

The Graduate Record Exam



HOW TO STUDY & WHAT TO EXPECT

Ingrid Galfi, Saeid Chavoshi, Holly Clayton

What is the GRE?



- A computerized, standardized test designed to assess “readiness” for graduate school.
- GRE scores are often required as part of your graduate application, but may also be used to apply for external grants or financial aid.
- Not every school requires that the GRE be written in order to apply. Check program websites.

Which test should I write?



General test

- Assesses general skills necessary for graduate studies.
- Applies to most subject areas.
- Assesses your ability to read complex information, knowledge of high-level vocabulary, mathematical problem-solving abilities, and writing skills.
- Offered year round.
- Always check program requirements

Subject Test

- Tests fundamental knowledge in a particular subject area.
- Must have extensive background in subject area.
- Biochemistry, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, English Literature, Mathematics, Physics & Psychology.
- Only offered in Oct., Nov. & Apr.
- Always check program requirements.

Standardized Testing



- Since the GRE is a standardized test, it is very predictable. The same concepts are tested on all exams. Scores are reliable & form a bell-curve.
- Think of the test like a game, and “train” yourself to be successful .
- Most of the skills necessary to do well on the GRE are acquired ; giving yourself enough practice time is **imperative** to your success!
- The same problems will appear on the GRE year after year, only the words and numbers are changed.



How the GRE is organized

The GRE is done on a computer. There are 3 scored sections, as shown here.

Your test *may* contain an additional, experimental section (to test out new questions) in either the verbal or quantitative domain. Your test center may not tell you which section this is, so treat all parts of the test as real and scored.



Verbal

60 minutes, Approx. 40 multiple choice questions.

Quantitative

70 minutes, Approx. 40 multiple choice questions.

Analytical Writing

60 minutes, 2 short essays.

The GRE as a Computer-Adaptive Test



A computer-adaptive test is a computer-based test taken at a test center, at a time you schedule.

- Questions are presented within sections. You can go back within a section, however you cannot go back between sections.
- Question difficulty increases when the previous section has been answered mostly correctly; when the previous section was mostly incorrect, difficulty decreases.
- Do not think about whether the problems are becoming more difficult during the exam as this will only distract you.
- There is a timer in the test window which you may hide if it bothers you. However, be aware of the time, because when it is up the computer immediately starts the next section.

Scoring

Verbal
130-170

Quantitative
130-170

Analytical
Writing
0-6

- You receive a scaled score, as shown on the left.
- You also receive a percentile ranking.
- Be aware that a high score may not always translate into a high percentile rank.
- Find out what scores/rankings the school(s) you are interested in require.

Registering for the GRE



- Every school has different application deadlines, so be aware of these before you register for the GRE.
- The GRE is (usually) only part of your complete application package. Make sure you've left enough time to complete the other portions, too.
- www.gre.org to register online.
- **1-800-GRE-CALL** to register by phone.
- It costs \$190.
- It is \$50 to re-schedule or change test locations.

For Those Who Have Taken Old Version...



Modified Versions of Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning Questions

- The test you take may include questions that are modified versions of published questions or of questions you have already seen on the test. Some modifications are substantial; others are less apparent.
- Even if a question appears to be similar to a question you have already seen, it may in fact be different and have a different answer. Pay careful attention to the wording of each question.

