

**1.0 What Is the GMAT® Exam?**

## 1.0 What Is the GMAT® Exam?

The Graduate Management Admission Test® (GMAT®) exam is a standardized exam used in admissions decisions by more than 5,200 graduate management programs worldwide. It helps you gauge, and demonstrate to schools, your academic potential for success in graduate level management studies.

The four-part exam measures your Analytical Writing, Verbal, Quantitative, and Integrated Reasoning skills—higher-order reasoning skills that management faculty worldwide have identified as important for incoming students to have. Unlike undergraduate grades and curricula, which vary in their meaning across regions and institutions, your GMAT scores provide a standardized, statistically reliable measure of how you are likely to perform academically in the core curriculum of a graduate management program. The GMAT exam's validity, appropriateness, and value in admissions have been well-established through numerous academic studies.

The GMAT exam is delivered entirely in English and solely on computer. It is not a test of business knowledge, subject matter mastery, English vocabulary, or advanced computational skills. The GMAT exam also does not measure other factors related to success in graduate management study, such as job experience, leadership ability, motivation, and interpersonal skills. Your GMAT score is intended to be used as one admissions criterion among other, more subjective, criteria, such as admissions essays and interviews.

## 1.1 Why Take the GMAT® Exam?

Launched in 1954 by a group of nine business schools to provide a uniform measure of the academic skills needed to succeed in their programs, the GMAT exam is now used by more than 5,200 graduate management programs at approximately 1,900 institutions worldwide.

Using GMAT scores helps institutions select the most qualified applicants and ensure that the applicants they admit are up to the academic rigors of their programs. When you consider which programs to apply to, you can look at a school's use of the GMAT exam as one indicator of quality. Schools that use the GMAT exam typically list score ranges or average scores in their class profiles, so you may also find these profiles helpful in gauging the academic competitiveness of a program you are considering and how well your performance on the exam compares with that of the students enrolled in the program.

No matter how well you perform on the GMAT exam, you should contact the schools that interest you to learn more about them and to ask how they use GMAT scores and other criteria (such as your undergraduate grades, essays, and letters of recommendation) in their admissions processes. School admissions offices, web sites, and materials

### *Myth* -vs- **FACT**

**M** – If I don't score in the 90th percentile, I won't get into any school I choose.

**F** – Very few people get very high scores.

Fewer than 50 of the more than 200,000 people taking the GMAT exam each year get a perfect score of 800. Thus, while you may be exceptionally capable, the odds are against your achieving a perfect score. Also, the GMAT exam is just one piece of your application packet. Admissions officers use GMAT scores in conjunction with undergraduate records, application essays, interviews, letters of recommendation, and other information when deciding whom to accept into their programs.

published by schools are the primary sources of information when you are doing research about where you might want to go to business school.

For more information on the GMAT exam, test registration, appropriate uses of GMAT scores, sending your scores to schools, and applying to business school, please visit our web site at [mba.com](http://mba.com).

## 1.2 GMAT® Exam Format

The GMAT exam consists of four separately timed sections (see the table on the next page). The test starts with one Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA) essay prompt, and you will have 30 minutes to type your essay on a computer keyboard. The AWA is followed immediately by the 30-minute Integrated Reasoning section, which features 12 question prompts in four different question formats. The test ends with two 75-minute, multiple-choice sections: the Quantitative section, with 37 questions, and the Verbal section, with 41.

The Verbal and Quantitative sections of the GMAT exam are computer adaptive, which means that the test draws from a large bank of questions to tailor itself to your ability level, and you won't get many questions that are much too hard or too easy for you. The first question will be of medium difficulty. As you answer each question, the computer scores your answer and uses it—as well as your responses to any preceding questions—to select the next question.

Computer-adaptive tests become more difficult the more questions you answer correctly, but if you get a question that seems easier than the last one, it does not necessarily mean you answered the last question incorrectly. The test has to cover a range of content, both in the type of question asked and the subject matter presented.

Because the computer uses your answers to select your next questions, you may not skip questions or go back and change your answer to a previous question. If you don't know the answer to a question, try to eliminate as many choices as possible, then select the answer you think is best. If you answer a question incorrectly by mistake—or correctly by lucky guess—your answers to subsequent questions will lead you back to questions that are at the appropriate skill level for you.

Though the individual questions are different, the content mixture is the same for every GMAT exam. Your score is determined by the difficulty and statistical characteristics of the questions you answer as well as the number of questions you answer correctly. By adapting to each test-taker, the GMAT exam is able to accurately and efficiently gauge skill levels over a full range of abilities, from very high to very low.

