

Test-Taking Strategies for the Computer-Based General Test

- **Become familiar with the test before test day.** It is always best to know as much as possible about what to expect before you arrive at the test center. Read on to learn about the purpose of the test, the content of the questions, test day procedures, and test preparation strategies and materials.
- **Once you know what to expect on the test, it's time to practice.**

Analytical Writing Section

Writing tasks will be delivered on the computer, and you must type your responses.

Issue Task

The Issue task gives you considerable latitude in the way you respond to the claim made about a given issue. Practice writing responses on several of the topics, keeping to the 45-minute time limit.

What does the statement mean? What does it imply? What, precisely, is the central issue?

- Do I agree with all or with any part of the statement? Why or why not?
- Is the statement valid only in certain circumstances?
- Do I need to explain how I interpret certain terms or concepts used in the statement?
- If I take a certain position on the issue, what reasons support my position?
- What examples — either hypothetical or drawn from my readings or direct experiences — could I use to illustrate those reasons and advance my point of view? Which examples are most compelling?
- What reasons might someone use to refute or undermine my position? How should I acknowledge or defend against those views?

Argument Task

Because the Argument task is constrained by the line of reasoning in the argument presented to you, read and analyze the argument carefully. Practice writing responses to several of the topics within the 30-minute time limit.

What claims, conclusions, and underlying assumptions does the argument make?

- What alternative explanations and counterexamples can I think of?
- What additional evidence might weaken or strengthen the claims?
- What changes in the argument would make the reasoning more sound?

Verbal and Quantitative Sections

- **Practice test questions under timed conditions so that you get used to the pace of the test.** For example, if there are 30 questions in a section and you have a total of 30 minutes to complete the section, give yourself an average of 1 minute to complete each question. When you are practicing, keep time in mind and remember that **if you spend too much time on one question, you will have less time to spend on others.**
- **Use the computer tutorial.** The tutorial is included in the GRE POWERPREP software that will be sent to you upon registration. The tutorial will let you try out the **functions** of the computer (e.g., the mouse, the scroll bar) used during the test.
- When you arrive at the test center, you will have the opportunity to complete an untimed computer tutorial before the actual test begins. You can spend **up to 30 minutes** on the tutorial and other untimed sections to become familiar and comfortable with the computer **before** starting the timed sections of the test.
- Once the test is under way, you can always click on "Help" to review the directions or a summary of the tutorial again, but be aware that **this will count against the allotted time** for that section of the test.

- Some questions, graphs, or passages are too large to appear completely on the computer screen. In these cases a 'scroll bar' appears to the right of the material and the word 'Beginning' appears on the information line at the top of the screen. These are cues to scroll for more information.

Pace yourself throughout the test – You want to finish!

- Use the **resources** available for test practicing (test preparation books, software) to become familiar with the test and test instructions **before** you get to the test center.
- Read the **directions** carefully before you begin. The directions at the beginning of each test section give the total number of questions in that section as well as total time allotted for that section.
- **Budget enough time for each question** to be able to complete the test without having to rush at the end of each section. Keep in mind the average amount of time to spend per question.
- Once you start the test, an **on-screen** clock display will continuously count down the remaining time. You can hide this display if you want, but it is a good idea to check the clock periodically to monitor your progress. The clock will automatically alert you when **5 minutes** remain in the allotted time for that section.
- **Use your time wisely.** Read each question carefully to determine exactly what is being asked. Eliminate the wrong answers and select the best choice. Don't get stuck on a tough question and lose time. **Keep moving** through the test and try to finish each section.
- You may want to use the one-minute break between test sections to replenish your supply of scratch paper. After the Analytical Writing section, an on-screen message indicates a 10-minute break is available. Section timing does not stop for unscheduled breaks.

Know the rules.

- **Computer-adaptive tests require that you answer every question in the order it is presented.** You can't **skip** a question and go back. The computer selects the next question from a large pool of available questions based upon your previous responses.
- **Click on the appropriate answer.** Answer each question by clicking on the oval next to the answer choice or by clicking on any part of the text of that answer choice. Complete the answer by clicking on "Next" and then "Answer Confirm." You can change an answer any time before confirming it by clicking on a different answer choice.
- **Understand the implications of exiting a section or quitting the test.** Once you exit a section, you cannot return to it. Click on the "Test Quit" box at the bottom of the screen only to end the testing session. If you quit the test, you will not receive a score for any section, even for sections already completed. If you click on "Section Exit" or "Test Quit" by mistake, you will be given the opportunity to reverse or confirm that decision.
- You may take the computer-based General Test once per calendar month up to 5 times in a 12-month period. This applies even if you ended the testing session by clicking on "Test Quit" or canceled your scores after completing the test.

Understand how the test is scored.

- **Computer-adaptive tests are scored differently than most paper and pencil tests.** The score on the computer-adaptive test depends on a combination of such factors as
 - the **number** of questions answered within the allotted time
 - **performance** on questions answered throughout the test
 - the **statistical characteristics** (including difficulty level) of questions answered throughout the test.

Don't panic if you don't know an answer.

- **Don't spend too much time on any one question.** The last thing you want to do is waste a lot of valuable time on any one question. If, after a reasonable amount of thought, you don't know the answer, **eliminate** as many answer choices as possible and then select and confirm the best answer. Keep going and aim to complete the test.
- **If you are running out of time at the end of a section, make every effort to complete the test.** Data indicate that most test takers get higher scores if they **finish** the test.