Verbal Section



QUESTION TYPES & EXAMPLES

Important Revisions & New Focus

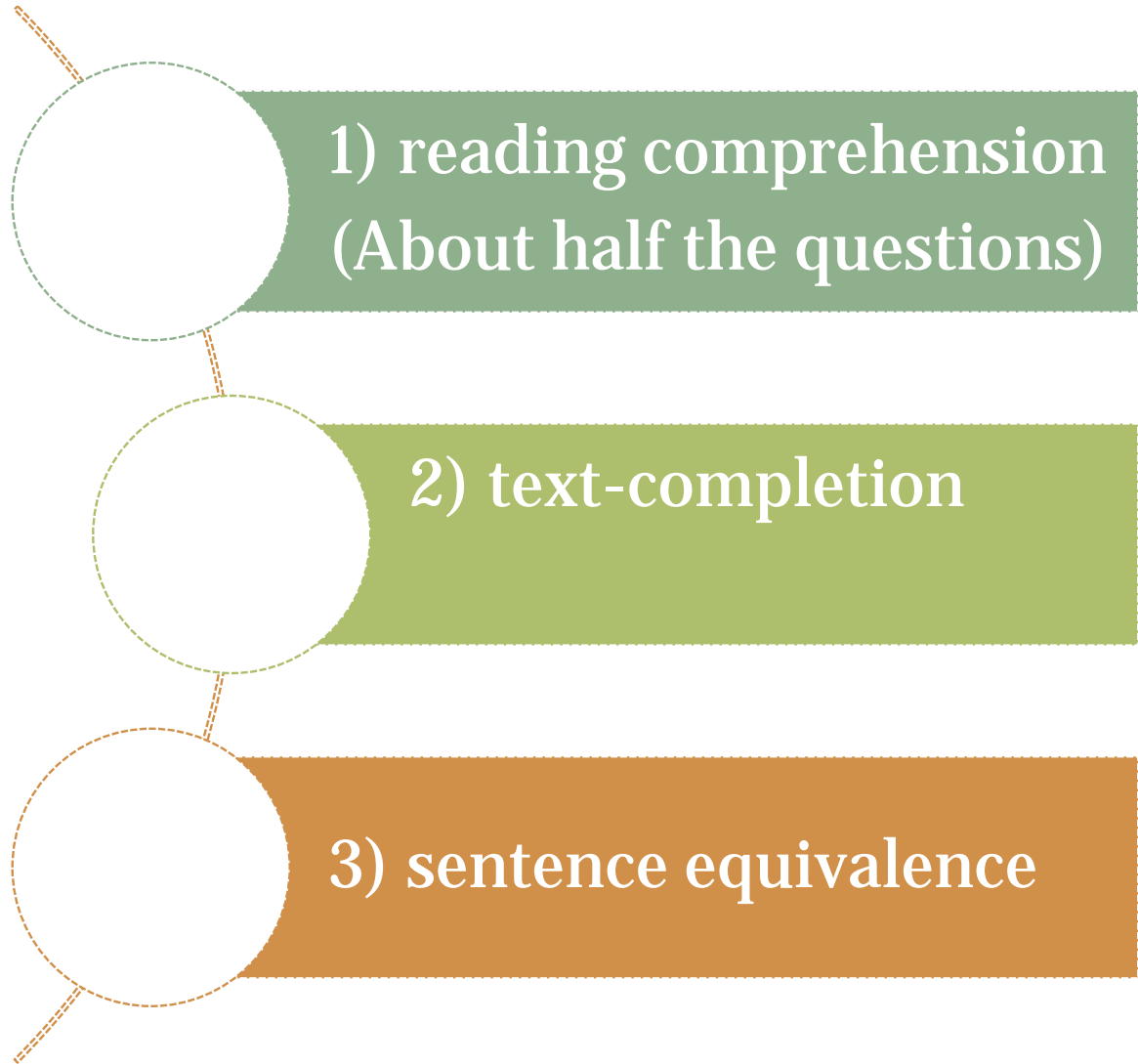


- **NO ANTONYMS, ANALOGIES**
- **GREATER FOCUS ON COMPREHENSION;
MEANING; REASONING**



Verbal Section

- 60 minutes, 40 questions.
- Emphasis on reading comprehension.
- Vocab & general knowledge by way of sentence completion, reading comprehension.



