**What is the SAT?**

The SAT is a standardized test required for admission to colleges and universities in the USA. The SAT is different from UK SATS tests.

The SAT is a paper-and-pencil test administered by The College Board that measures your critical thinking skills. It tests your ability to analyze and solve problems in math, critical reading, and writing.

**Who should take the SAT?**

If you’re doing your AS/A levels and you want to apply to study a degree programme in the US, you’ll most likely have to take the SAT. Most students in the UK take the SAT in the lower year of their AS/A levels, which allows them to prepare for and take any SAT Subject Test later on. This also gives them time to re-take the SAT Test if they were not pleased with their first set of results. Don’t worry if you have to re-take the test! Most US students will take the SAT at least twice.

Remember the US university application process is quite lengthy compared to the UK application process to universities. So the earlier you take the SAT Test the better. This allows you time to focus on your finals and the remainder of the university application process.

**Structure**

The SAT is 3 hours and 45 minutes long and is divided into the following sections:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Average Score** | **Time (Minutes)** | **Content** |
| Writing | 493 | 60 | Grammar, usage, and diction. |
| Mathematics | 515 | 70 | Number and operations; algebra and functions; geometry; statistics, probability, and data analysis |
| Critical Reading | 501 | 70 | Vocabulary, Critical reading, and sentence-level reading |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Section | Length | Question Types | No. of Questions |
| Critical Reading | Two 25-minute sections One 20-minute section | Sentence Completion Reading Comprehension | 19 48 |
| Math | Two 25-minute sections One 10-minute section | Multiple Choice Grid-Ins | 44 10 |
| Writing | One 25-minute section One 10-minute section One 25-minute essay | Identifying Sentence Errors Improving Sentences Improving Paragraphs | 18 25 6 |
| Experimental | One 25-minute section | Can be Critical Reading, Math, or Writing Does not count toward score | Varies |

SAT consists of three major sections: Critical Reading, Mathematics, and Writing.

There are 10 sections in all in the test.

1. Writing essay (25 minutes)
2. Critical Reading which includes Sentence Completion, Short Reading Passages, Long Reading Passages. (25 minutes)
3. Mathematics (25 minutes)
4. Writing- Multiple Choice (25 minutes)
5. Critical Reading which includes Sentence Completion, Short Reading Passages, Long Reading Passages. (25 minutes)
6. Mathematics, multiple choice questions (25 minutes)
7. Critical reading (20 minutes)
8. Mathematics. (20 minutes)
9. Critical reading (25 minutes)
10. Writing- Multiple Choice, includes Improving Sentences. (10 minutes)

So the total duration of the exam is 3 hours 45 minutes and the number of questions is 202-212.

Read more here: <http://entrance-exam.net/sat-papers/#ixzz22jkQgnWg>

Each section receives a score on the scale of 200–800. All scores are multiples of 10. Total scores are calculated by adding up scores of the three sections.

Each major section is divided into three parts.

There are 10 sub-sections, including an additional 25-minute experimental or "equating" section that may be in any of the three major sections.

The experimental section is used to normalize questions for future administrations of the SAT and does not count toward the final score. The test contains 3 hours and 45 minutes of actual timed sections, most administrations (after including orientation, distribution of materials, completion of biographical sections, and eleven minutes of timed breaks) run for about four and a half hours. The questions range from easy, medium, and hard depending on the scoring from the experimental sections.

Easier questions typically appear closer to the beginning of the section while harder questions are towards the end in certain sections. This is not true for every section (the Critical Reading section is in chronological order) but it is the rule of thumb mainly for math and the 19 sentence completions on the test.

**Critical Reading**

The Critical Reading (formerly Verbal) section of the SAT is made up of three scored sections: two 25-minute sections and one 20-minute section, with varying types of questions, including sentence completions and questions about short and long reading passages.

Critical Reading sections normally begin with 5 to 8 sentence completion questions; the remainder of the questions are focused on the reading passages. Sentence completions generally test the student's vocabulary and understanding of sentence structure and organization by requiring the student to select one or two words that best complete a given sentence.

The bulk of the Critical Reading section is made up of questions regarding reading passages, in which students read short excerpts on social sciences, humanities, physical sciences, or personal narratives and answer questions based on the passage.

Certain sections contain passages asking the student to compare two related passages; generally, these consist of shorter reading passages. The number of questions about each passage is proportional to the length of the passage. Unlike in the Mathematics section, where questions go in the order of difficulty, questions in the Critical Reading section go in the order of the passage. Overall, question sets towards the beginning of the section are easier, and question sets towards the end of the section are harder.

**Mathematics**

An example of a "grid in" mathematics question in which the answer should be written into the box below the question.

The Mathematics section of the SAT is widely known as the Quantitative Section or Calculation Section. The mathematics section consists of three scored sections. There are two 25-minute sections and one 20-minute section, as follows:

* One of the 25-minute sections is entirely multiple choice, with 20 questions.
* The other 25-minute section contains 8 multiple choice questions and 10 grid-in questions.

For grid-in questions, test-takers write the answer inside a grid on the answer sheet. Unlike multiple choice questions, there is no penalty for incorrect answers on grid-in questions because the test-taker is not limited to a few possible choices.

The 20-minute section is all multiple choice, with 16 questions.

The SAT has done away with quantitative comparison questions on the math section, leaving only questions with symbolic or numerical answers.

New topics include Algebra II and scatter plots. These recent changes have resulted in a shorter, more quantitative exam requiring higher level mathematics courses relative to the previous exam.

**Calculator use**

Four-function, scientific, and graphing calculators are permitted on the SAT math section; however, calculators are not permitted on either of the other sections. Calculators with QWERTY keyboards, cell phone calculators, portable computers, and personal organizers are not permitted.

