How to ace DI-LR section in CAT?

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In the last two years, the data interpretation and logical reasoning (DI-LR) section in the Common Aptitude Test (CAT) has sandbagged the scores of many a test-taker; thus making its mark as the most difficult of the three sections of the test. A major reason is the unpredictability associated with DILR—not knowing what is going to unfold this time around. For instance, instead of the traditional sets that had appeared till CAT 2015, of late, the section has been rife with puzzle-type questions with no clear distinction between LR and DI sets.

The 'IIM dollar' question: How does one prepare for DILR

Before identifying a preparation strategy, it's important to pinpoint what DILR focuses on. The section tests you on two things only:

- Common sense; and your ability to apply it
- Can you stay calm under pressure?

Basically, it's like a top-order batsman batting with a tailender. Can he soak all the pressure; and pick and choose the bowler and delivery to take advantage of? Similarly, can you keep your cool; and tell yourself that it's a test of just 12-14 questions!

Thus, the first change one needs to make is to view LRDI not as a section of 8 sets, but as a 32-question ball-game. And the first step would be to convince yourself to not try and attempt everything. Herein starts the process of unlearning.

The next step is to identify opportunities to encash. Just like the batsman in our example chooses the bowler and delivery he wants to capitalize on, similarly, you need to spot the sets you want to attempt, as well as the questions in those sets you should attempt first. To do this, follow a 3-step thumb rule:

Step 1: Spend the first 10 minutes of the section skimming through all the sets. While doing so, don't just go through the mother data, but also look at the questions. Those starting with 'If' and those that include 'Cannot be Determined' (CBD) in their options are signaling you to leave them alone. Identify the priority (order) in which you would want to pick up the sets—based on familiarity and comfort.

Step 2: Remember that you are a human being – yes, that's critical! Implication? Well, not being able to solve a question is no big deal. However, how quickly you identify such questions, and move on is definitely a big deal! Ideally, you should be able to spot a not-to-attempt set in about 4-5 minutes. Just tell yourself it was a corker of a delivery; but you survived, and tired the bowler out.

Step 3: Keep in mind that it's not about solving all questions from a particular set, but about solving the easiest ones—14-16 questions, to be precise. That can be achieved by identifying 4 sets, wherein you solve almost all questions; or, solving around 2 questions from each of the 8 sets.

DO'S

- Start with attempting 8 questions with 100% accuracy
- Thereafter, push the 8 questions to 12
- Take Mocks regularly
- Analyze each Mock thoroughly
- Prioritize accuracy over attempts

DON'T'S

- Prepare from offline material
- Fear the section
- Miss out on analyzing Mocks
- Feel obligated to attempt more sets in the time remaining

In the actual exam, as per the trends in the last few years, an attempt of 12-14 questions is 3/8th of the paper. So, with 100% accuracy you will score 40-42 marks, which, in return, will get you close to a 97-98%ile+. The key, as mentioned, is to keep it simple. Follow the thumb rule; and formulate your exam-day strategy. Keep time aside to go through the question paper; and choose the sets which you would be attempting. Remember, time is precious; waste it wisely!

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