GMAT STUDY GUIDE

The simple guide to understanding GMAT, studying effectively, and scoring 650+
What to expect

In this intro section, you will learn about the content of this guide.
In This Chapter...

1. What can I learn in this guide?
2. Who is this guide for?
3. Who are you and why did you prepare this guide?

1. What can I learn in this guide?
This guide has two main purposes: (1) cutting your preparation time and (2) improving your GMAT score.

(1) First of all, this guide includes all information that you need to start preparing for the GMAT so you don’t have to search on your own. You will learn what is GMAT, what exercises to expect, which books to buy, what exercises to focus on, etc. Secondly, there are certain aspect of GMAT that are less relevant for your admission so you can save time by approaching them more effectively. I explain which parts of GMAT are more relevant and how this may decrease your required preparation time. Thirdly, material beats method. If you use wrong books, you can spend 3 months studying very ineffectively. I will show you which books are the best and why. Finally, I have included a very specific study plan with which you will save additional time.

(2) You can improve your score by using the strategies described in the fourth chapter of this guide. Strategies cover what to focus on a test day, how to keep pace on GMAT, etc.

2. Who is this guide for?
- for those who need to take GMAT in order to apply to business school programs
• for those who want to find the most effective way to prepare for GMAT

• guide is even more perfect for those who did not start to prepare for GMAT yet (if you have, you might find some chapters redundant, however, some will still be relevant)

3. Who are you and why did you write this guide?

I am Alen Faljic. In year 2012 I decided to pursue my master degree abroad. After one year of preparing for various admission tests, writing CVs, writing motivational letters and interviewing, I have achieved my goal. I have applied to three schools: WU Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien, IE Madrid, HHL Leipzig. At the end, I was accepted at each of them, but I decided to pursue my masters degree in Vienna.

In the last two years, I have noticed that many students want to apply to best European business schools, but don't know how. The process is so overwhelming that many fail even before they start. I have been pretty successful with my applications so I started to receive many questions from my colleagues. First, I advised every single person via Skype but it soon became unbearable because I had several hours of Skype sessions every week. At that point, I decided to prepare a comprehensive guide that will comprise of my experiences and advices. The guide was a big success in my home country, Slovenia, and thus I decided to prepare an international version of it. In 2014, the guide was turned into a workshop, which was held in Vienna and hence called GMAT Vienna. This guide is an improved and extended version of a handout that we distributed during workshops.

My CV in six bullet points would look like this:

• Undergraduate studies: 2009 – 2013 – Faculty of Economics Ljubljana, Slovenia

• Graduate studies: 2013 – 2015 – WU Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien, SIMC program

• Applied and accepted to all three choices WU Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien, IE Madrid, HHL Leipzig (offered €14.500 scholarship)

• GMAT: 680

• TOEFL: 111

• Professional career: 2015 – IDEO – Business Designer

Btw, I am a real person. You can find me on LinkedIn. :)
This chapter is a high-level introduction of GMAT. If you have done some research on GMAT already, you can probably skip it. Otherwise, read carefully because it will help you understand the rest of the guide.
GMAT OVERVIEW

In This Chapter...

1. What is GMAT?
2. How is GMAT structured?
3. What types of exercises are in GMAT?
4. What is the range of GMAT results?
5. What does CAT mean?
6. What result do I need?
7. How tough is GMAT?
8. How to apply for GMAT?

1. What is GMAT?

The GMAT or Graduate Management Admission Test is a standardized admission test that is used by more than 5000 business schools around the world. The purpose of the GMAT is to help business school admission offices compare students in the admission process.

The GMAT does not test business knowledge but analytical, writing, quantitative, verbal and reading skills. In plain words, it tests your math, logic, and partly English language knowledge. No need to review your old economics books.

2. How is GMAT structured?

You can find a structure of GMAT exam in the table on the next page. No need to understand it yet. It’s not important for this phase. I would suggest you just quickly skim the table. Here is a quick simplified version:

- Analytical Writing Assessment is Essay
- Integrated Reasoning are Graphs and similar
- Quantitative is Maths
- Verbal is English language
### 3. What types of exercises are in GMAT?

Don’t bother too much with this table. It’s more useful as a resource once you start preparing. Just remember it’s here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of GMAT</th>
<th>Number of questions</th>
<th>Time available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analytical writing assessment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated reasoning</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative (Maths)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>75 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal (English)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>75 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3h 30 min</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. What is a range of GMAT results?

