CAT Exam Syllabus

CAT is a computer-based objective exam that has 3 sections – Verbal Ability, Data Interpretation & Logical Reasoning and Quantitative Ability. The sections have nearly equal weightage. For a long time, from 2010-2019 it was roughly a 3-hour exam. The pandemic has seen it transform into a 2-hour exam. Around 75% of the questions are MCQs (Multiple-Choice Questions) while the rest are TITA (Type in the Answer). The MCQs carry negative marks for incorrect answers, while TITA ones do not.

Broadly, the CAT syllabus covered comprises of math learnt in classes VI to X of schooling. Although the framework has been broadly constant throughout the past 15 years, there are some specific patterns that emerge if we scroll through the data. The video below gives a wonderful overview of what we can take away from the past few years' papers.
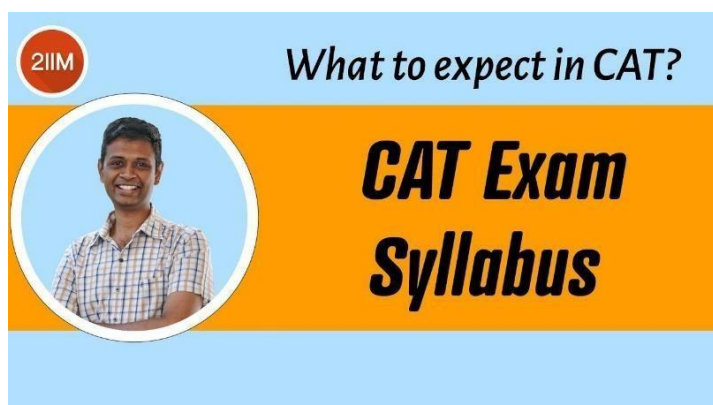
CAT Exam Overview (CAT 2023)

Section	Duration	No of MCQ's	No of TITA (Non MCQ's)	Total
VARC	40 minutes	20	4	24
DILR	40 minutes	12	8	20
QA	40 minutes	14	8	22
Total	120 minutes	46	20	66

As we dive deeper into the sections and take them up one by one, we will take you through the CAT Syllabus followed by our analysis of the CAT previous year papers to give you a glimpse of what you can expect in the upcoming CAT exam.
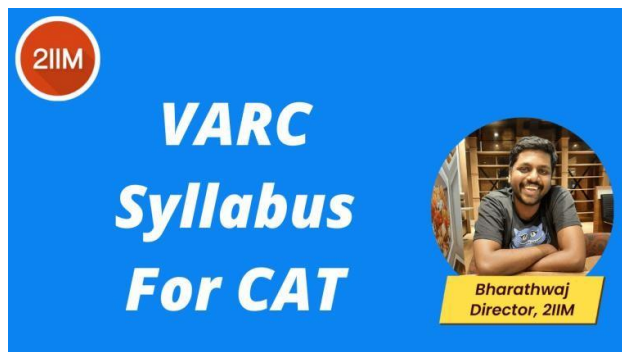
Overall CAT Syllabus and CAT Exam Pattern

Before we look into the CAT syllabus, here is a quick recap of key facts about the exam:

- Historically, the CAT Exam is a 3-hour (180 min), computer-based exam. It is not held in offline mode. After 2020, it became a 2-hour exam, and it is likely to stay that way for CAT 2024 as well.
- The exam is held in three slots—morning, afternoon, and evening—on the same day. The papers are different in these sessions, but the scores are normalized to account for the differences.
- The exam comprises of 3 sections— Verbal Ability and Reading Comprehension (VARC), Data Interpretation and Logical Reasoning (DI/LR) and Quantitative Ability (QA).
- In the last few CATs, the order of the sections has been VARC first, followed by DILR, followed by QA. Switching between sections is not possible. There are no breaks between sections.
- There were 66 questions in all. Most questions are Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs),with 4 answer choices, one of which is right. About one-third of the paper, however, consists of objective but non-MCQ questions. These are of the Type-In-The-Answer (TITA) kind.
- MCQs carry 3 marks for a right answer and -1 mark for a wrong answer, but there is no negative marking for TITA questions.
- A simple, on-screen calculator is provided for the QA and DI/LR sections.
- Any Bachelor's degree holder (with 50% at least marks) and any candidate in the final year of their graduation can write CAT.
- The official website for CAT: CAT Website

