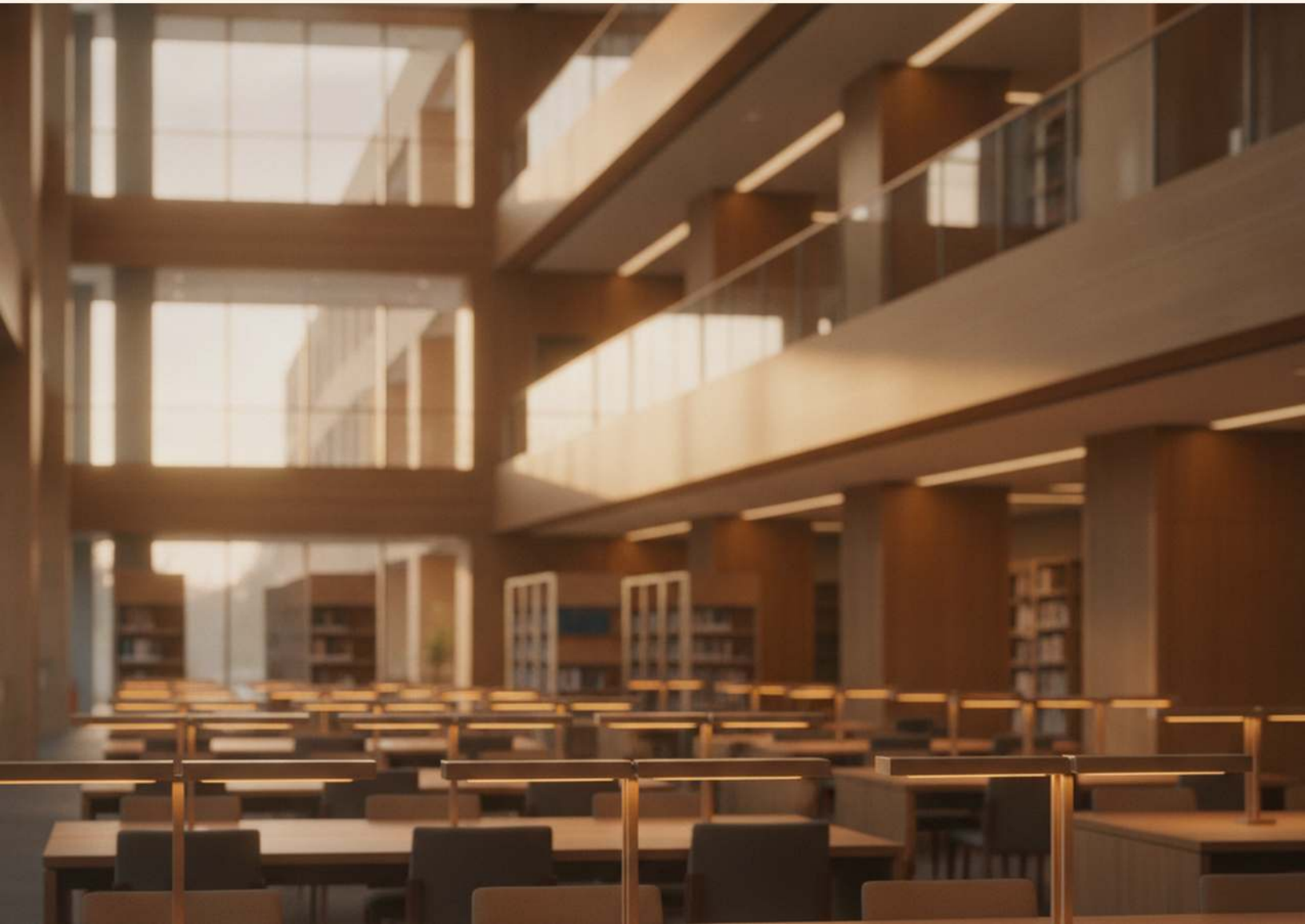
THE COMPLETE GMAT FOCUS PREP GUIDE

Quant + Verbal + Data Insights | Study Plans | 2026-2027 Edition



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Quantitative Reasoning

Twenty-one questions. Forty-five minutes. Arithmetic and algebra, nothing else. No geometry - not a single triangle, circle, or coordinate plane. No calculator. Every question is problem solving with five numerical answer choices. This chapter covers what the section tests, the method that solves it, and how to use the answer choices as a tool.

What the Section Tests

Quantitative Reasoning measures whether you can translate quantitative information into mathematics, execute the math accurately, and reason about numbers under time pressure. The content breaks into three buckets.

Arithmetic. Integers and divisibility, fractions and decimals, percents and percent change, ratios and proportions, exponents and roots, order of operations. This is the foundation for everything else. Many test-takers lose points here, not because the arithmetic is advanced, but because the test dresses simple arithmetic in confusing wording and tight time limits.

Algebra. Linear equations and inequalities, quadratic equations (factoring and the quadratic formula), systems of equations, absolute value, functions and function notation, sequences in basic forms. The algebra rarely goes beyond what you learned by tenth grade. The difficulty comes from setting up the right equation from a word problem, not from exotic techniques.

Word problems. Rates and work, mixtures and weighted averages, sets, counting and basic probability, overlapping categories. These are arithmetic and algebra wearing a costume. Your job is to strip the costume off - to translate the story into an equation or a calculation, then solve.

