

# THE POWERSCORE SAT SELF-STUDY GUIDE



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*Published by*

PowerScore Publishing, a division of PowerScore Incorporated  
57 Hasell Street  
Charleston, SC 29401

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Published in the United States  
05 05 20 15

# THE POWERSCORE SAT SELF-STUDY GUIDE

Okay, you’ve made the decision to prepare for the SAT on your own. Good call! This guide will help you get started, help identify the materials you need, and provide you with a comprehensive self-study plan.

Let’s quickly outline the basic steps you need to take, and if you have already completed any of these steps, just skip ahead to the next item on the list.

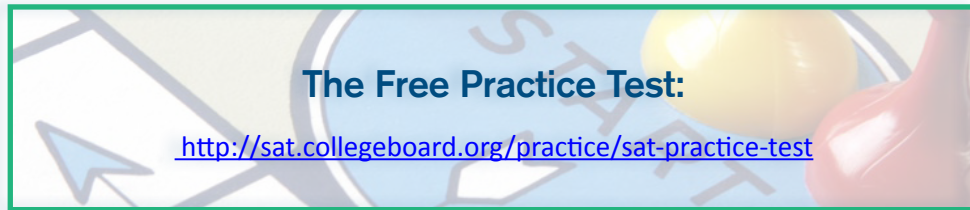
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# 1. Take a Practice SAT

Your first step should be to take an actual, released SAT and establish a baseline score. Taking an actual SAT will give you several benefits:

- A. You will become familiar with the types of questions presented on the exam and with the language patterns that the test makers use.
- B. You will get a sense of the endurance and concentration required to complete the exam.
- C. You will get a starting score and a snapshot of where your strengths and weaknesses lie.

Fortunately, you can get started with this process immediately, and for free! The College Board (the company that administers the SAT) makes a real SAT available on their site for free download:



To take the exam, follow these guidelines:

According to The College Board, the nine test sections should be taken back-to-back, which will require approximately 3 hours and 25 minutes (note that this practice test is missing the experimental section). A scoresheet is included the test download file so that you can record your answers.

Per College Board protocol, here are the directions for taking a four-section test under timed conditions:

