

SAT Exam Primer 2017-18

Overview

The SAT is a standardized test that students take in their junior and senior years of high school. The test is meant to assess a student's college readiness, and is used as criteria for admission to many colleges. It is also used to determine eligibility for many scholarships, including the merit scholarships offered by universities to promising students.

The SAT Exam is composed of 5 sections and is 3 hours, 50 minutes long, not including breaks. The exam consists of one Reading Test, one Writing Test, two Math Tests – one with a calculator and one without, and an optional Essay Test. The exam answer type is mainly multiple-choice, but there are 13 grid-in responses on the math tests as well.

SAT Exam Format: 5 Sections

Reading Test	65 minutes, 52 questions
Writing and Language Test	35 minutes, 44 questions
Math Test – No Calculator	25 minutes, 20 questions
Math Test – Calculator	55 minutes, 38 questions
Essay Test	50 minutes, 1 essay and prompt

Scoring

The maximum score that you can attain on the SAT is a **1600**. To calculate the final score, the Reading and Writing scores are combined and the two math scores are combined, using a conversion chart. Scores for each of the 2 test areas range from 200 - 800. A perfect 800 in both areas would add up to a 1600 score. The optional essay is scored separately and DOES NOT affect the 1600 max score.

Schedule and Registration

Students can register online at www.collegeboard.com or using an application from their school counselor. The SAT is given during the school year on the following dates:

Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late (w fee)
August 26, 2017	July 28, 2017	August 8, 2017
October 7, 2017	September 8, 2017	September 19, 2017
November 4, 2017	October 5, 2017	October 17, 2017
December 2, 2017	November 2, 2017	November 14, 2017
March 10, 2018	February 9, 2018	February 20, 2018
May 5, 2018	April 6, 2018	April 17, 2018
June 2, 2018	May 3, 2018	May 15, 2018

Fees

SAT Test: \$46.00, SAT with Essay: \$60.00 (Fee waivers are available from school counselors.)

Late fee: \$29.00

Test day standby: \$49.00

SAT Test Strategy

General Tips and Strategies for the SAT

1. YOUR GOAL IS TO GET A 1600 POINT SCORE.
2. The SAT tests the same information, the same way, every year. Learn the content and structure of the exam. Knowing what to expect will help you to raise your score!
3. Take practice tests to increase your familiarity with the types of questions asked.
4. You don't have to come up with the answer from scratch; you just have to identify it amongst the choices. Every correct answer is right in front of you.
5. The SAT does not take any points away for wrong answers. Thus, **never leave any bubbles blank.**
6. When you don't know the right answer to a multiple choice question, look for the wrong answers instead. They're often easier to find.
7. Use process of elimination. When you find a wrong answer, eliminate it.
8. When should I guess? You should guess when you are able to eliminate at least one answer. This will increase the probability of getting the question right.
9. Own your test booklet. Feel free to use it for scratch paper and to keep ideas fresh in your head.
10. **Manage your time:** Know how much time you have to complete each section and each question. For example, 48 seconds per question in Writing, about 80 seconds per in math.
11. If you run out of time near the end of a section, a preferred plan is to choose a column and fill in the blanks for the remaining questions in a vertical line. Don't zig-zag randomly.

