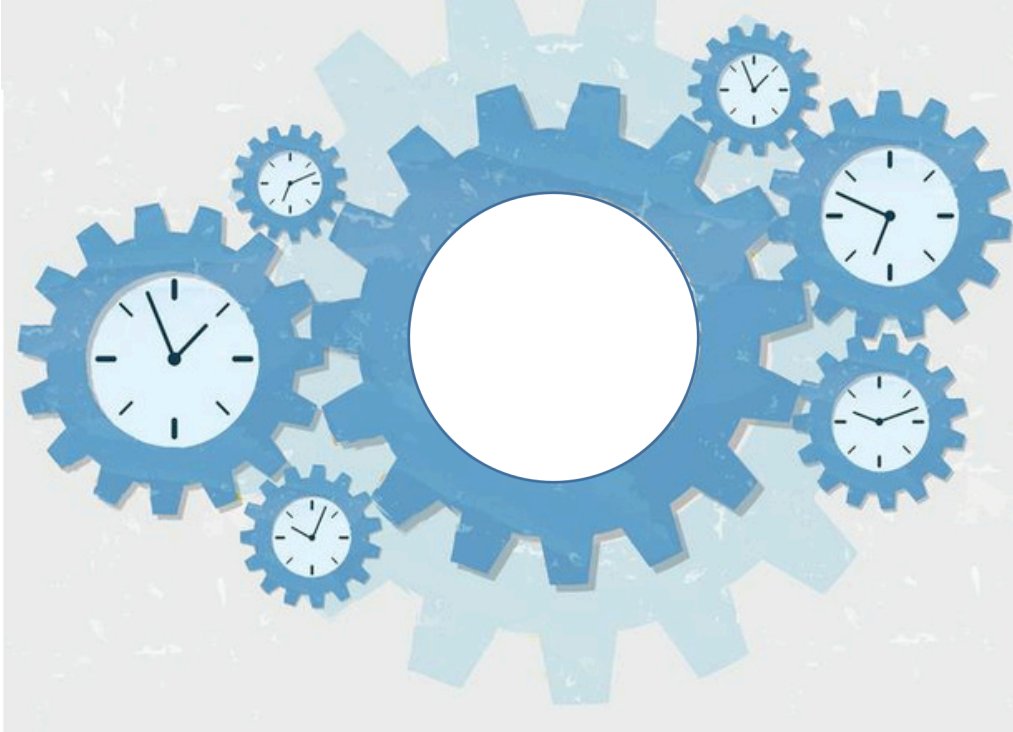


MBA Entrance Exams All About TIME MANAGEMENT



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Introduction



When planning to appear for MBA exams, the first thing one must work upon is to plan the right time management strategy. Strategies are not planned overnight or implemented directly in the exam. Strategies need to be tested first, and then one must apply the best ones. It is always a good idea to experiment with as many strategies as possible – this will help you discover your weak and strong areas. Thus, you can calculate how much time to devote on each question/section.

The common sections of every management exam are:

- Quantitative Aptitude (QA)
- Data Interpretation & Logical Reasoning (DILR)
- Verbal and Reading Comprehension (VRC)
- General Awareness

Time management, apart from high levels of accuracy has become a crucial point of focus in all MBA entrance exams. How do test-takers tackle such a lengthy paper in a relatively short amount of time? The question has two simple answers: High accuracy and optimisation of time.

Talking about [CAT](#), the biggest roadblock is the time challenge – attempting 100 questions in 180 minutes. Candidates are allotted exactly 60 minutes for answering questions in each section and they cannot switch from one section to another while answering questions in a section. Here, test-takers need to spend time wisely, identify speed breakers and try to avoid them.

Identifying the Speed Breakers



How does one identify the speed-breakers? To be able to identify the speed breaker, firstly it is important know your weak areas. The trick is not to get carried away while attempting questions in any section and end up spending more than half the time. Maintain a tempo. Be wise with time in each section.

Reading comprehension requires spending a considering amount of time reading (sometimes re-reading too) and figuring out details. So how does one save time here? The art is to have a pre-planned strategy for Quant and Verbal sections. Strengths should be properly exploited for a balanced percentile. Hence, give more time to weakness and practice different approaches.

