



SYNAPSE PREP



Defeating the SAT

The Official Unofficial Study Guide

- Relatively fun, easy to follow strategies that work + tons of practice problems.
- Witty and irreverent. Written by smart-alecks, for smart-alecks.
- No useless BS. Only contains stuff that will actually improve your test score.
- Includes Access to Online Video Lessons



STEP 1

Follow this SAT prep guide.



STEP 2

Defeat the SAT with new-found confidence.



STEP 3

Get into your dream school!



STEP 4

Graduate and write SAT prep guides for a living?

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INTRO

Chapter 1

What is the SAT?

The SAT is a 3-hour long beast of a test (3 hours 50 minutes with essay).

It has 4 parts--**Reading, Writing and Language, Math**, and an optional **Essay**.

Here's the breakdown:

Part	# Of Questions	Time	Time/ Question
Reading	52 questions	65 mins	1.25 min
Writing and Language	44 questions	35 mins	0.8 min
Math (calculator)	38 questions	55 mins	1.45 min
Math (No calculator)	20 questions	25 mins	1.25 min
Essay	1 question	50 min	50 min

How is the SAT Scored?

The SAT has a pretty weird scoring scale from 400 - 1600 points.

A 400 means someone should check your pulse.

A 1600 means your mom forced you to master the cello by 2nd grade.

800 possible points come from the **Reading** part and **Writing/Language** part (**400 each**).

800 possible points come from the calculator **Math** part and no calculator **Math** part (**400 each**)

The **Essay** is graded separately with a scale from 6 - 24 points.

SAT vs ACT?

Once upon a time...

The SAT and ACT were very different tests.

Then more and more students started to like the ACT.

So what did College Board (the people/creatures who make the SAT) do?

THEY COPIED THE ACT!

Yep, the current SAT is basically a total rip-off of the ACT.

This blatant thief is amazing for you though!

How????????? Because, **now preparing for the SAT will also prepare you for the ACT.**

There are still a couple of minor differences though. Here's the breakdown:

SAT	ACT
No 'hard' vocab questions	No vocab questions
4 answer choices per multiple-choice question	4-5 answer choices per multiple-choice question
Science questions in the reading part	Has a separate science part

What Do Colleges Want?

Wait! You're not taking the SAT for fun?

You'd **rather** be mauled by a raccoon for 3 hrs?

You'd **rather** undergo dental surgery without anesthesia for 3 hrs?

You'd **rather**...ALRIGHT WE GOT IT!

You're trying to get into college? Gotcha. Yea, college is pretty awesome.

That means at some point you're likely going to call up your favorite school and ask about getting in.

Someone will tell you (usually in smug voice),

“WE TAKE A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO OUR ADMISSIONS PROCESS”

They're saying that they take your entire application into consideration.

So you start thinking,

“Cool. Even if my SAT score sucks, my high GPA, loads of extracurricular activities, glowing letters of recommendation, and quality personal statement, should make up for it!”

We'll put this as softly as we can...

NO.

Sorry to break it to you, but most colleges ($\approx 95\%$) only care about two things¹

1) Your SAT

2) Your GPA

The even sadder reality is that your GPA is seen as secondary to your SAT.

Nowadays, there's so much emphasis on the SAT that most colleges will accept a weak GPA (~ 2.5) if it is offset by a very high SAT score.²

Whereas if you do fantastic in high school, but your SAT score is trash, then your application will likely become trash as well--even if you apply with a perfect GPA.

'WHAT MADNESS IS THIS!?'

We agree! The SAT carries way too much weight. The problem is that colleges have no way of knowing whether or not your GPA is legit.

Your high-school could have been crazy strict with only the most dedicated suck ups managing to get B's, or your teachers could have been giving out A's left and right.

So the SAT was invented to give everyone a "level playing field" to prove that they actually paid attention in class.

1) Private liberal arts colleges at least pretend to seriously consider your personal statement, letters of recommendation, etc. Some actually do, but more often than not admissions only reads through these materials to see if your parents have money.

2) This is not true for extremely selective schools, such as the "Ivy League." Almost everyone who applies to these schools has a virtually perfect GPA and SAT. You'll need a truly remarkable application (incl. advanced coursework, letters of recommendation, personal statement, etc.) to set yourself apart.



3 Most Important Things to Know

Most SAT prep books will spend 100+ pages describing every nook and cranny of the SAT.

Here's the thing:

Most of these details will have no effect on your actual SAT score.

So we've trimmed the fat.

And the following pages present only the stuff that is **absolutely key** to improving your score:

1) The SAT is Freaking Penalty-Free

2) The SAT is Freaking Long

3) The SAT is Freaking Sneaky



The SAT is Freaking Penalty Free

Read Aloud

I
THE STUDENT READING THIS
WILL NEVER
I MEAN NEVER, EVER, EVER, EVER
EVER, EVER, EVER, EVER
LEAVE A QUESTION BLANK ON THE SAT

You're probably thinking "**WTF** (Wow that's fun) dude, but I got it the first time.

Reciting that was stupid **AF** (awesome, friend).

Listen you little **ASS** (Awesome super stud)...

Despite repeating it

and repeating it

and repeating it

and...

There inevitably ends up being students who leave questions blank!

