

**GRE TEST DAY**

*checklist*

To bring... Don't forget:	...Or not to bring Leave at home:
✓ Your admission ticket	✗ Your phone
✓ A (mental) list of universities you want to send your scores to	✗ GRE prep books or other study materials
✓ No. 2 or HB pencils and a good eraser	✗ Mechanical pencils and pens
✓ Photo ID	✗ Calculators and protractors
✓ A sweater in case the room is chilly	✗ Food, beverages, or tobacco
	✗ Digital watches or stopwatches
	✗ Any other electronic, recording, listening, or photographic devices
	✗ Any other personal items not related to the test

MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

# THE GRE TEST

## NOT AS SCARY AS YOU THINK



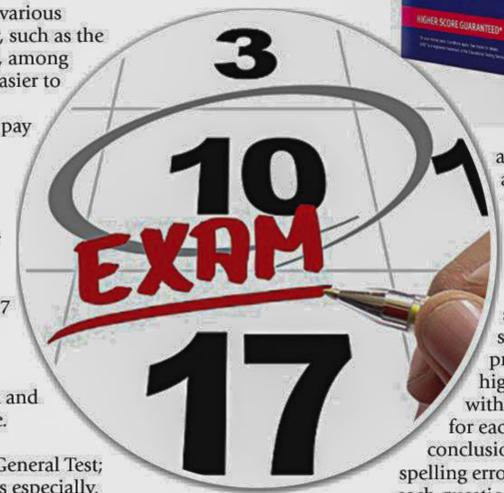
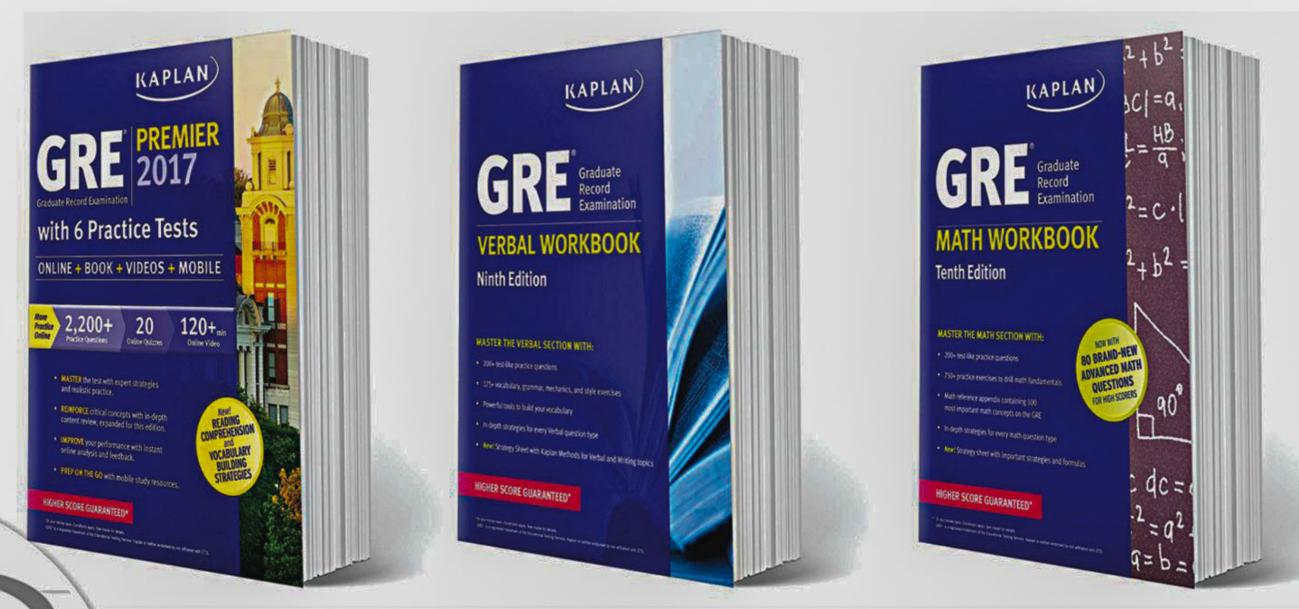
SARAH ANJUM BARI

*Contrary to horror stories narrated by some standardised test veterans, the GRE isn't designed to rob you of your sleep and social life weeks before you sit for the test. In fact, it is designed particularly to help test-takers score as well as they can, provided you've thrown in some basic preparation.*

The GRE has test centres at various institutions across the country, such as the American Alumni Association, among others. Personally, I found it easier to register on the ETS website ([www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org)), which lets you pay the USD 205 registration fee directly to the board, choose your test date and location, order five score reports to be directly sent to universities for free, and access practice resources. Extra score reports can also be ordered for USD 27 per copy. Closer to the exam date, the ETS sends email reminders with detailed instructions on what to expect and what to bring to the test venue.

Most American graduate programmes ask for the GRE General Test; graduate business programmes especially. More competitive universities may even ask for subject specific GRE tests, which are understandably a lot more comprehensive and challenging.

