



TESTS UNCOVERED

the eBook

Learn what experts found out when they broke down the new SAT and revisions to the ACT.





Dear Reader,

The college admission tests have changed drastically, so our test prep experts—leveraging decades of experience—have worked tirelessly to decode the redesigned SAT and revisions to the ACT.

To share what we have learned with students, parents, and counselors, we created the Tests Uncovered eBook, with the hope of providing clarity and making this transition a bit more painless.

We dive deep into the types of questions you will find in each section of each exam, and we explain the content students will need to know to ace the test. We also provide a glimpse at sample questions, so you get a sense of what you will see on test day.

We hope that this comprehensive analysis of the redesigned SAT and revisions to the ACT will ease some of the anxiety that comes with these changes, will provide you with clear information, and will allow you to conquer this crucial step of the college admissions process.

Happy prepping!

Megan, *Senior Director of Instruction*

Lisa, *Director of Curriculum*

Jodie, *Manager of Instruction*



HERE'S WHAT WE'LL COVER

New SAT Reading Section

New SAT Writing & Language Section

New SAT Math Sections

New SAT Essay Section

Changes to the ACT

the
NEW SAT

**READING
SECTION**



WHAT WILL YOU LEARN ABOUT?

Evidence Questions

Graph Questions

Vocabulary Questions

Global Conversation Passage

Timing

EVIDENCE QUESTIONS *in New SAT Reading*

What does this question look like?

First, the test will ask a regular SAT question (we'll call it the Anchor Question). Maybe it will be a question about the author's tone or an inference you can draw from the passage.

After the Anchor Question will be a question asking you which lines in the passage "provide the best evidence for the answer to the previous question." You'll then see four line-numbers listed as answer choices. This is the *Evidence Question*.

Let's look at a couple examples.

Anchor Question

The author indicates that architectural trends of the nineteenth century, in comparison to the twentieth century, were

- A) less innovative but equally important.
- B) equally stagnant and less practical.
- C) more influential and better directed.
- D) more heterogeneous and less expensive.

Evidence Question

Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

- A) Lines 4–5 ("Resilient...sacrifices")
- B) Lines 18–21 ("London's...congestion")
- C) Lines 23–25 ("Increasingly...pragmatic")
- D) Lines 34–35 ("Yet scholars...irrevocably")

EVIDENCE QUESTIONS *in New SAT Reading*

Occasionally, the SAT will not bother with an Anchor Question. Instead, the Evidence Question will contain a point made by the author and ask you to find lines in the passage where the author discusses the point.

Evidence Question without an Anchor Question

Which choice best supports the argument that architecture is a reflection of thought rather than practice?

- A) Lines 10–12 (“Heroic...change”)
- B) Lines 65–67 (“Challenging...ever”)
- C) Lines 68–72 (“Architects...evolve”)
- D) Lines 72–74 (“Without...form”)

How often does this question appear?

These questions make up 10 out of the 52 Reading questions (19% of the section).

How does this compare to the old SAT (before 2016)?

The old SAT didn’t have Evidence Questions. Instead, students were naturally expected to use the passage to answer basic questions like the Anchor Question. Adding these new Evidence Questions forces students to prove their answers and show that they went back to the passage.

Is this question on the PSAT?

Absolutely. Expect the same number of Evidence Questions on the PSAT.

EVIDENCE QUESTIONS *in New SAT Reading*

What does this mean for students?

Don't be frightened by these questions! They actually help students. By forcing you to go back and find the lines that support your answer to the Anchor Question, you get a second shot at getting the Anchor Question right. If none of the lines referenced in the Evidence Question fit your answer to the Anchor, you know your first answer was wrong.

It's also helpful if you could only narrow the Anchor Question down to two answers. Looking at the lines that SAT writers thought were important in the Evidence Question will give you valuable clues for making a final decision on the Anchor Question.

GRAPH QUESTIONS *in New SAT Reading*

What does this question look like?

One or two of the passages on the test have some form of visual data. This data might appear as a bar graph, a line graph, a pie chart, a basic chart of numbers, or a diagram. Students normally see these graphs only on Social Science and Natural Science passages.

There are three types of questions that ask about these graphs:

What do the data say? These questions just ask students to read the data in the graph (see #1 on the next page). This type of question makes up 1/2 of all graph questions and is usually the easiest.

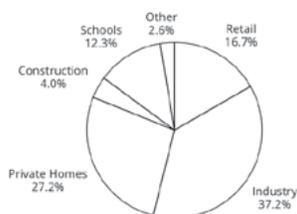
Do the data support the author? These questions ask students how the data relates to the argument of the passage (see #2 on the next page).

How would the author respond to the data? These questions ask students to predict how the passage might agree, disagree, or be modified based on the data in the graph.

Let's look at an example on the next page.

GRAPH QUESTIONS *in New SAT Reading*

**Percent of Recycled Materials in US
by Sector, 2010–2015**



**Annual Savings Due to Recycling
by Sector, 2010–2015**

SECTOR	ANNUAL SAVINGS (in millions of dollars)
Retail	5.1
Industry	26.2
Private Homes	29.0
Construction	0.5
Schools	4.9
Other	1.1
TOTAL	66.8

- Which statement is best supported by the data in the first figure?
 - The amount of material recycled by retail is greater than that recycled by industry.
 - Schools have run more recycling programs than construction projects have.
 - Private homes recycle more material than retailers do.
 - The amount of material recycled by construction and retail combined is equal to the amount recycled by industry.
- Do the data in the table support the author's argument about the economic efficiency of private sector recycling?
 - Yes, because private homes do not make up the largest percentage of recycled materials in the U.S. but do save the most money by recycling.
 - Yes, because construction makes up a small percentage of recycled materials in the U.S. and saves the least amount of money by recycling.
 - No, because private homes do not make up the largest percentage of recycled materials but do save the most money by recycling.
 - No, because construction makes up a small percentage of recycled materials in the U.S. and saves the least amount of money by recycling.

What is the subject of the following paragraph text?

Each test contains approximately 5–6 Graph Questions (approximately 10% of the section).

How does this compare to the old SAT?

The old SAT didn't have graphs in the Reading section, so these questions are entirely new. In many ways these questions look a lot like the Science section of the ACT. The SAT may have added these questions to try to match the ACT's content without going to the trouble of adding an entirely new section.

GRAPH QUESTIONS *in New SAT Reading*

Is this question on the PSAT?

Yes, but Graph Questions may make up a smaller portion of the PSAT, only 6–8% of the section.

What does this mean for students?

Graph Questions require that students learn an entirely new set of skills for the SAT. First, they must be sure they read carefully. Many of the questions ask students to look at only specific pieces of data in a chart. Precision is key. Second, Graph Questions often have many moving parts that students need to juggle (data, text, numbers, relationships, etc.). Learning to break down the questions and answers while keeping it all organized is fundamental to any test prep. Finally, students need to learn how to quickly search the text of the passage for specific details when asked how the author might respond to the graphs.

