Score Architect

FREE GUIDE

The Complete GRE®® General Test Guide

How the test is built, how it is scored, how to register, what happens on test day and how your scores reach your programs.

- The five sections, the question types and the timing, in plain tables
- What ETS says about scoring, percentile ranks and sending scores
- Fees, deadlines, ID rules, and the test center and at home requirements
- Every exam fact numbered and linked to the ETS page it comes from



www.scorearchitect.com/gre | Test facts checked against ets.org on November 13, 2026

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How to read this guide

This guide collects, in one place, what you need to know about the GRE® General Test before you start preparing and before you register.

The test is made and administered by ETS. Every statement about the test in this guide comes from an ETS web page or ETS document, and each one carries a small number that points to the source list at the end. We opened and read every source on November 13, 2026. Fees and policies change, so treat ets.org as the final word and confirm anything that affects your money or your test date before you pay.

Two kinds of content are kept apart on purpose:

- **Facts** are in the running text and tables, with a source number.
- **Advice** is in boxes labeled “Our advice.” It is the view of Score Architect, an independent preparation service. It is not an ETS rule and ETS has not reviewed it.

1 h 58 min
Approximate total test time, with no scheduled break[1, 2]

5 sections
One Analytical Writing, two Verbal Reasoning, two Quantitative Reasoning[1]

130 to 170
Score scale for Verbal and for Quantitative, in 1-point steps[3]

0 to 6
Score scale for Analytical Writing, in half-point steps[3]

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THE SHORT VERSION

- The test takes about **1 hour 58 minutes**. It opens with one 30-minute essay, followed by two Verbal Reasoning sections and two Quantitative Reasoning sections.[1]
- Inside a section you can **skip, mark, return and change answers** until the section time runs out.[1]
- Verbal and Quantitative are **section-level adaptive**: how you do on the first section of a measure decides the difficulty of the second.[1]
- **Nothing is subtracted for a wrong answer**, and ETS says it is best to answer every question.[4]
- Official scores reach your ETS account **8 to 10 days** after the test date and can be reported for **5 years**.[3]

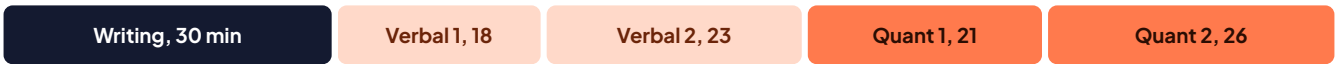
1 The test at a glance

The GRE General Test is a computer-delivered test with three measures: Analytical Writing, Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning.[1] You can take it at a test center or at home; the at home test is identical to the one given at a test center.[5] The structure below has applied since September 22, 2023.[1]

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MEASURE	SECTION	QUESTIONS	TIME
Analytical Writing	One section	1 “Analyze an Issue” task	30 minutes
Verbal Reasoning	Section 1	12	18 minutes
	Section 2	15	23 minutes
Quantitative Reasoning	Section 1	12	21 minutes
	Section 2	15	26 minutes

Source: ETS test structure page.[1] The section times add up to 118 minutes, which is the 1 hour 58 minutes ETS quotes.



One possible order. Analytical Writing is always first. The Verbal and Quantitative sections may appear in any order after it.[1]

No break, and the clock does not stop

There are no breaks during the test. If you take an unscheduled break, the section timing does not stop.[2, 4] For the at home test, ETS states that unscheduled breaks are not permitted at all.[6]

Section-level adaptation

The Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning measures are section-level adaptive. The first section of each measure is of average difficulty. The difficulty of the second section depends on your overall performance on the first. In the example ETS gives, if you do very well on the first Quantitative section, the second Quantitative section will be at a higher level of difficulty.[1] The adaptation happens between sections, not between questions: the computer selects the second section of a measure based on your performance on the first.[7]

The score takes into account the total number of questions you answered correctly across both sections of a measure, as well as the difficulty level of the sections.[1]

Moving around inside a section

Within a section you can preview and review questions, use “Mark” and “Review” to tag a question, skip it and come back if time remains, and change or edit your answers. An on-screen calculator is available in the Quantitative Reasoning sections.[1] The review screen shows the full list of questions in the section, including which ones you have answered and which you have marked. ETS advises not spending too much time on that screen, because it takes time away from answering.[4]

IF YOUR BOOK DESCRIBES A LONGER TEST

Before September 22, 2023 the test took about 3 hours 45 minutes. It had six sections, a 10-minute break, two essay tasks (“Analyze an Issue” and “Analyze an Argument”), and 20 questions in each Verbal and Quantitative section.[1] Material written for that version describes timing and an essay task that no longer apply.

