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THE OFFICIAL

Digital SAT Study Guide

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The Official
Digital
SAT

Study Guide™

COLLEGE BOARD, NEW YORK

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College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of over 6,000 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success—including the SAT®, the Advanced Placement® Program, and BigFuture®. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators, and schools. For further information, visit collegeboard.org.

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Dear Student,

Congratulations on taking an important step toward preparing for the SAT®. *The Official Digital SAT Study Guide™* is a tool to help you practice for the latest version of the test. By investing in SAT practice, you're making a commitment to your college, career, and life success.

As you start to familiarize yourself with the test, we're excited to share with you some of the many benefits it has to offer. The questions that make up the assessment are modeled on the work you're already doing in school. You'll recognize topics and ideas from your math, English language arts, science, history, and social studies classes. These questions are also aligned with the capabilities that research says matter most for college and career readiness. This means that by practicing for the SAT, you're reinforcing the knowledge and skills that will help you excel both in your coursework and in your future pursuits.

The SAT is clearer than ever. The questions will not be tricky, nor will there be any obscure vocabulary or penalties for guessing. By being transparent about what is on the test and making preparation materials easily available, we're providing you the foundation for successful practice. The best source of information about the SAT is found right here in the pages of this book, and you've taken an important step by equipping yourself with these key facts.

The SAT is just one component of the College Board commitment to increasing students' access to and success in college and career. We have also partnered with colleges and universities to offer college application fee waivers to every income-eligible senior who takes the SAT (to learn more visit sat.org/fee-waivers). College Board wants you to succeed in your pursuits, and defraying the cost of admission for eligible students is just one way that we can make it easier for you to reach your goals.

Now that you have this great study guide as a tool, we encourage you to begin practicing today.

Keep up the good work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Priscilla Rodriguez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Priscilla" and last name "Rodriguez" clearly distinguishable.

Priscilla Rodriguez
Senior Vice President, College Readiness Assessments
College Board

Foreword

The Official Digital SAT Study Guide is the latest in a series of SAT preparation books put together by College Board, the makers of the test, to help you, the student, get ready to do your best work on the exam.

In putting this volume together, the various authors and contributors had a single goal in mind: giving students such as you all the information and advice you need to do well on test day. To that end, we've put together detailed overviews of the digital SAT and its components, provided walk-throughs of the various question formats and types you'll encounter on the test, and created opportunities for you to engage in authentic test practice.

The digital SAT itself has been crafted to give all students a fair, valid, and reliable way to demonstrate to colleges, career training programs, scholarship organizations, and others what they know and can do in reading and writing and in math. Designed and developed based on careful research and extensive input, including from students, the digital version of the SAT is easier to take, easier to give, more secure, and more relevant than ever before. The ultimate aim of the test is to give you the best possible opportunity to show what you know and can do, to stand out from your peers, and to be seen and recognized by the postsecondary institutions that interest you and that are a good match for your plans and capabilities.

Although the single best preparation for the digital SAT is engaging actively in a set of challenging high school courses, we've created this book to help you understand and get comfortable with the specific ways in which the digital SAT assesses your achievement. Equipped with this information and having taken advantage of one or more of the many opportunities this book offers to evaluate and hone your skills and knowledge, you'll be able to test with full confidence.

Jim Patterson, Ph.D.
Co-lead author, *The Official Digital SAT Study Guide*
College Board

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Official Digital SAT Study Guide is designed to give you the information and tools you'll need to do your best on the SAT, a college and career readiness assessment. This book has been crafted by College Board, the makers of the SAT, and provides authoritative test-taking advice as well as official sample test questions and practice tests developed by the same College Board staff members who produce the actual tests. By using this book as part of your preparation for test day, you can be confident that you have access to all the resources you need to succeed.

A Word or Two about the Digital SAT

Before we dive into the specifics of preparing for the digital SAT, let's make sure that you know a little about the SAT and what testing digitally means for you.

The SAT is one, and the best known, of the tests in College Board's SAT Suite of Assessments. Along with the suite's other tests—the PSAT/NMSQT®, PSAT™ 10, and PSAT™ 8/9—the SAT is designed to measure what research indicates are essential academic requirements for college and career readiness in reading and writing and in math. This means that the SAT is intended to measure the extent to which you've obtained the skills and knowledge needed to be ready to succeed in college and in workforce training. Because the SAT shares the same goal as your high school courses—preparing you for the next stage of your educational career—you should expect that the questions on the SAT will ask you to demonstrate the same sorts of skills and knowledge you use every day in your classes. Moreover, because the SAT provides valuable information about your readiness to succeed in college and career, the results are highly relevant to you. In addition, the score report for the SAT serves as an important gateway to additional college-planning resources, which can help you make informed decisions supportive of your post-high school aspirations.

The SAT is designed to be an appropriately challenging test of your college and career readiness. The demands of college and workforce training programs are high, and the SAT must be similarly demanding.

At the same time, we've designed the SAT to be a fair test of what you know and can do. When test questions are challenging, it's because the content you're asked to work with, the questions you're posed, and the problems you're asked to solve require this level of understanding. The difficulty of SAT questions, in other words, comes from the sophistication of the skills and knowledge you're asked to demonstrate; by contrast, the wording of test passages and questions as well as the tasks you're presented with are meant to be as clear and comprehensible as possible. With appropriate familiarity with the test and its content, you'll be able to answer questions confidently and to the best of your ability.

The Structure of This Book

The Official Digital SAT Study Guide is divided into four parts.

- **Part 1: The Digital SAT** provides an overview of the digital SAT test itself, the scores it yields (and what to do with them), and the test day experience (e.g., what to bring and not bring to the test center). We also present some general test-taking strategies, which complement those specific to the test sections found in later chapters. Part 1 concludes with a discussion of how to use this book to prepare for either the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10, two other, highly similar tests that are part of the SAT Suite of Assessments.
- **Part 2: The Reading and Writing Section** goes into depth on the features and elements of the literacy-focused section of the digital SAT. Part 2 begins with an overview of the test section. The next two chapters address Reading and Writing test passages and informational graphics in detail so you come away with a strong sense of the kinds of readings and graphics you'll be asked to engage with. After a brief introduction to the Reading and Writing section's four *content domains*—the categories into which we organize test questions by topic—we devote two chapters to each of these domains. The first chapter in each pair is a detailed look at the domain, including its purpose and focus and the kinds of questions you may encounter. The second chapter in each pair consists of drill questions in that domain. These questions are accompanied by answer explanations, so you can check your work. Our intent is for these drills to serve as immediate practice once you've read a given overview chapter. The number of drill questions varies somewhat by domain, and there's no real expectation that you answer these questions under timed conditions. Rather, our goal is just to get you familiar with the full range of questions you may encounter in each domain.
- **Part 3: The Math Section** includes a section overview as well as pairs of chapters devoted to the test section's four content domains. These pairs consist of domain overviews followed by drills with answer explanations. Two additional chapters round out Part 3. The first offers further discussion of the student-produced response (SPR)

question format, which requires you to generate and enter your own answers (rather than select from multiple-choice options). The second describes your test-day calculator options, including the built-in Desmos Graphing Calculator.

- **Part 4: Practice Tests** consists of a series of official digital SAT practice tests accompanied by answer explanations and scoring guidelines. You may choose to use the paper versions of these tests included in this book, or, preferably, you can follow the provided directions to test digitally—just as you will on test day and using the same digital test application, Bluebook™. If you do choose to practice on paper, carefully read the introduction to this section of the book so that you're fully aware of the differences between practicing on paper and digitally.

How to Use This Book

First and foremost, this is your book, so you should use it in the way that makes you feel most confident in your preparation. We do, however, have some suggestions, depending on how much time you have before you test.

If you have **two months** or more to prepare, we recommend proceeding through this whole book. Read part 1 to get a clear sense of what the digital SAT is like, and then read parts 2 and 3 to become fully versed in how the Reading and Writing and Math sections of the test are put together. Answer the drill questions spread throughout parts 2 and 3 and use the provided answer explanations to assess your responses and identify areas of weakness to work on. Take a full-length practice test, either in Bluebook or in this book, under timed conditions to better understand how to pace yourself. Go through your answers and the provided explanations, figure out what you missed and got right, and identify skills and knowledge you need to brush up on and/or question formats and types you need more practice with. Visit Khan Academy® at khanacademy.org/digital-sat, the home for free Official Digital SAT Prep, to explore their resources, which include lessons and activities designed to assess and build your skills and knowledge. Take a second practice test to check for improvement and to identify any areas still needing work.

If you have roughly **one month** to prepare, we still recommend doing all the above, though you may need to push a little to get through everything. If you must prioritize, pay particular attention to the chapters providing overviews of the digital SAT (chapter 2), the Reading and Writing section (chapter 7), and the Math section (chapter 19) to ensure that you're familiar with the key features of the test and its two sections. Take a full-length practice test under timed conditions and analyze your results. Identify the areas where you need the most improvement and use the resources in this book and/or on Khan Academy to address your most critical shortcomings.

A NOTE ABOUT THE PRACTICE TESTS

Most students will take the digital SAT in **Bluebook**, a digital testing application downloaded onto an appropriate device. Because of this, we recommend that—unless you need to test on paper as an accommodation—you take the practice tests in Bluebook. This will get you familiar with the full testing experience, including the many ways Bluebook makes taking the test easy and efficient. If you choose to practice using the test forms included in this book, be sure to read “Introduction to the Practice Tests” in Part 4 for more information about how we’ve “adapted” the digital testing experience for paper.

If you have a **week or less** before test day, you'll need to be strategic in your preparation. Focus on the overview chapters (chapters 2, 7, and 19) mentioned above so that you have the key test features firmly in mind. Take a full-length practice test under timed conditions so that you have a better idea of how the test is put together and how to pace yourself effectively. Analyze your results and look for one to two areas in Reading and Writing and in Math that you feel you could improve on quickly. Use the drill questions and answer explanations found in various chapters in parts 2 and 3 to gain some quick practice with question formats and types you're not confident on but may be able to master with a bit of effort.

Some Additional Advice

There's a lot of information in this book as well as many options for getting ready for the digital SAT. We strongly suggest that you begin your preparation for taking the SAT at least a couple of months ahead of your test date so that you can practice at a relatively leisurely pace and have enough time and energy to evaluate and, where needed, improve on your reading and writing and math skills and knowledge.

Although we do recommend devoting effort to preparing for the digital SAT, we also want to reassure you that the questions you'll be asked are, in many respects, similar to those you'd encounter in challenging high school courses. Thus, **the single best preparation you can undertake for the digital SAT is what you're already doing: actively engaging in your classes.** The main purposes of specific preparation for the digital SAT are for you to (1) become comfortable with the kinds of questions we ask and how you're expected to respond and (2) learn to pace yourself during the test so that you have an opportunity to answer each question to the best of your ability.

