't even get to the last 7 questions in the 75 minutes. Thus, I knew I had to focus most of my speed training on math.

Once you know the content cold and you know where to focus, practice for speed

I'm sure there are 1,000 different ways of doing this, but the one that worked for me was:

- a) Choose 10 questions in order from the OG
- b) Time myself doing them

- c) As I work through, mark any questions that I wasn't 100% sure I got right
- d) Check the answers and additionally mark any questions I got wrong
- e) Go back and review the questions I got wrong to see if I could figure out the right answers without looking at the OG's explanation
- f) Review the explanations for questions I was unsure about but still got right
- g) Take notes on any tricks or pieces of knowledge I didn't already know cold

With the math section, I started off sometimes taking over 25 minutes to do 10 questions, but by the end, I could do even difficult math questions in 15-18 minutes.

Going through the entire sections in the OG also has the pleasant side effect of revealing any gaps in content that you may still have. I found that there were many points that seemed very minor when I was first working through the [Manhattan GMAT](#) guides but that turned out to be essential for answering a question in the OG. Use this opportunity to review, until you know even the smallest details cold. The [Manhattan GMAT](#) guides are really, really good. They don't include extraneous information that the GMAT doesn't test, so know absolutely everything they say.

Once you're done with everything you can practice in the OG, use the online [Manhattan GMAT](#) practice CATs

A set of 6 computer adaptive tests is free with the purchase of any [Manhattan GMAT](#) book, and the exams are pretty good (and supposedly better than any other prep company's unofficial exams). A few notes about them to be aware of:

-A lot of the [Manhattan GMAT](#) online math questions are very computation or algebra-heavy, and that's what makes them difficult. In contrast, rarely will you have to work out crazy algebra on official GMAT questions to get an answer. Just be aware of this. If you can finish 37 [Manhattan GMAT](#) math questions in 75 minutes, then you should be able to go even faster on official questions.

-Some of the [Manhattan GMAT](#) verbal questions are just retarded. Critical Reasoning, in particular, has some questions on which the correct answer's logic doesn't make any sense. Ignore them. Every question on the real GMAT will be sensible.

-Like with the OG speed training, mark questions you're unsure of, so you know which ones to review later.

Once you are finishing [Manhattan GMAT](#) practice exams in the time allotment and getting a decent score, make sure your test date is set

I got through about 2 full CAT exams when I figured I would be ready in a few weeks to take the test, so I signed up. Just bear in mind the lead time required to book an appointment in your area. In Los Angeles, the earliest test date I could initially find was 8 weeks in the future. However, I found a cancellation that was about 4 weeks away, so I jumped on that.

About a week before the exam, start glancing at the Analytical Writing Assessment

Everyone treats this as mostly an afterthought, and if you're a native speaker and writer, it probably is. It did help me to look at a few templates for how people should structure their essays. This one was pretty good: http://www.platinumgmat.com/about_gmat/awa_essay_template

I ended up with a 6.0 on the AWA, and really, I think the keys were:

1) Have a large quantity of substantive points for both essays. For the Analysis of an Argument, in particular, there were a ton of different criticisms to make. Cover as many as you possibly can, even if it doesn't fit neatly into one of those prebuilt outlines. Even if one of your paragraphs is two sentences, that's okay: "The author also mistakenly assumes <assumption>. This is faulty because <reason> but could be improved if <improvement>."

2) Write A LOT. If you look at the sample essays with grades in the OG, the first thing that should jump out at you is that the Score 6 example is long, the 4 example is shorter, and the 2 example is the shortest. No matter the stylistic quality of your writing, the more substantive words you get onto the page, the better your score will be.

Take the test!

If you do all of the above, you'll rock it.

A Final Note on Attitude

My general attitude my entire life towards standardized tests has been, "Given unlimited time and patience, I'm perfectly capable of getting a perfect score. Let me work hard to prepare and see how close I can come to that perfect score on test day."

Unless you're Rain Man or some child prodigy, you're not going to walk into the GMAT and pull an 800 out of thin air. Even if you're incredibly well prepared, chances are there will be one or two questions that will throw you for a loop and you won't be 100% sure of your answer in the 2 minutes you've allotted to find it. That's okay. Prepare the best you can, and a good score will follow.

The best definition of confidence I've ever heard is, "I did it yesterday, I'm doing it today, and I will do it again tomorrow." Know the content cold and practice for speed (yesterday), take the practice tests (today), and crush the actual GMAT (tomorrow).

Hello everyone,

I haven't posted very much on GMAT Club forums before now because I never thought I had anything worthwhile to share, but now that I got a ~~decent~~ good GMAT score, maybe my debrief will help someone.

My Background

I am a 25 year-old American male. I have always performed above average on standardized tests. I had great success with the ACT especially. I didn't care as much for the SAT. I remember the obscure vocabulary and analogies to be quite challenging.

I received a BS in chemical engineering and a MS in bioengineering from a good-but-not-great state school (although our football team is top-notch). After my master's I joined the Peace Corps (in 2010). My work mostly involves community development and English education in Ukraine.

Method of Study and GMAT Score History

I used the [OG 12](#) and GMATPrep software. I liked the OG because it provides answer explanations. Because of the introduction of the IR section, I was actually able to use two versions of GMATPrep software (before and after the change). This allowed me to have 4 adaptive practice exams. In general, I never studied on two consecutive days, nor for longer than 3 hours at a time. When using the OG, I enjoyed working through one question type at my own pace without a time limit.

First GMATPrep Practice Exam

Last summer (2011) I determined that I wanted to pursue an MBA after Peace Corps if I would be accepted to a highly ranked program. I downloaded the GMATPrep software from mba.com. I took a practice exam on July 13, 2011. I received a score above 700. I don't remember what it was exactly, but I remember thinking that while the score wasn't amazing, it wasn't so low that I felt nervous about preparing for the test. I forgot about the GMAT for a while.

Registering for the Test and Practicing Diagnostic Questions

On April 29, 2012 I finally registered to take the GMAT in Kyiv, Ukraine on July 3, 2012. I wanted to take it before it changed in early June, but I didn't want to miss work at the end of the school year (since I'm a teacher) and the dates just didn't work out. I had the good fortune of finding a copy of GMAC's Official Guide, 12th Edition among the free books that volunteers leave in the Peace Corps office. This guide has a short diagnostic test (paper-based) that I used to test myself. I intended to answer the quantitative questions, find how many I'd missed, then answer the verbal questions, but I never got to the verbal questions. I was appalled that I had missed about 10% of the quantitative diagnostic questions. I reviewed my mistakes and realized that half of them were due to careless mental math errors (saying $12 \div 1.5 = 6$, or 4 out of 20 is 25%) and the other half were due to reading the question incorrectly, thereby missing important details. I didn't do any other studying in April.

Working with the Official Guide (12th Ed.)

In mid-May I decided to answer 40 of each question type available in [the official guide](#). There were five question types (PS, DS, CR, SC, and RC). I didn't time myself for these and I didn't do more than one question type in a single day. When I had the time and urge to study, I simply opened the guide to the

section of interest and began answering questions using only a pen and scratch paper. I would answer 40 questions without a break (but also without a time limit), but no more than 40, except in the case of RC, where it was logical to answer the 41st question as well. It took me a few weeks to get to all five categories. I think I did the two quantitative question types in May, but didn't finish answering the other three until mid-June. Of the five categories, I missed one question for each category except PS, of which I answered all 40 correctly. **I would make sure to review the answers and explanations for every question I answered incorrectly or answered correctly by guessing.** I felt that answering 40 questions at a time improved my stamina and ability to focus. Answering just one type of question at a time served to get me better acquainted with each question type. I removed the element of time so that I would be able to learn how to answer correctly. I wanted to identify the mistakes I was making without the complication of time limit effects.

Subsequent GMATPrep Practice Exams

Still using the old GMATPrep software (based on Java), I took my second practice exam on June 26, 2012. For the Analysis of an Argument section, I simply typed out an outline with sections such as: *argument's thesis, supporting evidence, underlying assumptions, alternative explanations, and other information that would be useful*. I didn't write an actual essay. I decided to skip the *Analysis of an Issue* section, since it wouldn't be on my actual exam (I would take the Next Generation GMAT with Integrated Reasoning). I finished the quantitative and verbal sections in good time. It was only later that I realized how much mental fatigue I spared myself by only writing an outline for the first essay and skipping the second essay altogether. My result on this exam was 770 (50Q, 46V). I felt really encouraged by this, but I knew that it didn't account for the new IR section.

I had taken a look at the practice IR questions on mba.com and didn't feel too concerned about the new section. Actually, I thought it would favor analytical people like me. I can't say that writing is my strong suit, so I wasn't upset to see the second essay go. On June 27 I downloaded the most recent GMATPrep software that is based on Adobe AIR. I was stunned by the quality and breadth of the changes GMAC made to the software.

On June 28-29 I worked through more PS problems in the OG, but didn't do anything strict or regimented. I think I answered 100 on the 28th and 60 or 70 on the 29th, until I got tired and decided to play Diablo. Diablo 3 and GMAT preparation were my two time sinks from June 20 until G-Day. I found it necessary to decompress, especially after taking practice exams.

On June 30 I took a practice exam using the new software and had problems with time management (it's convenient that the new software saves this information for later review). I only answered 34 of 37 quantitative questions and 11 of 12 IR questions. I answered all verbal questions in 47 minutes. Verbal has never given me too much trouble, but now that I'm an English teacher, I find it even less challenging. My score on this practice exam was 760 (49Q, 45V, 8 IR). I thought it was noteworthy that I got a perfect IR score even though I didn't answer all the IR questions (and I'd even guessed on the last question I answered because time was running out). I realized there is some leeway there. I was a bit disappointed by the decrease in my score. I told people, including myself, that my goal was 730, but I secretly hoped for 750+.

After this practice exam I searched GMAT Club forums for explanations of the quantitative questions I'd missed. This is when I discovered Bunuel, GMAT Club member of the month and all-around outstanding poster. I saw his signature contained links to all sorts of challenging quantitative problems. I knew that I wouldn't have consistent internet access after leaving my apartment on July 1, so I opened all of Bunuel's PS links and saved the problem and solution sets on my computer as Word documents (although if you do this, be aware that not all equations copy properly automatically; I had to look for "holes" and manually copy the relevant image file from the original post and insert it into my document). I began reviewing exclusively these especially challenging 700+ questions. **One unforeseen consequence of reviewing only super-hard questions is that I lost my confidence.** I encountered questions I didn't readily know how to solve more frequently than I had done when I was simply

answering questions in [the official guide](#). This was especially true of complex permutation questions, for which even Bunuel's solutions and explanations were sometimes difficult for me to understand. As test day drew near, I told myself that the real GMAT wouldn't contain exclusively super-hard questions, and I should calm down.

On July 1 I took an overnight train from my home to Kyiv, where I would take the test. On the train I solved PS questions (without a time limit) until the lights were turned off. I wasn't able to sleep all night because the passenger next to me snored very loudly. I had been aware that I might not be able to sleep on the train, which is why I had planned to arrive in Kyiv a day early, not simply on the day of the exam. I arrived on July 2 and found the test center. I actually walked all the way into the office where I would need to register on the day of the exam so that I knew how long it would take me to get there. I went to the apartment where I was staying and took my last remaining practice GMAT. I again had problems with time management. I only answered 35 of 37 quantitative questions, but finished the verbal section in 53 minutes and the IR section in 15 minutes. I noticed that all IR questions and some RC passages and questions were the same as those in the first practice exam I'd taken using the new GMATPrep software. This is one reason my times on those sections were so fast. My score on this practice exam continued the downward trend. It was 750 (49Q, 44V, 8 IR). I tried to encourage myself by reasoning that I hadn't slept at all on the train. That night I went to bed around 10:30 (tired from no sleep the previous night and mentally exhausted from the practice exam), but I couldn't fall asleep for a long time. My mind was racing. I worried what would happen if I got a low score. I worried that I wouldn't have time to retake the test before essay prompts begin to be released, and then my attention would be divided. I didn't think my work experience alone would get me into a good school. I tried to fall asleep but kept thinking about how much I needed a strong score. Also, it was just too hot in my room. My window was open, but the night air still hadn't become cool. Eventually I fell asleep.

TEST DAY

I woke up at 7:20, well before my 8:00 alarm went off. I ate breakfast, although it didn't sit too well because of nerves. I traveled from the apartment to the Peace Corps office in Kyiv, where I planned to return [the official guide](#) I'd borrowed and pass the time until my exam. I had about two hours to kill. I couldn't help but fret about the test. I checked my email, chatted with people, and solved PS problems from the guide to calm down. I read online about London Business School and INSEAD. I knew three of the five schools to which I would send my scores, but I wasn't sure about the last two spots. In the end, my five were Booth, Kellogg, Fuqua, LBS, and INSEAD. Now I wish I had replaced INSEAD with Tuck.

I arrived at the test center early. My appointment was for 2:00 and I arrived around 1:15. The test administrator asked me to wait, but he told me that he could get started if I gave him my passport and appointment confirmation. I gave them to him and sat in the hallway to wait. I started reading some posters on the walls, but I couldn't keep from getting nervous. I had serious butterflies. I sipped from a bottle of juice I'd brought with me. I had heard that it's good to drink something with sugar and electrolytes during the scheduled breaks to alleviate mental fatigue. I ended up "sipping" half the one-liter bottle before I even began my test.

At about 1:45 the test administrator, Vladislav, invited me in to have my palm scanned and picture taken. When I said I was ready, he escorted me to the testing room. There were four test stations arranged in a row. It was a small room. I asked Vladislav whether I'd be the only one testing. He said yes. I was relieved.

The first part was the essay. I noticed right away that the computer keyboard's keys felt squishy and it didn't register every keystroke. I typed slowly and deliberately and looked carefully for spelling errors. I also noticed noise from people walking in the hallway. I put in the earplugs that had been supplied to me. I didn't take time to write or type an outline. I was afraid I'd run out of time if I didn't start promptly. In the end, my essay included all the points I wanted to make, all the alternative arguments and underlying assumptions and so forth. But my essay seemed short, and as time ran out I couldn't

help but feel that it could have benefited from more polish.

The integrated reasoning immediately followed. I noticed right away that the mouse didn't consistently register clicks. One of the early questions, perhaps the third, was worded in a way that I found quite difficult to understand. I spent a long time (too long) working on this problem. It was a two-column question. I made my selections and checked to see that they met the constraints of the prompt. It seemed that they did, so I moved on. I think I must have spent 8 minutes or more on that problem. Since there were several questions still ahead, I thought that I could save a little time on each of those and be fine. In the end, I didn't have time to answer the final two questions 😞 I don't know my IR score yet, but I'm hopeful that I'll get a 7 or 8, or that my IR score won't count for too much, since business schools will still be adapting to the new GMAT format.

I took the first optional break. According to the lock screen on the computer, I had 8 minutes, but Vladislav told me I would have only 5 minutes. I went to the hallway, drank some juice, and cursed myself for running out of time on IR. I tried to calm myself before returning from my break, but it was no use.

The quantitative section went smoothly, except that one of the pens supplied to me didn't write very well. It would make two lines whenever I made a stroke. I read each question, then solved it on my laminated 10-sheet notepad, then selected my answer, then checked to see that the answer worked. I spent the most time on the DS questions and on PS questions that were structured with three conditions (I, II, III) and answer choices like (I only, II only, I and III, etc.). I assume most GMAT Club members know what I'm talking about. Even though I checked each question after selecting my answer, I finished the section in good time. I think I had 6-8 minutes left. I was relieved that I didn't see any complex permutation questions like those I'd stressed about in Bunuel's problem sets.

I took the second optional break. I sipped juice. I used the bathroom. I rinsed my face with water. I fussed about my appearance in the mirror. I thought about my performance on the quantitative section and felt that there was still hope for me to get a good overall score (this is in contrast to how I felt after IR). It all depended on the verbal section.

I've always found SC relatively easy. Verbs should agree with nouns, phrases should logically describe their noun (and that noun should be the closest noun to the phrase in almost every case), and there are a few finer points (like the differences between "fewer" and "less," "between" and "among") that aren't difficult to remember. On RC questions I took care to identify the basic content of each paragraph, and from the content I deduced the purpose of the paragraph. I also paid attention to the language used throughout the passage, which can sometimes make the purpose of the passage clear. On CR questions it's most important to identify which answer choices have nothing to do with the topic at hand. I reached the last verbal question, a SC-type, with about 6 minutes left. It was at this point that I realized I hadn't looked at the timer throughout the entire verbal section. Thinking back, I only glanced at the timer two or three times during the quantitative section. **I realized that over the course of the test, I had become a kind of question-answering zombie--**I had no awareness of anything besides the present question. I didn't even recall the question immediately prior to the current one. As the exam had worn on, I came to be entirely focused on the current prompt, what it was really asking, and which answer choices were viable and which were nonsense. I took my time and ended my exam with about 3-4 minutes remaining.

I paused when I saw the report/cancel scores screen. It was the first time I'd seen it, since it wasn't present in the GMATPrep software. I felt good about my test performance with the exception of IR. Then the unofficial score screen came up:

Quantitative: 51 Percentile: 98
Verbal: 51 Percentile: 99
Total: 800 Percentile: 99

I got goosebumps when I saw it! I raised my hand to be dismissed and shakily walked with Vladislav to his station, where he printed out my unofficial score report and scanned my palm one last time. He said it was the first time in two years that he'd seen a perfect score.

General Test-Taking Advice

I can't say I'm a GMAT expert. But I highly recommend all GMAT examinees get acquainted with both the content and the length of the test. I was content with [the official guide](#) and GMATPrep software, both of which were produced by GMAC. For specific advanced questions, GMAT Club met all my needs.

Mental fatigue is real and it tends to snowball. I mean that as you approach the end of a section, fatigue will cause you to think more slowly, it will force you to re-read or re-calculate, and spending longer on each question will only serve to fatigue you even more. In the weeks leading up to your exam, take a few practice exams. I recommend taking them at the same time of day you as your test appointment. If possible, determine whether you are mentally fresher in the morning or afternoon before you schedule your exam.

Also, time management is important.

To those expecting scores of 700+, I would say do not pay too much attention to the clock. You have the ability to identify the correct answer, you just need to do it without second-guessing yourself or getting distracted. It might seem counter-intuitive, but I really believe my time management was better because I wasn't paying attention to the time. Don't calculate how much time per question you have remaining. Don't determine whether you are ahead or behind schedule. Focus instead on identifying what the question is asking and which answer choices are decoys or traps. It's important to avoid diverting your attention from the question at hand and losing your train of thought (on the current question) and your momentum (on the test section).

For those who aren't merely struggling against time, I would advise you to use strategies to eliminate answer choices whenever possible. This way, even if you truly don't know how to solve a question, your guesses will be correct more often. That's the goal: to narrow the choices and to do it as quickly as possible. On quantitative questions, use estimates when possible. On questions such as:

Which of the following must be true?

- I. $x < y < z$
- II. $y < z < x$
- III. $z < x < y$

use test (example) numbers when possible, especially testing values between 0 and 1, between 1 and 2, and between -2 and -1 and -1 and 0. Don't forget to test 0 itself! And on SC questions, identify the noun and verb and ignore the answer choices that don't have the right form. On RC questions, an answer choice might use words from the passage but combine them to make a statement that is inconsistent with the content of the passage. Don't be deceived by the presence of conspicuous keywords from the passage. I think the strategies I've listed here will help eliminate the most incorrect answer choices the fastest, thereby helping you finish the section in time. Finally, pay attention on all questions to what's NOT said. Don't add or imagine that an opinion was stated in a passage or a constraint was listed in a quantitative prompt, when in fact there was no such thing.

Conclusion

I'm glad to put the GMAT behind me for now. The initial excitement of my score has worn off and now everything is firmly back in perspective. After all, if a school's student body has a median GMAT score of 700, it means that half of the accepted students scored 700 or below. That means that they were accepted because of other deciding factors and the GMAT didn't change the strength of their application. Similarly, I know that my GMAT won't get me into any schools that don't already like my essays, interview, and work experience.

I don't claim that luck played no part. ~~I know that I didn't get every quantitative question right; otherwise I would have gotten a quantitative score of 60 according to GMAC's percentiles.~~ But now that I have taken the GMAT, I can stress about the essays and recommendations, which will be crucial in convincing adcoms to take a chance on an applicant with so little relevant industry experience.

I believe anyone can prepare for the GMAT, and it doesn't cost a fortune. I found [the official guide](#) exceptional. Also, Bunuel shared some formulas that weren't in the guide and I had forgotten (such as the sum of the first n consecutive positive odd integers equals n squared). Practice is key! I wish you all luck in your business school endeavors and beyond!

Though I am not a master in GMAT, I want to share with you all my GMAT experience. Today I gave my GMAT for the 2nd time and got a 720 (51Q, 36V). Finally, I have achieved my target score of 7XX and I feel elated to be finally over with my GMAT.

To give a context, my first attempt at GMAT was on 25th Sept 2010 and got only 640 (50Q, 28V). I was really disappointed and knew that I could [cross](#) the 7XX barrier if I give a bit extra effort. Circumstances changed, and I could not study for sometime and finally decided to give a second shot at GMAT around March. I started preparing from May-June 2012 with full swing. I badly needed to [cross](#) the barrier of 700 being an Indian and from an engineering background. I knew I could make it, I just needed to study diligently and give as many mock tests as possible. And now today, I feel, those efforts paid off. All's well that ends well. Thank you all at BTG! I have been a regular visitor here and I used to read all the "I just beat the GMAT stories" and tried to keep myself motivated. I wondered if I would ever get a chance to narrate my story also. God is great!!

Materials used for preparation:-

1. Official Guide - 12th edition - I had this book from my 1st attempt and didn't think it was worthy enough to buy the 13th edition. Anyways IR is not counted atleast now!!
2. [Manhattan GMAT](#) - SC guide - This is the BEST book one can have in SC. Its a MUST HAVE for all.
3. [Manhattan GMAT](#) - CR guide - Borrowed this book from a friend. Has some good pointers for approaching CR questions.
4. [Princeton Review](#) - Cracking the new GMAT 2013 - Good book with many practice problems. Especially the harder Math and English bins are really good practice materials. 4 Free CAT tests come with this book.
5. 1000 SC - The most comprehensive SC practice one can ever get. Somehow I managed to complete all 1000 questions. Answers with explanations are easily available over the internet in various blogs.
6. GMATClub Tests - A wonderful source with tons of sectional tests (both Quant and Verbal). A really good practice material. There's nothing better than timed practice.

Mock tests given and scores:-

1. [Manhattan GMAT](#) 1 - 640
2. [Manhattan GMAT](#) 2 - 590 - Was completely out of mind. Had to attend a lot of calls during the exam.
3. [Princeton Review](#) Free Test - 710
4. GMAT Prep Test 1 - 730
5. [Manhattan GMAT](#) 3 - 690
6. [Manhattan GMAT](#) 4 - 700
7. [Manhattan GMAT](#) 5 - 670
8. [Manhattan GMAT](#) 6 - 690

9. Princeton Review Test 7 - 610 - Didn't worry as Princeton scores are usually 100 pts lower
10. Princeton Review Test 8 - 640
11. Princeton Review Test 9 - 640
12. Manhattan GMAT 1A - 700
13. Manhattan GMAT 2A - 680
14. Manhattan GMAT 3A - 680
15. Manhattan GMAT 4A - 780 (Inflated probably because of some repeat questions)
16. GMAT Prep Test 2 - 710 (taken 2 days before the test!)

In all the tests my verbal scores varied between 32 - 39 and Quant scores varied between 45 - 50.

Very evidently GMAT Prep Test scores (730,710) are the most accurate indicators of the actual GMAT score (720) 😊

Last few weeks before the exam, I took a lot of mock tests and repeats just to keep myself habituated in giving long tests. This is very helpful. I even took 2 tests in one single day to test my tenacity!!

Last day before exam:- No more tests. Just browsed through all the exercise books which I worked, the error logs and Manhattan SC guide. I kept reading the idioms and other SC rules. Made sure I slept a lot and kept myself fit for the D-day.

Test day experience:-

Experience was good. Nothing unexpected. Essay was easy. IR was okay. Though guessed a few because of lack of time. Took the entire 8 mins break and started the Quants. They looked very easy after all those Manhattan Quant questions. Manhattan Quants are really the toughest of the lot. Finished my Quants with 2 mins to spare. Took the 8 mins break, drank some water and started off with the most dreaded section of all. As usual, I had no clue, how I was performing and prayed to God after almost every question!! One of the RC's was really long and very tough! I guessed 2 out of the 4 questions there!! I took some more time in solving SC's than I took normally in the mock tests to make sure those were right. I really practised a LOT of SC's as I knew this is the section where accuracy can be increased dramatically!! It probably paid off. Towards the end I was bit slow and had 3 questions left in 1.5 mins. Made a random guess in the penultimate question as I didn't have time and you know it's VERY important to finish the exam. Finally I came to the last question with 30 secs to spare. Fortunately it was a simple SC. I got it with 5 secs to spare. And there you are I have finally finished the GMAT. Quickly browsed through the background questions and finally the score screen. I was so happy to see a 7 in the hundred's digit 😊 All's well that ends well.

I will be more than happy to answer if anyone has any questions. Seriously, this 80 point jump is not something out of the world. As I mentioned, self-belief is the key, and the willingness to work towards your goal is all that matters!! Cheers and all the best to all of you who are giving the GMAT in the coming days!!! 😊

Thought I'd share my two pennies worth of advice here! I was extremely dejected after working hard towards my first attempt and scoring a 650 (target was 700+). Here's the link to my post after my unsuccessful attempt : <http://www.beatthegmat.com/big-dip-in-gmat-scores-650-q46-v33-t118981.html#496384>

I went for a second attempt yesterday and got a 740 (Q49, V42); first attempt was in August

Following were key changes to my gameplan:

Verbal:

- Studied the passages really well and understood the flow of events very clearly : some experts suggest skim-reading and subsequently digging into the passage for the answer after reading the questions. This did not work for me. I still had to dig in sometimes, but only to confirm my answers
- Sentence correction questions can sometimes be tricky. I used to select an answer choice as soon as I detected the applicability of a rule. In my second attempt, I did look out for rules, but verified my final selection for meaning as well - I believe this really helped
- Critical reasoning : I found CR tough on the real test. The GMAT prep and [MGMAT](#) questions were relatively simple - I really don't know what can be done about CR. I did go through CR Bible that many recommend on this forum, but I would say that book is good only for below 700 level questions. It does however give you a solid methodology to work off

Quants:

- I practised from gmatclub tests, [MGMAT](#) questions and the GMAT Prep software. I also bought the additional GMAT Prep questions that you get online for \$25.
- I tend to jump into questions very [quickly](#). Whilst speed is obviously important, it helps to pause and plan an approach before diving in. On hindsight, even on my second attempt, I rushed into a few questions that I would have got correct had I planned my response - cannot however complain with a 3 point improvement

And yes, I got a good night's sleep this time round and that really helped - Thanks to the motivating comments and advice from joeItaly on my previous post 😊

Hi guys, I just got home from the test center; I scored 750 (Q50, V41)!!. This is my second attempt -I scored 610 in my first attempt. I am not an active member on the community but I am a frequent visitor. I would like to thank ALL the members of the BTG community for all the posts, recommendations and reviews. I want to share some of my thoughts when they are still very fresh in my mind. I apologize for the really long post.

First attempt: (June 2010)

My job requires a lot of travel and most of my preparation was done in the airports and in the hotels. When I gave the GMAT the first time around, I knew that I 'deserved' (if I can use that word) better. My mind was not in the right place because of some issues and I went to the test center very disturbed. Clearly, this had a big impact on the score. The score of 610 is lower than the score I got when I took a practice test for the first time WITHOUT ANY STUDY! So, needless to say, I was pretty disappointed and lost a lot of confidence. I was especially very disappointed at my verbal score because that was lower than what I got without any preparation.

One good thing I did after coming home that day was to write down my test day experience for myself. I wrote down how I felt in each section in as much detail as I could remember. This really helped me the second time around. **I strongly recommend this to anyone who plans on retaking GMAT.**

I went ahead and applied to the part-time MBA program at Robert Smith School of business. I was offered an admission there but I didn't take it as I didn't think that their program was a good return on investment, even after my company was ready to cover a (small) part of the tuition.

Second attempt: (today - Aug 18th 2012)

Verbal preparation:

Due to heavy travel and work load, I didn't get back to the books until late last year. I think I re-started my preparation sometime in December of last year. I realized that I need to take a very fundamental approach for my verbal preparation. [MGMAT](#) Sentence correction, which was the only resource I used the first time, is a good book but it does not cover the foundations needed for non-native English speaker like me. I read about [e-gmat](#) on the forums and wanted to give it a try since it was said to be targeted for non-native English speakers. I tried their free videos and was immediately impressed. I signed-up for the full verbal prep course including live sessions.

Though [e-gmat](#) has sentence correction and critical reasoning (very minor focus on RC though), I was especially impressed by the sentence correction part. I learnt how to breakdown a complex sentence into smaller, more manageable clauses and this helped me in better comprehending the meaning of the sentences. A very important note to non-native English speakers: NEVER underestimate the importance of meaning in the GMAT SC. Most of the SC questions I saw today in the actual GMAT and in the GMATPrep, OG 12 and other official sources can be easily solved once you focus on the meaning of the sentence. If you don't focus on the meaning, you are certain to make a mistake on many medium and high difficulty SC questions. In addition, I noticed that once I started to focus on sentence structure and

meaning, I was able to do better on critical reasoning and RC as well! This was a big bonus as both CR and RC NEED YOU TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS THE MAIN POINT - something that you will not get unless you understand the meaning of the sentence, argument or the passage.

For critical reasoning, I used [MGMAT](#) critical reasoning book. This is, in my opinion, the BEST book on critical reasoning.

I didn't use any resource for RC as I was pretty good at RC already and I have been getting almost all of the RC questions correct in all of the practice tests. The main thing in RC is to summarize to yourself the essence of each paragraph - I have never written down a thing during RC but I ALWAYS summarized each paragraph in one sentence in my mind. The smaller passages are the worst; they do not really have the same organization and structure of a big passage. To me, the smaller passages were much more difficult to comprehend than the longer ones. If you are like me, you need to realize that even though the smaller passage seems like one big paragraph without any breaks, make sure you mentally break it into easy to understand chunks - again, summarize intermittently in order to continue to build the BIG PICTURE in your mind. OG 12 and OG verbal 2 are the best resources for RC - note that the answer explanations for RC in the OG are much better than those for other sections. So, be sure to read each and every explanation, even for wrong answer choices.

Quant preparation:

Like any other Indian, I am good at Math in general. In addition, I have Masters in Engineering and have aced some of the most advanced math courses at the Masters degree level. But I had trouble with GMAT math. If you are like me, you need to realize that GMAT math is NOT AS MUCH ABOUT MATH AS IT IS ABOUT HOW YOU THINK!!!! The sooner you realize this, the better. The GMAT math is pretty fundamental but you need to work through the initial 'obscurity' that GMAT adds to the problem. This one realization really pushed up my math score.

I used [MGMAT](#) math books for my preparation. If you have these books, you really don't need anything else for math prep - period. GMATCLUB tests (they came free when I signed up for [e-gmat](#) live prep) are VERY good for practice. I took only 3 (out of 30-something) in the past couple of weeks, but those 3 tests really boosted my confidence and speed. I suggest that you first study the [MGMAT](#) books and then start trying out the GMATCLUB tests.

IR SECTION:

I didn't get a chance to prepare well for IR. I spent the few hours I got each day during the week on SC, CR and Quant and I didn't have any time to prepare much for IR. I viewed the IR introductory videos on BTG and bought access to [MGMAT](#) IR question bank for \$2 - great deal, thanks to BTG! I was totally devastated by my performance on [MGMAT](#) IR questions. I felt that they were very very difficult and I soon realized that I need to develop a new set of skills in short notice, which is not realistic. I decided that given my time limitations, I am going to focus only on Multisource reasoning and two-part analysis - for the rest, I am going to do my best on the exam day and hope for the best! That is what I did. I hope that my score won't be too low!!! I will update the post after I get my score report.

Test day experience:

I stopped all preparation yesterday since I didn't want to be burned out like I was during my first attempt. I think this really helped put things into perspective for me - I spent the day playing with my 2 year old son.

My test was at noon today and I was at the test center by 11:30 am. The staff at the test center has changed - I didn't remember seeing any of them before.

Argument essay was OK. Then came the IR section - the questions were not as bad as the [MGMAT](#) questions but they did drain my mental energy.

When I came out for the break, the proctor, who was clearly new in her job didn't know whether I can go to my locker and have a snack!! When I told her that I want to go to my locker, she opened GMAT rules book and started reading it!!!! DAMN IT WOMAN - YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO KNOW THIS!! I lost valuable time. I was late for Math session, I lost a full minute!!!

I was pretty mad at her and at Pearson VUE for letting such untrained people be proctors but I didn't let this get to me. As I started solving the questions, I fell right back into the groove and midway through the section, I realized that I was doing OK on time. I had to get a new notepad - which again wasted some time. I had to guess on probably a couple of questions but overall felt that the section went OK.

During the break I [quickly](#) returned from the restroom, fearing that I will lose valuable minutes in verbal section where I cannot afford to lose any time. I was parched and hungry - my tummy started rumbling as soon as I started the verbal section. I felt that I was doing OK but I was behind on time by around 6 mins when I reached question # 20 - not good. I tried to speed up but it is really difficult to speed-up. I had to guess on the last 4 questions. I felt that I probably totally messed up the entire section.

After the background info, I selected 'report scores' and 'next' and just closed my eyes and stated to think about what I need to do if I score below my 610. When I raised my head, I was glad to see 750 on the screen!!

GMAT 760 (Q49 V44) debrief

After around two month of preparation and numerous practice tests, I took my first GMAT on 23rd June'12. I ended up scoring a, what I called "not good but reasonable", 680(q47 v37).

Being an Indian Applicant, I knew somewhere that it was definitely a below par score and that I will need to work very hard to churn out exceptional essays to even stand a chance of an interview call from any of the top US B-schools. I was massively disappointed with my Quant performance coming from an engineering background from a very reputed Institute in Pune, India. Somewhere I knew I could do at least slightly better if not something seriously over the top.

I was readying myself for the Essays part when I heard of MBAdream.in. In my first conversation with Rahul there, he came across as a person who's been there and done that, what he is actually in fact. I expressed my disappointment with my first GMAT score and he gave me a logic that turned out to be the final nail in the coffin of my first GMAT attempt.

Rahul asked me the score I expected of myself before the exam, which to me was anywhere in the 700-720 range. He then asked me to divide the additional expense I will have to bear just because I scored lesser than my expectations with the difference in expected score and actual score. At 680 GMAT, with very low chances of scholarships from top schools, I was staring at an additional expense of anywhere between INR 20-30 Lacs. Each mark had cost me at least a lakh rupees. It is this realization that pushed me to retake the test and I booked a slot for 18th Aug'12, approx a month's time away from when I talked to Rahul. During the entire month of preparation, talking to Rahul kept me going at the target of getting myself ready. He kept on highlighting the importance of a higher GMAT Score.

This time I had no nerves and had a better understanding of the test and experience of an actual test. All I had to do was raise my verbal score significantly and perform on quant to my natural ability. Over the next month, I went through RC99 and Aristotle SC document and defined clear strategies for the CR section. Earlier I had believed that CR was all instinctive and in RC, the passage was not worth a second glance while answering. These two things precisely led to my downfall. Corrected these two basic errors in my approach and I was ready for it.

I gave 5 tests on my way to the actual test day, one every weekend and one somewhere in the middle. Following are the scores. Don't have the break-ups in my study log though.

GMAT prep1 - 730

Manhattan GMAT1 - 730

Manhattan GMAT2 - 660 (don't know how!!)

Manhattan GMAT1 - 740

GMAT prep2 - 740

A 740 on the official test prep just a day before the d-day gave me a lot of confidence and I didn't look at a single document that day after the test. Didn't even analyze my errors. Just chilled out and hoped that I'd be at least this good on the test.

9On the test day, as I had an afternoon slot, lazed around till around 12.30 in the afternoon and started for the test center. I was anxious but nowhere close to the anxiety levels of the first test. I knew I had nothing to loose, except for the additional money I had paid in retaking the test of course

When it started, I breezed through the Argument and IR and waited patiently during the break to take on

Quant. I had repeated the MBAdream logic to myself on numerous occasions but I replayed it once again in my head. That was all I had ever needed.

Frankly, I remember neither a single question nor a single minute of the next 158 minutes of my life. And when the screen hanged to calculate the score, I'm sure I skipped a heartbeat. But when the score flashed, I could breath again. The shoulders were lighter and world seemed like a better place all of a sudden. I had aced the GMAT, at least by my standards. A neat 760 was right there in front of me. Although Quant still showed an average 49, I couldn't have asked for more on Verbal (V44), and I could most definitely not complain about the overall score.

Came out of the test centre and called Rahul #firsttthing! He was as elated as an elder brother would be. We knew we had at least made it easier on the pocket.

I shared the same feeling.⁹In customary MBAdream style, he said, "Bhai tu mane ya na mane, teri aaj ki kamaai kam se kam 10-15 lakh rupaye hai, Congrats!!".

I'm still in the midst application process, but for all that has come to pass, I thank MBAdream and Rahul for the support I've got till date and hope that it continues in the future. At the same time, I wish MBAdream loads of success and all the luck they need in time to come.

I know this isn't exactly the kind of debrief most aspirants look out for or most people pen down once their exam is done. But for me, after reaching 680 in the first attempt, it was all about that last push I needed to decide on retaking the GMAT. I feel that after a certain point, the GMAT doesn't really test your knowledge but it checks your confidence and strategy, if you have any, to take the test. If one can cover those two bases, the GMAT isn't really a big deal.

So anyone who is mulling on retaking the test may play the MBAdream logic to themselves or get in touch with Rahul or me if you need to. Irrespective of whether or not I land a big Fish next fall, this GMAT experience will stay with me forever, reminding me of the famous Edison quote, "Many of life's failures are men who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up."

Cheers and best luck in all your quests.

First off, thank you all for posting, answering questions and your motivating stories. They helped me and I hope this helps you one day.

A little about myself. I grew up in the U.S.. Obtained my bachelors and masters degree's in Civil and Structural engineering, respectively. So Quant was definitely a strong suit. But the GMAT is not about designing buildings, so I had to brush up on a lot of my math skills. Let me start by saying when I started I thought the GMAT was a piece of cake. Until I took a practice test and barely squeaked out a 580. That really woke me up and brought me back down to earth. So here it is.

I decided engineering is cool, but not something I want to do for the rest of my life. So at the ripe old age of 23 I started studying for the GMAT. Goal has always been either [Kellogg](#) or [Booth](#), since I live in Chicago. So I knew I needed at least a 700 to have a decent shot to get in.

After doing some research I liked [Manhattan GMAT](#), so I bought all of their Study Guide Books on Amazon. Honestly, the books were awesome. I read through them. Felt pretty good about everything and did some [MGMAT](#) CAT's. Below are some of my scores.

Took actual GMAT without studying too much, just brushing up on concepts:
GMAT #1: 600 (Q46 v27) November of 2011.

Obviously that was a failure. So practice [MGMAT](#)'s are below.