Diving deeper into CAT VARC Syllabus

In terms of CAT Syllabus across the sections, the VARC section is the simplest to describe. Building a habit of reading is the closest to what one might call as Syllabus. If you are looking at a timeline north of 4 months, you have a great time window to build up the habit of reading. You should check out the video below for more information than just Reading, how to make the most of this etc.
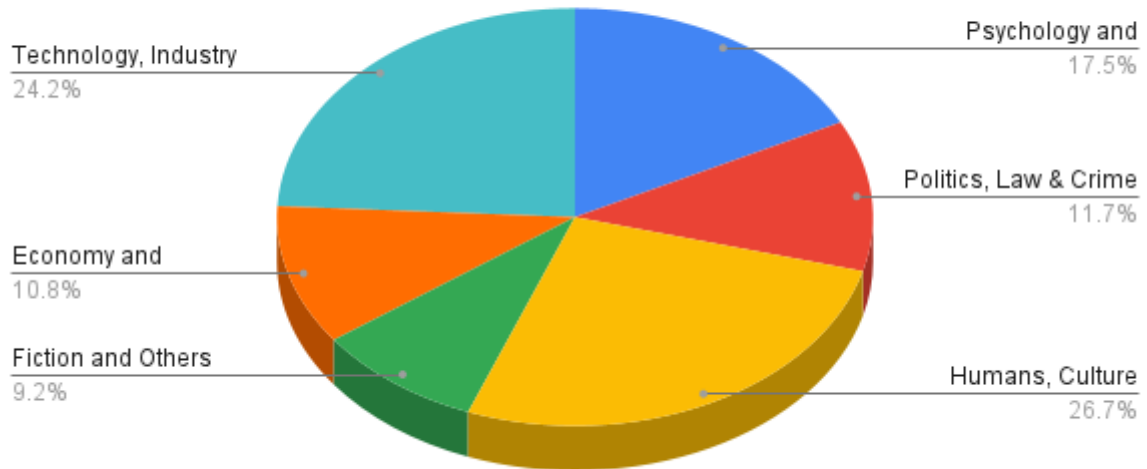

CAT 2023:

VARC Sub-section	Description	Question Type	No. of Questions
CAT Reading Comprehension	This section comprises of 4 RC passages which are usually 600-700 words in length	4 MCQs based on each passage	24
CAT Verbal Ability	Paragraph Jumbles Paragraph Summary Sentence Elimination (Oddd One Out) Sentence Placement Others	3-4 questions, usually TITA, involving rearrangement of sentences in the right order. 2-3 questions, MCQs, involving identification of the best summary for a given paragraph. 2-3 questions, involving identification of the odd sentence in a given set of sentences. 2 questions, MCQ/TITA, involving placing the given sentence in the most appropriate position in the given paragraph. Questions of these types are less common: • Paragraph Completion • Sentence Correction • Critical Reasoning • Fact Inference Judgement	8

	2017-2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Reading Comprehension	24	18	16	16	16
Para Summary	4	3	3	3	2
Para Jumble	3	3	3	3	2
Odd One Out	3	2	2	0	2
Sentence Placement	0	0	0	2	2
Total	34	26	24	24	24

RC genres over the years

Technology, Industry 24.2%

Economy and 10.8%

Fiction and Others 9.2%

Psychology and 17.5%

Politics, Law & Crime 11.7%

Humans, Culture 26.7%

Success Factor	Key Resource	Big Takeaway
Reading Habit	**Bharath's Reading List**	**RC is the elephant in the room**

