



TestInnovators
Prep for Success

SSAT Prep Guide

By Brenna O'Neill

Tips and strategies for every
section of the test

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Dedication

ODIN



LEO



This book is dedicated to the dogs of the Test Innovators office, who consistently inspire us with their perseverance, their ability to learn new things, and their unparalleled enthusiasm.

MERCY



BECKY



Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	2
CHAPTER 1: AN OVERVIEW OF THE SSAT.....	3
CHAPTER 2: THE SECTIONS OF THE SSAT.....	18
CHAPTER 3: PREPARING FOR THE SSAT.....	25
CHAPTER 4: STRATEGIES FOR THE SSAT.....	31
VERBAL.....	35
MATH.....	42
READING.....	46
ESSAY.....	48
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....	59

Acknowledgments

This book contains the collective knowledge of the Test Innovators team, a group of educators and technology experts dedicated to helping students succeed on standardized tests.

Special thanks to Edan Shahar, Erin Lynch, Geoff Dennis, Kimi Rosadini, and Marina Flider, PhD for their editorial wisdom, and to Rebecca Caldera for beautiful design elements.

About Us

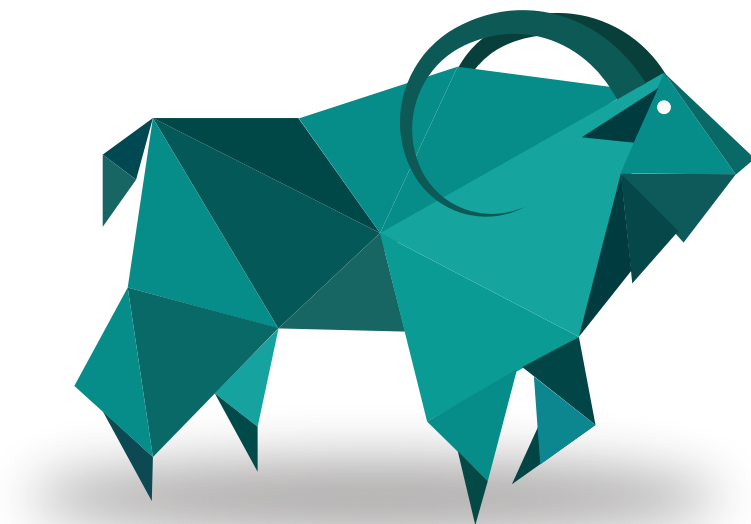
We at Test Innovators believe that standardized test taking is a skill you can learn, and mastering this skill can open doors to new opportunities throughout your life.

Our decades of experience with test writing and teaching, combined with our dedication to finding the best technological solutions, provide students with an unparalleled test preparation experience.

We believe that with the right tools, a personalized learning path, plenty of practice, and support throughout the process, every student can reach their fullest potential and find the test preparation process fulfilling rather than stressful.

Chapter 1:

An Overview of the SSAT



What is the SSAT?

The SSAT (Secondary School Admission Test) is an admission test administered by the EMA (Enrollment Management Association). Many private schools in North America, and a handful of international schools, use the SSAT as a crucial part of the admissions process for grades 4 through 12.

The SSAT serves as a standardized metric by which admissions departments can compare students from different schools. There are many parts to an application, and the manner in which SSAT scores impact admissions is very school-dependent.

Regardless of the school, an excellent score on the SSAT sets you apart in the admissions process, especially at highly competitive schools. Based on our years of test prep experience, we believe that standardized test taking is a skill that you can master, and—like all skills—you need to learn and practice in order to improve.

This book will serve as your guide in the preparation process, giving you insights into the test as well as strategies that will allow you to tackle the SSAT with confidence.

Is the SSAT related to the SAT?

The SSAT and SAT are commonly confused since their acronyms are so similar, but the two tests are unaffiliated. The SSAT is a test administered by the Enrollment Management Association for admission to independent elementary, middle, and high schools, while the SAT is administered by the College Board for admission to colleges.

Levels of the SSAT

The SSAT has three test levels, each of which is taken by students in a range of grades. The level that you take depends on your grade level at the time that you take the test.

Elementary Level

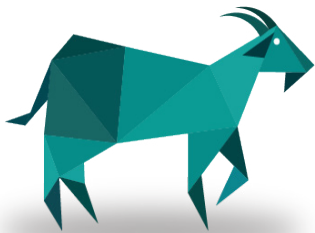


Elementary Level 3

For students testing in grade 3
(applying to grade 4)

Elementary Level 4

For students testing in grade 4
(applying to grade 5)

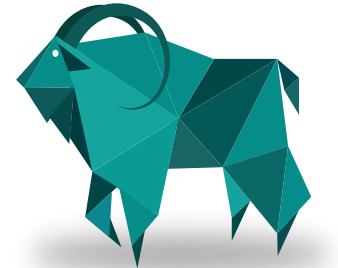


Middle Level

For students in grades 5 - 7
(applying to grades 6 - 8)

Upper Level

For students in grades 8 - 11
(applying to grades 9 - 12)



It might seem like a disadvantage for a younger student to be taking the same test as older students, but it's a little more complicated.

SSAT scores are based on a student's current grade level, so students are **only compared to others in the same grade level**.

So, a student in grade 8 will not be competing against a student who is two years older, in grade 10.

However, an 8th grader will be taking a test with questions designed to identify the top 10th graders. Knowing not to dwell on these difficult questions is critical to success on the SSAT.

SSAT Timing and Structure

The number of questions and timing varies for each level of the SSAT.

Elementary Level 3 & 4 SSAT:

For students in grades 3 and 4 (applying to grades 4 and 5)

SECTION	QUESTIONS	TIME
Quantitative Section	30 questions	30 minutes
Verbal Section	30 questions	20 minutes
<i>Break</i>	–	15 minutes
Reading Section	28 questions	30 minutes
Writing Sample	1 prompt	15 minutes
Experimental Section	15-17 questions	15 minutes
TOTAL	89 questions	2 hours, 5 minutes

Middle and Upper Level SSAT:

For students in grades 5 - 11 (applying to grades 6 - 12)

SECTION	QUESTIONS	TIME
Writing Sample	2 prompts	25 minutes
<i>Break</i>	–	5 minutes
Quantitative Section #1	25 questions	30 minutes
Reading Section	40 questions	40 minutes
<i>Break</i>	–	10 minutes
Verbal Section	60 questions	30 minutes
Quantitative Section #2	25 questions	30 minutes
Experimental Section	16 questions	15 minutes
TOTAL	167 questions	3 hours, 5 minutes

Test Format

The SSAT is administered in two formats.



Paper test



Computer test

The computer-based SSAT is administered at Prometric centers or at home, and the paper-based test can be taken at schools or test centers. Check online at <https://ssat.org> to see which options are available near you.

Students taking the SSAT on paper will complete their writing sample in pencil. Students taking the SSAT on a computer will type the essay.

Note: the Elementary Level SSAT is only administered on paper.

How should I take the test?

If you have a choice, here are some things to consider:

The environment: Prometric centers host a wide range of students all taking different tests (say, 22-year-old college students taking the GRE). At schools and other test centers, every student is roughly the same age and there to take the SSAT. At home, you'll need a strong internet connection and a space where you won't be distracted. Consider how these different testing environments might impact you.

The essay: Students taking the SSAT on a computer will type the essay. For slow typists, this might be difficult. Students taking the test on paper will write the essay out by hand. For students who have trouble writing legibly, this might present a challenge. Consider which format will be more advantageous for you.

The answer sheet: Many students have trouble correctly bubbling their answers into an answer sheet. On the computer test, this is not an issue: students enter each answer on the same screen as the question.

Our advice: Take a practice test both ways, see which one goes better, and sign up accordingly.

SSAT Question Types

The SSAT consists of four multiple-choice sections and one writing section. Multiple-choice questions on the SSAT look like this:

How many answer choices do SSAT questions have?
(A) 1
(B) 2
(C) 3
(D) 4
(E) 5

Students indicate the answer (hopefully E in this case) on their answer sheets, bubbling in their choice.

Note: On the Elementary Level SSAT, students mark their answers directly in the test book rather than using a separate answer sheet. They do this by coloring the circle next to their chosen answer choice.

The writing sample section requires students to write a response to the given prompt. The type(s) of prompts provided depend on the level of the test. For both the Middle and Upper Levels of the SSAT, students choose between the two prompts given, and write in response to their chosen prompt. Elementary Level students do not get a choice of prompt.

LEVEL	PROMPT(S)
Elementary Level	1 picture prompt
Middle Level	1 creative prompt, 1 personal essay prompt
Upper Level	1 personal essay prompt, 1 general essay prompt

Sample personal essay prompt:

Who is one of your favorite characters from a book, and why?
--

SSAT Scoring

Scoring Basics

The first step in scoring is calculating a raw score. How this is done depends on the level of the test. Elementary Level students do not lose points for incorrect answers, while Middle and Upper Level students do.

This chart shows how many points are awarded for each level:

	Elementary	Middle and Upper
Correct Answer	1 point	1 point
Incorrect Answer	0 points	-1/4 point
Unanswered	0 points	0 points

Once a raw score has been calculated for each section, it is converted into a scaled score. This conversion adjusts for the variation in difficulty between different tests. Thus, a lower raw score on a harder test could give you the same scaled score as a higher raw score on an easier test.

