



A+ Test Prep and Tutoring Newsletter

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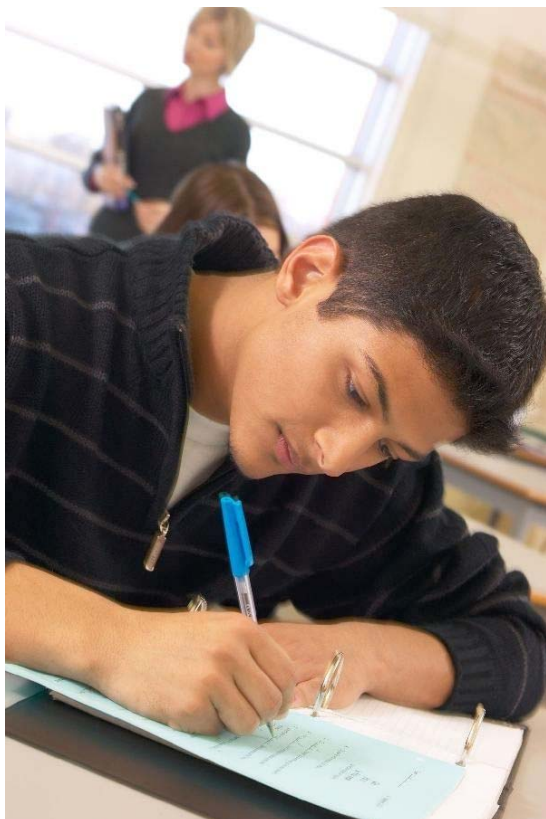
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SAT & ACT Accommodations

At A+ we get many questions from students and parents about accommodations on standardized tests. If you have a documented disability, you may



The SAT Essay

The SAT essay, a required component of this standardized test, presents a challenge to many students. A student has 25 minutes to respond to a prompt and support his position by drawing on examples from history, literature, current events, science, or personal experience.

The essay should include the usual elements: an introduction with a thesis statement, supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion.

We are frequently asked about the importance of the essay's length. Will a longer essay produce a higher score? There is no simple answer to this question since many factors are considered in the scoring of the essay, but overall we suggest that you include at least two examples to support your position.

be entitled to receive special testing accommodations. These accommodations apply not just to the SAT and ACT--they also apply to SAT Subject Tests, AP (Advanced Placement) exams, and the PSAT. A wide range of disabilities can qualify a student for accommodations including but not limited to learning disabilities, deafness/hearing impairment, blindness/visual impairment, certain medical conditions, certain physical disabilities, and certain psychiatric conditions.

Some of the many accommodations that are available include: 50% extended time, 100% extended time, large-print test booklets, large block answer sheets, Braille, multiple-day testing, specified time of day testing, frequent breaks, permission for diabetics to eat snacks, adaptive tools, special furniture, and private room or small group setting.

Please note that in order to qualify for accommodations, in addition to having your disability documented, you must be receiving accommodations at school.

A temporary disability--such as a broken arm--does not qualify a student for accommodations on the ACT, SAT, or SAT Subject Tests. Instead, it is recommended that he postpone taking the exam until a later test date when the temporary disability will have healed. However, if that student is scheduled to take a College Board test that is only administered annually such as the PSAT or an AP exam, the school and the student may contact the College Board at (609) 771-7137 to inquire about permission to take the exam with temporary accommodations.

How does one arrange for accommodations? Both ACT and the College Board have their own registration and documentation requirements and qualification process which can be viewed on their respective websites, <http://www.act.org/aap/disab/opt1.html> and <http://www.collegeboard.com/ssd/prof/eligible.html>.

To get a head start on the process, collect all the required documentation from your school and any professional involved in the student's diagnosis, along with their recommendations for specific, appropriate accommodations. Early on, contact the individual at your school who coordinates this process, take note of the test's registration

With respect to the essay, the College Board website states that:

"Developing your point of view doesn't mean coming up with as many examples as you can. Rushing to give multiple relevant examples can lead you to oversimplify a complex topic. An essay with one or two thoughtful, well-developed reasons or examples is more likely to get a high score than an essay with three short, simplistic examples."

Including and developing multiple examples increases the length of your essay, but bear in mind that the readers are looking for the persuasiveness of your argument, the *relevance* of your examples, your facility with language (varied sentence structure and vocabulary, correct grammar, etc.) and your ability to tie things together.

How can you learn to write a better SAT essay?

Here are a few tips that will help streamline your writing and allow you additional time to write a more developed and cogent essay.

Build up your writing muscle!

Writing under pressure is a learned skill and can be improved through practice. If you are working with an A+ tutor, we offer at least five such timed essays during our one-on-one SAT prep course. Two independent graders will score each essay and provide suggestions for improvement. You will also receive detailed feedback from your tutor. Additional prompts are available upon request. You may also ask your English or Social Studies teacher to provide such writing opportunities either as a classroom exercise or as homework.

Get organized. Quickly take a position on the issue presented and draft a thesis statement. Brainstorm supporting examples and prioritize them. Then, create a brief outline

deadline, and follow up as needed. Finally, be flexible. The testing site you may have ordinarily used may not offer the particular accommodation(s) you need and you may be assigned to an alternative test site. Also, standby testing is not available for those needing accommodations since advance arrangements are necessary.



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Once again A+ is pleased to offer free SAT test prep tutoring to deserving, motivated students who might not otherwise be able to afford customized, one-to-one instruction. Eleven juniors were selected with the help of their guidance departments from the following Philadelphia area schools:

Springside School
Abington Friends School
Mount St. Joseph's Academy
Upper Dublin High School
Friends' Central School
Springfield High School
Wissahickon High School
St. Joseph's Preparatory School
Gwynedd Mercy Academy
Penn Charter
Council Rock North High School

Each student will receive seven 90-minute sessions with a verbal/writing tutor and six 90-minute sessions with a math tutor. Tutoring takes places at one of our two office locations (Jenkintown or Gwynedd) or at the student's school. We commend the dedicated A+ tutors who donate their time to this worthy cause, and wish the students success when they take the SAT later this spring.

before writing. This is your roadmap for the essay and will help keep you on track to cover all points.

Avoid wordiness. Be direct in your writing and avoid "filler" phrases such as "I think that..." or "In my opinion..." "It is true that..." These phrases add nothing to the statement that follows, and rob you of valuable time in which you could be writing an additional sentence for your conclusion, for example. Also, use the active voice, not the passive voice. The active voice makes a stronger statement and uses fewer words. For example:

The party will be organized by the mothers. (Passive voice, 8 words)

The mothers will organize the party. (Active voice, 6 words)

Cut to the chase. Consider whether each sentence is necessary and advances your argument. Avoid the temptation to summarize a book's entire plot if, for instance, you are using a fictional character as one of your examples. Focus instead on character analysis and only the essential plot points as they relate to the question being answered.

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