

Best Study Guide for GMAT?

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GMAT is a very important part of your Business School application. It is not the decisive factor, but having a good GMAT (700+) will give you a good shot at the best business schools, and having a low GMAT (below 650) will definitely keep you out.

So how do you prepare? There are many many books out there, but it all depends on what you requirements are. We personally recommend those books for those who are aiming at a top 10 business schools:

Kaplan GMAT 800

Personally, I think this is the best. It is clear to follow and it really prepares you best to get very high scores. One word of caution though, it is a tough book. What the book is doing giving you all of the very hard questions that you will encounter in 700+ range. When I first tried the sample exams on the CD, I was actually very depressed because I couldnt get a score above 650. But what this book does is making you study really, really hard and pushes you to the limit. Even though I didnt get above 650 in the practice tests in the CD, the day of the exam I got 720. And without the emergency bathroom break I had to take during the exam (my advice: don't drink anything before the test), I believe I would have scored higher than that still. ☐

Cracking the GMAT

This book is fine if you want practice and are not aiming at the 700+ scores. Its a notch below Kaplan but it offers extensive practice opportunities with a quite large database of practice questions on the CD. ☐

The next question that often comes is: "should I pay for training courses?"

My answer is that it depends on what kind of study person you are. I would say no if:

- You are comfortable with maths and the concepts of the GMAT
- You are good at studying by yourself and you don't need anybody to watch you or "motivate" you
- You really, really cannot afford the money (in my opinion doesnt make much sense because if you get accepted you'll spend a lot of money on the MBA anyway, unless you are fully sponsored)

But do take the courses if:

- You are not from a scientific or analytical background
- You don't like maths, or from reading about the GMAT, you feel scared or uncomfortable with the type of questions
- You lack focus or concentration and you need somebody to give you a good kick

How long in advance should I prepare?

Again, it depends on what kind of person you are. If you are more analytical and good at maths, you can start to practice a few hours every day for a month before the exam. Personally, I took two weeks off, practiced 4 to 6 hours per day, and took the exam. I found this method quite effective. If you are from a non-analytical profession or not comfortable with maths, most people take courses for up to 6 months before their exam date.

Overall, it is good to get your GMAT done quite some time before you apply to business schools. If you get a long break, or even before you start work, you can just get it done. The results are valid for several years (it was 3 years when I applied in 2008, check the latest), so you if you plan to do an MBA, you should try to take the GMAT early so you don't have work pressures when you are ready to apply. As you grow older and get busier and start to have personal or friends commitments, it is hard to motivate oneself to spend every night of the week studying.

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