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Quick Prep Edition

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Get prepared quickly by:

- Enhancing your test-taking skills
- Reviewing the SAT format and question types
- Taking a complete practice test and getting full answer explanations

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Introduction

Change is good, right? So why do so many people hop on the nervous-breakdown train when they hear that the SAT is changing? Perhaps because the SAT is an important step on your journey to college, and anything to do with the admissions process is enough to give applicants an instant panic attack. Nervous or not, you have to take the SAT when you apply to most colleges or universities in the United States and to some English-speaking institutions abroad. The “old” SAT has been around since 2005 and was actually a redesign of a still older exam. The “new” SAT appears in March 2016. Because it’s new, that version of the SAT may seem extra scary.

You have nothing to worry about, though, because you’ve been preparing for this version of the SAT for many years. What? You say you haven’t been memorizing vocabulary words and drilling key math concepts since you were in your crib? How neglectful of you! Actually, you *have* been getting ready for the redesigned SAT, because you’ve been studying the necessary material during every single minute you devote to schoolwork, not counting lunch and the time you spend texting your friends from the phone hidden behind your science book. But those small lapses don’t count for much when you consider the amount of time you’ve been analyzing and uncovering meaning when you read, organizing your ideas and writing papers, and solving math problems (more than 10,000 hours between kindergarten and tenth grade, according to a recent survey).

All those skills come in handy on the new SAT. The final step in preparing for the exam is the one you’re taking now. You’re reading this book and therefore becoming

acquainted with the format of the test. By the time you're finished with *SAT For Dummies*, Quick Prep Edition, you'll have every possible tool for conquering the 2016 SAT.

Why change at all? The old SAT was loudly criticized for several reasons. It was long, hard, and tricky. Most important, it didn't accurately predict college success, its stated purpose. The College Board, which creates and administers the SAT, heard the complaints and hit the drawing board. What they came up with is still long and relatively hard, but the test more closely resembles the stuff you actually do in school. The reading and writing passages come from history, science, literary, and career-oriented sources. Some math questions draw on real-world situations. The new SAT also tests your ability to understand information presented visually, often in graphs or charts, and to recognize and evaluate evidence. The 2016 SAT eliminates some of its old tricks, such as the penalty for guessing, and lets you decide whether you want to write the essay. Add everything up, and you arrive at a test that concentrates on the skills you need to succeed in college and the workplace. (For details on the changes, check out [Chapter 1](#).)

About This Book

SAT For Dummies, Quick Prep Edition, is a whirlwind tour of the redesigned SAT. (If you expect to take the old SAT at some point before the spring of 2016, turn to *SAT For Dummies*, 8th Edition, by Geraldine Woods, also published by Wiley.) This book takes you through each section of the 2016 SAT, explaining what the test-makers are looking for and how you can deliver it. For example, the new SAT makes a point of testing vocabulary in context, and that's how vocabulary shows up in *SAT For*

Dummies, Quick Prep Edition. As you read, keep an eye out for words and definitions, including in paragraphs that have nothing to do with vocabulary *per se*. (By the way, ***per se*** means “as such” or “for itself.”)

To help you step up your game on the SAT, this book includes in-depth analysis and samples of each type of question that the SAT dumps on you — reading comprehension, math grid-ins, and so forth. To kill still more of your free time (and help you improve your SAT-tested skills), you get a detailed explanation with each answer so you know what you answered correctly, what you got wrong, and why. To give you a feel for how ready you are to take the new SAT, try your hand at the practice test. No, it’s not a real SAT because the company that produces the actual test is sitting on those rights. The test you get on test day may not have exactly the same number of questions in exactly the same order as the ones here, because the test-makers continue to tinker with the format. But the test in this book is as close as anyone can come without invoking lawyerly attention, and it will prepare you well for the real thing. As a bonus, you may find that preparing for the SAT improves your schoolwork, too, as you sharpen your reading skills, polish your grammar, and solve math problems more efficiently.

