MBA ONE STOP · CAT

CAT VARC Playbook: Reading Comprehension, Para-jumbles, Summary, Odd-one-out

A working method for CAT VARC: how to read RC passages, solve para-jumbles and odd-one-out, build vocabulary, and a 60-day reading routine.

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What VARC rewards

Verbal Ability and Reading Comprehension is one of three CAT sections, timed at 40 minutes, with no switching between sections. A correct answer is worth 3 marks and a wrong MCQ costs 1. Non-MCQ questions have no negative marking, and unattempted questions score nothing.

The official CAT 2026 pages do not state how many passages or questions VARC has, or how they split between reading comprehension and verbal items. Train for both, and read the instructions on your paper before you start.

Three skills decide your score: reading with retention, building a logical chain from sentences, and a feel for tone and language. The sections below train each one.

Reading comprehension: a five-step method

1. Read the passage once at a steady pace. After each paragraph, label its job in two or three words: claim, example, counter-view, concession, conclusion.
2. Before the questions, say the main idea in about ten words. If you cannot, reread the first and last paragraphs.
3. Read each question stem. For detail and inference questions, go back to the exact lines. Do not answer from memory.
4. Eliminate options. Cross out anything out of scope, reversed, too extreme, or only half true.
5. If two options survive, pick the one the passage supports directly, not the one that sounds more sensible.

Question type	What to do	Common trap
Main idea	Match your ten-word summary	Option that covers only one paragraph
Inference	Find the lines, then ask what must follow	Option true in the real world but not in the passage
Detail	Locate and compare wording	Option that swaps cause and effect
Tone	Look at the adjectives the author chooses	Picking 'critical' when the author is only cautious
Vocabulary in context	Replace the word with each option	Choosing the dictionary meaning
Except / not	Tick each option as stated or not	Forgetting the question is reversed

Example. Passage: Cities in India add flyovers faster than they add footpaths. Planners defend this with traffic counts: a flyover moves thousands of vehicles an hour, while a footpath, they say, moves nobody anywhere. But the count measures only what the planners chose to count. A footpath outside a school or a bus stop moves children and commuters who never appear in a vehicle survey, because nobody classed them as traffic. The result is a road network that looks efficient on paper and hostile on foot. Question: The author's main point is that (a) flyovers should no longer be built, (b) traffic counts that ignore pedestrians make flyover-heavy planning look better than it is, (c) footpaths carry more people than flyovers, (d) planners falsify traffic data.

1. Paragraph jobs: claim (flyovers first), planners' defence, author's rebuttal, conclusion.
2. Short summary: the way traffic is counted hides what pedestrians contribute.
3. (a) is too extreme: the author never says stop building. (c) is out of scope: no comparison of people carried is given. (d) is too strong: planners 'chose to count', not falsified.
4. (b) matches the summary.

Answer: (b)

Para-jumbles: build a chain

Do not try all orderings. Find the opener, find the forced pairs, then test.

□ Opener: a sentence that introduces its subject by full name and needs nothing before it. It rarely starts with 'this', 'that', 'however' or a pronoun.

□ Forced pairs: a pronoun and its noun, 'Instead' after an option, 'That choice' after a decision, a question followed by its answer.

□ Time and logic markers: dates in order, cause before effect, general before specific.

□ Closer: a result, a conclusion or a sentence that points forward.

□ Test your final order by reading it aloud once.

Example. Order these sentences. A: Instead, it kept a small team and let each member own one product line end to end. B: In 2019 the Coimbatore firm could have hired fifty more engineers to meet demand. C: Within two years, delivery times fell even though headcount barely changed. D: That choice was unpopular at first, because owners had no one to hand work to.

1. B is the opener: it names the firm and states a road not taken.
2. A must follow B: 'Instead' contrasts with the hiring option.
3. D must follow A: 'That choice' points back to keeping a small team.
4. C closes with the result, 'within two years'.

Answer: BADC

Summary and odd-one-out

For a paragraph summary, state the paragraph in ten words yourself first. The right option carries the author's main claim and stance, adds nothing new, and drops examples. Wrong options either narrow to one example or widen beyond the paragraph.

Example. Which option best summarises the paragraph? Paragraph: A city that fines fast drivers gets slow driving only while the camera is in view. A city that times its signals so that steady driving meets green lights gets steady driving at every hour, camera or not. Options: (a) Cameras are expensive and should be removed. (b) Designing the road so that good behaviour is the easy choice works better than punishing bad behaviour. (c) Green signals reduce traffic in Indian cities. (d) Fast drivers always slow down near cameras.

1. Short summary: design that rewards steady driving beats fines.
2. (a) adds a cost claim the paragraph never makes. (c) narrows to signals and invents a traffic effect. (d) is only the first half of the contrast and says 'always'.
3. (b) carries the full contrast and the author's stance.

Answer: (b)

For odd-one-out, write the common thread of the four sentences in a few words. The odd sentence can be true and even related, but it changes the focus.

Example. Which sentence is the odd one out? 1: Small merchants adopted UPI because a printed QR code cost them nothing. 2: A vegetable seller in Mysuru can now accept payment without owning a card machine. 3: The spread of QR payments among street vendors shows how low entry costs drive adoption. 4: Debates about interchange fees on card payments have occupied regulators in many countries for decades.

1. Thread of 1, 2 and 3: low-cost QR payments spreading among small merchants.
2. Sentence 4 shifts to regulation of card fees. It is a true statement about a related topic, but the focus is different.

Answer: Sentence 4

Vocabulary habits that last

Word lists fade. Words met in context stay. Keep a log with the sentence you found the word in, your own sentence using it, and its tone (positive, negative, neutral).

Habit	Daily time	Why it works
Log 5 new words with the source sentence	10 minutes	Context carries tone and usage
Revise on day 2, day 7 and day 21	5 minutes	Spaced review beats cramming
Group words by root or tone	Weekly, 15 minutes	One root unlocks many words
Fix one grammar rule per week	5 minutes	Agreement, parallelism and modifiers show up in verbal items

Tip. A word counts as learned only when you can use it in a sentence of your own without looking.

A 60-day reading routine

Read widely: editorials in The Hindu and Indian Express, opinion pages in Mint, long reads in Scroll or Aeon, essays on science, history, art and economics. Variety trains you for any passage.

Days	Daily plan	Minutes a day
1 to 15	Read one article (30), write a two-line summary (10), log words (10)	50
16 to 30	Read (30), one timed RC with questions (15), review it (10), words (10), one verbal set (10)	75
31 to 45	Read (30), two RCs (30), review (15), words (10), verbal sets (15)	100
46 to 60	One 40-minute timed VARC sectional, review (30), read (20), words (10)	100

That is 4,875 minutes in total, a little over 81 hours across 60 days. On a day you cannot manage the full plan, protect the reading and the review. Drop the extras first.

Mistakes that cost marks

- □ Choosing the option with the strongest word, such as always, never, only or all.
- □ Reading an option first and then hunting for support in the passage.
- □ Spending too long on one passage. Set a ceiling before you begin and keep to it.
- □ Guessing a wrong-prone MCQ without removing a single option. A wrong MCQ costs 1 mark.
- □ Leaving a non-MCQ blank. It has no negative marking, so always enter your best answer.
- □ Reviewing only wrong answers. Review the right answers you got by luck as well.

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