[MGMAT](#) CAT1: 650 (Q44 V35)
[MGMAT](#) CAT2: 640 (Q43 V34)
[MGMAT](#) CAT3: 670 (Q45 V36)
[MGMAT](#) CAT4: 640 (Q44 V34)
[MGMAT](#) CAT5: 630 (Q46 V31)

I figured 5 tests was good enough. I took the actual test a second time.

GMAT #2: 570 (Q45 V25) End of March 2012.

This was devastating. This almost brought me to tears and I really don't cry that often. Up to this time I really thought I could wing the GMAT without being that great at grammar. I didn't have time to learn grammar. I have a loving wife and 2 yr old kid with whom I enjoy spending time with. I also have a lawn that is not going to cut itself. Long story short, I was working about 50-60 hours a week as a Structural Engineering and trying to not be a horrible husband/father while studying for the GMAT.

Luckily my wife encouraged me to take the test again. I took about 2 months off and did not even think about the GMAT. Around May of 2012 I realized that I need to work on my grammar and such for the SC portion. I started from scratch. Literally from 'what is a verb'. I bought the SC GmatPill. It was ok overall, but not earth shattering. In all fairness my conversational English was just fine, but my proper/GMAT English could use some work. Either way, the [MGMAT](#) SC Book was pretty awesome. I also bought the PowerScore for CR. Also very solid. I kept doing a lot of OG problems. Using an error log. Tracking the

time for each questions. Really slowing the process down and getting QUALITY OVER QUANTITY! This is huge!

I signed up for all the daily problems from every possible website. I lived and breathed with my GMAT study books. At first I wanted to take the GMAT a third time before the IR change, but realized that I needed some more time. I'm very glad I waited.

Eventually I've done all of the Verbal OG questions twice. and taken the [MGMAT](#) CAT's again. Below are some of the score.

[MGMAT](#) CAT6: 700 (Q47 V39) (I was pumped!)

[MGMAT](#) CAT1A: 660 (Q44 V36)

[MGMAT](#) CAT2A: 620 (Q45 V31) This was 5 days before the exam!

I was again devastated. I took the GMAT Practice tests with their software and was consistently getting about 660. Nothing spectacular.

So with 5 days to go I start stressing out. My wife is out of town, so I have some free time. Took a day off of work and just put in like 8-10 hrs. Just piles of practice SC problems. Used any and every problem I could get my hands on. Dissected the solutions until I started seeing doubles of everything. Also I went back to all my [MGMAT](#) tests and wrote down the formulas/concepts for all the math problems I got wrong. Which was only Probability, Combinatorics and some Standard Deviation stuff. I went back to the [MGMAT](#) Guides and reread those sections (all within the last 5 days). I really felt even more confident in Quant. So then came test day.

Test Day:

Left 4 hours before the test (trip is approx. 1 hr) Got [stuck](#) in major traffic (this never happens at 10am) and started freaking out. Of course this would happen on test day. Test was at 2pm. Got there with 2.5 hours to spare. Started reviewing all of my notes of questions I missed furiously. Almost forgot to eat. Got some food. Walked over to test center, said a [quick](#) prayer and walked in.

Testing folks were great, no problems there. Signed in and destroyed the AWA Essay. That CEO had no chance. Now I never practiced any IR at all. But it seemed relatively straightforward. I feel pretty good about how I did there, guess I'll find out in a couple days. Took my first break.

Had my granola bar. Downed a Starbucks coffee. Did about 30 push ups. I was pumped for the Quant. Went back in and was doing good. At about question 20 I may have finally missed a question, but was still ahead as far as timing goes. But the quant didn't feel bad, until question 25 or so. Man, the GMAT gods struck with a vengeance. Crazy geometry. Obscure inequality/absolute value data sufficiency. Just an absolute nightmare. I was glad I was ahead on time. I finished with about 39 seconds to spare. Felt wiped out, but knew I did well. Took my second break.

Had a few more granola bars. Did 30 more push ups. Got my blood pumping and back in to do Verbal. First 20 were fine. Couple weird SC's, some vague and confusing articles but I took detailed notes on RC articles and really forced myself to actually care about them. There were a few tough CR questions, but

nothing unmanageable. Around question 30 I started to lose it. I knew the test was almost over. My heart started beating really fast. I lost my concentration and was falling apart. I was ok on the timing, even 3 minutes ahead. So I stopped completely and for 60 seconds, closed my eyes and just did some breathing exercises. This helped calm me down. Finished the last couple questions, probably got them wrong and didn't feel too confident in my Verbal score. Went through the bs demographic questions and boom: 700.

GMAT #3: 700 (Q49 V38)

Double fist pump in the air. I felt about 20 lbs lighter. I was so happy to have this over with.

Some general thoughts/tips.

1. Don't let the test consume you. Breathe. Exercise. Do whatever you need to be in control.
2. Timing is KEY! If you are behind and guess it's ok. But do NOT under any circumstances spend 4-5 minutes on a math problem. It will destroy your timing and is not worth it. I strongly believe that with time and a good foundation one can easily score 660-680.
3. Don't give up. I have to say that I am by far one of the worst standardized test takers. When I tell my friends how I do on standardized tests they do not believe me, because the scores are so low. I suck at them! They are horrible! They give me nightmares. If you are like me, then all I can say is that there is hope. But it requires a lot of practice. Like so much practice that you start understanding how and why the GMAT writers give you certain options on the SC and what they are trying to trip you up with. So much practice that when you Data Sufficiency problem and you want to select C (both 1 and 2) you realize that it's a trick question and you're falling for their trap. Practice is not overrated. Studying works. If you think it doesn't then you haven't studied hard enough.

Do I wish I got higher than a 700? Of course. But getting a 700 is good enough at this point. My ROI to get a 720 or so is simply not worth it.

If you have any questions feel free to message me.

The GMAT is a tough test. If anyone ever tells you otherwise then challenge them to actually take it. The GMAT will humble you and bring you down to your knees. But with enough practice you can beat it!

So happy studying to all of you. Hope this helps. Now I'm off to write some essays.

Dear friends,

Sorry that it took me long time to share my 5th GMAT story. It was mainly because I was overloaded with writing my applications to business schools. At least the whole effort paid off when this week I was notified that I got an interview to [Ross](#). So exciting. So this post is dedicated to all the members in this forum that encouraged, supported, and inspired me along the way. I admire you. Let's start:

My GMAT story is a nightmare. Starting from the end, I took the GMAT exam five times in two years. I endured repeated setbacks and by persevering ultimately conquered the exam, while growing and learning much about myself along the way.

I don't want to describe again all my previous attempts (you can read it here: <http://www.beatthegmat.com/610-4th-time-gmat-is-it-time-to-let-go-t91243.html>), but I will rather refer to them when comparing my 5th exam's approach with my previous exams' approaches. Before I kicked off my preparation for my 5th exam, I wanted to understand deeply my two major problems: anxiety and my low score on the Verbal (even though I consistently scored high on simulations). This time, for the latter, I decided to do study differently. I wanted to come to the test after I made some changes in the way I think, in the way I approach the exam, and in the way I solve questions. Please note that I am not going to talk about the Quantitative section because I never had problems with it and I scored 50,48,49,49. I only had difficulties with the Verbal section. Having said that, here is a list things I've changed before my last attempt:

1. First and foremost - I contacted the best Verbal private tutor - Irene - who has 25 years of experience preparing students for the Verbal Section and most of her students are beating the 700 score. She is a very interesting woman - a musician who travels around the world for 6 months every year to compose and spread her music, and in the rest she teaches the Verbal section privately. (Irene Contact information: gmateverbal@gmail.com). Although Irene teaches via Skype, I preferred to meet her face to face because I wanted her to witness my approaches in action and analyze what I am doing wrong (plus - we live in the same city). At first, she gave me few SC questions to solve and asked me to write detailed solutions with everything that I know. She immediately realized my weaknesses and strengths and decided to customized her course so that it will fit my knowledge base. I can't express how much I value her, so let's summarize that she is just amazing. period.

Now some real insights on the exam. Some she taught me, and some I've figured out myself:

2. Treat the exam as if you don't have the time limitation. In my previous attempts and following many advises by top GMAT tutors here, I tried to answer ALL the questions. Irene told me that this is a WRONG approach especially for international students that don't process English as native speakers, without mentioning even the reading speed. It's more important to answer the first thirty something questions (about 34) with as many correct answers in a row as you can (I can say almost without wrong answers), rather than check the clock all the time and randomly guess questions to meet some timing strategy. I was very skeptic about this approach but after I used it few time in GMAT Prep, I've realized that it

actually works. Working on questions without having the time limitation significantly reduced my stress. The last few questions still need to be guessed, but if you follow that approach and you answered most questions correctly, your score won't drop to less than 35. Take a simulation exam without looking at the clock, and leave 2 minutes at the end to guess the last questions left. If you reached question 33-35, you are ready to take the exam. If you reached only 30 - keep practicing the concepts to gain more confident (the speed will come with it).

3. Understand how the GMAT works. For that I used this rule of thumb:

- * Easy questions = huge fine, small bonus.

- * Hard questions = small fine, big bonus.

This means that if you don't answer the easy questions correctly, especially at the beginning, you are going to get a huge fine. i.e. no 700 for you. You have to answer the easy and medium level questions correctly in order to start getting hard ones, otherwise the GMAT won't trust your ability and challenge you with difficult questions. Answering correctly the easy questions is more important than answering the hard questions correctly. On the contrary, if you approached the hard level of questions, and you answered them correctly, you will get a huge bonus. If you happen to answer them wrong - not big deal - you will get a small fine.

Keep in mind - you have to answer the easy questions correctly.

4. Focus issue - this is one of the best advises I've heard from Irene which I've completely ignored - after the Quant section and the break, the mind loses its focus and your concentration level drops. So when starting the Verbal section, it takes time to gain your focus back. Now, it happened to me in 2 stages of the exam: at the beginning immediately after the break, and around the 12-14 question. This resulted always in wrong answers that dropped my score. Irene told me to just dedicate extra 30-60 seconds to read few times the question and review the answer when I enter this state. Like magic - it solved my careless errors in those stages.

5. Study material - thanks to ronaldramlan and Irene, I've realized that the practice questions of ALL prep companies (yes yes, including [Manhattan GMAT](#), [Knewton](#), [MasterGMAT](#), etc) are just not good! The questions format, mainly in SC and RC, is very different from the real GMAT questions, and when you practice with them, you starting to get used to recognize those patterns, even though they don't appear on the real thing. There are specific patterns according to which the real GMAT SC and RC questions are written (believe me I've analyzed thousands of questions). Irene taught me to work according to specific huge set of rules which helped me gain confidence in my knowledge answer more than 90% of the SC questions correctly. This gave me a huge advantage on the GMAT - usually SC questions considered to be more easy, so I didn't fall on easy questions. So practice only GMAT Prep or official guide questions.

6. Let's drill down a bit:

My approach to SC questions:

Before my 5th try, I used to read the entire question and tried to identify the errors and figure out the meaning, etc.

After: A big change here - I read ONLY the underlined part and immediately compared it with other answer questions to identify the errors tested. I was very skeptical about this approach and it took me long time to get used to it, but I've learned that more than 90% of the answer choices of GMAC GMAT questions can be grammatically eliminated, before jumping into meaning, etc. Be very suspicious about each word location and function in the sentence. You won't believe how many answer choices I've eliminated based on pronoun ambiguity or use of adverb instead of adjective.

My approach to RC questions:

Before my 5th try, I used to read the entire passage and MAP it in my mind (main idea, author POV, purpose, etc). Then I approached the questions and jumped back to the passage to validate my answers or search for information. I didn't write anything during RC question and RC was my toughest area for me to improve.

After: my tutor told me the following sentence: after 2 hours of exam and under huge pressure do you really trust your brain to remember tons of unimportant details and understanding everything after reading once a really complex passages? So here another big change - apparently GMAT RC passages have tendency to pose the important information of every paragraph in the first sentence or two (I have to give credit for [MasterGMAT](#) that are using this approach, but I didn't listen to them back then). So, I quickly created a table and distilled the important information from the first sentence of each paragraph (not more than few words), and then skimmed the rest of the paragraph to find important transitions/specific information and filled the table with it. General questions - I answered based solely on my table. As for specific questions: I located the relevant area to look for in my table, and moved to read the text accordingly. This way your brain remains fresh and not filled with a lot of unnecessary information. You won't believe how many questions of RC passages focus only on one paragraph, so why spend all your time reading it all?? Again, it took me forever to master this approach, but eventually it really worked.

Lastly - I worked on myself as an individual, adapting steps in my life emphasizing relaxation and

tranquility. After my 4th attempt - I was beyond devastated. My friends and family, who supported me along the way, tried to convince me to let go. But I believed in my abilities and I was determined to study an MBA in a top school next year. So I didn't let go, and neither you need to.

In summary, it was a long journey. I am happy to finish with it and I am happy to share it. I will finish with the words of Napoleon Hill that said: Effort only fully releases its reward after a person refuses to quit.

Feel free to ask any question. I promise to do my best to answer.
eladshush

Just a [quick](#) update:

Thank you all for your kind words. Throughout my entire preparation, the members in this forum helped and inspired me so much! All I wanted was to contribute back to the community, so the least I can do is share my story and be as responsive to your kind messages as I can.

Edit:

I have 2 announcement for you:

1. I I've edited my post above to include Irene contact information. So feel free to contact her.
2. In the past couple of months, I've been working on an iPhone GMAT application in partnership with Irene, and some other talented GMAT tutors. This app is going to expose her amazing teaching material and methods along with my learning experience insights, as well as tons of practice questions (2000 Verbal and 2000 Quant). All included in one app. Get ready!! We will launch the application in couple of months from today. I will update soon.

Hi everyone, I just got back from the testing center and I was floored by my score. I would be remiss to not discuss my journey from 650 to 770.

I purchased the complete set of [MGMAT](#) books in January 2011 and had planned to take the test last year. I wound up deciding to refocus on work and my GMAT prep went to the back burner. Fast forward to February 2012 and I decided I wanted to go to b-school again. I had heard the test format was changing in June so I targeted the end of April as my first attempt and I figured I could take it again at the end of May if I didn't do well. I read all of the [MGMAT](#) books for my first test, but neglected any practice tests until the last weekend.

I scored a 650 on my [MGMAT](#) practice test and scored the same (48Q 33V) on the real thing.

I was disappointed in my score as I was shooting for a 700+ score.

After that test, I started reading the forums and realized that I hadn't been doing enough preparation or practice tests. I purchased the Aristotle Sentence Correction ebook and refocused. I went over every [MGMAT](#) book again and I did a number of practice tests, probably too many! I did about 6 within 6 weeks.

My scores were as follows:

[MGMAT](#):

700 660 680 740

GMAT prep:

700 720

I was fairly confident about my next attempt. I did a bunch of practice problems the day before the test and on the morning of. I found that I got exhausted during the Verbal during the real thing. I scrolled through the score report and found that I scored a 680(48Q 36V). I was bummed. I thought that I would give it another shot, but take more time and study the right way. I bought the Powerscore CR Bible and the new OG. My study technique was to do every problem in the OG and then redo every problem that I got wrong the first time through the book. I focused more on verbal, but did all the quant problems too. I did every problem with a 2 minute timer and would redo them if I didn't finish within 2 minutes. Regarding practice tests, I only did 4 between June and August 29.

I did the the new GMAT prep tests once and I redid the [MGMAT](#) practice tests, with the following results:

GMAT Prep: 700 750

[MGMAT](#) 730 680

I did my final [MGMAT](#) practice test on the Sunday before the test and scored the 680. I lost some confidence. During this final practice test, I was too slow on the quant and wound up guessing on the last 6 questions and I was too slow on the verbal and didn't finish. The last practice test showed me that it was imperative for me to speed up if I fell behind. On my test this morning, I skipped some quant questions in the middle in my weak areas (combinatorics and geometry). I was about 6 minutes ahead of pace on the verbal and really slowed down on the last 6 questions to make sure I got those right. I didn't expect such a high score, 770 (50Q 46V), but I am happy with the results.

So here is some advice for those of you still working hard at the GMAT:

- Use the [MGMAT](#) books, OG, and the Powerscore CR Bible, and apply the techniques on real problems
- Take a max of 1 practice test per week and review every problem in the test
- Review your problem areas and make sure you finish those OG questions within 2 minutes
- Relax on the day before the test! Cramming won't do anything, but exhaust you for test day
- Review your practice test question timing. The GMATPrep software tells you how much time you took for each question, so use that information to your advantage!
- Guess early rather than later
- Eat a plain breakfast the morning of the test and get a good night's sleep before. Don't stress yourself out the night before.
- Take advantage of the forums and read up on your problem areas. You can do a forum search for each subject area and review those problems.

To briefly introduce myself, I am **not** a native English speaker. I have an undergrad. degree in Engineering from the US.

I took the test last Saturday and scored 700 92% (Q 49 - 89% , V 36 - 80 %).

I took the GMATprep the first time in my GMAT preparation trip and scored 490. By then I realized I needed alot of preparation to get to 700 or so. I registered for **Kaplan's** course and spent \$1,500. Here is what I think of Kapan's course: it is good only for beginners and those looking for up to 550 - 600. **Kaplan** classes are more heavily focused on test strategies and guessing tricks than the underlying knowledge and skills needed to score high on the GMAT.

My 2 cents ? almost all that you can learn from **Kaplan's** class in two months can be easily obtained from a**Kaplan** book or the **MGMAT series** in two weeks time for ALOT less cost.

One major negative side of **Kaplan** is that they never mention **the Official Guide** for the GMAT by mba.com.

As the **kaplan course** ended I took the real GMAT and scored 600 (Q 48, V 25). I knew I needed much improvement in Verbal.

Early in 2007 I discovered the GMATclub. I learned alot from this forum and I figured out the existence of the OG.

I am not trying to be nice or something, but I really want to thank GMATClub for taking me to the 7xx club. I couldn't have done it without the help of all active members of GMATClub at the math and verbal forums. Many posts of old members back in 2005 and 2006 were extremely helpful as well. I spent a great deal of my time surfing the GMATclub forum.

I am not going to waste your time with my test day story and my practice scores .. etc. I will start directly with my test prep strategies, hints, and advices. I can summarize my conclusion in ten big HINTS :

Hint 1: The GMAT is getting harder and harder. The GMAT a year ago was alot easier, both quant and verbal sections.

Hint 2: The **Official Guide 11** is a MUST have/do. If you take the GMAT test without doing every single problem in the **OG 11**, then you're wasting your time and money unless you are really good and already in the 700 level. If you take the GMAT before doing all problems in the OG and taking the GMAT prep 2 tests, then it is entirely your fault and lack of hard work and strong preparation.

Hint 3: Take the GMAT Prep tests each once to examine your level and approximate score. Then, retake the GMAT Prep as many times as you can to get new questions for practice in verbal and math, mainly untill you get almost all questions available in the pool. These questions are very good practice materials and reflect the type of questions you would see on the test. Bare in mind that the GMAT Prep

is NOW easier than the actual GMAT test. The hardest questions you'll get on GMAT prep math are not as hard as the upper bin ones you'd see on the real test.

Hint 4: Don't do the big and most common mistake of the following:

I love math, I'm good in math and I have a technical degree (engineer, CS, math .. etc). My English is fluent and I read newspapers in english .. well, at the end I did my degree in an english speaking institute. I can do reading. I know how to write correct english. As long as I'm good in Math I will score good in GMAT. You take the GMAT and boom 560 (Q 48-50, V 15-25). What ?!! This is unfair.. oh I need help !

Hint 5: the GMAT is not an easy test. It is a big challenge for most people. Less than 10% of test takers score higher than 690 on the GMAT. If you want your 720, *you must pay alot of time, great amount of effort, and some money.* GMAT is not fun by any means. getting an MBA from a top school is worth the effort you put into preparing for the GMAT.

Hint 6: You have a free amazing tool for the GMAT. Whether you utilize it or not, it is your problem. If you don't believe me, at least I did my part and gave you the advice. USE GMATCLUB !!!! Be an active member. answer problems, involve in discussion of hard SC questions. Help others and get help. Instead of paying \$1000 on GMAT books from every single available test prep company, use the free posts on the GMATclub. It should take months before you can say that you fully utilized and took advantage of the GMATclub. Read posts from even 2004. tons of 7xx scorers have posted their experience in here.

Hint 7: If you're shooting for 48+ on the math/quant part of the GMAT, **GET THE CHALLENGES** (now **GMATclub tests**) (<http://www.gmatclub.com/wiki/tests>). Those tests are really amazing and teach you alot of advanced concepts. Previously, they used to be much harder than what you may see on the GMAT. Nowadays, *many questions from the challenges reflect the hard big questions on the real GMAT.* So these challenges are worth more now than before.

Hint 8: To score high on the GMAT you need three things. You can not score high unless you have mastered these three:

1. **Knowledge:** SC structure and grammer, MATH forumals and concepts, Vocabulary for GMAT in RC and CR .. etc
2. **Skills:** Process of Elimination, reading skills, logical reasoning, ability to extract information data from a math questions, data sufficiency skills .. etc
3. **Strategy:** time management, educated guessing, skipping hard and time consuming questions, stamina strategy .. etc

Example: By strategy and skills only you can never do very well in RC unless you know good vocabulary to understand the passages. The same thing applies if you don't know the main arithmetic equations.

Example: If you master the knowledge and concepts behind the GMAT and have the sufficient skills, you can never do really well if you don't manage your pace throughout the test and end up not finishing the section.

Hint 9: Practice .. Practice .. Practice .. Practice .. Practice .. Practice ..

No score is out of your league. Once you get the knowledge, skills, and strategy, you can keep practicing untill you reach 800 if you want.

Hint 10: I have compiled a list of top quotes and advices by many top scorers GMATclub members. It is the "Golden Quotes by GMAT Clubbers !"

<http://gmatclub.com/forum/1-t43532>

What I used to prepare and that I would recommend :

- o [GMATclub challenges](http://gmatclub.com/wiki/tests) (5 of them only) - <http://gmatclub.com/wiki/tests>
- o [Manhattan Sentence Correction](#) book and [Manhattan number properties](#) book (Both are a must)
- o [Official Guide](#) 11th edition and [Official Guide Verbal](#) and [Official Guide Quantitative Reviews](#)
- o Spidey notes for SC - <http://www.gmatclub.com/forum/p572956#p572956>
- o GMAT Club forums
- o [Kaplan book](#)(for basic concepts and introductory strategies to left me from 490 to 600).
- o [GMAT prep tests](#)
- o [Peterson AWA book](#) (worth it)

I just finished taking the exam for the 2nd time. Proud to report that I scored a 750 (49Q, 44V). It was not an easy journey. On my first diagnostic, which was taken after my first month of study, I had scored a 550 using the GMATPrep software. I thought that I would at least score in the 600s, and thinking this was surely a mistake, I retook it again for a similar score. I knew I was in no shape for the exam and studied HARDCORE for a good 6 months before taking the exam last month to get a 690 (47Q, 38V). I was disappointed since I was aiming for 700+ (but probably in the low 700s). I knew that this should be a realistic goal because in practice tests my verbal score would usually be around 41, whereas on the actual exam I got a 38. My goal for the 2nd retake was to just hit 700, since I was sooo close the first time.

I'll be honest, a 750 was more than I could have ever hoped for. I have always been mediocre at taking standardized exams, and both my math and verbal skills are mediocre at best... believe me, I am not trying to be humble when saying this, especially numbers... oh god I've always hated math and numbers. As for verbal, I had to stay back one grade in school because my English ability was not up to par... oh, and did I mention that I was born and raised in the US? Anyone who knows me personally knows that I could never be classified as a smart person... I have been called an idiot or absent-minded on numerous occasions. When doing practice tests, as well as on the actual exam, I have never finished the exam before time ran out. I am a slow thinker, and require a lot of time on exams, or I don't finish. The GMAT is one of those tests that I really had to rush on and still not be able to complete on time. I had to randomly guess on 2 or 3 questions at the end of the exam. Therefore when I saw my score, I was pleasantly surprised. I was really aiming for a 700 or 710 the whole time, but never expected a 750 to pop up. Despite my shortcomings, I will say that I am tenacious and hard working. I studied 5 hours a day for most of 6 months. After getting a 690 the first time, I doubled my efforts for the month before the retaking. When I took my 2 week (and expensive) vacation to Asia, I spent at least 3/4 the time in a coffee shop studying. Given that I was in a resort town the locals, hotel staff, everyone thought I was insane to waste my hard earned money spending the days studying in the hotel restaurant instead of tanning on the beach. I am a firm believer in hard work, and I know that if I can get a decent score, then almost anyone can do it. I am of below average intelligence, but I have always squeaked by the finish line with work ethic. So for those of you who are not hitting your desired scores, or feel like giving up, just keep at it, and you WILL get a score you are satisfied with.

Since some of you asked, I wanted to share my feedback with you on the exam.

Books used:

- **Manhattan GMAT Series** - ALL you need to get a grasp of the fundamentals. As many have mentioned, the Number Properties and Sentence Correction books are especially valuable.
- **Official Guide 12** - Very valuable, since these are the actual past GMAT questions. Once you have the foundation from the **Manhattan GMAT** material, the best way to prepare is to do problems that are similar to the ones written by the test writers.
- **Official Guide 11** - The more actual GMAT questions the better! If you can get a copy of **Official Guide 11** (it can be purchased cheap or found at the library), it will have some additional questions that aren't in OG12. The **Manhattan GMAT** website shows the difference between the two: <http://www.manhattangmat.com/official-guide-12.cfm>. One can use the site to determine where

the overlap occurs and work on the questions that aren't repeats for [OG12](#).

- Official Guide for GMAT Quantitative Review - Again, I advocate doing as many official questions as you can get your hands on.

- Official Guide for GMAT Verbal Review - Again, I advocate doing as many official questions as you can get your hands on.

- [Princeton Review](#) Crack the GMAT - Worthless. Do not buy.

Practice tests used

- GMATPrep - This is an extremely valuable resource that can be obtained for free. There are 2 exams, but since the exam generates random questions, I was able to take maybe 5-10 tests and still see new questions each time. The software is also computer adaptive so should give you the most reliable indicator of where you stand. Anyway, enough has been said about the GMATPrep software by other forum members, so I won't talk about it in depth. I scored a 550 the first time I took it, after 1 month of study. Subsequently I scored 590, 640, and 720. Note that each additional time you take the test your score will probably be inflated because you are bound to see some repeat questions from the last couple times you took the tests. However, as I mentioned, you will still see plenty of new questions as well, so it is good to keep taking the GMATPrep in order to exhaust the questions.

- [Manhattan GMAT](#) - If you buy any of the [MGMAT book](#), you get 7 practice tests for free. These are good, but much harder than the actual exam. I could honestly never even finish half the quant section before time ran out. Eventually I stopped practicing with the timer on. Instead I took the tests at a leisurely pace just to see if I knew my fundamentals. Note that some of the questions are very tough and test concepts that are not frequently tested on the real exam (see my section below on tough or out of the ordinary questions). Therefore, I wouldn't sweat these exams too much, but just use them as an additional resource for practice. I took the 7 exams throughout my study (with the timer off) and scored the following: 610, 690, 670, 710, 690, 700, and 720.

For fundamentals all you need is [Manhattan GMAT](#)

As many have mentioned, these books are excellent for getting the proper foundation you need to succeed. In fact, these are the ONLY materials you need to get that foundation, and I wouldn't bother with anything else unless you really don't understand a concept the way MGMAT has explained it and you need supplemental material. I read each of the books from cover to cover, taking notes along the way. I reread some of the books multiple times if necessary, especially the really good ones, such as Sentence Correction and Number Properties. I would also do the questions at the end of each chapter, as this solidifies and confirms your understanding of the fundamentals. If short on time, obviously the most important material to know is the stuff in the first half of the books (the stuff prior to the advance section). If you have the time, I would also review the advance material, though this is far less important. In fact, I only paid a minimal amount of attention to the advance sections in the [MGMAT books](#). Some of the advanced sections are more useful than others. For example, an advanced section that I thought was not worth the time was the advanced section of the Sentence Correction book. You can do fine in SC without having touched that section, which just fills your head with a lot of other nonsense that is more rarely tested. Ultimately, I recommend going through the advanced sections at least once, and using your judgment as to the usefulness of the material. If you think it is useful, you can go back and spend more time studying it. If not, move on.

Focus on Official Questions

I would not bother as much with questions outside of the official questions, such as those from other websites, or designed by test makers/individuals outside of GMAC. The reason is twofold: First, within the Official questions, there should be enough material to keep you busy and develop a good

foundation for your test. 2nd, there are often minor, although important, differences between official questions those designed by non-official sources. I'm not saying to not do any questions at all outside of official questions... I'm just saying that it is unnecessary to achieve a 700+ score, and the subtle differences may throw you off from what an actual question should look like. I personally found this especially to be true of the sentence correction questions on various websites. Do as many official problems as you can get your hands on. The same question types tested in the official questions are frequently tested on the actual exam; the test writers are lazy or lack the desire to make significant changes to the problems.

Don't focus on extremely tough or out of the ordinary questions

Yes, it is good to gain an understanding of every question type if you have the time and capability to do so. However, I found it unnecessary if your goal is to simply achieve a score of 700+ (as opposed to 770). Like some have mentioned, it is best to focus on the MAJOR fundamentals and questions where you are required to apply these fundamentals. The most important questions to know are the ones where you see the concepts repeatedly in many other OFFICIAL questions. Example would be just know how to do the most extreme basic of combination or permutation questions, not all the various more complicated variations. Any question that you come across that is testing some obscure concept that you never seen tested in any other question is probably not worth your time getting more than a basic understanding of. Again, the bare fundamentals, the concepts that are repeatedly being tested, and the most common methods that they like to use to trick test takers, are the most important areas to focus on. Unique question types or one-off tricks are a waste of your time and it will be a rare chance if you actually get tested on it during the real test. I guess this is my only gripe with the [MGMAT books](#). Sometimes they cover certain areas in depth even though the chances of occurrence on the actual exam are slim. I guess they just want to have all their bases covered in case some guy wants to score a 780. One offender that I can think of right off the top of my head is the MGMAT chapter on combinations. Waaay too much detail and 75% of it is too complex for the real GMAT. I could explain everything about combinations/permutations required for the GMAT in maybe 5 sentences and 2 or 3 sample question types. It was really unnecessary for them to go into the whole anagram method and such. You cannot possibly prepare for every question type that the exam makers will throw at you. Better to spend most your time studying the most tested concepts or question types rather than spend 80% studying questions that have a 2% chance of occurring.

Hardest Challenges, Brutal Questions, etc

To drill the above point into your heads, I also beg you guys not to focus on those brutal questions, hardest impossible challenges, or whatever else they manifest themselves as if you want to study efficiently (unless you are a nerd genius who won't settle for any less than a 770+). One perfect example is the Brutal SC questions, which I have seen making its rounds through this forum. This is the biggest waste of time imaginable. At best it will waste a few hours of your valuable study time. At worse, it could be detrimental to your score, as you will be carefully studying questions that are not even from official GMAC sources and may be questionably written. I didn't go through all of the Brutal SC questions as I quickly identified this as non-value added study time, but for the questions I did do, I probably scored no more than 20%, and I did these Brutal SCs just 1 week before my actual test. In other words, I would score just as well if I just randomly picked "C" for all my answers. Keep in mind that I was able to score 97% in verbal on the actual exam.

Identifying odd or overly difficult questions

I mention above to not focus on overly difficult questions. So how do you apply the above? Well, this one kind of comes with experience, once you have already spent some considerable time studying.

Some have asked whether I simply ignored the tough questions (i.e. the ones at the end) in the OG books. The answer is no. First of all, I did every question in OG 11 and 12 on my first run through the book. By the time I was had gone through all the questions, as well as reviewed MGMAT sample questions, I kind of had an idea which concepts were frequently tested. Therefore, I ignored any advanced questions that appeared to be odd. When you see such a question, you have to ask yourself, have I seen this concept(s) tested in other official questions before. If you cannot think of seeing the odd concept tested in at least one other question during your studies then I would potentially ignore the question in future study sessions (i.e. don't bother wasting your time putting it on your error log, or whatever other method used, for future review). Chances are you've sunk enough time into that question already and it is not worth it. Also noting that advanced questions usually test multiple concepts, you have to ask whether there is a mix of good foundational concepts, and maybe one concept that is an oddity, making the question advanced and difficult. If this is the case, I would not bother focusing on the odd concept, but still note the other concepts tested. I don't remember the exact number, but I think I deemed about 10%-20% of the OG "hard" questions as testing odd concepts that would not be worth putting in the error log for later review.

You do not need to get every question correct to get a good score, not even close

This point kind of follows my point above that one should not focus on studying really tough or out of the ordinary questions. If you see a question on the test that you simply don't know how to do or never seen before, don't bother wasting time spinning your head on it. Chances are likely that you will waste a considerable amount of time thinking about it or freaking out about it, and then end up guessing or working it through just to get it wrong anyway. Better to just skip the question and save the time for something you CAN do. I had skipped about 3 or 4 questions in quant knowing that I didn't have a chance of figuring it out, and still didn't finish the exam on time. I also know that I didn't answer every other question correctly, as I had to do plenty of guessing on other questions as well. I still got a 49 in quant, which I think is pretty decent, and a 750 overall. Proof that you can afford to skip questions and still get a 700+ on the exam. NEVER EVER waste time on questions you don't know how to tackle. Try to eliminate some of the choices is possible, and then take an educated guess, and move on.

Error Log was a waste of time (but maybe not for you)

This is going to sound like blasphemy to a lot of people because so many successful GMAT scorers attribute their success to using an error log, however I found it to be an absolute waste of time. I guess everyone has their own study methods. I did start using one initially as well, hearing how critical it is to one's success, but stopped after a while. I found that I spent too much time inputting questions and all the other info (e.g. source, question type, topic tested, etc) into the error log when I could have been using that time to actually do questions. That is not to say I didn't have a way to keep track of problem areas or questions. What I found most useful for myself was to simply circle questions that I missed in the official guide, so that I could review them later. I would circle the question, and assign a 1, 2, or 3 to it depending on difficulty, with 1 essentially meaning I just wanted to review the question later to make sure the fundamental concept was still in my head later (I forget stuff over time), and a 3 meaning that I didn't know how to do the problem at all the first time through. This was much quicker than inputting a bunch of information into an excel spreadsheet. I also kept in a word file the areas that I was having problems with where I needed to review the problems (e.g. triangles, combinations, etc). Then I would simply go back to the MGMAT books or other sources to solidify my understanding of the fundamentals. Ultimately my point is that I agree that tracking mistakes and going back to certain questions is a key for success. However, using one of the pre-made error logs on this or other sites may not be most efficient for everyone.

If you are a native English speaker, don't waste a lot of time with idioms

I did not bother studying idioms at all and near the end of my test prep I was scoring in the 99 percentile on verbal consistently. There are just too many idioms to bother memorizing them all. Like I said, my verbal skills are not excellent, but it was NOT required to mention all the idiom listings. If anything, there are many 3-5 idioms that are more commonly tested than others, which might be worth knowing, but you will come across these in [the official guide](#) questions anyway. Again, your yardstick for determining whether or not something is worth memorizing is whether you see the specific concept (or idiom) being tested more than once in official questions. Some important ones I can think of off the top of my head are "because of" vs. "due to" or "if" vs. "whether".

Reading Comprehension

I was lucky enough that I am a native English speaker, although as mentioned above, I once even had to stay back a grade in school due to my poor verbal ability. However, I do enjoy reading (but maybe not how you think... keep reading and I will explain), so the reading comprehension portion was never a major concern to me (this is not to say that this section is a walk in the park for native English speakers because it certainly isn't). Nonetheless, I do have some advice and comments to make about this section for those who need to work on their scores in this area. I have read in various parts of the forum where other GMATClub members have recommended reading novels (e.g. Mark Twain) and other similar literature to improve reading comprehension skills. Although I don't argue that any amount of reading is bound to improve your comprehension at least a little bit, I feel that that this would be a waste of time, since it is not the most efficient way to improve reading comprehension for GMAT type questions. If you really want to improve reading comprehension for the GMAT, I would advocate reading the newspaper, or magazines such as Newsweek, Businessweek, etc. I would also recommend reading research journals, at least the executive summary and conclusion. When reading, don't just read news or articles that you are interested in. Also read those that you have no interest in, since your reading comprehension is obviously better when you have an interest in the topic. However, for the boring topics, pretend that you are interested while reading them.. you will be amazed by how much more attention to detail you will pay, and how much your reading comprehension will improve, when when you trick yourself into thinking you like these boring topics. Read for comprehension, and then afterwards try to summarize what the main points of the article were. As I mentioned earlier, I enjoy reading. However, I absolutely hate reading literature, especially fiction. In fact, the last time I read a work of fiction was probably over a decade ago, in high school. However, I love to read newspapers, magazines such as the publications mentioned above, etc. Therefore, I did not have many problems with the reading comprehension section. This should be proof enough that you don't need to read Huck Finn to prepare for the RC section of the GMAT... instead, read Newsweek or a scientific journal.

Exam anxiety

For those who have it, this can affect your performance on test day if you let it. Just take some deep slow breathes prior to the exam. Sometimes I'll do a few jumping jacks or pushups to let out some stress. Either way, you need to make sure you're in the right state of mind PRIOR to the exam. Be confident and tell yourself that it's just a test; it's really not the end of the world. Retakes are always available if needed. If stuck on a question, don't panic. As I've mentioned above, you do not even need to get close to getting every question right to get a decent score. Just skip the question and move on unless you think you will be able to figure it out.

From 690 to 750

As I've said, I was able to raise my score from 690 to 750 in one month. Some have asked for exactly

what I did during the one month to achieve the increase. To be honest, I didn't really do anything significantly different from my 690 to 750. My 690 on the first exam consisted of 47Q and 38V. The 47Q was about on par with what I was getting on my practice tests, so I was satisfied with that score. However, on most of my practice tests I was starting to see that my verbal score was more in the vicinity of 40 or 41. As such, I knew off the bat that I had underperformed the first time I took the test and I should probably have been in the low 700 range. Since my verbal score was lower than expected, I decided to dedicate some more time to sentence correction, reading comprehension, and critical reasoning. I knew I wouldn't be able to raise my quantitative score significantly since I had already put in a ton of study there, and felt I had just about reached my limit. That is not to say I ignored quantitative during my one month study. I simply continued to do the same thing, more in order to prevent myself from forgetting concepts and strategies than anything. I did the same questions over again, and re-reviewed the [MGMAT books](#). On test day, my verbal improved from 38 to 44 and even my quantitative went up from 47 to 49 points, I guess from the additional month of study.

I hope this is helpful to at least some people out there.

Hi guys,

I just came back from the test center with a big smile on my face. 😊

Got a 700 (Q47, V39). As many of you guys remember, I joined this site after getting a 420 back in October. I was feeling so down that I chose "positive soul" as my username. I have to say that the road was not easy, but I found very helpful all the support I got from you guys.

I am exhausted, so I will write in more details in the next few days.

Now, I am going to sleep. 😊

Remember to never give up.

Thank you all for your kind words. I am very happy to see that all my effort and sacrifices paid off, and, hopefully, my experience will help others to beat the GMAT.