Diving deeper into CAT LRDI Syllabus

The DILR section has been elusive in terms of giving us a definitive syllabus for this section. We can of course paint a broad picture with the information we have obtained through taking this exam over the years. In case you are looking to know how to prepare for this section, head out to the above link. But if you are keen to understand the section first, watch this video and then scroll down!
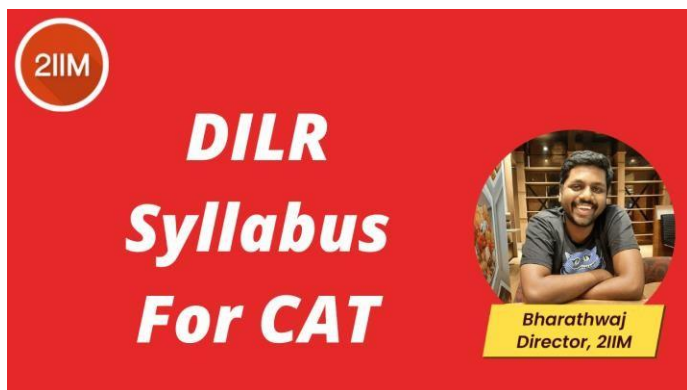

Data Interpretation	Bar graph, line graphs, pie charts, tables, Venn diagrams, word problems, combination of graphs
Logical Reasoning	Puzzles based on visualization, math puzzles, games and tournaments, calendar, sequencing, grid puzzles, seating arrangement, direction- based puzzles

Topics	CAT 2017		CAT 2018		CAT 2019	
	Slot 1	Slot 2	Slot 1	Slot 2	Slot 1	Slot 2
Routes and Networks	8	-	-	-	4	-
Tables	8	4	-	4	-	-
Scheduling, Optimization and Allocation	8	4	4	4	-	8
Bar Graphs	4	4	-	-	4	-
Grids	-	8	8	4	4	4
Arrangements	-	4	-	-	4	-
Word Puzzle	-	4	4	4	-	-
Games and Tournaments	-	-	-	-	4	4
Math Puzzles	4	4	8	4	4	4
Venn Diagrams	-	-	4	4	-	4
Pie Charts/Doughnut Charts	-	-	4	-	-	-
Scatter Plot	-	-	-	4	-	4
Coding/Decoding	-	-	-	4	4	-
Radar Chart	-	-	-	-	4	4
Gnatt Chart	-	-	-	-	-	-

Topics	CAT 2020			CAT 2021			CAT 2022			CAT 2023		
	Slot 1	Slot 2	Slot 3	Slot 1	Slot 2	Slot 3	Slot 1	Slot 2	Slot 3	Slot 1	Slot 2	Slot 3
Routes and Networks	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	-	-	-	5
Tables	-	10	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	5	5	5
Scheduling, Optimization and Allocation	6	6	6	4	-	-	5	-	5	10	-	-
Bar Graphs	-	-	-	4	4	-	-	-	5	-	-	-
Grids	10	8	6	6	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	5
Arrangements	-	-	-	6	6	6	5	-	-	-	-	-
Word Puzzle	-	-	4	-	4	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Games and Tournaments	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Math Puzzles	-	-	4	-	-	4	-	5	5	-	5	5
Venn Diagrams	8	-	4	-	-	-	5	5	-	-	-	-
Pie Charts/Doughnut Charts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scatter Plot	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-
Coding/Decoding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Radar Chart	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gnatt Chart	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	5	-