Also note that though these questions are similar to the ACT Science section, this does not mean that if you are bad with graphs and science, both the SAT and ACT now are equally hard for you. The graphs only make up 10% of one section on the new SAT and 100% of one section on the ACT and tend to be much easier.

VOCABULARY QUESTIONS *in New SAT Reading*

What does this question look like?

These questions ask a student to determine the definition of a word or phrase as it is used in the passage. Usually, the word from the passage is a common word we hear everyday, but it has two or more meanings (see #1 below). The trick for the student is to determine which meaning applies in the passage.

Let's look at an example.

1. As used in line 17, "weight" most nearly means
 - A. Burden
 - B. Influence
 - C. Force
 - D. Application

How often does this question appear?

Each test contains approximately 7–8 Vocabulary Questions (approximately 15% of the section).

How does this compare to the old SAT?

The old SAT also contained this type of Vocabulary question in exactly the same format. The major difference is that Vocabulary questions are now focused on familiar but multi-meaning words that require you to use context.

Is this question on the PSAT?

Yes, and it makes up a similar percentage of the exam.

What does this mean for students?

It is no longer as helpful for students to memorize large stacks of "SAT Vocabulary" flashcards. However, having a strong vocabulary will help with those questions that include difficult vocabulary in the answer choices. It is important for all students to learn how to find clues in the passage to decide which definition of the word applies.

GLOBAL CONVERSATION PASSAGE *in New SAT Reading*

What does this question look like?

The College Board added a new passage type to the redesigned exam: the Global Conversation or Founding Document Passage. It is a passage in the Reading section that comes from an important historical text on civic or political issues, such as democracy, equality, voting, or human rights.

These passages may be from any country or any period. Many of the released sample passages come from the 1700s and 1800s.

Examples of passages:

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* (U.S., 1963)
- The Seneca Falls Convention's *Declaration of Sentiments* (U.S., 1848)
- Frederick Douglass's *The Hypocrisy of American Slavery* (U.S., 1852)
- Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (U.S., 1775)
- Mary Wollenscraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (England, 1792)
- Mahatma Gandhi's *Statement at 1922 Trial* (India, 1922)

How often does this passage appear?

There is one Global Conversation Passage out of the test's five passages. There are no notations to alert students to which passage is this type.

The Paired Passage, which asks a student to compare two passages on the same topic, could be made up of Global Conversation Passages.

GLOBAL CONVERSATION PASSAGE *in New SAT Reading*

How does this compare to the old SAT?

The old SAT did not include this passage type. The old SAT also almost never included texts before 1900, so including texts from the 1700s and 1800s is a big shift.

Is this passage on the PSAT?

Yes. It is one of the five passages on every PSAT.

What does this mean for students?

These passages are difficult. In most of the released exams, the Global Conversation Passage is the most difficult passage. This difficulty comes partly from the periods in which the passages were written. Because many of the passages come from the 1700s and 1800s, the prose feels foreign to many students. The sentences are longer, more complex, and a bit archaic. Students will need to practice wading through older texts.

There's also been a lot of fear that these documents will be too American-centered. People were concerned that international students would be unfairly disadvantaged because they haven't taken American history or aren't as familiar with these themes. However, after seeing all of the released exams, it's pretty clear that the questions on these passages are still critical reading questions; they test if a student reads carefully. Familiarity with the theme (for example, the history of slavery or the author) would be helpful to quickly orient a student, but it's not necessary. In fact, it's somewhat like the advantage a student might have with any Reading passage. If the Science passage is about DNA and you've taken biology, you will probably catch on faster. But without a biology class under your belt, you will still be able to answer the questions.

Some people have also been talking about the importance of reading and learning all the historically important texts on politics and civic life. Going this far isn't necessary. Instead, to prepare for this passage, spend time familiarizing yourself with the common themes that appear in these texts.

What is the timing like on the new SAT Reading section?

A student has 65 minutes to complete the Reading section on the redesigned SAT. All of the passages on the exam are contained within this one section. The section is the first section of the test.

How does this compare to the old SAT?

The old SAT broke up Reading into three different sections. Each section was either 25 or 20 minutes long. Between each old section of Reading, students often had a Math or Writing section to give them a mental break.

Is the timing the same on the PSAT?

Nearly identical. On the PSAT, the Reading section is only 60 minutes, but there are fewer questions. Thus the time allotted per question is basically the same. Just as on the new SAT, students will see this section first on the PSAT and all the Reading passages come in one section.

What does this mean for students?

Probably the biggest hurdle on the new Reading section is the new timing. Students will have to first work on their endurance. Reading dense passages for 65 minutes without a break is extremely hard for even the best readers. Add in the stress of the test and the (traditionally) boring nature of these long passages, and the result is a long, hard slog. Students should practice reading for long periods of time before test day. Think of it like running a marathon: only by doing long runs to build your body's strength can you make it through all those miles.

Secondly, students need to be sure they are wide-awake and warmed up from the start. This long section is the very first section a student will see, so be sure to read something before the test starts. Make sure those reading muscles are warmed up! *(cont.)*

What does this mean for students? Cont.

Finally, students need to be aware of the clock and their pace as they move through the section. On the old test, because Reading was divided across multiple sections, students were forced to stay on pace by the proctor who called “pencils down” at the end of every section. This meant that if a student was thrown off by one hard passage and accidentally slowed down, it would only ruin pacing for 1/3 of the Reading score. The student could “reset” with the next Reading section. On the redesigned test, however, students need to keep a close eye on their pacing to be sure they don’t get thrown off early in the Reading, which could affect the entire section.

the
NEW SAT

WRITING & LANGUAGE SECTION



WHAT WILL YOU LEARN ABOUT?

Passages for Context

Passage Structure Questions

Vocabulary Questions

Argument Questions

Graph Questions

Punctuation Questions

Verb Questions

PASSAGES FOR CONTEXT *in New SAT Writing & Language*

What does this section look like?

The new SAT Writing section has 44 multiple-choice questions that must be completed in 35 minutes. The questions appear in four passages, each of which has 400–450 words. Portions of each passage are underlined and numbered to correspond with the questions.

Let's look at an example.

Greek yogurt business have found many methods of controlling and eliminating most environmental threats. Given these solutions as well as the many health benefits of the food, the advantages of Greek yogurt **1** outdo the potential drawbacks of its production.

