

The Paper-based GRE revised General Test

Typical Test Structure

Measure	Number of Questions	Allotted Time
Analytical Writing (Two sections)	Section One: “Analyze an Issue” task	30 minutes
	Section Two: “Analyze an Argument” task	30 minutes
Verbal Reasoning	Section One: 20 questions	30 minutes
	Section One: 20 questions	30 minutes
Quantitative Reasoning	Section One: 20 questions	35 minutes
	Section One: 20 questions	35 minutes

NOTE:

- ✓ The Analytical Writing sections will always be first, while the other four sections may appear in any order.
- ✓ Total testing time is approximately 3 hours and 30 minutes. The directions at the beginning of each section specify the total number of questions in the section and the time allowed for the section.

Description of Test Components

I. Analytical Writing

1. Task One: Analyze an Issue Task

Understanding the Issue Task

The Analyze an Issue task assesses your ability to think critically about a topic of general interest according to specific instructions and to clearly express your thoughts about it in writing. Each issue topic makes a claim that test takers can discuss from various perspectives and apply to many different situations or conditions. The issue statement is followed by specific instructions. Your task is to present a compelling case for your own position on the issue according to the specific instructions. Before beginning your written response, be sure to read the issue and instructions carefully and think about the issue from several points of view, considering the complexity of ideas associated with those views. Then, make notes about the position you want to develop and list the main reasons and examples that you could use to support that position.

NOTE:

The GRE readers scoring your response are not looking for a “right” answer — in fact, there is no correct position to take. Instead, the readers are evaluating the skill with which you address the specific instructions and articulate and develop an argument to support your evaluation of the issue.

Sample Issue Task

As people rely more and more on technology to solve problems, the ability of humans to think for themselves will surely deteriorate.

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement and explain your reasoning for the position you take. In developing and supporting your position, you should consider ways in which the statement might or might not hold true and explain how these considerations shape your position.

I. Analytical Writing

2. Task One: Analyze an Argument

Understanding the Argument Task

The Analyze an Argument task assesses your ability to understand, analyze, and evaluate arguments according to specific instructions and to clearly convey your evaluation in writing. The task consists of a brief passage in which the author makes a case for some course of action or interpretation of events by presenting claims backed by reasons and evidence. Your task is to discuss the logical soundness of the author's case according to the specific instructions by critically examining the line of reasoning. This task requires you to read the argument and instructions very carefully. You might want to read them more than once and possibly make brief notes about points you want to develop more fully in your response. In reading the argument, you should pay special attention to

- ✓ what is offered as evidence, support, or proof
- ✓ what is explicitly stated, claimed, or concluded
- ✓ what is assumed or supposed, perhaps without justification or proof
- ✓ what is not stated, but necessarily follows from what is stated

In addition, you should consider the *structure* of the argument — the way in which these elements are linked together to form a *line of reasoning*; that is, you should recognize the separate, sometimes implicit steps in the thinking process and consider whether the movement from each one to the next is logically sound. In tracing this line, look for transition words and phrases that suggest that the author is attempting to make a logical connection (e.g., *however, thus, therefore, evidently, hence, in conclusion*).

An important part of performing well on the Argument task is remembering what you are *not* being asked to do. You are not being asked to discuss whether the statements in the argument are true or accurate. You are not being asked to agree or disagree with the position stated. You are not being asked to express your own views on the subject being discussed (as you were in the Issue task). Instead, you are being asked to evaluate the logical soundness of an argument of another writer according to specific instructions and, in doing so, to demonstrate the critical thinking, perceptive reading, and analytical writing skills that university faculty consider important for success in graduate school.

Sample Argument Task

In surveys Mason City residents rank water sports (swimming, boating, and fishing) among their favorite recreational activities. The Mason River flowing through the city is rarely used for these pursuits, however, and the city park department devotes little of its budget to maintaining riverside recreational facilities. For years there have been complaints from residents about the quality of the river's water and the river's smell. In response, the state has recently announced plans to clean up Mason River. Use of the river for water sports is, therefore, sure to increase. The city government should for that reason devote more money in this year's budget to riverside recreational facilities.

Write a response in which you examine the stated and/or unstated assumptions of the argument. Be sure to explain how the argument depends on the assumptions and what the implications are if the assumptions prove unwarranted.