Students receive one scaled score for each of the three subjects (Quantitative, Reading, and Verbal) as well as a total scaled score which is the sum of the section scaled scores. The scaled score range is different for each level of the SSAT:

Level	Section Scaled Score Range	Total Scaled Score Range
Elementary	300 - 600	900 - 1800
Middle	440 - 710	1320 - 2130
Upper	500 - 800	1500 - 2400

The final (and most important) score calculated is the percentile. Percentiles compare a student's performance to all other same-grade students. For example, a 20th percentile indicates that a student received a higher scaled score than 20% of students in the same grade.

The SSAT score report shows two percentiles: one comparing you to students in the same grade, and one comparing you to students in the same grade and of the same gender.

The SSAT Score Report

Here's an example of what an SSAT score report looks like. At the top of the report, you'll see overall scores for each section of the test:

	Your Scaled Scores		SSAT Reference Information			
	Possible Scaled Score Range: 500-800		Grade 8 Total		Grade 8 Male	
	Score	Range	Your Percentile	Average Score	Your Percentile	Average Score
Verbal	674	653 - 695	56	664	57	663
Quantitative	680	661 - 699	52	679	47	686
Reading	620	599 - 641	27	654	29	651
Total	1974		45	1997	44	2000

Underneath the overall scores on the score report, you will see a more detailed breakdown. Each section is broken into question types, and you can see how many questions were answered correctly, incorrectly, or left unanswered.

Test Question Breakdown		Right	Wrong	Not Answered
Verbal Questions testing your knowledge of words (synonyms) and your ability to relate ideas (analogies).	Synonyms	18	11	1
	Analogies	17	11	2
Math Questions testing your knowledge of number properties and relationships, basic computation, concepts of equivalencies, geometry, measurement, and interpretation of charts/graphs.	Number Concepts & Operations	7	7	0
	Algebra, Geometry & Other Math	19	16	1
Reading Questions regarding the main idea and supporting details of a passage or requiring higher order skills, such as deriving the meaning of words from context, extracting the meaning of a passage, or interpreting an author's logic, attitude and tone.	Main Idea	6	8	1
	Higher Order	13	12	0

Score Report Insights

Don't focus on the scaled score or the right/wrong/unanswered numbers:

The scaled score allows you to compare scores on different test dates, but does not differentiate between students in different grades. Eleventh graders taking the Upper Level SSAT will generally do better than ninth graders, but the scaled score does not capture this information. (You could see this by looking at average scores for each grade—older students at the same level will have a higher average score.)

The number of right, wrong, or unanswered questions is not very meaningful, because, unlike on in-school tests where students are always aiming for a high percent of correct answers, on the SSAT, performance is all relative. Additionally, test difficulty varies. Thus on a hard test, answering half the questions correctly could be fantastic, while on an easier test, this could lead to a low score.

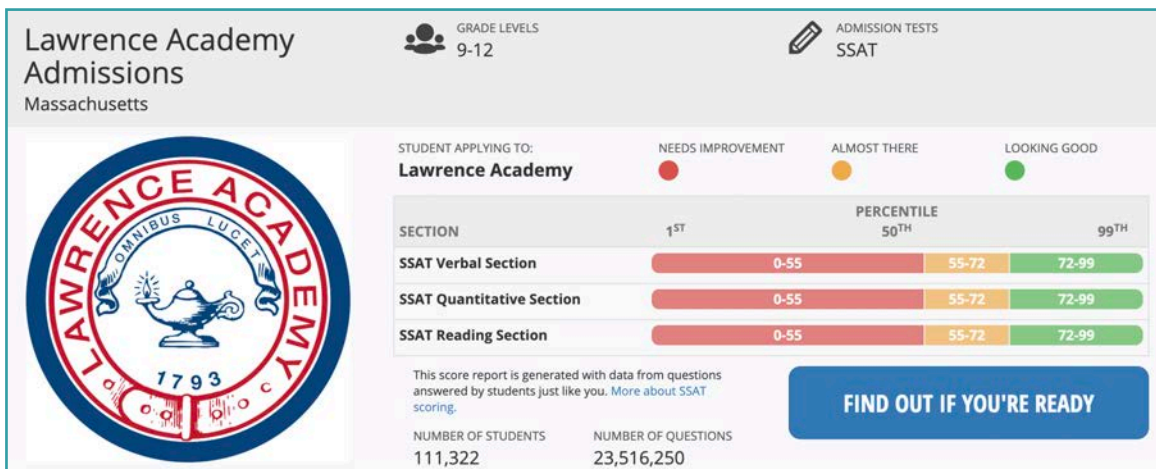
Focus on the grade-level percentile instead. This is the best number to understand student performance. (Note: the gender norm is rarely used for school admissions.)

Schools and SSAT Scores

The purpose of the SSAT is to provide school admissions panels with a standardized metric they can use to compare applicants from different schools. Because of this, it is a central part of the application. However, it is important to remember that it is just **one** part of the application. The transcript, interview, letters of recommendation, essays, and other components of the application are all critical for successful applicants. That said, we have seen that low scores can be an obstacle to admissions, especially for competitive schools that receive a large number of applications.

The Test Innovators website displays data on score ranges that have historically made students competitive applicants at different schools. These are designed to provide directional information but are by no means absolute.

Here's what this school data looks like:



View this information for all of the schools you are interested in here:

<https://SSATpracticetest.com/content/schools>

As you look through the information on your target schools, remember that there are many parts to an application. Scores in the green range do not guarantee admission, nor do scores in the red range preclude it.

Common Score Questions

How soon will I receive my score report?

For traditional paper-based testing, you will be able to see your score report within two weeks of your test date. Families will generally receive SSAT at Home and Prometric SSAT scores within four business days of testing. Log in at <https://ssat.org> to access your scores. You can also sign up to receive a score alert notification when your scores are available through your parent SSAT account.

Can I see the score report before sending it to schools?

Yes! Especially if you test (or may test) more than once, we strongly recommend that you wait until you see the score report(s) before determining the schools to which you would like to send them.

If I test more than once, can I send only the best score for each section (otherwise known as superscoring)?

No. Though some schools may choose to do this as they review student score reports, the admissions offices will be able to see the complete score report for each test you choose to send.

Why are my SSAT scores lower than my usual standardized test scores?

SSAT test takers tend to be high performers, and a 50th percentile score means that you're testing right in the middle of this talented pack. The competitive nature of the test is, however, a very good reason to practice before sitting down for the official exam.

Registration Dates

The information below is accurate for the 2020-21 SSAT testing season:

Middle and Upper Level students have three testing options: the SSAT at Home, the SSAT at a Prometric center, and the paper-based flex SSAT.

In 1 testing season, the SSAT at Home can be taken up to 5 times, the Prometric SSAT can be taken up to 2 times, and the flex SSAT can only be taken once.

Elementary Level students can only take the paper-based SSAT, and can test up to 2 times, either with one flex and one standard test, or with two standard tests.

The 2020 standard paper-based test dates (only offered for Elementary Level testers and students in international markets) are September 26th, October 31st, November 21st, and December 19th.

Prometric and flex testing availability is dependent on location.

The SSAT at Home will be administered every Saturday, select Sundays, and a few weekdays from the end of September through at least the end of January.

Visit <https://ssat.org> to find test dates and register.

Be sure to sign up for a test that will ensure your scores are ready before school application deadlines.

Fee Waivers

Fee waivers are available directly from schools. Contact the admissions offices of the schools to which you are applying to ask about availability.

Registration Tips

Whenever possible, we recommend that you plan to take the test at least twice. This helps alleviate the pressure of a single testing date, and if the first test goes well, you don't have to take it again.

If possible, it is also best to have some time between test dates—that way if you determine you need to prepare more, you'll have an opportunity to do so. It's generally a good idea to allot 3 or 4 weeks between test dates.

Check the application and testing deadlines for the schools to which you are applying. Note the last test date which fits within these deadlines, and then be sure to register for a test date that falls at least one month prior to this final testing option.

Another thing to bear in mind as you consider test dates is that you will have covered considerably more academic curriculum by the time you reach the later test dates. If your scores from an earlier fall test date aren't what you hoped for, especially for the quantitative sections, the additional time in the classroom will most likely be beneficial.

Register for the test here: <https://ssat.org/registration>

Tip

When you register for the test, you will have the opportunity to enter the schools to which you would like to send your scores. Do not enter schools yet! There is no reason to send the scores BEFORE you have the opportunity to review the score report.

If you have a secondary school placement advisor, they may ask you to enter your current school so that they can best counsel you.

Accommodations

Some students are eligible for accommodations on the SSAT. Accommodations will not be visible on the SSAT score report sent to schools, so admissions offices will not know if a student took the test with accommodations.

To be eligible, students must have a documented learning difference or disability that requires accommodations and must currently be receiving accommodations at their school for that need.

The most common accommodation on the SSAT is fifty percent additional time for each section, but there are many others, including:

- Permission to mark answers directly in test booklet
- Large print test booklet and materials
- Use of laptop computer with spelling aid for the writing sample
- Small group setting
- Reader or scribe (provided by family)

It may take **up to two weeks** for an accommodations request to be processed, and the request must be approved **before** you can register for an SSAT test date with accommodations. Additionally, test sites offering accommodations often fill up before test registration deadlines. Be sure to send in your documentation as soon as possible!

