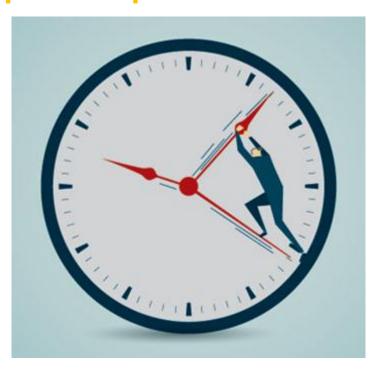# Time is ticking, manage yours well with these important tips for CAT 2019

How to manage time for CAT?

CAT is the most difficult exam in country to get into the topmost prestigious colleges (IIMs and other colleges among top 50) in the country. Every year, 2lac+ candidates take the exam to compete for 3200+ seats across all IIMs and other top-notch B-schools in India.

Being the most esteemed exam for MBA entrance, same is the level of preparation it demands. Not only preparation of topics and concepts is required but also level of mental preparation must be to the required extent. Be calm and composed with 100% concentration on the exam is the mantra to ACE the CAT.

Paper pattern & time allowed

To solve CAT and know tricks to ace the exam, one first need to know the paper pattern and time available & breakup of the questions.

CAT 2018 Exam Pattern

The CAT 2018 exam pattern will follow the CAT 2017, 2016, 2015 pattern. The test duration will be 180 minutes with 60 minutes allotted to each section. No movement will be allowed across sections. The order of sections will remain the same that is Verbal Ability and Reading Comprehension (VARC), Data Interpretation and Logical Reasoning (DILR), and Quantitative Aptitude (QA). The use of basic on-screen calculator is allowed.

CAT 2017 exam pattern is tabulated below for your ready reference:

Sr. No.	Section	MCQs	Non-MCQs	Total Questions	Total Marks	Time allotted for each section (in minutes)
1	Verbal Ability & Reading Comprehension (VARC)	24	10	34	102	60
2	Data Interpretation & Logical Reasoning (DI & LR)	24	8	32	96	60
3	Quantitative Ability (QA)	27	7	34	102	60
Total		**75**	**25**	**100**	**300**	**180**

Marking Scheme

Each correct answer to a question in the exam will carry 3 marks. For MCQ type questions, each incorrect attempt will lead to a negative marking of 1 mark. For non-MCQs or TITA (Type In The Answer) questions there will be no negative marking.

Some CAT FAQs

1. How to solve CAT question in a minute?

If we look at the paper pattern shown above, we can easily make out that in each section, each question has more than a minute on an average. So, there is no need to try and solve the question in less than a minute. It is similar to a case that if a biker needs to cover 50 kms in (say) 1 and half hour, there is no need for him to rush through the traffic. He can easily reach the destination even if he drives at a speed of 40 kms.

So, there is no hurry to solve the question in less than a minute. Read and understand the question first, try to solve it in your mind. If you feel confident enough to solve it, then only invest next minute to solve otherwise move forward and save negative marking. The minimum time to solve any CAT question depends upon the nature of the question, options therein, familiarity with the construct, ability to think/calculate/analyse fast and also luck to some extent. This minimum time may range from 15 seconds (for vocabulary-based questions, for example) to 3 minutes (for a tough Quant question). So, the objective should be to give deserved time for easy question and save time for difficult/confusing ones.

2. How to solve a question in the minimum possible time?

After reading answer for first question, next question comes to reader's mind is obvious one. To answer this question, one must clear their minds of some myths.

Myth 1:

Master all Short-cuts & you will do well at the CAT. Do all questions need short-cuts? The answer is NO. Short-cuts can be useful only for standard question formats. And the CAT is notorious for mostly having questions that do not resemble any standard format. Take any past CAT paper and you will find very few questions in each paper where questions are in a standard format and you can apply the corresponding short-cuts and save on some time. So, while knowing a few relevant short-cuts will always come handy and help you save time for a handful of questions – for most of the questions you do not have any standard short-cuts. In short, learn short-cuts but do not depend on them to do well in the CAT.

Myth 2:

Learn Vedic Maths and you will crack the CAT Quant & DI sections. Will Vedic Maths solve all your Quant & DI related problems? The answer is NO again. While a few techniques of Vedic Maths may come handy for some of the calculations in Data Interpretation – investing too much time learning Vedic Maths leaving other important topics will not be a very fruitful exercise from CAT perspective. However, having some short cuts under your sleeve is always helpful in saving time of lengthy calculations.

Myth 3:

Skim through the passages/questions if you want to do well in the Reading Comprehension section. **True, but NOT WHOLLY.** While it is important to read fast, it is more important that you comprehend the passage/question correctly. If you read so fast that you do not comprehend the passage correctly in your first attempt and need to go back to reading the passage again (and again) – you will only end up consuming more time for reading the same. So, the mantra is to read with as much pace as it is comfortable for you to successfully comprehend what you are reading in the first read itself.

- **you should be able to read and correctly comprehend the passage/set/questions asked** – and as fast as possible. As already explained, effective reading is a pre-requisite not only for the Reading Comprehension Questions – but also for Quant, DI, LR and Verbal Ability Questions. For example, correctly understanding a 4-5-line Math question in the first read can help you save time which can be used to solve question. Also, reading effectively "between the lines" will sometimes help you answer the question fast without having to really solve the question.
- **you should be familiar with the construct/concept/question type assessed** - To develop familiarity with constructs, you need to have a sound conceptual clarity – you should know all the formulae, the rules, the exceptions, the standard approaches to solve standard question types/questions and the short-cuts or quicker approaches wherever applicable and, this should be backed with a whole lot of purposeful practice with CAT LEVEL questions.
- **you should be able to eliminate options – wherever possible.** While solving questions, you need to keep an eye on options – learn to eliminate, know when to stop calculating, make intelligent guesses

whenever required. So, for example, if you know that the answer must be a multiple of 10 and there is only one option with "0" at the unit place then there is no need to solve the question completely– mark the option accordingly and save time. This thinking will only be developed after certain amount practice.

- **you should minimize use of pen & paper (and now the calculator) for basic calculations.** To minimize use of pen and paper, practice basic mental calculations like adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, factorizing, finding HCF/LCM, squares & cubes, working with fractions etc. With the advent of the on-screen calculator, you may be tempted to use it for every calculation that comes your way– but remember that use of the calculator without discretion will only mean you take more time than if you were to do certain calculations mentally.

- **And most importantly, you should have 100% focus and concentration while solving the question**. Learn to stay calm and composed while solving a question– you should be mentally alert, do not get distracted & keep calm in order to ensure that you do not waste time in re-reading the question, misinterpreting the question, making careless mistakes thereby needing to recalculate etc.

I am sure that if you work on each of the above aspects, you will be solving CAT questions as fast as you can– and maybe faster than most other CAT-takers. Do not worry too much about learning short-cuts or mastering Vedic Maths. Focus on improving your conceptual clarity and level of thinking, practice with a whole lot of CAT-level questions and work on your test-taking skills.