Using shortcut techniques such as skimming and scanning for RCs or using tricks and formulas in DI/Quant section is handy. Balancing time between sections – LR, VA, QA and DI – is also crucial.

At the end of the day, students need to know their own strengths and weakness to develop their own strategy and maximise score. Deciding on how much time to spend on each section will require considerable practice during preparation time. Take enough mock tests to know your level.

A plan B must also be in place. If for some reason, your favourite section ends up with more difficult lot of questions, some quick thinking will be required for time management. In such cases, the trick is not to waste your precious time on a single question. Set a certain time limit for every question, such as two minutes for one question in Quant section. If you can't make heads or tails of the question, move on to the next one. Don't waste time.

Time Management in Quantitative Ability and Data Interpretation Sections

CAT is the only entrance test that has a sectional time limit. Test-takers of Management entrance tests apart from CAT can choose which section to attempt first and how much time to devote to each section.

While attempting Quantitative Ability and Data Interpretation sections, aspirants can explore which of the following strategies work the best for them. Remember, that some of these strategy can be applied to all other Management exams other than CAT as the latter has sectional time limits:

The first thing you must start with is reading. Read the question paper thoroughly and mark the questions you feel confident about

The strategy is to get a high in the exams. For this, don't aim to attempt maximum number of questions. Rather try solve maximum correct answers. For this you must follow this three step strategy

1) Start with easy questions first. Questions that can be solved within a minute should be attempted first

2) Now, go back to the beginning and start again. This time, attempt questions which will take time. Alternatively, you can attempt the next set of tough questions

3) At last, come to the final set of difficult questions. Attempt these questions at the end of the exam. If you are confident enough about scoring well in the exam (questions attempted so far), then you have an option leave this part

Once you are through all the questions, try to revise the section before moving on. Revising will help you estimate your accuracy level. And of course, you can rectify your mistakes. Try to maintain maximum accuracy level. Do not rush to attempt questions, but take care of what you attempt

The most important thing you have to do is take care is the selection of questions. Eliminate questions that you are not confident about attempting. Leaving questions becomes important to score high. Leave the questions rather than attempting them wrong and wasting time. Also do not attempt those questions which will take most of your time.

When you are clear about the logic and basic concepts, the questions are easy. When you are doubtful about any aspect, then the question becomes tough for you. Carelessness during the exam may deter your chances of scoring well. So, try to be cautious during the exam. Remember, accuracy is paramount in any MBA entrance test.

Time Management in Verbal Ability & Logical Reasoning Sections



As mentioned earlier, time and accuracy play an important role in any Management entrance exam. These two are interdependent – if you lose time, accuracy gets affected and vice versa.

Candidates try various time management strategies during the preparation phase. However, the idea is to figure out what's the best strategy for the exam.

Many candidates are unsure about Verbal Ability (VA) and Logical Reasoning (LR) sections. Generally, test-takers think Management entrance exams to be quite difficult, but this is a myth. These exams are not difficult for those who are fully prepared for it.

Let us have a look at a few tips & tricks that can help in time management in VA and LR section:

Read the question paper carefully in the first five minutes. Mark the questions you are confident in attempting. But start with those questions which are difficult and demands time. Choose to finish dense questions first

Try to solve Logical Reasoning and Verbal Ability section together. LR is comparatively easy and scoring. If attempted accurately, chances are to score full in LR

