



Abstract-Based WAT Bible

Most Common WAT Topics with Sample WATs

Hi,

Welcome to the Written Ability test or 'WAT' section for your MBA Admission process!

The WATs in this section have been curated by alumni of top business schools like IIM A, C, SP Jain, and SCMHRD. Few authors have been panellists for top business schools and have formal experience in taking interviews of the candidates.

The document and content below have been created concerning the past 5 years of WAT experiences for the top B-schools and will be useful for a quick walkthrough. Each category covers a wide range of topics followed by sample WATs. We recommend you read through the topics and the sample WATs for greater insights. Hope these add to your preparation and help you in levelling favours up your game plan in the admission process!

All the best!

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Written Ability Test (WAT) Preparation

WAT or Written Ability Test is one of the two shortlisting rounds conducted by b-schools to assess the candidate's reasoning abilities and written communication skills. The WAT concept started anew last year by top IIMs of the country (Indian Institute of Management) to replace the group discussion round (GD). Many other B-Schools followed the lead of this protocol and have incorporated WAT as one of their selection parameters for MBA Admissions. Major IIMs and other top b-schools of the country award a significant weightage to the WAT round (more than 20%), the second stage of their shortlisting process. This article summarizes all the tips and strategies devised by CL experts to help you with your WAT preparation. Without further ado, see how one should take necessary steps anent WAT Preparation to crack it successfully.

What is meant by WAT?

WAT (Written Ability Test) is a written examination that includes one unique essay question a student needs to answer within the time bracket of 10-20 minutes. This round is conducted somewhere between early afternoon to late afternoon. The style and type of the essay differ across several institutes. The WAT round's primary purpose is to evaluate the candidate on four major proficiency strands, i.e., understanding, fluency, problem-solving, and reasoning. This round is similar to an essay competition. Several IIMs (including new IIMs and Baby IIMs) have replaced the original group discussion round with the WAT round. The reason for this modification was threefold; the inability of candidates to creatively construct their opinions during the earlier group discussion round, the GD room's chaotic environment, and the lack of confidence amongst candidates to speak up their part without any hesitance.

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What are the pivotal factors in any plan?

- The objective.
- The resources.
- The time available.

The objective is to compose an essay that displays clarity of thinking, simplicity of phrasing, breadth of viewpoint, and robustness of logic.

The following are the resources: We don't have any reference materials, so this is a little tough. As a result, we must rely on our memories. The assignment is somewhat easier if the topic is open to interpretation and allows the writer to pick a framework for debate. When it comes to a certain issue (such as 'The Demonetization in India,' for example), we must rely on our existing understanding of the subject. As a result, all WAT candidates must be current on current events.

The amount of time you have: We must divide our time correctly among the essential processes, regardless of how much time we have, rather than committing it completely to the act of writing. Let's pretend we have 20 minutes on our hands to better comprehend the procedure

How to approach a WAT:

1. Understand your topic: Read the topic carefully and try to understand what is being conveyed
2. Take a stand: Based on your understanding, form your opinion and build your pointers.
3. Connect the dots: Organize your points and build your WAT.
4. Conclude: Make sure you conclude the essay well and proofread it before submitting it.

Types of WATs

The following types of WATs have been observed in the past 5 years:

1. Abstract based WAT
2. Business-related WAT
3. Current affairs-based WAT
4. Lifestyle based WAT
5. Philosophy based WAT
6. Politics based WAT
7. Science-based WAT

Let's dive into each type!

Abstract based WAT

Abstract Topics

Abstract topics are given to test you are out of the box thinking. You would be given a phrase or even a word and you will have to make sense of that. Like you can be given something like "People are dying but bulls are flying". This can mean so many things like the stock market booming during corona, the Taliban taking over Afghanistan, the China market booming on the backdrop of the

corona, etc. You will have to decide what you make out of the phrase given. The key to acing this type of WAT is to be unconventional. The more unconventional thinking you can bring forward, the better will be your grades.

How to approach abstract topics?

