Magoosh's Complete Guide to the GRE

Updated 6/12/14

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About Us

What is Magoosh?

Magoosh is online GRE Prep that offers:

- Over 200 Math, Verbal, and AWA lesson videos. That's over 20 hours of video!
- Over 1000 Math and Verbal practice questions, with video explanations after every question
- Material created by expert tutors who have in-depth knowledge of the GRE
- E-mail support from our expert tutors
- Customizable practice sessions on.33o s

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Meet the Revised GRE

Breakdown

The Sections

The Revised GRE will consist of two Verbal sections, two Quantitative sections, and one experimental section, which can be either Verbal or Quant

Question Types: Quantitative Comparison

From the table above, we can see that any multiple of 5 is divisible by 5. For instance, 1000/5 = 200. Therefore, 1000 is a multiple of 5.

The question above asks us how many multiples of 49 are less than 2000. We can divide 2000 by 49 to see how many m

One solution is to first divide each column by 1,000,000. When we do this, we get:

some point, circa middle
ce, you should be able to use

)6(O)4(Isi)-4(t)6a(t)6(e)-4d us foFcte

(O)4(agg)4(e)-4(s)5) 76; FinOaggbba, (mua)-4(b)-ttba thrmbmete-4(t)-4(t)6tentelr thr4(t)6ghg 3(l)5(mo)-2(s)5(te

How many different 3-digit numbers are greater than 299 and do not contain the digits 1,

So, we get 5 × 7 × 7, which equals 245.

There are 245 different 3-digit numbers that are greater than 299 and do.46 690.7 T4 0[m0//AttachA 299 9

Basic Concepts: Probability

If you're like most students, you probably struggle with the GRE's time constraints, and you probably have difficulties with probability questions.

“Bar Charts” vs. “Column Charts”

ETS calls a chart a "bar chart" whether the bars are horizontal or vertical. Nevertheless, many sources (such as MGRE) call charts withe horizontal bars "bar charts" and charts with the vertical bars "column charts."

GRE Data Interpretation Practice Set

The following pie chart shows the breakdown of revenues for a particular grocery store over the

1. What is the dollar amount of sales of canned goods in the first quarter of this year?

A. $6,000
B. $9,000
C. $18,000
D. $36,000
E. $90,000

2. Frozen prepared meals constitute what percentage of the total sales for the first quarter this year?

■ 2%
B. 9%
■ 20%
F. 36%
D. 54%

3. During the first quarter this year, this particular grocery store was finishing its construction of an expanded bakery facility, which, when opened at the beginning the second quarter, will offer dozens of new cakes and pies, a whole new line of pastries, and several flavors of gourmet coffee. Assume that in the second quarter, the bakery sales triple, and all other sales stay the same. The bakery would then account for what percentage of the total sales in the second quarter?

■ 8.7%
B. 12%
■ 16.1%
D. 18%
E. 25.3%

Explanations

1. This is a straightforward read-data-off-the-chart question. The pie chart tells us canned goods sales constitute 18% of $200,000. Don't go to the calculator for such a straightforward percent question!

   .018 x 200000 = 18/100 x 200000 = 18 x 2000 = $36000

   Answer = D

2. From the bar chart, prepared meals account for about $18,000 in sales. This $18,000 is what percent of $200,000? Again, please don't jump to the calculator for this.

Practice Questions

Multiple Choice

Directions: Choose the option that best answers the question.

How many positive integers less than 10,000 are such that the product of their digits is 210?

A. 24
B. 30
C. 48
D. 54
E. 72

Text Explanation:

How many positive integers less than 10,000 are such that the product of their digits is 210?

(A) 24
(B) 30
(C) 48
(D) 54
(E) 72

$210 = 2 \times 3 \times 5 \times 7$

Case i: 4-digit number with 2, 3, 5, and 7
➡ 4! (24) possibilities

Case ii: 3-digit number with 5, 6, and 7
➡ 3! (6) possibilities

Case iii: 4-digit number with 1, 5, 6, and 7
➡ 4! (24) possibilities

Total = 24 + 6 + 24 = **54**

Try this question online and watch the video explanation:
http://gre.magoosh.com/questions/831/

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Multiple Answer Questions

Directions: Consider each of the choices separately and select all that apply.

If x>0, and two sides of a certain triangle have lengths 2x+1 and 3x+4 respectively, which of the following could be the length of the third side of the triangle?

Indicate all possible lengths.

- ■ 4x+5
- B. x+2
- ■ 6x+1
- D. 5x+6
- E. 2x+17

Text Explanation:

If $x > 0$, and two sides of a certain triangle have lengths $2x+1$ and $3x+4$ respectively, which of the following could be the length of the third side of the triangle?

Indicate all possible lengths.

(A) $4x+5$
[B] $x+2$
(C) $6x+1$
[D] $5x+6$
(E) $2x+17$

Given 2 sides with lengths A and B,

difference between A and B < length of third side < sum of A and B

$x+3$ < length of third side < $5x+5$

Try this question online and watch the video explanation:
http://gre.magoosh.com/questions/2205/

Numeric Entry

Directions: Enter the answer in the blank.

If $\left(\frac{2^{-n}}{3}\right)\left(\frac{3^{-n}}{2}\right)=\frac{1}{36}$, what is the value of n?

Text Explanation:

If $\left(\frac{2^{-n}}{3}\right)\left(\frac{3^{-n}}{2}\right)=\frac{1}{36}$, what is the value of n?

