

PREPARATION MATERIAL FOR THE GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATION (GRE)

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PROJECT 1000: The Second Thousand

What are some practical tips to help prepare students for the GRE general test?

a. Read the free official *GRE Registration & Information Bulletin* you use to register for the test carefully and completely. It contains a great deal of valuable information, but its prose is very terse and economical with words. Some of the most important tips are given almost in passing. We suggest therefore that you read every word of the bulletin and outline all information related to preparing for the GRE. Pay particular attention to the sections on “Registration”, “Taking the GRE Tests”, “Score Reporting”, “Preparing for the Tests”, “Test-Taking Strategy”, “General Test Sample Questions with Explanations”, and “Practice General Test.”

b. Take the GRE general test and, if required by the programs/universities to which you will be applying, the GRE subject test in your field no later than the December preceding the Fall semester for which you are seeking admission to graduate school. Project 1000 strongly encourages you to take the GRE general test either in June between your junior and senior years (when most students are not taking classes and thus have plenty of time to prepare for the test without major distractions) or in October of your senior year (when if something goes wrong unexpectedly such as a sudden illness you can still take the test in December in time for your application to graduate school to be complete before most graduate program deadlines).

c. If at all possible, begin preparing/studying for the GRE at least six weeks to two months prior to the date on which you plan to take the test. Be sure to register for the test even earlier in order to avoid missing the registration deadlines (printed on the back cover of the official *GRE Registration & Information Bulletin*). Try to commit at least an uninterrupted 30 minutes every day. It is generally more effective to work every or nearly every day for at least a few minutes than to work less often for larger amounts of time. Try to avoid having to “cram” a few days before the test date since this is considerably less effective than a more paced effort over a longer period of time. Nevertheless, generally speaking *any* preparation is an improvement over no preparation at all. Because the test presumes a certain familiarity with directions, question and answer formats, test procedure, and the parameters of the material being tested, you will be at a disadvantage compared to other test-takers if you do not make a reasonable effort to orient yourself to the test as fully as practicable.

d. Most experts agree that the best form of practice for the GRE is trying to answer actual old test questions under simulated circumstances. This form of practice familiarizes you implicitly with the test-taking situation, the type and range of subject material that will be covered, and test directions. It also allows you to experiment with and practice different strategies/approaches to analyzing and answering the questions asked (for example, skimming the questions in the reading comprehension portion of the verbal ability section before reading the passage itself versus reading the passage thoroughly first then the questions or skimming both the reading passage and questions before thoroughly reading the passage, etc.). Different strategies are more effective than others for different people; whatever helps you answer the most questions correctly within the time allotted is the most effective strategy for you. The only way you can hope to find out what strategies work most effectively for you is to experiment with various approaches to actual old GRE questions and to analyze the results *before* the test date. Areas you need to work on more than others (such as, for example, how to use the Pythagorean theorem to help solve a geometry problem or what is the meaning of “saturnine”) will become readily apparent. Practice with simulated testing situations should also help to greatly reduce test-anxiety.

After each simulated testing session be sure to review carefully the questions you were unable to answer correctly until you understand both how to answer the question correctly and expeditiously and why you answered it incorrectly. Look up all mathematical formulae or vocabulary words you encounter that you

do not know. One possible schedule you may wish to try is to take one 30 minute verbal, quantitative, or analytical ability section on the first day (being sure to time yourself). The next two days you might check your answers to see whether they are correct and figure out both why you failed to answer correctly the incorrect ones and how the correct answers can be arrived at as expeditiously as possible. On the fourth day, if you have finished reviewing your first practice section, you would be ready to take another section under simulated testing conditions. After you have repeated this process several times, having taken and carefully reviewed several sections each of analytical, verbal, and quantitative reasoning, you may want to start concentrating on the section(s) which give(s) you the most difficulty and/or those sections most important to the academic field in which you intend to study (for example, the quantitative section for mathematics or engineering, the verbal section for English literature or history, the analytical section for philosophy, etc.). You may also determine at this point whether or not you need to spend time doing a basic math review.

