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6 tips to approach the Integrated Reasoning section in the GMAT

The Integrated Reasoning (IR) section has been causing a number of sleepless nights for the GMAT aspirants. With the all so predictable 'Analysis of an issue' essay replaced by some unpredictable and new question types, there is no doubt about the fact that the IR has made the GMAT tougher. Personally, I feel that the section has been beautifully crafted with very interesting questions wherein aspirants have to use both quantitative and verbal reasoning in conjunction to solve problems.

The following are a set of six points that you need to keep in mind while approaching this section.



Tip #1: Note points down

The entire 4 question types, especially the 'Two-Part Analysis' and the 'Multi-Source Reasoning' are packed with a good amount of information that you will have to make use of. Noting points down from the first sentence itself saves time later.

Tip #2: Approximate calculations

Although the calculator is provided for this section, almost all the practice problems can be answered without using it. The questions require time for you to get a hang of the data sets. Once you get to know that, the hard work is done. So you need more time to do that rather than waste time on calculations. In places where a little amount of calculation is required, using approximations is a better and faster method.

Let's say that you need to find 67.3/113.6. The fastest way to get an answer is to do the

following:

- Approximate the denominator to a number which can be an easy divisor. In this case the number 100 becomes an easy divisor.
- Assume an approximate value for the fraction. In this case, we can assume $67.3/113.6 \sim 2/3$.
- Adjust the numerator. If, we've reduced the denominator by about 13 ($113.6 - 100$), we need to reduce the numerator by $(2/3) \times 13 \sim 8$.
- The fraction becomes $(67.3 - 8)/100$, i.e., $59.3/100 = 0.593$. The actual answer is 0.592.

Just a little bit of practice will increase both speed and accuracy in the IR. It might seem to be a long process now. But when you might have to do ten such ratios and arrange them to find their mean, you'll realize that the calculator will eat up your time. In addition to this, make it a point to practice fast addition and subtraction of numbers.

Now let us dig deeper into the individual question types.

Tip #3: Don't approach passages like you do in an RC.

The Multi-Source Reasoning types are the toughest among all the question types wherein you will need to synthesize information from two to three independent sources, one of which will generally have a small, 100-150 word passage. The other sources may contain additional text or graphical information.

In addition to the 'multiple choice questions', the 'multiple dichotomous choice questions' have raised the level of complexity.

The format of a multiple dichotomous choice question is shown below:

	Inferable	Not inferable	
	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Statement 1
	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Statement 2
	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Statement 3

Do not try to skim through the text and try to make sense of the graphical information. Each and every sentence in the passage will be heavily packed with information that you cannot overlook. Move on to the other sources only if you have completely understood what the initial text means. If that is not ensured, you will have to come back again and lose time in the process.

Tip #4: Refresh statistics concepts

The **Table Analysis** is the easiest of all the different question types with questions with multiple dichotomous choice questions based on a single table. What helps you even more is that you can sort the table by different fields to search for what you need.

There is a lot of emphasis on statistical operations in these problems with frequent questions on comparisons of central tendencies and ranges among sets of data. Make it a point to strengthen your fundamentals in these concepts. The more difficult questions would involve operations on weighted means.

Tip #5: Understand trend lines and correlation in data sets

The **Graphics Interpretations** question type can be considered an extension of the Data Interpretation section with various kinds of bar graphs, line graphs, scatterplots and flowcharts added. There will be two to three variables depicted in these graphs. The question format will be multiple choice questions in the form of a drop-down list instead of the radio buttons.

Practicing problems in the data interpretation will ensure familiarity with a number of visual representations of data. There is a lot of emphasis on trend lines in a data set and correlation between different sets in scatterplots. The key here is to understand how multiple data sets are related, whether an increase in one variable results in an increase or decrease in the other.

Tip #6: Understand argument structures in passages.

The **Two-Part Analysis** requires you to have a good grasp of the critical reasoning section. There is a lot of emphasis on the following concepts:

- Argument structure of passages. There are questions that ask you to identify inherent assumptions, conclusions and facts supporting or opposing them. Questions on cause and effect relationships are frequently asked.
- Logical reasoning problems on 'selection' and 'arrangement' of items in a group based on certain criteria. These are new kinds of questions that you need to practice.

By [Shouvik](#) on May 13, 2012 / [GMAT, Integrated Reasoning](#) / [Leave a comment](#)

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