1

$$\left(\frac{2^{-n}}{3}\right)\left(\frac{3^{-n}}{2}\right)=\frac{1}{36}$$ $a^n b^n = (ab)^n$

$$\frac{6^{-n}}{6}=\frac{1}{36}$$

$$\frac{6^{-n}}{6^1}=6^{-2}$$ $\frac{x^a}{x^b}=x^{a-b}$

$$6^{-n-1}=6^{-2}$$

$$-n-1=-2$$ If $x^a = x^b$ then $a=b$ $(x \neq 0,1,-1)$

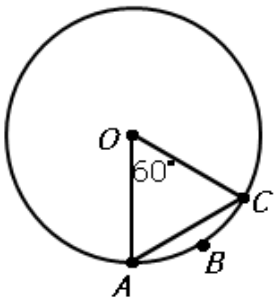
$$-n=-1$$

$$n=1$$

Try this question online and watch the video explanation:
http://gre.magoosh.com/questions/2185/

Quantitative Comparison

Directions: Choose the correct statement.



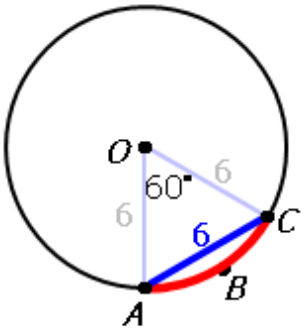
O is the center of the circle with radius 6.

Column A	Column B
Length of arc ABC	6

Choose the correct statement:

- The quantity in Column A is greater
- B. The quantity in Column B is greater
- The two quantities are equal
- D. The relationship cannot be determined from the information given

Text Explanation:



O is the center of the circle with radius 6.

Column A		Column B
Length of arc *ABC* ✓	A	6
6^+		

Try this question online and watch the video explanation:
http://gre.magoosh.com/questions/1054/

Verbal Section

Question Types: Text Completions

On the surface the Text Completion sounds deceptively easy: all you have to do is fill in in blanks in a sentence with a vocabulary word that, given the clues in the sentence(s), fits best. Notice the (s) in the preceding sentence—unlike the one-sentence Sentence Completions on the old GRE, a Text Completion can contain anywhere from one to four sentences. Indeed, the longest Text Completion can sometimes run an entire paragraph.

A Text Completion can have anywhere from one to three blanks. Every one-blank Text Completion will be one sentence and will contain FIVE answer choices. The two- and three-blank Text Completions, on the other hand, can run anywhere from one to four sentences. Most importantly, each blank in a two- and three-blank Text Completion will always have THREE answer choices.

With a two- or three-blank text completions, your chances of guessing and getting lucky are quite low: for a three-blank TC, you have to get all three correct in order to get the question correct (that amounts to a 1 in 27 chance in guessing).

Below are five important strategies you should follow if you want to do well on Text Completions:

1. **Don't dive in**

   Read the entire stem first. The reason for this strategy is that the first blank is often ambiguous, unless you have read the entire paragraph.

2. **Breaking down the text completion**

   Text Completions are sometimes a paragraph long, so it is easy to get lost in them. A great strategy is trying to understand the "big picture". Breaking down the paragraph in your own words (paraphrasing the paragraph) will help you get a grasp on what the sentences are talking about. Then you're ready for step #3.

3. **Use your own words**

   We want to use the strategy of putting in our own word(s) in the blank or blanks. To do so, you must always justify your answers based not just on the "big picture", but on some of the specific words or phrases in the sentence itself. I refer to these word(s) as keywords.

4. **The second (or third) blank first**

   Because the first blank is often difficult to deal with, try finding a word for the second or third blank first. Then work your way backwards to the first blank. The caveat: This

technique only applies if you can come up with a word for the second or third blank. If you can't, then work with the first blank.

5. **Use the entire text completion as context**

When you've finally chosen your two/three answers, plug them back into the blanks. Does the completed sentence make sense with how you earlier paraphrased it?

Watch our lesson video "Intro to Text Completion":
http://gre.magoosh.com/lessons/149-intro-to-text-completion/

Question Types: Sentence Equivalence

Sentence Equivalence questions have vague instructions ("select exactly two words that best complete the sentence and produce sentences that are alike in meaning"). Even though the Revised GRE has been around for almost two years, many are still scratching their heads, wondering what the difference is between synonymous sentences and synonyms.

Even if a Sentence Equivalence question is straightforward, you may be unsure how to proceed. What if three answer choices work? Two of them are synonyms, and one of them isn't. You feel, however, that one of the synonyms somewhat works in the sentence, but the one lone word that does not have a synonym amongst the answer choices works even better. What, then, is the answer?

Let's take a look at the question that puts us in the aforementioned quandary.

> The blitzkrieg of anti-smoking images has clearly had a(n) —- effect: both the number of total smokers and the rate of lung cancer has fallen in recent years.
>
> ■ salutary
> B. lasting
> ■ dramatic
> D. ephemeral
> E. unremarkable
> F. beneficial

There are a few answer choices that could conceivably work here: (A) salutary, (B) lasting, (C) dramatic and (F) beneficial. However, lasting is a bit suspect, because there is nothing in the sentence implies that the changes in behavior are permanent.

So, now you are down to three answers. Let's say you really like answer choice (C) dramatic. Indeed, this is the very word you came up with for the blank. However, because answer choices (A) and (F) are synonyms that work for the blank, there is no way (C) dramatic can be the answer. This is an important statement, so I will repeat it again: if two synonyms work for the blank, then another word cannot be the answer.

Of course, in the world of the GRE, and Sentence Equivalence in particular, it is not always that straightforward. What if you did not know the definition of (A) salutary? Then would it make sense to choose (C)? No. The overwhelming majority of Sentence Equivalence answers are synonyms. Even in those Sentence Equivalence questions, in which the two correct answers aren't strict, synonymous sentences result when you plug the words in. (C) dramatic and (D) beneficial, however, are very different words and create very different sentences. Therefore, your best bet, probability-wise, is to choose (A) salutary, even though you do not know what it means. The

assumption here is that (A) salutary is one of the two synonyms. Then you want to choose either dramatic or beneficial. One of them will most likely be the answer.