Topics	Total
Routes and Networks	27
Tables	47
Scheduling, Optimization and Allocation	70
Bar Graphs	25
Grids	78
Arrangements	31
Word Puzzle	26
Games and Tournaments	8
Math Puzzles	56
Venn Diagrams	34
Pie Charts/Doughnut Charts	4
Scatter Plot	13
Coding/Decoding	8
Radar Chart	8
Gnatt Chart	9
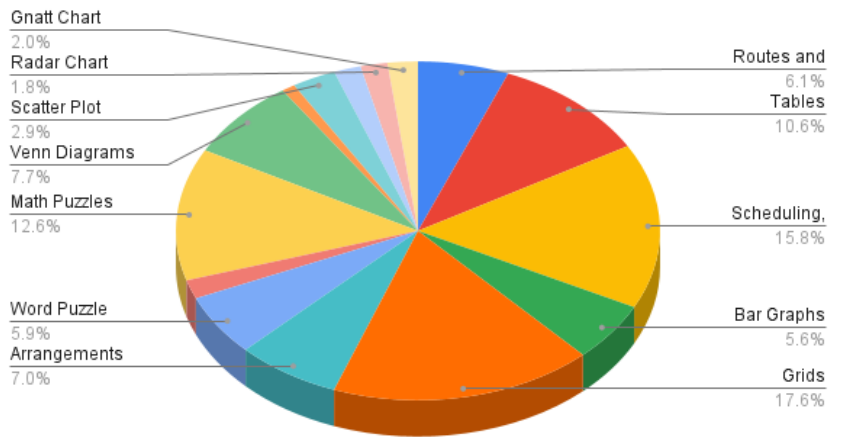
| Success Factor	Key Resource	Big Focus Area
1. Variety in puzzles 2. Detailed solutions	2IIM Free Question Bank	Previous year Papers

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Diving deeper into CAT Quant Syllabus

The Quantitative Aptitude section is the most robust section in terms of something that can give you a definitive syllabus. Do not fret looking at the enormous list of topics listed below. Following the Pareto principle, a collectionof a few key topics can help you get up to 90+ percentile. Watch the video below to get more clarity on the CAT syllabus for the Quantitative Aptitude section of the CAT exam.

QA Topic	Key Concepts	Approx. No. of Questions
Arithmetic	Percentages Time Speed Distance Pipe Cisterns, Work TimeProfit and Loss Mixtures Averages Ratios and Proportion Simple Interest Compound Interest	10 - 11
Geometry	Triangles, Circles, QuadrilateralsMensuration Coordinate Geometry Trigonometry	5 - 6
Algebra	Linear and Quadratic Equations Functions Polynomials Inequalities Arithmetic and Geometric Progressions	6 - 8
Number Theory and Modern Math	HCF LCM Factors and Multiples Factorials, RemaindersSet Theory Permutation Combination, ProbabilityLogarithms	2 - 3