This book also uses a few special conventions. Keep them in mind as you work your way through this book:

✓ *Italics* have three different duties:

- To introduce new terms, particularly those that apply to math, analytical reading, and writing
- To refer to portions of a question or answer choice
- To emphasize a particular word or point

- ✓ **This font** highlights words that may be useful when you take the SAT. Check out the definitions that follow these words, and notice the context. (Mastering words in context can really improve your score on the SAT.)
- ✓ **Boldface** indicates the action part of numbered steps and the main items in bulleted lists.

Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, we assume several things about you, the reader, including the following:

- ✓ You probably hate standardized tests (nearly everybody does!) but want to achieve a high score on the SAT with minimum effort and maximum efficiency.
- ✓ You've taken the usual math and language arts courses through, say, algebra, geometry, and sophomore English. If you haven't taken one of those classes or if you did and still feel puzzled by the subject, you may want to read some other *For Dummies* books that can help you review the material. Take a look at *English Grammar For Dummies*, 2nd Edition, for basic information, or go for grammar practice with the *English Grammar Workbook For Dummies*, 2nd Edition and 1,001 Grammar Practice Questions For Dummies (all written by Geraldine Woods). Those of you who struggle with the math will find these books helpful: *Algebra I For Dummies*, 2nd Edition, and *Algebra II For Dummies*, by Mary Jane Sterling, and *Geometry For Dummies*, 2nd Edition, by Mark Ryan. Wiley publishes all these titles.

One assumption we haven't made is age. True, most people who take the SAT are teenagers, but not everyone follows the same life path. If you're hitting college after

living a little, good for you. This book can help you remember the schoolwork you need for the SAT, no matter how many years ago have passed since you sat in a classroom.

Icons Used in This Book

Icons are those cute little pictures that appear in the margins of this book. They indicate why you should pay special attention to the accompanying text. Here's how to decode them.



This icon points out helpful hints about strategy — what the all-star test-takers know and the rookies want to find out.



This icon identifies the sand traps that the SAT-writers are hoping you fall into as you take the test. Take note of these warnings so you know what to do (and what not to do) as you move from question to question on the real SAT.



When you see this icon, be sure to file away the information that accompanies it. The material will come in handy as you prepare for (and take) the 2016 SAT.



This icon identifies questions that resemble those on the actual SAT. Be sure to read the answer explanations that always follow the questions.

Where to Go from Here

Okay, now that you know what's what and where to find it, you have a choice. You can read every single word of [Part I](#) first and then take the practice exam, or you can check out only the parts of the book that address your "issues," as they say on daytime talk shows, concentrating on the kinds of questions you struggle with. (Check out [Chapter 3](#) for an overview and sample questions similar to those on the exam.) If you're worried about when, where, and how to sign up and actually take the test, look through [Chapters 1](#) and [2](#). Another good way to start is to take the sample test in [Part II](#), score it using the appendix, and then focus on your weak spots. Feel free to check out www.dummies.com, where you'll find the "cheat sheet" (which is *not* for use during the exam) for *SAT For Dummies* and up-to-the-minute information on any changes the College Board has made to the test. No matter what you do next, start by doing something simple: Calm down, stay loose, and score big on the SAT.

Part I
**Getting Started with the
SAT**



For Dummies can help you with lots of subjects.
Check out www.dummies.com to learn more and do more

with *Dummies*.

In this part . . .

- ✓ Get to know the new SAT. Find out what it tests, when you can and should take it, where you can find it, and how it affects your chances for admission to college.
- ✓ Find out how to best prepare yourself for success — from making the most of your time leading up to your testing date to ensuring you have what you need (and leaving home what you don't) on test day.
- ✓ Check out the redesigned SAT Reading, Writing and Language, and Math sections of the test and discover strategies to maximize your score on each one.

