



SAT WRITING

TEST PREPARATION GUIDE

Based on the March 2005 Revisions

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SAT Writing Preparation Diagnostic Test

PART I: Essay

Time — 25 minutes

Writing the SAT essay will demonstrate your ability to express ideas and offer details. Remember: use precise and concise language, choose a consistent, logical point of view, and organize your ideas in a logical progression with appropriate transitions.

On the actual SAT essay test, you will be given an answer sheet in which to write your essay. On that test you will be allowed to write a quick outline or plan on the essay test page. You will have no other paper on which to write.

For this practice essay, you will use your own paper. You may want to use this page for a quick outline or plan, so you will be accustomed to the space provided for prewriting. When you write your essay, write legibly and carefully, so graders may read your work.

You have twenty-five minutes to write an essay on the writing prompt below. Write a response only to this prompt, no other. Any essay that is written not addressing the prompt will receive a score of ZERO.

Read the following prompt and assignment carefully. Then consider your response to them.

Many young people do not put much thought into their own mortality. For some, youth affords the sense that one will live forever. Often, the notions of dying and growing old are of no consequence to the youthful.

Adapted from William Hazlitt's "On the Feeling of Immortality in Youth."

Assignment: What are some ways in which young people are often reckless with their mortality? Decide on your point of view, and develop it in an essay. Use reasoning and examples from your reading, studies, experience, or observations to support your position.

NOTE: There is not a word count requirement for the SAT essay. However, the essay must be long enough to demonstrate your abilities to organize ideas and write them in a smooth progression. We recommend a minimum of 320 – 520 words.

Chapter 1

Writing Paragraphs

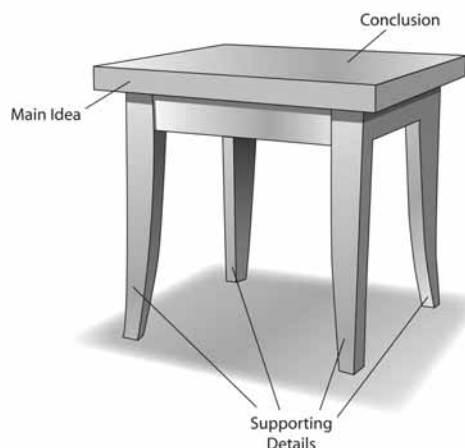
Just as the quality of a building depends on the materials used in its construction, so also the quality of an essay is only as effective as the **paragraphs** that comprise it. When faced with the assignment of writing a well organized, cohesive SAT essay in 25 minutes, you will develop the essay one paragraph at a time. In this chapter, you will practice writing paragraphs, the building blocks of a good essay.

The purpose of paragraphs is to organize ideas. In chapter 4 of this book, you will learn about the “quick and messy” outline, in which you jot down ideas that come to mind when you read the writing prompt. After you write several notes, what is the next step? You immediately organize them. You group them into sentences and paragraphs.

In chapter 4, you will also learn about the three kinds of paragraphs: introduction, body, and conclusion. For now, we will look at the basic features that constitute all effective paragraphs. This chapter discusses the following elements of paragraph writing:

- **Paragraph Structure**
- **Writing Clear Topic Sentences**
- **Writing Effective Supporting Sentences**
- **Writing Strong Concluding Sentences**
- **Organizing Paragraphs**
- **Using Convincing Language**

PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE



An easy way to understand the **structure** of a paragraph is to compare it to a table. The topic sentence is like the table top. Just as the table top’s purpose is to provide a flat surface for writing or eating, the **topic sentence**’s purpose is to give the reader a broad view of the topic. Of course, without legs, the table top will not stand. Similarly, the topic sentence needs details, examples, and personal observations to support it. Finally, a table that rocks on an uneven floor is not reliable. In the same way, a paragraph that rests on an unclear or irrelevant conclusion appears unstable.

Look at the following examples of paragraphs with concluding sentences that tie into the main idea of the essay. Notice how the concluding sentence brings the reader back to the main idea of the essay.

