

Chapter 1

Introduction

Welcome to the *Official SAT® Study Guide*! Browse through the guide to gain a sense of the information in it, and begin marking sections that get your attention. This guide is designed for you. Return to it again and again in the coming weeks and months. Reading it is an excellent way to become familiar with the SAT — its content, structure, timing, question types, and more. The information, advice, and sample questions will help you prepare to take the test with confidence.

New and important undertakings put most of us on edge — at least a little — and raise our adrenaline. This happens whether it’s an audition or the first day in a new school. But if we feel prepared for the adventure, we can use that adrenaline rush for a focused energy boost.

Tackling new things makes most of us nervous, but when we can learn a great deal about a new situation in advance, we feel much more able to take a deep breath and meet the challenge. Learning about the SAT through this guide and trying out some timed sample tests will contribute to being well prepared when your test date arrives.

How Does the SAT® Measure Academic Achievement?

Questions on the SAT will not ask you to recall details of *Hamlet* or to simply find the answer to 11×11 or to name the capital of Nevada or the location of the Platte River. If you recall those facts, good for you, but the SAT will ask for something different. Instead of asking you to show what you’ve memorized, the questions invite you to exercise your thinking skills.

All of the learning you’ve done — from childhood to now — contributes to how you think, how your mind manages information. Even if you don’t recall the details of a history or science lesson, the process of learning information and blending it with previously learned information is key to becoming a skilled thinker. A chef knows a half-teaspoon of salt just by looking. You’re reading this page easily because you’ve had a lot of practice reading.



REMEMBER

The SAT isn’t designed to assess how well you’ve memorized a large set of facts. Rather, the SAT assesses your ability to apply the knowledge and skills you’ll need in college and career.

REMEMBER

Working hard in school, challenging yourself, and being an active class participant are all great ways to prepare for the SAT.

You also evaluate, analyze, and make assumptions all the time. We humans love to figure out puzzles, and finding our way through unfamiliar places or comprehending a text requires discovering a solution, just as playing Candy Crush or Sudoku does. It should be no surprise to discover that the best preparation for success on the SAT aligns with the learning you've done in your classes and perhaps in your extracurricular interests, too. If you've challenged yourself again and again with complex problems — whether in literature, programming, physics, or other domains — you've exercised your thinking skills, just as athletes exercise their muscles by running.

Who's Responsible for the SAT?

The SAT is developed by the College Board, a not-for-profit organization that was founded more than a century ago to expand access to higher education.

- ▶ Membership: Over 6,000 schools, colleges, and universities
- ▶ SAT: Administered 3.3 million times annually

The mission of the College Board is to connect students with the opportunities in higher education that they've earned through their own hard work. Each year, College Board programs and initiatives serve more than 7 million students and their parents, 24,000 high schools, and 3,800 colleges by assisting with:

- ▶ College and career readiness
- ▶ College admission and placement
- ▶ College recruitment
- ▶ Financial aid
- ▶ Scholarship and recognition programs

The best-known programs offered or delivered by the College Board are the SAT, the PSAT/NMSQT®, and the Advanced Placement Program® (AP®).

How Is the SAT Developed?

The process of developing a test given to students around the world is complex and involves many people. Test developers are content experts who majored in physics, biology, statistics, math, English, history, computer science, sociology, education, psychology, and other disciplines. Their goals are to craft questions — and answer choices — that allow students to demonstrate their best thinking. The people who work on the SAT are not only content experts, but most have also been classroom teachers. A majority of the test developers took the SAT themselves when they were in high school. So in addition to all of the knowledge they've gained since taking the test, they

share the experience of preparing for, being anxious about, and then taking the SAT. It's part of the knowledge they bring to test development now.

Many other experts are involved in the development of SAT test questions. Committees of high school and college instructors review every question to ensure that each one measures important knowledge, skills, and understandings; that the questions are fair to all students; and that they're written in a way that models what students are learning in the best high school classrooms.

Good standardized test development links scores and test questions to actual outcomes. In other words, because the SAT is developed according to rigorous specifications and assesses the content that matters most for college and career readiness and success, test results provide meaningful information about a student's readiness for and likelihood of succeeding in college. And, of course, that is the information that colleges seek. After all, they want to admit students who will have successful college experiences and successful careers. Everyone knows that the SAT gives colleges one indicator of college readiness and success; other factors that colleges typically consider include grade point average (GPA), class standing, extracurricular activities, and traits that are hard to measure, such as grit and perseverance. Independent research demonstrates that the single most important factor for demonstrating college readiness is high school GPA. Even more predictive than GPA, though, is GPA combined with an SAT score. That's why colleges often require SAT (or ACT) scores, since the scores help them gauge your readiness for and likelihood of succeeding at their school.

