

6 Skills You Need to Master for the SAT

The SAT tests your Reading & Writing and Math skills—and preparing for what’s on the test is important if you want to perform your best. Here are six skills you should master as you get ready for the SAT.

Reading & Writing

- **Choosing words in context:** For questions that ask you to select a word that completes a text with the most logical word or phrase, think about the context and not just about what word sounds best in the sentence. Who or what must the word in the blank describe? What else do you know about that person or thing? Then, come up with your own word or phrase to put in the blank, and choose the answer that’s the best match.
- **Identifying the author’s purpose:** Consider the tone and theme of the passage. Ask yourself what a specific line contributes to the passage and why the author included it or why the author wrote the passage as a whole.
- **Connecting clauses:** Identify the independent and dependent clauses within a sentence. Make sure you know the rules for using periods, semicolons, colons, commas, and dashes between clauses.
- **Transitioning between ideas:** Read the sentence before the one with the blank as well as the sentence that contains the blank. Ask yourself how the two ideas relate, and pick the answer choice that connects the ideas accordingly.

Math

- **Solving systems of equations:** Know how to use the substitution technique or the elimination method—whichever you’re more comfortable with—to solve more challenging questions, and how to use the SAT’s built-in Desmos calculator to solve the easier ones.
- **Using Desmos effectively:** Understand when and how to use Desmos’ graphing and scientific calculators to easily solve questions that involve graphs, systems of equations, averages, quadratics, and more.

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