Main Idea of Essay	Paragraph with Concluding Sentence
<p>Happiness comes from within us, not from circumstances around us.</p> 	<p>Many heroes and leaders have given us examples of how happiness can exist regardless of circumstances. Mother Theresa of Calcutta, for example, lived amidst the most difficult conditions imaginable. But it is rare to find a picture of her not smiling or looking peaceful — even joyful. She seemed to contain a great reservoir of happiness within her, which even the wealthiest people on earth might envy. Perhaps her happiness came from her faith and her choice to help, rather than to avoid difficulties. <u>In any case, it obviously came from within her, and not from the impoverished and tragic circumstances that surrounded her.</u></p>
<p>Arts and literature are still as valuable to society as technology is.</p>	<p>One way to illustrate the value of arts and literature in society is to look at a literary example of a society without arts or literature. Lois Lowry's <i>The Giver</i> depicts a world in which technology and human ingenuity have eliminated suffering, illness, and pain. But they have also eliminated all the materials that inform art and literature: the wonder of life, of suffering, of growing and learning, and of beauty. From this world, the main character, Jonas, risks his life to escape. <u>This is an extreme example, but it points starkly to the need for a balance in life, in which arts and literature are valued as much as technology is.</u></p>
<p>I believe, along with Asimov, that people who use violence to solve problems do so because of a lack of competence in alternative methods.</p>	<p>Often people use violence simply because they are incompetent in communicating their needs. Most of us have observed young children who have not yet mastered speech. It is not uncharacteristic of them to bat, kick, grab, and push their playmates down, merely to gain access to a toy. This behavior is usually met with an equal volley of pounding, kicking, and screaming, as each child inarticulately and violently expresses his or her frustration. If nature had endowed young children with the skills of speech, cooperation, and willingness to compromise, all the futile flailing would be unnecessary. <u>The same principle of the lack of peace skills can be applied to violence between adults.</u></p>

Chapter 2

Appropriate Vocabulary and Point of View

What aggravates you when you are reading? For many people, reading tired, old phrases and worn out words aggravates them, inciting them to yawn or sneer at the recycle-bin words. Read the following paragraph, and think about the reaction you have to the language in it:



Beyond a shadow of a doubt, voting is a poorly understood and under used thing. I know you feel as though your vote just does not count for anything. Often it doesn't. Have we ever been completely bowled over by the results of an election day? Or do you feel as though we have jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire? Has anyone felt that the outcome of a vote was interesting to their nine-to-five life? I know that a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing, but knowing how or if voting affects you is very important — as the former President Harry Truman cried, "The buck stops here."

This writing contains trite, or over-used, phrases and vague words. It expresses an opinion but in a way that is uninspired and too informal to be convincing or appealing. Also, the point of view changes midway through the idea, causing the writing to be unclear.

In your writing for the SAT essay, you will want to

- Avoid Trite Phrases and Overused Words
- Use Apt (Specific, Vivid) Language
- Build a Writing Vocabulary
- Develop and Maintain a Consistent Point of View


At the end of this chapter, there will be a section titled "Student Resources: Web sites and Books." In this section, you will find resources for each of the above topics. These materials are rated for usefulness and ease of use.

OVERUSED WORDS AND SELECT SYNONYMS

Selecting just the right word is easier with the use of a generous thesaurus, one that is well organized with a wide variety of word choices. The following list of overused words includes possible synonyms. The word “possible” is important here. It implies that the control over the word choice is yours, the writer, to decide which synonym best suits the context you are writing.

When reading this list, pay careful attention to the bolded overused words, which are targeted as those which make readers cross their eyes with boredom. They are Overused, Overdone, and Obnoxious — do whatever you must do to avoid using these words.

Overused Words / Effective Synonyms	
Awesome:	stupendous, fabulous, outstanding
Beautiful:	alluring, attractive, exquisite, gorgeous, stunning, appealing
Begin:	launch, commence, originate, initiate, introduce
Big:	huge, immense, enormous, massive
Finish:	conclude, cease, achieve, deplete, complete
Good:	competent, virtuous, satisfactory, serviceable
Important:	notable, critical, significant, meaningful, vital
Interesting:	appealing, absorbing, entertaining, fascinating
Like (adj):	equivalent, similar, parallel
Like (verb):	appreciate, enjoy, relish
Nice:	charming, pleasant, satisfying
Try:	venture, endeavor, attempt
Very:	extremely, unusually, exceedingly



Launch

Practice 3: Saying No to Trite Phrases and Overused Words

Read the following excerpt of a political speech. Some trite phrases and overused words have been bolded. After reading the speech, rewrite the sections with bolded text with new, original phrasing or words.

My Fellow Citizens,



This is a **very great day** for our community — it is a validation of all we hold dear in our corner of **America’s vast heartland**. We are here today, **in one accord** to ratify a local ordinance: an ordinance which you asked for and which you used your freedom of choice to vote for. Your freedom of expression rings out as loud and clear as the Liberty Bell, **setting the world on fire** for Democracy.

Chapter 3

Critical Thinking

Some of the most consequential work you will do when faced with your SAT essay prompt will be done before your pencil touches paper. Before you even begin formulating your thesis, your supporting ideas, and your conclusion, you will apply the two most important skills a persuasive writer can have: **careful reading** and **critical thinking**.