II. Verbal Reasoning

Verbal Reasoning Question Types

The Verbal Reasoning measure contains three types of questions:

1. Reading Comprehension
2. Text Completion
3. Sentence Equivalence

1. Reading Comprehension Question Types:

A. Select One Answer Choice

Description

These are the traditional multiple-choice questions with five answer choices of which you must select one.

B. Select One or More Answer Choices

Description

These provide three answer choices and ask you to select all that are correct; one, two, or all three of the answer choices may be correct. To gain credit for these questions, you must select all the correct answers, and only those; there is no credit for partially correct answers. These questions are marked with square boxes beside the answer choices, not circles or ovals.

C. Select-in-Passage

Description

The question asks you to click on the sentence in the passage that meets a certain description. To answer the question, choose one of the sentences and click on it; clicking anywhere on a sentence will highlight it. In longer passages, the question will usually apply to only one or two specified paragraphs, marked by an arrow (>); clicking on a sentence elsewhere in the passage will not highlight it.

Sample Question Set

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 in his compositions. 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.

Select only one answer choice.

1. The passage addresses which of the following issues related to Glass's use of popular elements in his classical compositions?
 - A. How it is regarded by listeners who prefer rock to the classics
 - B. How it has affected the commercial success of Glass's music
 - C. Whether it has contributed to a revival of interest among other composers in using popular elements in their compositions
 - D. Whether it has had a detrimental effect on Glass's reputation as a composer of classical music
 - E. Whether it has caused certain of Glass's works to be derivative in quality

Consider each of the three choices separately and select all that apply.

2. The passage suggests that Glass's work displays which of the following qualities?
 - A. A return to the use of popular music in classical compositions
 - B. An attempt to elevate rock music to an artistic status more closely approximating that of classical music
 - C. 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.

Answer key: 1. E 2. A/C 3. The last sentence of the passage

2. Text Completion Questions

Description

As mentioned above, skilled readers do not simply absorb the information presented on the page; instead, they maintain a constant attitude of interpretation and evaluation, reasoning from what they have read so far to create a picture of the whole and revising that picture as they go. Text Completion questions test this ability by omitting crucial words from short passages and asking the test taker to use the remaining information in the passage as a basis for selecting words or short phrases to fill the blanks and create a coherent, meaningful whole.

Question Structure

Passage composed of one to five sentences

A. One to three blanks

B. Three answer choices per blank (five answer choices in the case of a single blank)

NOTE:

- ✓ The answer choices for different blanks function independently; that is, selecting one answer choice for one blank does not affect what answer choices you can select for another blank
- ✓ Single correct answer, consisting of one choice for each blank; no credit for partially correct answers

Sample questions:

For each blank select one entry from the corresponding column of choices. Fill all blanks in the way that best completes the text.

To anyone watching the interview, it was clear that the reporter was bent on portraying the senator as corrupt and dishonest. He quoted several of the senator's (i) _____, who said that the senator had taken bribes. He even made an (ii) _____ that the senator was having an extramarital affair. Only two days later, after being chastised by both his network and his viewers for making biased and unsubstantiated claims, did the reporter take to the air to (iii) _____ his opinions.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)	Blank (iii)
(A) clairvoyants	(D) obfuscation	(G) temper
(B) detractors	(E) approbation	(H) forestall
(C) savants	(F) insinuation	(I) accumulate

In small farming communities, accident victims rarely sue or demand compensation: transforming a personal injury into a (i) _____ someone else is viewed as an attempt to (ii) _____ responsibility for one's own actions.

Blank (i)	Blank (ii)
(A) claim against	(D) proclaim
(B) conspiracy against	(E) elude
(C) boon for	(F) divulge

Just as the authors' book on eels is often a key text for courses in marine vertebrate zoology, their ideas on animal development and phylogeny ----- teaching in this area.

- (A) prevent
- (B) defy
- (C) replicate
- (D) inform
- (E) use

Answer key: 1. B/F/G 2. A/E 3. D

3. Sentence Equivalence Questions

Description

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 questions consist of a single sentence with just one blank, and they ask you to find two choices that both lead to a complete, coherent sentence and that produce sentences that mean the same thing.

Question Structure

Consists of:

- ✓ a single sentence
- ✓ one blank
- ✓ six answer choices
- ✓ Requires you to select two of the answer choices; no credit for partially correct answers.

