

About the Tests

	ACT	SAT
Length	3 hours, 5 minutes	3 hours, 15 minutes
Sections	English Test Math Test Reading Test Science Test Optional Writing Test (essay)	Reading Test Writing and Language Test Math Test—No Calculator Math Test—Calculator Optional Essay
Scores	1–36 composite score 1–36 scores for the 4 required Tests 2–12 scores for the Writing Test	400–1600 composite score 200–800 section scores 2–8 scores for the essay

Tips for the SAT & ACT:

Neither test has a wrong answer penalty. Answer every question—don't leave anything blank.

Triage every section:

1. Start with the questions you know how to answer easily and quickly
2. Skip questions that you are unsure about or take up too much time by circling them. Come back to them only after you have finished all the questions you know in that section (or on that passage).
3. Put an X next to any questions you don't understand or don't remember how to do. Return to them only if you have extra time. Otherwise, enter your Letter of the Day as your answer.

Use elimination if you have time and can't figure out a question. Even if you still guess, you're more likely to get a question correct when choosing from 2 or 3 choices rather than 4.

Use a calendar to make a study schedule.

1. Write in all of your non-test commitments first: school, work, sports, and any other scheduled outings with friends, etc.
2. Write in your test prep class times.
3. Select your break day (i.e., the day you take completely off from studying for the test).
4. Finally, in the other days, write in blocks of time to tackle the test.

	Sun 2	Mon 3	Tue 4	Wed 5	Thu 6	Fri 7	Sat 8
5am						Lazy day	
6am		work out	work out		work out		
7am							
8am		School	School	School	School		
9am						Work	Work
10am							
11am			test prep				
12pm		School		School	School		
1pm							
2pm	Practice Test						
3pm		School		test prep			
4pm							
5pm			Soccer Game				test prep
6pm		homework/ study			homework/ study		
7pm						Bday dinner	
8pm							

If you **haven't** taken a practice test in the past two weeks, do that first.

If you only have a **week or two** to study, focus on your strengths.

- Review common math concepts, such as slope-intercept form.
- Review basic punctuation rules.
- Review the Reading passage types and determine your personal passage order for test day.

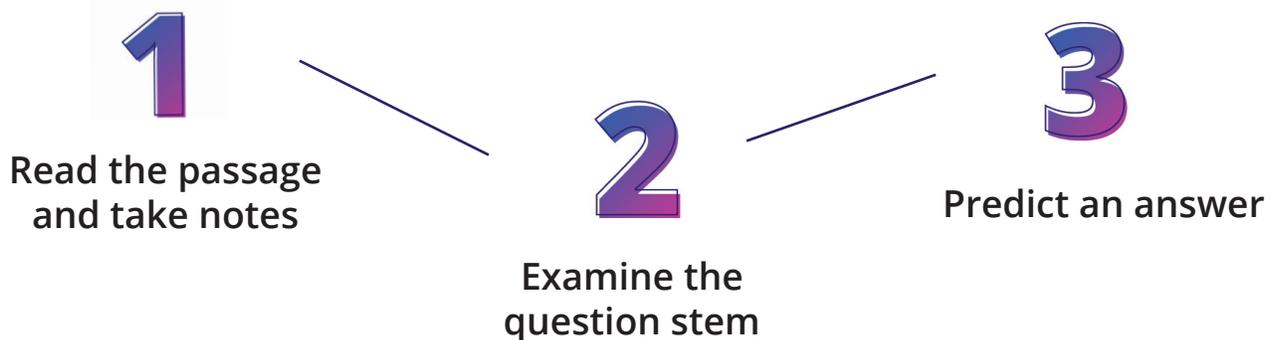
If you have **three or more weeks**, focus on your areas of opportunity.

- Determine which section(s) you need to improve and how many points you need to reach your goal score.
- Identify which three topics are the most important in your lowest scoring section and start reviewing them.
- Take practice tests at regular intervals to track your progress and help you adjust your plan.

Reading

	ACT	SAT
Length	35 minutes	65 minutes
Number of Questions	40 questions Multiple choice, 4 choices	52 questions Multiple choice, 4 choices
Passage Types	Literary Narrative/Prose Fiction Social Science Humanities Natural Science	U.S. and World Literature History/Social Studies Science
Notable Distinctions	About half the time as the SAT section but only 12 fewer questions, so there is much less time per passage and question set.	Command of Evidence questions relate to previous question (“Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?”) with line references as answer choices.

Kaplan Method for Reading:



Tips for Reading:

When you see a line reference, go back to the passage and read a little before and after. Then, eliminate any details that are from the wrong part of the passage.

When you are in between 2 or 3 answer choices, look for clues to help you eliminate incorrect answers. Even when you have no idea, you should guess.

Avoid answer choices with extreme language like “always,” “never,” “best,” and “worst.” These are incorrect when they go beyond the author’s beliefs in the passage.

English/Writing and Language

	ACT	SAT
Length	45 minutes	35 minutes
Number of Questions	75 questions Multiple choice, 4 choices	44 questions Multiple choice, 4 choices
Skills	Conventions of Standard English Production of Writing Knowledge of Language	Command of Evidence Words in Context Analysis in History/Social Studies Expression of Ideas Standard English Conventions
Notable Distinctions	Includes 10 more minutes but 31 more questions than the SAT.	Includes infographics that must be interpreted to answer the question correctly.

Kaplan Method for English/Writing & Language:

1

Read the passage and identify the issue

2

Eliminate answer choices that do not address the issue

3

Plug in the remaining choices, and select the most clear and concise.

When you see...	You should suspect...	Ask yourself...
a comma underlined	a run-on issue	Are there two independent clauses? Are they properly combined?
an -ing verb underlined	a fragment issue	Is the -ing verb being used as the main verb in the sentence?
a series, list, or compound underlined	a parallelism issue	Are all of the items in the series or list in the same form?
an adjective or adverb underlined	a modifier issue	What word is being modified? Is the adverb or adjective correct?
a connecting or relationship word underlined	a connections issue	What is the relationship between the ideas?

Tips for Punctuation:

The 4 ways commas are tested:

1. To set off 3 or more items in a series or list
2. To separate independent clauses connected by a FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) conjunction
3. To separate an introductory phrase from the rest of the sentence
4. To separate non-essential information from the rest of the sentence

The 2 ways semicolons are tested:

1. To join two independent clauses when a FANBOYS word is not present
2. To separate items in a series or list if those items already include commas

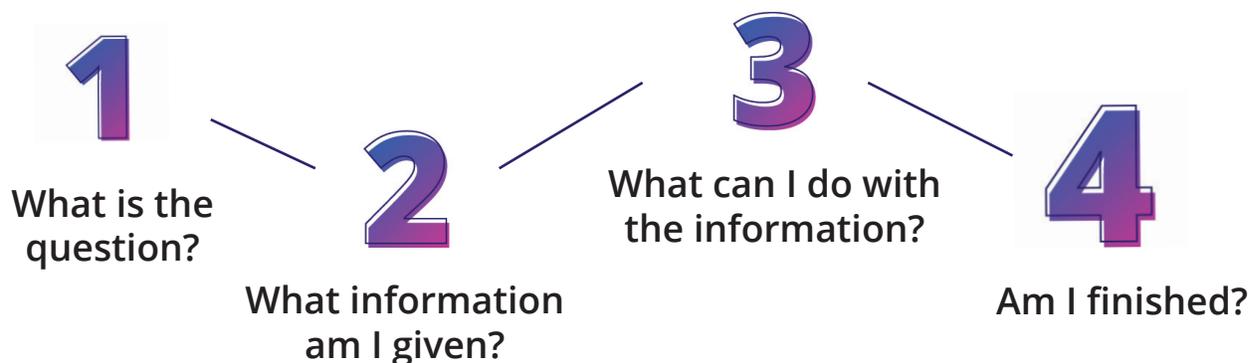
The only way a colon is tested:

1. To introduce and/or emphasize a short phrase, quotation, explanation, example, or list

Math

	ACT	SAT- no calculator	SAT- calculator
Length	60 minutes	25 minutes	55 minutes
Number of Questions	60 questions Multiple choice, 5 choices	20 questions Multiple choice, 4 choices, and grid-in	38 questions Multiple choice, 4 choices, and grid-in
Topics	Number & Quantity Algebra Functions Geometry Statistics & Probability	Heart of Algebra Problem Solving and Data Analysis Passport to Advanced Math Additional Topics in Math	
Notable Distinctions	Generally less wordy than SAT math questions. Everyday formulas not provided.	Both sections include grid-in questions. These questions require you to generate your own answer as opposed to choosing from 4 options.	

Kaplan Method for Math:

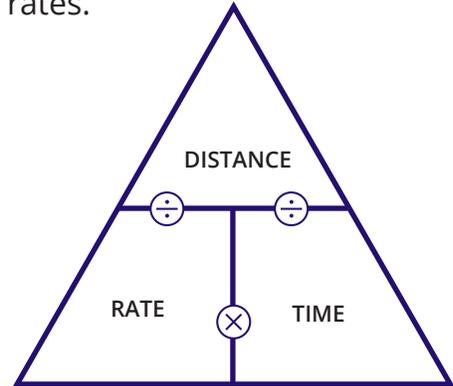


Tips for Math formulas:

The DIRT formula can help you with most questions involving rates.

