

Learning Made Easy



GRE[®] Prep 2023

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



FEATURES

6 Practice Tests Online

400+ Flash Cards
Testing Strategies
Answer Explanations

Ron Woldoff, MBA

Founder, National Test Prep



This book comes with access to more content online.

Quiz yourself, track your progress,
and score high on test day!

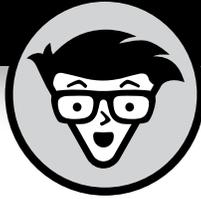
Register your book or ebook at
www.dummies.com/go/getaccess

Select your product, and then follow the prompts
to validate your purchase.

You'll receive an email with your PIN and instructions.

GRE[®] Prep 2023

**for
dummies[®]**
A Wiley Brand



GRE[®] Prep 2023

with Online Practice

by Ron Woldoff, MBA

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand

GRE® Prep 2023 For Dummies® with Online Practice

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, www.wiley.com

Copyright © 2022 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the Publisher. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Trademarks: Wiley, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, Dummies.com, Making Everything Easier, and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc., and may not be used without written permission. GRE is a registered trademark of Educational Testing Service (ETS). This publication is not endorsed or approved by ETS. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: WHILE THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHORS HAVE USED THEIR BEST EFFORTS IN PREPARING THIS WORK, THEY MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS WORK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ALL WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. NO WARRANTY MAY BE CREATED OR EXTENDED BY SALES REPRESENTATIVES, WRITTEN SALES MATERIALS OR PROMOTIONAL STATEMENTS FOR THIS WORK. THE FACT THAT AN ORGANIZATION, WEBSITE, OR PRODUCT IS REFERRED TO IN THIS WORK AS A CITATION AND/OR POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FURTHER INFORMATION DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHORS ENDORSE THE INFORMATION OR SERVICES THE ORGANIZATION, WEBSITE, OR PRODUCT MAY PROVIDE OR RECOMMENDATIONS IT MAY MAKE. THIS WORK IS SOLD WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PUBLISHER IS NOT ENGAGED IN RENDERING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES. THE ADVICE AND STRATEGIES CONTAINED HEREIN MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR YOUR SITUATION. YOU SHOULD CONSULT WITH A SPECIALIST WHERE APPROPRIATE. FURTHER, READERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT WEBSITES LISTED IN THIS WORK MAY HAVE CHANGED OR DISAPPEARED BETWEEN WHEN THIS WORK WAS WRITTEN AND WHEN IT IS READ. NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR AUTHORS SHALL BE LIABLE FOR ANY LOSS OF PROFIT OR ANY OTHER COMMERCIAL DAMAGES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO SPECIAL, INCIDENTAL, CONSEQUENTIAL, OR OTHER DAMAGES.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002. For technical support, please visit <https://hub.wiley.com/community/support/dummies>.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022936300

ISBN 978-1-119-88660-0 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-119-88661-7 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-119-88662-4 (ebk)

Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
Part 1: Getting Started with the GRE	5
CHAPTER 1: Knowing the GRE	7
CHAPTER 2: Planning Your Time	13
CHAPTER 3: Planning for Exam Day: Everything Outside the Exam	21
Part 2: Tackling the Verbal Section One Word at a Time	27
CHAPTER 4: Upping Your Best GRE Verbal Score	29
CHAPTER 5: What Are They Saying: Text Completion and Sentence Equivalence	33
CHAPTER 6: Getting the Gist: Reading Comprehension	51
CHAPTER 7: Critical Thinking: Argument Analysis Questions	67
CHAPTER 8: Expanding Your Vocabulary to Boost Your Score	77
Part 3: Math You Thought You'd Never Need Again	97
CHAPTER 9: Raising Your Best GRE Math Score	99
CHAPTER 10: Working with Numbers and Operations	105
CHAPTER 11: Solving Algebra and Functions	129
CHAPTER 12: Drawing Geometry	157
CHAPTER 13: Simplifying Word Problems	191
CHAPTER 14: Interpreting Data and Graphs	213
CHAPTER 15: Comparing Quantities	235
Part 4: Getting the Essays Right	251
CHAPTER 16: Writing the Essays Well and Fast	253
CHAPTER 17: Practicing Your Essays	269
Part 5: Full-Length Practice Exams: Show Time	279
CHAPTER 18: Practice Exam 1	281
CHAPTER 19: Practice Exam 1: Answers and Explanations	307
CHAPTER 20: Practice Exam 2	321
CHAPTER 21: Practice Exam 2: Answers and Explanations	345
CHAPTER 22: Practice Exam 3	357
CHAPTER 23: Practice Exam 3: Answers and Explanations	383
Part 6: The Part of Tens	393
CHAPTER 24: Ten Key Facts about the GRE	395
CHAPTER 25: Ten Mistakes You Won't Make (While Others Will)	399
CHAPTER 26: Ten Ways to Build Your Skills with the Online Exams	403
Index	407

