

The Graduate Records Examination

The GRE (Graduate Records Examination) is a standardized test used by graduate schools to evaluate applications to their programs.

Format

- Multiple-choice (except for writing section)
- Computer-based
- Approximately 4 hours long
- Offered year-round
- Scores sent to schools within approximately 15 days
- Can be taken every 21 days (up to 5 times in a 12-month period)
- The exam can be scheduled through the testing center, or you can sign up to take it at home
- There may be scholarships/grants to help pay for the exam (i.e., “GRE® Fee Reduction Program” and possibly others)

Sections

- **Analytical writing**
 - o Two portions: “Analyze an issue” and “Analyze an argument”
 - o Each portion is separately timed (30 minutes each): 60 minutes to complete
 - o Considered the essay portion of the exam
- **Verbal reasoning**
 - o Two portions: 20 questions per portion
 - o Types of questions: text completion, sentence equivalence, and reading comprehension
 - o Each portion is separately timed (30 minutes each): 60 minutes to complete
- **Quantitative reasoning**
 - o Two portions: 20 questions per portion
 - o Types of questions: quantitative comparison and problem solving dealing with arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and data analysis. These are generally high school level concepts.
 - o Each portion is separately timed (35 minutes each): 70 minutes to complete
- **“Unscored/Research”**
 - o These are questions that will not count toward your score, but must be completed
 - o These are experimental questions that the testing company uses to construct new questions
 - o These questions may be marked as unscored or “research” but also may not be marked at all

Score

- The quantitative and verbal sections are scored on a scale between 130-170
 - o The “average” scores for these sections: Quantitative (153) and Verbal (151)
 - o The combined “average” score is 304
- The analytical writing section is scored 0-6 (with half points possible)
 - o The “average” score for writing is 4.0

Test Preparation

- There are plenty of options and services available for test prep. The ETS website provides a comprehensive list of resources (both free and paid) that are available through the testing company.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Do I need to take the GRE?**
 - o Maybe. The GRE is the most commonly used standardized test that universities use to evaluate applications. The GRE is only a portion of the application, but it may be required by the university and/or department you are wishing to attend. There are some universities (and the list has grown since COVID) that no longer require the GRE. You need to check with the schools you are applying to about their requirements.
- **When should I take the GRE?**
 - o It depends on your schedule and circumstances.
 - Some students choose to take the GRE during the summer before the start of their senior year. This provides time to study and take the exam without other academic obligations (like course work). This also will allow you to retake the exam if you choose.
 - Other students study for the exam during the summer and take the GRE at the beginning of their final fall semester.
 - Take it as early as you feel comfortable and prepared.
 - It is advisable to take the exam at least a month your first application deadline to allow for the scores to be released and sent to the universities. Remember that this will not allow you the option to retake the exam before the application deadline.
- **What score do I need to get?**
 - o There is no right answer.
 - Some universities will have specific requirements (usually a minimum score). Some universities will report their “average GRE” score for those admitted. Some universities will not require the GRE at all.
 - Some anthropology departments will have a specific score requirement. And some don’t require it at all. You can ask the graduate director or graduate secretary at each school.
 - Some potential advisors will have minimum GRE score requirements. You need to contact your prospective advisor and ask. Some advisors will take the GRE score very seriously when considering an application, while others will not take it into account at all (even if the university or department requires it).
 - o You need to determine your own target score based on your objectives. Look closely at the schools you want to apply to for guidance.
 - o The average scores for the GRE are reported above; however, these are the averages for all disciplines across the country and may not reflect specific score requirements for the departments/universities.

- **How do I study? How long should I study for?**
 - This is entirely dependent on you. You have taken standardized tests before (ACT and/or SAT) and know the basics of how they work. You need to identify the best method for studying that suits your needs and timeline.
 - There are free resources online available through ETS, the company who administers the GRE exam, and there are paid options (including books, computer tutorials, and classes). The ETS website is a good resource to find test prep materials.
- **How long are my scores good for?**
 - 5 years. After 5 years, you will have to take the exam again.