Find more information and register at <https://ssat.org/ta>

Test Day Information

The day before the test, relax, read a book, get some exercise, and get plenty of sleep. (In fact, you should prioritize sleep the entire week before the test as those earlier nights' sleep will be critical.)

On the morning of the test, wake up with ample time to eat a good breakfast and head to the test center so that you arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the start of testing.

For at-home testing, prepare your testing space well in advance (at least the day before) and verify that your computer's system and internet are ready for testing.

Do not attempt to study or cram last-minute information on the night before or day of the test! This will only cause undue stress and anxiety. Now is the time to feel confident in everything you've already done to prepare.

What to bring to the test:



A snack



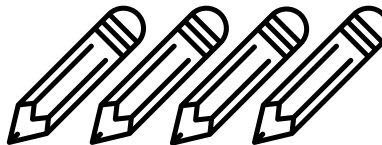
Water

Put your snack and water in a clear ziplock bag with your name on it. Your snack and water will be stored separately during the test and can only be accessed during scheduled breaks.

For paper-based testing:



Admission ticket



Four #2 pencils
with erasers

For Prometric testing:



Prometric
confirmation email

For at-home testing:



One pencil



Two pieces of
blank scratch paper

Prohibited items:

Everything not listed previously! This includes:



Calculators



Cell phones



Backpacks

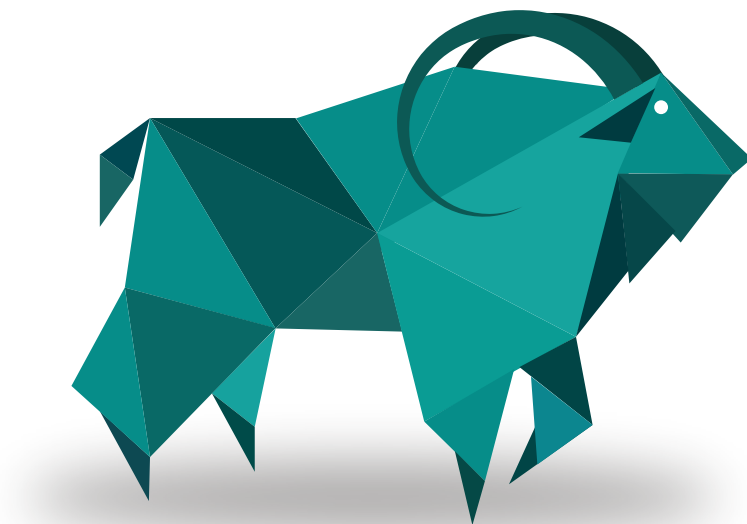


Notes

Scratch paper: Scratch paper and pencils will be provided at computer-based testing locations. On the paper-based SSAT, students may use blank space in the test booklet as scratch paper.

Chapter 2:

The Sections of the SSAT



SECTION 1

Writing Sample

The essay section is the only unscored portion of the SSAT. A copy is sent to schools along with the score report.

Students will be given two prompts and asked to complete a writing sample in response to one of them.

Middle Level SSAT Prompts:

On the Middle Level SSAT, you will choose between a creative prompt and a personal essay prompt. Middle Level prompts will look like this:

- Ⓐ She could hardly wait to get home.
- Ⓑ Who is someone you look up to? Why do you admire this person?

Upper Level SSAT Prompts:

On the Upper Level SSAT, you will choose between a personal and a general prompt. For either prompt, students should write a 4- or 5-paragraph essay and know how to defend an argument. Upper Level prompts will look like this:

- Ⓐ If you could spend a year of high school studying anywhere in the world, where would you choose to go, and why?
- Ⓑ Do you think students should be required to study a foreign language? Why or why not?

Upper Level Writing Tip

Before your official test date, try writing in response to both types of prompts to determine which one is a better fit.

How schools use the SSAT writing sample:

The way in which each admissions department uses the writing sample varies from school to school, but the following are the main elements that will be evaluated:

1. Topic choice
2. Organization and structure
3. Use of examples and details
4. Writing mechanics (spelling, punctuation, grammar)

Tip

Some schools will compare student application essays with the SSAT writing sample. If the application essays are written very differently from the SSAT writing sample, schools may disregard the application essays entirely based on an assumption that these may have been written by someone else (a parent, tutor, etc.)

Make sure that you write your own application essays! Parents, guardians, and others can help with the editing process, but the writing should be your own!

Quantitative Sections

There are two quantitative sections on the SSAT. These sections cover a broad range of subject matter, which often includes concepts students may not have seen for a while as well as some concepts that they may not have learned yet.

Students **cannot** use a calculator for either of the quantitative sections.

On the Middle and Upper Levels of the SSAT, the general subjects covered on these sections are the following:

QUANTITATIVE SUBJECTS:

NUMBERS AND OPERATIONS

ALGEBRA

GEOMETRY

MEASUREMENT

DATA ANALYSIS AND PROBABILITY

PROBLEM SOLVING

On the Elementary Level SSAT, students are asked questions related to numbers and operations, shapes, measurement, and interpretation of graphs.

Questions on the quantitative sections will look like this:

Which of the following is equivalent to the expression shown below?

$$\frac{5 - 10x\sqrt{81}}{\sqrt{25}}$$

- (A) $-90x$
- (B) $1 - 90x$
- (C) $1 - 18x$
- (D) $5 - 2x$
- (E) $5 - 18x$

SECTION 3

Reading Section

In the reading section, students will be asked to read passages dealing with a variety of subjects.

READING PASSAGE SUBJECTS:

FICTION
HUMANITIES
SCIENCE
SOCIAL STUDIES

The questions associated with each passage are designed to test students' understanding of what they read. The Middle and Upper Level reading sections have 8 passages with an average of 5 questions each, and the Elementary Level reading section has 7 passages with 4 questions each. Students can expect to see a variety of different question types on this section.

READING QUESTION TYPES:

MAIN IDEA
SUPPORTING IDEA
INFERENCE
VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT
TONE/STYLE/FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE
ORGANIZATION/LOGIC

Below is an example of a tone question:

Which best describes the tone of the passage?

- (A) logical and factual
- (B) philosophical and inquisitive
- (C) dynamic and surprising
- (D) informative and inspirational
- (E) methodical and objective

Verbal Section

The verbal section of the SSAT is composed of two types of questions.

VERBAL QUESTION TYPES:

SYNONYMS

ANALOGIES

The first half of the section is synonym questions, which look like this:

DECEPTIVE:

- (A) steadfast
- (B) misleading
- (C) predictable
- (D) cautious
- (E) spontaneous

Students are given a word and then asked to find its closest synonym in the answer choices.

The second half of the verbal section is analogies. These follow two different formats. They can look like this:

Reporter is to notepad as

- (A) kangaroo is to jump
- (B) conductor is to music
- (C) player is to ball
- (D) secretary is to director
- (E) painter is to canvas

Or like this:

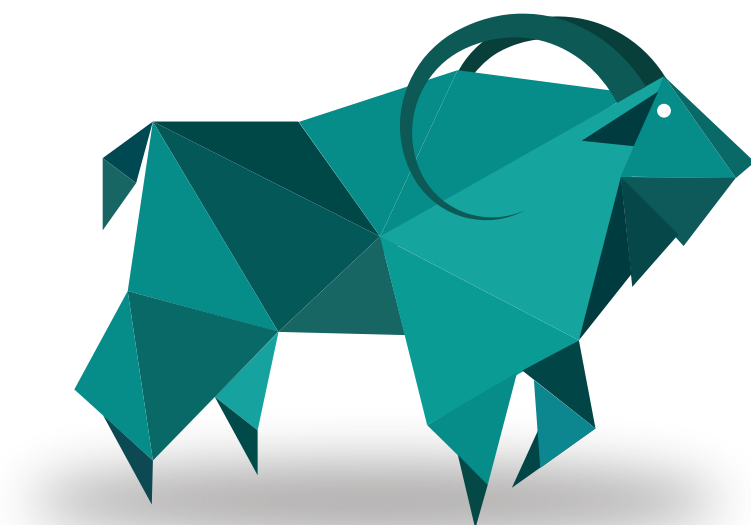
Courage is to trial as patience is to

- (A) pleasure
- (B) sturdiness
- (C) weakness
- (D) annoyance
- (E) fulfillment

In either case, students choose the answer choice that completes the sentence logically, such that the relationship between the first pair of words is the same as the relationship between the second pair of words.

Chapter 3:

Preparing for the SSAT



Preparation Basics

Practice Timeline:

In general, the earlier you start, the better. If you can give yourself at least six months, that is ideal—having more time relieves the anxiety of trying to rush any learning. However, it is never too late to start practicing. The more you know about the test structure and questions, the better you will do. We've seen students massively improve in just a week by understanding how the test is structured and what's expected of them.

It is difficult to make a broad recommendation about the frequency and duration of study sessions—as with most learning, this is very student-dependent! Our advice to all students is to focus on consistency and quality. For consistency, practice regularly even if not for a long period of time. One hour once a week is much more effective than four hours once a month. In terms of quality, make sure you are focused for the duration of each of your study sessions. If you can no longer learn new material because you've been sitting for so long, it's a good idea to take a break. (Though also see the tip below about full-length practice tests.)

