

GRE Verbal Reasoning

Sample Paper 09

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 veteran appellate judge's written opinions were known for being _____; unlike most judicial prose, which tends toward elaboration, her rulings conveyed complex constitutional reasoning in a single, unadorned paragraph.

- A. Discursive
- B. Elliptical
- C. Trenchant
- D. Verbose

Q2. Even when confronted with polling data showing that ninety percent of her constituents opposed the proposed legislation, the senator remained _____, declaring that principled governance could not be held hostage to shifting public sentiment.

- A. Pliable
- B. Irresolute
- C. Indomitable
- D. Concessive

Q3. The new superintendent was praised for her (i) _____ approach to curriculum reform; rather than mandating changes from headquarters, she chose to (ii) _____ teachers across all grade levels into collaborative working groups that shaped policy from the ground up.

- A. (i) Hierarchical; (ii) Exclude
- B. (i) Participatory; (ii) Enlist
- C. (i) Participatory; (ii) Marginalise
- D. (i) Authoritarian; (ii) Enlist

Q4. Critics found the retrospective exhibition (i) _____, drawing together the sculptor's entire output across six decades into a narrative arc that revealed the coherence underlying what had appeared to be disparate phases; yet the catalogue essay was so (ii) _____ that few visitors read beyond the opening page.

- A. (i) Revelatory; (ii) Turgid
- B. (i) Superficial; (ii) Accessible
- C. (i) Revelatory; (ii) Lucid
- D. (i) Reductive; (ii) Turgid

The notion that the human gut might influence cognition and emotional states was, until recently, dismissed as fringe speculation. A growing body of research, however, has lent increasing credibility to what scientists now call the gut-brain axis — a bidirectional communication network linking the enteric nervous system of the gastrointestinal tract with the central nervous system. The gut microbiome, comprising trillions of microorganisms, produces a remarkable range of neuroactive compounds, including approximately ninety percent of the body's serotonin. Animal studies have demonstrated that mice raised in germ-free conditions — entirely without gut bacteria — exhibit heightened anxiety-like behaviour and abnormal stress responses, and that introducing specific bacterial strains can partially reverse these effects. Translating these findings to human populations has proven more complex, as the human microbiome is extraordinarily heterogeneous and shaped by genetics, diet, geography, antibiotic exposure, and early-life environment. Nonetheless, preliminary clinical trials have reported correlations between the consumption of specific probiotic formulations and modest reductions in self-reported anxiety and depressive symptoms. Researchers caution, however, that correlation does not establish causation, and that robust randomised controlled trials are needed before dietary interventions can be recommended as adjuncts to established psychiatric treatments.

Q5. The passage implies that the initial scientific attitude toward the idea of gut-brain communication was:

- A. Enthusiastically embraced as a logical extension of established neuroscience.
- B. Largely dismissive, with the concept regarded as lacking scientific credibility.
- C. Accepted in animal models but considered irrelevant to human physiology.
- D. Officially endorsed by psychiatric associations pending further trials.

Q6. According to the passage, the primary challenge in extending animal study findings to human populations is:

- A. The absence of a germ-free condition equivalent for human clinical trials.
- B. The extraordinary variability of the human microbiome across individuals and environments.
- C. The failure of probiotic formulations to produce any measurable effect in human subjects.
- D. Ethical restrictions that prevent the manipulation of gut bacteria in living patients.

Q7. The author's reference to the need for 'robust randomised controlled trials' serves primarily to:

- A. Dismiss the value of the preliminary clinical trial findings reported earlier in the passage.
- B. Signal that current evidence, while suggestive, is insufficient to support dietary recommendations as a psychiatric treatment adjunct.
- C. Argue that animal studies are an unreliable basis for any biomedical research.
- D. Suggest that the gut-brain axis theory will ultimately be disproven by rigorous testing.

Q8. The investigative panel's report on the safety regulator was _____; it documented systematic failures across every division, traced each breakdown to its institutional root, and proposed remedies for all of them.

- A. Cursory and Perfunctory
- B. Thorough and Comprehensive
- C. Anecdotal
- D. Selective

Q9. The administration's decision to classify the inspection findings was regarded as _____ by watchdog organisations, which argued that concealing the data served no purpose other than shielding powerful interests from accountability.