You may balk, thinking that the odds are 50/50. However, if you simply pick (C) and (F), while avoiding the word you do not know, your chances of answering the question correctly are very slim to nothing because such different words clearly create different sentences.

Here are some good strategies for dealing with Sentence Equivalence questions:

- Always look for synonyms.
- If you can't find any synonyms amongst the answer choices, given you know the definition of every word, then the correct answers will be words that aren't technically synonyms.
- If you do not know a few of the words, do not just pick two words because they create synonymous sentences; sometimes two pairs of synonyms exist amongst the six answer choices.
- Choose a word you do not know, and match it with one of the answer choices that work.
- If the above sounds like a gamble, that's because approaching Sentence Equivalence, in terms of guessing, is so complex, at least compared to the typical one in five answer choices. Essentially, you will want to do anything to increase the odds of guessing correctly. And, to do so, the steps above will be your most helpful strategy.

Watch our lesson video "Intro to Sentence Equivalence":
http://gre.magoosh.com/lessons/180-intro-to-sentence-equivalence/

Question Types: Reading Comprehension

Typically when I have a student who is struggling with Reading Comprehension, I have them do a little exercise. I give them two minutes to read an entire passage (yes, you should always read the passage first before attempting the questions).

Know the passage

When the two minutes are up, I immediately have them close the book and tell me what the passage was about. Say the passage was about three competing theories on dinosaur extinction. The author endorsed a meteorite impact theory because it could account for the uneven dispersal of iridium.

A student struggling with the passage will say the passage was about dinosaurs. They may throw in the word meteorite, or maybe mention something about iridium, but they will not give me with a coherent synopsis, like the one I provided above, because their understanding is fragmented.

You may think trying to describe the passage in your own words is frivolous and time-consuming. However, unless you try to understand the passage by describing it in your own words, you will find yourself struggling even more on the questions, easy prey for the traps the test writers have laid.

Slow down

So what should you do? Learn to read passages, slowly even, to make sure you can accurately paraphrase what the passage is talking about. In fact, you shouldn't even worry about the questions until you are able to understand how the passage is constructed.

Don't trust your gut

Many students balk, saying that slowing down to read the whole passage eats up time. The truth is students waste the most time on questions they don't know the answers to because they have an incomplete understanding of the passage. They will vacillate between two answer choices and pick one based not on logic but on "gut feeling".

Takeaway

So the key is to really understand the passage. One way to make sure you are doing so is to write down the three main points after you're done reading the passage. Once you get in the habit of doing so, processing the passage in this way will become second nature and soon you will be able to dissect the passage in your head without having to write anything down.

Question Types: Argument Questions (Paragraph Argument)

On the GRE, a subset of the Reading Comprehension is called Paragraph Argument. Of course, the GRE doesn't call it this, but instead lumps the question type under Reading Comprehension. Back before the old GRE was the old GRE, and when it was actually the new GRE, ETS had decided to do away with a section called the Analytical Section. So, the old-old GRE had an extra section worth a total of 800 points (yes, you can consider yourself lucky, in a way, that the new GRE didn't completely resurrect this section).

They did, however, resurrect a question type from this erstwhile section – and that is the question type I am labeling a Paragraph Argument question.

Those with GMAT experience will notice that this question type is the same in content and description as the Critical Reasoning questions on the GMAT.

Even for those of you with only GRE experience, you've seen it before – it's a short paragraph with only one question, typically asking you to think logically about information in the paragraph.

Today, I am going to be dealing with a subspecies of this question that is proving pesky for many students (and for those of you considering only taking the GMAT, you better listen up).

You can identify this question by bolded parts of the text. It is called Paragraph Argument, and requires you to understand how arguments are constructed.

Below we have an excerpt:

The lower the tide, the less likely guppy fish are to come to the surface to feed. The tern, which feeds exclusively on the guppy, does most of its hunting in the evening, when the tide is low. It follows that the tern is going to have more difficulty hunting the guppy in the evening than during the daytime, because it expends more energy doing so. Dotting points slightly out to sea are outcrops of rock that the tern usually lands on while hunting. Therefore, an observer is more likely to see tern resting on the rocks in the evening than during the day.

A Paragraph Argument question will have you do one of a number of things: Evaluate the Argument, Strengthen/Weaken Argument, Resolve the Paradox. Following each Paragraph Argument are five answer choices.

For this excerpt, we are not going to answer a question, but are going to take apart the argument. This skill is essential to answer any of the question types above.

Premise

For an argument to be valid, it must be based on a fact. In this case, we accept what the passage tells us in the beginning two sentences (by the way, I made up these fish facts, so I do not think they actually apply to the natural world). For me to draw a valid conclusion, I must build off of these sentences.

Conclusion

In this case, I am assuming that the tern is going to have trouble hunting the guppy in the evening, because there aren't too many guppies breaking the surface. This conclusion is by no means 100% valid. It is a conclusion drawn from facts that we, the readers, take for granted are 100% valid (the first two sentences).

With this excerpt, we are not finished. Notice how there is another conclusion: "Therefore, an observer…" You'll notice that this sentence is the final conclusion, which must be based on the first conclusion. Therefore, the first conclusion is not the main conclusion, but what is known as the intermediate conclusion. Without the intermediate conclusion, the passage would not be able to draw the main conclusion.

Other twists

Sometimes, the main argument will not agree with the intermediate conclusion. For instance, the main argument could have said something to the effect of, "Therefore, the increase of birds on the outcrops during the day cannot fully be explained given the above information."

In this case, the main argument opposes the intermediate conclusion. That is, there has to some other reason, besides resting, to account for the increase in terns. Perhaps the terns used the time on the outcrops to clean their feathers (or some other random explanation).