OUR ADVICE (NOT AN ETS RULE)

Use the time per question as a guide, not a rule. Dividing the ETS section times by the question counts gives about 1 minute 30 seconds per Verbal question and about 1 minute 45 seconds per Quantitative question. That arithmetic is ours. Some questions deserve 40 seconds and others 3 minutes, so check your pace against the clock every few questions and not on every one.

Do not try to guess which second section you were given. The ETS pages cited here do not publish the rule that selects it, and trying to judge difficulty in the middle of the test costs attention you need for the questions.

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2 Verbal Reasoning

ETS describes the Verbal Reasoning measure as assessing your ability to analyze and evaluate written material and synthesize information from it, to analyze relationships among the parts of sentences, and to recognize relationships among words and concepts.[8] It has three question types. About half of the measure asks you to read passages and answer questions about them; the other half asks you to read, interpret and complete sentences, groups of sentences or paragraphs.[8]

QUESTION TYPE	WHAT YOU SEE	WHAT YOU DO	CREDIT
Reading Comprehension	A passage followed by one to six questions. Most passages are one paragraph; one or two are several paragraphs long.	Depending on the question: choose one of five answers, choose all correct answers from three, or click a sentence in the passage.	For "choose all" questions you must select every correct answer. No partial credit.
Text Completion	A short passage of one to five sentences with one to three blanks.	One blank: choose from five answers. Two or three blanks: choose from three answers for each blank.	Every blank must be right. No partial credit.
Sentence Equivalence	One sentence with one blank and six answer choices.	Choose the two answers that each complete the sentence coherently and produce sentences alike in meaning.	Both answers must be right. No partial credit.

Source: ETS overview of the Verbal Reasoning measure.[8]

Reading Comprehension

Passages are based on material found in books and periodicals, both academic and nonacademic, drawn from the physical sciences, biological sciences, social sciences, business, arts and humanities, and everyday topics.[8] The skills ETS lists include distinguishing major from minor points, summarizing, drawing conclusions, inferring missing information, understanding how the parts of a text relate to one another, identifying an author's assumptions and perspective, identifying strengths and weaknesses of a position, and developing and considering alternative explanations.[8] That last group is why short argument passages (a claim, some evidence, and a question about what would strengthen or weaken it) belong to Reading Comprehension and are not a separate question type.

The three answer formats are:[8]

- **Multiple-choice, select one.** Five choices, one correct.
- **Multiple-choice, select one or more.** Three choices, of which one, two or all three may be correct. You must select all the correct ones and no others.
- **Select-in-Passage.** You click the sentence in the passage that meets a description. In longer passages the question usually applies to one or two specified paragraphs.

Text Completion

Each blank has a single correct answer, and the choices for different blanks work independently: picking an answer for one blank does not change the choices available for another.[8] ETS advises against testing every combination. Read the passage for its overall sense, find the words that signal its structure (words like "although" or "moreover"), think of your own word for a blank before you look at the choices, and start with whichever blank is easiest, which is not always the first.[8]

Sentence Equivalence

ETS gives two warnings about hunting for synonyms. First, the choices may contain a pair of words that mean the same thing but do not fit the sentence. Second, the two correct words may not mean exactly the same thing; what matters is that the two completed sentences mean the same thing.[8]

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What ETS advises for Reading Comprehension

- The correct answer is the one that most accurately and most completely answers the question. Do not be misled by choices that are only partly true or that only partly answer the question.[8]
- Do not pick a choice simply because it is a true statement.[8]
- In "select one or more" questions, do not be disturbed if you think all three choices are correct; these questions can have up to three correct answers.[8]

OUR ADVICE (NOT AN ETS RULE)

Learn words in sentences. Text Completion and Sentence Equivalence reward knowing how a word behaves in context, including its second meanings. A list of definitions is a start; reading the word in several real sentences is what makes it usable.