NOTE:

These questions are marked with square boxes beside the answer choices, not circles or ovals.

Sample Questions

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

Unlike most other serious journals, which drain money from their owners, the Review has long been _____.

- (A) charitable
- (B) profitable
- (C) widespread
- (D) lucrative
- (E) common
- (F) scholarly

Answer key: B/D

SAMPLE UNIT

Section I. Vocabulary

In this section you are given two words list, each with twelve words. Each word list is followed by fill-in the-gap exercises. After the two word lists and the related exercises, you are given practice in answer GRE type questions.

WORD LIST 1

1. **juxtapose (v.):** To place close together, especially in order to compare or contrast
Dottie spread her new dress out on her bed and then juxtaposed all her scarves.
2. **fritter away (v.):** To waste time, money, or effort on something small or unimportant
Vince fritters away both his time and his money playing game after game in video arcades.
3. **collaborate (v.):** To work together on a project or in an effort
When Sarah and I were asked to collaborate on an article for the school newspaper, we found it difficult to work together.
4. **venerate (v.):** To respect deeply
The guests at our dean's retirement banquet made it clear that they venerated her; when she entered the room, everyone rose.
5. **zealot (n.):** A person totally devoted to a purpose or cause
Annie, a zealot about health, runs a hundred miles a week and never lets a grain of sugar touch her lips.
6. **instigate (v.):** To persuade someone do something bad or violent
An English captain named Robert Jenkins instigated a war in 1738 by displaying his pickled ear, which he said had been cut off by Spanish patrol. The horrified British declared war on Spain _ "War of Jenkins' Ear."
7. **venerate (v.):** To respect deeply
The guests at our dean's retirement banquet made it clear that they venerated her; when she entered the room, everyone rose.
8. **detriment (n.):** Something that causes damage, harm, or loss
Smoking is a detriment to your health. It's estimated that each cigarette you smoke will shorten your life by one and half minutes.
9. **discretion (n.):** Good judgment or tact in actions or speaking
Ali wasn't using much discretion when he passed a police car at eighty miles an hour.
10. **vicarious (adj.):** Experienced through the imagination; not experienced directly
If you can't afford to travel, reading guidebooks can give you a vicarious experience of traveling ill foreign countries.
11. **subsidize (v.):** To support financially; provide a grant or contribution
During college, many students are subsidized by their parents, while others rely on grants or loans.

FILL-IN-THE-GAP EXERCISE

Use the words in the word list already introduced to fill in the blank in the following sentences. Use each word **ONLY ONCE**.

1. Do you think a spectator gives the fans ----- triumphs and defeats, or real ones?
2. A weak voice is a serious ----- to a stage actor's or actress's career.
3. Any employee--who wants to use ----- would simply ignore a piece of spinach on the boss's front tooth.

Answer key: 1. vicarious 2. detriment 3. discretion

EXERCISE 2

Select the answer choice that best complete the blank in the following questions.

1. Exiled in 1845, Dimítrios, opposed to the rule of King Otto, returned in 1848 and tried unsuccessfully to ----- a revolution.
A. venerate
B. fritter away
C. juxtapose
D. subsidize
E. instigate
2. Although I'm ordinarily a gregarious person, I'm tempted to move into a cave, far from other people_ and landlords. Okay, I admit that I didn't use (i) ----- in choosing apartments to rent. But does every one of them have to be a (ii) ----- to my health, mental ability, and checkbook?

Blank (i)

- A. collaboration
- B. veneration
- C. discretion

Blank (ii)

- D. detriment
- E. juxtaposition
- F. zealot

For the following question, Use **TWO** answer choices.

3. I don't like to take risks myself, but I love the ----- thrill of watching death-defying adventures in a movie.
A. extroverted
B. sensory
C. indirect
D. sociable
E. vicarious
F. gregarious

Answer key: 1. E 2. C/D 3. C/E

Section II. Reading Comprehension

In this part, you are first supplied with information about a reading skill, following by an actually example. Then several passages are given for practice.

Skill 1: Main Idea Questions

Everything you read is focused on some core concept, often called the main idea or primary purpose. The GRE passages are no exception. Each passage contains a main idea, usually established early in the passage, like in the first paragraph. Sometimes the passage builds to the main idea in which case it will be at the end of the passage, like in the last paragraph. Other times, the main idea may not be explicitly stated and you will have to infer the main idea from the main points addressed in the passage.