Before I start, I want to thank all the active members of the GMAT Club, specially, **ywilfred**, **professor**, **vivek123**, **HongHu**, **GMATT73**, **coffeeloverfreak**, **laxieqv**, **ps_dahiya**, **Futuristic**, **fig**, **rhyme**, **u2lover**, **haas_mba07**, **necromonger**, **kevincan**, and **yezz**. I really learned from you guys. I take my hat off.

My GMAT experience is a very LONG one. I took the GMAT the first time in 1995, when it was still on paper and I was considering the idea of going for my MBA right after college. I got a 560!! I knew this score was too low to try to get into a top school, so I decided to take a **Kaplan course**. After 3 months, my score improved a little to 590. Luckily (I guess), I landed a very good job in an European Multinational, so I decided to put off the MBA for a couple of years.

The years went by, and I started to climb the corporate ladder, so every year I put off the MBA. The funny thing is that during 4 years, my GMAT books traveled with me around the world.

In **October 2006**, (10 years later), I took the GMAT again, obtaining a very VERY dissapointing score **420 (29Q 20V)**

I knew my preparation for the test was not optimal, but a 420 was just too low. For my preparation I used the OG and my old **Kaplan** books. I was consistenly scoring above 550 in sample tests, so I was expecting a low 600. I will never forget that day, it was the worst day of my life. I went back home thinking I was never going to get into a decent MBA program. Out of my dissapointment, I found strength to look for help. So searching the web, I found this amazing site. I posted my experience, and I got encouraging words from some of the member. At this point I saw light at the end of the tunnel.

My second try:

I became determined to at least break the 500 level. I read many posts regarding preparation materials, and strategies. So I gave myself 3 months to retake the exam. Looking back, it was a mistake because I was working 60+ hours, and under a lot of pressure to deliver a project by the end of January. I went ahead anyway because I wanted my "revenge".

My preparation consisted on reviewing the same OG and Kaplan materials that I used before. I also started to solve some of the problems in the GMATClub. I studied on and off during the first 2 1/2 months, and started to put 2 hours during the weekdays and 8 hours during the weekend.

I got a 510 (36Q 20V?) this time. Believe it or not, I was happy that I improved my Quantitative score.



Final Try

Eventhough, I improved my score, I knew I had to improve. I was not near the 650 I need to even dream about applying to a top MBA. Then I decided to make it happen. I made a decision to score a 700. I was no longer going to be complacent with myself. So I started to make changes in every single aspect of my preparation.

Thinks that I did, I believe it made a difference this time around:

1. I committed myself to put the time and effort. Work and travel was no longer an excuse. I made the time. I promised myself I would study at least 2 hours per day. No matter what. This was very difficult, and I did not do it every day, but at least 90% of the time. I became more focus on achiving my objective.
2. I gave myself a realistic timetable to take the test. I knew, I was not going to improve my score by 200 points in one month. At least not with my working schedule. This was one of the mistakes I made in the first 2 tests. However, I knew that I had to be serious with this issue, otherwise history would repeat itself.
3. I put together a very complete list of study materials and resources. This was my list:

- **OG Materials:** GMAT review 10th Edition, Verbal review and Quantitative review. I also obtained old GMAT paper tests from their website.
- **Kaplan Materials:** Kaplan GMAT 2005, Kaplan GMAT 800 and Kaplan GMAT Verbal.
- **GMATprep Software:** Downloaded from the website.
- **LSAT sample tests**
- **GMAX online**
- **GMAT Club Forum and Challenges.**
- **GMAT 1000 Questions**

I could have gotten more books, but I wanted keep it as simple as possible. I knew I was NOT going to improve by doing all available questions, but by changing the way I study (I will develop later).

4. I totally changed my study approach:

a) **I decided to cover the basics:** I came to accept that I did not have a good grasp of all the topics (Math and Verbal). It was that simple. I was really troubled by very simple rate and distance problems, and I was a dummy when I tried to solve number properties. **What did I do:** I took the GMAX online course. I will not recommend this course to everyone, but if you make an honest self-assessment of your skills, and think you need help. I highly recommend it. Note: This course by itself will NOT help

you to increase your score dramatically but it will provide you with the basic knowledge you need to apply some strategies.

b) **I started to use an error log:** I cannot tell you how many times I read about it. I always said, I will definitely do it, it makes sense, etc.....

BUT I NEVER DID IT (sounds like anyone you know????). Deep in my mind I thought it was a waste of time and energy: **What did I do:** I just did it. It was really a pain in the beginning. But I cannot tell you how much time I saved, and the things I discovered about myself. After going over the GMAX course, I discovered that 75% of my mistakes were careless mistakes, such as I did not multiply correctly (🤪), I did not read the question properly, I did not read all the answers, etc. I think this made a huge difference because on test day, I was right on the ball. I knew in which questions and calculations I was prone to make mistakes, and I paid a LOT of attention.

c) **I always tried to solve a question on my own, I did not seek help until I knew I could not solve it on my own.** Before, I used to try a problem, I got it wrong, I will see the explanation given. BIG mistake. I was only doing the most convenient thing but I was not really learning. **What did I do:** Sometimes I would spend 10 minutes on a question (obviously not during a sample test), trying to solve it. You might say "what a waste of time", now ask me if I got a similar problem wrong. Very few times. I made a commitment to think and learn.

d) **I never jumped to solve a question before spending a few seconds thinking about the quickest way to solve it.** I read once on post, not to attack right away a problem using "brute force". This is a skill you need to develop, and it is very difficult to think about it when you know that the clock is your enemy. **What did I do:** When I was practicing, I realized that if I could not solve a problem under 1 1/2 minutes, I was using the wrong approach or I did not know the concept tested. So I tried and tried until I found a faster way.

e) **I decided to learn from the GMAT questions.** In some courses, you read about traps, question types, etc. I knew about them, but I never actually thought about them when solving a question. I never said to myself, "this is a global question, so answers that are too specific will probably be wrong....". I knew the theory but I never applied it. **What did I do:** For every SINGLE question, I would analyze each answer and find WHY it was right and WHY the other 4 were wrong. This way you learn to identify first hand what the GMAT test makers are throwing at you. I was getting so good, I could eliminate in a few seconds 2 to 3 answer choices. Depending on the question, you could eliminate the wrong answers by knowing your scope (even in math) and identifying how GMAT tries to trick you. In summary, Re-do the questions and read every single answer. Identify the reasons for being right and wrong. Do this and you will identify patterns that repeat themselves all the time. Once you do this on YOUR OWN. You will work faster and more efficient.

5) **I participated more actively on the GMAT Club.** I have to accept that I always felt apprehensive about participating because some of you guys are VERY GOOD. However, once I improved my skills, I started to try. I answer some questions wrong but I learn from them. Don't be intimidated. I found myself learning a lot, trying to explain some of my answers. Sometimes, this process is a great teacher.

For you guys that feel intimidated, I can tell you that some of the questions I found in this site were just too hard for me. Some of the explanations were very hard to understand. In summary, I felt dumb. But on test day, I was so ready, I found very few questions I was not able to handle

6) **Practice with the GMAT Challenges.** They were not easy, but they were great practice. The concepts tested were right on the money, and the time constraints really pushed me to my limits. I scored over 80% after my 6th challenge. It was a good tool to measure my improvement.

7) When I felt overwhelmed, I looked for the GMAT Club for inspiration. Things were never a piece of cake. I had my ups and downs. I really struggled to overcome my low score stigma. There were days that I would try 10 questions, and I would get 7 wrong. I just convinced myself that it was possible to do it. I logged in everyday for inspiration. (However, I have to say I felt frustrated when members posted their 700+ score on their very first post. Why?, because they made look easy to get a 700, while I was killing myself to get reach that level.) No hard feelings because you probably deserve it. My point is, If you want to improve, you have to work hard for it, and the GMAT Club has examples of people who have done it. Dream that it is possible just as I did.

8) **I took care of myself:** There is a very good post about improving your score by exercising and eating better. I cannot say for sure If it really help me, but I believe it did not hurt. I convinced myself that this change would help me score higher so I started to exercise 3 times a week and eat better. I made no radical changes and I lost 10 lbs.

I will not discuss about the test itself as I don't believe I can add any value to comments made by other members. However, I had a scary moment when the power went out in the middle of the verbal section. The computer shut down and it took 6 minutes to restart and recuperate the test. I believe I could have done a better job on the verbal part since I have to guess the last 5 questions. Maybe I could have reached 720 and make a 300 points improvement. 😊

My final GMAT score was 700 (47Q 39V).

Finally, I think I need to talk about things that I could have done better. GMAT can take a huge toll on your personal life. The obsession to score higher hurt my relationship with friends and family. I distanced myself from them for 2 reasons: 1) I was ashamed of my score (since I live in an environment where people seem to get 650+ all the time 😊) and 2) I felt guilty when I took some time off. Don't let this happen to you. Find a balance, and try to get support from your friends.

Good luck, and remember to be positive.

As Rhyme mentioned, I got accepted in the Wharton/Lauder Program. I want to thank you guys for your support since the begining. I really worked hard on the applications and followed some of your advise. The only thing I can say about the application proccess is that it is a pain in the %%\$!!!!!! 😊 In a serious note, I think you need to market yourself well. Tell your story and be clear on your goals. Schools really look for people that will make a good use of their MBA, thus marketing the school for them.

So you know, I also applied to:

Harvard....haven't heard from them so I think they dinged me.

INSEAD: Accepted

London Business School: Accepted.

Columbia: dinged after interviewing

It has been a long journey since my 420 in the GMAT. Although, the road was not easy, I am really satisfied with the outcome. It is really a dream come true.

Remember to be POSITIVE and the only obstacle to achieving your goals is yourself.

Took the exam today and scored a 760 (Q49, V44). I should be happier with my score but am not and here's why:

After my AWA section, I raised my hand for a break. The moderator/observer guy, who was a bit overly friendly, said "alright, take your time!" Like a complete idiot, I assumed that Pearson would notify you when your 8 minute break was up. Unfortunately, this was NOT the case. What was the consequence? When I returned from my post-AWA break and started on the quant section, the time remaining had already been depleted to **71:03**. 4 minutes vanished into thin air. Psychologically, I was so in the zone that I was only briefly flustered. I simply told myself that I've trained too long and hard to let this ruin my test day and kept moving forward. In an attempt to stay on MGMAT's timing schedule, I rushed through a few questions without thinking through them thoroughly. Got to the last question, which was a hard one, with about 1:45 remaining. Took me ~1:30 to finally think of the correct formula but with 15 seconds left, I did not have enough time to calculate it out. So what should have been a surefire Q50 / 770 and potential Q51 / 780 turned into a Q49 / 760.

Would appreciate people's thoughts on me potentially retaking it. In the 3 months leading up to test day, I approached the GMAT with the intention of destroying it. It's really become a matter of pride at this point and the thought of such a stupid and avoidable mistake is driving me nuts. I would have been perfectly proud and happy of my 760 if it were not for this mistake. It's like making it to the 100M sprint at the Olympics expecting to win gold and then getting silver because you heard the gunshot a half second after everyone else.

Bit of background on me: 25 years old. Currently work in the corporate development department of a well-known Internet company. Prior to that, worked as an investment banking analyst.

Anyhow, here is a breakdown of my study strategy:

Class:

Manhattan GMAT. Enrolled in the live class. Overall it was pretty useful but not so much because of the class as because of the materials and resources.

Pros: Quant strategy guides are really good. SC guide is really good. Extremely detailed spreadsheets for answer/timing tracking on OG problems. Extremely detailed and focused study plan. And, most importantly, 30-minute office hours with their instructors. While my classroom instructor was great, a MGMAT instructor named Horacio Quiroga gave me some advice that was critical to my success. I met the guy through office hours in my last week of class and, if you look at the trajectory of my practice CAT scores after that week, you'll see the results. He acted like he had a vested interest in my GMAT score (offered to hold follow-up calls with me beyond the duration of the class, on his own time) and the advice/guidance he gave was tremendous.

Cons: Unfortunately, because they need maximize their addressable market, class room lecture plans aren't really targeted to the students who are looking to get mid-high 700's. Based on my experience,

most of the students are looking for mid-to-high 600's and the classroom is taught with that in mind. They have a separate series of 2-hour segments called "The Quest for 750" but I did not take them so I can't comment. While the class is really good for building fundamentals, if you're shooting for 760+, you'll probably need to do a lot of additional studying post-class.

Study materials:

1. **MGMAT Guides** - Quant and SC are great. Tried the note taking strategies for both CR and RC and found they only slowed me down.
2. **OG 12**, Q and V books - Did most of the problems for all three books at first according to the MGMAT study plan. After I exhausted all of the MGMAT study plan HW problems, began to do only the later problems (anywhere from #50 to #90 and on, depending on book/question-type).
3. A set of 400 problems which I got by emailing the guy at this website: <http://gmatquantproblems.blogspot.com/>. A friend of mine who had taken the test recently recommended the set to me. These problems were most representative of the actual test. \$150 for 400 problems, all of which are at least as difficult as the hardest quartile of official guide problems. You should be scoring in the Q47/Q48+ range before purchasing. If you're shooting for Q50, this is the set to get after you've exhausted **the official guide**.

Warning: the guy is pretty flaky over email. He's apparently a GMAT tutor in Argentina, where customer service is low on the list of priorities. He takes Paypal or money order and physically mails you the questions (I know - old school).

4. Jeff Sackmann's Extreme Challenge - There are 2 guys on this forum who talk about this thing like it's GMAT quant salvation in a PDF. I suspect they might be related to Jeff Sackmann 😊. Don't get me wrong, it's got some good, representative problems. But out of the 100 questions, 30-35 of them were probably combo/probs. How many combo/probs did I see on the test? 1. I did wipe it out quite quickly though, probably purely because of Sackmann's set. The set is split roughly 35/65 PS/DS. I wouldn't recommend that anyone NOT purchase it but it's not nearly as helpful as some people here claim.

CAT & actual exam:

MGMAT 1: 6/6/09 - 570: Q30 / V38

MGMAT 2: 7/21/09 - 660: Q44 / V36

MGMAT 3: 8/9/09 - 680: Q47 / V35 - **MGMAT classes** ended this week

MGMAT 4 : 8/16/09 - 730 : Q48 / V41

MGMAT 5 : 8/23/09 - 750 : Q48 / V44

GMAT Prep 1 : 8/30/09 - 770 : Q50 / V45

GMAT Prep 2 : 9/13/09 - 780 : Q50 / V48

Actual Exam: 9/18/09 - 760: Q49 / V44

Key takeaways

- Before anything else - *****DO NOT MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE I DID AND ASSUME THAT THEY WILL

NOTIFY YOU WHEN YOUR 8-MINUTE BREAK IS UP*****. If you did not read my intro paragraph, this cost me 4 minutes in the quant section and turned a 770 into a 760.

- SC: Exhaust all of the OG problems and make sure you read the official explanations for EVERY QUESTION, EVEN THE ONES YOU GET RIGHT. For the ones you get right, go through and read the official explanation for why every other answer choice is wrong. Every wrong answer choice typically has 2-3 errors and chances are you're only able to identify 1 of them. By going through the official explanations for why each answer choice is wrong, you really train yourself to recognize errors, which is the key to SC. Even on the toughest SC problems, you can use error recognition and POE to arrive at an answer 95%+ of the time. This was the revelation that kicked my score up from a V36 to V41 in a single week.

- CR/RC: you should approach studying for these the same way as you approach SC although you probably don't need the same level of meticulousness. After a while it's just pattern recognition. Stay as close to the text as possible, avoid extremisms, etc. etc.

- Quant: Do problems and own the problems. I went from a Q30 to a consistent Q50 by doing somewhere around 800-1,000 quant problems. My history in math is a bit unique though and I can offer up more details if anyone is interested in how to move from a Q30 to Q50.

- Study hard and consistently. I'm not sure I would have been able to make the gains I made by studying in broken intervals. I averaged 20-25 hours a week for 13 weeks straight. There were maybe only 3 days during which I did not study.

- GMAT club is a great resource but try and filter out the noise (this applies to any other GMAT forum, including MGMAT's). I found motivation through some really solid posts on here. Also found some gems of quant wisdom. But this is a free-for-all forum and not every post is made of gold. There were a few times when questions totally unrepresentative of the exam were posted and proceeded to drive me crazy because I couldn't figure them out. Also, there are some posters who provide wrong answers with such a high degree of confidence that it can be dangerous. GMATclub is a great resource with some amazing contributors, but be careful of how deeply you read into certain posts.

- Don't use any CATs until you've done a decent portion of the OG problems in timed conditions.

- MGMAT CATs are 10-20% harder than the real exam. It's a pretty good proxy for the real test but GMAT Prep is (obviously) by far the best.

- In my personal experience, the real GMAT was a bit harder than GMAT Prep. Quant section was a tad bit more difficult and verbal was definitely more difficult. I missed 0 SC in my last 2 practice CATs (both GMAT Prep) but probably missed 2 or 3 on the real exam based on my V44 score and my feelings about the RC/CR questions.

- If you're a native English speaker and you're in the mid-to-high 30's in verbal, you can probably get away with not taking any notes in CR and RC.

- Embrace the AWA! I'm actually really glad they make you do this first. It really helps you to ease into the test and overcome any initial anxiety you might have. An hour in the actual testing environment

will calm the nerves, especially since you know you're working on the part of the exam that doesn't really count for much.

Hello all, I just got back from the test center and I am extremely tired. Let me check my score again. Okay it is indeed:

770 99%

Q50 94%

V44 97%

And here is my road to the 700 club. I never scored well on any standardized test, since I am not an native english speaker. So I never dreamed of making this score on GMAT, my aim was 720+ when I started. I started my prep road by doing kaplan gmat. My first test score is 640 on a paper. And that's when I discovered gmatclub, a google search landed me here. After reading all the heart warming stories of successful predecessors, I decided to give it my best shot. I finished kaplan book, meanwhile I purchased the MGMAT sc guide. Let me say this book is god-sent, I went over it at least 4 times. After reading it, SC started to make sense to me, before the book my SC correction rate is about 30-40%. 😊

I took the Kaplan paper test and score 690, a nice improvement. But I had felt that I acquired all the tools that I need to get a good score, the rest is just practice. My next phase is about 3 month of on-and-off study/practice. I want to give special thanks to Walker.

As I continued my prep for GMAT, my work has gotten busier everyday, I barely had enough time to study after work. I took MGMAT a few times, the highest I've ever gotten was 710. So I signed up for the kaplan class, part of the reason is so that I can have dedicated time blocks to study for GMAT. There are a few tricks I learned from Kaplan that actually helped me speed up the thinking process, it was quite helpful. But after I take the practice exam, I still averaged only around 690-720.

My real break came only couple of weeks before I take the actual GMAT. Knowing my time is running out, I took GMATprep and scored a somewhat unsatisfying 730. I felt quite disappointed. That's when I started really buckled down and started to hit the practice problems. I did on average at least 100 problems a day, mostly SC1000 and CR1000. I took GMATprep again shortly after and score 770. That's when I started to believe that I can actually score higher than 750. I practiced and practiced, even when I was "taking care of business". I practiced nothing but GMATprep since then, I took it for 5-6 times, scores ranging from 750 to 770.

I think the last two weeks of my prep is where my real improvements come from. After all the hardwork, I was so excited to take the test, I barely slept last night. I woke up around 4 after 3 hrs of sleep and could never fall into sleep again. So I went to the test center and took it earlier than my scheduled time. Before I know it, I am done with a 770 score! 😊

I want thank everybody who had helped along the way, I am very tired, but happy at last. Thank you all! And best of luck to everyone.

Prep Tips

I am going to share some tips with fellow test takers. I think the first step is to identify your weakness. For me, I categorized each mistake I made and calculated the % I missed on each category. In the beginning, I did well on Quant, but I had to improve on speed and go over some basic concepts. I missed about 60-70% SC, and 30-40% on CR. So I know these are the areas I need to work on. I decided to not spend too much time on RC. For two reasons: RC has a comparatively low portion on the verbal section, also it is the hardest to improve on. I also did not spend much time on AWA, I originally planned to, but running out of time and I decided it will look much better to have a GMAT score rather than the AWA score.

SC

SC is my biggest gain in points come from. I would like to credit it to the methodology learned from [MGMAT SC](#) review and practices I did with SC1000. I really had no idea what was going on when I first started doing SC. It was atrocious, especially since I am not a native speaker. [MGMAT SC](#) review really opened my eyes, it broke down each problem to a sub category. My experience is, if you see a problem and you don't know which category it belong, then you are probably in trouble. Many problems belong to two or more categories, but you should have no problem identify them. Once you learned necessary skill set to tackle this problem, the next part is to hit the practice problems. I think the volume of the practice you do will help you tremendously. There is really no easy way. And I want to thank Walker again for writing the SC1000 software. I used it to practice at least 50 problems a day. I also have it loaded on my phone so I can practice wherever I go. I started out getting about 60% correct, and the week before I take GMAT I was able to get somewhere between 85%-90%. The best part of the SC1000 software is that they have links on some problems that will bring you to the thread on GMATclub forum, where you can see what others explanation of the problems are. It really helped me a lot.

CR

The most important thing about CR is to read critically. By the time you finish reading the questions, you should somewhat expect what kind of answer you will be looking for. I see several good books where they break down CR questions into sub categories. It is helpful knowing what the question is looking for. And the rest is just practice, I practice about 50 problems a day. It's not necessary to have dedicated time block to do this problem. Practice wherever you can, on the train, in the meeting (pretending you are checking your email, WARNING! this is not recommended, but sometimes you have to, like when you only have two weeks to go!), car trip, lunch time, before you to go bed every night.

RC/AWA

RC is the hardest part to improve. I figured my return/investment ratio isn't too great in this portion. There are only around 10 RC problems on the test, where CR and SC has about 15-17. And it's hard to improve RC scores. My recommendation is to read critically and read newspapers/magazines(not those with a lot of pictures 😊) whenever you have time. The general rule of thumb is there are 3 category: summary, inference and fact. Summary is the general idea, inference is what author is suggesting, and fact is basically what is explicitly stated in the paragraph. For AWA, I used chineseburned guide, it should be in the verbal section of this forum. It's helpful, I went over it 3 times and one more before the exam. I really did not have enough time to prepare for it.

QUANT

I didn't prepare much for quant portion. I did about 10 GMATCLUB math tests. It is much harder than the real quant of course. Even GMATprep is slightly harder than the real GMAT. I hope this will give you

idea on how to prepare for it.

I just got back from my GMAT and I got a 700(Q48 V38). Here I am sharing my prep story for all those students who are average and are desperately looking for that magic '7'!

First and foremost, know your strengths and weaknesses. This will save up a lot of your prep time and help you focus on areas where most of your score can increase. The 80-20 rule applies to the GMAT as well. 80% of your improvement in score will come from 20% of the weaknesses. So it helps to identify those 20% of your weaknesses soon and work on them.

Day 1: GMATPrep1 - 510(Q36 V25)

I was quite shocked to see this score. I expected at least a 580 to give myself a chance of getting a 700 in 45 days. So I started analysing the test and jotting down points about areas of improvement, strengths, weaknesses etc.

Day 2: Give the Diagnostic Test from [the Official Guide](#)

I used **OG12** for my preparation and it helped me immensely. I could immediately understand what I need to focus on at the beginning of my preparation.

1. I figured that in Quant, I needed to work on Ratios, Probability, Permutations and Combinations.
2. In Verbal, I needed to work most on Sentence Correction, followed by Critical Reasoning.

Day 3: Start with the OG

Start with problem 50 in each section. The ones before are a little too easy for our liking. Remember, we have just 45 days. Make it a point to solve at least 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas daily. Easier said than done. You will need to go and look at the solution well and understand how each problem has been solved. This is because even though you may get the answer correct, you need to know the best way or the quickest way of getting there.

Day 4: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

By now you will start understanding the workings of the GMAT and what it expects. Your scores in the further tests will definitely show it. Even so, you need to be dedicated enough to go through all explanations in detail.

Day 5: GMAT800 test: 580(Q40 V30)

There's the improvement. Now that you know something about the GMAT and you combine it with your preparation, your score should definitely see an improvement of at least 40 points in the 500-600 range. However, after you finish the test, take a break and then go through the explanations of each answer. This is a time-consuming job but most important in your preparation.

Day 6: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

Day 7: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

Day 8: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

Day 9: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

Day 10: GMAT800 Test: 640(Q44 V35)

Wow that's a huge improvement. Even I didn't expect my score to increase so much so soon. Again, analyze the test. See what mistakes you made. See the explanation for each answer.

Day 12: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

Day 13: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

Day 14: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

Day 15: GMAT800 Test: 610(Q38 V35)

We've reached the 1/3rd mark on our prep and I see the first major drop in score. The Verbal stays unchanged from last time and the Quant plummets from Q44 to a Q38. OK maybe we've reached stagnancy in the verbal area. And now we need to work on the Quant as well. When you reach this level, you should realize that this is the level you will reach by just polishing your knowledge and reviewing what you know already.

To increase your score from here, you will have to learn new concepts, read more, use more strategies.

Day 16: Buy the ManhattanGMAT SC Guide and start reading.

This is a book that can be read almost anytime and referred to again and again. You do not need to finish a certain number of pages in one go. Neither do you need to be at your desk when you read this. Just treat it as a welcome change from the usual Question-Answers of the GMAT. This book really is the bible for SC. Read just the first 5 chapters, and most of your doubts will be cleared. The further chapters are for people who are regularly scoring 700+. But it won't hurt to read them nonetheless. However, do not invest time in the further chapters and reduce time in your actual prep. That's an extra.

Day 17: Time to wind up the OG.

You may have finished 50-75 of the OG questions in each section. Leave it there and start from the last 40 of each section. Finish the last 40 in 2 days. We cannot invest more time in the OG at this stage.

The ManhattanGMAT guide gives you access to their website and 6 CATs. Use these wisely. The scores they give you and the timing system reflect most to the actual scores you will get on the GMAT. By far the best practice tests on the market. They are followed by the GMAT800 tests. Do not try the old 800Score tests. They are full of crap. Further, when you have just 45 days to prepare, do not even think about the Kaplan tests. They are very disorienting. They are probably for students getting a 750+ on other tests.

Day 18: Think about the essays a little

For students who are weak with the language, it would make good sense to start reading English newspapers, novels, articles and paragraphs at this stage of the prep. Get used to the flow of the language. Understand the difference between Spoken English and Written English. For the others, like me, leave this bit for until a lot later.

You should be finishing the OG today. You won't need to look at it again until the last 3-4 days remain.

Day 19: ManhattanGMAT test 1: 640(Q42, V38)

Are we on track again? Well we studied verbal mostly last week and used the ManhattanGMAT SC guide. And this is the best Verbal score i've gotten until date. So I guess we are back on track. Again, analyse the test, see the explanations. Manhattan's s/w gives you a whole load of statistics that you can use to your benefit. Some of these are the %-ile indicator that shows you what percentile you were on, on each question of the test. Shows you where you screwed up or did well. It shows you the difficulty level of the questions. At this stage, you want to be getting most questions in the 600-700 range or higher. For this, all questions below these ranges must be answered correctly.

Day 20: Improve your quant knowledge.

Now is a good time to improve your scores in Quant. You have reached a level where you will need to learn new concepts to improve your score. Identify these concepts and look for tutorials online or on gmatclub. For me, these areas were probability, permutations and combinations, inequalities.

Day 21: Continue reading the MGMAT SC guide and the Math tutorials.

Day 22: Halfway there!

Now, getting from a 500 to a 650 is much easier than taking that 650 to a 700. The next 23 days can be frustrating. It is important that you never give up and continue chipping away at that score one bit at a time. Continue working with those tutorials. Keep increasing hit rate at the weak areas.

Day 23: Take a break

It's been a long 3 weeks. Take the day off. Take a day off every week henceforth to keep your sanity. 😊

Day 24: ManhattanGMAT test 2: 680(Q44 V38)

Small increase in the Quant section. But huge increase in the score. Analyse the test. Check out your mistakes. See how you did in your weak areas compared to the previous tests.

Day 25: Stick to the Math

Continue with the tutorials. Finish off the tutorials for the weak areas in the next 3 days.

Day 26: More Math

Another 2 days of intensive math.

Day 27: Still more math

Finish all Math tutorials today.

Day 28: ManhattanGMAT test 3: 670 (Q46, V35)

The score has reduced, albeit marginally. But wait a minute! Q46! That's the best we've done so far. The verbal has reduced from a V38 to V35. But that's because we haven't studied any Verbal over the

last 3-4 days. We have touched a V38 before, so if we manage that with this Quant score, our job would be done almost.

Day 29: Take a break

Day 30: Work on your verbal strategies.

Scour the gmatclub site for strategies to be used in each section of the verbal. This is important because now you need to increase your score in verbal and keep the time taken for each question the same. Again, this is easier said than done. You should be finishing both sections 5-6 min before time because on the actual test, time flies faster than now. You need to keep that buffer.

Day 31: CR strategies

Try out 2-3 different strategies in CR and see which one works best for you. Practice only CR today and see if it helps.

Day 32: SC strategies

Do the same for SC today. Finalize on one strategy you will be using to tackle each and every SC question. Practice only SC today.

Day 33: RC strategies

By now, I am sure RC is giving you a lot of trouble. The mistakes in RC are the most difficult to get rid of. You will need to decide how you will tackle passages now. Practice a few from various fields like History, Business, Science etc.

Day 34: Brush up the math

You don't want the quant to go down now. So brush up all the concepts you have learnt and practice.

Day 35: Manhattan GMAT test 4: 680 (Q46 V36)

That's good. Quant stays the same. Verbal improves slightly. So it's all good. Analyze the test. Check out where you went wrong. Many of them will be silly mistakes for sure. See what could be done to avoid them.

Day 36: Take a break

Day 37: Practice makes Perfect - 1

Practice only verbal today. Do loads of it. Use the gmatclub forums for this.

Day 38: Practice makes Perfect - 2

Practice only quant today. Do loads of it. Use the gmatclub forums for this.

Day 39: Timing! Timing!

Now do a lot of quant and verbal from the forums and use the Timer.

Day 40: AWA!

Work on AWA today. Read what is expected of you. What an Argument is. What an issue is. Read the OG samples. The 6 essay, the 4 essay, the 2 essay. Compare them.

Day 41: Manhattan GMAT Test 5 along with AWA: 690(Q46, V38)

So close yet so far! Verbal is back to its V38 mark. The AWA drains out a lot of energy so its good to keep the score up. But hey! The Quant is still a Q46. No improvement at all! Lets look a little at that. Analyze the test.

Day 42: Template for AWA

Use the template provided by Chineseburned on the gmatclub forum for AWA. It saves a lot of time. And reduces your mental activity a little. From now on, everything must be timed. Write a couple of essays. I will review them for you for free if you mail them to me in a .doc file.

Work on quant. Practice is all you can do now. So practice. A lot. I was getting screwed by DS. So I worked on that a lot.

Day 43: ManhattanGMAT test 6 with AWA: 700(Q47 V39)

There is is! The magic number!!! Finally!!! However, this is a practice test. Its a lot more different on the actual test. Analyse this attempt as well. See where you went wrong.

Day 44: GMATPrep Test 2: 730(Q50 V39)

Whoa! Wait-a-minute! What's that score??? Ya that's a 730 alright! But don't get too excited. GMATPrep is known to be easier than the actual test. Especially the quant. Our verbal hasn't improved at all. So This score is similar to a 690-700 in MGMAT. Analyze the test.

Day 45: Take it easy

No more tests now. Not a lot of practice. Study a little. Equivalent to stretching before a game. I nice line I had read is, "Would you run a practice Marathon one day before the actual Marathon?". Very true. You are not going to improve your score much by slogging it out today. In fact, chances are, you might do a lot of damage. Pay a visit to the test centre if you can.

TEST DAY!!!

Carry a PowerBar and some RedBull to the test. Stay calm and treat it like your practice tests!

[b]And the score appears on your screen at the end of the test: 700(Q48 V38) !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!![b]

Hi guys,

I just came back from the test center with a big smile on my face. 😁

Got a 700 (Q47, V39). As many of you guys remember, I joined this site after getting a 420 back in October. I was feeling so down that I chose "positive soul" as my username. I have to say that the road was not easy, but I found very helpful all the support I got from you guys.

I am exhausted, so I will write in more details in the next few days.

Now, I am going to sleep. 😊

Remember to never give up.

Thank you all for your kind words. I am very happy to see that all my effort and sacrifices paid off, and, hopefully, my experience will help others to beat the GMAT.

Before I start, I want to thank all the active members of the GMAT Club, specially, **ywilfred**, **professor**, **vivek123**, **HongHu**, **GMATT73**, **coffeeloverfreak**, **laxieqv**, **ps_dahiya**, **Futuristic**, **fig**, **rhyme**, **u2lover**, **haas_mba07**, **necromonger**, **kevincan**, and **yezz**. I really learned from you guys. I take my hat off.

My GMAT experience is a very LONG one. I took the GMAT the first time in 1995, when it was still on paper and I was considering the idea of going for my MBA right after college. I got a 560!! I knew this score was too low to try to get into a top school, so I decided to take a **Kaplan course**. After 3 months, my score improved a little to 590. Luckily (I guess), I landed a very good job in an European Multinational, so I decided to put off the MBA for a couple of years.

The years went by, and I started to climb the corporate ladder, so every year I put off the MBA. The funny thing is that during 4 years, my GMAT books traveled with me around the world.

In **October 2006**, (10 years later), I took the GMAT again, obtaining a very VERY dissapointing score **420 (29Q 20V)**

I knew my preparation for the test was not optimal, but a 420 was just too low. For my preparation I used the OG and my old **Kaplan** books. I was consistenly scoring above 550 in sample tests, so I was expecting a low 600. I will never forget that day, it was the worst day of my life. I went back home thinking I was never going to get into a decent MBA program. Out of my dissapointment, I found strength to look for help. So searching the web, I found this amazing site. I posted my experience, and I got encouraging words from some of the member. At this point I saw light at the end of the tunnel.

My second try:

I became determined to at least break the 500 level. I read many posts regarding preparation materials, and strategies. So I gave myself 3 months to retake the exam. Looking back, it was a mistake because I was working 60+ hours, and under a lot of preasure to deliver a project by the end of January. I went ahead anyway because I wanted my "revenge".

My preparation consisted on reviewing the same OG and **Kaplan** materials that I used before. I also

started to solve some of the problems in the GMATClub. I studied on and off during the first 2 1/2 months, and started to put 2 hours during the weekdays and 8 hours during the weekend.

I got a 510 (36Q 20V?) this time. Believe it or not, I was happy that I improved my Quantitative score.



Final Try

Eventhough, I improved my score, I knew I had to improve. I was not near the 650 I need to even dream about applying to a top MBA. Then I decided to make it happen. I made a decision to score a 700. I was no longer going to be complacent with myself. So I started to make changes in every single aspect of my preparation.

Thinks that I did, I believe it made a difference this time around:

1. I committed myself to put the time and effort. Work and travel was no longer an excuse. I made the time. I promised myself I would study at least 2 hours per day. No matter what. This was very difficult, and I did not do it every day, but at least 90% of the time. I became more focus on achiving my objective.
2. I gave myself a realistic timetable to take the test. I knew, I was not going to improve my score by 200 points in one month. At least not with my working schedule. This was one of the mistakes I made in the first 2 tests. However, I knew that I had to be serious with this issue, otherwise history would repeat itself.
3. I put together a very complete list of study materials and resources. This was my list:

- **OG Materials:** GMAT review 10th Edition, Verbal review and Quantitative review. I also obtained old GMAT paper tests from their website.
- **Kaplan Materials:** Kaplan GMAT 2005, Kaplan GMAT 800 and Kaplan GMAT Verbal.
- **GMATprep Software:** Downloaded from the website.
- **LSAT sample tests**
- **GMAX online**
- **GMAT Club Forum and Challenges.**
- **GMAT 1000 Questions**

I could have gotten more books, but I wanted keep it as simple as possible. I knew I was NOT going to improve by doing all available questions, but by changing the way I study (I will develop later).

4. I totally changed my study approach:

a) **I decided to cover the basics:** I came to accept that I did not have a good grasp of all the topics (Math and Verbal). It was that simple. I was really troubled by very simple rate and distance problems, and I was a dummy when I tried to solve number properties. **What did I do:** I took the GMAX online course. I will not recommend this course to everyone, but if you make an honest self-assessment of your skills, and think you need help. I highly recommend it. Note: This course by itself will NOT help you to increase your score dramatically but it will provide you with the basic knowledge you need to apply some strategies.

b) **I started to use an error log:** I cannot tell you how many times I read about it. I always said, I will definately do it, it makes sense, etc.....

BUT I NEVER DID IT (sounds like anyone you know????). Deep in my mind I thought it was a waste of time and energy: **What did I do:** I just did it. It was really a pain in the begining. But I cannot tell you how

much time I saved, and the things I discovered about myself. After going over the GMAX course, I discovered that 75% of my mistakes were careless mistakes, such as I did not multiply correctly (🤔), I did not read the question properly, I did not read all the answers, etc. I think this made a huge difference because on test day, I was right on the ball. I knew in which questions and calculations I was prone to make mistakes, and I paid a LOT of attention.

c) **I always tried to solve a question on my own, I did not seek help until I knew I could not solve it on my own.** Before, I used to try a problem, I got it wrong, I will see the explanation given. BIG mistake. I was only doing the most convenient thing but I was not really learning. **What did I do:** Sometimes I would spend 10 minutes on a question (obviously not during a sample test), trying to solve it. You might say "what a waste of time", now ask me if I got a similar problem wrong. Very few times. I made a commitment to think and learn.

d) **I never jumped to solve a question before spending a few seconds thinking about the quickest way to solve it.** I read once on post, not to attack right away a problem using "brute force". This is a skill you need to develop, and it is very difficult to think about it when you know that the clock is your enemy. **What did I do:** When I was practicing, I realized that if I could not solve a problem under 1 1/2 minutes, I was using the wrong approach or I did not know the concept tested. So I tried and tried until I found a faster way.

e) **I decided to learn from the GMAT questions.** In some courses, you read about traps, question types, etc. I knew about them, but I never actually thought about them when solving a question. I never said to myself, "this is a global question, so answers that are too specific will probably be wrong....". I knew the theory but I never applied it. **What did I do:** For every SINGLE question, I would analyze each answer and find WHY it was right and WHY the other 4 were wrong. This way you learn to identify first hand what the GMAT test makers are throwing at you. I was getting so good, I could eliminate in a few seconds 2 to 3 answer choices. Depending on the question, you could eliminate the wrong answers by knowing your scope (even in math) and identifying how GMAT tries to trick you. In summary, Re-do the questions and read every single answer. Identify the reasons for being right and wrong. Do this and you will identify patterns that repeat themselves all the time. Once you do this on YOUR OWN. You will work faster and more efficient.

5) I participated more actively on the GMAT Club. I have to accept that I always felt apprehensive about participating because some of you guys are VERY GOOD. However, once I improved my skills, I started to try. I answer some questions wrong but I learn from them. Don't be intimidated. I found myself learning a lot, trying to explain some of my answers. Sometimes, this process is a great teacher.