Lastly, not all Paragraph Arguments – in fact, very few indeed – actually deal explicitly with intermediate conclusions. But, because this terminology is not common, it tends to throw many people off. However, if you want more practice with Paragraph Arguments, you should not only look at Revised GRE material, but should also look at GMAT and LSAT material. There will be plenty of practice there for this tricky kind of question.

Pacing Strategies

Each verbal section consists of 20 questions. You will have a total of 30 minutes per verbal section, translating to 1.5 minutes per question.

So how do you allocate this time amongst the different questions? In order of LEAST time-consuming to MOST time-consuming we have:

1. One-Blank Text Completions
2. Sentence Equivalence
3. Two-Blank Text Completion
4. Short Reading Passage
5. Three-Blank Text Completion
6. Paragraph Argument
7. Long Reading Passage

This ranking is a rough estimate, meaning that a difficult sentence equivalence question may cost you more time than a straightforward three-blanker. To simplify things even further, I will assign each of the sections above a different amount of time, giving a range to account for the difference in time for any given question type.

- One-Blank Text Completions 20 – 45 seconds
- Sentence Equivalence 20 – 60
- Two-Blank 30 – 75 sec
- Three-Blank 45 sec – 2 min
- Short Reading Passage (including time to read passage): 45 sec – 1:45
- Paragraph Argument – 1:00 – 2:15
- Long Reading Passage 1:00 – 3:00.

What does this all mean? On Sentence Equivalence and One-Blank Text Completions spend no more than a minute. On Two-Blank and Three Blank Text Completions spend an average of 1:00 – 1:30 minutes. The extra time you saved in One-Blank Text Completions and Sentence Equivalence use towards Reading Comprehension.

The low-hanging fruit

20 seconds to 3:00 minutes is a pretty vast range. Simply put, some questions are easy and others fiendishly diabolical. The shocking thing is each question, from the one that you get in a blink of an eye to one that has you scratching your head till longer after the exam is over, are worth the same.

That point is so important I am going to repeat it again (in caps): EACH QUESTION ON THE GRE IS GIVEN THE SAME WEIGHT.

The takeaway? Do not spend 3 minutes agonizing over a three-blank text completion with the words *hagiographic* and *pulchritudinous* as answer choices. If it's a long paragraph with really difficult words SKIP IT!

That is, as soon as you see that the question is difficult, move on. Instead, go for the low hanging fruit. That is, first answer the questions that are easier and take less time. The Revised GRE, after all, allows you to scroll from question to question. Make sure to take advantage of this function.

You do not need to attempt every question

Don't freak out if you are unable to attempt every question. As long as you just guess some random answer, that's fine. There is no penalty for guessing. There is, however, a penalty for rushing through a relatively easy question to try to answer every question. And that penalty is you getting the easy question wrong. Anyways, you do not get bonus points for completing the test. So make sure to be accurate.

Takeaway

Each question on the GRE is worth the same. Do not waste time trying to answer a difficult question. Remember you can always come back to a difficult question if you have time, after you've answered the easy/medium ones.

Vocabulary: Learning in Context

When learning GRE vocabulary, we need to arm ourselves with as many approaches as possible.

Reading for vocabulary

Why is reading for vocab, compared to the memorizing flashcards, so effective?

In the cozy flashcard milieu, words come to us a lot easier. But, the GRE is far from cozy. When we see a word we've seen before, the context — the GRE testing room — is very different. Likewise, when we are reading, we don't expect to see a given word. It is this element of surprise, this jolt of recognition that makes reading such an effective vocabulary-learning tool.

If you are going to use flashcards, we recommend using one that have good example sentences. We have over 1000 free ones for you to flip through online (or on your phone!) here: http://gre.magoosh.com/flashcards

Active word usage

Once you've exposed yourself to many new words through reading, you don't want to just look at them and put them in a notebook for safe keeping. A technique you can rely on is active usage – a highly effective way of embedding words into long-term memory. If you don't make active usage part of your arsenal, you are selling yourself short.

The key to active usage is to be creative. So, if vocabulary words start randomly popping into your head, think of where you can use them. For instance, if you someone walking down the street arguing on his cell phone, words such as *contentious*, *disputatious*, and *polemical* should leap to mind. Indeed, the zanier the connections you make with words, the more likely you are to remember them (this zanier-is-better approach applies to the next part of the vocabulary arsenal as well).

Mnemonics

Suppose there is a really pesky word that you just can't get into your long-term memory, no matter how many times you see that word. Okay, perhaps you don't have to suppose, as there are many words that fall into this category. But let's pluck a word at random from the GRE vocabulary tree: lambaste.

Let's say whenever you encounter this word, the first four letters, l-a-m-b, throw you off. You picture a docile creature bah-ing contentedly in a pen. When you see the definition — to reprimand harshly — it always surprises you.

Vocabulary: Magazines and Newspapers

The Revised GRE requires us to have a far greater sense of how words function in context. This is why I've recommend learning vocabulary by reading voraciously from prescribed sources. These sources include *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *The New Yorker*. Most of the writing found within the pages of these august publications is not only replete with GRE-level vocabulary but is also similar in tone and style to that found on the Revised GRE.

Today I am going to take actual articles from the aforementioned sources. I will highlight important vocabulary and also discuss ways you should approach learning words when you encounter them in context.

Finally, the articles come from a wide variety of fields, e.g. business, science, literature, etc. I've done my best to select pieces that I think a majority will find interesting, a criteria that I recommend you employ when you embark on your own reading quest.

In each case, I've specifically taken excerpts that contain not only GRE words (though these are sprinkled throughout each article) but also engage in analysis of some issue.

The Atlantic Monthly

Outsider, non-founder CEOs are often overvalued because many corporate boards think the answer to their problems is a superstar CEO with an outsized reputation. This leads them to overpay for people who are good at creating outsized reputations through networking, interviewing, and taking credit for other peoples' achievements-all bad indicators of future success.