The ability to read carefully and the ability to think critically are essential in producing an essay of quality. For this reason, they are discussed separately here as components of an overall approach to writing the essay. The purpose of this chapter is to step back from the instruction of essay writing mechanics, and explore the thinking and reading skills which are required in the first place, in order to produce the clear and reasonable ideas you will be shaping into sentences, paragraphs, and other mechanical aspects of essay writing.



Because the techniques of careful reading and critical thinking are all about examining ideas rather than merely accepting them passively, you can practice these techniques in many areas of your life. By doing so, you will make them an automatic part of your thinking process by the time you take your SAT. This chapter will show how this can be done.

First, we will look at basic skills involved in careful reading, specifically in regards to the SAT essay prompt. Then we will discuss some of the skills and intellectual characteristics involved in critical thinking.

CAREFUL READING

Careful reading is the first step to critical thinking. You have already read several standard-form SAT prompts and assignments in the first two chapters of this book. You probably feel you know their standard format by heart and are ready to skip them. But have you read them carefully? One clue that can indicate whether or not you have is a visual one. Look at the directions and prompts you have read in this book so far. Are there any pencil marks on them? If so, and they underline key words or show question marks and/or other notes in the margins, then you have probably read those words carefully.

If not, however, it is not a problem. You may be hesitant to mark up a book. But do not hesitate to mark the prompt on your test. Marking a passage is an effective tool in careful reading, which you will learn in the next section.

THE PROMPT DIRECTIONS

Now we will read the directions specific to the essay prompt. They are written as follows:

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and assignment below:

1. What two words give the command in prompt directions? **Answer:** “*Think carefully.*” Before doing any other preparation for this essay, you are told what to do and how to do it. Think. Carefully. Don’t start writing at the first thought that comes to your mind. Once you have read the whole prompt, try to see the essay in your mind as a whole. Jot down ideas, and begin writing only after you have a good idea of what you are going to say.
2. What will you be thinking about? **Answer:** *The issue.* The quote or excerpt, as well as the question given in the assignment, address a specific issue. You cannot simply respond to the quote without addressing the issue being asked about. You must clearly identify what that issue is.
3. Where is the issue presented? **Answer:** *In the excerpt AND in the assignment.* The excerpt provides a background idea. The assignment provides the specific question which defines the issue to be addressed. So, read the quote and keep it in mind as you read the assigned question.

CAREFUL READING OF THE PROMPT

The **prompt** consists of a quote or an excerpt which discusses a topic. It can also consist of a short paragraph which describes an issue. The **excerpt, quote, or descriptive paragraph** sets you up for the **assignment**. You should read it carefully. It is advisable to read it more than once. Again, underline key words and phrases. If it is a quote or excerpt, consider who it was that said the words. Consider why they were said. What could the **motive** have been? Do you agree or disagree?

Remember, the prompt is to get you *started thinking*. It is not the exact question you will be answering. That comes next. The prompt we are working with consists of two quotes, as shown below.

For it has been said so truthfully that it is the soldier, not the reporter, who has given us the freedom of the press. It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech. It is the soldier, not the agitator, who has given us the freedom to protest.

– Zell Miller, U.S. senator, 2004

*See how the world its veterans rewards!
A youth of frolics, an old age of cards.*

–Alexander Pope, poet (1688 – 1744)



Chapter 4

Writing the Opinion Essay

What can you do in 25 minutes? You can bake one pan of brownies for friends, you can watch one Simpson's episode on DVD, or you can wash one medium-sized car — quickly.



Twenty-five minutes. This is the amount of time you will have to write one essay in rough draft form for the SAT Essay section. This time frame is the first thing you will need to remember when sitting down to write — but it is not the last thing. Since this is a rough draft essay, the readers will be looking first for appropriate supporting ideas and for the essay to make a clear statement of opinion. At the end of this chapter you will find the section “**Student Resources: Web Sites and Books.**” There are several excellent sites and texts which cover the writing topics you may want to practice.

Below is a list of topics which will be covered in this chapter. These topics will all help you to create an essay with appropriate supporting ideas and a clear opinion. You will have already seen most of these topics in your study of language arts, but this is a look back — to look ahead at the SAT essay.



CHAPTER TOPIC LIST

PREWRITING

- Opinion: Form One and Keep It Constant
- Analyze the Prompt
- Planning Your Essay

WRITING

- Write an Attention-getting Introduction
- Write Supporting Body Paragraphs
- Write a Clincher of a Conclusion

POST-WRITING

- Scanning Your Essay (If Time Allows)
- Compare Sample Essays as Practice

*Remember: 25 Minute Essay, Rough Draft Form

WRITING

After planning the essay, your time to write this rough draft is down to 20 minutes. This second phase of the writing process takes a great amount of concentration or focus. Follow the instructions given by the test proctor (instructor). Use only the lined paper of the *answer booklet* for your writing. You may want to take a deep breath and exhale slowly as you begin.