Sections 1–7.....25 minutes each

Sections 8–9.....30 minutes each

Section 10.....10 minutes

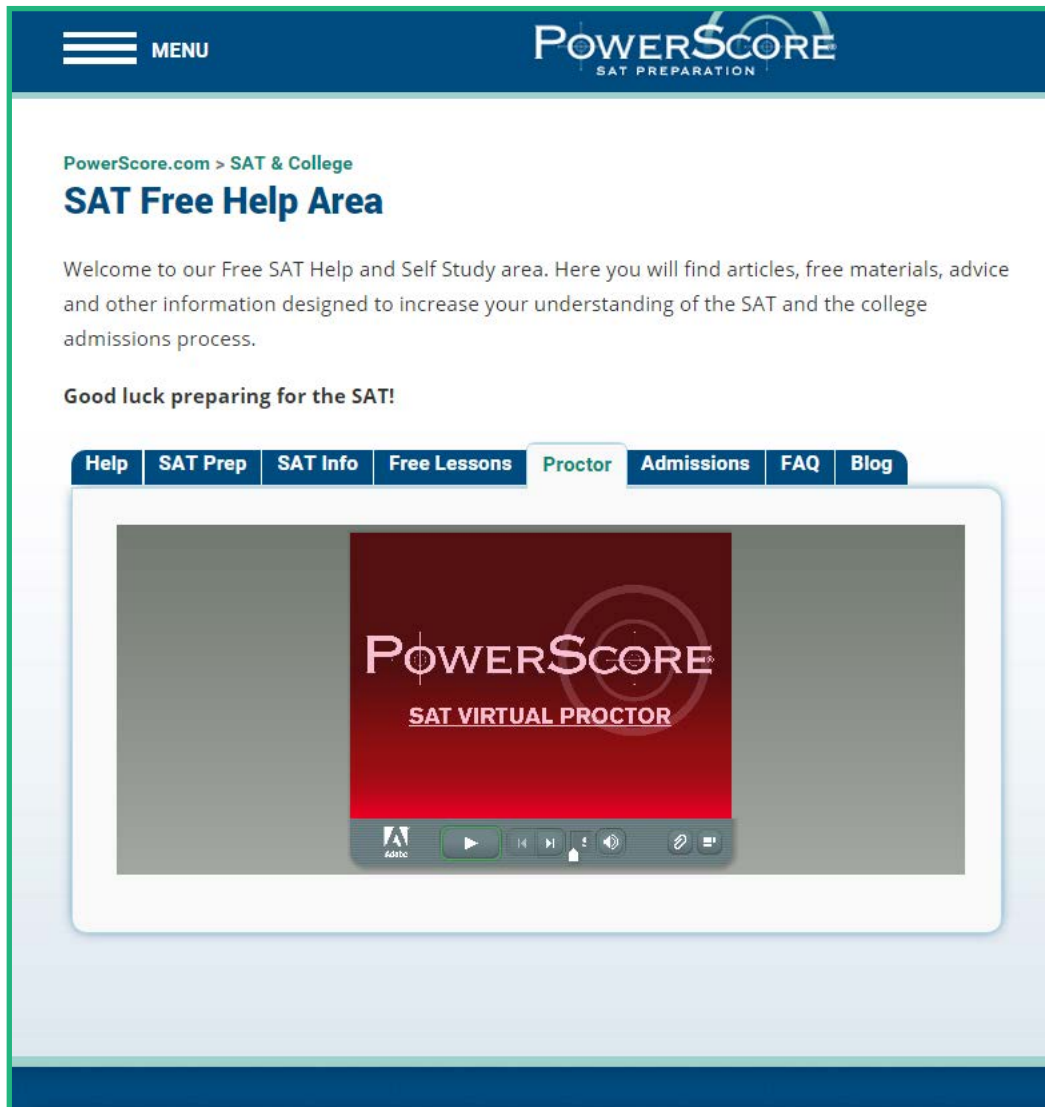
During the test you are allowed to work only on the section being timed. You cannot go back or forward to work on any other section of the test.

You may not use any scratch paper while working on the test; only the test pages themselves are available for your use.

Please use a number 2 pencil for your answer sheet. You may use an eraser and a highlighter, if needed.

You may not eat or drink during a timed section.

You can also use our [Free Virtual SAT Proctor](#) module we have in our [Free SAT Help Area](#). The Virtual SAT Proctor can time your exam and provide you the verbal warnings given during the actual SAT (just hit the “play” button in the lower left-hand corner of the screen when the page opens).



Regardless of what proctoring method you use, follow the guidelines rigidly, and put in your best effort! The more realistic your results, the better decisions you can make later when setting up a study plan.

Finally, no matter what your result, do not overemphasize the score you receive. You take an initial practice SAT in order to establish a baseline and to learn a little bit about how the test works, and you should expect to significantly improve over this first performance.

## 2. Analyze Your Results

Once you complete your practice SAT, visit our Free Help Area and download the [SAT Skills Assessment](#). The assessment will help you identify your strengths and weaknesses, information you can then use to help you shape your studies. This tool might use some terms that seem foreign at first. As you work through the SAT Bibles these terms will become quite familiar and you will become more comfortable using the SAT Skills Assessment. Categorize your errors to the best of your ability with this first test.

What each person considers a “good” SAT performance is to some degree relative to the range of schools one is considering. If you are considering schools like Harvard, Berkeley, or Georgetown, a good SAT performance is in the upper 2100s and 2200s, and you have to go all-out for the highest possible score you can achieve (every point counts, especially at the ultra-competitive top schools). This is also an excellent general strategy for any student, because sometimes students who start with fairly modest target colleges discover that their SAT score opens up many new, attractive possibilities.

On the other hand, if you have a particular school or set of schools in mind, you may be able to determine that a certain score will be sufficient to gain admission. For example, for the University of Arizona, a good score is somewhere in the upper 1600s, and with a 3.5 GPA, a score of 1850 would probably guarantee admission. While we believe that every student should shoot for 2400 (because even if you fall short, you still do extremely well), it may be that you do not need to put in the time required to get a score in the upper range. Only you can set your scoring goal, and you should do that early in the process, and after seriously considering the types of schools you are interested in attending.



