

Redesigned SAT

When students open their SAT test books in spring 2016, they'll encounter an SAT that is more focused and useful than ever before. The full specifications of the exam along with extensive sample items for each section will be available on April 16, 2014. Major changes are described below.

Exactly what are the major changes to the SAT going to be? Here they are in plain English:

1. No penalty for wrong answers. Students will want to answer every question on the SAT since there will no longer be a penalty for wrong answers.
2. The essay portion will become optional. Many colleges will likely require that students complete the essay, but technically, it will be optional.
3. Also, the type of essay students are asked to write will be different than the type of essay students are currently asked to write. In the words of the College Board, "students will read a passage and explain how the author builds an argument. They'll need to support their claims with evidence from the passage." The actual essay question (what the College Board calls the "essay prompt") will be "shared in advance and remain consistent." What will change from test to test is the source material or passage that the student needs to build his or her argument from.
4. There will be reading comprehension questions in which students have to, in the words of the College Board, "support answers with evidence, including questions that require them to cite a specific part of a passage to support their answer choice."
5. The SAT will ditch the kinds of vocabulary words that students only see on the SAT and will use words that are seen more in college and career, such as "empirical" and "synthesis."
6. The math sections are going to focus on a more narrow range of topics: linear equations, ratios, percentages, and proportional reasoning, and functions or complex equations. These concepts are on the current SAT but on the new SAT they will be focused on more heavily.
7. A calculator will only be permitted on some of the math sections. Now, a calculator is permitted on all sections.
8. Back to a scale of 1600. There will be a separate essay score.
9. SAT will be available in both paper and digital forms.

In More Detail

The Basics

- The redesigned SAT will first be given in spring 2016.
- The SAT will be offered in print and, at selected locations, on computer.
- There will be three sections: Evidence-Based Reading and Writing, Math, and the Essay.
- The length of the SAT will be about three hours, with an added 50 minutes for the essay. Precise timing will be finalized after further research.
- The exam will once again be scored on a 400- to 1600-point scale. The Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section and the Math section will each be scored on a 200- to 800-point scale. Scores for the Essay will be reported separately.

Eight Key Changes

The redesigned SAT will ask students to apply a deep understanding of the few things shown by current research to matter most for college readiness and success. They'll find questions modeled on the work of the best classroom teachers and perform tasks practiced in rigorous course work. The SAT redesign is centered on eight key changes.

Relevant Words in Context

The redesigned SAT will focus on relevant words, the meanings of which depend on how they're used. Students will be asked to interpret the meaning of words based on the context of the passage in which they appear. This is demanding but rewarding work. These are words that students will use throughout their lives — in high school, college, and beyond.

Requiring students to master relevant vocabulary will change the way they prepare for the exam. No longer will students use flashcards to memorize obscure words, only to forget them the minute they put their test pencils down. The redesigned SAT will engage students in close reading and honor the best work of the classroom.

Command of Evidence

When students take the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section of the redesigned SAT, they'll be asked to demonstrate their ability to interpret, synthesize, and use evidence found in a wide range of sources. These include informational graphics and multiparagraph passages excerpted from literature and literary nonfiction; texts in the humanities, science, history, and social studies; and career-related sources.

For every passage students read, there will be at least one question asking them to select a quote from the text that best supports the answer they have chosen in response to the preceding question. Some passages will be paired with informational graphics, and students will be asked to integrate the information conveyed through each in order to find the best answer.

Questions that assess writing skills will also depend on a command of evidence. Students will be asked to analyze sequences of paragraphs to make sure they are correct, grammatically and substantively. In some questions, students will be asked to interpret graphics and edit the accompanying passages so that they accurately convey the information in the graphics.

The redesigned SAT will more closely reflect the real work of college and career, where a flexible command of evidence — whether found in text or graphic — is more important than ever.

Essay Analyzing a Source

The focus of the Essay section on the redesigned SAT will be very different from the essay on the current SAT. Students will read a passage and explain how the author builds an argument. They'll need to support their claims with evidence from the passage. This task more closely mirrors college writing assignments.

The new Essay section is designed to support high school students and teachers as they cultivate close reading, careful analysis, and clear writing. It will promote the practice of reading a wide variety of arguments and analyzing how authors do their work as writers.

The essay prompt will be shared in advance and remain consistent. Only the source material (passage) will change. The Essay will be an optional component of the SAT, although some school districts and colleges will require it.

Math Focused on Three Key Areas

The exam will focus in depth on three essential areas of math: Problem Solving and Data Analysis, the Heart of Algebra, and Passport to Advanced Math. Problem Solving and Data Analysis is about being quantitatively literate. It includes using ratios, percentages, and proportional reasoning to solve problems in science, social science, and career contexts. The Heart of Algebra focuses on the mastery of linear equations and systems, which helps students develop key powers of abstraction. Passport to Advanced Math focuses on the student's familiarity with more complex equations and the manipulation they require.

Current research shows that these areas most contribute to readiness for college and career training. They're used disproportionately in a wide range of majors and careers. The SAT will sample from additional topics in math, but keep a strong focus on these three.

Problems Grounded in Real-World Contexts

Throughout the redesigned SAT, students will engage with questions grounded in the real world, questions directly related to the work performed in college and career.

In the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section, reading questions will include literature and literary nonfiction, but also feature charts, graphs, and passages like the ones students are likely to encounter in science, social science, and other majors and careers. Students will be asked to do

more than correct errors; they'll edit and revise to improve texts from the humanities, history, social science, and career contexts.

