

## NAT PREPARATION – A PERSPECTIVE

### WHEN TO START PREPARING?

NAT is no joke. You cannot expect to score well without working towards it. Students generally start preparing for the test much before time, and serious examinees start somewhere a year before they pass out from college/university! Now preparation for NAT does not only mean studying for the exam but also gathering information for it, registering for the exam and finalizing the test dates. All this takes time, and preparing for the test goes on side by side. If you plan to start with preparation after registering, then you just end up wasting time. So it is best to start preparing well in advance.

### OBSERVE NAT CONTENTS

NAT review is very essential, much more than you think. When you take the test for the first time, you are new to everything and might underestimate the difficulty level of the test. Moreover you might think that the education you get in classes is sufficient for scoring well. If you have been a good student through schooling, it is not necessary that you score well in NAT. Guided preparation for the NAT gives you an idea of what to expect in the test and so you prepare for it accordingly. You need to make use of some resources which prepare specifically for NAT, rather than relying on your own books and material. NAT review is most essential because you do not have an idea of what level of competition you face outside your own college/university. Students of no two college/university can be compared until they take a common exam and so you never know what level of competition is in store for you. Hence even if you feel your preparation is enough, it just might not be! Moreover you get good practice of the type of questions asked in the NAT. NAT review materials like the book in your hands deal with the test specifically and are thus relevant to the test; they do not offer general knowledge. They offer valuable strategies, tips and practices that enable you to raise your score to a competitive level.

### QUALITY OF PREPARATORY MATERIAL

Good NAT review is the one which gives you complete knowledge and practice of the test. It should not just teach you how to handle one section but all the sections. For example if you get a NAT review which emphasizes more on vocabulary but does not give you any advice on how to deal with quantitative section, then the review is not complete. You must look for a review which gives you comprehensive and complete preparation strategies for preparation of each type of question separately. Likewise it should contain enough tips especially for studying mathematics. Also a good review gives you enough practice of the complete test. If you practice section wise and do not take the complete test then you do not get a clear idea of what the NAT is like in reality. Besides, the NAT review should be student centered; it should not have a language which in fact is not the standard language of the test. Also keep in mind that the NAT review source also gives you practice to speed up your work so that you can finish the real test in the limited time. Speed is a major factor which influences your performance in the test.

## MODES OF PREPARATION

There are numerous modes of preparation you can choose from according to what suits you best. You can buy books, take private tuitions, take tuitions in small groups, take an online course or take classroom coaching in coaching centers.

## TEST DAY CONSIDERATIONS

- A test taker must show Roll Number Slip before entering the test center, so you must be careful to put the Roll Number Slip in your wallet the night before the test morning.
- Be conscious about the center and test start time mentioned on the Roll Number Slip. You must reach the center one hour before the start of the test.

## IN THE CENTER

- Calculators, Mobile Phones, and Wrist Watches are not allowed in the examination hall.
- The question booklet you receive will be of five different colors. Moreover, each question booklet will be sealed and will be opened by the candidates at the start of test.
- You are not supposed to break the seal till the test starts.
- You must be patient not leave your seat during the test except with the permission of the invigilator in case of an unavoidable situation.
- No test taker is allowed to leave the hall without the permission of the invigilator.

## GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- Dress so that you can adapt to any room temperature.
- Friends or relatives who accompany you to the test center will not be permitted to wait in the test center or be in contact with you while you are taking the test. Except for NTS-authorized observers, visitors are not allowed in the testing room while testing is in progress.
- ID verification at the test center is important. If you refuse to participate in your identification process, you will not be permitted to take the test. This is in addition to the requirement that you must present acceptable and valid identification.
- Personal items other than identification documents are not allowed in the testing room. This includes cell phones, PDAs, laptops, and any other electronic or photographic devices. You will not have access to your personal items during the test or during breaks. Before the test, you will receive instructions from test center staff regarding where you must deposit personal items. You will be required to follow the procedures set by the test center for storage of your cell phone or any electronic or photographic device you bring to the test center. If you take personal items into the test room, they will be collected by the test center staff. Personal items such as hats, scarves, jackets and outerwear that are taken into the test room are subject to inspection by the test center staff before being admitted to the test room. Failure to comply may result in dismissal from the test and/or cancellation of scores. If you fail to follow the directions of the test center staff, you will not be permitted to take the test. Any violation of this procedure during the test or breaks may result in cancellation of your scores, dismissal from the test center or banning from future testing.



- On occasion, weather conditions or other circumstances beyond the test administrator's control may require a delayed start or the rescheduling of your test appointment. In the event that it is then necessary to cancel your test session, or if it is later determined that your scores could not be reported, you will be offered the opportunity to schedule another test appointment.

**NOTE:** All information provided in the above pages has been collected from the previous test takers for general interest.