For you guys that feel intimidated, I can tell you that some of the questions I found in this site were just too hard for me. Some of the explanations were very hard to understand. In summary, I felt dumb. But on test day, I was so ready, I found very few questions I was not able to handle

6) Practice with the GMAT Challenges. They were not easy, but they were great practice. The concepts tested were right on the money, and the time constraints really pushed me to my limits. I scored over 80% after my 6th challenge. It was a good tool to measure my improvement.

7) When I felt overwhelmed, I looked for the GMAT Club for inspiration. Things were never a piece of cake. I had my ups and downs. I really struggled to overcome my low score stigma. There were days that I would try 10 questions, and I would get 7 wrong. I just convinced myself that it was possible to do it. I logged in everyday for inspiration. (However, I have to say I felt frustrated when members posted their 700+ score on their very first post. Why?, because they made look easy to get a 700, while I was killing myself to get reach that level.) No hard feelings because you probably deserve it. My point

is, If you want to improve, you have to work hard for it, and the GMAT Club has examples of people who have done it. Dream that it is possible just as I did.

8) **I took care of myself:** There is a very good post about improving your score by exercising and eating better. I cannot say for sure If it really help me, but I believe it did not hurt.

I convinced myself that this change would help me score higher so I started to exercise 3 times a week and eat better. I made no radical changes and I lost 10 lbs.

I will not discuss about the test itself as I don't believe I can add any value to comments made by other members. However, I had a scary moment when the power went out in the middle of the verbal section. The computer shut down and it took 6 minutes to restart and recuperate the test. I believe I could have done a better job on the verbal part since I have to guess the last 5 questions. Maybe I could have reached 720 and make a 300 points improvement. 😊

Hi everyone,

This is long overdue, but I thought it might benefit some of you to hear my GMAT story.

I had been studying off and on since I graduated college in 2009; however, I never fully committed until I made a 2012 New Year's Resolution to achieve a 700+ score. Here's a breakdown of how I met my goal.

January 2012:

- Took a GMAC practice test to get a baseline score and got a 690 (49Q, 35V)
- Registered to take the exam on April 28th...I thought if I didn't get the score I wanted, I could retake before the IR section was added in on 6/5
- Created detailed study plan for myself

February 2012:

- Dedicated to studying for Quant section using [MGMAT](#) study guides and OG

March 2012:

- Dedicated to studying for Verbal section using [MGMAT](#) study guides and OG
- Took 3 [MGMAT](#) practice tests:
 - 640 (42Q, 35V)
 - 610 (41Q, 33V)
 - 710 (48Q, 39V)

April 2012:

- Dedicated to studying for Verbal section using [MGMAT](#) study guides and OG
- Was worried by my low Quant scores on [MGMAT](#) exams, so crammed for Quant section for the final week
- Took 2 [MGMAT](#) practice tests:
 - 740 (46Q, 45V)
 - 670 (40Q, 41V)
- **Took the real GMAT: 680 (49Q, 34V, 6.0 AWA)**
- Tried to register for a retake before the IR section was available, but they were (obviously) all booked up by this point - d'oh! Ended up registering for June 17th...
- Signed up for the [Knewton](#) course

May 2012:

- Created calendar for myself to ensure I met all the criteria for the 50 point guarantee
- Completed ~9 sessions
- Took 3 [Knewton](#) practice exams:
 - 640 (41Q, 38V)
 - 640 (42Q, 37V)
 - 650 (42Q, 38V)

June 2012:

- Completed remaining ~3 sessions

- Took 3 [Knewton](#) practice exams:
- 680 (44Q, 40V)
- 710 (45Q, 44V)
- 640 (37Q, 43V)
- Studied ~5 hours for IR using [Knewton](#) materials and MBA.com examples
- **Took the real GMAT again: 730 (48Q, 42V, 6.0 AWA, 6/8 IR)**

Here's my advice to you all:

- Always take full length practice exams. I didn't do this for my [MGMAT](#) exams and felt tired during the Verbal section on my first attempt.
- There are no shortcuts--the name of the game is identifying your weaknesses and then reviewing materials/doing practice problems to fill those gaps.
- For you high quant scorers--you can make bigger total score gains by focusing on Verbal! If you already [crossed](#) the 80th percentile barrier (49Q at present), then why bother devoting serious time to the Quant section? It requires a lot of time and effort to go from a Q49 to a Q51, and you can only improve your total score ~20 points!
- The [Knewton](#) course was great, but if you're going to do it, take an actual GMAT to get your baseline score. I'm convinced that their diagnostic exam is scored lower than your actual ability so they can make good on their 50 point improvement guarantee.
- On [MGMAT](#) and [Knewton](#) practice tests, the Quant scoring is not very accurate...I scored much higher on the real thing, but I've seen a lot of people score much lower...however, the Verbal scoring seemed accurate. Bottom line, don't read into the score too much, focus on the problem types you're having issues with.

Hi everyone,

Just took the GMAT for the first time on Friday and got a whopping 770! I've been surfing this website everyday and haven't been active posting so far. It's time I gave back to the community and share my experience with all of you. First of all, I big shout out and thank you to Eric for creating this awesome website, stumbling [across](#) BEATtheGMAT on facebOok was the best thing that could have happened to my GMAT studying. Also, no less deserving of thanks is Brent for the 60 day study guide; I don't think I would have been nearly as successful without this plan and your continued encouragement!

My story:

Initial Resources:

- OG13
- GMATPREP free software

I bought the OG13 from mba.com and starting plowing through it, spending 3-4 hours a night answering practice questions. I took both diagnostic tests and reviewed math and verbal materials. After about a month I took my first prep exam - scored 640. Extremely bummed out!

Phase 2:

- signed up for 60 day study guide daily emails
- [Manhattan GMAT](#) complete guide set 5th edition - well worth the money!
- GMATPREP expansion add-on to expand question bank for practice question and practice exams.

* I highly recommend scheduling your test date 63-65 days from when you start the study guide, so you can make up any missed/incomplete days without stressing out or feeling that you need to 'catch up'.

I basically followed the study guide emails and took the free GMAT exams:

GMATPrep Exam 1 640 (before study guide)

GMATPrep Exam 1 710

GMATPrep Exam 1 720

GMATPrep Exam 2 730

[Veritas](#) 51 720

[Manhattan GMAT](#) 710

[Princeton Review](#) 760

[Kaplan](#) GMAT 620

GMATPrep Exam 2 750

[Manhattan GMAT](#) 720

On the few days before my test date I made sure to get 7-8 hours sleep each night to make sure that I was well rested. I also followed the advice of an [MGMAT](#) article and brought gatorade with me to the test and a couple of granola 'trail mix' bars. I got there nice and early @ 7:15am (Exam @ 8am) so I didn't feel rushed and so I could get myself 'into the zone'. I drank some gatorade before the exam and then used each brake to drink 1 cup of gatorade and eat a granola bar (and go to the bathroom, lol!). Obviously, I couldn't believe my eyes when I submitted my score and got the results - feels great! Thanks BEATtheGMAT and 60 day study guide, couldn't have done this without you!

1.1 GMAT Scores :

Here is my result and unofficial score card :

AWA -> 5.5 -> 77%

IR -> 8 -> 94%

Maths -> 50 -> 92%

Verbal -> 39 -> 87%

Total -> 730 -> 96%

* During my Test preparation - I got 730 once but i got 97% as the percentile score. Dont know why it is varied here.

1.2 Preparation Tips :

Please find below my methods for preparation. If you think it can help your preparation, you are more than welcome to follow it.

Preperation for AWA :

<http://gmatclub.com/forum/how-to-get-6-0-awa-my-guide-64327-140.html>

End of story. The above template and word structuring were really helpful. I don't think I spent more than 2 days on AWA preparation. I practiced 2 essays typing in MS word. Stick to the template provided by ChineseBurned in the above link and you will be fine. Also, make sure you use a lot of transition words and connecting words. Make sure your thought flow is clearly supplemented by such words.

Preperation for IR :

IR was not one area where I had sufficient material; neither do i have enough knowledge to even logically attack it. OG 13 provides a 6 month free access to their online portal hosting 50 IR questions. These are the best. They are tough, stressful, irritating and just what you need to get a taste of the original GMATish IR.

The most crucial factor about IR is to forget about numbers and understand the synopsis/description/annotation about what this data means. Once you understand what values each numbers/graph bars stand for - IR questions will demystify and will be a cake walk.

Sounds easy right ? This is where GMAT shows its true colors. One ca easily mistake the meaning of a data while solving the question and land up at wrong calculation result. Oh yeah - GMAT will make sure the wrong answer is present in the answer choices.

If you can - give the Online IR provided by OG13 a try - they are really really tough !

Preperation for Quant :

Preparation for Quant was very straightforward. Practice, Practice, Practice - coupled with - Review, Review, Review. I don't remember the last time I looks at geometry formulas or statistic concepts. Maybe it was 2 months ago. Anyways, my point is - Once you fully understand the concepts tested by GMAT - All that is left to do is quality practice (Preferably Official Question - GMATPrep, OG12, OG13, Math Supplement, mba.com questions). What you need to understand is that GMAT only tests a finite set of concepts which are easy and quite basic. Get this over with at the early stages of your preparation.

Preperation for Verbal :

Oh Boy, this was a nightmare for me. Especially the sentence correction part of it. There seems to be many interlinked ways in which a "grammatically correct" answer can sound weird. Don't worry - a technique called "Detailed Documentation" worked for me. It is similar to Error log - but something which i have made for myself. The details of this method are in the end.

Sentence Correction is a pain in the ass. But one thing which drastically improved my performance is a

simple technique. Whenever evaluating correct answers - make sure to look into non-underlined portion of the question for tips. Most of the case, you will find critical clues which will help you answer the question.

Reading Comprehension is an area which can drain you of energy and concentration. Most important thing to do for this section is to stay focused and connect with the passage. Sounds stupid - But trust me, it works ! You don't have to dream about dolphins for 5 min if the passage is about dolphins. You just need to like dolphins - seriously, love them - I myself hate dolphin but what choice do we have ?

Critical Reasoning is an area where you will definitely commit mistakes. Period. This is inevitable. Keep 1 or 2 questions buffer in CR and consider them as goners. I don't mean to suggest an outrageous thing such as leaving out a question or blindly guessing. But what I am saying is something that many people forget to adapt to on a CR question. Once you find the answer - Mark and move on. It is not a mere coincidence that many people who apply for competitive exam choose correct answer but review the answer choices again and again and end up choosing the wrong answer. This is exactly why I did not [cross](#) cut-off in IIT-JEE.

I am suggesting this from the bottom of my heart - with all the good will. This is applicable to Verbal questions in general but mostly to RC & CR. Never re-review your answer choices once you have correctly "zoned" in using elimination technique. It is waste of your time and energy.

1.3 G-Day and The Day before :

The Day before the GMAT - Do not read anything. Do not review anything. Do not take practice test. Strickly - No VERBAL ! You can do a little of maths - but only those easy kind of problems. (Only if you are feeling too bored)

What i did was - Went to office but did little work, Listened to lots of music while at office, Went to movie with friends after office and took my girlfriend for a great Italian dinner. (She was actually more tensed than i was about my exam !)

If you can - visit the center. I knew where my center was - so did not do this activity.

G-Day(my slot was morning - 9:00 AM) - Have a heavy breakfast and tea/coffee/juice - whatever suits you. Just don't get dehydrated. That is the last thing you want on a GMAT. I took a red bull - now i know 1 was not enough. I should have taken some chocolate bars/energy bars. [Manhattan GMAT](#) has a set of techniques to get you relaxed. Practice these - will be helpful during Real Exam. Also - don't forget to ask the test administrator for Ear-Plugs. They work for noise cancellation and are very effective.

Quote:

Detailed Documentation: Whenever I am done with a practice test - I open up spreadsheet and enter all the errors I have committed. With details and answer three headers related to the error:

Details on the Error, Reasons for the Error & To-Do Improvement.

In case anyone wants a template of this file, you can download it below:

(No copyrights applicable : Free document : Creative Commons of Penguinfoot)

Finally, Remember : You can practice 1001 questions, but if you don't review your errors - you are not gonna make any progress.

I gave my GMAT almost a month back on 08-Aug-2012 and was meaning to write this for some time. Well, honestly, I did not believe my GMAT score when it popped up but I think there are certain distinct strategies that helped me to break into the 700+ club.

I prepared approximately for 3-months. Prepare a realistic plan and for the love of god stick to it, include the days you would study, the days you would be on holidays - in Europe everyone takes summer holidays, I took mine for 8 days, 4 days in Cologne and 4 days in Berlin 😊!!!

Practice Material

1. GMATPrep + Question Pack - absolutely absolutely essential. Again buy it, \$25 is well spent, only about 5 Questions I saw repeat from the Verbal Guide, but you get 400 retired GMAT questions, which is awesome for practice.
2. OG12
3. Quantitative Guide 2nd Edition and Verbal Guide 2nd Edition
4. Manhattan - 5th edition - 9 volumes - did not do all
5. [Kaplan](#) GMAT Premier 2011 - only if you need broad concepts. If you are in shit in a particular area, this book will not help you. On the contrary, [beaththegmat.com](#) will 😊
6. Powerscore Critical Reasoning Bible - this book saved my life...pew!

GMAT is not rocket science, it just requires a lot of discipline...at the end I was living, dreaming and breathing GMAT! I followed beaththegmat's [60-Day Plan](#) for 2months and I kept 1month for the practice tests.

I come from an engineering background, so quant was not much of an issue - I did the whole of OG12 and QG. Thereafter, just to keep in touch I would do the Manhattan Free Challenge problem of the week every Monday.

Verbal Nightmare

But I had serious issues with Verbal. I did the Verbal portion of the 60-Day Plan and my accuracy in verbal was in shit. The 60-Day Plan recommends reading the [Kaplan](#) 10-pagers on each of the concepts and dive into the OG & VG questions. I think for people who are challenged in Verbal, this is a [suicide](#) - because I ended up wasting all the OG & VG questions without a deep understanding of the concepts! During my practice tests, my verbal score never moved out of that V28-V34 range and 2weeks before my GMAT, I took [MGMAT](#) CAT 1 and in CR I had 2/15 correct...yes I got 13 CR wrong! This was really my wake-up call.

Practice test History

GMATPrep (1st Attempt): 600 - V30 - Q43
GMATPrep (2nd Attempt): 660 - V29 - Q50
[MGMAT](#) CAT 1: 620 - V29 - Q47 (CR: 2 out of 15 correct!)
[MGMAT](#) CAT 2: 670 - V33 - Q50
[MGMAT](#) CAT 3: 640 - V29 - Q51
[MGMAT](#) CAT 4: 650 - V32 - Q48

How I saved my GMAT (in 2weeks)?

I decided to fix my CR accuracy because trying to fix RC and SC would be too complicated at that point to fix. I got myself the Powerscore CR Bible and finished the entire book in 1 week. After I finished, I did all the OG12 CR problems without any time-limit to understand the concepts and by this time I had forgotten most of the questions from OG & VG. Then I did the whole CR from VG but now under timed conditions. I made a flow chart & summary table which many will hopefully find helpful to navigate

through CR. During all this time, I was practicing questions from the Beat The GMAT forums on CR all day long at work. For 2 weeks, I was working on GMAT at work! I was reading the [flash cards](#) from Beat The GMAT.

My advice: Use "Powerscore CR Bible" to learn the concepts before you attempt any CR questions, you will learn much better. This become will give you a lot of insight. It helps in educated guessing as well.

One week before the exam, I only practiced verbal questions from the GMATPrep Question Pack and CR from the BTG Forum. I did not bother about Quant anymore, it was least of my problems. This is where knowing your weaknesses helps.

2days before D-Day, I took my last shot at GMAT Practice...GMATPrep Test 2 (1st Attempt) : 690 (V34, Q50) - I had peaked. I was happy to have peaked 2 days before my exam but had more or less reconciled with a <700 score!

I had found another problem 2 days before my GMAT...one of the reasons why I never broke the V34 barrier was, I was married to the questions - I was spending too much time on some questions in the middle and as a result I was either having to rush through my last 5 questions, or sometimes I am not able to finish the test. I knew this before, but I thought I would be able to speed up but I was not able to! 2days before GMAT I saw in the GMATPrep software that **not finishing 5 questions takes your percentile down 91 to 77**, that's 3 percentile per question penalty. I realized every time I had 700+ on the cards only if I had sacrificed a few questions in the middle and got more of those at the end correct. And there goes my second advice:

Finish the test, no matter what. Just Finish it...you will be rewarded.

Day before the exam, I just worked on my endurance, so did like 80 verbal questions from GMATPrep Question Pack, only of medium and hard difficulty level. I also worked on the BTG Flashcards for Verbal - they have these little bombs of information that go a long way.

Exam Day

At the exam, I decided not to take any stress(inspired by this BBC documentary on Usain Bolt,http://youtu.be/UB_ZQfxXbTc), enjoy the GMAT, guess when *stuck*, and finish the damn test. I finished Quant with 2seconds to spare and Verbal with 60seconds. There was only 1 RC which was really dense, but the questions were all global questions, so not trying to understand everything in that RC helped. SC questions were mostly related to logical usage, idioms, meaning+parallel, but always something to do with meaning. I kept calm, had a Mars in the break between Quant & Verbal to have the right energy level. I had no chance to [cross](#) 700, but just by keeping calm, finishing the test and being confident without being married to those questions, I was able to beat it.

Few General Notes

- Read broadly to feel comfortable with RC and also this helps later at applying stage. For Management & Current Affairs read HBR and Economist - will help during interview stage as well. For difficult material I read New Scientist and [Harvard](#) Law Review.
- Keep an error log - this is invaluable. Here is the error log for Verbal & Quantitative Guide generously inspired by BTG OG12 error-log.
- If you have time, it's worthwhile to go through all the AWA arguments and frame what can strengthen,

weaken the argument, what can be conclusion, what are the assumptions. This just gets your brain wired in a certain way, helps in CR.

d. Try to use as less space to do the calculations or to make Verbal notes. The less space you need, psychologically more organized you are and hence less tensed. I have seen over my prep time e.g. my RC notes became shorter and shorter, for CR i needed only notes for cause-effect questions and in PS & DS I normally needed only 3-sides of A4 paper. Try and use only about 3 A4 sheets or 6 paper-sides when taking practice exam - try to be neat in your exam notes - economy in taking notes saves a lot of time.

d. Love the GMAT and feel betrayed by it and hence declare war on it. This test is more mental than you think.

I am veteran here on beatthegmat(maybe not in terms of the number of posts but for the sheer regularity with which I would visit beatthegmat and the duration I have been here for). Am finished with my GMAT today and got an adorable score of 760.To be honest, I wasn't expecting this much. I was aiming at 740 and the thought of targeting 760 did occur but I thought it's better to target a little lower and get higher and be happy instead of targeting higher, pressurizing oneself and eventually getting a low score.

Here's the break up of the scores;

Overall score - 760 - 94th percentile

Quant score - 50 - 93th percentile

Verbal score - 42 - 94th percentile.

Haven't got the AWA score yet but I think it should be above 4.5.

The stats above look nice, don't they? It's hard to believe that they are mine. As hard to believe as it gets when you know that you can't get a hot girl and suddenly you get one. ;-D

Target schools - [ISB](#), NUS, NTU, HKUST

The journey began and abruptly ended...

I started my preparation around 8 months back. The preparation went well for 1 month but I got sick with typhoid and this kept me out off from the prep for around 3 months.

Finally, I started my preparation again in Dec 2011 so in all I roughly spent around 4 months in preparing which I think is the ideal amount of time.

Diagnostic test result before starting my preparation: 630 on GMATPREP1

Material used:...

I chose the material after seeing the recommendations here on the forum.

SC - Manhattan SC, Aristotle SC .As recommended, I started with Aristotle SC and then graduated to Manhattan SC .

CR - : Since I work for a Big4 , critical reasoning came naturally to me. I just went a lot of articles of CR in the **GMAT Library** section in a systematic way and I knew that I was good to go. I went through the Manhattan CR book initially but didn't like their approach of making T-diagrams and all. It seems inane to me. Also I didn't see much point in reading a lot of theory on something which came naturally to me. I read that much theory that helped me recognize the type of questions and the strategies for tackling them.For rest commonsense rules.

RC- OG RCs+Aristotle RC Sets 1 and 2.

Quant- Compilation of notes and questions from various sources

OG 12 - did OG12 two times in a systematic manner.A book you simply can't do without.

Practice test scores:

Did the Manhattan test series. I think that the Maths section has too many difficult questions. I did all the 6 tests and got varying scores.

Got a 740 on GMATPREP1 a week before the exam

Got a 740 again on GMATPREP2 4 days before the exam.

Now the most important elements to get 700+

1. **Getting familiar with the test center** :I live in Ghaziabad which is a satellite city to Delhi and my test center was almost 2 hours from my home. I was a little anxious about the distance because I had never seen that area where the test center was. I went to check the test center one day before the exam date for two reasons -to avoid last minute tension and second avoid last day study. You may not want to do this if you live closeby otherwise I think it makes sense to do it.

2. **No study in the run up to the exam** :Take at least 3 days off from office before the exam date so that you can unwind. Also don't keep any word pending in the office because this will psychologically disturb you,even though in a small way.You want to ensure that no unwanted thoughts clutter your mind as you take the test.

3. **Relaxation is critical to victory**: I think beyond a point, studies can't help you at all and the best thing you can do is to not study at all. Also while going to the test center on the test day, I put a relaxing Tibetan incantation **Om mani padme hum**. That chant really calmed me down as it always does.

4. **Concentrating too hard during the exam?Think again** Do not concentrate too hard during the exam. This may seem a bit contrarian but trust me this is important. If you concentrate too hard on the exam, either you'll get a headache or your anxiety level will shoot northwards. You need to give your brain "breathing space" otherwise it will simply not work the way you would want it to.

5. **Assessing your performance during the exam. Avoid It**: Do not try to assess how you are performing on the exam WHILE you are taking the exam. I cannot overemphasize this. We have a tendency to constantly think/judge/evaluate our performance on the last few questions and we tend to guess our score . Doing both of these things can prove fatal.

6. **Stay relaxed** :Things are bound to be different on the actual GMAT. There will a certain ups and downs during the exam. Take them in your stride and keep going.

7. **Enjoy the exam**. This simple yet important tip I read here on the forums helped me a lot. It's easier said than done but try to enjoy the whole GMAT experience rather than considering it to be a burden and you will feel that during the exam you will be able to focus better. In fact, enjoy the entire process of preparation.As goes one famous quote

'Winners take time to relish their work, knowing that scaling the mountain is what makes the view from the top so exhilarating'

This is my first post and I am really happy to share the news 😊 For the tips section please scroll down 😊

First things first

- 1) This is my first attempt at GMAT
- 2) I have a dual degree - M.Sc. Mathematics with B.E. Computer Science => decently good at Mathematics
- 3) Decent English speaking and writing skills (but not the level GMAT demands)

I joined a GMAT coaching center (Crack~~ISB~~ - not many would no about it) 5 months ago and realized that my 3 years in an IT company has put me completely out of shape in Maths. I spent considerable time solving OG problems and could pick speed. The preparation was very haphazard and not until the last month I was able to pick up pace.

Last 10 days I have spent writing 5 GMAT complete tests(GMATPrep and [Manhattan GMAT](#)) and numerous individual tests (800 score). I could pick speed and was practised hard to complete quant and verbal within the time.

D-day - My AWA was not so good. I could not put my points properly and was very concerned about spelling mistakes and I am not sure how well I put forward my opinions. IR was average, questions were tricky (and boring) and I did not put my full efforts to solve any of the problems. Took a break for 8 mins started my Quant and oh god I have never seen such tough Maths questions even in [Manhattan GMAT](#). Rather than state it as tough, I would state it as toooooo damn lengthy, so many calculations to do and this really hurt my concentration and by the time I was in the 30th question I realized that my score would not touch 50 in Quant. Question 34-37 were too easy.

Took another break for 8 mins had a Snickers and was completely focused on verbal during the break. Questions were not that tough but the level increased after I attempted my first RC. After that the questions were tough but somehow all the RC's looked quite familiar (this really helped me to get a good score. I am very confident that I scored 13 out of 13 in RC 😊). By the 25th question the level was really hard, I had guessed couple of questions in SC and spent time on CR's and by the 36th question it was really tough. The good part is I had lot of time left because of the RC's. I could spend 3 minutes on each of the question and eventually passed out with flying colors 😊

My Target score was 720 and I am really happy with the score.

Here are the list of tips

- 1) Read how I just BEAT the GMAT sticky threads - Those are real gems. You will not need anything more than that but just in case
- 2) CR's - If you do not find any of the options to be correct, read the first option again as we are used to skipping the first option in SC (blame it on the involuntary actions of the brain). Always and always find out what the conclusion is. If you do not get that it is better to skip the CR.
- 3) SC - Rules rules and Rules - The only rule you must follow is that the sentence should sound good with the option you chose. Most of the time we analyze the SC, find out what is wrong and check for an answer which solves the issue. But there are always multiple issues in SC's so the option you chose might result in another error. It is very important that you re-read the sentence completely with the option you

chose.

4) RC - Don't blindly read the RC. This is the scoring part in Verbal and it is very important that you understand every line in the RC. People might suggest you to read the RC in 3-4 minutes, but unless you understand what is the crux of the RC, you cannot score good. Spend extra 1-2 mins if required but see to it that you understand the RC. Also solve as many RC problems as possible especially the one's which talk about Women's rights and history. Reading about Womens suffrage and American foreign policy in Wikipedia will help you a lot.

5) Quant - There is no special tip here. If you are good at Maths you will surely score above 48. The difference between 48 and 51 will not exceed 40 points in most cases so it is very important you concentrate on Verbal score 😊 Practice tests should help you pick speed

General tips

1) [Manhattan GMAT](#) tests - Very good and only 49 \$ 😊

2) Manhattan Verbal - SC is a gem. There is no other book you need. RC and CR will give you a good idea about the model problems.

3) GMAT Prep Question Pack - very helpful, especially DS and SC questions. Concentrate on them couple of days before the exam.

4) Always write full length exams and never skip the AWA or IR while writing the GMAT prep exams. Make a habit not take to take more than 8 min breaks in between. Once your body gets used to proper prep tests, you will start scoring better. My scores in Manhattan improved from a paltry 590 to 670 in 10 days, simply because I could have the same concentration levels even after 4 hours.

5) Most importantly never think that you cannot score good in GMAT. My scores in Prep tests never [crossed](#) 700 - but the efforts you put in and your persistence will be the difference in the end

I took the GMAT this past week and wanted to relay my story because I relied heavily on other members' stories as confidence boosters when my journey wasn't going according to plan.

I started my GMAT journey in mid-July of this year, when I registered for a 3-week [Kaplan](#) intensive course (6 on-site classes and 5 virtual classes). I had registered for a Sept 1 test, so I didn't have much time to prepare. I took my first [Kaplan](#) Diagnostic CAT and scored a 610 (my goal score was 720). I was really disappointed because I didn't finish either section in time and Data Sufficiency destroyed me. In many ways, I am thankful for the low diagnostic score because it forced me to take the studying process very seriously.

I was using the [Kaplan](#) materials, which I found to be useful as a review/overview of the topics, but I found the "hard" test questions on the CATs to be much harder than anything in the book. I had also purchased the OG, but because I was putting my faith in [Kaplan](#), I didn't touch it for the first month.

After the first two weeks, I started taking two [Kaplan](#) CATs per week (arguably one too many) and was incredibly frustrated with my progress. Despite feeling like I had a grasp on the material, I was getting very rattled during practice tests, having a hard time with the time limits, and not seeing much improvement in my scores. My score log is at the end if you want details.

I must say, for all my frustration with the [Kaplan](#) CAT scores, the instructors were amazing. I sent my teacher an email after every CAT with my feedback on the experience, and he would help me break down what went wrong and how to focus my efforts for the next week. One of the most important insights he had for me, which is obvious but took me a while to truly internalize, was that the test should feel difficult for EVERYONE. It sounds obvious and you read it in every prep book you pick up, but this was the first time I had encountered an adaptive test and the idea of perpetually feeling challenged was seriously undermining my confidence despite my rational awareness that it was supposed to feel this way. Once I let that really sink in, things started to turn around and I started finishing the sections within the time limits and stopped trying to guess how I was doing mid-test.

With two weeks left to test day, I hadn't come close to breaking the 700 barrier on the [Kaplan](#) CATs. It was at that point a friend mentioned to me that she had had a similar experience and that when she took the GMAT Prep CATs, her scores were much higher (and much closer to her final score). I took the GMAT Prep CAT 1 for my next practice test and broke the 700 barrier. I was so relieved, and my long-lost confidence had returned.

At this point, I had finished all the [Kaplan](#) practice problems, so I started in on the OG problem sets. While I wouldn't necessarily say that the OG problems are easier than [Kaplan](#) problems, they are written in a slightly different style and it made a difference for me. [Kaplan](#) can't use old GMAT problems due to the proprietary nature, so they do their best to mimic GMAT problems but they aren't identical. I think for some people, the official GMAT writing is just easier to parse through, especially on the Verbal sections. Also, the other test prep companies don't have the GMAT's exact scoring algorithm, so the scores aren't completely accurate. This is why [Kaplan](#) (and I think most prep companies) tell you to focus on trends in your scores, not the actual numbers. I had a hard time believing it when facing an unsatisfactory number, but it's true.

The OG is obviously a great tool because it is the closest you can get to the questions you will see on test

day. Since Quant was my weakness, I did every Quant problem in the book, and reviewed every problem that I either got wrong or took over two minutes to solve. I also did all the Sentence Correction questions because that was my greatest area of opportunity to pick up points in the Verbal section.

One thing that is great about the [Kaplan](#) class is that you are given the opportunity to take a practice test in the test-center. I can't stress how valuable this was for me. I showed up to Pearson Vue a week before my "real" test and let my nerves get the best of me, which resulted in a score lower than any prior score except my Diagnostic.

I had read on this forum over and over (and over) again that confidence is what will make or break your test-day experience. So instead of focusing on my low test score, I went out to dinner with friends that night and toasted the fact that I had gotten all of the nervous energy out of my system so there was none left for the following weekend.

Two days later, I took another GMAT Prep CAT and did much better than I expected (and higher than my goal score), so I decided that with only five days until the test, I was going to make that my last practice CAT, end on a high note, and only do enough practice problems to keep me in the rhythm until test day.

The day before the test I did not touch any study materials and only did things that were either fun or relaxing (or both). I calculated that I had spent over 150 hours studying in the past six weeks, so I told myself that I had put in the work and now it was time to reap the rewards. Again, confidence is everything.

Test day brought no surprises and the test felt just like the two GMAT Prep CATs. I took both breaks and used them as opportunities to stretch, shake out any tension in my body, and eat a [quick](#) snack (Pearson VUE now has a recording of me jumping up and down and shaking out my limbs like a weirdo). The moment before hitting the button to reveal my score, my heart rate skyrocketed. Given that I was never able to break the 700 barrier on my [Kaplan](#) CATs, I was in a state of [disbelief](#) when I saw my score. I think my hand was still shaking as I gave my palm print for checkout. My section specific percentiles obviously have a big gap between them, and my strong Verbal performance definitely boosted my overall percentile more than a strong Quant performance would have. I had learned early on that this would be the case due to the large number of non-native English speakers from Quant heavy backgrounds who take the test, so I made sure my Verbal skills were top notch since Quant was still giving me some problems.

I know this has been a lengthy post, but I appreciate you sticking it out. Here are a few parting thoughts:

--Put in the time and trust the process. Don't fight the "game" of the test, it's a waste of energy. Instead, spend that energy coming up with a strategy to beat the game.

--Identify your strengths and weaknesses. Work on the weaknesses while maintaining mastery of your strengths. Don't neglect your strengths because those are points you will want to guarantee yourself on test day.

--Understand that many of the best test-takers still have to make educated guesses now and then or "let go" of a problem that is costing them too much time. Due to time constraints, perfection is not the name of this game, successfully executing your test-day strategy is.

--Don't get hung up on the actual scores of your practice CATs. A general trend upward is what matters most, and understand that the only company with the exact GMAT scoring algorithm is the one that created it, so the GMAT Prep CATs are the only (somewhat) realistic indicators of actual score.

--Confidence is everything. Do whatever you must to feel good going into test day. Treat the test as a challenge that you will dominate instead of something that could dominate you.

--Recognize that a GMAT score does not define you, and that this process is not life-or-death. A little perspective can help when an unsatisfactory practice score has you in a tizzy.

I hope this is helpful to at least one person, as it would be nice to pay forward the insight that I gained from this community.

Now for my score log:

Kaplan Diagnostic: 610

Kaplan CAT 2: 630

Kaplan CAT 3: 630

Kaplan CAT 4: 650

Kaplan CAT 5: 640

Kaplan CAT 6: 660

GMAT Prep CAT 1: 720

Kaplan CAT 7: 660

Kaplan CAT 8 @ Pearson Vue: 630

GMAT Prep CAT 2: 750

Actual GMAT: 760 (47Q, 49V)

It was almost reliving an experience when I saw a 770 flashing on my screen. It was the same euphoric feeling that I got when I was a kid and made it to the IIT a little less than a decade back. I couldn't be happier with the score as I am targeting H/S/W where the average GMAT scores are around 730 and a 770 makes me feel relieved about the score. Now I can focus on spending my time working on the other aspects of my application.

Before getting into how I prepared for the GMAT , a bit of background information about me. I am from an IIT in India and have 4 years of work experience. I have been an all rounder and that was the reason that I didn't join the IIMs (H/S/W of India) even after securing admits from there 2 years back. I didn't want to be surrounded by engineers who have studied at IITs/NITs,cracked the CAT(a difficult exam to make it to the top schools in India),and are going to business school without any specific goal err the common goal of getting paid better.

Secondly, I didn't intend to sit in classes where we are being bombarded with theory and without work experience the students(and sometimes the profs) are clueless about the application of theory.

Had a couple of people in family who have done their MBA from the top schools abroad(including [LBS](#)) and given the transformation they underwent I really knew that I wanted to go to these schools.

Anyway, without digressing too much about why I wanted to do an MBA abroad(that would possibly be the topic for another post .Haha) I'd share my story here because by reading the success stories here, I drew a lot of motivation and it'd be great to share what worked for me. In hindsight, I think there were four reasons for my success.

a) Beat the GMAT community

b)The right study resources

c) The right focus on learning and utilizing the resources I had judiciously instead of making my room a dump for all the GMAT material I had.

d) Being aware about the importance of timing.

Now let me expound on why each of these things were crucial to my success.

a) Beat the GMAT- Love at first sight!

Since I didn't want to tell around me that I am preparing for the GMAT, I had to rely on google to fetch me what resources I use.That is when I incidentally came [across](#) BTG and it would be an understatement to say that I was enthralled to see such a magnificent community. I was so hooked that I didn't study for the GMAT for one whole week(LOL)-so busy did I get reading around the forum that seem to have had inexhaustible source of knowledge and wisdom. Since there were too many posts, I kept on writing notes so that I can make a study plan for myself and also kept on bookmarking the posts that I wanted to read again later. The bookmark list got so long within a week that it seemed like I had bookmarked the entire site. LOL! But seriously this site is amazing and was a big contributor to my success!

b) The right study resources : This is very critical to your success on the GMAT. I remember the first book I purchased for the GMAT was Barron' GMAT Guide because their GRE Guide was what my batchmates had used in college to prepare for the GRE and had said that it is a good book for the GRE but alas it didn't turn out that way for the GMAT. I read a lot of debriefs to figure out what books people used and boiled down to the following. I didn't refer much for quant and found the GMAT quant to be a cakewalk(yes that's exaggeration but true to a great extent).

For Integrated reasoning also, I just relied on the 50 questions that accompany the Official Guide and saw a few free videos here on BTG. The questions on the actual test were quite similar to what I had practiced so didn't have much trouble.

Official Guide 13th edition- A book you cannot just do without. A lot of people complain that the OG questions are not difficult enough in comparison to what you are likely to see on the 700+ level on the test and to an extent I agree. However, the OG questions are the closest you will get to the actual GMAT questions (apart from obviously the GMATPREP questions). Since the questions in the OG are retired GMAT questions, you should try to extract the maximum out of them

SC- Aristotle [SC Grail](#), [MGMAT](#) SC Guide -Most of the people here use these two books and I can see why. You don't need to look for anything beyond these two books. SC Grail is written in a very structured and easy to understand way and makes things simple while Manhattan SC Guide though not written in that engaging a way covers some of the more difficult topics that haven't been dealt with in SC Grail.

CR- I used the Manhattan CR Guide but didn't find it very helpful. It focuses too much on diagramming. One needs to learn all those signs for different things. I almost finished the entire book in 1 day. I liked the CR Bible more. The content in the book flows like a story and it's written in an interesting way.

RC- Trust me, reading comprehension is only a function of practice. I sucked big time on RCs and in fact my heart used to slump the moment I saw them. Did all the RC passages from OG13 and then moved on to [Aristotle RCs](#) since I wanted to build the mental stamina of being hammered by passages after passages and yet be not bored of them. Initially I practiced 3-4 passages per day but then started doing 8-10 passages for a couple of days. It built my stamina big time.

c) Focused on learning from the questions

There is ton of non Gmat like questions (1000 CR, 1000 SC are cases in point) floating around and honestly they will only rack your brain but won't teach you anything new. Remember this is no body building championship in which you will be judged by what how much weight can you lift, so don't worry about how much material can you do. What was more important to me was how much can I learn from the mistakes I made.

d) Love hate game with timing:

The GMAT is all about timing and this is something that we do not realize early. We hate doing practice questions under timed circumstances but hey anyone can get 15 critical reasoning questions correct in one hour with 100% accuracy but how many people can get 15 CR questions correct in 20 minutes with 90% accuracy. Not many. The same holds true for Reading comprehension. Don't give it if you are not prepared to time yourself. For the longest time I didn't time myself and suffered big time with a poor score. You have to get over the fear that there is a clock on your head, sometimes just knowing that time is ticking will hamper your performance. I noticed as well that when you're short of time you mess up because you don't make the most of the little time you do have. Confusion and Panic sets in. Instead slow down for 2 seconds and get back again. I ensured that all the practice I was doing from the OG or the Aristotle material was timed. This way I was able to manage my time effectively later.

Hi All,

Just got back from the testing center and will write a detailed debrief soon.. Huge thanks to all the gmatclubbers who have given advice or talked about their experience. **Mega kudos to Karishma and Bunuel who are doing amazing things on the quant boards.** I have a bit of regret on not prepping more on the verbal side but a 740 is fine and I think I have a good split with Q49 and V42.

Went from a 670 (minimal prep - didnt even know about gmatclub) --> 740 with about 2 months of studying part time (after work and on weekends).

I had one minor glitch during the test.. Had a very simple quant question that was testing order of operations but one of the symbols was unclear.. it looked as if it could either be a $^$ or $.$ between 2 numbers.. I solved both ways and realized 2 solutions were possible based on that.. I raised my hand and the proctor was nowhere to be found.. After another 2 minutes, the proctor finally shows up and says there is nothing she can do but file an incident report.. She gave me an incident report number. I am guessing it is an experimental question but who knows...

Only part I'm pissed about is that I ended up guessing on 2 questions around the end and if I had just picked an answer and moved on on the operations question I probably could have solved the 2 I guessed on.

