

Official SAT Practice

Lesson Plans

for Teachers by Teachers

LESSON 9

The SAT Essay—Part One

Focus: Becoming familiar with the SAT[®] Essay

Objectives:

Students will understand the scope and purpose of the task of the SAT Essay.

Before the Lesson:

- ☐ Review Chapter 14 of the SAT *Study Guide for Students*.
- ☐ Preview the SAT Essay overview video.
- ☐ Preview and print (if necessary) the student materials.

Introductory Activity | 20 minutes

1. Be sure to let students know some basic facts about the SAT Essay:
 - a. It's optional, though students should research whether the schools they are considering require the Essay, recommend it, or neither. A regularly updated list for students to consult can be found here: <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/college-essay-policies>.
 - b. Students have 50 minutes to read the passage and to write a response.
 - c. The prompt won't ask you to take a stance on an issue. Rather, your task will be to analyze an argument presented in a passage in order to explain **how the author builds the argument** to persuade his or her audience.
 - d. It's scored on the following aspects:
 - i. *Reading*: How well you demonstrated your understanding of the passage.
 - ii. *Analysis*: How well you analyzed the passage and carried out the task of explaining how the author builds his or her argument to persuade an audience.
 - iii. *Writing*: How skillfully you crafted your response.
 - e. You may want to show students this introductory video from Khan Academy® at this point: <https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat/new-sat-tips-planning/about-the-sat-essay/v/about-the-sat-essay-what-to-expect>.
2. The most important aspect to emphasize to students is that the purpose of their essay is to identify and **analyze** the tactics that the author uses to build the argument.
3. Ask students to brainstorm a list of ways that, in general, writers (or speakers) try to convince their readers (or audiences). They should say things like: facts, evidence, logical reasoning, but you should try to get them to think about how language, specifically diction and syntax, can also be used.
4. Let students know that the prompt for the SAT Essay always remains the same; it's only the text that they analyze that changes. The prompt, included in the student materials for this lesson, will ask students to consider the following elements:
 - a. Evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.
 - b. Reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence.
 - c. Stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed.
5. Look at the opening paragraphs of a sample text and ask students to identify any of the above elements that the writer uses **to persuade his audience that news organizations should increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage provided to people in the United States**.
6. Ask students to think about how these first three paragraphs strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of Goodwin's argument. Remind students that they are NOT to focus on whether they agree or disagree with the author, or to summarize what the author is saying, but to focus on the tactics he uses.

Group/Pair Practice | 20 minutes

1. In pairs or small groups, ask students to read the remaining article aloud, marking places where the author uses evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic elements.
2. Students should discuss the following question: What does the author include to try to persuade his audience about the need for foreign journalism? Ask them to fill in a chart of examples of the following elements:

Evidence	Logical Reasoning	Stylistic Elements

Independent Practice | 10 minutes

1. Ask students to read a student's sample response to the SAT Essay prompt about the text that they just read. Let them know that this one met the expectations of the essay (received 3s on all traits out of 4).
2. Students should summarize the main points that the student writer makes about the persuasiveness of the text. What were the elements the student focused on? What are the portions of the essay that are similar to other essays students have written? How is it different?
3. Ask students to imagine that they were going to explain to someone how to take the SAT Essay. What would they say? What is its goal?

Homework | 30 minutes

- Read at least three more student sample responses. They can be found here starting on page 185:
<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/pdf/official-sat-study-guide-ch-17-about-sat-essay.pdf>.
- Students should also read the articles in the SAT Essay Strategies section of the Tips and Strategies tab on Official SAT Practice.

Student Materials—Lesson 9

Introductory Activity

The SAT Prompt

As you read the passage below, consider how [the author] uses

- evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.
- reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence.
- stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed.

Write an essay in which you explain how [the author] builds an argument to persuade [his/her] audience that [author's claim]. In your essay, analyze how [the author] uses one or more of the features listed above (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of [his/her] argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

Your essay should not explain whether you agree with [the author's] claims, but rather explain how the author builds an argument to persuade [his/her] audience.

**Adapted from Peter S. Goodman, “Foreign News at a Crisis Point.”
©2013 by TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc. Originally published
September 25, 2013. Peter Goodman is the executive business and
global news editor at TheHuffingtonPost.com.**

1. Back in 2003, American Journalism Review produced a census of foreign correspondents then employed by newspapers based in the United States, and found 307 full-time people. When AJR repeated the exercise in the summer of 2011, the count had dropped to 234. And even that number was significantly inflated by the inclusion of contract writers who had replaced full-time staffers.
2. In the intervening eight years, 20 American news organizations had entirely eliminated their foreign bureaus.
3. The same AJR survey zeroed in on a representative sampling of American papers from across the country and found that the space devoted to foreign news had shrunk by 53 percent over the previous quarter-century.

Pair/Group Activity

As you read the rest of the article, identify the following:

Evidence	Logical Reasoning	Stylistic Elements

4. All of this decline was playing out at a time when the U.S. was embroiled in two overseas wars, with hundreds of thousands of Americans deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was happening as domestic politics grappled with the merits and consequences of a global war on terror, as a Great Recession was blamed in part on global imbalances in savings, and as world leaders debated a global trade treaty and pacts aimed at addressing climate change. It unfolded as American workers heard increasingly that their wages and job security were under assault by competition from counterparts on the other side of oceans.
5. In short, news of the world is becoming palpably more relevant to the day-to-day experiences of American readers, and it is rapidly disappearing.
6. Yet the same forces that have assailed print media, eroding foreign news along the way, may be fashioning a useful response. Several nonprofit outlets have popped up to finance foreign reporting, and a for-profit outfit, GlobalPost, has dispatched a team of 18 senior correspondents into the field, supplemented by dozens of stringers and freelancers. . . .
7. We are intent on forging fresh platforms for user-generated content: testimonials, snapshots and video clips from readers documenting issues in need of attention. Too often these sorts of efforts wind up feeling marginal or even patronizing: “Dear peasant, here’s your chance to speak to the pros about what’s happening in your tiny little corner of the world.” We see user-generated content as a genuine reporting tool, one that operates on the premise that we can only be in so many places at once. Crowd-sourcing is a fundamental advantage of the web, so why not embrace it as a means of piecing together a broader and more textured understanding of events?