Answer from the text. For every Reading Comprehension answer you choose, be able to point to the lines that support it. If you cannot, treat the choice as unproven.

3 Quantitative Reasoning

The Quantitative Reasoning measure assesses basic mathematical skills, understanding of elementary mathematical concepts, and the ability to reason quantitatively and to model and solve problems with quantitative methods.[9] Some questions are set in real-life situations and others are purely mathematical; many are word problems that have to be translated into mathematics.[9]

CONTENT AREA	TOPICS ETS LISTS (ABRIDGED)
Arithmetic	Properties and types of integers (divisibility, factorization, primes, remainders, odd and even); arithmetic operations, exponents and roots; estimation, percent, ratio, rate, absolute value, the number line, decimals and sequences.
Algebra	Operations with exponents; factoring and simplifying expressions; relations, functions, equations and inequalities; linear and quadratic equations and inequalities; simultaneous equations; setting up equations for word problems; coordinate geometry, including graphs, intercepts and slopes.
Geometry	Parallel and perpendicular lines; circles; triangles, including isosceles, equilateral and 30°-60°-90° triangles; quadrilaterals and other polygons; congruent and similar figures; three-dimensional figures; area, perimeter and volume; the Pythagorean theorem; angle measurement in degrees.
Data analysis	Mean, median, mode, range, standard deviation, interquartile range, quartiles and percentiles; reading tables and graphs (line, bar and circle graphs, boxplots, scatterplots, frequency distributions); elementary and conditional probability; random variables and probability distributions, including normal distributions; counting methods such as combinations, permutations and Venn diagrams.

Source: ETS overview of the Quantitative Reasoning measure.[9]

What is not tested. The level is generally no higher than a second course in algebra. Trigonometry, calculus and other higher-level mathematics are not included. The ability to construct proofs is not tested, and neither is inferential statistics.[9]

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The four question types

TYPE	HOW IT WORKS
Quantitative Comparison	Compare Quantity A with Quantity B. The four answer choices are always the same: Quantity A is greater; Quantity B is greater; the two quantities are equal; the relationship cannot be determined from the information given.
Multiple-choice, select one	Five choices, one correct.
Multiple-choice, select one or more	Select all the choices that apply. The question may or may not say how many to select, and there may be only one correct choice.
Numeric Entry	Type the answer: an integer or decimal in a single box, or a fraction in two boxes (numerator and denominator).

Any of these can appear alone or inside a Data Interpretation set, a group of questions based on the same table, graph or other display.[9]

What you may and may not assume

These assumptions appear in the directions for the Quantitative sections:[9]

- All numbers used are real numbers.
- All figures lie in a plane unless otherwise indicated.
- **Geometric figures are not necessarily drawn to scale.** Do not assume lengths and angle measures are as they appear. You may assume that lines shown as straight are straight, that points on a line are in the order shown, and that geometric objects are in the relative positions shown.
- **Coordinate systems** (xy-planes and number lines) and **graphical data presentations** (bar, circle and line graphs) **are drawn to scale**, so you can read, estimate and compare values by sight.

ETS also publishes a Math Conventions document. A few conventions from it that catch people out:[10]

- 0 is an even integer and is neither positive nor negative. A prime number is an integer greater than 1, so 1 is not prime.
- Numbers given in a question are exact, even where real-life figures would have been rounded.
- “From 0 to 9, inclusive” refers to 10 integers.
- “Average” with the note “(arithmetic mean)” is the sum divided by the count. Standard deviation means the population standard deviation.
- Unless stated otherwise, the “difference” between two quantities means the positive difference, and “profit” means revenue minus cost.

The on-screen calculator

A calculator is provided on screen for the Quantitative sections; personal calculators are not permitted in the testing room.[1, 11] ETS describes how it behaves:[12]

- It respects the order of operations, so entering 1 + 2 × 4 gives 9, not the 12 that many basic calculators would show.
- It has parentheses, a square root key and one memory location with memory recall, memory clear and memory sum.
- It displays up to eight digits. A result above 99,999,999, a division by zero or the square root of a negative number shows ERROR.
- A Transfer Display button copies the display into the answer box of a Numeric Entry question that has a single box. Check that the number is in the form the question asks for.