The most important result is the one between 200 and 800. Even more relevant than the absolute score is the percentile in which you find your score. Each student is compared to students that took the GMAT in the last years. You can see the current percentiles on the table here. For example, the result 700 means that a student scored better than 89 percents of student that took the GMAT.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of GMAT</th>
<th>Range of results</th>
<th>Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analytical writing assessment (Essay)</td>
<td>0-6,0</td>
<td>0,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated reasoning (Graphs and similar)</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative (Maths) + Verbal (English)</td>
<td>200-800</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5. What does CAT mean?

In order to explain what a CAT is you have to know that the GMAT is a test conducted on a computer.
A CAT is an acronym for the Computer Adaptive Test. This means that the GMAT is an exam that adapts to students performance during the test. With other words, test questions are not set in advance. There is a pool of possible questions and an exam gives a student a question based on his performance so far. You need to solve easier questions in order to earn harder questions.

For instance, you start with the first exercises of the Quantitative section of the GMAT. The test gives you a question that is worth 450 points and you solve it correctly. The next question you get is worth 500 and you solve it correctly again. After several correct answers, you get a question that is worth 740. Unfortunately, you solve this question incorrectly. Now, test’s algorithm gives you a question worth 710. You solve this one correctly and you earn a question worth 720. And so on...

Moreover, it is important to note that only Quantitative and Verbal parts of the exam are adaptive while Analytical Writing Assessment and Integrated Reasoning are not.

Note that at every moment there is only one question on the screen. You cannot go back or skip a question.

6. What result do I need?
Business schools usually publish average GMAT scores for their programs. You can find this information on websites of your preferred program.

Aim for the ballpark of 40 points under/over the average GMAT score.

If you do not get the information you need online, contact the admission office. Call them via the phone and ask about the average GMAT score and if they can evaluate your chances of successful admission.

Note that the GMAT typically is just one of the criteria for admission. It does not necessarily mean you will be accepted if you score higher than the average GMAT score.

7. How tough is GMAT?
The GMAT is a very demanding test that requires serious preparation. It does not only test your analytical abilities, but also your concentration and your endurance; two skills that are very important for business careers.

All in all, this is a hard question to answer. Your perception of GMAT difficulty will depend on your prior knowledge. It is to try to solve several questions and see for yourself.
8. How to apply for GMAT?

- Visit [https://accounts.gmac.com/Account/Register](https://accounts.gmac.com/Account/Register)
- Create a new account
- Register for the GMAT

The price is 250 USD + VAT (the exact price for your country will vary, depending on VAT %).

Be sure to register well in advance (1 month or more) because available spots are quickly taken.
In this chapter, you will find out which books and online resources you should use.
In This Chapter...

1. Which books should I use?
2. Are there any online resources you recommend?
3. What is Error Log? Should I keep one?
4. I have solved all questions in three must-have books. Are there any additional high-quality exercises?

1. What book should I use for my GMAT prep?

In general, I recommend two categories of books. First, there are certain absolute must-have books. They are published by the company that also administers the test. These books actually consist of retired GMAT questions and they are the single best exercise you can have.

Must-have books are:

- The Official Guide for GMAT Review - by GMAC
- GMAT Verbal Review - by GMAC
- GMAT Quantitative Review - by GMAC.

Visit this link to buy all three books on Amazon.

Second, there are some books that I would categorize as optional. These books are known as Manhattan GMAT Guides. There are 9 guides in this collection and they cover all question types from math to integrated reasoning.

These books consist of exercises and resources with detailed explanations and strategies. In my opinion, they are too detailed to go through them all.
I suggest you only pick those guides that cover your weak areas. So, if I were you, I would first just buy the three must-have books, solve 30-50 questions of each type and only then (after you have properly immersed yourself in GMAT prep) would I decide which Manhattan GMAT guide (if any) I need.

2. Are there any online resources you recommend?  
Yes, GMAT Club.  
Use GMAT Club whenever you are confronted with a question you don’t know how to solve and you don’t understand the official explanation (which happens fairly often!). Just copy “the first several words of the instructions” + “gmat club” in the Google search. You will be directed to the GMAT Club forum where members explain how to solve exercises.

3. What is Error Log? Should I keep one?  
While preparing for a GMAT you will need to solve several hundred exercises. Unless you have a super memory you will forget which questions you solved wrong. Thus, you need to keep an error log, which is a list of all the exercises that you solved incorrectly. There are many excel spreadsheet floating around the web, however, I would suggest you use pen and paper. If you buy your own books, you can just mark the questions that you have solved incorrectly.

Error log can help you identify your weak areas. If the majority of your incorrect answers comes from, for example, data sufficiency, you know that you have to spend more time on that aspect.

