

MCAT

Verbal Reading and
Writing Sample

First Steps

- Make a preparation schedule
- Find resources
 - Come to the CTL
 - Borrow from peers
 - Go to your local library
- Subscribe to <http://www.e-mcat.com/>

About Verbal Reasoning

- 85 minutes
- 60 multiple choice questions with choices A-D
- 9 passages and 4-10 questions each
- 600-word (approximately) passages
- 15 = top score

Strategy Approach to Verbal Reasoning

- Energy
- Focus
- Confidence
- Timing

Energy

- Pull your chair close to the table
- Sit up straight
- Place your feet flat on the floor and be alert
- Practice under timed conditions and give 100%

Focus

- Focus on the task at hand
- Ignore distractions

Confidence

- Be confident of your score
- Be arrogant when you read
- Assume you have guessed correctly on every answer
- Read critically
- Assume it's the writers fault that you are confused

Timing

- Read every passage in the order given
- Attempt every question
- Check your time after you've finished the fifth passage
- Guess at the difficult questions and move on

Tactic Approach to Verbal Reasoning

- Take five second break
- Read every word
- Construct main idea
- Use four tools to answer questions

Take Five Second Break

- Before each passage, take a five second break
- Forget the last passage and all other thoughts
- Sit up straight, concentrate, and focus

Read Every Word

- Don't skim
- Don't write in the margins
- Tests your ability to detect and understand ambiguities, not details
- Concentrate on the main idea
- Don't read the question first
- Don't circle or underline
- Get excited about the topic
- Don't speed read
- Create an image of the author in your mind
- Spend 20 seconds figuring out the main idea before beginning the questions

Four Tools to Answer Questions

- Going back
- Main idea
- Question stems
- Answer choices

Going Back to Parts of the Passage

- Only when you finish an exam on time
- Only when you know what you're looking for
- Only when you know where you can find the answer

Main Idea

- Summary of passage in one or two sentences
- Reflects author's opinion
- Emphasize minor topics
- Questions want to take you away from main idea
- Construct the main idea in your head (20 seconds)
- Continue reading until you get to something you do understand
- Become familiar with the author
- Don't feel that you need to remember the details of a passage.

Question Stems

- Use this information to answer the questions
- Some questions you can answer without even reading the passage or answer choices
- Simplify the question and answer choices

Answer Choices

- Three of the options are *distracters*
- Five categories of suspected distracters
 - Round-About: moves around the question
 - Beyond: validity relies upon information not in the passage
 - Contrary: contrary to the main idea
 - Simpleton: too simple or easy to verify
 - Unintelligible: don't understand
- Correct answer = softeners (*most likely, had a tendency to, seemed, etc.*)

How to Study for Verbal Reasoning

- Take verbal test under time limit and score your answers
- Take a one-day break
- Examine the questions and answer choices
- Take a one-day break
- Read first passage in same test and write main idea; match your main idea for each question and answer choices; repeat for each passage

Advice about Verbal Reasoning

- Read all of the questions first and skim over the passages looking for keywords.
- Read *The Economist* and *The Wall Street Journal*
- Make notes of the main point of each paragraph
- Take a 5 second break between passages
- Get rest to ensure peak performance

Discussion Board - <http://www.e-mcat.com/>

About the Writing Sample

- Two 30-minute periods
- Take both sides of the argument
- Give guideline to determine which side is correct in which case
- 6 (or T) = top score

Writing Sample Directions

- Explain the statement with an example
- Give example contradicting statement
- Give guideline when statement is true and false
- Write outline of three steps above
- Write 2 pages with correct grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and historical examples

Sample Prompts

- An understanding of the past is necessary for solving the problems of the future.
- Politicians too often base decisions on what pleases voters rather than on what is good for the country.

Advice about Writing Sample

- Divide your essay into separate paragraphs so the markers know you've completed each task
- Insert transitional links to unify your essay
- Use logic to make the first paragraph

Sources

1. *Exam Crackers: MCAT Verbal Reasoning (5th edition)*
2. Discussion Board - <http://www.e-mcat.com/>