### DISMISSAL FROM A TEST CENTER

*(Norms usually applicable to international tests)*

- A test administrator is authorized to dismiss you from a test session and/or your scores may be canceled for actions such as, but not limited to attempting to take the test for someone else or having someone else take the test for you failing to provide acceptable identification
- obtaining improper access to the test, a part of the test, or information about the test using and/or having any helping device.
- creating a disturbance (disruptive behavior in any form will not be tolerated; the test administrator has sole discretion in determining what constitutes disruptive behavior.)
- attempting to give or receive assistance. Communication in any form is not permitted during the test administration. Discussion or sharing of test content during and after the test administration is prohibited.
- removing or attempting to remove test content from the test center.
- attempting to remove scratch paper from the computer-based testing room or using scratch paper during untimed sections of the test or during breaks
- bringing a weapon or firearm into the test center
- leaving the testing room without permission
- referring to, looking through, or working on any test, or test section, when not authorized to do so, or working after time has been called

**NOTE:** the information contained in the pages above is generally found in all international tests conduction.

### WHAT TO DO THE WEEK BEFORE THE TEST

#### 128 Hours and Counting:

##### *Getting Ready for the Big Day*

In this section we'll discuss what you should do the week before the NAT, what to expect in the exam room, and what happens after you've taken the test.

You want the week leading up to the test to go as smoothly as possible, so get yourself into a routine beginning on the Sunday night the week before the test (128 hours). Look at your calendar for that week and make sure you plan ahead for everything else in your life: homework, upcoming tests, at due, after college/university activities.

## GO EASY ON YOURSELF THIS WEEK

Don't overload yourself this week. In fact, do what you can to lighten up your normal schedule. If you normally participate in two or three after-college/university activities, consider passing up anything you don't have to do.

Your family members should know that you need to be focused this week, too. They should let you delegate some of your normal responsibilities you can make up your chores the week after the NAT.

Try to get into a routine in the days leading up to the test. Get to bed and wake up at reasonably consistent times. If it takes you a while to wake up in the morning, wake up an hour earlier than usual every day this week so that you'll have an extra hour on test day to clear your head; the NAT starts fairly early in the morning, and you want to be completely lucid when the test begins.

By the way, if it's cold season, wash your hands frequently the last thing you need going into the NAT is to get sick this week. You're not being obsessive or a hypochondriac here; most cold viruses pass from the environment to your hands and from your hands to your face. If you get sick the week before the test, it's not going to ruin your chances for the NAT, but do reduce the chances for future success.

## GETTING INTO THE RIGHT FRAME OF MIND

At the end of a season and leading up to the championship, athletes go through a "tapering phase" to make sure they perform at their peak when it counts. In a sense you've been a mental athlete, and you want to make sure that you perform at your peak when it counts: on the actual NAT.

For you, tapering consists of scaling back drastically the amount of preparation you've been doing so you can give your mind a chance to rest and rev up your motivation. During this week you should do less work, but of a much higher quality. Instead of doing an entire section of NAT, for example, spend the same amount of time focusing on three or four truly difficult questions. You'll gain far more by wrestling with a tough question for ten minutes—or more—than you will by doing ten simple questions quickly.

In fact, don't do anything timed this week. Rehearse the techniques meticulously, getting everything just right. Trust me on this point: the best way to improve your test-taking speed and your test-taking accuracy is to practice mindfully, being hyperconscious of every little step you do.

This week is also an excellent time to see how far your skills have advanced since you started preparing for the test weeks ago. Get out your Smart Brain NAT book, or your first few practice exams, and look over your work. You'll be so surprised at how you used to solve questions that you won't even recognize your work.

Keep up with your vocabulary work this week, but don't try to cram in more words than normal—doing so will not make much of a difference in your score and trying to do so will just heighten your anxiety level at a time when you should be taking it easy.

Don't wait until the last minute to locate your Entry Card. You can print one out from the NTS website if you registered online.



### THE DAY BEFORE THE TEST

- If you haven't already, make sure you know the location of your test center. If you haven't taken a test before at your test center, ask around among the seniors you know to see whether there's anything you need to know about the place.
- Speaking of contingency plans, if someone is supposed to drive you to the test center, make sure you have a back-up plan in case the person oversleeps, gets sick, or otherwise fails to show up tomorrow morning (remember, this is the day before the test) at the appointed time.
- During the day, make sure you have a digital watch or similar timing device, ideally one with large, easily read numbers. The best timing device to use is one that counts up rather than down, but any digital device is better than an analog watch with hard-to-read hands.
- Also make sure you have a working alarm—or two!—in the house so you're sure to wake up in time. If you can't find one, borrow one from a friend or a neighbor.
- Although you can get some gum and maybe a bottle of water the morning of the test, it's probably a good idea if you get these things today.
- Finally, it's a good idea to have a cell phone handy on test day. If you don't have one, borrow one and make sure it's charged.

### IF THIS IS YOUR FIRST NAT—GET EXCITED

It's natural to feel nervous the day before the test, maybe even a bit panicked, but let's try to get some perspective on your situation. Try to think of your first NAT as an audition for college, but not the audition that really counts. Naturally you hope that your audition goes well tomorrow, but it's not a big deal if it doesn't go quite as well as you'd like.

