



Timing strategy is an important aspect of taking the LSAT. Most test-takers do not have enough time to answer every question as carefully as they would like, and most test takers are required to make tough decisions about allocating time during the exam. Here are some basic strategies that can help guide your process.

Logical Reasoning

the facts

- 35 minutes
- expect twenty-five to twenty six questions
- about 1:20 per question
- different types of questions take different amounts of time
- on average, questions get more difficult as the section progresses

thoughts

When you think about your timing for any particular problem during a Logical Reasoning section, there are three main aspects to consider. One: certain types of questions are meant to take longer to solve, even when you solve them really well. For example, a Match the Reasoning question will typically require more steps than a Find the Conclusion question, and so will it will usually take you longer to solve. Two: on average, questions get more difficult as the section progresses. However, keep in mind that this progression is very inconsistent—expect the test-writers to throw in difficult questions amidst easy ones, and vice-versa. Three: questions take more time when you mess up. The key is to have enough experience and wisdom to know when you are spending more time on a question because it warrants it, and when you are spending more time because you've messed up. For many test-takers, the biggest timing issue isn't going too slow in general, it's not being able to let go of the questions that we get stumped on.

strategies

Checking your time about once every five minutes (with additional emergency checks here and there) is just about perfect for keeping on top of your time, but also not distracting yourself from the questions. Here are some general benchmarks that you use to track your time:

After Question 5: 5 minutes in
 After Question 10: 11 minutes in
 After Question 15: 18 minutes in
 After Question 20: 26 minutes in

Adjust these benchmarks per your goals. If you can afford to miss four or five questions in a section, you may choose to spend a little more time on the first fifteen, and then make up the time by letting yourself take educated guesses on some of the hardest questions between 16 and 25 or 26. If your goal is to go -0, you may want to push yourself even faster through the first fifteen, so that you have plenty of time to carefully evaluate the hard questions to come.

Make sure to write these benchmarks down in your workbook, so that you don't have to think about remembering them. And make sure to get plenty of practice utilizing these benchmarks before you go into your exam.

Reading Comp

the facts

- 35 minutes / 4 passages= 8:45 per passage
- expect twenty-seven questions
- on average, passages get more difficult as the section progresses, but this is very inconsistent

thoughts

Reading Comprehension passages are all about the same length, and you should expect to spend a fairly consistent amount of time on reading each of the passages. Just as with Logical Reasoning, however, certain questions will take much less time and others more. In particular, if you've read the passage well, general questions should take less time, and those that ask about specific details that you need to go back into the text to identify will often take more time. Each passage is likely to be accompanied by questions that take very little time, and those that take more.

One key decision is how much time to allocate to reading, and how much time to allocate to answering questions. Most top-scorers spend between 2 and 3 minutes reading each passage, but there are various ways to be successful. If you spend more than that, though, you should expect to retain a bit more of the passage, so that you can spend less time answering questions.

strategies

In general, you just want to check your time after each set of questions. In addition, it also helps to check your time right after you read the first passage, so that you can make sure that your reading pace is fine.

After reading the first passage: 2 to 3 minutes in
 After finishing passage one questions: 8 minutes in
 After finishing passage two questions: 16 minutes in
 After finishing passage three questions: 25 minutes in

If you look at the historical aggregate, Reading Comprehension passages get slightly more difficult as the section progresses, but this is wildly inconsistent—it's very likely that your second passage will be markedly more difficult than your fourth. It's important to remember that the difficulty of the section will balance out; that is, the difficulty of a Reading Comprehension section from one exam will be about the same as that from any other exam.

Make sure you have enough experience to know when you are facing an easier passage or a more difficult one, and get practiced at adjusting your time accordingly on the fly if need be. Also adjust your time for the number of questions—if a passage has six questions (which is slightly less than average) you should expect to be ahead of the pace, and if it has seven (slightly more than average) you can afford to be a bit more behind it.

Logic Games

the facts

- 35 minutes / 4 games = 8:45 per game
- expect twenty-three questions
- different games take different amounts of time to set up
- on average, questions get more difficult as the section progresses

thoughts

Unlike the consistent amount of time that it takes to read Reading Comprehension passages, the amount of time that it takes to read and setup Logic Games scenarios varies drastically from game to game. Much of this is per the design of the games. Certain games are designed for us to do more work, and make more inferences, up front, and these games take longer to set up. Other games are designed so that we know very little—other than a few basic rules—about a game until we get into the questions. For these games, the questions will supply the additional information we need to think about how the rules of a game come together. For these types of games, we need to get through setups quickly, so that we have enough time to do the work needed to solve problems.

If, by test day, you are not able to finish all the questions for all four games on time, do not use the oft-quoted strategy of focusing on three games and skipping one. Rather, practice getting through all four games, while taking very quick educated-guesses on x-number (the number depending on your timing issues) of the hardest, most time consuming questions.

strategies

In general, you just want to check your time after each game. Of course, you also want to check in if you are worried that a setup or a question is taking too long.

After game one: 7 minutes in
 After game two: 15 minutes in
 After game three: 25 minutes in

In general, games get more difficult as the section goes on. However, just as with Reading Comprehension, there is great inconsistency. You can expect, though, that the first game will almost always be your easiest. Recently, the second, third, or fourth game have all been just as likely as one another to be the hardest in the set.

Make sure you have enough experience to know when you are spending more time because a game takes more time (either because it is more difficult, has a more complicated setup, more questions, or harder questions), versus when you are spending more time because you are having trouble with a game. Wasting time on the latter situation is the most common reason test-takers have timing issues in the Logic Games section.

Also, just as with the other timing strategies, make sure you adjust the above-recommendations per your goals. If you are struggling with Logic Games and need to ensure that you get out of the section with a -6 or better, or example, you may want to practice allocating a bit more time to the easier games, so that you can ensure you get those points. If your goal is to go -0 on the section, you will likely want to, on average, go a bit faster on all of the games, so that you can allocate extra time to the one or two hardest ones. And as with Logical Reasoning and Reading Comprehension, make sure you get plenty of practice applying these strategies in practice exams, so that you don't have to waste precious energy thinking about them on test day.