- A. Transparent and Candid
- B. Brazen and Audacious
- C. Judicious
- D. Measured

Q10. A regional water authority reports that after installing advanced filtration systems in its treatment plants, the incidence of waterborne illness in the served communities declined by 42% over three years. It concludes that the filtration upgrade was responsible for the improvement. Which of the following, if true, most seriously weakens this conclusion?

- A. The new filtration systems required specialised maintenance training for plant operators.
- B. During the same three-year period, a separate public health initiative distributed water purification tablets to all low-income households in the served communities.
- C. Residents reported higher satisfaction with the taste and clarity of tap water after the upgrade.
- D. The water authority received a national infrastructure award following the installation.

Q11. Choose the sentence that correctly maintains parallel structure:

- A. The board's priorities were expanding market share, to reduce operational costs, and the improvement of customer retention.
- B. The board's priorities were to expand market share, reducing operational costs, and improve customer retention.
- C. The board's priorities were expanding market share, reducing operational costs, and improving customer retention.
- D. The board's priorities were to expand market share, to reduce operational costs, and the improving of customer retention.

Q12. In the phrase 'the ignominy of a public retraction,' the word 'ignominy' most nearly means:

- A. Formal recognition
- B. Public disgrace or humiliation
- C. Bureaucratic inconvenience
- D. Deliberate concealment

SECTION II: VERBAL REASONING

Q1. The finance minister's annual budget presentation was widely criticised as (i) _____, shifting between macroeconomic projections, anecdotal case studies, and historical comparisons without any (ii) _____ logic uniting them, leaving economic analysts (iii) _____ about the government's actual fiscal strategy.

- A. (i) Disjointed; (ii) Overarching; (iii) Bewildered
- B. (i) Focused; (ii) Unifying; (iii) Reassured

- C. (i) Concise; (ii) Overarching; (iii) Encouraged
- D. (i) Disjointed; (ii) Unifying; (iii) Reassured

Q2. The international climate accord was designed to be (i) _____, establishing binding emissions targets that no signatory could unilaterally revise; in practice, however, the (ii) _____ language of its enforcement mechanism meant that violations carried no meaningful consequence.

- A. (i) Ironclad; (ii) Toothless
- B. (i) Provisional; (ii) Stringent
- C. (i) Ironclad; (ii) Rigorous
- D. (i) Advisory; (ii) Toothless

Q3. To outside commentators, the central bank governor's decision to hold interest rates steady amid rising inflation appeared (i) _____, but economists with access to the bank's internal modelling recognised it as a (ii) _____ response calibrated to avoid triggering a credit contraction.

- A. (i) Negligent; (ii) Deliberate
- B. (i) Prudent; (ii) Reckless
- C. (i) Transparent; (ii) Negligent
- D. (i) Negligent; (ii) Impulsive

Q4. The junior barrister found the task of reviewing seventeen years of case files (i) _____, yet the (ii) _____ legal precedent she ultimately located — a single overlooked ruling from a district court — proved decisive in overturning her client's conviction.

- A. (i) Gruelling; (ii) Pivotal
- B. (i) Invigorating; (ii) Negligible
- C. (i) Effortless; (ii) Pivotal
- D. (i) Gruelling; (ii) Inconsequential

Q5. The ethics committee's reputation for _____ was hard-won; over two decades, it had overturned dozens of funding decisions where institutional interests had been allowed to colour scientific judgement.

- A. Partiality
- B. Integrity
- C. Laxity
- D. Caprice

Q6. The data governance policy introduced by the technology ministry was so _____ in its obligations that legal teams at mid-sized firms estimated full compliance would require an entirely new department.

- A. Onerous
- B. Perfunctory
- C. Negligible
- D. Transparent

The placebo effect — the measurable, physiological improvement experienced by patients who receive an inert treatment they believe to be active — has long been regarded as a nuisance variable to be controlled away in clinical trials rather than as a phenomenon worthy of investigation in its own right. Over the past two decades, however, a series of compelling neuroimaging and pharmacological studies have transformed scientific understanding of the effect. Researchers have demonstrated that placebo administration triggers the release of endogenous opioids — the brain’s own pain-suppressing compounds — producing analgesic effects that can be blocked by naloxone, a drug that specifically antagonises opioid receptors. This finding establishes that placebo analgesia is not merely subjective or imaginary but involves real, measurable neurochemical activity. Perhaps most counterintuitively, a subset of studies has found that open-label placebos — those administered with the explicit knowledge of the patient that they contain no active ingredient — still produce statistically significant symptom relief in conditions including irritable bowel syndrome and chronic lower back pain. These results challenge the assumption that deception is a necessary condition for placebo efficacy, and raise the prospect that the therapeutic ritual of receiving care may itself be an active ingredient in recovery.

