

## Tried-and-True Strategies to Ace the SAT or ACT

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SAT, ACT, oh my! While students may still be deciding whether to take the SAT, ACT, or both, there are some tried and true strategies that they should use to ace either one come test day! With trusty No. 2 pencil in hand, these simple tips will help students tackle test day with confidence.

### **Use Process of Elimination.**

If students have difficulty with a question, they should quickly get rid of any answer choices that they feel cannot possibly be correct and make a guess from the remaining answers.

With Math, start with choice C, the middle number. Plug in easy to use numbers when variables are used especially the tricky symbols.

### **Use context clues for vocabulary.**

Context is also very important! Don't just look at the exact line that is referenced in the question—look at the sentences above and below. If the questions asks what the word in line 5 means, read lines 3-7. The definition is rarely in the line the word is used. **Look for contrast words.**

### **Smart Pacing.**

Students shouldn't spend longer than a minute and fifteen seconds per question. All questions are worth the same. Skim the reading passages first and then answer the questions.

### **READING**

SAT: 5 passages with 52 questions (10-11 per passage) in 65 minutes = **~13 min per passage**

### **GRAMMAR**

SAT: 4 passages with 44 questions (11 per passage) in 35 minutes = **~8.75 min per passage**

### **Never leave an answer blank.**

If students cannot eliminate any of the answer choices, or if they feel it would take too long to answer the question, make a random guess—it cannot hurt! Neither the SAT or ACT penalizes students for wrong answers, so even a guess has a 1 in 4 chance of being correct. Not bad odds!

**Keep going.**

The items on each test represent a range of difficulty that appears in a mixed order. If students find one type of question challenging, they should mark it, come back, and take their best guess.

**Watch out for the dreaded “I’m one off” syndrome.**

**Students should periodically check their answer sheet to make sure they have not misplaced an answer.**

**Mark it up.**

As they work, students should markup questions to help them focus on key parts of the questions or eliminate answer choices. Marking up the SAT or ACT test booklet, but not the answer sheet, helps students with the following:

- Improving understanding of a test question
- Breaking down the important parts of reading passages or text
- Concentration and focus on the day of your test
- Effective time management while working through each test section

**General Preparation Tips**

While the following tips may seem simple, they are very important things to keep in mind the night before and day of the SAT or ACT.

**Check calculator batteries** the night before the test. Replace batteries that are more than a month old. Prepare a “**Go Bag**” that includes the following items: Several sharpened No. 2 pencils, Calculator, Any related paperwork, Identification, Water and a snack, A watch to keep pace and monitor time during the test.

**Eat a good dinner** the night before and a good breakfast the day of the test.

Get a good night’s sleep.

**Arrive** at the test center **with time to spare**.

For the SAT/ACT, arrive no later than 7:45 a.m., unless the admission ticket says otherwise. The doors to the testing room close about 8 a.m. and testing starts between 8:30 and 9:00.

**Relax.**

Adapted from: [http://www.sylvanlearning.com/blog/index.php/tried\\_and\\_true\\_strategies\\_to\\_ace\\_the\\_sat\\_or\\_act/](http://www.sylvanlearning.com/blog/index.php/tried_and_true_strategies_to_ace_the_sat_or_act/)