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
About This Book	1
Icons Used in This Book	2
Beyond the Book	2
Where to Go from Here	3
PART 1: GETTING STARTED WITH THE GRE	5
CHAPTER 1: Knowing the GRE	7
Knowing the GRE Sections	8
Knowing the GRE Scores	9
Calculating your score	10
Checking your score	10
Seeing or canceling your scores	11
Taking advantage of the ScoreSelect option	11
Bringing the GRE into Your Comfort Zone	11
Getting familiar with what's on the exam	11
Understanding the other admissions requirements	12
Using Old Scores	12
CHAPTER 2: Planning Your Time	13
Planning Your Prep Time	13
Planning your study time	13
Planning your practice time	14
Planning Your Exam Time	14
Planning your question time	14
Throwing a mental dart	15
Planning your intermission time	15
Planning your computer time	16
Planning Your Mental and Physical Time	17
Staying active	17
Eating well	17
Relaxing	17
Scheduling Your Exam	18
Scheduling for the testing center	18
Scheduling for home	18
CHAPTER 3: Planning for Exam Day: Everything Outside the Exam	21
Planning the Night Before	21
Knowing what to bring	21
Knowing what not to bring	22
Planning for Contingency	23
It's Them, Not You: Testing under Adverse Conditions	24
PART 2: TACKLING THE VERBAL SECTION ONE WORD AT A TIME	27
CHAPTER 4: Upping Your Best GRE Verbal Score	29
Building Your Core Skills	29
Managing Your Time	30

CHAPTER 5: What Are They Saying: Text Completion and Sentence Equivalence	33
Clinching Text Completion and Sentence Equivalence Questions	33
Keeping it straight	34
Trying it out	34
Developing Your Skills for Finding the Correct Answers	35
Interpreting the Text 101	35
Getting the gist of the text	36
Taking the Best and Only Approach	36
Interpret the text without looking at the answer choices	37
Complete the text with your own words	37
Eliminate wrong answer choices	38
Interpreting Trickier Sentences	38
Use transition words to get the gist of the phrases	39
Start with the second or third missing word	40
Getting Your Hands Dirty with Some Practice	41
Text Completion questions	41
Sentence Equivalence questions	44
CHAPTER 6: Getting the Gist: Reading Comprehension	51
Recognizing the Three Reading Comprehension Question Formats	51
Multiple-choice questions: Choose one answer	52
Multiple-choice questions: Choose one or more answers	52
Sentence-selection questions: Choose a sentence from the passage	53
Developing Strategies for Success	53
Using the context as your road map	53
Grasping the gist of the passage	54
Avoiding common traps	54
Answering the question yourself	55
Acing the Three Commonly Tested Reading Comprehension Passages	55
The biological and physical science passage	55
The social sciences passage	58
The humanities passage	61
The social sciences passage redux	63
CHAPTER 7: Critical Thinking: Argument Analysis Questions	67
Covering the Answer Choices	68
Reading the Question for What It's Asking	68
Reading the Passage for What the Question Is Asking	68
Identifying the "because" and the "therefore"	69
Finding the unstated assumption	70
Exploring common logical fallacies	71
Answering the Question in Your Own Words	72
Eliminating Each Wrong Answer	72
Applying the process of elimination	73
Testing your skills	73
CHAPTER 8: Expanding Your Vocabulary to Boost Your Score	77
Brushing Up on Prefixes, Suffixes, and Roots	77
Prefixes	78
Suffixes	80
Roots	80
Memorizing the GRE's Most Common Vocabulary Words	82