Most of all, remember: You *can* do this.

PART 1

The Digital SAT



CHAPTER 2

Getting to Know the Digital SAT

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the digital SAT. We begin with a high-level discussion of the key components of the test, including its sections, timing, and number of questions. Following that, we describe some of these features in more detail, with a focus on how you can use this information to better prepare for test day.

The Digital SAT at a Glance

The digital SAT is composed of two sections:

- A **Reading and Writing section**, which measures your ability to apply reading and writing skills and knowledge you've gained in your classes in English language arts and other subjects.
- A **Math section**, which measures your ability to apply math skills and knowledge you've gained in your classes in math and in other subjects, such as science, where math is frequently used.

Questions in both sections test the skills and knowledge you've learned in your classes and that our research has found are necessary for you to have to be ready to succeed in college courses.

Table 1 summarizes key features of the digital SAT, while table 2 summarizes key features of each of the two test sections. These features are discussed in more detail below and throughout this book.

NOTE

Part 1 of this book focuses on the digital SAT in general terms. In parts 2 and 3, we cover the Reading and Writing section and the Math section, respectively, in depth, including offering you opportunities to immediately practice with questions in each of the test's *content domains*, the categories we use to conceptually organize test questions by topic.

Table 1. Key Features of the Digital SAT

Feature	Digital SAT
Administration	Two-stage adaptive testing
Number of questions	98 questions: 54 Reading and Writing 44 Math
Time allotted	134 minutes: 64 Reading and Writing 70 Math
Scores reported	Two section scores , each on a scale of 200–800: Reading and Writing Math A total score , which is the sum of the two section scores and is on a scale of 400–1600

Table 2. Key Features of the Digital SAT Sections

Feature	Reading and Writing Section	Math Section
Administration	Two-stage adaptive test design; each stage consists of a module of questions	Two-stage adaptive test design; each stage consists of a module of questions
Section composition	Questions divided into two modules, each timed separately	Questions divided into two modules, each timed separately
Number of questions	1st module: 27 questions (including 2 unscored questions) 2nd module: 27 questions (including 2 unscored questions)	1st module: 22 questions (including 2 unscored questions) 2nd module: 22 questions (including 2 unscored questions)
Time per module	1st module: 32 minutes 2nd module: 32 minutes	1st module: 35 minutes 2nd module: 35 minutes
Total number of questions	54 questions	44 questions
Total time allotted	64 minutes	70 minutes
Average time per question	1.19 minutes	1.59 minutes
Score reported	Reading and Writing section score, on a scale of 200–800	Math section score, on a scale of 200–800
Question type(s) used	Multiple-choice Each question is standalone (i.e., there are no question sets).	Multiple-choice (about 75% of the section) Student-produced response (about 25% of the section) Each question is standalone (i.e., there are no question sets).

Feature	Reading and Writing Section	Math Section
Subject areas for passages and contexts	Literature, history/ social studies, the humanities, science	Science, social studies, real-world topics
Word count	25–150 words per passage (or pair of passages)	About 30% of questions are set in context; most of these contexts have 50 words or fewer.
Informational graphics	Yes; tables, bar graphs, line graphs	Yes; a wide range of data displays and geometric figures
Reading and Writing passage text complexity	Passages represent a range of text complexities from grades 6–8 through grades 12–14.	

Key Features of the Digital SAT

In this section, we discuss the key features listed above in detail, with an emphasis on how this information can be used to enhance your preparation for test day.

Two-Stage Adaptive Testing

Traditionally, large-scale tests such as the SAT have been given in a paper and pencil format, and everyone who took a particular test form was presented with the exact same set of questions. Even when College Board started making the transition to digital testing for the SAT several years ago, these digital forms were essentially paper and pencil tests with some minor adjustments (e.g., answers being selected or entered onscreen rather than marked on a paper answer sheet). These sorts of test forms, whether printed on paper or displayed on a screen, are known as *linear* because there's only one "path" through the questions, and the test doesn't change in any way based on how the test taker is performing.

The main alternative to linear testing, and one that organizations such as College Board have increasingly turned to in recent years, is *adaptive* testing. You may have heard of such tests or taken one or more of them already. Adaptive tests (which are pretty much exclusively delivered on digital devices) are so called because, in one or more ways, they "adapt" during the test based on how the test taker is doing.

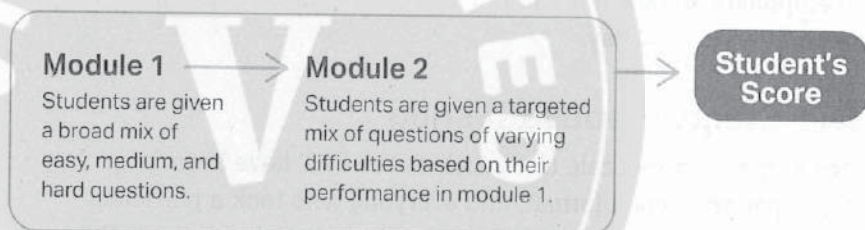
One critical way that adaptive tests such as the SAT improve the test-taking experience is by targeting questions to individual test takers' demonstrated achievement level. Put more simply, if a test taker is doing well on an adaptive test, they're given harder questions to determine the upper limits of their skills and knowledge; if a test taker is struggling, they're given easier questions to determine what they *do* know and can do, not just what they don't and can't.

By contrast, linear tests given to lots of test takers at a time must include a large number and broad range of questions of various challenge levels to assess everyone's achievement. In practice, this means that such tests are quite lengthy and that nearly all test takers end up being asked at least some questions that are either too easy or too hard for them, because the test doesn't change based on how any one test taker is doing during the exam.

The key benefit that the digital SAT's adaptive testing model offers you is a shorter exam that nonetheless measures your skills and knowledge as accurately as a longer test. While the last paper and pencil (linear) version of the SAT clocked in at three hours, the digital SAT is much closer to two.

There are various models for adaptive testing out there. The method we've chosen for the SAT is called *multistage adaptive testing* (MST). In MST, the digital test application adapts after test takers have completed a given *stage* of testing. The digital SAT uses a simple two-stage model, illustrated in figure 1, below.

Figure 1. The Digital SAT's Multistage Adaptive Testing Model



Each section of the digital SAT is divided into two stages, each of which consists of a *module* of questions. Each module contains half the section's test questions (27 Reading and Writing questions or 22 Math questions).

The first module in each test section consists of questions that are, on average, of medium difficulty. (We say "on average" because individual questions may be of high, medium, or low difficulty, but, overall, they average out to moderately challenging.) At the midpoint of each test section, the test application routes students to one of two possible second-stage modules of questions: one whose questions are, on average, of lower difficulty than those in the first module and the other whose questions are, on average, of higher difficulty than those in the first module. (Again, "on average" means that high-, medium- and low-difficulty questions may appear in either second-stage module.)

Each of the two modules in a test section is separately timed, so you'll be allotted half of the total time for each section for answering questions in the first module and the other half for answering questions in the second module. You'll have 32 minutes for each Reading and Writing module and 35 minutes for each Math module.

It's important to note here that the digital SAT only “adapts” once per test section and only after you’ve had a chance to answer half of the section’s questions. This means that you’ll have a good opportunity to show what you know and can do in each section before the digital testing app determines which of the two second-stage modules—higher or lower difficulty—you receive.

Besides reducing any stress you might feel about the adapting the test does, this feature allows you to move around freely among the questions in a given module. You can preview later questions in a module and flag and return to earlier questions if you wish, and even change your answers, as long as time permits.

The Fairness of Adaptive Testing

College Board is deeply committed to ensuring that all its tests, including the SAT, are fair to students from all backgrounds and achievement levels. Put simply, we believe that a test that’s not fair is a bad test.

As part of this commitment, we’ve taken numerous steps to make sure that the adaptive testing model used for the digital SAT is fair to all students.

- All test takers begin each test section at the same place: with a medium-difficulty module.
- Because this medium-difficulty module contains a large number of questions as well as a mix of low-, medium-, and high-difficulty questions, every student has a fair chance to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.
- Test takers may navigate freely among the questions in a given module as time permits. They may preview later questions and flag, review, and change answers to earlier questions within a particular module.
- The test application only “adapts” once per test section, and only after each student has had a chance to answer many questions (27 in Reading and Writing, 22 in Math) and thereby give a strong indication of their achievement. This also means that you won’t face a situation in which incorrectly answering the first few questions in a section sends you into a downward spiral of inappropriately easy questions, as could be the case if the test application adapted after each question.
- The specifications (“rules”) that control how the digital SAT is put together ensure that every student, regardless of when or where they take the test, receives a highly comparable experience. In other words, no one receives a digital SAT test form that’s significantly easier or harder than any other student’s.

IMPORTANT!

As time permits, you may freely move back and forth among questions in a given module. If you wish, you can change your answers in the current module (the two modules in each section are separate). However, you may **not** return to a previous module after the test application moves you to the next module, which happens automatically after time expires. In addition, you may **not** return to the first test section (Reading and Writing) after the test application moves you to the second (and last) test section (Math).

Timing and Pacing

For the Reading and Writing section, you'll have a total of 64 minutes to answer 54 questions. This averages out to 1.19 minutes per question. The questions and total time are evenly split between the two modules of questions in the test section, meaning that you'll have 32 minutes to answer the 27 questions in each module.

For the Math section, you'll have a total of 70 minutes to answer 44 questions. This averages out to 1.59 minutes per question. Like the Reading and Writing section, the Math section is divided evenly into two separately timed modules of questions. You'll have 35 minutes to answer the 22 questions in each module.

Remember that you won't be allowed to return to a given module of questions once time is up, and you won't be able to return to the Reading and Writing section once you've begun the Math section.

Question Types

All questions in the Reading and Writing section and about 75% of questions in the Math section are multiple-choice in format. Each of these multiple-choice questions has four answer choices (also known as options), of which one (and only one) is the best answer (*key*). The three other answer choices represent common errors that test takers make or common misconceptions that test takers hold, so they're intended to be plausible to varying degrees without any one of them being a second key.

The other approximately 25% of questions in the Math section are in a format we call *student-produced response* (SPR). These questions have no answer choices; you must solve each problem and enter your own answer into the test application. SPR questions may have more than one possible correct answer, but you'll only ever be asked to enter a single answer. We'll have more to say about SPR questions in chapter 29, and numerous examples of such questions appear throughout this book.