- Use a two-step strategy for VA. Consider Reading Comprehensions (RC) as section one; and the remaining portion i.e. grammar and logical reasoning as section two. Solve these two sections as separate entities.
- RCs come with different difficulty level. They do not consist of many questions but are time consuming. Generally, RCs are more opinion-based. Therefore, it is advisable to read a passage carefully in one attempt. Reading over and again will not help
- LR or Analytical Reasoning (AR) generally consists of light questions. Most students like to attempt them first. Accuracy is expected in this part. Therefore, they are called refreshments. Use these questions as fillers during the exam. Try attempting these questions in maximum of four minutes
Do not stick to a question. Start saying 'NO' to things. If you are not able to find an answer, move to the next questions
Candidates who are not so good with reading should go with the following strategy: Attempt RC and LR questions alternatively. Start with one RC question and then do one or two questions of LR. This will maintain the mood and tempo. Candidates will not lose focus in the exam
- This strategy works well for aspirants with good reading skills. If you are confident about your reading speed, start with two or more questions of RC. Once you start feeling bored or think that you are losing focus, use fillers (LR) questions. This can be quite helpful, as you are done with the lengthy and difficult part of your exam in the first half. The rest of the grammar portion works as a refreshment before you move on to Quant section
- The strategy of using fillers between RC questions can also be combined with parajumbles. This too will maintain the tempo in the exam. The combination of light and dense question is really helpful
- For students who do not have good reading skills, go with the strategy of solving easy questions first. However, do not keep dense and difficult questions for the end. You will end up losing marks and time. It is difficult to attempt RCs correctly with an exhausted mind

Effective Time Management Tips for CAT

The introduction of sectional time limit in CAT is a challenging modification. Some aspirants feel that this can help in increasing their scores, while some feel that this modification might hamper their chances of scoring well in the exam.

Here are a few tips that can help in effective time management during CAT exam. CAT exam paper will consist of 3 sections. Each section will have 34, 32 and 34 questions respectively. The time allotted for each section will be 60 minutes. This means that candidates will get a total of 180 minutes to solve 100 questions. Going by this calculation, a candidate must spend only 1.8 minute per question.

How to use Sectional Limit to your Advantage

A few CAT aspirants are considering the sectional limit as an unnecessary restriction – this however is not true. In the earlier format, candidates could switch from one section to another without any limitations. Here, many candidates wasted a lot of time in adjusting to the new sections without answering the actual number of required questions. In a way, the sectional time limit acts in favor by taking away the freedom of choice.

While attempting the paper, candidates need to focus more on providing correct answers rather than the number of questions attempted as there is negative marking. Thinking of it practically, on an average candidates will be able to answer around 20 questions correctly. Taking this into account, per question time increases by 3-4 minutes. Under the new sectional limit, if a candidate is able to answer around 20-22 questions accurately in 1 hour, a score of 98 or 99 percentile can be expected.

Another important way of managing time better is by attempting the Non-negative marking questions first. Each section of the exam will consist of both MCQs and non MCQs. Non-MCQs are considered safe as they do not attract the wrath of negative marking. It is always advisable to first attempt non MCQs that you are confident of, and then move on to the 'difficult' non-MCQs – make sure you set a time limit for each question. Once the MCQs are over, pick the MCQs that will attract negative marking. Always move from the easy and less time-consuming ones to difficult ones.

How to Hone your Time Management Skills

Managing your time effectively is an important part of studying. A common mistake most students make is that they try to create overly restrictive timetables which practically cannot be implemented, and at the end of the day this makes them guilty. It would also be a mistake to tell yourself that schedules don't work for you. You should plan according to your capabilities and goals. Try to be realistic and honest with yourself. You can also try some of these strategies:

Think about when your brain works best – Judge this for yourself. Try to analyse when your brain works the best -morning, night or the mid-afternoon, and plan your study schedule accordingly. If you are going to read a difficult article for the first time, don't start it at 10pm unless you are a natural owl. In low times, do something less demanding such as organising notes or revising.

Prioritise: Make a list of what you have to do and list it in order of importance. Schedule the important stuff first. Take breaks. Don't study for more than 50 minutes at a stretch. Use the other 10 minutes to do leisurely things or have a snack.

Avoid getting stuck: If you can't figure something out, skip it and get help later. Setting milestones can help you manage your time better. To keep up the motivation level, reward yourself on achieving the milestone. Rewards can be small like treating yourself to an ice cream. Bigger goals can have bigger rewards.

How to Manage your Time during Exams

It is extremely important to learn to manage your time before exam and during exam. Now that we already know how to manage time during exam preparations, let us have a look at how one can manage time during the exam.

Always remember that attempting random questions, taking longer breaks and spending more time on one question might prove disastrous for you. It is advisable to be organised while attempting the test.