This is Insanity.

OK. Lets crunch the numbers.

1463863219642085434689515658083468908098876564563542143368709887760957421468798633

No. Not like that. Here we are

You have a 1 in 4 shot of getting the answer right by simply guessing.

You have a 0 in 4 shot of getting the answer right by leaving it blank.

For the love of all that is good in the world, if you learn just one thing from this book, make it this:

DO NOT LEAVE ANY QUESTIONS BLANK!!!!!!



The SAT is Freaking Long

If the SAT were a cat, it'd be a really long one.

At 3 hours (3 hours and 50 mins with the optional essay), the SAT is a monster test that requires **intense focus and a strong will to push forward**.

And passage after passage,

Problem after problem,

it'll all start blending together into a big mess.

Many students become so mentally drained on the last part of the test that they'll start randomly guessing.

Some may even hallucinate. For those that do, remember not to eat any delicious looking pies you may see on test-day; they are just pie charts!

Now running a mile or so everyday is great for your health, but it's not going to fully prepare you for the length of a marathon.

Likewise, making a little time for SAT prep everyday (or at least a couple times a week) is awesome.

BUT, it's not going to mentally equip you to conquer the SAT's secret weapon:

it's length.

At this point you're probably thinking, *"My liege, how doth I prepare the battle-ments for such lengthy a scrimmage?"*

First, quit being weird.

Second, there are a couple ways to strengthen your mental endurance:

1) *Smoking Methamphetamine (not recommended)*

This is the easiest and most **illegal** way to maintain your mental power throughout the test, on the way home, to the motel, during the three day drug/prostitute binge, into the shootout, and through part of your resulting trial.

2) *Take full, self-timed SAT practice tests*

College Board offers free, full length practice tests online.

At minimum, you should aim to **complete 3+ self-timed SAT practice tests in their entirety before test day!**

Then when the SAT launches its secret weapon—trying to wear away your energy and focus with its sheer length—you'll have the mental endurance to push forward with max thinking power!



The SAT is Freaky Sneaky

The SAT is a dirty fighter.

You enter the ring thinking everything is legit when you're suddenly kicked in the nuts (or female equivalent).

See, the SAT can't beat you fair and square, so it resorts to trickery.

The Good News

The vast majority (**80-90%**) of SAT problems are straight forward and don't involve any trickery.

The Bad News

The SAT will try to **deceive**, **confuse**, and **misdirect** you more than a fiending shoe addict on the remaining problems.

The Good News about the Bad News

The SAT uses the same dirty tricks from test to test.

This last piece of news is great, as it means you can learn to recognize and avoid these '**trap**' problems in advance.

Because traps tend to vary based on which part of the SAT you're in, we'll cover most of them in later on.

For now, let's fashion our metaphorical jockstrap by learning to avoid the most common traps lurking ***throughout the SAT***.

Trap #1	Effect
The question looks simple, but it's actually complex.	1) Narrows your focus 2) Kills your self-esteem

This trap can be a huge time waster if you're not careful.

Take a quick glance at the first example, **QUESTION 1**

1

$$x^2 + y^2 + 4x - 2y = -1$$

The equation of a circle in the xy -plane is shown above. What is the radius of the circle?

- A) 2
- B) 3
- C) 4
- D) 9

What about **QUESTION 1** makes it look simple?

- 1)** No complicated formula.
- 2)** Low word count.
- 3)** No technical words.

If you're good with geometry, you're probably thinking, *Sweet, it's a ***simple*** question about a circle.*

Not so fast! Step back or you'll fall into the trap, clawing at the walls with everything you know about circles. But you won't get out.

Why? Because it's actually a **complex** question involving some tough algebra and squares.

Now you're welcome to take on **QUESTION 1** if you're looking for a challenge.

Just know that it's not vital to the lesson, so we won't be going over the answer (for the brave souls who did give it a try, the correct answer is **Choice A**).

The next example, **QUESTION 2**, is based on the following real SAT passage.

Just give the passage a glance for now.

Question 2-2 is based on the following passage.

This passage is adapted from Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*. ©1938 by Harcourt, Inc. Here, Woolf considers the situation of women in English society.

Close at hand is a bridge over the River Thames, an admirable vantage ground for us to make a survey. The river flows beneath; barges pass, laden with timber, bursting with corn; there on one side are the domes and spires of the city; on the other, Westminster and the Houses of Parliament. It is a place to stand on by the hour, dreaming. But not now. Now we are pressed for time. Now we are here to consider facts; now we must fix our eyes upon the procession—the procession of the sons of educated men.