Any advice on whether it is worthwhile to follow up on the Incident Report?

The Debrief – Attempt 1

I took the GMAT on 2/11/2012 with around 3 weeks of preparation focused on a [Princeton Review](#) online self-study class. On the 5 practice tests I did, I scored 700+ on every single test and finished the quant with 30 mins extra most of the time. Based on the [Princeton Review](#) tests, I assumed I would breeze through the actual test and get at least a 700.

Test Day – 2/11/2012 – Attempt 1

The weather was really bad with snow flurries and a lot of accumulation the night before. My car was slipping and sliding everywhere on the day of the test, but I managed to get to the venue on time and even managed to have a bit of breakfast on the way in.

I started the test and after the initial tutorial on the test, I got two easy AWA topics and breezed through them with enough time to craft a strong conclusion. When I did simulated tests, I didn't take any breaks so I went straight into the Quant section. It started off pretty good and about 20 questions in I got a really tough question involving a complex geometric set of beads. I was ahead on time so I figured I could spend a little bit of extra time on the question. I ended up spending 8 or so minutes on it and still ended up guessing on it.. When I looked up I realized I was behind on time so had to rush through the rest of the test. I wasn't panicking yet because I knew I could speed up and still finish.. I did another 10 questions and hit a tough counting question. I looked at the time and realized I only had 3 minutes left. I started guessing randomly after reading the stem of the question. I ended up running out of time with 2 questions left to go.. I felt really terrible at this point and took the break.. I took a walk in the hallway and composed myself because I was really shocked. On all the test simulations, I

was strongest on quant and even the few questions I got wrong were silly mistakes. I was a bit nervous because Verbal definitely wasn't my strength and I didn't prep much for the Verbal... I told myself to pull it together and do whatever I could to get as high a score as possible on the Verbal. I got back in and took my time on the verbal questions.. I was doing OK but towards the end of the Verbal section, I was definitely feeling fatigued. In all my simulated tests, I never did the essays so I didn't have the stamina to deal with the length of the test. I powered through the section and finished the test with around 30 mins to spare. The few mins of demographics and picking schools was agonizing but I got through it and ended up with a 670 q42 v40. I wasn't too surprised other than the fact that the q42 was only the 59th Percentile Rank...

I walked away pretty disappointed overall and feeling as if I underperformed. I also strongly believe that [Princeton Review](#)'s prep material is subpar for anyone targeting a 700+ score.

Prep for Attempt 2

2 days after my first attempt, I started searching online GMAT forums and found gmatclub.com. I posted in general how I did on the test after about 2-3 weeks of prep and asked for advice on whether to reapply or not. Everyone on the forum was very supportive and suggested I retake based on my profile and aspirations and since I got a good score with relatively minimal prep. The people who responded to the first post really made me feel OK about getting the 670 and that I could do better with a few months of focused prep. I signed up for a new test date of 4/13/2012 and after browsing through some of the forums decided on a plan for prep.

Here are the materials I used:

[MGMAT guides](#)

[MGMAT Advanced Quant](#)

[Official Guide 12](#)

Khanacademy.com videos

Forums (more on this later)

GMAT Toolkit - Iphone app (the OG tracker on here alone is worth it here)

GMATClub.com tests

Here is the schedule I followed:

Monday - Thursday :

4AM - 4:30AM Wake Up & Shower etc

4:30AM - 7AM GMAT Prep

7AM - Go to Office

8AM - 12Noon - Work

12Noon-1PM - Lunch break and GMAT Prep

1PM-6PM - Work (end time for work is flexible and more often than not this was 8-9PM)

8PM - 9PM - Relax & have dinner

9PM-11:30PM - GMAT Prep

11:30 - Midnight - GMAT prep in bed on iphone app

Midnight - Sleep

Weekend schedule:

Friday night - no prep -relax maybe do a few questions on iphone

Saturday

6AM-9AM GMAT prep

2PM-6PM GMAT prep

Sunday

2PM-6PM GMAT prep

Whenever I had free time at work, I was working on OG problems using the Iphone OG tracker. Once I completed the **OG quant** questions, I also spent a ton of time answering forum questions. I would go to the Active Discussions section in the forums and try to answer all new questions. I also did provide my opinions on how to work through a few questions. I must say here that for quant forums, I really appreciate the great work being done by Karishma and Bunuel as they are doing a great service for this community. My boss was aware I was taking the GMAT and thus I didn't have to have any awkward conversations about what I was doing. Also, I am very hard working and have proven myself to always stay and get the job done so no one had issues with me studying on the job.

Towards the end of prep, I was feeling quite burned out and in the last 2 weeks I had some major work commitments that forced me to back off the intense schedule. I work in corporate finance so quarter close brought a week of heavy work as well as the week after it where I dealt with Financial Reporting and Presentations.

Here are the test scores and dates for the MGMT tests I took:

3/11 MGMT1 560 Q33 V34

3/11 MGMT2 740 Q46 V45 (I realize this is crazy to do 2 tests in one day but I was shocked by previous score)

3/24 MGMT3 740 Q47 V44

3/24 MGMT4 700 Q47 V38

3/27 MGMT5 680 Q47 V35

3/28 MGMT6 720 Q47 V41

I also took a few of the GMATclub.com tests but don't remember the scores (I think they were in the 700 range).

After the 3/28 test, I was pretty much burned out and work was piling up so I had to switch gears and I just worked on problems after that - I spent the majority of the rest of the time on **MGMT advanced quant** and **OG quant** questions. I used 2 vacation days to get a break the 2 days before the test. This was pretty unnecessary actually and I ended up working from home about half the time even though I was officially off. The night before I had planned to get a good night's sleep but I ended up staying up to about 1AM working on problems.

Test Day – 4/14/2012 – Attempt 2

I woke up at 6AM and was out the door by 7AM. The test was scheduled for 8AM. I picked up 2 bottled Starbucks frappuccino's and 3 energy bars for energy. I had one Frappuccino and an energy bar enroute to the testing site. I got there with plenty of time to spare. Stowed my drink and power bars in the locker and started the test at around 8:05AM. I chose the 5 schools I was interested in: HBS, Stanford, Booth, Wharton and Columbia. The first AWA was an easy topic about a company and a paragraph from its annual report. It was an analysis of argument essay and the argument had several flaws and I easily

picked it apart. I wrote a lot and ran out of time just before clicking next. (I was done but didn't get a chance to really check it). Next topic was a tough topic but I still had lots to write about it and I finished a few seconds before time ran out.

I took the break, grabbed my stuff from the locker, took a walk around the building, had some of the Frappuccino but wasn't feeling hungry at all. I also drank a bit of water and splashed some cold water in my face. I took 6 of the 8 minutes and started back onto the quant section. I was breezing thru the quant section and then I hit a small glitch on a simple question dealing with order of operations. There was a symbol between 2 numbers that could either be a $\cdot$ or a $^$ and depending on which it was, the answer would be different. I called the proctor over and she basically said she couldn't do anything but file an incident report. The symbol looked more like a $\cdot$ to me so I answered accordingly and moved on. I was slightly crunched for time so I made an educated guess on 2 questions towards the end. I had sufficient time to answer the last question and I am confident I got that one right. (I assume I missed the penultimate question.)

I took the next break but I forgot the locker key in the test room so I just walked around, washed my face, used the restroom and drank some water. I came back and jumped right into the verbal.. 2 questions in I got the first Reading Comp passage and I was surprised that it had highlighted text and the questions asked about different parts of highlighted text. I don't recall seeing any practice questions with that form. No real surprises in the verbal section. The toughest questions were sentence correction for me. I know I grappled with some SC questions for 3-4 minutes. I am really fast in general for Verbal and finished with 15 mins to spare and I deliberately spent an extra-long amount of time on the last 4 questions.

I clicked through the demo information. I was delighted when I saw the score of 740 with Q49 V42. Only thing that is disappointing is that Q49 is only the 85th percentile rank. Either way I am extremely happy with the score. I am interested in matriculating in Fall-2013 so now I can relax till App Season. In the next 2 months, I intend to take the CMA certification as well so after I take a weekend off, I will start hitting the books again.

Thanks to all of you who are part of this community. Your posts have inspired me and helped me too understand questions and question types and how to think about various quant problems. I wish everyone here all the best in their GMAT experience and beyond. Hopefully, I will be seeing some of you in one of the Ultra-Elite or Top-10 schools next Fall

Background

I'm a Management Consultant based in North America. I completed my undergrad in April 2010 and began working a few months after that. My interest in attending b-school stems both from my profession (the MBA is a sine qua non for advancement in my firm) and from my own desire to pursue higher education. As such, I decided to write the GMAT.

Books & Materials Used

- The entire **MGMAT book** series (I read each multiple times)
- **OG 11**, 12, and 13
- Verbal Review 2nd edition
- Quantitative Review 2nd edition
- PDF of all the math questions contained in the GMATPrep (found on this forum)
- 6 MGMAT practice CATs
- GMATPrep v1 (older version without IR) - took each test once (two total)
- GMATPrep v2 (with IR) - took each test twice (four total)

The Beginning – Studying like an idiot

In February 2012 I began studying for the GMAT with no specific test date in mind. I decided to focus first on quant and then move to verbal. By studying I mean I picked up **OG 11** and started doing math questions. I cannot overemphasize how poor this method of studying is. I didn't realize my math fundamentals were weak and, as a result, I began memorizing theorems and formulae instead of understanding the principles of number properties, geometry, etc. Moreover, my practice was sporadic because of my hectic and often unpredictable travel schedule. After about two or three months of fruitless studying, I decided to switch gears and get back to basics. This was mainly due to a quick analysis of my **error log**; my hit rate for PS questions had not improved significantly since I began studying so I knew something was wrong.

The Middle – Studying like a pro

Towards the end of April 2012 I decided to start reading the **MGMAT books** cover-to-cover. My brother had taken the course a few years ago and luckily hadn't thrown out the books. I read through the books, doing each set of practice questions. I forced myself to truly understand the concepts being discussed and to do so I had to read each page slowly, often aloud to myself. Reading the number properties book alone was worth the process. Around this time I started to do practice questions exclusively on the imitation GMAT note board and marker produced by MGMAT. In addition, I started to time myself on each question in order to identify three things:

- 1) Question types I get right but take too long to complete --> means I need to identify patterns more quickly
- 2) Question types I get wrong but take too long on --> means I don't understand a principle
- 3) Question types I get wrong but don't take enough time on --> means I am improperly applying a principle

Doing the above step moved my hit rate in math from ~ 80 % to ~ 90 % and my average time per question down from about 2 minutes and 30 seconds to 1 minute and 45 seconds.

First Practice Test:

By mid-June 2012 I had completed most of my math preparation and decided to take a practice test to gauge my progress. The only preparation for Verbal I did was reading about the question types in the OG. The result was disappointing: 690 (46 / 39). I managed my time poorly and had to guess on the last 7 quant questions. This was the biggest lesson I took away from my first experience with the GMAT:

sometimes, you've got to guess and move on. It sounds basic but it has far reaching implications. After that, I decided to schedule my exam for Friday, September 7th.

If you're interested, here are my other practice test scores:

6/17/12 - GMATPrep 1 (new version): 690 (46 / 39)
6/23/12 - MGMAT 1: 700 (44 / 40)
7/08/12 - MGMAT 2: 690 (45 / 38)
7/22/12 - MGMAT 3: 740 (47 / 45)
7/28/12 - GMAT Prep 1 (old version): 760 (49 / 46)
8/05/12 - GMAT Prep 2 (old version): 720 (47 / 42)

At this point, I started writing the tests with the AWA and IR sections and took timed breaks. I tried to mimic exam conditions as much as possible. For the last CAT I took I actually went to the local library and sat in a room to try and get used to writing in an unfamiliar environment.

8/11/12 - MGMAT 4: 700 (43 / 41)
8/17/12 - MGMAT 5: 700 (44 / 41)
8/24/12 - MGMAT 6: 700 (47 / 39)
8/31/12 - GMATPrep 2 (new version): 750 (49 / 44)
9/02/12 - GMAT Prep 1 retake (new version): 740 (47 / 45)
9/04/12 - GMAT Prep 2 retake (new version): 770 (50 / 47)

As you can see, my MGMAT scores were consistent but much lower than my average GMATPrep score. This didn't mean I took the MGMAT CATs lightly; the MGMAT math questions were difficult and the explanations were superb. I would highly recommend them to anyone looking to get a top score on the GMAT.

The End – The payoff

During the last week of my preparation, I spent a lot of time reviewing my previous exams and [error log](#). I also took advantage of GMAT Club's free access on September 3rd and was severely disappointed with my results. I could barely answer more than 50 % of the questions correctly. Dejected, I decided to power my way through about 800 + math questions from GMATPrep that I found on this forum. In retrospect, it probably helped improve my math score but I wouldn't recommend it as a strategy.

The day before my test I tried to take it easy. I watched some TV (I'm a sucker for The Sopranos and Mad Men) and lightly reviewed the ~ 20 pages of quant and verbal notes I had developed. I also visited the test center to ensure I knew how to get there, where to park, and to ask about any specific policies that the test center had in place. I went to sleep early but found myself unable to sleep. Luckily, my exam was scheduled for 1:30 pm so it wasn't too much of a problem.

Test Day

I woke up early, ate a large breakfast and drank a bottle of Gatorade. I always found it helpful to do 10 easy math questions before my tests so I picked up the quantitative review book and chose 5 PS and 5 DS questions and solved them on the yellow note board. After this, I reviewed my notes once again and headed to the center. I listened to classical music on my way there as it calms me, mainly because it usually doesn't contain lyrics.

I arrived about 45 minutes early and the proctor let me start right away. I drank a third of the bottle of Gatorade I had brought along and jumped into the AWA. It was a relatively straightforward argument about a national supermarket chain's attempt to gain market share in smaller markets through more local involvement. No problem. Next up was the IR section. I tackled each question as best as I could but by the end of this section, I wasn't feeling all that great about my performance.

I took my break, sprinted to the bathroom, and downed a further third of my Gatorade after I came back. I was determined to do well on the quantitative section. Started off with a basic ratio problem then moved to a more difficult geometry question. By the middle of the section I was about 2 minutes behind schedule and I was getting questions I felt were easy. I kept thinking “this is not going well.” I sped up, guessing on questions I didn’t know in order to get back on schedule. The fact that I didn’t see any probability or combinatorics questions further strengthened the voice in my head telling me that I wasn’t doing well. Finished the last question with about 30 seconds to spare and breathed a sigh of relief. I was almost done.

Once more I sprinted to the bathroom, splashed cold water on my face, and finished the last third of my Gatorade. The verbal part was my strength and I knew I could do very well. My MGMAT and GMATPrep practices had for the most part been above 90th percentile and I had done some intense studying with the [MGMAT SC](#) guide to push my GMATPrep scores up to the mid 90s. I went through the section and felt it went much better than the quant section. I knew I was doing well when I got to question 35 and got stuck on a CR question in which EVERY answer could have been correct. Across all my prep tests, and the real GMAT included, that question was the only verbal question I ever guessed on. Hopefully it was experimental. I got to the last question (SC) with about 5 minutes to spare and leisurely picked apart the grammatical issues. I hesitated in confirming my answer because I wanted to think through if I actually wanted to report my score or not. After about two minutes of debating, I decided that I was going to report my score because even if I did poorly, this was a chance to learn and without data it would be difficult to diagnose problems.

I answered the BIQs (prepopulated from my registration) and hit the “report score” radio button. Those 5 seconds the software takes to calculate the score were the longest 5 seconds I’ve ever had to wait. The result: 750 (98th) Q: 49 (83rd) V: 44(97th). When I saw my score, I was ecstatic. The math score was the one I was most proud of, since I hadn’t been scoring consistently in the 80th percentile on my practice tests. I guess I really couldn’t gauge how easy or difficult the questions were and got very lucky with which questions weren’t counted! Overall, I’m very happy but I’m still waiting on the official score to be reported, including the AWA and IR.

This process has been a difficult one but has been made less so by the existence of GMATclub. For every question I got wrong during my prep, I always came to this forum to find out what I was doing incorrectly. It has been a fantastic resource and I encourage anyone who is in the process of studying to visit often.

My 4 Lessons:

- 1) Always start with the basics: even if you're an engineer extremely proficient with math, it won't hurt to spend some time reviewing the basics of the math principles tested on the GMAT. The same goes for verbal.
- 2) Error logs will only get you so far: a well built [error log](#) can help you diagnose performance issues, but it can be exponentially more powerful when paired with a diligent review of every question you do, regardless of if you got it right or wrong.
- 3) As much as possible, take full length exams (w/ AWA and IR): for me, this really helped build my stamina. Moreover, I was often very nervous when I started each of the CATs and this reflected itself in the poor math scores I would see when I skipped the AWA and IR sections. During the actual exam, I found these sections to be useful in that they are a nice way to ease into the exam.
- 4) Plan out pre-test day dinner and test day meal schedules: if you're going to train for high performance then look to the training schedules of other high performers to understand what works. Athletes will often do this to ensure they won't eat anything that may upset their

stomache. The last thing you want is to try some new food the night before your exam only to find out you're allergic! The natural extension of this is to visit the test center in order to plan your route and to ask the proctor about the policies of the test center.

Just gave the test today and got a 750 (Q49, V44). While overall I am definitely happy and relieved I must admit I am a little dissatisfied with the quant score. Never scored less than 50, but some stupid decisions I made during the test cost me a 50+ quant score.

Here were my test scores:

GMATPrep1: 760

GMATPrep2: 760

MGMAT 1: 760

MGMAT2: 750

MGMAT3: 750

MGMAT4: 730

MGMAT5: 760

MGMAT6: 770

GMATPrep2 (retake): 790

Preparation:

OG - First of all I personally do NOT believe that the OG is the bible. OG is just the first step and by no means will it prepare you for a 720+ score. 80% of the OG is way easier than Gmatprep and the actual test so keep that in mind. Do not build false confidence by doing well in OG. OG should be the FIRST thing you do and that's it, after that you must move on to more difficult sources.

MGMAT - The best CATs by far. I would highly recommend them

SCs - [Manhattan SC](#). A lot of people swear by this as the SC bible, but once again I beg to differ. I think it is a stepping stone, but by no means is it the be all and end all of everything to do with SC. In fact the book doesn't cover a lot of the ground for the really tough SCs in GMAT, such as Ellipsis. However, this MUST be the starting point for all study in SC.

The best source for SC in the last 2 weeks of prep is the GMatPrep document on this website that covers ALL of the problems posted in GmatPrep. Once you go through that you will realize that for the most difficult questions, simple parallelism, pronoun rules don't suffice. Learning about these problems

is the single most important thing you can do for SC prep.

CR/RC - Practice, Practice, Practice. No material to learn here, the more you practice the better you become.

Finally during your practice tests, whenever you get something wrong, don't brush past it, but understand why you went wrong. Search for the problem on this forum or the Manhattan forums (highly recommended)

Now onto quant.

Now during the test, I felt like I was doing well in the first 15 qns of quant and got some tough DS's, but then I got a nasty DS that stuck with me through the test. I should have guessed and moved forward, but I refused to let go. I wasted about 7 mins on this and paid for it at the end by guessing the last 3-4 qns semi-blindly. Pick the battles you want to fight.

I felt the verbal considerably easier than anything I had done. Every SC seemed to be water-tight and apart from a few CRs towards the end and a nasty RC at the very end, I was in control throughout.

I have been preparing for GMAT for over 10 months. Having seen multiple ups and downs, joys and sorrows, I am elated to score over 730 (my goal) on the exam. I hope that this score with my experience will help me get into one of the top B schools, probably with some scholarship. I would appreciate inputs from other's who have some experience with the same. I got a lot from the communities at BTG and GC . Here are the things that I learned.

First phase: Study hard and solve lots of questions

I started preparing in November 2011 using the [Princeton review's cracking the GMAT](#). The book is a great introduction but little beyond that. It just lacks any depth and is quite inadequate for non-natives. I took a mock test after completing the book and scored a pathetic 23 on verbal. That's when I joined BTG. I saw MGMAT highly recommended and purchased the entire pack.

The [MGMAT books](#) were much better and dealt with things in unbelievable detail. The quant books especially the one on number properties and sets are excellent. I have TATA McGraw Hill's CAT book that deals with the same topics but it in no way compares to the [MGMAT series](#). I also liked the Verbal books for they helped me improve my Verbal score to from 23 to 32 (MGMAT mocks) but somehow I could not improve beyond that. This was a very frustrating period as I kept on revising the books but without much improvement. I solved a number of questions on GC (Kudos to BB for the tagging system) but that did not help.

Phase 2, focused study

Desperate for improvement I looked for help. I found two companies that fit my budget - [GMATPill](#) and [e-GMAT](#). After asking people around, I went for [e-GMAT](#) (thanks Vinnik for your recommendation). The course was really helpful in pushing my score from 32 to 40. These folks at [e-GMAT](#) have a very different approach. They teach SC using logic, something that came very intuitively to me. I knew most of the rules but was not aware of the logic behind those. Once you understand those, applying them became a lot easier. This helped me improve. SC became fun. In CR, the Prethinking approach helped a lot in improving accuracy for more difficult questions. Overall, the course gave me much more structured approach towards my prep. Overall, the course provided me with a lot more clarity. Check it out if you need help on Verbal.

This also helped me focus on quant and improve to 50. I read the number properties book again (very important if you want to reach 50), did all the difficult DS problems that I found from any source and revised my mocks diligently. The last point helped me a lot. As I solved my mocks, I realized that in every mock I would answer 2-3 questions incorrectly due to silly mistakes. I focused just on weeding those mistakes out and was able to do that in 2 weeks.

My learnings:

1. Do not give up: GMAT is a very logical exam and if you are good with logic you should be able to do reasonably well. Focus on the basics if you are not improving. Define your weak areas and work on them.
2. Keep time for Sentence Correction: SC is vast, especially for non-natives. The best way to master SC is to build a foundation. Learn clauses and phrases well. Then, learn all the rules but focus especially on Verb-ing modifiers, Verb ed, FANBOYS. Work on your ability to identify lists. We are not trained to do that. (look at the helpful resources section for help there)
3. Understand the logic in CR: Most of us are good in CR. However, to score 40, you need to be better.

Focus on why the correct answer is correct and the wrong answer is wrong. This was one thing I struggled with. I wish I had created a document of all the good solutions. Look for good solutions either on forums but pose a question if you are satisfied with the logic.

4. Read properly in Reading Comprehension: Build your vocabulary (not GRE level but definitely better than regular English), get comfortable with the various topics and learn how to read and retain information. My ability to retain information was limited when I started. I had to take a lot of notes. As I stretched myself, I realized that I could retain more and consequently the speed improved and the reliance on notes went down. Also read a few good magazines/journals (if you can read journals, they help a lot)

5. Quant: Aim for a 50 and work on it. 700+ score becomes a lot easier if you can get 50 on quant. Work on your weak areas. Do not leave DS for the end of your prep. Do it early. Do not hesitate to brush up the basics even if you are very good.

6. Focused prep: As you isolate your weaknesses, find good theory material and questions. Work on it till you are satisfied with it.

7. Selective Sacrifice: GMAT prep requires time and everyone is busy. One of the biggest challenges I faced was to decide where to cut off. I stopped attending all but important social visits. I did lighten up on my gym schedule but realized that it was counter productive. I also realized that short sport stints such as playing a game of badminton really helped me. I would recommend that you don't give up on sports while preparing. One more thing, I also took half my vacation during for my prep.

Helpful resources:

There are many helpful resources available on the web. Here are some that I have

AWA:

how-to-get-6-0-awa-my-guide-64327.html - the best one.

GMATprep questions:

gmatprepsc-105446.html

gmat-prep-critical-reasoning-collection-106783.html

Sources to improve reading

1. NyTimes: <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html> The opinion column is full of great articles. Read those that are not too long.

2. WSJ: A good place to get started for business articles. There are some articles on policy too.

a. Economic section: [http://online.wsj.com/public/page/news- ... pnav_na_us](http://online.wsj.com/public/page/news-...pnav_na_us)

b. Life and culture: [http://online.wsj.com/public/page/news- ... lture_main](http://online.wsj.com/public/page/news-...lture_main)

3. Discover magazine: <http://discovermagazine.com/>

4. Scientific American: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/> (lots of short articles)

5. HBR blog: <http://hbr.org/> (short and long articles, excellent sentence construction)

6. Journal of American history: <http://www.journalofamericanhistory.org/>

7. Competition Success Review: Print only, for people in India.

8. Creativity post: <http://www.creativitypost.com/> - bio sciences related articles

Use Evernote: This is a very helpful tool to catalogue whatever you read. There are times when you stumble upon something that you are unable to complete. Use this tool to tag and archive. Why use this tool: It has excellent search capabilities and it works on every smartphone, tablet and computer. Give it a try. You will not be disappointed. This is one life saver free tool.

I know it has been a log debrief. I hope it helps you.

Hello everyone, this is my second post ever on this forum (First was the creation of the 2013 Jones thread, join me on it!)

Anyways, I took my GMAT in March of 2011, so it was quite a long time ago; hopefully my story can help you guys out. I think the test changed since, but I think some of my anecdotes will generalize to the revised test.

I spent about 2 months studying. My theory is, it's not about how long you study or even how many hours a day you study, it's about knowing how to study. In my personal case, I am a quant guy so I spent most of my time on the verbal section. When I took the exam, it was Reading, Logic, Sentences. I'll take each part separately:

Reading: It's hard to "learn" how to read faster, but it is easy to DISCIPLINE yourself into becoming a more focused reader. I can't stress how key this is. You do not have to speedread to beat the gmat; however, the student who has to read sentences multiple times because he loss focus is in big trouble. I recommend reading a book or two or more in the month before taking the gmat. This will get your mind accustomed to focus on reading and will give you an inside edge at control of your own mind's focus. Now, on to the questions. Take Practice Tests and take a LOT of them. If you get a question wrong, don't tell yourself the answer is "wrong". It's not telling you your dumb, it's telling you that you are making improper inferences. DONT INFER UNLESS THE QUESTION TELLS YOU TO INFER. You want to pick the answer that is the most painfully obvious from the text. Thus, although it may seem like a good thing if you know the subject you are reading about, it is most often not. I thought I was golden everytime the passage on the practice tests were about chemistry because that is my study, but I most often got the most wrong on passages like this. Don't let your own knowledge infringe on the material that you will be asked about. There will only be one choice that is completely accurate and not a logical leap. Pick that one and move on to the next question. And don't read choice a, read choice b, read choice c, like choice c, and pick choice c. Read all the choices.. easy to say but in practice this takes discipline.

Logic: Much of the same strategy as reading, but here you have to infer. Again, read all the choices. Many of them may seem correct. In reality, more than one of the answers may be correct. However, there is one that can be inferred directly from the material. If one choice follows from the material and violates common sense and the other requires common sense to infer, Go with the first choice! Keep your logic linear... Keep track of all the inputs required in your logic to reach a position. If one of the inputs is not in the text.. that answer is Wrong!

Sentences: Learn the rules. Learn the rules. Learn the rules. They are going to try to trick you with long drawn out sentences with complex clauses. In math, we use paranthesis to separate things. For example, $\sin 5x$ would look better if we wrote $\sin(5x)$. In sentences, you should do the same thought process. For example:

"Each of the scientists have a computer". This sentence is WRONG. Know why? Think of it like this: "(Each of the engineers) have a computer". The subject in paranthesis is referring to a singular person. "(Person) have a computer". Now it is clear that this is wrong: "(Person) HAS a computer" --> "Each of the scientists has a computer" is the correct sentence. Besides this, focus on parallelism and idioms... those are key.

As far as the AWA goes, keep the logic linear and maintain a structure... that is what they look for.

And for the quant: Work fast but at every logical step you make, quickly ask yourself, "is this logically correct?". Then, when you get to the end, you will not have to worry about getting the problem wrong, because you evaluated every step. Half of your brain should be in problem solving mode, and the other half should be in editing mode. This is not the math test where a simple mistake is forgiven. At least in my day, the CAT meant that getting 2 questions wrong early killed your high score.

I'm sorry I'm not more specific... I'm more just relaying the realizations I made on my path to the test taking environment. It's definitely an intimidating process, but I wish you all the best of luck.

I'm happy to inform you all that I am done with the GMAT, forever. Got a 750(Q-51,V-40) and though it's a little less than the 99th percentile(760 benchmark) I had set for myself, nonetheless, I'm on top of the world.

A brief background

In India, we are told by our parents that every exam is very "crucial for your future". So the high school exam is "make or break" for "deciding your future", the same is for the 12th grade and the same continues when we prepare for the engineering exam and then for the CAT. I have been hearing all those things since time immemorial "Beta, padh lo! Life ban jaayegi"(Son, study! Your future will be secure!) . Huh! But to prepare for the GMAT was the first time when anybody didn't have to tell me that, because

1. This time I didn't tell anyone that I'm preparing for the GMAT so there was no one to bestow me with suggestions
2. This time I myself knew that this exam is really important as it is going to determine my future.

I started my preparation 4 months back . As I am working full-time, I kept aside around 20 hours of studying per week as I did not want to burn out fast by studying too hard.

Test day Experience

AWA -

I didn't prepare anything for AWA till the day before the exam. Knew that I'll do well on this. Saw the template by Chineseburned and just practiced writing one essay each of argument and issue on one of the AWA topics on mba.com and surprisingly as luck would have it, I got the argument essay on the GMAT on which I had practised writing an essay! .

Quant:-

The questions were very easy and I was cruising at good speed. Suddenly, saw that 2-3 questions were quite easy and I got nervous thinking that I was not doing well but as the score showed later, I think I couldn't have done better on quant. The language and format of the quant questions was very similar to the ones you'd see on the GMATPREP CATs , so I'd suggest you to really take time analyzing the GMATPREP CATs

Verbal:-

First two questions were SC questions. The sentences were not long but the questions were quite tricky. And though I had practiced a lot of meaning based questions from Aristotle New SC Questionbank, I was thrown off balance because of the pressure on the exam. Took a good 4-5 minutes on them and cursed myself for that. Regained the composure and said to myself not to exceed the time I have set for myself for each type of question. Then started tackling the questions with greater poise.

Finished the Verbal section just in time. Only 10 seconds were left on the clock. 😊

Books referred:-

I primarily referred OGs, Manhattan and Aristotle Prep books as I didn't want to go crazy doing everything on the internet

OG12 and **OG11**- The OGs are the best resources for practising as they contain retired GMAT questions.

SC -Aristotle SC Grail ,Manhattan SC - Both the books complement each other. No wonder these are the most referred books for SC.

Ultimate One minute Explanations to OG12 SC- Has to understand explanations to OG12 questions.

CR : Manhattan CR Guide

RC : Ginn's RC Guide for RC strategy and Aristotle RC Practice sets 1 & 2 for practice

Quant- Nothing much. In fact, I got a little jittery in the 3rd month of my preparation that I have completely ignored maths 😊

Practice test scores

GMATPREP and Manhattan CATs are the best out there!

Before I started my prep, i took a GMATPREP CAT.Scored a 670 on that so knew that I'd not to be just focused to score well.

After 3 months

MGMAT CAT 1 - 640(Got shocked that after preparing for 3 months I got a score less than what I had gotten on the diagnostic)

MGMAT CAT 2 - 670

MGMAT CAT 3 - 720

GMATPREP 1 - 740 (Was overjoyed that I have broken the 700 barrier on GMATPREP)

MGMAT CAT 4- 740

GMATPREP 2- 750

GMATPREP1 (Retake) : 780 (Saw around 4-5 repeat questions/sections so that's why the score got inflated)

Final GMAT : 750(Q:51,V:40)

I'm quite happy on getting this score but maybe a little disappointed that I couldn't touch the 99th percentile mark at 760.

Here are some things which I learned during the journey and after reaching the destination 😊

1.) **TIME MANAGEMENT** - I think that time management is MORE important than practicing.A lot of us fail to control our emotions on the actual exam and end up spending more than the stipulated time on a particular question. For example, I wasted around 4-5 minutes on a probability question when all I should have done is that I should have

2.) **Educated guessing/Ballparking** : Making educated guesses on maths can help you answer questions faster. The GMAT doesn't expect you to solve every question till the last digit. Learn the art of ballparking as you prepare for the exam.

3) **Prefer only good quality material** : Do not go mad doing every other resource out there on the internet especially those 1000 SC documents. Its more important to do 10 questions a day and get 7 different concepts out of it rather than doing 100 and getting only 5 different concepts out of it. How to find different concepts ? Read the answers in the OG very carefully. They hide little gems.

4.) **Visit the forums often**: This forum is the best way to keep yourself in the groove and be motivated. Follow threads by good members.A good way to get good questions .

Warning: As you can probably tell from this long thread I tend to say very little with many words, so read at your own risk. If you're cramming for the GMATs then it's more valuable to read the shorter debriefs

My "quest" is over, and luckily I don't plan on engaging in another GMAT quest ever again. I received a Q49, V44 for a 760 and I'm not too bummed out about not hitting 800 😊. Thanks to everyone at gmatclub for their continuing support, the mods and creators of [gmatclub tests](#), and special thanks to Avenusaur and gmanjesh for their valuable tips and sanity checks.

I took my gmat this morning. I'll start with the test day debrief and follow with my study recommendations.

I read a lot of debriefs from other people so I was able to get a lot of tips before test day. I know some people have trouble sleeping the night before or wake up really early on test date; luckily for me I slept like a baby and felt really good the morning of the test. I had planned on getting to the test center an hour earlier and grab brunch since my test was scheduled for noon. I ended up getting there there two hours early. I took the extra time to buy 2 bottles of 5-hour energy, 2 bananas, and water. At the diner, it only took me 15 minutes to eat. I had prepared for test very intensely for ~5 weeks, averaging about 6-8 hours a day. However, this past week I didn't really study much and the day before the test I hardly studied anything at all. I felt a bit rusty so I was determined to do some practice OG problems at the cafe. I think this is a fairly good way of getting your brain in gmat-mode prior to taking the test. After about 15 minutes though I got tired and went to the test center 1.5 hours early because I had read that people are often allowed to take tests early.

At the test center (16th floor of Herald Square- NY) I was sort of annoyed that there was construction going on. The lady was very nice but unfortunately I could only start the test at 11:30, so I had to sit around and wait for an extra hour. The test center itself was going under construction and thus there were no bathrooms on the floor! What's worse is one had to take an elevator to either the 15th or 17th floor to use the restroom. There was staircase that said "Staircase under construction, only enter under emergencies." I decided that having 8 minutes to wait for an elevators and use the bathroom constituted an emergency so I risked my life and used the staircase (which was clearly under construction but fine).

During the wait room I also had to use the bathroom twice for some reason. I was a bit embarrassed that people would think I had an overactive bladder.

Perhaps the most important tip I received came from the admin. As you all know, 8 minutes is a short time for a break. **The admin told me to raise my hand and call the admin before clicking YES for the break.** The reason for this is because sometimes it takes a while for the admin to come, and if he's standing there while you press YES you get the full 8 minutes. This came in handy because after the quant section I had a couple of minutes left and raised my hand for my break. Since I was in the corner it took him literally two minutes to come over. If I had opted to take the break and clicked yes I would have been screwed ¼ of my time. Definitely try to remember this during your test.

The center came with earplugs and huge headphones to block out noise, which I used during the test. I started the AWA and felt that they were a lot more difficult than I had expected. I sort of struggled through the second one (take a side) because the prompt was so unclear but I wrote it anyway. I figure I should at least receive a 5.5 since I'm a native speaker and wasn't too worried.

During the 8 minute break I ran up one floor and used the bathroom, ate a banana and swigged half a bottle of my 5 hour energy. I'm probably used up only 5 minutes of my break but I didn't care and wanted to start.

I made sure to follow MGMAT's timing strategy of checking the problem number every 15 minutes. I

think this strategy is much better than looking at the problem and then figuring out how much time is left. MGMAT recommends that when you have 60 minutes left, you should be on Q7 or V8, 45 minutes left, Q14 or V16, 30 minutes left, Q(14+7) or V(16+8)...etc. I think this strategy is optimal because it frames your mindset. It's not that you are running out of time, you just have more questions to do. If you look at the question number and then try to determine how much time you have left, you may feel under pressure because of the clock ticking down. Small tricks such as (not like 😊) this were helpful to me.

I ran into quant troubles very early (at #5 and #6) but I had expected this since many people wrote this in their debriefs. Quant was a bit weird in that the questions were either really easy or really hard with few hard manageable questions. I only received 1 combinatorics/probability question that was so easy I had to do it three times to make sure there wasn't a trick question involved. During the latter part of the test I received some brutal geometry questions that involved similar trapezoids (wth?) and regular octagons. I sort of had time management issues in that somehow I had 20 minutes left with 6 questions to go but then 8 questions left with 4 to go, after those two problems. I ended up fairly satisfied with quant and expecting a Q50.

I ate my second banana and took my second swig of 5-hour energy. I had only planned on drinking half a bottle each break but since I had brought two bottles, I think I took the full bottle and downed the entire thing. After I used the bathroom I began to feel really jittery. Definitely not a good thing.

The verbal questions were fairly straightforward. I ran into a couple difficult sentence corrections at the beginning and I extremely long question (comparable to LSAT) but most of the questions were okay. The last 3 verbal questions were CR and very difficult; I spent my last 12 questions trying to figure them out and I wasn't sure whether I got them. Also, during the section I received absolutely NO bold-faced questions. I had heard rumors that those questions were indicators of doing well so I was a bit scared that I screwed up verbal badly. I ended up finishing with about 3 minutes left.

After the test was done I answered all the boring personal questions and before I clicked Report Score prayed that I would receive a 750+. I clicked and the screen showed a Q49 (87%) V44 (97%) - 760 (99%). A few fist pumps later I turned my head and saw the administrators smiling at me (didn't know they were watching). I received a couple of congratulations and exited the test center. After I left the test center I was a tiny bit disappointed by my Q49 (Avenusaur after all received a Q50 V44 which I hoped to match =) since I had successive Q51s, but I quickly shrugged that off since, well, a 760 definitely won't preclude me from any schools. Whew! Congrats on reading through this. On to my study strategy...

Study Strategy

I am a recent college grad and had a couple of months before I started work. I figured 3 months would be sufficient time to prepare. I started my log on 5/26 but somehow procrastinated for 2 full months, leaving me about 6 weeks to study. I was so angry that I let that happen that I determined to dedicate all my time to the GMAT. For the next 5 weeks I studied about ~6-8 hours every day. The last few days before the test I probably studied about 3-4 hours a day. I didn't study at all the day before. What works for me might not work for you, so take everything with a grain of salt. With that said, I don't think I could have studied for more than 5 weeks with that intensity anyway, so I was pretty happy with the study timeframe.

I purchased the complete [MGMAT books](#) + OG guides on craigslist for \$40, and bought the MGMAT online resources for \$40. I also used several LSAT books, [gmatclub tests](#)...etc.

Sentence Correction

Materials Used [in order]:

[MGMAT SC](#) - I went through this twice and really got the hang of it the second time.

Brutal SC Doc- The first time I went through these I got really frustrated. I kept an [error log](#) and redid them a week before the test day and got most of them correct.

Gmat-Sucesss Scs- Available online. They were very helpful but contain a lot of errors. They are good practice but make sure to google your answers to double check.