For more guidance on setting a target score, check out [this article](#) on our Free Help Area.

Once you have a general idea in mind for a target score, it is time to look carefully at your baseline SAT results. Take a look at the following areas, and ask the following questions:

- A. Your overall score. How far away are you from your target?
- B. Your score on each individual section. What’s your best section? Your weakest section? Identifying your weakest section will give you a starting point for your studies.
- C. Within each section, what question types or game types gave you the most difficulty? Again, this information can be used to focus your studies when using up your study plan.

### 3. Collect Relevant Study Materials

There are a variety of SAT books available to students, and they fall into three categories:

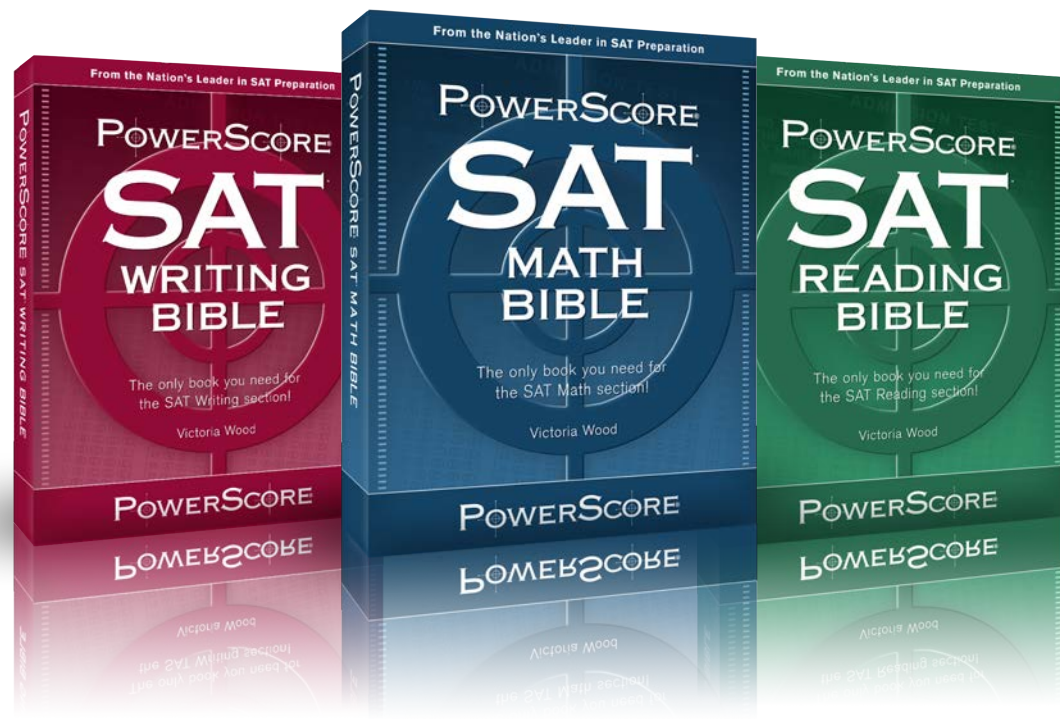
- A. SAT preparation guides containing strategies and techniques
- B. Collections of complete SATs or individual questions

To successfully self-prepare for the exam, books from both categories can be helpful. Let's discuss some of the available options.

#### SAT Preparation Guides

Quality SAT study guides typically focus on individual sections of the SAT, and depending on your performance above, you should select guides for each area giving you difficulty. For example, if Math was your weakest section, look to buy guides that specialize in reacquainting you with the math content that is assessed and explaining how that content is tested. As far as individual books, we are of course partial to our well-known [PowerScore SAT Bibles](#) (but don't take our word for it—we urge you to visit Amazon or any SAT discussion forum and see what others have to say).

There are some book options where you can buy a book that attempts to explain all three sections of the test. We tend to be less impressed with these books because they usually cover each section very superficially. The SAT is not an easy or superficial test, and a book that covers the entire SAT in 200 pages or so cannot go into each section very deeply.



