

RETHINK your approach

As the countdown to CAT 2018 begins, it is time to rework your strategy and make the most of the time left

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With less than two weeks to go for the Common Admission Test (CAT) 2018, the nervousness and fear would have increased manifold.

Should I do only mock CATs now? Should I leave out some of the topics that I am weak in? My scores in two sections are good, but I haven't been scoring well in one section. My scores are erratic, what do I do? How do I prepare for other exams while CAT prep is still on? There are too many concerns students are saddled with. But, the answer to almost all these questions is the same – Concentrate on what can be done rather than on what cannot be!

Acing the CAT requires two parallel distinctive approaches: Ensuring the full utilisation of the three hours in the exam, and ensuring the maximum returns for the hours invested prior to the exam (read 'preparation').

Strategise

However good one may be in solving problems of quantitative ability (QA) or data interpretation and logical reasoning (DILR), or good in vocabulary and grammar, the exam requires a special approach. It is much like adapting oneself to various formats of cricket (Test, ODI, T20).

Basically, the strategy is to ensure the following:

Read all questions in a section/set

Identify and solve the easy and medium-level difficulty questions

Identify and avoid difficult or lengthy questions

Have a cut-off time (stop loss) for every question/every set

Maximise attempts

Be systematic and clinical in your approach

SUGGESTED EXAM STRATEGY

POSSIBLE BREAK-UP OF TIME LIMITS:

QA – DO IT IN TWO ROUNDS (35 MIN AND 25 MIN) OR SIX QUESTIONS IN 10 MIN

DI – 30 MIN (7.5 MIN FOR EACH SET)

LR – 30 MIN (7.5 MIN FOR EACH SET) OR

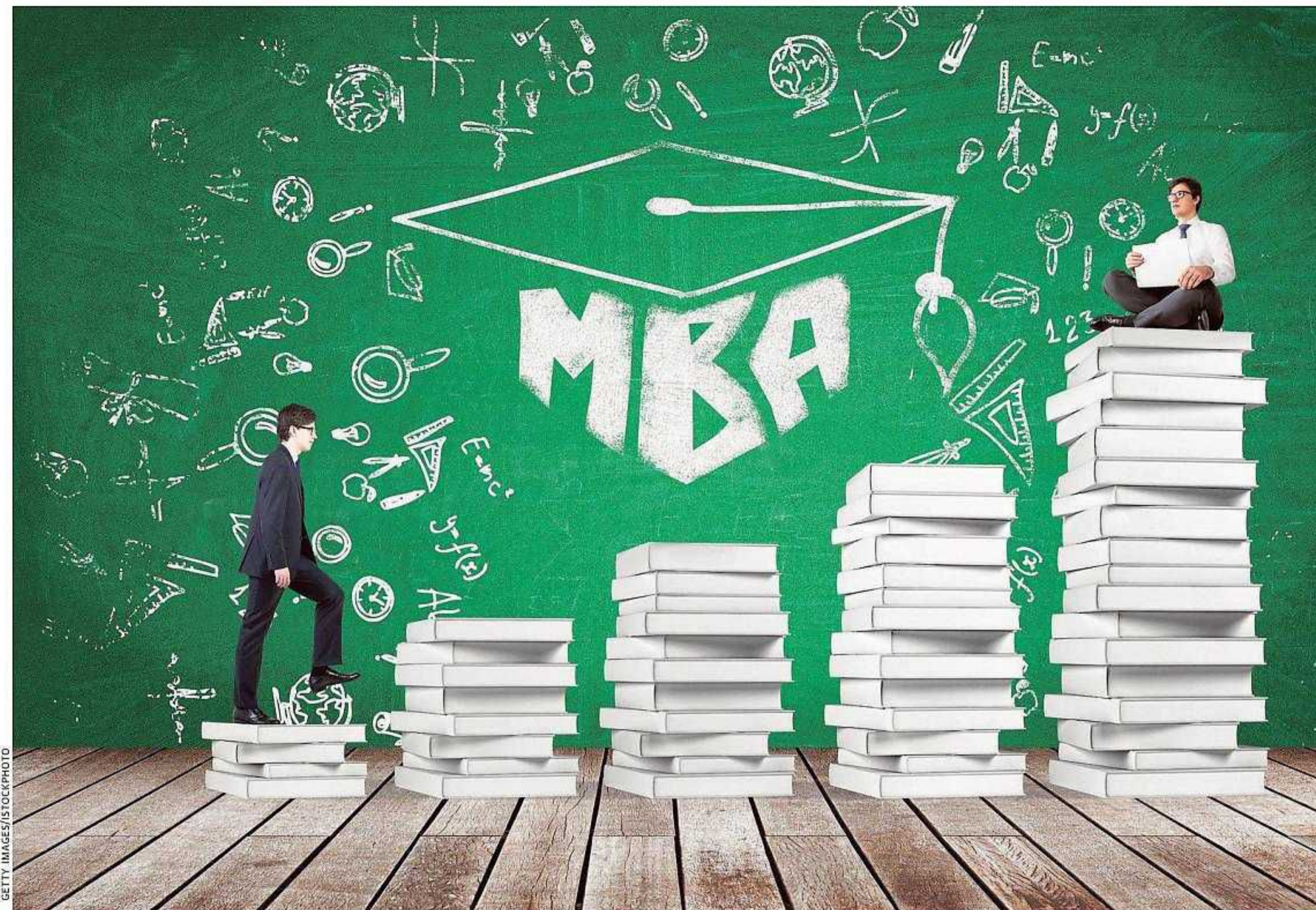
DILR – GIVE ABOUT NINE TO 10 MINUTES PER PASSAGE AND TRY TO DO FIVE PASSAGES.