There they go, our brothers who have been educated at public schools and universities, mounting those steps, passing in and out of those doors, ascending those pulpits, preaching, teaching, administering justice, practising medicine, transacting business, making money. It is a solemn sight always—a procession, like a caravanserai crossing a desert. . . . But now, for the past twenty years or so, it is no longer a sight merely, a photograph, or fresco scrawled

upon the walls of time, at which we can look with merely an esthetic appreciation. For there, trapesing along at the tail end of the procession, we go ourselves. And that makes a difference. We who have looked so long at the pageant in books, or from a curtained window watched educated men leaving the house at about nine-thirty to go to an office, returning to the house at about six-thirty from an office, need look passively no longer. We too can leave the house, can mount those steps, pass in and out of those doors,... make money, administer justice. . . . We who now agitate these humble pens may in another century or two speak from a pulpit. Nobody will dare contradict us then; we shall be the mouthpieces of the divine spirit—a solemn thought, is it not? Who can say whether, as time goes on, we may not dress in military uniform, with gold lace on our breasts, swords at our sides, and something like the old family coal-scuttle on our heads, save that that venerable object was never decorated with plumes of white horsehair. You laugh—indeed the shadow of the private house still makes those dresses look a little queer. We have worn private clothes so long. . . . But we have not come here to laugh, or to talk of fashions—men's and women's. We are here, on

the bridge, to ask ourselves certain questions. And they are very important questions; and we have very little time in which to answer them. The questions that we have to ask and to answer about that procession during this moment of transition are so important that they may well change the lives of all men and women for ever. For we have to ask ourselves, here and now, do we wish to join that procession, or don't we? On what terms shall we join that procession? Above all, where is it leading us, the procession of educated men? The moment is short; it may last five years; ten years, or perhaps only a matter of a few months longer.... But, you will object, you have no time to think; you have your battles to fight, your rent to pay, your brassieres to organize. That excuse shall not serve you, Madam. As you know from your own experience, and there are facts that prove it, the daughters of educated men have always done their thinking

from hand to mouth; not under green lamps at study tables in the cloisters of secluded colleges. They have thought while they stirred the pot, while they rocked the cradle. It was thus that they won us the right to our brand-new sixpence. It falls to us now to go on thinking; how are we to spend that sixpence? Think we must. Let us think in offices; in omnibuses; while we are standing in the crowd watching Coronations and Lord Mayor's Shows; let us think . . . in the gallery of the House of Commons; in the Law Courts; let us think at baptisms and marriages and funerals. Let us never cease from thinking—what is this “civilization” in which we find ourselves? What are these ceremonies and why should we take part in them? What are these professions and why should we make money out of them? Where in short is it leading us, the procession of the sons of educated men?

We're not gonna lie, this passage is a doozy: full of abstract metaphors, fancy pants language, and indirect arguments.

So I don't have to read it all, right?

Uh oh, looks like you just pissed off the passage's author:

But, you will object, you have no time to think; you have your battles to fight, your rent to pay, your brassieres to organize. That excuse shall not serve you!

You heard em'. Quit sorting your bras and get to reading! You've got to push yourself if you want what you want in life.

Afterwards, give **QUESTION 2** below a shot.

2

Which choice most closely captures the meaning of the figurative “sixpence” referred to in lines 70 and 71?

- A) Tolerance
- B) Knowledge
- C) Opportunity
- D) Perspective

What about **QUESTION 2** makes it look simple?

- 1) "Sixpence" is used multiple times in passage.
- 2) Low word count.
- 3) Answer choices are easy words.

In fact, the only part of this '**word in context**' question that seems to offer any trouble is the word, 'sixpence.'

Sixpence??? This is America. Speak English.

Never heard it before? No problem. Not knowing a word on the SAT reading part shouldn't ever stop you from getting the right answer. You'll just have to do a little extra detective work.

In this case, we should first work out a general definition for 'sixpence.'

Try narrowing in on the core sentences and list any helpful context clues on the line below.

It was thus that they won us the right to our brand-new sixpence. It falls to us now to go on thinking; how are we to spend that sixpence?

Helpful context clues: _____

Here's 3 that caught our eye: **won, brand-new, and spend.**

So now we've got a '**brand-new**' sixpence that was '**won**' by the 'daughters of educated men.'

Yea, that tells us diddly squat (not to be confused with squat diddly).

What about the word, 'spend?' What do people spend?

Time, money, **things of value.**

It's pretty vague, but it may still help us eliminate some answer choices.

Let's take a look at them again:

- A) Tolerance
- B) Knowledge
- C) Opportunity
- D) Perspective

Crap! They're all things of value that could be figuratively 'spent.'

Looks like we'll need to gain more context by reading a few lines before and after the core sentences.

Re-read lines 63-74 below:

As you know from your own experience, and there are facts that prove it, the daughters of educated men have always done their thinking from hand to mouth; not under green lamps at study tables in the cloisters of secluded colleges. They have thought while they stirred the pot, while they rocked the cradle. It was thus that they won us the right to our brand-new sixpence. It falls to us now to go on thinking; how are we to spend that sixpence? Think we must. Let us think in offices; in omnibuses; while we are standing in the crowd watching Coronations and Lord Mayor's Shows; let us think . . .

For most students, that didn't give a clear answer.

But it's a simple 'word in context' question! I must have missed something. Let me try re-reading those lines again.

It's at this point the trap sinks its teeth in and infects you with tunnel-vision.

You'll end up wasting time re-reading those same lines over and over without getting any closer to the correct answer.

Ultimately, most students will end up going with **Choice B** as lines 63-74 are filled with its synonyms: thinking, education, study, college, etc.

How did a simple looking question turn into an absolute nightmare?

Because, the strongest context clues for "sixpence" aren't found anywhere near where the word is used! Where are they then?

