

Feb 25, 2019 | Live Chat: How to Save Time During the Exam

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<https://exampal.com/gmat>

Moderator: Welcome everyone in this special chat session about timing strategies on the GMAT with David from ExamPAL! Before we open the floor to Q&A, I would request David to talk a little about strategies to save time on the GMAT!

David: Thank you! Guess I don't have to tell you this, but time management is hard! Basically, to do it right, you need to decide as much as possible in advance. This includes building up a 'Guessing Strategy', a 'Decision making Strategy', and a set of 'hard and easy questions' list, and many more small things. Let's go over the big headers...

Guessing strategy - How many questions should you aim to answer? Answering only 4 out of 5 gives an extra 25% (!!) time per question on average. Totally worth it if this allows you to avoid making those silly mistakes. Know in advance which questions to skip. Are there certain types of subjects you just don't get? Certain types of questions you know in advance will give you brainfreeze? Especially if you're pressed for time, sometimes the right thing to do is to skip. Generally we recommend spreading your time out evenly over the test. So about 10 min per every questions in Quant, a bit less in Verbal. Check the clock every 5 questions and if you're off target.... time to guess.

Making decisions during the exam - Our research (and others) has shown that it doesn't pay to waste (too much) time on questions you just don't know how to approach. If after 30 seconds you find yourself still looking at a question, not having the slightest idea what to do, it is usually in your best interest to move on. Once you hit the 2-minute mark, the chances of answering a question correctly usually go down very quickly unless this is a very calculation-intensive question. In other words, questions that don't require lots of complicated math should not take you this long; if they are, there is a good sign you're on the wrong track and should cut your losses. If you realize you're stuck on a question, but haven't yet given up, switch up your strategy! Were you going with equations so far? Take a step back and use numbers. Is using numbers just confusing you? Take a step back and look for an underlying logical property. So that's a lot of general stuff.... where do you practice it? In practice CATs of course! Use your practice exams as general rehearsals, not only to gauge your current scoring level. This is where you test your stamina, guessing strategy,

scratchpad skills, and thinking under pressure skills all at once. These are also your best tool for debugging your work and optimizing your strategy; nothing else comes close.

OK so that was a lot of big picture, big strategy stuff. let's move on to some details. In Verbal - usually, except for SC, reading the answers is a bad way to go Unless you're a speed reader, you'll just get confused and waste a bunch of time. In RC, and especially in CR, first try to solve the question on your own, that is to 'predict a likely answer' only then take the time to look at the official answer choices and see which fit. this will save a TON of time for most people - not just reading time but thinking time (and thinking energy) both of which are very precious

So that was a lot of me talking, and hopefully gives a good intro to the topic of 'saving time on the exam'. Lets now open up the floor to questions

Is it true that we should spend more time on first few questions?

David: Ooh the 'spend more time on the first few questions' question always comes up. So the answer is yes and no. Yes - As if you dig yourself too deep a hole it can be hard to climb up out of it. No - I've seen countless students' ESR where they bombed the first part and successfully climbed up afterwards. So - Spending a bit more time on the first 4-5 questions is OK, but don't overdo it. An extra 10-15 seconds at most, and even that's a stretch.

How to tackle lengthy CR questions?

David: So in CR you always want to break the prompt down into its component parts. Think of it as a really long word problem - trying to understand it all in your head will just make a mess; writing down the important bits on paper can help you SEE them and think through them. Additionally, use the question to help you focus in on the important parts of the passage.

I don't know how to speed up my reading time in RC. (I'm not a native speaker). Are there some tips?

David: Unfortunately I have no silver bullet for this...One thing that can really help is to learn to skip over the additional details. Long words, descriptions, years, etc. are often (but not always) just confusing and not necessary to know. so learning to speed-read the easy way is about learning to ignore the unimportant stuff.

What strategies should we adapt to save time on the CR?

David: Saving time on CR is about how quickly you can build up a logical structure of the question and identify the 'direct', 'obvious' answer. This is improved via practice and via learning how to eliminate the out-of-scope answers quickly

Do you think choosing one pattern of test over the other affects in anyway? I was thinking of attempting Verbal second coz I can utilize the break time to list down the options on a scratchpad so that I can save some time during the test. Should that be my approach?

David: Only recommendation I have is to take AWA and IR last, cause they don't matter too much. Otherwise, do whatever feels good to you. We talk about this in our interview with the GMAC, which is on our youtube channel, check it out! (Link: <https://youtu.be/VaSuZ1ksueA?t=699>)

Can you guide us through some really kickass approach for SC?

David: Excellent question! First, read the sentence. If you can immediately identify wrong things, then you know exactly what to look for in the answer choices. If you don't understand the sentence / don't know how to fix it, use the splits in the answers for help. These help you to focus, and show you where to look in the original sentence.

what is the best timing strategy ; section wise both quant and verbal ; ideally what should be the pacing rate per question

David: Try to spread your time out evenly. This comes to 5 questions every 10 minutes in Quant and a bit less in Verbal. In Verbal things are a bit harder because the time isn't evenly distributed between questions, but still aim to keep things even. From students' ESRs, those who had more even time distributions almost always scored higher

Is guessing the answers of the last 4-5 questions in a section OK? I always fail to manage my time.

David: Guessing them is fine, skipping them is not! Under no circumstances leave questions unanswered, check out the above link to the GMAC interview, where we discuss exactly this point.

But - spreading out your guesses is better than lumping them all together. If you don't have time to answer everything, don't even bother trying. Instead, choose in advance, how many questions and which ones you will skip.

Could you please tell us at what point should we make an educated guess

David: Either within the first 30-40 seconds (hopefully before) when you realize you still don't understand what's going on. Or when you realize you're caught in a loop and aren't going anywhere (esp. if you are at/past the 2min mark). An easy example is in SC questions when you're down to the last 2 options and are 'going by ear'. Usually, at this point you shouldn't even bother. Just give it your best guess.

How many questions can i roughly make an educated guess for if i'm aiming for Q49-51 and V37-40?

David: Assuming you get everything else correct? Quite a few, but hard to say. In Quant, certainly 4 or 5, which means you can in advance answer only 5 out of 6 questions. In Verbal I'm not sure off the top of my head, would need to check. One way to figure this out on your own is to 'hack' the official exams. All the answers are online, so you can just take an exam and 'play around' with how many wrong answers you make.

David: Also, this is a good time to mention that there is a special 25% off due to our GMAT boot camp running this week. Boot camp special offer: 25% discount on your GMAT course! Enter coupon code bootcamp2019 at checkout >> See plans <https://bit.ly/2GSIIUA>

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