

Chapter 3

Read This! Keys to Doing Your Best on the SAT

If you're like most test-takers, you see the SAT as an important exam, one that can have a big impact on your future. It's only natural, then, that you want to prepare for it as well as you can. Presumably that's why you're reading this book right now. You may be thinking that getting ready for the SAT is some kind of mysterious process that has little or nothing to do with what you've been learning in school. Maybe you've heard that the SAT is an aptitude test — a test of how well you can learn, not what you already know. Or maybe someone told you that the SAT is like an IQ test.

It's true that the “A” in “SAT” used to stand for “aptitude,” but for many years now, the SAT has been what's called an achievement test — a test of how well you've mastered important knowledge and skills. The SAT is, in short, a test about what you've learned in school. It's a test you can — and should — prepare for. That still leaves the question of how best to prepare.

This chapter offers some ideas about that. The information is divided into three main chunks:

- ▶ Helping you develop the knowledge and skills measured on the test
- ▶ Identifying ways that you can familiarize yourself with the test itself
- ▶ Discussing some things to do (and not do) on test day

All three areas are important. Even if you have a strong grasp of the content included on the test, you still can benefit from becoming familiar with the test format and picking up some test day strategies.



REMEMBER

The SAT is an achievement test rather than an aptitude test. You can improve your score on this test by practicing for it!

This chapter covers the following topics:

Building Important Knowledge and Skills Measured on the SAT

- ▶ The big key: working hard in school
- ▶ Reading and vocabulary
- ▶ Writing and language
- ▶ Creating a personalized study plan through Khan Academy

Getting Familiar with the SAT

- ▶ Practicing: it can make a difference
- ▶ Understanding the test directions
- ▶ Getting to know the test question formats
- ▶ Taking the PSAT/NMSQT® or PSAT™ 10
- ▶ Using sample SAT questions and tests
- ▶ Exploring other resources
 - Online Score Report
 - The College Board on social media

Test Day and Beyond

- ▶ Counting down to the test
- ▶ Ready yourself the day before the test
- ▶ What to pack
- ▶ What NOT to pack
- ▶ Avoiding problems on test day
- ▶ Using good test-taking strategies
- ▶ Dealing with nerves and distractions
- ▶ Taking the test again?

Building Important Knowledge and Skills Measured on the SAT

THE BIG KEY: WORKING HARD IN SCHOOL

The SAT has had a reputation for testing students on obscure bits of knowledge, the kinds of things you'd find on the SAT and nowhere else. This has fed into a perception that the way to do well is to learn things specifically for the SAT. One of the most important goals in the redesign of the SAT has been to change that perception by making what's on the test more clearly reflect what's being taught in the best high school classrooms in the country and what's needed to be ready for and to succeed in college and workforce training programs.

This means that, more than ever before, the best way to prepare for the SAT is as simple and as difficult as working hard in high school: taking challenging courses, diligently doing your homework, carefully preparing for tests and quizzes, asking and answering lots of questions . . . in short, learning as much as you can. In a very real sense, preparing for the SAT is something you do every day in school as part of your regular course work. Because what's on the redesigned SAT is a good reflection of rigorous curricula, the hard work you put into your studies is likely to yield strong results on the test.



REMEMBER

The best way to prepare for the SAT is to work hard in school. The SAT has been designed to reflect what you're being taught in school, as well as the skills and knowledge you need to succeed in college and workforce training programs.

READING AND VOCABULARY

You've been reading for many years, of course, but being able to read well enough to be ready to succeed in college and career (and, not coincidentally, to do well on the SAT) requires both a range of skills and the ability to apply them to challenging texts in a wide range of subjects.

In terms of skills, you'll need to be able to determine both what's stated and what's implied in a text. Authors often make information and ideas explicit by stating them directly. Some questions on the SAT will ask you to locate a piece of information or an idea presented in such a way. Often, though, authors are more subtle, requiring readers to make reasonable inferences or to draw logical conclusions on their own to reach a deeper level of meaning or just to follow the author's train of thought. Some SAT questions will ask you to work out the implications of a text by using what's made clear by an author to figure out suggested meanings. You'll also work with stated and implied information and ideas when the SAT presents you with a pair of related passages and asks you to make connections between them.