Why Has the SAT Changed?

The world needs more people who can solve problems, communicate clearly, and understand complex relationships — whether those relationships involve nations, cells, futures markets, or novels. Recent research has revealed that far too few students are fully prepared to participate in careers that require such skills.

The goal of strengthening education in the United States and around the world inspired the College Board to align the SAT with the latest research about what students need in order to succeed after high school. The changes in the SAT are intended to provide a better, more complete picture of student readiness for college-level work while focusing the test more clearly on the knowledge, skills, and understandings that research shows are essential for college and career readiness and success. In addition, by reflecting the relevant, focused, engaging, and rigorous work offered in the best high school courses taught today, the redesigned SAT creates a stronger bond between the assessment and what students are learning in their classrooms.

While research is ongoing, we believe that the redesign of the SAT meets these goals while maintaining the test's traditional value as a predictor of readiness for success in college and career.

REMEMBER

The SAT has been carefully crafted by many people, experts in their fields, to ensure that it's a fair test that assesses the knowledge and skills you'll need to succeed in college and career.

REMEMBER

Colleges care about your SAT score because it's a strong predictor of how you'll perform in college. By doing well on the SAT, you can show colleges that you're ready to succeed.

REMEMBER

The redesigned SAT is more closely aligned with the knowledge and skills that are taught in high school classes around the country.

How Is the Test Organized?

The redesigned SAT has four tests, with the Essay being optional. The three tests that everyone will take are (1) the Reading Test, (2) the Writing and Language Test, and (3) the Math Test. The breakdown is structured as follows:

Component	Time Allotted (min.)	Number of Questions/ Tasks
Reading	65	52
Writing and Language	35	44
Essay (optional)	50	1
Math	80	58
Total	180 (230 with Essay)	154 (155 with Essay)

REMEMBER

Thoroughly research schools you're interested in before deciding whether to sign up for the Essay.

The Essay, which formerly lasted 25 minutes, will now last 50 minutes; the longer period reflects the fact that the task is different from what it used to be. You'll be asked to read a passage and to write an analysis of what you've read, which will require more time. Some high schools and colleges require the Essay, and some don't. Depending on your high school and your college choice, you may already know whether or not you will take the Essay. If you have any uncertainty — for instance, if you can imagine that you might transfer from a school that doesn't require it to one that does — consider taking the SAT with Essay. Then you won't have to make arrangements to take it later.

How Is the Test Scored?

As you know, numbers often represent information in a straightforward manner, but we need context to give meaning to those numbers. When we see 32 degrees Fahrenheit, we may think “water freezes,” but if the topic is seawater, we need a different number. Similarly, SAT test results show scores (numbers) in different contexts; several of the scores describe the same parts of the test in different ways or combinations, as explained below.

SECTION SCORES AND TOTAL SCORE

The redesigned SAT includes two section scores: (1) Evidence-Based Reading and Writing, which combines the results on the Reading Test and the Writing and Language Test, and (2) Math, which is derived from the results on the Math Test's calculator and no-calculator portions. Each of the two section scores will be reported on a scale ranging from 200 to 800. The scores for the Essay will be reported separately and will not be factored into the section scores.

The total score is the best-known number attached to the SAT. Your total score will range from 400 to 1600 and will be the sum of your scores on the

REMEMBER

You'll receive two section scores — Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and Math — which are each reported on a scale ranging from 200 to 800. Together, these two scores make up your total score. Your scores on the optional Essay are reported separately.

two sections of the SAT: the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section and the Math section (discussed above).

TEST SCORES

In addition to the total score and section scores, the redesigned SAT will report three test scores that will range from 10 to 40. Those scores will reflect your achievement in the following:

1. Reading Test
2. Writing and Language Test
3. Math Test

Each test score is determined by adding up the number of questions you answered correctly on that test and then converting that to a scaled score of 10 to 40. Because different questions are asked every time the SAT is administered, a scaled score is determined so that student performance can be compared across test dates. If you take the optional Essay, you'll receive three separate Essay scores: Reading, Analysis, and Writing.

CROSS-TEST SCORES

Within each of the tests that make up the SAT, some questions will require analysis grounded in history/social studies and science contexts. Your responses illustrate your ability to apply analytical thinking — by using reading, writing, language, and math skills — to texts and problems in these subject areas. Results on these questions will contribute to two cross-test scores:

1. Analysis in History/Social Studies
2. Analysis in Science

Each cross-test score will be reported on a 10 to 40 scale.

