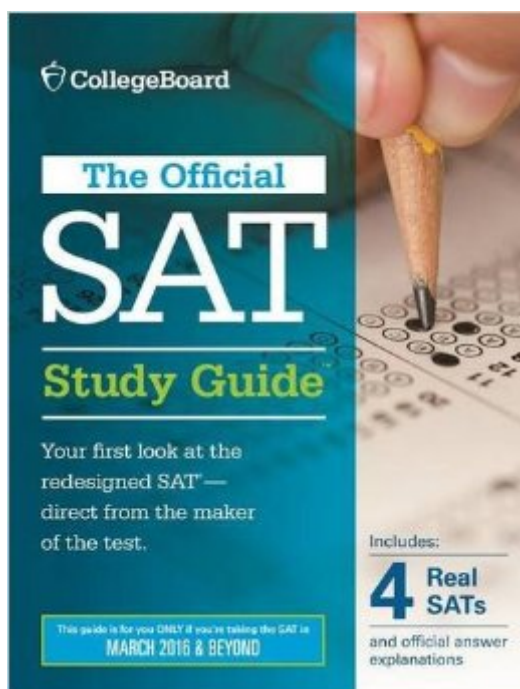


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The Official SAT Study Guide, 2016 Edition



Synopsis

The Official SAT Study Guide includes 4 official SAT® practice tests created by the test maker. As part of the College Board's commitment to transparency, all four practice tests are available on the College Board's website, but The Official SAT Study Guide is the only place to find them in print along with over 300 pages of additional instruction, guidance, and test information. Launching in March 2016, the new SAT introduces new question formats and content. Be ready with strategies and up-to-date information straight from the team that created the exam. Students will gain valuable experience and raise their confidence by taking practice tests, learning about test structure, and gaining a deeper understanding of what is tested on the SAT. The Official SAT Study Guide will help students get ready for the SAT with: 4 official SAT practice tests, written in the exact same process and by the same team of authors as the actual exam detailed descriptions of the math and evidenced based reading and writing sections of the SAT targeted practice questions for each SAT question type guidance on the new optional essay, including practice essay questions with sample responses a review of math concepts tested in the exam test-taking approaches and suggestions that underscore important points seamless integration with Khan Academy's free SAT practice resources scaled scoring for all 4 official SAT practice tests available in July on collegeboard.org There's also a complete chapter on the new PSAT/NMSQT®, which is aligned to the content and scores of the new SAT. The new PSAT/NMSQT also has over \$180 million of scholarships connected to student performance. This is the guide for the new SAT that launches in March 2016 and the new PSAT/NMQST that launches in October 2015.

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Customer Reviews

This is the most essential preparation book for the new, revised SAT and PSAT (beginning in March 2016 and October 2015, respectively) because it's the only physical source of official revised SATs. The practice SATs in all other books are nothing more than subpar imitations of the real thing. However, the PDFs of all 4 tests in this book, along with answer explanations, can also be downloaded from the College Board website for free (google "SAT Practice Tests - The College Board"). In addition, there are no score conversion tables provided: you will have to visit the College Board website (google "Scoring your SAT Practice Test #1") in order to convert your raw scores (total number correct on each section) into scaled scores (400-1600 scale, with additional sub-scores). So in some ways, this book is a waste of \$18 plus tax, as other reviewers have already noted. On the other hand, the physical book does still have its advantages over a bunch of PDFs. Perhaps most importantly, the tests are already printed out for you (for now, the SAT is still a paper and pencil test, and you are allowed to write on the test, so in the interest of practicing the way you play, you should never attempt to take it on a computer screen). Those of you who have printers at home know how frustrating and/or expensive it can be to print out a 64-page test (68 if you include the essay portion, and 70 if you include the answer sheets). Even if you print double-sided, which you should, that's still 35 pieces of paper and a lot of printer ink. And if you want the detailed answer explanations, then you'll have to print out twice as much. That's more than 100 pages of printing per test! Never mind the hassle of trying to keep all those pages organized. Do you staple them? Put them in a three-ring binder? The physical book solves these problems easily, keeps everything ordered and in one place, and obviates the need for internet access, at a fraction of what it might cost to print it out yourself (\$18 / 748 pages total = 2 cents per page). Even if you were to only print out the practice tests and explanations, it would still come out to less than 4 cents per page. Depending on your personal printing situation, this may or may not be a bargain for you (some of you may be able to print the PDFs for free at your high schools, for example), but you also have to factor in the convenience and organization of the pre-printed book.

