

Introduction

What Is the SAT? How Is It Used?

As you probably know, many colleges use the SAT as one of several ways to assess a student's readiness for college-level work. Other important measures used are high school grades and teacher recommendations. Unlike many countries, the United States does not have a common national exam that must be taken by all students to earn a high school diploma. In one sense, therefore, the SAT can be seen as a means to give colleges a common standard by which to assess students' proficiency.

The SAT tests skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, using predominantly multiple-choice questions. (Some of the mathematics questions require you to type in the answers.) Because the test aims to assess readiness for college, the level of the material on it is about the level of work done in the first and second years of college. However, the SAT does not require you to have specialized knowledge of any subject.

The SAT is prepared by the College Board, an organization that promotes college education in the United States. Students can go to the College Board's website at <http://sat.collegeboard.org/home> for detailed information on when the test is given and how to register for it.

Students typically take the SAT in their junior or senior year of high school. They can also retake the test to improve their scores. The College Board has a policy called Score Choice that allows students to have only their best score report sent to colleges to which they have applied for admission. Some colleges accept Score Choice, and others do not. To find out if your selected colleges accept Score Choice and to find further information about how this process works, go to

<http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-score-choice>.

The SAT tests the skills that you have developed over the entire course of your education. Whenever you write an essay or solve a mathematics problem, you are developing these skills. However, this does not mean that you should not do additional preparation for this important test. Carefully focused preparation over several weeks (or, even better, a number of months) will almost certainly help you to do better—in many cases, much better. Experts with many years of experience preparing students for the SAT and students who have achieved high scores on the SAT agree that the best way to do well is to practice using well-designed materials that provide full explanations of the answers. This is where this book will help you succeed!

The New Digital SAT

Beginning in the fall of 2023, the SAT will no longer be a paper test. International students will be the first to take this digital test followed by U.S. students in the spring of 2024. The new digital exam will continue to test mathematics, reading, and grammar. However, the length of the test will be reduced from three hours to two and calculator use will be permitted on all math sections. The reading passages will also change, featuring shorter passages and fewer questions. In addition, the new computer-based exam will be adaptive; i.e., it will increase or decrease the level of difficulty based on the test taker's performance. This book will provide you with the most additional practice with drills on Reading, Writing, and Math questions you will see on test day.

The SAT Format

The SAT is now a little over two hours and contains two parts: Reading and Writing and Math. Each test contains two modules. The first module is of standard difficulty, while the second module is based on adaptive difficulty, meaning how well you did on the first module for Reading and Writing and Math. The Math modules now allow you to use a calculator whenever you need to. You can either bring your own or use the one provided for you within the exam interface.

Reading and Writing Modules—32 Minutes, 27 Questions

Reading

Passages are shorter, no longer than 150 words, with just one attached question and the same great variety of genres, including drama and poetry.

Questions are broken down into the following categories:

- Words in Context
- Structure and Purpose
- Central Ideas and Details
- Quantitative Evidence
- Textual Evidence
- Inferences

Writing

Questions are broken down into the following categories:

- Number and Tense Agreement
- Punctuation
- Sentence Structure and Organization
- Transitions
- Notes Analysis (Rhetorical Analysis)

Math Modules—35 Minutes, 22 Questions

There is a mix of multiple-choice and student-response questions as follows:

- Algebra
- Problem Solving and Analysis
- Advanced Math
- Geometry and Trigonometry

Your Test Scores

After you take the SAT, you will receive scores that will help you to evaluate your performance and tell you where your strengths and weaknesses lie. These scores usually fall between 200–800 in all Reading and Writing modules as well as the Math modules for a total perfect score of 1600.

The SAT can be taken multiple times.

Percentile Scores

You will receive a percentile ranking of 1 to 99 for your total composite score as well as for each of your section scores in Reading and Writing and in Math. The percentiles tell you how well you performed compared with other students taking the test. For example, if you receive a composite percentile ranking of 92%, you have achieved a higher score than 92% of all students taking the test.

