

Everything SAT

Sign up for the SAT

1. Check out your calendar at home and select a date to take the SAT.
2. Go online to [www.Collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) and begin to register. You can open a Collegeboard account and start to register for the SAT without knowing what date you plan to take the test. Start today at <http://sat.collegeboard.org/home?navid=gh-sat>

Prep for the SAT

1. Check out these online resources to prepare yourself for the test.
 - **Prepare Test Prep** <https://www.prepareforthesat.com/> Phone: 610-730-4876
Prepare Test Prep at Gwynedd Mercy University offers intensive ACT/SAT prep classes twice a week for six consecutive weeks, covering every aspect of both tests. **Dock students receive a \$200 discount for the 2020 March 12 – May 1 session.** Prepare has over a hundred testimonials on its website and offers continuing support for its students throughout their high school careers – for no additional charge.
 - **Education Plus** <https://www.educationplusinc.com/>
Education Plus in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, offers academic tutoring in all subject areas, as well as test preparation and counseling services. They offer an unbeatable combination of experienced tutors, flexible hours, and individualized attention.
 - **A+ Test Prep and Tutoring** <https://www.aplustutoring.com/about-us>
A+ Test Prep & Tutoring offers a wide range of customized tutoring programs to students of all ages, including academic tutoring, test preparation programs, and Executive Function coaching. Our one-to-one tutoring is available in your home, at your school, online, and at our office locations in Jenkintown and Gwynedd, PA.
 - **Kaplan Test Prep** <https://www.kaptest.com/sat>
Kaplan offers classroom, online, and tutoring options. Kaplan’s exclusive SAT Channel provides interactive live online sessions taught by our team of teachers. Students tune in for the sessions they need most and get instant help with any questions they have.
 - **The Princeton Review** <https://www.princetonreview.com/college/sat-test-prep>
Princeton offers self-paced, online, in-person, and private tutoring options. This program promises to maximize results with minimum time.
2. Take a Prep Class at a local college.
 - **Montgomery County Community College Academic Test Preparation:** <https://www.mc3.edu/for-the-community/personal-enrichment/sat-preparation>
The college's well-regarded *Academic Test Preparation Program*, for grades 10 to 12, is known throughout Montgomery county for the quality of its instruction, superior test prep, and impressive student score gains. You will learn to approach the test analytically and with confidence.
 - **Bucks County Community College (Upper Bucks Campus)** <https://www.bucks.edu/businesscareer/testpreparation/>
Courses offered are designed to help prepare students for all sections of the SAT. Throughout the course, you will practice numerous actual SAT questions independently or in small groups, and always with the instructor’s guidance. You will learn and practice general test-taking tips and strategies.

➤ **Penn State Abington:** <https://abington.psu.edu/sat-college-prep-courses>

Courses offered are designed to help prepare high school students for the math and verbal portions of the SAT exam. The cost is \$150 per course or \$280 if registering for both the math and verbal courses. Call 215-881-7339 for the discount code. The courses run for 3 consecutive Tuesdays and/or Thursdays, beginning Feb. 11, 2020. Classes are currently filled. Contact Alina Raskopin at axr5142@psu.edu for more information.

3. Take some online practice tests. Below are several sites which offer free SAT prep. You can also borrow SAT prep books from the guidance office with sample test questions.

➤ Khan Academy <https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat>

➤ Collegeboard <http://sat.collegeboard.org/practice>

➤ Princeton Review <http://www.princetonreview.com/college/free-sat-practice-test.aspx>

4. Watch a video on SAT test strategies:

<http://www.veritasprep.com/free-sat-lessons/videos/on-demand.php#video>

SAT Subject Tests

Most of you will not need to take the SAT Subject tests but if you do, plan to take them when the information is fresh in your mind (sometime in the spring when you are completing the course). If you are planning to apply to a university or college that is fairly competitive, then you may be required to take 2 Subject Tests. The Subject tests are mostly multiple-choice and will take about 60 minutes to complete. You can take up to 3 Subject Tests on the same day, but you can't take SAT I on the same day. I'm pretty sure you wouldn't want to do that anyway! 😊

Check out this link to Collegeboard for more info on Subject Tests:

<http://sat.collegeboard.org/practice/sat-subject-test-preparation/approaches>

Ten Tips for a Higher SAT Score

There is a lot of advice floating around about improving your SAT score—some of it good, some of it bad. A lot of advice, although solid, is either very obvious or very general, such as "take a lot of practice tests" or "study vocabulary."

Here are ten specific tips to boost your SAT score, in no particular order. Some you may have heard before, others you probably haven't.

1. Build your own vocabulary list using past tests.

All of my students have a little composition book where they write down and define every single unknown word they encounter on College Board practice tests. At around eight tests, they start to notice that many of the difficult vocabulary words have already appeared on previous tests. The test-makers seem to "like" certain words, and those words come up over and over again. I joke with my students that they better know what "ambivalent" means because it shows up on nearly every test (my guess is that it shows up on around three quarters of tests).

Like the old saying goes, "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me!" If you take the SAT and miss a question because you didn't know a word that you've seen before, shame on you! Every time you encounter an unknown word you have an opportunity to learn it. Write it down, define it, and periodically review your growing vocabulary list.

2. For Critical Reading passage-based questions, experiment with different strategies.

I don't advocate a one size fits all approach to passage-based questions. I think that, *ideally*, a student should be able to read a passage once and comprehend it thoroughly enough to answer many of the questions without having to refer back to the passage. I know, however, that this level of reading comprehension takes a long time to develop, and some students find themselves in a situation where they only have a few months to study before taking the SAT.