The GRE General Test is comprised of three parts – the Analytical, the Verbal, and the Quantitative sections. The Analytical section is basically



an essay writing exercise with particular focus on the argumentative format. The two questions – one an 'Issue' test and the other an 'Argument' test – provide a short statement or passage in the form of a speech, an advertisement, or a claim; they prompt the test-taker to write a passage in response. You have to discuss, agree or disagree with the provided statements, explaining your stand with sound reasoning. The more well-developed and specific your arguments are to each point made by the prompt, the better. A neat format goes a long way in scoring higher marks on the essay – a brief introductory paragraph with a topic sentence addressing each point, separate paragraphs for each argument, and a concise or even thought-provoking conclusion. Needless to say, it's imperative to check for typos, spelling errors, and general editing within the allotted 30 minutes for each question. The ETS web pages for GRE exams ([www.ets.org/gre](http://www.ets.org/gre)) have several sample prompts and marking schemes available for practice.

Since the Analytical part is the first exercise on the test, you're coming to it with a fresh mind. This means that you're able to think faster and with more focus, ideally resulting in better answers. It's also advisable to

plan out your response by jotting down your arguments in bullet points on the scratch paper provided by the test centre. This frees you up from having to think of arguments as you write; all you have to do is take each point on your scratch paper and build on it.

This is followed by the Quantitative or the Verbal section, which may appear in any order.

GRE math is tricky. Not necessarily because it's hard, but because it comprises of Algebra, Arithmetic, Geometry and Data Analysis – things that you've long left behind in your high school days; what appears to be easy at first soon becomes annoyingly tiresome, because you'll feel like you should be able to answer these questions. Rafidah Rahman, an NSU student who is currently preparing for the exam at the GRE Centre in Banani, points out, "Even though GRE comprises of basic maths, most of us have significant gaps in our knowledge of it. Before jumping into the advanced books, my advice would be to go through the Manhattan 1-6 GRE textbook, which highlights the major discussions and problems to help sharpen your basics." Following YouTube channels to brush up on basic mathematical concepts will also prove to be very helpful.

The elements that can make the Quantitative section hard are the computer format of the test and the 30-35 minutes allotted for each set

of 20 questions. Most of us aren't great at using an online calculator, so it might impede the pace with which you solve the problems. It's therefore better to use it for particularly challenging calculations such as long division or difficult multiplications, instead of something as simple as  $20 \times 100$ . Again, it's important to treat each question as a word problem and jot down the points on the scratch paper, no matter how easy it might seem at first. It's also helpful to remember a rule of thumb – in all the questions, all numbers are real numbers, coordinate systems and graphical data such as graphs and pie charts are drawn to scale, and geometric figures are not drawn to scale.

"I found the Verbal part of GRE easier to prepare for, but actually it was much harder for me to score well in the Verbal part compared to the Quantitative," says Tauhid Irteza Ali, a recent Economics graduate who sat for the GRE test in December 2016. This is because the Verbal Reasoning section consists of questions on sentence equivalence, text completion, and reading completion that tests you on your knowledge of advanced vocabulary and logical reasoning. Unlike math exercises, this isn't something you can master in a matter of weeks. Training centres suggest reading English-language books and newspapers to build a mature vocabulary, but it should ideally be an organic process over a longer period of time, instead of trying to memorise difficult words one week before the exam. You might want to keep in mind that reading comprehension in this case is more challenging than those in O Level English exams, so it's advisable to practise sufficiently using the test materials online or practice books found at most bookstores in Dhaka. A textbook called 'WordSmart' is useful for practicing the Verbal

Reasoning section, while 'Cracking the GRE' by the Princeton Review has particularly useful tips on preparing for the overall test, with a large number of both Quantitative and Verbal Reasoning exercises.

Rafidah, when asked about the kind of preparation she's putting in for the test, explains, "GRE might seem complicated if you look at the never-ending syllabus, but the trick is to deal with it one step at a time. Instead of piling on the work load, give it at least two hours of your time every day, and you'll be fine." Meanwhile, Tauhid addresses an interesting aspect: "In the end, it depends on the programme one is applying to. A maths-oriented programme like Engineering or Economics prioritises the Quantitative score of the GRE more than the overall score. So before starting the preparation, it's necessary to understand the programme requirements, and then stress more on that component of the GRE."

Finally, the biggest consolation lies in the fact that the computer-based GRE in particular is designed specifically to suit the test-takers' levels of competency – the questions start out easier, and they only get more difficult according to the pattern of answers you plug in. This, in addition to the alternate turns with which the Quantitative and Verbal sections appear, allows you to take a break from each kind of question (math or logical) in between sections.

The ETS allows you to take the test again within a certain period of time and choose which of your scores you send to universities. Even if you don't have time to take the test more than once before your graduate application deadlines, putting in some basic preparation for the GRE test can help make the test easy to a great extent. Fear not.

## Not going to work on the GRE