All digital SAT questions are standalone. (The technical term for this is *discrete*.) This means that each question can be answered independently, without reference to any other question. There are no sets of questions linked to a common passage or set of data. This means that you won't have to worry about answering several questions about a single Reading and Writing passage or Math context that perhaps you feel you don't fully understand. You'll instead be able to give your best effort on each question and then move on to the next. And as we'll discuss in chapter 5, there's no penalty for guessing on the digital SAT, so you should *always* answer every question, even if you must guess.

Context-Based Questions in the Math Section

Roughly a third of the questions in the Math section are set in context. By “in context,” we’re referring, loosely, to the sorts of questions commonly known as word problems. Although most questions in the section test “pure” math, in-context questions make an important contribution, as they help determine whether you can apply your math skills and knowledge to solving authentic problems in social studies and science as well as those based in real-world scenarios.

Subject Areas

All Reading and Writing questions and some Math questions are set in one of a range of academic subject areas, such as history/social studies and science. We do this for two main (and related) reasons. First, the digital SAT tests the skills and knowledge you’ve developed in your classes. It therefore makes sense—and is beneficial to you—to set questions in the subjects you’ve studied in school. Second, the digital SAT is a test of your college and career readiness. It therefore follows that your readiness should be tested in relation to the kinds of classes you’ll have to take after high school.

It’s important to note here that *no* digital SAT question tests your knowledge of specific topics within the various academic subjects sampled on the test. You won’t, for instance, be asked to recall historical facts or scientific theories. All the information needed to answer a given question is provided in the question itself.

That said, we take great pains to ensure that digital SAT questions set in academic contexts are as authentic as possible. This means that Reading and Writing passages (and informational graphics—more on these below) as well as Math questions set in context present the kinds of topics and ask the kinds of questions that you’d encounter in challenging high school courses as well as in first-year courses at the college level. Your knowledge of and experience with these subjects, therefore, can be beneficial on the digital SAT, as courses in these subjects teach you how to read, write, and reason in the specific ways required in these fields. We’ll have more to say about this later, particularly in chapter 8.

The Reading and Writing section includes passages and informational graphics in the subject areas of literature, history/social studies, the humanities, and science. Some Math section questions set in context address topics in the academic subjects of social studies and science, while others address real-world applications of mathematics. Examples of all of these appear in the chapters later in this book devoted to the Reading and Writing and the Math sections.

IMPORTANT!

We just said it, but it’s a critical point worth emphasizing: All the information needed to answer a digital SAT question is in the question itself.

REMINDER

Each Reading and Writing passage and each Math context is connected to one and only one question. There are no question sets based on a common source, such as a long passage or a data set.

Passage/Context Word Count

On the digital SAT, we keep Reading and Writing passages and Math contexts short and focused so that you can concentrate on answering the associated questions. That doesn't mean that you won't encounter some challenging readings—more on that below—but it *does* mean that you'll be presented with only the most important information needed to answer a given question.

Reading and Writing passages are 25 to 150 words in length, while most Math contexts are 50 words or fewer.

Informational Graphics

The digital SAT includes informational graphics with select Reading and Writing and Math questions. That's because the ability to make skilled use of quantitative (numeric) data is a critical requirement of college and career readiness, not to mention effective participation in civic life.

In the Reading and Writing section, select questions will include a table, bar graph, or line graph. You'll be asked to do various things with the data displayed in these graphics, such as locate specific data points, recognize trends in data, and make connections between the information contained in a graphic with the information and ideas in an accompanying passage. What you *won't* have to do with these questions is perform calculations—and a calculator is neither permitted nor necessary to answer questions in this section. We've limited the types of graphics that appear in the Reading and Writing section to just the three listed above because these are the most common ways in which people in the subject areas sampled by the section organize and display data graphically.

The Math section, by contrast, includes a wider range of informational graphics (e.g., scatterplots, box plots). That's because mathematicians—as well as experts in other fields, such as science, in which math plays a large role—use numerous kinds of data displays, with the choice of which to use depending on what sorts of analyses are being performed. And, unlike in the Reading and Writing section, the Math section *will* require you to perform calculations involving these data. In doing so, you may make use of either the Desmos Graphing Calculator built into Bluebook or your own approved calculator. (In chapter 30, we'll discuss the features of the built-in graphing calculator as well as where you can find College Board's up-to-date calculator policy, that outlines which personal calculators are and aren't acceptable for use on the digital SAT.) In addition to data displays, select Math section questions may include geometric figures, such as triangles and circles.

Text Complexity (Reading and Writing Section)

The passages you encounter in the Reading and Writing section will vary in terms of how challenging they are to read. Some passages will be relatively straightforward, while others will exhibit a relatively high level of complexity. Technically speaking, passages in the section range in complexity from ones like those you might have encountered in grades 6–8 up to and including ones that are similar in difficulty to those you may be assigned in your first-year college classes. We include some highly challenging passages in the Reading and Writing section because research has shown that the ability to read complex texts is a key indicator of students' college and career readiness. (Text complexity in the Reading and Writing section is a topic we return to in chapter 8.)

Math contexts aren't formally rated for text complexity, in part because the presence of equations and other expressions limits the validity of the kinds of text complexity measures we use, and in part because that test section assesses math skills and knowledge, not reading achievement per se. Each Math context is, however, carefully examined by experts prior to its use to ensure that it's as clear and concise as possible, which helps keep the focus where it belongs: on the math itself.



CHAPTER 3

Understanding and Using Your Digital SAT Scores

In this chapter, we go over how the digital SAT is scored. We also examine the digital SAT score report, a critical tool enabling you both to understand your test performance better and to easily take advantage of the many SAT-related services College Board provides.

Your Scores

You'll need to understand your digital SAT scores to measure your progress toward college and career readiness and determine what your next steps should be. Table 1 shows the score details and score ranges.

Table 1. Digital SAT Scores.

SAT Score Reported	Details	Score Range
Section Scores (2)	• Reading and Writing	200–800
	• Math	200–800
Total Score	Sum of the two section scores	400–1600

Your score on each section is based on your performance on all questions in the section. Section scores for Reading and Writing and for Math are reported on a scale from 200 to 800. The two section scores are then added together to yield your total score. This total score ranges from 400 to 1600.

It's to your advantage to answer each question, even if you're not completely sure of your answer, as there's no guessing penalty.

IMPORTANT!

There's no scoring penalty for guessing on the digital SAT. It's therefore in your interest to answer each question to the best of your ability. As we'll discuss in more detail in chapter 5, educated guesses—ones based on having eliminated one or more incorrect answer choices (for multiple-choice questions)—are far better than random guesses; even so, you should never *not* provide an answer to a question.

Comparing Digital SAT and Paper and Pencil SAT Scores

Scores on the digital SAT are directly linked to scores on the paper and pencil version of the SAT that the digital test replaces. This means that scores on the paper and pencil SAT can be fairly compared to scores on the digital SAT. However, because the digital and paper and pencil SATs measure slightly different content and do so in somewhat different ways, a paper and pencil SAT score isn't a perfect predictor of how you'd perform on the digital test.

Your Score Report

Your score report gives the meaning behind the numbers by providing a summary of how you did on each section and on the test as a whole. It also serves as a portal connecting you with additional SAT-related services that College Board provides.

You can access your score report online through your College Board account. This account is the same one you use if you register to take the digital SAT on the weekend. (If you can't access your online score report, your school can print a copy for you.)

We briefly discuss some of the key features of the score report below.

★ Score Ranges

To better contextualize your actual test scores, we provide score ranges that account for the slight variations in your performance that could occur had you taken the digital SAT on a different day.

Score Comparisons

Score comparisons let you compare your total and section scores to the average scores of all students who took the same digital SAT administration, as applicable, at your school and in your district, state, and country as well as to all testers worldwide.

Percentiles

Percentiles represent the percentage of students whose score is equal to or lower than your own; the higher your percentile rank, the better. For example, if your score were at the 75th percentile for your state, this would mean that 75% of graduating seniors testing over the past three years in your state achieved scores at or below your score. Percentiles are provided, as applicable, at the state level, country level, and among testers worldwide, ranking your scores among the scores of graduating seniors over the last three years.

College and Career Readiness Benchmarks

Based on extensive, ongoing research, College Board has established college and career readiness benchmark scores for the Reading and Writing and Math sections of the digital SAT. These benchmarks—480 for the Reading and Writing section and 530 for the Math section—are the minimum scores our research indicates are required for students to have a high chance of succeeding in common entry-level credit-bearing college courses. Students are considered college and career ready when their digital SAT section scores meet both the Reading and Writing and the Math benchmarks. If your scores fall below one or both of these benchmarks, we recommend using the Knowledge and Skills section of your report (discussed below) to analyze your results further and to explore options for improving on your weaknesses.

Knowledge and Skills

By themselves, test scores are just numbers. As we illustrated above, test scores can be compared in various ways to give useful information about test performance. But the numbers remain abstractions unless looked at in the context of skills and knowledge they likely demonstrate.

That's why College Board has developed Skills Insight™ for the digital SAT (and the other tests of the digital SAT Suite of Assessments). Skills Insight is a set of statements, derived from careful analysis of student performance on hundreds of test questions, describing what test takers earning various scores on the digital SAT are likely to know and be able to do in reading and writing and in math. Accompanying these statements are sample test questions providing concrete examples of the kinds of skills and knowledge that students scoring in particular ranges on the digital SAT are typically able to demonstrate. The Skills Insight statements are generalizations, meaning that they don't precisely describe your performance or that of any single student, but they do provide a strong general sense of what students scoring in particular ranges probably know and can do.

The Knowledge and Skills portion of your score report, which is based on Skills Insight, allows you to better understand your performance across the digital SAT's eight content domains—four for Reading and Writing and four for Math. A link in your score report grants ready access to the Skills Insight Tool, which connects you to the statements and sample test questions associated with your scores.

Sharing Your Scores

Your digital SAT scores can help you better understand your readiness for college and workforce training and how you can further develop your skills and knowledge, but they become more useful still when shared with postsecondary institutions, such as colleges, universities, and scholarship organizations, that are a good match to your achievement and interests.

Sending Scores to Your High School

Your score report will automatically be delivered to your high school when you take the digital SAT.

Sending Scores to Colleges, Universities, and Scholarship Organizations

Sending your scores to colleges, universities, and scholarship organizations early in the college application process is a great way to show your interest in these institutions and their services. You'll have the opportunity when you take the digital SAT to choose up to four colleges/universities and/or scholarship organizations to receive your scores for free. You may also choose to send your scores to additional institutions for a fee.

★ For score sends requested when you take the digital SAT, only your scores from the requested test date will be sent, unless you specifically ask to send all your existing SAT scores.