Chapter 1

Erasing the Worry: Getting to Know the New SAT

In This Chapter

- ▶ Determining which test to take
 - ▶ Comparing the old and new SAT
 - ▶ Signing up for the SAT
 - ▶ Allowing for special needs
 - ▶ Previewing the SAT Reading, Writing and Language, and Math sections
 - ▶ Understanding SAT scoring
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In ancient Greek mythology — and in the Harry Potter series — a three-headed monster guards a magical place. In the real world, a different sort of three-headed monster — the SAT — protects another magical place: the college of your dreams. The SAT's three heads are tests of your skills in reading, writing, and math. Instead of chomping its victims like an imaginary monster, the SAT chops you up into a series of numbers — scores that play a **crucial** (extremely important) role in determining whether you receive a *please come to our school* or a *sorry to disappoint you* response at decision time.

In this chapter, you find the ABCs of the SAT: how it's changing as well as when, where, and how often you should take the test. This chapter also tells you what sort of scores you receive, explains how to deal with special

needs, and gives you a peek into the structure of the exam itself.

Not an ACT: Getting Real with the SAT

Most college applicants take one of two giant exams on their way into U.S. colleges and some foreign schools. One is the ACT, and the other is the SAT. Most colleges accept scores from either test; check with the admissions office of the colleges on your list to be sure you're taking the test(s) they prescribe. (A good general rule for college admissions is to give them what they want, when they want it.) The SAT and the ACT are roughly the same in terms of difficulty, but each exam is of a different nature. As of this writing, you can access free PDFs from www.collegeboard.org and www.actstudent.org (homes of the SAT and ACT, respectively). If you're so inclined, you can download and review each exam and see which one you like more (or rather, which one you *dislike* less). Because you're reading *SAT For Dummies*, Quick Prep Edition, presumably you're taking the SAT. But if you're also taking the ACT, don't forget to check out *ACT For Dummies*, 6th Edition, by Lisa Zimmer Hatch, MA, and Scott A. Hatch, JD (Wiley).



Don't confuse the SAT with the SAT Subject Tests, which used to be called the SAT II, a name that is now officially **obsolete** (outdated, so yesterday). The SAT Subject Tests cover biology, history, math, and a ton of other stuff. Depending on the schools you apply to, you may have to take one or more Subject Tests or none at all.

All colleges have websites, where you can find out exactly which exam(s) your favorite schools require. Many libraries and nearly all bookstores also carry college guides — 20-pound paperbacks describing each and every institution of higher learning you may apply to. If you're relying on printed material, be sure to check the copyright date. With the **advent** (arrival) of the new SAT, some colleges may change their requirements, and earlier books may not be accurate. The official website of the College Board (www.collegeboard.org) also lists popular colleges and the tests they want to **inflict** (impose) on you. The College Board creates the exams, so its website is **replete** (well supplied) with helpful information.

If college isn't in your immediate future, you may want to take the SAT just to see how you do. If your plans include a stint in the armed forces or climbing Mount Everest before hitting higher education, you can keep your options open by taking the SAT before you go. Your score on the SAT may be higher while formal "book learning" is still fresh in your mind. Then when you're ready to return to an actual classroom education, you have some scores to send to the college of your choice, though if a long period of time has passed, the college may ask for a retest. How long is *a long period of time*? It depends on the college you're applying to. Some may ask for an updated score after only a couple of years; others are more **lenient** (easygoing). Obviously, whether you took three years off to relax on the beach or five to create a gazillion-dollar Internet company also influences the admissions office's decision on SAT scores. Check with the college(s) you're interested in and explain your situation.

A Whole New Ballgame: Comparing the Old and New SAT

What a difference a couple of months make! If you take the SAT in January 2016 and then again in March 2016, the exams you face will *not* be identical twins. Like any family members, they may share the arch of an eyebrow or the shape of the nose, but otherwise they're quite different. Check out [Table 1-1](#) for a side-by-side comparison of the old and new exams.