GMATPrep SC question doc- From sterny's debrief, I found these a week before the test. I went through them in two days and I believe they helped tremendously. In my opinion, [MGMAT SC](#) is necessary to get a good quant score but definitely not sufficient. Once you get the basics, you need the GMATPrep SC doc to learn about the subtleties in the choices. Often times they'll be changes in meaning, ellipses, complex parallelisms- things that [MGMAT SC](#) don't cover.

Critical Reasoning

Materials used:

[Powerscore LSAT Logical Reasoning Bible](#)- My friend recently took the LSAT and let me borrow his LSAT LR book. Although I had the [MGMAT CR](#) book I didn't think it would be sufficient. I also didn't want to spend money on the Powerscore GMAT CR Book. I must say that this guide was ESSENTIAL (I'd bet that the powerscore GMAT CR book is equally good). It breaks down every single type of question and gives you strategies that make every question seem clear. For example, the assumption negation technique tells you that you can double check your answers simply by negating the answer choice and seeing if that weakens the question. The evaluate the argument technique tells you that when faced with answer choices, assume it is true then assume it is false. If one strengthens the argument and the other weakens it, your answer choice is correct.

[Kaplan LSAT Mastery](#)- I had to buy this book from [Amazon](#) because it's only available for [Kaplan](#) students who register for a full LSAT course. Basically it is a list of almost all the official LSAT questions broken down by type. After reading the Assumption section in the Powerscore LSAT bible, I would do the 100 or so Assumption questions in the LSAT Mastery bible. After reading strengthen/weaken, I would specifically target those questions. Because all the questions are specific and from an official source (LSAT), I thought this book was also invaluable.

Reading Comprehension

[MGMAT RC Guide](#)- I went through this first and really liked it. It definitely helped taking notes and identifying the structures. I started RC averaging about 3 wrong but after getting through the guide, I was still getting 1-2 wrong per section.

[Powerscore LSAT RC Guide](#)- I went through this after and thought it was helpful but nothing groundbreaking. A lot of emphasis was put on diagramming (which of course is essential for the LSAT) but it was difficult to apply to the GMAT. However, I did learn 1 important tip- when doing a history passage or one with a lot of dates, draw a timeline of the events. There, I just saved you \$60.

[Kaplan LSAT Mastery](#)- I had trouble with hard science passages and did all the LSAT science passages (organized in the book). I also did all the social science passages. Again, I really liked this book and would advise any serious student to get it (though it may be difficult to find).

Random LSAT Prep Tests- I did like 5 or 6 LSAT sections (each contained 27 questions/4 passages in 35 minutes). I don't think these were necessary but definitely helped.

The most important part of RC is just to practice. I used to think it was hard to improve- you either get it or you don't- but honestly after a lot of repetition you learn to read things very carefully. Eventually I just realized that when doing local questions, I had to read word-by-word or else I would miss the information necessary to answer the question. After I realized I simply wasn't reading carefully enough, my RC scores shot up.

Quant

MGMAT guides- I read all the **MGMAT guides** and went through them. Number Properties was very helpful, as was Geometry. I think they were essential in improving.

GMATClub tests- I got them for free after 200+ posts, which I managed to cram in several days (I'm a cheapo so I had registered for gmatclub 6 months beforehand to satisfy the 90-day requirement =P). They really helped me concentrate on the details and I thought they were probably my best practice resource. A lot of info is given so I won't go too much in-depth. However, I felt that after doing the first 9 or so I got the hang of them. The following were my practice scores

As you can see, not the prettiest of scores. I thought the specific-question types were very helpful as well.

Sackmann Extreme Challenge & Data Sufficiency Sets- I thought they were a bit pricey at \$25 per set, but if you get the **Total Gmat Math** (which I didn't) + Sets I think the price is reasonable. I thought the DS set was great in helping my DS. The Challenge Set emphasized way too much on probability and combinatorics (which were barely represented on my GMAT).

That pretty much completes my materials. I also used **OG11**, Official Verbal Review, and Official Quant Review. Honestly I only completed the questions that MGMAT required, so I went over a lot of the sentence corrections in the guide. Since I didn't use MGMAT for CR, I didn't even do 1 official CR question (LSAT questions were more than sufficient). I think the OG books are helpful but slightly overrated. They tend to be too easy for those looking for 750+ and one can definitely get by without them.

Aside from these sources, I also did a lot of verbal and quant questions in gmatclub forums. The verbal questions helped a lot and the quant questions were pretty challenging. Perhaps the biggest resource I haven't focused on is Google. For all the official SC and most of the official CR questions, you can paste the first few words in quotes and you'll be presented links to explanations. By far the most helpful responses were Ron and Stacey's on the mgmat forums. For the GMATPrep SC document, I learned a LOT from their posts. Don't expect to get your questions answered if you post them on the forum however because the instructors generally only answer questions from course students, and even then they don't get answered in a timely manner. I read through Chineseburned and **OG11's** AWA guides and did one full CAT (MGMAT #6) with AWA.

I used MGMAT and GMATPrep CATs. They're pretty self-explanatory.

5/26 - 690 - Q44 V39 - MGMAT1 (didn't really study until 7/15 after this 😞)

7/17 - ??? - Q48 V?? - MGMAT2
7/25 - 680- Q47 V36 - MGMAT3
8/1 - 720 - Q49 V39 - GMATPrep1
8/7 - 760 - Q50 V42 - GMATPrep 2, closest approximation
8/12- 740 - Q50 V41- MGMAT4
8/13 - 720- Q48 V40 - MGMAT5
8/17 - 770- Q49 V46- GMATPrep1 Retake
8/19 - 780- Q51 V45- MGMAT6
8/21 - 780- Q51 V46- GMATPrep2 Retake
8/25 - 760- Q49 V44- Official GMAT

Whew! I think that about covers it. I definitely typed more than I wanted to but hopefully you found some of this information helpful. I found that keeping a diary kept me motivated and focused for much of my preparations and I encourage you to start one if you need support. Ask away if you have any questions and good luck on your test!

Arggh! I took the test yesterday here in Korea at the Pearson VUE center. The test was free, but I'm kind of frustrated with the score. I'm still debating whether or not I should retake it.

Here is the breakdown:

Q47 - 81%

V40 - 91%

710 - 94%

I guess I should be happy with the score, but from the practice tests and studying that I did I was pretty confident that I would get between 730 and 750.

Before even touching any questions in the OG, my PP scores were 710 and 720.

I took two [Kaplan](#) CATs: 630 and 640.

And two [Princeton Review](#) CATs: 730 and 740.

And after going through the OG and analyzing my mistakes I took the PP CATs again: 790 and 780.

My strike rates for all the sections in the OG were around 90%.

Anyway, I'll write about my experience with Pearson VUE.

My appointment was for 12:30, but I got there around 11:40 and the clerk let me check-in and start the test early. She checked my confirmation letter from Pearson VUE and took my digital signature and fingerprint, as well as my photograph from a video camera hooked up to a computer.

She then gave me a checklist of rules to look over. I was disappointed that I couldn't take my watch into the testing room...I hate looking at the timer on the computer screen. No watches are allowed, even analog ones without alarm clocks. I was only allowed to take my locker key and passport in the testing room. Before entering the testing room I had to press my finger on a fingerprint recognition device and hand over my passport again. Before entering and right after leaving the room each time I had to go through this procedure.

What I think contributed to a possible loss of 20 or 30 points in my score was the marker and "erasable boards" I had to use. The boards were just laminated white grid paper. Two of them. And I was told not to erase my work, but to just raise my hand and request more. I found this extremely frustrating during the quantitative section as it ate into my precious time. It didn't take long to fill up the paper. More annoying than this was the markers. I've always done all my mathwork with a mechanical pencil and found the markers awkward to write with. Even though they were fine-tip. Not only that, but I was only given one marker at a time and I had to replace them about three times just during the math section. The first two markers didn't write well - they just gave me used markers. Because of the constant replacing of markers and papers, I had trouble maintaining my pace. Needless to say, it rattled me and threw me off for the entire test. In hindsight, I should have found the best marker before going into the testing room. But, I shouldn't have to do this...Pearson VUE could easily shell out a new marker for each person and throw away all the old ones. This test really is about

confidence and racing against time...so disturbances, no matter how minor, can have a big impact on your mindset.

One other difference, I think, is the break times. Ten minutes after the AWA, and ten minutes after the Quant section.

Anyway, as for content, nothing new to report here. I got a few probability questions. And lots of Data Sufficiency ones. The first ten in a row were DS. Much more fun to do the PS questions.

My score will get me into the schools I want to get into, I'm just wondering if I can get more \$\$\$ for having a 740 or 750, instead of a 710. Any advice is welcome.

Here's a debrief on a few aspects of the GMAT I dealt with:

This was my 2nd GMAT, so I'll try to put the summary below, after the prep and practice sections, in some sort of chronological order.

Preparation

Veritas Prep Course + materials - I took the intensive, 1-week version of this course back in October in NYC. Very good materials and good instructor. Highly recommended, although if you have the time, take the full 13-week course.

OG 11 - Unlike many others, I did not find this helpful at all. I found the practice questions to be ridiculously easy and the concepts were not approached in depth.

Kaplan 800 - I thought this was quite helpful. There are too many GMAT books that take a shallow cut at the concepts and not enough that prepare you to confront the toughest questions. Although the math questions were easier than they should be, the majority of the book did help.

GMATClub.com Challenges - Probably the best tool for practicing math concepts and GMAT-specific problems. Typical questions will stack numerous concepts into a tough problem. Utilize these if you want to do some training by the over-reaching method (ie., practicing problems harder than you will face on the actual test).

Practice Exams

Thomson Arco - My scores ranged from 630-780 on these. Overall, not a bad test. The questions from both sections were similar in difficulty to the actuals.

Veritas practice tests - Decent tests. Not the best. The quality of a few questions were iffy at best.

800 Score - Absolutely horrible. The questions on these tests are of extremely poor quality. Mistakes ranged from blatant and numerous misspellings to missing information in the questions.

GMATPrep - Must take before the actual exams. My score on this test 2 days before the real thing was exactly the same as my official score.

Summary

My first test (on 11/20) wasn't taken under the best circumstances. I had little rest in the preceding days, and was doing some excessive work (during my actual work day). The result was a 720, which was not nearly what I expected and much lower than most of my practice exams.

Afterwards, I was adamant about re-taking it, even though many questioned a retake when the initial score was not bad by any means. My reasoning was pretty simple - I knew I could score much better.

So, I've spent the last 6 weeks or so (aside from a 4-day golf vacation in Florida) doing plenty of **GMATClub challenges**, practice tests, and general study.

Also, my mental approach to this latest test was a bit different. I came in much more relaxed (likely due to less stress), which I'm sure helped. I also paid very little attention to the clock, peaking at it only every 10 questions or so. This was something I actually had to discipline myself to do, rather than looking at the clock every minute, estimating how much time I have left per remaining question, etc.

So, I came into the test center very relaxed, with a very light attitude...almost as if I didn't care what I got.

The AWA was simple. **Veritas** teaches a formulaic approach, as I'm sure other courses do. Sticking to

that approach makes it very easy. It's also effective. I'm assuming I got a 6.0 or close to it on this test, since that's what I got on the first one using the same technique.

The quant section tried as hard as it could to screw with my mind. I was sure after this section that I hadn't been able to break 45. The difficulty of some of the later questions I was receiving was pretty low. Later, I thought this might have more to do with building up a strong tolerance with [GMATClub challenges](#). So I finished quant with about a quarter of a second left. I actually thought I didn't get my last answer in before the time expired. Anyway, I didn't let what I thought was a poor performance bother me too much going into the verbal, which was key.

Verbal got very tough towards the middle and stayed that way all the way through. With the exception of the RC questions (they were fairly straightforward), everything from question 15 onwards was challenging. I actually got a question in the verbal that I had seen in one of the [GMATPrep tests](#), which I thought was strange.

So, I finished verbal with about 1 minute left and prepared for the worst. I really felt terrible at this point about my performance. I estimated a 670-690 score, and was leaning towards cancelling my score. The only thing that stopped me from doing so was the fact that I wouldn't get to see them. My reasoning was that not knowing what score I got would be worse than simply not doing well 😊. It would have just eaten me up inside.

So, of course, I decided to book the scores and send them to the schools I chose. One of the [Veritas](#) instructors once mentioned that the really great GMAT scores occur when you feel like you've done terribly. That was definitely the case here, as I saw a 770 pop up on the screen.

The 49 in quant was 90th% (little disappointed in that - was hoping to break 50), and the 47 in verbal was 99th%. Total score of 770, into the 99th%.

All in all, I felt this was much closer to what I was capable of on the GMAT and am very satisfied with the score and what it might mean with regards to the application process.

If you guys have any questions about any of the stuff in my summary, let me know. I would be glad to clarify.

Thanks and much appreciation to everyone on the [GMATClub](#) forums for contributing. You guys helped me out a ton!

I scored pretty badly in my verbal section in my first attempt on 08/29/08. I was well prepared for GMAT, but did not give much attention to exam day preparation. I was struggling in verbal section during my exam and ended up getting mere 19. This score led me to go back to my shell. I never performed so badly in any exam. Nothing seemed right at that moment. I was pretty much depressed and never wanted to talk about my GMAT day. 3 of my friends appeared for GMAT and everyone got more than 700 in GMAT. All I was thinking during that time is "Am I this bad that I cannot even go past 650 mark". Next 4 months went by and never thought I will give GMAT again.

Earlier I was good in CR and SC and all I wanted was to go past 700 so that my applications will become competitive for the schools that I am aiming for. Well clearly that did not happen and I was completely shattered and devastated.

I changed my goals in New Year and after doing all the research on b schools I realized that I need to get 85+ percentile in both the sections. With this goal in mind I started my preparation again. I knew that problematic area for me was RC and unless I kill RC there is no way I can go past 700+ mark or my 85+ percentile mark. With burden of past failure and RC ghost, I pretend to work normally in office where work was killing me. One day while doing my research on Chicago booth, I came across soni's blog. This led me to the discovery of GMATclub. This was the only place where RC forum was moving. I thought may be other guys don't find RC that much difficult.

With so much going on I thought let me check gauge my level so I gave GMAT prep and scored 600(Q37, V25) well this was not bad as I gave this without preparation, but still it did pinch me. I thought dude GMAT is not your cup of tea and let's forget about it, but on a second thought I realized do I have another way?

With all these thoughts I started with LSAT stuff and RC forum, where **Nitya34** used to post 3 RC passages every day. Initially I never felt like doing 3 R gruesome passages after full day of work, but somehow I managed. This is the forum where I met **Ritula** and **Icandy** (Thanks guys).

I loved Nitya's signature

"3 RC passages a day keep RC fear away" 😊

Time was flying out of my hand, sometimes I felt I should have started early. All I did during this time was RC, RC and RC. After a while I became consistent with LSAT passages and while at the same time RC forum also helped in gauging my skills against other good people.

For SC I used **MGMAT SC** guide and OG. While doing OG I realized that certain things are always wrong such as "because of", "in order to". After doing certain exercises I became good at finding these errors, but again I knew that this would be area where I will face toughest questions. I completed 1000SC series with 75% accuracy. I was not happy but this was still better than my 570 score. This 570 score ghost never stopped chasing me.

For CR I used power score book and did some LSAT passages. After a while I found myself doing better in this section. So I started enjoying CR forums.

For Quanta I did not study. I was taking 2 mins for Quanta problem without all those formulae so I was happy that I don't need to work on this section. Oh did I tell that I am Electronic and Telecomm engg so quanta was not a problem for me.

Soon April,09 came, I thought now onwards I will give test on every weekend, but again this was the time when I started feeling that I could not study anymore and started feeling exhausted. Since I did not want diminishing returns so I thought let's take a break for while. I made quick trips to NY, NH and VA with friends. Here came last weekend of April and I thought dude you need to complete this GMAT before June.

From 04/25 onwards my focus was to give only practice tests on weekend with essays and take off on one weekday. With this strategy in mind, I spent next few months giving 5 MGMAT test and GMAT preps. I also planned that I will book GMAT date once I get 3 continuous 700 scores.

MGMAT 1-620(Q47, V29) -04/25/09

MGMAT 2-640(Q48, V31) -05/10/09

MGMAT 3-700(Q51, V35) -05/16/09

MGMAT 4-700(Q51, V35) -05/23/09

Prep1 -730(Q51, V38)-05/30/09

Here I achieved my target of getting 3 700 scores, but still I was not convinced so next day I went for one more test.

MGMAT 5-730(Q50, V40) -05/31/09

Finally, I scheduled GMAT on 06/27/09. For next couple of weeks I continued with my strategy of giving tests on weekends.

Prep2 - 710(Q51, V34)-06/06/09

Prep2 Retake- 760(Q51, V40)-06/13/09

Prep1Retake-770(Q50, V44) - 06/20/09(For the first time the number of mistakes in verbal was fewer than Quanta)

As you can see my test was on 06/27 and I had 6 more days to go thru. In the mean time I read blog of another GMAT taker where he mentioned that GMAT is getting tougher and he scored 620 in his second attempt. It shook me for a while and then I came across bb's post where he mentioned

Quote:

Not true.

This comes up every few months when a test taker is destroyed at a test center and starts a rumor that GMAT has become harder.

P.S. Questions are replaced every 30 days.

Well this certainly helped, but still this last week was one of difficult weeks to go thru. During my last week I reserved one day for each section from OG. I started with PS on Sunday (06/21) and finished with SC on Thursday (06/25). I did not take off until Friday (06/26) and reason for taking this off was to give my prep a final touch. I woke up at 5 am in the morning and started my day from there. Idea was to go thru all the MGMAT tests, wrong questions in [GMATclub tests](#) and all the GMATprep questions. This might help certain test takers what to do in last week of their prep.

I went to sleep at 8 pm on 06/26, but could not sleep until 11 pm. I woke up next morning at 6:15 am and reviewed my idioms list, CR question types and meaning of key words for RC (I have posted all this stuff on my wall so I just glanced thru this stuff quickly). I also reviewed my essay templates quickly.

I reached Test center, at 7:10 am for my 8 am appointment while listening to NPR radio. Doors were still closed and I was the first one to reach there. I was able to get in thru the back door. After all the formalities I started with awa and finished argument essay with 5 seconds on the clock and moved onto issue essay this one also I finished with 2 seconds on the clock. I took a break for 2 mins, gulped down

half red bull and went to rest room. I started Quanta section and soon level of questions started rising. I had to give it a thought before selecting final answer. 5-6 DS questions were really tricky. In last 5 questions I started getting really tough question. I had 6 mins on the clock and 4 questions to go thru. Somehow I managed to finish this section with 15 seconds on the clock.

I stick to the following rule

Number of Questions: 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 37

Time Quanta : 65 55 45 35 25 15 10 05

Again I took a 2 mins break and gulped down rest of the red bull and ate one energy bar before making a trip to men's room.

I started with Verbal section and those initial SC questions were horrible. I used POE to find right answers. Again, I saw one tough CR followed by a big and complex RC. I said to myself dude no matter what happens you need to kill all the RCs. I moved on with the rest of the questions and all I remember now is that I got one more long killing RC and 2 short RCs, one of them was complex. Finally in the end I received good SC questions; I completed this section with 1 second on the clock.

I just ignored the entire survey question and finally I remember one error message came that you cannot select next on this screen. I looked at it closely and realized that this is screen where I need to select report score and cancel score. I selected report score and prayed that please give me 730 score with 85+ in both the sections and finally after a while screen displayed.

Overall: 760 (99 percentile)

Quanta: 50 (94 percentile)

Verbal: 42(95 percentile)

I asked proctor to open the door quickly as I wanted to make a quick trip to men's room:(.

Strategy I followed for this section

Number of Questions: 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40

Time Verbal : 66 57 48 39 30 21 12 03

So finally I ended my GMAT journey with 760 😊 .

I remember one of my friends who scored 740 couple of years back telling me 2 things

1. He told me I know this does not reflect your true potential and I know next time you gonna just flip the first 2 digits. He also gave me example of his friend who scored 660 in his first attempt and 750 a month after and who is matriculating from NYU now.

2. Second thing, which I feel I will remember for long time

He said "Some guys are born geniuses who do not require any study for GMAT and score 780-790, some are lucky like me (he scored 740) while some are like you who have to go through some tough time." Now, I think that had I gone for just 700 earlier, I wouldn't have achieved this score.

Thanks for giving your precious time in reading this post guys.

-- My debrief (760, q49 v47) --

Personally, preparing for the GMAT was one of the most intensive things I have done in my life. My goal was 700+, not only because I think that anything less leaves room for doubt when applying to a top-10 school, but also because I have a weak GPA, which I need to compensate. The whole GMAT concept was new to me, but when I first started I thought "how hard can it be", thinking about all the English experience I have and the extensive math I had in high school.

Oh, how wrong was I.

Having glanced through the GMAT book, I decided to do a diagnostic test to see how I would without preparation. I admittedly rushed a bit through the test, but the result was a shocking 580. Right then, I knew I had seriously underestimated this.

I decided I was going to give the GMAT my absolute best effort, and I would let my score determine whether I would apply to a top school or maybe not do an MBA at all. To the very last minute on test day, I kept in the back of my mind that I simply may not reach 700+.

Fortunately, I was wrong again. 😊

I will tell you all about my GMAT saga, about what I think works best and what doesn't.

-- Conviction --

First and foremost, you have to keep reminding yourself that your GMAT score is a direct function of the time and effort you put into preparation. Sure, you need a fair amount of intelligence, but I promise you, there are plenty of people with lower GMAT scores than mine who are more intelligent than I am. I'm a smart guy, but I'm no Einstein, and you don't need to be to get a good score.

Think about it. If you made it your life goal to get a 99th percentile GMAT score, do you think you would ever achieve it? Sure you would, given the right amount of practice. The more I studied, the more I became convinced of this simple fact -- your score is NOT an intelligence gauge, it is a reflection of how well you have prepared for this specific test, how good you've become at answering GMAT questions. It's quite a narrow study area, and it CAN be mastered.

If you don't already have an 800 score, realize that every hour of preparation will improve your ability to score high on the GMAT. Yes, after a while your learning curve will seriously flatten, but it never becomes flat. And this I believe is where the men separate from the boys. It's relatively easy to get your score up from a 600 to a 650, but getting from 700 to 750 is a completely different story. You have to ask yourself if you're willing to go that extra mile and study 4 weeks extra to improve your likely score range with 10 points. If you're not, then fine, but know that this has been YOUR choice. 700+ IS possible, it just takes a fair bit of honest effort.

-- Impact --

This brings me to the impact GMAT preparation can have on your life. About two weeks after I started studying, I got assigned to a big project abroad, which was going to take away a lot of my time. The timing couldn't have been worse. The experience was too valuable to let go, and it would look good on my application resumes, so I decided to do it anyway. I studied for the GMAT at airports, every minute of flights, and of course in the weekends. I limited social activities to short breaks of only a couple of hours only when I would actually need some time off studying. Fortunately, you do need some time off if you do GMAT math for 5 hours straight.

Again, this is a choice you have to make. If you're not willing to sacrifice your Friday night out with your friends partying until 5 am, that's fine, but recognize that you're giving this more priority than your GMAT score. If you want to maximize your score, then consider that a couple of months with little social activity is not going to kill you in the long run. I studied for about 3 or 4 months, the first half of which very intensively, at least two hours a night on weekdays and 5+ hours per day on weekends, and the second half I only studied during weekends. It wasn't easy.

Also consider that, according to an admission officer at a top school, the continuing GMAT score inflation is not a reflection of people getting smarter, but of people putting more time into preparing for the test, as a response to growing competition for top MBA admissions. More study resources are becoming available, and people are increasingly using them and doing everything they can to stand out from the crowd. What this tells you is that to look better than your competitors, you don't have to be more intelligent than they are, you simply have to prepare better than they do.

Alright, enough power talk, on to the prep materials.

-- Popular Prep Books --

The first books I bought were [Princeton Review](#) 2006 and [Kaplan](#) 2006, which are both decent introductions if you're new to the game. I thought [Princeton Review](#) did a nice job of showing how the different question bins work, and what you can expect from each bin. So let these books give you a nice intro, but don't rely on them for a 700+ score, they simply do not target that audience. You'll see some tough questions, but they alone are not enough to prepare you for a 700+ score.

[Kaplan](#) is a unique beast. Do ****NOT**** take their CAT scores too seriously. Even if you're setting your standards high and don't want to make assumptions on higher scores, really, do NOT take them seriously. They are NOT realistic. The difference between complexity of questions in the [Kaplan](#) book and those in their CAT is just ridiculous.

More on that later.

Quite some time into my studies, I bought the full [Manhattan GMAT series](#), driven by all the people who get poetic about their Sentence Correction (SC) book. Yes, their SC book is good. I didn't think it was spectacular, but it is definitely good, and arguably the best book available on GMAT SC. Thinking about it, it's the only book I have seen that seriously addresses the subject, and I remember feeling somewhat frustrated by other books that said that "you might want to consult a book on English grammar".
Helpful!

But my real point about the [Manhattan GMAT series](#) is that all their books are good. Really good. If you want a high score you won't get by on stupid guessing techniques or learning AD/BCE techniques, etc. What you need is a thorough understanding of the theory behind each concept and not just the basics, but the advanced stuff as well. This you will find in the [Manhattan GMAT books](#) and it is one of the few materials that takes this advanced approach. If you want 700+, and if you do not believe you have fully mastered all theory yet (are you still making concept errors?), get these books. I wish I had found them much earlier.

I have tried a couple of questions on their CAT, but to my surprise, they were also much harder than those in the book. Seems like they have gone the same way as [Kaplan](#) with this. Do NOT let this undermine your confidence. I put the [Manhattan GMAT](#) CATs aside, just like the [Kaplan](#) CATs.

-- Prep Courses --

I haven't done any prep course, so I really can't comment on how good they are, but I will say that my score and that of many others prove that it is perfectly possible to do well without them, provided you have enough motivation to impose the right discipline on yourself. And, as someone else put it: if you don't have this motivation, you probably shouldn't be pursuing an MBA in the first place. I guess they will help you to save time in finding good practice resources and more direct help, but this added benefit can cost you some serious money.

-- Practice Strategy --

You really have to find your own way in this, but I will give you my experiences in the hope that this helps you.

First, look for the practice grid on the GMATClub or TestMagic forums. You don't have to use the exact same sheet, but the idea is what matters and it is key to successful preparation. I'll summarize my ideas about it.

With EVERY question or set that you do, you need to monitor your timing, and see whether the errors you make are "concept" errors or "careless" errors.

1. Concept Errors

If you do not know how to approach a certain problem, if you find the answer explanation has a much quicker way of doing this (even if you got the question right!), if you had to guess, if you took 5 minutes to solve the problem, etc., then you know you need to go back to the theory and work on your understanding of the concept or the best approach to a certain question type. Number property problems are notorious for having shortcuts that you may not know.

Make sure you amend your theory sheet (more on that later) with the relevant new concepts to learn by heart. Record the question on your list of failed questions (more on that later) so that you can

practice it another time.

I do not recommend doing CATs or long practice sets before you have gone through a comprehensive theory review, and again, I highly recommend the [Manhattan GMAT books](#) to do this.

2. Careless Errors

Slap yourself and take note of what you did wrong. Don't just curse, shrug and move on.

Was it a $3^2=6$ error? Then make a note that you need to be extra careful with powers that have low roots and low exponents.

Did you confuse your hastily scribbled 0 for a 6? Tell yourself to write more carefully.

Did you fail to consider statement I combined with statement II in DS? Tell yourself to write down I), II) and I+II) on EACH DS question you do.

Did you find an answer but it was not what was being asked? (one of my weaknesses)? Practice with tough [Kaplan](#) questions. They often explain everything in hours and then ask a question in minutes, or they set you up to confuse a radius with a diameter, etc.

Keep track of the type of careless errors you make so that you expose to yourself what your weaknesses are, and work on improving them.

Careless errors are very tricky to get rid of, and you have to develop a certain amount of rigor in your work without forfeiting too much in speed. More on timing later.

In the final moments of your practice, you will get seriously frustrated by errors, because by now you shouldn't be making them anymore. Keep telling yourself that errors are an opportunity to learn how to improve your performance. If it's a concept error you have the chance to learn something that will allow you to get the same type of question right if you get it on the GMAT. If it's a careless error, you still have a chance to whip yourself into shape to be more careful.

-- Timing --

You'll find a time when you're getting questions right but are taking too much time. Certainly, with enough time I'll answer EVERY question correctly! In fact, I have found that the true challenge of the GMAT is not **whether** you can solve a particular problem, but **how quickly** you can do it. You will need to train yourself to see through wordy and concept-stacked GMAT questions quicker and quicker as you progress. Learning to apply the theory is one thing, getting it internalized so well that you can apply it without thinking (like tying your shoe laces) is another.

Secondly, when you have read through and have interpreted the question stem, it is tempting to rush to doing a calculation, but know that you usually have enough time for only ONE calculation approach. If you screw up, decide to re-read the question, and then find out you actually need to calculate something slightly different, you will probably already have blown your 2 minute average for the question. Train yourself for the mindset that you get ONE shot at answering each question, so make sure your question interpretation is right the first time.

Timing is one of the most difficult things to get right, and it is one of the most important things for a good score. If you blow the average of two minutes, you won't have time to think about the next

question, which on the test means your getting the answer wrong. Screwing up your timing on the GMAT will without a doubt destroy your score.

Improving your timing is perhaps as time consuming as mastering the underlying theory. Everyone can rush through a math calculation, but can you rush without making mistakes? To master this, you need to practice, practice, practice. After a while you'll start to recognize common GMAT patterns just as you can name colors -- without thinking.

Also, very important, you need to start to develop a feel for when your two minutes for a question are up without constantly looking at the clock. Learn to make a choice at that point. If you're confident you'll be able to answer the question correctly with one more minute, and you've been doing ok on timing so far, by all means, go for it. If you're still struggling with finding the right approach, if you're stuck, or if you don't have the faintest idea on how to do the question, guess and move on. On the real GMAT I remember seeing a question and having absolutely no idea how to even begin solving it in a time-efficient manner. I took 1 minute to interpret the question and think about an approach, but decided I was not going to get this one right. I guessed, and moved on. Yes, I got easier questions, which implies my score went down a notch, but I had sufficient time to make sure I got them right, and after a couple of them, I felt I was right back in the top bin of questions again.

-- Theory Sheet --

Some people call them flash cards, you can call them whatever you want. I had a couple of sheets of paper that had little remarks about all concepts that I had struggled with at first, lists of numbers I wanted to know by heart, permutation/combination formulas, etc. I recommend making your own sheet rather than using someone else's, as one person's weaknesses are not the same as another's, and there's the old student curse that lets you remember stuff better once you create a cheat sheet for it. There's no substitute for your own sheet. Review this sheet every night before you go to bed, and repeat repeat repeat -- that's the best way to internalize these things.

-- Failed questions --

Some may find this too laborious, but as soon as I felt I had a good grasp over all GMAT concepts, I started to keep record in an MS Word document of EVERY question that I got wrong on practice CATs, on [GMATclub challenges](#), from [the official guide](#), etc. My final version of this document spanned as much as 42 pages, but it was excellent practice, because after enough questions you won't really remember the first one anymore, and it really ensures you don't keep making the same mistakes over and over again. I greatly recommend it.

-- The CAT is your friend --

There is a notorious myth out there that the first 5 to 8 questions determine 80-90% of your score, and that the rest will just get you floating 10 points above and below your score. I do NOT believe this is

true. I remember having serious trouble with the third or fourth question on the real GMAT, and I would be surprised if I guessed it right. Later in the test I got some scarily easy questions, but then some outrageously difficult ones again, some of which I had no idea even how to begin with! Do NOT get discouraged if you get questions wrong on the real GMAT, even if it's within the first five or ten. If you see questions that look more like the last 1/3 of OG11 rather than the first 1/3, then you can be sure you're doing something right. I truly believe that making an error on the CAT is less fatal than on non-adaptive tests, since the CAT will give you another shot at the same level later on.

Secondly, GMAC is quite specific in OG11 that this theory about the first couple of questions is NOT true, and I believe these people have at least so many ethical values that they would not outright lie about it.

-- Combinations/Permutations/Probability --

Yes, the GMAT has these questions and yes, they can get tricky. From what I've read from other test takers, and from what I've seen on GMATPrep and on the real GMAT, you will see two, maybe three, questions of this type. It has been argued by many that people tend to worry too much about these questions, and my view would be "worry if you want to". If you don't want the absolute maximum of your abilities, then your lack of understanding on some advanced combinatorics questions will probably not harm you too much. Personally I felt very uncomfortable about them and spent a lot of time on understanding the theory and practicing questions. Unfortunately, good material on this, geared specifically toward the GMAT, is rare. You'll find some stuff in the forums, but I thought it was patchy, unclear, and incomplete. Despite negative reviews on Amazon, I bought the Veritas ProjectGMAT book, which I can tell you, is very good. I had struggled through DeltaCourse, still not really grasping the subject, but with the Veritas book I truly saw the light. They explain these complicated concepts extremely well, they don't give you quick workarounds, and they give you enough tough practice questions. Some have argued that some questions would never be asked on the GMAT, but I'm not so sure about that because no one seems to really know what the GMAT scope is for these questions, and this book gave me a level of confidence about combs/probs so much that I was actually looking forward to getting these questions on the GMAT, because I felt I could tackle them.

I will say that this was the only point where the Manhattan GMAT books let me down. They tell you to approach all these problems like anagrams, for which they give you a formula, but that's really a workaround and I got more confused than I already was. I thought it was especially surprising to see such a 'trick' being taught by Manhattan GMAT, because it's the very approach they try to counter.

On the real GMAT, I saw one counting problem which required permutations and was relatively simple, and one probability question that, as far as I remember, couldn't solve. It was really tough. I also remember not feeling too bad about it, because it was so hard that it must have come out of the top difficulty bin of questions, so I was doing well.

-- Official Guide and GMATPrep --

If you're looking for the most accurate reflection of the Real Thing, these two are as accurate as you

will get. All popular prep companies have good practice questions and nice little mock GMATs, but they have more concepts stacked in one question and they have more traps than what you would see on the real GMAT. See them as good practice to improve your speed, rigor, accuracy, and comfort level with difficult questions, but don't be too intimidated by them.

The last third of each section of **OG11** is an extremely accurate reflection of top-bin questions in the real GMAT.

If you don't have **OG11**, I recommend getting it, because even though **OG10** has overlapping content, **OG10** does not have questions ordered by difficulty level, and I have personally found the **OG10** difficulty matrix that circulates these forums to be inaccurate or at least not applicable to my strengths and weaknesses.

About GMATPrep -- this is, hands down, the absolute best thing for preparing for the GMAT and for gauging your current level. It's a pity you only get two shots, so use them well. (I have read about people re-installing the software, but I'm sure they are getting a lot of overlap and thus unrealistic results).

On the real GMAT, I felt my stress levels going down significantly, because it really felt like I was doing a GMATPrep, which felt slightly comfortable by now.

-- Setbacks and Confidence --

In your preparation you will almost certainly get setbacks that can seriously undermine your confidence. I certainly underestimated what a low prep test score can do to you.

A month or two into my preparation, I took a **Kaplan** CAT and scored 600, which absolutely destroyed my confidence. I had read about **Kaplan** CATs, but did not want to make assumptions about getting higher scores than those a reputed Prep company would give me after a test. Well, I was wrong. You can read it in various forum posts, and I will say it again -- do NOT take the **Kaplan** test scores seriously.

A couple of weeks later, I decided I had enough practice to do the first GMATPrep. 740! Yay!!

Then, a couple of weeks later, my studies had suffered somewhat from my big project at work, so I thought I would do a retired paper test. This only gave me a 700. It was good enough, but this did not exactly leave much room for error. I got worried.

I then decided to schedule my GMAT on the Wednesday of the first week of my summer holiday, which gave me 4 days to finalize my studies when my holiday started.

On Monday, two days before my GMAT, I did another paper test, and scored, no kidding, a 660. This was such a huge blow to my confidence that I even started rethinking the whole MBA idea. The negativity stayed with me but I kept on studying nevertheless, and fortunately, I decided to do the second GMATPrep test on Tuesday, the day before my GMAT. 740 again!

Honestly, 660 one day and 740 on the next, both tests from the official source, I did not know what to think.

Same goes for GMATClub Challenge Sets. They are wonderful practice, but the guys you're competing with in the percentile calculations are such math wizards it's scary, and you need to be careful that they don't destroy your confidence. The percentile scores on these challenge sets are NOT representative of those on the real GMAT. For reference, I started with Challenge 25, scored 69%, then Challenge 24, 76%, Challenge 23, 78%, challenge 22, 84%. Note the rising trend, which I thought shows I was improving. (Had on average 2 weeks between each Challenge)

First you need to master the theory, that's just step one. Then step two is to become increasingly comfortable with tougher and tougher questions. First you'll panic, then you'll slowly start to get them right, with pathetic timing. Then, slowly, you'll become quicker and more successful. The more you practice, you better you'll get, it's as simple as that.

-- Verbal --

As you may be able to tell, most of my preparation went into math.

A substantial amount of my professional life takes place in English, and this has been a definite advantage for me. On the other hand, you need to get accustomed to written English, and not the quick e-mails your colleagues send you, but Standard Written English. I have read The Economist the past year, and I feel it has been contributed immensely to my grasp of English, and this has been especially valuable for Reading Comprehension.

Let me give you my views on the verbal sections.

1. RC - Reading Comprehension

I must confess I haven't really gone through the [Manhattan GMAT RC](#) book in great detail. The strategies I have read about are around how you can quickly take logical notes of what you read. I don't do this, and I don't recommend it. You need to be able to do this in your head, as writing it down will lose valuable time. My approach is to say what you would want to write down out loud, without making a sound. So move your lips, but don't let any sound come through. This forces you to verbalize your thoughts (which is better than just thinking -- you'll skip stuff), and if you keep quiet, you can use this approach while taking the real GMAT.

A key point about RC is that -- and this will sound stupid but it is often neglected -- you need to understand the text.

Do NOT skim and scan. You are being tested for comprehension of the text, not your ability to pick details out of paragraphs without really knowing what the full story is. Questions like "what do you think that author would most agree with" can NOT be answered without REALLY understanding what the story is about. With time pressure it will be very tempting to rush to the questions and think you'll read the relevant passage when they ask about it, but I believe this is exactly the trap you want to keep out of.

What I do is I read the first paragraph twice, maybe three times, because it often sets the tone (which

you'll be asked about) very quickly. Summarize the first passage -- out loud but quietly -- in very simple laymen terms, if necessary in your own language, as if you're explaining it to a child. The GMAT tests your ability to filter the wordy mumbo-jumbo, awkward sentence constructions, and understand in Sesame Street terms what is being said.

If you come across an important paragraph that gives a new side to a story, read it and make absolutely sure you understand what is being said. Read it twice. Read it three times if necessary. Your body will scream no because that clock is ticking, but if you understand the text well, the questions will mostly be a walk in the park. If you don't, you'll be spending a lot of time trying to get the pieces of the puzzle to fit, and doing what you should have done in the first place -- trying to understand the text.

