

Changes to the SAT Announced by the College Board

On April 16, 2014, the College Board released further details about the Redesigned SAT. These changes are only applicable to the class of 2017 (current 9th grade students) and beyond.

OVERALL CHANGES AND IMPACTS

Change	Impact
Fewer sections, but each section will be longer than on the current SAT. The longest one will be the Reading Test at 65 minutes.	Students who like working in uninterrupted, longer blocks of time will appreciate the change. Others, however, will need to learn how to stay focused over a longer period of time. This change aligns the SAT more with the format of the ACT.
Elimination of the penalty for wrong answers.	This is a win for students! They'll be able to guess without worrying about losing points if they're wrong.
Multiple-choice questions will have 4 answer choices instead of 5.	Another win for students. It takes less time to consider the answer choices and there's a higher probability of guessing correctly.
Charts and graphical elements throughout the Redesigned SAT, including the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing Test.	Students will need to be comfortable deciphering information in non-textual formats.
Redesigned SAT will feature certain historical documents and speeches.	Students unfamiliar with these elements will require additional time to read and process the passages
The Redesigned SAT will provide multiple sub-scores within each test and across the entire exam.	The score reports will contain a lot of noise for students and may cause anxiety. Ultimately the 2 area scores (200-800) for Math and Evidence-Based Reading and Writing) and the composite score (sum of the area scores) are all that will matter to colleges.
Scoring scale goes back to 1600.	Students will be able to compare their scores to those of their parents.

MATH CHANGES AND IMPACTS

Change	Impact
Of the 2 math sections, students will be allowed to use calculators on only one.	Students will need to get comfortable doing calculations on their own, without a crutch. This may be a source of concern for some students, and this will make practice even more important.
More advanced math topics including trigonometry.	Math geeks will be psyched to see the higher level content that they're currently doing in school.
Questions will require multiple-steps to reach the correct answer. They will also require that students understand the fundamental math underlying the problems.	Math problems will take longer and students who have gaps in foundational knowledge will be at a disadvantage.

READING CHANGES AND IMPACTS

Change	Impact
Reading test will be a 65 minute long section.	None of the Critical Reading sections on the current SAT are longer than 25 minutes. It will be a challenge to simply stay alert for over an hour – maintaining focus and acuity will require a great deal of practice and determination.
Some passages will be made intentionally more complex by employing unfamiliar vocabulary, uncommon sentence structure and references to other texts.	Students who already struggle with Reading Comprehension will find the Redesigned SAT even more challenging and will need to determine which passage(s) and/or questions are worth investing their time.
Elimination of Sentence Completions.	Impact depends on how well a student did on this type of question.
Vocabulary words will be more familiar. However, students will need to know multiple meanings and not just primary definitions.	Not only will students need to study vocabulary, but they'll now also need to derive the correct meaning from context clues.

WRITING & LANGUAGE CHANGES AND IMPACTS

Change	Impact
The Writing & Language Test is 44 questions to be completed in 35 minutes – that’s a serious time crunch.	Pacing is going to be of utmost importance and that requires a lot of purposeful practice.
Grammar is still tested, but in passage form.	Students will be required to read even more, which is both tiring and time consuming. Making sure they understand the rules that will be tested will be important.
Grammar will include punctuation.	Students will need to remember (or learn!) the rules of punctuation like commas, parentheses and dashes.

ESSAY CHANGES AND IMPACTS

Change	Impact
The essay will double in length to 50 minutes.	Stamina will be important. Students will already be tired by the time they get to the essay (3 hours of testing before essay), and they’ll need to plow through another 50 minutes of work.
The essay will have a separate score that is not part of the composite score.	
The essay will be at the end.	
The essay passage is extremely long (650-750 words).	A larger portion of students’ time will be spent reading and processing the passage before they even start writing the essay.
Task will be to explain how the author builds an argument to persuade an audience.	There is a reading comprehension component built into this exercise. In order to provide an analysis of the passage, rather than just an opinion of the conclusion, students will need to understand both what the author is saying and how he or she persuades tries to persuade the reader.
Essay will be optional.	Students will be tempted to skip it. However, if they do and then apply to a school that requires it, they’ll have to retake the entire exam.

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