

GRE General Test Primer

Pick your path, budget real hours, run PowerPrep. Prompts tutor between official sets — not instead of them.

Standalone printable workbook · Not a screenshot of the site. Live prompts: testlessons.com/tests/gre/

What the Shorter GRE Is

The GRE General Test is ETS's exam for graduate, business, and many law programs. You're on the shorter GRE (~1 hour 58 minutes of testing, since September 2023): one Analyze an Issue essay (the Argument task is gone), then section-adaptive Verbal and Quant. V and Q each score 130–170; Analytical Writing scores 0–6. Section 1 performance routes Section 2 difficulty—early accuracy is high leverage.

Official POWERPREP through your ETS account is the score thermometer. We treat prompts as the sharp tutor between official sets, built for people who already have a job and limited weekly hours. If you already know the clocks, go to Start Here and pick the path that matches this week.

Start Here · Pick One Path

No Baseline Yet

When: No recent PowerPrep (or equivalent official timed form)

Tonight:

- ☐ Log into your ETS account and confirm PowerPrep is available
- ☐ Schedule one full shorter GRE (~2 hours quiet) this week — before heavy AI volume
- ☐ After scores: write V/Q/AWA below; run Overview + fill Hour Budget

Official first: PowerPrep timed form #1 = score thermometer

Have Scores · 4–10 Weeks Out

When: At least one official-ish timed V/Q (PowerPrep preferred) in hand

Tonight:

- ☐ Paste V/Q/AWA and weak item types into the Score Plan prompt
- ☐ Tag misses: conceptual / process / careless / timing — pick top two
- ☐ Rebalance Hour Budget toward the measure that blocks your programs

Official first: Next PowerPrep or official timed blocks on the calendar

Final 2 Weeks

When: ≤14 days to test day

Tonight:

- ☐ Stop opening new content rabbit holes and long-GRE nostalgia drills
- ☐ Run Test Day prompt (at-home vs center logistics)
- ☐ Light mixed review only; protect sleep and section-1 habits

Official first: No brand-new full-length in the last 2–3 days unless you still need timing calm

Your Plan (write in pen)

Test date (and at-home / test center)

Baseline — V _____ Q _____ AWA _____ (PowerPrep date _____)

Target — V _____ Q _____ AWA _____ (from program ranges)

Hours per week you will actually do (be honest)

Hour split — V ____ hrs Q ____ hrs AWA ____ hrs (should sum ≈ weekly total)

Top 2 miss tags (conceptual / process / careless / timing)

Path circled above (No Baseline Yet / Have Scores / Final 2 Weeks)

Shorter GRE only (since Sept 2023). Full history lives on the site primer page. Do not train long-GRE dual essays or fake single-block V/Q timings.

Section-Adaptive · Shorter Clocks

Verbal and Quant are section-adaptive: how you do on section 1 routes the difficulty of section 2. Early accuracy is high leverage — this is not a “warm-up you can sleepwalk.” AWA is one Analyze an Issue task; the Argument essay is gone (AWA itself is not gone).

- Analytical Writing: 1 Issue task · 30 min · 0–6 (half points)
- Verbal: Sec1 12Q/18m → Sec2 15Q/23m (never one 27Q/23m blob)
- Quant: Sec1 12Q/21m → Sec2 15Q/26m (never one 27Q/26m blob)
- Total testing ~1 hour 58 minutes
- V and Q each 130–170; on-screen calculator on Quant
- Official free practice: POWERPREP via your ETS account = score truth
- Linear within a section; section 2 difficulty depends on section 1 — protect early accuracy

Hour Budget · V / Q / AWA

You already have a job and a life. Six-hour study days are a fantasy for most GRE takers. Write a weekly hour total you can keep for 6–8 weeks, then allocate to the measure that moves admissions — not the app that feels productive.

- [] List 2–4 target programs and their reported V/Q ranges (and AWA if they care).
- [] If one measure is already at/above range: maintenance only (≤20% of hours).
- [] If one measure is below range: put 50–70% of hours there until PowerPrep moves.
- [] AWA: enough timed Issues to be stable (often 1–2 short sessions/week) — not zero, not a thesis project.
- [] Cap untimed AI drills; every week needs at least one timed official or official-like section.
- [] Rebalance after each PowerPrep — don't run last month's budget on new data.

Hub tabs: Score Plan for the weekly map; AWA Decision if writing time is the open question.

Set Real V / Q Targets

Pull program pages or class profiles for Verbal and Quant ranges in your field. A single “160+” fantasy is weaker than “V 158 / Q 162 because program X.” Bands below are rough context on the 130–170 scale — not guarantees.

150–154 Around average Verbal/Quant (V/Q) — build accuracy and timing systems	160–164 Competitive for many programs — polish weak question types	165–170 Elite band — hard-item stamina + near-zero careless errors
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Prep Principles

- Official Educational Testing Service (ETS) materials (PowerPrep, Official Guide, Official practice books) beat random volume for score prediction.
- Train the shorter section lengths—old long-GRE pacing habits mislead.
- Section-adaptive means section 1 is high leverage; don’t rush into avoidable misses.
- Error logs by question type beat passive review.
- Use AI prompts to tutor skills; verify gains on official practice.

If You Already Have a Job

- PowerPrep is the thermometer. AI is the tutor between official sets — not a substitute score.
- Protect calendar blocks like meetings. Two focused 45-minute sessions beat one exhausted Sunday marathon.
- Tell one person your test date so logistics (quiet room, ID, time zone) are not a 48-hour surprise.
- Skip long-GRE books that still center two essays or obsolete section lengths.
- If energy is trash three days straight: sleep and a short timed section beat guilt-scrolling question banks.

