

GRE Verbal (Reading)

Recap: Types of Questions

Reading comp (p. 47)

Recommended approach: Read passage first, and read for thorough comprehension (don't "skim").

Letters in ovals = Only ONE answer ("the best") is correct

Letters in rectangles = One OR MORE answers are correct; choose all that apply

Text completion (p. 49)

Often a good approach: Come up with your own word choices first, especially with 1 – 2 blanks.

Sentence Equivalence (p. 52)

What language is this?!

Vocabulary is the GRE's most notorious element. Some pointers:

- Try to infer the meaning of a strange word from context or content.
- If a word you don't know is in one of the answer choices, don't eliminate it.
- Check the words you do know first.
- You are not tested on foreign or technical terms. Their meanings will either be explained or will be irrelevant.
- Cramming vocabulary is ineffective for permanent retention. Learn 1 – 3 new words / day max.

But it's not all just about obscure words. The GRE uses academic-style, information-dense passages.

Sentence structure

- Don't be afraid to read slowly or twice.
- Watch out for double / triple / quadruple negatives. You can cancel negatives in pairs to produce simpler sentences.
- Abstract subject matter: Try to provide your own examples.

Paragraph structure

- Identify the backdrop, central argument, and support / evidence.
- Take note of each name the first time it appears, and the role it plays.
- Connect every pronoun to its antecedent.
- Passive voice: If subject and / or object are unstated, read between the lines to infer.

Hard Problems

Visualizing or summarizing information

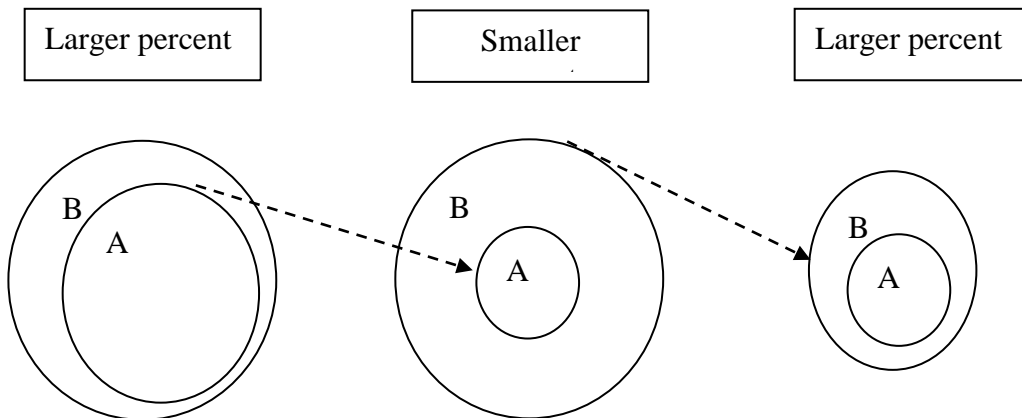
When necessary, draw out dense information in a picture or diagram. (See skinny book p. 21)

Percent principles

Definition of Percent

Percent = Successes / Choices. Therefore, a higher percent can be caused by more successes OR fewer choices.

A as a percentage of B:



Multiple factors

Percentages / probabilities are often used to weight the significance of other factors.

Ex. 2a: The expected value of your prize in a lottery is not just the jackpot, but the jackpot multiplied by the probability of winning. Formulaically, $E = x * P(x)$. Becoming an athlete or entertainer is like buying a lottery ticket. Kids are enticed by the “jackpot” of stardom, failing to recognize the low probability of winning it.

Ex. 2b: Your risk of death in an accident is the probability of getting into an accident multiplied by the probability of dying in that type of accident.

“People who get into car accidents usually experience minor fender benders and do not get seriously hurt or killed. However, when a plane crashes, almost everyone on board dies. Therefore, plane travel is much more deadly than driving.”

Fallacy: This argument is failing to weigh the probability of death in an accident with the probability of actually getting into such an accident.

Car accident: High probability of occurrence, low probability of death

Plane accident: Low probability of occurrence, high probability of death

These percent principles are relevant for the infamous agriculture problems on p. 71.

Strengthening / Weakening Arguments

Sometimes it is possible to directly strengthen / weaken an argument with evidence.

At other times, an argument can be indirectly strengthened / weakened with an alternative explanation.

To weaken a conclusion, you can find support for an alternative explanation.

Therefore, to strengthen a conclusion, you can weaken an alternative explanation!

Arnold's Argument

Observation: Traffic is jammed up ahead.

Conclusion: I'll bet there's an accident.

Alex's Alternative Explanation

Well, maybe there's a sports event nearby.

	<i>Arnold's argument</i>	<i>Alex's alternative</i>
(A) The roads are icy.	Directly strengthens	
(B) We are near the Staples Center	Indirectly weakens	Directly strengthens
(C) There are no emergency vehicles in sight.	Directly weakens	
(D) We are in the middle of the desert	Indirectly strengthens	Directly weakens

Usually, the alternative explanation is not spelled out for you, but hinted at in the question or the answer choice.

Art's argument

Observation: I put my songs on iTunes, but nobody is buying them.

Conclusion: My music is too sophisticated for iTunes users.

Does each of the following strengthen or weaken Art's argument?

- (A) The median age of iTunes users is 14.
- (B) Art has priced his songs at \$4 each, which is 2 – 4 times as expensive as other songs on iTunes.
- (C) There are 400,000,000 songs on iTunes, and it is too expensive for independent artists to advertise
- (D) Art has priced his songs at \$.99 each, which is the standard price for iTunes songs.

See Skinny book p. 22 # 1