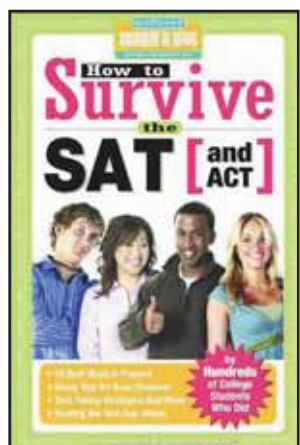


PLANNING AND STUDY TIPS TO HELP YOU PREPARE FOR THE BIG TEST

SAT SURVIVAL GUIDE

Someday, you'll look back on the SAT as simply another steppingstone in your 17-plus years of formal education. You'll view the test as part of being a teenager and an experience that, while stressful, made you a better person.



Today is not that day. The SAT is one of the most important tests you'll ever encounter. How are you supposed to keep everything in perspective while everyone seems to have gone SAT crazy? It helps to take a step back and put everything in perspective. Yes, this is an important test. Yes, it plays a role in the college admissions process. But it's not the be-all and end-all of your high school career. Here we offer information about the test and ways to get through it with success.

—Text for the page excerpted with permission from "How to Survive the SAT (and ACT)," edited by Jay Brody (Hundreds of Heads, \$14.95)

WHAT THE STUDENTS SAY

- Here's some advice from college students who have taken the test.
- Take the SAT in your sophomore year in high school as practice. That way you'll know exactly what to expect when you take it at the end of your junior year when the scores really matter.
- Where you take the test matters. If it's held in a university auditorium, it could be a logistical mess for everyone to sit down and get all the papers passed out. If you can schedule it so you can take it at a smaller location it's much less frustrating.
- In the critical reading section, look carefully at the wording of the question. Take special notice of the words "except," "only," "true," "false," etc.
- The best way to succeed in the sentence completion section is just to be well read. Nothing improves vocabulary more than reading.
- The reading comprehension questions assess both the general and the specific. To save time, read the articles first for a general idea, keeping track of exactly where each topic is located. You'll likely have to go back to check details anyway, so don't try to retain everything on the first time through. Glancing at the questions first is also a good strategy.
- Work from the top down in the math section, so you can start with the easy questions. If you work from the bottom up, then you start with the hard questions, and you end up spending more time on them.
- Before reading the essay prompt in the writing section of the test, it helps to have a skeletal outline in mind; in addition to writing an introduction and a conclusion, plan to support your thesis with three paragraphs: one discussing a novel, another a historical event and a third a current event. Have a couple of books, historical events and current events in mind that can easily adapt to whatever topic is given.
- Use your calculator to go back and check your math if you have time at the end. Use every minute to double check.
- Forget cramming the night before the test. Get some sleep.

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE SAT?

While there are no official guidelines for how colleges interpret the SAT, and each school takes its own approach, the vast majority of schools view the SAT as an important tool in evaluating incoming college students. By requiring standardized tests such as the SAT or the ACT, colleges can compare students from different types of high schools and different parts of the country. Also, the SAT tests some concepts that sometimes aren't an official part of the high school curriculum. Grammar, vocabulary, certain types of math problem solving, and time-pressured reading comprehension are all areas tested on the SAT that students may not be explicitly tested on in high school.

- Here's a very rough estimate of how a more exclusive college might weight the various college admissions components:
- High school record: 40 percent
 - Standardized test scores: 30 percent
 - Activities and extracurricular accomplishments: 10 to 20 percent
 - Essays: 5 to 10 percent
 - Recommendations: 5 percent
 - Other factors: 0 to 10 percent

By the time junior year rolls around, a student can exert the most control over his or her application by focusing on the SAT.