PART 3: MATH YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER NEED AGAIN	97
CHAPTER 9: Raising Your Best GRE Math Score	99
Managing Your Time.....	100
Typing an Answer.....	100
Selecting Two or More Answers.....	101
Choosing among three answers.....	101
Choosing among more than three answers.....	102
Selecting the Quantity That's Greater.....	102
CHAPTER 10: Working with Numbers and Operations	105
Working with Integers, Factors, and Multiples.....	105
Working with Math Terms.....	106
Working with Prime and Composite Numbers.....	106
Working with the Units Digit.....	107
Working with Absolute Value.....	108
Working with one absolute value.....	109
Working with two absolute values.....	109
Working with Order of Operations.....	110
Working with Fractions.....	111
Adding and subtracting.....	111
Multiplying.....	113
Dividing.....	113
Working with mixed numbers and improper fractions.....	113
Cross-multiplying.....	114
Working with Decimals.....	115
Adding and subtracting.....	115
Multiplying.....	115
Dividing.....	116
Working with Percentages.....	118
Converting.....	118
Calculating percentage of change.....	119
Working with Factorials.....	121
Working with Ratios.....	122
Working with total numbers.....	122
Working with amounts in the ratio.....	123
Maintaining the ratio.....	124
Combining ratios.....	126
CHAPTER 11: Solving Algebra and Functions	129
Solving Bases and Exponents.....	129
Solving Math Operators.....	132
Solving for X	133
Solving for x with a number.....	134
Solving with the FOIL method.....	135
Factoring back out.....	137
Solving Square Roots and Radicals.....	139
Simplifying.....	139
Adding and subtracting.....	140
Multiplying and dividing.....	141
Simplifying first.....	142
Solving Coordinate Geometry.....	142
Solving common problems.....	143
Solving linear equations.....	145
Solving two linear equations.....	147
Solving graphed circles.....	151

Solving Patterns in a Sequence	152
Solving $f(x)$ Functions.	153
CHAPTER 12: Drawing Geometry	157
Drawing Lines and Angles	157
Drawing lines	157
Drawing angles.	158
Measuring Polygons	161
Measuring total interior angles	162
Measuring one interior angle	162
Drawing Triangles	163
Drawing three types of triangles.	163
Measuring key characteristics	164
Drawing perimeter and area	165
Measuring with the Pythagorean theorem	168
Drawing common right triangles.	169
Drawing Quadrilaterals.	172
Drawing Circles	174
Drawing parts of a circle.	174
Drawing the circumference and area	176
Drawing the arc and sector	178
Drawing overlapping shapes	182
Drawing 3D Shapes	184
Drawing a cylinder.	184
Drawing a rectangular solid.	185
Drawing a cube	186
CHAPTER 13: Simplifying Word Problems	191
Simplifying the Steps.	191
Simplifying Time and Distance	192
Simplifying Units of Measurement	193
Simplifying Averages.	194
Simplifying missing-term averages.	194
Simplifying evenly spaced integers.	195
Simplifying weighted averages	196
Simplifying Work Problems	198
Simplifying Team-Work Problems.	199
Simplifying Mixture Problems	201
Simplifying Sets and Groups	203
Simplifying the Venn diagram	203
Simplifying the sets formula	204
Simplifying Probability	204
Step #1: Set up the fraction	205
Step #2: Multiply consecutive probabilities.	205
Step #3: Add either/or probabilities on a single event.	206
Simplifying probability in sets and groups.	207
Simplifying Counting Methods	208
Basic counting methods.	208
When order matters: Permutations	210
When order doesn't matter: Combinations.	211
CHAPTER 14: Interpreting Data and Graphs	213
Interpreting Basic Stats.	213
Interpreting the median	213
Interpreting the mode.	215
Interpreting the range.	215

Interpreting the mean	216
Interpreting standard deviation	219
Eyeballing standard deviation	220
Interpreting mean deviation	222
Interpreting the distribution curve	223
Interpreting Tables and Graphs	223
Interpreting tables	224
Interpreting graphs	225
CHAPTER 15: Comparing Quantities	235
Comparing Exact Answer Choices	235
Comparing Steps	236
Comparing via Strategy	237
Comparing similar appearances	238
Comparing drawings	238
Comparing concepts	240
Comparing identical terms	241
Comparing ranges	245
Comparing estimates	246
Comparing with Four Square	247
Comparing with a hundred	249
Comparing multiple unknowns	250
PART 4: GETTING THE ESSAYS RIGHT	251
CHAPTER 16: Writing the Essays Well and Fast	253
Setting Your Sights on a Perfect 6	254
What the essay scores really mean	254
Key methods to scoring well	255
Writing the Issue Essay	256
Step 1: Read and understand the prompt	256
Step 2: Identify examples you already know about the issue	257
Step 3: Take a position that's in line with your examples	257
Step 4: Write your Issue essay	258
Tying everything together with smooth transitions	261
Writing the Argument Essay	262
Step 1: Read and understand the prompt	262
Step 2: Identify the position stated in the argument	263
Step 3: List the reasons given to support the stated position	263
Step 4: Identify the flawed assumptions behind each reason	264
Step 5: Write your essay	265
CHAPTER 17: Practicing Your Essays	269
Setting the Stage for a Realistic Experience	269
Writing an Issue Essay: Some Samples	270
Having trouble getting started? Begin by identifying some relevant laws	270
Sample essay — score 6 (outstanding)	271
Evaluator comments on the score 6 essay	272
Sample essay — score 4 (adequate)	272
Evaluator comments on the score 4 essay	273
Writing an Argument Essay: Some Samples	274
Having trouble getting started? Begin by finding the faulty assumptions	274
Sample essay — score 6 (outstanding)	275
Evaluator comments on the score 6 essay	276
Sample essay — score 4 (adequate)	276
Evaluator comments on the score 4 essay	276