[1] The main environmental problem caused by the production of Greek yogurt is the creation of acid whey as a by-product. [2] Because it requires up to four times more milk to make than conventional yogurt does, Greek yogurt produces larger amounts of acid whey, which is difficult to dispose of. [3] To address the problem of disposal, farmers have found a number of uses for acid whey. [4] They can add it to livestock feed as a protein

1

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) defeat
- C) outperform
- D) outweigh

2

- Which choice provides the most relevant detail?
- A) NO CHANGE
 - B) supplement and convert it into gas to use as fuel in electricity production.
 - C) supplement, while sweet whey is more desirable as a food additive for humans.
 - D) supplement, which provides an important element of their diet.

How much of the test is Writing?

A student's overall SAT score is made up of two main section scores: Reading/Writing and Math. The Writing test is half of the Reading/Writing score, meaning it's 25% of a student's total SAT score.

How does this compare to the old SAT?

The new SAT Writing section looks a lot like the current ACT English test. Gone are the single, stand-alone sentences testing a student's ability to quickly spot grammar errors. Now, students must consider questions in context. In other words, they must read full passages.

PASSAGES FOR CONTEXT *in New SAT Writing & Language*

How does this compare to the old SAT? (cont.)

If you've spent time preparing for the old SAT Writing section, don't despair. A lot of the skills tested on the old exam are still relevant. They're just presented in a new way.

Are Passages for Context on the PSAT?

Yes. Every PSAT includes a Writing section with Passages for Context. It also contains four passages and makes up 25% of your PSAT score.

What does this mean for students?

While passage-based Writing questions may sound intimidating, many students find them much more manageable. For starters, students can use the passages to get a feel for grammar and tone. With context, spotting and correcting grammar errors is much easier.

The new SAT Writing section has also eliminated the most difficult type of questions on the old SAT: the Identifying Sentence Error questions, in which students had to spot where the error was in a sentence without any context or corrections to consider. On the new exam, students will have plenty of context for each question (from both the passage and suggested corrections in each answer choice). More context means more clues, so students can "hear" the right answer.

PASSAGE STRUCTURE QUESTIONS *in New SAT Writing & Language*

What does this question look like?

These questions ask a student to correctly combine, order, or transition between sentences.

Let's look at an example.

[1] First, students lay their mats down on the floor side-by-side. [2] Then, they assume a comfortable position for some preliminary stretches. [3] When everyone is beginning to feel nice and relaxed, it's time to get into a plank position. [4] In this position, students are challenged to hold their abdominal muscles taut as they rest the majority of their weight on their forearms. **32**

32

The writer wants to add the following sentence to the paragraph.

Common stretches include gentle wrist, ankle, and neck rotations.

The best placement for the sentence is immediately

- A) before sentence 1.
- B) after sentence 1.
- C) after sentence 2.
- D) after sentence 3.

How often does this question appear?

There are approximately 9–11 Passage Structure Questions (24% of the section).

How does this compare to the old SAT?

The new SAT places more emphasis on passage organization compared to the old SAT. Whereas the old SAT dedicated no more than 12% of its Writing section to rhetoric, and even fewer questions to passage structure, the new SAT Writing section includes several structure questions per passage. These questions are also more context-based, so students must read the passages thoroughly in order to answer the questions correctly.

Is this question on the PSAT?

Yes. Passage Structure Questions make up approximately 15% of the Writing section on the PSAT. Given that there are fewer Passage Structure questions on the PSAT, a student's PSAT performance may not be a perfect indicator of his or her Passage Structure preparedness. Consider taking a practice SAT from a company that offers detailed score reports before sitting for an official exam.

PASSAGE STRUCTURE QUESTIONS *in New SAT Writing & Language*

What does this mean for students?

Read, read, and read some more! By reading more academic publications, you'll come to understand how effective passages are composed. While you're reading, pay attention to how authors introduce topics, sequence ideas, and transition between sentences and paragraphs. If you can put yourself in an author's shoes, you'll be more likely to make strong structural choices on test day.

Also, studying the most common transitions the SAT writers use and learning concrete clues to watch out for when ordering sentences and paragraphs will be key for your test prep.

VOCABULARY QUESTIONS *in New SAT Writing & Language*

What does this question look like?

These questions ask a student to select a word, phrase, or sentence that best matches the style of the passage as a whole.

Let's look at an example.

Vinyasa yoga offers many benefits: increased flexibility and strength, greater presence of mind, and better balance. Even those who **32** practice once a week begin to notice positive cognitive and physical changes relatively quickly.

32

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) engage
- C) observe
- D) do it

How often does this question appear?

There are approximately 3–5 Vocabulary Questions (10% of the section).

How does this compare to the old SAT?

These are a new question type on the SAT and closely mirror how vocabulary is tested on the ACT. Take note that these questions in the Writing section rely on the same skills that students will have to use for the Vocabulary questions in the new SAT Reading section.

Is this question on the PSAT?

Yes. Vocabulary Questions make up approximately 14% of the Writing section on the PSAT.

VOCABULARY QUESTIONS *in New SAT Writing & Language*

What does this mean for students?

Vocabulary-based questions are less formulaic than usage and mechanics questions. While many students may take naturally to this question-type, others who prefer to memorize and apply grammar rules will likely struggle more. If you have not already done so, be sure to take a SAT practice test to determine your personal areas of strength and weakness. If you find that vocabulary questions are not your style, try working with a tutor to strengthen your rhetorical skills and your familiarity with vocabulary that can have multiple meanings.

ARGUMENT QUESTIONS *in New SAT Writing & Language*

What does this question look like?

These questions ask a student to determine the purpose of a sentence or paragraph within the context of the passage's argument. Most Argument Questions test this skill-set by asking students if a sentence should be kept or deleted and why.

Let's look at an example.

Vinyasa yoga offers many benefits: increased flexibility and strength, greater presence of mind, and better balance. **32** Even those who practice once a week begin to notice positive cognitive and physical changes relatively quickly.

32

At this point, the writer is considering adding the following sentence.

Vinyasa yoga was made popular by K. Pattabhi Jois in the 20th century.

Should the writer make this addition here?

- A) Yes, because it supports the passage's main idea.
- B) Yes, because it is a welcome departure from a dry and uninterested tone.
- C) No, because it disrupts the logical progression and flow of ideas.
- D) No, because it is inaccurate.

How often does this question appear?

There are approximately 3–4 Argument Questions (8% of the section).

How does this compare to the old SAT?

The old SAT tested argumentation once or twice and only within the context of a very short passage. In contrast, the new SAT tests argumentation several times throughout four long passages.

Is this question on the PSAT?

Yes. Argument Questions make up approximately 13% of the Writing section on the PSAT.

ARGUMENT QUESTIONS *in New SAT Writing & Language*

What does this mean for students?