Remember:

- You now have 20 minutes
- Focus on holding to one opinion
- Follow your outline as closely as possible



WRITE AN ATTENTION-GETTING INTRODUCTION



Treat this as a hello to the reader and know that this is the first impression your reader will have of you. The essay for the SAT will be an opinion essay. Not all of the different forms of introduction will work with that type of essay. Also with the 20-minute time limit, you will want to make this a quick “hello.”

The **introduction** is the first paragraph of your essay. It may be shorter than the body paragraphs or just a little longer, but it serves an important purpose. It tells readers where you are going and invites them to join you. It should catch the readers’ interest and clearly state the thesis of the essay. The introduction may also inform readers of the order

of support for the thesis.

You probably have seen stores that attract customers by placing a huge, fluorescent-colored sign outside, advertising an incredible sale. This catches the interest of potential buyers and leads them into the store. This approach to sales is somewhat similar to how you want to lead readers into your essay. You want to catch the readers’ attention, lead them into your essay, and then explain the purpose of your essay. A simple way to build an introduction is by using the following three components: **lead**, **tie-in**, and **thesis**.



LEAD

Sometimes you can start your essay by stating the thesis of your essay, but often that type of beginning is too abrupt. You need to grab the reader’s attention first, and make the reader want to read further. You can do this with the first sentence, called a **lead**. The lead may be one of the following:

- Statement of your position on the topic
- Question
- Problem or riddle
- Historical review
- Surprising statistic or fact
- General, thought-provoking statement
- Catchy remark
- Famous person

Chapter 5

Using the Write Stuff: Avoiding Errors

Avoiding writing errors is not like dodging alien spacecraft in a video game. There is no such thing as a safe place to hide or a safe strategy for sidestepping the issue. Writing only short simple sentences is a red flag that tells readers that the writer lacks basic skills. The SAT essay, though written in rough draft form, needs to demonstrate the writer's basic knowledge of writing skills.



Yes, the readers for the SAT essay will be looking first at ideas and a logical progression of opinion, but they will score down an essay which has numerous errors in sentence formation and the mechanics of Standardized English. So how do you avoid errors when writing an essay for the SAT? Practice is the key; successful students will practice writing with correct grammar, usage, and mechanics.

TIP

Write it right the first time through.

The best way to practice writing your essay right the first time is to take an honest look at your writing skills. You will want to decide which of your skills are strong and which ones need strengthening. Armed with that information, you will be able to target specific areas for practice.

Proofreading your essays will reveal to you the type of errors that show up in your writing. This chapter will give you a quick look at how to check your essays for errors in grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, as well as for repeated words or omitted words.

TIP

Practice proofreading quickly and with an eye to a pattern of errors, if any.

Readers will be looking to your rough draft essay to demonstrate your knowledge of standardized English through grammar and usage, punctuation, and spelling. Proofreading your essays will help you demonstrate these skills. In this chapter, you will review **proofreading notation** and then will practice proofreading for errors in the following areas of writing:

- **Grammar:** Sentence Types and Formation
- **Usage:** Parts of Speech and Spelling
- **Mechanics:** Capitalization and Punctuation

Practice 1: Grammar

- A. Read the following writing prompt on an aspect of human nature and the assignment for an essay. Then read the essay, first for content. Next, scan the essay quickly for errors in grammar. This is half the length of a typical SAT essay, so you will want to finish your search for errors in half the usual time. So spend about two minutes scanning the essay. Make proofreading notations for changes and reword when needed.

Writing Prompt

The natural historian, Stephen Jay Gould, uses the phrase “less is more” when describing the workings of human DNA. There are fewer genes needed for humans than originally thought. The explanation is that each gene is responsible for several types of physical traits. Gould notes that humans tend to not think in terms of less is more — though the natural world tends to seek simple, elegant systems.

Assignment: What is your opinion on the validity or truth that “less is more?” Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view (opinion) on the issue. Support your opinion with reasons and evidence brought from your own experience, your studies, or from your observations.

Essay

Less is More Than You Think



We need to turn down the “buy more” roar from advertisers. We need to turn this down from our communities, too. The process of living with less will not be painless. But, it will be simple. As simple as the urging from Henry David Thoreau. He wrote the words, “Simplify. Simplify.”

The process of living with less will bring people more rewards than is immediately apparent. It will bring peace of mind. When bills must be paid, people will have fewer bills. It will bring respect for individuals at their own worth. Instead of the false respect for the things they own. It will bring back a life based on strong values, like integrity, hard work, and community spirit. This instead of a life based on the value of possessions.

