

## SAT Writing Section

From Grace Fleming  
Your Guide to Homework / Study Tips

### Wish You Were Born a Little Earlier?

How do you feel about the new writing section of the SAT I test? Are you disappointed or are you happy about this change?

Some students are a little intimidated by the new format; after all, the test has increased in length with the addition of a writing section. Some students feel downright unlucky, since an earlier birth date would place them at college age long before the writing requirement kicked in.

But don't take the new requirement personally. For years, college educators and business leaders have noticed a need for improved writing skills for people at all levels. Most universities have even addressed the problem by establishing writing centers, to provide their students with tools for improving skills.

The College Board, a not-for-profit organization that administers the test, is simply responding to a long-standing need.

The SAT I is now a three-part test instead of a two-part, with a perfect score of 2400 instead of 1600. The writing section itself lasts 60 minutes, with a multiple choice section lasting 35 minutes and an essay-writing portion of 25 minutes.

This isn't the first time the SAT requirements have changed. The test has evolved along with society.

As a matter of fact, the essay requirement was recommended and considered long ago, but the technology of the day couldn't accommodate the transmitting and grading of essays on a large scale. Technology has changed, and so has the test.

### Feeling Intimidated by the Time Requirement?

As mentioned above, the essay-writing portion is a timed test, allowing students 25 minutes to plan, outline, and write. The problem is, some students are so concerned about the clock that they skip over the planning and outlining and dive straight into writing.

Some gifted writers may do very well, developing ideas as they write. For most people, however, it's a good idea to jot down ideas and important points before starting. As always, get organized before you start!

It might help to know that nobody will expect your essay to be perfect. It will be considered a first draft, and the reader will not hold it against you if you have a few scratch-outs or if you struggle with bad handwriting.

Even a few spelling mistakes are okay. But consistent mistakes will affect your score. It would be a good idea to study some of the most common spelling mistakes and word mix-up's as you prepare for the test.

#### What to Expect from the Essay Assignment

The essay assignment consists of one topic, unlike other essay tests which offer a choice of topics. In other words, students won't be able to choose a question.

Do not try to change the question. Stick to the topic you're given.

The essay assignment follows a specific format. One part of the test question contains a quote, paragraph or passage from a specific book. The passage will address a specific issue.

The other portion asks you to develop and explain your point of view on the issue. You are encouraged to use examples from your own experience, as well as thoughts from other books or articles you've read.

Remember that this is a personal essay, asking for your opinion. Speak from your own point of view, using phrases like "I think" or "I strongly believe," and then be sure to back up your point with evidence and examples.