Reading skills are obviously important, but they're not enough by themselves. It's also critical to be able to apply those skills to the kinds of readings you're likely to see in college or workforce training programs (and in many challenging high school classes such as AP courses). The more complex texts you'll see in high school and postsecondary courses will often contain uncommon vocabulary, use sophisticated sentence structures, present large amounts of information and ideas quickly, discuss abstract ideas (such as justice or duty),

PRACTICE AT **khanacademy.org/sat**

Throughout this book you'll see notes like this one that give you specific ideas on how to improve your SAT score.

To learn more about College Board's partnership with Khan Academy and what it means for your success on the SAT, go to khanacademy.org/sat

PRACTICE AT **khanacademy.org/sat**

SAT passages are drawn from high-quality, previously published sources in the subject areas of U.S. and world literature, history/social studies, and science. Practice reading and analyzing essays or articles from each of these areas to prepare yourself for the SAT.

and identify subtle or complex relationships among concepts. Because these types of readings are going to be required in your earliest classes post-high school, you'll also see complex texts included in each SAT. Not all passages on the SAT are that difficult, but you should be ready to use your reading skills to draw out meaning from them when they appear.

Although the redesigned SAT doesn't have a vocabulary section, the test does assess your knowledge of and skill with words and phrases in numerous ways. On the Reading Test, you'll be asked to figure out the precise meaning of words and phrases as they are used in particular passages. Generally, these words and phrases will have more than one dictionary-type meaning, and you'll have to use context clues (and possibly other word knowledge, such as an understanding of common prefixes and suffixes) to determine exactly what the tested word or phrase means in a given passage. Both the Writing and Language Test and the optional Essay assess whether you're able to use words and phrases appropriately and precisely. On the Writing and Language Test, for example, you might be asked to choose from among four words or phrases the one that expresses an idea most clearly or that best accomplishes a given goal, such as evoking a particular mood or tone.

PRACTICE TIP

Read one essay or article each week in an online or print publication that's new to you. Ask your teachers, parents, or school or public librarian for ideas. If you can print the essay or make a copy, then you'll be able to mark it up. Read it once for the overall sense of the piece. The second time, read it more slowly or in chunks, and examine the language and the structure. Why did the author present the evidence in the way he or she did? What viewpoint was taken, and why do you think the author chose that one instead of another one?

Read the chapters later in the book on reading (8 to 12), and then review this practice tip again to imagine the ways that you can improve your reading skills.

WRITING AND LANGUAGE

Writing is a central component of your post-high school future. As with reading, effective writing is about more than just developing skills, although that's clearly essential. You must also learn to use writing to accomplish various tasks and purposes for different audiences; to write under varied conditions, including timed writing; and to take your writing through multiple phases.

The SAT divides the skills assessed on the Writing and Language Test into two broad categories: Expression of Ideas and Standard English Conventions. Although there are other ways to divide writing and language skills, this approach draws attention to the fact that skilled writing involves both conveying information and ideas in an effective way and observing the conventions of standard written English to help ensure that the messages you're trying to send are received and understood as you intended. On the SAT, Expression of Ideas questions focus on topic development

(matters such as support and focus), organization (matters such as introductions, conclusions, transitions, and logical sequence), and effective language use (matters such as precision, style, and tone). These questions focus on the content of writing, and when answering them, you must consider how a piece of writing could be improved in order to weed out extraneous material, create a smooth progression of ideas, and eliminate wordiness and redundancy, to name a few examples. Other questions deal with sentence structure, usage, and punctuation — elements of the conventions of standard written English. When answering these Standard English Conventions questions, typically you must recognize and correct errors (or figure out that no error has been made), drawing on your knowledge of language practices.

Your writing will also be evaluated should you choose to take the optional Essay Test. The Essay, in part, will be scored according to how well you've expressed and fleshed out your ideas and to what extent, if any, mistakes in applying standard written English conventions impair the quality of your expression.