Table 1-1 Old SAT versus New SAT

<i>Old SAT</i>	<i>New SAT</i>
Critical Reading: 67 questions, 70 minutes	Reading: 52 questions, 65 minutes
Essay: Mandatory, 25 minutes, respond to a prompt with your own point of view and evidence	Essay: Optional, 50 minutes, analyze writing techniques in a passage
Multiple-Choice Writing: 49 questions, 60 minutes	Multiple-Choice Writing and Language: 44 questions, 35 minutes
Mathematics: 54 questions, 70 minutes, divided into 3 sections	Mathematics: 57 questions, 80 minutes, divided into 2 sections
Calculators allowed for all 3 sections	Calculators allowed for 1 section and not for the other
Multiple-Choice and Grid-In Scoring: 1 point for each correct answer, 1/4-point deduction for each wrong multiple-choice answer (no penalty for incorrect grid-in answers)	Multiple-Choice and Grid-In Scoring: 1 point for each correct answer, no deduction for wrong answers

<i>Old SAT</i>	<i>New SAT</i>
Multiple-Choice Format: 5 possible answers	Multiple-Choice Format: 4 possible answers
Score Types: 200–800 points each for Critical Reading, Writing, and Mathematics (total: 600–2400 points)	Score Types: 200–800 points for a combination of the Reading and Writing and Language sections; another 200–800 points for Mathematics, for a total of 400–1600 for the entire exam, separate essay score, cross-test subscores for analysis in history and science, section subscores for various skills

Now you know the basics. For more information on the changes to the SAT, see the section “Examining Your Mind: What the New SAT Tests,” later in this chapter.

Signing Up Before Sitting Down: Registering for the SAT

The SAT is given at multiple times at select high schools throughout the United States and in English-speaking schools in many other countries. Home-schoolers can also take the SAT, though not in their own living rooms. This section explains how and when to register for an exam and acceptable methods of payment. **Note:** The SAT **waives** (drops) fees for low-income test-takers. Check out the section “Meeting Special Needs” in this chapter for more information.

How to register

You can register for the SAT online, by mail, or, if you’ve taken the SAT before, by phone.

Online registration is simple: Go to www.sat.collegeboard.org/register to sign up and to choose

a test center and date. You need a credit card or a PayPal account and a digital photo of yourself ready to upload. Be sure the photo meets the College Board's ***criteria*** (standards). The College Board wants what Hollywood agents call "a head shot" — a photo featuring everything above shoulder level. You should be the only one in the picture, and your whole face must be visible. Head coverings are okay only if they're religious in nature. The College Board accepts JPEG, GIF, and PNG formats.

You can also register by mail. In fact, you have to do so if you're younger than 13 or older than 21 or if you need to take the exam on a Sunday for religious reasons. Ask the college or guidance counselor at your school for a registration form. If you're home-schooled, call the nearest public or private high school. Older test-takers (over 21 years of age): Call the College Board Customer Service Center for help (within the U.S.: 866-756-7346; outside the U.S.: 212-713-7789). You have to attach a photo (no smaller than 2 x 2 inches and no larger than 2.5 x 3 inches) to the paper registration. Follow the same guidelines for the online photo, and make sure it shows your face clearly. Tape the photo to the designated area of the application. With the application, enclose payment (credit card number, a check from a United States bank, or a bank draft).

If you're suffering through the SAT for a second time, you can register by phone, though you pay an extra \$15 to do so. Call the College Board's Customer Service center (within the U.S.: 866-756-7346; outside the U.S.: 212-713-7789). Hearing-impaired test-takers can call the TTY Customer Service number (within the U.S.: 888-857-2477; outside the U.S.: 609-882-4118).



However you register, you'll be asked whether you want to sign up for the Student Search Service. Answer yes and fill out the questionnaire. Colleges, universities, and some scholarship-granting organizations receive information about you from this service. Expect lots of emails and letters — a little annoying, perhaps, but you may discover a school or scholarship that meets your needs perfectly.



