



8 Essential SAT Test Tips *plus tips for each section*

- **Don't rush.** Do not miss easy points for misreading the question, failing to complete the math equation or misbubbling. Students typically rush in the beginning of the test and lose precious easy points on the first pages, especially in Writing and Math. Remember, all points are good points, so rack them up in the easy questions first and don't leave any behind!
- **Move on past mistakes.** Think of an Olympic figure skater: You know how, if the skater falls down early in the routine, she is more likely to fall again later, as her focus and confidence has been broken? You don't have to let that happen to you! If you mess up on timing or are unsure in any section, just move on; don't let it throw you for the rest of the test. You'll practice this in timed practice tests and gain the skills to let go and move forward with renewed concentration.
- **Don't squander time on hard stuff.** Time is better spent on material that is easier since you are more likely to get the questions correct and since all questions – whether super-easy or rock-hard – are worth the same. Think of an Easter egg hunt: All eggs are just as good as any other, so finding one out on the grass is better than digging in the bushes to find one. Collect everyone one of those easy Easter eggs that you can first!
- **Pace yourself.** You must train to do this well. Time yourself on all your practice tests and timed drills with a watch – not your cellphone. If you have an analog watch, practice setting the hands to 12 to start the section. For Reading, with 5 passages to do in 65 minutes, you should pace yourself for about 12 minutes / passage. When it's time to move on from a passage, you have to bubble in whatever remains and move on in order to have time to effectively tackle easier questions in the next passage.
- **Take full practice tests.** Train for the real test by taking full timed practice tests in test-like conditions at home, school or a test prep center. If you take the test with a test prep company, confirm beforehand whether you will get a copy of the test booklet and your detailed results afterwards, and if so, WHEN. Don't bother with them if they won't answer or say it will take more than a week. Go over your practice test results as soon as possible after taking the test so you remember what you were thinking as you answered tougher questions. Rethink those you got wrong and try them again before checking the correct answer.
- **Be well-rested for your exam.** Be sure to get a good night's sleep every night in the few days before your exam. On test day, eat breakfast, pack an energizing snack, dress in layers. Your physical state is the single most important performance factor on test day.
- **Take the real test multiple times.** Don't expect to get your best score by taking the SAT once. Take it preferably twice in 11th grade – October or March plus May – and once more in August or the fall of senior year. In October and May, order Question and Answer Service (\$18) from the College Board to get a copy of the test booklet and your annotated test results to study your mistakes for next time.

• **Do the Essay.** The SAT essay is optional but all students should do it in case they need it for any one school to which they end up applying. Some colleges may use the essay score for English class placement, or to compare the writing quality to that of your application essay. There is no way to take the SAT essay alone, so you don't want to end up having to retake the entire test just to get an essay score. As always in your application, you want to demonstrate that you go above and beyond the basic requirements, always seeking to excel.

MATH TIPS

- Know all the math facts and formulas given at the beginning of the math section by heart. The fact that those are given to you implies that you will need to use them. If you have them memorized, you will be ready to use them which will save time – and help you hit upon the best way to solve problems faster.
- For Roman numeral questions with "MUST be true", plug in easy values to DISPROVE the wrong answers and use P.O.E. (Process of Elimination) to get to the right one. Don't forget to check if true with 0, 1, a negative number and/or a fraction, as allowed for the question.
- Although the math questions generally progress from easiest to hardest, your personal order of difficulty may vary. Don't get stuck on a hard question; move on and jump to those easiest for you to solve first.

READING TIPS

- If you are stuck on any one question, first thing to do is leave it for the end of the PASSAGE's questions. Magic formula: As you do the easier questions, the hard ones become easier!
- Read, practice and apply my [Really Radical Reading Techniques for the SAT](#). You must practice these in order to use them well.
- Do the [Triggers Worksheet](#) and [Rephrasing the Questions Worksheet](#) to hone skills.
- If you can tell from the beginning of the passage (or at any early point in your work on it) that it is going to be hard, SKIP it and go on to the next one first. Just be very careful not to misbubble before you go back to the hard one.
- If you really, really don't understand at all: leave it for last and read all questions and all answers before starting. Sometimes, repeated themes in different questions and their answer choices can tip you off to a theme or tone you misread.

WRITING TIPS

- Pump up your game for the WRITING section: don't leave any points on the table! This is the place to pick up easy points that you might need to bring up Reading score deficiencies. Bone up on grammar and read for context, not just the words around those underlined.
- In complex and/or long sentences, look for places where you might have an unspoken "that" which will identify the following noun or pronoun as the subject of a verb that follows, not precedes, it. (See College Board Test 4 #13).

READING AND WRITING SKILL-BUILDING

- Build your vocabulary and rhetorical skills consistently, spending at least 10 minutes DAILY from the end of sophomore year, at least. Download the brilliant, free vocab app, [Visual Vocab](#), to your phone and master at 2-5 new words daily. Mastering words means learning them – and retaining them! Start your own [Quizlet.com](#) folder for new words that need more reinforcement. Add to it and review DAILY.

- Read 10 minutes daily in challenging periodicals, preferably online, so you can read on the go, look up new words and skip to different sections. Recommended: *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *WIRED*, *Vanity Fair*, *GQ*, *Esquire*, *New York Magazine*, *Scientific American*, *The Financial Times*. Be sure to read the headlines daily so you are in the know, plus some opinion pieces for rhetorical skill-sharpening. Movie reviews in *The New Yorker* or *The New York Times* are clever and inspiring!