

Daily Practice: SAT/ACT

To make consistent improvement, devote at least five hours a week to test prep. If you don't make the time, don't expect to improve. In the two weeks leading up to the test date, spend no fewer than two hours a day practicing—ideally, you would complete one practice test per day. After you've depleted the available OFFICIAL practice tests from the College Board and the ACT, find supplemental prep books from Princeton Review, Kaplan, and Barrons, preferably updated versions.

Reading

- Read 60+ minutes every day (at or above grade level)
- Read actively (use acronyms)
- Keep a list of new words from books, articles
- Read novels, short stories, non-fiction books, or magazine articles (see my list)
- Subscribe to a couple magazines in fields of your interest (see Advanced Reading List or use news-aggregating apps like FlipBoard, SmartNews, or Apple News)
- Download and use the following apps: Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Wikipedia, iTranslate, Vocabulary Builder by Magoosh, Quizzitive, Quiz Up, SAT/Khan Academy, WeCroak, The Grading Game
- Read in the morning and before bed
- Discover what genres, topics, authors, and/or series you enjoy
- Find friends to read the same stuff with you so that you have someone with whom to discuss the life-altering realizations you are regularly making as a result of your stimulating reading

Writ/Lang/English

- Learn all the grammar concepts listed on the SAT English Concepts page (Know them so well that you could teach them to someone else)
- Keep a list of your frequent grammar mistakes and find worksheets to review
- Master sentence variety
- Use quiz apps like QuizUp and the Grading Game to build confidence in minor mistakes
- Become an avid grammarian and start correcting mistakes you hear or see (in your head so people don't think you're a weenie)
- Read aloud under your breath to engage grammatical instincts when practicing
- Insert the answers and re-read the entire sentence to grasp the entire grammatical context

SAT Essay

- Master (be able to define and provide an example of) basic rhetorical devices ethos, pathos, logos, syntax
- Master literary devices: diction/tone/mood, figurative language, imagery
- Master basic intro, body, and conclusion ¶ structure
- Memorize the three analysis questions: How does X relate to the author's argument? How does X affect the audience? Why is X device persuasive?
- Use academic (pointy-headed) diction
- Use sentence variety

General Improvement

- Routine: complete one passage at a time, check your answers, discern the nature of your mistakes, make a list of the mistakes, and take a break**
- KEEP A RUNNING RECORD OF YOUR MISTAKES AND REVIEW IT BEFORE YOU PRACTICE**
- Start your practice by recalling the acronyms: FigLang Set The PloToSh Conch, JarToSh TopS The PurpChag Count, SR. NAV, ISM, and POELR CCCIA RAGCAR**
- Use the Pomodoro Technique: 25 mins (isolated from distraction), short break (10-15 mins) with reward (candy, phone time, social media, video game, massage, meditation, etc.)
- Practice using a timer (get a stopwatch or kitchen timer): SAT (11 mins per Reading, 8 mins per Writ/Lang); ACT (9 mins per English, 8.5 mins per Reading)
- Gradually decrease the time to 2 mins under the limit
- Find friends to practice with so you don't feel like such a tired, lonely dweeb
- Get earplugs to avoid distraction
- Combat test anxiety with slow breathing—ideally, five long, slow, deep breaths per minute