e. The free official *GRE Registration & Information Bulletin* has one section each of verbal ability, quantitative ability, and analytical ability old test questions taken from previously administered actual GRE general tests. Additional actual old GRE general tests may be ordered directly from the Educational Testing Service (publishers of the GRE) using the “GRE Publications Order Form” found in the back of the official *GRE Registration & Information Bulletin*. They are available in both printed (approximately \$15 for 1992-93) and software (approximately \$80 during 1992-93) forms under the name *Practicing to take the GRE General Test*. In addition to six actual GRE general tests with answers, the printed version of this series now (#9 on but not earlier editions) also includes one additional test with explanations and a math review section. Older editions (#8 and earlier) of the printed version provide three additional old actual GRE tests, but without the math review or any explanations of how to arrive at the correct answer given. The software version has included the latter for some time. When ordering be careful not to confuse the various subject test practice booklets with those of the general test. Please note that although many commercial vendors have GRE preparation booklets of varying comprehensiveness and utility for sale, only GRE/ETS own the copyright to actual old GRE questions. Other companies must write their own simulated questions in an attempt to replicate the copyrighted actual GRE test. If at all possible, you should try to practice with actual old GRE questions. To save money, you may want to pool your resources with friends and order *Practicing to take the GRE General Test* to share with them or buy it yourself with a prearrangement to resell it to someone else who will be taking the test later than you (after you have already taken the test and no longer have need for it).

f. The quantitative ability section of the GRE General Test includes *only* arithmetic, algebra, and geometry (*excluding* the ability to construct proofs). It does *not* include or require any trigonometry or calculus. The math review sections of the free official *GRE Registration & Information Bulletin* and especially the more detailed official *Practicing to take the GRE General Test* (official printed version #9 or later or any official software version) sold by GRE/ETS are excellent places to start your review. Most of the commercial guides available also have excellent math review sections. The advantage of using a math review designed especially for the GRE is that it helps you save time and effort by focusing immediately on what you need to know to do well on the test without wasting any time on the innumerable things you do *not* need to know to do well on the quantitative ability section of the GRE general test.

g. The analytical ability section of the GRE general test requires *no* knowledge of formal logic or the terminology of formal logic. To quote p. 31 of the 1992-93 official *GRE Registration & Information Bulletin* “analytical reasoning problems can be solved using knowledge, skills, vocabulary, and computational ability (simple addition and subtraction) common to college students.” However, because many students at first find the questions in both the analytical reasoning and logical reasoning sub-sections of the analytical ability section of the GRE general test unusual at best and somewhat bizarre at worst, it is essential that you familiarize yourself with the format of the questions and expected answers. The only effective method doing this that Project 1000 can suggest is for you to practice these questions for as long as necessary until you are comfortable with the format and can answer them reasonably confidently, accurately, and expeditiously.

