

How to increase the number of attempts in the CAT paper

A LOT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT THE PREPARATION BUILDING UP TO THE COMMON ADMISSION TEST (CAT), 2010; LETS DISCUSS HOW TO GET TO THE BEST SCORE

The one and only thing which determines the success or failure of a candidate in any exam is the score obtained. This holds good for CAT as well, the first step towards securing a seat in the prestigious IIMs. The IIMs not only look for a high overall score, but also for a relatively good performance (score) in the individual sections (Quant, Verbal & I,DI).

Two factors determine the score obtained - number of attempts & accuracy. Though these two are not completely independent of each other, let us focus on the "Number of Attempts" and discuss the ways to increase it.

1. Question Selection: The students need to ensure that they attempt and answer all the easy questions in each section within the time allotted for the section. Once they are done with the easy questions, they can proceed to answering the more difficult ones, if time permits. To be able to do this, one has to attempt questions selectively, judging their difficulty level while reading them. The cardinal rule is to not miss on any easy question in the CAT paper.

The question which usually comes to the mind of the students while attempting the CAT questions based on the difficulty level is that, whether they should scan the paper first, or answer them on the go based on the difficulty level. The answer would depend on the section that one is working out. For a section like Verbal Ability, it doesn't make sense to come back to the questions after scanning them as most of them can either be answered or left out in the first reading.

But for a Quantitative Ability section, the constraints are different. All the questions can be read first and easy questions can be left to be solved later when one identifies all the easy questions in the paper. But the disadvantage in doing this will be that



there would be duplication of efforts in terms of reading the same question(s) multiple times. This is because by the time the scan is over and one comes back to the first question, the information on the question will not stay in ones mind and the question has to be read again. To avoid this, the students can divide the allotted time for the section into different chunks (for example - divide 40 min into 4 chunks of 10 min each) and in each time chunk, focus on a set of questions to be scanned for difficulty level and attempted. This way, one can ensure that no question goes unread and also that all the easy to medium questions are attempted.

A similar approach can be followed for LDI section, and the advantage here is that most questions here would be pre-divided into sets, making the student's task easier.

2. Order of Answering Different Sections: Put your best foot forward and start with your strongest section. If this section turns out to be the most difficult, it is great, as you have taken the biggest thorn out of your way. If this turns out to be easy, then it would give you more time to attempt the latter sections, one of which is your weakest. Doing this also prevents loss of confidence, which might happen if you start with your weakest or not so strong section and perform bad in it.

Never end with your weakest section. This would more often than not, be the reason for students getting

into panic mode as the time is running out and they are still stuck with their weakest section. Hence, the safest bet is to sandwich the weakest section between the other two.

3. Having a tried & tested "Time Management Strategy": By now, the students should have written enough number of mock cats (of good standard), to know their strengths and weaknesses. They also should have tried out various strategies (order of sections & time for each section). What invariably keeps happening, unless the students are disciplined enough is that, the time for the last section becomes much less than what the students had allotted to it. This is because of the natural instinct to get one more question in the earlier sections even after the allotted time is over. Hence, there is always a danger of the last section suffering due to lack of time. To avoid this, have 15-30 min buffer zone at the end. This would cater for any indiscipline in time management and ensure that no section suffers.

4. All said and done, it is the candidate's state of mind which plays a key role in the exam. Keep a cool head, ignore all the hype & hoopla going around you and focus only on the exam.

The article is authored by Mr. Ramnath Kanakadandi, Course Director - CAT, T.I.M.E. (Triumphant Institute of Management Education Pvt. Ltd.) Hyderabad