Here are a few tips that can help you with time management during the MBA entrance exams:

Do not start without reading the question paper: Solving the questions without reading the question paper is a bad idea. You must read the question paper first so that you are aware of the difficulty level of the test. Also, with this you get an idea of how to segregate your time according to questions.

Choose your Best area: This strategy will work for all MBA entrance exams other than CAT as the latter has sectional time limit. Start solving the paper from the section you are confident about. If you think you are strong in General Awareness or Logical Reasoning, go with it. This will boost your confidence for the rest of the exam. Also, you can be sure of securing marks in questions you know.

Utilise full time: MBA aspirants get habitual of taking long exams in short period. But always remember that you need not to go too fast for the test. Justify your time for all the questions. You can also devote lesser time to easy questions and more to the tougher ones.


Selection of questions: It is not necessary that you have to attempt all questions for a good score. If you think that you are unable to solve a question, you may leave it. It is better to leave a question rather than doing it wrong. If a question is taking time, you must skip on to the next question.

Section-wise division of time: This strategy again cannot be used for CAT but, for other exams that have no time lag. You can easily attempt questions and earn marks. Logical Reasoning and General Awareness are meant to be the easy.

You can easily solve them in an hour. You must give half an hour to LR and GA and you are done with the section. Rest of the time can be divided between Quant and Data Interpretation section and English section. Problems in these sections are bit tougher and lengthier. So, you can use larger part of your time for difficult sections.

Save time for Revision: It is recommended that you must revise your sheet before final submission. Devoting last 10 minutes for revision is a perfect idea. In this period you have the opportunity to rectify your mistakes. Thus, you can assure accuracy and analyse your score.

The 4-month Preparation & Time Management Strategy



MBA entrance exams can easily be cracked with an intensive 4 month preparation plan. One should try and make a consistent daily/weekly effort across various sections as per the following indicative plan.

It is important to realise and accept that there is no single plan that will work equally well for every individual. Hence, it is crucial that your preparation adapts to your individual needs. The following is just a roadmap, with an inbuilt flexibility at each step to allow you to adapt it to your own specific needs.

With an average of 3 hours of effort per day, apart from your college classes/job/coaching classes etc., you have around 350 hours of preparation ahead of you. How you invest these 350 hours will have a decisive impact on your chances of success. Investing them just like everyone else is unlikely to increase your chances of success. Out of these 350 hours, roughly 100 hours should be spent in practicing Mocks.

While 15 mocks (1 per week) will mean only 45 hours, at least an equal amount of time has to be invested in analyzing these full-length tests and then working upon the areas that need improvement. This leaves you with around 250 hours out of which you will invest a certain amount in every section (QA, VRC, DILR).

The first thing to do would be to divide this in a manner such that your weakest section gets the maximum time, and the strongest gets the least time. Why? Simply because it will ensure a better return on invested time. Putting in more where the scope of improvement is more is just analogous to investing more in a stock that is likely to appreciate more. The fundamentals of investment remain fairly similar to that in any other asset class.

However, to ensure balance, even your strongest section should not get less than 70 hours (roughly 30%) out of the 250 hours we talked about. The weakest one should not get more than 100 hours (roughly 40%). This ensures that your investment is sufficiently diversified and hence, relatively balanced and safe.

If you are already feeling this time is too less overall, you will need to put in more hours daily. So, 4-hours daily for instance, would mean your total investment will move up to roughly 450 hours, and subtracting the 100 hours for Mocks and their analyses, it would leave you with 350 hours for the practice at the sectional/topic-wise levels. In such a case you could look at somewhere between 100 to 140 hours for each section, depending upon how strong/weak you are in that currently.

Within each section too, more time should go into a topic that you are weaker in and less into a topic that you are already strong in. Why? Simply because in a topic that you are weak in, you should be practicing all questions starting from the simplest ones and moving on to tougher ones; whereas in a topic that you are relatively stronger in, you need to practice only tougher questions.

For any given level of ability and preparation, how well you adapt your preparations and invest your time according to your own specific needs will get you far superior returns.