Good writers are also able to tailor what they produce to particular tasks, purposes, and audiences. The Essay is the clearest example on the SAT of the importance of these considerations. To score well on this part of the exam, you not only have to read and write skillfully, but also create a response that's appropriate to the task of analyzing a source text for the purpose of explaining to a reader how an author tries to build an argument to persuade an audience. If you fail to appreciate the nature of the analytical task — by merely summarizing the source text, for instance, or by arguing for the rightness or wrongness of the author's position — your response won't receive a high score on the Essay's Analysis dimension.

Strong writers are also able to take the texts that they're working on through a flexible, sometimes recursive process that generally includes planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (or at least sharing with a broader audience). While the SAT doesn't simulate all aspects of this process, you'll be expected to revise and edit text produced by others on the Writing and Language Test and to plan and draft text if you choose to take the Essay (although your planning won't be scored).

PERSONALIZED PRACTICE THROUGH KHAN ACADEMY

While a lot has changed about the SAT itself during its most recent redesign, just as important have been the College Board's efforts to bring world-class test practice to students everywhere — for free. Through the College Board's partnership with Khan Academy, you and your fellow test-takers have access not only to a wide range of practice materials, but also to Khan Academy's personalized study planning aimed at helping you acquire the knowledge and skills you need to do well on the test and, more importantly, in college and career.

Part of the reason the College Board decided on this partnership is the commitment of the founder of Khan Academy to sharing knowledge with the world. Before Salman Khan launched his nonprofit in 2008, he worked as a



REMEMBER

The redesigned SAT Essay is optional for students. Some school districts and colleges, however, will require it. The Essay has been designed to mirror some of the kinds of work often required in college and career.

hedge fund analyst in Boston. At home, he made YouTube videos and online practice problems for his cousins in New Orleans to help them understand math. The videos gained a wide audience, Sal left the hedge fund to work on Khan Academy full-time, and now the website offers a wide variety of resources on many subjects for learners of all ages. From its initial focus on math, Khan Academy has branched out to include science, history, art, and more. In addition, Khan Academy has created brand-new resources in both math and reading & writing specifically to support practice for the redesigned SAT. Everything on the site, at all levels of learning, is free.

PRACTICE AT



khanacademy.org/sat

By using the personalized practice on the Khan Academy website, you'll be able to focus on the skills likely to have the biggest impact on your performance, building a solid foundation for the SAT and beyond.

The partnership between the College Board and Khan Academy means you have more choices than ever before in terms of how you refresh or increase your knowledge and skills in various areas. On the Khan Academy website (khanacademy.org/sat), you'll find interactive practice materials that provide instant feedback and personalized recommendations. Start by importing your actual PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT 10, or SAT results into the Khan Academy system, and then learn exactly what you need to work on next. Maybe it's linear equations word problems or subject-verb agreement. The system will make personalized recommendations as you answer problems. As you grow in knowledge and confidence, you'll be able to take full-length practice tests and see your progress.

Getting Familiar with the SAT

PRACTICING: IT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

As we hope we've made clear in the preceding sections, the single best way to prepare for the SAT is to evaluate and, where needed, improve your grasp of the important knowledge and skills included on the test. Doing so will mean more to you in the long run than any sort of test-taking strategy we or someone else could give you.

That said, there's still something to be gained from understanding how the SAT itself works and how you'll be tested. Reducing the mystery of the test is an important aim of this book and of the College Board more generally. We want the test to be about what you know and can do, not about your test-taking skills per se. By coming into test day with a solid understanding of what's on the exam, you'll be more comfortable with the format, better able to focus on the particular questions, and more certain that you'll do your absolute best in answering them.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEST DIRECTIONS

It's worth spending some time acquainting yourself with the directions for each portion of the SAT — and to do so before test day. By learning in advance what the directions say, you can minimize the amount of time you spend reading them on test day. Moreover, the directions give you important information about how to answer the questions, when a calculator is permitted or not permitted, and so on — all of which are important to informing your preparation.

PRACTICE AT



khanacademy.org/sat

Know exactly what to expect on test day. By knowing how long the test is, when the breaks are scheduled, what formats the question come in, what the test directions are, and how the test is scored, you won't have any surprises and will be able to focus on performing your best.

Reading Test

65 MINUTES, 52 QUESTIONS

Turn to Section 1 of your answer sheet to answer the questions in this section.

DIRECTIONS

Each passage or pair of passages below is followed by a number of questions. After reading each passage or pair, choose the best answer to each question based on what is stated or implied in the passage or passages and in any accompanying graphics (such as a table or graph).

Writing and Language Test

35 MINUTES, 44 QUESTIONS

Turn to Section 2 of your answer sheet to answer the questions in this section.

DIRECTIONS

Each passage below is accompanied by a number of questions. For some questions, you will consider how the passage might be revised to improve the expression of ideas. For other questions, you will consider how the passage might be edited to correct errors in sentence structure, usage, or punctuation. A passage or a question may be accompanied by one or more graphics (such as a table or graph) that you will consider as you make revising and editing decisions.

Some questions will direct you to an underlined portion of a passage. Other questions will direct you to a location in a passage or ask you to think about the passage as a whole.

After reading each passage, choose the answer to each question that most effectively improves the quality of writing in the passage or that makes the passage conform to the conventions of standard written English. Many questions include a “NO CHANGE” option. Choose that option if you think the best choice is to leave the relevant portion of the passage as it is.

Math Test – No Calculator

25 MINUTES, 20 QUESTIONS

Turn to Section 3 of your answer sheet to answer the questions in this section.

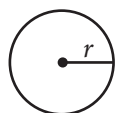
DIRECTIONS

For questions 1-15, solve each problem, choose the best answer from the choices provided, and fill in the corresponding circle on your answer sheet. For questions 16-20, solve the problem and enter your answer in the grid on the answer sheet. Please refer to the directions before question 16 on how to enter your answers in the grid. You may use any available space in your test booklet for scratch work.

NOTES

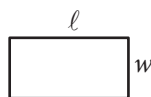
- The use of a calculator **is not permitted**.
- All variables and expressions used represent real numbers unless otherwise indicated.
- Figures provided in this test are drawn to scale unless otherwise indicated.
- All figures lie in a plane unless otherwise indicated.
- Unless otherwise indicated, the domain of a given function f is the set of all real numbers x for which $f(x)$ is a real number.

REFERENCE

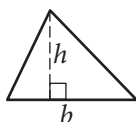


$$A = \pi r^2$$

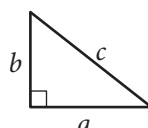
$$C = 2\pi r$$



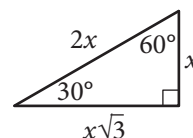
$$A = \ell w$$



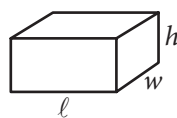
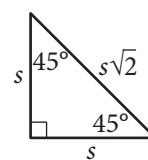
$$A = \frac{1}{2}bh$$



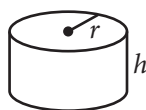
$$c^2 = a^2 + b^2$$



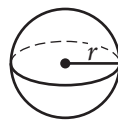
Special Right Triangles



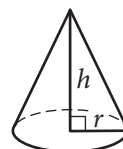
$$V = \ell wh$$



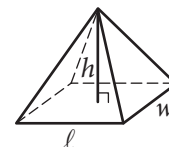
$$V = \pi r^2 h$$



$$V = \frac{4}{3}\pi r^3$$



$$V = \frac{1}{3}\pi r^2 h$$



$$V = \frac{1}{3}\ell wh$$

The number of degrees of arc in a circle is 360.

The number of radians of arc in a circle is 2π .

The sum of the measures in degrees of the angles of a triangle is 180.

Math Test – Calculator

55 MINUTES, 38 QUESTIONS

Turn to Section 4 of your answer sheet to answer the questions in this section.

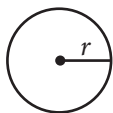
DIRECTIONS

For questions 1-30, solve each problem, choose the best answer from the choices provided, and fill in the corresponding circle on your answer sheet. For questions 31-38, solve the problem and enter your answer in the grid on the answer sheet. Please refer to the directions before question 31 on how to enter your answers in the grid. You may use any available space in your test booklet for scratch work.