Neither the Student Search Service nor any other part of the College Board markets products to you via email or regular mail, but some scam artists do. Don't send personal or financial information to any organization unless you know it's legitimate. Not sure? Call the College Board to check (within the U.S.: 866-756-7346; outside the U.S.: 212-713-7789).

When you register for the SAT, you also choose the type of score reports you want to receive. See the section "Scoring on the New SAT," later in this chapter, to explore your options.

When to take the test

The last "old" SAT is scheduled for January 2016; the first "new" SAT debuts in March 2016. Keep those dates in mind as you make your own personal test schedule.

The SAT pops up on the calendar seven times a year. You can take the exam as often as you want. If you're a ***masochist*** — that is, you enjoy pain — you can take all seven tests, but most people stick to this schedule:

- ✓ **Autumn of junior year** (about 1¾ years before college entrance): Time to take the PSAT/NMSQT, the exam that serves as a preview of the real thing. Even if you don't believe you need a preview, take the PSAT/NMSQT anyway; this test serves as a sorting tool for several scholarship opportunities and special programs. The first redesigned PSAT/NMSQT will be given in October 2015.
- ✓ **Spring of junior year** (about 1¼ years before college entrance): Take the SAT strictly for practice, though you can send in your scores if you're pleased with them.
- ✓ **Autumn of senior year** (a bit less than a year before entrance): The SAT strikes again. Early-decision candidates should take the test in October or November; regular applicants may choose from any of the three autumn dates, including December.
- ✓ **Winter of senior year** (half-year before entrance): Some SAT-lovers take the exam in autumn and again in winter, hoping that practice will make them perfect, at least in the eyes of the colleges. The high scores won't hurt (and you probably will improve, just because the whole routine will be familiar), but don't put a lot of energy into repeated bouts of SAT fever. Your grades and extracurriculars may suffer if you're too **fixated on** (obsessed with) the SAT, and you may end up hurting your overall application.

If you're transferring or starting your college career midyear, you may sit for the SAT in January, March, May, or June. Check with your counselor or with the college of your choice and go with that recommendation.

Everyone takes the SAT on Saturday except for those students who can't for religious reasons. If you fall into

that category, your SAT will be on a Sunday following a Saturday SAT day. Get a letter from your **cleric** (religious leader) on letterhead and mail it in with your registration form.



In terms of test sites, the early bird gets the worm. (Do you ever wonder why no one talks about the worm? He got up early, too, and look what happened to him.) When you register, you may request a test site, but if it's filled, you get an alternate. So don't delay; send in the form or register online as soon as you know when and where you want to take the exam.

Meeting Special Needs

In a speech introducing the redesigned SAT, the president of the College Board stressed fairness and equal access for all students, including those with special needs. Even if you don't think you belong in that category, skim this section. You may discover an option that will help you "show what you know" when it matters most.

Learning disabilities

If you have a learning disability, you may be allowed to take the SAT under special conditions. The first step is to get an Eligibility Form from your school counselor. (Home-schoolers, call the local high school.) You may also want to ask your college counseling or guidance office for a copy of the *College Board Services for Students with Disabilities Brochure* (pamphlet). If your school doesn't have one, contact the College Board directly (212-713-8333, TTY 609-882-4118) or check the

testing agency's website (www.collegeboard.org/students-with-disabilities). You can also contact the College Board by mail at this address: College Board SSD Program, P.O. Box 8060, Mount Vernon, IL 62864-0060.



After you've been certified for accommodations on one College Board test (an AP, a SAT Subject Test, or the PSAT/NMSQT), you're certified for all, unless your need arises from a temporary medical condition. If you fall into that category, see the next section for more information.

File the form well in advance of the time you expect to take the test. Generally, if you're entitled to extra test time in your high school, you'll be eligible for extra time on the SAT. What does *extra time* really mean? Extra time equals 1½ the usual amount for each section. So if regular test-takers have 50 minutes to write the essay, for example, extended-timers get 75 minutes.