PART 5: FULL-LENGTH PRACTICE EXAMS: SHOW TIME	279
CHAPTER 18: Practice Exam 1	281
Answer Sheet for Practice Exam 1	283
Section 1	287
Section 2	293
Section 3	297
Section 4	303
CHAPTER 19: Practice Exam 1: Answers and Explanations	307
Analytical Writing Sections	307
Section 1: Verbal Reasoning.....	307
Section 2: Quantitative Reasoning	310
Section 3: Verbal Reasoning.....	313
Section 4: Quantitative Reasoning	316
Answer Key for Practice Exam 1	319
CHAPTER 20: Practice Exam 2	321
Answer Sheet for Practice Exam 2	323
Section 1	327
Section 2	332
Section 3	336
Section 4	341
CHAPTER 21: Practice Exam 2: Answers and Explanations	345
Analytical Writing Sections	345
Section 1: Verbal Reasoning.....	345
Section 2: Quantitative Reasoning	348
Section 3: Verbal Reasoning.....	350
Section 4: Quantitative Reasoning	353
Answer Key for Practice Exam 2	356
CHAPTER 22: Practice Exam 3	357
Answer Sheet for Practice Exam 3	359
Section 1	363
Section 2	369
Section 3	372
Section 4	378
CHAPTER 23: Practice Exam 3: Answers and Explanations	383
Analytical Writing Sections	383
Section 1: Verbal Reasoning.....	383
Section 2: Quantitative Reasoning	385
Section 3: Verbal Reasoning.....	387
Section 4: Quantitative Reasoning	389
Answer Key for Practice Exam 3	392
PART 6: THE PART OF TENS	393
CHAPTER 24: Ten Key Facts about the GRE	395
You May Return to Previous Questions in the Same Section	395
The GRE Doesn't Penalize for Guessing	396
The GRE Uses a Percentile-Based Scoring System	396
Practice Makes All the Difference	396
You Must Prepare for the GRE.....	397
The GRE Is Different from the SAT and ACT	397

	The GRE Also Measures Your Stamina and Performance under Pressure	397
	The General GRE Is Not Program-Specific	397
	You Can Practice the GRE on Your Own Computer	397
	You Can't Bring Anything into the Testing Center.	398
CHAPTER 25:	Ten Mistakes You Won't Make (While Others Will)	399
	You Won't Cheat	399
	You Won't Run Out of Steam	400
	You Won't Neglect Your Breaks.	400
	You Won't Dwell on Questions from Previous Sections.	400
	You Won't Worry about the Time Limit	400
	You Won't Rush Through the Questions	401
	You Definitely Won't Choke on the Essays.	401
	You Won't Fret Over the Hard Questions.	401
	You Won't Take the Exam with a Friend.	402
	You Won't Change Your Morning Routine.	402
CHAPTER 26:	Ten Ways to Build Your Skills with the Online Exams	403
	Take an Exam in One Sitting to Build Stamina	403
	Recognize the Mistakes You Make under Pressure	404
	Get Used to Others Being in the Room	404
	Make It a Dress Rehearsal	404
	Get a Competitive Edge	404
	Practice Your Test-Taking Strategies.	405
	Know the Exam Software	405
	Get Used to Starting with the Essays	405
	Find Your Areas of Focus	406
	Review the Answers and Explanations.	406
INDEX	407

Introduction

Years ago, during an early gig as a consultant, I sat at a desk that had a *For Dummies* book on the shelf. The book was something office-related, like *SQL For Dummies*. I took a sticky note and wrote the word *Ron* with a black marker, and then placed the sticky note over the word *Dummies* on the side of the book, so it read *SQL for Ron*. It fit nicely.

Since starting my test-prep company, I've had students who would be my boss in the business world, and many have gone on to have amazingly successful careers. You, too, are in this group of future success stories. How do I know? Because you're on your way to an advanced degree, which will open lots of doors, and you're oh-so-close to getting started. You just need to get past this one hurdle called the GRE.

The GRE challenges your ability to conjure up everything you've forgotten since high school — things you haven't thought about in years. Really, all you need is a refresher, some strategies, and practice. This book has all that and more: It goes beyond rehashing what you've learned (and forgotten) by providing exam-specific strategies and tips for answering questions quickly and getting through the exam. There are examples, practice questions, and practice exams to help you hone your skills, identify areas you need to work on, and build your confidence for test day.