ETS advice on using it: most questions do not need difficult computation, so do not use the calculator just because it is there. Use it for tedious work such as long division, square roots and arithmetic with several digits. Estimate first so that you can tell whether the result is reasonable.[12]

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OUR ADVICE (NOT AN ETS RULE)

Practice with a calculator that behaves the same way. If you train with a phone calculator in scientific mode, you will lean on keys that are not there on test day. ETS points to its free POWERPREP Online practice tests as the place to experience the test design features, which include the on-screen calculator.[1]

In Quantitative Comparison, test more than one kind of number before you decide. ETS itself suggests zero, positive and negative numbers, small and large numbers, and fractions and decimals.[9]

4 Analytical Writing

The Analytical Writing measure consists of one 30-minute "Analyze an Issue" task. It presents an opinion on an issue together with instructions on how to respond. You are asked to evaluate the issue, consider its complexities and develop an argument with reasons and examples to support your view.[13] ETS says the measure assesses your ability to articulate and support complex ideas, construct arguments, and sustain a focused and coherent discussion, and that it does not assess specific content knowledge.[13]

The instructions matter

Each Issue topic comes with one of six sets of instructions.[14] In our own words, they ask you to:

1. say how far you agree or disagree with a statement, considering ways in which it might or might not hold true;
2. say how far you agree or disagree with a recommendation, describing circumstances in which adopting it would or would not be advantageous;
3. say how far you agree or disagree with a claim, addressing the most compelling reasons or examples that could be used to challenge your position;
4. say which of two views is closer to your own, addressing both views;
5. say how far you agree or disagree with a claim and with the reason on which the claim is based;
6. give your views on a policy, considering the possible consequences of implementing it.

ETS is explicit that raters are not looking for a "right" answer. They evaluate the skill with which you address the specific instructions and develop an argument.[14] You are free to organize the response in whatever way communicates your position effectively.[14]

The writing tool

You type the essay in a basic word processor developed by ETS. It can insert text, delete text, cut and paste, and undo the previous action. There is no spellchecker and no grammar checker.[13]

The topic pool is public

ETS has published the entire pool of Issue topics from which your task will be selected.[13, 15] The pool document notes that the wording on the test may vary slightly and that the same topic can appear with different instructions, so read the instructions on your screen and respond to those.[15] We do not reproduce ETS topics here; the pool is listed in the sources.

How essays are scored

The reported score runs from 0 to 6 in half-point steps.[16] Essays are evaluated on a 6-point holistic scale, which means a score reflects the overall quality of the response to the assigned task. The evaluation includes a score from the e-rater scoring engine, a computerized program developed by ETS.[7] The table gives the label ETS attaches to each level of the Issue scoring guide, with a short summary in our words.[16]

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SCORE	ETS LABEL	IN BRIEF (OUR SUMMARY OF THE ETS SCORING GUIDE)
6	Outstanding	A clear, insightful position, fully developed with compelling reasons or examples, well organized, with precise and varied language.
5	Strong	A clear, well-considered position, developed with sound reasons or well-chosen examples, focused and generally well organized.
4	Adequate	A competent analysis with a clear position and relevant support, acceptable clarity, and some errors.
3	Limited	Some competence, but flawed in a visible way: limited development, weak organization or language problems that blur meaning.
2	Seriously Flawed	Serious weaknesses in analysis, development or organization, or frequent errors that obscure meaning.
1	Fundamentally Deficient	Little or no development, or errors so severe that the writing is incoherent.
0	(no label)	Does not address the task, only copies the topic, is in a foreign language or is indecipherable.

NS (No Score) is reported if you produce no text at all.[16]

ETS advises budgeting your time and saving a few minutes at the end to check for obvious errors. An occasional spelling or grammatical error will not affect the score, but serious and persistent errors lower it.[4, 13] All essays are also reviewed with ETS essay-similarity-detection software, and ETS may cancel scores if a response is not your own original work.[7, 11]

OUR ADVICE (NOT AN ETS RULE)

Split the 30 minutes on purpose. One workable split is about 4 minutes to read the instructions and plan, about 22 minutes to write, and about 4 minutes to reread and correct. Adjust it after two or three timed practice essays.