¡Atención! What every foreign student needs to know about the new SAT

First, welcome to the U.S.'s worst invention, the Seriously Annoying Test (SAT), which you're taking so that you can attend an American institution. Getting ready for this exam may make you consider another American institution, one with padded rooms and bars on the windows. But a high score on the new exam is certainly within reach for individuals who have studied English as a second language. Because the new SAT tests vocabulary in context, you can usually figure out the answer, even if you don't know the formal definition, by plugging in a **plausible** (reasonable) alternative word. As a foreign student, pay special attention to the vocabulary words in this book, which, like *plausible*, are defined in context. You may want to keep a notebook or a computer file of new words you come across as you work through the sample questions. Also, a number of questions on the new SAT involve visual data in the form of graphs, charts, and diagrams. These require little knowledge of English.

Be sure to turn your concentration up to “totally intense” in the math section of this chapter and **Chapter 3** because arithmetic doesn’t change from language to language. Neither does geometry or algebra. If you can crack the basic language used to put forth the problem, you should be able to score a ton of points.

Physical issues

At no additional charge, the SAT also provides wheelchair accessibility, large-print tests, and other accommodations for students who need them. The key is to submit the Eligibility Form early so that the College Board can ask for suitable documentation and set up appropriate test conditions for you. You can send paper documentation or file an Eligibility Form via the Internet. Check out www.collegeboard.com/students-with-disabilities for details.

If a physical problem (a broken arm, perhaps) occurs shortly before your scheduled SAT and you can’t easily take the exam at a later date, call the College Board (212-713-8333, TTY 609-882-4118), explain the situation, and have your physician fill out the forms requesting whatever accommodation you need.



Questions about special needs? Your high school’s counselor or principal can help, or you can email the College Board (ssd@info.collegeboard.org).

Financial help

If your special need resides in your wallet, you can apply for a fee waiver, which is available to low-income high-school juniors and seniors who live in the United States, Puerto Rico, and other American territories. (United States citizens living in other countries may also be eligible for fee waivers.) Not only does the College Board

waive its fee for the exam, but it also gives you four extra score reports for free. And, as they say on television infomercials, “Wait! There’s more!” When you apply to college, you usually have to pay an application fee. If the College Board has waived its fee, you receive four request forms for college application fee-waivers. Not a bad deal!

For any financial issues, check with your school counselor for fee-waiver applications. (As with everything to do with the SAT, if you’re a home-schooler, call the local high school for a form.) And be careful to avoid additional fees when you can. You run into extra charges for late or changed registration and for some extras — super-speedy scores, an analysis of your performance, and the like. (See the section “Scoring on the SAT,” later in this chapter, for more information on score-reporting options.)

Examining Your Mind: What the New SAT Tests

Reality isn’t just material for television shows anymore. It takes a starring role in the redesigned SAT. Nearly all the changes on the exam attempt to measure the skills you need to succeed in school and in the workplace. Gone are questions that fall into the “guessing game” category — sentence completions and recognition of grammar mistakes in random sentences, for instance. Questions on the new SAT tend to be longer and to rely more closely on the most common elements of the average school’s curriculum.

That said, the SAT is still just a snapshot of your mental **prowess** (ability) on one weekend morning. College admissions offices are well aware of this fact. No matter

how **rigorous** (tough, demanding) your high school is, other factors may influence your score, such as whether you deal easily with multiple-choice questions and how you feel physically and mentally on SAT day (fight with Mom? bad romance? week-old sushi?). Bottom line: Stop obsessing about the SAT's unfairness (and it is unfair) and prepare.