SAT Reading Test Strategy

- The Reading Test will present 5 passages, or pairs of passages, each followed by 10 or 11 questions. The Reading Test always includes:
 1. One passage from a classic or contemporary work of US or world literature.
 2. One passage from either a US founding document or a global conversation.
 3. One passage related to the humanities, such as economics, sociology, etc.
 4. Two science passages related to earth science, biology, chemistry, or physics.
- The main reason that many students run out of time on the Reading Test is because they spend too much time **READING!** Unless you are a speedy reader, you must develop a strategy for answering the questions correctly without reading all of the passage.
- **One strategy for the Reading Test:**
 1. Read the short preface blurb (source, author, and date)
 2. Read the first sentence in each paragraph (or two sentences if a paragraph is long). You are looking to grab the main idea of each paragraph and understand the overall essence of what is going on in the passage. Go for big picture, not memorization.
 3. Read the last sentence of the final paragraph to see how the passage closes.
 4. Answer each question, referring back to the part of the passage that will most likely contain the answer, based upon what you saw during your first look.
 5. Remember to stay aware of the time! If you get stuck, use process of elimination and guess. **KEEP IT MOVING!**
- **The passages are NOT all the same.** As you do your initial pass through the passage, you should be looking for specific things. Two passages will contain charts and graphs as well.
 1. **Literary passage** questions tend to ask about how characters in the passage ‘feel’ and how they interact with each other. **Focus on the WHO, WHERE, and WHY?**
 2. **Science** questions tend to ask about specific details in the passage. Thus, you should pay attention to the **WHAT, WHEN and HOW?**
 3. **Humanities and Social Science** questions are generally a mix between the literature/fiction and the science style of questions.
- Some questions will direct you to a certain line (or lines) in the passage. The answer is sometimes right there, but it is good to read 3-5 lines ahead and 3-5 lines behind that part to better understand the **context** around the given line (or lines).
- Two tricks to look out for on the Reading Test questions:
 1. Sometimes the test writers will offer answer choices that use totally different words to express the same meaning as the words in the original passage.
 2. Other times the test writers will steal words or phrases right out of the passage, but use them in a way that does not agree with the original meaning at all.
- **Manage your time:** The SAT Reading Test is 65 minutes long and has 52 questions. That’s about 1 minutes and 15 seconds per question. Remember though, that is only for the questions, and **DOES NOT** include reading the long passages! Thus you must have a strategy that helps you to read just enough to get the questions right in the allotted time!

SAT Writing and Language Test Strategy

- The Writing and Language Test covers concepts in several areas of English, including:
 - Grammar
 - Punctuation
 - Sentence Structure
 - Language skills such as understanding main ideas or strengthening the passage.
- The Writing and Language Test will present passages on the left side of the page. There will be words and phrases underlined throughout each passage. Your task is to determine whether the underlined portion is correct as written or whether one of the other answer choices is correct.
- Be sure to read **ALL** of the text in the Writing and Language Test passages. Determining the correct answer often requires you to understand the context around the underlined portion.
- The Writing and Language Test is a test of standard written English. Do not choose answers just because they ‘sound’ right. You will often see answer choices that sound like things you hear every day, yet are grammatically incorrect.
- If you narrow the choices down to two that don’t contain any errors, choose the shorter of the two answers.
- Do not be afraid to select **NO CHANGE**, which is frequently offered as the first answer choice. **NO CHANGE** will be the correct answer several times during the Writing and Language Test.
- **Sentence Structure concepts to study:** Sentence Fragments, Independent and Dependent Clauses, Comma Splices and Run-Ons, Misplaced Modifiers and Construction Shifts, Parallel Construction
- **Grammar concepts to study:** Pronoun Case, Subject-Verb Agreement, Pronoun-Verb Agreement, Verb Tense
- **Punctuation concepts to study:** Commas, Semicolons, Colons, Apostrophes, Dashes
- **There are several types of Language Skills questions:**
 - Some questions will ask about the main idea of the passage or whether a given statement strengthens or weakens the passage.
 - Some questions ask you whether a new sentence should be added to the passage or which answer choice best concludes the paragraph.
 - You may also be asked to interpret data presented in charts within the passage.
- **Manage your time:** The Writing and Language Test is 35 minutes long and has 44 questions. That is less than 48 seconds per question on average. Make sure you stay on pace to finish strong!