> **What is NOT tested:** Geometry of any kind. No area, no perimeter, no angles, no coordinate geometry, no 3D shapes. If a question seems to require a geometry formula, you have misread it - look for the arithmetic or algebra underneath.

The Four-Step Method: Translate, Plan, Execute, Check

Every Quant question on the test yields to the same four steps. The steps are simple; doing them in order, every time, is the discipline that separates consistent scorers from erratic ones.

15, and 5(3) = 15. Match. Answer: (B). Check by solving directly: 2n + 9 = 5n gives 3n = 9, so n = 3.

The lesson: when a test fails, decide which direction to move before testing the next choice. And if no choice ever satisfies all the conditions, the problem is almost always your translation or your arithmetic, not the question. Re-read the stem and rebuild the equation.

Second worked example. "If 4 less than 3 times a number is 20, what is the number?" Choices: (A) 6 (B) 7 (C) 8 (D) 9 (E) 10.

Test (C) 8: 3(8) - 4 = 20. Exactly 20. Done in ten seconds. When the translation is clean, backsolving is the fastest method available.

Picking numbers, full method. Use it when: the question contains variables, percents, or ratios with no concrete values, and asks for a relationship.

1. Pick numbers that are convenient AND legal. Avoid 0 and 1 (they have special properties that can make wrong answers look right). For percent problems, 100. For fraction problems, the least common denominator.
2. Solve the problem with your numbers.
3. Plug your numbers into each answer choice. The choice that matches your result is correct.
4. If two choices match, pick new numbers and retest - this is rare but possible.

Worked example. "If the price of a stock increases by 20% and then decreases by 20%, the final price is what percent of the original?" Choices: (A) 96% (B) 100% (C) 104% (D) 120% (E) 144%.

Pick 100. After +20%: 120. After -20%: 120 x 0.80 = 96. Final is 96% of original. Answer: (A). The trap is (B) 100% - the intuitive but wrong "they cancel out." They do not cancel because the decrease applies to the larger intermediate value. Picking numbers makes this visible instantly.

Worked example with variables. "If $x > 0$, which is greater: x^2 or $2x$?" This is not multiple choice, but picking numbers resolves it: $x = 1$ gives 1 vs 2 ($2x$ bigger); $x = 3$ gives 9 vs 6 (x^2 bigger); $x = 2$ gives 4 vs 4 (equal). The answer depends on x - a classic Data Sufficiency setup (Data Sufficiency, which asks whether you have enough information to answer rather than for the answer itself, is covered in the Data Insights chapter). When picking numbers reveals different outcomes, you have found the boundary cases the test is probing.

Answer Explanations

1. (A). Statement 1: 3x = 15, x = 5. Sufficient alone. Statement 2: x could be 1 through 9 - insufficient alone. A common trap is (C), but statement 2 adds nothing to statement 1. Always evaluate each statement independently.

2. (C). Divisibility by 6 requires divisibility by both 2 and 3. Statement 1 alone: n could be 4 (not divisible by 6) or 6 (divisible) - insufficient. Statement 2 alone: n could be 3 or 6 - insufficient. Together: n is divisible by both 2 and 3, hence by 6 - sufficient. This is the classic genuine C.

3. (A). The question asks "more red than blue" - a yes/no question. Statement 1: a 3:2 ratio means red > blue regardless of totals. Sufficient alone. Statement 2: 500 total pens tells you nothing about the split. Insufficient. Answer A. Note that you never need the actual numbers - sufficiency, not computation.

4. (a) **Yes.** Revenue per employee (in $ thousands): North = 840/28 = 30.0; South = 1150/35 ~ 32.9; East = 720/22 ~ 32.7; West = 980/31 ~ 31.6; Central = 660/25 = 26.4. South is the highest, so the statement is true. Note how close South and East are - this is why you compute rather than eyeball.

(b) **Yes.** East expenses = 500 ($ thousand), the lowest of any office.

(c) **Yes.** Offices with expenses exceeding $800 thousand: South (900) and West (810) - exactly two.

5. (a) **No.** West profit = 980 - 810 = 170. North profit = 840 - 620 = 220. West's profit is LESS than North's, so the statement is false - **No**.

(b) **No.** Central has 25 employees; East has 22. Central does not have the fewest - **No**.

(c) **Yes.** Total = 840 + 1150 + 720 + 980 + 660 = 4,350 thousand = $4.35 million, which exceeds $4.3 million - **Yes**.

6. Greatest quarter: **Q4** (25 hundred = 2,500, the tallest bar). Second half total: Q3 + Q4 = 15 + 25 = 40 hundred = **4,000**. The key move is noticing the axis is in hundreds - a common graphics error is reading 40 as the answer instead of 4,000.

7. s = **8**, l = **5**. Translate both conditions: 6s + 12l = 108 (muffins) and s + l = 13 (boxes). Divide the first by 6: s + 2l = 18. Subtract the box equation: l = 5, so s = 8. Check: 6(8) + 12(5) = 48 + 60 = 108 muffins, and 8 + 5 = 13 boxes. Notice why the box count matters: the muffin equation alone allows two pairs from the options (s = 6 and l = 6, or s = 8 and l = 5), and only the second condition makes the answer unique. The Two-Part method: write every constraint as an equation first, simplify, then solve or test options rather than guessing.