



Chapter 1

New SAT Reading Section

The rationale behind the redesigned SAT test is to prepare students for success in post-secondary education. The new SAT reading test is designed to be a better indicator of students' comprehension and reasoning skills required for college entry courses. We will dissect the reading section by first discussing some of the major changes made in the redesigned SAT.

I. Major Changes

Category	Current SAT	Redesigned SAT
Total Questions	67 questions	52 questions
Time Allotted	70 minutes	65 minutes

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Category	Current SAT	Redesigned SAT
Passages and Word Count	Two 25-minute sections and one 20-minute section; passages range from 100 to about 850 words	Four single passages and one pair set; 500—750 words per passage or paired set; 3 250 words in total
Answer Choices	5 answer choices	4 answer choices
Components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passage-based reading • Sentence completions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidenced-based reading test • Evidenced-based writing and language test
Vocabulary	12—16 questions Emphasis on vocabulary itself, often in limited contexts	10 questions Emphasis on the meaning of words in extended contexts and on how word choice shapes meaning, tone, and impact

II. Passage Contents

Knowledge Domain	Number of Passages and Questions	Percentage
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%

III. SAT Reading Domain

(Table reproduced based on the *Test Specifications for the Redesigned SAT* from College Board)

Content Dimension	Task 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

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Content Dimension	Task Description
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

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Content Dimension	Task Description
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

IV. Key Features

The redesigned SAT reading test emphasizes on four key features:

1. Words in extended context and word choice for rhetorical purposes;
2. Command of evidence in support of conclusions and inferences;
3. Inclusion of graphics for information interpretation;
4. Text complexity range from grades 9 to postsecondary entry.

Words in Context

Different from the current SAT reading test, the word in context questions are not testing vocabulary, but focus on the rhetorical purposes of the words in extended contexts. The following passage excerpt and the two sample questions demonstrate the difference between the word in context questions in the current SAT and in the redesigned SAT.

The coming decades will likely see more **intense** clustering of jobs, innovation, and productivity in a smaller number of bigger cities and city-regions. Some regions could end up **bloated** beyond the capacity of their infrastructure, while others struggle, their promise stymied by inadequate human or other resources.

Richard Florida, *The Great Reset*, 2011

1. As used in line 3, “bloated” mostly nearly means:
 - A. swollen
 - B. outrageous
 - C. pampered
 - D. expanded
 - E. limited

This is an example of word in context question in the current SAT reading test. The best answer is choice D. To answer this question, students need to know the meaning of the asked word as well as those of the words in the answer choices. The purpose of the question is to test how accurately students can interpret the meaning of a word in context

while choosing among words that are given to test students' vocabulary.

2. As used in line 1, “intense” most nearly means:

- A. emotional
- B. concentrated
- C. brilliant
- D. determined

This is an example of word in context question in the redesigned SAT reading test. The best answer is B. The word “intense” is neither obscure nor specific to any domain but a high utility word. The purpose of the question is to evaluate students' understanding of the word based on contextual clues.

Command of Evidence

When doing the SAT reading test, students are not only required to comprehend information and ideas, but also tested for drawing reasonable conclusions and inferences based on supporting evidences in the passage. The following passage excerpt and the sample questions illustrate command of evidence.

Sleep-deprived people are known to have stronger reactions to negative experiences, but some patients with depression seem to perk up with lack of sleep. To resolve this paradox, Matthew Walker at the University of California, Berkeley, and his team used functional magnetic resonance imaging to scan the brains of 14 people who hadn't slept for about 36 hours while presenting them with emotionally neutral and pleasant-looking images. The volunteers rated a greater proportion of the images as

“pleasant” than did people who had maintained a normal sleep routine. The sleep-deprived individuals also showed increased activation in brain regions that mediate reward-driven behavior, as well as greater connectivity between certain visual and emotional processing centers. The results suggest that sleep deprivation can enhance reactivity to both positive and negative stimuli.

Neuroscience: No sleep, better mood, 2011

Based on Walker’s research, what is the most likely explanation for the observation in line 2 (“but some . . . sleep”)?

