



How to OUTSMART The ACT & The SAT

READING SECTION (SAT & ACT)



READING SECTION OVERVIEW

- **SAT** - 65 minutes to answer 52 questions
 - 5 passages - 4 single passages and one paired
 - Prose, History, Science, Social Studies, Global Conversation (freedom, justice, human dignity)
- **ACT** – 35 minutes to answer 40 questions
 - 4 passages usually one of which is paired
 - Literary Narrative, Social Science, Humanities (prose).
Natural Science

WHAT'S A GOOD ACT READING SCORE?

	Scaled Score	Raw Score (# Right)	# Wrong
Outstanding	33+	37	3
Excellent	30	33	7
Very Good	27	30	10
Good	25	28	12
Average	22	24	16

WHAT'S A GOOD SAT READING SCORE?

	Score	Equivalent Score	Raw Score (# Right)	# Wrong
Outstanding	37+	750	47	5
Excellent	35	700	43	9
Very Good	32	640	39	13
Good	30	600	34	18
Average	27	540	29	23

READING SECTION STRATEGY


(Top Level)

1. Choose which passage you want to read first/last.
2. Apply your optimum reading strategy (developed through practice)
3. Answer questions in a prescribed order (easiest to most difficult)
4. Don't spend time obsessing on questions you don't know the answer to – maximize the time you have to work on questions that you have a good chance of answering correctly.
5. Monitor your time – go to next passage when the time allocated to that section is done - give yourself adequate time to fill in all answers on bubble sheet



Sometimes the “correct” answer is not the “best” answer. Sometimes it’s just the one that’s not “wrong”.

CHOOSING THE PASSAGE YOU WANT TO READ FIRST/LAST

- Quickly skim the passage introductions to identify a passage you think will be the easiest to read and understand and which will be the most difficult
-  Use experience from practice tests to help you choose
- Oftentimes paired passage will be choice for last
- Make your choice quickly and with confidence

PASSAGE INTRODUCTION EXAMPLES

- A. This passage is from Lydia Minatoya, *The Strangeness of Beauty*. ©1999 by Lydia Minatoya. The setting is in Japan in 1920. Chie and her daughter Naomi are members of the House of Fuji, a noble family.
- B. This passage is adapted from Francis J. Flynn and Gabrielle S. Adams, “Money Can’t Buy Love: Asymmetric Beliefs about Gift Price and Feelings of Appreciation”. ©2008 by Elsevier Inc.
- C. This passage is adapted from Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*. ©1938 by Harcourt, Inc. Here, Woolf considers the situation of women in English society
- D. Passage 1 is adapted from Michael Slezak, “Space Mining”: The Next Goldrush?” ©2013 by New Scientist. Passage 2 is from the editors of *New Scientist*, “Taming the Final Frontier ©2013 by New Scientist.




Passage Introductions are a wealth of information about the subject and the author's attitude about it – look for clues here to give you context for what you are about to read

APPLYING YOUR OPTIMUM READING STRATEGY

- As you take practice tests experiment with different reading strategies and see which one works best for you
- Here are some possible strategies:
 - Skim passage, skim questions, reread passage more thoroughly
 - Read questions, mark line items, read passage
 - Read passage thoroughly, summarize by paragraph
 - Combination of above
- Read opening and closing paragraphs more carefully
- Pay attention to tone, perspective, attitude - put yourself in the author's shoes
- Underline and make notes as you read – pay particular attention to extreme words or words that change meaning (e.g. all, none, however, except, etc.)
- Read it like you're reading to a friend (**comprehension not fluency**)

ANSWER QUESTIONS IN THIS ORDER

-  Answer easiest questions first -as you take practice tests identify which questions you find the easiest and which you find the most difficult
- Suggested order:
 - Words in Context
 - Graphs/Charts - SAT only
 - Questions that cite line items
 - 2 Part Evidenced Based
 - Main idea/General Questions – may be first if understood passage
 - All others
- If running out of time on paired passage see if any questions relate only to one passage or the other and answer those first

STRATEGY OVERVIEW BY QUESTION TYPE

- Words In Context: cover answer choices and come up with your own definition then find in answer choice; if unsure substitute each choice into sentence; look for roots; compare tone of sentence to tone of word
- Line Item Citations: oftentimes there is insufficient information in lines cited – read sentence before and after for better context.
- General Questions; look for clues in the question that will direct you where to look in the text (eg. During the Depression; in the Southwest, prior to 1800, etc.)
- Main Purpose Questions: if nature of questions allows, cover answers and come up with your own. Then check against available answers. If you have difficulty with these questions review your passage reading approach
- 2 Part Evidenced Based Questions: work backwards from line item citations when allowed
- Charts & Graphs (SAT only – ACT Science): if question refers only to graph/chart check each answer to make sure all conditions are correct and in chart/graph. DO NOT INFER!!!