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QA Segment wise Comparision
Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry,NT & Modern Math
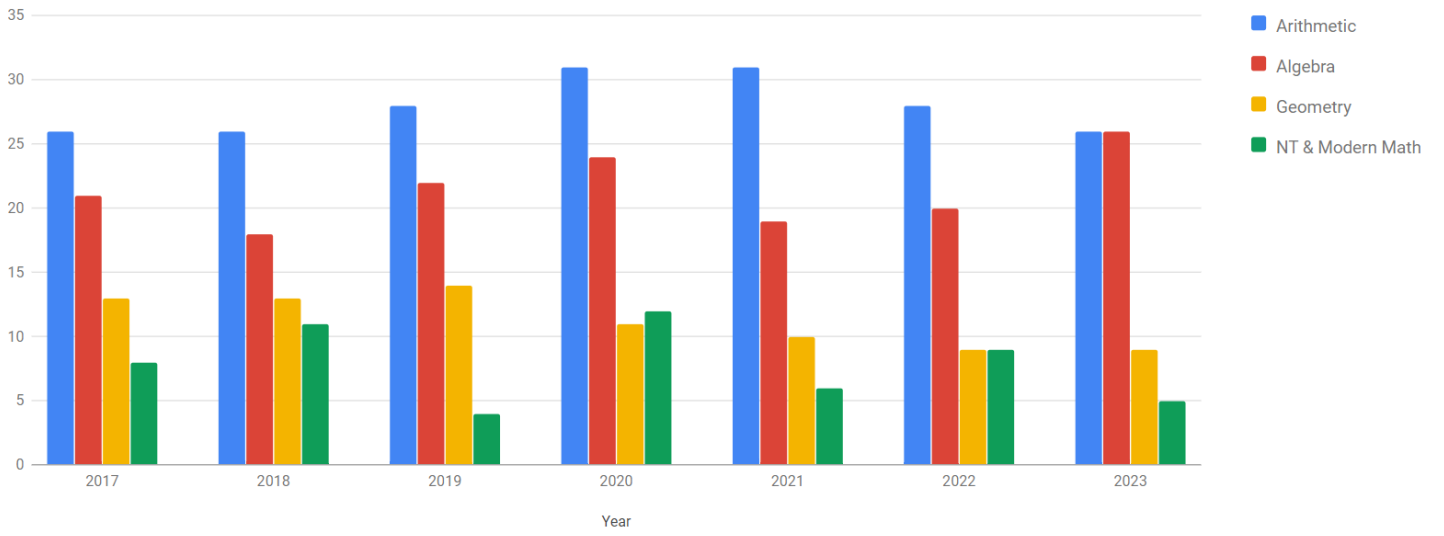
2017 - 2023
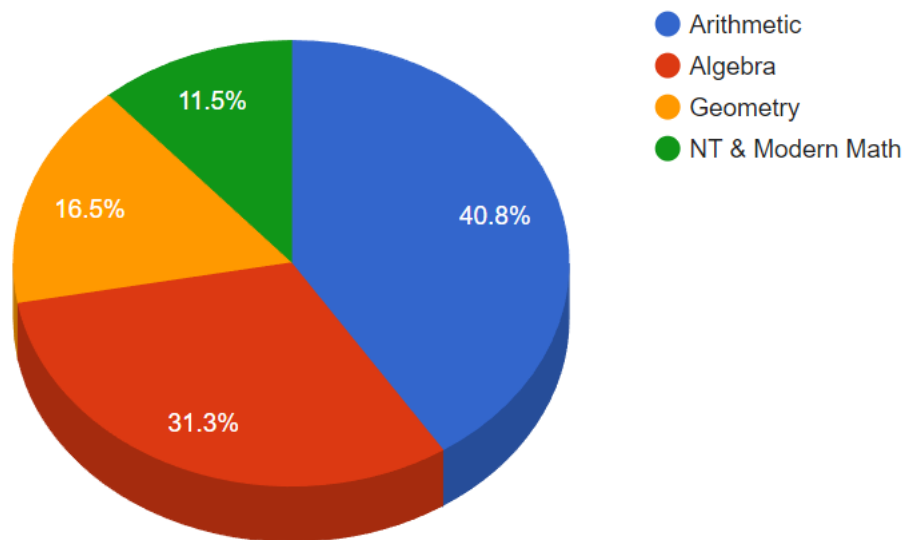
Further breaking down the segments, topic-wise:

Segment	Topic	2017			2018			2019		
		Slot 1	Slot 2	Total	Slot 1	Slot 2	Total	Slot 1	Slot 2	Total
Arithmetic	Ratios, Mixtures, Averages	4	4	8	6	5	11	3	4	7
	Percents, Profits, SICI	6	4	10	2	1	3	5	5	10
	Speed, Time, Distance, Races	2	3	5	3	3	6	4	3	7
	Pipes, Cisterns, Work, Time	1	2	3	3	3	6	2	2	4
Algebra	Linear and Quadratic	1	1	2	1	0	1	3	4	7
	Progressions	2	3	5	1	4	5	3	3	6
	Polynomials	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Inequalities	1	0	1	0	3	3	0	0	0
	Functions	2	3	5	2	1	3	2	1	3
	Logarithms and Exponents	3	3	6	4	2	6	3	3	6
Geometry	Geometry	3	5	8	5	2	7	2	4	6
	Co-Geo	2	1	3	0	1	1	3	0	3
	Mensuration	2	0	2	2	3	5	2	2	4
	Trigonometry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
NT & Modern Math	Combinatorics	3	2	5	1	1	2	0	0	0
	Digits	0	3	3	1	2	3	0	1	1
	Factorials	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Factors	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	2	2
	Remainders	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Set Theory	0	0	0	2	2	4	1	0	1