To paraphrase President John Kennedy, ask not what your money will buy for you, ask what you can do to buy your money the time to grow. And how it can do genuine good. Continually buying the latest gadgets can get boring. Whether they are tiny, but better music players, or faster, flashier vehicles, or smaller, smarter computers, people set themselves up for disappointment and a constant yearning for the next new thing. Their money disappears down the insatiable hole of conspicuous consumerism. Freedom from want cannot be made a law; it is a freedom people can only give to themselves. They have it when they stop wanting new things. A life lived free from want and more focused on simple needs is a reward that is priceless.

- B. Write a paragraph describing any pattern of errors found in this essay, and how you corrected them. In your paragraph, use the suggestions for appropriate grammar learned in this section.



Chapter 6


Improving Sentences, the SAT Way



Introducing

the Interaction-Driven, New and “You-Improved” SAT Sentences!

We are employing this shameless commercial setup to get you ready, able, and more than willing to practice improving sentences for the SAT. The testing format is one you will most likely appreciate. You will not be required to know the names of the embedded errors or the improvements—you simply need to recognize any errors and determine the best way to correct them.



TIPS

Improving Sentences, the SAT Way

1. **Remember** that several of the test sentences will be “error-less.” When a test sentence seems correct as it appears, then Choice A, the exact replica of the original sentence, is the choice you will want to make.
2. **Keep in mind** that rarely, if ever, will the correct responses have being or –ing verbs.
3. **Also**, choose the response that is concise, clear, and true to the original meaning of the testing sentence.
4. **Eliminate** obvious incorrect responses and focus on choosing the most clearly written choice.
5. **Some texts** may advise you that when you are in doubt you should choose the shortest choice (least wordy), but beware; the test creators know of this maneuver and will have adjusted many choices accordingly.

WORDINESS

Word choice also refers to how succinct or how wordy a piece of text may be. Generally, wordiness is a style writers need to avoid for clear, concise writing. Positive sentences are clearer for readers than negative ones. Dropping common empty words, such as “the fact that,” creates concise writing.

Example: At this moment in time, gas prices have reached an unprecedented high.

Correction: Today gas prices have reached an unprecedented high.

Example: To make a long story short, the perceived global hoarding of oil, which is at a crisis level, is pricing energy beyond the reach of many third world nations.

Correction: In short, the perceived global hoarding of oil, at a crisis level, is pricing energy beyond the reach of many third world nations.

Example: In spite of the fact that this market report has been compiled for the purpose of educating consumers about choices in alternative energy, no one is listening.

Correction: Although this market report has been compiled to educate consumers about choices in alternative energy, no one is listening.



IDIOMS (PREPOSITIONS)

Idioms are common word constructions that are specific to a language. English has certain idiomatic uses of prepositions, and this is tested in the SAT. Below are four common prepositions, their possible uses, and examples:

- in (enclosed within a container or as a point in time or space)
- at (a point in time or space)
- on (as supported on a surface or by words)
- for (a reason for action)

Example: The astronauts will be arriving *in* a Hummer.

Example: The space center will admit visitors *in* one hour.

Example: Military jets are scheduled to await the lift-off *at* the launch site.

Example: Reporters at the site must keep ID tags *on* their cameras.

Example: NASA officials will speak *on* the subject of the shuttle mission.

Example: The junior flight crew is responsible *for* chronicling the journey.



Chapter 7

Improving Paragraphs

In addition to the essay, which always comprises section one of the test, the SAT also includes sections which test sentence and paragraph improvement. These sections include questions which test your skills with grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. Chapter 5 of this book covers many of the skills needed to do well in these sections of the test.

This chapter will focus on the section of the SAT which calls on you to improve the writing and clarity of given paragraphs. As well as issues of grammar and mechanics, these sections address the more fundamental concepts such as simple clarity of meaning and integrity of structure.

Skills needed for the Paragraph Improvement sections of the SAT are essential not only for performing well in those parts of the test but also for honing your ability to write your own essay for section one of the test. This chapter will give you practice in paragraph writing skills such as the use of **transitions**, the use of **standard English and active voice**, and **structure and mechanics** such as proper pronoun reference.

Why improve paragraphs? To get a good score on your SAT and to get into a good college is one reason. But the real reason these skills are taught and tested is so that when you write, your writing will be effective. Everyone has something of value to say; something to communicate — to teachers, to the community, to the world. *How* you communicate your ideas makes all the difference in whether your ideas are heard, understood, taken seriously, and even acted upon. Effective writing changes things: your outlook, other people's minds, or even world events.