Do not try to bluff your way through the questions by scanning text fragments for clues or words that correspond to an answer item. Those answers are often traps, and the real answers are often hidden in overly simplistic or overly complicated answers that, if you're bluffing, look like unlikely answers, but, only if you really understand the gist of the story, you can recognize as being correct.

Timing, of course, is still key here. Practice a text and its questions in e.g. OG11 and time how long you took on average for each question. If it's more than 1 3/4 minute per question, you need more practice. But first and foremost, make sure you understand the text. Do not skip to the questions if you don't understand the text, you will be punished for that.

2. CR - Critical Reasoning

This I didn't find terribly difficult once you get used to the question types. Do a hundred of these questions from OG and you'll know the typical question wordings. The advanced stuff is really around recognizing out of scope items, e.g. a conclusion that seems logical but cannot be drawn based just on the information in the fragment, or reasons that make sense but that are never mentioned in the text.

Also look out for the following --

"All answers weaken the argument EXCEPT" is not the same as "which answer strengthens the argument". The right answer will often be irrelevant to the argument, and will neither strengthen NOR weaken the argument, and thus is correct.

3. SC - Sentence Correction

This is notorious among forum contributors and I have a feeling this is because there are a lot of Indians on these forums for whom English is more difficult than for Western Europeans?

I didn't have a great deal of problems with SC, and this I largely contribute to reading publications like WSJ and Economist, and having had a thorough training in high school on the Dutch language, which can contain the same type of errors, e.g. verb-subject disagreement etc.

I will say though that some of the tough example questions from non-official sources often contain awkwardly structured sentences that would NEVER appear on the real GMAT. I believe 800Bob has also made remarks about this earlier. You will NOT find unnecessarily awkward answers that correct spelling errors from less wordy and better flowing sentences on the real GMAT. "Awkward" and "wordy" sentences are just as wrong as confusing plural with singular.

Best resources

1. Long-term exposure to high quality publications such as WSJ, Economist, FT, etc. Most time consuming but there's no substitute for real-life English.
2. [Manhattan GMAT SC](#) guide. If you want or need to learn by theory, this is arguably the best resource
3. Look for Spidey's notes on GMATClub / TestMagic forums, and possible also other people's SC notes. To me they contained a lot of open doors, but I guess they can be very valuable to some people.

-- On-line Resources --

GMATClub -- great forum and great advanced [math challenge](#) sets

TestMagic -- great forum

Both forums have a LOT of math wizards and GMAT gurus participating on them. Don't get intimidated by their expertise (I know I was!), but see them as a resource, not as competition.

DeltaCourse -- ok for practice but not the best for explanations, and not the most comprehensive resource. I recommend [Veritas ProjectGMAT](#)

GMATClub Challenge Sets -- more advanced than what you will see on the GMAT, but great to build confidence and speed into attacking difficult questions. Highly recommended.

-- Books --

I have already mentioned a couple of them.

[Kaplan 2006](#) / [Princeton Review 2006](#) - good intro and good practice

[Kaplan 800](#) - good for practice, but definitely NOT just highest bin questions, and not even the most difficult ones around. I liked the GMATClub Challenge Sets very much.

Official Guide (OG) 10 - good, but obsolete now. Get [OG 11](#).

Official Guide (OG) 11 - the closest you can get to the real thing, but not enough top-level practice questions. Only the last 1/4 or 1/3 is really relevant for people aiming at 700+.

[Manhattan GMAT series](#) - most comprehensive theory review, including advanced topics and underlying theory

[Veritas ProjectGMAT](#) - clearest and most comprehensive book on prob/combs

Arco Real Answers to the AWA Essay Questions -- you can't completely ignore your AWA, and I think the best practice is to read example essays that would score a 6. I don't know my AWA score yet, but I'm assuming it's 5+.

-- My GMAT Day Experience --

Got to the test center an hour early. Friendly woman at reception asked whether I wanted to start right away. Hmm let's see, biting my nails for an hour, or getting this thing over and done with, tough choice... I signed the form, put my stuff in a locker, and went into the airconditioned room. I got signed in, and I think it took 5 minutes before the screen "please wait, loading content" changed into the actual content. It felt like 50 minutes!! Don't know what happens there, maybe the program downloads an updated random test or something, but it surely took way too long...!

AWA is a nice start, I must say. It's not too hard, you get enough time, and it doesn't really matter a

great deal anyway... 😊

Then the first hour has passed, and you get your first break. I went outside, drank some Aquarius and a little cruesli bar, and sat next to another guy in the waiting area who was looking at his GMAT form, and I chatted a bit with him. He got unexpectedly accepted at a university in Holland one week earlier, and they asked him to do a GMAT within two weeks. He hadn't really studied for the test.... Poor bastard. But on the other hand, if you're already accepted, why worry...

Then Math. It was tough, but I guess that's good. Another break. Pee, drink, eat, stretch, breathe, and go back in.

Verbal. RCs not too long, some really tough CRs, and SCs were ok.

As the end was approaching, I felt confident, and the whole thing felt like taking a GMATPrep -- another reason why you should definitely practice with that software, as it will make you feel more comfortable on test day. I wanted to get through the last verbal questions, started to get some concentration problems, but pinched myself in the face to bring back my focus. And then.... It was over...

Had to click through that stupid questionnaire (really guys, it's kind of sadistic to do this between your last question and seeing your score....), and then the Big Question appeared -- do you want to see your score.

I was VERY careful not to accidentally click something else, and I clicked Yes.

And I will never forget the moment the 760 appeared on my screen. I couldn't make noise as others were taking tests as well, but I wrote down my scores on my hand, closed down, and went outside to get the printout. Oh, was I happy.

The lady at reception printed the score and while she was back at the printer and out of my sight I heard her say "Oh wow!". Both the guy signing me out as well as the lady at reception said they had never seen such a high score before.

That just made my day. I stepped outside, into my car, shut my door, and shouted like a madman. The GMAT was over. I won. Mission completed. What a rush.

Good luck. Keep faith. If I can do it, you can too.

It is with some hesitation that I post this message because my friend MATT has such a recent setback with his exam.

Some of you may know that I took the GMAT a little over a month ago and scored 730 (Q48, V41). While that was a good score, I was disappointed that I scored towards the bottom of my practice scores for Q, and well below any of my practice scores on V. After thinking for a weekend I decided to prepare for the exam one more time.

My practice range for Q on the first exam was 48-50, but after preparing for another month, I was feeling more confident about my Q skills and was realistically hoping to score towards the top of my practice range. When I began studying prior to the first exam, I had to review almost everything tested on the GMAT, but over the course of the first month I felt pretty good about most question types. After an additional month of review, I was definitely feeling better about everything.

My practice range for V on the first exam was 46-48 or so. I was a 99th percentile scorer on the LSAT some years ago so I didn't really spend enough time on V the first time around. In the last month, I spent a good amount of time on SC and CR (using the SC1000 and CR1000), and moved my practice scores up a few points. The main disappointment from my first exam was the low (for me) V score. Given the pool of test takers (engineering, business majors, foreign students, etc.), someone like me with a law degree from a top school should do better than 41V 93%.

I walked into the test center today with the dream of scoring 50+ on both V & Q. That would be at the high end of my practice scores for both subjects. Incidentally, I got 50Q 48V on the GMATprep a few days ago and scored 780, apparently 3 more points on V didn't move the overall score up.

I got a good night's sleep and went through my normal morning routine. My test was scheduled for 2PM, but I actually showed up at 1:30 and was accommodated right away. The first time around, I believe I drank too much coke in the morning, and I felt very tired towards the end of the exam. This time around, I drank some coke, but didn't over-do it. Also, the first time around I had a candy bar prior to the exam, and again at the second break, and I think that made me more tired as well. This time around I had some nuts in the middle break. I felt much better towards the end.

The AWA sections were pretty straightforward. I'm an attorney so I'm never at a loss for something to say. I got 6.0 on the AWA the first time around, and I think I did pretty well this time also. In any case, I don't think the AWA matters much, as long as you don't score like 1.5 or something (schools want to be sure that you wrote your own application essays).

The AWA sections went very smoothly and my bladder was cooperating so I decided to skip the first break and head directly to the Q section. The Q section was difficult but manageable. Since I finished with a 50, I will assume that I was in the high range of questions for most of the section. I did notice that the questions during the middle section of the test were more time consuming than some near the end. In fact, I started to feel like I was falling behind, and started to hurry a little; but then I got several questions in a row that were tricky but not time consuming and finished the section right on time.

The V section went about as well as I could have dreamed. For some reason, almost every single question looked like it had a clear answer. I recall feeling almost the same way during my first try at the exam, so I frightened myself a bit, but in the end, things turned out wonderfully. For the entire

section, I only felt like 2-3 questions were tricky. I actually finished the verbal section with over 20 minutes to spare, so for some reason, my brain was really really clear this afternoon.

I felt great after finishing all the questions. In fact, I couldn't wait to speed through the end-of-exam questions so I could get my score. When it finally came up 780 I was extatic. Honestly, I do not believe I have ever seen a 51V.

So, here are some of my initial reactions:

At this moment I'm obviously very happy that I decided to study for the exam again, but I won't really know until the spring whether it pays off, and possibly not until many years after that. Many employers do ask for GMAT scores, so to quote a Chicago GSB admissions officer, your GMAT score will be with you for years to come.

I did find that it seems pretty difficult to improve your score towards the top end of the scale. I improved my Q by 2 points, and my V by 10 points, with an overall score improvement of 50 points. I'm actually somewhat surprised by what it must take to get 800. I was only dreaming of scoring 50/51, but apparently even higher scores are required for 800. Would 51/50 or 51/51 do it? Or do people actually score over 51 on either/both sections?

Everything fell my way today. The math questions were ones that I could handle, and I got lucky that I was able to work out several of the difficult questions more quickly than expected; it pretty fortunate that my timing was almost exactly right on in the end. In the V section, it just seemed that every single question was written by someone that thinks just like me. For almost every question, I found an answer exactly like I was looking for. It was a bit of good fortune.

The people here at GMATclub were a big part of my further preparation, especially GMATT73 & Futuristic. The inspiring posts and private messages helped keep me going for the second go-round. A few times I found myself sitting around thinking my first score was pretty good, and that I was causing unnecessary grief for myself, but the members of this board helped me to continue. I also enjoyed debating and conversing with many many others in the forums; it helped keep my mind on the job at hand.

My Score: 740 (48 Quant, 44 Verbal)

I have spent a lot of time reading the messages on these boards and never actually posted anything. My GMAT experience is a long and painful one (with a happy result). It started a year and a half ago when I took a [princeton review](#) course. I went into the test shooting for a 680+. I was shocked and disappointed when a 650 showed up on the screen. I decided I'd go in a week later and take it again (this was when ETS ran it and you were allowed to stack test dates like that) to my horror I scored a 650 again! At this point I gave up on the GMAT. A year and a half later I decided to take it up again. This time I studied even harder and my practice test scores were higher (680-700 range). This time I was sure I would hit at least 680. Went in, took the test, felt good. My score: 650!!!!!! I was DEVESTATED!! I even came close to crying (and since I'm a man of course I never cry - haha). The next morning I woke up and said, This test is not going to get the better of me! This is when I started to incorporate some things I learned on this forum. I made an [error log](#). I timed every question. I took [Kaplan](#) and MGMAT tests because their harder. And I took GMATPrep 4 times (included retakes which had a couple duplicates). By the way, GMATPrep is exactly like the real thing. During the next month of intense study my practice tests were as follows:

[Kaplan](#) 1: 570

[Kaplan](#) 2: 600

[Kaplan](#) 3: 700

MGMAT 1: 620

GMATPrep1: 720 (include a couple repeats because I'd taken it before my last test)

GMATPrep2: 720 (2-3 repeats)

PowerPrep1: 720

GMATPrep1: 730 (5-6 repeats)

GMATPrep 3: 750 (nearly half repeats)

I would be more than happy to share my observations on the difficulty of the real test (as well as how it compares to the ETS version) and how it compares to [princeton](#), [kaplan](#), [mgmat](#), [gmatprep](#) and [powerprep](#) practice tests. I also have a ton of information on pacing strategies (which was a major problem for me on math), math content strategies, verbal content strategies, [error log](#) etc. I have studied obsessively for so long that I feel like I know this test inside and out. So if you have ANY questions, shoot away!

I took the GMAT. I scored what I wanted to score and I am very happy with my verbal results (that's the highest I have ever scored). However, before I start let me express my one single concern. I'm freaking out about the AWA; I wrote the first essay using my template and it's logically and grammatically correct. But when I finished writing my conclusion (which was short because I was running out of time) I looked up at the clock and it said 20 seconds left !!!! I didn't even get a chance to proof read my writing! I'm freaking out knowing that my spelling isn't exactly great (the fact that I'm not a native speaker won't save me from the graders) so I'm not sure how much that will effect my score. I'm sure I have several spelling mistakes but I just want to do marginal on the AWA I don't need a 6 haha I just want to pass. If I have to retake the GMAT because of the AWA I'll be super pissed lol. I know that the argument analysis is good, I have several points on where I found faults and how it could be improved; however the fact that I didn't proof read is freaking me out. (retrospectively I should have spent more time practicing my essays & spent my proofreading time making stupid notes on the notepad)

I guess I'll need to pray and wait for my official score results to see my AWA score 😞 how long does this take? Is it really 20 days?

The test itself .. play by play.

I'll skip the AWA because that just puts me in a bad mood lol.

The Quant section started with a fairly easy exponent question. At about question 4 or 5 I got a tough geometry question and for the life of me couldn't remember the formula for area of a trapezoid (and you really needed it for this one lol I had to derive it) . I've never seen a trapezoid question before lol. This one took me some time to brute force but I wasn't about to give up; I probably used about 4 minutes on this one but I'm pretty sure I got it right. And then it all went to hell (at least that's what I thought) The number theory questions came & oh boy did they come & all shapes and sizes lol started off with some DS & not too bad used the Kaplan method for choosing small numbers 😊 and got a few of those right & then PS and not easy ones & primes and sequences all over the place .. all together I think I got 3 sequence questions one of which was extra tricky I couldn't spend anymore time so I made a logical guess after narrowing it down to 2 choices. At about question 20 all hell broke loose they started getting harder and harder & too the point where I had to guess on 3 questions (by guess I mean I could eliminate 2 choices at least and then guess) and then wooshhh an easy question (this is where I almost started crying lol as I thought I buried myself with my guessing & but I had no choice I was pressed for time and felt that I should get as many right as I can) I answered the easy question and moved on & another easy one and another & I thought I'm done for lol. They got slightly trickier towards the end but still nothing like the middle questions. KNOW YOUR NUMBERS hah I felt that was the most tested area on the quant. (maybe it's because that's not one of my strongest) In the middle between the sequence questions I got a probability question & it wasn't too bad.

Took the break; ate my second banana used the bathroom and decided that I won't give up and do my freaking best on the verbal.

Verbal section started with 3 sentence corrections (by far my weakest area & I thought they are doing this on purpose & animals) not sure if I got the 2nd and 3rd right but didn't let it phase me & took Praetorian's advice and concentrated on the question in front of me. Then BAM! An RC & a short one followed by three questions (one with some highlighted text) I'm not bad at RC so I felt I got all

three right. Question 7 was a CR question which I also got right â€¦ then it started alternating between SC and CR â€¦ and the SC would come in packs lol (I guess they never travel alone â€¦ or maybe I just kept getting them wrong) the CR wasnâ€™t too bad I got most of them down to 2 choices and then it was just a matter of finding the supporting evidence for one choice and rebutting the other. About question 20 another RC even shorter than the first !!! but freaking dense â€¦ re read it twice and took notes (I usually do â€¦ this helps soo much) answered the 4 questions about it (couldnâ€™t believe they asked that many about such a short RC) â€¦ moved on to some more CR .. these were a bit tougher .. a few I was rereading 2 or 3 times to get a handle on what they wanted. But not so bad â€¦ around question 25 another small RC (this one was really easy) .. then a string of 3 SC I guessed at 2(logical guessing not just random picking of the answer lol) . and then another RC right at the end â€¦ this one was long !! but fairly interesting haha so I finished it rather quickly and moved on to the question. The section finished up with 2 SC (and I was super lucky the last one was short because I had 40 second left) clicked submit and that was it.

Filled out the survey. Was expecting something like a 660 because I thought the math killed meâ€¦ but ended up with a 700 â€¦ thanks to my verbal score. I was never going to cancel my score no matter how poorly I did â€¦ I NEEDED TO KNOW WHERE I STOOD. I usually do better than a 47 on math but I have never broken 50 so I wasnâ€™t too upset.

Now Iâ€™m just going to hope they donâ€™t kill me on the AWA.

Ok lets talk about my prep.

Material list:

Kaplan 2006 book (great intro book â€¦ my first intro to the gmat, the problems are easy but it gets your familiar with the test)

Kaplan paper diagnostic test (full length gmat timed with proctor and everything â€¦ I scored a 570 after completing the **Kaplan 2006 book**)

Kaplan course (the course itself was ok â€¦ the class work was marginal and I didnâ€™t find it to be too useful) however my teacher was great and could explain pretty much any math problem within 5 minutes so i constantly stayed after class to ask my own questions. **Kaplan**â€™s biggest strength is its resources. The online material is excellent and there is plenty of it. I think I solved almost 2000 questions from the quiz bank over my entire study period. Great math prep for the gmat â€¦ the verbal I found to be slightly lacking.

OG 11 (good book, these problems present a good version of how the gmat question is structured â€¦ **Kaplan** has a format which I find a bit easier for both math and verbal questions) the **OG 11** is a must for everyone

Kaplan 800 book (great for the data sufficiency questions, really gets into the fine detail and the dirty tricks of those number properties questions. I saved this book for the last few days before the test)

GMAT Prep Test 1â€¦ I scored a 700 Q47 and V 39 (a few questions overlapped but pretty much just like the real thing â€¦ less stress maybe 😊 â€¦ I took this test 2 weeks before my actual exam)

GMAT Prep Test 2â€¦ Scored a 690 last night Q49 Verbal 36 â€¦ this one freaked me out a bit because I found the verbal to be slightly harder than the first test.

And Finally gmatclub.com â€¦ greatest resource of them all â€¦ not only for problems but also for inspiration.

My average study time was about 3 hrs a day with only 2 days off in the 8 week period. At about week 5 I felt myself burning out so I took some time off to collect myself and get back to work. I started with a fairly low diagnostic score so I knew I have to get myself in gear to achieve my goals.

My technique was a very structured approach. Every week I would make plans for the next weekâ€¦ just like I plan my gym workouts I would plan my gmat workouts. Setting aside what areas I would want to focus on this particular week and also collecting my thoughts on what I learned the previous week (that part is ultra important). I decided not to focus too much on taking CATâ€™s because in reality the only useful formula is the Gmat Prep formula and everything else will just make you emotionally unstable lol. I did use the **Kaplan** timed quizzes which gave you about 2 minutes for every question and then provided a nice breakdown of your score. So I saved my Gmat prep exams for the last 2 weeks knowing that these will let me know how ready I am (and they did). Also I solved the OG second to last â€¦ I wanted my math skills and most of my verbal skills to be sharp before I tried the real test questions.

I started a thread in the GMAT part of the forum about the last week of my prep â€¦ here is the link If anyone is interested (this should give you an idea of what I was doing till the end)
<http://www.gmatclub.com/phpbb/viewtopic.php?t=27822>

Im not sure what else to write .. and this is getting rather long so if anyone has any questions feel free to ask them here and i will answer. Im definitely staying around the board I love this place â€¦ il even do the quant problems for fun hahah just not those damn nuber theory questions.

Thank you all for reading and I wish you luck !!!



I got 780, believe it or not. 😊

I have been hoping for above 700, but didn't think that I could achieve that good of a score. Considering that I only had one and half month to prepare for the test, that I'm working at the same time, and that both of my little boys had been sick in the last two weeks, I have to say I did pretty good.

My experience may not be applicable for many of you since I imagine most of you guys are still students and have more times to prepare, but I'll still write a little just in case I could be any help to anybody in any way. I would be happy to share more if any of you have any more questions. 😊

Preparation

I did not have a lot of time to cover a lot of materials, so I chose to concentrate on one set of books (two Chinese GMAT reviewing books in my case, math and grammar) to get the basic principles. I have not spend time to specifically prepare for reading comprehension and critical reasoning. Once I feel I have got the basic understanding about the math and grammar principles, I did the first PowerPrep test, and started to study [the Official Guide](#). In the mean time, I have chosen to actively participate in this forum, doing almost all questions that are posted in this forum, and try to write down my reasonings and solutions for each question. The forum served a very important role in my preparation for the test. In addition to learning additional methods of solving a math problem and increasing my understanding toward confusing grammatical usages, I have also used it as a daily practise venue. I always tried to form my own answers before I looked at the others' answers. This way I can see where my weakness is and I remember the correct ways of solving a problem better. The most important experience that I have on preparing for the test, is to try to use your own brain everytime you see a question, not only guess a choice, but actually think. Having to write down a post helped with this goal.

Test Day

I've been having five hours of sleeps in average in the last month, so that I could actually have some time to study. But yesterday, I decided that I will not gain too much more by several hours' studying. So I went to bed with the kids at 9 o'clock, and I woke up at 7:30am this morning and I felt very relaxed. I did not set a very high target for myself. I was thinking as long as I score over 680 I'll feel ok. Considering that my second PP test was 710 even when I didn't do well in the verbal part, I was pretty confident that I wouldn't do too much worse than 680, so I wasn't feeling nervous at all.

I finished the two essays just in time. Didn't even have time to re-read my second essay. I took the break, letting my mind prepare for the math part that is coming. Math was relatively easy, I didn't have time to worry if that means that I didn't do well or something, I just kept doing the questions, only breaking to check my pace several times, and to remind myself to be careful not to overlook any traps for the DS questions. I finished the math part 10 minutes earlier. I took about one minute before I clicked on "proceed". It may be better if I could take the 10 minutes to rest a little, but I didn't feel like I would have a good rest with an unfinished section. I did take the 5 minute break again, before I start the verbal sections. The questions in the beginning felt at the right level, not too easy, not too hard. Then when I approach the middle part, the reading comprehension passages became longer (from 40 lines to 70 or 80 lines), and the critical reasoning became harder. I got a couple bold face questions too. I reminded myself to concentrate on the questions off hand, and in one RC question that I didn't

understand in the first read, I took the time to re-read it. I was a little worried if I wouldn't have enough time, but I still tried to make sure I do not rush any questions. In the last 8 questions or so I had to remind myself multiple times to calm down and concentrate. In the end I actually finished the section with several minutes left.

My mind had been in a state of being exited since the beginning of the test and I only start to feel tired two hours after the test was over.

Anyways I'm glad that this is over and I didn't do too badly. There are still so much to do. I need to prepare the other materials before 1/3, the deadline of UR's PhD program.

Whatever result I would get in the end of this endevore, I would never forget this forum and its many participants. I have learnt so much from here and got so much encouragement from the people here. I will try to give back whatever I received in the future days to come.

Good luck to all of you that will take your test later!

Dear fellow members, my quest is finally over. After a year of intense studying at GMATclub, I have fulfilled my promise: To break the 7XX club. It has been a long journey but one that I am most thankful to for it has taught me the principle of discipline and has allowed me to cross path with many invaluable GMATclub fellow members. I would first like to thank:

BB, Praetorian: You guys are doing a formidable job keeping up this site and it has allowed me to reach a score I would have never dreamed of 2 years ago.

Akamai: You have taught me how to study in the most rigorous way. Your challenging problems really put my grey cells to work.

Stolyar: You were a forever source of inspiration to me and your contribution to this forum are beyonds what words can describe.

Anandnk and Kpadma: I owe much of my score to you guys. We had great discussions this last year and I am forever grateful to have studied with you guys.

Venksune: As of late, we had much interaction and much discussions going on. Thank you for that and for wishing me good luck before G-day. I'm sure you will do great in your own quest my friend.

Crackgmat750: Your own "musing" was so great an inspiration to me. It allowed me to believe in myself.

NEWKID: I'm sure you can score well on the GMAT buddy. I can see your improvement in the verbal section. You are a model to many GMATclub forum members in that you strive to explain your answers with excruciating detail. This is how you will do better on the GMAT. Believe me.

Hardworkerindian, Dharmin, Vivek_dj, carsen, dookie, OlegC, gmatblast, dj, Srijay: You guys were the members from whom I benefited a great deal. Thank you all for your inputs. Other members, also let me thank you for your contributions and forgive me if I forgot to mention your names.

Here are my practice scores:

Kaplan diagnostic: 670 Kaplan#1: 600(Q40V32) Kaplan#2: 600Q46V30) Kaplan#3: 640(??)
Kaplan#4: 670(Q50V37) PR2004#1: 730(Q45V47) PR2004#2: 680(Q45V39)
PR2004#3: 710(Q45V43) PR2005#1: 650(48V33) PR2005#2: 710(Q48V41)
PR2005#3: 710(Q51V38)

PT42: 700

PT31: 710

PT52: 740

PT14: 730

PT55: 720

PT48: 680

PT37: 720

PT28: 780

PT25: 780

GMAT: 710(Q49V38)

There are many things that I want to say but for the moment, it is all I can say for there are many people I have neglected in my journey and I have to take good care of them. I will let you know about the exam day and my study approach very soon. Also, I will definitely stay around to help this community evolve and help future GMAT takers in the best of my capacity.

I am pleased to tell all my mates here that i scored 730 today morning.

I thank all the poeple on this site especially bb, stolyar, akamai and my freind praet (who is now busy doing research) & shubh. BB, stolyar u have done a great job by buliding this wonderful site.

One thing that clearly comes out of my performance is that anyone willing to work hard can get a good score. IMHO no exceptions to this rule. It's just that some have worked on their skills before and others have to do NOW.

my previous scores:

Oct-2002 - 590 (q-49, v-22)

Oct-2003 - 640 (q-47, v-31)

Nov-2003 -730 (q-50, v-40)

After my last test in Oct, i realized that my major weak area was SC. So this time i really worked on it. At the same time i practised much tougher RC & CR questions of Lsat. I can tell you if have done them, understanding and developing strategies how to attack them, u will be very comfortable with the questions on actual test.

I started with quant and found it to be okayish. Some tricky questions in the beginning. U will see the difficulty of questions jump up and down.. some tough followed by pretty easy. So dont panic and just focus on question right in front of you. In the middle i needed scrath paper, raised my hand and no one came.. 😞 the ETS guy was strolling in the corridor. i got up, went outside, cursed him (mentally... 😊) and brought the new scrath paper. Be cool and focused throughout the test.

For quant:

Obviously GMAT Club is the best.

U may also want to check out questions in the link below. This site prepares for a tough MBA exam (CAT) in india and has good collection of quant problems:

[http://www.ascenteducation.com/india-mb ... 2002.shtml](http://www.ascenteducation.com/india-mb...2002.shtml)

If u have any problem in understanding the above quant questions, just post them here. Also after solving a tough quant problem, always try solving it again and see how u can solve it faster on the actual test and be sure to understand the concepts.

Verbal has been my weak area. But this time i had practised enough to be sure to crack every question. For SC question parallelism was very common. Also while tackling any SC question reason it out why one choice is correct and others wrong.

I found the following material extremely useful for various sections of GMAT:

The American Heritage Book of English Usage. This site is very good to memorize grammer rules. Read everything that is covered at GMAT (prounoun, sub-verb agreement, parallelism, redundancy.. et al)

<http://www.bartleby.com/64/>

For RC & SC questions, try practising the Lsat questions.

Finally, if u beleive that u can score good and presently have a bad score.. **Dont give up...**

Identify your weak areas, work on them and i am sure each of us can do better. I would be more than happy to answer doubts or help in any other way.

thanks again

still a long way to go, have to start writing those torturous essays.. 😊

Today I retook the GMAT for the 4th and final time and I can say with pride that I have finally defeated the beast. A little over a year ago I took a [Kaplan](#) practice test on my lunch break at work - I was contemplating applying to b-school and wanted to get an idea of what to expect on the GMAT. At the end of the test I scored a 490, but I was confident I could improve my score with practice so I enrolled in the [Kaplan course](#).

My teacher was awesome, and my score did improve to the 590 level on the [Kaplan](#) CATs, and my GMATPrep score was around the same level - never breaking the 600 level. At the time I would have taken a 640 and been happy. After taking some time off at the end of my [Kaplan course](#), I began meeting with a private tutor and soon was up to a 640 on the GMATPrep.

I took the official test in April of 2006 and scored a 640 Q38 V40- but the quest for 700 was now in my blood and I had also discovered the GMAT Club. Meeting so many driven people really pushed me to strive for the 700 level - Rhyme I would specifically like to point you out as my main inspiration for this quest.

After meeting with the same tutor for 2 more months, I retook the GMAT and my score dropped to a 610 - although my quant went up to a 43 my verbal dropped to a 32. Needless to say, I was shocked - but far from done.

For the third round with the beast I did my studying on my own, using the [OG11](#), the Verbal and Math supplements, and the PR CATS and [Kaplan](#) book. Feeling more prepared than ever before - I took the exam and scored a 630 Q44 V33 - I decided to pack it in and apply because the effort wasn't paying off.

In December of 2006 I was wait listed at my top choice and their recommendation was to try my hand at the GMAT one more time. While I did not love the idea, I knew I could get a 700. Unfortunately work had just given me a promotion and my schedule along with applying to schools meant the GMAT would have to wait.

Fast forward to February and I started to get serious about the test again. I met with a different tutor for 4 weeks (once per week), took GMATPrep about 6 times, Powerprep twice, a PR CAT, and a Manhattan CAT. My lowest score came on the PR cat (580 - an eye opener considering how I have been doing on the real thing and other CATS). On the Manhattan I scored a 640 but those tests are worthless as predictors. On Powerprep I scored a 690 and a 720. Finally on GMATPrep I started at a 680 and the final two days before the test I scored a pair of 740's.

I attribute my increased scores to meeting with my tutor and reviewing the exams, as well as focusing on the [OG11](#) for practice, and also focusing on my weaknesses. I kept making similar errors in SC and on the DS problems in the quant section.

Finally - today I showed up at the Pearson Center and took what I consider to be the hardest test of my life. The Quant section threw some brain twisting questions at me and the verbal section was rough. I covered my face, prepared to see another score in the mid 600's and to my shock and delight - I scored a 710 - Q48 V 38.

everyone out there who is struggling with the test to know that it can be done - you can master this test - through hard work and perseverance. Don't give up, trust your instincts, and have confidence. Best of luck to all

Just got back from Pearson VUE and am happy to report a successful test taking experience. Thank you, everyone on GMAT Club for making this possible! Here's a quick postmortem.

Q50 (94%)

V44 (97%)

770 (99%)

Study Material (in vague order of usefulness)

1. GMATPrep (indispensable)
2. GMAT Club forum posts (indispensable) -- 90% of my practice questions were from the forum
3. All MGMAT prep books (good for Quant review and SC; didn't open CR and RC)
4. **OG11**, **OG Verbal**, **OG Quant** (good for practice, but questions are easier than on the real thing)
5. **Powerscore CR Bible** (read through the whole thing, but a little too wordy for my taste)
6. **GMAT Club tests** (good for learning tricks; bad for pacing -- i finished many tests w/ a lot of time to spare)
7. MGMAT CATs (Quant is tougher; Verbal is completely useless, maybe even detrimental to performance)
8. **Kaplan GMAT 800** (barely opened this)
9. **Princeton Review Cracking the GMAT** (never even opened this)

If I had to do this over again, I would use GMATPrep, GMAT Club forum, MGMAT Quant and SC books, **Powerscore CR Bible**, OG problems, and **GMAT Club tests** (<http://www.gmatclub.com/wiki/tests>). As you can see from my practice test performances, I did not really improve my scores at all, which I'm a little disappointed by (more because I stressed for a month and spent a bunch of money on books). However, I definitely went into the test feeling prepared and confident. If I had taken the exam a month ago, I would've felt like I was shortchanging myself.

Tips for everyone:

Do not rely on anything but GMATPrep for live CAT practice. I really believe MGMAT verbal sections are crap and can really throw you off your game.

Tips for those looking to improve to 700+

- a. Focus on quant basics (equations/inequalities, number properties, geometry, fractions/decimals/percents). Forget about probability, combinations/permutations, work problems, mixtures, etc...These questions only really affect 49-51 Quant people. Otherwise you're trying to run before you can walk.
- b. Focus on RC and SC. I am of the opinion that everyone should get every RC right. There's no excuse not to -- it's like not doing well on an open book test. The answers are right in front of you. With SC, there are very clear rules that you can follow to do well -- use the **MGMAT SC** guide!
- c. CR is much harder to improve, in my opinion, as these questions test whether you can think logically. That's something that is difficult to drastically change in a 2-3 months. In any case, Powerscore Bible will be most helpful.

Tips for 700 scorers looking for 750+

- a. If you're regularly scoring 47/48 on Quant, then it's time to start practicing/learning the harder problems. MGMAT Word Translation guide will give you everything you need to be successful.
- b. Do every quant problem that is posted on GMAT Club. Some of them are tougher than the ones you will see on GMAT, so it will really help you improve your score. Note the high quant scorers' answers (walker, durgesh, x2suresh to name a few) and really understand how they approach problems. Most of the time, elite quant people think differently than the average person. You need to think like they do!
- c. SC - You need to sleep with/on/next to **MGMAT SC Bible**. But don't just read it. Write in Standard Written English! This will also be good practice for AWAs. I always found SC to be easy because I've always been a grammar nazi. You need to make proper grammar part of you, not just something you happen to learn for a test.

- d. RC - Read everything you can get your hands on. WSJ, Economist, etc. My method is that I do not move on to the next sentence if I don't understand what that sentence's message is. I don't move on to the next paragraph if I don't understand what that paragraph's message is. I don't move on to questions if I can't figure out the point/message of the passage. Do this with everything you read.
- e. CR - Powerscore Bible + forum question practice or take a logic class at your local community college/extension school. Again, toughest area to improve on.

Practice test scores:

GMATPrep 1 (late July, hadn't started studying yet): Q50/V44 -- 770

GMATPrep 1 (re-take 1): Q50/V45 -- 770

GMATPrep 1: (re-take 2): Q51/V47 -- 780

GMATPrep 2: Q50/V42 -- 760

MGMAT CAT 1: Q48

MGMAT CAT 2: Q48/V38 -- 710

MGMAT CAT 3: Q47/V44 -- 740

MGMAT CAT 4: Q49/V39 -- 720

GMAT Club Tests:

Test Correct Total % Correct Mean time msec Percentile

m01 32 37 86.5% 1m 55s 11505 96.3%

m02 34 37 91.9% 1m 35s 9535 97.8%

m03 32 37 86.5% 1m 55s 11588 92.5%

m04 33 37 89.2% 1m 48s 10845 98.7%

m05 31 37 83.8% 1m 59s 11988 94.7%

m06 31 36 86.1% 1m 59s 11990 93.1%

m07 31 37 83.8% 1m 45s 10524 90.5%

m08 28 37 75.7% 1m 49s 10933 86.4%

m09 29 37 78.4% 1m 20s 8033 92.6%

m10 31 37 83.8% 1m 43s 10353 94.6%

m11 30 37 81.1% 1m 25s 8551 83.3%

m12 32 37 86.5% 1m 46s 10688 93.3%

m13 31 37 83.8% 1m 38s 9872 92.0%

m14 33 37 89.2% 1m 38s 9811 100.0%

m23 36 37 97.3% 1m 40s 10081 100.0%

m24 31 37 83.8% 1m 22s 8249 93.3%

v01 33 41 80.5% 1m 24s 8403 95.5%

v02 32 41 78.0% 0m 00s 11 87.8%

v03 37 41 90.2% 1m 06s 6667 100.0%

v04 33 41 80.5% 1m 14s 7458 83.3%

v05 37 41 90.2% 1m 15s 7531 100.0%

Test Day

I scheduled my exam for 12:15, since I am not a morning person. The night before, I prepared everything I needed (IDs, bag w/ food and caffeine for breaks) so all I would have to worry about today was rolling out of bed and finding the test center.

7-11PM night before: Re-read MGMAT math books and SC books to see if I had missed any tricks that I could use; Ate 2 high-carb dinners to make sure I would have plenty of energy today

11PM night before: Went to bed early to make sure I had a good amount of sleep.

7AM: Woke up feeling very nervous; tried to sleep for another hour

8AM: Started re-reading Powerscore CR Bible

9AM: Read Chineseburned's AWA guide: [1-t64327?hilit=chineseburned](#)

10AM: Relaxed, watched some stimulating/comedic TV (Real Time with Bill Maher) to get my mind working a little bit. I purposely did not do any practice problems, because I did not want to psych myself out if I got a few wrong.

11AM: Took the subway to the test center

11:30: Arrived at Pearson VUE

I should have visited the test center site before taking the test, as studies have shown that familiarity enhances test performance (I was briefly a psych major in college). I was completely thrown off by the layout and procedures of the test center, but more on that later. I was given a policy form to read, but I don't really remember what it said. After having my fingerprint scanned and my photo taken, I was handed ear plugs and allowed to start the test early. This was something I was half-expecting, but there were a lot of people from the morning appt still taking the exam. I'm not sure that they appreciated the afternoon group coming in one-by-one and disturbing everyone.

AWA

AWA was tough, and I regret not preparing for it at all beyond reading Chineseburned's post this morning. I write very well in general, but I'm not sure my arguments made a ton of sense, because 30 minutes is not a lot of time to write a well-thought out essay. I bet that my AWA will be read 5-6 by the e-rater and 4-5 by the professional reader. Overall, I really liked that AWA was first, because it allowed me to warm up my brain w/o feeling a whole lot of pressure to get things completely right.

I took my 10 minute break, and this is where I was a bit thrown off. You have to raise your hand to be allowed out. Then they scan your fingerprint as you leave and as you re-enter. These procedures shave ~1 min off your break time (10% of your time!), which annoyed me a little bit. I went to the bathroom, drank some water, and ate a granola bar. Apparently 10 minutes goes by fast, because I barely made it back to my station before the 10 minutes expired.

Quant

Quant was much, much easier than I expected. There were a lot of basic, straightforward problems, which totally freaked me out during the exam. I thought I must either have bombed earlier questions or was missing some of the tricks. There were definitely some very tough questions interspersed, but there were maybe 4 or 5 that took me longer than 2 min. Because I was worried I was missing something, I started doing every problem twice before moving on (starting at about question 10). This was a bit of a mistake, as I realized I was maybe 7 min behind pace when I got to question 25. Luckily, the next few questions were quick DSs that I could answer within 30 sec. I ended up finishing the test with about 4 min left. I really thought I bombed the Quant, so I was not too pleased with myself. This just goes to show that you cannot figure out how well you did, so there is no point in canceling your scores unless something major happens.

Took my break again and chugged a bottle of starbucks frappuccino for caffeine. That was a big mistake, as I needed to pee about halfway into verbal.

Verbal

This is my weak spot (or so I thought), and I was worried by the low verbal score thread, but I told myself I had to make up ground for my low quant score. Things here went more smoothly. My pacing was perfect, as I finished with about 2 min remaining. I actually thought I had a chance at 46+ verbal, but I guess a few of the tougher CRs and SCs got me.

