

GRE Verbal Reasoning

Sample Paper 08

A) Subject: Verbal Reasoning

B) Total Questions: 27 Questions (Section I: 12 — Section II: 15)

C) Marking Scheme & Rules:

- **Correct Answer:** +1 Point
- **Incorrect/Unattempted:** 0 Points (No Negative Marking)
- **Partial Credit:** None. For multi-blank questions, all parts must be correct.
- **Equivalence Questions:** Both synonymous words must be selected.

SECTION I: VERBAL REASONING

Q1. The celebrated journalist's autobiography was surprisingly _____; although she had spent four decades covering the most consequential global events, she distilled her entire career into a tightly written ninety pages.

- A. Discursive
- B. Compendious
- C. Prolix
- D. Expansive

Q2. Despite the tribunal's unanimous ruling against the corporation's environmental practices, its chief executive remained _____, vowing to appeal every judgment and continuing all contested operations in the interim.

- A. Contrite
- B. Conciliatory
- C. Recalcitrant
- D. Acquiescent

Q3. The chief negotiator was widely respected for her (i) _____ demeanor at the summit; she possessed a singular capacity to (ii) _____ even representatives who had arrived at the table with deeply entrenched, opposing mandates.

- A. (i) Bellicose; (ii) Provoke
- B. (i) Conciliatory; (ii) Disarm
- C. (i) Conciliatory; (ii) Antagonise
- D. (i) Fractious; (ii) Disarm

Q4. The tenure committee found the candidate's research (i) _____, providing a genuinely new theoretical lens through which decades of prior findings could be reinterpreted, yet her oral presentation was so (ii) _____ that several members struggled to follow even her opening remarks.

- A. (i) Seminal; (ii) Abstruse
- B. (i) Derivative; (ii) Lucid
- C. (i) Seminal; (ii) Pellucid
- D. (i) Pedestrian; (ii) Abstruse

Passage for Questions 5–7

Since the onset of industrialisation, the world's oceans have absorbed approximately thirty percent of the carbon dioxide released by human activity. While this buffering capacity has moderated the pace of atmospheric warming, it has triggered a parallel and equally serious chemical transformation: ocean acidification. When carbon dioxide dissolves in seawater, it forms carbonic acid, which releases hydrogen ions that lower the water's pH. Over the past two centuries, average ocean surface pH has declined from approximately 8.2 to 8.1 — a seemingly small shift that nonetheless represents a roughly twenty-six percent increase in acidity, given that pH is measured on a logarithmic scale. The consequences for marine ecosystems are severe. Organisms that construct shells or skeletons from calcium carbonate — including oysters, mussels, sea urchins, and reef-building corals — find it increasingly difficult to calcify as carbonate ion concentrations fall. Coral reefs, which support an estimated twenty-five percent of all marine species despite covering less than one percent of the ocean floor, face a particularly grave threat. Some researchers argue that the current rate of acidification is unprecedented in at least the past fifty million years, leaving little time for evolutionary adaptation by the species most affected.

Q5. The passage implies that the ocean's role in absorbing carbon dioxide has:

- A. Eliminated the need for atmospheric climate policy.
- B. Provided a degree of protection against atmospheric warming while simultaneously generating a distinct environmental problem.
- C. Accelerated the rate of ocean acidification beyond what land-based emissions alone could cause.
- D. Benefited coral reefs by stabilising pH levels at their historical range.

Q6. According to the passage, the decline in ocean pH from 8.2 to 8.1 is described as significant primarily because:

- A. It directly caused a twenty-six percent reduction in marine biodiversity.
- B. pH is measured on a logarithmic scale, meaning that even a small numerical change represents a large proportional increase in acidity.
- C. Scientists had predicted that pH would not fall below 8.15 under any modelled scenario.
- D. The change has occurred uniformly across both surface and deep ocean waters.

Q7. The author mentions 'the past fifty million years' primarily to:

- A. Argue that ocean acidification is a natural and recurring geological phenomenon.
- B. Suggest that the current rate of change is so rapid that affected species have little evolutionary time to adapt.
- C. Demonstrate that coral reefs have previously survived periods of high acidity.
- D. Establish that human industrial activity began at least fifty million years ago.

Q8. The young architect's debut civic project was _____; it demonstrated not merely technical competence but a rare sensitivity to the neighbourhood's historical character that far exceeded what her portfolio had suggested.

- A. Uninspired and Pedestrian
- B. Remarkable and Impressive
- C. Adequate
- D. Derivative

Q9. The governor's emergency proclamation was seen as _____ by civil liberties groups, who argued that it suspended fundamental rights under the pretext of a crisis that had been deliberately overstated.