The college admission essay is a great place to put your scores in perspective. If you face some special circumstances, such as a learning disability, a school that doesn't value academics, a family tragedy, and so on, you may want to explain your situation in an essay. No essay wipes out the bad impression created by an extremely low SAT score, but a good essay gives the college a way to interpret your achievement and to see you, the applicant, in more detail. For help with the college admission essay, check out *College Admission Essays For Dummies*, by Geraldine Woods (published by Wiley).

The SAT doesn't test facts you studied in school; you don't need to know when Columbus sailed across the Atlantic or how to calculate the molecular weight of magnesium to answer an SAT question. Instead, the SAT takes aim at your ability to follow a logical sequence, to comprehend what you've read, and to write clearly in Standard English. The math portion checks whether you were paying attention or snoring when little details like algebra were taught. Check out the following sections for a bird's-eye view of the three SAT topics.

Reading

This portion of the exam used to be called Critical Reading, but for some reason the test-writers dropped

half of the name. However, reading-comprehension passages still play a **critical** (vital, essential) role in your SAT score. Besides dropping sentence completions — statements with blanks and five possible ways to fill them — reading-comprehension questions now ask you to choose among four, not five, possible answers. Here's what you see on the new SAT Reading section:

- ✓ **Quantity:** A total of four single passages plus one set of paired passages, each from 500 to 750 words long, with each passage or pair accompanied by 10 to 11 questions, for a total of 52 questions.
- ✓ **Content:** Two passages, or one passage and one pair, in science; one literary passage, either narrative fiction or nonfiction; and two passages, or one passage and one pair, in history/social studies. One of the history/social studies passages or pair deals with what the College Board calls the “Great Global Conversation” — a historical document, such as a presidential speech or a modern discussion of an issue relating to democracy and human rights.
- ✓ **Reading level:** Some passages on the 9th and 10th grade level, some on the college-entry level (12th grade and beyond).
- ✓ **Graphics:** Charts, tables, graphs, diagrams: one to two in science, and one to two in history/social studies.

Reading-comprehension questions are a mixture of literal (just the facts, ma'am) and interpretive/analytical. You'll be asked to choose the meaning of a word in context and to understand information presented graphically (though you don't need to know math to answer these questions). You may also have to assess the author's tone or point of view. At least two questions per

passage or pair ask you to recognize supporting evidence for your answer. Take a look at this pair of questions.



Tim was frantic to learn that the first GC-MP8 handheld was already in circulation. And here he was wasting his time in college! The degree that he had pursued so doggedly for the past three years now seemed nothing more than a gigantic waste of time. The business world, that's where he belonged, marketing someone else's technology with just enough of a twist to allow him to patent "his" idea. Yes, Tim now knew what he must do: Spend time with YouTube until he found an inventor unlikely to sue Tim for intellectual property theft.

In this passage, the word *his* is in quotation marks

- (A) because it's a pronoun
- (B) because the reader is supposed to hiss at Tim, whom everyone hates
- (C) to show that the idea is really someone else's
- (D) because the typesetter had some extra quotation marks

The best evidence for the answer to the preceding question is

- (A) "Tim was frantic . . . circulation."
- (B) "The degree . . . years now"
- (C) "The business world . . . belonged"
- (D) "marketing someone else's . . . twist"

Note: In the real exam, the lines will be numbered and the questions will include the line they're interested in.

The answer to the first question is Choice (C). These quotation marks refer to Tim's claim to "someone else's technology." Although he isn't quoted directly, the quotation marks around *his* imply that Tim says that a particular invention is his, when in fact it isn't.

The answer to the second question is Choice (D). As you see in the explanation to the first question, these words reveal that the technology isn't Tim's invention and support the correct answer, *to show that the idea is really someone else's*.

Writing and language

To the ***chagrin*** (disappointment or embarrassment) of English teachers everywhere, the new SAT Writing and Language section contains even less actual writing: one optional 50-minute essay analyzing the writing style of a passage you've never seen before plus 35 minutes' worth of short answers. Why so little writing? As those of us who sit with four-foot-high piles of essays on our laps know, it takes a long time to read student prose. The SAT test-makers must pay people to read and score essays — a much more expensive and time-consuming proposition than running a bubble sheet through a scanner. Here are the details.