Practice Format:

We recommend that you practice both online and on paper.

Paper practice is important if you are taking the official test on paper. In particular, it is crucial to practice using the answer sheet to bubble in answers. It is better for you to have a bubbling snafu on the practice test than to make that mistake on the official test.

Computer practice is important if you are taking the official test on a computer. If you are taking the official test on paper, online practice is still important for timing feedback, one of the key strategic areas of this test.

Tip

Every level of the SSAT requires stamina and focus. Sit for a full-length practice test before the official one so that you know how it feels! Use a virtual proctor to simulate the official test:

<https://testinnovators.com/proctor-videos>

How to Prepare

Step 1: Take a full-length practice test.

This initial practice test serves as a benchmark, or diagnostic test, and is the jumping-off point of the preparation process. We generally recommend taking this test as early as possible, but it is never too late.

No matter how close it is to your official test date, taking a practice test will ensure that you know what to expect on test day, giving you familiarity with:

SSAT question types
Section instructions

The difficulty of the test
SSAT scoring

The content on the test
Section timing

Additional benefits to taking a full-length practice test include:



Timing practice

Learn how to use your time well and which questions to skip.



Answer sheet practice

Become adept at accurately bubbling your answers.



Content review

See which concepts you should review before the official test.

The most important thing about a practice test is its accuracy—if the practice test does not reflect the content of the official test, the benefits of taking that practice test are limited. There are many sample tests and practice resources available, and we encourage you to research them. We at Test Innovators have spent a great deal of time making our practice as accurate as possible, and we continually ask for feedback every year to make sure our content is up to date. You can find our practice materials at <https://SSATpracticetest.com>

Tip

Make sure that you have access to normative scores for your practice tests! Remember that answering 75% of the questions correctly on a given section may be a great score or an average score depending on the grade level and difficulty of the section.

Step 2: Identify strengths and weaknesses based on results.

Look at overall trends first. Which sections went well, and which sections would you like to improve?

For instance, if these were your practice test scores:

Verbal: 88th percentile
Quantitative: 15th percentile
Reading: 46th percentile

You would clearly need to focus on the quantitative sections the most, then work on the reading section, and worry about the verbal section last.

After getting this general picture, dig deeper. What specific question types or subject areas went well, and which ones could use improvement? Let's say these were your results by subject area for one of the quantitative sections:

Algebraic Concepts: 2/9 correct
Data Analysis and Probability: 2/4 correct
Geometry: 4/5 correct
Measurement: 2/4 correct
Number Sense: 2/3 correct

Based on these results, you're doing well with the geometry questions, but you might need to brush up on some algebra fundamentals before heading into the next practice test.

Finally, consider time management as well. Did you manage your time effectively on each section? Did you run out of time to answer all of the questions on any of the sections?

If you were unable to reach all of the questions in every section, study and practice time management techniques. See page 39 for more information.

Step 3: Focus on any weak areas identified in Step 2.

This is the step at which all of the learning takes place! Review every question that you answered incorrectly or skipped. Make sure that you would know how to answer them correctly if you saw them again. This means that you should not only know why the correct answer is correct, but also why the answer you chose (and the other incorrect answers) is wrong. Here's an example of how to annotate this:

An SSAT question you answered incorrectly or skipped.

(A)	Answer you chose	→	_____
(B)	Possible answer		Reason this choice is incorrect
(C)	Possible answer		
(D)	Possible answer		
(E)	Correct answer	→	_____
			Reason this choice is correct

Verbal recommendations: Add words you don't know to your vocabulary list. This includes words from the answer choices. See pages 35-41 for more strategies.

Quantitative/math recommendations: Identify the concepts and skills being tested in the questions you missed. Study those concepts, starting with the topics and question types you have seen before but may need review. After mastering those, delve into the unfamiliar content. See pages 42-45 for more strategies.

Reading recommendations: Practice finding textual evidence: find line numbers to support every correct answer, and determine what information in the passage made each incorrect answer wrong. See pages 46-47 for more strategies.

Tip

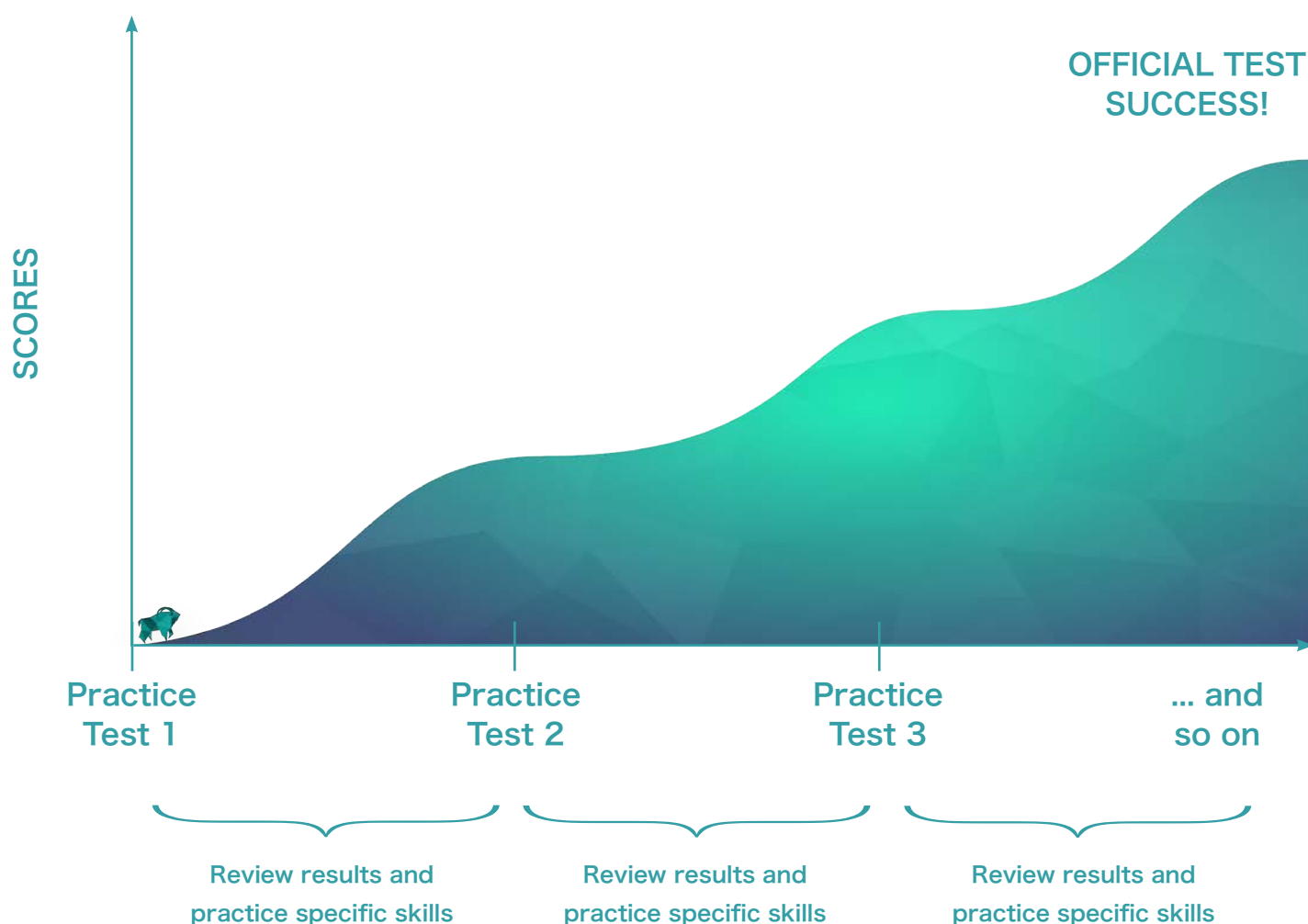
Make sure that your practice materials include targeted practice of the specific question types you are missing. This approach will be much more effective than simply taking full-length practice test sections.

At SSATpracticetest.com, additional practice exercises are linked to each practice test question so that students can easily follow up with relevant work to practice specific skills.

Step 4: Take another full-length practice test, and repeat.

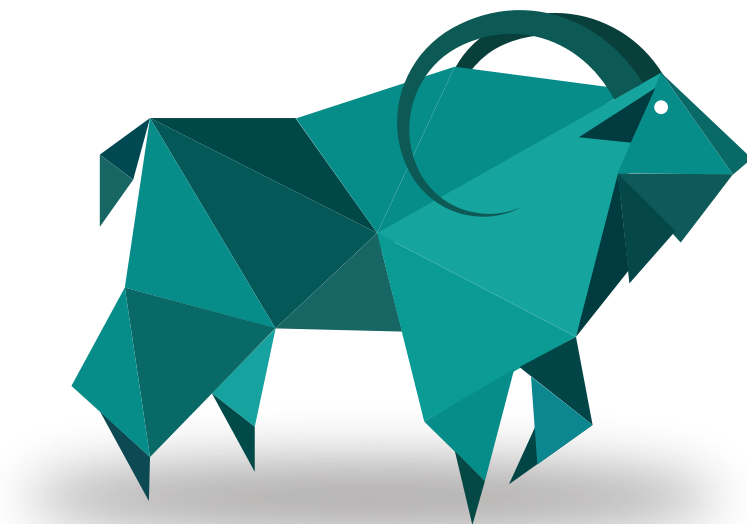
The preparation process is an iterative one. Each practice test should serve as a benchmark of progress, and as a roadmap for what to work on next. Studying between practice tests promotes growth and improvement between tests.

