

The Beginning: How to approach SAT preparation

Provided by Madrona Tutoring

These Handouts

Real quick: these handouts are made to be printed and used in a binder. They have wide margins for notes, doodles, and working out the math problems. Print them, and write all over them. The more you underline and annotate, the better you will do. Guaranteed.

Standardized Tests and You:

Let's break down why the SAT is relevant to you:

Colleges and Universities use standardized tests to keep down the costs of sifting through tens of thousands of applications every year. Large universities use graphs mapping the relationship between GPA and ACT or SAT scores to determine who is rejected, looked at, and automatically accepted. It's a way to process 40,000 applications in a couple of months with only an admissions staff of twenty people.

What does that mean? Well, it means that the SAT score you get is important, but not the most important thing in your application. **The most important aspect of your application will be your GPA and course selection, followed by SAT scores.** So remember, keeping the grades up is part of the battle too!

The Test Scores and what they mean:

The SAT is scored out of 1600. The closer to 1600 you are the better your score is. 1000 is average. That means with a score of 1000, you have a better score than about 50% of students. With a score of 1150, you doing better than about 75% of students. At 1300, you have a better composite than over 90% of other students. Our goal will be to get you as high above 1000 as we can.

The Average Test Taker

The average test taker, Sleepy, hasn't really prepared for the test, and hasn't done any practice. Sleepy's pretty smart, and pulls down B's in school. However, zhe's not aware that the SAT is all about timing. In the math section, zhe tries to hurry through the easy questions to spend time on the hard ones. As a result, zhe makes a lot of silly mistakes on the easy ones (misses out on points zhe could have had

for sure) and misses a lot of the hard questions (they are hard. Nuff said.)

We're going to teach you how to avoid Sleepy's mistakes. The first rule is: **SLOW DOWN**. Even if you are going to run out of time before you finish a section, **it is better to do good work as long as possible than to do mediocre work and finish with five minutes left**. So, keep track of time when you do practice tests, and start to develop a sense of how fast you can move through material while still getting 8/10 right.

The flip side to that is that we don't want you to spend too much time on any single problem. Because every problem is worth a single point, spending three minutes on a problem is strictly off limits. If you find yourself stuck on a problem, and there seems no way out, just guess and move on.

Guessing

That's right. Guessing. It's an important tool in our kit. **The SAT does not take any points away from you for getting incorrect answers**. This means that if we run out of time we should guess on the rest. Statistically, if we answer the first column (A) for every answer, we get one out of four right. So if you run out of time on math, and you have fifteen problems left to go, you can still get three points by guessing!

Also, keep in mind that on harder questions, you should try to eliminate a couple of answer choices before guessing. If you can do that, you increase your odds from 20% to 25% or even 33%!

Guessing is going to be particularly important for us in the math section, so stay tuned.