If you want to change where your scores are sent, you have until nine days after your test date to alter the recipients of your four free score reports at no charge. After that, you'll be charged the additional score report request fee for any added or changed report requests.

Score Choice

If you take the SAT more than once, you have the option of Score Choice™. With Score Choice, you can choose which set(s) of scores you send to colleges.

Choose by test date for the digital SAT—but keep in mind that some colleges, universities, and scholarship organizations require you to send all your scores. If you don't use Score Choice, we'll send all your scores from your six most recent administrations. However, if you want only your highest set of scores to be seen, select Score Choice.

Each school or program has its own deadlines and policies for how scores are used. Information is listed on the score-sending site for each participating institution, but you should check with the individual school or scholarship organization to make sure you're following its guidelines.

IMPORTANT!

You can only choose which scores to send by test date. You can't send a Reading and Writing section score from one test date and a Math section score from another test date.

Sending Scores to College and University Systems

College Board doesn't use either your raw scores or your reported scaled scores by themselves or in combination with any other information to predict your individual future academic performance at specific postsecondary institutions. However, College Board does help individual colleges and universities use and interpret digital SAT scores.

In certain college and university systems, once you submit your scores to one school, other schools within that system will also have access to your scores. Please note, however, that if you are applying to more than one school within a college or university system, it's still important for you to send your digital SAT scores to each individual school. If you're not sure whether the specific school you're applying to is part of such a system, contact the school's admissions office.

Additionally, if you've decided to participate in Student Search Service (see the next section), colleges and universities may identify you to provide you with materials about college admission and financial aid at their institutions.

Connecting with Colleges, Universities, and Scholarship Organizations

College Board provides students with a range of ways to connect with colleges, universities, scholarship organizations, and other educational opportunities, including BigFuture® and Student Search Service. You will have the opportunity to opt into Student Search Service at any time (except during school day test administrations), including when you create a College Board account, when you register for SAT Weekend, and when you use BigFuture, our free career and college planning site.

BigFuture is a free online planning guide that helps all students take the right first step after high school. When students sign in, they can access a personalized dashboard with options to explore careers, plan for college, and pay for college. When students in tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades sign in and complete specific steps on their dashboard, they automatically earn entries into monthly drawings for \$500 and \$40,000 BigFuture Scholarships. (Students must attend a high school in the United States or U.S. territories to be eligible for drawings.) Visit bigfuture.org to unlock your dashboard.

Thousands of colleges, universities, and scholarship organizations rely on Student Search Service to connect with millions of students who may be a good fit for their programs. By joining, you have the opportunity to hear directly from over 1,500 four-year colleges. Every year, \$300 million in scholarships is available from colleges, universities, and scholarship organizations that use Student Search to find students.

When you join Student Search Service, you agree to share general information you provide when creating your College Board account, along with your score range on any College Board assessments that you've taken. You also agree to share institutions you've added to your college list on BigFuture to help colleges and universities see your demonstrated interest along with information about your high school performance and activities.

Colleges, universities, nonprofit scholarship programs, and nonprofit educational organizations pay for Student Search Service, but this service is available at no cost to you. Visit cb.org/studentsearch to join Student Search Service.

Key Facts about Student Search Service

- You can join for free and receive information from a diverse group of accredited colleges, universities, scholarship organizations, and other nonprofit education programs. No other organizations or companies are eligible to participate in Student Search Service.
- When you take a College Board test, you'll be asked to provide certain information about yourself during registration. Answers to some of the questions are optional; others are required.
- It's entirely up to you whether to opt in. The service is free to you, but education organizations pay us a licensing fee to use the service. We use those fees to support our nonprofit, mission-driven work, including providing fee waivers so that students from lower-income families can take the digital SAT for free.
- You can opt out of Student Search Service at any time.
- Being contacted by a college or university doesn't mean you've been admitted to that institution. You must submit an application to be considered for admission. Student Search Service is just a way for nonprofit education organizations to reach prospective students to let them know about the opportunities they offer.

How Student Search Service Works

- If you opt in, you may be identified by education organizations as a potential match for their programs and services.
- Education organizations generally look for groups of students based on expected graduation date, where they live, self-reported cumulative grade point average (GPA), test score ranges, intended college major, geography, and other limited parameters. This information comes from your registration and other information you provide to College Board. It may also include your college list, if you created one, on BigFuture, College Board's free career and college planning website.
- College Board never shares your actual test scores, grades, disability status, parent information, or telephone numbers. Please note that we *do* share test score ranges and GPA.

- If you've opted in and match an education organization's search criteria, we provide them your contact information so they can reach out to you by postal mail and/or email about their programs and services. These institutions are required to keep your data secure and may not share your data with any third parties (other than the education organization's own service providers).
- Colleges and universities may send you information about such things as
 - ♦ financial aid opportunities, scholarships, or other ways to make attending their institutions more affordable.
 - ♦ details on campus life and student services.
 - ♦ overviews of majors, courses, and degree options.
 - ♦ deadlines.

For more information, visit bigfuture.collegeboard.org/student-search-service.

If at any time you change your mind and want to stop participating in Student Search Service, please visit my.collegeboard.org/profile/privacy or contact us at SearchCustomerService@collegeboard.org or 866-825-8051. Please note that education organizations that have already received your name and other data may continue to send you information. You may contact such organizations directly to opt out of further communications from them.

CHAPTER 4

What to Expect on Test Day

In this chapter, we review important test day guidelines to help you understand the policies that cover your digital SAT testing experience. You should expect a similar experience to paper and pencil tests (e.g., prohibited behaviors such as attempting to cheat or communicate with other test takers are the same); however, the digital testing environment will include some unique elements that you should know about in advance.

Get Familiar with the Digital Testing App

To perform at your best on test day, you should be familiar with Bluebook, the digital application delivering the test to you.

Bluebook makes taking the digital SAT as easy as possible, allowing you to focus on demonstrating your skills and knowledge on test questions. And you don't need to wait till test day to try it out.

To begin your exploration, simply go to bluebook.app.collegeboard.org to download Bluebook and get started. This link will specify the hardware requirements your device must meet and then direct you on how to download and install the software. You'll need to sign in to or create a College Board account to use Bluebook for practice or official testing.

Test Day Items

Be prepared for test day by making sure you bring only what you need. Leave all prohibited items at home. You won't be able to use or access your phone during the test.

Here are some digital SAT regulations:

- For SAT Weekend, you can present your admission ticket on a mobile device instead of printing it. Your phone will be collected and stored away from your desk before testing begins.
- You should bring a pen or pencil for scratch work. (It doesn't have to be a No. 2 pencil.)
- You must have an eligible testing device (see below), with Bluebook already downloaded on it.
- A calculator isn't required but is allowed (see below).

IMPORTANT!

Most students taking the digital SAT will do so using Bluebook, the digital testing application. However, for those students who require paper and pencil testing as an accommodation, College Board makes linear versions of the digital SAT available. These linear tests use the exact same types of questions as found in the digital version of the SAT. The main difference is that linear tests, being in a different mode, are somewhat longer than their digital counterparts. The extra length is needed because linear tests aren't able to adapt to students' achievement levels during testing and therefore must include more questions to yield scores as valid and reliable as those from digital testing. The crucial point here is that if you expect to take the SAT digitally, you should, if you can, practice digitally.

Though not required, consider bringing

- snacks and drinks (which must be under your desk during testing).
- a power cord or portable charger for your eligible testing device.
- an acceptable calculator for use on the Math section of the test (if you prefer using a handheld calculator instead of using the Desmos Graphing Calculator embedded in Bluebook).*
- extra batteries and backup calculator.

*A battery-operated handheld calculator can be used for testing on the digital SAT Math section (only). No calculator power cords are allowed. If you have a calculator with characters that are 1 inch or higher, or if your calculator has a raised display that might be visible to other test takers, the testing staff will seat you in a location where other students can't see the display. All scientific calculators, which can perform complex mathematical functions but don't have a graphing feature, are acceptable if they don't have any prohibited features. For a list of acceptable graphing calculators and prohibited calculators, see sat.org/calculator. No other calculators are permitted. See also chapter 30 for more information on calculator options.

NOTE

A school-managed device is one owned and/or operated by your school, not a personal device you yourself own.

Eligible Testing Devices

You can take the digital SAT on a wide range of devices, including a personal or school-managed Windows laptop or tablet, a personal or school-managed Mac laptop, a personal or school-managed iPad, or a school-managed Chromebook. You'll need to download Bluebook onto your device before test day. If you're taking the test on a school-managed device, you'll need to ask your school's technology department to install the app for you. Your device must also be able to connect to Wi-Fi and hold a charge for roughly three hours. We recommend you bring a power cord or portable charger, but we can't guarantee you'll have access to an outlet. You're permitted to bring an external mouse for your device and an external keyboard if your device is a tablet. You can't use detachable device privacy screens. All other applications and programs must be closed during the test. You can't simultaneously test on multiple devices.

Testing Guidelines

This section summarizes important guidelines for digital SAT testing. Make sure you complete all the steps below to successfully prepare to take the test.

- Plan ahead and bring equipment that's in good working order and that has enough battery power to last for three hours. Your testing device must be able to connect to Wi-Fi, and you may need to update your operating system to support the digital test.

- If you're registering for SAT Weekend and think you'll need to borrow a testing device, you'll have a chance to request one. See "Borrowing a Device from College Board," below.
- If you're testing with extended time, bring a power cord; your testing site should provide an outlet for recharging if needed.
- You'll need to download Bluebook from bluebook.app.collegeboard.org.
- Between one and five days before the test, you'll need to sign in to the app, agree to the Application Terms and Conditions, and complete exam setup. You'll get access to your admission ticket once you've completed exam setup.
- On test day, you'll follow instructions to complete exam check-in on your testing device and connect to Wi-Fi. Then you'll type a brief statement saying that you agree to follow all test day rules.
- Store any snacks or drinks you bring out of sight in a paper bag under your desk. You may only eat snacks during breaks. The testing staff will tell you where you can go to have your snack.
- Keep your photo ID with you at all times. This is especially important if you leave the testing room. You may be asked to show your ID at any time while at the test site.
- If you're testing with a laptop, don't close your device during testing; leave it open during break time.
- Don't leave the testing room before you're dismissed; if you do, your scores will be canceled.

Borrowing a Device from College Board

For SAT Weekend, students who don't have access to an eligible testing device can request to borrow one from College Board. You may qualify to borrow a testing device if you submit a request at least thirty (30) days before the test date. Submitting a request, however, doesn't guarantee that College Board will grant such a request and provide you with a testing device. If a testing device is provided, additional rules relating to borrowing the device will apply to you. For more information, go to satsuite.collegeboard.org/digital/device-lending.

