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General Information

The Digital SAT has combined reading with language and writing to create this test section, called Reading and Writing. Thus, questions will assess both your receptive and expressive language skills. Four basic skill sets are tested, two from reading and two from writing.

In the **reading** domain, you will be quizzed on **craft and structure**, which involves basic comprehension and creating a higher level of understanding of text ideas through reasoning. Reading questions also require you to locate specific **information presented** in the text, both in the form of narrative and graphic content.

Writing questions pose a different type of task. Here, you will evaluate the text to determine if there is an **effective presentation of ideas** and if the writer has used the conventions of **standard written English**.

The Reading and Writing test is a **multistage adaptive test** and is presented in **two modules** lasting **32 minutes each**. There are **27 questions in each module**, with only 25 being scored. You will not know which questions are unscored.

In the **first module**, you will see a mixture of easy, medium, and hard questions. The **second module** contains questions that were specifically chosen for you, based on your performance in the first module. This testing method ensures accurate results in a shorter testing time.

Reading: Craft and Structure

The craft and structure questions on the test assess your ability to understand vocabulary and determine how texts are organized. This includes evaluating the rhetorical choices a writer makes and their impact on the text's overall meaning.

Basic Comprehension

Reading comprehension questions rely on the information you can gain from reading the passage and how well you can use it to answer the questions. It is much more than citing stated facts, although that is an important part of the process.

Vocabulary Skills

Comprehending a passage as a whole is partially dependent on understanding the meaning of individual words. The SAT assesses this by asking what certain words mean in the context of the passage. Here are some things to consider as you review.

High-Utility Words and Phrases

High-utility words and phrases are those that are commonly used and should be used, understood, spelled, and recognized with proficiency. Although there is not a definitive list of high-utility words, the general consensus is this: high-utility words and phrases are those regularly seen and used in textbooks, literature, and daily life and form the basis for both formal and informal language development.

Words in Context

Context is an incalculable tool in determining the meaning of words and the relationship between pieces of information. To use context, identify the word or bit of information you are working with, and then look at the surrounding words and sentences. These will lend insight into the meaning of a word (based on the surrounding words), or the meaning of a portion of information, based on what is being discussed in the phrases and sentences nearby.

Many words possess multiple meanings—and even multiple spellings—based upon the surrounding context. This is why developing the ability to use context clues is so important; “read” and “read,” though they possess identical spelling, mean very different things based upon the context in which they are used. You read a book, but the book has also been read.

Another example is this: “The road was extremely windy. Clive smiled as he drove, the windy air bending branches and kicking up leaves.” The first *windy* means curvy or unpredictable, while the second is describing a weather pattern.

Sometimes, the author actually gives specific meaning clues, such as these:

- **definition**— When looking for context clues, one of the most obvious ones is a definition. Sometimes, a writer will define a term within the sentence itself. The definition is often set off by commas or put in parentheses. For example:

> It is important to be able to identify rhetoric, *the art of persuasion through language*, so that you do not get fooled by someone’s words.

- **synonym**—Writers might also give you a clue as to the meaning of an unfamiliar word by including a synonym, or another word or phrase that means the same thing. For example:

> Jack is a gregarious, *outgoing* man who is popular everywhere he goes and has many friends.

- **antonym**—An antonym is a word or phrase that means the opposite of a given word. Use antonyms provided to help determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word. For example:

> Sarah was famished after swim practice, but Elena *wasn’t hungry*.

Higher-Level Comprehension

Some comprehension questions go beyond asking you to extract information from the text. They require you to *do* something with that information to find the correct answer. Here are some of the steps to take as you address higher-level comprehension questions.

Analysis

To address higher-level comprehension questions, you may need to examine something closely and in detail. Analysis means a detailed examination or study of something to better understand it. For example, you may be asked to explain, classify, determine a relationship, or provide evidence for something.

Synthesis

Synthesize means “put it all together.” To synthesize, you must identify the most important, powerful aspects of a piece, or multiple pieces, and create an all-encompassing explanation of what the content is all about. The result can be used to not only entice readers to engage with written content but also demonstrate your understanding of the material and your ability to combine information without merely repeating what you’ve read verbatim.

Reasoning

Reasoning refers to the pattern of thinking you use to determine an answer. In higher-level comprehension questions, this may require you to form a hypothesis or consider a different perspective or support a claim with evidence. Reasoning requires logic and application of prior knowledge to determine the most likely outcome.