With the recent changes to the content of the SAT math section, the need to save time while maintaining accuracy of calculations has led some to use calculator programs during the test. These programs allow students to complete problems faster than would normally be possible when making calculations manually.

The use of a graphing calculator is sometimes preferred, especially for geometry problems and questions involving multiple calculations. According to research conducted by the CollegeBoard, performance on the math sections of the exam is associated with the extent of calculator use, with those using calculators on about a third to a half of the items averaging higher scores than those using calculators less frequently. The use of a graphing calculator in mathematics courses, and also becoming familiar with the calculator outside of the classroom, is known to have a positive effect on the performance of students using a graphing calculator during the exam.

**Writing**

Page 1 of an SAT essay

Page 2 of an SAT essay

SAT essay. This student received a 10/12 from two judges, each giving 5/6

The writing section of the SAT, based on but not directly comparable to the old SAT II subject test in writing (which in turn was developed from the old TSWE), includes multiple choice questions and a brief essay. The essay subscore contributes about 28% towards the total writing score, with the multiple choice questions contributing 70%. This section was implemented in March 2005 following complaints from colleges about the lack of uniform examples of a student's writing ability and critical thinking.

The multiple choice questions include error identification questions, sentence improvement questions, and paragraph improvement questions.

Error identification and sentence improvement questions test the student's knowledge of grammar, presenting an awkward or grammatically incorrect sentence; in the error identification section, the student must locate the word producing the source of the error or indicate that the sentence has no error, while the sentence improvement section requires the student to select an acceptable fix to the awkward sentence.

The paragraph improvement questions test the student's understanding of logical organization of ideas, presenting a poorly written student essay and asking a series of questions as to what changes might be made to best improve it.

The essay section, which is always administered as the first section of the test, is 25 minutes long. All essays must be in response to a given prompt. The prompts are broad and often philosophical and are designed to be accessible to students regardless of their educational and social backgrounds.

For instance, test takers may be asked to expand on such ideas as their opinion on the value of work in human life or whether technological change also carries negative consequences to those who benefit from it.

No particular essay structure is required, and the College Board accepts examples "taken from [the student's] reading, studies, experience, or observations." Two trained readers assign each essay a score between 1 and 6, where a score of 0 is reserved for essays that are blank, off-topic, non-English, not written with a Number 2 pencil, or considered illegible after several attempts at reading. The scores are summed to produce a final score from 2 to 12 (or 0). If the two readers' scores differ by more than one point, then a senior third reader decides. The average time each reader/grader spends on each essay is less than 3 minutes.

In March 2004, Dr. Les Perelman analyzed 15 scored sample essays contained in the College Board's ScoreWrite book along with 30 other training samples and found that in over 90% of cases, the essay's score could be predicted from simply counting the number of words in the essay. Two years later, Dr. Perelman trained high school seniors to write essays that made little sense but contained infrequently used words such as "plethora" and "myriad." All of the students received scores of "10" or better, which placed the essays in the 92nd percentile or higher.

**Style of questions**

Most of the questions on the SAT, except for the essay and the grid-in math responses, are multiple choice; **all multiple-choice questions have five answer choices**, one of which is correct. The questions of each section of the same type are generally ordered by difficulty.

However, an important exception exists: Questions that follow the long and short reading passages are organized chronologically, rather than by difficulty.

Ten of the questions in one of the math sub-sections are not multiple choice. They instead require the test taker to bubble in a number in a four-column grid.

The questions are weighted equally. For each correct answer, one raw point is added. For each incorrect answer one-fourth of a point is deducted. No points are deducted for incorrect math grid-in questions. This ensures that a student's mathematically expected gain from guessing is zero. The final score is derived from the raw score; the precise conversion chart varies between test administrations.

The SAT therefore recommends only making educated guesses, that is, when the test taker can eliminate at least one answer he or she thinks is wrong. Without eliminating any answers one's probability of answering correctly is 20%.

Eliminating one wrong answer increases this probability to 25% (and the expected gain to 1/16 of a point); two, a 33.3% probability (1/6 of a point); and three, a 50% probability (3/8 of a point).

**How will the test sections be ordered?**

The 25-minute essay will always be the first section of the SAT, and the 10-minute multiple-choice writing section will always be last. The other 8 sections (including the unscored, experimental section) can appear in any order.

**What are the next Test Dates for the SAT & Subject Tests?**

**\*International Registration Deadlines (Expire at 11.59pm Eastern Time USA)**

**Date                                 Early Registration (International only)   Regular Registration**

October 6, 2012                        August 28, 2012                          September 7, 2012

November 3, 2012                    September 25, 2012                   October 4, 2012

December 1, 2012                    October 23, 2012                         November 1 ,2012

January 26, 2013                      December 18, 2012                     December 28, 2012

May 4, 2013                             March 26th, 2013                         April 5, 2013

June 1, 2013                            April 23, 2013                                May 2, 2013

**How can I register for the SAT?**

Register online at [**collegeboard.com**](http://www.collegeboard.com) or by calling **+1-866-756-7346**.

**How much does it cost to take the SAT?**

USD$71.00

**What is the range of SAT scores?**

Each section is scored from 200-800 each, giving a total range of 600-2400 points. The essay is scored from 0-12, and is included as 1/4 of the total Writing score.

Source: <http://www.kaptest.co.uk/courses/usa-undergraduate/sat/about/sat-overview>

Tests

<http://sat.jumbotests.com/>

Good online self test

<http://www.proprofs.com/sat/practice-questions.shtml>

<http://www.majortests.com/sat/sentence-completion.php>

Good examples and discussion

<http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/sat/sat-practice-test.pdf>