4. I have solved all questions in three must-have books. Are there any additional high-quality exercises?  
If you have (correctly!) solved all exercises in the three must-have books, I would suggest you use all free exercises you receive with the GMAT Prep Software (you will receive GMAT Prep Software when you register for an exam). If free exercises are not enough, you can buy 404 additional GMAT questions here.
In this chapter, you will find tips on how NOT to spend 3 months preparing for GMAT. This is probably the most valuable section of the whole guide, full of tips and suggestions. Read it carefully several times.
In This Chapter...

1. How much time do I need to prepare for GMAT?
2. What should I focus on?
3. How to save 50% or more of your studying time?
4. How important is pace keeping?
5. How can I train my pace?
6. Study plan

1. How much time do I need to prepare for GMAT?

I have heard everything... From 2 weeks to 4 months. I believe it really depends on your target score and your starting position (knowledge).

Generally, you should plan for at least 4 weeks of concentrated preparation with 3-4 hours per day. If you have time (and stamina) to prepare more than 4 hours per day, you can shorten your prep time significantly. The rule of a thumb is to invest around 100+ hours in prep. If you need more than 150, you are probably doing something wrong.

You can find my suggested study plan at the end of this chapter.

2. What should I focus on?

Most admission officers put much bigger emphasis on the total score (200-800) than on the AWA (0-6) and IR (1-8). Hence, the most important parts of the GMAT exam are the verbal and the quantitative part (check table on page 6 if you are not sure what I am explaining).

Some schools almost completely ignore the AWA and IR results. For example, the admission office at my university said...
that they mainly only take the total score into account. I wouldn’t skip the AWA and IR completely, but just spend far less time on them.

This is a great news for you. It means that you can invest much more time in quantitative and verbal exercises. Moreover, by preparing for quantitative and verbal sections, you are indirectly preparing for integrated reasoning (IR) and analytical writing assessment (AWA). Hence, it makes sense that you start your GMAT prep with quant and verbal sections and invest some time in the IR and AWA section towards the end of your prep. I have already integrated this approach in the study plan example on the next page.

Another great tip is that the verbal part seems to count slightly more for the total score. In other words, if you do great in quant but poor in verbal, your score will be worse than vice-versa. Hence, it makes sense that you spend slightly more time on a verbal part of your preparation.

3. How to save 50% or more of your studying time?

- Limit the time you prepare for AWA and IR sections. One-two days of preparation for each should be enough. Focus on AWA and IR toward the end of your prep.

- Don’t get obsessed with GMAT internet forums and other online sources. Don’t read how to study. Just follow the first steps at the end of this guide, start studying and you will figure everything else along the way.

- Study through examples. Don’t try to learn all the theory and do exercises afterwards. Do the opposite. Learn theory through doing exercises. If you repeat one exercise until you can solve it, you will remember the theory along the way.

- Material beats method. Limit the study material you use. In many cases, the three official books are enough. Only buy Manhattan GMAT Guides if really necessary.

- Prepare, but don’t “over prepare”. Aim for 100-140 hours of prep. More is usually too much.

4. How important is pace keeping?

There is a severe score penalty if you do not finish the test.

Worst case scenario: You still have 20% of the questions unanswered, but only 5% of the time left. You rush through the remaining questions getting many of them wrong in a row. Because of the CAT-model this will severely damage your score.

Getting an easy question wrong hurts your score more than getting a difficult question wrong and the question following a
wrong answer is always easier. Consequently, getting 3 questions wrong in a row hurts your score more than getting 3 wrong separately.

So, try to keep track of how much time you need per exercise in the final stages of your prep; last 10-15 days.

5. How can I train my pace?
Make it a habit to not take too long for a question. You can use the following table as a guideline concerning how much time you can spend per question type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question type</th>
<th>Max time per question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative (PS and DS)</td>
<td>2 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Correction (SC)</td>
<td>75 sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Reasoning (CR)</td>
<td>2 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension (reading)</td>
<td>3 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension (question)</td>
<td>90 sec</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Study plan
Example of a study plan is on the right-hand side.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First 3 days</td>
<td>Carefully read the introduction in the Official Guide for the Quant and Verbal parts and solve 10 questions of each type (PS, DS, SC, CR, RC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Solve a diagnostic test in the Official Guide 13th edition determine your starting point, how much time you need and weakest areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20 days</td>
<td>Solve all questions from the Official Guide GMAT 13th edition (read answer explanations, use Manhattan for your weak spot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>GMAT prep-test (1st practice exam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15 days</td>
<td>Go through the Quant Review and Verbal Review with a time limit (just as in real exam, 75 minutes for 37/41 questions) + analyze wrong answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Do Integrated Reasoning exercises in the GMAT Prep software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Learn the structure for the Analytical Writing Assessment part and write few essays (2-3) based on the topics published online (<a href="http://goo.gl/ZMmbFp">http://goo.gl/ZMmbFp</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>GMAT prep-test (2nd practice exam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>33-43 days (3-4 hours / day)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this chapter, you will learn what to expect on your test day.
In This Chapter

1. How does a test day look like?
2. Are there any breaks during GMAT?
3. How do I send my GMAT score?
4. When to take GMAT?
5. Test day equipment
6. How long do I need to wait for GMAT score?
7. Taking GMAT multiple times
8. Should I focus just on Quantitative and Verbal part?

