

GMAT Verbal Workshop

E-GMAT TEAM

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GMAT VERBAL WORKSHOP

Decoding the X factor that separates winners

A few weeks back we asked ourselves, “How we can make our courses even better?” The answer was simple – help your students be more successful. Hence, to do the same, we introduced two new workshops – Sentence Correction and GMAT Verbal. While most test prep companies including e-GMAT teach people concepts and application and provide ample practice and mocks, few companies teach how to take the test, manage your mental state, and make decisions during the exam maximize your potential. The Verbal workshop was a step in that direction.

This article presents an account of our experience with the Verbal Workshop, recounts the aha moments and the revelations that the students had, and discusses the improvements that we may make in the upcoming workshops.

The Verbal workshop was designed to bridge the gap between the students’ true potential and their performance on the real test, helping our students put their best foot forward. Our hypothesis was simple - People improve best when three things happen, that is when they:

1. Realize the need to improve.
2. Understand where (the areas) they need to improve.
3. Get a clear direction on how to improve.

HOW WAS THE WORKSHOP CONDUCTED

Conducted by 5 e-GMAT experts, the workshop included a timed mini-mock test with 20 grueling verbal questions on Sentence Correction, Critical Reasoning, and Reading Comprehension. Click [here](#) to learn more about this workshop. Each question on the test was carefully hand-made by e-GMAT experts. Over 150 hours of work were put in designing this workshop.

- ⇒ 20 questions, 5 points per question, 42 minutes
- ⇒ All GMAT like questions, hand-made, fresh
- ⇒ Eligibility: Recommended minimum verbal score – 32
- ⇒ Non adaptive test

WHO WAS THIS WORKSHOP FOR?

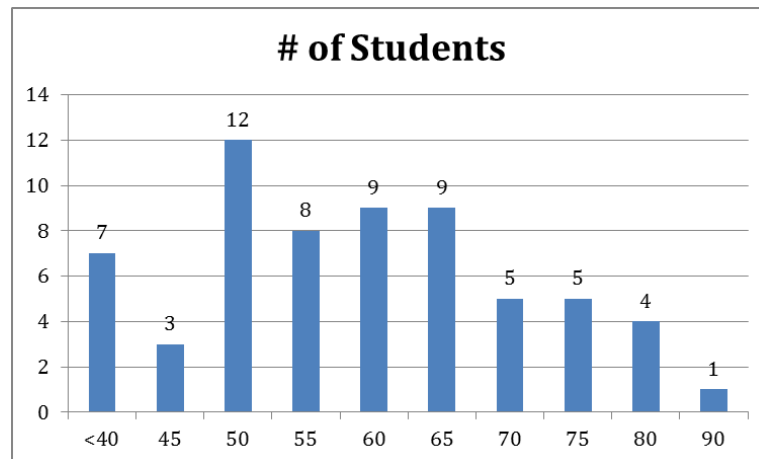
The pre-requisite for attending this work was the verbal score in the range of 32-40 (on a scale of 60) in the recent mock test. Students scoring less than 30 on their mock tests were not encouraged to attend the workshop.

Overall, the goal was to treat this workshop as an exercise similar to that of answering first 20 questions on the exam. Each question was awarded 5 points, leading to a maximum of 100 points. Over **63 students** participated in this workshop.

WORKSHOP STATS

The mean mini-mock test score of the group as a whole was 57, while the median score was 60. The standard deviation was **16 points**. **95%** of the students were within **2 standard deviations** of the mean score. The score distribution has been provided below.

- Mean Score = 57
- Standard Deviation = 16
- Min Score = 5
- Max Score = 90
- Total Attempts = 63



Insights

Further analysis led to some very interesting insights. First of all, we realized that students in general performed better on the first 10 questions than on the last 10 questions. The average accuracy of the group as a whole for the **first 10 questions was 70%** while the average accuracy of the group for the last **10 was 43%**. Upon further discussions, two things stood out:

1. Students who spent too much time on the first 10 questions realized that they had to rush through the last 10, impacting their accuracy.
2. There was an extremely difficult RC in the last 10 questions that consumed a lot of time. Students who were short of time were negatively impacted by that RC in two ways:
 - a. They tried to rush through the RC and ended up answering most RC questions incorrectly.
 - b. The RC passage shook their confidence, negatively impacting their accuracy on the subsequent questions.

ACTIONS DIFFERENT FROM WORDS – SEPARATING THE WINNERS

Most of these students had taken complete mocks, had been preparing for months, and were completely aware of the best practices, yet they failed to execute on the same. Here are three broad failure mechanisms that we uncovered:

1. **Focusing on question at hand:** Students were aware that once they attempt one particular question they should let go of it. Yet, many students were unable to do so. As you would read in the students' take-aways, many students could not move on with a clear mind when they face a challenging question. Remember, GMAT is also about performing in a stressful situation.
2. **Managing Timing:** Many students were aware of the best practices on managing timing on the first 10 question and so on, yet they ended up spending more time than recommended, some up to 65% of the time on the first 10.
3. **Leveraging their strengths:** Worse still, there were students who said that they would not hesitate to skip question, if required, so that they can spend more time on sections that they were strong in. Yet many students failed to do just the same.

COMMON THEMES IN PERSONALIZED FEEDBACK

Many students who scored below 60 faltered because of one or more factors stated above. Note, that the factors above have **little to do with a student's ability on Verbal section** but everything to do with the decisions he/she made while taking the mock test.

The important thing to notice is that the conclusions above were arrived at not only based on our hypothesis but also based on our detailed discussions with the students immediately after they attempted the quiz. In fact, when asked one thing that they would do differently, majority of them mentioned about 1 or more of the three factors above. Click the link below for some of the snippets from students.

This led us to conclude that what separates those who ace the Verbal section from those who merely do ok is not only the knowledge of concepts but also the ability to execute during the exam. We hope in addition to helping students on the former, this workshop helps students with the latter.

THE PRIZE - PERSONALIZED ASSESSMENT AND NEXT STEPS

During the workshop, we asked the students to document their experience and write down the areas where they lack. Below are some of the impressions (I have 10+ pages of such impressions).

Overall, this workshop required lot of work. During the workshop, five experts spent 4 hours addressing students' queries and making sure that everyone was able to take useful pointers as next steps. To prepare, e-GMAT team put in 150 hours, coordinating across 3 time zones. Was this effort worth it?? I am sure that our students would think so and even if it helps them improve a mere 10 points, then I could not agree more.