

# **THE GRE**

**<http://www.gre.org>**

## **What is the GRE?**

The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is an Educational Testing Service administered exam consisting of four parts. The first two parts called the Verbal and Quantitative Sections are similar in format to the SAT. The Verbal Section has 30 questions, the Quantitative section 28 questions. The scores on these two sections are generally combined to provide a total often used by graduate schools as part of their admission screening process. A third part, called Analytic (with 35 questions), measures logical thinking. Sometimes the score from the Analytic section is combined with the Verbal and Quantitative scores to give a larger grand total. In addition, there is a written component available which may be used by some schools. (Note that effective October 2002, the third section of the General Test will be an Analytic Writing test which is the same as the current written component. The old Analytic section will be dropped.) A final part, The Subject Exam, covers topics relating to the examinee's field of interest. Some schools also look at scores on the subject Exam.

The Psychology Subject area test includes about 215 multiple choice questions covering 40% experimental material (including learning, memory, perception, sensation, etc.), 43% social material (including abnormal, developmental, personality, clinical, etc.), and 17% general material (including history, measurement, research design and statistics). The range of possible scores on each section of the General exam is from 200 to 800. (The new Analytic writing section will be scored from 1 to 6). The score ranges on the Subject Test vary by subject area. Not all graduate schools require the GRE, but among those that do, there is often a stipulated minimum score for each section.

The General Test of the GRE (as well as the writing assessment) is offered in a computer based version. The Psychology Subject Exam is at this time offered only in a paper-and-pencil version.

## **When do I take the GRE?**

The general test may be taken year round. Students taking the test by computer, may choose to learn their unofficial scores immediately after they finish, and scores are sent out 10 to 15 days later. After completing the exam, students may choose to cancel their scores prior to viewing the results. If this occurs, there is no refund. The computer-based testing program is offered several days a week, year-round, though student use of the service is limited to once per calendar month.

The paper-and-pencil version of the Subject Exam of the GRE is administered three times during the school year (November, December, and April). Most students who expect to apply for admission to graduate school in the fall of a given year take the exam the prior fall. Since application deadlines are often quite early (as early as Dec. 1 for the following fall admission for doctoral programs), students expecting to apply to doctoral programs should check to see if the Subject Exam is needed and take the test early enough that their scores reach the graduate schools by the application deadlines. (Allow four to six weeks for the paper-and-pencil Subject test.)

The GRE requires pre-registration for the exam. Appointments for the computer based General Test and the Writing Assessment are scheduled on a first-come, first served basis. Deadlines for the pre-registration for the paper and pencil subject test come as much as six to eight weeks in advance. To schedule computer based testing, phone 1-800-GRE-CALL or register online at [www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org).

### **How much does the GRE cost?**

The General Test (Verbal, Quantitative and Analytic) costs \$105.00, the Writing Assessment test is \$50, and the Subject Test is \$130.00. For the list price, scores are sent to four schools. Students who wish their scores sent to additional schools pay \$13.00 extra per school with a \$6 service fee per call if requested by phone. There is also a fee of \$10 to learn scores by phone. A fee waiver program is available for students on financial aid.

### **Do I have to take the GRE?**

In deciding whether it is necessary to take the GRE, students should consult the book, *Graduate Study in Psychology* to learn the requirements of the graduate schools that interest them. As noted earlier, some schools may not require the GRE, others require only the General Test, others require the General and Analytical Tests and still others require both the General and Subject Area Tests. However, those schools requiring both General and Subject area tests still generally place most emphasis on the General Test even though both are required.

### **How can I prepare for the GRE?**

Students often ask how to prepare for the GRE. The best preparation for the Verbal section is a lifetime of reading. Similarly, continuing education and interest in math result in the highest scores on the Quantitative section. A well-rounded selection of psychology courses including Psychology 401 (History and Systems of Psychology) prepares one well for the Subject Test. In addition, it is useful to consult some of the study books designed for the GRE to practice the task, get GRE test-taking tips and review math. There are also computer software programs available. There is now a free downloadable practice test available and a sample test composed of interactive practice questions at the GRE website. The Educational Testing Service (ETS), developer of the GRE, offers study books and software for sale as do many other publishers. Many students also review an introductory Psychology text to study for the Subject Test.

In addition, there are courses designed to help study for the GRE offered at CSULB (through Extension Services) and other campuses. The costs of these courses range from \$100 to \$175. Private companies like the Kaplan (<http://www1.Kaplan.com>) and Princeton Review (<http://www.review.com/index.cfm>) offer lengthier study courses which can cost as much as \$650 to \$1100 depending upon whether one enrolls for just the General Test or both the General and Subject area tests. There is now a website (<http://www.mygreprep.com/>) that provides test preparation online for a fee.

### **Can I take the test again if I don't like my score?**

Students often wonder if it is possible to repeat the exam if they are not satisfied with their scores. Yes, definitely. However, to do so, the student must take the exam early enough to allow for receiving the scores, re-enrolling for the exam, and sending the results to graduate schools. If the exam is retaken, the Educational Testing Service will send all testing results from the last five years to graduate schools, not just the best scores. However, many believe that graduate school admissions committees consider your highest scores as the best indicators of your potential for graduate work, others believe that the scores are averaged, while still others think only the most recent scores are considered.