I suggest that these students experiment with different strategies. Try reading the questions first, and then referencing the passage. Or skim the passage first, focusing on the first and last sentences of each paragraph, and then tackle the questions. If you aren't seeing improvement with one method, try another. Don't believe anyone who insists there is only one right way to tackle passage-based questions.

3. Know your special triangles.

You will frequently encounter math questions where the "key" is realizing that the triangle in question is a special triangle. If you feel you can go no further on a triangle question and find yourself thinking something like, "there's not enough information!", always check to see if it may be a 30-60-90 or 3-4-5 triangle (for the latter, remember that any ratio of 3-4-5 works, like 6-8-10 or 30-40-50).

You can also try splitting the triangle in two to see if it forms a special triangle. Also, know how to calculate the diagonal of a square. Yes, some of this information can be found at the beginning of each math section, but if you're out of practice it won't do you much good!

4. Never leave any multiple choice questions blank.

I mean never, even if you can't eliminate any answer choices. The College Board tells us that a person who leaves the entire test blank and a person who blindly guesses on every question will, on average, receive the same score. But a person who leaves blanks runs the risk of incorrectly bubbling in the rest of the answers (e.g. student leaves question 12 blank, and accidentally fills in the answer for question 13 in the bubbles for section 12, and so on).

Moreover, because raw scores are only whole numbers, certain quarter point deductions for incorrect answers will not affect your score due to a rounding-up effect. For instance, imagine a student who knows the answer to every single question in Critical Reading, except the very last one, and furthermore is unable to eliminate any answer choices. This student currently has a raw score of 66 and has a $\frac{1}{5}$ chance of guessing the correct answer and receiving a perfect raw score of 67. On the other hand, this student has a $\frac{4}{5}$ chance of guessing incorrectly, and reducing his raw score to 65.75. But since raw scores are only whole numbers, this would be rounded up to a 66, meaning that guessing in this case would carry absolutely no risk (A 65.50 would also be rounded up). It is due to this rounding effect that I'm convinced a person who leaves nothing blank has a slight score advantage over the person who leaves some questions blank.

5. Read, read, read—especially topics that you don't find particularly interesting.

Even students with mediocre scores on the passage-based reading sections do fairly well on passages that they find interesting. Many high school students are accustomed to skimming material that they find boring or uninteresting and therefore quickly lose attention when they encounter such a passage on the SAT. If you find yourself reading the same sentence over and over again, this is probably what's going on. As interest wanes, so does focus.

One way to retain focus is to engage in active reading (for instance, notating the passage as you read it). A better way is to increase your attention span through practice. If you struggle with science passages, then go to the [science section of the New York Times website](#), download some science articles and start reading. Read with the goal of keeping focus and increase your speed as you progress. Periodical articles are ideal because their difficulty approximates that of most SAT passages.

6. If you're stuck on a math problem, start writing.

Write anything: label the diagrams, draw a picture or plug in numbers. Try expanding, factoring or simplifying expressions. Often students of mine will leave a math question blank and say "I'm stuck" but they will have little or nothing written on the page. I'll suggest that they write down what they know and see if anything comes from it. Many times, something does. Often there are hidden patterns in the question that we miss until we start writing things down.

7. In your essay, consider the opposing point of view.

Graders of the essay appreciate writing that sounds mature. An easy way to demonstrate mature thinking is to acknowledge the opposing point of view to your thesis. Don't *agree* with the other point of view, merely acknowledge that it exists and is reasonable, but that your thesis is superior for whatever reason. You can do this in your conclusion paragraph or in a separate paragraph before your conclusion.

If your thesis is something like, "Hard work is essential for success," you can say something along the lines of, "While it is true that lazy people occasionally attain success, these instances are rare, and are usually the effect of pure luck or extraordinary natural ability. The overwhelming majority of successful people are successful because they worked hard at it." This is a simple, powerful formula to follow and most students don't do it. Hence, it's a great way to distinguish your essay from the hundred other essays your grader will read.

8. Always show your work.

Careless, silly mistakes often turn great scores into good scores. Students rightly feel that they can do a lot of the simpler math in their heads, and they usually can. Unfortunately, this also frequently leads to silly mistakes, especially on questions that have multiple steps. Even if you are confident that you can perform all the steps of a math question in your mind, do yourself a favor and spend a few extra seconds writing the numbers down.

9. Use official tests to practice with.

Buy a used, unmarked copy of the Official SAT Study Guide for 10 bucks [on Amazon](#). This book contains ten practice tests. An additional ten tests can be obtained by paying 70 bucks and enrolling in the [Official SAT Online Course](#) (Official SAT Study Guide Book owners get a \$10 discount and explanations for all the questions in the book). That is a total of 20 College Board tests for \$70 with explanations for every single question—not bad. If you need more practice, look for previous versions of College Board's "official" SAT prep books (like [this one](#), or [this one](#)). Some will object that these old tests are obsolete because they were created before the 2005 update of the SAT. On the contrary, they still make excellent practice; just skip the analogy and Quantitative Comparison sections (also, be aware that these older tests do not have a Writing section). Make sure you read the product description and only buy *unmarked* used copies!

10. Create a collection of mature sounding words and phrases to incorporate into your essay.

According to the College Board, a six-level essay "exhibits skillful use of language, using a varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary." Most students use very dull diction on their SAT. Some students try to incorporate so-called "vocab words" into their essays but do so in a way that sounds forced or contrived. When you come across words or phrases in your reading that you think could be incorporated into your essays, jot them down, review them, and incorporate them into your practice essays. A word like "perfunctory" can really make an impression if used correctly!