

GMAT – Frequently Asked Questions

The GMAT is the exam preferred by top B-schools to gauge applicants' aptitude and your GMAT score plays a major role in determining whether your college application will be successful. The GMAT is scored on a scale of 800 and a score higher than 700 puts you firmly among the top 20% of test-takers all over the world. Percentiles are ranking systems, which means that if you score in the 90th percentile, then your score is better than 90% of test-takers.

My students are consistently among the top scorers and it gives me immense joy to know that I have played a part in writing their success story. There are various aspects about the GMAT exam that you should be aware of and I will try my best to give comprehensive answers to all your questions. So let us have a detailed discussion about the GMAT examination:

What is the GMAT exam?

GMAT stands for Graduate Management Admission Test. It is an exam taken by MBA aspirants all over the world and it is also popular among students who want to apply for a Master in Management degree, which is a popular management course for graduates with less than 3 years of work experience.

Which organization conducts the GMAT exam?

The GMAT is owned by an organization named GMAC (Graduate Management Admission Council).

What is the pattern of the GMAT exam?

The GMAT has four sections, viz. AWA (Analytical Writing Assessment), IR (Integrated Reasoning), Quantitative and Verbal sections. The exam lasts for a little over 3 hours and you have 2 optional breaks in between. It is highly advisable to take the breaks and refresh yourself for the next section of the exam. You will have to write a critical essay in the AWA section and the IR section tests your knowledge of both, verbal and mathematical concepts. You can attempt the sections in an order of your preference and you will be given three options to choose from at the beginning of the exam. They are:

<u>Option # 1</u>	<u>Option #2</u>	<u>Option #3</u>
Analytical Writing Assessment	Quantitative	Verbal
Integrated Reasoning		
Optional Break (8 minutes)		
Quantitative	Verbal	Quantitative
Optional Break (8 minutes)		
Verbal	Analytical Writing Assessment	Analytical Writing Assessment
	Integrated Reasoning	Integrated Reasoning

You will not be allowed to use a calculator during the exam, except for the IR section, where an on-screen calculator is available. Following is a break-up of the questions in the exam along with the time limit:

<u>Section</u>	<u>Questions</u>	<u>Time (minutes)</u>	<u>Estimated Time Per Question (minutes)</u>
Analytical Writing Assessment	1 Essay	30	30
Integrated Reasoning	12	30	2.5
Quantitative	31	62	2
Verbal	36	65	1.8

It is quite evident that the GMAT requires you to be quick while solving questions. On an average, you have 2 minutes solve a quant question and less than 2 minutes to solve a verbal question. Therefore, will you need to improve not only your mental mathematics, but also your ability to think out of the box.

How is the GMAT exam scored?

The GMAT is scored on a scale of 800 points. The lowest possible score is 200, while the highest possible score is 800. This means that if you get almost all of your answers wrong, then you end up with a score of 200. On the other hand, if you get almost all of your answers correct, then you may end up with a score close to 800. I am approximating the values because the GMAT is an adaptive exam and all the questions are not assigned equal weightage. 3 questions in your quant section and 6 questions in your verbal sections are experimental, which means that you will not be scored on those questions, but you have no way of knowing which questions they are. Therefore, you will be scored out of 28 questions on the quant section and out of 30 questions in the verbal section.

The AWA section is scored on a scale of 6 points in half-point increments, whereas the IR section is scored on a scale of 8 points in one-point increments. The Quant and Verbal sections are scored on a scale of 60 points each. The maximum you can score in either section is 51. A score of 51 in the quant section is considered rare and a score above 45 in the verbal section is also very rare. Subsequently, your scores are converted to a band of 800 points. In order to arrive at your GMAT band score, you can use the following approximation:

$$\text{Total Score} = (\text{Quant Score} + \text{Verbal Score}) * 8.25$$

Following is a break-up of the scoring system of the GMAT:

<u>Section</u>	<u>Min Score</u>	<u>Max Score</u>	<u>Scoring System</u>
Analytical Writing Assessment	0.0	6.0	In 0.5-point increments
Integrated Reasoning	1	8	In 1-point increments
Quantitative	6	51	In 1-point increments
Verbal	6	51	In 1-point increments

There is also a significant overlap in the number of questions you need to answer correctly to achieve particular scores. This is because the GMAT is an adaptive exam and each question you see depends on your answer to the previous question. This means that there is no fixed question-paper and the software throws questions at you based on your responses. Generally, there is a high penalty for getting easy answers wrong because you are expected to get those correct. On the other hand, if you get a difficult question wrong, the algorithm will give you a smaller penalty.

The first question is always of a moderate difficulty level. If you get it right, then the next question is tougher but it carries more marks. However, if you get it wrong, then the next question will be easier but it will carry fewer marks. Hence, you must answer questions correctly at the beginning of the section in order to unlock difficult questions and score high. If you get questions wrong at the beginning of the section, then the algorithm will penalize you heavily and ask you very easy questions, making it progressively difficult for you to reach difficult questions and get a high score. Following is a short illustration of the number of questions you need to answer correctly in order to achieve different scores:

Quantitative (out of the 28 scored questions)		Verbal (out of the 30 scored questions)	
Correct Answers	Score	Correct Answers	Score
26-28	51	26-28	45
22-27	50	24-25	44
20-24	49	24-25	43
19-23	48	23-24	42
17-22	47	22-23	41
17-21	46	21-22	40
17-20	45	20-21	39
17-19	44	19-20	38
17-18	43	18-19	37

How much do I need to score on the GMAT exam?