I've never met someone who couldn't do well on the exam. I *have* met people who haven't been coached properly, or who haven't practiced enough. With this take, I aim for 100 percent with each student. You're a little rusty here, haven't seen that there, could use a few tips, but you'll pick it up and do just fine. Succeeding on the GRE is like any other skill: If you know what to do, you have some coaching, and you practice, you'll be fine. I get you started with some review and guidance, and you take it from there.

About This Book

In *GRE Prep 2023 For Dummies*, I pretend you forgot everything. You start at the very beginning, covering all the basic math and verbal concepts, and then try some challenging GRE-level questions. You also discover how to approach these questions, avoid common mistakes, and practice the intuitive tricks that help you knock it out of the park.

There are three components to achieving a top GRE score:

- 1. Knowing what's on the exam.**

Read through this whole book. No matter how well you know a topic, you can discover strategies and common traps specific to the GRE, which has a way of asking a question that's different from what you're used to — or what you learned in the classroom.

- 2. Strengthening your weak subject areas.**

While you're reading through the book, mark any sections that have unfamiliar or unclear topics so you can revisit them during your review. This book is organized to make it easy to find strategies and practice for specific question types that you have trouble with.

3. Preparing for the test-taking experience.

Answering the exam questions is one thing, but taking the exam is another. Start with the online practice exams to prep for the experience. ETS offers two excellent online practice exams, free, but you'll need more than two. Packaged with this book, also free (after you buy the book), are *six* online practice exams: three in the book itself and all six online. When your exam is just around the corner, take one or two practice exams in real-life, dress-rehearsal settings. Flip to Part 6, The Part of Tens, for ten ways to get the most benefit from the online practice exams.

Basically, this book does it all: It prepares you for the exam by taking your skills from the basic level to the GRE level and fixing any gaps. What else is there?

There's vocab.

To help you with vocab, as you read through this book, you'll notice that some words have a style all their own. Each GRE vocabulary word in this text appears in *this font*, followed directly by its *connotation* (meaning). Besides that, when you encounter a GRE vocab word in a question, look up its meaning and write it down. This is an effective complement to studying from a list or flash cards.

Icons Used in This Book

Look for these icons to spot highlights throughout this book:



TIP

This indicates a key strategy or point to remember. There are lots of these, which is good, because they're essential to your success on the exam.



REMEMBER

This indicates overall knowledge about the exam that's useful for planning your approach, such as managing your time or knowing what to expect.



WARNING

This marks a GRE trap or common student mistake so you can spot it and dodge it on test day.



PLAY

This indicates a practice question for you to try.

Beyond the Book

Besides this book, there are more resources online, including these:

» **Cheat sheet:** Go to www.dummies.com and type "GRE Prep 2023 For Dummies cheat sheet" in the Search box for this book's cheat sheet, which gives you last-minute details, including a rundown of what to expect when you take the GRE, a list of what to bring versus what to leave

at home, tips for taking the computer-based exam, and more pointers for answering exam questions.

- » **Over 400 GRE vocabulary flash cards:** Stock your mental word bank and boost your verbal score by accessing the meanings of over 400 words that frequently appear on the GRE.
- » **Six full-length practice exams:** You can take the three practice exams in this book along with three more online to help you build your competence and confidence. You can select the level of difficulty and answer the questions through untimed and timed quizzes, so you can practice at your own speed and then try it out under pressure.

To gain access to the online flash cards and practice questions, register your book or ebook at Dummies.com by following these steps:

1. **Go to** www.dummies.com/go/getaccess.
2. **Select your product from the drop-down list on that page and follow the prompts to validate your product.**
3. **Check your email for a confirmation message that includes your PIN and instructions for logging in.**

If you don't get an email within two hours, be sure to check your spam folder. You can also contact Technical Support through <http://support.wiley.com> or 877-762-2974.

Now you're ready to go! You can come back to the practice material as often as you want — simply log on with the username and password you created during your initial login. No need to enter the access code a second time.

Your registration is good for one year from the day you activate your PIN.

Where to Go from Here

You can approach this book in three ways:

- » **Work through it from beginning to end.** For most readers, I recommend this approach. Although prepping to take the GRE isn't a linear process, I present topics from easy to challenging, so they build on each other as you progress through the chapters. I provide a feel for the test-taking experience along with guidance for each section of the exam — verbal, math, and essays — followed by practice exams, and I wrap things up with some Part of Tens chapters that will stick with you long after you're done with this book.
- » **Skip around.** Each chapter is a stand-alone lesson on a specific GRE topic. If your study time is limited, skip around to focus on areas where you need the most guidance. For example, you can skip to Chapter 7 to hone your skills at answering Argument Analysis questions, or visit Chapter 12 to brush up on geometry. Another strategy is to take one of the sample tests to evaluate your skills and identify areas of weakness, and then use that information to develop your plan of attack.