1. The Blurb Before the Passage Begins

This passage is adapted from Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*.
©1938 by Harcourt, Inc. Here, Woolf considers the situation of women in English society.

Knowing the author's identify and who **she** is writing about provides vital context to the passage.

2) The Beginning of Paragraph 2 (Lines 12-13 and 19-25)

There they go, our brothers who have been educated at public schools and universities...but now, for the past twenty years or so, it is no longer a sight merely, a photograph, or fresco scrawled upon the walls of time, at which we can look with merely an esthetic appreciation. For there, trapesing along at the tail end of the procession, we go ourselves.

The strongest context clues are usually found in the same paragraph as the word

in question. So why are we looking more than 50 lines away from 'sixpence'?

You probably didn't catch it, but there are only 2 paragraphs in the entire passage! So this context clue is actually in the same paragraph as 'sixpence.'

It tells us that women had only recently been allowed to attend college when the author wrote the passage.

Now lines 63-74 make a lot more sense!

The author writes that previously women had to do all their thinking while performing house-work:

They have thought while they stirred the pot, while
they rocked the cradle.

Finally, she ponders how women should use this brand-new...

It was thus that they won us the right to our brand-new
sixpence. It falls to us now to go on thinking; how are
we to spend that sixpence?

...Opportunity.

Making **Choice C** the right answer.

How to Avoid Falling Victim

1) Don't Doubt Yourself

These problems can kill morale.

This should be so simple. What am I missing? I'm so stupid! I knew those pole dancing lessons were a smart investment.

NEVER waste valuable test time being self-critical or thinking about how your SAT performance will impact your future.

The truth is that most students are pleasantly surprised by their SAT scores, despite feeling uncertain on test-day.

Remember that you're doing a lot better than you think!

2) Keep an Open Mind

If a problem looks simple, but the strategy you typically use to solve it mysteriously won't work, then it's probably a complex problem in disguise.

This is a wake up call that you're using the wrong approach and need to take a **big** step back.

In fact, you'll probably need to completely re-start the problem to find the correct approach.

Mark the problem if you're having trouble, so you can return to it later with fresh eyes.

Trap #2	Effect
Simple problems that look complex	1) Scares you into skipping them 2) Makes you waste time by over thinking.

These look super intimidating on the surface. We ain't playin'.

Try looking at these 3 example questions without groaning and/or violently twitching.

3

The posted weight limit for a covered wooden bridge in Texas is 6000 pounds. A delivery truck that is carrying x identical boxes each weighing 15 pounds will pass over the bridge. If the combined weight of the empty delivery truck and its driver is 4500 pounds, what is the maximum possible value for x that will keep the combined weight of the truck, driver, and boxes below the bridge's posted weight limit?

QUESTION 4 (below) refers to the following information.

Percentage of Base in Organism's DNA				
Organism	adenine (%)	guanine (%)	cytosine (%)	thymine (%)
Maize	26.8	22.8	23.1	26.9
Octopus	33.4	17.7	17.7	32.1
Cat	28.6	21.4	20.5	28.4
Dog	29.3	20.5	20.7	29.3
Human	32.8	17.7	17.3	32.1
Wheat	31.3	18.7	18.7	32.9

4

Do the data in the table support the authors' proposed pairing of bases in DNA?

- A) Yes, because for each given organism, the percentage of adenine is closest to the percentage of thymine, and the percentage of guanine is closest to the percentage of cytosine.
- B) Yes, because for each given organism, the percentage of adenine is closest to the percentage of guanine, and the percentage of cytosine is closest to the percentage of thymine.
- C) No, because for each given organism, the percentage of adenine is closest to the percentage of thymine, and the percentage of guanine is closest to the percentage of cytosine.
- D) No, because for each given organism, the percentage of adenine is closest to the percentage of guanine, and the percentage of cytosine is closest to the percentage of thymine.

5

$$m = \frac{\left(\frac{r}{1,500}\right)\left(1 + \frac{r}{1,500}\right)^N}{\left(1 + \frac{r}{1,500}\right)^N - 1} P$$

The formula above gives the monthly payment m needed to pay off a loan of P dollars at r percent annual interest over N months. Which of the following gives P in terms of m , r , and N ?

$$\text{A) } P = \frac{\left(\frac{r}{1,500}\right)\left(1 + \frac{r}{1,500}\right)^N}{\left(1 + \frac{r}{1,500}\right)^N - 1} m$$

$$\text{B) } P = \frac{\left(1 + \frac{r}{1,500}\right)^N - 1}{\left(\frac{r}{1,500}\right)\left(1 + \frac{r}{1,500}\right)^N} m$$

$$\text{C) } P = \left(\frac{r}{1,500}\right) m$$

$$\text{D) } P = \left(\frac{1,500}{r}\right) m$$

These problems may look super complex, but it's all an illusion!

Once you're clear on what's being asked, there are just a few simple steps to get the answer.

How to Avoid Falling Victim

1) Confidence is Key

Don't get intimidated; approach every SAT problem like a boss.

2) Don't Over-think Things

Most complex looking SAT problems are actually simple problems in disguise.

These problems typically have a key step that reveals their simplicity—saving you a lot of time.

If you're taking more than 5-6 steps, or 1-1.5 mins, on a problem, then you've probably missed something.