NOTES

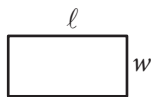
1. The use of a calculator **is permitted**.
2. All variables and expressions used represent real numbers unless otherwise indicated.
3. Figures provided in this test are drawn to scale unless otherwise indicated.
4. All figures lie in a plane unless otherwise indicated.
5. Unless otherwise indicated, the domain of a given function f is the set of all real numbers x for which $f(x)$ is a real number.

REFERENCE

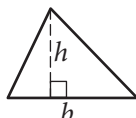


$$A = \pi r^2$$

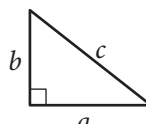
$$C = 2\pi r$$



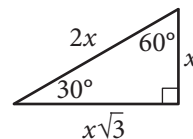
$$A = \ell w$$



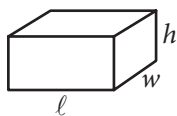
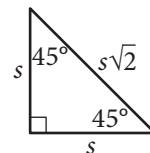
$$A = \frac{1}{2}bh$$



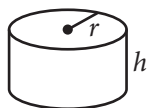
$$c^2 = a^2 + b^2$$



Special Right Triangles



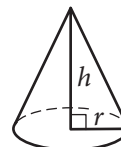
$$V = \ell wh$$



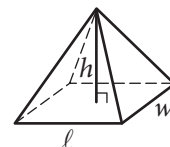
$$V = \pi r^2 h$$



$$V = \frac{4}{3}\pi r^3$$



$$V = \frac{1}{3}\pi r^2 h$$



$$V = \frac{1}{3}\ell wh$$

The number of degrees of arc in a circle is 360.

The number of radians of arc in a circle is 2π .

The sum of the measures in degrees of the angles of a triangle is 180.

Essay

DIRECTIONS

The essay gives you an opportunity to show how effectively you can read and comprehend a passage and write an essay analyzing the passage. In your essay, you should demonstrate that you have read the passage carefully, present a clear and logical analysis, and use language precisely.

Your essay must be written on the lines provided in your answer booklet; except for the Planning Page of the answer booklet, you will receive no other paper on which to write. You will have enough space if you write on every line, avoid wide margins, and keep your handwriting to a reasonable size. Remember that people who are not familiar with your handwriting will read what you write. Try to write or print so that what you are writing is legible to those readers.

You have 50 minutes to read the passage and write an essay in response to the prompt provided inside this booklet.

REMINDERS:

- Do not write your essay in this booklet. Only what you write on the lined pages of your answer booklet will be evaluated.
- An off-topic essay will not be evaluated.

As you read the passage below, consider how [the author] uses

- evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.
- reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence.
- stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed.

The passage follows the box above.

Write an essay in which you explain how [the author] builds an argument to persuade [his/her] audience that [author's claim]. In your essay, analyze how [the author] uses one or more of the features listed above (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of [his/her] argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant aspects of the passage.

Your essay should not explain whether you agree with [the author's] claims, but rather explain how the author builds an argument to persuade [his/her] audience.

GETTING TO KNOW THE TEST QUESTION FORMATS

In addition to understanding the test directions, you should also get a sense of how questions on the various sections of the test are asked. Doing so will help prevent surprises on test day and free you up to focus on the content rather than the format. For example, you'll want to become familiar with the two-column format and the underlined portions of text in the Writing and Language Test. For the Math Test, you'll definitely want to become familiar with the format of the student-produced response questions, or SPRs. For these questions, you won't have answer choices to select from. Rather, you must solve the problem and "grid" the answer you came up with on the answer sheet. Be sure to read through this book's information about the format of each test and work through the sample questions in Chapter 12 (the Reading Test), Chapter 16 (the Writing and Language Test), and Chapters 23 and 24 (the Math Test).

TAKING THE PSAT/NMSQT OR PSAT 10

Taking the PSAT/NMSQT has a number of benefits. Probably the best-known one is that the PSAT/NMSQT serves as the qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship Program (hence the abbreviation "NMSQT"). But the test also gives you an early opportunity to take an exam very similar to the SAT and under similar conditions. While the PSAT/NMSQT test is a little shorter than the multiple-choice portion of the SAT, and the material is geared to high school sophomores and juniors, the PSAT/NMSQT covers the same broad subjects as the SAT and uses questions that are in the same general formats as those found on the SAT. (There is, however, no Essay on the PSAT/NMSQT.)