DIRT Distance Is Rate \times Time $\rightarrow d = rt$

The **rate** is always something per something.
The **time** unit should match the rate unit.
The **distance** is whatever is being measured.



Imaginary numbers follow a pattern. Use the exponent to help you figure out the **value of i^n** :

i^1	=	i	Everything to the first power is itself	=	i	
i^2	=	$i \times i$	=	$\sqrt{-1} \times \sqrt{-1}$	=	-1
i^3	=	$-1 \times i$	=	$-1 \times \sqrt{-1}$	=	$-i$
i^4	=	$-(i \times i)$	=	-1×-1	=	1

Is **n** a multiple of 4? Then the value is 1.
If it's not a multiple of 4, use the remainder in the pattern above.

When a test question mentions the word **average**, write out the **average formula**:

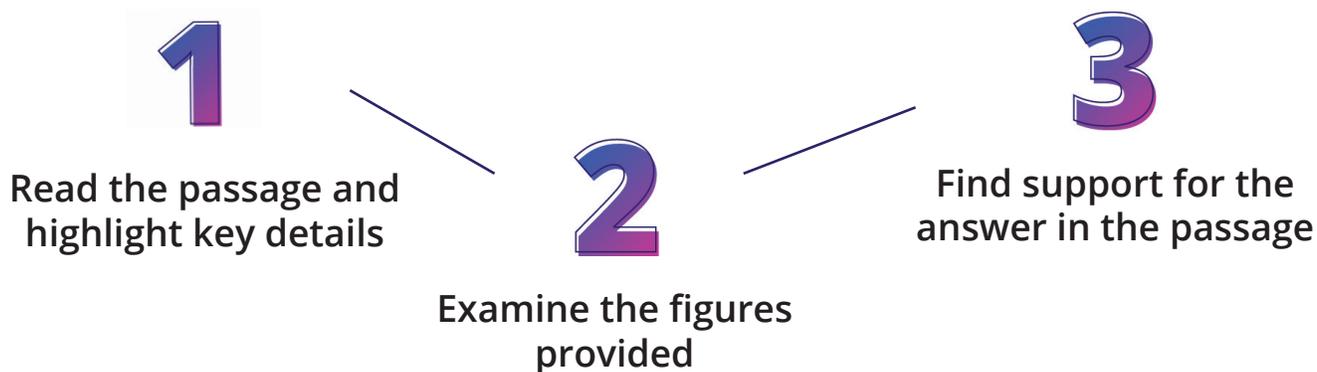
average = (sum of terms)/(number of terms)

Plug in the values you are given. Often, just thinking about the information in this setup will help you decide what to do next.

Science - ACT only

	ACT ONLY
Length	35 minutes
Number of Questions	40 questions Multiple choice, 5 choices
Passage Formats	Data Representation Research Summaries Conflicting Viewpoints
Notable Distinctions	The data representation passages and questions rely more on the graphs and tables than the passages. Be sure to read the Research Summaries or Conflicting Viewpoint passages strategically before the questions.

Kaplan Method for Science:



Tips for Science:

Very little science knowledge is required. Use the information given to you in the passage. Don't jump to any conclusions that are outside the scope of the passage.

You're able to work through the passages in any order. Start with the ones you are most comfortable with, and save the trickier ones for last.

You can often answer the data interpretation questions without using the passage at all. Don't waste time reading anything you don't need.

Essay/Writing

	ACT	SAT
Length	40 minutes	50 minutes
Task	Evaluate multiple perspectives regarding a current issue	Write an explanation of how the author of a persuasive text builds her argument, citing specific examples from the text.
Notable Distinctions	The specific position you take is not the important part. You don't have to address all three perspectives to get a strong score, but you must demonstrate the ability to analyze multiple positions on a topic.	Most similar to an AP Language and Composition rhetorical analysis essay. Having 5–6 rhetorical devices in mind will help you plan and write a better essay.

Do I need to take the essay?

Some schools do require you to submit an essay score with your SAT and ACT scores, but not all do. If you are unsure, we recommend taking the test with essay at least once. You can find a list of schools that require an essay score for [SAT](#) and [ACT](#).

The Kaplan Method for Writing/Essay:

1

Read the prompt, and mentally summarize the task.

3

Write the essay. Focus on clarity and precise word choice.

2

Make a plan. Outline your introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion.

4

Proofread your essay. Read through your essay fixing spelling, grammar, and other errors.

Essay Tips :

You can still achieve a high score even with small errors. Focus on the most important pieces like your thesis and supporting evidence.

Make sure to answer the question. An off-topic essay will receive a very low score, even if it's written well.

Use your time wisely. It's important to plan your paragraphs in advance, but the majority of your time should be spent writing. Save at least 2-3 minute for proofreading to catch errors.

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