Once again, mark the problem if you're having trouble, so you can return to it later with fresh eyes. The key step that you missed the first time around may then jump out at you.

Trap #3	How it works
The Right Answer to the Wrong Question	Makes you think a "sub-answer" is the final answer

This trap is especially dangerous to people who read the questions too fast.

So try example **QUESTION 6**—numbering each step as you work through it.

6

$$2x + 3y = 2$$

$$4x + 5y = 3$$

If (x, y) is a solution to the system of equations above, what is the value of $x - y$?

- A) 1
- B) -1
- C) -1.5
- D) -0.5

As with most SAT problems, you had to work through several steps (each with its own sub-question and sub-answer) before reaching the **final question** and **final answer** to **QUESTION 6**.

First 3 Steps

Step	Sub-Question	Sub-Answer
1	What's the question type? (we'll cover this later on)	System of linear-equations

2	How do I solve a system of linear equations?	Set the equations equal to each other.
3	Solve for x	-0.5

The SAT tries to trick you into thinking one or more of your sub-answers is the final answer by mixing them into the answer choices.

*Look! -0.5 is **Choice D**.*

Booyah, I've still got it baby!

Unfortunately, you haven't actually answer the question!

QUESTION 6 asked you to solve for $x - y$, not x .

Last 2 Steps

Step	Sub-Question	Sub-Answer
4	Solve for y	1
5	Solve for $x - y$	-1.5

How to Avoid Falling Victim

1) Carefully Read Each Question

Most SAT questions are actually made up of two parts: the description and the

actual question.

You risk overlooking the actual question and other important details by reading too quickly.

This trap is easily avoided by **reading every SAT question slowly and carefully.**

Some students also find it helpful to underline what's actually being asked—especially on wordy problems—and then double checking at the end of the problem to make sure what they've underlined has actually been answered.

Here's **QUESTION 6** with its “actual question” underlined:

6

$$2x + 3y = 2$$

$$4x + 5y = 3$$

If (x, y) is a solution to the system of equations above, what is the value of $x - y$?

- A) 1
- B) -1
- C) -1.5
- D) -0.5

A graphic featuring the letters "SAT" in white, bold, sans-serif font, centered within a blue-to-purple gradient square. To the left of the square is a vertical blue line with a small blue square at its base. Above the square is a horizontal blue line with a small blue square at its right end. These lines intersect at the top-left corner of the square.

SAT

3 Overall Strategies

Overall Strategy

1

The 3 Steps to Every SAT Problem

Step 1

Identify the Question Type

Step 2

Predict the Answer

Step 3

Compare Your Prediction

Step 1

Identify the Question Type

By this point in your life, you've answered a lot of different types of questions!

What's your name? How many pets do you have? How do you spell 'SAT'?

So you probably know that before answering any question, you must remember--or **recall**--from your knowledge, the things that you need to answer it

Well Duh!

Relax. It's called making a point.

Well then make it.

Keep it up kid; I'll pull this book over right now...

To continue, **the importance of quick and accurate recall on the SAT cannot be overstated.**

See, it's not that those who have difficulty recalling their study material on test-day are forgetful.

After all, those same students have no problem recalling practically all of the lyrics to their favorite songs.

Rather, it's the way they recall information that's causing them trouble.

They force their brains to search through a large number of memories for the few that are related to the question.

This “looking for a needle in a haystack” approach is super inefficient and can be avoided by simply pointing your brain in the right direction.

So with each and every question on the SAT, start off by asking yourself

What type of question is this?

Look for keywords. This should only take a few seconds (just move on to the next question if it takes any longer).

It is important to note, however, that simply identifying the question type won't help you eliminate any answer choices on the SAT. This is because the answer choices **always** relate to their question type.

For example, if you're asked to find a passage's theme, then all of the answer choices will relate to a passage's theme.

So you'd never get a mixed up set of answer choices like in **QUESTION 7**

7

Which choice best describes a major theme of the passage?

- A) The damaging influence of a self-centered society
- B) She lacked a sense of awareness
- C) The passage suggests a feeling of urgency.
- D) The healing power of parental love

Choice B is about a character's traits.

Choice C is about the passage's tone.

Only **Choices A and D** refer to the passage's theme.

Likewise, if you're asked to find a set of coordinates, then all of the answer choices will be a set of coordinates.

So you'd never get a mixed up set of answer choices like in **QUESTION 8**

8

Find the coordinates of the point on the graph above.

- A) 10
- B) (3, -2)
- C) $3x - 1$
- D) $4i + 6$

Choice A is an integer.

Choices C and D are an expressions.

Only **Choice B** is a set of coordinates.

Hold up! Why should I give an SAT proctor's behind about identifying the question type then?

Because!

Identifying the question type will help you recall the things you need to answer the question, such as the matching strategy, key details to focus on, etc.).

What wizardry is this!?

NO WIZARDRY. IT'S SCIENCE, BIOTCH (short for biotechnology)!

See, our brains keep related ideas close together. That's why, when you hear a word like pirate, you'll suddenly recall things like wooden ships, peg-legs, trea-

sure chests, and the ocean. Ahoy!

At this point, we'd love to set you loose on some practice questions armed with our recall strategy, but let's get real.