Note: Your school may also offer a test called the PSAT 10 in the spring in addition to the PSAT/NMSQT in the fall. The content is identical on both tests. The only important differences are the time of the year that the test is given and the fact that the PSAT 10 isn't associated with the National Merit Scholarship Program.

USING SAMPLE SAT QUESTIONS AND TESTS

The College Board and Khan Academy are making hundreds of sample SAT questions and numerous sample SAT tests available to test-takers for practice. By using these materials, along with other forms of preparation, you can familiarize yourself with the particular question formats you'll encounter on test day and identify areas of strength and weakness in your understanding of the knowledge and skills measured on the SAT.

In addition to the samples in this book and on the Khan Academy website, practice materials can be found at the College Board's website, <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org>.

EXPLORING OTHER RESOURCES

Online Score Report

The introduction to this book described your Online Score Report. To view this report, you'll need to register for a free account if you haven't already done so. Registering gives you access to many services, including the opportunity to register for the SAT electronically. When you register for the SAT, you must upload a digital photo of yourself that will be printed on your admission ticket as a form of identification (so make sure it accurately represents how you'll look on test day).

The College Board on Social Media

The College Board uses a variety of social media to share information with students, teachers, parents, counselors, and others. To stay up-to-date on the latest SAT news and happenings, consider following one or more of our official Twitter accounts: @CollegeBoard, @OfficialSAT, and @SATQuestion. We also regularly update content on Facebook (facebook.com/thecollegeboard) and Instagram (@collegeboard). You can use these accounts and pages to ask questions about the SAT and other College Board programs and services.



Test Day and Beyond

COUNTING DOWN TO THE TEST

In the months and weeks leading up to test day, you'll probably spend a good amount of time preparing for the test: brushing up on old skills, developing new ones, going over sample questions and tests, and so on. In the days immediately preceding the test, you might want to consider taking a different approach by focusing on maintaining your physical health and readiness.

Do you exercise, do yoga, sing, or meditate? Carry on with those activities. If you don't exercise regularly and your physical condition permits, go someplace private and swing your arms, kick your legs, and breathe deeply. Jumping can be good, too. If you're alone, sing loudly! During the day, when you're sitting at a table or desk, take some deep, slow breaths. For your brain to function as well as it can, oxygen needs to flow easily and constantly.

Eat well in those preceding days, too. Think about cutting out the refined sugar, such as that found in sodas and many desserts. You won't want to radically change your breakfast habits, but you should also consider that on test day you'll be sitting at a desk and engaging in very little physical activity for the entire morning. Given that, it's probably not a good idea to overload on carbs (say, pancakes) or sugar (which makes up a large proportion of many packaged cold cereals). Consider protein, whether from cheese, fish, soy products, yogurt, nuts and nut butters, or eggs. Whole grains — oatmeal,

PRACTICE AT

khanacademy.org/sat

Resist the temptation to cram hours and hours of test preparation into those last few days before the SAT.

Cramming has been shown to be an ineffective study technique and may lead to fatigue and increased anxiety.

brown rice, hot cereal, or hearty bread — can be another good choice. Some people eat dinner leftovers for breakfast. Think about experimenting, trying out some different types of breakfasts several days before the test to see which ones help you stay focused and which ones leave you sluggish. Know that you may feel nervous on test day, too, which can affect your appetite.

Finally, get some sleep. In a TED talk, neuroscientist Jeff Iliff explains that our brains use one-quarter of our energy and that remarkable “cleaning” goes on while we slumber. Most adults and teens know how hard it is to turn off electronics at night. For many, phones, tablets, and computers have become companions, keeping us up-to-date on the latest, well, everything. Using them at night, though, can interfere with sleep. You’ll find it an interesting experiment to set a time to turn them off. (Warn your friends of the shutdown; with luck, they’ll be willing to make a pact and join you.)