The essay

The prompt, or question, never changes, but the passage does. You have to figure out the author's point of view, what he or she is arguing for or against. Then you must pick apart the passage, discussing *how* the author attempts to persuade the reader to accept this point of view. Finally, you get 50 minutes to write your own essay, describing what you've discovered. Your own ideas on the subject, by the way, are ***irrelevant*** (beside the point). The College Board doesn't care what you think; graders simply want to know whether you can identify

the relationship between style and content in someone else's work.



Many standardized tests may now be taken on a computer. The College Board has begun to move toward a computer-based SAT, too, at the speed of an elderly turtle. As of this writing, the computer-based SAT will be available at only a few sites. The College Board promises that at some point it will be everywhere. When? Don't hold your breath! No date has been given, and the College Board has never been famous for its speed in technical innovation. Currently, only those who have been certified as **dysgraphic** (having a learning disability that affects handwriting) may type the essay. For everyone else, handwriting is your only option. Start practicing your penmanship.

Multiple-choice questions

You get four passages, each from 400 to 450 words long, accompanied by 11 questions per passage. The passages represent fairly good student writing, but they all have room for improvement in grammar, punctuation, organization, logic, and style. The multiple-choice questions address those areas. In terms of content, you see one passage in each of these areas: careers, history/social studies, humanities, and science. One or two passages will make an argument for a particular idea, one or two may be informative or explanatory, and one will be a narrative. At least one passage (and probably more) includes a graphic element — a chart, table, diagram or graph relating to the subject matter. One question checks that the passage accurately represents the information in the graphic element. The questions may focus on a single word (to check your

vocabulary-in-context skill) or on the passage as a whole (to determine your ability to organize information).

Take a look at this example, which, on the real exam, would be part of a longer passage. Which answer best changes the underlined portion of the sentence?



Having been turned down by 15 major league baseball teams, Milton changed to basketball, and he succeeded in his goal where he was aiming to be a professional athlete.

- (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) in that he reached his goal of aiming to be a professional athlete
- (C) where he became a professional athlete
- (D) in his goal of becoming a professional athlete

The answer is Choice (D), because that version conveys the information smoothly and correctly. Did you notice that Choice (A) keeps the wording of the original passage? That's the design in most multiple-choice Writing and Language questions.

Mathematics

SAT math questions rely on Algebra II and some advanced topics in geometry, statistics, probability, and trigonometry. The new SAT Mathematics section contains one 55-minute section when you can use a calculator and one 25-minute section when you can't. Of the 57 questions, 45 are multiple-choice, in which you choose an answer from four possibilities, and 12 are *grid-ins*, in which you supply an answer and bubble in the actual number, not a multiple-choice letter. Whether calculator or no calculator, multiple-choice or grid-in

answer, each question is worth the same except for one grid-in question called Extended Thinking, which carries four times the weight of the other math questions.

Here's a sample multiple-choice problem:



If $xy - 12 = z$, and the value of x is 2, which of the following must be true?

- (A) $z = xy$
- (B) $y = 12 + z$
- (C) $z = 2y - 12$
- (D) $2y - z = 100$

Substitute 2 for x , and see which answer most closely resembles $2y - 12 = z$. The correct answer is Choice (C).

Scoring on the New SAT

The new SAT has a completely different scoring system. The goal is to give colleges an in-depth look at your performance. Scared? Don't be. If you take the exam more than once, as most people do, you can use the detailed information from your score reports to craft a personalized study program, zeroing in on the skills you need to **hone** (sharpen).

Types of scores

The redesigned SAT gives you many, many more scores than the older exam. Here's the deal:

- ✓ **Composite score:** This is the sum of Reading, Writing and Language, and Mathematics (400 to 1600 points). The maximum SAT score is 1600 (with a top score of