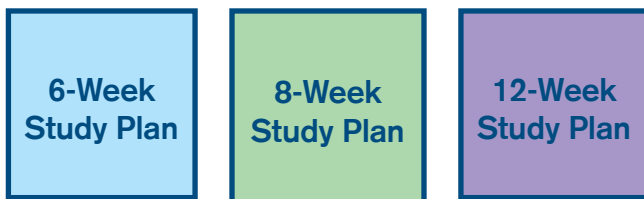
## SAT Question Collections

As you learn SAT tips and techniques, you will need to practice with them extensively. The best source for practice materials are the SAT tests released by the College Board, the administrators of the SAT. These SAT tests are authentic, previously administered SATs, and they provide the closest approximation to the exam you will ultimately take. The only book with real test questions is *The Official SAT Study Guide*, available from [The College Board](#), [PowerScore](#), [Amazon](#), and other booksellers.

## 4. Set Up a Study Plan

Once you have completed the first few steps above, it is time to select a study plan. To a great extent, your plan is affected by how much time you have until you take the SAT. Because the SAT is not a test that lends itself well to cramming, the basic rule is this: the more time you have to prepare, the better off you will be. So, if possible, start early!

To make your SAT preparation easier, we have created a set of free self-study plans that are based on our SAT Bibles. These detailed plans can be found on our [Free SAT Help Area](#). You can select from the following options:



Each plan is extremely comprehensive, and details the steps you need to take to achieve the best possible SAT score. Simply select the plan that is closest to the amount of time until you take the SAT, and then start preparing!

As an overview, each study plan uses the following pedagogical principles:

- A. **The plans start by having you learn the fundamentals of the SAT, and focus on strategies and techniques.**

The goal here is to first learn how to best approach the SAT. The more you know about the test itself and the best methods for solving questions, the better you can score.

- B. **Practice on specific question types is a major feature of each plan, because you have to regularly apply the methods you learn in order to become as fast and efficient as possible with them.**



- C. **At designated intervals you are directed to take full practice tests. Taking full SATs is critical to becoming as comfortable as possible on test day.**

One of the major problems for all SAT takers is fatigue during the exam. The SAT is a long, draining test, and by frequently taking full practice exams, you become acclimated to the rigors of test day.

- D. **Thorough reviews of your practice sessions and test results are built in so you can track improvement and identify areas of difficulty.**

This portion of your preparation is critical. You must closely examine every question on each test you take—both the questions you answered correctly (could you have been faster or more certain?) and the questions you answered incorrectly (to see where you went wrong and to learn how to avoid those issues next time).

- E. **Your practice test results can be used to revise your general study plan to account for changes and improvements.**

As you progress through your course of study, you will improve in some areas and find other areas that still need more work. Use your practice test results to identify these areas. For example, if you keep running into difficulty with Logic Games, you can slant your study time to allow you to do more games and review more material about games. The old saying that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link applies to your testing as well. If you have a weakness, find it and work relentlessly to eliminate it!





## 5. Stick to Your Study Plan

Getting the materials together and selecting a study plan are the easy parts. Sticking to the plan is much more difficult!

When you set your schedule, do not generalize. For example, don't say, "I want to study a lot this week" or "I want to take a practice test sometime." Instead, be specific. Say, "I want to study every day except Monday and Friday for at least 2 hours a day" or "I'm going to complete every item on the study plan this week by Friday." Creating specific goals will help you stick to the schedule more easily, and it will give you an ironclad guide for knowing whether or not you are following your plan.

## 6. Review Your Progress and Make Changes as Needed

In war, the battle plan sometimes changes and adjustments have to be made as the campaign continues. The same holds true for your SAT preparation (that's right, it's war!). At the outset, you may draw certain conclusions about your test performance or your study schedule that subsequently change over time. Constantly revisit your progress and use your practice test results to revise your estimations of needed study time and your areas of strength and weakness.

What happens if you find yourself in trouble or if you can't keep up with your schedule? If so, you have a few options:

- A. Postpone your SAT date. Depending on when you are sitting for the SAT, you may have the option of delaying your test without losing out on the current application cycle.
- B. Seek professional assistance. No, we don't mean psychological help! We mean professional SAT help. If you feel that self-studying isn't giving you the results you want, or if you simply need a jump-start to your studies, you can avail yourself of several different options. For example, you can work with an SAT tutor for a few hours, attend a Weekend SAT Course, or sign up for a Live Online SAT Course.