For now, though, to prepare for the SAT Paragraph Improvement sections, we will begin with a sample essay and questions which you will encounter on your test.



5. **The answer to question #5 is D.** This sentence about fantasy genre in the 20th century is irrelevant to the topic of the paragraph and the essay. Its language is also colloquial (“I think”). Given the *purpose* of the passage, which the question alludes to, and which is to inform, colloquial language is inappropriate.
6. **The answer to question #6 is C.** Again, the antecedent for “They” in the original sentence is vague. The sentence is corrected by specifying what the subject is: “These two great works of English fiction.”

CHAPTER 7 REVIEW

Below is a practice paragraph improvement essay and directions. First, read the directions. Then read the paragraphs carefully and answer the questions that follow.

Directions: The following passage is an early draft of an essay. Some parts of the passage need to be rewritten.

Read the passage, and select the best answers for the questions that follow. Some questions are about particular sentences or parts of sentences and ask you to improve sentence structure or word choice. Other questions ask you to consider organization and development. In choosing answers, follow the requirement of standard written English.

Sample Passage 2

No noisy, intensive agribusiness here. The farmhouses along two-lane Zurich Road, outside of Sodus in Upstate New York, look like models for a children’s book on “Grandpa’s farm.” The late summer sun glints off silver silos alongside red barns. Often on opposite sides of the road from their farmhouses. Orchards of apple trees display fruit in first blush, and cows take their sweet time crossing roads in front of patient cars and tractors.

Pull up alongside of the huge boulder on the side of the road, however, and you stand before a gateway into another world. It’s a world which the local residents have heard about since childhood but rarely paid much attention to. Just as well to avoid it.

A quaint wooden sign beckons the visitor onto a grassy pathway leading to Zurich Bog, a registered National Landmark, owned by the Bergen Swamp Preservation Society of Wayne County, and protected by the National Parks Service. The path is wide and pleasant enough at first. Visitors are gently corralled onto a narrow board walk, a mere three boards wide, lying on the ground and running into a forest. Federal regulation prohibits entering the bog alone, an ominous rule that fuels imagination, even when strictly obeyed. As the path becomes narrower and the vegetation thicker, fantasies of thirsty, unstable soil — quicksand — on either side of the path add to the sense of adventure.



And fantasies they are. Quicksand is a common feature of bogs, but contrary to its nightmarish reputation, created by bad movies, it is not a life-threatening monster. Quicksand is saturated grainy soil that has so much water in it that it cannot support weight. It is like the sand closest to the ocean in which your foot sinks as you enter the water. But quicksand is never very deep. Usually only a few inches in depth, it may be as much as waist deep. But it does not “suck” anything into it. In fact, it is more buoyant than water.

Chapter 8

Editing the Essay

You have used your time wisely, read the prompt carefully, brainstormed ideas, and come up with supporting evidence. You have produced a “first-draft” essay for the SAT. Congratulations.

There is, however, one final step to take: editing the essay.

It is unreasonable to expect that at this point in the test you will have a lot of extra time on your hands. In fact, if you are lucky, you may have a couple of minutes.

If you have them, use them.

This chapter is about editing. It is not presented here under the illusion that you will be doing major revisions or multi-leveled edits on your SAT essay. It is written for your background information. Through reading the information in this chapter, you will glean a strong basic understanding of the process of editing. With this knowledge, you will be able to quickly prioritize the most crucial changes needed in your essay which can be done in a few seconds. These changes will range from adding some punctuation to inserting a sentence. Whatever they are, you will be able to spot and fix them quickly if you are familiar with the information in this chapter. This information will also help you in editing your practice essays.

Given the limited time available, the main purpose of reviewing your essay is to quickly determine if you have applied the principles of essay writing covered in the previous chapters of this book.

These are the three levels of editing that will be discussed in this chapter:

- **Editing for structure:** organization of essay and of paragraphs (Chapters 1 and 4)
- **Editing for content:** language, point of view (Chapter 2)
- **Editing for mechanics:** grammar, punctuation, usage (Chapter 5)

EDITING FOR STRUCTURE

To review the elements of structure in an essay, you will recall that the overall essay requires a specific structure, and the units within the essay, the paragraphs, also require a specific structure. We will look at these two structures separately.



3. Anybody can learn to rappel, provided they are not afraid of heights. (**Number.** Change *they* to *he* or *she* to agree with *anybody* (singular) Don't forget to change *are* to *is*.)
4. Either football or orchestra will find that their funds have been cut for next year. (**Number.** Change *their* to *its* agree with the singular produced by *either... or*.)
5. No one could bring themselves to be the first to leave. (**Number.** Change *themselves* to *himself* or *herself*.)