- A. Judicious and Measured
- B. Tyrannical and Despotic
- C. Prudent
- D. Proportionate

Q10. A university's admissions office reports that students admitted under a new holistic review process have a significantly higher four-year graduation rate than those admitted under the previous grade-only criteria. The office concludes that holistic admissions cause higher graduation rates. Which of the following, if true, most seriously weakens this conclusion?

- A. Holistic review processes are more time-consuming and costly to administer than grade-based systems.

- B. The holistic process selects for non-academic qualities such as resilience and leadership, which are independently associated with higher persistence in higher education.
- C. Faculty members participated in the design of the new admissions criteria.
- D. Students admitted under the old system reported lower satisfaction with campus life.

Q11. Choose the sentence in which subject-verb agreement is correct:

- A. The committee, along with its three external advisers, have issued a preliminary ruling.
- B. Each of the submitted proposals were reviewed by two independent evaluators.
- C. Neither the dean nor the department heads was informed of the decision in advance.
- D. The panel of experts has unanimously endorsed the revised safety guidelines.

Q12. In the phrase 'the sophistry of the lobbyist's testimony,' the word 'sophistry' most nearly means:

- A. Remarkable technical expertise
- B. Reasoning that appears valid but is actually misleading or fallacious
- C. Scrupulous adherence to factual accuracy
- D. Excessive and unwarranted modesty

SECTION II: VERBAL REASONING

Q1. The outgoing director's farewell address was widely characterised as (i) _____, lurching from institutional statistics to personal reminiscences without any (ii) _____ structure, and leaving the audience (iii) _____ about what legacy she actually intended to claim.

- A. (i) Meandering; (ii) Coherent; (iii) Uncertain
- B. (i) Focused; (ii) Discernible; (iii) Inspired
- C. (i) Succinct; (ii) Coherent; (iii) Reassured
- D. (i) Meandering; (ii) Discernible; (iii) Inspired

Q2. The bilateral trade agreement was meant to be (i) _____, resolving longstanding tariff disputes permanently; instead, the (ii) _____ drafting of its exemptions clause gave both governments grounds to claim the outcome supported their conflicting national interests.

- A. (i) Conclusive; (ii) Opaque
- B. (i) Temporary; (ii) Transparent
- C. (i) Provocative; (ii) Precise
- D. (i) Conclusive; (ii) Unambiguous

Q3. To the broader electorate, the incumbent's decision to decline the televised debate appeared (i) _____, but political insiders who monitored the daily polling data recognised it as a (ii) _____ tactic to deny the challenger a high-visibility platform.

- A. (i) Cowardly; (ii) Astute
- B. (i) Principled; (ii) Reckless
- C. (i) Transparent; (ii) Naive
- D. (i) Cowardly; (ii) Impetuous

Q4. The doctoral student found the process of transcribing and coding hundreds of hours of interview recordings (i) _____, yet the (ii) _____ theoretical insights that emerged from the data ultimately validated the years of methodical effort.

- A. (i) Arduous; (ii) Illuminating
- B. (i) Stimulating; (ii) Negligible
- C. (i) Effortless; (ii) Illuminating
- D. (i) Arduous; (ii) Trivial

Q5. The investigative team's reputation for _____ was beyond question; every assertion in their published reports was corroborated by multiple independent sources before it was included.

- A. Perfidy
- B. Scrupulousness
- C. Negligence
- D. Partiality

Q6. The regulatory framework governing the new class of financial derivatives was so _____ that compliance officers at leading institutions convened monthly working groups simply to determine what the rules required.

- A. Convoluted
- B. Pellucid
- C. Explicit
- D. Straightforward

The bystander effect — the observed tendency for individuals to be less likely to offer help in an emergency when other people are present — was first systematically studied following a widely publicised incident in New York in 1964. Social psychologists John Darley and Bibb Latane designed a series of controlled experiments in which participants believed they were witnessing a medical emergency. Their findings, published in 1968, revealed a compelling inverse relationship: the greater the number of bystanders present, the lower the probability that any individual would intervene. Darley and Latane attributed this to two distinct psychological mechanisms. The first, diffusion of responsibility, holds that as the number of observers increases, each individual perceives their personal obligation to act as proportionally diminished. The second, pluralistic ignorance, describes the tendency for individuals to interpret the apparent calm of those around them as evidence that no emergency exists, even when each person privately suspects otherwise. Critics have noted that subsequent research has produced more nuanced findings, with some studies demonstrating that bystanders in smaller or more cohesive groups are significantly more likely to intervene. Nevertheless, the foundational study remains among the most replicated in the history of social psychology.

