

# Graduate Record Examination

## In-Depth Guide

According to [Inside Higher Ed](#), more than 400,000 men and women sat for the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) during the 2011-12 academic year. Comprised of six primary sections in three different academic areas, **the GRE general test is considered the standard entrance examination for graduate-level college and university programs across the United States.** The exam is offered throughout the year at Educational Testing Service (ETS) centers worldwide; more than 20% of exam-takers in 2011-12 sat for an exam at a testing center outside the United States.

Please note: While one specific section addresses the GRE subject tests, this guide is intended to only cover the GRE general test in a comprehensive manner.

## GRE FAQs

### Where do I register for the GRE general test?

| Registration Options  | Details   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Online                | Most U.S. and non-U.S. exam-takers may <a href="#">create an account and register online</a> on the official website of Educational Testing Services, the company that offers the exam. A <a href="#">valid credit or debit card</a> will be required; American Express, Discover, JCB, MasterCard and VISA are all currently accepted.   |
| Mail                  | Individuals with disabilities or health-related needs must register for the exam <a href="#">by mail through ETS Disability Services</a> ; those requiring accommodations must have their request approved before their test date can be scheduled. The GRE is normally offered on Sundays, and individuals who wish to take the test on Monday due to religious beliefs must <a href="#">register by mail</a> .  |
| Mail/Phone            | Exam-takers who <a href="#">request a fee reduction due to unemployment</a> must <a href="#">mail a completed CBT Authorization Voucher</a> (along with documentation of unemployment), and then contact ETS by phone at (800) GRE-CALL to schedule a testing date. <a href="#">Telephone and mail registration</a> options are also available for all computer-adaptive test-takers; paper-based test-takers may register by mail, but not by telephone. In addition to online, telephone, and mail options, non-U.S. GRE-takers may <a href="#">register by fax</a> . |
| At the Testing Center | Finally, standby testing is available on exam dates at testing centers with enough space to accommodate last minute GRE-takers; <a href="#">registration for these individuals</a> will take place at the testing center immediately before the exam.   |

## How much does it cost?

The standard worldwide fee for taking the GRE is \$195. Exam-takers are also entitled to study materials, online score reports, and the GRE Diagnostic Service at no extra cost. Those who register late will be charged an additional \$25, while those who reschedule their exam date, change their testing center, or participate in standby testing will each be assessed an additional \$50 fee. A full listing of GRE services and their related fees is available [online](#).

## How long is the test?

The GRE is comprised of [six individual sections](#). Test takers who sit for the computer-adaptive exam are allotted a total of 3 hours and 45 minutes to finish the test, while paper-based test-takers receive 3 hours and 30 minutes.

## Where do I take the exam?

Every exam-taker's timeline and availability differs, but all computer-adaptive and paper-based GRE tests are conducted at ETS testing centers. A [complete directory](#) of all testing locations, both in the U.S. and abroad, is available online. This directory allows users to view seat availability on different testing dates at all locations.

## When should I take the exam?

[According to \*The Princeton Review\*](#), prospective students who must submit a GRE score as part of their application process for grad school should sit for the GRE general test roughly **four to five months before submitting formal applications**. For instance, individuals who plan to send their applications in December are encouraged to sit for the exam sometime in July or August. If an exam-taker is not satisfied with the final score, then he or she will have several months to study and retake the test.

| If you want to submit your application in this month, | If you want to submit your application in this month, |
|---|---|
| January   | August or September <i>of the previous year</i>       |
| February  | September or October <i>of the previous year</i>      |
| March   | October or November <i>of the previous year</i>       |
| April   | November or December <i>of the previous year</i>      |
| May   | December or January <i>of the previous year</i>       |
| June  | January or February                                   |
| July  | February or March                                     |

|           |                |
|-----------|----------------|
| August    | March or April |
| September | April or May   |
| October   | May or June    |
| November  | June or July   |
| December  | July or August |

If the student also needs to sit for the GRE subject test, this exam is normally offered [three times per year](#) — normally during the months of September, October, and April. Both the GRE general and subject tests are normally offered on Sundays.

## What is computer-adaptive testing?

Both the Verbal and Quantitative Reasoning sections of the computer-based GRE test use software that essentially “adapts” to individual test-takers. This means test content is delivered to exam-takers based on their performance in previous sections.

For example, the questions found in the first section of the Verbal Reasoning section range from easy to difficult. The difficulty of the second Verbal Reasoning section, however, is determined by the exam-taker’s score on the first section; those who excel during the first section will face relatively challenging questions in the second, while those who struggled initially will encounter questions of average difficulty. Test takers who receive increasingly difficult questions throughout the test receive the highest scores.

The Critical Thinking and Unscored sections do not use computer-adaptive testing.

## How long are scores valid?

GRE scores are considered [valid for five years](#) after the exam-taker’s last testing date.

## How many times can I sit for the exam?

Candidates are allowed to sit for the exam [once every 21 days](#), and no more than five times during a 12-month period. Test takers can opt to send or not send each individual exam to four schools, free of charge.

## How are scores delivered to colleges and universities?

Official GRE score reports are [mailed to four colleges and universities of the exam-taker’s choice free-of-charge](#); additional score reports are \$37 apiece. Computer-adaptive test-takers designate their four schools at the testing center prior to the exam, with the option of cancelling their score (see next question) and withholding their score from these schools once the exam is finished. Paper-based test takers designate their four schools during the registration process.

The [ScoreSelectSM](#) option from ETS is now available to all exam-takers. Through this feature, students can modify their reporting request once they have viewed their unofficial scores on testing day. Options include:

- To not send scores at all
- To send only the most recent score to as many as four designated schools
- To send all GRE scores recorded within the previous five-year period to four designated schools

After the testing day, exam-takers can send as many previously recorded GRE scores as they wish for a small fee.

## **How and when should an exam-taker cancel his/her GRE score?**

GRE-takers are allowed to [cancel their exam score](#) once the test is finished under the condition that they will never be able to view their unofficial or official score. That means exam-takers who view their score on the testing date will not be allowed to cancel that score. The ETS hopes to discourage cancellations with the [ScoreSelectSM](#) option which makes it possible to choose which score reports are sent to schools and which are not.

The fee to reinstate a cancelled score is \$30. Students can reinstate their score by sending the fee and an [SR Form](#) to ETS within 60 days of the date of the cancelled test.