After you have reviewed and reflected on your test results, learn everything about the questions you missed, and then take another practice to gauge your progress and determine what you need to work on next.



Chapter 4:

Strategies for the SSAT



Overall SSAT Test-Taking Strategies

Process of Elimination

The beauty of a multiple-choice test like the SSAT is that you can be sure the correct answer is there! On every question, even if you aren't sure how to find the correct answer, see if there are answer choices you know are wrong. Eliminate these and then make an educated guess.

Each answer choice you eliminate increases your chances that your guess is correct. In the example below, after elimination, you have a $1/3$ chance of answering correctly, rather than the $1/5$ chance you would have had with a random guess. Sometimes, elimination is all you need to find the right answer!

Read the specific strategies for each section to learn ways to eliminate answer choices for different question types.

This is a sample SSAT question. Don't forget to think about which answer choices you can eliminate as you solve this problem!

- ~~(A)~~ Definitely wrong answer
- (B) Possible answer
- (C) Possible answer
- ~~(D)~~ Definitely wrong answer
- (E) Possible answer

Guessing

For the Elementary Level SSAT:

Always answer every question!

Correct answers are awarded 1 point, and incorrect or blank answers receive 0 points. Thus, you have a 20% chance of earning a point by guessing randomly, with no penalty if you're wrong. Whenever possible, eliminate as many answer choices as you can before guessing to increase your chances of earning points. That said, if you encounter a question where you cannot eliminate any answer choices, or if you are running out of time in the section, you should still select an answer choice for every question!

For the Middle and Upper Level SSAT:

On these levels of the test, incorrect answers lead to a quarter point deduction. (See scoring basics on page 11.)

The wrong-answer penalty is simply designed to negate the benefit of guessing. On tests without a wrong-answer penalty, students earn points by guessing randomly. The wrong-answer penalty deducts points for incorrect answers, balancing the 1 point received for each correct answer with deductions for each incorrect answer. *Statistically, you will receive the same number of points on average if you guess randomly on every question as if you leave every question blank.*

Here's an example to illustrate this. Let's say you have a 5-question test.

The guessing scenario:

On average, you'll answer 1 question correctly (earning 1 point), and 4 questions incorrectly (losing 1/4 point each). Thus your score will be $1 + 4(-1/4) = \mathbf{0 \text{ points overall}}$.

0 / 5	
0	1. a b c d e
0	2. a b c d e
0	3. a b c d e
0	4. a b c d e
0	5. a b c d e

The non-guessing scenario:

If you don't guess on any of the questions and leave everything blank, you'll receive 0 points for each question, and **0 points overall**.

0 / 5	
-1/4 X	1. a b c d e
+1 ✓	2. a b c d e
-1/4 X	3. a b c d e
-1/4 X	4. a b c d e
-1/4 X	5. a b c d e

The strategy:

You should guess! Simplifying your test strategy will improve confidence, not skipping questions will help you avoid answer sheet mis-bubbling, and with any eliminated answer choices, you increase your chances of earning points.

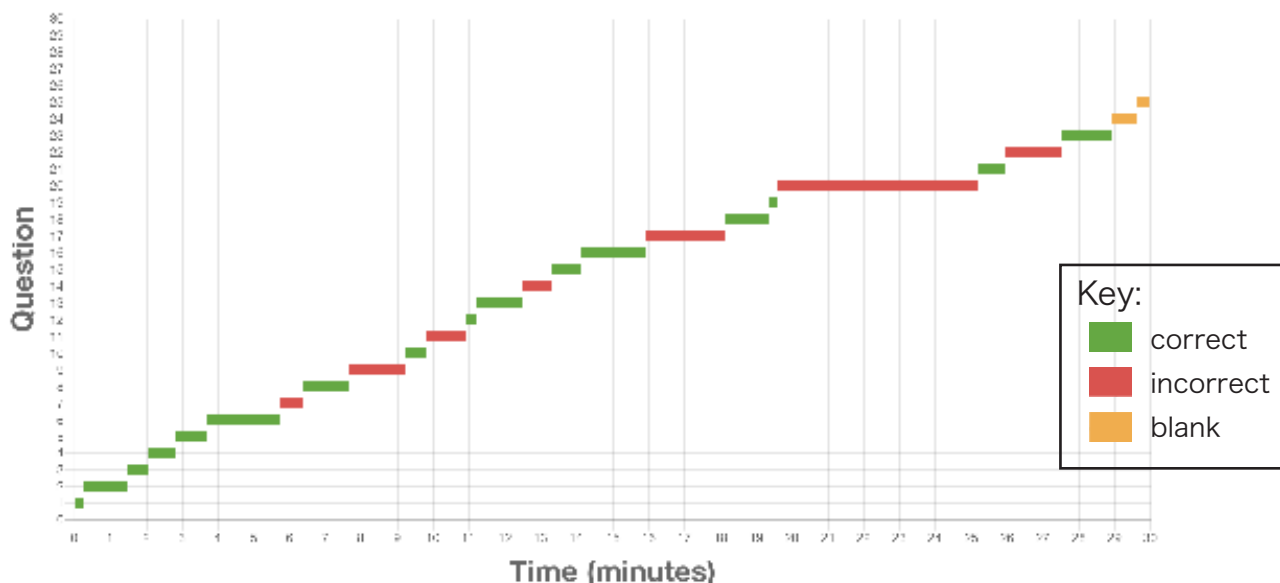
Time Management

Using your time effectively on the SSAT is critical. Every correct answer gives you the same number of points, so your goal is to answer as many questions correctly as possible. Don't waste valuable time on a hard question when you could instead answer three easy questions correctly in the same amount of time.

Here are three steps to manage your time well:

1. Group questions by difficulty: easy and hard. What does that mean? Every time you read a question, ask yourself "do I know how to do this?" If the answer is "Yes, absolutely" – solve the question. If the answer is "Maybe" or "I'm really not sure about this," or as you start the problem, you realize that it's taking you a long time, skip it.
2. When you skip a question, mark an answer on your answer sheet and circle the question in your test booklet. Filling in an answer on your answer sheet will ensure that you don't mis-bubble your answers!
3. After going through the whole section, return to the hard questions you marked and see if you can make any progress.

This is an example of what timing feedback looks like in the Test Innovators practice platform:



You can see that this student spent far too long on question 20, and therefore didn't have time to answer all of the questions. Insights like these are critical to building effective time management skills.

Verbal Strategies

Study Vocabulary

If you have more than two weeks to prepare for the SSAT, studying vocabulary is a very good idea! The verbal section largely relies on knowledge of words, so the more words you know, the better.

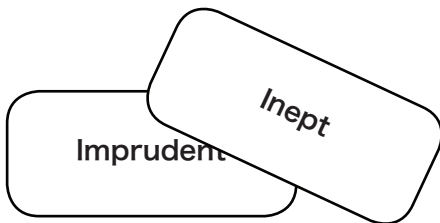
Study vocabulary for 10-15 minutes every day—short, consistent study sessions are the best way to effectively build vocabulary.

You can find good word lists for each SSAT level here:

<https://quizlet.com/testinnovators/folders>

There are many great ways to study vocabulary. Find the ones that are most successful for you! Here are a few ideas:

Use flashcards



Write sentences

She packed many **superfluous** items for her first camping trip; though she knew she wouldn't need them, she preferred to be prepared for anything!

Say the words aloud

Say your vocab words aloud as you study, and ideally use them in your day-to-day conversations as well.

Draw pictures



Unknown Words: Break Them Apart

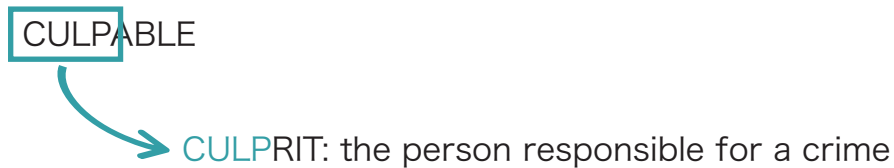
If you encounter a word that is unfamiliar to you, see if you can break the word apart. Roots contain the core meaning of a word, and prefixes and suffixes supplement that meaning. Do you recognize part of the word? Do you know another word that has that part? If so, use it to help you predict the meaning of the given word, or to eliminate answer choices that are not in line with that meaning.

Here's an example of how to apply this strategy:

CULPABLE:

- (A) attuned
- (B) famous
- (C) guilty
- (D) soft
- (E) gullible

Try breaking the word apart:



Although you may not have known the word culpable, you might know the word culprit. Using that, you can choose the answer choice closest to this meaning, which is C: guilty.

Unknown Words: Use Connotation

Connotation is the mood or feeling associated with a word. Sometimes, you might not know what a word means, and you might not recognize parts of it, but you can still figure out if it is a good thing or a bad thing. To use this strategy, assign words a sign: positive, negative, or neutral.