READYING YOURSELF THE DAY BEFORE THE TEST

- ▶ **Plan how you will get to the test site.** If it’s in a large school or office building, be sure to find out which door will be open. If you haven’t been in the building before, find out how to get to the room.
- ▶ **Set two alarms.** Even though alarms rarely fail, it can happen. You’ll sleep more easily knowing you have a backup.
- ▶ **Review the list of things you need to take with you, and pack them all in a bag.**
- ▶ **Review the test directions once more.**

WHAT TO PACK

- ▶ **Photo admission ticket** (remember that the photo must resemble you on the day of the exam and comply with the rules posted on www.collegeboard.org/sat)
- ▶ **Valid photo ID** (driver’s license [or other state-issued photo ID], school identification card, valid passport, or student ID form prepared by your school with a photo and the school seal overlapping the photo)
- ▶ **Several number 2 pencils** with soft erasers (mechanical pencils are not permitted)
- ▶ **Approved calculator** with fresh batteries, if appropriate (see <http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/calculator-policy> for more calculator guidance)
- ▶ **Watch** (one that only tells time; nothing that can be used to record, transmit, receive, or play back audio, photographic, text, or video content)
- ▶ **Snack** (something quiet, such as raisins or cashews, and hard candies or gum)
- ▶ **Water** (in a clear bottle, label removed, cap off)

PRACTICE AT

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It’s important to get plenty of sleep during the nights leading up to your SAT. But don’t drastically alter your sleep schedule by, for instance, going to sleep much earlier than usual. Stick with a sleep schedule that works for you and allows you to do your best.

WHAT NOT TO PACK

- ▶ Smartphone or other cell phone
- ▶ Camera
- ▶ Recording device of any type
- ▶ Digital watch that has any capabilities beyond telling time
- ▶ Timer

If you're seen using any of the items above, they will be held by a test administrator, you will be asked to leave, or you may be denied admission. Obviously, the better choice is to leave them at home.

AVOIDING PROBLEMS ON TEST DAY

You will NOT be allowed to take the test if:

- ▶ The photo on the admission ticket doesn't look like you or otherwise doesn't comply with the rules posted on www.collegeboard.org/sat (for example, it's too light or too dark, it includes another person, your face is covered)
- ▶ You're missing either the admission ticket or a valid photo ID
- ▶ You're late

Please note:

- ▶ Test center changes are not permitted on test day. You can take the test only at the center where you're registered.
- ▶ Test-type changes are not guaranteed on test day. (You can only switch from SAT to SAT with Essay at the center if space and materials allow.)
- ▶ Walk-in (or standby) testing is not permitted.

Using Good Test-Taking Strategies

Let's assume you've arrived at the test center in good time, settled in, reminded yourself that you've prepared well for the SAT, and taken a few deep breaths. Thinking back on all of the time you spent building your knowledge and skills and familiarizing yourself with the test should leave you with feelings of satisfaction and confidence. You're ready! Now you need to make the best use of your time and energy on the test. Below are a few test-taking strategies you might consider. Try these out as you practice and see what works best for you.

- ▶ Pace yourself by keeping track of the clock — either on the wall or on a watch that's on your desk. Each section of the test has its own amount of time, so, when the test administrator says you can turn to each section,

REMEMBER

You won't be permitted to take the test if you arrive late. Thus, make sure you know exactly how to get to the test site, and plan to arrive early to account for unexpected transportation delays.

glance through a few pages to get a sense of how long you'll have for each chunk of questions. Check yourself one-quarter, one-half, and three-quarters of the way through the allotted time to make sure you're still on pace.