Technical Support on Test Day

The testing staff will provide additional support on test day. They will ensure the Wi-Fi network is working and will assist you if you encounter connectivity issues. Additionally, a help room will be available for you to fix device issues with the testing staff. We'll also have customer service resources ready to troubleshoot issues on test day. Before, during, and after testing, the Help icon in Bluebook enables users to review troubleshooting tips and FAQs.

Makeup Testing

During bad weather, natural disasters, power outages, or other unusual conditions, test sites may close. If a makeup date is confirmed, you'll be notified.

The following policies apply to makeup testing:

- The availability of makeup testing and the conditions that allow test takers to be eligible to take a makeup test are at the sole discretion of College Board.
- Access to scores from makeup administrations may be delayed by several weeks.



CHAPTER 5

Digital SAT Test-Taking Strategies

In this chapter, we offer suggestions for preparing for and taking the digital SAT. We begin with ways that you can get familiar with the digital SAT as you begin your preparation to take the test, and then we offer some tips for how you can demonstrate your best work on test day. We wrap up with a brief consideration of whether you should retest.

Getting Familiar with the Digital SAT

As you begin your digital SAT practice, you should become comfortable with several aspects of the test and how to take it.

Understand the Test's Purpose

The digital SAT is an assessment of your college and career readiness. It's designed to assess the extent to which you've obtained the necessary prerequisites in reading and writing and in math for success in college and workforce training programs. You should expect that the digital SAT will call on you to demonstrate academic skills and knowledge that the best available evidence indicates are necessary for you to have to be ready for postsecondary education.

The single best preparation for the digital SAT is actively participating in a challenging set of academic courses. Such classes and the digital SAT share the goal of helping ensure that you're ready to succeed in college and career training after you graduate from high school. This means that the skills and knowledge you'll be tested on in the digital SAT will closely resemble those you're called on to demonstrate in your current classes. While there are specific ways the digital SAT tests these skills and knowledge (which we'll go over throughout this book), the key point is that what you'll be tested on should be familiar to you from your classes. The test should also be clearly relevant to you since you'll need these same skills and knowledge to succeed in college and workforce training programs.

SECTION PREVIEW

In this section, we cover the following topics:

- Test purpose
- Test basics
- Bluebook
- Digital testing tools in Bluebook
- The adaptive test engine
- Test directions
- Question formats
- Question types

Know the Test Basics

Before taking the digital SAT (or any test), it's important to have a sense of the test's key features. Chapter 2 provides an overview and discussion of all those features. Here, we recap a few of the most relevant points as they pertain to your test preparation.

- **Test components:** A Reading and Writing section and a Math section
- **Number of questions:** 98 (54 Reading and Writing questions, 44 Math questions), with each test section divided into two equal-length, separately timed modules consisting of half the section's questions (27 questions for each Reading and Writing module, 22 questions for each Math module)
- **Time allotted:** 134 minutes (64 minutes for the Reading and Writing section, 70 minutes for the Math section), with each test section divided into two equal-length, separately timed modules of questions (32 minutes for each Reading and Writing module, 35 minutes for each Math module)
- **Scores**
 - ♦ Two section scores (Reading and Writing; Math), each on a 200–800 scale
 - ♦ A total score (sum of the Reading and Writing and Math section scores) on a 400–1600 scale

SAT Test Preview

One option offered by Bluebook—and one we strongly encourage you to make use of—is SAT Test Preview. SAT Test Preview gives you an untimed, stress-free option to explore Bluebook, try out the tools, and test out any assistive technology you might be using on test day. SAT Test Preview presents you with the directions for each test section and a small selection of sample questions. These questions aren't primarily to test your skills and knowledge but rather to get you up and running on how to appropriately respond to questions during your practice or on test day itself. You can also gain some experience with the app's tools for annotating text and for flagging questions to return to should time permit, and you can experiment with hiding and revealing the testing app's countdown timer, if you wish. When getting familiar with the Math section, you'll be able to learn how to use the built-in Demos Graphing Calculator as well as the reference sheet with common math formulas. (Neither of these tools is available—or needed—during the Reading and Writing section.) See chapter 30 for more on your calculator options and chapter 31 for a copy of the reference sheet.

When you finish each mini section in SAT Test Preview, you'll be reminded of questions you either flagged to return to and/or haven't yet answered. This feature helps ensure that you don't make careless mistakes when responding and will have the best chance to perform up to your achievement level.

STRATEGY

We **strongly recommend** that all students planning to take the SAT digitally spend some time exploring Bluebook using SAT Test Preview.

Official Full-Length Practice Tests

In addition to hosting SAT Test Preview, Bluebook is also your hub for official full-length SAT practice tests. Simply sign in to Bluebook to get started. The practice tests available via Bluebook have been written by the same developers College Board uses to produce the tests taken on test day, so you can be confident that you'll be measured on the same skills and knowledge, in the same ways, and at the same level of challenge as on test day. These Bluebook practice tests are also adaptive, like those on test day, meaning that you'll gain practical experience with how the adaptive test design used for the digital SAT works. Finally, because you'll be practicing in the same digital testing app as the one you'll be using on test day, you'll be gaining facility with the testing app while you practice. You can link to My Practice from Bluebook to access answer explanations and information about your estimated test scores to make the most of your practice in Bluebook.

Get Familiar with Digital Testing Tools

Bluebook offers several tools that you may choose to use to improve your testing experience. Among the key tools available to all students testing digitally are those that allow test takers to

- annotate text (Reading and Writing section only).
- cross out answer options in multiple-choice questions.
- display or (until the five-minutes-remaining mark) hide a countdown timer.
- access the test directions and the Math section's reference sheet during testing.
- flag questions within a given test module to return to.
- access a display informing you of how many questions in each test module you've either flagged or left unanswered and allowing you to jump to any question within a module.
- use the built-in Desmos Graphing Calculator (Math section only).
- adjust magnification (zoom with keyboard shortcuts on laptops or by pinching on tablets).
- modify color contrast using system settings before testing.

Remember that you're free to navigate among questions in a given test module as long as testing time remains. This means, for example, that you can preview upcoming questions or return to flagged or unanswered questions should time permit.

Understand the Nature of Adaptive SAT Testing

As discussed in chapter 2, the digital SAT uses a simple two-stage adaptive model to improve your testing experience, primarily by making it as short as possible while retaining the test's value as a fair, valid, and reliable measure of what you know and can do with respect to college and career readiness requirements.

LINEAR PRACTICE

For students preparing to take the SAT with pencil and paper, College Board has also made available a number of nonadaptive test forms. These forms are found in part 4 of this book and are also obtainable via free download (satsuite.collegeboard.org/digital/digital-practice-preparation/practice-tests/linear). These linear versions of the tests are recommended only for those students who will be testing using paper and pencil. We recommend that all other students instead make use of the opportunity to take full-length practice via Bluebook. See "Introduction to the Practice Tests" in Part 4 for more information about these practice forms, including how they differ in terms of timing and number of questions from digital adaptive forms.

The key practical implication for you is that each of the two test sections on the digital SAT is divided into two separately timed, equal-length modules of questions. After you answer the questions in the first module of each test section, Bluebook will automatically route you to either a higher- or lower-difficulty second module of questions, depending on your performance on the first module's questions.

Each of the two possible second modules of questions contains a mix of easy, medium, and hard questions, although in different proportions. This means that when you move into the second module, you shouldn't expect to encounter only easy or only hard questions. In fact, the differences between the two possible modules, in terms of average question difficulty, are slight enough that you may not know which of the two possibilities you were routed to.

We suggest not thinking of the two modules in a test section as two separate tests, even though each has its own time limit. Rather, you should think about the two modules as two parts of a single test in either reading and writing or math. Your section scores are based on your performance on *all* test questions in the section. If you're routed to the higher-difficulty second module, you don't need to answer every question correctly to get a good score; conversely, if you're routed to the lower-difficulty second module, you'll have a full opportunity to answer questions in the module correctly and show what you know and can do.

A NOTE ON LINEAR SAT TEST FORMS

Linear (nonadaptive) versions of digital SAT test forms are available for students who require them as testing accommodations. These linear forms are longer in terms of number of questions and testing time due to their nonadaptive nature, but otherwise these linear forms are highly comparable to digital adaptive forms and also yield scores that can be reported to colleges and universities.

The essential point is that, in general terms, you'll get the same section and total scores on the digital SAT that you would've gotten had the test not been adaptive, except that the test would need to have been significantly longer to reach that conclusion. That's because in typical large-scale nonadaptive testing programs, such as the previous paper-based versions of the SAT, test makers must present each test taker with the same broad range of question difficulties, from very easy to very hard. While this works well enough for test takers in general, this approach isn't particularly efficient because any given individual is likely to encounter questions that are too easy or too hard for them. Such questions don't tell us much about the individual's capabilities. Correctly answering a too-easy question doesn't really help establish the upper limits of what the test taker knows and can do, and incorrectly answering a question that's too hard doesn't reveal much about what the test taker does know and can demonstrate.

The multistage adaptive model used in the digital SAT improves on this approach by targeting question difficulty more closely to the skills and knowledge of individual students than is possible in a nonadaptive test. This is beneficial to you because it means that the same information about your skills and knowledge can be obtained with fewer questions and less time. It also means you'll more likely be able to give your full effort and attention throughout the test than you would if the test were longer.

Learn the Test Directions Prior to Test Day

We strongly encourage you to become familiar with the directions for the digital SAT prior to test day. You won't have to memorize them because you'll have access to them throughout the test if you wish, but any time you spend reading directions on test day is time not spent answering questions.

The best way to become familiar with the test directions is through practice activities. SAT Test Preview, discussed above, allows you to read the test's directions in advance and to apply your understanding by answering a few sample test questions. Our official full-length practice tests, also discussed previously, contain the directions as well.

The directions for the digital SAT are straightforward. For most questions, you simply need to select the best (Reading and Writing) or correct (Math) option from among a set of provided answer choices. The exception to this is the SPR question format in Math. These questions lack answer options and require you to generate and enter your own answer. Directions for entering SPR answers in Bluebook can be found in chapter 29.

Know the Two Test Question Formats

Most digital SAT questions—all Reading and Writing questions and most Math questions—are in the multiple-choice format. Each of these questions has four answer choices, and your job is to determine which of these choices is the best (Reading and Writing) or correct (Math) answer.

About a quarter of Math questions are in the SPR format. As noted above, these questions lack answer options and instead require you to generate and enter your own answers. These questions are essentially tests of whether you can apply your math skills and knowledge in cases where the scaffolding and support of answer choices isn't provided. Examples of questions in the SPR format can be found throughout this book's discussion of the Math section, and chapter 29 is devoted to explaining how to properly enter your answers. Note that some SPR questions may have more than one possible answer, but you're only ever required to enter a single answer to each question in this format.