SAT Math Test Strategy

(No Calculator Section: 25 minutes, Calculator Section: 45 minutes)

- The math on the SAT covers a wide range of math, from arithmetic to trigonometry. All concepts in that range are fair game, so you should review your math concepts thoroughly.
- Trust your knowledge of math and your intuition. Confidence is a huge part of doing well on the SAT.
- The SAT gives you a set of math equations for reference, however it is best to memorize them. Knowing many basic formulas by heart will help you to solve answers more quickly.
- You may have learned many of the basic concepts tested in the SAT Math Test, but do not underestimate the importance of reviewing those basic skills. Work through all of the questions on your practice test to ensure mastery of the concepts.
- The questions are not in order of difficulty in the math sections. Easy, medium, and hard questions are given throughout the test.
- For grid-in problems, always start gridding in the leftmost column to help avoid mistakes.
- Make sure that you answer the ACTUAL QUESTION. Be careful not to select an answer choice that represents a ‘step along the way’ to the actual answer.
- The SAT Math questions are presented in paragraph form. You must be good at converting ‘words’ into ‘equations’. Know your math terminology well so that the words don’t trip you up. Examples include: prime number, quotient, factor, ratio, slope, diameter, function, etc.
- **Arithmetic Concepts:** Fractions, Decimals, Percent, Exponents, Roots, Averaging, Ratios, Absolute Value, Proportions, Median
- **Algebra Concepts:** Solving Linear and Quadratic Equations, Factoring, Collect Like Terms, Solving Simultaneous Equations, and Inequalities, Functions
- **Geometry Concepts:** Angles, Lengths, Triangles, Circles, Area, Perimeter, and Volume
- **Coordinate Geometry:** Slope, Distance, Midpoint, Parallel and Perpendicular Lines
- **Trigonometry Concepts:** You must know the SOHCAHTOA equations. Know that $TAN = SIN/COS$.
- **Manage your time:** You must pace yourself. You have 25 minutes to complete 20 questions without a calculator (1 minute, 15 seconds per question), then you have 55 minutes to complete 38 questions with a calculator (1 minute, 26 seconds per question).
- If you find that you haven’t begun to solve a math question after looking at it for 30 seconds, then consider taking your best guess and moving on. Come back to it if time permits.

SAT Writing Test Strategy

- The Writing Test presents you with a passage and asks you to analyze and explain how the author builds a persuasive argument. You have 50 minutes to read the passage, analyze the author’s reasoning and evidence, and write a well-crafted essay.
- Although the essay is ‘optional’, many colleges want to see the writing score, so it is recommended that you complete it when you take the SAT.
- The Writing Test does not affect your 1600 SAT score. The essay is scored separately. Two readers will award 1–4 points for each dimension: **reading, analysis, and writing**. The two scores for each dimension are added. You’ll receive three scores for the SAT Essay — one for each dimension — ranging from 2–8 points. A perfect score is 8/8/8.
- **Writing a High Scoring Essay**
 1. You must **demonstrate thorough comprehension of the passage**. Your response should show an understanding of the passage’s main ideas and most important details and how they interrelate.
 2. Your essay must **offer an insightful analysis of the source text** and demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the task. The essay must keep a consistent focus on those features of the passage that are most relevant to addressing the task.
 3. **Demonstrate a deliberate and highly effective progression of ideas** both within the paragraphs and throughout the essay. Make sure that you think through how you will write your paragraphs BEFORE you begin writing them.
 4. **Stay organized**. Your essay should contain an introduction, supportive body paragraphs, and a conclusion.
 5. **Use clear and effective language**. Avoid grammar errors and use your best vocabulary. Do not use slang!
- **More Pointers**
 - Use your scratch paper to brainstorm ideas, especially for your supporting examples.
 - Plan to spend as much as 20-25 minutes on reading and analysis, then 20-25 writing.
 - Allow a couple of minutes to proofread your work before your time is up.
 - Longer essays tend to get higher scores. Try to write at least 5 paragraphs.
 - Paragraphs should be clear and to the point; stay away from writing ‘fluff’.
 - Use transition words purposefully throughout the essay. (However, Finally, etc.)
 - Mix up your sentence lengths. Use long sentences and short sentences throughout the essay. This makes the essay easier to read.
 - Use short, relevant quotes from the passage.
 - Write a skillful introduction and conclusion.
 - Keep the final essay neat. Stay away from excessive erasures or scratched out words or sentences.

To All Students, Be Great!