For synonym questions, the sign of the given word should match the sign of the correct answer. For analogies, the signs of the first pair of words should generally match the signs of the second pair of words.

Here's an example of how you might apply this strategy to a synonym question:

SINISTER: → -

- (A) grand → +
- (B) menacing → -
- (C) perky → +
- (D) unseen → **neutral**
- (E) vigorous → +

Here's an example of how you might apply this strategy to an analogy question:

Enlightened is to foolish as → (+ is to -)

- (A) peaceful is to serene → (+ is to +)
- (B) frightened is to fearful → (- is to -)
- (C) dreadful is to unfortunate → (- is to -)
- (D) many is to numerous → (**neutral** is to **neutral**)
- (E) courageous is to cowardly → (+ is to -)

Synonyms: Think of Your Own Answer

For the synonym questions of the verbal section, always think of your own answer before looking at the answer choices.

Coming up with your own answer first is the best way to avoid tempting wrong answers that are related to the given word, but do not have the correct meaning.

Don't worry about coming up with a perfect synonym. It's fine to think of a phrase or feeling that fits. Perhaps you can only think of a context, phrase, or sentence in which you've heard the word before. Anything helps!

Then find the answer choice that is closest to your prediction.

Here's an example of how you might apply this strategy:

WANE:

Notice that you're not looking at the answer choices yet, because you always start by thinking of your own answer. As you take the test, it can be a good habit to simply cover the answer choices with your hand until you've come up with your own answer.

Maybe you're not sure exactly what the word "wane" means, but you may have heard this word used in the context of the moon. So you'll mentally note that you think the word "wane" has something to do with the moon getting smaller. Then look at the answer choices:

(A) diminish

(B) mend

(C) wander

(D) allot

(E) dither

→ most similar to
your prediction

Analogies: General Strategy

Step 1: Find the relationship between the first pair of words. Do this by forming a sentence (or bridge) that connects the two words.

Step 2: Apply the relationship to each pair of words in the answer choices. Do this by substituting the answer choice words into the sentence you created in Step 1, in place of the original pair of words.

Step 3: Eliminate answer choices that do not fit the relationship, and select the answer choice for which the relationship holds.

Here's an example of how to apply this strategy:

Star is to constellation as

- (A) turquoise is to opaque
- (B) supernova is to explosion
- (C) spectator is to audience
- (D) revision is to finale
- (E) essay is to article

Step 1: A star is part of a constellation.

Step 2:

- (A) Turquoise is part of opaque.
- (B) A supernova is part of an explosion.
- (C) A spectator is part of an audience.
- (D) A revision is part of a finale.
- (E) An essay is part of an article.

Step 3: Answer choices A, B, D, and E do **not** fit the relationship we found in Step 1, so we can eliminate them and choose answer choice C, the only choice where our sentence made sense.

Types of Analogies

Synonyms

Words with the same meaning:

Kind is to compassionate

Dote is to adore

Essential is to intrinsic

Part to Whole

One word is a part of the other:

Chapter is to book

Goose is to flock

Snowflake is to blizzard

Antonyms

Words with opposite meanings:

Loud is to quiet

Gentle is to harsh

Stinginess is to generosity

Cause and Effect

One word is the cause of the other:

Rain is to flood

Spark is to fire

Idea is to innovation

Degree

Words that are greater and lesser forms of the same thing:

Stomp is to tiptoe

Drizzle is to downpour

Whisper is to shout

Type or Kind

One word is a category into which the other word falls, or both words fall into the same category:

Ape is to primate

Sonnet is to poem

Swallow is to robin

Characteristic

One word is a standard characteristic of the other word:

Soda is to bubbly

Rose is to fragrant

Water is to wet

Definition or Purpose

The purpose of one word is to do the action of the second word:

Mop is to clean

Blanket is to warmth

Pencil is to write

Analogies: Pay Attention to Order

Order matters! "Puppy is to dog" has a different relationship than "Dog is to puppy." The correct answer should match the order of the original pair of words. Here's an example:

Foal is to horse as: (baby is to adult)

- ~~(A)~~ chicken is to chick (adult is to baby)
- ☒ (B) caterpillar is to butterfly (baby is to adult)
- (C) ostrich is to egg (adult is to origin)
- (D) donkey is to colt (weak relationship!)
- (E) brother is to sister (sibling is to sibling)

Analogies: Use Parts of Speech

For analogy questions (and synonym questions!), the parts of speech for the words in the question should be the same as the parts of speech for the correct answer.

If the words in an answer choice have different parts of speech than the words in the question, OR the parts of speech are in the wrong order, you can eliminate that answer choice.

Here's an example:

Importance is to insignificant as (noun is to adjective)

- ~~(A)~~ courage is to tenacity (noun is to noun)
- ~~(B)~~ honor is to disrespect (noun is to noun)
- (C) rhythm is to spoken (noun is to adjective)
- ☒ (D) novelty is to familiar (noun is to adjective)
- ~~(E)~~ visible is to inaudible (adjective is to adjective)

Math Strategies

Read Carefully

One of the most common mistakes on the SSAT is misreading a question, usually due to reading too quickly. Be sure to take a few extra seconds on every question to avoid careless errors.

Underline important information.

This includes words and numbers indicating the quantities, relationships, and calculations (less than, twice, product, etc.) that you'll need to answer the question. Words like “not” can be easily missed and completely change what you’re supposed to find in the question!

Here's an example of underlining:

Whitney has taken three quizzes in her French class so far, earning scores of 84, 92, and 88. Her next test score will be counted three times in her overall mean. If she takes only these three quizzes and one test, what is the lowest score she can earn on the test to have a mean score of at least 90?

Check that you answered the given question.

For every problem, after you finish solving, look back at what the question was asking you to find. Make sure that this matches your answer.

Here's an example of this check:

Carla and Teresa are each taking turns driving a car. Carla drives 4 times as much as Teresa. If Carla and Teresa drive a total of 220 miles, how many miles did Teresa drive?

It would be easy to accidentally solve for the number of miles Carla drove, which will almost certainly be one of the answer choices as a common error. Take the extra second to verify that the question is asking for Teresa's miles, and answer accordingly.

Work Backwards

Take advantage of the fact that the SSAT gives you more information than just a question: it also gives you answer choices, one of which you know must be the correct answer!

For questions with an unknown quantity, you can substitute the answer choices for the unknown quantity to see which is correct. Always start with the middle answer choice to minimize the number of answers you have to substitute.

Here is an example of how to do this:

A farmyard has 17 chickens and pigs in it, and 52 total feet. Assuming that all of the chickens have two feet, and all of the pigs have four, how many chickens are in the yard?

- (A) 7
- (B) 8
- (C) 9
- (D) 10
- (E) 11

This is a tricky question to solve directly, but substituting answer choices is very manageable. Remember to start with the middle answer choice, C, which is 9.

If there are 9 chickens, then there must be 8 pigs. The total number of feet will be $9 \cdot 2 + 8 \cdot 4 = 18 + 32 = 50$. This is too few feet, so C is incorrect. To increase the number of feet, we must have fewer chickens and more pigs, so D must also be incorrect and we should try B: 8 next.

If there are 8 chickens, then there must be 9 pigs. The total number of feet will be $8 \cdot 2 + 9 \cdot 4 = 16 + 36 = 52$.

B is the correct answer.

Estimate

Estimation is a powerful tool for eliminating wrong answers. For every question, before beginning to solve, ballpark what you think the right answer should be. Think about things like: should it be positive or negative, an integer or a fraction, bigger or smaller than any of the other numbers in the question, and so on. Sometimes the question will even include clues that you should estimate, such as “approximately” or “about,” but even without these words, always estimate first.

Here is an example of how to use estimation:

If $\frac{5}{6}$ of a chapter can be read in one hour, how many hours will it take to read the rest of the chapter at the same rate?

- (A) 0.14
- (B) 0.20
- (C) 1.20
- (D) 1.83
- (E) 10

Notice that the question is asking how many hours it will take to read the REST of the chapter. Since almost the entire chapter has been read already, it cannot possibly take more than an hour to read the remainder, so you can immediately eliminate answer choices C, D, and E.

Thus, even with very little time spent on this question, you have a 50% chance of answering correctly.

Pick Values

Sometimes, the math questions you see on the quantitative sections may seem very challenging to solve abstractly. The question may ask how an unknown quantity will change if it undergoes a couple of percent changes, or to solve for one variable in terms of others. In cases like these, it can be helpful to use actual numbers to determine the answer, rather than trying to solve algebraically.

Here is an example of how to use this strategy:

If the length of the base of a triangle is decreased by 40% and the height is increased by 60%, what is the percent decrease in the area of the triangle?

- (A) 4%
- (B) 14%
- (C) 20%
- (D) 24%
- (E) 36%

Pick easy values for the base and height of the triangle, say 10 and 20. Thus the initial area of the triangle is $0.5 \cdot 10 \cdot 20 = 100$. (We chose these numbers strategically so that the area would be 100.)

Now the base decreases 40%, so the new base is 6, and the height increases 60%, so the new height is 32. Thus the new area of the triangle is $0.5 \cdot 6 \cdot 32 = 96$.

Therefore, the area of the triangle has decreased 4%.