Reading Comprehension-

Passage example



REVIVING THE PRACTICE OF USING ELEMENTS OF POPULAR MUSIC IN CLASSICAL COMPOSITION, AN APPROACH THAT HAD BEEN IN HIBERNATION IN THE UNITED STATES DURING THE 1960S, COMPOSER PHILIP GLASS (BORN 1937) EMBRACED THE ETHOS OF POPULAR MUSIC WITHOUT IMITATING IT. GLASS BASED TWO SYMPHONIES ON MUSIC BY ROCK MUSICIANS DAVID BOWIE AND BRIAN ENO, BUT THE SYMPHONIES' SOUND IS DISTINCTIVELY HIS. POPULAR ELEMENTS DO NOT APPEAR OUT OF PLACE IN GLASS'S CLASSICAL MUSIC, WHICH FROM ITS EARLY DAYS HAS SHARED CERTAIN HARMONIES AND RHYTHMS WITH ROCK MUSIC. YET THIS USE OF POPULAR ELEMENTS HAS NOT MADE GLASS A COMPOSER OF POPULAR MUSIC. HIS MUSIC IS NOT A VERSION OF POPULAR MUSIC PACKAGED TO ATTRACT CLASSICAL LISTENERS; IT IS HIGH ART FOR LISTENERS STEEPED IN ROCK RATHER THAN THE CLASSICS.

Reading Comprehension- example (cont'd)



1.) SELECT ONLY ONE ANSWER CHOICE.

THE PASSAGE ADDRESSES WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ISSUES RELATED TO GLASS'S USE OF POPULAR ELEMENTS IN HIS CLASSICAL COMPOSITIONS?

How it is regarded by listeners who prefer rock to the classics

How it has affected the commercial success of Glass's music

Whether it has contributed to a revival of interest among other composers in using popular elements in their compositions

Whether it has had a detrimental effect on Glass's reputation as a composer of classical music

Whether it has caused certain of Glass's works to be derivative in quality

2.) CONSIDER EACH OF THE THREE CHOICES SEPARATELY AND SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

THE PASSAGE SUGGESTS THAT GLASS'S WORK DISPLAYS WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING QUALITIES?

A return to the use of popular music in classical compositions

An attempt to elevate rock music to an artistic status more closely approximating that of classical music

A long-standing tendency to incorporate elements from two apparently disparate musical styles

3. SELECT THE SENTENCE THAT DISTINGUISHES TWO WAYS OF INTEGRATING ROCK AND CLASSICAL MUSIC.

Text Completion



- 1. PASSAGE COMPOSED OF ONE TO FIVE SENTENCES**
- 2. ONE TO THREE BLANKS**
- 3. THREE ANSWER CHOICES PER BLANK (FIVE ANSWER CHOICES IN THE CASE OF A SINGLE BLANK)**
- 4. THE ANSWER CHOICES FOR DIFFERENT BLANKS FUNCTION INDEPENDENTLY; I.E., SELECTING ONE ANSWER CHOICE FOR ONE BLANK DOES NOT AFFECT WHAT ANSWER CHOICES YOU CAN SELECT FOR ANOTHER BLANK**

Text Completion- example



- It is refreshing to read a book about our planet by an author who does not allow facts to be (i) _____ by politics: well aware of the political disputes about the effects of human activities on climate and biodiversity, this author does not permit them to (ii) _____ his comprehensive description of what we know about our biosphere. He emphasizes the enormous gaps in our knowledge, the sparseness of our observations, and the (iii) _____, calling attention to the many aspects of planetary evolution that must be better understood before we can accurately diagnose the condition of our planet.

Blank (i)

(A) overshadowed

(B) invalidated

(C) illuminated

Blank (ii)

(D) enhance

(E) obscure

(F) underscore

Blank (iii)

(G) plausibility of our hypotheses

(H) certainty of our entitlement

(I) superficiality of our theories

Sentence Equivalence



-LIKE TEXT COMPLETION QUESTIONS, SENTENCE EQUIVALENCE QUESTIONS TEST THE ABILITY TO REACH A CONCLUSION ABOUT HOW A PASSAGE SHOULD BE COMPLETED ON THE BASIS OF PARTIAL INFORMATION, -

-BUT TO A GREATER EXTENT THEY FOCUS ON THE MEANING OF THE COMPLETED WHOLE.