Either way, ETS will be asking you about the main idea. It's one of their favorite questions to ask. So let's take a look at how to identify a main idea question, strategies for approaching these questions, and the common wrong answers often associated with these questions.

How to Identify Main Idea Questions

The Main Idea question-type will include a word or phrase letting you know you're being asked about the main point of the passage as a whole. The key words are bolded below.

- ✓ "The author's **primary purpose** in this passage is . . ."
- ✓ "The passage is **mainly concerned with** . . ."
- ✓ "The **best title** for this passage would be . . ."
- ✓ "The author's discussion of . . . is **primarily intended** to explain . . ."
- ✓ "Which of the following **most completely and accurately describes** the passage . . ."

Example:

Chimps and children, gulls and Greeks—the ethnologists go their merry way, comparing bits of human cultural behavior with bits of genetically programmed animal behavior. True, humans are animals; they share certain anatomical features with other animals, and some items of human behavior may seem analogous to the behavior of other animals. But such analogies can seriously mislead if we fail to look at the context of a particular item of behavior. Thus one ethnologist compares the presentation of a twig by a cormorant with gift-giving in humans. Yet the cormorant's twig-presentation simply inhibits attack and is comparable to other appeasement rituals found in many species. Human gift-giving differs in form and purpose not only from culture to culture, but within the same culture in various social contexts. Everything significant about it derives from its social context. Thus, ethnologists can accomplish little—beyond reminding us that we are animals—until they study humans as cultural beings.

1. The author is primarily concerned with
 - (A) demonstrating the usefulness of ethnology in discovering the behavioral limits within which humans operate
 - (B) objecting to the degradation of humanity implicit in the ethnologists equation of humans and animals
 - (C) pointing out the dangers inherent in comparing highly dissimilar species, such as humans and cormorants, rather than similar ones, such as humans and apes
 - (D) refuting the idea that the appeasement rituals in human cultural behavior can be profitably subjected to ethological analysis
 - (E) arguing that the ethnologists' assumption that human behavior can be straightforwardly compared with animal behavior is invalid

Correct answer: E

If you read the passage, you realize that the sentences in lines 4-5 (But such analogies can seriously mislead if we fail to look at the context of a particular item of behavior,) is the topic sentence.

Section III. Verbal reasoning

Verbal reasoning skills are introduced and clarified by means of actually examples, followed by exercises for further practice.

Skill 1: Assumption Questions

These questions all depend upon an understanding of the assumptions made by the author to reach a certain conclusion. What is an assumption?

First, an assumption is something that the author *does not state* in the argument; for this reason, we call assumptions *unstated*. An assumption is, however, something that the author *must believe to be true* in order to draw the given conclusion.

We'll go into much more detail on assumptions in chapter 4 but let's look at a short example:

That car is green. Therefore, that car cannot belong to Dan.

If we're only told that the car is green, how can we know for sure that it doesn't belong to Dan? Clearly, there's some information missing. What is the author assuming here? The assumption: *Dan does not have a green car.*

Exercise

The earth's resources are being depleted much too fast. To correct this, the United States must keep its resource consumption at present levels for many years to come.

The argument above depends on which of the following assumptions?

- (A) Per capita resource consumption in the United States is at an all-time high.
- (B) The United States wastes resources.
- (C) The United States uses more resources than any other country.
- (D) The United States imports most of the resources it uses.
- (E) Curbing U.S. resource consumption will significantly retard world resource depletion.

Correct answer: C.

The author indirectly compares with the effect of all the world's countries' consumption of the earth's resources with that of the United States and assumes that that the U.S. is greatest consumer.

Section IV. Writing

The Writing Section is handled in the following way.

1. A writing strategy is taught, followed by a sample essay to demonstrate the explanations. Then you are asked to write an essay with a given time frame. You then email your essay for correction.
2. A grammar lesson along with exercises is also given per week.

Course Syllabus

The whole course takes ten weeks to complete. The following table demonstrates the course duration and content.

Week 1	Orientation Session & Lesson 1
Week 2	Lesson 2
Week 3	Lesson 3
Week 4	Lesson 4
Week 5	Question and Answer Session & Lesson 5
Week 6	Lesson 6
Week 7	Lesson 7
Week 8	Lesson 8
Week 9	Lesson 9
Week 10	A Complete GRE Test