Q7. According to the passage, how has scientific understanding of the placebo effect changed over the past two decades?

- A. Researchers have concluded that placebo effects are entirely subjective and cannot be measured neurologically.
- B. The placebo effect has been reclassified as a harmful variable that distorts all clinical trial outcomes.
- C. Studies have demonstrated that placebo responses involve genuine neurochemical activity, elevating the phenomenon from a nuisance variable to a legitimate subject of inquiry.
- D. Placebo treatments have been approved as first-line therapies for chronic pain in most major health systems.

Q8. The author describes the naloxone finding primarily to:

- A. Argue that opioid antagonists should be used to eliminate placebo responses from clinical trials.
- B. Provide evidence that placebo analgesia is mediated by real neurochemical mechanisms rather than being merely imaginary.

- C. Demonstrate that all analgesic medications work by stimulating endogenous opioid release.
- D. Suggest that naloxone is more effective than conventional painkillers for chronic pain management.

Q9. Which of the following best describes the significance of the open-label placebo findings discussed in the passage?

- A. They confirm that patients must be deceived for any treatment to produce a therapeutic effect.
- B. They demonstrate that placebo effects are too unreliable to be of any clinical value.
- C. They suggest that the therapeutic benefit of receiving care may itself have physiological effects, independent of whether the patient believes the treatment is active.
- D. They prove that irritable bowel syndrome and chronic back pain are purely psychosomatic conditions.

Q10. A publishing house argues that introducing a four-day working week for its editorial staff led to a 22% increase in manuscripts accepted per editor per year. It concludes that the shorter week directly caused the productivity increase. Which of the following, if true, most effectively weakens this conclusion?

- A. Several editors reported feeling less fatigued under the new schedule.
- B. The four-day week was introduced simultaneously with a new manuscript management software system that automated the most time-consuming stages of the editorial review process.
- C. Other publishing houses that have not adopted the four-day week report lower editor satisfaction scores.
- D. The managing director publicly endorsed the four-day week as a model for the wider industry.

Q11. The literary critic's essay on the novelist's use of unreliable narration was so _____ that it identified layers of structural irony that readers across three decades of scholarship had consistently overlooked.

- A. Superficial and Cursory
- B. Penetrating and Incisive
- C. Derivative
- D. Perfunctory

Q12. The audit board's findings on the pension fund's management were _____ for the trustees, who faced immediate suspension, potential criminal referral, and the freezing of all fund assets pending a full investigation.

- A. Exculpatory and Vindicating
- B. Catastrophic and Ruinous
- C. Inconsequential
- D. Commendable

Q13. The anthropologist's fieldwork report was _____, weaving together linguistic analysis, ritual observation, kinship mapping, and oral history into a portrait of the community that no single methodology could have produced alone.

- A. Reductive and Simplistic
- B. Multidisciplinary and Integrative
- C. Anecdotal
- D. Selective

Q14. Despite the _____ conditions under which the expedition set out — dwindling supplies, failing equipment, and a forecast of severe storms — the team reached the summit and returned safely within the planned window.

- A. Favourable and Auspicious
- B. Adverse and Forbidding
- C. Routine
- D. Propitious

Q15. The commission's report into the handling of the public health emergency was praised for being _____, attributing blame where evidence clearly supported it while acknowledging systemic constraints that had limited decision-makers' options.