Rakesh Khurana has amply *shown how this* delusion *of the* charismatic *savior creates a* dysfunctional *market for CEOs, allowing the small number of existing public-company CEOs to demand and receive extravagant* compensation. *The myth of the generalist CEO is* bolstered *by the many* fawning *media portrayals where CEOs say that their key jobs are understanding, hiring, and motivating people-leading board members to believe that you can run a technology company without knowing anything about technology.*

This passage is great because it is full of relatively difficult words, many of which are high-frequency GRE vocabulary (*fawning, bolstered, ample/amply*). This excerpt is also filled with analysis, which will help sync your synapses for the Revised GRE.

Perhaps business reading induces a *meh*, or worse yet a *blah*. Maybe you simply want to vary up your reading. A great field to draw from is science. Part of the reason is the Revised GRE will typically have one science passage. While it may be drier than the typical fare found in the

magazines cited above, often the science writing on the GRE is similar in tone and style to what you'll encounter in these magazines.

So let's take the article *Bird Brain,* which appeared in *The New Yorker* last year. It explores the development of language in human beings and whether language is the province only of humans. To do so, it tells the story of an African gray parrot, Alex, and his owner, Irene Pepperberg—namely how she trained Alex to say hundreds of words (though none, I believe, were GRE vocab) so that Alex, by the time he was an adult, was able to form relatively coherent sentences.

The New Yorker

Below is an excerpt from the article, which is about 15-pages long. In general I would recommend the entire piece, especially if the above sounds intriguing. The excerpt includes a few vocab words, and some reflection and analysis.

All children grow up in a world of talking animals. If they don't come to know them through fairy tales, Disney movies, or the Narnia books, they discover them some other way. A child will grant the gift of speech to the family dog, or to the stray cat that shows up at the door. At first, it's a solipsistic *fantasy—the secret sharer you can tell your troubles to, or that only you understand. Later, it's rooted in a more philosophical curiosity, the longing to experience the* ineffable interiority *of some very different being. My eight-year-old daughter says that she wishes the horses she rides could talk, just so she could ask them what it feels like to be a horse. Such a desire* presumes*—as Thomas Nagel put it in his 1974 essay "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?"—that animals have some kind of* subjectivity*, and that it might somehow be* plumbed*. In any case, Nagel explained, humans are "restricted to the resources" of our own minds, and since "those resources are inadequate to the task," we cannot really imagine what it is like to be a bat, only, at best, what it is like to behave like one—to fly around in the dark, gobble up insects, and so on. That inability, however, should not lead us to dismiss the idea that animals "have experiences fully comparable in richness of detail to our own." We simply can't know. Yet many of us would be glad for even a few glimpses inside an animal's mind. And some people, like Irene Pepperberg, have dedicated their lives to documenting those glimpses.*

Though you may already know a few of these words, you should definitely look them up, especially if you are inferring the meaning based on the context. Always validate your hunch, don't assume you can always glean the exact definition of the word simply by looking at context.

After looking up these words, you'll notice a word with a secondary meaning, *plumbed*, and a couple of words from philosophy – *subjectivity* and *solipsistic*. After consulting *Word Smart*, the Magoosh flashcards or other vocabulary lists I've recommend you'll notice that subjectivity (or subjective) is a very important word; solipsistic, on the other hand, is not as likely to pop up on the

test. But if you already have a strong vocabulary, and are looking to score in the top 10%, then definitely learn solipsistic.

You will notice that the definition of *interiority* isn't very surprising, as it is directly related to interior. You may also notice that it is similar to *subjective*. Finally, you learn the word *ineffable*, which say you've never seen before, and you also find it on a few lists. Write it down on a flashcard along with an example sentence (oh, the irony of ineffable – for to say something is *ineffable* is contradicting the very essence of the word).

Following a process similar to the one above is important. You don't want to simply underline the words and look them up. You want to digest them, so that, much like Alex the parrot, you will be able to use them in a coherent sentence.

Of course reading the entire article is also a good idea. Essentially you are training your brain to read through a long, relatively challenging piece, a skill that is indispensable during the third hour of the Revised GRE.

New York Times Book Review

Let's say that you read *Bird Brain* and enjoy it. You are already familiar with a number of words and want something more challenging, maybe something couched in academic jargon or that oozes literary style. (I'm assuming that if you fall into this category, you are also looking to get the difficult verbal section).

A good resource is the *New York Times Book Review*. Here you will find the truly erudite waxing literary on a recently published novel/book that is just as scholarly as the review. You may even ask yourself if *The New York Times* writers are the very writers who craft byzantine Text Completions for ETS.

Below are two excerpts from the same book review of a biography of Joseph Heller, the reclusive, and frequently irascible, author of Catch-22, one of the great novels of the 20th century.

But again, Daugherty is often perceptive about Heller's place in the larger culture, even if the novelist himself rarely comes into focus. For the human aspect, one turns to Erica Heller's frank but loving memoir of her father, "Yossarian Slept Here," which comes as close as possible, I dare say, to deciphering the ***enigma*** *behind the obsessive, pitch-black fiction. Joseph Heller, the opposite of* ***demonstrative****, was given to* ***oblique*** *ways of showing affection…*

That was the year Heller published his second novel, "Something Happened," which Daugherty commends as follows: "Joe stepped beyond Wilson's sentimentality and Yates's

Practice Questions

Text Completion

Directions: For each blank select one word from each column that best completes the sentence.