Aftermath

I was annoyed that the computer took you through all the personal questions you were required to submit when you registered to take the test. I wanted my score! Finally got there and was foiled by the cancel score prompt. I kept trying to hit next, but it kept telling me I needed to tell it whether I wanted to cancel my scores. I was so flustered and nervous at this point that I didn't notice until 3 or 4 attempts. Finally, I figured it out and hit next. Longest 15 sec of my life while it graded. It spit out my score, and I had to restrain myself from celebrating in the test room. I took my score printout and left the center so happy

To briefly introduce myself, I am **not** a native English speaker. I have an undergrad. degree in Engineering from the US.

I took the test last Saturday and scored 700 92% (Q 49 - 89% , V 36 - 80 %).

I took the GMATprep the first time in my GMAT preparation trip and scored 490. By then I realized I needed alot of preparation to get to 700 or so. I registered for **Kaplan's** course and spent \$1,500. Here is what I think of Kapan's course: it is good only for beginners and those looking for up to 550 - 600. **Kaplan** classes are more heavily focused on test strategies and guessing tricks than the underlying knowledge and skills needed to score high on the GMAT.

My 2 cents ? almost all that you can learn from **Kaplan's** class in two months can be easily obtained from a**Kaplan** book or the **MGMAT series** in two weeks time for ALOT less cost.

One major negative side of **Kaplan** is that they never mention **the Official Guide** for the GMAT by mba.com.

As the **kaplan course** ended I took the real GMAT and scored 600 (Q 48, V 25). I knew I needed much improvement in Verbal.

Early in 2007 I discovered the GMATclub. I learned alot from this forum and I figured out the existence of the OG.

I am not trying to be nice or something, but I really want to thank GMATClub for taking me to the 7xx club. I couldn't have done it without the help of all active members of GMATClub at the math and verbal forums. Many posts of old members back in 2005 and 2006 were extremely helpful as well. I spent a great deal of my time surfing the GMATclub forum.

I am not going to waste your time with my test day story and my practice scores .. etc. I will start directly with my test prep strategies, hints, and advices. I can summarize my conclusion in ten big HINTS :

Hint 1: The GMAT is getting harder and harder. The GMAT a year ago was alot easier, both quant and verbal sections.

Hint 2: The **Official Guide 11** is a MUST have/do. If you take the GMAT test without doing every single problem in the **OG 11**, then you're wasting your time and money unless you are really good and already in the 700 level. If you take the GMAT before doing all problems in the OG and taking the GMAT prep 2 tests, then it is entirely your fault and lack of hard work and strong preparation.

Hint 3: Take the GMAT Prep tests each once to examine your level and approximate score. Then, retake the GMAT Prep as many times as you can to get new questions for practice in verbal and math, mainly untill you get almost all questions available in the pool. These questions are very good practice materials and reflect the type of questions you would see on the test. Bare in mind that the GMAT Prep is NOW easier than the actual GMAT test. The hardest questions you'll get on GMAT prep math are not as hard as the upper bin ones you'd see on the real test.

Hint 4: Don't do the big and most common mistake of the following:

I love math, I'm good in math and I have a technical degree (engineer, CS, math .. etc). My English is fluent and I read newspapers in english .. well, at the end I did my degree in an english speaking

institute. I can do reading. I know how to write correct english. As long as I'm good in Math I will score good in GMAT. You take the GMAT and boom 560 (Q 48-50, V 15-25). What ?!! This is unfair.. oh I need help !

Hint 5: the GMAT is not an easy test. It is a big challenge for most people. Less than 10% of test takers score higher than 690 on the GMAT. If you want your 720, *you must pay alot of time, great amount of effort, and some money.* GMAT is not fun by any means. getting an MBA from a top school is worth the effort you put into preparing for the GMAT.

Hint 6: You have a free amazing tool for the GMAT. Whether you utilize it or not, it is your problem. If you don't believe me, at least I did my part and gave you the advice. USE GMATCLUB !!!! Be an active member. answer problems, involve in discussion of hard SC questions. Help others and get help. Instead of paying \$1000 on GMAT books from every single available test prep company, use the free posts on the GMATclub. It should take months before you can say that you fully utilized and took advantage of the GMATclub. Read posts from even 2004. tons of 7xx scorers have posted their experience in here.

Hint 7: If you're shooting for 48+ on the math/quant part of the GMAT, **GET THE CHALLENGES** (now **GMATclub tests**) (<http://www.gmatclub.com/wiki/tests>). Those tests are really amazing and teach you alot of advanced concepts. Previously, they used to be much harder than what you may see on the GMAT. Nowadays, *many questions from the challenges reflect the hard big questions on the real GMAT.* So these challenges are worth more now than before.

Hint 8: To score high on the GMAT you need three things. You can not score high unless you have mastered these three:

1. Knowledge: SC structure and grammer, MATH forumals and concepts, Vocabulary for GMAT in RC and CR .. etc
2. Skills: Process of Elimination, reading skills, logical reasoning, ability to extract information data from a math questions, data sufficiency skills .. etc
3. Strategy: time management, educated guessing, skipping hard and time consuming questions, stamina strategy .. etc

Example: By strategy and skills only you can never do very well in RC unless you know good vocabulary to understand the passages. The same thing applies if you don't know the main arithmetic equations.

Example: If you master the knowledge and concepts behind the GMAT and have the sufficient skills, you can never do really well if you don't manage your pace throughout the test and end up not finishing the section.

Hint 9: Practice .. Practice .. Practice .. Practice .. Practice .. Practice ..

No score is out of your league. Once you get the knowledge, skills, and strategy, you can keep practicing untill you reach 800 if you want.

Hint 10: I have compiled a list of top qoutes and advices by many top scorers GMATclub members. It is the "Golden Qoutes by GMAT Clubbers !"

<http://gmatclub.com/forum/1-t43532>

What I used to prepare and that I would recommend :

- o **GMATclub challenges** (5 of them only) - <http://gmatclub.com/wiki/tests>

- o Manhattan Sentence Correction book and Manhattan number properties book (Both are a must)
- o Official Guide 11th edition and Official Guide Verbal and Official Guide Quantitative Reviews
- o Spidey notes for SC - <http://www.gmatclub.com/forum/p572956#p572956>
- o GMAT Club forums
- o Kaplan book (for basic concepts and introductory strategies to left me from 490 to 600).
- o GMAT prep tests
- o Peterson AWA book (worth it)

Hello! This is the thread where I tracked my GMAT studying progress. I'll post my eventual debrief below, but please note that the first post (under all of the dashed lines) and all posts after that are from the beginning of my GMAT journey. Here's the debrief:

My exam was on August 19, and as evidenced in this thread, I was expecting a pretty solid score (>750). I'm definitely happy with my 760, but I wish I had done a few things differently. Here's a breakdown of my exam experience:

Note: I'm the type of person who loves pressure situations and doesn't get nervous about most things, so if you're looking for a thread on how to calm your nerves, then look elsewhere!

TESTING CENTER SELECTION

I have problems with noises, so I wanted to choose a testing center that was as quiet as possible. There were three testing centers that are relatively close to me (< 1 hour drive), so I had some choices. One was in a small but hip city, the second was in a major US city, and the third was in a super-rural, poorly educated town. I chose the poorly-educated city because I figured that there would be fewer people there during my test. I was right -- I was literally the only person in the room for the entire exam, so I didn't have to worry about noise. This was also great because the proctor (a rather large fellow who moved EXTREMELY slowly and made multiple errors trying to type in his administrator password during my breaks) was able to focus all of his time and energy on me. I would have been pretty annoyed to see him lumbering around trying to log other people in / out.

One problem that I did encounter was the long drive over there. My exam was at 6:30 PM, so I started my drive around 5:00 PM and ended up there around 6:00 PM. On the way there, I stopped at a small shop for a few Gatorades and power bars. When I got back into my car and started to drive up the hill to the testing center, I noticed that a huge bee was trapped in my car. I have a deadly allergy to bees and I didn't think to bring my EpiPen, so I literally pulled over, hopped out of my car, and just started running. It was definitely an interesting experience to have right before my exam.

TIME OF DAY

This was one of my biggest errors. I was a pretty big night owl during the summer, so I figured that the 6:30 PM time slot would be great for me. Sadly, I didn't realize that a 6:30 PM time slot equivocates to the post-lunch drowsy period when you're waking up around noon. I should have picked a time much closer to when I actually got up at that time (man, I wish I could still wake up at noon! Gotta love the summer as a college student). While I was pumped to be taking the actual GMAT, I was feeling pretty sleepy on the drive home just from the time of day.

AWA

(NOTE -- MY AWA COMMENTS APPLY TO NATIVE SPEAKERS ONLY!)

Nobody cares about the AWA. I'm serious. I don't know if there's much value in doing the AWA during practice exams because nobody cares about your score. Some people may argue that it's important to build stamina for test day, but I think that's worthless for two reasons: first, on a normal practice exam day, you aren't focusing all of your thoughts on your practice exam. I did a few practice exams after work / after going to the gym / after fun nights out, but on test day, I focused all of my energy and thoughts on the actual exam. Second, adrenaline kicks in on test day and you'll have more energy to crank out the essays -- they're more like a mental warm-up. I didn't read any guides or any sections on the AWA because it just doesn't matter. When I was writing the essays, I thought they were absolutely terrible, but I ended up getting a 6. Who knows!

QUANT

Yep, the quant section is getting harder. I ran into a few types of problems that I had never even seen before -- including one in particular that reminded me of a question I had gotten as a brainteaser during my derivatives trading interviews. By the time I realized what the problem was really asking, I had wasted too much time. [Manhattan GMAT](#) is a pretty awesome resource for this type of thinking, but it's not a comprehensive guide anymore for the quant section. You're going to have to improvise. It's also hard to prepare for the GMAT's experimental questions. It was nice to see a few ridiculously easy problems randomly thrown in there (i.e. reducing fractions), but it definitely threw me off of my game. The easy questions kind of lulled my mind to sleep. PowerPrep is the best way to prepare for this wildcard factor (PowerPrep has the experimental questions in there) but the general level of difficulty is way too easy.

This brings me to another big mistake that I made on test day: strategy. Before going into your exam, decide on your strategy for handling tough quant questions. Are you going to skip over them and move on? Are you going to try to hammer out a solution? I made the mistake of doing both -- I tried to get an answer for a while (i.e. 2-3 minutes), but at the end, I ended up skipping. I wish I had made a decision beforehand so I could have more time at the end of my exam.

VERBAL

Not too much to say here. Verbal was pretty spot-on from the practice exams. The one thing I did notice is that there were some idioms that I knew as a native English speaker, but didn't remember from any verbal review books / idiom lists in particular. I think that the exam makers have realized the unbelievable amount of preparation materials out there for anyone who wants them and is now slightly changing the exam to compensate for all of this information.

SCHOOL SELECTION

Choose the schools you want to send your scores to before your exam. I know this sounds stupid, but at 27 bucks a pop after the exam, it pays to send the scores early. I sent them to all of the schools I wanted to apply to who didn't allow self-reported scores alone to apply.

I just got back from my GMAT and I got a 700(Q48 V38). Here I am sharing my prep story for all those students who are average and are desperately looking for that magic '7'!

First and foremost, know your strengths and weaknesses. This will save up a lot of your prep time and help you focus on areas where most of your score can increase. The 80-20 rule applies to the GMAT as well. 80% of your improvement in score will come from 20% of the weaknesses. So it helps to identify those 20% of your weaknesses soon and work on them.

Day 1: GMATPrep1 - 510(Q36 V25)

I was quite shocked to see this score. I expected at least a 580 to give myself a chance of getting a 700 in 45 days. So I started analysing the test and jotting down points about areas of improvement, strengths, weaknesses etc.

Day 2: Give the Diagnostic Test from [the Official Guide](#)

I used **OG12** for my preparation and it helped me immensely. I could immediately understand what I need to focus on at the beginning of my preparation.

1. I figured that in Quant, I needed to work on Ratios, Probability, Permutations and Combinations.
2. In Verbal, I needed to work most on Sentence Correction, followed by Critical Reasoning.

Day 3: Start with the OG

Start with problem 50 in each section. The ones before are a little too easy for our liking. Remember, we have just 45 days. Make it a point to solve at least 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas daily. Easier said than done. You will need to go and look at the solution well and understand how each problem has been solved. This is because even though you may get the answer correct, you need to know the best way or the quickest way of getting there.

Day 4: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

By now you will start understanding the workings of the GMAT and what it expects. Your scores in the further tests will definitely show it. Even so, you need to be dedicated enough to go through all explanations in detail.

Day 5: GMAT800 test: 580(Q40 V30)

There's the improvement. Now that you know something about the GMAT and you combine it with your preparation, your score should definitely see an improvement of at least 40 points in the 500-600 range. However, after you finish the test, take a break and then go through the explanations of each answer. This is a time-consuming job but most important in your preparation.

Day 6: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

Day 7: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

Day 8: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

Day 9: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your

problem areas

Day 10: GMAT800 Test: 640(Q44 V35)

Wow that's a huge improvement. Even I didn't expect my score to increase so much so soon. Again, analyze the test. See what mistakes you made. See the explanation for each answer.

Day 12: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

Day 13: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

Day 14: Continue with the OG - 5 questions on each section and 10 questions on each of your problem areas

Day 15: GMAT800 Test: 610(Q38 V35)

We've reached the 1/3rd mark on our prep and I see the first major drop in score. The Verbal stays unchanged from last time and the Quant plummets from Q44 to a Q38. OK maybe we've reached stagnancy in the verbal area. And now we need to work on the Quant as well. When you reach this level, you should realize that this is the level you will reach by just polishing your knowledge and reviewing what you know already.

To increase your score from here, you will have to learn new concepts, read more, use more strategies.

Day 16: Buy the ManhattanGMAT SC Guide and start reading.

This is a book that can be read almost anytime and referred to again and again. You do not need to finish a certain number of pages in one go. Neither do you need to be at your desk when you read this. Just treat it as a welcome change from the usual Question-Answers of the GMAT. This book really is the bible for SC. Read just the first 5 chapters, and most of your doubts will be cleared. The further chapters are for people who are regularly scoring 700+. But it won't hurt to read them nonetheless. However, do not invest time in the further chapters and reduce time in your actual prep. That's an extra.

Day 17: Time to wind up the OG.

You may have finished 50-75 of the OG questions in each section. Leave it there and start from the last 40 of each section. Finish the last 40 in 2 days. We cannot invest more time in the OG at this stage.

The ManhattanGMAT guide gives you access to their website and 6 CATs. Use these wisely. The scores they give you and the timing system reflect most to the actual scores you will get on the GMAT. By far the best practice tests on the market. They are followed by the GMAT800 tests. Do not try the old 800Score tests. They are full of crap. Further, when you have just 45 days to prepare, do not even think about the Kaplan tests. They are very disorienting. They are probably for students getting a 750+ on other tests.

Day 18: Think about the essays a little

For students who are weak with the language, it would make good sense to start reading English newspapers, novels, articles and paragraphs at this stage of the prep. Get used to the flow of the language. Understand the difference between Spoken English and Written English.

For the others, like me, leave this bit for until a lot later.

You should be finishing the OG today. You won't need to look at it again until the last 3-4 days remain.

Day 19: ManhattanGMAT test 1: 640(Q42, V38)

Are we on track again? Well we studied verbal mostly last week and used the ManhattanGMAT SC guide. And this is the best Verbal score i've gotten until date. So I guess we are back on track. Again, analyse the test, see the explanations. Manhattan's s/w gives you a whole load of statistics that you can use to your benefit. Some of these are the %-ile indicator that shows you what percentile you were on, on each question of the test. Shows you where you screwed up or did well. It shows you the difficulty level of the questions. At this stage, you want to be getting most questions in the 600-700 range or higher. For this, all questions below these ranges must be answered correctly.

Day 20: Improve your quant knowledge.

Now is a good time to improve your scores in Quant. You have reached a level where you will need to learn new concepts to improve your score. Identify these concepts and look for tutorials online or on gmatclub. For me, these areas were probability, permutations and combinations, inequalities.

Day 21: Continue reading the MGMAT SC guide and the Math tutorials.

Day 22: Halfway there!

Now, getting from a 500 to a 650 is much easier than taking that 650 to a 700. The next 23 days can be frustrating. It is important that you never give up and continue chipping away at that score one bit at a time. Continue working with those tutorials. Keep increasing hit rate at the weak areas.

Day 23: Take a break

It's been a long 3 weeks. Take the day off. Take a day off every week henceforth to keep your sanity. 😊

Day 24: ManhattanGMAT test 2: 680(Q44 V38)

Small increase in the Quant section. But huge increase in the score. Analyse the test. Check out your mistakes. See how you did in your weak areas compared to the previous tests.

Day 25: Stick to the Math

Continue with the tutorials. Finish off the tutorials for the weak areas in the next 3 days.

Day 26: More Math

Another 2 days of intensive math.

Day 27: Still more math

Finish all Math tutorials today.

Day 28: ManhattanGMAT test 3: 670 (Q46, V35)

The score has reduced, albeit marginally. But wait a minute! Q46! That's the best we've done so far. The verbal has reduced from a V38 to V35. But that's because we haven't studied any Verbal over the last 3-4 days. We have touched a V38 before, so if we manage that with this Quant score, our job would be done almost.

Day 29: Take a break

Day 30: Work on your verbal strategies.

Scour the gmatclub site for strategies to be used in each section of the verbal. This is important because now you need to increase your score in verbal and keep the time taken for each question the same. Again, this is easier said than done. You should be finishing both sections 5-6 min before time because on the actual test, time flies faster than now. You need to keep that buffer.

Day 31: CR strategies

Try out 2-3 different strategies in CR and see which one works best for you. Practice only CR today and see if it helps.

Day 32: SC strategies

Do the same for SC today. Finalize on one strategy you will be using to tackle each and every SC question. Practice only SC today.

Day 33: RC strategies

By now, I am sure RC is giving you a lot of trouble. The mistakes in RC are the most difficult to get rid of. You will need to decide how you will tackle passages now. Practice a few from various fields like History, Business, Science etc.

Day 34: Brush up the math

You don't want the quant to go down now. So brush up all the concepts you have learnt and practice.

Day 35: Manhattan GMAT test 4: 680 (Q46 V36)

That's good. Quant stays the same. Verbal improves slightly. So it's all good. Analyze the test. Check out where you went wrong. Many of them will be silly mistakes for sure. See what could be done to avoid them.

Day 36: Take a break**Day 37: Practice makes Perfect - 1**

Practice only verbal today. Do loads of it. Use the gmatclub forums for this.

Day 38: Practice makes Perfect - 2

Practice only quant today. Do loads of it. Use the gmatclub forums for this.

Day 39: Timing! Timing!

Now do a lot of quant and verbal from the forums and use the Timer.

Day 40: AWA!

Work on AWA today. Read what is expected of you. What an Argument is. What an issue is. Read the OG samples. The 6 essay, the 4 essay, the 2 essay. Compare them.

Day 41: ManhattanGMAT Test 5 along with AWA: 690(Q46, V38)

So close yet so far! Verbal is back to its V38 mark. The AWA drains out a lot of energy so it's good to keep the score up. But hey! The Quant is still a Q46. No improvement at all! Let's look a little at that. Analyze the test.

Day 42: Template for AWA

Use the template provided by Chineseburned on the gmatclub forum for AWA. It saves a lot of time. And reduces your mental activity a little. From now on, everything must be timed. Write a couple of essays. I will review them for you for free if you mail them to me in a .doc file. Work on quant. Practice is all you can do now. So practice. A lot. I was getting screwed by DS. So I worked on that a lot.

Day 43: ManhattanGMAT test 6 with AWA: 700(Q47 V39)

There is is! The magic number!!! Finally!!! However, this is a practice test. Its a lot more different on the actual test. Analyse this attempt as well. See where you went wrong.

Day 44: GMATPrep Test 2: 730(Q50 V39)

Whoa! Wait-a-minute! What's that score??? Ya that's a 730 alright! But don't get too excited. GMATPrep is known to be easier than the actual test. Especially the quant. Our verbal hasn't improved at all. So This score is similar to a 690-700 in MGMAT. Analyze the test.

Day 45: Take it easy

No more tests now. Not a lot of practice. Study a little. Equivalent to stretching before a game. I nice line I had read is, "Would you run a practice Marathon one day before the actual Marathon?". Very true. You are not going to improve your score much by slogging it out today. In fact, chances are, you might do a lot of damage. Pay a visit to the test centre if you can.

TEST DAY!!!

Carry a PowerBar and some RedBull to the test. Stay calm and treat it like your practice tests!

Hello all, I just got back from the test center and I am extremely tired. Let me check my score again. Okay it is indeed:

770 99%

Q50 94%

V44 97%

And here is my road to the 700 club. I never scored well on any standardized test, since I am not an native english speaker. So I never dreamed of making this score on GMAT, my aim was 720+ when I started. I started my prep road by doing kaplan gmat. My first test score is 640 on a paper. And that's when I discovered gmatclub, a google search landed me here. After reading all the heart warming stories of successful predecessors, I decided to give it my best shot. I finished kaplan book, meanwhile I purchased the MGMAT sc guide. Let me say this book is god-sent, I went over it at least 4 times. After reading it, SC started to make sense to me, before the book my SC correction rate is about 30-40%. 😊

I took the Kaplan paper test and score 690, a nice improvement. But I had felt that I acquired all the tools that I need to get a good score, the rest is just practice. My next phase is about 3 month of on-and-off study/practice. I want to give special thanks to Walker.

As I continued my prep for GMAT, my work has gotten busier everyday, I barely had enough time to study after work. I took MGMAT a few times, the highest I've ever gotten was 710. So I signed up for the kaplan class, part of the reason is so that I can have dedicated time blocks to study for GMAT. There are a few tricks I learned from Kaplan that actually helped me speed up the thinking process, it was quite helpful. But after I take the practice exam, I still averaged only around 690-720.

My real break came only couple of weeks before I take the actual GMAT. Knowing my time is running out, I took GMATprep and scored a somewhat unsatisfying 730. I felt quite disappointed. That's when I started really buckled down and started to hit the practice problems. I did on average at least 100 problems a day, mostly SC1000 and CR1000. I took GMATprep again shortly after and score 770. That's when I started to believe that I can actually score higher than 750. I practiced and practiced, even when I was "taking care of business". I practiced nothing but GMATprep since then, I took it for 5-6 times, scores ranging from 750 to 770.

I think the last two weeks of my prep is where my real improvements come from. After all the hardwork, I was so excited to take the test, I barely slept last night. I woke up around 4 after 3 hrs of sleep and could never fall into sleep again. So I went to the test center and took it earlier than my scheduled time. Before I know it, I am done with a 770 score! 😁

I want thank everybody who had helped along the way, I am very tired, but happy at last. Thank you all!

And best of luck to everyone.

Prep Tips

I am going to share some tips with fellow test takers. I think the first step is to identify your weakness. For me, I categorized each mistake I made and calculated the % I missed on each category. In the beginning, I did well on Quant, but I had to improve on speed and go over some basic concepts. I missed about 60-70% SC, and 30-40% on CR. So I know these are the areas I need to work on. I decided to not spend too much time on RC. For two reasons: RC has a comparatively low portion on the verbal section, also it is the hardest to improve on. I also did not spend much time on AWA, I originally planned to, but running out of time and I decided it will look much better to have a GMAT score rather than the AWA score.

SC

SC is my biggest gain in points come from. I would like to credit it to the methodology learned from **MGMAT SC** review and practices I did with SC1000. I really had no idea what was going on when I first started doing SC. It was atrocious, especially since I am not a native speaker. **MGMAT SC** review really opened my eyes, it broke down each problem to a sub category. My experience is, if you see a problem and you don't know which category it belong, then you are probably in trouble. Many problems belong to two or more categories, but you should have no problem identify them. Once you learned necessary skill set to tackle this problem, the next part is to hit the practice problems. I think the volume of the practice you do will help you tremendously. There is really no easy way. And I want to thank Walker again for writing the SC1000 software. I used it to practice at least 50 problems a day. I also have it loaded on my phone so I can practice wherever I go. I started out getting about 60% correct, and the week before I take GMAT I was able to get somewhere between 85%-90%. The best part of the SC1000 software is that they have links on some problems that will bring you to the thread on GMATclub forum, where you can see what others explanation of the problems are. It really helped me a lot.

CR

The most important thing about CR is to read critically. By the time you finish reading the questions, you should somewhat expect what kind of answer you will be looking for. I see several good books where they break down CR questions into sub categories. It is helpful knowing what the question is looking for. And the rest is just practice, I practice about 50 problems a day. It's not necessary to have dedicated time block to do this problem. Practice wherever you can, on the train, in the meeting (pretending you are checking your email, WARNING! this is not recommended, but sometimes you have to, like when you only have two weeks to go!), car trip, lunch time, before you to go bed every night.

RC/AWA

RC is the hardest part to improve. I figured my return/investment ratio isn't too great in this portion. There are only around 10 RC problems on the test, where CR and SC has about 15-17. And it's hard to improve RC scores. My recommendation is to read critically and read newspapers/magazines(not those with a lot of pictures 😊) whenever you have time. The general rule of thumb is there are 3 category: summary, inference and fact. Summary is the general idea, inference is what author is suggesting, and fact is basically what is explicitly stated in the paragraph. For AWA, I used chineseburned guide, it should be in the verbal section of this forum. It's helpful, I went over it 3 times and one more before the exam. I really did not have enough time to prepare for it.

QUANT

I didn't prepare much for quant portion. I did about 10 GMATCLUB math tests. It is much harder than

the real quant of course. Even GMATprep is slightly harder than the real GMAT. I hope this will give you idea on how to prepare for it.

TEST DAY

Visit the test center, bring food/drink, but don't drink too much. I made a mistake where I drink too much tea trying to stay awake and by the end of the verbal session (10 problems left or so), my bladder was about to explode. I seriously contemplated the idea of taking an extra un-timed break. It's really distracting. Get a good night of sleep.

Took the exam today and scored a 760 (Q49, V44). I should be happier with my score but am not and here's why:

After my AWA section, I raised my hand for a break. The moderator/observer guy, who was a bit overly friendly, said "alright, take your time!" Like a complete idiot, I assumed that Pearson would notify you when your 8 minute break was up. Unfortunately, this was NOT the case. What was the consequence? When I returned from my post-AWA break and started on the quant section, the time remaining had already been depleted to **71:03**. 4 minutes vanished into thin air. Psychologically, I was so in the zone that I was only briefly flustered. I simply told myself that I've trained too long and hard to let this ruin my test day and kept moving forward. In an attempt to stay on MGMAT's timing schedule, I rushed through a few questions without thinking through them thoroughly. Got to the last question, which was a hard one, with about 1:45 remaining. Took me ~1:30 to finally think of the correct formula but with 15 seconds left, I did not have enough time to calculate it out. So what should have been a surefire Q50 / 770 and potential Q51 / 780 turned into a Q49 / 760.

Would appreciate people's thoughts on me potentially retaking it. In the 3 months leading up to test day, I approached the GMAT with the intention of destroying it. It's really become a matter of pride at this point and the thought of such a stupid and avoidable mistake is driving me nuts. I would have been perfectly proud and happy of my 760 if it were not for this mistake. It's like making it to the 100M sprint at the Olympics expecting to win gold and then getting silver because you heard the gunshot a half second after everyone else.

Bit of background on me: 25 years old. Currently work in the corporate development department of a well-known Internet company. Prior to that, worked as an investment banking analyst.

Anyway, here is a breakdown of my study strategy:

Class:

Manhattan GMAT. Enrolled in the live class. Overall it was pretty useful but not so much because of the class as because of the materials and resources.

Pros: Quant strategy guides are really good. SC guide is really good. Extremely detailed spreadsheets for answer/timing tracking on OG problems. Extremely detailed and focused study plan. And, most importantly, 30-minute office hours with their instructors. While my classroom instructor was great, a MGMAT instructor named Horacio Quiroga gave me some advice that was critical to my success. I met the guy through office hours in my last week of class and, if you look at the trajectory of my practice CAT scores after that week, you'll see the results. He acted like he had a vested interest in my GMAT score (offered to hold follow-up calls with me beyond the duration of the class, on his own time) and the advice/guidance he gave was tremendous.

Cons: Unfortunately, because they need maximize their addressable market, class room lecture plans aren't really targeted to the students who are looking to get mid-high 700's. Based on my experience, most of the students are looking for mid-to-high 600's and the classroom is taught with that in mind. They have a separate series of 2-hour segments called "The Quest for 750" but I did not take them so I

can't comment. While the class is really good for building fundamentals, if you're shooting for 760+, you'll probably need to do a lot of additional studying post-class.

Study materials:

1. **MGMAT Guides** - Quant and SC are great. Tried the note taking strategies for both CR and RC and found they only slowed me down.

2. **OG 12**, Q and V books - Did most of the problems for all three books at first according to the MGMAT study plan. After I exhausted all of the MGMAT study plan HW problems, began to do only the later problems (anywhere from #50 to #90 and on, depending on book/question-type).

3. A set of 400 problems which I got by emailing the guy at this website: <http://gmatquantproblems.blogspot.com/>. A friend of mine who had taken the test recently recommended the set to me. These problems were most representative of the actual test. \$150 for 400 problems, all of which are at least as difficult as the hardest quartile of official guide problems. You should be scoring in the Q47/Q48+ range before purchasing. If you're shooting for Q50, this is the set to get after you've exhausted **the official guide**.

Warning: the guy is pretty flaky over email. He's apparently a GMAT tutor in Argentina, where customer service is low on the list of priorities. He takes Paypal or money order and physically mails you the questions (I know - old school).

4. Jeff Sackmann's Extreme Challenge - There are 2 guys on this forum who talk about this thing like it's GMAT quant salvation in a PDF. I suspect they might be related to Jeff Sackmann 😊. Don't get me wrong, it's got some good, representative problems. But out of the 100 questions, 30-35 of them were probably combo/probs. How many combo/probs did I see on the test? 1. I did wipe it out quite quickly though, probably purely because of Sackmann's set. The set is split roughly 35/65 PS/DS. I wouldn't recommend that anyone NOT purchase it but it's not nearly as helpful as some people here claim.

CAT & actual exam:

MGMAT 1: 6/6/09 - 570: Q30 / V38

MGMAT 2: 7/21/09 - 660: Q44 / V36

MGMAT 3: 8/9/09 - 680: Q47 / V35 - **MGMAT classes** ended this week

MGMAT 4 : 8/16/09 - 730 : Q48 / V41

MGMAT 5 : 8/23/09 - 750 : Q48 / V44

GMAT Prep 1 : 8/30/09 - 770 : Q50 / V45

GMAT Prep 2 : 9/13/09 - 780 : Q50 / V48

Actual Exam: 9/18/09 - 760: Q49 / V44

Key takeaways

- Before anything else - *****DO NOT MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE I DID AND ASSUME THAT THEY WILL NOTIFY YOU WHEN YOUR 8-MINUTE BREAK IS UP*****. If you did not read my intro paragraph, this cost me 4 minutes in the quant section and turned a 770 into a 760.

- SC: Exhaust all of the OG problems and make sure you read the official explanations for EVERY QUESTION, EVEN THE ONES YOU GET RIGHT. For the ones you get right, go through and read the official explanation for why every other answer choice is wrong. Every wrong answer choice typically has 2-3 errors and chances are you're only able to identify 1 of them. By going through the official explanations for why each answer choice is wrong, you really train yourself to recognize errors, which is the key to SC. Even on the toughest SC problems, you can use error recognition and POE to arrive at an answer 95%+ of the time. This was the revelation that kicked my score up from a V36 to V41 in a single week.

- CR/RC: you should approach studying for these the same way as you approach SC although you probably don't need the same level of meticulousness. After a while it's just pattern recognition. Stay as close to the text as possible, avoid extremisms, etc. etc.

- Quant: Do problems and own the problems. I went from a Q30 to a consistent Q50 by doing somewhere around 800-1,000 quant problems. My history in math is a bit unique though and I can offer up more details if anyone is interested in how to move from a Q30 to Q50.

- Study hard and consistently. I'm not sure I would have been able to make the gains I made by studying in broken intervals. I averaged 20-25 hours a week for 13 weeks straight. There were maybe only 3 days during which I did not study.

- GMAT club is a great resource but try and filter out the noise (this applies to any other GMAT forum, including MGMAT's) . I found motivation through some really solid posts on here. Also found some gems of quant wisdom. But this is a free-for-all forum and not every post is made of gold. There were a few times when questions totally unrepresentative of the exam were posted and proceeded to drive me crazy because I couldn't figure them out. Also, there are some posters who provide wrong answers with such a high degree of confidence that it can be dangerous. GMATclub is a great resource with some amazing contributors, but be careful of how deeply you read into certain posts.

- Don't use any CATs until you've done a decent portion of the OG problems in timed conditions.

- MGMAT CATs are 10-20% harder than the real exam. It's a pretty good proxy for the real test but GMAT Prep is (obviously) by far the best.

- In my personal experience, the real GMAT was a bit harder than GMAT Prep. Quant section was a tad bit more difficult and verbal was definitely more difficult. I missed 0 SC in my last 2 practice CATs (both GMAT Prep) but probably missed 2 or 3 on the real exam based on my V44 score and my feelings about the RC/CR questions.

- If you're a native English speaker and you're in the mid-to-high 30's in verbal, you can probably get away with not taking any notes in CR and RC.

- Embrace the AWA! I'm actually really glad they make you do this first. It really helps you to ease into the test and overcome any initial anxiety you might have. An hour in the actual testing environment will calm the nerves, especially since you know you're working on the part of the exam that doesn't really count for much.

So that's my story.

Yes guys, I scored lower than my previous score. Huh..This was the score, for which I put 1 year of efforts, all sacrifices, I can't believe it. But it is a reality and I have to face it. It was my third attempt and I was waiting for 'Third Time Lucky' or 'Third is a charm' thing to happen. But it didn't happen in my case, verbal screwed me big time and I scored an awful 620. I went into the state of shock. My wife and kid were waiting eagerly for my call and they remained numb when they heard this. Since then, it is all sadness, gloominess in and around us. I am the culprit for this. But I finally decided to share the experience with this forum, which has been my heart and soul for last 1 year. (Don't look at the number of posts I submitted, I used this forum more as a search tool, because most of the questions are discussed here more than 10 times..)

Now, I am with the mixed feelings of what to do next, as sometimes I feel doing MBA in the US is not in my destiny and I should leave this dream, but at the same time I feel that I should not run away like this.

Just to make a long story short....

I started preparing for this beast around Sept last year. It looked as if I came from a different planet as far as verbal was concerned. I was always good at Maths but those SCs, CRs and RCs made me sick. That time I was not aware of all the GMAT strategies, so didn't focus equally on both verbal and Quant. I prepared continuously for 8 weeks mostly with OG10, PR and Kaplan and Manhattan guides. Finally appeared in exam in NOV

First GMAT 610 -----> Q49/ V25

The message was clear, I needed to improve my verbal. I decided to give it another shot with more preparations. I was too busy that time with other activities that I had to take one and half months break from the studies.

Jan2006 -- I came back again, started preparing verbal, right from the scratch. My SCs started to improve. I was able to see through the CRs, able to humble some RCs, but RCs always remained my weakest point. In some RCs I would perform well, but on some others I would fail completely. I went through OG10 verbal once again, got OG11 went through verbal. My main focus was Verbal as I was confident that I can pull through the Quant. This time I spent a significant time on the GMATCLUB. My main contribution was in the form of posting good questions. I used to take some practice tests also. This was the time when GMATPREP came around. We were not aware that it gives different questions each time we take it. Still I took it 3 times. Scored 720, 700 and 740. So I thought that my real score should range somewhere between 680 and 720.

second GMAT 660 ---49 Q and 31 V ----> didn't mention this score on the club....As I was very disappointed to have missed my target score of 700. But I knew that I could do this. With some more practice in the verbal I would break the 7++ barrier. In the verbal section of the real test I had to rush thru the last 12-15 questions. I had just 15 minutes to complete last 11 questions. Some of them went as educated guess. A couple of mishits. I realised the correct answer after clicking next. So it was a problem with time management. This score already spoilt my last year's chances. So second chance

gone, but I felt it was somewhat respected score.

I started the studies again back in June. Now I was very familiar with all the question types, patterns etc. Started with working on the basics. Got a strong hold on SCs, mastered over the CRs and started doing decently on the RCs. I spent almost 6 months wholeheartedly on doing studies. Whenever I got a free time, I spent that on GMAT. Everyday 5-6 hrs at least I spared for the preparations and over the weekend-12-13 hrs. I took several practice tests and GMATPREP multiple times. Now my concepts became very clear and my speed also improved. I conquered the entire LSAT CR document. I did almost all 30 LSAT CR tests.

I took PR online tests with 700 and 640 scores.

2 kaplan tests 640 & 590

Mgmat tests non cat 670, 640

MGMAT CAT 720, 720

took gmatprep around 7-8 times --> always scored 700+ as there were many repeats

Fast forward to the test experience.

AWA went fine as usual.

Quant started with a 5 liner word problem, but after reading it a couple of times I realised that it was an easy problem. Q2 was a twister on geometry, I think I spent too much time on this and started lagging behind my speed. First 10 were real twisters, but somehow pulled them thru. I was always 5 minutes late of my target time so in the end I had to rush thru the questions. Questions in the end became surprisingly easy, So I had a doubt that I screwed the test, but consoled myself that it was not the time to think about all these, rather I should just focus on taking the test.....

Break time -----> I was feeling very confident contrary to my last 2 attempts. I was eagerly waiting to start the verbal section, just wanted to kill it. But the god has something else in the mind. 1st question was a SC, total braintwister.. 3 answer choices seemed equally good. spent 3 minutes on that and picked one. 2nd one was worse than the previous one, another 3 minutes. 3rd one was CR assumption---> all the answer choices were wildest of my dreams. 4th one SC---> gosh.....my target to finish SCs in less than 1 minute was screwed. Finished 4 questions in 12 minutes without getting convincing answers of any of them.

Then came RC, not too bad but again answer choices were very narrow. I fell apart- first 10 questions 26 minutes, and the trend continued, all the SCs were convoluted. They could qualify to any brutal list, I am sure. Second RC took all the juice out of me and I was left with 23 minutes and 21 question remaining kind of situation. I started rushing, skipped the 3rd RC, guessing all the questions, thinking that it would be experimental. Kept on getting SCs and CRs, but even the single liner SCs were too narrow in their answer choices. None of the verbal rules was getting applied or they were getting applied to at least 3 of the answer choices. 4th RC was easier but I didn't have sufficient time, somehow completed all the questions of the verbal section.

Completed the survey and hit report the score. -----WOW-----620

What????????? 620

Q49 V27

Great I lowered my score with so much of hard work, great.....Kept on staring at the screen, the proctor came and told me Sir, your exam is over. I just didn't cry that time. My 4 yr kid was waiting to watch CARS with me, my wife had taken off from the work to celebrate the completion of my test, but

I couldn't fulfill their dreams. I wanted somebody to drop me to home.....I was lost....Thats is ...I got the biggest gift of my life.My Christmas was already over...

4 days after this I am still alive, still thinking what to do.....My wife wants me to take one more shot, but I am still fighting with myself- I am always a NEVER SAY DIE kind of a person, but somehow feel defeated this time. I will see which direction do I go. I will keep you posted guys.
Thanks for reading this story and I wish you all best of luck.