Sentence Equivalence- example



1. SELECT THE *TWO* ANSWER CHOICES THAT, WHEN USED TO COMPLETE THE SENTENCE, FIT THE MEANING OF THE SENTENCE AS A WHOLE AND PRODUCE COMPLETED SENTENCES THAT ARE ALIKE IN MEANING.

ALTHOUGH IT DOES CONTAIN SOME PIONEERING IDEAS, ONE WOULD HARDLY CHARACTERIZE THE WORK AS

-----•

- a. orthodox
- b. eccentric
- c. original
- d. trifling
- e. conventional
- f. innovative

Sentence Equivalence-

TIPS FOR ANSWERING



DO NOT SIMPLY LOOK AMONG THE ANSWER CHOICES FOR TWO WORDS THAT MEAN THE SAME THING. THIS CAN BE MISLEADING FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST, THE ANSWER CHOICES MAY CONTAIN PAIRS OF WORDS THAT MEAN THE SAME THING BUT DO NOT FIT COHERENTLY INTO THE SENTENCE.

SECOND, THE PAIR OF WORDS THAT DO CONSTITUTE THE CORRECT ANSWER MAY NOT MEAN EXACTLY THE SAME THING, SINCE ALL THAT MATTERS IS THAT THE RESULTANT SENTENCES MEAN THE SAME THING.