The movie is comprised of several vignettes, each presenting a character along with his or her foil: a staid accountant shares an apartment with a (i)_____ musician; a tight-lipped divorcee on a cross-country roadtrip picks up a (ii)_____ hitchhiker; and finally, and perhaps most unconvincingly, an introverted mathematician falls in love with a (iii)_____ arriviste.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (ii)
A. colorful	D. garrulous	G. unpredictable
B. insatiable	E. untrustworthy	H. gregarious
C. eminent	F. forlorn	I. bumbling

Answers: A, D, H

'Foil' is an opposite. Therefore each time a person is mentioned we want to come up with a person who exhibits opposite qualities. For instance, in the first blank we have 'staid accountant.' 'Staid' is boring and dull. Thus, the opposite would be (A) colorful. For the second blank, (D) garrulous is the opposite of 'tight-lipped.' Finally, (H) gregarious is the opposite of 'introverted.

Try this question online and watch the video explanation:
http://gre.magoosh.com/questions/2574/

Sentence Equivalence

Directions: Select exactly two words that best complete the sentence and produce sentences that are alike in meaning.

A knack for _____, it can be argued, allows one access to a whole range of careers, many of which require one to forsake direct, honest speech.

- A. eloquence
- B. prevarication
- C. equivocation
- D. abbreviation
- E. discernment
- F. openness

Answers: B, C

'...to forsake...speech' means to not speak truthfully. Thus the word in the blank should be a synonym with dishonest

A. eloquence has a positive connotation
B. prevarication is speaking in an evasive fashion
C. equivocation means to speak vaguely as to avoid revealing the truth
D. abbreviation is not supported by context
E. discernment is the ability to judge
F. openness is the opposite of the blank

Try this question online and watch the video explanation:
http://gre.magoosh.com/questions/2369/

Reading Comprehension

Directions: Consider each of the choices separately and select all that apply .

What lit tle scholarship has existed on Ernest Hemingway--considering his stature--has focused on trying to unmask the man behind the bravura. Ultimately, most of these works have done little more than to show that Hemingway the myth and Hemingway the man were not too dissimilar (Hemingway lived to hunt big game so should we be surprised at his virility, not to mention that of many of the author's--chiefly male --protagonists?). In the last few years, several biographies have reversed this trend, focusing on Hemingwa y near the end of his life: isolated and paranoid, the author imagined the government was chasing him (he was not completely wrong on this account). Ironically, the hunter had become the hunted, and in that sense, these latest biographers have provided --perhaps unwittingly --the most human portrait of the writer yet.

With which of the following would the author of the passage agree?

- The prevalence of scholarship on Hemingway is commensurate with his renown as a writer.
- B. The latest Hemingway biographies consciously intended to show Hemingway's vulnerabilities.
- Until recently, Hemingway biographies had shown a similar trend.

Answers: C only

(A) is wrong because the first sentence clearly states the opposite: for someone of Hemingway's stature, few biographies have resulted.

(B) is wrong because the passage says, "perhaps unwittingly", meaning the biographies did not consciously set out to depict He mingway's vulnerabilities.

(C) is clearly supported in the passage: "What little scholarship…bravura."

Try this question online and watch the video explanation:
http://gre.magoosh.com/questions/2663/

Paragraph Arguments (Critical Reasoning)

Directions: Choose the option that best answers the question.

The waters off the coast of Iceland are filled with pods of killer whales, which migrate there during the summer. Wildlife parks that rely on the killer whales for entertainment hunt the killer whale almost exclusively in the water of Iceland, because strict sanctions forbid them from doing so off the coast of North America, an area also abundant in killer whales. Since Iceland recently gave into pressure from international groups opposed to the hunting of killer whales, it too will forbid the hunting of killer whales off its coast. Therefore, all wildlife parks will be forced to end their shows featuring killer whales once their current killer whales are unable to perform.

All of the following cast doubt on the conclusion of the argument EXCEPT?

- The recent ban only extends to within one hundred miles of Iceland, though killer whales are plentiful along the shores of Greenland, which fall outside this range.

B. The incoming prime minister of Canada, who is more conservative, is planning on lifting the ban on hunting killer whales off the coast of Canada.

- In-park killer whale births have become increasingly common, especially in those wildlife parks that harbor a large number of killer whales.

D. Some wildlife parks are involved in the illegal trade of killer whales.

E. It is nearly impossible to catch killer whales in deep waters, so hunters typically rely on luring killer whales into coves.

Answer: E

The argument states that the only place wildlife parks can find killer whales is off the coast of Iceland, yet, with an imminent ban there, wildlife parks will be unable to replenish their respective in-park killer whale populations. Eliminate all the answer choices that call this question into conclusion.

(A) provides a source of killer whales (Greenland), thereby weakening the conclusion.

The argument states that North America is also abundant in killer whale. If Canada lifts its ban, then wildlife park can find killer whale there. (B) is out.

(C) provides a great place to replenish the killer whale population: the park itself. Therefore, (C) directly attacks the argument that wildlife parks will run out of killer whale.

(D) provides a clear means by which parks will acquire killer whales despite all the bans.

(E) does not provide a new means by which parks will acquire new killer whales. It only describes how killer whales are generally caught. Therefore (E) is the answer.

Try this question online and watch the video explanation:
http://gre.magoosh.com/questions/3403/

Well-structured: The essay should have an Intro, Body Paragraphs and Conclusion. Your intro should end with a clearly defined thesis, so the person reading your essay knows what you are trying to prove.

Well-reasoned: For the Issue paragraphs, your body paragraphs should contain examples, either actual or hypothetical, that cogently defend your position. For the Argument task, you convincingly show why the argument is weak.

Well-Expressed: The GRE wants to get a sense of how well you write. And by write, I mean, do you use relatively sophisticated speech? Do you vary up your sentences? Do grammar issues interfere with your expression?

Together, the three points will give the GRE reader an overall impression (what they call a holistic approach) of your writing ability. Again, this score will be based on a scale from 0.0 – 6.0.