- h. Knowledge of cognates (the thousands of words that are similar in meaning and spelling in both English and Spanish due to their derivation from a common ancestor in Latin) is a resource that students with some degree of fluency in Spanish may find helpful with the verbal section of the GRE general test. For example, some words that are relatively uncommon in English (such as “felicity”) have cognates that are much more frequently used in Spanish (in this case, “felicidad”). Be careful, however, of “false cognates” (for example, “éxito” in Spanish means “success” *not* “exit” or “leave”) which may be the result of coincidences in spelling between the two languages or the evolution of meanings over time. A knowledge of prefixes, suffixes, and word roots derived from Latin that are common in English (and Spanish) can also help you figure out the meaning of words you otherwise are unfamiliar with.
- i. When practicing with actual old GRE test questions be sure to learn the distinctly different question and answer format of each sub-section of the three major sections of the GRE general test. More specifically, learn carefully the different rules, expectations, and answer formats of the “Analogies”, “Antonyms”, “Sentence Completions”, and “Reading Comprehension” sub-sections of the Verbal Abilities section; the “Quantitative Comparison”, “Discrete Quantitative”, and “Data Interpretation” sub-sections of the Quantitative Abilities section; and the “Logical Reasoning” and “Analytical Reasoning” sub-sections of the Analytical Abilities sections of the GRE general test. Familiarity with these sub-sections will save you time during the test that you can use either to answer more questions or to have more time to think about the answers to difficult questions.
- j. Pace yourself carefully when taking the test. Your GRE general test score is determined entirely by the number of correct answers that are recorded on your answer sheet. Every single question answered correctly no matter how simple it was to answer counts exactly the same toward your score as the most difficult question to answer. It only makes sense therefore that you should first answer the questions that take the least time and seem easiest and save the more difficult questions for last. You may then want to consider dividing the difficult questions into two categories: (1) those you have no idea how to answer or do not have enough time remaining to answer; and (2) those you can probably answer correctly, but need time to do so. It’s probably a good idea to guess outright the answers to #1 while working through those in #2 until you determine the answer. Do not spend too much time on any one question, however, unless you have answered all the others first! You may find it helpful to know that generally speaking questions are ordered from easiest first to most difficult last within each sub-section (be sure to note however that there are two to four sub-sections within each 30 minute section—each subsequent sub-section beginning over again with the easiest first). Needless to say, what one person finds easy another may find difficult and vice-versa.
- k. There is no penalty or subtraction from your score for wrong answers on the GRE general test (*although there is on the GRE subject tests which unlike the GRE general test require a more restrained guessing strategy*). Because every correct answer on the GRE general test counts exactly the same toward your final scores, and because there is no penalty for wrong answers, you should never leave the answer “bubble” blank for any question. If you do not know the answer to a given question, or do not have enough time remaining to answer the question, you should guess. If you are able to eliminate one or more possible answers, record your best guess on the answer sheet. For all questions that you do not have enough time to even look at or for which you cannot eliminate any of the possible answers, you should consistently enter the same answer. This should be your choice of “A”, “B”, “C”, or “D” (do not guess “E” unless you have already eliminated some other choice or choices because it is an option on only some questions). Since the test is designed so that there are roughly an equal number of “A”s, “B”s, “C”s, and “D”s, guessing the same “favorite” letter every time you do not know the answer or cannot eliminate any of the possible answers should answer approximately 25% of these questions correctly. Depending on how many questions you are forced to answer by guessing in this manner, the positive effect on your score as opposed to leaving them blank could be quite significant.
- l. Project 1000 participants are invited to attend free workshops on preparing for taking the GRE to be held in select cities across the nation (travel will be at the student’s own expense). Call Project 1000 staff for information regarding sites and dates.

m. Do not be discouraged if even after repeated practice you are unable to answer all questions in a given section within the 30 minutes allotted. The test is designed so that *most* test-takers will not have enough time to comfortably answer every question. After careful practice, learn to answer as many questions on the GRE general test as you can and to effectively guess answers for the rest. Keep in mind that the test is designed so that nearly half the people taking the test will answer less than half the questions correctly.

n. Relax as much as possible and remember that the GRE is only one of many factors that are considered in graduate school admissions.

When is the best time to take the GREs?

It is strongly recommended that you take the GRE general test in the Fall preceding the year for which you are trying to gain admission rather than in the Spring immediately prior to the semester of planned admission (and even better still during the June between your *junior* and senior years). The best time to take the GRE subject test (if required by the programs to which you are applying) is during December of your senior year (unlike the GRE general test your scores should improve the more you learn, but you cannot take it any later and still have the scores reported in time to meet most graduate school application deadlines). Higher percentages of Hispanic students take the GRE later in the year than Anglo students. This is not the best strategy because it greatly reduces the opportunities to be admitted into selective graduate programs and especially to receive financial aid if admitted.