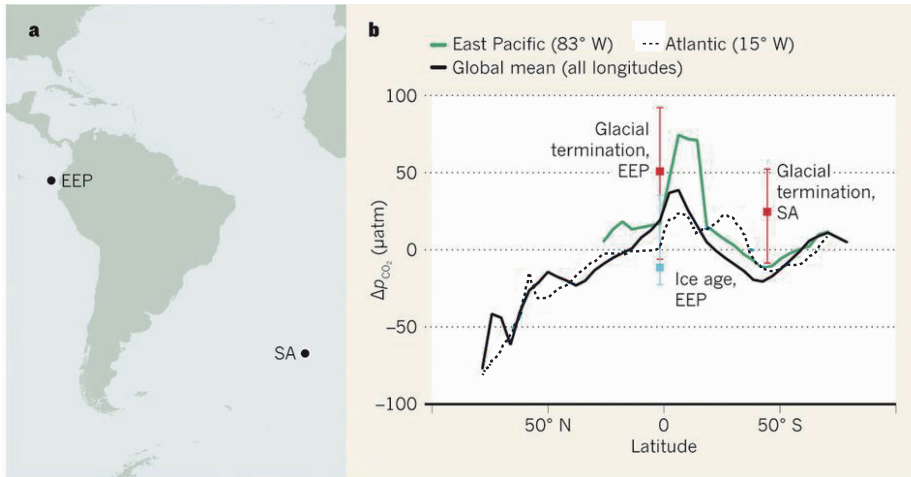
- A. People with depression often have difficulty sleeping.
- B. There is a positive relation between sleep deprivation and positive stimuli.
- C. There is a negative relation between sleep deprivation and positive stimuli.
- D. The emotions of people with depression are easier to manipulate.

To answer the question, students need to identify evidence given in the passage to explain the reason behind the observation. The best answer for Question 1 is B. Line 9—13 provides the evidence from the study: when sleep deprived, human’s brain regions that mediate reward-driven behavior become more active and the emotional processing centers are more sensitive to visual stimuli.

Informational Graphics

A new feature in the redesigned SAT Reading is the inclusion of informational graphics. There are two passages which include one or two graphics such as tables, graphs, and charts. Students are asked to interpret and integrate the information in the graphics and in the text. The following passage excerpt and the sample question help

illustrate this concept.



Martínez-Botí have used boron isotopes from planktonic fossils to determine past differences between the partial pressures of CO₂ in the ocean and the atmosphere (Δp_{CO_2} , measured in microatmospheres) in the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean (EEP) and the South Atlantic Ocean (SA). They find that Δp_{CO_2} in the EEP was negative, on average, during the latter part of the last ice age (25 000 to 19 000 years ago), implying that the ocean absorbed CO₂ from the atmosphere. During the glacial termination, which is about 18 000 to 11 000 years ago, average Δp_{CO_2} at both sites was positive. This suggests that the ocean released CO₂ to the atmosphere at both locations at that time, which probably contributed to the overall rise in atmospheric CO₂ levels between the ice age and the following, milder Holocene epoch. Data for the modern ocean (solid lines) are from ref. 3. Squares represent mean values; vertical bars represent the full range of values for each period.

Based on the passage and the graph, which of the following statement is true?

- A. As the partial pressures of CO₂ in the ocean and the atmosphere go higher, the more CO₂ the ocean absorbs.
- B. The South Atlantic Ocean releases more CO₂ than the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean since the Ice Age.
- C. The eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean releases more CO₂ than the South Atlantic Ocean since the Ice Age.
- D. The lower the latitude, the more CO₂ the South Atlantic Ocean releases into the atmosphere.

Based on the information given in the graph and the text, the best answer is C. Line 4—6 (They find that. . . atmosphere) sets the foundation of the logic to interpret the relations between the partial pressures of CO₂ in the ocean and the atmosphere and the amount of CO₂ release or absorbed by the oceans.

Text complexity

The college board specifies that the SAT reading test includes passages with text complexity levels range from grades 9—10 to postsecondary entry. This change not only reinforces the connection between K-12 education and college entrance test, but also ensures the range of text difficulties on test forms are comparable.



Chapter 2

Evidence-Based Reading

I. What is Evidence-Based Reading?

The redesigned SAT included a new section called Evidence-Based Reading and Writing. The section combines multiple-choice questions on reading comprehension, grammar, writing mechanics, rhetoric, context-based reasoning, and use of evidence in support of conclusions and inferences. According to the College Board, students will be explicitly asked to identify or evaluate evidence in the passage in support of some concluding statement, and will be asked to evaluate evidence presented in informational graphics to draw a conclusion.

Understanding the term evidence-based reading is crucial in redesigned SAT reading. Students should be able to connect claims with supporting evidences. Students are asked to support their answers with evidence in questions which require them to cite a specific part of a passage to support the answer choice.

II. Discerning Claims and Evidences

Claim

In persuasive writing, the writer often presents “claims”, propositions that convey the writer’s conclusions of or beliefs about something. Claims are not facts but rather interpretations that the writer has based on facts. A claim may include at least two different, sometimes opposing, points of view. In SAT reading, most of the claims in reading passages could be substantiated with specific evidences in the passages.

Using Henry David Thoreau’s ***Walden*** as an example.

The claims Thoreau made are:

- Preoccupation with insignificant events caused nineteenth-century Americans to overlook what is important in life;
- Technology was the primary cause of distress for nineteenth-century Americans;
- Simple men who lived close to the woods and the earth understand the universal order that civilization obscured.

These are all the beliefs Thoreau has which explain his misanthropy. In his writing, he had to support his claims by providing evidences to convince the readers of his advocates.

Evidences

Evidence is also referred to as supporting details or facts. Evidence is factual. Unlike claims, evidences are indisputable. The easy way to see if someone is presenting a statement or an evidence is to distinguish what is supported by what. All good arguments must be supported by a strong foundation of evidences. An article filled with claims but without supporting evidences is not an argument. It is a collection of the writer's opinions or beliefs, and readers will have no reason to believe the author's opinions or beliefs if they are not well supported with evidences.

Using Henry David Thoreau's example above, to support the claims, he provided the following evidences.

- “Men think that it is essential that the Nation have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether they do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain.”
- “We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate.”
- “They never consulted with books, and know and can tell much less than they have done. . . (The fisherman's) life itself passes deeper in Nature than the studies of the naturalist penetrate; himself a subject for the naturalist.”

III. Connecting Claims and Evidences

Often an argument has one or more claims which are substantiated by evidences.



SAT reading tests whether students can connect claims with evidences. Questions will ask students to identify the evidence that the author uses to derive the claim. Students are also asked to pinpoint the lines that provide the evidence.

IV. Practice

Read the following passages and answer the questions. The purpose of this practice is to familiarize students with the concepts of claims and evidences.

Exercise 1

Marie Antoinette, the Austrian queen of Louis XVI, is recognized as a crucial figure of the French Revolution of the 18th century. Upon her arrival in France in May of 1770, she was seen as the very picture of morality by the French government and people. Not soon after her debut in the royal court, however, her reputation in the eyes of the public was thrown into a steady decline by a series of facetious rumors that began internally, stemming from members of the courts of Louis XV and Louis XVI. This poor public opinion of Marie Antoinette propelled the Revolution toward the radicalism that overthrew the Bourbon monarchy, and may have even contributed to its initial decline upon the start of the Revolution. Historian Nancy N. Barker emphasizes that stories in the press that involved the queen contributed both to the coming of the Revolution and the radicalization of its events. Thomas E. Kaiser and Vivian R. Gruder, however, emphasize the effects of her foreignness and bad press during the Revolution, rather than prior to it. Gruder also strongly disagrees with the idea that the scandals and public images were major factors in the bringing on of the Revolution. All three historians conduct their analyses on the given subject by looking at the reactions of both the popular classes and the aristocracy.