Takeaway

So, those were the high-level basics. But don't worry – there is a lot more to come. We are going to take a look at the Issue and Argument independently.

The Argument Essay

Just like the assumptions themselves, the trepidation people have of The Argument Task on the Analytical Writing Assessment Section of the GRE is unwarranted. Below is a sample argument prompt and the first step in approaching the Argument Task: Brainstorm.

Sample task

SuperCorp recently moved its headquarters to Corporateville. The recent surge in the number of homeowners in Corporateville proves that Corporateville is a superior place to live then Middlesburg, the home of SuperCorp's previous headquarters. Moreover, Middleburg is a predominately urban area and according to an employee survey, SuperCorp has determined that its workers prefer to live in an area that is not urban. Finally, Corporateville has lower taxes than Middlesburg, making it not only a safer place to work but also a cheaper one. Therefore, SuperCorp clearly made the best decision.

"Write a response in which you examine the stated and/or unstated assumptions of the argument. Be sure to explain how the argument depends on the assumptions and what the implications are if the assumptions prove unwarranted." – ETS

Step one - attack the assumptions

Do not agree with any part of the argument—the argument is full of logical gaps and your job is to expose them. Of course, you do not only want to cite what is wrong with the argument, you want to elaborate on how the argument can be improved.

The first step is to brainstorm the logical gaps or unwarranted assumptions the argument makes. Thinking of the assumptions is key before writing – don't just rush into the essay. Planning before you write will, in the end, save you time.

In this post we will only be concerned with the brainstorming part. The follow up post will have a sample essay, followed by a score and feedback, including how to improve the essay.

Assumption #1

The argument assumes that the increase in homeowners is directly correlated with improved living, or, as the argument states, "a superior place to live." Housing could simply be cheaper, causing an influx of people. That is the increase of population does not mean that everybody wants to live in Corporateville because it is such a great place.

The Issue Essay

Out of the two essays, the Issue tends to be more difficult for most students. Part of the reason is it is far more difficult to "wing it" on the Issue task than it is on the Argument Task.

The Issue Prompt requires you to respond to a simple statement, by developing a position, and supporting it with convincing examples. To be able to do so you will want to "keep" the following points in mind.

Keep it organized

Nothing reflects strong essay writing skills like organization. Even an impassioned, cogent response falls apart if it is not bundled into essay form: the introduction, a few body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

The Intro should not be needlessly long, as you try to stuff in everything you want to say. The Intro serves (unsurprisingly) to introduce the topic. Most importantly, the Intro must have a clearly defined thesis statement. Often it is easiest for the writer—and the reader—if the last sentence in the Intro is the thesis.

The body paragraphs should develop your thesis. Finally, the conclusion should recap what've you said (don't try to add any new information).

Keep it focused

Within the paragraph it is easy for us to lose our way. Perhaps we summarize needlessly, forgetting that the essay requires our analysis of an issue. Maybe our sentences do not link together logically, and we find ourselves rambling. Or, we may find ourselves juggling several hypothetical examples, never really making a compelling case.

So stay focused on analyzing the issue. Make sure your sentences link together, and be sure to develop an example, so that by the end of the paragraph you can persuasively—and clearly—show how your example supports your thesis.

Keep it engaging

Repetitive sentence structure makes for repetitive reading. Vary up the way you write—don't be afraid to use a colon (or a dash), drop in a semi-colon, and vary up the syntax. Noun followed by verb followed by adjective implies that you are a hesitant writer. Regardless of your analysis and organization, the overall impression your essay leaves on the graders is a resounding meh.

Keep it specific

Hypotheticals are fine, if you can use them to convincingly back up your point. However, that's the tough part; "some people," "mankind," or "you" are dull, vague abstractions. If you trying to show that knowledge can sometimes be used for destructive ends, "Oppenheimer's knowledge of nuclear fusion allowed him to create the most destructive weapon the world had ever known" is far more impactful than, "scientists can sometimes use knowledge to hurt us."

Keep it on topic

Perhaps the most important (lest you wonder why you received a '1' on your essay) is to keep your essay on topic. Imagine you had to write on the mock prompt on knowledge I used above. If you begin talking about how technology is destructive because smartphones cause us to become insular, you have totally forgotten to answer the question, "Knowledge can sometimes used for destructive ends."

Keep practicing

Writing well is very difficult. It takes a lifetime of diligent practice. Luckily, the GRE essays graders are not judging whether we could be New Yorker staff writers. Even '6' essays are not perfect; while commanding and sophisticated, these essays are not beyond the grasp of many native speakers.

Even as a non-native speaker, with a little practice you can go from a '3' to a '4' and from a '4' to a '5'. But the key is practice. Writing an essay and feeling utterly deflated because it would score below a '3' is fine…as long as you can pick yourself up and tackle another essay prompt, knowing that you can—and will—improve with more practice.

And non-natives don't despair. Two of the preeminent prose stylists of the English-language novel were both non-native English speakers. Joseph Conrad didn't learn English until he was 18 (though his *Heart of Darkness* will confound most 18-year olds native English speakers). And Vladimir Nabokov wrote in both French and Russia before ever committing his pen to English at the ripe age of 25. The first page of *Lolita* alone makes even New Yorker staff writers blush crimson with envy.

Takeaways

Okay, enough with the pep talk. For practical advice on practicing: click here for access to hundreds of essay prompts by ETS. Better yet, the actual prompt you see test day may be one of these essays. So set yourself a goal (say, an essay a day) and practice. And remember, your mood coming out of the essay will affect your performance on the other sections. So (for non-native speakers) do Nabokov proud, and for natives with enough practice, maybe you'll be able to show those New Yorker staff writers a thing or two.

