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SESSION 2: STANDARDIZED TESTING

ACTIVITY #3: PRACTICE SESSION

Opening Discussion:

Understanding and practicing the types of questions asked on the SAT or ACT are absolutely necessary steps in the college process. Emphasize to the students that these tests measure critical thinking.

Research has demonstrated that test preparation improves scores on standardized tests for some students. This section will introduce students to sample questions and test taking strategies. ACT and SAT practice tests can be downloaded from their websites at www.actstudent.org and sat.org/practice respectively.

Activity/Handouts:

Ten Brief Test Taking Tips**Sample SAT Test Questions and Explanations**

The SAT is changing in 2016. Visit www.sat.org/practice for more information about the revised test.

ACT Science Question Explanation**Sample Prompts for Timed Writing****SAT Essay Scoring Guide**

Instructions:

1. Go over the “Test Taking Tips” with the students and remind them to keep the handout for a reference to review the night before taking any standardized test.
2. Simulate a testing environment by giving students several different test questions, asking them to complete the questions in a set amount of time.
3. Review the answers to the questions and use the discussion time to talk about the types of questions and strategies for answering them.
4. Go over the “ACT Science Question Explanation” and encourage them to go to the ACT website to review sample questions.
5. Give the students the writing prompts from both the SAT and ACT and give them time to brainstorm ways they might respond to the prompts.
6. Students can learn more about how their exams are scored by visiting sat.collegeboard.org/scores.

10 BRIEF TEST TAKING TIPS FOR STANDARDIZED TESTS

1. Be sure to read and pay careful attention to directions.
2. Read every possible answer—the best one could be the last one.
3. Work as rapidly as possible, but don't work carelessly.
4. Eliminate answers you are certain are incorrect.
5. Don't spend too long on any one question. Instead, skip difficult questions and move on. Mark questions in the test booklet to which you need to return. Be careful to skip that same question on the answer sheet. Return to these questions if time permits.
6. Make sure to record every answer in the correct place on the answer sheet. If you change an answer, be sure to erase changes completely.
7. The SAT subtracts 1/4 point for each wrong answer—but does not penalize students for omitting a question. If you can narrow your answer choices to two possibilities, it is in your favor to make your best guess.
8. Because the ACT test does not subtract points for incorrect answers, you should make an “educated guess” and not leave questions blank.
9. Use every minute of the time given for the test. If you finish early, go back and complete questions skipped, make sure you have not mismarked the answer sheet, and check your work.
10. Being familiar with testing format and procedures will help you do your best. Be sure to take some practice tests prior to test day.

SAMPLE SAT QUESTIONS:

(Additional practice questions and materials can be downloaded at sat.org/practice).

Sentence Completion:

The sentence below has two blanks, each blank indicating that something has been omitted. Beneath the sentence are five sets of words labeled A through E. Choose the word or set of words that, when inserted in the sentence, best fits the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

Hoping to ----- the dispute, negotiators proposed a compromise that they felt would be ----- to both labor and management.

- (A) enforce . . useful
- (B) end . . divisive
- (C) overcome . . unattractive
- (D) extend . . satisfactory
- (E) resolve . . acceptable

Math Question #1:

A special lottery is to be held to select the student who will live in the only deluxe room in a dormitory. There are 100 seniors, 150 juniors, and 200 sophomores who applied. Each senior's name is placed in the lottery 3 times; each junior's name, 2 times; and each sophomore's name, 1 time. What is the probability that a senior's name will be chosen?

- (A) $\frac{1}{8}$
- (B) $\frac{2}{9}$
- (C) $\frac{2}{7}$
- (D) $\frac{3}{8}$
- (E) $\frac{1}{2}$

Math Question #2:

$$|4x - 7| = 5$$

$$|3 - 8x| = 1$$

What value of x satisfies both of the equations above?

SAMPLE SAT QUESTIONS EXPLANATIONS

Explanation of Sentence Completion:

One way to answer a sentence completion question with two words missing is to focus first on just one of the two blanks. If one of the words in an answer choice is logically wrong, then you can eliminate the entire choice from consideration.

- Look at the first blank in the example above. Would it make sense to say that “negotiators” who have “proposed a compromise” were hoping to enforce or extend the “dispute”? No, so neither (A) nor (D) can be the correct answer.
- Now you can focus on the second blank. Would the “negotiators” have proposed a compromise that they believed would be divisive or unattractive to “both labor and management”? No, so (B) and (C) can be eliminated, and only choice (E) remains.
- Always check your answer by reading the entire sentence with your choice filled in. Does it make sense to say “Hoping to resolve the dispute, the negotiators proposed a compromise that they felt would be acceptable to both labor and management”? Yes.

Correct answer: (E)

Explanation of Math Question #1:

To determine the probability that a senior’s name will be chosen, you must determine the total number of seniors’ names that are in the lottery and divide this number by the total number of names in the lottery. Since each senior’s name is placed in the lottery 3 times, there are $3 \bullet 100 = 300$ seniors’ names. Likewise, there are $2 \bullet 150 = 300$ juniors’ names and $1 \bullet 200 = 200$ sophomores’ names in the lottery. The probability that a senior’s name will be chosen is

$$\frac{300}{300 + 300 + 200} = \frac{300}{800} = \frac{3}{8}.$$

Correct Answer: (D)

Answer to Math Question #2:

OR

Correct Answer:

$\frac{1}{2}$ or .5

	1	/	2
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0

.	1	5	
0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0

While the ACT is also a multiple choice standardized tests, there are some differences as noted in “Understanding Standardized Testing for Juniors and Seniors” from Session II. The most notable difference is found in the science section of the test. Following is a description of that section from the ACT website.