Students who wish to do well on Argument Questions should become familiar with the overall structure and theme of various passages. Practice identifying main ideas, supporting details, transitions, and conclusions. Then, use your knowledge of the passage to determine if a proposed revision supports or detracts from the author's central argument. If this sounds like a tall order, don't worry. Argument Questions are one of the easiest question types to answer once you learn the correct strategies. Consider working with a tutor who can introduce you to the various types of Argument Questions you'll see on test day and show you how to approach them. These questions are a bit different from what most students see in school. However, once you master them, you'll find them quite manageable.

GRAPH QUESTIONS *in New SAT Writing & Language*

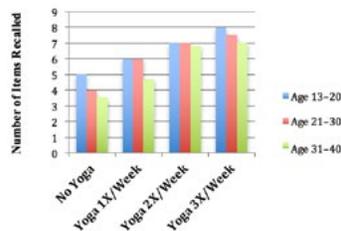
What does this question look like?

One or two of the passages in this section have some form of graphical data that relates to the passage. This data might appear in a pie chart, a map, a scatter plot, a bar graph, etc. Sometimes the graph is part of the passage. At other times the graph will be part of a question.

These questions will ask which answer choice provides the most “accurate interpretation of the graph” or how to change the passage to best match the graph’s data.

Let’s look at an example.

One way yoga improves the mind is by increasing memory. Indeed, individuals who practice yoga tend to perform better on memory recall tests than individuals of a similar age who do not practice yoga.



33

Which choice offers the most accurate and complete interpretation of the data in the graph?

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) Despite this fact some adults still perform surprisingly well on memory tests.
- C) Indeed, individuals who practice yoga retain more and more information with age.
- D) Even practicing once a week can help the individual to achieve his or her memory recall potential.

How often does this question appear?

There are approximately 1–2 Graph Questions (3% of the section).

How does this compare to the old SAT?

The old SAT didn’t have graphs in the Writing section, so these questions are entirely new.

Is this question on the PSAT?

Yes, Graph Questions make up approximately 1–3 questions on the PSAT (5% of the section).

GRAPH QUESTIONS *in New SAT Writing & Language*

What does this mean for students?

As in the new SAT Reading section where Graph Questions have also been added, students need to learn an entirely new set of skills for Writing questions of this type. Students need to slow down and read the data carefully. There will be a lot to read on these questions (numbers, words, graphics, etc.) in order to get them right. But take heart! Students often find the Graph Questions on the Writing section a bit easier than those on the Reading section, so use Writing as a “first step” when learning these skills.

PUNCTUATION QUESTIONS *in New SAT Writing & Language*

What does this question look like?

These questions ask a student to select the correct punctuation mark(s) to use in a sentence. Commonly tested punctuation marks include commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, dashes, and periods.

Let's look at an example.

Vinyasa yoga offers many **32** benefits: increased flexibility and strength, greater presence of mind, and better balance. Even those who practice once a week begin to notice positive cognitive and physical changes relatively quickly.

32

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) benefits;
- C) benefits,
- D) benefits

How often does this question appear?

There are approximately 5–6 Punctuation Questions (13% of the section).

How does this compare to the old SAT?

The old SAT did not directly test punctuation. Instead, students used other clues to bypass any punctuation marks they didn't know. On the redesigned exam, students must know proper punctuation rules in order to answer these questions correctly.

Is this question on the PSAT?

Yes. Punctuation Questions make up approximately 10% of the Writing section on the PSAT.

PUNCTUATION QUESTIONS *in New SAT Writing & Language*

What does this mean for students?

Students who wish to do well on the new SAT Writing & Language section should learn their punctuation rules, especially commas and semicolons. You'd be surprised how often people misuse these marks—in news articles, books, social media, and even academic journals! If you're not absolutely sure how a punctuation mark works, take some time to study independently or with a tutor.

VERB QUESTIONS *in New SAT Writing & Language*

What does this question look like?

These questions ask a student to select the correct form of a verb within the context of a passage.

Let's look at an example.

Vinyasa yoga **32** offers many benefits: increased flexibility and strength, greater presence of mind, and better balance. Even those who practice once a week begin to notice positive cognitive and physical changes relatively quickly.

32

- A) NO CHANGE
- B) has offered
- C) offered
- D) offer

How often does this question appear?

There are approximately 3–5 Verb Questions (9% of the section).

How does this compare to the old SAT?

The old SAT tested verb tense more frequently than the redesigned SAT does. However, the old SAT also offered more clues per question. These clues helped students determine correct answers despite gaps in knowledge. Thus, a student who might not have understood verb tense rules may have used other parts of the question to identify the correct response. On the new SAT, students do not have these clues to draw from. Instead, students need to fully understand the rules of verb agreement and tense to get these questions correct.

Is this question on the PSAT?

Yes. Verb Questions make up approximately 9% of the Writing section on the PSAT.

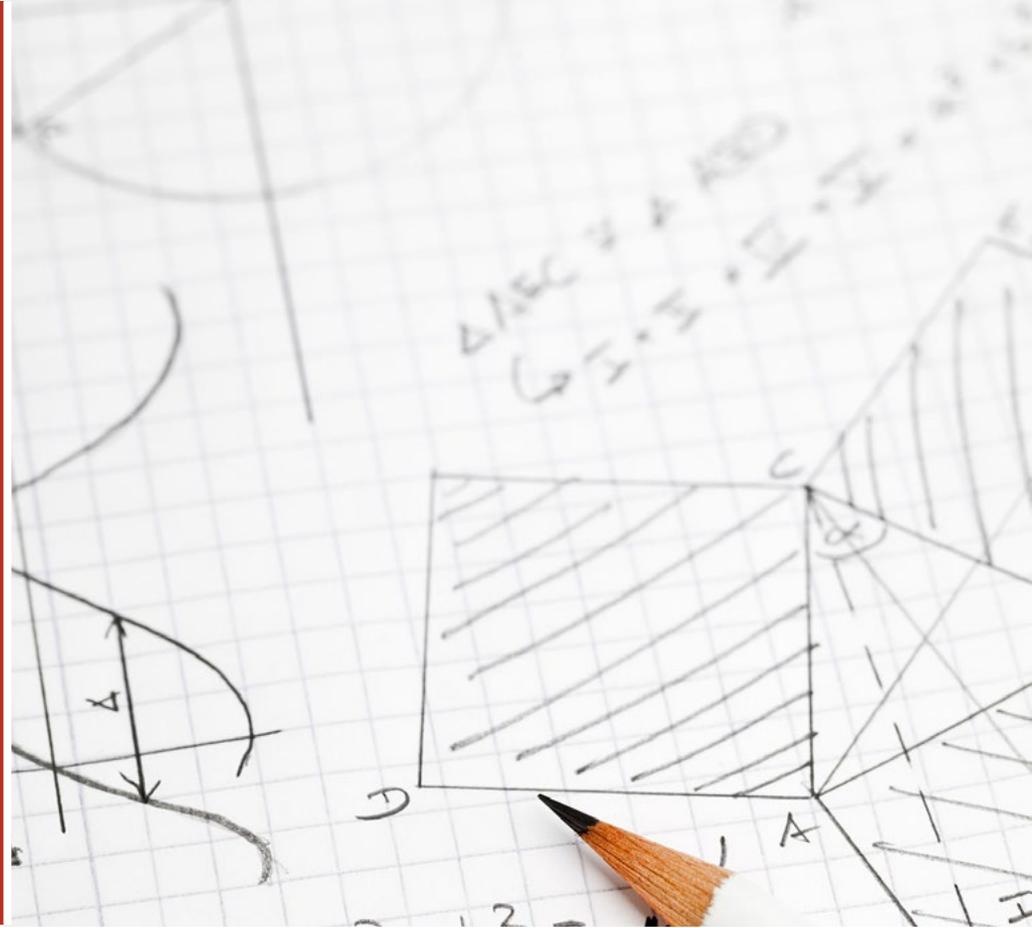
VERB QUESTIONS *in New SAT Writing & Language*