Quantitative Section



QUESTION TYPES & EXAMPLES

Revisions & New Focus

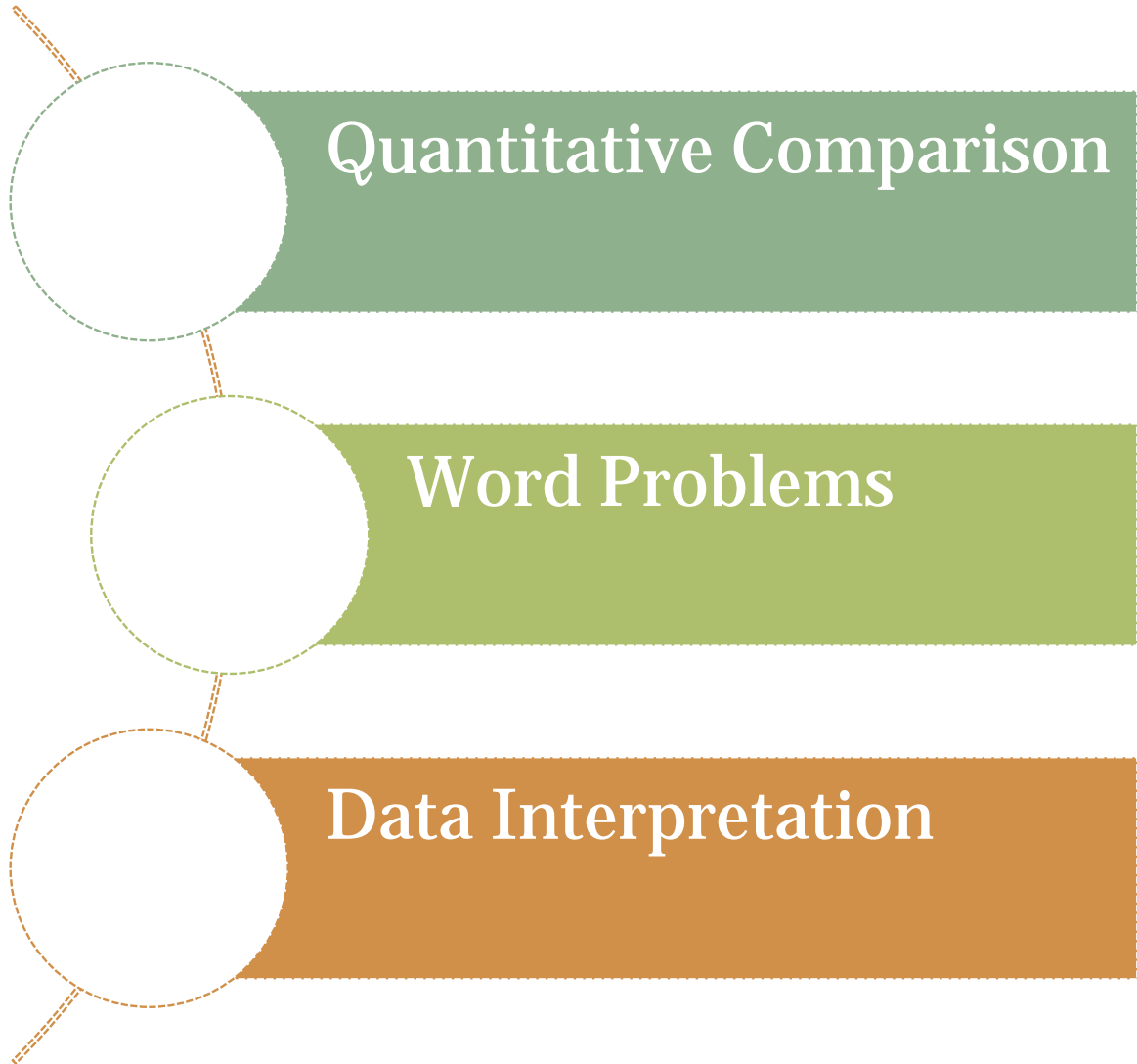


- **LESS EMPHASIS ON CALCULATION AND MORE ON THE INTERPRETATION OF DATA**
- **GREATER EMPHASIS ON DATA PROBLEMS INVOLVING DATA SETS AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DATA SETS**



Quantitative Section

- 70 minutes, 40 questions.
- *Some Q's will be multiple choice, some will be text entry
- You are now allowed a calculator.
- You are provided with a couple of sheets of blank paper for the ENTIRE test. Use them wisely.
- Diagrams are not drawn to scale unless noted.





Quantitative Section:

Topics

- *Arithmetic*
- *Algebra*
- *Geometry*
- *Data analysis*
 - high school mathematics and statistics
 - Math review document found at:
http://www.ets.org/s/gre/pdf/gre_math_review.pdf

Quantitative Comparisons – Which is greater?



Column A

• $2x$

Column B

• $3x$

Quantitative Comparisons



Tips

- You are not solving, you are comparing the values in both columns.
- Choice D is **never** correct if both columns contain ONLY numbers.
- Choice D is **always** correct if you can find more than one relationship between the columns.

Answer choices (MEMORIZE THEM)

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

* Always have the same answer choices

Quantitative Comparison - Example



Column A: $2x$

- If x is a negative number, this column is greater.
- If $x = 0$, the columns are equal.

Column B: $3x$

- If x is a positive number, this column is greater.
- **The choice is D, since more than one relationship is possible.**

Analytical Writing Section



THE ISSUE ESSAY (30MINS)
THE ARGUMENT ESSAY (30MINS)

**-QUESTION PROMPT WILL TELL YOU WHAT
TO FOCUS YOUR ANSWER ON**

Writing Strategies for the GRE



- 1) Maintain a well-focused, coherent discussion.
- 2) You must show proper control of language, including grammar, word choice and sentence structure.
- 3) Keep things simple and straightforward. Using fancy words that you learned in the verbal section will not gain you any extra marks, especially if used incorrectly.
- 4) Minor grammatical errors will not dramatically decrease your score, you are writing a “rough draft”.
- 5) The main goal is show that you can clearly and concisely construct, as well as analyse, argumentative essays.
- 6) Make sure that all points are supported with evidence.
- 7) Include strong introductions and conclusions. Structure is incredibly important!

Questions?



- Reach Saeid, 2012 Thesis Coordinator at:
- Chavoshi<at> yorku (dot) ca