Gradeful
Test Prep

SAT E-Book

Reading

- **Be in control of your reading speed.** When you read very quickly, you are reading for main idea and not tiny details; when you read very slowly, you are getting tiny details but not the main idea; you can't get both at the same time. That's one of the reasons why your first read of a passage should take no longer than 60 to 90 seconds. The SAT's reading questions are very in-depth, but if you read deeply the first time, you'll miss the main idea and you'll be preparing for the 100 questions they could possibly ask, when in reality, they are only going to ask 10 or 11 questions per passage.

- **Never pick an answer without being able to point out the line (or lines) that serves as evidence for that answer.** The SAT writers are good at writing questions in which, if you answer based on what you feel like you remember reading, you'll get it wrong.

- **Know your verbs!** In addition to the verbs that are easy to pick out, know that: *is*, *was*, *are*, *am*, *were*, *be*, *have*, *has*, and *had* are also verbs. Know that *'ing'* words like 'running' aren't verbs, and neither are *'to do'* phrases like 'to run'. Identifying verbs takes you to the single most important thing the writer is saying in each sentence. Try it!

Writing & Language

- **Semi-colon (;)-** Used to separate two independent clauses.

- **Colon (:)-** Used when the part *before* the colon is an independent clause and the part *after* the colon is anything that describes the first part.

- **Long Dash (—)-** One counts as a colon, and two count as a set of parentheses.

- **Sentence Location-** When asked to find the best location for a specific sentence, look for red flags/clues/relational words within the sentence itself.

- **Adding/Deleting Sentences-** When asked whether a sentence should be added or deleted, ask yourself, “What is the single thing the paragraph is about?”

- **Transitional Words-** When choosing between words like *however*, *furthermore*, *moreover*, and *therefore*, first invent your own word for that space. This will force you to truly understand the relationship between the preceding and ensuing sentences.

- **What are the two correct ways to join two independent clauses** (that could each be their own sentence)? A semi-colon or a comma plus conjunction (FANBOYS).

- **Beware of the run-on sentence, also called the comma splice.** This error has two independent clauses with a comma in between them.

- **Effectively Combining 2 Sentences-** Read fast looking for flow, use good transitions (transition words and punctuation), look out for bad word order (when words placed in the wrong order create relationships that shouldn’t be there), and avoid explanations that restart where doing so is avoidable (a wrong answer might say something like, “They constructed the building quickly. They did this by using extra workers.”)

- **Look out for strings of nouns joined by prepositions** (a preposition is a word that tells the relationship between two nouns). One example is, “The keys on the table of my cousins in college for the medical sciences is/are gold.” The rule is to judge singularity/plurality by the first noun in the string.

- **Word Choice-** When choosing between four words that generally mean the same thing, first look out for the formality/casual-ness of each word. For an academic- or professional-sounding essay, rule out words that are not formal enough. If that doesn’t work, think of a real-world use of each word

Math

- **Finding the Vertex of a Parabola** (or any code word that may mean ‘vertex’)- There are two ways to do this: x equals $-b/2a$ (from the a, b, and c of the quadratic equation) or x equals the average of the two zeros (which works well for functions where it’s easy to see the zeros, like $y = (x-2)(x+5)$).

- **Never use the distance formula**. It’s the most confusing of all the formulas. Wherever you might have used the distance formula, you can also draw a right triangle and use the Pythagorean Theorem instead.

- **Cofunctions of complementary angles are equal**. For instance, if a + b = 90, then sin a = cos b or cos a = sin b.

- **Make sure you know how to complete the square.** This factoring method is necessary to find the equation of a circle, and it's also a quicker alternative to the quadratic formula.

- **Always plug your answers back in for radical equations** to make sure that they work and don't create a zero in a denominator.

- **When asked to find the intersection between two functions** (curves of lines), isolate *y* for both equations and set those equations equal to each other.

- **For parallel lines joined by a transversal**, look out for C's and Z's. If the area connected by the parallel lines looks like a Z, then the two inner angles are equal to one another; if the area connected by the lines looks like a C, then the two inner angles add to 180 degrees.

- **To get rid of unwanted denominators**, multiply by the denominator that you don't want on both sides of the equation. This goes for number denominators and variable or polynomial denominators (expressions like '$5x$' or '$x-5$').

- **A prism is a 3-D figure with the same shape on opposite sides**, stretched apart like an accordion. A cylinder is technically not a prism because it's round, but it has all of the other features of a prism and has the same volume formula. The volume of a prism is equal to the area of the base times the height (the height is the distance between the 2 identical bases).

- **There are two things that cause an undefined value:** a negative under a radical or a zero in the denominator of a fraction.

- **Conditional probability is the ultimate question that seems difficult but is actually easy**. It sounds like this: What is the probability that a student answered 'yes,' given that the student is a sophomore? These types of questions are asking you to only pay attention to the sub-group being referenced, in this case, students who are sophomores, and to take the probability only from within that sub-group.

- **For quadratics** (equations in the format of $y = ax^2 + bx + c$), the number in the *'c'* spot is the y-intercept, and the sign of the number *'a'* tells you whether the parabola opens upward or downward. If the equation is missing a *'b'* term, then it's symmetrical across the y-axis.

- **Percent change is 'the change over the original.'** For instance, if your score goes from 85 to 92, the percent change is 7/85, which comes out to 8%.

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