Plan against the instructions, not the topic alone. Before you write, note in one line what the instructions require (for example, "address the strongest objection") and make sure one paragraph does exactly that.

5 How the test is scored

MEASURE	SCORE SCALE	REPORTED IN
Verbal Reasoning	130 to 170	1-point increments
Quantitative Reasoning	130 to 170	1-point increments
Analytical Writing	0 to 6	half-point increments

If you answer no questions at all in a measure, you receive No Score (NS) for that measure.[3]

Verbal and Quantitative: from answers to a scaled score

1. **Raw score.** For each measure, the raw score is the number of questions you answered correctly. Within each section, all questions contribute equally.[7]
2. **Equating.** The raw score is converted to the 130 to 170 scale through a process called equating. It accounts for small differences in difficulty between test editions and for the differences introduced by section-level adaptation.[7]
3. **Meaning.** As a result, a given scaled score reflects the same level of performance regardless of which second section you were given and when you took the test.[7]

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ANSWER EVERY QUESTION

ETS states that nothing is subtracted from your score for incorrect answers and that, to maximize your Verbal and Quantitative scores, it is best to answer every question. It adds that no question carries greater weight than any other, so you should not waste time on questions you find extremely difficult or unfamiliar.[4]

Percentile ranks

Your score report shows, next to each score, a percentile rank: the percentage of test takers in a reference group who scored lower than that score.[3, 17] ETS updates this interpretive information annually.[18] The figures below are from the current ETS table and are based on everyone who tested between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2025.[17]

SCALED SCORE	VERBAL: % SCORING LOWER	QUANT: % SCORING LOWER
170	99	89
165	95	67
160	82	50
155	64	37
150	39	23
145	21	12
140	10	5

WRITING SCORE	% SCORING LOWER
6.0	99
5.0	93
4.5	85
4.0	63
3.5	40
3.0	16
2.0	3

Selected rows from ETS tables 1B and 1C, copied without change.[17] In the same period the mean scores were 151.39 for Verbal Reasoning, 157.62 for Quantitative Reasoning and 3.46 for Analytical Writing.[17]

Two points follow directly from the ETS data. First, the same scaled score means different things on the two measures: 82 percent of test takers scored lower than 160 in Verbal Reasoning, and 50 percent scored lower than 160 in Quantitative Reasoning. ETS says scores on the different measures should not be compared directly, because each measure is scaled separately; use the percentile ranks to compare them.[18] Second, a percentile rank is not fixed: ETS notes that a given score represents approximately the same level of ability whenever it was earned, but its percentile rank may vary with the group it is compared with.[18]

OUR ADVICE (NOT AN ETS RULE)

A "good" score is whatever your programs want. There is no pass mark. Look up what each program on your list publishes about the scores of admitted students, or ask the admissions office, and set a separate target for Verbal and for Quantitative. A program in engineering and a program in history will weigh the two measures differently.

6 Registering

You register through an ETS account. The points that most often cause trouble are the name on the account, the deadlines and the fees.

Your name and your ID

The first and last name you register with must exactly match (excluding accents) the name printed on the ID you will present. If they do not match, you will not be able to take the test and the fee is not refunded.[19] ID requirements depend on where you plan to test and on your country of citizenship, so read the rules for your location. In general, an ID document must be original (no photocopies), physical (a digital ID on a phone is not

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acceptable, with an exception for some digital IDs in the Republic of Korea), government-issued, and valid (not expired); it must bear your name exactly as registered, a recent recognizable photograph and your signature.[19]

When and where

- **Test centers.** ETS cites more than 1,000 test center locations worldwide.[20] The test is given throughout the year on computer at Prometric test centers.[11]
- **At home.** Offered everywhere the test is normally available, based on the country of your account address, around the clock, seven days a week, with a human proctor. Test takers in Mainland China use a separate site.[5]
- **Deadline.** Register at least two calendar days before your preferred test date.[11]
- **Accommodations.** If you have a disability or a health-related need, submit the request and documentation before you schedule the test. Available accommodations include extended testing time, extra breaks, screen magnification and alternate test formats.[20, 21]