Resources

Study Plans

Whether you're studying for 1 week or 6 months, it definitely helps to add some structure to your study plan to keep you accountable and motivated. Below is a list of our study guides that include recommended materials and checklists for each stage of your prep:

1 Week Study Schedule

1 Month Study Schedules:

- Daily schedule
- Weekly schedule

2-3 Month (90 Day) Study Schedules:

- Weekly Schedule
- Daily Schedule Version A for Beginners
- Daily Schedule Version B: Math Focused
- Daily Schedule Version C: Verbal Focused
- Daily Schedule Version D for Advanced Students

6 Month Study Schedules

- Daily Schedule (for Math Beginners)
- Daily Schedule (Advanced Math)
- Weekly Schedule

You can also access all of the study plans above from http://magoosh.com/gre/gre-study-guides-and-plans/

Official Practice Material from ETS

You may have heard that there is no better way to practice for the GRE than by taking a mock exam, especially one written by ETS.

The extent to which this is true depends on how you use the exam. Taking a test once, figuring out your score, and then hoping that your brain will avoid the same kinds of mistakes on the test is wishful thinking. Following the steps below will help you get the most out of a practice test.

The tests

ETS (the best source for the most accurate practice material) offers a few resources:

- A free PDF practice test (1 practice test)
- The Official Guide book for the Revised GRE (practice questions and exam overviews as well as 1 practice test)
- A CD that comes with the book above (1 practice test)
- Free Powerprep II software (1 practice test)

The tests written by ETS are the best in terms of preparation. ETS creates the GRE you will see on test day, so it provides the best indicator of your score test day. However, some of the material on these tests overlap.

Here's a quick guide to keep track:

- Powerprep and the CD are identical, with 100% of the same material.
- The material on the PDF test is a subset of the material found on both Powerprep and the CD. That means you will see all of the questions on the PDF in Powerprep/CD material, but you won't see all of the Powerprep/CD material on the PDFs.
- Completely separate is the one practice test at the of the Official Guide book, which does not have any overlap with any other material.

Confusing, right? It's best to do as much practice as possible, so you shouldn't worry about overlapping material too much, but you should keep the above distinctions in mind because if you see a question that you've seen previously, you may get the correct answer not because you knew how to do it, but because your brain may just have remembered the answer from last time!

Mark the questions you get wrong

After figuring out your score, put a mark next the questions you missed. However, do not look at the answer. See if you can figure out why you got the question wrong. Sometimes this mistake can

be attributed to carelessness. Other times there is a conceptual issue. If you are still unsure look at the correct answer and then see if you can figure out *why* it is correct.

Figure out the question on your own

Looking at an explanation can be harmful in a few ways. First off, many explanations seem more confusing than the actual question. Secondly, by relying on an explanation, you do not force yourself to really think through a question.

With the ETS practice test, there are no explanations given. Again, this will force you to really think through a problem. Of course the reality is you will sometimes be stumped. If that happens…

Watch our video explanations

If you can't figure out a problem after trying to work it out on your own, check out our video explanations for each question in the PDF or the ones for the ETS Official Guide Book. Then, if it still doesn't make sense, leave us a comment on our blog. I will be sure to get back to you to help you figure it out.

Find questions similar to Powerprep II and the Official Guide

Practice tests allow you to determine your strengths and weaknesses. Focus on your weaknesses by finding practice problems that test the concept with which you are struggling. Manhattan GRE and Magoosh are both great resources.

Take the tests multiple times

The PDF file is static so you the questions will not change. The Powerprep II test, however, differs slightly so that you will see a few new questions when you retake the test. Either way, if you space out enough time between tests, you shouldn't remember too many questions. While the score will not be valid (it will probably be slightly inflated), taking an ETS test under timed conditions is the best way to prepare for test day.

Be sure to review questions, both mistakes and lucky guesses, the way enumerated above.

Other Tests

No mock test is the same as that provided by ETS. Still, it is important to remember that some are better than others. Manhattan GRE provides five practice tests, all of which have challenging content. Magoosh also allows you to create your own mock tests.

Kaplan tests, judging from their book content, are a poor approximation of the real test. Princeton Review also contains questions that are suspect, too easy, or both. And those tests you find on-

line…well, let's put it this way. I ventured to a site that offered mock "GRE tests." In the math section, almost every other question was a permutation/combination problem. On the actual test you may only get one such question. So much for a faithful approximation of the test.

Book Reviews

There isn't much out there (yet) in terms of Revised GRE material, but we've reviewed all of the recent prep material that's been released since the official GRE switch happened (in August of 2011). You'll be getting an expert's point of view on all of the following new GRE books:

- McGraw-Hill's New GRE: 2011-2012 Edition Grade: D-
- Kaplan New GRE Premier 2011-2012 Grade: D+
- Barron's New GRE 19th Edition Grade: B-
- Princeton Review: Cracking the New GRE 2012 Grade: C
- McGraw-Hill's Conquering the New GRE Math Grade: A-
- ETS's Official Guide to the GRE Revised General Test Grade: A+/C
- ETS's Old GRE Material:
  Practicing to Take the General Test 10th Edition (Big Book) Grade: C+/D-
- Manhattan GRE Grade: A
- Gruber's Complete GRE Guide 2012 Grade: C-
- Nova's GRE Prep Course Grade: B/F
- ETS's Official Guide to the GRE Revised General Test (2nd Edition) A+/C
- GRE for Dummies Premier 7th Edition F/C
- Manhattan 5 lb Book of GRE Practice Problems Review A
- Barron's 1100 A-
- Barron's GRE Verbal Workbook D-
- Barron's 6 GRE Practice Tests B-
- Manhattan GRE Flashcards A

You can find links to full reviews of all of the books above (and more!) at
http://magoosh.com/gre/new-gre-book-reviews/

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We give you everything you need to start studying today.

http://gre.magoosh.com/