GOOD SAT STUDY HABITS

- Start early.** Studying properly will require at least dozens of hours of preparation. While cramming may have worked for you in the past, it won't work here. At the latest, you should begin studying during the spring of your junior year.
- Plan your studying.** When you first start preparing for the SAT, map out a plan of attack. Figure out what you need to learn and practice, and understand which materials you're going to work through for each section.
- Study in a consistent time and place.** You'll be more relaxed and efficient if you set aside a time and spot to study, whether it's your bedroom on Tuesday nights or third-period study hall.
- Work for at least an hour at a time.** The SAT is an ordeal that takes more than four hours to get through. Patience and improving your attention span are key skills. Studying for 15 minutes at a time may help you review concepts, but it won't help your brain get in shape for the actual SAT testing environment.
- Time yourself.** The SAT is what's known as a "speeded" test — time is definitely a factor. If you haven't been practicing doing questions with a clock or timer, then you're not ready for the test.

ACT VS. SAT

While the SAT is the dominant college admissions exam on the coasts, the ACT is popular in the Midwest and the South. Almost as many students take the ACT as take the SAT, and the test has received a great deal of attention lately as an alternative to the SAT. Many colleges allow students to submit scores from either test. You should check with each college to which you're applying to find out which test(s) they accept. So, how is the ACT different from the SAT? The differences between the two tests are probably overstated. Sure, they're scored differently and have different question types. And the ACT has a science section and makes the essay optional. But generally, these two exams test the same things: writing skills, reading comprehension and math knowledge.

SAVE THE DATE

The SAT is offered at least seven times a year: October, November, December, January, March/April, May and June.
The ACT is offered six times a year: September, October, December, February, April and June.

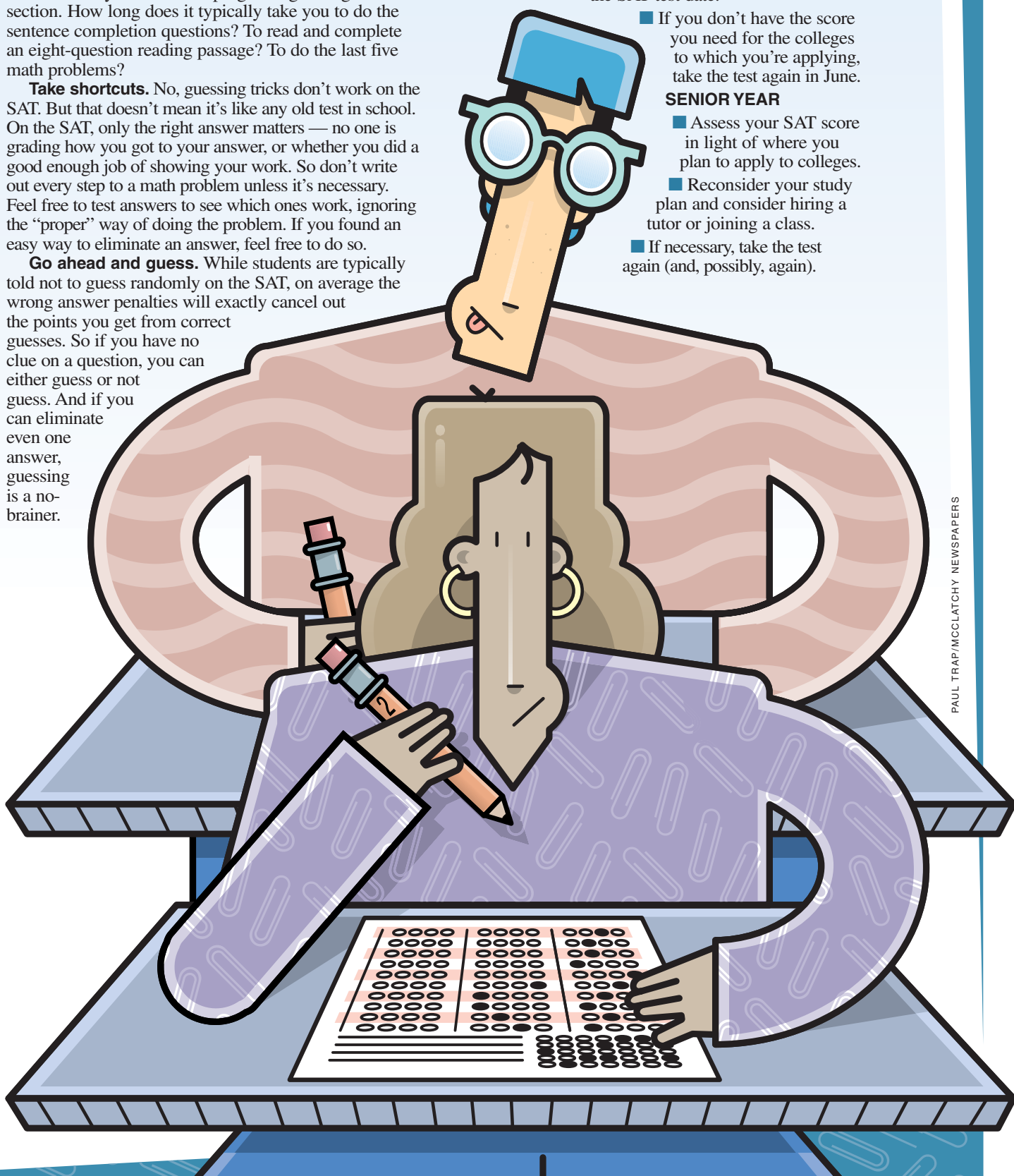
(Visit www.hundredsofheads.com to share your advice or get more information.)

TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

- Keep your own time.** Don't rely on the wall clock or on the proctors who are supposed to remember to call out time. They have the final word, of course, but it's dangerous to rely on a clock that you may not be able to see well or on monitors who may forget to call out warnings.
- Don't waste time with multiple-choice guessing shortcuts.** The SAT is put together by psychometricians, who design multiple-choice tests for a living. You can't outsmart them. Just because C hasn't come up for a while doesn't mean it's due.
- Skip the toughest questions.** Unless you're planning to get a nearly perfect SAT score, there will probably be a handful of questions that you should skip. Skipping questions means that you run out of time on the hardest questions (the ones you skipped) instead of simply the ones at the end, which may or may not be hard for you.
- Maintain your focus.** The SAT is a marathon, not a sprint. Hunker down over your answer sheet, move quickly and answer each question as if it were the most important thing in the world.
- Know how the question order and timing work.** Most of the SAT sections are 25 minutes long. Others are 20 or 10 minutes long. Know not only those times, but also how you should be progressing through each section. How long does it typically take you to do the sentence completion questions? To read and complete an eight-question reading passage? To do the last five math problems?
- Take shortcuts.** No, guessing tricks don't work on the SAT. But that doesn't mean it's like any old test in school. On the SAT, only the right answer matters — no one is grading how you got to your answer, or whether you did a good enough job of showing your work. So don't write out every step to a math problem unless it's necessary. Feel free to test answers to see which ones work, ignoring the "proper" way of doing the problem. If you found an easy way to eliminate an answer, feel free to do so.
- Go ahead and guess.** While students are typically told not to guess randomly on the SAT, on average the wrong answer penalties will exactly cancel out the points you get from correct guesses. So if you have no clue on a question, you can either guess or not guess. And if you can eliminate even one answer, guessing is a no-brainer.

SUGGESTED SAT CALENDAR

- If you're a sophomore or even a junior, you've got time to plan out everything you need to do to get ready for the SAT.
- JUNIOR YEAR**
- Find out when the PSAT is given at your school and put it on the calendar. If you're a very good test taker you might want to prepare for the PSAT, because it's the qualifying test for National Merit scholarships (only relevant for the top few percent of students).
 - In the fall or winter, make a decision about whether you want to get a tutor or enroll in a course for the SAT. Note: The best teachers can fill up months in advance, so call in October or November to get into January or February courses.
 - Decide whether to take the SAT, ACT or both.
 - Take the test for the first time in the spring (March or May for the SAT, April for the ACT). Put the test date on your calendar, as well as the deadline for signing up for the test.
 - Make sure you plan out a study schedule that concludes before you take the exam. If you're taking a class or hiring a tutor, make sure the sessions all finish before the SAT test date.
- If you don't have the score you need for the colleges to which you're applying, take the test again in June.
- SENIOR YEAR**
- Assess your SAT score in light of where you plan to apply to colleges.
 - Reconsider your study plan and consider hiring a tutor or joining a class.
 - If necessary, take the test again (and, possibly, again).



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