Two notes on avoiding pronoun/antecedent traps:

1. When you need a third person singular pronoun, and you are concerned about which gender to choose (he or she, him or her) remember that it is now an acceptable convention to choose one or the other. It is not necessary to always use the cumbersome “he or she” or “him or her.”
2. The following indefinite pronouns are always singular and always take a singular pronoun: everyone, everybody, no one, no body, anyone, any body. (See example questions 3 and 5 above.)

PUNCTUATION

The SAT essay graders understand that the essay is a first draft written under time constraints. They also know that the essay tests a student's ability to present ideas in a clear and organized way. Therefore, the SAT graders will not be meticulous about punctuation. There are, however, some major issues of punctuation that may affect your score slightly. While reading over your essay, look for these red flags:

- Always capitalize the first word of each sentence.
- Make sure all periods — and other end punctuations — only come after **complete** sentences. Otherwise, it is called a sentence fragment.
- Make sure your possessive nouns and pronouns contain an apostrophe (except for **its**, as in **the dog could not catch its tail**).
- Underline the titles of books, movies, plays, poems, and short stories you may refer to in your essay. Use quotation marks for written articles you refer to.

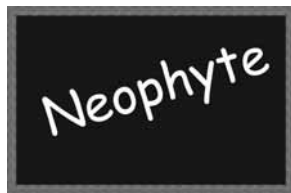
Practice 3: Editing for Language, Grammar, and Punctuation

The following two paragraphs contain errors in **language**, **grammar**, and **punctuation**. Read the paragraphs carefully and, on a separate sheet of paper, rewrite them with corrections.

When the government goes and tells people how to do their jobs, they just took away their right to practice religion. A health professional cant be told how they had to act morally. The concept of civil disobedience was an example of how the law of right and wrong are are higher than the civil law. People who practiced civil disobedience, such as Martin Luther King, do so because he believed in their own conscience more than in civil laws. Of course, they take their punishment because they respected the law, but they follow their own law of right and wrong first. Therefore, neither government nor law enforcement have the right to make a worker to act against their conscience.

Chapter 9

Neophytes' Guide to Scoring SAT Essays



What is this word “neophyte” doing in the chapter title? It comes from the Latin word “*neophytus*”— meaning “newly planted.” The English word “neophyte” refers to a novice, someone new to a process. Asking students to score essays is asking them to play a role normally reserved for teachers. But students who practice scoring essays understand more completely the planning strategies and writing elements needed for a successful essay.

In this chapter, you will learn several aspects of scoring SAT essays:

- **how SAT essays** are scored with the **Scoring Guide**;
- **what SAT readers** expect in a successful essay; and
- **how you can write** a successful essay.

Several essays are provided in this chapter, so you may use the scoring guide to rate essays on your own. With this practice, you will be better able to recognize the elements of a successful essay in your own writing. When scoring the essays, you may put away the stop watch. This is not a timed event.

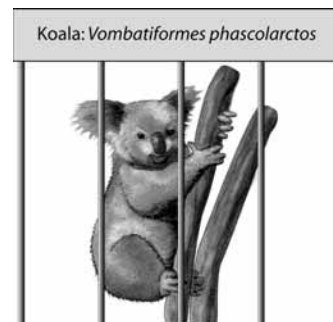
NOTE: When scoring the essays, keep in mind that the readers value a strong, consistent opinion and clear organization with relevant supporting evidence more than perfect punctuation or spelling. Some errors are seen as acceptable in those areas, as long as they do not interfere with the essay’s logic.

HOW ARE SAT ESSAYS SCORED?

The SAT essays are scored with the use of a Scoring Guide — a list of expectations for each score given by professional readers. The following **Scoring Guide**, which lists the requirements of each score (from 6 to 0, with 6 being the highest score), is a summary of the one used by the SAT readers:

Writing Prompt

The science fiction writer Ursula K. LeGuin wrote a short story which explored the power which words have over human action and human thought: “Mr. Underhill answered the question: ‘Because the name is the thing . . . and the true name is the true thing. To speak the name is to control the thing . . .’”



Assignment: Are names the true measure and nature of a person or a thing? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasons and evidence brought from your studies, experience, or observations.

1 The Name Game




“What’s in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” In this quote, William Shakespeare seems to attach less importance to names than most people. But think about it. The flower he uses in his example has a name which instantaneously brings to mind a distinct, cloying fragrance which cannot be denied. His choice of flower was deliberate in its power to transfix readers in its spell. Could any other name have worked so well?

