

GMAT - Top ten best methods to improve your mathematical skills

A high score in the GMAT exam is essential to get admission in top business schools. The GMAT exam is made of three parts: GMAT Verbal, GMAT Math and Analytical Writing. Usually GMAT Exam takers have years of training and practice in the verbal and writing part. However, the same is not true for GMAT Math. A high GMAT score, therefore, is largely dependent on high GMAT Math score. What can students do to get a high score in GMAT Math? What are the best methods and strategies that are taught in effective GMAT Courses? The top 10 strategies on GMAT math preparation are listed below. Said differently, the following is a list of "Do and Don'ts" in obtaining a high GMAT score.

High School Math: The areas in math tested in the GMAT exam are not different from what one has learned in the high school. In fact, the syllabus of GMAT Math is shorter than what one may have studied many years ago in the school. The problem is that one may not easily remember or recall what one has seen several years ago. A good GMAT course, either self-made or through review classroom, should therefore, first emphasize and help recall what one already knows. Therefore, to get started, GMAT aspirants should simply pull out old high school books and familiarize themselves with formulas and concepts described there.

Different Format: While the GMAT course content is limited and based on high school math, what makes the GMAT exam difficult in the way questions are asked. How often is an individual required to resolve a 'data-sufficiency' question, either during high school days or now? Never! Similarly, the word problems in the GMAT Exam require a good understanding of the way the question is being asked. Needless to say, a majority of high GMAT scorers do familiarize and train themselves in understanding the format of GMAT exam and practice working within the framework of the GMAT format.

Computer-adaptive Test: The GMAT Math is not only different in the way questions are asked, but the order and difficulty of GMAT math is also very unique. Experts contend that a high GMAT score is dependent on the ability to tackle the adaptive style of the GMAT exam. Since the level of difficulty of a regular question is dependent on correctness of the previous response, all test-takers feel challenged when taking the GMAT exam in the computer adaptive environment. Thus, learning how to face difficult testing conditions may have many advantages. In short, students may want to build stamina to deal with hard GMAT Math questions without feeling stressed out.

Word Problems: Studies have shown that students, who get high GMAT score, are extremely good at solving the word problems. There are two reasons for that: (1) about one-third of all GMAT math questions are word-problems and (2) cracking word-problems does not require learning a new math topic. Experts conclude that high scorers have one thing in common – they have mastered the art of translating the given GMAT Math problem from English statements (word and sentences) to arithmetic / algebra forms thus making it mathematically solvable. The rule of thumb is simple: translate word problems verbatim in the same order. Upon correct translation, one could see how difficult looking problems become simple and solvable. All good GMAT course train GMAT exam takers in the word problem transformation process.

Practice, Practice and Practice: It may sound like a cliché, but the truth remains that practicing is the key to get a high GMAT score. Popular GMAT courses can only offer a limited number of contact hours. The number of hours spent in the review classroom or with the instructor / tutor can never be adequate. While most GMAT courses are helpful in exposing you with basics of the GMAT exam, no GMAT course can guarantee you a high GMAT score unless you spend dozens of hours every week practicing new tips & tactics in GMAT Math. On the conservative side, one may require over 2 months to practice and over 3 practice tests to fully realize one's potential and score high in the GMAT Exam.

Study Aid: Students (and in some cases, new instructors) often search for the "best" book on GMAT math. Nowadays, with so many other medium to learn from, for example GMAT CD / DVD, GMAT exam toolkit, Flashcard, Audio-book etc. the search for the one "best" study aid has become even more challenging and confusing. It is, however ironical that despite differences of opinion on the "best" source, most of the study aids are very good and no single tool may be "best" or "perfect" or "complete". Students interested in obtaining a high GMAT score, therefore, are recommended to: (1) choose a GMAT course that provides maximum number of contact hours, (2) purchase a book or CD or DVD toolkit which is popular and readily available, (3) use 1 and 2 from different sources i.e., book or CD from company A and classroom review course from company B.

GMAT Math preparation time: No matter how dedicated and hard working one may be, a high GMAT math score cannot be earned overnight. One may need over 2 hours of GMAT math practice for over 2 months. For those who feel that their preparedness for GMAT exam is weak, or those who really require a very high GMAT score for top business schools, it is recommended that they study for about 3 hours or more everyday for 3 months or more. It is better to spread one's study hours and days over a long period of time. For example 2 hours of study over a 5-day period is more beneficial than studying for 10 hours in a single day. Human mind, can best learn and apply those learning, if it is trained slowly. Without doubt, the GMAT Exam requires a lot of learning and training of mind.

Day before the GMAT Exam: All the stories about overnight miracle are untrue and therefore it is not helpful to study for long hours on the day of the exam or on the previous day of the exam. In fact, the counter-intuitive prescription is truer. In order to get a high GMAT score with one's level of knowledge and preparedness, one should STOP studying for GMAT math 2 days before the actual GMAT exam. By studying close to the actual exam or attending crash sessions of GMAT course, one may be doing more harm than benefit from it. Scholars in educational psychology have maintained this premise for years. Test-takers must follow it in order to get a high GMAT score in the GMAT exam.

Take practice tests: All students want to get a high GMAT score and most of them prepare in that direction (for example by taking an expensive GMAT course) but not all of them do well in the GMAT math. The GMAT exam is as much about the substance as it is about style. Theoretical knowledge of the format, and familiarity with topics and types of questions asked in the exam is necessary, but not sufficient. What is really needed is actual practice with real GMAT like tests. The more practice tests one takes, the more comfortable one becomes with the pressure, stress, format, timing, one's strength and weaknesses. This in turn may help the said student align his/her energies in the right direction and secure a high GMAT score.

Don't kill over the GMAT exam: Without dispute, a high GMAT score may bring a clear advantage over other candidates who have similar credentials but a lower score. And a high score in GMAT math is critical for high score in the overall exam. However, having said that, one is not required to kill oneself for not being able to do so. There are other factors that go in the GMAT exam, in the admission to business school, and in life in general. The factor of fate and luck may also play a big role. One has to remember that one is lucky (or unlucky) only half the time. One should work smart, and work hard, but not at the cost of other good things in life. Good luck!

About the Author

A Senior Associate (Development & Quality) at Win Education Service India, Sudeshna Sonal Kumari has tutored GMAT for over 7 years. Rewarded with the 'Most popular instructor' title by students in 2005 and 2006, she has lead a 5-member business development team in developing [gmat](#) course material and marketing plan for the WinGMAT education services. Under her leadership, WinGMAT has seen an increase in enrollment by 15% on an annualized basis.

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