- ▶ While you need to keep your answer sheet free of stray marks, you're welcome to mark up the test booklet as much as you want. Annotating your test booklet can, if done judiciously, help you recall important facts or work through challenging problems.
- ▶ Consider skimming the questions in the Reading and the Writing and Language Tests prior to reading each of the passages in order to get a sense of what issues will be important.
- ▶ After reading each question, imagine the answer you would come up with. Then read the possible answers to find the one closest to your own.
- ▶ Always read all of the answer choices. You don't want a too-hasty decision to cause you to select the wrong answer to a question.
- ▶ If you read a question that stumps you, don't dwell on it. Return to the unanswered ones at the end. Make big marks next to questions you decide to skip so you can return to them later.
- ▶ Remember that there's no penalty for guessing (as there used to be on the SAT), so you should answer all questions before time is up. When you're not sure of an answer, make an educated guess. Draw lines through each of the answer choices you eliminate. Remember, too, that there are only four answer choices (instead of the old five), so cutting down the possibilities by even one substantially increases your odds of choosing correctly.
- ▶ **Important:** Be sure to check often to make sure that the number of the question you're about to answer matches the number in the test booklet. Erase and adjust if needed.
- ▶ You very well may finish some sections before time runs out. Review, but do so carefully. You don't want to second-guess yourself and change answers just to change them.

Dealing with Nerves and Distractions

It's not uncommon to feel nervous about the test. Try to consider that adrenaline rush as an aid. It's chemical energy, after all; your body is trying to help. If the energy feels like too much help, shake your arms and hands hard, as if you were shaking off water. While researchers may not understand why this helps, anecdotes from various people, including professional musicians, suggest it has a calming effect.

Also try to keep at the forefront of your mind the idea that you're prepared for this test. Combine that thought with the fact that while this test is

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Formulating an answer, or at least an approximation of an answer, to a question before reading the answer choices will help you to select the correct answer more accurately and efficiently.



REMEMBER

Unlike on the previous SAT, there's no penalty for guessing on the redesigned SAT. Therefore, never leave a question blank. Eliminate as many answer choices as you can, and make an educated guess from among the remaining choices.

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It's common and perfectly normal to feel nervous or anxious on test day. Research has shown that, when facing an important event, students who view nervousness as a normal and even positive response by the body perform better than students who view nervousness as detrimental.

important, it's only one of several factors that colleges consider when they review your application.

Distractions during the test are, well, distracting. You want to put them out of your mind as much as possible. If you're momentarily struggling, a nearby student turning a page, for example, can break your concentration and make you feel like you're falling behind (even if you're not). Remember: You have no idea how well other people are doing on the test, and, anyway, being the fastest doesn't necessarily mean being the most successful. Stay focused on your own effort, and push petty thoughts and doubts away as quickly as they enter your mind. (Also, it should go without saying — but we'll say it anyway — that you should do everything in your power not to be a distraction to others.)

Taking the Test Again?

One more way to quiet your nerves is to remember that you can take the test again. More than half of the students who take the SAT take it twice — once in the spring of their junior year and once in the fall of their senior year. Most students who do so have higher scores on the later test. If you choose this path, make sure you spend time between tests to brush up on areas that you struggled with the first time.

CHAPTER 3 RECAP

Getting ready for the SAT involves a lot of time and hard work, but it's also a chance to excel and to stand out to colleges and scholarship search programs. You can make best use of your opportunity by both (1) learning the essential knowledge and skills covered on the test and (2) getting comfortable with the test itself. In sum:

- ▶ The best practice for the SAT occurs every day as you study hard and acquire important reading, writing, language, and math knowledge and skills. Make use of the information in this book, take stock of how well you do on sample tests and questions, figure out your academic strengths, and work on addressing your weaknesses. Take advantage of the free practice resources on Khan Academy to help you not only learn about the test itself, but also expand your knowledge and skills.
- ▶ Get familiar with the SAT itself. Understanding the test directions in advance and being comfortable with the format of the various test questions can both save you time and give you added confidence on test day. Taking the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10, using sample questions and tests available from the College Board and Khan Academy, and exploring other resources (such as sat.org/practice and the College Board's social media posts) can also help.
- ▶ As the time for test day approaches, make sure you're staying as healthy as possible and getting plenty of rest.
- ▶ Avoid problems on test day by knowing how to get to your test site as well as knowing what to bring and what not to bring with you.
- ▶ Practice a range of test-taking strategies, such as the ones introduced earlier in this chapter, to find out what works and what doesn't work for you.
- ▶ Put away those doubts and worries on test day. You're ready! You'll be great! (And if you're still not satisfied with your score, you can consider taking the test again.)