Note: For percent questions, use 10% as your guide. 10% of any number is that number divided by 10, which is the same as moving the decimal point one unit to the left. Thus 10% of 60 is 6, 10% of 72 is 7.2, and so on.

Reading Strategies

Find Evidence

The most important rule of reading comprehension is that the passage will always provide all of the information needed to answer the question. This means that reading comprehension is really like a scavenger hunt, and your objective is to get as good as possible at sleuthing, finding the lines that give the answer to the question as quickly as possible.

If any part of an answer choice doesn't match the information given in the passage, it is incorrect. Even one word can make an answer choice wrong!

Note that there cannot be more than one valid interpretation of the information in the passage.

The correct answer should always have the same meaning as the information in the passage, though it may not use the exact same words.

Think of Your Own Answer First

Whenever possible, after you read a question, come up with an answer in your head before you look at the answer choices. This will help you to eliminate wrong answer choices, and find the best answer.

Eliminate Extreme Answers

In general, avoid answer choices that are too extreme. SSAT passages are usually moderate in their claims. If you see answer choices with words like “only,” “always,” “never,” “best,” “every,” or other extreme words, these are unlikely to be the correct answer. You should only choose them if you are absolutely sure that this sentiment is in the passage as well.

Main Idea Strategy

After reading the passage, come up with the main idea in your own words. What was the passage all about? Start by eliminating answer choices that are not in line with your main idea. If you're torn between a couple of answer choices, determine how many lines of the passage talk about each answer choice. The one that covers more of the passage is a better answer.

Tone Strategy

Tone questions ask how an author feels about the information in the passage. Start by determining if the tone is positive, negative, or neutral. To help decide, pay attention to adjectives and other charged/feeling words in the passage. Find the answer that best matches the way the author is talking about the subject.

Note: Neutral tone answer choices may be "informative" or "factual." A persuasive tone is indicated by words like "should" "ought to" "must" and "need."

Vocabulary in Context Strategy

Treat these questions like sentence completions. Don't look at the answer choices at first. Instead go to the line in question, read the sentence (covering up the word), and come up with your own word to go in the blank. Then find the closest answer choice. Afterwards, plug your answer into the sentence and make sure that it fits.

General Writing Strategies

(for both creative and essay writing)

Time Management

With only 25 minutes to write, managing your limited time effectively is incredibly important. Start by spending the first 2-5 minutes outlining your ideas to clarify and structure your thoughts. After you have a plan, go ahead and get writing! This is where you will spend the bulk of your time. You'll need to watch the clock, and save yourself 2-5 minutes at the end for review.

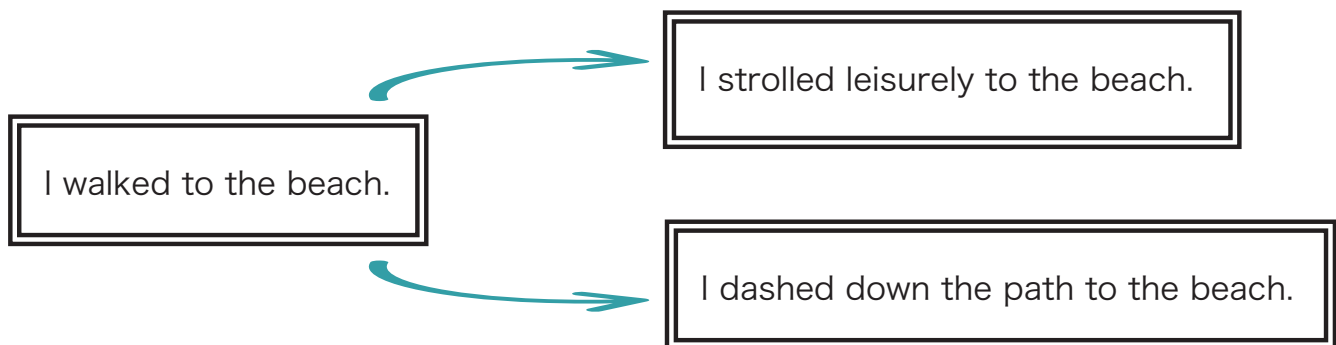
2-5 minutes	Plan
15-20 minutes	Write
2-5 minutes	Revise

Revision

Editing and reviewing at the end is a crucial step in creating a polished writing sample.

Try to catch any grammar, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation mistakes, and change "weak" words to "strong" ones.

Here's an example of writing stronger, more visual sentences:



Neatness and organization matter! You want your writing to be as smooth and polished as possible. Make sure you write slowly enough that your handwriting is legible.

Creative Writing Strategies

Topic Choice

Make sure that you write about something that you know about and choose a problem that is relevant to your life. This will help your writing to come alive for your reader and make sure that you have plenty to talk about!

For example, let's say you are given the following prompt:

He had never seen such an incredible sight.

Pick a setting and problem that is familiar to you. Perhaps your main character is traveling out of the country for the first time, just as you did, or perhaps he is visiting a natural landmark that you have seen yourself.

Story Planning

Before you begin writing, plan or outline your story. Make sure that you identify your main character, the setting of the story (where it takes place), the problem your main character faces, and how the problem is solved. Having a game plan for your writing will help to keep your story focused.

Story Structure

For the creative sample, your goal is to tell an entire short story from beginning to end. There are three parts to most stories: setup, confrontation, and resolution.

In the setup, introduce your reader to the main characters, setting, and conflict of the story. The confrontation, or conflict, is necessary to maintain tension in the story. In the resolution, the conflict resolves, the characters grow, and the story

Story Components

The Setup

The beginning of the story, “the setup,” is where you introduce your characters, setting, and conflict. Since this is such a short story, make sure to include no more than 1-2 characters and one setting. Include a sentence or two of description to make the scene come alive for the reader.

Then introduce the problem or conflict that your character is facing. This can be a challenge, difficulty, or disagreement—there are many types of conflicts!

Here's a guide for the elements you should introduce in your setup:

1-2 characters 1 setting The problem/conflict

Here's a sample setup:

He had never seen such an incredible sight. Anthony gazed, awestruck, at the huge auditorium full of kids his age, excitedly chatting over tables of glittering metal parts. It was the first day of the international robotics competition, and Anthony, alongside his teammates, Rory and Ellen, was competing for the first time. Well, it was Anthony's first time. Rory and Ellen had competed together last year; Anthony was new to the school, and to the robotics team. He had a lot to prove.

For this competition, each team had to assemble a robot that could complete an obstacle course set up on the stage. That part, Anthony thought, was easy. However, their robot also had to remove a series of small, brightly-colored balls scattered across the course. The team had never built something like that before, and he felt worried. Were they up to the challenge?

The Confrontation

The confrontation is the main action of the story, where the problem or conflict escalates. Here, make sure that your character confronts an obstacle! Do they get in an argument? Does something go wrong as they try to solve a problem? Do they have to overcome a challenge or face a fear? This should be the most exciting part of your story.

To make it come alive, the confrontation should include dialogue. Note how this is formatted in the sample confrontation below.

“Alright contestants,” a voice came over the loudspeaker. “The competition begins now!”

“Okay guys,” said Ellen. “How are we going to make our robot pick up the balls? How about an arm that picks them up?”

“No way,” said Rory. “You know how long it takes to build an entire moving arm. What about a sensor that blows a gust of air to move them away, off the course?”

“Too risky,” Ellen replied confidently. “What if it doesn’t blow hard enough or moves them in the wrong direction?”

As Ellen and Rory volleyed ideas back and forth, Anthony stood, frozen, his hands sweating and his mind blank. The voices and the sounds of power tools echoing throughout the auditorium swirled in his brain. Why couldn’t he come up with an idea? Think!

“Wait a minute,” he said. “What if we added a shovel on the front, like a snow plow? The shovel could be shaped like a bucket to scoop the balls up one by one!”

Ellen and Rory stopped chattering and just stared at him.

“I think that could work,” Ellen said slowly.

Rory agreed. “Let’s start building!”

Together, the three began to assemble their pre-designed robot, then added the “snow plow” on the front. Anthony added a sensor so that the robot knew when there was a ball that needed to be picked up, and he finished just as the buzzer rang!

Their team was the last to try the obstacle course, so Anthony had plenty of time to be nervous watching the other teams’ robots. None of them were able to complete the obstacle course or successfully remove all of the balls. Finally, it was their turn.

“Here goes nothing,” he said, setting their robot at the edge of the obstacle course.

The Resolution

The resolution, or end of the story, is where the conflict resolves and you show how the characters have changed. Often, the main character will demonstrate growth, make a decision, or come to an important realization.

It is important, also, that the conflict be fully resolved. Cliffhangers are fun when you're reading an entire chapter book, but in this context, you should write a complete story.

Here's a sample resolution:

When he turned around, Anthony noticed that Ellen and Rory were both smiling at him.

"Whatever happens," Rory said, "We just want you to know that we're glad you're part of the team."

Together, they watched as their robot began the course. As it encountered the first ball, the robot quickly scooped it up with the shovel and moved to the next one. It completed the whole course with ease, then deposited the balls in a neat pile in the corner.

Anthony cheered and high-fived his teammates. Together, he thought, they could tackle any challenge.