What does this mean for students?

Students who wish to do well on the new SAT Writing section should learn their verb rules. It's not enough to know simple past, present, or future tenses. The new SAT tests past and perfect tense as well as agreement between subjects and verbs. If you're feeling rusty with verb tense and/or usage, take some time to study independently or with a tutor.

the
NEW SAT

—
**MATH
SECTIONS**



WHAT WILL YOU LEARN ABOUT?

No-Calculator Section

Heart of Algebra Questions

Problem Solving & Data Analysis Questions

NO-CALCULATOR SECTION *in New SAT Math*

What does this section look like?

The No-Calculator section has 20 questions to be completed in 25 minutes.

Multiple-Choice Questions	15
Student-Produced Responses (Grid-Ins)	5

Like the Calculator section, the No-Calculator section begins with a reference box, which includes several relevant math formulas and figures that a student can use on the test.

How much of the test is No-Calculator?

The No-Calculator section contains fewer questions than the Calculator section. As a result, the No-Calculator section only contributes to 34% of your total Math score.

How does this compare to the old SAT?

Students were permitted to use approved calculators for all Math questions on the old SAT. On the redesigned SAT, there are two different types of Math sections: one permitting the use of a calculator and one prohibiting it.

Is the No-Calculator Section on the PSAT?

Yes. Every PSAT also includes a No-Calculator Section. It is one of two Math sections and forms 35% of your PSAT Math score.

What does this mean for students?

While the concept of “No Calculator” may sound intimidating, there are a few concrete steps students can take to improve their performance in this section:

NO-CALCULATOR SECTION *in New SAT Math*

Write it out

Immediately write down everything you know about the problem. It's no good to keep it in your head. You're using your head enough!

This advice is especially true for word problems. Here, the writers will present you with a lot of information at once. Read the problem sentence by sentence and write down what you know as you go.

Master the basics

Practice outside the SAT. You may be surprised by how much you've been relying on your calculator in everyday classes. Try practicing math in or out of school without a calculator. The more you practice, the faster and more accurate you will become.

Work backwards

Problems on the redesigned SAT try to trick you into doing a lot of complicated math. However, this is rarely (if ever) the most efficient way to solve a No-Calculator SAT problem. Sometimes testing the answer choices directly is faster.

Look for shortcuts

One of the hardest elements of the No-Calculator section is the time constraint. You must find ways to get to answers quickly, instead of always completing the questions the "traditional" way you might in school. For example, a question may ask:

If $7(2x + 3) = 77$, what is the value of $2x + 3 - 1$?

Many students would do this question the "traditional" way by solving for x in the first equation, then plugging that value into the second equation, a process that involves up to seven steps. However, if you spot that $(2x + 3)$ appears in both equations, you can simply stop after you've isolated $(2x + 3)$ in the first equation and plug that value into the second. Taking this shortcut requires only two steps instead of seven!

HEART OF ALGEBRA QUESTIONS *in New SAT Math*

What does this question look like?

The new SAT contains a number of questions that the College Board calls the “Heart of Algebra”. There is especially an emphasis on solving systems of equations, solving polynomials, and interpreting algebraic equations in real-world scenarios.

Let’s look at an example.

$$3a + 2b = 33$$

$$a - 5b = -2a - 9$$

1. Based on the system of equations above, what is the sum of a and b ?

- A. -1
- B. 5
- C. 7
- D. 13

How often does this question appear?

Each test contains 25 Heart of Algebra Questions (45% of the total Math score). A much larger percentage of the No-Calculator section is made up of these questions (70% of the No-Calculator section versus 29% of the Calculator section).

How does this compare to the old SAT?

The old SAT also tested algebra, but it now makes up a larger part of the redesigned test. This is because the new SAT contains less geometry. The College Board now thinks algebra is more important than geometry for college and real life. The Heart of Algebra Questions on the new test also include many more systems of equations (see example #1 on previous page) and ask students to prove they truly understand how equations work.

HEART OF ALGEBRA QUESTIONS *in New SAT Math*

Is this question on the PSAT?

Yes, and it makes up the same percentage of the test as on the SAT.

What does this mean for students?

Brush up on those algebra skills. For some juniors and seniors, Algebra 1 was a class they took years ago. For others, Algebra 2 may be a class they haven't finished yet. Students not only have to review how to solve for a variable but also how to carefully translate real world situations into equations and vice versa.

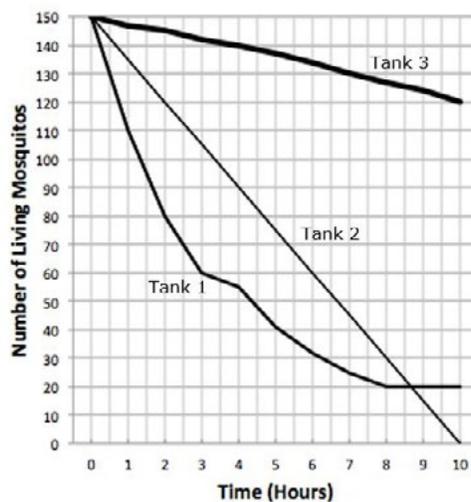
The heavy emphasis on algebra in the No-Calculator section means that students need to know how to quickly solve algebraic expression AND that some of the traditional test prep tricks—like plugging in numbers—may be time consuming and not as helpful. A strong foundation in algebra is key!

PROBLEM SOLVING & DATA ANALYSIS QUESTIONS *in New SAT Math*

What does this question look like?

The new SAT contains a number of questions that involve charts/graphs and statistical measures. These questions test your ability to summarize and manipulate data. They may ask you to compare averages, interpret a graph, interpret the standard deviation, or find the line of best fit for a scatterplot.

Let's look at an example.