Q7. According to the passage, which of the following best describes the relationship Darley and Latane identified between group size and intervention?

- A. Larger groups were consistently more likely to produce at least one intervening bystander.
- B. As the number of bystanders increased, the likelihood of any single individual intervening decreased.
- C. Group size had no statistically significant effect on intervention rates in controlled conditions.
- D. Individuals were more likely to intervene when they believed themselves to be the sole bystander only in outdoor settings.

Q8. The author describes 'pluralistic ignorance' primarily to:

- A. Argue that bystanders in emergencies are fundamentally indifferent to the suffering of others.
- B. Explain how individuals can collectively fail to recognise an emergency by misreading each other's composed outward behaviour as a signal that no crisis exists.
- C. Suggest that Darley and Latane's findings were invalidated by the behaviour of observers in public spaces.
- D. Demonstrate that diffusion of responsibility and pluralistic ignorance produce identical outcomes in emergency situations.

Q9. Which of the following best captures the overall position of the passage regarding the bystander effect research?

- A. The original study by Darley and Latane was fundamentally flawed and has since been discredited.

- B. Subsequent research has fully overturned the foundational findings, establishing that group size promotes intervention.
- C. While the original findings have been qualified by later, more nuanced research, they remain highly influential and widely replicated.
- D. The bystander effect operates exclusively in large, anonymous urban settings and does not apply to cohesive groups.

Q10. A logistics company claims that switching its delivery fleet to electric vehicles reduced its annual operating costs by 18%. It concludes that electric vehicles are more cost-effective than combustion-engine vehicles for urban delivery. Which of the following, if true, most effectively weakens this conclusion?

- A. Drivers reported that electric vehicles were quieter and more comfortable to operate.
- B. The switch coincided with a national fuel subsidy programme that artificially suppressed petrol costs for combustion-engine vehicles, which expired at the end of the study period.
- C. The company installed its own charging infrastructure, which it depreciated over a ten-year period.
- D. Several rival logistics companies have also begun transitioning to electric fleets.

Q11. The museum's retrospective on the sculptor's early career was so _____ that scholars who had studied the artist for decades found several previously undocumented pieces and correspondence they had not encountered before.

- A. Cursory and Superficial
- B. Comprehensive and Exhaustive
- C. Selective
- D. Perfunctory

Q12. The ombudsman's verdict on the data privacy breach was _____ for the technology firm, as it imposed the largest financial penalty in the regulator's history and triggered a mandatory external audit of all internal systems.

- A. Inconsequential and Trivial
- B. Devastating and Ruinous
- C. Salutary
- D. Commendable

Q13. The economic historian's monograph on medieval trade networks was _____, synthesising numismatic evidence, merchant ledgers, archaeological finds, and diplomatic correspondence into a single coherent argument.

- A. Narrow and Parochial
- B. Integrative and Synthetic
- C. Reductive
- D. Anecdotal

Q14. Despite the _____ public reaction that had initially greeted the proposed urban regeneration plan, the city council pressed ahead, and within two years the development had become a source of local pride.

- A. Enthusiastic and Favourable
- B. Hostile and Antagonistic
- C. Indifferent
- D. Laudatory

Q15. The commission's final recommendations were praised for being _____, having carefully acknowledged the legitimate concerns of industry, environmental groups, and local residents without unduly privileging any single constituency.

- A. Partisan and Biased
- B. Evenhanded and Impartial
- C. Polemical
- D. Dogmatic

Solutions - Section I

1. **(B)** The contrast signal is "although she had spent four decades covering... consequential global events." Despite this long and expansive career, the memoir was "tightly written" and only ninety pages. "Compendious" refers to something that is concise yet comprehensive, perfectly fitting a short book that covers a long career.
2. **(C)** The sentence describes an executive who refuses to yield despite a "unanimous ruling" against his corporation. He vows to "appeal every judgment" and continue operations. "Recalcitrant" means having an obstinately uncooperative attitude toward authority or discipline, which fits his defiant stance.
3. **(B)** For blank (i), a negotiator widely respected for handling entrenched opponents would likely have a "Conciliatory" (peace-making) demeanor. For blank (ii), the ability to "Disarm" means to deprive of hostility or suspicion, which allows her to manage representatives with opposing mandates.