1. How does a test day look like?
A picture is worth a thousand words and a video is worth a million words. Almost everything you need to know about the test day is described in this video.

2. Are there any breaks during GMAT?
There are two optional breaks during the GMAT. Each of them lasts 8 minutes. I strongly advise you to take both of them.

One break is after an Integrated Reasoning section and one break is after a Quantitative section.

If you extend your break past 8 minutes, you will lose time on the next section of the exam.

3. How do I send my GMAT score?
First of all, I would advise you to select your top 3-5 school choices before taking the test.

Scores can be sent only by the company that conducts the test. You can send your official score to 5 schools for free if you indicate schools BEFORE the test. Each additional report costs $28.
You will indicate your chosen schools in the test application on a computer before starting with the official test.

4. When to take GMAT?
Morning. GMAT is a long and exhausting test that will test not only your knowledge but also your concentration and stamina. Thus, it is important to be as rested as possible. Ideally, I would schedule a GMAT exam for 9 or 10am.

5. Test day equipment
You will receive:
- GMAT Booklet & pen (for taking notes and calculations)
- Earplugs (but they are really bad so I suggest you bring your own)

Not allowed:
- Watch
- Notes or scrap of papers
- Calculators
- Food & beverage (only during breaks)

6. How long do I need to wait for GMAT score?
You will receive an unofficial score right after finishing exam. This result consists just of 200-800 result from Quantitative and Verbal parts of an exam. The official score is sent via email within 3-4 weeks. This result will also comprise of IR and AWA results.

7. Taking GMAT multiple times
If you take GMAT two or three times it should not affect your application success. Many students actually do take GMAT several times.

When a student takes the GMAT exam his scores are sent to the school. But the score is not sent to a school via regular mail and there is no recruitment officer that opens an envelope and takes a look at your exam. Schools are notified electronically that they received a new score. Usually, they do not take a look at every single notification they receive. They only verify your GMAT score if they intend to accept you.

Note that you can take 5 GMAT tests in 12 months. Every next appointment has to be 31 days after the previous appointment.
8. Should I focus just on Quantitative and Verbal part?

I would suggest that you take it relatively easy on AWA and IR sections of the exam. Sure, try to do them as well as possible, but don’t be nervous if you don’t know every answer. Save your energy for verbal and quantitative sections.

One trick you can use is to finish AWA or/and IR before the time is up (30 minutes) and just rest. For example, if you finish you AWA in 25 minutes, don’t click “next” right away. Wait until your time is almost up, and then proceed with the exam. Take these few minutes to rest.
YOUR FIRST STEP

Still confused? In this chapter, you will learn what is the easiest way to kick-off your GMAT prep today.
In This Chapter

1. Buy books
2. Immerse yourself in the exercises
3. Take diagnostic test
4. Prepare your own study plan

The four steps presented in this chapter are a more detailed version of the first four steps presented in the study plan from page 15.

1. Buy books

First of all, you should buy the must-have books. I suggest you buy all three OG books also mentioned in the 2nd chapter. However, if you are still not sure if this whole GMAT thing is for you, buy just the main OG guide.

There is no need to buy other books (optional ones) yet.

2. Immerse yourself in the exercises

Carefully read the introduction of the Quant and Verbal sections in the Official Guide. These introductions consist of general information on strategies and theory concerning exercises. They will not be sufficient for a perfect score, but they will remind you of knowledge that you already have.

After that, solve 10 questions of each type (PS, DS, SC, CR, RC).

Reading the instructions and solving questions will prepare you for a diagnostic test. Many students take a diagnostic test right
away without any prior mini preparation. This is a waste of time and a test. If you take a diagnostic test right away, you will do many careless mistakes and give incorrect answers because you don’t understand the wording or logic behind the questions.

This mini prep serves as your getting-to-know with GMAT so you will better understand the logic behind it.

3. Take a diagnostic test
In the OG, you will find a diagnostic test, which will reveal how well prepared you are. More importantly, it will also show you where you should put more emphasis during your prep.

4. Prepare your own study plan
If you do all three preceding steps, you will already have a very good understanding of GMAT. In this point, you can develop your own plan. Take the one I have provided on page 15 as an example and make your own.