8. We all know the power of Twitter, Facebook and other forms of social media to connect readers in one place with images and impressions from situations unfolding far away. We know the force of social media during the Arab Spring, as activists convened and reacted to changing circumstances. . . . Facts and insights reside on social media, waiting to be harvested by the digitally literate contemporary correspondent.
9. And yet those of us who have been engaged in foreign reporting for many years will confess to unease over many of the developments unfolding online, even as we recognize the trends are as unstoppable as globalization or the weather. Too often it seems as if professional foreign correspondents, the people paid to use their expertise while serving as informational filters, are being replaced by citizen journalists who function largely as funnels, pouring insight along with speculation, propaganda and other white noise into the mix.
10. We can celebrate the democratization of media, the breakdown of monopolies, the rise of innovative means of telling stories, and the inclusion of a diversity of voices, and still ask whether the results are making us better informed. Indeed, we have a professional responsibility to continually ask that question while seeking to engineer new models that can channel the web in the interest of better informing readers. . . .
11. We need to embrace the present and gear for the future. These are days in which newsrooms simply must be entrepreneurial and creative in pursuit of new means of reporting and paying for it. That makes this a particularly interesting time to be doing the work, but it also requires forthright attention to a central demand: We need to put back what the Internet has taken away. We need to turn the void into something fresh and compelling. We need to re-examine and update how we gather information and how we engage readers, while retaining the core values of serious-minded journalism.
12. This will not be easy. . . . But the alternative—accepting ignorance and parochialism—is simply not an option.

Independent Practice

Read the following student essay in response to the article that you examined. As you read, keep track of how the student writer addresses the prompt and creates an effective essay.

Student Sample #1

Logic, reason, and rhetoric create a strong persuasive argument. Peter S. Goodman utilizes these tools in his article “Foreign News At a Crisis Point”. Goodman presents a cause and effect argument as well, by presenting the facts and revealing their consequences. What truly persuades his audience is his use of logic, reason, and rhetoric. These occur in forms of examples, explanations and conclusions, and persuasive and rhetorical statements.

Goodman’s use of logic occurs throughout his article, but is most prevalent in the beginning. Examples and statistical presentations initially draw interest from readers. Goodman begins with a census from year 2003 and year 2011 that reveals the major decline of foreign correspondents employed by newspapers based in the United States. The numbers themselves raise a concern in the audience’s mind, but may not capture their attention. Goodman then presents more appalling examples, including the sharp decrease of space devoted to foreign news over a quarter century, in order to further capture the reader’s attention and raise concern. The connection between the decline in foreign news and increased American involvement overseas heightens curiosity for the reader. Goodman employs logic, basic reasoning and evidence presentation in order to raise concern, curiosity, and questions from the reader.

Goodman’s use of reason is present throughout the entire article. After Goodman’s presentation of his statistics and facts, he raises more concern about how to increase these statistics and factual numbers. Goodman uses reason to recognize that it would be more “genuine” and better informing for readers to hear of first hand experiences. The reader of his article begins to wonder how Goodman plans to increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage for Americans, and Goodman utilizes reason to draw a simple solution. Social media sites provide an outlet for individuals to have a voice “electronically” speaking. Goodman uses reason to reveal to the reader that first-hand knowledge is best and social media sites provide easy access, so why not create an outlet for people who know more to say more? Goodman also utilizes reason to present the problem of inaccurate information on social media sites. He further builds and enhances his argument when he states that there must be a way to “engage readers, while retaining the core values of journalism.” Goodman also uses reason to evoke agreement within the reader’s mind when he draws simple conclusions and presents simple solutions. Reason allows Goodman to construct upon his solid foundation of evidence that creates his argument.

Rhetoric seals the deal in Goodman's argument. After presenting the facts using logic, and making connections using reason, Goodman utilizes rhetoric to place the cherry on the top of his argument. Rhetoric is crucial in an argument because it determines how the reader feels after reading an article. Goodman utilizes rhetoric after he presents the fundamental advantage of crowd-sourcing on the web, when he asks a rhetorical question. Goodman presents obvious and exciting information that seems more than reasonable, and asks whether this great idea should be practiced or not. A rhetorical question is meant to evoke either disagreement or agreement of the author's purpose. In this case, Goodman's use of rhetoric evokes agreement from the reader. In his final stanza, after presenting all methods of reform, Goodman utilizes rhetoric to once again state the obvious. Goodman presents his solutions, then asks if it is better to stay ignorant and parochial; the answer to his statement is obvious, and causes the reader to agree with him.

Great persuasive essays utilize the tools of persuasion. Goodman began his argument with logic, combined in reason, and finalized with rhetoric. A flow of examples to connections, to solutions, and consequences propels the reader into agreement with the author. Goodman solidifies his argument and builds his argument with logic, reason, and rhetoric, allowing for a reader to be in more agreement and satisfaction of his argument.