Fees

ITEM	FEE (U.S. DOLLARS)
GRE General Test, all areas of the world except China	**$249**
Rescheduling fee, all areas except China	$55
Changing your test center	$55
Additional Score Reports, per recipient	$40
Score Review for the Analytical Writing measure	$60
Score reinstatement	$50

Fees effective August 1, 2026 and subject to change without notice.[22] China has its own fee, and test takers in India are directed to the ETS India website; see the fees page for both.[22] The Bulletin adds that the final charge includes a nonrefundable 4% online service fee, and that taxes are added to orders in some jurisdictions.[11]

What the test fee includes. Registration includes sending your scores to up to four recipients that you choose on test day.[20, 23]

Fee Reduction Program. ETS offers vouchers for people who can demonstrate financial need, people who are unemployed and receiving unemployment compensation, people currently serving in the Peace Corps, and national programs that work with underrepresented groups. With a voucher you pay $100 for the General Test.[22] You also receive free access to two POWERPREP PLUS Online practice tests and ScoreItNow! Online Writing Practice. Some voucher types are limited to U.S. citizens and resident aliens; the full eligibility rules are on the fees page.[22]

Changing or canceling an appointment

- You must reschedule no later than four days before your test date (10 days in Mainland China), or the test fee is forfeited. ETS gives this example: for a Saturday appointment in the United States, the deadline is Tuesday.[11]
- If you cancel by the same deadline, you receive a refund equal to half of the original test fee.[11]

How often you can take the test

You can take the test once every 21 days, up to five times within any continuous rolling 12-month period. This applies even if you canceled your scores on an earlier test. An appointment that you miss or cancel does not count toward the limit of five and does not start the 21-day wait.[20]

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Work backward from your earliest application deadline. Official scores take 8 to 10 days to appear,[3] and a second attempt cannot happen sooner than 21 days after the first.[20] A test date about six weeks before your first deadline leaves room for one retake and for score delivery. Check each program's own instructions as well; some set an earlier date for receiving scores.

7 Test center or at home

ETS describes the at home test as identical to the test taken at a test center.[5] What differs is who controls the environment: at a test center the staff do, at home you do, and ETS will not let you test if your equipment or room fails its requirements.

	TEST CENTER	AT HOME
Supervision	Test center staff run check-in and administer the test.[2]	A human proctor watches you by camera and monitors your screen; the session is recorded.[6]
Arrival	Arrive at least 30 minutes before your test time. If you arrive late you may not be admitted and the fee is forfeited.[2]	Start check-in 15 minutes before your test time using the "At Home Check-In" link in your confirmation email. Check-in takes about 20 to 30 minutes.[6]
Computer	Provided.	Your own desktop or laptop, with the ETS Secure Browser installed and the Equipment Check passed.[5]
Notes	Scratch paper is provided by the test administrator and must be returned at the end.[11]	One small desktop whiteboard with an erasable marker, or one sheet of paper inside a transparent sheet protector with an erasable marker. No regular paper, pencils or pens.[5]
What is with you	Only your ID, and a mask if you choose to wear one. Other personal items are stored outside the room.[2]	A cleared desk. Your phone is used for check-in and as the second camera.[5, 6]
If something fails	If the center cancels or delays a session, you are offered a free reschedule or a full refund of the test fee.[2]	If you do not meet the equipment and environment requirements on test day, you cannot test and receive no refund or free reschedule.[5]

At home requirements, as a checklist

Equipment[5]

- [ ] Desktop or laptop computer. Tablets, Chromebooks, mobile devices and Microsoft Surface Pro devices are not permitted.
- [ ] One screen and one keyboard. No dual monitors.
- [ ] A licensed operating system: Windows (version 11 or higher recommended) or Mac OS X 11 or higher. Chrome browser.
- [ ] A speaker to hear the proctor. Headsets and earphones are not allowed.
- [ ] A microphone that is not part of a headset.
- [ ] A camera that can be moved to show a 360-degree view of the room, including the tabletop.
- [ ] A second camera: a fully charged smartphone or tablet (iOS 12 or later, Android 8 or later), connected by scanning a QR code.