A little bit about me: I'm a professional, full-time SAT tutor in San Diego. Since 1998, I have amassed over 15 years and 15,000 hours of teaching and private tutoring experience, both in-person and

online via Skype and Scribblar. I'm also a Harvard grad and SAT perfect scorer who continues to take the test 2-3 times a year, so I like to think that I understand the SAT better than nearly anyone. And I've already reviewed all 4 of these new tests with my students, since they've already been available online for several weeks. Many of the one-star, harshly negative reviews of this book have nothing to do with the quality of the book and practice tests themselves; it's simply that the reviewers had expected 4 different practice SATs from the ones released digitally as free PDFs earlier in the month, and were thus disappointed when they saw the same tests in this book. (Having worked in this industry for a long while, I was not surprised--it takes a long time to create new tests.) I don't see this as the College Board trying to rip anyone off; I see it as its providing a free, digital option to students (which, by the way, it had never done before), as well as a more convenient, pre-printed option for less than \$20. This book contains 326 pages of SAT prep advice, much of which cannot be found anywhere else, and another 458 pages of the practice tests and answer explanations that can be found online. Although much of the first half of the book is superfluous, and parts of it are indeed available online through Khan Academy, it does offer some moderately helpful tips in its first 326 pages, including a test structure recap, concept overview, practice questions and explanations, as well as an essay rubric, scoring guidelines, sample essays and an introduction to the PSAT. As I've always said, asking the College Board for advice on the SAT is like asking the IRS for tax advice: the writers are not going to be overly forthcoming. However, I must applaud the College Board for increasing its level of transparency, and for releasing the tests in PDF form to benefit those who cannot afford to buy the book, as well as adding detailed answer explanations (though very often, the explanation provided in the book is not the simplest way to solve the question). There were some oversights, of course. As was done in the old (current) SAT Official Guide, this edition should have included single-page answer sheets for each test, with only the letter answers to the questions on each test, which would have made it much easier to grade the tests yourself. Instead of simply using a single answer page to correct your test, will you have to flip through 40 pages of answer explanations in order to correct your practice tests. Also, I agree with other reviewers that 4 tests is insufficient for a full preparation--it should be closer to 10. Hopefully the College Board will come out with another batch of tests sometime soon. Oh, and the College Board *really* wants you to use the free online tools provided by Khan Academy. Khan's web address is plastered on the margins of nearly every page of the book other than the practice tests and answer explanations. I would encourage you to make use of these online tools, practice questions and diagnostics, even though as a professional SAT tutor I am aware of their limitations. Quick tip: when taking practice sections or full tests in this

book, don't bother filling in the bubbles--just circle your answers. For the essay, you're going to want to rip out the pages from the book (it's hard to write without doing so) because at the moment the College Board has yet to provide a digital option, and because you're going to want to practice using the actual essay space, to get a feel for the proper length (always write by hand, unless you are injured or have a disability, and try to avoid the temptation to type it--good typists can type 2-3 times as fast as the average person can write by hand). You can find the first essay space in this book on pages 400-404. For some reason there is currently no way to download the Essay Space PDF online (ahem, College Board, please get on this), but if you want to practice filling in the bubbles, then you can google "Answer Sheet - New SAT Practice Test." I recommend that you scan the blank essay space on pages 400-404 after you rip them out, so you can re-use them later if you end up writing more than 4 practice essays. When it comes time to re-try the questions, I recommend that you either buy a 2nd copy of the book to keep blank, or that you print out a fresh copy using the free PDFs provided by the College Board. It's what I call a "blind review": going over all the questions you got wrong without first checking the correct answer/explanation, or seeing any of your previous work. In my opinion, blind review is one of the key facets of effective test prep. Thus, you should only mark your answers as correct or incorrect (this is easier when working with a partner). Most importantly, don't indicate the correct answers on the test before you get a chance to review them. In contrast, if you go over questions by checking the correct answers right away, then you can fool yourself into thinking that you understand them fully, when in fact you are still prone to those types of mistakes. The best way to know for sure is to try the questions again, from scratch, **without** the aid of the answer key or the answer explanations. Only then should you confirm the correct answer and read the explanation provided.

Now, let's talk about the structure of the new test.

Entire Test: Four answer choices instead of five, no guessing penalty, essay optional (but required by the majority of colleges). Lots of sub-scores, including not only the usual Reading, Writing and Language, and Math scores (1-40), but also Cross-Test scores in

- "Analysis in History/Social Studies" (1-40), and
- "Analysis in Science" (1-40), and sub-scores in
- "Command of Evidence,"
- "Words in Context,"
- "Expression of Ideas,"
- "Standard English Conventions,"
- "Heart of Algebra,"
- "Problem Solving and Data Analysis," and
- "Passport to Advanced Math" (1-15).

I'm not so sure that any of these sub-scores will matter much to colleges: most colleges are simply going to want your Reading, Writing and Math scores, as well as your overall

score (now on a 400-1600 point scale). However, these sub-scores should help you figure out your specific areas of weakness.

-Reading Section: 65 minutes, 52 questions. No more sentence completions or esoteric vocabulary. Lots of question pairs where the second question in the pair asks for "the choice that provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question." For this reason, always glance at the next question for clues as to where the answer might be found. The new reading section also includes a significant number of vocab-in-context questions, as well as some graphs and charts at the end of the passages, with corresponding questions that are usually relatively easy.

-Writing and Language Section: 35 minutes, 44 questions. For those of you who have taken the ACT, the SAT Writing and Language section is nearly identical to the ACT English section. No more isolated sentences like the current SAT writing--instead you are given a series of passages with underlined portions to edit.

-Math No Calculator Section: 25 minutes, 20 questions. New concepts such as imaginary numbers (multiplying by the conjugate of the denominator) and synthetic division are tested. In some cases you must complete the square or use the quadratic equation, and in other instances, you are given physics-type questions that involve conceptual understanding, such as the fact that velocity equals zero when a projectile reaches its highest point. Estimation is often necessary. For questions 16-20, you must provide your own response (no multiple choice).

-Math With Calculator Section: 55 minutes, 38 questions. Pretty much the same stuff, except with a calculator. For questions 31-38, you must provide your own response (no multiple choice).

-Essay: 50 minutes, analyzing an argument. Essays are given three scores from 2-8 in Reading, Analysis and Writing (two different essay readers grade each essay from 1-4 and their scores are added together). The essay portion is now optional (but most colleges will require it). The essay space provided is three pages long, not including the page provided for outlining and brainstorming. The goal of the essay is to analyze how and why the author shapes his/her argument, and its effect on the reader. If you need help with this, then I would strongly suggest that you read the sample essays on pages 214-220.

These days, many students prefer the ACT to the SAT. But the College Board has been fighting back by inflating SAT percentiles and making other efforts to make the SAT more palatable for students. For example, one major reason to consider taking the New SAT instead of (or in addition to) the ACT is that the SAT allows you more time per question than does the ACT. Thus, if time management is a major issue, then the SAT might be a better test for you:

SAT Reading	= 1.25 minutes per question	(75 seconds)
ACT Reading	= .875 minutes per question	(52.5 seconds)
SAT Grammar (Writing and Language)	= .8 minutes per question	(48 seconds)
ACT Grammar (English)	= .6 minutes per	

question (36 seconds) SAT Math = 1.4 minutes per question (83 seconds) ACT Math = 1 minute per question (60 seconds) Please keep in mind that this book is not necessarily the best source of SAT strategy. For that you should consider the help of free online sources such as the aforementioned Khan Academy, as well as Magoosh, Sparknotes, YouTube, and the like. Or, if you can afford it, then buy some additional SAT strategy books, find a classroom course, or hire a qualified private tutor like me. Even in this information age, there is still great value in being taught in person (or online via Skype) by a qualified, experienced and full-time professional. The most obvious drawback of using third-party SAT strategy books is that the questions within are less realistic than those on the real SAT. However, one benefit of using them is that they also include additional (non-official) SAT practice tests: most of my private students find the 4 tests included in the book to be insufficient for a full preparation. Flawed as these synthetic tests may be at times, it's nice to have 10 extra diagnostic exams to prepare with while the College Board cooks up a new batch of actual SAT practice tests. The Ivy Global's New SAT Guide, 2nd Edition and Barron's 6 Practice Tests for the NEW SAT, 2nd Edition books serve well for this purpose. The Ivy Global book includes 3 tests (including an extra PDF test that is free to download online), and the Barron's book contains 6 tests. Overall, the quality of the Ivy Global tests is better, but there are fewer tests than the Barron's book, and the Ivy Global guide costs 2.5 times as much. If you need more help with SAT strategy and want to focus on particular types of questions, then the Ivy Global book could be a good choice--it has nearly 500 pages of mostly helpful SAT prep advice and practice questions drills in addition to the 3 SAT practice tests. If you just need more practice tests at a cheaper price, then the Barron's book should suffice. Real SAT questions are of course always better to practice with, but for the new SAT, they are currently in short supply. So you should also try to get your hands on a copy of the 2015 practice PSAT (copies were sent to students who took the test), as well as the actual October 2015 PSAT, which you can download from the College Board website. Professional SAT tutors like me will obsessively collect every real SAT or PSAT we can find, and at the moment, there are very few of them, so of course they are especially precious. When the College Board first announced the new changes to the SAT, I took its proclamations about test changes and specifications with a grain of salt. The Board likes to wax poetic about how much better the new test is, and all the various areas of knowledge it's going to test, but as I learned from the last time the SAT was updated 10 years ago, the proof is in the pudding: the actual College Board tests. And finally, we have 4 of them (5 if you include the new PSAT). This time around, I have to admit that the new SAT actually is quite different. In the introduction to the book, Cynthia B. Schmeiser (Chief of Assessment at the College