Can Project 1000 help with the cost of the GRE?

The Graduate Records Examinations Board provides Project 1000 with a limited number of vouchers which can be submitted to GRE/ETS *in lieu of payment* of their standard fees for taking the general test, taking the subject test, and requesting additional score reports. Eligibility for these fee waiver vouchers is based on both eligibility for Project 1000 and financial need. If you have been receiving financial aid as an undergraduate student or if you have been out of school for several years and your working income has been low, you may be eligible. To be considered, please complete your GRE registration form, attach a copy of your GAPS FAS or other Financial Statement, and send it to Project 1000. If Project staff determine that you are eligible for a Project 1000/GRE fee waiver voucher, we will forward your GRE registration form with a fee waiver voucher directly to GRE/ETS for processing. Conversely, if Project staff determine that you are ineligible for a Project 1000/GRE fee waiver voucher, we will return your GRE registration form directly to you. In the latter circumstance, you then would need to send your GRE registration form *with payment* directly to GRE/ETS. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Since it will take several weeks to receive, review, and forward or return your GRE registration form and fee waiver request, be sure you send them to us *well before the registration deadline* for the date you wish to take the GRE. Please contact Project 1000 (1-800-327-4893) if you have any questions about this procedure or would like additional information about GRE fee waivers.

Test-Taking Tip Sheet

General



This is one of a series of test-taking tip sheets developed to provide Latino and other Hispanic students with important information about preparing for standardized tests. This tip sheet provides general information. All of the tip sheets have been written by Educational Testing Service (ETS) staff members experienced in the development of tests, in collaboration with representatives of the ASPIRA Association, Inc. Other separate tip sheets provide information on analytical, reading, verbal, writing, and quantitative questions.■

By the time you have reached college, you have probably taken several standardized multiple-choice tests. You are likely to remember your elementary and high school teachers administering those tests in your classroom. Through such experience, you have probably learned that tests are important because they let you show how much you have learned over the years or in a particular course. At this point, you may be thinking about becoming a teacher or going on to graduate school — perhaps business, law, or medical school. In most cases, you will have to take at least one standardized test as you pursue your goal. What follows is some basic information that you should have to increase your chances of doing well on any standardized test you may need to take now or in the future. The best preparation, however, remains good solid academic courses taken with enthusiasm.

■ Be a good consumer

The best source of information about a particular test is usually the test maker. Most test publishers today provide either free or

at a modest cost copies of actual tests that have been given previously. Make sure you have at least one of these disclosed tests. Be sure to review it and any other material provided by the publisher. *This is important!*

Know what the test is supposed to measure and what it is *not* supposed to measure. Know how the agencies and/or schools to which you are applying use the test. For example, is there a cut score — i.e., a score below which your application or certification will not be considered? If so, set your desired score above, not at, the minimum required. Thus, your strategy in preparing for the test allows for encountering more difficult items than you had anticipated.

Plan to do your best the first time you take the test. There are several reasons for this suggestion. First, it saves you time and money. Second, if you don't do much by way of preparation in the interim between two tests, it is unlikely that your score will increase, and it could decrease. Finally, unless you are required to reach a certain minimum score, as, for example, with examinations that are used nationally for teachers, schools are generally encouraged

to average your two scores, rather than simply take the higher score.

Once you have a sense of why you are taking the test, what it measures, and what score you are aiming for, it is time to begin preparation. The next section is divided into three parts: what you should do *before* taking a test, what you should do *during* a test, and what you should do *after* taking a test. ■

■ Before the test

You should have in hand the most up-to-date information on the test you will be taking. You need the testing program's bulletin of information for the current academic year. It is vital that you have the current version of the bulletin because it will reflect any changes that have been made in the test.