NOTE

Some Math multiple-choice questions also have more than one possible real-world answer, but only one correct answer will be provided among the options you're given.

Get Familiar with the Various Question Types

Chapter 7 (Reading and Writing) and chapter 19 (Math) provide overviews of the types of questions you'll be asked on test day, while subsequent chapters in parts 2 and 3 of this book go into detail about the skills and knowledge these question types require you to demonstrate and provide opportunities for immediate practice.

Becoming aware of and comfortable with the types of questions you'll be asked is a critical element of your preparation for several reasons. First, and most obviously, it's important for you to know *what* skills and knowledge you'll be required to demonstrate on the digital SAT. Second, it's important to know *how* these skills and knowledge are tested (i.e., in what types of questions) so that you're better prepared to answer correctly. Finally, an understanding of question types is helpful for practice, as you can hone your preparation on those topics that you may be struggling with.

The question drills in parts 2 (Reading and Writing) and 3 (Math) of this book are one way for you to gain this familiarity, as these practice sequences include a good representation of question types organized by content domain (e.g., Information and Ideas in Reading and Writing; Problem-Solving and Data Analysis in Math). Visiting Khan Academy for free Official Digital SAT Prep on Khan Academy at khanacademy.org/digital-sat is another excellent option.

SECTION PREVIEW

In this section, we cover the following topics:

- Reading every question carefully
- Answering every question
- Making use of the question order
- Pacing yourself
- Knowing when to move on

Doing Your Best on Test Day

In this section, we focus on specific strategies that you can use on test day to maximize your performance.

Read Every Question Carefully

It's important that you read every question on the digital SAT carefully to know what you're being asked to demonstrate. Although this takes time and effort, there are compensations.

- You'll know exactly what you're being asked, so you're less likely to make a careless error when answering. This can be particularly important for multiple-choice questions, as the incorrect answers often play into common mistakes that test takers make or misconceptions that they hold.
- You may encounter some important contextual information that changes how you'd otherwise understand the question. This is true in both test sections. Some Reading and Writing questions, especially those associated with the literature subject area, supply important background information to make interpreting a given passage easier. In-context questions in Math, which constitute about 30% of questions in the section, require you to read and understand the scenarios presented in order to answer properly.
- You'll notice important qualifiers. A few Math questions, for example, may use "not" or "NOT" in the question to signal that you're looking for what's *not* the case. Missing out on that qualifier will leave you adrift in the question.

It's worth noting that College Board takes great pains to ensure the clarity and conciseness of each test question. In other words, we're not trying to trick or overload you with the wording of questions. We want the challenge posed by our test questions to come solely from the ease or difficulty of performing given tasks, not from students struggling to understand what they're being asked to do.

To this end, you may note that we make use of standardized question language whenever it makes sense to do so. For instance, in Rhetorical Synthesis questions in Reading and Writing (see chapter 15 for more details), you'll always be presented with a set of notes taken by a hypothetical student and asked to use relevant information from the notes to meet the student's goal as a writer, such as introducing an artist to an audience unfamiliar with that artist or their work. While the basic framing is the same from one Rhetorical Synthesis question to the next, the hypothetical student's goal varies from question to question, as will, of course, the student's notes and the topic they address. So you'll want to pay close attention to the specified goal in each question, as meeting this goal most effectively is the objective of answering the question.

Answer Every Question

There's no penalty for guessing on the digital SAT, so there's no reason not to answer every question in both sections. But what if you're not sure of the answer? There are a few things you can do to improve your odds of responding properly.

- First, you may find it beneficial to flag questions you're having trouble with to return to should time permit. You don't want to flag too many questions, but you don't want to get hung up on one or two questions about which you're uncertain when you could be answering other questions in a module with greater confidence.
- Second, for multiple-choice questions that you're not sure of the answer for, try to eliminate one or more incorrect answer choices. (The Bluebook testing application has an answer elimination option for this very reason.) You're much more likely to answer correctly if you can reduce your possible responses by two or even one than if you randomly guess.
- Third, as a last resort, randomly guess on multiple-choice questions that you're uncertain of the answer to and when time's running out. Admittedly, you're not likely to correctly answer many questions to which you randomly guessed the answer, but you'll definitely get none of the questions right that you don't answer at all.

After you've reached the end of a module but before time has expired, the questions you've flagged to return to and the questions you haven't answered at all will appear on your Check Your Work page. Use this information in the remaining moments of your testing to address as

many of these questions as possible. Use your timed practice (see below) to get a better sense of when you should make this turn toward finalizing your answers to questions in each module.

Make Use of the Question Order

As also discussed in chapter 7 (Reading and Writing) and chapter 19 (Math), digital SAT questions are ordered in particular ways, and knowing these patterns can help you during testing.

In the Reading and Writing section, each module begins with Craft and Structure questions, followed by Information and Ideas, Standard English Conventions, and Expression of Ideas questions. Within all but the Standard English Conventions content domain, questions are further ordered by type, meaning that similar questions appear together. This is beneficial to you because it allows you to get into a rhythm by answering questions of the same type consecutively, with a minimum of context switching. This can also be an aid to pacing, as we discuss later. Note, however, that Reading and Writing questions aren't strictly ordered by question difficulty, so within each module you can expect to see easy, medium, and hard questions mingled.

In Math, questions are ordered by difficulty, from easiest to hardest, within each module. While you're free to navigate through the questions in each module and answer them in any order you choose, you may find more success working from the start of a given module to the end, given that the easier questions appear earlier than the harder ones. Of course, "easy" and "hard" are relative terms, and what's easy for one test taker may be hard for you and vice versa. Nonetheless, you may find that moving sequentially—question by question—through a Math module offers some benefit to you because of the ordering by difficulty.

Pace Yourself

Pacing is critical to success on the digital SAT. To get your best score, you need to spend the right amount of time on each question—no more, no less.

In Reading and Writing, you'll have about 1.2 minutes to read and answer each question, and you'll have about 1.6 minutes to read and answer each Math question. Since digital SAT questions are relatively brief, this should give you adequate time to give your best answer in each case as long as you're adequately prepared.

As we've argued, part of that preparation is understanding the purpose of the SAT; the test basics; Bluebook and its tools; the adaptive test engine; the test directions; and the question formats and types. Another crucial part is practice under timed conditions. The question drills throughout part 2 and part 3 of this book are geared toward untimed practice—in other words, the focus is intended to be on getting familiar with the way the digital SAT presents questions.

By contrast, the full-length practice test opportunities available through Bluebook and this book are ideal opportunities to practice under test-like conditions and to get a better handle on how long particular formats and types of questions are going to take you.

In general:

- Reading and Writing questions in the Information and Ideas content domain are usually the lengthiest and require the most time, on average, while questions in the Standard English Conventions domain are typically the briefest and take the least time, on average. Craft and Structure and Expression of Ideas questions usually fall somewhere in between.
- Math questions set in context are likely to take a bit longer to answer than Math questions not in context, as you'll have to spend some time and effort reading and understanding the scenarios being laid out.

Know When to Move On

Finally, it may sometimes be worth it to give up on particular test questions and move on to others for the sake of time. As mentioned above, we still suggest giving your best answer to every question, but there may be some that you really just don't know the answer to or perhaps even how to approach. When this happens, you should then take your best guess rather than not answer, particularly for multiple-choice questions. Grinding away on such questions is probably not worth it, even if you end up getting them right, as there's an opportunity cost in the form of other questions you might have answered more skillfully had you given them adequate time.

This may be obvious, but it's not necessary to get every question on the digital SAT correct to score well. In that spirit, don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Focus on your strengths and avoid getting bogged down in one or more questions that stump you.

Should I Retest?

Let's say you've done everything we suggested, practiced extensively, and taken the digital SAT. You've gotten your scores back, and while you're not unhappy with them, you feel as though you could've done better. Should you retest?

In general, College Board recommends that students take the SAT at least twice—in the spring of their junior year and the fall of their senior year. The most important reason for this is because research has shown that SAT test takers' scores tend to go up between tests, due to a combination of enhanced learning and greater familiarity with the test itself. What's more, colleges tend to use students' highest SAT scores as the basis for decision-making, and many use a practice known as superscoring in which a student's highest SAT Reading and Writing section score is paired with their highest SAT Math section score.

It's possible that your scores could increase between a first and second testing simply due to you becoming more familiar with the digital SAT itself. However, you're more likely to improve scores between testing if you spend the intervening time identifying and working on academic shortcomings associated with the digital SAT. This is where additional resources, such as your score report (discussed in more detail in chapter 3), full-length practice tests, and Official Digital SAT Prep on Khan Academy, can be hugely beneficial. These various resources can help you pinpoint weaknesses that you need to address and provide information and suggestions about how to improve on them.



CHAPTER 6

Using This Book to Prepare for the Digital PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10

Overview

The digital SAT is part of a system of tests—the SAT Suite of Assessments—created by College Board to assess students' progress toward college and career readiness. Two other important pieces of this suite are the digital Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) and PSAT 10. These two tests are the same in terms of content, differing mainly in when students take them and how they're used. The PSAT/NMSQT is administered in the fall of each year, typically to high school juniors, and serves as the qualifying test for entry to the National Merit® Scholarship Program conducted by National Merit Scholarship Corporation. The PSAT 10 is administered in the spring, typically to high school sophomores, and does *not* have any connection to this scholarship program.

Whether you take the digital PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10, the test and its results are useful to you in several ways. First, as we'll discuss in more detail below, the PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 are highly similar in content to the SAT, meaning that preparation and practice for either of these earlier tests will carry over into getting ready for the SAT and that your PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10 scores are good indicators of how well you'd perform on the SAT if you'd taken it instead. Second, the PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 provide important measures of your progress toward attaining college and career readiness. You can use the results to check in on your progress, engage in career exploration, identify areas of strength and weakness in your academic preparation, and plan steps to address any shortcomings. Third, as previously mentioned, taking the PSAT/NMSQT in the fall of your junior year is one requirement for entry to the National Merit Scholarship Corporation's annual scholarship program.

By design, the digital PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 tests are very similar to the digital SAT. Among other things, this means that **you can use the content of this book, including the advice, sample questions, and practice tests, to help you prepare to take either the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10.** There are just a few important differences worth noting.

Table 1 compares the digital SAT to the digital PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10. The few differences between the SAT and the two PSAT-related assessments are discussed afterward.