Your brain is currently a disorganized mess of Netflix shows, useless memes, and upcoming video games.

No? We're projecting? Whatever.

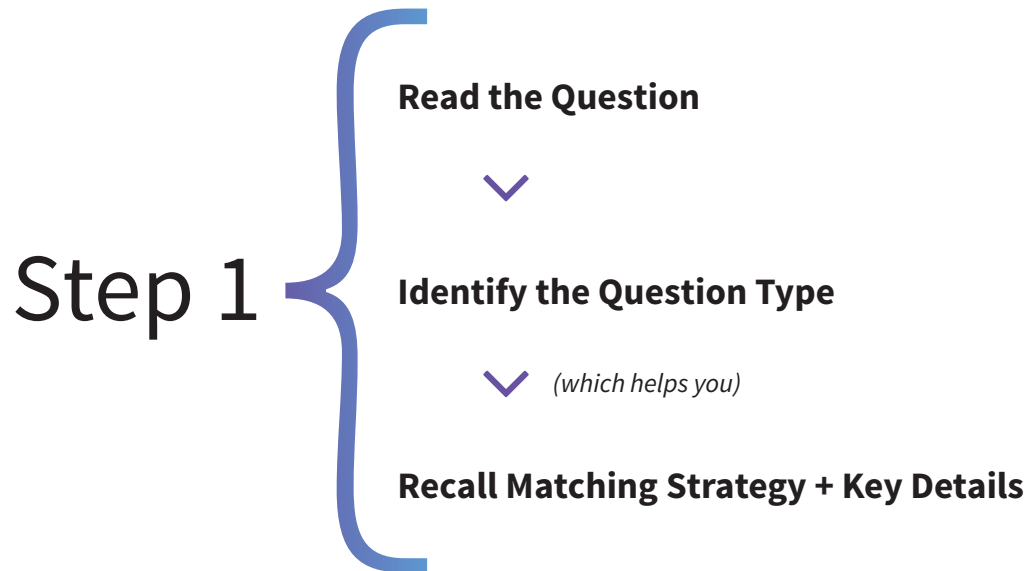
The point stands that your brain's poop deck needs a good scrubbin' (last pirate reference, we swear).

But have no fear ye free-booting scallywag (never trust a pirate), because this book will turn part of your brain into an SAT cheat-sheet made up of

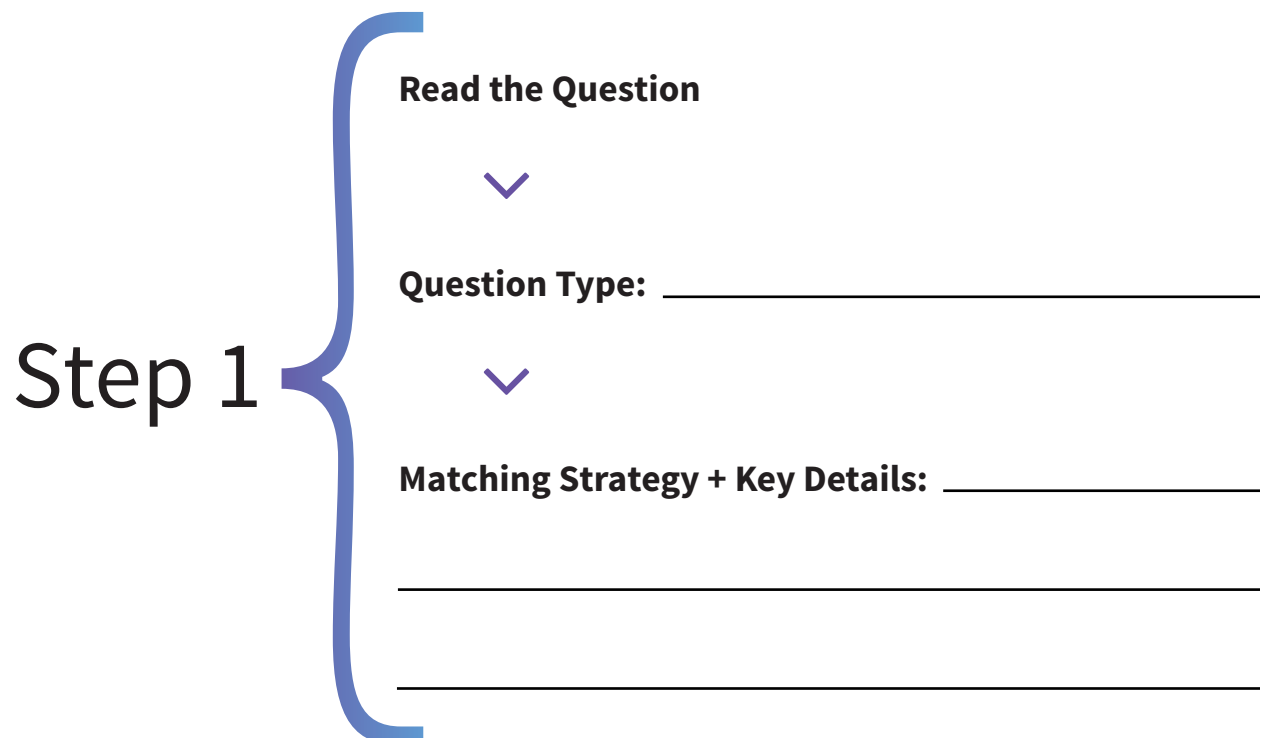
1) Every SAT question type and its matching strategy

2) The key details to focus on for every SAT question/passage type

OK. Let's do a quick review before pushing forward to Step 2.