*Myth* -vs- **FACT**

**M** – Getting an easier question means I answered the last one wrong.

**F** – Getting an easier question does not necessarily mean you got the previous question wrong.

To ensure that everyone receives the same content, the test selects a specific number of questions of each type. The test may call for your next question to be a relatively difficult problem-solving item involving arithmetic operations. But, if there are no more relatively difficult problem-solving items involving arithmetic, you might be given an easier item.

Most people are not skilled at estimating item difficulty, so don't worry when taking the test or waste valuable time trying to determine the difficulty of the questions you are answering.

The test includes the types of questions found in this book and in the online Integrated Reasoning component, but the format and presentation of the questions are different on the computer. When you take the test:

- Only one question or question prompt at a time is presented on the computer screen.
- The answer choices for the multiple-choice questions will be preceded by circles, rather than by letters.
- Different question types appear in random order in the multiple-choice and Integrated Reasoning sections of the test.
- You must select your answer using the computer.
- You must choose an answer and confirm your choice before moving on to the next question.
- You may not go back to previous screens to change answers to previous questions.

Format of the GMAT® Exam		
	Questions	Timing
Analytical Writing Analysis of an Argument	1	30 min.
Integrated Reasoning Multi-Source Reasoning Table Analysis Graphics Interpretation Two-Part Analysis	12	30 min.
Optional break		
Quantitative Problem Solving Data Sufficiency	37	75 min.
Optional break		
Verbal Reading Comprehension Critical Reasoning Sentence Correction	41	75 min.
Total Time:		210 min.

## 1.3 What Is the Content of the Test Like?

The GMAT exam measures higher-order analytical skills encompassing several types of reasoning. The Analytical Writing Assessment asks you to analyze the reasoning behind an argument and respond in writing; the Integrated Reasoning section asks you to interpret and synthesize information from multiple sources and in different formats to make reasoned conclusions; the Quantitative section asks you to reason quantitatively using basic arithmetic, algebra, and geometry;

and the Verbal section asks you to read and comprehend written material and to reason and evaluate arguments.

Test questions may address a variety of subjects, but all of the information you need to answer the questions will be included on the exam, with no outside knowledge of the subject matter necessary. The GMAT exam is not a test of business knowledge, English vocabulary, or advanced computational skills. You will need to read and write in English and have basic math and English skills to perform well on the test, but its difficulty comes from the required analytical abilities, which are developed over time.

The questions in this book are organized by question type and from easiest to most difficult, but keep in mind that when you take the test, you may see different types of questions in any order within each section.

## 1.4 Integrated Reasoning Section

The Integrated Reasoning section measures your ability to understand and evaluate multiple sources and types of information—graphic, numeric, and verbal—as they relate to one another; use both quantitative and verbal reasoning to solve complex problems; and solve multiple problems in relation to one another.

Four types of questions are used in the Integrated Reasoning section:

- Multi-Source Reasoning
- Table Analysis
- Graphics Interpretation
- Two-Part Analysis

Integrated Reasoning questions may be quantitative, verbal, or a combination of both. You will have to interpret graphics and sort tables to extract meaning from data, but advanced statistical knowledge and spreadsheet manipulation skills are not necessary. You will have access to an online calculator with basic functions for the Integrated Reasoning section, but note that the calculator is *not* available on the Quantitative section.

To review the Integrated Reasoning question types and test-taking tips, see chapter 10. For practice questions of each format, with full answer explanations, please visit the Integrated Reasoning online component using your unique access code found in the back of this book.

## 1.5 Quantitative Section

The GMAT Quantitative section measures your ability to reason quantitatively, solve quantitative problems, and interpret graphic data.

Two types of multiple-choice questions are used in the Quantitative section:

- Problem Solving
- Data Sufficiency

Both are intermingled throughout the Quantitative section, and both require basic knowledge of arithmetic, elementary algebra, and commonly known concepts of geometry.

To review the basic mathematical concepts that you will need to answer Quantitative questions, see the math review in chapter 4. For test-taking tips specific to the question types in the Quantitative section, practice questions, and answer explanations, see chapters 5 and 6.

## 1.6 Verbal Section

The GMAT Verbal section measures your ability to read and comprehend written material, and to reason and evaluate arguments. The Verbal section includes reading sections from several different content areas. Although you may be generally familiar with some of the material, neither the reading passages nor the questions assume detailed knowledge of the topics discussed.