SUBSCORES

Just as your responses to certain questions contribute to the cross-test scores described above, your responses to various questions also contribute to seven subscores, which provide even more detail about your achievement. Responses to select questions on the Reading and the Writing and Language Tests will contribute to scores in the following:

1. Command of Evidence
2. Words in Context

Responses to questions on the Writing and Language Test will also contribute to scores in the following:

1. Expression of Ideas
2. Standard English Conventions



REMEMBER

Test scores will reflect your performance on each of the three required tests on the SAT. The three different Essay scores serve a similar role.



REMEMBER

Subscores provide additional insights into your performance on specific topics and skills.

Responses to select questions on the Math Test will contribute to three subscores:

1. Heart of Algebra
2. Problem Solving and Data Analysis
3. Passport to Advanced Math

Each subscore will be reported on a 1 to 15 scale.

The SAT Score Report

You'll be able to access all of your scores online through your free College Board account. This account will be the same one you use to register for the SAT. Learn more at sat.org.

SCORE RANGE

In addition to the scores described above, the SAT Score Report will include a score range for each score. This range indicates where your scores would likely fall if you took the test several times within a short period of time (for instance, on three consecutive days). If you were to do that, you would see numbers that differ, but not by much.

PERCENTILES

Your SAT Score Report will include the percentile rank for each score and subscore. As you may know, percentile ranks are a way of comparing scores in a particular group. For the SAT, separate percentile ranks will be reported based on your state and on the total group of test-takers. Each percentile rank can range from 1 to 99 and indicates the percentage of test-takers who attained a score equal to or lower than yours. For instance, a perfect total score of 1600 would have a percentile rank of 99, meaning that 99 percent of people taking the test achieved a 1600 or lower score. A percentile rank of 50 means that half of students taking the test scored at or below your score.

ONLINE SCORE REPORT

This Web-based report gives you the meaning behind your numbers by providing a summary of how you did on each section with how many answers you got right, got wrong, or omitted. The tool offers insight into your strengths and weaknesses by showing your results grouped by content area and level of difficulty. The SAT Online Score Report provides other information as well:

- ▶ Percentiles to help you see how your results compare with those of other students like you
- ▶ A search tool for career and college majors, with suggestions based on information you provide in your profile
- ▶ If you completed the Essay, a scanned copy of your response and the question

REMEMBER

Your percentile rank indicates the percentage of test-takers who scored at or below your score.

REMEMBER

You'll be able to access your online score report through your free College Board account. This report will give you a detailed breakdown of your performance.

Being able to review your response to the Essay gives you an opportunity to reconsider how well you understood the passage, the effectiveness of your analysis, and the quality of your writing. You can reflect on whether your points were clear, how well you provided support for your points, and how effectively you structured your essay. Reading a passage and writing an essay under time pressure are not easy tasks. Reviewing your essay to assess what was effective and what could've been more effective will serve you well. Each essay written under pressure provides good practice in composing your thoughts and writing under time constraints.

Additional Services

When you register for the SAT, you'll be able to choose reports and services that will be helpful in a number of ways. Review the types and availability so that you can decide which ones you want. Depending on which date you test on, there are different options for receiving detailed feedback on the questions from your exam. Browse through the types of information that each of the following reports and services offers you.

ADDITIONAL SCORE REPORTS

Registering for the SAT allows you to send your results to up to four institutions; you can identify these institutions within nine days of taking the test. Take advantage of all four score reports, whether you send them to colleges or to scholarship sites. Sending your scores to colleges and universities early in the college application process is a great way to show your interest. Use your online account to order additional score reports.

SCORE CHOICE™

If you take the SAT more than once, you can utilize the Score Choice service. Score Choice allows you to select which score, by test date (or by test for SAT Subject Tests™), to send to your chosen colleges, in accordance with each institution's individual score use practices. Note that this service is optional. If you do not select Score Choice when registering, all of your scores will be sent to institutions receiving your results. Colleges consider your best scores when they review your application, so having them all sent will not have a negative impact. However, if you want only the top numbers to be seen, you should elect Score Choice.

Each school or program has its own deadlines and policies for how scores are used. Information is listed on the Score Choice site for each participating institution, but check with the individual school or scholarship program to make sure you're following its guidelines.

Note that you cannot select one section score from one test date and another section score from another date. (For example, you won't be able to send your Evidence-Based Reading and Writing score from one date and your Math score from a different date.) Also, if you took the SAT with Essay, you won't be able to send a score without the Essay scores as well.



REMEMBER

Within nine days of taking the test, you can decide to have your SAT results sent, free of charge, to four institutions.



REMEMBER

The Score Choice service allows you to select which score (by test date) to send to your chosen colleges. Keep in mind, however, that you can't choose to submit specific section scores or subscores from different test dates.