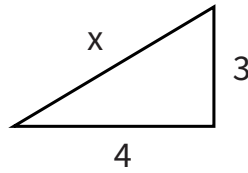


Here's the same outline with blanks.



Try it out on **QUESTION 9**. Make sure to fill in the blanks above as you work through it.

9



What is the length of the missing side?

- E) 5
- F) 6
- G) 10
- H) 4

If you haven't already, you can finish answering the question, but it's not really that important.

It's way more important that you understand how to use this recall strategy.

But for those of you who'd like to know, **Choice A** is correct.

Remember, this recall strategy works for every SAT question!

Step 2

Predict the Answer

Predict the answer? Umm yea, cause I'm totally psychic. In fact, I know exactly what you're thinking.

Really?

Yep. You don't believe me.

You done smartypants?

No. You're not going to have to consult any crystal balls to predict the answer.

By “predict,” we mean trying to **answer the question without peeking at the answer choices!**

Even though the answer to every multiple choice SAT question is right on the test, looking at the answer choices before considering the question (some students don't even finish reading the question!) is a bad idea.

10

Why do so many students go straight to the answer choices?

- A) You didn't
- B) Go straight to
- C) The answer choices
- D) Did you?

Caught! Come on, think about it for a second before reading on (trying to get you into the habit).

Reason #1	The Problem
To eliminate obviously wrong answer choices	They don't really exist on the SAT

These students are **hoping** that some of the answer choices will be so ridiculous that they can be easily eliminated like in **QUESTION 10**.

11

What is $2 + 2$?

- A) Potato
- B) $2^{17.2578 + \text{potato}}$
- C) Potato^2
- D) 4

Unfortunately, **the SAT does a great job at making all of the answer choices attractive so that you are forced to reason through all of them.**

Reason #2	The Problem
To help recall the answer	Trap answers will try to misdirect your brain

These students are trying to use the answer choices to point their brain in the right direction.

It doesn't sound like such a bad strategy until you realize that the SAT is full of traps that will try to misdirect your brain or even implant false memories.

You'll be much less likely to fall for these traps if you at least have some sense of what the answer could be.

For example, try predicting the answer to **QUESTION 12** without looking at the answer choices (don't forget to first identify the question type).

12

The author's (Synapse Prep's) attitude toward the SAT is best described as

- A) You best
- B) Not be
- C) Reading this
- D) Right now

Your Prediction: _____

We doubt you know exactly how we feel about the SAT.

Still, you should have gathered we're not the biggest fans at this point.

So it would make sense to predict a somewhat negative attitude such as opposed, skeptical, disapproving, etc.

Even if your prediction is just vague feeling, it's still way better than going directly to the answer choices without pondering the question.

Step 3

Compare Your Prediction

Last step baby!

Now that you've honed in on some possible answers, let's take a look at the real answer choices to **QUESTION 12**.

Compare each answer choice to your prediction—crossing it out if it doesn't match up (it must be exact match if you're dealing with a math question).

12

The author's (Synapse Prep) attitude toward the SAT is best described as

- A) Hateful
- B) Ambivalent
- C) Adoring
- D) Critical

Choice A is too extreme.

Choice B is highly unlikely given we've written a book about the SAT.

Choice C is very positive feeling.

Look! **Choice D** is a rewording of our prediction.

Review Time!

- 1) You helped your brain recall related info, such as the matching strategy and other key details by **identifying the question type**
- 2) You then used this info to **predict the answer.**
- 3) Finally, you **compared your prediction with each of the answer choices, eliminated the wrong ones, and selected the closest match.**

Warning!

Like everything in life, there are exceptions—even to this statement.

Although this strategy works great for every SAT problem, you should use it as a guideline and not let it limit you.

For example, sometimes your prediction may be completely off and the correct answer suddenly dawns on you as you read the answer choices.

In addition, sometimes going straight to the answer choices in the Math part can actually be the better approach. We'll discuss this strategy later on in the Math chapter.

Ultimately, the best strategy is the one that works for you.

Overall Strategy

2

Manage Your Time With HASH

The **#1 problem** students have on the SAT...

The **#1 problem** hurting their score...

The **#1 problem** that makes the SAT such a headache...

...isn't a particular question type or part of the test...

It's running out of time!

It's not uncommon to see students turn in their SAT with the second half of each part left completely blank!

In fact, **only a tiny fraction of students manage to answer every question.**

Time management is essential to achieving your highest possible score.

Out of all of the tips, tricks, and strategies that you'll uncover in this book, **the HASH method will have the most impact on your score.**

No. Not the drug (*it's a plant bro*) this acronym shares its name with.

That kind of hash slows you down.

This kind of **HASH** speeds you up.

Kenny Rogers captures the essence of HASH in his hit song, *The Gambler*.