Abstract topics could be approached in multiple ways and be taken in any direction. Try relating it to real-life situations as much as possible

Sample Abstract Topics:

1. Difference between ethics and morals
2. Are newspapers going to get replaced soon?
3. Is competition doing us better off or worse off?
4. Does deadline decrease effectiveness?
5. Why a practical based study is required? What should be the ratio of theory to practice in studies?
6. College should be free for everyone
7. Teamwork vs individual work
8. Joint family or nuclear family or DINKS?
9. Private vs government job: The future
10. Online education or offline education?
11. Movies breed crime
12. Walls are dead
13. A new tourist spot or a new college
14. Movies encourage social evil
15. Do deadlines destroy creativity?
16. Success has different meanings
17. Democracy in India: Success or failure
18. Should street food be banned?
19. Fame is a double-edged sword
20. Do brands rule or life?
21. Job vs entrepreneurship
22. MBAs do not make good business leaders
23. MBA is a highly expensive two-year networking
24. Are women better managers than men

25. How can we reduce the line between rich and poor?
26. Nationalism vs regionalism
27. Is everything Black and white?
28. Do certifications prove the knowledge?
29. How can the standard of people below the poverty line be raised?
30. Is 75% attendance too much for engineering students?
31. Should healthcare be made free for all?
32. Should there be a retirement age?
33. Should anonymity be allowed on the internet?
34. Is MBA a rat race?
35. People are dying but bulls are flying
36. There is nothing like black or white... everything is grey
37. Is the Indian education system killing dreams?
38. Joint family or nuclear family?
39. How will you deal with work-life imbalance?
40. Can discipline and innovation go hand-in-hand?
41. Leader vs Follower
42. Change
43. Shiba Inu at \$100,000
44. Life is an illusion
45. Dreams are real
46. Hope
47. The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose
48. Justice favours victors, not victims
49. Green Energy
50. The circular economy is the future

Sample Abstract WATs

1. People are dying but bulls are flying

Key Pointers:

- a) Correlation between Coronavirus and the market → How the market looks futuristic as vaccines were manufactured.
- b) Role of Foreign investment in revamping the economy (expected growth of 8%).
- c) Despite the loss of life, the market can't be stationary and the economy has to yield for sustainable development.

Final Draft

This implies that people are dying because of Coronavirus, but markets are at an all-time high. There is very little correlation between Coronavirus and the market. When Coronavirus started, then it was a shock for the market. So, the market responded by tanking. There was uncertainty as to what would happen. But with time, we saw that we could manufacture vaccines. However, the road is long to tackle Coronavirus fully. But understand that the market is futuristic. The market has confidence that the worst has already occurred. The market is running on the assumption that 1 or 2 years down the line, there will not be any coronavirus. Therefore the market did not depreciate much during the second wave. It no longer is a surprise for the market.

FII's are pouring money into the Indian market. The government has taken a lot of measures to transform the economy of India. The government is doing everything possible to bring foreign investment to India. After the Coronavirus in China, people have lost faith in the Chinese economy. After China, India is the best opportunity as far as the economy is concerned. It is expected that the Indian economy will grow at 8+ per cent favour next year. This is the highest in any emerging market. The bull run in the market shows strong investor confidence in India.

People are dying due to Coronavirus. That is a bad thing. We must work together towards stopping Coronavirus from spreading, but we cannot be stuck here. Life must go on. Businesses have to make money and contribute to the larger good of society. People will die, but the market has to fly high.

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2. There is nothing like black and white... everything is grey

Key Pointer:

- a) Comprehending the meaning of the topic
 - b) Understanding that life is not binary, it is more of a perception of an individual, which is symbolized in this topic as grey
 - c) An example to elucidate the above statement and conclude the established point.
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Final Draft:

This topic discusses duality in this world. We are taught right from the start that everything in this world is either good or bad. We think gods were good and the devil was terrible. We believe Mr X is a good person and Mr Y is evil. However, the truth is that no one is all good, nor is anyone all bad. You always have a mix in this world. The good has some evil in it, and the evil also has some bad in it. We mean that there is nothing like black and white in this world; everything is grey.

For example, many BJP supporters will proclaim that whatever the ruling government does is right. Similarly, many Congress people will say whatever they do is right. But the fact is that not everything BJP does can be correct; the same is the case with Congress. This is why we have democracy in our country. This democracy was made to do away with the duality of right or wrong. All political parties are supposed to do that beneficial for a significant part of society. They cannot benefit the entire population of 135 crore people. Some will be satisfied, and some will have to pay for that benefit. For example, take the BPL scheme. The government taxes the rich more than the poor, and that money is used to uplift the poor. Some people think the rich should be taxed less to generate more employment. But taxing them less will leave the poor vulnerable.

We should accept the “grey” in this world and rise above the duality of black and white.

