

preparing for the SAT

Grade level: high school students

Format: discussion, lecture, and practice

Class time: 1½ hours

Materials

- packets
- notes
- flipchart and easel, or black/white board
- markers
- copies of the SAT practice test
- refreshments (optional)
- water (if you'll need it)
- handouts

Scoring guide for the essay (available at <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/sat-reasoning/scores/essay/guide>)

Essay practice questions with answer sheets (use the College Board SAT Preparation Booklet)

SAT general test strategies

SAT writing prompts for practice

Brainstorm charts

SAT vs. ACT

Score comparison SAT vs. ACT

Writing the 25-minute essay

What does a five-paragraph essay look like?

Characteristics of effective writing

VSAC event schedule (available from VSAC Resource Center; call 800-642-3177)

Procedure

1. Welcome the attendees and introduce yourself.
2. Begin with the following strategies for the whole test:
 - Review with students all the information on the SAT tip sheet handout, including the most effective guessing strategies.
 - Explain how the test differs from regular school tests:
 - 1) Difficult questions are worth the same number of points as easy questions.
 - 2) If you answer only two-thirds of the questions correctly, you get a good score of between 500 and 600 (whereas on school tests, two-thirds will earn only 66%).
 - 3) The SAT measures your reasoning and test-taking skills, not your knowledge.
 - Emphasize the value of practicing (use books, VT Guidance Central, Learning Express) and diagnosing the areas you need to strengthen.

Strategies for the essay

- Review the following handouts with students:
 - Writing the 25-minute essay
 - What does a five-paragraph essay look like?

- The essay is scored on the ability to take a stand and thoroughly defend it in a logical, easy-to-read way (go beyond superficialities).
- Encourage students to practice, practice, practice in order to become used to writing under pressure. Provide the brainstorm charts to help them develop their ability to organize their thoughts.

Test details

- Time: You'll be testing from approximately 8:15 am to 12:30 pm.
 - Bring: admission ticket, two #2 pencils, photo ID, calculator
 - Sections: math, critical reading, writing
 - Score: 600–2400
4. Allow time for questions if students are concerned about topics not covered above.
 5. Provide practice time using materials from the College Board SAT book.

Additional notes for presentation

Rules

- Spend the least amount of time on difficult questions.
- Spend the most amount of time on medium questions.
- Guessing is good, but whether you go with your first hunch depends on the difficulty level of the question.
- Re-read questions before selecting your final answer
- Possible outcomes if you guess:
 - 1) gain 1 point
 - 2) lose $\frac{1}{4}$ of a point
 - 3) gain/lose nothing if you don't guess

Critical reading section

- Sentence completion exercises measure your knowledge of vocabulary and your ability to understand how parts of a sentence fit together.
- There is a portion on passage-based reading.
 - 1) Passages are between 100–850 words in length.
 - 2) Questions are in the order that their answers appear in passage.
 - 3) The test involves the following skills: Drawing conclusions, understanding vocabulary in context, literal comprehension, making comparisons

Writing section

- The essay portion needs to be persuasive. It will be judged on:
 - 1) how well you express yourself clearly, coherently, and logically
 - 2) the extent to which you can support your opinion
 - 3) *Before exam day, pick your favorite books and history examples because almost any example can fit almost any essay question.*
- The multiple choice portion will test your ability to identify sentence errors, to improve sentences, and to improve paragraphs.

Math section

- This section tests your reasoning, not your math skills.
- The test involves the following skills: number and operations, algebra and functions, geometry and measurement, data analysis, statistics, and probability.



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