

# **SAT PREP: Evidence-Based Reading Test (Long Passages)**

**From:** *Up Your Score, The Underground Guide to Outsmarting “the Test”*

**Reading Test:** This section is 65 minutes, with FOUR passages of 500-750 words each and a pair of related passages with another 500-750 words. There will be 10 to 11 questions after each passage; questions following the related passages will be both specific to each passage as well as addressing the relationship between the two passages.

**All passages will require you to provide *evidence* and to *analyze*.**

## **1. Evidence**

- How does this evidence contribute to the argument?
- This evidence could be used to support which of the following claims?
- If this evidence were to change, how would the overall argument change?
- The author uses which piece of evidence to support the claim made in paragraph -----?
- Which of the following statements contradicts the author’s claim?
- Which point is implicit in Paragraph ---- and explicit in Paragraph ----?

## **2. Analysis**

- Analyze the argument.
- Analyze what would happen to the author’s argument if he/she used this word instead of that one.
- Analyze the pattern across two texts. Analyze for tone, analyze the change, and analyze the conclusion.

## **Keys to Success**

### **1. Know your speed**

- You will have about 50 seconds per question.
- Practice until you “know your own speed.”
- If you run out of time, AMPUTATE (Choose either the subject area you find most difficult or the last passage, which is sometimes the hardest.)
- BUT, leave time to guess and fill in answers. NEVER, EVER leave anything blank: THERE IS NO PENALTY FOR GUESSING!

### **2. Trust the passage**

- While outside information is not needed, passages rarely contradict conventional wisdom.
- However, don’t assume you know what the passage is going to say....read it!

### **3. Always guess**

- Again, NEVER, EVER leave anything blank: THERE IS NO PENALTY FOR GUESSING!
- Create a system for marking (in the test booklet) those questions you want to return to (“X,” “?”), BUT go ahead and guess and put an answer on your answer sheet.

### **4. Questions are usually in order of the passage.**

- This is usually true; but if it appears NOT to be true, keep the entire focus of the passage in mind.

## 5. Know the directions

- Directions are almost always the same for any edition of the SAT. Unless they seem different, don't waste time reading them in detail.

## 6. Adopt a positive attitude

- Avoid negative thinking: it slows you down.
- Avoid negative thinking: you are less likely to remember what you read when you are in a negative frame of mind. Psych yourself up and embrace each passage as if it was the most interesting work you ever read! There is solid science behind this technique.

## 7. Read!

- Read journal articles, newspapers, read a textbook! It will develop stamina for the test and reacquaint you with higher level vocabulary.

## Types of Passages

Passages on the redesigned SAT tend to be more "academic" than those on the older versions. This is why reading more advanced subject specific material helps in the analysis of each passage.

### 1. Science

- **Bad News:** You will be expected to understand a wide range of "scientific" vocabulary, the scientific method, evaluation of the scientist's hypothesis, and analysis of data.
- **Good News:** Challenging vocabulary and information is usually explained in the passage.

### 2. History/Social Studies

- **Founding Documents** (primary sources): usually about values, qualities, principles...questions tend to be straightforward: What is the author saying? How does he say it?
- **Great Global Conversations** (primary sources): usually speeches, letters, papers from famous American, world leaders/persons about ideals such as freedom and justice
- **Social Sciences:** topics in anthropology, economics, political science, psychology; often uses charts, graphs, statistical data to make points
- **Good News:** similar to science section
- **Bad News:** are expected to know these terms as you will use them in college

### 3. Literature

- Passage may come from the American/world classics or a contemporary author.
- It will NEVER ask you how you feel about the passage, rather what the author is saying, how he/she is saying it, and the details that support the main thesis.
- Questions are usually in the following sequence:
  - What is the author saying?
  - What evidence does he/she provide?
  - How does the author say it?
  - How is "this word" used? (Vocabulary-in-context)
  - Do you understand the metaphor or symbolism? (While this may seem open to interpretation, stick close to the simple point of the passage; don't overthink.)

#### 4. Paired Passages

- This will include two passages from one of the three areas above, that are designed (according to the College Board) to “oppose, support, or in some way complement” each other.
- **Key:** figure out the relationship between the two passages.
- **Hint:** If they seem very different (location, time, tone, etc.), they probably agree. If they seem very similar, they probably contradict.
- This may be a comparison question.

#### Types of Questions

1. **Main Idea:** check introduction, thesis, topic sentences, conclusion
2. **Point of View:** really just a main idea question (Ex: When Wolff says that women need “a room of their own,” she is speaking as.....)
3. **Explicit Meaning:** what the passage *literally states* (formulate an answer before reading the questions)
4. **Implicit Meaning:** reasonable conclusion (choose answer closest to the literal meaning of the passage) Ex: With which of the following statements would the author most likely agree?
5. **Follow up Evidence:** If your answer to the previous question is correct, this should be no problem.
6. **Analogy:** turn question into a template (Ex: Which of the following is most similar to the one described?)
7. **Cause and Effect:** questions may not use “cause” and “effect” so pay attention to vocabulary
8. **Sequence:** chronological order; again, pay attention to vocabulary which may indicate a prior or subsequent event (Ex: *Before there were circuit breakers, there were fuses.*)
9. **Vocabulary-in-Context:** usually ask which synonym is most appropriate in the passage

#### Different Strategies

1. **Skim the questions before reading the passage.** Don’t waste time on the answers at this point, just read the passage. If the question is a reference to a particular line in the passage, mark that line in the booklet. As you read the passage, mark anything that might be a clue, but don’t get so caught up in looking for answers that you lose the meaning of the passage.
2. **Mentally summarize.** Make notes in the margins of the booklet, underline or mark key words, phrases. Remember, if you can’t summarize it...you don’t understand it!
3. **Circle the main idea.** This will help with main idea and supporting evidence questions. If you can’t find the main idea...you don’t understand the passage!