3. Is the Indian education system killing dreams?

I don't think the Indian education system is killing dreams. If you look closely, this Indian education system has produced stalwarts like Sundar Pichai, Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, Raghuram Rajan, and countless more. So, we cannot blame the Indian education system. What is killing dreams is parents and society forcing youngsters to choose a particular stream of education without their prior approval.

For example, if I push you to make a career in engineering while you are very passionate about acting, it would kill dreams. It would also kill a very talented actor who would have taken the acting industry to new heights. The reason India has been able to produce so many successful persons is that they knew what they are passionate about and their parents and relatives supported them in their dream.

If you would have pushed Shah Rukh Khan to become an engineer, you could imagine the loss Bollywood would have suffered. Or take for example, if you would have pushed Sachin Tendulkar to become a doctor who would have set new standards in cricket.

So, students should understand what they are passionate about and then give their heart and soul to it. Some students are naturally attracted to academics. Don't fall into the trap that academics is not important or it is not glamorous. No matter what your passion is, I would suggest you should complete at least higher secondary.

4. Joint family or nuclear family

A joint family is an extended family where the children, mother, father, uncle, aunt, grandmother as well as grandfather live under the same roof. A nuclear family consists of only parents and their kids. The nuclear family is much smaller as compared to the joint family. In India, a joint family has been the norm for decades and maybe centuries. However, with time people are shifting towards the nuclear family.

Advantages of Joint family

- Children will get to tackle many different people with many different natures.
- Functions and festivals would be filled with excitement
- There will not be emotional and financial problems

Disadvantages of Joint family

- Chances of conflicts are higher
- Convincing everyone is difficult
- There is nothing called privacy here

Advantages of the nuclear family

- Children will learn how to be independent
- Everyone will have their privacy
- Expenses are less as the family is smaller

Disadvantages of the nuclear family

- Children get less time from parents if both are working
 - Children learn to leave their parents when they later grow old
 - Loneliness increases because of smaller family size
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5. How will you deal with work-life imbalance?

The work-life imbalance has become quite prevalent these days. This topic has gained a lot of importance these days. With the advent of Covid as the boundary between work and life is diminishing, this topic becomes all the more important. Since people have started working at home, they usually extend work more than work hours. They forget to give time to their kids and family.

We should understand that work is important because it gives you money. But money is of no use if you don't have a family. You must be able to manage work and life. The one simple trick I use to get a perfect work-life balance is that to have a definite time for work and a definite time for life. I set a time when I would work and at that time, I would do nothing but work. I assume that I am at the office where there is no distraction. I start working from 9 and go on till 6 with the usual lunch break and a few refreshers. After 6 I will not do any work. I would spend the entire time with my friends and family. I also give time for myself. I am not only physically away from work but mentally as well. I don't think about work. That is the time for relaxing and that is exactly what I do at that hour.

If you follow this simple trick and set a rigid boundary you would be able to deal with the work-life imbalance. You should also refrain from working on holidays like Sundays or as such.

6. Can discipline and innovation go hand-in-hand?

Many people wrongly assume that discipline means going out of order, being indisciplined, doing things as per mood. However, I completely disagree with this. I believe discipline is an indispensable part of innovation. Yes, innovation flourishes in a flexible environment, where there are no rigid rules as such. However, fewer rules do not mean indiscipline.

If you take the leeway of fewer rules and start doing things as per mood and your mood is never to study, how can discipline flourish here! Innovation flourishes when you are passionate about the thing you are doing. Innovation is centred at a place where the management is lenient enough to break regular norms and try unconventional ways. But that does not mean you would not work.

In any organization, you will have to work for 8-10 hours. Max the company can do is give you flexible hours. But you cannot say that to foster innovation management should give me only 4 hours of work. It does not happen that way. So, I believe discipline and innovation always go hand-in-hand. However, you should not make the work environment unnecessarily rigid.

7. Are newspapers going to get replaced soon?

It is common to see people getting updates on the latest news from the internet rather than the traditional method of reading a newspaper. I would argue that electronic sources of information will gradually replace that of the newspaper. Newspapers remain an essential source of news for several reasons. The first of these is that the older generation still prefers to read their news this way because they have traditionally bought a newspaper over the years, and information there does not wish to change or simply does, not know how to do so online in some cases. In addition to this, a newspaper also comes with other supplements, such as magazines and television guides, and sources of entertainment, such as crosswords. This makes it more attractive for some than going online.

