

8 Key Changes to the SAT

1. Key Content Changes

Each assessment in the SAT Suite of Assessments — the SAT, PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT 10, and PSAT 8/9 — includes a Reading Test, a Writing and Language Test, and a Math Test. The SAT also features an [optional essay component](#), which some colleges will require. Questions throughout the assessments focus on skills that matter most for college readiness and success, according to the latest research.

2. Words in Context

Many questions in the SAT Suite focus on important, widely used words and phrases found in texts in many different subjects. Some questions ask students to figure out a word's meaning based on context. The words are ones that students will probably encounter in college or in the workplace long after test day.

No longer will students use flashcards to memorize obscure words, only to forget them the minute they put their test pencils down. The redesigned exams engage students in close reading and honor the best work of the classroom.

3. Command of Evidence

The Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section and the SAT Essay ask students to interpret, synthesize, and use evidence found in a wide range of sources. These sources include informational graphics, such as tables, charts, and graphs, as well as multiparagraph passages in the areas of literature and literary nonfiction, the humanities, science, history and social studies, and on topics about work and career.

For every passage or pair of passages students will see during the [Reading Test](#), at least one question will ask students to identify which part of the text best supports the answer to the previous question. In other instances, students will be asked to find the best answer to a question by pulling together information conveyed in words and graphics.

The [Writing and Language Test](#) also focuses on command of evidence. It asks students to do things like analyze a series of sentences or paragraphs and decide if it makes sense. Other questions ask students to interpret graphics and to edit a part of the accompanying passage so that it clearly and accurately communicates the information in the graphics.

[The SAT Essay](#) also tests command of evidence. After reading a passage, students will be asked to determine how the author builds an argument to

persuade an audience through the use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive devices. Scorers look for cogent, clear analyses supported by critical reasoning and evidence drawn from the text provided.

4. Essay Analyzing a Source

The redesigned SAT Essay asks students to read a passage and explain how an author builds an argument to persuade an audience. This task closely mirrors college writing assignments because it is asking students to analyze how the author used evidence, reasoning, and stylistic and persuasive elements.

The redesigned SAT Essay is designed to support high school students and teachers as they cultivate close reading, careful analysis, and clear writing. It will promote the practice of reading a wide variety of arguments and analyzing how authors do their work as writers.

The essay prompt will be the same every time the redesigned SAT is offered, but the source material students are asked to write about will be different each time.

Not all students will take the SAT with Essay, but some colleges and school districts require it. The SAT is the only assessment in the SAT Suite that includes an essay. [Learn more about the SAT Essay.](#)

5. Math that Matters Most

The Math Test focuses in-depth on three essential areas of math: Problem Solving and Data Analysis, Heart of Algebra, and Passport to Advanced Math.

Problem Solving and Data Analysis is about being quantitatively literate. It includes using ratios, percentages, and proportional reasoning to solve problems in science, social science, and career contexts.

Heart of Algebra focuses on the mastery of linear equations and systems, which helps students develop key powers of abstraction.

Passport to Advanced Math focuses on more-complex equations and the manipulation they require.

Current research shows that these areas are used in a wide range of majors and careers. The redesigned SAT also includes questions on other topics in math, including the kinds of geometric and trigonometric skills that are most relevant to college and careers. [Learn more about the Math Test.](#)

6. Problems Grounded in Real-World Contexts

Throughout the SAT Suite, students will be asked questions grounded in the real world, directly related to work performed in college and career.

The Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section includes questions on literature and literary nonfiction, but also features charts, graphs, and passages like the ones students are likely to encounter in science, social science, and other majors and careers.

Questions on the Writing and Language Test ask students to do more than correct errors; they ask students to edit, revise, and improve texts from the humanities, history, social science, science, and career contexts.

The Math section features multistep applications to solve problems in science, social science, career scenarios, and other real-life situations. The test sets up a scenario and asks several questions that give students the opportunity to dig in and model it mathematically.

7. Analysis in Science and in History/Social Studies

The redesigned SAT asks students to apply their reading, writing, language, and math knowledge and skills to answer questions in science, history, and social studies contexts. In this way, the assessments call on the same sorts of knowledge and skills that students will use in college, at work, and throughout life to make sense of recent discoveries, political developments, global events, and health and environmental issues.

The redesigned SAT includes a range of challenging texts and informational graphics that address these sorts of issues and topics in the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section and the Math section. Questions will require students to read and understand texts, revise texts to be consistent with data presented in graphics, synthesize information presented through texts and graphics, and solve problems that are grounded in science and social science.

8. U.S. Founding Documents and the Great Global Conversation

The SAT Suite of Assessments asks students to read a passage from U.S. founding documents or the global conversation they inspired.

The U.S. founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the Federalist Papers, have been inspired by and have helped to inspire a conversation that continues to this day about the nature of civic life.

Authors, speakers, and thinkers from the United States and around the world, including Edmund Burke, Mary Wollstonecraft, Nelson Mandela, and Mohandas Gandhi, have broadened and deepened the conversation around such vital matters as freedom, justice, and human dignity.

The redesigned SAT Suite includes texts from this global conversation. The goal is to inspire a close reading of these rich, meaningful, often profound texts, not

only as a way to develop valuable college and career readiness skills but also as an opportunity to reflect on and deeply engage with issues and concerns central to informed citizenship.

andNo Penalty for Guessing

Across the SAT Suite, students simply earn points for questions answered correctly. They're able to give their best answer to every question because there's no advantage to leaving them blank.

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/about/key-changes>