*“You got to know when to hold ‘em
and know when to fold ‘em.”*

For the SAT this translates to:

“You got to know when to answer a question
and know when to skip it and move on.”

This is where HASH comes in. For each and every SAT question,

Once you know which question type you're facing, ask yourself...

How often do I get this question type right?

Always

These are the questions you’re going to do every time you see them. Get them out of the way first!

Sometimes

These are the questions you’re going to skip at first.

Mark them with an **S** and only return to them once you've answered all of the questions you **ALWAYS** get right.

Hardly Ever

These are the questions you're going to randomly guess on.

Mark them with an **H** and only return to them once you’ve answered all of the questions you **SOMETIMES** get right.

Take the time to really get familiar with HASH (again, not the drug/plant bro).

As you do, a few questions will likely come up.

Does HASH work in all sections of the SAT?

Yes! However, it's less effective in the Reading part because you'll need to return to the **SOMETIMES** questions before starting on a new passage.

You'll likely need to re-read the passages if you wait until the last passage to return to the **SOMETIMES** questions

What if I don't recognize the question type?

Treat it as a **HARDLY EVER**.

Why should I randomly guess on **HARDLY EVER** questions? I could at least try to figure them out.

Really?

You've seen these kind of questions (or completely ignored them) for years and virtually never solve!

You think you're going to have some kind of eureka movement where the stars suddenly align and the answer just falls unto your lap?

Hahahahahaha! Please.

Only attempt your **HARDLY EVER** questions as an afterthought once you've completely finished answering all of your **ALWAYS** AND **SOMETIMES** questions.

Overall Strategy

3

Read for Pleasure

Reading for your own enjoyment is the most powerful way to experience ideas.

It's so beneficial that nearly all top SAT scorers report strong personal reading habits.

Even on the Math part? **Even on the Math part.**

Umm, I don't enjoy reading Math textbooks. So, how is reading for fun going to help me learn math?

It won't. But it'll still help you get a higher Math score!

How!?

Because, reading isn't just the most powerful tool to build knowledge. It's also the best way to sharpen your...

Brain's Core Skills

- Enhances reasoning
- Improves concentration
- Boosts reading comprehension and speed

- Expands memory capacity
- Heightens empathy

Alright! Feeling motivated to tackle some books now?

Yea...kinda...I guess.

Lies!

Boosting your knowledge and brain power are reasons you **should** read, but they rarely motivate anyone to **want** to read.

That's like saying you're joining a gym to improve your health; it's a great reason you **should** join, but that's not what actually motivates anyone to **want** to work out.

Bro 1: Yea bro, going heavy on chest today.

Bro 2: Nice bro! What's your goal?

Bro 1: 130/85

Motivation to Read

Students who love to read are driven by their own curiosity.

They have questions that they're dying to know the answer to.

- *Will the protagonist track down the murderer before they strike again?*
- *Which players will most likely to get drafted by *insert favorite league*?*
- *What is the meaning to life, the universe, and everything (spoiler alert: the answer is 42)?*

While everyone is born full of curiosity, much of it is quashed over the years in the machine of modern schooling.

From teachers who dismiss genuine questions ("you should already know that!") to peers who mock those who enjoy learning.

The worst offenders though are English teachers who discourage reading for pleasure (unintentionally) by forcing you to

- 1) Read books you have no interest in
- 2) Complete tedious worksheets every few chapters
- 3) Conform your reading experience or be told your opinion is wrong (it's your 'opinion')!

If your desire to read has survived this onslaught, then count yourself lucky!

And if it hasn't, then it's up to you to rekindle it.

There's a ton reading material out there that's just for you.

You just have to find it!

Reading may feel like work to you right now, especially if like most students you've been avoiding it like the plague.

But that's true with any skill.

Think about something you're good at—skateboarding, gaming, programming, playing an instrument, complaining, etc.

It wasn't easy at first. But you motivated yourself to keep going and now it's second nature.

Reading works exactly the same way: **the more you read, the easier and more enjoyable it becomes.**

Unfortunately, without curiosity driving you, there's not much we can say to convince you—even if we told you that reading improves your social life, makes you rich, and lengthens your lifespan.

Surprise! It does all 3.

The Way You Read Matters

It wasn't random that we compared reading to working out earlier—you even read, bro?

They're actually very similar!

Whether exercising your body or mind, you have to get outside your comfort zone and challenge yourself to improve.

Shouldn't I avoid stress?

Not at all! Stress isn't always bad. In fact, it's necessary for growth.

The more you feel challenged, the more you're making new connections: synapses in your brain and actin/myosin in your muscles.

But not everything will provide that challenged. There's plenty of...

Reading material that isn't gonna cut it

- *Texts from your ex.*
- *Children's books like Little Bunny Foo Foo, The Giving Tree, or that one with the colored fish*

(excuse us, fish of color).

- *Stuff you've already read a bunch of times or from the same subject.*

Keep in mind, the SAT tests how comfortable you are with ideas from **different** branches of knowledge.

This means you'll do way better on the SAT (and life in general) if you're well-rounded.

Be eager to explore subjects that are unfamiliar to you.

Take the time to understand confusing sentences or ideas—don't just skip them!

And finally, look up unfamiliar words as you read. This is easier than ever with the invention of digital tablets.