However, though newspapers may not disappear completely, the Internet is likely to become the more dominant source of news over time. This is primarily because younger people tend to read the information online and prefer not to pay for it, so those reading newspapers, the older generations, will gradually decline. This links with the second reason: as media companies start to see a drop in income from newspapers, printing them will become unprofitable, and they will be forced to find ways to make money from news online.

In conclusion, although newspapers remain popular today, they will gradually be replaced by the desire to read the news through electronic sources. This may be a sad loss given their history, but unfortunately, it is an unavoidable development.

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8. Walls are dead

- A few decades before, segregation walls existed to separate whites from blacks in some countries such as South Africa and separate some communities from others in India. Now, these kinds of segregation walls are almost dead.
- On 9th November 1989, East Germans and West Germans started demolishing the Berlin wall, which divided them. The fall of the Berlin wall led to German reunification. Now, these divisions that restrict people from moving to other countries are almost dead.
- Humans constructed walls to keep others out, even in ancient times. But with time, people started to imagine a borderless world. However, the walls are not dead. Several countries have walls at borders. US President Donald Trump is trying hard to build a wall between US & Mexico to restrict immigrants from Mexico.

- Though walls exist at borders, many of them are of no use considering the issue of illegal immigrants in many countries despite having border walls.
- The concept of border walls may die soon because there will be no need for physical walls with the proliferation of technology. For example, Lidar sensor technology is being tested to spot intruders as an alternative to a border wall. This kind of system will be much cheaper and effective.

9. Do deadlines destroy creativity?

Yes – Deadlines destroy creativity:

- Deadlines will force us to focus on finishing the task at hand rather than coming up with creative ideas.
- Continuously chasing deadlines can make us emotionally exhausted. Hence there will be no motivation to be creative.
- Even if we get creative ideas, implementing them requires more time and analysis. With a short deadline, that will be difficult, and hence people will go for routine and already worked out ideas.
- Everyone is different. Some people can be creative under pressure, and some will bring innovative ideas only if they are not under pressure. So, giving tight deadlines to those who cannot cope with stress can destroy creativity.

No – Deadlines motivate us to be creative:

- If there are no deadlines, people may keep postponing the task, searching for a better creative idea.
- If we get used to being creative, we will be creative even with deadlines. Thinking and implementing creative ideas can become a habit.
- We'll have plenty of time with no deadline, so we may also think about why the idea won't work and the possibility of failure. This can indeed kill creativity.

How to be creative under pressure:

- Dividing the task into subtasks and keeping short deadlines will reduce the pressure and can give us peace to think about innovative ideas. If we delay the work until the last minute, we cannot think about new ideas.
- Setting some time aside to think about creative ideas also helps.
- Eliminating distractions will give us more time to finish the task, and thereby we can use that time to try and implement new ideas.
- Mistakes do happen if we try something new. So, not being scared of failing and making mistakes can help us be creative.
- Taking tiny breaks can reboot our brains and help us think clearly.

Conclusion:

Not everyone can manage to be creative under pressure. Strict deadlines can kill creativity. But reasonable deadlines can spur creative ideas.

10. Fame is a double-edged sword.

- Some people work hard to become famous, and some others get fame even if they do not want it due to working in specific fields. Often, fame is the byproduct of success. Many of their more opportunities, such as social media apps, are harmful to earning fame. But fame is a double-edged sword. That means it has both positive and negative consequences.

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The positive consequences of fame:

- Fame will fetch more opportunities to earn and market themselves in their field.
- The increasing fan following can help in improving confidence.
- Fame can be used to become influencers & thereby can promote what they believe in. For example, they can encourage body positivity, gender equality etc.

The negative consequences of fame:

- It's difficult for celebrities to keep their personal lives secret. Stars have to cope up with the paparazzi daily. They can't go to places where ordinary people go and may have to spend more to stay in luxury places to maintain privacy.
- No matter what they do, there will almost always be criticism. There will be some expectations on them that they should behave in a certain way. Many have to cope up with social media trolls and criticism. Even their words can be twisted, and someone can make a controversy out of it.
- If fame starts to fade, it may lead to depression in some people.
- Some famous people do not have any real friends and suffer from isolation.

Conclusion:

Some people earn more money with the fame they get, while others suffer from the negative consequences of fame. A few people handle fame well by utilizing it to their advantage without falling into its trap.

