MBA ONE STOP · CAT

CAT DILR Playbook: Pick the Right Sets, Solve Arrangements, Tables and Games

How to choose the 2 to 3 DILR sets worth your 40 minutes, with methods for arrangements, tables, games and routes, and five worked mini-sets.

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How DILR is set up and marked

Data Interpretation and Logical Reasoning is one of three CAT sections, timed at 40 minutes. You cannot switch sections, so you cannot borrow time from QA or VARC. A correct answer earns 3 marks, a wrong MCQ costs 1, a skipped question scores zero, and non-MCQ questions have no negative marking.

The official CAT 2026 pages do not state how many sets or questions DILR has. What matters is the structure: a set is a bundle of questions sharing one data block. One good set pays for several questions at once, and one bad set can eat 15 minutes for nothing.

Picking the 2 to 3 sets that matter

Spend the first four minutes scanning every set. Do not solve. Tag each set easy, medium or hard using these signals.

Signal	Good sign	Bad sign
Data	Clean table or short list of rules	Long paragraph with many unnamed entities
Anchors	Clues that fix a position or a value outright	Only relative clues, no fixed start
Questions	Direct: who sits where, what is the total	Conditional: 'if X changes, then...' on every question
Familiarity	A format you have solved before	A new structure with unusual rules

Rank the sets, then commit. If you have not made one forced deduction (a cell, a seat, a result you are certain of) after six to eight minutes, drop the set. The time already spent is gone; do not spend more to justify it.

Block of the 40 minutes	Minutes
Scan and rank all sets	4
Set 1, fully solved	12
Set 2, fully solved	12
Set 3, as far as the time allows	10
Buffer to enter answers and re-check	2

Tip. This split is a practice target, not an official figure. Adjust it after your first five mocks.

Arrangements: linear and circular

Draw the frame first: five boxes in a row, or a circle with numbered seats. Place anchor clues (fixed seat, end seat, opposite), then chain clues (immediately left, next to), then negative clues last. Split into cases only when a clue forces exactly two options.

Example. Mini-set 1. Five friends (Asha, Bharat, Chitra, Dev, Esha) sit in a row of seats 1 to 5, left to right. (i) Asha is not at either end. (ii) Bharat sits immediately to the left of Chitra. (iii) Dev sits at one end and Esha sits somewhere to his right. (iv) Chitra is not at an end. (v) Asha sits next to Bharat. Questions: who sits in seat 3, and how many people sit between Dev and Esha?

1. (iii): Dev has someone to his right, so Dev is in seat 1.
2. (ii) and (iv): Bharat-Chitra is a pair and Chitra is not at an end, so Chitra is in seat 3 or 4.
3. If Chitra is in 3, Bharat is in 2, and Asha must be next to Bharat and not at an end: seats 1 and 3 are taken. Impossible, so Chitra is in 4 and Bharat in 3.
4. Asha is next to Bharat and not at an end: seat 2. Esha takes seat 5.

Answer: Order: Dev, Asha, Bharat, Chitra, Esha. Seat 3 is Bharat; three people sit between Dev and Esha.

Example. Mini-set 2. Six people (Meera, Karan, Zoya, Tara, Rohan, Sana) sit round a table facing the centre. (i) Karan sits opposite Meera. (ii) Zoya sits in the next seat clockwise from Karan. (iii) Tara sits next to both Meera and Zoya. (iv) Rohan does not sit next to Meera. Questions: who sits opposite Sana, and who sits immediately anticlockwise of Karan?

1. Fix Meera at seat 0 to remove rotations. Seats run 0 to 5 clockwise. Opposite means +3, so Karan is at 3.
2. Zoya is clockwise of Karan: seat 4.
3. Tara is next to Meera (seat 1 or 5) and next to Zoya (seat 3 or 5): seat 5.
4. Seats 1 and 2 remain for Rohan and Sana. Rohan cannot be next to Meera (seat 1), so Rohan is in 2 and Sana in 1.

Answer: Sana (seat 1) sits opposite Zoya (seat 4). Immediately anticlockwise of Karan is seat 2: Rohan.

Tables and data sets

Rebuild the table in your own grid and add the derived columns you will need (change, share, ratio) before reading any question. Compare fractions by cross-multiplication, not by dividing every one. Keep percentage and absolute change apart: the question usually asks for one and tempts you with the other.

Store	Revenue 2025 (₹ lakh)	Revenue 2026 (₹ lakh)
Pune	40	50
Chennai	60	66
Hyderabad	80	84
Bengaluru	120	138

Example. Mini-set 3. Using the table: (a) Which store grew fastest in percentage terms? (b) Which store added the most revenue in absolute terms? (c) What share of the 2026 total does Bengaluru hold, to one decimal place?

1. Growth: Pune 10/40 = 25%, Chennai 6/60 = 10%, Hyderabad 4/80 = 5%, Bengaluru 18/120 = 15%.
2. Absolute gain: Pune 10, Chennai 6, Hyderabad 4, Bengaluru 18.
3. 2026 total = 50 + 66 + 84 + 138 = 338. Bengaluru share = 138/338 = 40.8%.

Answer: (a) Pune (b) Bengaluru (c) 40.8%

Games, tournaments and routes

For tournaments, check the total first: total wins must equal the number of matches. Then fill forced results one at a time. For routes, list every simple path between the two points and add the distances; small networks have few paths.

Example. Mini-set 4. Four teams (A, B, C, D) play each other once, with no draws. Final wins: A 2, B 2, C 1, D 1. D beat A, and B beat C. Questions: whom did A beat, and did C beat B?

1. Six matches, and 2 + 2 + 1 + 1 = 6 wins. Consistent.
2. D beat A, and that is D's only win, so D lost to B and to C.
3. B has wins over C and D: that is 2 wins, so B lost to A.
4. A has beaten B and needs 2 wins, so A also beat C. A's only loss is to D.
5. C has lost to A and B, and beat D: 1 win. It checks out.

Answer: A beat B and C. C did not beat B; B beat C.

Example. Mini-set 5 (practice distances, not real). Road distances in km: Delhi-Jaipur 270, Delhi-Agra 230, Jaipur-Agra 240, Jaipur-Kota 250, Agra-Gwalior 120, Gwalior-Kota 300, Agra-Kota 400. Questions: (a) Shortest route from Delhi to Kota? (b) Shortest if Jaipur-Kota is closed? (c) Time on the shortest route at 60 km/h?

1. Paths from Delhi to Kota: via Jaipur 270 + 250 = 520; Delhi-Agra-Kota 230 + 400 = 630; Delhi-Agra-Gwalior-Kota 230 + 120 + 300 = 650; Delhi-Agra-Jaipur-Kota 230 + 240 + 250 = 720.
2. With Jaipur-Kota closed, the shortest left is Delhi-Agra-Kota at 630.
3. Time = 520 / 60 = 8 hours 40 minutes.

Answer: (a) 520 km via Jaipur (b) 630 km via Agra (c) 8 hours 40 minutes

Time rules and daily habits

□ Decide your sets within the first four minutes and write their order on your rough sheet.
□ Mark each deduction as forced or assumed. Never build on an assumption without noting it.
□ Answer one easy question from the set first. If it does not match your grid, find the error before you answer more.
□ Never recompute a value twice. Write it in the grid once.
□ Always enter an answer to a non-MCQ question. There is no negative marking for them.
□ On an MCQ, guess only after removing at least one option. A wrong MCQ costs 1 mark against 3 for a right one.

Practise by solving one full set a day without a timer until the method is clear, then with a 12-minute limit. After each set, write down the first deduction you missed. That one line is where your time was lost.

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