Using This Book

The practice questions in this book are modeled after what we expect to see on the new digital exam. They closely resemble the new question types in Reading, Writing, and Math you will most likely see on test day in format, content, and level of difficulty. If you work diligently on them, you will greatly improve the skills you need to do well.

Work through each section, starting with the area you may need more practice in. When you go over your answers, carefully read the answer explanation for every question you answered incorrectly so that you fully understand the question and how to answer it. This will enable you to concentrate on developing the skills needed for each type of module of the test. Good luck!

Reading and Writing

The ability to understand what you read and to put that knowledge to work for you in other applications is an important skill that spans almost every interest, subject, or future dream you have. Consequently, the College Board includes on the digital SAT a portion that tests your reading and writing skills.

Do you want to earn a high score on the digital SAT? First, learn to read, and then learn to read well. What does that mean? To answer that question, let's break down the process into a few of its basic parts.

Learn to Read, Part 1: Sight Vocabulary

Learn as many words as you can. Know what each word means and how it's used in sentences. "What words should I learn before the test?" That's the wrong question. No one can predict exactly what unfamiliar words you will encounter on the digital SAT, in your college classes, or in the career you choose. You can make reasonable assumptions as you prepare, however, and you should do exactly that. A pragmatic approach is to learn as many words as you can using word games and puzzles in as many applications as possible. In other words, make learning new words a way of life.

"How do I answer a digital SAT Reading question if I don't understand what a word means?" Now, that is a good question! Well, there are tricks to the trade—ways to help you figure out what a word means even if you've never seen it before in your life, which leads us to the next key point. The next part contains one of the best ways to answer vocabulary-based questions correctly.

Learn to Read, Part 2: Context, Context, Context

You have years of reading classes in your rearview mirror, so you probably already know about context clues and how to use them. But be smart. Context can be your best friend when you're taking your reading skills to the next level. Context is so important that about 34% of the reading questions on the digital SAT will be about "words in context."

It's easy to practice. Whatever you're reading—whether it is a textbook, newspaper, novel—when you encounter a word that you don't recognize or know what it means, pause a minute. Don't put the term into your search engine to find the definition—yet. First, use all of those context clue ideas you learned in reading class to figure it out. Then, when you look up the definition, one of two things will happen: either you'll feel really, really good because you got it correct, or if you didn't figure out the meaning, you'll have learned a new word that you will probably never forget. It's a win-win.

Learn to Read Well: Application

Application puts together several important skills that you need for success on the Reading portion of the digital SAT.

What's the point of reading? Why do we learn to read? Reading is an amazing form of communication. It allows us to learn from others in a tangible form that reaches into the intangible world. Like stepping into a time machine, you can read a written work and discover the thoughts and ideas of people long gone, of different nationalities and cultures, and of almost every field of endeavor ever done by humans. When you know how to read and to read well, you can tap into the thoughts, motives, emotions, and ideas of others.

So what do we get out of reading? Sometimes just pleasure. Becoming part of a story, learning a new skill, and discovering a different way to view something can all be a lot of fun. But reading well is also a survival skill. To know how to read well is to know how to succeed. We live in a world that spins around written words—in print and in digital formats. Inestimable billions and billions of words are generated moment by moment, with a

person behind each one of those words. Most writers are trying to get your attention, to have you at least understand what they are communicating, and often those writers are attempting to convince you to agree with them. To read well is to be aware of the aims behind what has been written.

The ability to read well is very powerful. Written words should be handled with care, which is why the application step is so very important. Once you understand how words are defined and used in context, you must decide what the author means by using those words in that way. You can easily see the magnitude of this when you realize that in the digital SAT, about 66% of the reading questions are dedicated to the application step.

Here are the main components of the application step.