High-ROI Traps

Long-GRE nostalgia

Training dual essays or old long section clocks burns hours that do not show up on the shorter test.

Fake single-block V/Q timing

Do not drill Verbal as one 27-in-23 or Quant as one 27-in-26. Use the real sec1 → sec2 splits.

Sleepwalking section 1

Section 1 routes section 2 difficulty. Avoidable early misses can cap how hard (and high) section 2 can go.

AWA all-or-nothing

Ignoring Issue until week 7 creates avoidable stress; over-writing AWA while Q is underwater wastes the composite story programs actually read.

AI volume ≠ PowerPrep signal

Prompts explain and repair. Official timed forms tell you whether the score moved.

Default Path · ~8 Weeks · Realistic Hours

Week 1 · Baseline + map

- [] Create/confirm ETS account; run one PowerPrep timed form (full shorter GRE)
- [] Build miss log by measure + type (TC/SE/RC, QC/PS, Issue)
- [] Write V / Q / AWA targets from program ranges — not a random 170
- [] Run Overview prompt; fill Hour Budget on Your Plan

Week 2 · Verbal foundation

- [] TC/SE logic drills (evidence in the sentence, not vocab panic only)
- [] RC mapping under section clocks — not one fake 27Q block
- [] One timed Verbal section pair when possible (12Q/18m → 15Q/23m)

Week 3 · Quant foundation

- [] Arithmetic/algebra + data interpretation block
- [] Quantitative Comparison trap list (could be / must be)
- [] One timed Quant section pair (12Q/21m → 15Q/26m); on-screen calc only as allowed

Week 4 · AWA + weaker measure

- [] Two timed Analyze an Issue essays (30 min each) — Argument task is gone
- [] AWA Decision prompt if you are under-investing or over-investing in writing
- [] Extra hours on whichever of V/Q is dragging program fit

Week 5 · Weak-measure intensive

- [] Weak Area prompt plan for the weaker of V or Q
- [] 2–3 timed sections on that measure only (real section lengths)
- [] Score Plan refresh with new PowerPrep or official mixed-set numbers

Week 6 · Section-adaptive pressure

- [] Full shorter-GRE timing simulation (~1h58 testing)
- [] Protect section 1 accuracy — it routes section 2 difficulty
- [] Light Issue outline drills only if AWA is still unstable

Week 7 · Official repair

- [] PowerPrep #2 or remaining official timed material
- [] Top 3 miss tags only — no random new question banks
- [] Strategies prompt if process/pacing is the leak

Week 8 · Taper + logistics

- [] Short drills on personal error patterns only
- [] At-home vs test-center checklist (ID, equipment, quiet room)
- [] Test Day prompt; sleep priority — stop cramming new content

Miss Log (copy rows as needed)

After every timed section or PowerPrep: log misses. Repair the top two tags before random new topics.

* Tags: conceptual · process · careless · timing · (optional type: TC/SE/RC/QC/PS/Issue)

Date	V/Q/AWA	Tag*	What I missed	Fix tomorrow

Prompt Map (hub tabs)

testlessons.com/tests/gre/ — copy the full prompt, fill [brackets] with messy truth. PowerPrep remains score truth.

Overview: Shorter format still fuzzy

Done when: You can state sec1/sec2 clocks, one Issue essay, and why PowerPrep matters

Score Plan: Baseline in hand; need a weekly plan

Done when: Hour Budget written; next PowerPrep dated; weak measure named

AWA Decision: Unsure how hard to push AWA

Done when: Clear AWA hours vs V/Q tradeoff for your programs

Practice: Mixed skill drill between official sets

Done when: Timed shorter-format set done; misses tagged

Weak Area: One measure or item type is stuck

Done when: Focused repair; fewer repeats of the same tag next timed section

Strategies: Process / adaptive strategy

Done when: 1–2 rules for section 1 accuracy and pacing you will actually run

Test Day: Final 72 hours

Done when: At-home/center logistics done; light review only; sleep protected

Final 72 Hours

- [] ETS account, test registration, and ID name match
- [] At-home: room, proctoring equipment, internet, backup plan per ETS rules
- [] Test center: arrival time, ID, allowed items — read the ticket
- [] Know your start time in the correct time zone
- [] Light review of YOUR miss-log patterns only — no new textbooks
- [] Run Test Day prompt once if logistics or anxiety are messy
- [] Sleep > extra full-length the night before

Why the Score Still Matters (short)

Published research — not a score guarantee. Programs use multiple factors.

What To Do With This

- Check your target programs' reported Verbal/Quant ranges for your field.
- Section-adaptive testing rewards early accuracy—practice full sections, not only untimed drills.
- Use official PowerPrep for score truth; use prompts here to repair weak item types between forms.

Sources

1. Kuncel, N. R., Hezlett, S. A., & Ones, D. S. (2001). A comprehensive meta-analysis of the predictive validity of the Graduate Record Examinations: Implications for graduate student selection and performance. *Psychological Bulletin*, 127(1), 162–181. (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11271753/>)
2. Kuncel, N. R., Wee, S., Serafin, L., & Hezlett, S. A. (2010). The validity of the Graduate Record Examination for master's and doctoral programs: A meta-analytic investigation. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 70(2), 340–352. (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0013164409344508>)

Next On The Site

1. Circle your path on page 1 and fill Your Plan + Hour Budget
2. Open the hub prompt that matches this week (see Prompt Map)
3. Self-Assess if you want a quick path quiz: testlessons.com/tests/gre/approach/
4. Book PowerPrep on your ETS account before another week of untimed AI drills

Open prompts: testlessons.com/tests/gre/ · Self-Assess: testlessons.com/tests/gre/approach/ · SAT vs ACT: testlessons.com/tests/sat-vs-act/

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