Text Structure

The structure of a text is important when working to determine the importance of phrasing and organization in a piece. Being able to accurately evaluate text structure will demonstrate your ability to both comprehend a piece and identify an author’s overall tone and style.

Although we sometimes think about text structure in terms of multiple-paragraph texts, even a paragraph-length passage has intentional structure. Look for the topic sentence that introduces the main idea at the beginning of the paragraph, then evidence, examples, and details to support or explain that idea, and a concluding or transition sentence that summarizes the main points and/or moves the reader to the next point.

Just as with multiple-paragraph texts, single-paragraph passages can be

organized sequentially or chronologically, presenting cause and effect, problem and solution, or comparisons and contrasts.

Author's Purpose

The purpose of a piece is derived from the author's reason for creating it. Purpose can typically be divided into simple categories, such as to inform, to entertain, to persuade, etc. To determine the purpose of a piece, you must evaluate the author's language (is the tone formal or informal?), the subject matter (serious, relaxed, important, casual, etc.), and the main idea of the piece. These, combined, will reveal the author's purpose for creating a work.

When you have identified the point or purpose of a passage, you must find evidence to support your claim. This may come in the form of a simple sentence, a statistic or figure, or even just an author's opinion. Whatever your source, make sure you are able to find evidence to support your ideas; if you cannot, you have not found a credible point or purpose.

Author's Word Choice

This is largely dependent on the author's purpose. As a reader, word choice might not immediately seem important. As a writer, however, word choice is pivotal. It is no coincidence, then, that being able to understand why an author chose a certain word (or words) is key in understanding the author and piece of work overall. Some word choices are utilized in order to convey a commanding tone, while others are used to suggest that the author is a friend of the reader—an equal. Word choice goes a long way in developing the overall tone and level of authority of a piece.

Comparing Two Texts

Making connections between two passages will require you to identify how the author of one piece might react to a claim made in a second piece, or may focus on comparing and contrasting two passages. This means you must be able to identify the author's purpose, point of view, and tone.

Reading: Working with Information

As you read, make sure you pay careful attention to the information found within the passage. Rather than simply breezing over a piece and moving on, read carefully and patiently, identifying any parts of a passage that seem important, interesting, or essential to its purpose. Following are some things to look for.

Central (Main) Ideas

The central or main idea is the overall purpose behind writing. An argumentative essay, for instance, might have a main idea of “Presidential candidates should not be allowed to receive funds from lobbyists.” Conversely, the theme might be more along the lines of, “Lobbyists introduce copious amounts of corruption into our political system.”

The main idea is usually introduced early in the text, in the thesis statement of a multi-paragraph text or the topic sentence of a paragraph, so the reader knows what to expect in the rest of the passage. Effective writers then support their central or main idea throughout the text. They provide details, examples, and explanations to help back up the information they present so that the reader will trust it.

Details

To answer some reading comprehension questions on the SAT, you’ll need to provide evidence. This will be in the form of details from the passage. Although some questions will require you to identify *all* supporting evidence, others will ask you to find the *best evidence* or the most powerful. When searching for the most impressive piece of evidence, look for the portion of evidence that is most convincing, has the greatest amount of data, and is easiest to understand.

Inferences

Making inferences means drawing conclusions based on evidence and reasoning. It requires interpreting information that may or may not be explicitly stated in the text to make an “educated guess” and determine a logical conclusion. When making inferences in an informative text, consider both the text and any graphics that may be included. Inference questions may ask what you think and how you know that to be true. To explain your inference, you may be asked to identify the evidence that helped you draw that conclusion, so pay attention to the details from the text you use to infer.

Informational Graphics

Some questions will ask you to evaluate a graphic. As you do this, pay close and careful attention to any data presented, as well as the question. Be sure you know how to accurately read tables, bar graphs, and line graphs.

Utilizing data requires you to not only understand a graphic, but also be able to apply its ideas and principles to another—perhaps entirely unrelated—idea or situation. You might find a question asking you to take a table or graph and apply it to a passage.

Questions about graphics may prove tricky, such as those that ask, “Which is *not* likely to…?” These questions require you to identify the *least* likely answer, rather than the most—a switch that can prove tricky and is often easy to answer incorrectly.