Assessing your strengths and weaknesses

Becoming familiar with the types of questions on the test increases your confidence. Also, some question types seem complex if you first see them in the actual testing situation. To take a sample test, spend some time each day sitting at your desk with a timer. Take one section of the test in the time allocated. Put the test away and go on with other activities. The next day, find the answer key and score the section. Try to determine why you got the correct answers and why you got the incorrect ones. On the third day, take another timed section. On day four, score it and try to determine again why you answered correctly or incorrectly. Continue this way until you have finished the entire test. Then compute your score using the information provided with the test you are using. At some point you should begin to spot patterns to your responses. For example, are you good at determining the tone of a passage, but not very good at inferences? Are you terrific with fractions, but terrible with the placement of decimal points? You may discover that what you thought were

your weaknesses are not really your weaknesses at all. Work hard defining your problem areas.

Once problem areas are identified, you need to decide if the test contains enough of those types of questions to make it unlikely that you would score well. If so, try to practice that question type as much as possible. Consider going to the reading, writing, or math skills center and asking for help. This leads to an obvious point that is often overlooked. *Don't procrastinate* in taking the sample test. The earlier you identify strengths and weaknesses, the longer you have to work on any problems.

Getting prepared

If you haven't had mathematics in a long time or if you have been using a calculator or the computer to do high-level math, consider a math review. Most standardized tests at the graduate level require arithmetic, first-year algebra, and plane geometry, *not calculus*. Your review of the practice test may have already made you aware of this.

Know the time allocated for each section, how many sections there are in the test, and what the time "feels like." Practicing with this in mind should be helpful to you.

Make sure you completely understand the directions with the help of the bulletin of information. Some question types have lengthy and complex directions. Not knowing them well before you take the test cuts down the time you can give to working on the questions themselves. This is particularly true with the analytical question types that are a part of the Graduate Management Admission Test, the Graduate Record Examinations General Test, and the Law School Admission Test.

Make sure you know prefixes and suffixes so you can guess intelligently at words you do not know. Here are some; consult a good grammar book or an English professor for others.



Prefixes

a = not	peri = around, about
bio = life, living things	retro = backward,
co = with	back, behind
de = away from	syn = together, with
ex = out, former	trans = beyond,
inter = between	across
micro = small	ultra = beyond, very
omni = all	much

Suffixes

ary = pertaining to	ier = one who does
ance = state of being	ology = study of
ee = one who is	tude = condition,
ic = like, made of	state of being

Find out what materials you may and may *not* take to the testing site. You probably will need several No. 2 pencils and a watch. You probably will *not* be permitted to take a calculator, extra blank paper (write directly in the test book), or any materials for last-minute cramming. In many cases, photo identification may be necessary. *Don't forget your admission ticket!*

Find out whether there is a penalty for guessing. The bulletin of information should provide this information. If there is *not*, then be sure to fill in an answer to every question. You have nothing to lose since no points will be subtracted. If there is a penalty for guessing, by practicing on the sample test you can find out how good a guesser you are. For many tests you lose one-third to one-fourth of a point for each wrong answer. This total is then subtracted from the actual number of questions you answered correctly in determining your score. Most sources indicate that if you can narrow the possible answers to two, you increase your chances of getting the right answer. This does little good, however, if you are a terrible guesser. Find out before the actual test. Then either find some ways to improve your guessing ability or decide, by reviewing your guessing pattern, approximately how many questions you can afford to guess.■

■ During the test

Get to the test site *early* — perhaps a half hour before the time you are required to report. This gives you a chance to find the testing room, relax, and become aware of any unanticipated circumstances like a room that feels cold, a shortage of left-handed desks, and so forth. The test center supervisor may then be able to meet your needs.

Work carefully on the designated test section. Remember, since you have to read a question in order to find out what it's asking and what the answer choices are, you should simultaneously make a determination on whether:

- 1) You know the answer and should immediately mark the answer sheet, or
- 2) You think that if you have enough time you can get the answer, or
- 3) There is *no* way you have any idea of what is being asked.