ACT SCIENCE TEST DESCRIPTION

The Science Test is a 40-question, 35-minute test that measures the skills required in the natural sciences: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem solving.

You are not permitted to use a calculator on the Science Test.

The test assumes that students are in the process of taking the core science course of study (three years or more) that will prepare them for college-level work and have completed a course in earth science and/or physical science and a course in biology.

The test presents seven sets of scientific information, each followed by a number of multiple-choice test questions. The scientific information is presented in one of three different formats:

- data representation (graphs, tables and other schematic forms)
- research summaries (descriptions of one or more related experiments)
- conflicting viewpoints (expressions of several related hypotheses or views inconsistent with one another)

The questions require you to:

- recognize and understand the basic features of, and concepts related to, the provided information
- examine critically the relationship between the information provided and the conclusions drawn or hypotheses developed
- generalize from given information and draw conclusions, gain new information, or make predictions

ACT PROMPT FOR TIMED WRITING

Educators debate extending high school to five years because of increasing demands on students from employers and colleges to participate in extracurricular activities and community service in addition to having high grades. Some educators support extending high school to five years because they think students need more time to achieve all that is expected of them. Other educators do not support extending high school to five years because they think students would lose interest in school and attendance would drop in the fifth year. In your opinion, should high school be extended to five years?

In your essay, take a position on this question. You may write about either one of the two points of view given, or you may present a different point of view on this question. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

SAT PROMPT FOR TIMED WRITING

“Many persons believe that to move up the ladder of success and achievement, they must forget the past, repress it, and relinquish it. But others have just the opposite view. They see old memories as a chance to reckon with the past and integrate past and present.”

—Adapted from Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, *I've Known Rivers: Lives of Loss and Liberation*

Assignment: Do memories hinder or help people in their effort to learn from the past and succeed in the present? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

ESSAY SCORING GUIDE

To learn more about the essay-scoring process, visit sat.collegeboard.org/scores/sat-essay-scoring-guide.

A framework for scoring SAT essays

The SAT Scoring Guide **expresses the criteria readers use to evaluate and score the student essays**. The guide is structured on a six-point scale. Since the SAT essay is scored holistically, readers are trained to **use the SAT Scoring Guide in conjunction with anchor papers, which have been scored by consensus as representative examples**. The language of the Scoring Guide provides a consistent and coherent framework for differentiating between score points, without defining specific traits or types of essays that define each score point.

Score of 6

An essay in this category demonstrates **clear and consistent mastery**, although it may have a few minor errors.

A typical essay:

- Effectively and insightfully develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates outstanding critical thinking, using clearly appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- Is well organized and clearly focused, demonstrating clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas
- Exhibits skillful use of language, using a varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary
- Demonstrates meaningful variety in sentence structure
- Is free of most errors in grammar, usage and mechanics

Score of 5

An essay in this category demonstrates **reasonably consistent mastery**, although it will have occasional errors or lapses in quality. A typical essay:

- Effectively develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates strong critical thinking, generally using appropriate examples, reasons and other evidence to support its position
- Is well organized and focused, demonstrating coherence and progression of ideas
- Exhibits facility in the use of language, using appropriate vocabulary
- Demonstrates variety in sentence structure
- Is generally free of most errors in grammar, usage and mechanics

Score of 4

An essay in this category demonstrates **adequate mastery**, although it will have lapses in quality.

A typical essay:

- Develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates competent critical thinking, using adequate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- Is generally organized and focused, demonstrating some coherence and progression of ideas
- Exhibits adequate but inconsistent facility in the use of language, using generally appropriate vocabulary
- Demonstrates some variety in sentence structure
- Has some errors in grammar, usage and mechanics

Score of 3

An essay in this category demonstrates **developing mastery**, and is marked by **one or more** of the following weaknesses:

- Develops a point of view on the issue, demonstrating some critical thinking, but may do so inconsistently or use inadequate examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position
- Is limited in its organization or focus, but may demonstrate some lapses in coherence or progression of ideas
- Displays developing facility in the use of language or sometimes uses weak vocabulary or inappropriate word choice
- Lacks variety or demonstrates problems in sentence structure
- Contains an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage and mechanics

Score of 2

An essay in this category demonstrates **little mastery**, and is flawed by **one or more** of the following weaknesses:

- Develops a point of view on the issue that is vague or seriously limited and demonstrates weak critical thinking, providing inappropriate or insufficient examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position
- Is poorly organized and/or focused, or demonstrates serious problems with coherence or progression of ideas
- Displays very little facility in the use of language, using very limited vocabulary or incorrect word choice
- Demonstrates frequent problems in sentence structure
- Contains errors in grammar, usage and mechanics so serious that meaning is somewhat obscured

Score of 1

An essay in this category demonstrates **very little** or **no mastery**, and is severely flawed by one or more of the following weaknesses:

- Develops no viable point of view on the issue, or provides little or no evidence to support its position
- Is disorganized or unfocused, resulting in a disjointed or incoherent essay
- Displays fundamental errors in vocabulary
- Demonstrates severe flaws in sentence structure
- Contains pervasive errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that persistently interfere with meaning

Score of 0

Essays not written on the essay assignment will receive a score of 0.

