

Top Ten SAT Tips



Taking any test is difficult. That's a fact. The redesigned SAT has its own set of rules that you must know in order to score well. Fortunately, the test tips here will maximize your time because they follow the SAT rules.

Use Process of Elimination (POE)

Get rid of as many wrong choices as you can before answering a question. Wrong answers are often easier to find. Look for extremes such as "never," "only," and "always" in the reading test; look for opposites in the math section, such as a substitution of -1 for 1. Look for words that sound similar in the writing and language test, such as "conjunctive" and "subjunctive."

Answer Every Question

You are no longer penalized for incorrect answers. The redesigned SAT has reversed its penalty of 1/4 point for incorrect answers, so guess, guess, guess away after using the process of elimination. That said, you don't just want to go at the questions willy-nilly. (See the "Slow Down" section below.)

Write in the Test Booklet

Use your pencil to physically scratch out wrong choices, write down formulas and equations, solve math problems, outline, paraphrase, and underline to help you read. No one is going to read what you write in the test booklet, so use it to your advantage.

Transfer Your Questions at the End of Each Section

Instead of going back and forth between the Scantron answer form and the test booklet, just write your answers in the test booklet and transfer them over at the end of every section or page. You'll make fewer mistakes and save time. There is nothing worse than getting to the end of a section and realizing you don't have an oval to fill in for the last question.

Slow Down

It's very difficult to finish all the problems and maintain accuracy. Slow down a little bit, and answer fewer questions correctly instead of guessing at the entire lot. You'll get a better score if you answer **75 percent of the questions** on the test and answer them correctly than if you answer all of them and get 50 percent correct.

Choose Which Questions to Answer First

You do not have to complete the test sections in order. No, you can't jump from math to writing, but you can certainly skip around inside each section. If you're stuck on a difficult question on the reading test, for example, by all means, circle the question in your test booklet and move on to a simpler question. You don't get any extra points for more difficult questions. **Get the easy point when you can!**

Use the Order of Difficulty to Your Advantage in Math

Because the SAT Math section is loosely arranged from easiest to most difficult, the seemingly obvious answers to problems toward the beginning of a section may actually be correct. If you're in the final third of a section, though, beware of the obvious answer choices—they're probably distracters.

Do Not Give Your Opinion in the SAT Essay

Even though the **SAT essay** is now optional, you'll still probably need to take it. But it isn't like the essay of the past. The redesigned SAT essay asks you to read **an argument and critique it**. You are no longer be asked to give your opinion; rather, you need to tear someone else's opinion apart. If you spend your 50 minutes writing a persuasive essay, you're going to bomb it.

Cross-Check Your Ovals

If you have time at the end of a section, cross-check your test-booklet answers with your Scantron ovals. **Make sure you didn't miss a question.**

Don't Second-Guess Yourself

Trust your gut. Statistics prove that your first answer choice is usually correct. Do not go back through the test and change your answers unless you've found evidence that you are absolutely incorrect.

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