EVERY SET SHOULD BE READ FOR AT LEAST ONE TO TWO MINUTES BEFORE DECIDING ON DOING THE SAME OR SKIPPING IT.

READING COMPREHENSION – 40-45 MIN (8-9 MIN FOR EACH PASSAGE)

VERBAL ABILITY – 20-15 MIN (DEPENDING ON RC)

IN EVERY SECTION, STICKING TO THE TIME LIMITS IS SACROSANCT. WITHIN EACH SET OF SAY, DI/LR OR RC, DOING ALL QUESTIONS IS NOT THE OBJECTIVE; READING AND TRYING TO ATTEMPT THEM IS.



The approach

Ideally, by now, you should have come up with a viable strategy that works for you. The mocks that you have taken and the analysis that you have done should be enough to have zeroed-in on the best approach to the CAT exam.

The final leg

This is the time to forget all the books and concentrate only on Mock CATs and original CAT papers.

If required, take up some sectional tests. However, there is really no point going back to the basics often or solving tons of questions from each chapter/area.

Now is the time when writing the mocks to finalise one's strategy becomes imperative. At the same time, writing only mocks and doing nothing to improve one's capability of solving more questions/different types of questions would be counter-productive.

Take one mock in three to six days (as per your convenience) and then utilise the days between the Mocks for improving the marks in each of the areas.

In **quantitative ability**, the important topics to cover are arithmetic, QE/polynomials/inequalities/logs, numbers, geometry/CG/mensuration.

Divide **data interpretation**

into the seven types of questions: tables and its variants, bar chart, line graphs, pie charts, tournament and games / sports-based, max/minima and venn diagram, and miscellaneous like spider, triangle, scatter diagram, and so on. For each of the three days in between mocks, solve about 10 sets in each such type of

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questions.

Divided **logical reasoning** into the following: arrangements (linear and circular), selection, networks and routes, grouping, order sequencing and ranking, cubes and venn diagrams, and mathematical and logical puzzles. Everyday, solve about six sets of the same type. Which means, in a day you will only do arrangements and take up five to six sets at one go.

In **Reading Comprehension**, it is not enough to keep solving passages or taking tests. The scores will only improve if you figure out how to improve the accuracy levels while maintaining the attempts.

The areas to work on in **verbal ability** are: Critical reasoning, para completion/summary/others, para jumbles, and words. For each of these areas, one should solve 10 questions each day from the mocks or sectional tests that one has already taken.

Two weeks of preparation can make a huge difference to your score. You can add a minimum of 60 marks than you are currently getting. That could mean jumping about 20 to 30 percentile in the final analysis. But what is more important is to work without the fear of failure.

The writer is National Head, MBA Prep, Career Launcher.