

Test Summary

The following tables provide a synopsis of key content dimensions of the SAT Reading Test.

SAT READING TEST CONTENT SPECIFICATIONS		
	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE OF TEST
Time Allotted	65 minutes	
Passage Word Count	3,250 words total from 4 single passages and 1 pair; 500–750 words per passage or paired set	
Total Questions	52 questions	100%
Multiple Choice (4 options)		100%
Passage Based		100%
Contribution of Items to Subscores and Scores (Percentages do not add up to 100%.)		
Words in Context (Across Reading and Writing and Language Tests)	10 questions (2 questions per passage/pair)	19%
Command of Evidence (Across Reading and Writing and Language Tests)	10 questions (2 questions per passage/pair)	19%
Analysis in History/Social Studies (Across Math, Reading, and Writing and Language Tests)	21 questions (all history/social studies questions)	40%
Analysis in Science (Across Math, Reading, and Writing and Language Tests)	21 questions (all science questions)	40%
Passage Contents		
U.S. and World Literature	1 passage; 10 questions	20%
History/Social Studies	2 passages, or 1 passage and 1 pair; 10–11 questions each	40%
Science	2 passages, or 1 passage and 1 pair; 10–11 questions each	40%
Graphics		
	1–2 graphics in 1 History/Social Studies and in 1 Science passage	
Text and Graphical Complexity		
Text Complexity	A specified range from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry across 4 passages and 1 pair	
Graphical Data Representations (tables, graphs, charts, etc.)	Somewhat challenging to challenging (moderate to moderately high data density, few to several variables, moderately challenging to moderately complex interactions)	

SAT READING DOMAIN	
Content Dimension	Description
Text Complexity	The passages/pair on the SAT Reading Test represent a specified range of text complexities from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry.
Information and Ideas	These questions focus on the informational content of text.
Reading closely	These questions focus on the explicit and implicit meaning of text and on extrapolating beyond the information and ideas in a text.
Determining explicit meanings	The student will identify information and ideas explicitly stated in text.
Determining implicit meanings	The student will draw reasonable inferences and logical conclusions from text.
Using analogical reasoning	The student will extrapolate in a reasonable way from the information and ideas in a text or apply information and ideas in a text to a new, analogous situation.
Citing textual evidence	The student will cite the textual evidence that best supports a given claim or point.
Determining central ideas and themes	The student will identify explicitly stated central ideas or themes in text and determine implicit central ideas or themes from text.
Summarizing	The student will identify a reasonable summary of a text or of key information and ideas in text.
Understanding relationships	The student will identify explicitly stated relationships or determine implicit relationships between and among individuals, events, or ideas (e.g., cause-effect, comparison-contrast, sequence).
Interpreting words and phrases in context	The student will determine the meaning of words and phrases in context.
Rhetoric	These questions focus on the rhetorical analysis of text.
Analyzing word choice	The student will determine how the selection of specific words and phrases or the use of patterns of words and phrases shapes meaning and tone in text.
Analyzing text structure	These questions focus on the overall structure of a text and on the relationship between a particular part of a text and the whole text.
Analyzing overall text structure	The student will describe the overall structure of a text.
Analyzing part-whole relationships	The student will analyze the relationship between a particular part of a text (e.g., a sentence) and the whole text.
Analyzing point of view	The student will determine the point of view or perspective from which a text is related or the influence this point of view or perspective has on content and style.
Analyzing purpose	The student will determine the main or most likely purpose of a text or of a particular part of a text (typically, one or more paragraphs).
Analyzing arguments	These questions focus on analyzing arguments for their content and structure.
Analyzing claims and counterclaims	The student will identify claims and counterclaims explicitly stated in text or determine implicit claims and counterclaims from text.
Assessing reasoning	The student will assess an author's reasoning for soundness.
Analyzing evidence	The student will assess how an author uses or fails to use evidence to support a claim or counterclaim.
Synthesis	These questions focus on synthesizing multiple sources of information.
Analyzing multiple texts	The student will synthesize information and ideas from paired texts. (Note: All of the skills listed above may be tested with either single or paired passages.)
Analyzing quantitative information	The student will analyze information presented quantitatively in such forms as graphs, tables, and charts and/or relate that information to information presented in text.

Test Summary

The following tables provide a synopsis of key content dimensions of the Writing and Language Test.