An etymologist is studying the impact of insecticides on mosquitos. She sets up three tanks, each filled with a different insecticide. She then introduces 150 living mosquitos to each of the tanks when $t = 0$, where t equals the number of hours that have passed since the beginning of the experiment. The tanks are then sealed so that no mosquitos can escape. Every hour she returns to the tank to count the number of mosquitos that have died and the number that remain alive. The data from the etymologist's experiment for each tank are shown above. Which of the following statements is reflected in the graph above?

- A. For the first 2 hours, the number of dead mosquitos is increasing at a faster rate in Tank 1 than in Tank 2.
- B. Over the final 2 hours, the number of living mosquitos in Tank 2 stabilizes.
- C. At time $t = 0$, Tank 2 has no living mosquitos remaining.
- D. At time $t = 3$, the number of living mosquitos in Tank 3 is approximately 10% of the original number of living mosquitos in the tank.

PROBLEM SOLVING & DATA ANALYSIS QUESTIONS *in New SAT Math*

How often does this question appear?

Each test contains 10–15 Problem Solving and Data Analysis Questions (20% of the total Math score). All of these questions appear on the Calculator section of the exam.

How does this compare to the old SAT?

The old SAT also tested data analysis, but data analysis now makes up a larger part of the test. This is because the new SAT contains less geometry. The College Board thinks data analysis is more important for college and real life.

There are also new data analysis concepts on the new SAT. These new concepts (standard deviation, sampling, etc.) may be harder than the data analysis required on the old SAT.

Is this question on the PSAT?

Yes, and it makes up approximately the same percentage of the test as the SAT.

What does this mean for students?

Slow down. Many students rush through charts and graphs because they look easy. But attention to detail is key when tackling these problems. These questions also tend to have lengthy descriptions to introduce the data. Carefully read all parts of the question to be sure you answer it correctly.

You should also review data analysis concepts such as mean, median, mode, standard deviation, margins of error, confidence intervals, and sampling before taking the test.

the
NEW SAT
—
ESSAY



WHAT WILL YOU LEARN ABOUT?

The Essay Passage

What to Write

Scoring

THE ESSAY PASSAGE *on the New SAT*

When does this section appear?

The Essay appears at the end of the SAT exam, so that students who opt out of the Essay section can leave early. Students who sit for the Essay will read the passage first and then craft an analysis of its argumentative structure and literary devices.

What does this section look like?

The new SAT Essay passage is a 650–750 word speech or article intended for a broad audience. The Essay may or may not be taken from a recognizable source. Fortunately, you won't need any outside knowledge about the passage to get a great score on this section. You will have 50 minutes to read the passage and write your essay. The Essay section is also optional.

How does this compare to the old SAT?

The old SAT Essay didn't have a passage. Instead, it gave a student a quote and a question, and the student would write a persuasive essay in response. That essay could use any evidence from history, literature, or the student's own life. Now, the student must focus only on the passage given and determine what makes the passage persuasive.

Secondly, the Essay used to be the first section of the old SAT. Now, it's the last.

Thirdly, students only had 25 minutes on the old SAT Essay but are given double that time on the new exam.

Finally, the Essay section is now optional. Students only need to take it if their colleges require it for admissions.

Is this section on the PSAT?

No. The PSAT does not include the Essay.

THE ESSAY PASSAGE *on the New SAT*

What does this mean for students?

You must now be a strong writer *and* reader to earn a good score on the new SAT Essay. Try to reserve at least a few minutes to read and closely analyze the passage. While you're reading, think about what makes the passage compelling or persuasive. High scoring essays show an understanding of both the passage author's meaning and use of persuasive elements.

Now that the Essay is optional, it will be vital for you to know whether or not you need to spend time preparing for the Essay and money paying for the section's registration fee. Familiarize yourself with the application requirements of the colleges you plan to apply to and speak with your college counselor before taking the exam.

WHAT TO WRITE *on the New SAT Essay*

What should your Essay look like?

The new SAT provides you with four, lined pages for your Essay. You should try to use as much space as possible; longer essays tend to score better. This is especially true now that students have twice as much time and space to craft their essays. You should divide your essay into distinct paragraphs: one intro paragraph, at least two body paragraphs, and one conclusion paragraph.

How does this compare to the old SAT?

The old SAT Essay was an opinion piece spanning a maximum of two, lined pages. The prompt would present the student with an ethical question, and the student would take a stance on the issue using outside examples to support his claims. To get a high score, students often merely memorized a few well-known literary or historical examples and then catered those examples to the question they encountered on test day. For example, a student who liked Shakespeare might have memorized the main characters and key events in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Then, he would have a ready-made example for any prompt asking about themes such as individuality, cooperation, violence, or fate. The Essay structure was also quite simple. If the student had two examples to support his claims, he could easily create a basic, four-paragraph Essay including an introduction, two supporting example paragraphs, and a conclusion.

On the new SAT, students must focus on another writer's argument, not their own. Instead of memorizing canned examples, students must memorize common stylistic or literary devices and then find them in a given passage. This new Essay task automatically makes the structure a bigger challenge. While students still need to write an introduction and conclusion, they also need to decide how they want to organize their body paragraphs. Gone are the days of two parallel body paragraphs that focus on examples to support the thesis. Instead, students need to organize their body paragraphs around their chosen literary devices or work through the passage content chronologically.

WHAT TO WRITE *on the New SAT Essay*

What does this mean for students?

The new SAT Essay is very similar to the Free Response section of the AP English Literature and Language exams. Students who are well-versed in these courses will find several opportunities to showcase their knowledge. If you plan to write the SAT Essay but have not yet taken these courses, consider picking up an AP English prep book or meeting with a tutor to practice reading and analyzing essays. Not only can a tutor introduce you to the terms and concepts you will want to know for the exam, but can also provide feedback on your essays so you know exactly what to expect on test day.

How is the new Essay scored?

Students receive three separate Essay scores: Reading, Analysis, and Writing. Each score gauges a distinct attribute of the essay. Two graders score a student's essay, and each grader assigns a score from 1–4 point for each of these attributes. The scores are then combined to form three separate scores from 2–8. For example, a student might receive a score of 5, 7, 6, meaning a 5 out of 8 for Reading, a 7 out of 8 for Analysis, and a 6 out of 8 for Writing.

What does the rubric look like?

The complete new SAT Essay rubric looks a little intimidating at first glance. However, it repeats the same themes again and again. We've included a few key elements here, but you can reference an abridged version of the College Board's rubric at the end of this chapter.

Reading: This score measures how well a student comprehends the passage.

- Does she correctly identify the passage's main idea?
- Does she show how passage details reinforce that main idea?
- Does she make any factual errors?
- Does she reference the right parts of the passage?

Analysis: This score measures how well a student analyzes a passage.