Creative Writing Checklist

Content

- ☐ **Setting:** do you have one setting that you are familiar with and can describe?
- ☐ **Characters:** have you chosen 1-2 characters? What are their names?
- ☐ **Conflict:** what problem is your main character facing?
- ☐ **Resolution:** how does this problem get solved at the end?

Organization and Structure

- ☐ Do you have a setup?
- ☐ Do you have a confrontation?
- ☐ Do you have a resolution?

Style

- ☐ Is your writing clear?
- ☐ Is your word choice varied?
- ☐ Did you include one or two strong vocabulary words?

Mechanics

- ☐ Did you indent your paragraphs?
- ☐ Is your handwriting neat and legible?
- ☐ Did you check your spelling, capitalization, and punctuation?

Essay Strategies

Topic Choice

Try to choose a topic that showcases something you care about and are familiar with. Remember to write in a way that shows you in a positive light, and that highlights part of your personality. This is your chance to show the school who you are outside of school!

For example, imagine that you are given this prompt:

If you were granted the power to move anywhere in the world, where would you decide to live and why?

Make sure to pick a topic that is personally important to you! Is there a place you have visited that has meant a lot to you, or a place where people that you care about live? Make sure to choose something you know about, care about, and can tell stories about.

Essay Structure

For the personal or general essay, you should have a clear, focused topic that directly answers the given question. It should be structured much like essays you may have written in school, with an introduction, two or three body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

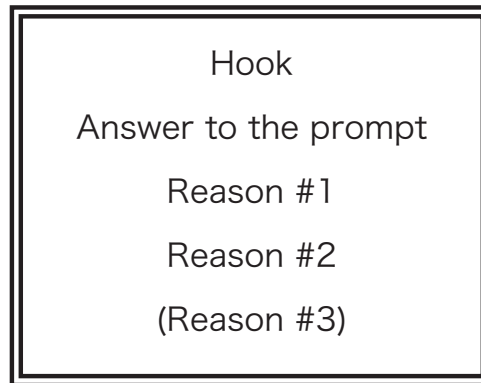
In the introduction, state your topic and then introduce your two to three reasons—these will be the topics of your body paragraphs. In the body paragraphs, include specific examples from your experiences to support each reason. Then, in the conclusion, rephrase your main points and offer something new to the reader, such as describing how this topic will affect your actions in the future.

Essay Components

The Introduction

The purpose of the introduction is to clearly communicate to the reader what you are going to talk about in the rest of the essay. Your introduction should generally be four to five sentences long. The first sentence is a “hook,” which is a question, description, or anecdote that captures the reader’s attention. The second sentence should restate the question and answer it. The last two to three sentences should provide an overview of your reasons.

Use this as your guide to the sentences in your introduction:



Here's a sample introduction:

As I gazed up at the clear skies and the majesty of Mount Tongariro, I knew that New Zealand was the most amazing place I had ever been. My visit there taught me that, if I had the power to move anywhere in the world, I would want to move to New Zealand. Moving to New Zealand would allow me to spend more quality time with my aunt, uncle, and cousins, who live there. If I moved to New Zealand, I would also be able to hike and explore the amazing, beautiful outdoors.

The Body

The body paragraphs of an essay explain how your reasons support your topic, and they provide specific details and examples to make your reasons concrete. As much as possible, these reasons should come from your own life and interests.

If you are writing about a place you'd want to move, for example, tell about an important visit you had there. Describe the scenery and the sights and sounds! Use words that appeal to the reader's senses: sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste.

Make sure that your details and examples stay on topic and don't become too longwinded. Your body paragraphs should be about 5-7 sentences long, so make sure to include only relevant information.

Here are sample body paragraphs:

Although my parents and I live in New York City, much of my extended family lives in Wellington, New Zealand. Last summer, we traveled there to visit them. I got to spend time with my cousins, Grace and Alex, who I hadn't seen in years. While we all felt a little shy at first, we soon discovered how much we have in common. My cousin Grace and I both love to skateboard, and Alex and I both were teaching ourselves Japanese! We had a great summer exploring the city together as well as hiking with our parents. If I moved to New Zealand, I would be able to enjoy their company the whole year, not just for a summer.

Because I have spent most of my life in a large city, I am always grateful for opportunities to spend time outdoors. In New Zealand, I was awestruck by the incredible natural beauty that the islands had to offer. One of my favorite trips that we took was to the Tongariro National Park. In the National Park, we rented mountain bikes and biked through the forest, under the watchful eye of Mount Tongariro. It was a truly spectacular experience. If I moved to New Zealand, I would take trips to so many more amazing locations.

The Conclusion

Your last paragraph, the conclusion, wraps up everything you've written about in your essay. In the conclusion, make sure to take 2-3 sentences to restate your topic and reasons. It is very important to use new words and phrases here, so that you don't repeat yourself.

Lastly, give the reader a positive closing statement. This can be a description of your growth, something you have learned related to the topic, or your future plans.

My visit to New Zealand last summer truly solidified that it would be my dream place to live. I valued the time I spent with my family there, and I would love to be able to spend more time learning and growing with my cousins. I also discovered my passion for the outdoors and would be excited to spend time exploring new places. Of course, my family is not moving away from New York any time soon, but that doesn't mean I can't start planning my next New Zealand trip!

Essay Writing Checklist

Topic Choice

- ☐ Is this topic something you know a lot about?
- ☐ Is this topic something you care about?

Specific Details and Examples

- ☐ Do you provide specific details for each of your reasons?
- ☐ Do you have enough examples to fill your body paragraphs?

Organization and Structure

- ☐ Do you have a 4-5 sentence introduction?
- ☐ Do you have 2-3 body paragraphs that are 5-7 sentences long?
- ☐ Do you have a 2-3 sentence conclusion?

Style

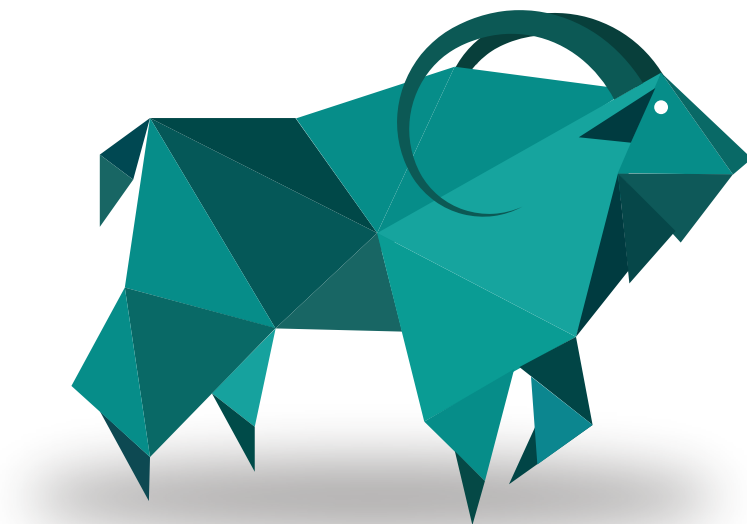
- ☐ Is your writing clear?
- ☐ Is your word choice varied?
- ☐ Did you include one or two strong vocabulary words?

Mechanics

- ☐ Did you indent your paragraphs?
- ☐ Is your handwriting neat and legible?
- ☐ Did you check your spelling, capitalization, and punctuation?

Chapter 5:

Conclusion



How to Prepare from Here

This book should serve as a guide and introduction to the SSAT and best preparation practices. Remember that practice is the cornerstone of the preparation process!

The next thing to do is to take practice tests and do practice questions. Apply the strategies covered in Chapter 4 until they are second nature.

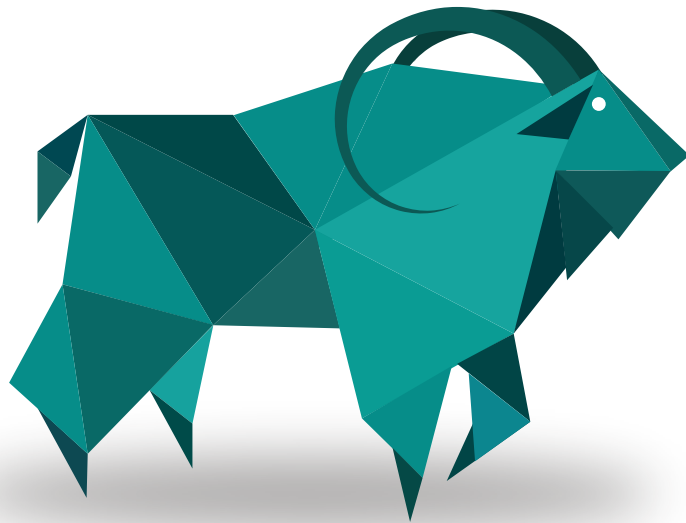
There are many SSAT practice resources available. We at Test Innovators have spent a great deal of time developing quality practice materials, which you can access at [SSATpracticetest.com](https://ssatpracticetest.com).

You can use the coupon code GUIDEBOOK for \$25 off any Valedictorian package.

If you have any questions about the preparation process, don't hesitate to reach out to us! From September through January, we answer the phone and respond to emails 7 days a week. Outside of the core testing season, we are available Monday through Friday to answer your questions. Our contact information is:

PHONE: 1-800-280-1857
EMAIL: support@testinnovators.com

We wish you the best of luck in the preparation process!



Good Luck!