



*Maximizing Potential. Realizing Success.*

# PSAT<sup>®</sup> Strategies

From CollegeBoard<sup>®</sup> and Silver Oak Learning<sup>®</sup>

# The Test

- **Critical Reading**
  - Two 25-minute sections
  - Sentence completion (vocabulary)
  - Passage-based reading
- **Math**
  - Two 25-minute sections
  - Multiple choice
  - Student-produced response (grid-ins)
- **Writing Skills**
  - One 30-minute section
  - Improving sentences
  - Identifying sentence errors
  - Improving paragraphs

Total time – 2 hours and 10 minutes

# Scoring

- Total score is between 60 and 240 (600 and 2400 on the real SAT)
- For correct answers you earn one point
- For incorrect answers you lose  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a point
- For omitted answers you don't gain or lose any points

# Critical Reading

## Sentence Completion Tips

- Read the entire sentence
- Watch for introductory or connection words and phrases like “but,” “not,” and “because.”
- Pick the answer choice that best completes the logic of the sentence
- Try answering two-blank questions one blank at a time. If you can eliminate one word in the answer choice, eliminate the choice entirely
- Before you mark your answer, read the complete sentence with your choice filled in

# Critical Reading

The advertised property, which ---- vast and unspoiled stretches, will undoubtedly ---- potential buyers who yearn for seclusion.

- A. ~~spans . . interfere with~~
- B. abuts . . appeal to
- C. ~~overlooks . . infuriate~~
- D. ~~precludes . . assemble~~
- E. ~~erodes . . inspire~~

# Critical Reading

## Passaged-based reading strategies

- Don't skip introductions to passages
- Read each passage and any accompanying information carefully. Follow the author's reasoning and be aware of features such as assumptions, attitudes, and tone
- You may find it helpful to mark the passages as you read, but don't spend too much time making notes
- Read each question and all answer choices carefully
- When a question asks you to compare an aspect of a pair of passages, don't be misled by choices that are correct for only one of the two passages
- Select the choice that best answers the question asked. Don't select a choice just because it is a true statement
- You may find it helpful to read the questions before the passage to get an idea of what to look for

# Math

## Topics Covered

- Numbers and operations
- Algebra and functions
- Geometry and measurement
- Data analysis, statistics, and probability

# Math

## Multiple-choice strategies

- Look at the answer choices before beginning work on the problem if you need help determining what is being asked in a question
- Read each question carefully, even if it looks like a question you don't think you can answer. Don't let the form of the question keep you from trying to answer it
- If your answer isn't among the choices, try writing it in a different mathematical format. You might have the same answer in another format
- Answer choices are always from least to greatest, so if plugging in answers, start with “C” and move up or down based on whether the answer is greater than or less than “C.”

# Math

## Multiple-choice sample

If  $xy = 2$  and  $xy^2 = 8$ , what is the value of  $x$ ?

- A.  $\frac{1}{2}$
- B. 2
- C. 4
- D. 8
- E. 16

**Answer:** A

**Explanation:** Substituting  $xy = 2$  into the equation  $xy^2 = 8$ , you will obtain  $(xy)y = 2y = 8$ , thus  $y = 4$ . To find  $x$ , substitute  $y = 4$  into one of the two original equations to obtain .

# Math

## Grid-in strategies

- Since answer choices aren't given, a calculator may be helpful in avoiding careless mistakes
- Write your answers in the boxes above the grid to avoid errors in gridding
- Some questions may have more than one right answer. Grid only one answer
- There are no point deductions for wrong answers

# Math

## Grid-in sample

How many different three-digit numbers between 100 and 1,000 have 5 as the tens digit?

**Answer:** 90

**Explanation:** In the 100s, the numbers with 5 as the tens digit are 150, 151, 152, ..., 159 (ten numbers). Also, there will be 10 such numbers in the 200s, in the 300s, etc. Therefore, there are  $10 \times 9 = 90$  three-digit numbers between 100 and 1,000 that have 5 as the tens digit.

# Writing

## Improving sentences strategies

- Read the entire sentence carefully, but quickly. Note the underlined portion because that is the portion that may have to be revised
- Remember that the portion with no underline stays the same
- Mark choice (A) if the underlined portion seems to be correct. Check the other choices quickly to make sure that (A) is really the best choice
- Think of how you would revise the underlined portion if it seems wrong. Then look for your revision among the choices given
- Replace the underlined portion of the sentence with choices (B) through (E) if you don't find your revision. Concentrate on the choices that seem clear and exact when you read them

# Writing

Hearing that the Statue of Liberty did not have a pedestal, a campaign was begun by Joseph Pulitzer to raise money for the construction of one.

- A. ~~a campaign was begun by Joseph Pulitzer to raise money~~
- B. ~~a campaign to raise money was initiated by Joseph Pulitzer~~
- C. ~~money was raised in a campaign by Joseph Pulitzer~~
- D. Joseph Pulitzer began a campaign to raise money
- E. ~~Joseph Pulitzer had campaigned to raise money~~

# Writing

## Identifying sentence errors strategies

- Read the entire sentence carefully but quickly
- Look at choices (A) through (D) to see whether anything needs to be changed to make the sentence correct
- Don't waste time searching for errors. Mark (E) **No error** on the answer sheet if you believe the sentence is correct as written
- Move quickly through these questions. The other kinds of questions (Improving Sentences and Improving Paragraphs) will probably take more time
- Mark questions that seem hard and return to them later

# Writing

Sponsors of the Olympic Games who bought advertising time on

A

United States television includes at least a dozen international firms

B

C

whose names are familiar to American consumers. No error.

D

E

- A. ~~who bought~~
- B. includes
- C. ~~at least~~
- D. ~~whose~~
- E. ~~No Error~~

## Explanation:

This sentence illustrates a subject-verb agreement error. The subject, "Sponsors of the Olympic Games who bought advertising time on United States television," is plural; the word underlined at choice B should be "include," to match the number of the subject. The correct sentence reads: **Sponsors of the Olympic Games who bought advertising time on United States television include at least a dozen international firms whose names are familiar to American consumers.**

# Writing

## Improving paragraphs strategies

- Read the entire essay quickly to determine its overall meaning. The essay is meant to be a draft, so don't be surprised if you notice errors. Don't linger over those errors.
- Make sure that your answer about a particular sentence or sentences makes sense in the context of the passage as a whole.
- Choose the best answer from among the choices given, even if you can imagine another correct response.

# What to Bring and What not to Bring

- **Bring**
  - Number 2 pencils
  - An approved calculator (see CollegeBoard website for list)
- **Do Not Bring**
  - Dictionaries or other books
  - Papers of any kind
  - Highlighters or colored pens or pencils
  - Any recording or photographic devices
  - Any food or beverages, including bottled water
- **TURN OFF ALL ELECTRONIC DEVICES!!!**

# Take Advantage of this Opportunity

Even though PSAT scores are not reported to colleges, there are a couple of reasons to want to do well on them:

- Your PSAT results provide useful feedback for preparing for the SAT.
- High PSAT scores can make you eligible for the National Merit Scholarship, a very prestigious scholarship for academic excellence.

# Questions?



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# Sources

- <http://www.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt>