

Name: _____

Date: _____

SAT Essay Prep Guidelines

About the SAT Essay

Some key information you should know about the SAT Essay is summarized below.

- Students are provided 25 minutes to complete the essay.
- Students will not know the topic in advance, but they will be required to state their opinion about the issue presented in the essay prompt and use specific reasons and examples to support that opinion.
- Essays are graded holistically, meaning that the two scorers reading the essay evaluate it based on the overall impression. Scorers understand that this is not a polished copy of an essay; it is a first draft based upon the essay prompt.
- A copy of the scoring guide used for the essay can be found at http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/prep_one/essay/pracStart.html
- Collegeboard.com also provides an SAT Preparation Center at http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/prep_one/prep_one.html

Essay Strategies

Practice is the key to success on the SAT Essay. Having a strategy in place for using the test time wisely will help you better accomplish the task of creating a high quality essay. The following strategies will be useful as you practice for and complete the SAT Essay.

- Be sure to read the entire prompt carefully.
- As you begin to formulate your essay, be sure to address all ideas presented in the writing prompt. Some prompts have more than one question to be addressed, and you must be sure to address all parts of the prompt within your essay
- Bring your own clock/watch so you can monitor the time remaining in the test
- Take the time to think through and plan your essay before you begin writing
 - Create an outline or mind map
- Follow the rules for creating your essay
 - Use formal written language and avoid slang
 - Clearly state your opinion as the main idea in paragraph 1
 - Utilize the writing prompt to create your topic sentence
 - Use the next 2-3 paragraphs to support your opinion using strong arguments that are clearly expressed and easy to understand. Be sure each of these paragraphs:
 - Begin with a topic sentence
 - Contain supporting details based on logical reasoning or personal examples
 - Use vivid, descriptive language
 - The final paragraph should clearly restate your opinion, summarize your major points and leave the reader with a clear conclusion
- Take time to proofread your essay. Proper use of punctuation, capitalization, grammar and spelling does make a difference. You should also be sure you have used variety in sentence structure and in your vocabulary choices.

- I used a variety of words when selecting vocabulary
- Exchange essays with a partner and use the SAT Essay Scoring Guide (available at http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/prep_one/essay/pracStart.html) to evaluate each other's essays.
- With your partner, discuss the score you would have given the essay and provide specific feedback about why you gave this particular score. Provide the writer with suggestions for improving the essay to increase the score.

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SAT Essay Practice Activities Annotated Teacher's Version

- Proceed with creating your essay by practicing the following steps: Facilitate this with students by working as a class to create a mind map or other graphic organizer on the board or overhead. Then direct students to use the information from the group brainstorming along with their own ideas to create their personal outline.

NOTE: Content from *NOW* may not support every point of view. Additional content related to the topic of immigration that is discussed in the *NOW* article "Be Our Guest" can also be found at the Public Agenda website at

http://www.publicagenda.org/issues/frontdoor.cfm?issue_type=immigration.

- In the space below, create an outline for your essay based on an opinion you have formed in your mind from the thesis you developed.
- Write the topic sentence below. Provide students with 2-3 minutes to write their topic sentences, then call on several volunteers to share what they have written.
- On a separate sheet of paper, write your essay. Provide students with approximately 20 minutes of class time to construct their essays. Call time and then review the step below for proofreading. Allow students 2-3 minutes to proofread their work.
- Read the following checklist and keep these items in mind as you proofread your essay.
 - I used formal written language and avoided slang
 - I clearly state my opinion as the main idea in paragraph 1
 - I supported my opinion using strong arguments that are clearly expressed and easy to understand.
 - Each of my supporting paragraphs:
 - Begin with a topic sentence
 - Contain supporting details based on logical reasoning or personal examples
 - Use vivid, descriptive language
 - I clearly restated my opinion, summarized my major points and left the reader with a clear conclusion
 - I used proper punctuation, capitalization, grammar and spelling throughout my essay
 - I varied my sentence structure
 - I used a variety of words when selecting vocabulary
- Exchange essays with a partner and use the SAT Essay Scoring Guide available at http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/prep_one/essay/pracStart.html to evaluate one another's essays. Review the scoring guide with students so they are familiar with what they are looking for in the essays. Provide students with approximately 5 minutes to read and score one another's work

With your partner, discuss the score you would have given the essay and provide specific feedback about why you gave this particular score. Provide the writer with suggestions for improving the essay to increase the score. Provide students with approximately 5 minutes to share their scores and feedback with one another.