SAT WRITING AND LANGUAGE TEST CONTENT SPECIFICATIONS		
	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE OF TEST
Time Allotted	35 minutes	
Passage Word Count	1700 words total from 4 passages; 400–450 words per passage	
Total Questions	44 questions	100%
Multiple Choice (4 options)		100%
Passage Based		100%
Contribution of Items to Subscores and Scores (Percentages do not add up to 100%.)		
Expression of Ideas	24 questions	55%
Standard English Conventions	20 questions	45%
Words in Context (Across Reading and Writing and Language Tests)	8 questions (2 questions per passage)	18%
Command of Evidence (Across Reading and Writing and Language Tests)	8 questions (2 questions per passage)	18%
Analysis in History/Social Studies (Across Math, Reading, and Writing and Language Tests)	6 questions (all Expression of Ideas questions in history/social studies)	14%
Analysis in Science (Across Math, Reading, and Writing and Language Tests)	6 questions (all Expression of Ideas questions in science)	14%
Passage Contents		
Careers	1 passage; 11 questions	25%
History/Social Studies	1 passage; 11 questions	25%
Humanities	1 passage; 11 questions	25%
Science	1 passage; 11 questions	25%
Graphics		
	1 or more graphics in 1 or more sets of questions	
Text Types		
Argument	1–2 passages	25%–50%
Informative/Explanatory Text	1–2 passages	25%–50%
Nonfiction Narrative	1 passage	25%
Text and Graphical Complexity		
Text Complexity	A specified range from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry across 4 passages	
Graphical Data Representations (tables, charts, graphs, etc.)	Basic to somewhat challenging (low to moderate data density, few variables, simple to moderately challenging interactions)	

SAT WRITING AND LANGUAGE DOMAIN	
Content Dimension	Description
Text Complexity	The passages on the SAT Writing and Language Test represent a specified range of text complexities from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry.
Expression of Ideas	These questions focus on revision of text for topic development, accuracy (consistency between text and graphic[s]), logic, cohesion, and rhetorically effective use of language.
Development	These questions focus on revising text in relation to rhetorical purpose. (Prior knowledge of the topic is not assessed, though consistency of the material within a passage may be.)
Proposition	The student will add, revise, or retain central ideas, main claims, counterclaims, topic sentences, and the like to structure text and convey arguments, information, and ideas clearly and effectively.
Support	The student will add, revise, or retain information and ideas (e.g., details, facts, statistics) intended to support claims or points in text.
Focus	The student will add, revise, retain, or delete information and ideas in text for the sake of relevance to topic and purpose.
Quantitative information	The student will relate information presented quantitatively in such forms as graphs, charts, and tables to information presented in text.
Organization	These questions focus on revision of text to improve the logic and cohesion of text at the sentence, paragraph, and whole-text levels.
Logical sequence	The student will revise text as needed to ensure that information and ideas are presented in the most logical order.
Introductions, conclusions, and transitions	The student will revise text as needed to improve the beginning or ending of a text or paragraph to ensure that transition words, phrases, or sentences are used effectively to connect information and ideas.
Effective language use	These questions focus on revision of text to improve the use of language to accomplish particular rhetorical purposes.
Precision	The student will revise text as needed to improve the exactness or content appropriateness of word choice.
Concision	The student will revise text as needed to improve the economy of word choice (i.e., to eliminate wordiness and redundancy).
Style and tone	The student will revise text as necessary to ensure consistency of style and tone within a text or to improve the match of style and tone to purpose.
Syntax	The student will use various sentence structures to accomplish needed rhetorical purposes.
Standard English Conventions	These questions focus on editing text to ensure conformity to the conventions of standard written English sentence structure, usage, and punctuation.
Sentence structure	These questions focus on editing text to correct problems in sentence formation and inappropriate shifts in construction within and between sentences.
Sentence formation	These questions focus on editing text to correct problems with forming grammatically complete and standard sentences.
<i>Sentence boundaries</i>	The student will recognize and correct grammatically incomplete sentences (e.g., rhetorically inappropriate fragments and run-ons).
<i>Subordination and coordination</i>	The student will recognize and correct problems in coordination and subordination in sentences.
<i>Parallel structure</i>	The student will recognize and correct problems in parallel structure in sentences.
<i>Modifier placement</i>	The student will recognize and correct problems in modifier placement (e.g., misplaced or dangling modifiers).