Segment	Topic	2020				2021				2022				2023			
		Slot 1	Slot 2	Slot 3	Total	Slot 1	Slot 2	Slot 3	Total	Slot 1	Slot 2	Slot 3	Total	Slot 1	Slot 2	Slot 3	Total
Arithmetic	Ratios, Mixtures, Averages	3	2	4	9	5	3	4	12	6	4	5	15	3	3	3	9
	Percents, Profits, SICI	3	3	3	9	3	3	4	10	2	2	1	5	2	3	3	8
	Speed, Time, Distance, Races	4	4	3	11	1	1	1	3	1	1	3	5	3	1	1	5
	Pipes, Cisterns, Work, Time	0	1	1	2	2	2	2	6	0	1	2	3	1	1	2	4
Algebra	Linear and Quadratic	2	4	2	8	0	1	1	2	1	2	3	6	3	2	2	7
	Progressions	1	1	0	2	1	2	1	4	1	2	0	3	2	1	2	5
	Polynomials	0	1	0	1	1	2	1	4	2	0	0	2	2	2	1	5
	Inequalities	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
	Functions	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	3	3	2	2	7	0	0	1	1
	Logarithms and Exponents	4	1	4	9	1	1	1	3	0	1	1	2	1	2	3	6
Geometry	Geometry	1	3	1	5	3	2	1	6	0	3	3	6	2	2	2	6
	Co-Geo	1	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	2
	Mensuration	2	1	0	3	0	1	3	4	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	1
	Trigonometry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NT & Modern Math	Combinatorics	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	2	1	2	0	3	1	0	0	1
	Digits	4	2	2	8	2	1	1	4	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
	Factorials	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Factors	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	4
	Remainders	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
	Set Theory	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Segment	Topic	Total
Arithmetic	Ratios, Mixtures, Averages	71
	Percents, Profits, SICI	55
	Speed, Time, Distance, Races	42
	Pipes, Cisterns, Work, Time	28
Algebra	Linear and Quadratic	33
	Progressions	30
	Polynomials	14
	Inequalities	10
	Functions	25
	Logarithms and Exponents	38
Geometry	Geometry	44
	Co-Geo	13
	Mensuration	21
	Trigonometry	1
NT & Modern Math	Combinatorics	14
	Digits	21
	Factorials	0
	Factors	11
	Remainders	1
	Set Theory	7

Success Factor	Key Resource	Big Takeaway
1. Strong Fundamentals 2. Excellent Drill	1. 2IIM Free Question Bank 2. 2IIM YouTube Channel 3. CAT Previous Year Paper	Arithmetic has been a major part of the quants section forever but in the last 2 years algebra has become increasingly important. Arithmetic and Algebra can easily take you to 90+ percentile.

Useful Links:

[Best CAT Online Coaching](#)!

[Best IPMAT Coaching](#)

[All about CAT Exam](#)

[CAT Syllabus](#)

[How to Prepare for CAT](#)

[How to Prepare for CAT Quantitative Aptitude](#)

[How to Prepare for CAT Verbal Ability and Reading Comprehension](#)

[How to Prepare for CAT Data Interpretation and Logical Reasoning](#)

[Bharath's Reading List](#)

[Free CAT Study Material](#)

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