Room and person[5, 6]

- [ ] You are alone, in a room where nobody can see you and you cannot see others. No public spaces and no glass-walled rooms.
- [ ] The computer and keyboard are on a desk or table, and you sit on a standard chair (not a bed, couch or overstuffed chair).
- [ ] The tabletop and the area around it are clear of everything not approved for the test.
- [ ] No food or drink during the test.

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- [ ] Your ears and face stay visible. Face masks may not be worn.
- [ ] Identity verified in the IDVaaS app at least 72 hours before the test.
- [ ] Screen-sharing and remote-access software disabled.

OUR ADVICE (NOT AN ETS RULE)

Choose the setting in which less can go wrong for you. If your internet connection is unreliable, your home is noisy or you share your space, a test center removes those risks. If the nearest center is far away and your setup is solid, testing at home saves the trip.

If you test at home, rehearse the setup. ETS suggests running the Equipment Check on the same day of the week and at the same time of day as your appointment, because bandwidth varies.[5] Practice taking notes on the whiteboard or sheet protector as well; it feels different from paper.

8 Test day, step by step

At a test center

1. **Bring valid ID** whose name exactly matches your registration (excluding accents).[2]
2. **Arrive at least 30 minutes early.**[2]
3. **Store your belongings** where staff tell you. Only your ID, and a mask if you want one, go into the room.[2] The Bulletin lists watches among prohibited items and prohibits jewelry other than wedding and engagement rings.[11]
4. **Check in.** Your photo is taken and your ID verified. You may be asked to empty your pockets, pull up your sleeves, give a voice sample, be scanned with a handheld metal detector or remove your glasses for inspection.[2]
5. **Sign the confidentiality statement.** If you do not sign, you cannot test and the fee is not refunded.[2]
6. **Take the test.** The administrator assigns your seat and gives you scratch paper; if you use it all, you hand it back to receive more.[11]

At home

1. **Before the day:** install the ETS Secure Browser, pass the Equipment Check and verify your identity in the IDVaaS app at least 72 hours ahead.[6]
2. **Gather** your ID, your approved note-taking material, and a phone or handheld mirror for check-in.[6]
3. **Close** all browsers and applications you do not need, and make sure other devices at home are not using the internet.[6]
4. **15 minutes before** your test time, click the “At Home Check-In” link. The Bulletin states that if you are more than 12 minutes late, your test will be canceled.[6, 11]
5. **With the proctor:** show your ID, show your screen using the mirror or phone, show a 360-degree view of the room and set up the second camera.[6]
6. **At the end,** erase your notes and show both sides to the camera.[6]

During the test, in either setting

- There are no breaks, and the clock keeps running if you step away.[2]
- At home, ETS lists behaviors that can invalidate the test: talking out loud to yourself, looking away from the screen, moving out of view of the camera and taking a break. If you need the proctor, speak or use the chat; a reply may take 30 to 60 seconds.[6]
- If you lose your internet connection for a moment at home, you are reconnected to the proctor automatically when it returns.[6]

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The last screen: report or cancel

At the end of the test you choose whether to report (view) or cancel your scores. The choice comes first: once you view your scores, you cannot cancel them, and you cannot cancel the score for one section only.[2, 11]

- **If you report,** you see your unofficial Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning scores right away. The Analytical Writing score is not shown, because the essay has not been scored yet. You can then name up to four score recipients as part of your test fee and choose a ScoreSelect option for them.[2, 6]
- **If you cancel,** the scores are not available to you and are not reported to anyone. No refund is made, and canceled scores are not added to your reportable history.[11]
- **Changing your mind.** Canceled scores can be reinstated within 60 days after the test date, for a fee ($50 on the current fees page).[11, 22]

> **OUR ADVICE (NOT AN ETS RULE)**
>
> **In most cases, choose to report.** Reporting lets you see your scores, and with the ScoreSelect option you still decide later which test dates a program receives (see section 9). Canceling throws away information you paid for. The exception is a program that requires all scores from every attempt; check that rule before test day, not on the last screen.
>
> **Know your four recipients before you sit down.** The four free reports are only free on test day.[23] Decide in advance which programs you will name.