If you haven't selected to have any scores mailed by the customary college application deadlines, the SAT site will send you an email reminder.

STUDENT ANSWER VERIFICATION SERVICES

The SAT Program offers two answer verification services for the SAT. (These services aren't available for SAT Subject Tests.) These services are intended to help you feel comfortable that your test was scored accurately by providing information about the types of questions and their content as well as how you answered them. Depending on when and where you take the SAT, you can either order the Student Answer Service (SAS) or the Question-and-Answer Service (QAS). You can order the services when you register for the SAT or up to five months after your test date.

Both SAS and QAS tell you which questions you answered correctly, which ones you didn't answer correctly, and which ones you didn't answer. You'll see information about the type of questions and the associated content. QAS provides additional information, including the actual test questions themselves. The Essay prompt will only be released as part of the Question and Answer Service.

STUDENT SEARCH SERVICE®

All students who take the SAT, the PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT 10, or any AP Exam are eligible to opt into this service, which helps colleges and scholarship recognition organizations find you. If you sign up during registration, your name and contact information, plus your GPA, date of birth, grade level, high school, e-mail address, extracurricular activities, and intended college major, will all be put into a database that colleges and scholarship programs use when they want to locate and recruit students with particular characteristics or interests.

Please note:

- ▶ Joining the Student Search Service is voluntary.
- ▶ Colleges that participate in the program don't receive your scores as part of their membership. They may request information about students whose scores lie in a particular range, but your scores will not be provided through this service.
- ▶ Colleges that may contact you are doing so to invite you to apply. Going through the application process is the only way to be admitted to a college. Colleges use the service to locate potential students who may not have thought to apply there.
- ▶ The Student Search Service is restricted to colleges, universities, and scholarship programs that sign up. Your information will never be sold to a commercial marketing firm or retailer of merchandise or services (such as a test preparation company).

REMEMBER

Enrolling in the optional Student Search Service allows colleges and scholarship programs to contact you to invite you to apply.

INCREASING ACCESS TO THE SAT WITH FEE WAIVERS

Students who are the first in their families to consider attending college, who come from low-income families, or whose ethnicities are underrepresented in colleges may feel that college isn't for them. The College Board is committed to identifying and breaking down barriers that prevent such students from applying to and enrolling in colleges that are the best academic, social, and financial fit. Visit youcango.collegeboard.org for more information about ways to achieve your dreams.

Students who face financial barriers to taking the SAT can be granted College Board fee waivers through schools and authorized community-based organizations to cover the cost of testing. Seniors who use a fee waiver to take the SAT will automatically receive four college application fee waivers to use in applying to colleges and universities that accept the waivers. You can learn about eligibility and the other benefits offered to help you in the college application process at sat.org/fee-waivers.

REMEMBER

Visit sat.org/fee-waivers to learn more about SAT fee waivers as well as college application fee waivers.

Time to Get Started

Want to know the difference between “good” test-takers and “bad” test-takers? It's not biochemical or genetic. Successful test-takers understand that the SAT is a unique opportunity to demonstrate readiness for college and career success. They approach the SAT as an opportunity, not a hurdle, confident that with the right amount of practice they can achieve a strong outcome. In this way, taking the SAT increases the opportunities you have in your life.

Increasing opportunity is at the heart of the College Board's work with Khan Academy. Beyond sharing the detailed test plans with Khan Academy, College Board's test developers are reviewing every SAT-like item that appears within Khan Academy's program and are providing in-depth feedback on Khan Academy practice tests. This means that time spent on Khan Academy practicing for the SAT is like having a sneak peak at what you'll see on test day. College Board test developers helped train Khan Academy's content experts in how to develop test questions like those that appear on the SAT and provide ongoing guidance and support of Khan Academy's practice test content. And it's all free for you.

As you learn more about the SAT from this guide, you should also use the resources and practice available on Khan Academy at khanacademy.org/sat to refresh and improve your skills. On the Khan Academy site, you will receive personalized guidance and instruction that is focused specifically for you.

Throughout this guide you'll see a lot of references to “practice” where you may be used to seeing “test prep.” That's intentional. The redesigned SAT, PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10, and the new PSAT 8/9 focus on what matters

most for college and career readiness. The act of preparing for the SAT, therefore, is not just a one-time hurdle that must be overcome, but part of a deep engagement in improving your fluency with mathematics, literacy, and other skills that will serve you well in college, career, and life.

As you embark on this important transition in your life, we ask that you commit yourself to a growth mindset that will help you improve your performance and your results. Colleges are looking for students like you. The SAT is a major tool that they use to find you. Commit yourself to the kind of productive practice that will earn you a strong SAT score and increased options for the next step in your journey.

Congratulations on taking this important step.