So don't think that all your college hopes rest on how you do on tomorrow's NAT—they don't. If you get a great score, terrific. But if you don't, it's not the end of the world.

### THE NIGHT BEFORE THE TEST

- Do spend at least half an hour today reviewing your work, but no more than an hour. Again, you're not trying to learn anything new at this point; you're just making mental notes about things you should already know.
- Before you get too tired, lay out everything you're going to need tomorrow morning: a picture I.D., your digital watch, your ball pens, and a clip board.
- Set out the clothes you'll wear for tomorrow, including any good luck items. It's a good idea to dress in layers so that if the room is too hot you can take off a sweater, or if it's too cold you can put one on.
- You might want to bring something distracting to read or listen to with you to the test site tomorrow, and maybe something to munch on. If so, set these items out, too.
- Charge your cell phone and set your alarm!

## WAKING UP ON TEST MORNING

- When you wake up, consider taking a shower or doing some brief calisthenics exercise to get the blood flowing especially to your groggy brain! If someone is with you to the test site, make sure he or she is up, too.
- Eat a normal breakfast, but not too much or you'll be groggy. If you're used to consuming some form of caffeine—tea, coffee, cola—then doing so is probably a good idea this morning. But only if you're used to caffeine; if you're not, this is not the morning to start.
- Make sure you have everything with you when you leave, and allow enough time to get to the test site thirty to forty minutes before the test starts to allow for traffic delays and to get yourself into a good position for entering the exam room.

## ARRIVING AT THE TEST SITE

There will probably be dozens of nervous students milling around at the entrance to the test site, reviewing flash cards, skimming through their notes, or muttering to themselves. If I were you I'd avoid congregating near everyone else so you can remain focused, but that's up to you and your state of mind that morning.

Make sure your ballpoints are slightly used. New ballpoints take longer to fill in the answer sheet bubbles than do used ballpoints points.

## ENTERING THE EXAM ROOM

Don't just wander into your exam room casually. Try to be one of the first students into the exam room so that you can choose a good seat (assuming seating is not assigned, as it sometimes is). A good seat is one that gives you a clear view of the proctor and of the central clock in the room that the proctor will be monitoring to time the test.

When I took exams I always preferred seats in the very back of the room because I didn't like the feeling that something was going on behind my back that I couldn't see. You may be different and prefer a seat as close to the front of the room as possible. The important thing is to choose a seat that suits you, and not one that you take by default.

Get ready to set your digital timepiece to zero you want it to count up, not down and await the proctor's signal.

## ALWAYS MAINTAIN YOUR GRIP DURING THE TEST—AND IF YOU LOSE IT, REGAIN CONTROL

One of the things you'll probably have to deal with during the NAT is distraction. Someone sniffing or coughing or tapping a pencil are one thing, but I've heard stories of distractions ranging from pile drivers at a nearby construction site to the school's band—tubas, drums, trombones, cymbals—practicing on the field outside. Some distractions are insidious, like hearing the jingle from a commercial playing over and over in your head.

Use distractions as reminders to get back to the test in front of you. If someone in the room is distracting you, raise the hand you're not writing with to attract the proctor's attention but keep working while you wait for the proctor to get to your desk.



**KEEP MOVING WHILE THE CLOCK'S TICKING**

Don't count on the proctor to be accurate or consistent about writing the time remaining in a section on the board. Monitor your time continually as you work through each section.

Watch out or you may enter a time warp. You start working on a difficult question that has you stumped, and before you know it, you space out. Suddenly you "come to" with a jolt and realize that you've just spent the last few minutes doing nothing!

To avoid time warps and spacing out in general, keep your ballpoint moving every few seconds, marking up your answer sheet. Don't ever let your ballpoint lift more than a couple of inches off the page; keep it poised to mark up questions.

Speaking of keeping your ballpoint moving, don't spend forever bubbling in your answer sheet. It's not uncommon to see a student in the exam room artistically darkening a bubble for ten or fifteen seconds. If you waste even two or three seconds per question bubbling in your answer, you'll waste a minute by the end of the section—or over five minutes wasted on the entire test!

For most of the test, keep your answer sheet under your test booklet. Always, always, always write your answer in your test booklet before you transfer your answers—in groups, like once every page—over to your answer sheet.

**NO MATTER HOW WELL YOU'VE PREPARED FOR THE NAT, IT'S ALWAYS GOOD TO WALK IN FEELING A LITTLE UNPREPARED**

Taking the real NAT is always, always different from taking practice tests that you know don't count. The NAT does count, and you know it. It's the same difference an athlete feels between a practice game and one in the final round of a championship.

The reason it's good to feel a little—just a little—unprepared is that you won't be thrown too badly by the inevitable surprises that occur on the exam. Students who feel completely prepared are too easily thrown for a loop when things in the actual exam room don't go exactly as they'd expected.