Structure and Purpose

In these questions, you must identify the main purpose of the text. Doesn't that make sense? Of course, figuring out why—for what purpose—the author wrote the text will help you better understand what is being said. Sometimes you will be asked to select the function or purpose of an underlined sentence or word(s) within the text, or the question might ask you to select the overall structure of the text. In other words, you need to be able to spot what organizational tools or approaches the writer used to convey ideas.

Cross-Text Connections

Think of all the works that have been written in the last 1,500-plus years in just the various forms of English alone. Could there be very many subjects that have escaped the written word? Consequently, you can expect to find multiple writers who view any given subject from every possible point of view. You name it; you'll find it. Conflict and agreement. Shades of difference and outright hostility. Fence straddling and pushing-the-opponent-into-the-deep-end-of-the-pool-type approaches. The digital SAT Reading portion will include fewer questions of this type on the test. Remember that each question will include two passages, so Cross-Text Connections will still be a significant part of the test.

Cross-Text Connections require you to compare the views, arguments, points of agreement, opinions, and so forth of two different writers, usually on the same topic. This type of question tests your skills on several levels as you evaluate what a given author says and determine how that relates to the writing of the other author. In the twenty-first century, having these skills is essential. Technology has allowed writers to post online opinions, how-to articles, advice, and so forth in forms ranging from blogs to e-books about every subject under the sun. Yet, for the most part, very little of what is posted is fact-checked. You need to develop the ability to spot errors in logic and to identify sound reasoning, to understand conflicting viewpoints, and to compare shades of agreement as well as differences.

The digital SAT Reading test writers are spot-on and include this question type in the test to motivate you to hone your Cross-Text Connection skills.

Central Ideas and Details

You may be comfortable with the Central Ideas and Details portion of the test because it consists of more traditional types of questions. Of course, you need to recognize the main idea of the text as well as the details that surround that main idea. What point is the writer making? Do be careful, however, not to confuse Central Ideas and Details questions with Structure and Purpose questions. For example, I am writing this paragraph to help you do better on the digital SAT Reading test (my purpose). My structure includes using a rhetorical question, some cautionary advice, and an example to communicate my purpose. The main idea of this paragraph is that Structure and Purpose questions can be easily confused with Central Ideas and Details questions.

Here's the point: When a question asks you, "Which choice best states the main idea of the text?" be sure your answer choice is the main idea and not the writer's purpose.

Quantitative Evidence and Textual Evidence

Quantitative Evidence and Textual Evidence both center on their common word: evidence. In both types of questions, you will be looking to see what

the author of the given text is claiming or what conclusion the author has drawn. Then you will use the available evidence to see if the claim or conclusion has any merit. The questions will ask you to select which answer choice supports, weakens, or illustrates the author's claim. The biggest difference between the two question types is where you will look to find the evidence.

- In the case of Quantitative Evidence, you will be looking at images such as maps, graphs, and charts to find the evidence. So be sure to look at the fine details of whatever graphic accompanies the text in order to recognize the correct answer.
- In Textual Evidence questions, the evidence (to a certain degree) will be found among the answer choices. For example, a researcher claims that yellow jelly beans taste better than red jelly beans based on his observations of children eating only the yellow jelly beans at a party. If the question asks you to find the answer choice that weakens the researcher's claim, you will want to look for that one answer choice that provides the best evidence that yellow jelly beans do not really taste better than red jelly beans. This is an example of a possible correct answer choice: "An independent study of the effects of eating jelly beans on the taste receptor cells found that red jelly beans stimulated more positive gustatory responses than any other color."

Inferences

Inference is a type of logic in which you make an educated guess (using your reasoning powers) based on clues in the text and information based on your own experiences (forms of evidence) in order to determine what the writer is suggesting or implying. Once you have made inferences, you can use them to draw conclusions. Historically, making inferences was called "reading between the lines."

Inference questions are often based on lengthy passages resulting in the reader needing to pull clues from several different places in the selection. On the digital SAT Reading test, however, you will be given just a few sentences from which to gather the clues. Don't assume that this will make