GRE Last-Minute Cheat Sheet

A free, unofficial quick-reference guide for the final week. Always confirm details on the

ETS website and practice with official ETS materials.

1. Test Format at a Glance

- Five timed parts: one Analytical Writing task, two Verbal Reasoning sections, and two Quantitative Reasoning sections.
- Analytical Writing: one Analyze an Issue task, 30 minutes.
- Verbal: 27 questions in total. Section 1 has 12 questions in 18 minutes. Section 2 has 15 questions in 23 minutes.
- Quant: 27 questions in total. Section 1 has 12 questions in 21 minutes. Section 2 has 15 questions in 26 minutes.
- Total: about 1 hour 58 minutes, with 54 questions plus the essay. Every question counts toward your score.
- Scores: Verbal 130–170 and Quant 130–170 (one-point steps), Analytical Writing 0–6 (half-point steps). The three are reported separately.
- Section-level adaptive: how you do on the first Verbal or Quant section shapes the difficulty of the second.
- Within a section you can skip, mark, and return to questions and change answers. You cannot return to a section once you leave it.
- No penalty for wrong answers. Never leave a question blank.
- An on-screen calculator is available in the Quant sections.
- Scores are valid for five years. You can test at a test center or at home.

2. Time Per Question

- Verbal: about 90 seconds per question.
- Quant: about 105 seconds per question.
- Reading Comprehension takes longer, so bank time on quick Text Completion and Sentence Equivalence questions.
- If a question stalls you, mark it, make your best guess, and move on.

3. Question Types

Verbal

- Text Completion (about 7 questions): one to three blanks, solved with logic and clue words.
- Sentence Equivalence (about 7): choose two answers that complete the sentence with the same meaning.
- Reading Comprehension (about 13): short and longer passages, plus a few critical- reasoning style questions.

Quant

- Quantitative Comparison (about 9): compare two quantities.
- Multiple Choice, one answer (about 10).
- Multiple Choice, one or more answers (about 2 to 3): select all correct options. You need every correct option for credit.
- Numeric Entry (about 2 to 3): type the answer as an integer, decimal, or fraction.
- Data interpretation questions use tables and graphs.

The counts above are approximate and can vary from test to test.

4. Verbal Strategy

Text Completion

- Read the whole sentence and predict the missing idea before you read the options.
- Circle clue words: although, but, however, because, thus, since. They tell you whether the blank continues or reverses the idea.
- For two or three blanks, solve the easiest blank first.

Sentence Equivalence

- Both answers must create sentences with the same meaning. Two synonyms that do not fit the sentence are wrong.
- Look for the pair first. If two options are synonyms, test them in the sentence.

Reading Comprehension

- Read for the main point and structure (what each paragraph does), not every detail.
- Return to the passage to confirm every answer. Never answer from memory or outside knowledge.

- Eliminate answers that are too extreme (always, never, only), off topic, or reversed.
- For select-all questions, test each option on its own.

5. Quant Formula Sheet

Arithmetic and algebra

- Percent change = (new − old) / old × 100.
- Ratios: the parts add to the total. A 3:5 ratio has 8 parts.
- Distance = rate × time. Average speed = total distance / total time.
- Work rates add: ifA takes a hours and B takes b hours, together they do 1/a + 1/b of the job per hour.
- Mean = sum / count. The median is the middle value.
- (a + b)2 = a2 + 2ab + b2. (a − b)2 = a2 − 2ab + b2. a2 − b2 = (a − b)(a + b).
- Quadratic formula: x = (−b ± √(b2 − 4ac)) / 2a.
- Exponents: am · an = am+n, am / an = am−n, (am)n = amn, a−n = 1/an.
- A number is divisible by 3 (or 9) if its digit sum is divisible by 3 (or 9).

Geometry

- Triangle area = 1⁄2 bh. Rectangle area = lw. Circle area = πr2. Circumference = 2πr.
- Pythagorean theorem: a2 + b2 = c2. Common triples: 3-4-5, 5-12-13, 8-15-17.
- 45-45-90 triangle: sides x, x, x√2. 30-60-90 triangle: sides x, x√3, 2x.
- Interior angles of a polygon add to (n − 2) × 180°.
- Distance between two points = √((x2 − x1)2 + (y2 − y1)2).

Counting and probability

- Permutations (order matters): nPr = n! / (n − r)!.
- Combinations (order does not matter): nCr = n! / (r! (n − r)!).
- Independent events multiply. At least one = 1 − P(none).

6. Quantitative Comparison Playbook

The choices are always: A) QuantityA is greater, B) Quantity B is greater, C) the two quantities are equal, D) the relationship cannot be determined.

- Simplify both quantities the same way you would simplify an equation.
- Test numbers: try positives, negatives, zero, fractions between 0 and 1, and large values.
- If different numbers give different answers, the answer is D.
- Do not assume values are integers or positive unless the problem says so.

- You only need to decide which is bigger. You do not always need the exact values.

7. Analytical Writing Cheat Sheet

- One Analyze an Issue task: you read a statement and an instruction, then argue a position.
- Readers look at a clear position, quality of reasoning and support, organization, and control of language.
- Time plan: 5 minutes planning, 20 minutes writing, 5 minutes revising.
- Structure (four to five paragraphs):

    1. Introduction: restate the issue and state your position in a clear thesis.

    2. Body 1: your strongest reason, with a specific example.

    3. Body 2: a second reason or a different example.

    4. Body 3: acknowledge the opposing view and explain why your position still holds.

    5. Conclusion: restate your position and the main reasons.

- Use specific examples from history, science, current events, or personal experience.
- Respond to the instruction in the prompt, such as whether to consider specific circumstances.
- Leave a minute for proofreading grammar, typos, and transitions.

8. The Last 7 Days

- Days 7 to 5: take one full official practice test and review errors by type.
- Days 4 to 3: drill your weakest areas, usually one Verbal and one Quant topic.
- Day 2: light review of formulas, vocabulary, and your essay outline. Write one timed essay.
- The day before: no new material. Pack your bag, check your ID and registration, and sleep early.

9. Test-Day Checklist

- Valid ID that matches your registration name exactly.
- Confirmation details and the route to your test center. If you are testing at home,
- complete the system check and prepare your room according to ETS rules.

- Arrive early. Check ETS rules for what you may bring.
- The shorter format has no long break, so eat and hydrate beforehand.

10. Mindset During the Test

- Answer everything. Eliminate options, then guess.
- Do not chase one hard question. Mark it and return.
- Do not try to work out whether the second section is harder or easier. Just do your
- best.
- Use your remaining time to review marked questions in each section.

11. Free Resources

- The ETS website (ets.org/gre) has official test details and free official practice materials, including sample questions and practice tests. Check the site for the current list.
- The best use of any practice test is a careful review of every mistake.
- Unofficial study aid. Test details can change, so confirm everything on the official ETS website before test day.