For the sake of organization, for situations (2) and (3) you may want to consider making two types of marks in your test book — for example, a pencil dot if you think you can answer with enough time and a minus sign where it appears hopeless. Remember, if there is no penalty for guessing you are going to answer every question anyway, so the minus sign is just a way of reminding yourself where these questions are.

For the section you are working on, save a few minutes to go back to questions that need more time. Five minutes should be enough. In cases where there is *no* penalty for guessing, use the last 30 seconds before time is called to make sure that for each question you have filled in a space on the answer sheet.

Do *not* let other test takers distract you from your task. Those who receive your scores do *not* know if you finished first or last. This is *not* the time to worry about whether someone else has finished before you.■

■ After the test

It is hoped that following the suggestions above will help you have a wonderful test-taking experience. But if you feel you did *not* do your best because you were sick or too nervous or not well enough prepared, consider canceling your scores. This can generally be done by speaking to the test center supervisor or by contacting the test maker within a few days after the test. You should realize, however, that your answer sheet will *not* be scored at all, and, in some cases, the institutions you have designated will receive your name on the score roster with a notation that your scores were cancelled. Check your bulletin for information about score cancellation.

If you are a junior and taking the test early, consider having the scores sent only to you. This will give you the chance to review your scores in light of your goals and consider whether you earned a score that you feel is in line with your abilities. You should be aware, however, that if you have your scores sent just to you, you will probably have to pay additional fees for score reports to be sent to the agencies and institutions you want to receive them. In any case, if you have used the available practice tests under timed conditions, you may not need to use this option since you should have a fairly good idea of how you are likely to perform on the actual test before you take it.

If it is available, consider ordering a copy of the actual test you took and a copy of your answer sheet. You can review your performance, and you may find the review useful in preparing for your next standardized test.

Use the following list to get information about some of the major standardized tests:

Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT)

P.O. Box 6101
Princeton, NJ 08541-6101
(609) 771-7330

Graduate Record Examinations Program (GRE)

Educational Testing Service
P.O. Box 6000
Princeton, NJ 08541-6000
(609) 771-7670

Law School Admissions Council (LSAT)

Box 2000
Newtown, PA 18940-0998
(215) 968-1001

Association of American Medical Colleges (MCAT)

Suite 200
One Dupont Circle, NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 828-0400

Teacher Programs and Services (NTE)

Educational Testing Service
Box 6051
Princeton, NJ 08541-6051
(609) 771-7670

This test preparation tip sheet was originally prepared by Carole D. Slaughter of Educational Testing Service at the request of the Steering Committee for the HBCU-ETS Collaboration. Inquiries may be addressed to the Office of the Corporate Secretary, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ 08541.

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Information about the programs and services provided by ASPIRA can be obtained from the ASPIRA Association, Inc., 1112 16th Street, NW, Suite 340, Washington, DC 20036

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HO 1.2

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Read each statement carefully; decide whether each is true or false. To indicate your answer, circle "T" for true or "F" for false.

- T F 1. Test questions should be answered in order no matter how long it takes for each answer.
- T F 2. You don't need to bother with the directions given within the test. It's easy to figure out what to do without reading the directions.
- T F 3. If there is time left after finishing the test, you should review your answers, even those you weren't sure of.
- T F 4. Even though there is a time limit on the test, it's okay to spend as much time as necessary on each question.
- T F 5. When you're not sure of the answer to a question, you can sometimes eliminate choices and then guess from the remaining choices.
- T F 6. With a multiple-choice question, you don't need to read all the possible choices before answering.
- T F 7. After answering each question, it's a good idea to make sure you have marked the answer you meant to mark on your answer sheet.
- T F 8. The more nervous you are while taking a test, the better your chances of getting a good score.
- T F 9. You are in the testing room. The test supervisor has just explained about taking the test and asks, "Are there any questions?" You should not ask questions if no one else does.
- T F 10. Suddenly you realize that you marked the answer to question 25 opposite number 24 on your answer sheet. This means that you probably skipped an answer somewhere and you should go back to find where.