

TAMING THE "CAT"

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Aristotle had once remarked: "Find a job you love and you will never have to work a single day of your life."

Prologue

The Common Admission Test is like a wild animal that really cannot be tamed but one which MBA aspirants have to tame. The spread and structure of the test is designed to be an enigma that in turn wants to stalk the novice tamer, through an assessment of the individual's ability in the realm of reasoning, verbalisation and quantitative skills under pressure of time. The animal is in its natural habitat while the aspirant is in strange and unfamiliar territory. This shows the compulsive need for intelligent and innovative preparation both mentally and physically. Most importantly, all "CAT tamers" must have the will, drive and determination to succeed no matter what it takes.

Why Should the CAT be tamed ?

CAT is rated amongst the best and elite examinations in the world. Taming the Common Admission Test is like passing through the portals of a professional paradise. It will give you access to quality institutes that determine your placements. Two to three hours of this single test can make all the difference to your entire life.

Eligibility

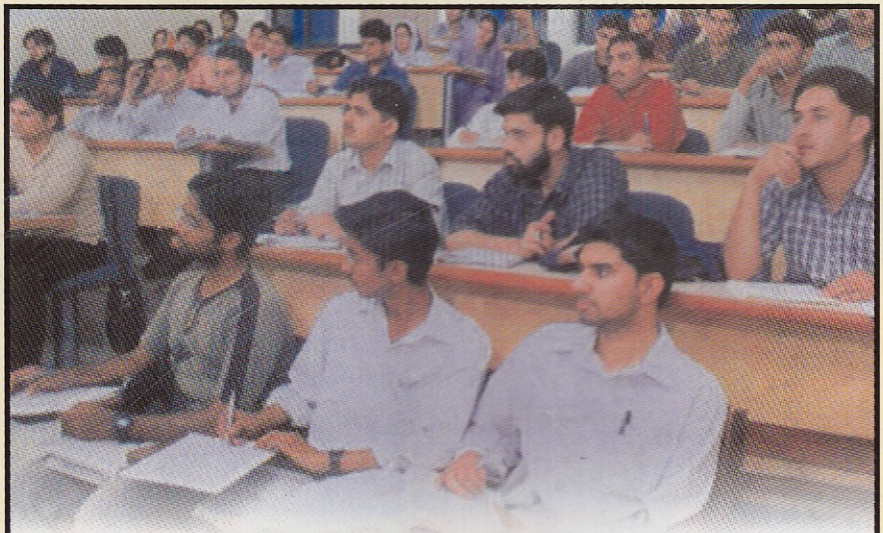
You have to have a Bachelor's degree in any discipline at least with 50% (45% for SC/ST) marks. It has a written test as well as a group/personal viva voce. The first step is qualifying in the written test.

Coaching Setups

There are several coaching setups across India that are fulltime commercially engaged in orienting and preparing students for appearing in CAT. The merits and demerits of this test are not being discussed here. Notwithstanding this, it is important for everyone who wants to take the exam to be well aware of what is needed in terms of the subject matter and organised effort to be able to follow a planned time table.

Belief & Approach

Your approach should be hope for the



The "P" List

PLAN

If you fail to plan you plan to fail

Decide what is vital, essential and desirable and plan accordingly

PREPARATION

Prepare what is needed to meet your vital and essential needs

Preview this plan and see whether it is do-able and achievable

PROGRAMME

Programme your schedule to put into action what you have prepared from your plan

Periodic review through a self audit will help you apply needed corrections

best and prepare for the worst. CAT preparation behooves giving it all you have got and at the same time believing that there is a life beyond CAT also. This seeming conundrum is actually common sense that will take you through by being and believing in your ROOTS—"Real, Objective, Opportune, Tuned, Systematic."

Fitness

Mental fitness is possible only through physical fitness. Ensuring balanced diet, proper sleep including short refreshing naps and some do-able exercise routines

would go a long way in enabling your readiness to take this all important test of your life. Include this too in your timetable plan. In short "Help your brain to help you".

Components of the Common Admission Test

CAT traditionally is a multiple choice based examination covering English language skill, logical analysis of data interpretation and quantitative applications of mathematics, algebra and geometry. The urge to do well in every section should be your mantra to qualify.

Approaching the CAT would hence need splitting it into vital, essential and desirable sections based on the quantum of marks allotted. The second step would be to classify them into complex, difficult and simple sections depending on each person's strength. The third step would be to create a time table and schedule factoring the above.

It would also be a good idea to consult some seniors who have been successful in CAT.

