

SECTION 3:

Connecting Test Content and Classroom Instruction

Test Overviews

This portion of the guide is dedicated to a brief overview of the assessment sections (Evidence-Based Reading and Writing, and Math plus the optional SAT Essay) and includes test specifications, general instructional strategies, and sample test questions annotated with relevant information (“Keys to the SAT”) and strategies (“Skill-Building Strategies”) for supporting skills development in the classroom. Additional sample questions, with answer explanations, are available with the full-length SAT Practice Tests, available at sat.org/practice. A compilation of the annotated instructional strategies for all tests can be accessed in Appendix A. All sample passages and questions in this guide have been copied from sample SAT assessments. There are no sample questions from PSAT-related assessments in this guide.

Evidence-Based Reading and Writing Section

The Evidence-Based Reading and Writing Section of the SAT comprises the Reading Test and the Writing and Language Test.

Key elements of both tests include:

- the use of a specified range of text complexity aligned to college and career readiness levels of reading;
- an emphasis on source analysis and use of evidence;
- the inclusion of data and informational graphics, which students must analyze in conjunction with text;
- a focus on words in context and word choice for rhetorical effect;
- attention to a core set of important English language conventions and to effective written expression; and
- the requirement that students work with texts across a wide range of disciplines.

Reading Test

The overall aim of the Reading Test is to determine whether students can demonstrate college and career readiness proficiency in comprehending a broad range of high-quality, appropriately challenging literary and informational texts in the content areas of U.S. and world literature, history/social studies, and science.

The assessments comprise a series of passages and associated multiple-choice questions; to answer the questions, students must refer to what the passages say explicitly and use careful reasoning to draw supportable inferences.

SAT READING TEST CONTENT SPECIFICATIONS

	Number	Percentage of Test
Time Allotted	65 minutes	
Passage Word Count	3,250 words total from 4 single passages and 1 pair; 500–750 words per passage or paired set	
Total Questions	52 questions	100%
Multiple Choice (4 options)		100%
Passage Based		100%
Contribution of Items to Subscores and Scores		
Words in Context (Across Reading and Writing and Language Tests)	10 questions (2 questions per passage/pair)	19%
Command of Evidence (Across Reading and Writing and Language Tests)	10 questions (2 questions per passage/pair)	19%
Analysis in History/Social Studies (Across Math, Reading, and Writing and Language Tests)	21 questions (all history/social studies questions)	40%
Analysis in Science (Across Math, Reading, and Writing and Language Tests)	21 questions (all science questions)	40%
Passage Contents		
U.S. and World Literature	1 passage; 10 questions	20%
History/Social Studies	2 passages, or 1 passage and 1 pair; 10–11 questions each	40%
Science	2 passages, or 1 passage and 1 pair; 10–11 questions each	40%
Graphics		
	1–2 graphics in 1 History/Social Studies passage and in 1 Science passage	
Text and Graphical Complexity		
Text Complexity	A specified range from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry across 4 passages and 1 pair	
Graphical Data Representations (tables, graphs, charts, etc.)	Somewhat challenging to challenging (moderate to moderately high data density, few to several variables, moderately challenging to moderately complex interactions)	

General Instructional Strategies for Reading:

- Require students to practice reading and analyzing extended passages of text at varied lengths and levels of text complexity. The Reading Test passages span a range of difficulty from the early high school to early postsecondary (college entry, credit bearing) levels of reading.
- Use multiple reading passages to explore ideas in both fiction and nonfiction, giving students the opportunity to practice analysis and synthesis of texts.
- Include graphs, tables, and charts in reading assignments. The Reading Test includes two passages accompanied by one or two related informational graphics. Students will be asked to interpret graphics and make connections between graphics and passages. (They will not need to use mathematical computation to answer the questions.)
- Ask students to investigate the way authors use word choice, structure, and other techniques to create a desired effect in both fiction and nonfiction passages.
- Direct students to analyze history and social studies passages from the U.S. Founding Documents and texts in the Great Global Conversation. Reading selections from such texts helps prepare students for the rigors of making meaning from challenging passages on topics such as rights, duties, and freedoms. The goal here is not to prepare students for specific test passages—the Reading Test does not follow a prescribed list of texts—but instead to acquaint students with the nature and challenges of reading such works and to engage them in the “conversations” these texts inspire. All of the information needed to answer the associated Reading Test questions is found in the passages themselves—the test does not assume that students will have read these passages previously. When useful, a historical note will be provided to contextualize the reading for students.