4. (A) For blank (i), research that provides a "genuinely new theoretical lens" through which prior findings are reinterpreted is described as "Seminal" (influential and original). For blank (ii), the word "yet" introduces a contrast; if members "struggled to follow" the presentation, it was "Abstruse" (difficult to understand).
 5. (B) The passage notes that the ocean's absorption of CO₂ has "moderated the pace of atmospheric warming" (a benefit/protection) while simultaneously "triggering ocean acidification" (a distinct environmental problem).
 6. (B) The passage explains that while the decline from 8.2 to 8.1 seems small numerically, it is significant because pH is a "logarithmic scale," meaning a small numerical shift represents a massive (roughly 26
 7. (B) The author uses the "fifty million years" reference to highlight that the current rate of change is "unprecedented," which implies that species have "little time for evolutionary adaptation" compared to historical geological shifts.
 8. (B) The project demonstrated "not merely technical competence but a rare sensitivity" that "far exceeded" her portfolio. In Sentence Equivalence, "Remarkable" and "Impressive" are synonyms that capture this level of noteworthy achievement.
 9. (B) Civil liberties groups argued the proclamation "suspended fundamental rights" under an "overstated" pretext. "Tyrannical" and "Despotic" are synonyms describing the exercise of absolute, oppressive, and illegitimate power.
 10. (B) The office concludes that the *process* causes the higher rates. Choice B weakens this by suggesting the process simply "selects" for students with resilience and leadership—qualities that would lead to graduation regardless of the admission method. This points to a selection effect rather than a causal effect.
 11. (D) (A) is wrong because "along with..." does not make the subject plural (should be *has*). (B) is wrong because "Each" is singular (should be *was*). (C) is wrong because the verb must agree with the nearer subject "heads" (should be *were*). (D) correctly treats "panel" as a singular collective noun.
 12. (B) "Sophistry" refers to the use of fallacious arguments, especially with the intention of deceiving. In the context of a lobbyist's testimony, it refers to reasoning that appears clever or valid but is actually misleading.
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Solutions - Section II

1. (A) An address that "lurches" between unrelated topics like "statistics" and "remiscences" is "(i) Meandering." This implies it lacked a "(ii) Coherent" (logical/unified) structure, leaving the audience "(iii) Uncertain" about the intended message.
2. (A) A trade agreement meant to resolve disputes "permanently" has the goal of being "(i) Conclusive." However, if both governments could claim the outcome supported "conflicting interests," the wording must have been "(ii) Opaque" (not transparent/unclear).

3. (A) To the "broader electorate," declining a debate appears "(i) Cowardly" (lacking courage). However, insiders who saw the strategy as a way to deny the challenger a platform recognized it as "(ii) Astute" (shrewd/clever).
4. (A) Transcribing hundreds of hours of recordings is "(i) Arduous" (strenuous and difficult). The word "yet" introduces the positive result: the insights were "(ii) Illuminating," which justified the effort.
5. (B) An investigative team that corroborates every assertion with multiple independent sources is demonstrating "Scrupulousness"—the quality of being extremely thorough, careful, and attentive to what is right/accurate.
6. (A) If experts had to meet monthly "simply to determine what the rules required," the framework must have been "Convolved" (extremely complex and difficult to follow).
7. (B) The passage states that the findings revealed an "inverse relationship": as the number of bystanders increased, the probability of any individual intervening decreased. Option B restates this correctly.
8. (B) The passage defines "pluralistic ignorance" as individuals interpreting the "apparent calm of those around them" as evidence that no crisis exists. Option B paraphrases this collective failure to recognize an emergency.
9. (C) The passage presents the bystander effect as a "foundational study" that remains "highly influential," while also mentioning that "subsequent research has produced more nuanced findings." This indicates the study is qualified but not discredited.
10. (B) The company attributes savings to electric vehicles. Choice B reveals a confounding variable: a fuel subsidy for gas vehicles expired at the end of the study. This means gas vehicles were actually *more* cost-effective during the study than they would be normally, weakening the conclusion about EV superiority.
11. (B) If scholars found "previously undocumented pieces" and correspondence they had "not encountered before," the retrospective must have been "Comprehensive" and "Exhaustive" (synonyms for extremely thorough).
12. (B) A verdict that imposed the "largest financial penalty in history" and triggered a "mandatory external audit" would be "Devastating" and "Ruinous" (synonyms for causing severe damage or destruction) for the firm.
13. (B) A monograph that "synthesises" four different types of evidence into a "single coherent argument" is "(B) Integrative and Synthetic" (synonyms for combining separate parts into a whole).
14. (B) The word "Despite" signals a contrast between the initial reaction and the later "local pride." "Hostile" and "Antagonistic" are synonyms representing a strongly negative/unfavourable initial reaction.
15. (B) Recommendations that "carefully acknowledged the concerns" of all competing groups "without unduly privileging" any one of them are "Evenhanded" and "Impartial" (synonyms for fair and unbiased).