Three types of multiple-choice questions are intermingled throughout the Verbal section:

- Reading Comprehension
- Critical Reasoning
- Sentence Correction

All three require basic knowledge of the English language, but the Verbal section is not a test of advanced vocabulary.

For test-taking tips specific to each question type in the Verbal section, practice questions, and answer explanations, see chapters 7 through 9.

## 1.7 Analytical Writing Assessment

The Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA) consists of one 30-minute writing task: Analysis of an Argument. The AWA measures your ability to think critically, communicate your ideas, and formulate an appropriate and constructive critique. You will type your essay on a computer keyboard.

For test-taking tips, sample essay responses, answer explanations, and sample Analysis of an Argument topics, see chapter 11.

## 1.8 What Computer Skills Will I Need?

The GMAT exam requires only minimal computer skills. You will type your AWA essay on the computer keyboard using standard word-processing keystrokes. In the Integrated Reasoning and multiple-choice sections, you select your responses using either your computer mouse or the keyboard. The Integrated Reasoning section includes basic computer navigation and functions, such as clicking on tabs and using drop-down menus to sort tables and select answers.

To learn more about the specific skills required to take the GMAT exam, download GMATPrep® software, the free test-preparation software from [mba.com/gmatprep](http://mba.com/gmatprep).

## 1.9 What Are the Test Centers Like?

The GMAT exam is administered under standardized conditions at test centers worldwide. Each test center has a proctored testing room with individual computer workstations that allow you to sit for the exam under quiet conditions and with some privacy. You will be able to take two optional breaks—one after completing the Integrated Reasoning section and another between the Quantitative and Verbal sections. You may not take notes or scratch paper with you into the testing room, but an erasable notepad and marker will be provided for you to use during the test.

## 1.10 How Are Scores Calculated?

Verbal and Quantitative sections are scored on a scale of 0 to 60, with scores below 6 or above 51 extremely rare. The Total GMAT score ranges from 200 to 800 and is based on your performance in these two sections. Your score is determined by:

- The number of questions you answer
- The number of questions you answer correctly or incorrectly
- The level of difficulty and other statistical characteristics of each question

Your Verbal, Quantitative, and Total GMAT scores are determined by a complex mathematical procedure that takes into account the difficulty of the questions that were presented to you and how you answered them. When you answer the easier questions correctly, you get a chance to answer harder questions, making it possible to earn a higher score. After you have completed all the questions on the test, or when your time is expired, the computer will calculate your scores. Your scores on the Verbal and Quantitative sections are combined to produce your Total score.

The Analytical Writing Assessment consists of one writing task, Analysis of an Argument, and your essay will be scored two times independently. Essays are evaluated by college and university faculty members from a variety of disciplines, including management education, who rate the overall quality of your critical thinking and writing. (For details on how readers are qualified, visit [mba.com](http://mba.com).) In addition, your response may be scored by an automated scoring program designed to reflect the judgment of expert readers.

Your essay is scored on a scale of 0 to 6, with 6 being the highest score and 0 the lowest. A score of zero is given for responses that are off-topic, are in a foreign language, merely attempt to copy the topic, consist only of keystroke characters, or are blank. Your AWA score is typically the average of two independent ratings. If the independent scores vary by more than a point, a third reader adjudicates, but because of ongoing training and monitoring, discrepancies are rare.

Your Analytical Writing Assessment and Integrated Reasoning scores are computed and reported separately from the other sections of the test and have no effect on your Verbal, Quantitative, or Total scores. The schools that you have designated to receive your scores may receive a copy of your Analytical Writing Assessment essay with your score report. Your own copy of your score report will not include your essay.

Like your AWA score, your Integrated Reasoning score will not count toward your Total score. A score scale for Integrated Reasoning will be available by April 2012 on [mba.com](http://mba.com).

Appendix A contains the 2011 percentile ranking tables that explain the distribution of GMAT scaled scores across all GMAT tests-takers during the period beginning July 2008 and ending June 2011. These ranking tables do not include Integrated Reasoning scores.

## 1.11 Test Development Process

The GMAT exam is developed by experts who use standardized procedures to ensure high-quality, widely appropriate test material. All questions are subjected to independent reviews and are revised or discarded as necessary. Multiple-choice questions are tested during GMAT exam administrations. Analytical Writing Assessment tasks are tested on [mba.com](http://mba.com) registrants and then assessed for their fairness and reliability. For more information on test development, see [mba.com](http://mba.com).

<http://www.pbookshop.com>