

Appendix A: Clearing 1000 On The GRE CAT

Many of my students come to me because they're applying for a particular graduate school program that only requires them to score 1000 on the GRE CAT as a condition for admission. Often, these programs don't assign any importance to a higher score—as long as the 1000 minimum score is met, these programs don't care if you score 1010 or 1600.

Programs that only ask for a minimum score of 1000 are typically, but not always, graduate programs in more practical or applied fields like sports management or education. Programs in more traditional, theoretical fields like literature or pure science are more likely to want their applicants to have the highest scores possible.

If you find yourself in the position of only needing to score 1000 on the GRE CAT, then this Appendix is for you. The strategies that you'll want to use to get yourself to 1000 are different from the strategies that other test-takers will use to get themselves the highest scores they possibly can. You'll be happy to know that getting to 1000 usually takes less time and effort than trying to make your highest possible score.



Do NOT follow the advice in this section if you're applying to a program that wants you to have the highest GRE CAT score possible! These strategies are only intended for students shooting for 1000 on the test.

First Things First: Assessing Your Starting Point

Before we can decide the best way for you to make 1000, we need to see what you're best at. The best way to find out what your strengths and weaknesses are on the GRE CAT is to download the free GRE POWERPREP software from the ETS web site and take one of the two practice tests. Give it your very best shot, and try to simulate testing conditions as accurately as you possibly can. When you're finished, note the two scores you receive and follow the directions below.

If one score is higher than 500 and the other is lower than 300 . . .

Use the traditional advice in the main Strategy Guide to beat the section that you scored higher on. On that section, you're in a score range where the smartest thing to do is apply the standard approach.

After you've worked on the higher-scoring section and maxed out that score, use this Appendix for the section that you got the lower score on. Your goal is simply to boost yourself up a hundred or so points on that section, and let your improvement on your stronger section carry you up to 1000.

In any other situation . . .

You need to decide where your biggest improvement is likely to come from—your lower-scoring section or your higher-scoring one. Just base that decision on how you feel about the two sections. (In a situation where the scores are markedly different,

we would let the scores tell us where the greatest possibility for improvement was. But in a case where the scores are close to each other and not that high, the individual test-taker should decide which section to work on first.)

The Good News and the Bad News about Lower Scores

The good news about lower scores is that the GRE CAT isn't very consistent in the lower score ranges. Since that's the case, the lower your scores are, the more likely you are to go up 100 points or even more just by taking the test again. That's the good news—you may be able to improve significantly without a whole lot of preparation effort.

And here's more good news—if you're applying to a program that just wants you to score 1000 to be eligible, they probably don't care what you score on the Writing assignments, so you probably don't have to spend any time preparing for those.

The bad news is that you'll have to take the GRE CAT a lot of times in order to be sure you give yourself the best possible chance to break 1000. And that can be a pain.

Your best bet, then, is to start taking the GRE CAT as early as you can in college, and to prepare as much as you need to in order to minimize your dependence on luck. But if you find yourself stalling out a few points shy of your 1000 goal, don't forget that you may be able to close that gap just by taking the test again.

The Basic Plan: How to Achieve a Median Score As Quickly As Possible

To get your score on a section into the 450-to-550 range, you need to focus on a couple of key things. Because of the screwy design of the GRE CAT, you'll tend to see only certain types of questions in certain score ranges (see the section labeled *READ THIS FIRST!!* in the beginning of this Guide). So if we want to get up into the median score range, it makes sense that we need to focus most of our energies on the kinds of questions we'll encounter in that range, and the skills that help us beat those questions. One of the biggest mistakes that I see my students make, when they're just shooting for 1000, is that they over-prepare by gearing up for question types that the GRE CAT usually doesn't show to median-scorers.

Median-Range Questions on the Verbal Section

On the Verbal section, the skills that will be crucial for getting you to the median range are the following:

- building good bridges on the Analogies that have words you know
- using intelligent hunch guessing on Antonym questions
- paying close attention to key words on Sentence Completion questions, and insisting on a perfect fit
- making sure you choose answers to Reading Comprehension questions that restate as much of the text as possible wherever appropriate

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Median-Range Questions on the Math Section

On the Math section, the skills that will be crucial for getting you to the median range are the following:

- paying close attention to the properties of negative integers and fractions
- using geometric reasoning to find angle measurements
- being sure to mark (D) on related-quantity problems ONLY when it's appropriate
- reading charts and graphs closely
- being familiar with formulas for area and circumference



If you devote most of your preparation time to working on these areas, you'll probably find yourself closing in on 1000 pretty quickly. Remember not to waste too much time preparing for question types that the GRE CAT won't show you!

A Final Note on Scoring

Never forget the importance of racking up as many correct answers early in each section as you can. Also, make sure you review the table in the next Appendix to see how the GRE CAT tends to reward different performances.

Armed with the information in this Appendix, you should be able to reach 1000 without wasting your time on material the GRE CAT will never show you!