

Overview

The verbal section of the GRE test is meant to gauge your overall reading, critical thinking, and overall verbal capabilities. The verbal section of the GRE General test is comprised of 30 questions, for which you have 30 minutes. The verbal section includes 5-7 sentence completion questions, 8-10 antonym questions, 6-8 analogy questions, and 6-10 reading comprehension questions based on 2-4 reading passages.

Sentence Completion

On sentence completion questions, you will be provided with a single sentence with either one or two words omitted, and you'll need to select from the answer choices the word or set of words that best fit the overall meaning of the sentence. For example:

His overly _____ demeanor is what made most of the voters decide to cast a vote against him because they thought that he was not genuine and in fact too much of a politician.

- permissive
- saccharine
- candid
- equitable
- tempestuous

Tactics:

- Try to arrive at the answer BEFORE you look at the answer choices.
- Look for key words that indicate a shift or a continuation or support of a certain idea. Example key-words include *however*, *therefore*, *furthermore*, *thus*.
- When dealing with a sentence with two blanks, eliminate answers as you consider one blank at a time. Both words have to fit into the sentence, and so don't get fooled into selecting an answer only because one of the answer choices fits.
- Remember that your objective is to select the MOST appropriate answer choice, and there may be several possible answers.

Analogies

On analogy questions, you are given a related pair of words or phrases followed by five pairs of words or short phrases. The objective is to elect the pair that best expresses a relationship between the words in capital letters. For example:

NOSE : FACE

- tail : bird
- finger : hand
- plate : table
- magnet : refrigerator
- pencil : notebook

Assuming you know the definition of the words in capital letters and all of the definitions of the word choices, then the analogy question will be straightforward, as the makers of the GRE claim that relationships are precise between all words given. The above example is straight-forward, (the answer is finger : hand, because a finger is always attached to a hand just like a nose is always attached to a face), but be assured that the analogy questions you'll see will be more challenging, especially if your running score on the verbal section is high.

Tactics:

- Come up with a sentence between the two capital letters BEFORE you look at the answer choices, and only then look at which choices fit into the sentence that you made.
- If you find that your relationship does not eliminate enough choices, then make your relationship more precise.
- Determining the parts of speech of the answer choices can help you to determine if a secondary meaning is being used in the provided relationship.
- The order of the relationship is important. For example, if the capitalized words are of type verb:noun, then the answer must be also verb:noun, and not noun:verb. Keep a lookout for such tricks.

Antonyms

For an antonym question, you'll be given a word or phrase printed in capital letters, followed by five lettered words or phrases. The objective is to choose the lettered word or phrase that is most nearly opposite in meaning to the word or phrase in capital letters.

Tactics:

- Try to come up with an antonym for the word in all capital letters. The antonym that you come up with should be very similar to one of the answer choices.
- If you don't know some or all of the words, focus on root words and prefixes. For example, *anti* means opposite, while *pro* means in favor of or before.
- If the capital word is a negative word, then the answer should be a positive word, and vice versa.

Reading Comprehension

There will be either 2 or 3 reading comprehension passages on the verbal section of the GRE, and for each passage you should expect 2-4 questions. Although there are no tricks that you can learn to ace the reading comprehension component of the GRE, there are certain things that you can do to make sure that you approach the problem correctly and so that you give yourself the best chance to answer the questions right. Sample question types include main idea, a new title, missing information, implications by the author, the tone and mood of the passage, etc.

Tactics:

- Read actively without memorizing
- Pick up on work clues. For example, words such as *However* and *Therefore* are important key words that indicate the flow of logic.
- Find the central idea of the passage and of each paragraph
- Take mental take notes
- If you are asked about specific details, answer a question using only the information that is provided in the passage.