

SAT Reading Strategies

Proven Techniques for Reading Comprehension Success

■ READING APPROACH: THE 5-STEP METHOD

Step 1: Preview (30 seconds)

- Read the introduction blurb for context
- Note the source, author, and year if provided
- Identify the passage type (literature, science, history, social studies)

Step 2: Read the Question Stems (1 minute)

- **Don't** read answer choices yet
- Just note what the questions are asking about
- This gives you a roadmap of what to look for

Step 3: Active Reading (3-4 minutes)

- Read at a steady pace, not too slow
- Mark or mentally note key points:
 - Main idea of each paragraph
 - Transitions and turning points
 - Author's tone and purpose
 - Evidence and examples

Step 4: Answer Questions (5-6 minutes)

- Start with questions you can answer from memory
- Return to passage for specific details
- Always find textual evidence for your answer

Step 5: Review (30 seconds)

- Double-check you answered all questions
- Verify bubble sheet matches your intended answers

■ MASTERING QUESTION TYPES

1. Main Idea Questions

What they ask: 'The passage primarily focuses on...' 'The main purpose is...'

Strategy:

- Look at the introduction and conclusion
- Find the most frequently discussed topic
- Eliminate answers that are too narrow or too broad

2. Detail Questions

What they ask: 'According to the passage...' 'The author states...'

Strategy:

- Use line references or keywords to locate info
- Read 2-3 lines before and after the reference
- Match answer choice wording to passage (paraphrased)

3. Inference Questions

What they ask: 'The passage suggests...' 'It can be inferred...'

Strategy:

- Correct answer is strongly supported, not a wild guess
- Stay close to the passage - don't bring outside knowledge
- Look for logical conclusions from stated facts

4. Vocabulary in Context

What they ask: 'As used in line X, [word] most nearly means...'

Strategy:

- Substitute each answer choice into the sentence
- Ignore the common dictionary meaning - focus on context
- Look for context clues in surrounding sentences

5. Function/Purpose Questions

What they ask: 'The author mentions X in order to...' 'The purpose of paragraph 2 is...'

Strategy:

- Ask yourself WHY the author included this detail
- Look at the broader context of the paragraph
- Common purposes: provide evidence, contrast ideas, introduce topic, conclude argument

■ COMMAND OF EVIDENCE QUESTIONS

These come in pairs:

- Question 1: Standard comprehension question
- Question 2: 'Which choice provides the best evidence for the previous question?'

Two Approaches:

Approach A (Recommended):

1. Answer Question 1 first based on your understanding
2. Then find the evidence in Question 2 that supports your answer
3. If you can't find good evidence, reconsider Question 1

Approach B (When stuck):

1. Read the evidence choices in Question 2
2. See which evidence best answers Question 1
3. Choose the answer pair that works together

■ STRATEGIES BY PASSAGE TYPE

Literary Fiction

- Focus on: Character development, relationships, mood, tone
- Pay attention to: Dialogue, character actions, internal thoughts
- Ask yourself: What is the character feeling? How do they change?

Science Passages

- Focus on: Hypothesis, experiment, results, conclusions
- Pay attention to: Graphs, data, cause-effect relationships
- Ask yourself: What did they test? What did they find?

History/Social Studies

- Focus on: Historical context, author's argument, supporting evidence
- Pay attention to: Dates, events, cause-effect, author's perspective
- Ask yourself: What is the author's point? How do they support it?

■■ TIME MANAGEMENT

Digital SAT Reading & Writing Module: 32 minutes for 27 questions

- Average: 70 seconds per question
- Short passages: 60 seconds
- Longer passages: 80-90 seconds

Time-Saving Tips:

1. Don't get stuck - mark difficult questions and move on
2. Answer easier question types first (detail, vocabulary)
3. Save inference and complex questions for last
4. Leave 2-3 minutes to review flagged questions

■■ AVOIDING COMMON TRAPS

Trap #1: Outside Knowledge

- Base answers **ONLY** on the passage, not on what you know
- If it's not stated or strongly implied, it's wrong

Trap #2: Extreme Language

- Beware of answers with: always, never, all, none, only
- SAT prefers moderate language: often, may, can, suggests

Trap #3: Partially Correct Answers

- Some answers start correct but end wrong
- Read the **ENTIRE** answer choice before selecting

Trap #4: True But Irrelevant

- Answer may be true according to passage
- But doesn't answer the specific question asked
- Always reread the question before finalizing answer

■ FINAL TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- ✓ **Practice consistently** - Reading skills improve with regular practice
- ✓ **Read actively** - Engage with the passage, don't just let words pass by
- ✓ **Build stamina** - Practice full-length sections to build endurance
- ✓ **Review mistakes** - Understand why you got questions wrong
- ✓ **Stay calm** - If you don't understand a passage, use question-first strategy
- ✓ **Trust the process** - Evidence is always in the passage