The Math section will feature multistep applications to solve problems in science, social science, career scenarios, and other real-life contexts. Students will be presented with a scenario and then asked several questions about it. This allows students to dig into a situation and think about it, then model it mathematically.

Analysis in Science and in Social Studies

When students take the redesigned SAT, they will be asked to apply their reading, writing, language, and math skills to answer questions in science, history, and social studies contexts. They will use these skills — in college, in their jobs, and in their lives — to make sense of recent discoveries, political developments, global events, and health and environmental issues.

Students will encounter challenging texts and informational graphics that pertain to issues and topics like these in the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section and the Math section. Questions will require them to read and comprehend texts, revise texts to be consistent with data presented in graphics, synthesize information presented through texts and graphics, and solve problems based in science and social science.

Founding Documents and Great Global Conversation

America's founding documents — such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights — are all rather short, but they have inspired a conversation that endures today. Every time students take the redesigned SAT, they will encounter an excerpt from one of the Founding Documents or a text from the ongoing Great Global Conversation about freedom, justice, and human dignity. In this way, we hope that the redesigned SAT will inspire deep engagement with texts that matter and reflect not only what is important for college and career, but what is important for citizenship here and around the world.

No Penalty for Wrong Answers

The redesigned SAT will remove the penalty for wrong answers. Students will earn points for the questions they answer correctly. This move to rights-only scoring encourages students to give the best answer they have to every problem.

Key Shifts of the SAT Redesign

Compare the current SAT to the redesigned SAT to see what's changing.

Current SAT	Redesigned SAT
<p>Reading and writing sections do not require students to cite evidence. Students select answers to demonstrate their understanding of texts but are not asked to support their answers.</p>	<p>Evidence-based reading and writing. Students will support answers with evidence, including questions that require them to cite a specific part of a passage to support their answer choice.</p>
<p>Source documents do not represent a wide range of academic disciplines. While many different types of text might appear on any SAT, there is no requirement that students encounter scientific or historical sources.</p>	<p>Source documents originate from a wide range of academic disciplines. On every SAT, students will encounter source texts from science, history, and social studies, analyzing them the way they would in those classes.</p>
<p>Vocabulary focused on words that are sometimes obscure and not widely used in college and career. These words, while interesting and useful in specific instances, often lack broad utility in varied disciplines and contexts.</p>	<p>Vocabulary focused on words that are widely used in college and career. The exam will focus on words such as <i>synthesis</i> and <i>empirical</i> whose specific meaning depends on the context.</p>
<p>The essay measures students' ability to construct an argument based on their background and experiences. Since students are not given source material, there is no way to verify the accuracy of their argument or examples.</p>	<p>The essay measures students' ability to analyze evidence and explain how an author builds an argument to persuade an audience. Responses will be evaluated based on the strength of the analysis as well as the coherence of the writing.</p>
<p>Math section samples content from a wide range of high school-level math. There are often only one or two questions on each topic and students need to cover a great deal of math to be prepared for all topics.</p>	<p>Math section draws from fewer topics that evidence shows most contribute to student readiness for college and career training. Students can study these core math areas in depth and have confidence that they will be assessed.</p>
<p>Calculator permitted for full math section. It is difficult to assess students' sense of numbers, their fluency in calculation, and their ability understand concepts rather than plug in the answers.</p>	<p>Calculator permitted on certain portions of the math section. The calculator can be used where most appropriate, but the no-calculator section allows greater assessment of students' understanding, fluency, and technique.</p>

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Current SAT	Redesigned SAT
<p>Reading and writing does not require data analysis. The reading and writing section does not often include passages from science and social studies with graphs and tables; questions rarely require students to both read text and analyze data.</p>	<p>Students asked to analyze both text and data in real world contexts, including identifying and correcting inconsistencies between the two. Students will show the work they do throughout their classes by reading science articles and historical and social studies sources.</p>
<p>Source documents drawn from texts that are not widely recognized and publicly available. Students have no idea before they take the test what the reading passages will be about.</p>	<p>Each exam will include a passage drawn from the Founding Documents or the Great Global Conversation. Students read from either a founding document such as the Declaration of Independence or from the conversation they inspire in the United States and around the world, such as Lincoln's Gettysburg Address or King's "I Have a Dream" speech.</p>
<p>Scoring deducts points for incorrect answers. Students get $\frac{1}{4}$ point deducted for incorrect answers; no points deducted for omitted answers.</p>	<p>Scoring does not deduct points for incorrect answers (rights-only scoring). Students are encouraged to select the best answer to every question.</p>
<p>Essay is required.</p>	<p>Essay is optional.</p>
<p>Score scale of 2400.</p>	<p>Score scale of 1600 with separate score for Essay.</p>
<p>SAT available on paper only.</p>	<p>SAT available in paper and digital forms.</p>

You may check out the Method Test Prep site for more information:

<http://info.methodtestprep.com/blog/bid/109641/Changes-to-the-SAT-in-2016-Just-the-Facts-Please>

You may also find information about the SAT changes on the College Board site:

https://www.collegeboard.org/delivering-opportunity/sat?affiliateId=FeaturedListing&bannerid=rSAT_related

David Coleman, president of College Board, explains the reasons for the changes in a YouTube video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSZbPJbXwMI&feature=youtu.be>