Board) writes that “the new SAT is clearer than ever.” Having completed all of these tests with my students already, I don’t know if I would agree with that observation—the math sections can be quite tricky at times, and starting the test off with a seemingly interminable 65-minute Reading section (the longest reading section on the current SAT—3 reading sections total—is only 25 minutes long, and the lone reading section on the ACT is only 35 minutes long) isn’t going to attract many new students either. I understand the thinking behind this decision—the idea was to get the reading section (traditionally the most disliked section of the test) out of the way first—but it doesn’t work in practice. And then there’s the essay. The length of the essay is now doubled from 25 minutes to 50 minutes, and this time it’s at the end of the test instead of the beginning. There are very few students out there who want to write a nearly hour-long essay after they have already taken a three-hour test. Ironically, the College Board made these changes in part because it was losing students and market share to the ACT, but I now expect even more students to flock to the ACT as a result, at least until the kinks in the new test are ironed out. Over time I plan to write free explanations for every question in this book. If you have any requests for specific questions, then please email them to me. And if you’re interested in learning more about how to prepare and study for the SAT, then googling “SAT Action Plan - McElroy Tutoring” would be a good place to start. Thanks for reading my long but hopefully informative review! If you have any additional questions, then just let me know in the comments section and I’ll be sure to respond ASAP. As you can probably tell, I’m fairly obsessed with this test and I’ll make sure to give you a thoughtful response.

I am a private math tutor and author of Ultimate Guide to the Math SAT. The printed contents of this book with the DVD are the same as that of its predecessor without the DVD, *The Official SAT Study Guide*, 2nd edition. I gave this book five stars for the same reason as its predecessor: it contains the best practice tests available. The difference between this book and its predecessor edition is the DVD and the price, which now is an extra \$8.11 (prices as of Jan 5, 2012). The answer as to whether the DVD is worth the extra cost will vary. Many students have complained that College Board books do not contain explanations to the problems on the practice tests, only an answer key. Those who purchase either edition of book (with the DVD or without) will be happy to know that they can have online access to the explanations. I should note that others have independently published books with explanations to the College Board practice tests, but I am not familiar with those and cannot compare them. The biggest difference between this DVD edition and the no-DVD edition is that the DVD contains a bonus SAT that was administered previously. If you anticipate needing

another practice test (many students do) then that alone is worth the price. Explanations to the bonus test are also available online. The DVD contains some videos and other tools that students may find useful. But some of these are already available on the College Board web site or in the SAT Preparation Booklet (these booklets are sometimes available at your school's guidance office). Some details: -- The DVD has a useful video called "Math Concepts" of a teacher going over solutions to math problems. But only ten problems are discussed. -- The DVD has something called a "Practice Test Timer" which is useful for students who want to do a full length practice test. It is somewhat similar to the "Test Day Simulator" found on the web site. -- The DVD has a test day checklist which is almost identical to the one on the web site. -- The DVD has a "Math Concepts Reference Guide" which is identical to the "SAT Mathematics Review" on the web site and in the preparation booklet.

To be honest, I bought this with almost no intention to actually do the practice tests, but only to read the tips and tricks to the SAT. I took the SAT not long ago during my senior year in high school, as a last ditch effort to acquire as high as possible grade on it as I could. I had never previously taken a standardized test with any preparation, and just showed up to take the test. While I always performed well, it wasn't necessarily at the standards of some elite colleges I had planned on applying to. I can't stress enough how useful practice tests are, especially for standardized exams. The thorough reasoning provided for each answer on all the practice tests really teaches you exactly what you are doing wrong and how to correct it, along with the process to find the answer for future reference. I can safely say that doing the practice tests in this book, as well as reviewing the lessons provided in the book, definitely helped me when I took the SAT a final time, and there were many questions that were structured nearly exactly the same as in the practice examinations. These questions, although few, could be the deciding factors in whether I get a few extra points on my test or not, and I believe they did. Doing the practice exams is really the best way to study for practice exams. You will feel so comfortable answering questions on the SAT after having done them before and understanding how to answer them and what to look for. I felt more confident coming out of that SAT than I ever have coming out of any test. DO THE PRACTICE TESTS IF YOU WISH TO IMPROVE YOUR GRADE. IT WILL HELP. TRUST ME.

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