SAT WRITING AND LANGUAGE DOMAIN

Content Dimension	Description
Inappropriate shifts in construction	These questions focus on editing text to correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense, voice, and mood and pronoun person and number.
<i>Verb tense, mood, and voice</i>	The student will recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense, voice, and mood within and between sentences.
<i>Pronoun person and number</i>	The student will recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in pronoun person and number within and between sentences.
Conventions of Usage	These questions focus on editing text to ensure conformity to the conventions of standard written English usage.
Pronouns	These questions focus on the proper use of pronouns.
<i>Pronoun clarity</i>	The student will recognize and correct pronouns with unclear or ambiguous antecedents.
Possessive determiners	The student will recognize and correct cases in which possessive determiners (<i>its, your, their</i>), contractions (<i>it's, you're, they're</i>), and adverbs (<i>there</i>) are confused with each other.
Agreement	These questions focus on ensuring grammatical agreement.
<i>Pronoun-antecedent agreement</i>	The student will recognize and correct lack of agreement between pronoun and antecedent.
<i>Subject-verb agreement</i>	The student will recognize and correct lack of agreement between subject and verb.
<i>Noun agreement</i>	The student will recognize and correct lack of agreement between nouns.
Frequently confused words	The student will recognize and correct instances in which a word or phrase is confused with another (e.g., <i>accept/except, allusion/illusion</i>).
Logical comparison	The student will recognize and correct cases in which unlike terms are compared.
Conventional expression	The student will recognize and correct cases in which a given expression is inconsistent with standard written English.
Conventions of Punctuation	These questions focus on editing text to ensure conformity to the conventions of standard written English punctuation.
End-of-sentence punctuation	The student will recognize and correct inappropriate uses of ending punctuation in cases in which the context makes the intent clear.
Within-sentence punctuation	The student will correctly use and recognize and correct inappropriate uses of colons, semicolons, and dashes to indicate sharp breaks in thought within sentences.
Possessive nouns and pronouns	The student will recognize and correct inappropriate uses of possessive nouns and pronouns as well as differentiate between possessive and plural forms.
Items in a series	The student will correctly use and recognize and correct inappropriate uses of punctuation (commas and sometimes semicolons) to separate items in a series.
Nonrestrictive and parenthetical elements	The student will correctly use punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off nonrestrictive and parenthetical sentence elements as well as recognize and correct cases in which restrictive or essential sentence elements are inappropriately set off with punctuation.
Unnecessary punctuation	The student will recognize and correct cases in which unnecessary punctuation appears in a sentence.

SAT ESSAY DOMAIN (PROVISIONAL)

CONTENT DIMENSION	DESCRIPTION
Reading	Comprehension of the source text
	Understanding of central ideas, important details, and their interrelationship
	Accuracy in representation of the source text (i.e., no errors of fact or interpretation introduced)
	Use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both) to demonstrate understanding of the source text
Analysis	Analysis of the source text and understanding of the analytical task
	Evaluation of the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or features chosen by the student
	Support for claims or points made in the response
	Focus on features of the text most relevant to addressing the task
Writing	Use of a central claim
	Use of effective organization and progression of ideas
	Use of varied sentence structures
	Employment of precise word choice
	Maintenance of a consistent, appropriate style and tone
	Command of the conventions of standard written English

Key Features

Three distinctive features of the SAT Essay are described below:

- » Use of a common prompt
- » Emphasis on analysis of argument
- » Use of clear, powerful evaluation criteria

The first two features are illustrated with sample material. (An additional Essay sample is provided in Appendix B.)

COMMON PROMPT

In the Essay, students are asked to write a cogent and clear response based on the comprehension and analysis of a source text, supporting their claims and points about the text with evidence drawn from the passage. While the source text will be different for each form of the

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The criteria by which students' written responses will be evaluated are notable for their clarity and robustness. As plans currently stand, each response will be assessed using three analytic traits — Reading, Analysis, and Writing — each of which will be scored on a scale of 1 to 4. (As elsewhere noted, additional ongoing research may confirm or modify that plan.)

While it is too early yet in the development of the Essay scoring model to publish a final rubric, the following serves as a likely indication of the bases on which students' responses will be evaluated.

READING	ANALYSIS	WRITING
<p>The Reading domain encompasses students' comprehension of a source text, including the text's central ideas and important details and how they interrelate. Students demonstrate their skill in comprehension in part by making effective use of evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both) from the source text.</p>	<p>The Analysis domain encompasses students' evaluation of an author's use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or features of the text of the students' own choosing. Students demonstrate their skill in analysis in part by using relevant, sufficient, and strategically chosen support for the claims or points they make and by focusing consistently on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.</p>	<p>The Writing domain encompasses the cohesiveness of students' written response to the task as well as students' use of language. Students demonstrate their skill in writing in part by providing a precise central claim; creating an effective organization and progression of ideas; successfully employing a variety of sentence structures; using precise word choice; maintaining an appropriate style and tone; and showing command of the conventions of standard written English.</p>

As should be readily apparent from the table and from the discussion in Section II of the Essay's evidentiary foundation, these criteria are both aligned with and supportive of important priorities in rigorous high school instruction. The clarity and richness of the criteria will also yield important information about student performance that should be easily understood and translated into further classroom-based work and support.