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## **What does it take to crack the CAT?**

The first and most important requirement to crack the CAT is aptitude. If you don't have it, it's very difficult to get a good CAT score. Aptitude is one thing that cannot be acquired or built up by practice. But don't think that this fact undermines the importance of practice in the course of CAT preparation. While you may have the right aptitude, you may falter on the D-day just because you don't have the right temperament and attitude to face the situation. The pressure on the day is immense and, unless you have built the confidence to face it by practising under simulated environment and doing a detailed analysis of your performance throughout the preparation period, you can very well have a bad day when it matters. While aptitude determines the zone in which your CAT score may finally lie, practice reduces the variability of that score and tends to push your score towards the ceiling of your zone. Practice does not mean taking numerous mock tests to get familiar with the kind of questions that may be asked or to optimise your time distribution for the various sections of the paper. The more important part entails that you analyse each and every paper you take to identify the kinds of problems you are good at and the types of mistakes you make. After identifying your strengths and weaknesses you need to take subsequent papers with the aim of improving your knack of picking the problems you can solve easily (and also in quick time, as an easy problem which takes a lot of time is no good). Moreover, you need to work on your weaknesses too, because you never know what will be the exact pattern of the paper and you may run out of easy problems to solve. But before all this you need to develop the platform for making your practice sessions more effective. This can be done by revising the theoretical concepts thoroughly so that you don't make blunders at later stages. So, the right mix of aptitude, theory, practice and analysis will help you sail through one of the most competitive exams in the world!

## **What was my strategy for CAT?**

My strategy for CAT was simple. As I said you cannot acquire aptitude by any means, I thought it was no point worrying about something I do not have control upon. If I had the ability it will be

evident in the result, otherwise it will make me a wiser person in terms of understanding my weaknesses. So, I just concentrated on building up my confidence of taking the paper in a pressure situation and worked on my temperament throughout the period. For this, I first brushed up the concepts and then started the practice sessions, coming back to the concepts whenever I felt the need. I did not take too many tests, a blunder many people do during CAT preparation, but focussed on analysing each and every paper thoroughly. I also took self administered previous years' CAT papers and followed them up with analysis. This helped in steadying my performance towards the end of the preparation period when I was able to get more or less similar scores in most of the tests I took. I was also pretty confident of myself in the real CAT and was sure I could handle any kind of variation they might put in the paper.

### **Tips for Various Sections:**

#### **a. Reading Comprehension**

RC is all about reading more and more, be it newspapers, novels or internet articles to make yourself familiar with various styles of writing and to improve your reading speed without compromising on comprehension. Apart from that attempting the RC passages in the mocks you take and analysing your answers to understand why your viewpoint differed from the actual answer is also important. Even if you are not able to cover all the passages within the time limit for the mock, you should attempt them later keeping appropriate time constraints.

#### **b. Verbal Ability**

The VA part tests your foundation of grammar as well as vocabulary. Vocabulary can be improved by doing a lot of reading, which may be combined with RC practice. But the important thing is to be on the lookout for unfamiliar words and understanding their meaning as well as the various contexts in which the word can be used. This is necessary because the same word can have different meanings in different contexts. Your grammar can be tested directly in sentence

correction/completion or in questions like parajumbles, etc. For this you need to brush up the basics and identify the subtle variations that may confuse you. This should be followed up with a lot of practice to build an instinctive ability to sense anything wrong in a sentence.

### **c. Logical Reasoning**

You can improve your logical reasoning ability by getting familiar with all the types of questions possible, though there is a limit to the improvement. Search for some good books on logical reasoning and practice hard. Also cover all the questions in the mocks and previous CAT papers.

### **d. Data Interpretation**

DI requires you to be good with numbers, in terms of interpretation ability as well as quick calculations. So, improve upon these two qualities by solving sufficient number of problems and practising the various shortcut techniques available for calculations. If you are not comfortable with the techniques, you may make blunders in the CAT or may have to fall back upon the time taking regular calculation methods.

### **e. Quantitative Ability**

The first thing to do for quant is to be thorough with your concepts, as this is one section where your concepts are really tested. Then you should improve your ability to apply the concepts by practising a lot. Fast calculation ability will also come in handy for this section.

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