Words In Context –
don't be fooled by
common use examples
– understand context –
difficult words often
defined before/after.



SAT only - When answering questions **SOLELY** based on a graph, chart or table, the answer must be contained **IN** the figure

HOW TO PRACTICE FOR THE READING SECTION

- During practice tests be mindful of passages you found easiest and those you found most difficult
-  Practice reading challenging texts – find texts similar to those you find most difficult
- During practice find best balance between time spent reading and time spent answering questions
- Keep building your vocabulary
- Take a few timed tests
- Use 1-2-3 method to gauge progress

**WRITING &
LANGUAGE SECTION
(SAT)**

**ENGLISH SECTION
(ACT)**



Let's eat grandma!



Let's eat, grandma!

**PUNCTUATION
SAVES LIVES!**

WRITING AND LANGUAGE (SAT) ENGLISH (ACT) OVERVIEW

- **SAT** - 35 minutes to answer 44 questions
 - 4 passages – 11 questions each
 - Careers, History/Social Studies, Science, Humanities
- **ACT** – 45 minutes to answer 75 questions
 - 5 passages – 15 questions each
 - Prose Fiction, Social Studies, Humanities, Natural Sciences

WHAT'S A GOOD ACT ENGLISH SCORE?

	Scaled Score	Raw Score (# Right)	# Wrong
Outstanding	33+	70	5
Excellent	30	66	9
Very Good	27	62	13
Good	25	58	17
Average	22	51	24

WHAT'S A GOOD SAT WRITING & LANGUAGE SCORE?

	Score	Equivalent Score	Raw Score (# Right)	# Wrong
Outstanding	37+	750	41	3
Excellent	35	700	39	5
Very Good	32	650	35	9
Good	30	600	31	13
Average	27	540	27	17

WRITING AND LANGUAGE SECTION(SAT) ENGLISH SECTION(ACT) – TOPICS

- Revise passage to improve expression of ideas
- Add, delete or revise words or sentences to improve clarity, precision, style and tone
- Correct errors in sentence structure, usage or punctuation
- Grammar
- Rearrange sentences in a paragraph (SAT)
- Rearrange paragraphs in a passage (ACT)
- May encounter a graph (SAT)



At least half of the questions in the Writing & Language (SAT) and English (ACT) sections are related to grammar, punctuation and sentence structure. Know the rules cold to improve your score. Be a detective and eliminate incorrect answer by using the rules to apply “POE”.

Tails

October 2010

Comp

in a time of financial crisis
celebrating the relationship between pets and their people

EAT, RAY, LOVE


Rachael Ray
finds inspiration
in cooking
her family
and her dog



WRITING AND LANGUAGE SECTION

ENGLISH SECTION STRATEGY

(Top Level)

- Read the whole passage first
 - They're easier than the Reading passages
 - Be careful not to get tripped up on grammar errors while reading
-  Do easier grammar questions first **know the rules!!!**
- Do sentence/paragraph order questions last – if score goal <600 always guess
- Sometimes you will need to “fix” the next following error to answer a question
- Don't spend time obsessing on questions you don't know the answer to – maximize the time you have to work on questions that you have a good chance of answering correctly.
- Monitor your time – go to next passage when the time allocated to that section is done - give yourself adequate time to fill in all answers on bubble sheet



Don't be intimidated by the "NO CHANGE" choice. Write the underlined choice next to "NO CHANGE" for easier comparison.



When you first look at a question quickly determine what type of grammar, punctuation or sentence structure concept is being tested. This will help you to more quickly apply the appropriate rule(s).




FOR EACH QUESTION ASK YOURSELF:

- What is the question asking?
- What do I know?
- Where do I find the information I need to correctly answer the question? (Reading & Science) or,
- What rules do I need to apply to arrive at the correct answer? (Writing & Language/English and Math)



FANBOY – use commas before the following coordinating conjunctions: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet.

HOW TO PRACTICE FOR THE WRITING & LANGUAGE / ENGLISH SECTION

-  Commit the Common ACT/SAT Grammar Mistakes handout to memory – the more quickly you can work through grammar/English conventions the more time you will have for more difficult questions
- Pay close attention to add/delete questions during practice – get familiar with what the ACT/SAT is looking for
- Practice POE – especially with grammar/English conventions
- Take a few timed tests
- Use 1-2-3 method to gauge progress