- Does she relate each of her arguments back to a central claim?
- Does she explain how the author develops his argument?
- Does she give examples of the author's argumentative techniques?
- Does she stay focused on the most important parts of the passage?

SCORING *on the New SAT Essay*

Writing: This score measures how well a student writes an analytical essay.

- Does it have a thesis?
- Does it have an introduction, body, and conclusion?
- Is there enough sentence variety to keep the reader engaged?
- Did she choose the right words to express herself?
- Are there any spelling or grammar errors that make it difficult to understand her essay?

How does this compare to the old SAT?

Three Scores

The old SAT rubric assigned just one grade based on an overall impression of the Essay. Now, students receive three equally important scores. These scores measure how well a student reads, interprets, and analyzes a passage as well as how effectively she crafts her own essay. So, a student who analyzes passages well but struggles with spelling and grammar will still have an opportunity to showcase her strengths on test day.

Smaller Scale

We should also note that the new SAT Essay is graded on a smaller scale. Whereas the old SAT essay graders evaluated the essay on a scale of 1–6, new graders must select scores from 1–4. Old graders were expected to assign scores within one point of one another, so they were very reluctant to assign extremely high or low scores. With the change in scale, however, graders will likely be more willing to assign “very high” scores (i.e. 4) or “very low” scores (i.e. 1) because these scores are not as far from the middle as they used to be.

Optional

The biggest scoring difference between the old and new SAT Essay is that the new SAT Essay is no longer required. Whereas the old SAT Essay determined one-third of a student’s Writing section score, the new SAT Essay is an optional section scored on its own.

SCORING *on the New SAT Essay*

What does this mean for students?

If you prepped for the old SAT Essay, do not despair. A lot of what you learned still applies. For example, high-scoring essays must be as long as possible, organized by paragraph, and primarily made up of evidence and analysis. However, the new essay has added several elements you'll want to be familiar with before test day. Take some time to review the rubric and then consider sitting for a practice exam. If possible, try to take your practice exam with a tutor or company that offers complimentary SAT scoring.

SCORING *on the New SAT Essay*

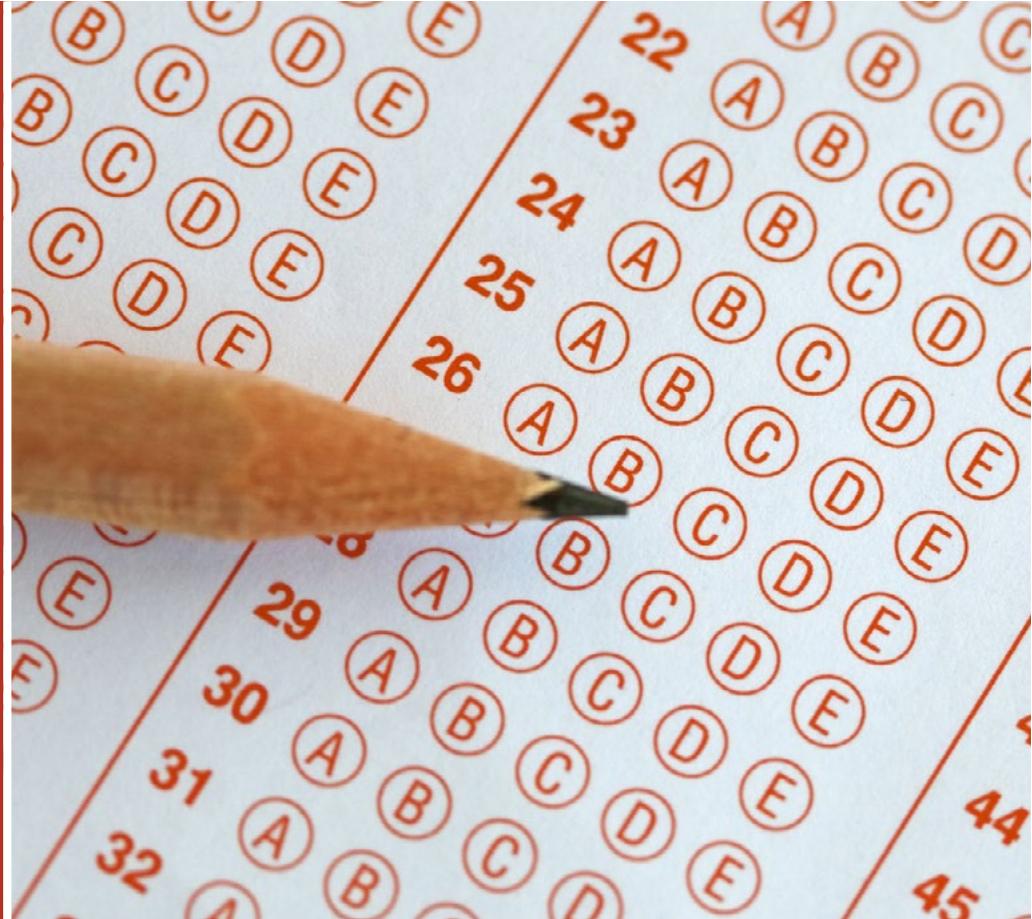
The following rubric has been adapted from the College Board's Official Guide to the SAT.

SCORE	Reading	Analysis	Writing
4 (Advanced)	<p>Clearly understands passage.</p> <p>Effectively draws connections between passage's main idea and supporting details.</p> <p>Free of interpretation errors.</p> <p>Skillful use of evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both).</p>	<p>Insightfully analyzes the passage.</p> <p>Thoroughly evaluates the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or rhetorical devices.</p> <p>Contains relevant, sufficient, and strategically chosen support for claims made.</p> <p>Consistently focuses on the most relevant parts of the passage.</p>	<p>Highly effective command of language and progression of ideas.</p> <p>Free of grammar and spelling errors.</p> <p>Contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a precise central claim - a skillful introduction and conclusion - wide sentence variety - precise word choice - objective tone
3 (Proficient)	<p>Understands passage.</p> <p>Draws connections between passage's main idea and supporting details.</p> <p>Free of major interpretation errors.</p> <p>Appropriate use of evidence.</p>	<p>Effectively analyzes the passage.</p> <p>Competently evaluates the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or rhetorical devices.</p> <p>Contains relevant and sufficient support for claims made.</p> <p>Primarily focuses on the most relevant parts of the passage.</p>	<p>Mostly effective command of language and progression of ideas.</p> <p>Few grammar and spelling errors.</p> <p>Contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a central claim - an effective introduction and conclusion - some sentence variety - some precise word choice - objective tone
2 (Partial)	<p>Partially understands passage.</p> <p>Understands passage's central idea(s) but not important details.</p> <p>Contains some interpretation errors.</p> <p>Limited use of evidence.</p>	<p>Limited analysis of the passage.</p> <p>Partially, insufficiently, or inaccurately describes the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or rhetorical devices.</p> <p>Contains little to no support for claim(s) made.</p> <p>Lacks clear focus on the most relevant parts of the passage.</p>	<p>Little or insufficient control of language and progression of ideas.</p> <p>Grammar and spelling errors that impede understanding.</p> <p>Lacks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a clear central claim - an effective introduction and conclusion - objective tone <p>Contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited sentence variety - imprecise word choice
1 (Inadequate)	<p>Does not understand most or all of the passage.</p> <p>Does not understand passage's central idea.</p> <p>Contains numerous interpretation errors.</p> <p>Does not use enough or any evidence.</p>	<p>No analysis or ineffective analysis of the passage.</p> <p>Does not explain author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements.</p> <p>Lacks focus on most relevant parts of passage.</p> <p>Contains little to no relevant support for claim(s) made.</p>	<p>Inadequate control of language and no clear progression of ideas.</p> <p>Numerous grammar and spelling errors that impede understanding.</p> <p>Lacks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a clear central claim - any introduction or conclusion - objective tone <p>Contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no sentence variety - imprecise word choice