» **Use it as a reference book.** Whenever you need information and advice on a specific GRE topic or skill, simply flip to the chapter or section that contains the information and guidance you need. *GRE Prep 2023 For Dummies* offers a refresher on the topics and skills you need to get the score you need on the GRE.

As you go through the book, write up some flash cards to note key concepts and strategies. These cards will serve as a handy reference while you review your notes.

I've been helping GRE students beat the test for years, so I know not only students' common questions and mistakes, but also how to make the math and verbal questions easier to answer. This book distills my tricks and secrets, which I'm pleased to share with you. Your success, after all, is why we're both here.

1

Getting Started with the GRE

IN THIS PART . . .

Get the details about signing up for the GRE, what's on the exam, and how your score is calculated.

Figure out how to plan and manage your study time ahead of test day, and get some pointers if you're retaking the exam.

Know what you need to do to prepare for the exam (beyond studying) along with what to expect on test day.

- » Knowing the layout of the GRE
- » Understanding how your scores are calculated
- » Bringing the GRE into your comfort zone

Chapter 1

Knowing the GRE

The GRE isn't an IQ test. Nor is it a measure of your worth as a human being or a predictor of your ultimate success in life. The GRE is designed to assess your ability to excel in grad school by sizing you up in three areas.

- » **Work ethic:** How hard you're willing and able to work to achieve an elusive academic goal — in this case, performing well on the GRE — reflects (to them) your work ethic. Graduate schools consider this to be a measure of how hard you'll work in their programs.
- » **Study skills:** To do well on the GRE, you must master some basic study skills and be able to process and retain new information.
- » **Test-taking ability:** This is your ability to perform well on a test, under pressure, which is a separate ability from being able to answer the questions. Exams are *ubiquitous* (appearing everywhere) to grad school, so you need to prove that you can take one without folding under pressure.

This book can't help you in the first area: That's all you. As a study guide, however, this book shapes you up in the second and third areas, enabling you to study more effectively and efficiently and improve your overall test-taking skills. By knowing the material and taking the practice tests, you establish a foundation for doing well on the GRE. And usually, if you know what to do and how to do it, you might find yourself working a little bit harder. In this way, this book *can* help you in that first area.

In this chapter, I discuss the GRE's structure and scoring system so you can build your strategies around them. With this guidance, you're better equipped to avoid surprises that may throw you off your game.

Knowing the GRE Sections

Standardized tests tend to bring on the chills. Telling someone you have to take the SAT, ACT, or GRE usually gets the same response as saying that you need to have your wisdom teeth pulled. However, with this book, the GRE isn't such a chilling experience, and breaking it down to its component parts makes it more manageable and less threatening.

The paper and computer versions of the GRE are slightly different. For one thing, the paper version has 25 questions per section, with four sections, while the computer version has 20 questions per section with five sections — either way, 100 questions.

You are almost certainly taking the computer-based version, but some materials provided by ETS, including the book-based practice tests and downloadable PDFs, are in the paper-based format. The guidance in this book refers to the computer-based version of the GRE, but I indicate the paper-based differences that you may encounter in the ETS practice materials — or just in case you do take the paper-based exam, however unlikely.

Table 1-1 provides a quick overview of what's on the exam. The essays are always first, but the multiple-choice sections may be in any order.

TABLE 1-1 GRE Breakdown by Section (Computer-Based)

Section	Number of Questions	Time Allotted
Analyze an Issue	1 essay	30 minutes
Analyze an Argument	1 essay	30 minutes
Verbal Section	20 questions	30 minutes
Math (Quantitative) Section	20 questions	35 minutes
Verbal Section	20 questions	30 minutes
Math (Quantitative) Section	20 questions	35 minutes
Discreetly Unscored Math or Verbal Section (may be earlier in the exam)	20 questions	30 or 35 minutes



REMEMBER

At close to four hours, the GRE challenges your stamina as much as your ability to answer the questions. No matter how solid your math and verbal skills are, you must maintain your focus to do well for the whole time, which isn't easy on a challenging task such as this. Build your test-taking stamina by practicing in four-hour stretches and taking timed practice tests.

The computer-based GRE includes one unscored Math or Verbal section in addition to the scored sections. You will have three Math or three Verbal sections, with one of those sections unscored. This unscored section neither helps nor hurts your score. The GRE may indicate that the section is unscored, but it usually doesn't, so be sure to work all the sections to the best of your ability. The paper-based GRE doesn't have an unscored section, but instead will have discreetly unscored questions mixed in the sections.