Periodic self audit of your preparation and its validation through mock examinations is an integral part of the pre-CAT process. It is good to realise that you are only competing with yourself and no one else.

Key points to remember in CAT

CAT components further broken down are

- Quantitative Ability
- Data Interpretation
- Data Sufficiency
- Logical Reasoning
- Reading Comprehension
- Verbal Reasoning

The above mentioned parts should enable you to prepare your timetable in a practical manner. Records show that CAT preparation is individualistic—some clear the CAT with less than a month's preparation while a few others do not succeed even after three or four years. This only highlights the relevance of timely application of knowledge with clarity and balance.

The Centre of Gravity of your Planning and Preparation

Your planning and preparation should revolve round keeping things simple and solvable. This would require defining :

(a) What work you need to do, rather than focussing on the time dimension of your preparation.

(b) Your current capability level and to what level you have to reach to qualify in terms of cut off percentages.

(c) A sectional approach. This would need you to break down your study schedule into verticals of each subject along with setting targets of qualifying. Do not attempt to cover everything at the same time. It would be too much to handle and will cause you to lose focus and get discouraged.

(d) How many questions involving this would give you the scope and range of required **Additional Efforts**.

Efforts

(e) Outline tables to fit in your schedule.

(f) Mastering your basic maths and language skills by rapid self and guided tests as a pre-CAT imperative.

(g) Balance and difference between accuracy and speed.

There are some additional catalytic must-do-efforts to help you succeed. These are :

(a) Preparing general knowledge across the span of economics, politics, national and international issues.

(b) Improving in reading speed and comprehension.

(c) Collecting of reading and test material.

(d) Storing and sorting this out for easy and ready access.

(e) Mentally testing yourself on the three major components whenever you can.

(f) Avoiding tiresome chatter and focussing on the only important task of readiness for the CAT.

(g) Creating conditions that are conducive to preparation, rest and relaxation.

(h) Reviewing your work through honest self assessment .

(i) Ensuring that your basics become sound at the first step. The next step is to correlate them in application and interpretation.

(j) Driving yourself to study sensibly. The more you study the clearer things would appear.

Enjoying the Challenge

Making the process an enjoyable one is of vital importance and will give you confidence. If you think of it as a burden you might as well not go through the throes of CAT.

Knowing your strengths and weaknesses is of vital importance. This would require you to take a battery of tests on subject matters, General Knowledge, IQ , language and maths skills.

To convert this challenge to an opportunity would need you to work hard and smart. The thumb rule is to be excellent in what you are good at. Good in what you are average at and most vitally be able to get through what you are not good at.

Comparisons always corrode. Nobody else matters but yourself. Others can at best only be guides. You have to take responsibility for yourself.

The ultimate litmus test would always be your approach and attitude towards not only taming the CAT but to your whole life.

CAT 2007 Inputs

There were no major changes from 2006 to 2007. The test had :

75 questions with 5 answer choices for each spread over three sections with 25 questions in each section.

It covered

Verbal Ability and Reading Comprehension

Data Interpretation and Logical Reasoning

Problem Solving

4 marks for each correct answer. Marking was changed to uniform from differential.

Choice of answers increased from 4 to 5.

1 negative mark for each incorrect answer.

Test Duration

2.5 hours.

Taming the CAT this time round

The keys to tame the CAT exam is to:

(a) Maintain poise and composure during the entire length of the test, after all your practice and hard work should not give in to pressure and panic.

(b) Plan your answering approach and the time you want to give to each section. Factor in total cutoffs as well as individual cutoffs.

(c) Scan the paper once or even twice to get a reasonable overview and feel.

(d) Read all questions in each section. You would be able to differentiate between the easy and difficult ones.

(e) Complete the easy ones in each section first. Remember the rule of uniform marking.

(f) Avoid getting bogged down at any point. Skip what cannot be answered and move ahead.

(g) Think about the impact of negative marking. It may be better to skip questions than answer them wrongly.

(h) Ensure that your work is neat and tidy.

Curtain call

The genesis of CAT lies in its mission of bringing in exclusivity with quality. In return it offers you position, power, status, progress, accompanied by the incentive of wealth.

The personality of CAT rests on its influence and impact across individuals, organisations and people. It opens the doors to its successful constituents. Consequently leadership, power and influence emerge to control, coordinate, design and shape events and activities across the nation as well as the globe. The WTO, World Bank, G8, Microsoft, TATAs, Reliance, MIT, IIMs, Harvard are all good demonstrable exemplary examples.

Go ahead if you feel that you have management aptitude, amplitude and attitude to be in the big league.

CSR & GHRDC wishes every one Godspeed and good luck.