Linnaeus thought so. He saw the world as a global Tower of Babel. Languages of different lands imposed different names to identical flora and fauna in the world. Linnaeus spent his life bestowing scientific names on the inhabitants of the natural world, so that the names would be universal—conferring ultimate control to *Homo sapiens*.

The names of these two men, Shakespeare and Linnaeus, have their own power. But the lives of these two people gave the names that power — the names alone are empty. In almost all cultures there are creation stories involving the naming of new creatures. Some traditions pair the act of creation with the act of naming — without a name, existence was not possible. But how were the names created? The English word “horse” in French is “*cheval*” in Spanish it is “*caballo*” and in Latin, the language of science, it is *Equus*. What in these names confers speed and grace and a free spirit? It is the animal which gives these qualities to the name, in any language.

This gives affirmation to anyone named Maude or Horace or Beryl or Willard. The heart and soul and drive of the person will influence the perception of the name. By the same token, the onus is on Jennifer or John or Brittany or Matthew to display positive characteristics so to not sully their popular names. What is in a name? A name’s power is to be a reflection of the true nature of the one who carries it.



: SAT Writing Preparation : Practice Test 1

PART I: Essay

Time—25 minutes

Writing the SAT essay will demonstrate your ability to express ideas and offer details. Remember: use precise and concise language, choose a consistent, logical point of view, and organize your ideas in a logical progression with appropriate transitions.

On the actual SAT essay test, you will be given an answer sheet in which to write your essay. On that test you will be allowed to write a quick outline or plan on the essay test page. You will have no other paper on which to write.

For this practice essay, you will use your own paper. You may want to use this page for a quick outline or plan, so you will be accustomed to the space provided for prewriting. When you write your essay, write legibly and carefully, so graders may read your work.

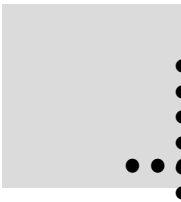
You have twenty-five minutes to write an essay on the writing prompt below. Write a response only to this prompt, no other. Any essay that is written not addressing the prompt will receive a score of ZERO.

Read the following prompt and assignment carefully. Then consider your response to them.

The fallacy of altruism, or altruistic moralism, is the sense that there is a general duty, or that morality as such requires us always, to act in the interest of others. On the other hand, an “altruistic moral aestheticism” is not a moral fallacy; for this only means that a person may act for the good of others if this seems good, which is unobjectionable as long as the action respects the autonomy of others, meaning it is not against their innocent and competent will.

Assignment: Is it always good for the good of others to help them in altruistic ways or is it simply for the feeling of control as goodness that people act altruistically? First develop a plan and then write an essay on this topic. Choose one point of view and develop it, using examples and logical reasoning from your coursework, experience, reading, or observations.

NOTE: There is not a word count requirement for the SAT essay. However, the essay must be long enough to demonstrate your abilities to organize ideas and write them in a smooth progression. We recommend a minimum of 320 – 540 words.



SAT Writing Preparation Practice Test 2

PART I: Essay

Time — 25 minutes

Writing the SAT essay will demonstrate your ability to express ideas and offer details. Remember: use precise and concise language, choose a consistent, logical point of view, and organize your ideas in a logical progression with appropriate transitions.

On the actual SAT essay test, you will be given an answer sheet in which to write your essay. On that test you will be allowed to write a quick outline or plan on the essay test page. You will have no other paper on which to write.

For this practice essay, you will use your own paper. You may want to use this page for a quick outline or plan, so you will be accustomed to the space provided for prewriting. When you write your essay, write legibly and carefully, so graders may read your work.

You have twenty-five minutes to write an essay on the writing prompt below. Write a response only to this prompt, no other. Any essay that is written not addressing the prompt will receive a score of ZERO.

Read the following prompt and assignment carefully. Then consider your response to them.

It is war that is the motor of institutions and of order: peace, right down to the smallest of its cogs, obscurely engages in war. In other words, we must decypher [make sense of] war in peace: war is the very cypher [symbol] of peace. Thus we are at war with each other; a battle front runs through our entire society, continuously and permanently, and it is this battle front which places each of us in one camp or another. There is no neutral subject; we are of necessity someone's adversary.

Excerpt from Michel Foucault, (1997)

"Il faut défendre la société. Cours au Collège de France. 1976
(Paris: coll. Hautes Etudes, Gallimard Seuil), pp. 43 – 44.

Assignment: Are elements of war found in the mechanics of peace? First develop a plan and then write an essay on this topic. Choose one point of view and develop it, using examples and logical reasoning from your coursework, experience, reading, or observations.

NOTE: There is not a word count requirement for the SAT essay. However, the essay must be long enough to demonstrate your abilities to organize ideas and write them in a smooth progression. We recommend a minimum of 320 – 520 words.