TIP

The GRE allows you to skip questions and return to them later, within that section. When you reach the end of a section, the GRE displays a review screen that indicates any unanswered questions. If you have time remaining in the section, return to these questions and answer them as well as you can. This feature is nice because you can knock out all the easy questions before spending time on the hard ones. (See Chapter 2 for more on planning your time.)

So what types of questions are there and how many of these can you expect on the GRE? Here's Table 1-2 with the answers.

TABLE 1-2 GRE Breakdown by Question Type

Type of Question	Approximate Number of Questions
Per Math Section (20 questions each)	
Multiple-choice with exactly one correct answer	6
Multiple-choice with one or more correct answers	2
Fill-in-the-blank with the correct answer	2
Data Interpretation (based on graphs)	3
Quantitative Comparisons	7
Per Verbal Section (20 questions each)	
Text Completion	6
Sentence Equivalence	4
Argument Analysis	2
Reading Comprehension	8

This table describes the computer-based GRE questions, but the paper-based GRE questions have a similar ratio. Also note that the question types are mixed throughout their sections, so you may encounter them in any order. Sometimes the software groups similar questions at the beginning or the end. For example, if you're halfway through a Verbal section and haven't seen a Text Completion question, you will.

Knowing the GRE Scores

With the GRE, you receive three separate scores: Verbal, Math, and Analytical Writing. You drive home knowing your unofficial Verbal and Math scores (as explained in the following section), but you get your Analytical Writing score about two weeks later.

On the GRE, you can score a maximum of 340 points on the multiple-choice and 6 points on the essays. Here's the scoring range for each of the three sections.

- » **Verbal:** The Verbal score ranges from 130 to 170 in 1-point increments. You get 130 points if you answer just one question, but that won't help you much: You need to score as well as or better than most of the other test-takers to improve your chances of being admitted to your target school. The chapters in Part 2 give you the lowdown on the Verbal sections.
- » **Math:** The Math score also ranges from 130 to 170 in 1-point increments. The chapters in Part 3 have more on the Math sections.
- » **Analytical Writing:** The Analytical Writing score ranges from 0 to 6, in half-point increments, with 6 being the highest. Each essay is graded separately, and your final score is the average of the two. There is more on the essays in the Part 4 chapters.



REMEMBER

If a multiple-choice question requires two or more answers, you have to get all the answers correct: There is no partial credit. However, you don't lose points for a wrong answer, so if you're not sure, you may as well guess and return to the question later. More on this strategy in Chapter 2.

Calculating your score

Within each section, each question counts exactly the same toward your score: The more questions you get right, the higher your score for that section. An easy question is worth the same as a hard question. Because you can move back and forth within each section, one strategy is to skip around and answer all the easy questions first, then go back and work the hard questions. If you like this idea, *try it out on a practice test* before exam day.

On the computer version of the exam, the *second* Math or Verbal section (not counting the unscored section) becomes easier or harder based on your performance. For example, if you do extremely well on the first Math section, the GRE makes the second Math section harder. Even if you don't get as many right in the second Math section, your score will be good, and it'll definitely be higher than the score of someone who bombs the first Math section but gets them all right in the second one; GRE scoring accommodates for the difficulty level of the questions.



WARNING

The strategy of bombing the first Math and Verbal sections in order to answer more questions correctly on the respective second sections is not a good one, and you'll end up with a low score. The exam doesn't score you based solely on the number of correct answers: It scores you based on how smart it thinks you are. So if you do *great* on the first Math section, the exam thinks you're smart and *ups* the level for the second Math section. If you don't answer all those questions correctly, that's okay: The questions are harder, and the exam has evaluated your skills. Conversely, if you *bomb* the first Math section, the exam thinks you're not that good at math, so it *drops* the level for the second Math section. If you answer most of those questions correctly, it doesn't count for much because those questions were easier.

When you complete a practice test from Part 5, you can easily estimate your Math and Verbal scores. For the Math score, count the math questions you answered correctly and then add 130 to that number. Because the GRE has 40 math questions (two sections with 20 questions each), this method gives you an approximate score from 130 to 170. You can find your Verbal score the exact same way, because the GRE also has 40 Verbal questions. Note this method doesn't account for the changing difficulty of the second Math and Verbal sections, but it's still an excellent way for you to practice and track your progress.