- A. Partisan and Polemical
 - B. Measured and Judicious
 - C. Evasive
 - D. Dismissive
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Solutions - Section I

1. (C) The sentence contrasts "judicial prose" that tends toward "elaboration" (wordiness) with the judge's rulings that are "unadorned" and "single-paragraph." **Trenchant** refers to a style of expression that is incisive, sharp, and highly effective. It perfectly fits the description of a judge who can distill complex constitutional reasoning into a powerful, concise format.
 2. (C) The senator refused to change her stance despite 90% opposition, stating governance should not be "held hostage to shifting public sentiment." **Indomitable** means impossible to subdue or defeat, fitting her refusal to yield to pressure.
 3. (B) For blank (i), "collaborative working groups" indicates a **Participatory** approach. For blank (ii), to get teachers into these groups, she chose to **Enlist** them (to engage or recruit their help).
 4. (A) For blank (i), "revealed the coherence" suggests the exhibition was **Revelatory**. For blank (ii), the fact that "few visitors read beyond the opening page" implies the essay was **Turgid** (excessively complex, swollen, or boring).
 5. (B) The passage states that until recently, the idea was "dismissed as fringe speculation," which means it was **Largely dismissive** and regarded as lacking credibility.
 6. (B) The text mentions that translating animal findings to humans is complex because the "human microbiome is extraordinarily **heterogeneous**" (varied) across individuals.
 7. (B) The author notes that "correlation does not establish causation" and robust trials are needed before recommendations are made. This serves to **signal that current evidence is insufficient** to support treatment dietary changes yet.
 8. (B) A report documenting "systematic failures across every division" and tracing them to their "institutional root" is described by the pair **Thorough and Comprehensive**.
 9. (B) Watchdog organizations argued that concealing data served only to shield powerful interests. This act of bold, shameless concealment is described as **Brazen and Audacious**.
 10. (B) To weaken the link between the filtration upgrade and the decline in illness, we need an alternative cause. If **purification tablets** were distributed during the same period, they could be the real reason for the improvement.
 11. (C) Parallel structure requires consistent verb forms. Option C uses the gerund form for all three items: "**expanding** market share, **reducing** costs, and **improving** retention."
 12. (B) **Ignominy** refers to public shame, disgrace, or dishonor, often resulting from a public retraction or failure.
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Solutions - Section II

1. (A) A presentation that "shifts" between unrelated topics without "(ii) **Overarching**" logic is "(i) **Disjointed**." This lack of coherence would leave analysts "(iii) **Bewildered**" (confused).
2. (A) An accord that signatories cannot "unilaterally revise" is meant to be "(i) **Ironclad**." However, since violations had "no meaningful consequence," the enforcement language was actually "(ii) **Toothless**."
3. (A) To outsiders, failing to raise rates during inflation looked "(i) **Negligent**" (careless). However, economists saw it as a "(ii) **Deliberate**" (carefully planned) response to avoid a credit contraction.
4. (A) Reviewing 17 years of files is a "(i) **Gruelling**" (exhausting) task. However, the ruling found was "(ii) **Pivotal**" (of crucial importance) because it overturned the conviction.
5. (B) A committee that overturns decisions where "institutional interests" colored judgment is celebrated for its **Integrity** (honesty and moral uprightness).
6. (A) If a policy requires an "entirely new department" for compliance, it is **Onerous** (involving a great amount of effort or burden).
7. (C) The text explains that studies have shown placebo responses involve "genuine neurochemical activity," which transformed it from a "nuisance variable" to a **legitimate subject of inquiry**.
8. (B) Naloxone is a drug that blocks opioid receptors. Showing it blocks the placebo effect provides evidence that the effect is **mediated by real neurochemical mechanisms** (opioids).
9. (C) Open-label placebos (given without deception) worked, suggesting the "therapeutic **ritual** of receiving care" may have physiological benefits independent of the patient's belief.
10. (B) To weaken the conclusion that the shorter week caused the increase, Option B provides a **confounding variable**: a new software system introduced at the same time.
11. (B) An essay that identifies layers that scholarship had "consistently overlooked" is described as **Penetrating and Incisive**.
12. (B) Findings that lead to "suspension" and "criminal referral" are synonyms for something causing disaster: **Catastrophic and Ruinous**.
13. (B) A report weaving together linguistic, ritual, kinship, and oral history is **Multidisciplinary and Integrative** (combining multiple fields/methods).
14. (B) "Dwindling supplies, failing equipment, and severe storms" are described as **Adverse and Forbidding** conditions.

15. (B) A report that attributes blame where evidence supports it but also acknowledges real constraints is **Measured and Judicious** (fair, sensible, and showing good judgment).
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