Kaitlin O'Connor, Marie Antoinette and the French Revolution, 1993

1. How did Marie Antoinette herself contribute to the start of revolution?

2. Indicate the lines that provide the evidence to your answer for Question 1.

Exercise 2

At the Portillo Pass is a conglomerate resting on micaceous sandstone, and traversed by great veins of granite. But at the Uspellata Pass (in the eastern chain), he found highly crystalline and felspathic rocks, regularly bedded, and resting on granite, the peaks of which reach the elevation of 14 000 feet. A wider examination of the overlying groups convinced him, not only that they were more recent than the western chain (being partly made up of its *debris*), but that they were of the same age with certain tertiary formations above noticed. For example, he discovered along the line of section, in the eastern chain, beds of sandstone, with silicified trunks of dicotyledonous trees, and beds of carbonaceous shale, resting on an ancient stream of lava, and surmounted by black augitic lava, 2 000 feet thick; over all these were five grand alternations of black volcanic rocks and sedimentary deposits, amounting to several thousand feet in thickness. This series, in its structure and fossils, is considered as identical with certain tertiary deposits of Patagonia, Chiloe and Concepcion; for it loses its mineral character only where it approaches the granite; in which case it is shattered, contorted, and traversed by great veins rising out of the central mass; and its several beds, as well as the fossils they contain, become entirely crystalline. Mr. Darwin further states, that this singular overlying group contains very numerous veins of copper, silver, arsenic, and gold, which may be traced down to the granite; and as a general conclusion, he expresses his conviction that the granite (now rising into central peaks 14 000 feet in elevation), must have been in a fluid state since the tertiary group, above described, was deposited.

Darwin, C. R. , Geological Notes Made During a Survey of the East and West Coasts of S. America,
1832—1835.

1. What evidence does Darwin give to prove that the two chains were the same age?

Indicate the lines from which you find the answer.

2. What evidence does Darwin give to prove that the granite had been in a fluid state?

Indicate the lines from which you find the answer.

Exercise 3

DEAR SIR,

I will tell you the story in a few words.

After going to St. David's and the recovery of Mr. Secord, we returned again to Queenston, where my courage again was much tried. It was there I gained the secret plan laid to capture Captain Fitzgibbon and his party. I was determined, if possible, to save them. I had much difficulty in getting through the American guards. They were ten miles out in the country. When I came to a field belonging to a Mr. De Cou, in the neighbourhood of the Beaver Dams, I then had walked nineteen miles. By that time daylight had left me. I yet had a swift stream of water (Twelve-mile Creek) to cross over on an old fallen tree, and to climb a high hill, which fatigued me very much.

Before I arrived at the encampment of the Indians, as I approached they all arose with one of their war yells, which, indeed, awed me. You may imagine what my feelings were to behold so many savages. With forced courage I went to one of the chiefs, told him I had great news for his commander, and that he must take me to him or they would all be lost. He did not understand me, but said, "Woman! What does woman want here?" The scene by moonlight to some might have been grand, but to a weak woman certainly terrifying. With difficulty I got one of the chiefs to go with me to their commander. With the intelligence I gave him he formed his plans and saved his country. I have ever found the brave and noble Colonel Fitzgibbon a friend to me. May he prosper in the world to come as he has done in this.

Laura Secord, Chippewa, 1861

By what evidence can we infer that Laura Secord was indeed courageous? Indicate the lines from which you find the answer.



Exercise 4

In his bed the writer rolled over on his side and lay quite still. For years he had been beset with notions concerning his heart. He was a hard smoker and his heart fluttered. The idea had got into his mind that he would some time die unexpectedly and always when he got into bed he thought of that. It did not alarm him. The effect in fact was quite a special thing and not easily explained. It made him more alive, there in bed, than at any other time. Perfectly still he lay and his body was old and not of much use any more, but something inside him was altogether young. He was like a pregnant woman, only that the thing inside him was not a baby but a youth. No, it wasn't a youth, it was a woman, young, and wearing a coat of mail like a knight. It is absurd, you see, to try to tell what was inside the old writer as he lay on his high bed and listened to the fluttering of his heart. The thing to get at is what the writer, or the young thing within the writer, was thinking about.

Sherwood Anderson, *The Grotesque*, 1919