Checking your score

If you score close to 340, you did great! If you score closer to 260, not so much. But wait — your score is right in between! Did you pass? Did you fail? What does it mean? Well, you can't really tell much about your score out of context. What does 320 mean? It all goes by a percentile ranking. To download the complete percentile table, visit www.ets.org, click GRE Tests, and search for "percentile ranking." As of this writing, here are some highlights:

- » A raw score of 165 is typically a 96th percentile ranking in the Verbal and an 84th percentile ranking in the Math.
- » A raw score of 160 is typically an 85th percentile ranking in the Verbal and a 70th percentile ranking in the Math.

Basically, with a range of only 40 points per section among 500,000 GRE-takers per year, give or take, each point counts for a lot. How well you do is based on how well the other test-takers did. What you need to ask is the score needed for acceptance into your program — or, even better, the score needed for a scholarship! Once you're in your program (or you've landed your scholarship), your GRE score doesn't matter.

Also, your exam score is only one part of the total application package. If you have a good GPA, a strong résumé, and relevant work experience, you may not need as high of a GRE score. On the other hand, a stellar GRE score can compensate for other weak areas.

Seeing or canceling your scores

Immediately after finishing the GRE, you have the option of either seeing or canceling your Verbal and Math scores. Unfortunately, you don't get to see your scores first. If you *think* you had a bad day, you can cancel, and your scores are neither reported to the schools nor shown to you. However, the schools are notified that you canceled your test. If you choose to see your score, you see it — minus the essay scores — right away, but you can't cancel it after that.



REMEMBER

How much do the schools care about canceled scores? Probably not much, especially if a top GRE score (from when you retake the test 21 days later) follows the notice of cancellation. If you really want to know the impact of a canceled score, check with the admissions office of your target school. Each school weighs canceled scores differently. See the section “Using Old Scores” for more about what to do after canceling your GRE score.

Taking advantage of the ScoreSelect option

At the end of the test, you have the option of choosing which test scores to send to your target schools, assuming that you've taken the GRE more than once. You can send the most recent scores, scores from the past (within five years), or all your test scores. However, you can't pick and choose sections from different testing dates. For example, if today you did better in Verbal but last time you did better in Math, you can't select only those sections — you have to send the entire test. Select whether to send the scores from today's test, the previous test, or all your tests.

Your GRE score is good for five years after your testing date, so if you use ScoreSelect, you're limited to exams within the past five years.

Bringing the GRE into Your Comfort Zone

No need to panic about taking the GRE — and, besides, it's counterproductive. You want to be confident and relaxed, which means bringing the GRE into your comfort zone. Working through this book and taking the practice tests can bring you very close to that goal, but having the right mindset is also useful. The following sections help put the GRE in the proper perspective and serve to remind you of just how prepared you really are.

Getting familiar with what's on the exam

The GRE focuses on a specific range of core concepts and presents questions in a fairly predictable format. Surprises are unlikely, especially if you're prepared and know what to expect. After you've successfully completed this book, you'll have the knowledge and experience needed to get the

score you need on the exam. You will gain even more familiarity with the test questions and format by taking the computerized GRE sample tests.



REMEMBER

A little self-affirmation goes a long way. In the days leading up to the test and on test day, remind yourself just how fully prepared you are. The GRE is designed to be challenging, and everyone who takes it is nervous, but you're better prepared than they are. At least you will be.

Understanding the other admissions requirements

Although your performance on the GRE is important for admission, it's not the only thing that admissions departments look at. Your work experience, GPA, extracurricular activities (including volunteer work), and other factors that define you are also important parts of your application. Of course, you should do your very best on the exam, but this isn't a do-or-die situation. Worst case: Retake the exam. I've had plenty of students forget key points or make mistakes on their first time taking the exam. Next time around, they aced it!

Using Old Scores

What if you took the GRE a long time ago when you thought you were going to grad school and then opted to take a job or start a family instead? Well, if it was within the past five years, you're in luck (assuming you scored well). GRE scores are reportable for up to five years. That means that if you're pleased with your old score, you can send it right along to the school of your choice and say *adios* to this book right here and now. However, if you took the test more than five years ago, you have to take it again, so hold on to this book.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEST PREP

Stories abound about how someone's friend's cousin's roommate took the GRE cold (with no preparation) and aced it. This story may be true on a rare occasion, but you hear only the success stories. Those test-takers who went in cold and bombed don't brag about the outcome. As an instructor, however, I hear those other stories all the time.

The GRE doesn't test your intelligence: It tests how well you've prepared for the test. I'd put my money on a prepared dunce over an unprepared genius every single time. Dramatically raising a test-taker's score, say from the 30th to the 90th percentile ranking, is something I do every day before breakfast, and it's what I do for you in this book. Being prepared means knowing what to expect and how to answer the questions, which means that the first time you calculate a fraction of a circle had better not be on the actual GRE. Make your mistakes *here*, in practice, *not* on the test.