Table 1. Comparison of the Digital SAT and Digital PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 Tests

Feature	SAT	PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10
Reading and Writing		
Number of questions	54	54
Total time allotted (minutes)	64	64
Average time per question (minutes)	1.19	1.19
Math		
Number of questions	44	44
Total time allotted (minutes)	70	70
Average time per question (minutes)	1.59	1.59
Score scales		
Section	200–800	160–760
Total	400–1600	320–1520
Question distribution—format		
READING AND WRITING:		
Multiple-choice	100%	100%
MATH:		
Multiple-choice	~75%	~75%
Student-produced response	~25%	~25%
Question distribution—content domain		
READING AND WRITING:		
Information and Ideas	~26%	~26%
Craft and Structure	~28%	~28%
Expression of Ideas	~24%	~24%
Standard English Conventions	~22%	~22%
MATH:		
Algebra	~35%	~35%
Advanced Math	~35%	~32.5%
Problem-Solving and Data Analysis	~15%	~20%
Geometry and Trigonometry	~15%	~12.5%
Administration	Two-stage adaptive test design; each stage consists of a module of questions	
Organization	Reading and Writing section, Math section	
	Each section consists of two separately timed modules of questions	
Scores reported	♦ Reading and Writing section score ♦ Math section score ♦ total score	
Skills and knowledge tested	Reading and Writing: ♦ No differences Math: Tested only on the digital SAT— ♦ margins of error ♦ evaluating statistical claims associated with observational studies and experiments ♦ circles	

Differences between the Digital SAT and the Digital PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10

There are only a few differences between the digital SAT and the digital PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10.

- **Score scales.** The tests of the digital SAT Suite of Assessments are on the same vertical scale. This means that your score on any one test in the suite is a good predictor of how well you'd score on a later test in the suite had you taken it instead. One consequence of the vertical scaling is that the tests' score scales are slightly different to allow for continued growth in subsequent tests. As a result, the digital PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 have section scores that are on a 160–760 scale and total scores that are on a 320–1520 scale, whereas the digital SAT's section scores are on a 200–800 scale and its total score is on a 400–1600 scale.
- **Question distribution—content domains.** The approximate proportion of Reading and Writing questions in each of the section's four content domains is the same on the digital SAT and the digital PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10. The approximate proportion of Math questions in each of that section's four content domains varies slightly, with the digital SAT having slightly higher proportions of Advanced Math as well as Geometry and Trigonometry questions and a slightly lower proportion of Problem-Solving and Data Analysis questions.
- **Skills and knowledge tested.** The skills and knowledge tested in the Reading and Writing section are the same in the digital SAT and the digital PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10. The same is true for Math, with the following exceptions:
 - ♦ *Problem-Solving and Data Analysis.* The digital SAT (only) may have questions about margins of error and about evaluating statistical claims associated with observational studies and experiments.
 - ♦ *Geometry and Trigonometry.* The digital SAT (only) may have questions about circles.

NOTE

PSAT 8/9 is another test in the digital SAT Suite, one typically given to eighth and ninth graders. You don't need to study for the PSAT 8/9. The best way you can prepare is to pay attention in class and do your homework. The test is meant to assess the skills you are currently learning in school.

PART 2

Reading and Writing Section



CHAPTER 7

Reading and Writing: Overview

The Reading and Writing section of the digital SAT is, along with the Math section, one of the two main portions of the test. In the Reading and Writing section, you'll answer questions that test your ability to read, analyze, and use information and ideas in passages (texts); explain how and why authors make the choices that they do; revise passages to improve how information and ideas are expressed; and edit passages so that they meet expectations of Standard English sentence structure, usage, and punctuation.

In this chapter, we'll cover the whole Reading and Writing section at an overview level so that you'll have a general sense of what you'll be tested on and how. Subsequent chapters will go into more details about the passages, informational graphics, and questions found in the section.

The Section at a Glance

Table 1 provides an overview of the digital SAT Reading and Writing section. Each feature is discussed in the following subsections.

Number of Questions, Timing, and Pacing

Each Reading and Writing test section is divided into two equal-length *modules* of questions. Each of these modules is separately timed, so you'll have 32 minutes to answer the 27 questions in each module. That averages out to 1.19 minutes per question.

Score

You'll receive a Reading and Writing section score based on your performance. Section scores range from 200 to 800, in 10-point intervals. Your scores on the Reading and Writing and Math sections added together will give you your total score for the SAT, which is on a 400–1600 scale, also in 10-point intervals.

PREVIEW

Chapters 8 and 9 discuss in detail the kinds of passages and informational graphics found in the Reading and Writing section, respectively. Chapters 10–18 cover the kinds of questions you'll encounter and provide drills that you can use for immediate practice.

QUICK TAKE

You'll have **64 minutes** to answer **54 multiple-choice Reading and Writing questions**. This averages out to **1.19 minutes per question**. These questions will be divided into **two separately timed modules** of 32 minutes each.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For an explanation of why the Reading and Writing (and Math) section is divided into two separately timed modules, see chapter 2.

Table 1. Reading and Writing Section Overview.

Feature	SAT Reading and Writing Section
<i>Timing and Pacing</i>	
Number of questions	1st module: 27 questions
	2nd module: 27 questions
	Total: 54 questions
Time per module	1st module: 32 minutes
	2nd module: 32 minutes
	Total: 64 minutes
Average time per question	1.19 minutes
<i>Score</i>	
Score	Reading and Writing section score (200–800 scale); one-half of the SAT total score
<i>Passages</i>	
Words per passage (or passage pair)	25–150
Passage subject areas	Literature
	History/social studies
	Humanities
	Science
Passage text type	Literary
	Informational/explanatory
	Argumentative
Text complexity bands	Grades 6–8
	Grades 9–11
	Grades 12–14
Informational graphics (included with select passages)	Tables
	Bar graphs
	Line graphs
<i>Questions</i>	
Question format	Four-option multiple-choice, each with a single best answer; all questions are independent of each other
Question content domains (categories)	Information and Ideas
	Craft and Structure
	Expression of Ideas
	Standard English Conventions

Passages

Each Reading and Writing question is accompanied by a brief *passage*, which questions in the Reading and Writing section refer to as a *text*. Each passage is short—as few as 25 words to a maximum of 150 words. Some questions will instead include a pair of passages on the same topic or similar topics; together, these passages will be 150 words or fewer in length.

Each passage has a number of important traits, which we'll describe here briefly and focus on in detail in chapter 8.

- Each passage has a **subject area**. This represents the nature of the topic being presented. Passages in the Reading and Writing section represent the subject areas of literature, history/social studies, the humanities, and science. It's helpful to pay attention to the subject area of a given passage because different subjects convey information and ideas in different ways, and knowing something about how each subject shares knowledge can give you an edge in responding to questions. You won't, however, be tested on what you already know about the topic of each passage, as all the information needed to answer each question is contained in the passage itself (and in any accompanying informational graphic).
- Each passage has a **text type**. The three text types represented in the Reading and Writing section are literary, informative/explanatory, and argumentative. It's useful to note the text type of a given passage because, as with subject area, the purpose for which a passage is written (e.g., to entertain, to explain, to convince) influences how its information and ideas are conveyed and organized as well as what kinds of details are included and what roles they serve.
- Each passage has a **text complexity** rating. *Text complexity* is a measure of how easy or difficult a given passage is. When we develop Reading and Writing passages, they get assigned to one of three text complexity bands: grades 6–8, grades 9–11, and grades 12–14. A given passage's text complexity is based on a number of factors, such as how long and sophisticated (or short and straightforward) its sentences are, how challenging (or familiar) its vocabulary is, and how much information it conveys and at what rate. You won't find text complexity ratings listed for passages on the test, and we don't advise paying too much attention to how easy or difficult any passage you encounter on test day is. Still, it's helpful to know that some passages will be relatively straightforward while others will be as challenging as those you'll be assigned in common first-year college courses.

The passages for certain questions will also include an **informational graphic**. Informational graphics in the Reading and Writing section consist of tables, bar graphs, and line graphs, which are among the most common tools authors use to display data visually.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Reading and Writing questions refer to the brief readings they include as *texts*. In this guide, we use the term *passages* to refer to these texts in order to avoid possible confusion with other types of real-world texts you may encounter.

QUICK TAKE

Each passage has a **subject area**, **text type**, and **text complexity**, and some passages are accompanied by an **informational graphic**. Understanding these features can help you better prepare to read and understand the passages on test day.

Questions that include a graphic may ask you to locate data, interpret information (e.g., identify a trend), or combine data from the graphic with information in the passage in a meaningful way. You won't, however, have to "do math" with graphics in the Reading and Writing section. No question in the Reading and Writing section will ask you to perform calculations, and the use of a calculator isn't permitted in the section. Instead, you'll apply the numeracy skills you've acquired in various classes, including in history/social studies and science courses, to find and make strategic use of data from tables and graphs to come to a fuller understanding of the topics presented in passages.

QUICK TAKE

Each four-option multiple-choice Reading and Writing question has one (and only one) best answer.

Your job is to determine which choice that is and to avoid being tempted by incorrect answers. All test questions are independent of each other; there are no question sets.

Questions

All questions in the Reading and Writing section are multiple-choice. Each question has four answer choices and one (and only one) best answer, known as the *key*. The three incorrect answer choices represent common errors that students may make when answering a given question (which is why, in test maker lingo, incorrect multiple-choice options are sometimes called *distractors*, because they're meant to be at least somewhat tempting). Your task on test day will be figuring out the best answer for each question using your reading and writing skills and knowledge.

All Reading and Writing questions are independent of each other. (These sorts of questions are sometimes described as *discrete*.) This means that each question is self-contained and can be answered on its own, without reference to any other question. In practical terms, this means that instead of reading a few long passages and answering multiple questions about each one, you'll be reading many short passages and answering a single question about each. This has important implications for preparing for and taking the test: if you struggle with a particular passage, just give your best answer and move on (and possibly flag the question to return to if time permits).

QUICK TAKE

Each Reading and Writing question falls into one of four categories, or *content domains*: Information and Ideas, Craft and Structure, Expression of Ideas, and Standard English Conventions. **Each question tests one (and only one) skill** (e.g., Central Ideas and Details).

Each Reading and Writing question tests a single skill. The skills tested by digital SAT Reading and Writing questions fall into four broad categories, or *content domains*. Each of these domains captures a "big idea" in reading and writing. We'll describe each of these briefly to orient you now and then unpack each content domain in later chapters.

Table 2 offers an overview of the four content domains in the Reading and Writing section, including the "big idea," or main focus, of each domain, the specific skills and knowledge on which you may be tested, and roughly how many questions of each domain appear in the test section.