9 Getting and sending scores

When scores arrive

Official scores, including Analytical Writing, are available in your ETS account 8 to 10 days after your test date, and ETS emails you when they are ready. At that time ETS also sends an official Institution Score Report to the recipients you named on test day.[3]

What a program sees

A report sent to an institution includes your contact information, date of birth, gender, intended graduate major, and the test dates and scores you chose to report, with their percentile ranks. It does not include information about your other score recipients, any scores you chose not to report, or any indication that you have taken other GRE tests.[3] Photos and essay responses from each test date you report are available to your recipients through the ETS Data Manager.[3]

The ScoreSelect option

WHEN	OPTIONS	COST
On test day	**Most Recent** (the test you just took) or **All** (all General Test dates in the last 5 years). You may also choose not to send scores at that time.	Free for up to four recipients
After test day	**Most Recent**, **All**, or **Any** (one or as many test dates as you like from the last 5 years).	$40 per recipient, as an Additional Score Report

Source: ETS page on sending scores.[23]

- Scores from a test date are reported in their entirety: you cannot send the Verbal score from one date and the Quantitative score from another.[11]
- An order for Additional Score Reports cannot be canceled, changed or refunded once submitted, and takes about 5 business days to process.[23]
- Some programs require applicants who have tested more than once to report all of their scores. ETS recommends checking the requirements of each program.[23]

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How long scores last

Scores are reportable for 5 years following your test date.[3] ETS gives the example that scores from a test taken on July 3, 2022 are reportable through July 2, 2027.[11]

Services after the test

- **GRE Diagnostic Service (free).** Available in your ETS account about 15 days after the test and for six months. It describes the types of questions you answered right and wrong in the Verbal and Quantitative sections, the difficulty level of each question and the time you spent on each.[11]
- **Score Review for Analytical Writing ($60).** Must be requested within 90 days of the test. If the review produces a higher or a lower score, the new score is reported.[11, 22]

> OUR ADVICE (NOT AN ETS RULE)
>
> **Use the Diagnostic Service before deciding on a retake.** It is free, and it shows whether your misses came from particular question types, from the harder questions or from time pressure. That tells you what the next three weeks should be spent on.

10 Free preparation material from ETS

Whatever else you use, begin with the material from the organization that writes the test. These items are free:

RESOURCE	WHAT IT IS
POWERPREP Online, Test 1	An untimed, full-length practice test. It gives the correct answers and a performance summary but no Verbal or Quantitative scores, because it is untimed.[24]
POWERPREP Online, Test 2	A timed, full-length practice test with correct answers and a performance summary.[24]
Math Review	A PDF covering the arithmetic, algebra, geometry and data analysis concepts behind the Quantitative measure, with exercises and answers.[25]
Math Conventions	A PDF that spells out the notation, terminology and assumptions used in Quantitative questions.[10]
Issue topic pool	The complete published pool of "Analyze an Issue" topics.[15]
Scoring guide and score level descriptions	The criteria raters apply to the Issue essay, level by level.[16]
GRE Information Bulletin	The full set of registration, test day and score reporting policies for the current testing year.[11]

ETS also sells preparation material. POWERPREP PLUS Online practice tests cost $44.95 per test and add scored essays and answer explanations.[24] The Official Guide to the GRE General Test is listed at $45 plus shipping, and ScoreItNow! Online Writing Practice at $20.[26]

> OUR ADVICE (NOT AN ETS RULE)
>
> **Save POWERPREP Online Test 2 for late in your preparation.** There are only two free tests written by the test maker, and only one of them is timed. Use Test 1 early to learn the interface and the calculator, and keep Test 2 as a rehearsal in the last two weeks.
>
> **Where Score Architect fits.** Our courses, practice questions and practice tests are our own original material, written to the content areas and question types ETS describes. They are meant to be used alongside the ETS material above, not in place of it. A free diagnostic on grad.scorearchitect.com shows where to start.

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ONE LAST REMINDER

Policies in this guide are those ETS published for the testing year that runs from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027.[11] If you are reading this later, open the pages in the source list and check the fee, the deadlines and the at home requirements again before you register.

Sources

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