

How to Do Well on the SATs

The SAT's are a dreaded test that every hopeful college-bound student takes. Despite the hullabaloo surrounding these tests, follows these simple steps and consider the tips below to help you prepare for your test. It isn't as hard as you may think to calm down and make sure you know the required information on testing day.

Steps

1. Don't stress out. Before starting anything, identify what you need to work on to prepare for the test. Study for each section thoroughly using SAT testing aides. There are many different testing aides available, books and practice tests can be found at the [SAT Preparation Center](#). There was also a New York Times article on a lesser known way to increase your SAT score using [SAT calculator programs](#) that can be used while you take the math portion of test, or serve as verbal flashcards on your calculator for handy review.
2. Identify problems you might have during the test. Do you have trouble with the difficult algebraic questions? Are you in the dark about some of the more obscure grammatical rules? Study more for these areas than you would others. It is recommended that you study at least twice as long in difficult areas as you would easier ones. Understand the concepts first, then practice those concepts with problems and questions. While memorizing can be helpful, particularly with vocabulary, it isn't the whole thing. Understanding goes a lot further than memorization.
3. Try not to be nervous on test day. It may be difficult, but just think to yourself: *It's just a test, and I prepared all that I could. I will succeed.* If you have confidence in yourself, quite simply, you will do better.

Tips

- If you have difficulty with math, try to understand the basic concepts as soon as possible. You can also try the [SAT prep](#) calculator programs previously mentioned to help you solve problems during the test. Get rid of any patterns or assumptions you think you've seen over the years and concentrate only on the basics. Then practice over and over again using all of these concepts.
- Important: Make sure you understand the method you use and why it works and makes mathematical sense.
- If you have difficulty with vocabulary and grammar, again, try to understand the concepts first. Then practice these concepts using an SAT guide or your textbooks. There are many minor rules and standards that the SAT checks.
- Find an SAT book that deals with minor grammatical rules (parallelism, possessives, correct phrasing of certain types of sentences). Recognizing grammatical mistakes in everyday speech makes it second nature.
- If you have trouble with reading comprehension, try to keep the logic simple and literal - don't confuse yourself and don't focus on the little pieces of the passage - the logic is often obvious.

- For particular SAT II's - Be sure to pay attention is your specific class. Beyond that, get a review book and make sure to take the practice tests. Try taking them in order (if you plan on taking multiple ones in a session - its less money) from most difficult to least.
- For math SAT IIs, use a graphing calculator (a TI-89 or -83+ is recommended) if at all possible. Your school may have a class set of these calculators for calculus classes. Talk to a calculus teacher to see if you can borrow one. Calculators can help you solve problems quickly by performing basic functions and graphing. While most problems on the SAT II are not solved using a calculator alone, calculators are certainly helpful.
- Familiarize yourself with the calculator as soon as possible before test day. You can't afford to spend a few minutes getting to know the calculator on the day of your test.
- Make sure to go to the bathroom before you take the test.
- Relax. Seriously. This cannot be stressed enough. So take lightening up seriously (oxymoron intended).
- Get a good night's sleep and eat a good breakfast. Don't sabotage yourself so you have an excuse when you do badly. You don't want to have regrets. If you set yourself up for success, it's much more likely you will.

Warnings

- Never sacrifice sleep to study more. It doesn't work. Sleep is when your body commits information to memory. If you sacrifice sleep to study, you will remember less.
- Understanding concepts includes realizing why they make sense and where they are to be applied. Don't just memorize and think you can use a concept for every problem or question that fits the mold. Sometimes different questions involve more than one concept.

Things You'll Need

- Pencils
- Calculator
- Study guides
- Lots of paper
- On test day: admission ticket and ID. Don't let an unlucky circumstance undermine your performance, prepare accordingly.