Changes to the

ACT

—
**ESSAY &
SCORING**



WHAT WILL YOU LEARN ABOUT?

What to Expect on the New Writing Prompt

What to Write for the New Writing Prompt

Understanding the Revised ACT Score Report

WHAT TO EXPECT *on the ACT Writing Prompt*

What does the prompt look like?

The issue: The new ACT Writing Prompt begins with a full paragraph providing background on a general issue. This paragraph does not take a specific position on the issue. Instead it explores why the issue is relevant in today's society.

Three perspectives: After the issue paragraph, you will see three different perspectives. Each perspective may offer a one-sided, multi-sided, or conditional approach to the issue. This section is perhaps the most obvious change to the ACT Writing Prompt.

Essay task: Next, you'll see an essay task box. The essay task box will include instructions for completing the essay. This box is always the same. Students should become familiar with these tasks now so they don't have to read them during the test.

Planning your essay: The last part of the prompt includes a list of questions to get students thinking about how to analyze the perspectives. This list is a useful brainstorming tool, but students are not limited to just these questions.

How does this compare to the old ACT?

The ACT has changed the way it times and scores the essay.

Timing: Students now have 40 minutes to write their essays as opposed to 30 minutes.

Scoring: Students receive sub scores from 1-12 under the following categories:

- Ideas and Analysis
- Development and Support
- Organization
- Language Use

WHAT TO EXPECT *on the ACT Writing Prompt*

These sub scores are then scaled to generate a score out of 12.

The Writing section is still optional. However, some college require it.

What does this mean for students?

Students who prepared for the old ACT essay can apply much of what they learned to the new ACT Writing Prompt. The prompt still requires students to look critically at an issue, develop persuasive argumentation, maintain clear structure and organization, and incorporate precise, skillful language.

The key difference is in using the three perspectives. Students must now incorporate at least two of the provided perspectives throughout their essays. They will also have more time to write their essays.

WHAT TO WRITE *for the ACT Writing Prompt*

What should a student write?

Perspective: A student must reference at least two of the three provided perspectives to form an argument. She can directly refer to these perspectives by number (i.e. “Perspective 1”, “Perspective 2”, or “Perspective 3”) or indirectly refer to them by concept. In either case, references should be clear and easy to detect.

Position: Students should use the provided perspectives to form their own positions on the issue. It’s not enough to simply agree or disagree with any given perspective. Instead, students should discuss the perspective’s strengths, weaknesses, and persuasiveness to build a convincing argument.

Panache: There are plenty of ways students can distinguish themselves on ACT Writing. First, students should organize their essays in a clear and logical manner. Each paragraph must present a new idea. Second, students should use multiple types of evidence to support their claims. Current events, historical precedent, and personal anecdotes are just a few ways students can create compelling arguments. Finally, students should use critical thinking to acknowledge the weaknesses in their own arguments. If the weakness has a clear solution, write about it. If the weakness isn’t that harmful, explain why.

How does this compare to the old ACT?

The three provided perspectives form the biggest change to the ACT Writing section. Before, students could simply agree or disagree with a proposed policy. Now, students must build off of multiple arguments to form their own.

Students also have a little more time to write their essays. In contrast to the old 30-minute essay, students have 40 minutes to complete the Writing section. That doesn’t mean students should waste time, though. Graders will look for more content and analysis to accompany this change.

WHAT TO WRITE *for the ACT Writing Prompt*

What does this mean for students?

The new ACT Writing section remains a very coachable test. Students can prepare by crafting practice essays that address multiple perspectives, acknowledge argument weaknesses, and develop persuasive paragraphs. Thus far, ACT has released a limited number of sample ACT Writing prompts. ArborBridge's curriculum writers have created several more samples students can use to practice their writing. If you'd like help preparing for the new Writing test, contact one of our ACT experts today!

UNDERSTANDING THE REVISED ACT SCORE REPORT

What's staying the same?

Students will still receive a score for each of the core sections (English, Math, Reading, and Science) out of 36. These four scores are averaged and rounded to the nearest whole number to create a student's Composite Score out of 36. This Composite Score is the score colleges usually look at as your "ACT Score."

Additionally, the score report still shows you subscores for various skills in each section. For example, in Math you will still see subscores for "Pre/Elementary Algebra," "Algebra/Coordinate Geometry," and "Plane Geometry/Trig." These subscores are out of 18 and give you a better idea of what to work on in each section.

What's changing?

The major changes to the score report are changes to the **Writing score**, as well as the addition of **ELA** and **STEM** indicators. *None of these additions will impact your Composite Score—they merely look at your test results from a different perspective.*

The Writing Score:

Previously, the Writing section containing the essay was graded only on a 2–12 scale. Now, the score report also includes the following four subscores (each out of 12 points) that contribute to your total Writing section score.

- Ideas and Analysis
- Development and Support
- Organization
- Language Use

UNDERSTANDING THE REVISED ACT SCORE REPORT

English and Language Arts (ELA):

The English and Language Arts (ELA) indicator is a combination of your English, Reading, and Writing scores. A student must take all three ELA sections (English, Reading, Writing) to receive this indicator. If you elect to skip the Writing section, you will not receive an ELA score. This indicator did not exist on old ACT score reports.

STEM Score:

The new STEM indicator is a combination of your Math and Science scores. Like the ELA indicator, the STEM indicator did not exist on old ACT Score Reports.

Other New Scores

The ACT will also include two other new indicators: Understanding Complex Texts and Progress Toward Career Readiness. These scores draw from different parts of the tests to assign you a score based on your overall career and college readiness.

What does this mean for students?

Very little, generally speaking. Colleges will continue to look primarily at your Composite Score. However, you can use these indicators to guide your test prep because they show you where you might need more practice.

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