You should score above the 90th percentile if you are aiming to secure admission into top-tier universities for MBA or MiM programs. If you score above the 80th percentile, you will still have a good chance of securing admission into a recognized university abroad. Also bear in mind that your GMAT score is not the only parameter for the admissions committee to decide on your application. You may gain admission to a top-tier university even with a low GMAT score and you may even get rejected in spite of a high GMAT score if your profile does not match the expectations of the admissions committee. However, your GMAT score is a pretty strong indicator of the kind of universities you should apply to. Following are the scores you need to achieve on the GMAT for various percentile rankings:

Quantitative		Verbal		Overall	
Score	Percentile	Score	Percentile	Score	Percentile
51	97 th	45	99 th	760-800	99 th
50	86 th	44	98 th	750	98 th
49	81 st	43	97 th	740	97 th
48	76 th	42	96 th	730	96 th
47	70 th	41	93 rd	720	94 th
46	68 th	40	90 th	710	92 nd
45	66 th	39	88 th	700	89 th
44	61 st	38	84 th	690	87 th
43	58 th	37	82 nd	680	85 th
42	54 th	36	80 th	670	83 rd

For how long is the GMAT score valid?

Your GMAT score will remain valid for a period of 5 years from the date of your exam.

How many re-attempts are allowed for the GMAT exam?

You can take the GMAT a total number of 8 times, but you cannot take it more than 5 times in any 12-month period. Moreover, there must be a gap of at least 16 calendar days between any 2 attempts.

What are the documents that I need to carry with me for the exam?

The only document that you need to carry to the examination hall is your passport and a print-out of the e-mail confirmation of your exam slot sent to your registered e-mail ID by Pearson VUE. You must carry your ORIGINAL passport. This is very important because if you do not carry the original passport, the invigilators will not allow you to take the test and you will not be given any refund of the examination fee either.

Is the GMAT a computer-delivered test or a paper-delivered test?

The GMAT is a computer-delivered adaptive test and cannot be taken on paper.

How often is the GMAT exam conducted?

The GMAT is conducted multiple times a month throughout the year. You will have to check the available dates at a centre near you and book a date that is suitable for you.

How can I book the GMAT exam?

You can go to the official website of the GMAC and create an account for yourself. Thereafter, you can login to your account and book the GMAT exam. Be careful about the credentials you enter while creating your account and make sure that your name matches the name given in your passport. Since you will book the exam from your account, avoiding mismatch of name and other details will save you a lot of hassle in the future.

Where can I take the GMAT exam?

The GMAT is available at designated test centres of Pearson VUE in various cities across the world. You can find a centre near your location on the official GMAC website.

What is the exam fee?

The registration fee to take the GMAT exam is \$275 in USA and Canada; it is \$250 in other countries including India.

In how many days will I get the result?

The unofficial scores of your Quant, Verbal and IR sections are displayed on the computer-screen at the end of your test and your official score with your Quant, Verbal, AWA and IR scores becomes available within 20 calendar days after your GMAT exam.

For how long do I need to prepare for the GMAT exam?

It will take you around 3 months to prepare for the GMAT exam if you follow a proper study plan and dedicate 2-3 hours to study every day. If your work timings are hectic and you are not able to dedicate enough time to practice, then it may take longer depending on your study plan.

How do you train for the GMAT exam?

I will ask you to take a diagnostic mock-test before we start classes and I will help you prepare a study plan based on your current level of conceptual understanding. We will have classes 2-3 times a week depending on how well you are able to follow the study plan and how much time you are able to devote to solving questions on a daily basis. I will also monitor your progress based on bi-weekly mock-tests and give you feedback to strengthen your weak areas. Moreover, I will ask you probing questions to help you uncover your biases and assumptions, thereby increasing your timeliness and accuracy.

Where do you conduct classes for the GMAT exam?

I conduct online classes for the GMAT exam using platforms such as Skype, Google Hangouts, Zoom, etc.

What preparation material should I buy to study for the GMAT exam?

You can buy the Official Guide for the GMAT to practice questions and GMAT Club, which is a global forum for MBA aspirants, is a very good resource to practice difficult questions. Moreover, if you enrol for my GMAT classes, I will mail you preparation material that I have compiled after extensive research and we will use that material in class and for practicing questions. I will share links below for the Official Guides to the GMAT. New editions of the books are published annually. Manhattan Prep, Veritas Prep, Kaplan Test Prep and Experts' Global are excellent resources for taking mock-tests apart from the official mock-tests provided by GMAC.

I hope that I have answered most of your questions regarding the GMAT exam and that you have a good amount of clarity about the structure of the exam, how to prepare for it and where your score is applicable.