The first two domains—Information and Ideas and Craft and Structure—mainly test reading skills, while the second two domains—Expression of Ideas and Standard English Conventions—mainly test writing skills.

Questions in each Reading and Writing test module will follow the sequence listed in table 3.

Within the content domains of Information and Ideas, Craft and Structure, and Expression of Ideas, questions testing the same skills (e.g., Central Ideas and Details in the Information and Ideas content domain) appear alongside each other. This is so you can concentrate on one type of question at a time, without having to switch back and forth among the various skills tested. Standard English Conventions questions, on the other hand, won't be organized by skill, so you might encounter Boundaries and Form, Structure, and Sense conventions questions in any order on your test form.

Being aware of this sequencing can help you manage your time since some question types can take longer to answer than others. However, it's important to be aware that the exact number of questions per skill within a module can vary.

Questions in each Reading and Writing module aren't strictly ordered by difficulty, so you may come across a hard question followed by an easier one and vice versa. Just do your best to answer each question, and remember that you can flag questions to return to if time permits.

IMPORTANT: UNSCORED QUESTIONS

Four Reading and Writing questions on each test form—two different questions per module—won't count toward your section score. These questions are ones that College Board is studying for potential use on future tests. Your answers to these questions won't impact your section score in any way. You won't be able to tell these questions apart from the ones in the section that do get scored, but there are few enough of them that their presence won't significantly affect your test taking.

Table 2. Reading and Writing Section Content Domains.

Reading and Writing Section Content Domain	The Big Idea	Skills and Knowledge Tested	Proportion of Test Section
Information and Ideas	Questions in this domain test your understanding of what you read.	Central Ideas and Details Command of Evidence ♦ Textual ♦ Quantitative Inferences	12–14 questions (about 26%)
Craft and Structure	Questions in this domain test your understanding of how and why authors write the way they do.	Words in Context Text Structure and Purpose Cross-Text Connections	13–15 questions (about 28%)
Expression of Ideas	Questions in this domain test your ability to revise passages to meet particular writing goals.	Rhetorical Synthesis Transitions	8–12 questions (about 20%)
Standard English Conventions	Questions in this domain test your ability to edit passages for conventional sentence structure, usage, and punctuation.	Boundaries Form, Structure, and Sense	11–15 questions (about 26%)

Table 3. Reading and Writing Section Question Order.

Reading and Writing Modules	Content Domain Sequence
1st module	Craft and Structure questions
	Information and Ideas questions
	Standard English Conventions questions
	Expression of Ideas questions
2nd module	Craft and Structure questions
	Information and Ideas questions
	Standard English Conventions questions
	Expression of Ideas questions

Summary: Reading and Writing Section

Timing and pacing

- 64 minutes to answer 54 questions across two separately timed modules of 32 minutes each
- An average of 1.19 minutes to answer each question

Score

- A Reading and Writing section score on a 200–800 scale, in 10-point intervals (one-half of the total score for the digital SAT, which is on an 800–1600 scale, also in 10-point intervals)

Passages

- 25–150 words per passage (or passage pair)
- Subject areas of literature, history/social studies, the humanities, and science
- An informational graphic (table, bar graph, or line graph) included with select passages
- Text complexities of grades 6–8, grades 9–11, and grades 12–14

Questions

- Four-option multiple-choice, each with a single best answer (*key*)
- All questions independent of each other (i.e., no question sets)

- Content domains of Information and Ideas, Craft and Structure, Expression of Ideas, and Standard English Conventions
 - ♦ On the test, Craft and Structure questions appear first in each module, followed by Information and Ideas, Standard English Conventions, and Expression of Ideas questions.
 - ♦ Except for Standard English Conventions questions, questions within each content domain are grouped together by skill (e.g., Central Ideas and Details) being tested.
- Each question tied to a single skill within one of the four content domains
- Easier and harder questions may appear alongside each other
- 4 unscored questions (2 different questions per module)



CHAPTER 8

Reading and Writing: Passages

This chapter examines the key features of the passages you'll be asked to work with in the Reading and Writing section. This information will help you unpack the passages you read during practice and on test day so that you're better prepared to answer associated test questions correctly. Over the course of this chapter, we'll demonstrate three strategies for unlocking the meaning of Reading and Writing passages: (1) determining a passage's main purpose, (2) identifying its central (main) idea, and (3) analyzing its structure. Using one or more of these strategies can help you obtain a high-level grasp of each passage, which can, in turn, help you answer whatever question you're ultimately presented with.

The Basics

Each Reading and Writing question includes a *passage* (which the test refers to as a *text*) or, in some cases, a pair of passages on the same topic. Each passage is tied to one (and only one) question, meaning that you can approach each question separately, without reference to any other question in the section.

As we noted in the previous chapter, all passages have three traits: a **subject area**, a **text type**, and a **text complexity**. Some passages also have a fourth trait: an **informational graphic**, which may be a table, bar graph, or line graph. We'll address the first three traits in this chapter and devote the next chapter to the informational graphics found in the Reading and Writing section.

All the information needed to answer each question is in the passage itself (and in any accompanying informational graphic). This benefits all test takers because it makes the Reading and Writing section a test of reading and writing skills and knowledge and not a test of what topics students such as you may or may not have had a chance to learn about in school.

This also means that you should **always answer questions based on what's stated or strongly implied in the passage (and any graphic)** rather than on what you know or believe about a topic.

PREVIEW

This chapter will discuss traits of Reading and Writing passages as well as present several broad strategies to help you better understand the passages.

QUICK TAKE

Each Reading and Writing passage has a **subject area**, **text type**, and **text complexity**. Select passages also have an **informational graphic**. All the information needed to answer each question is contained in its accompanying passage (and any informational graphic). Answer each question based on what's stated or strongly implied in the passage itself (and any graphic).

QUICK TAKE

Each Reading and Writing passage represents one of **four subject areas: literature, history/social studies, the humanities, and science**. Texts in each subject area convey information and ideas differently and for different purposes.

QUICK TAKE

Determining the **main purpose** and **central (main) idea** of passages are two of the three broad strategies we'll use in this chapter. The third strategy, analyzing **structure**, will appear later in this chapter.

Subject Area

Each passage belongs to one of **four subject areas: literature, history/social studies, the humanities, and science**. This is important because test passages (as well as real-world texts in these areas) convey information and ideas in differing ways by subject and have differing concerns, or things that authors writing in these subjects care about and are trying to communicate to readers.

Literature passages in the Reading and Writing section are excerpted from previously published works, such as novels, plays, and poems. Passages in all other subject areas are written specifically for the test in ways that simulate real-world texts in these areas.

As we analyze a sample passage from each of the four subject areas, we'll consider how we can determine the **main purpose** and the **central (main) idea** of each passage.

A statement of a passage's **main purpose** focuses on the author's aim in writing the text and is phrased in terms of what the author is trying to accomplish and why. Statements of purpose generally contain two elements:

- a verb signaling intent, such as “[to] persuade,” “[to] convince,” or “[to] explain,” and
- a “that” or “in order to” clause signaling more specifically what the author is trying to do, such as “[to persuade readers] that the proposed policy should be adopted” or “[to explain why the experiment likely failed] in order to prevent similar failures by other scientists.”

A statement of a passage's **central idea**, on the other hand, summarizes the informational content of the passage. In simpler terms, it conveys what the primary “message” of the passage is. Statements of central ideas are factual in content and are typically phrased as declarative sentences (e.g., “Researchers found that the new method of crop rotation increased yields by 30 percent on average”).

The concepts of main purpose and central idea are closely related. Main purpose is about *why* the author is writing, whereas central idea is about *what* the author is trying to communicate.

With those two concepts in mind, let's examine sample passages from each of the four subject areas represented in the Reading and Writing section. As we look at each sample, we'll work to uncover the main purpose and central idea of each passage using only information and ideas in the passages themselves.

Literature

Authors write literary texts mainly to share ideas and experiences (real or fictional) in vivid, memorable ways that engage readers at many levels—intellectual, emotional, moral, and so on. Works of literature come in many forms, including novels, dramas, and poems. While

these forms differ in many specifics, they all exhibit literary techniques such as evocative word choice, telling (revealing, characterizing) details, and figurative language (e.g., symbolism, metaphors). For literature questions in the Reading and Writing section, the reading skills you've developed in your English language arts classes are most applicable.

Literature passages in the Reading and Writing section include excerpts from previously published novels, short stories, plays, and poems as well as works of literary nonfiction (e.g., memoirs, personal essays). The original works from which literature passages are sampled represent a broad range of authors, styles, perspectives, and time periods and include works produced by writers from the United States and around the world; works originally in English as well as in translation; classic and contemporary works; and widely read and less familiar works. You don't need to have read any of the original works beforehand, however, as all the information needed to answer questions based on literature passages is, as always, included in the passages themselves.

Because they're excerpted from previously published works, literature passages in the Reading and Writing section will include some information about the author and the work, such as the author's name, the title of the work, and the year the work was first published. We suggest that you *not* skip over this information, as knowing who the author is and when the author was writing may help you properly set your expectations for what you'll read. For instance, if the work was originally published in the nineteenth century, you can reasonably expect that the vocabulary and style of writing will differ from what we typically find in more modern literature. In addition, this introductory material may include context that will help you understand the passage, such as a description of the setting or a quick summary of prior events to help set the scene.

Because Reading and Writing literature passages are so brief, don't expect to analyze them for complicated plot details or extended character development. Instead, these passages focus on specific moments, relationships, and characterizations that can be analyzed within a few sentences. You may be asked, for instance, to consider what a narrator's description tells us about a character's personality, how two characters feel about each other, or how a character reacts to an important event in their life.

Although the Reading and Writing section includes questions about selections from poems and dramas, you'll be asked to read and analyze these passages in ways similar to how you'd approach works of prose fiction, such as novels and short stories. In other words, you won't be asked to identify the meter or rhyme scheme of a poem, nor will you be asked to explain the conventions of drama, such as how plays are staged. Instead, you may be asked questions about ideas or experiences represented in the work, particular word choices that the author makes, or how one part of the passage relates to another.

QUICK TAKE

Literature passages in the Reading and Writing section convey ideas and experiences in expressive, memorable ways and are notable for their use of **evocative word choice, telling details, and figurative language**. These passages are excerpted from previously published works and include selections from novels, short stories, plays, poems, and works of literary nonfiction.

Don't worry: you don't need to have read these works beforehand. All the information needed to answer questions based on literature passages is in the passages themselves.

STRATEGY

Don't skip the introductory information about the authors and original texts from which literature passages in the Reading and Writing section are excerpted. This information may clue you in to the kind of reading experience you're about to have or provide useful context about the passage itself.

With that out of the way, let's examine a sample Reading and Writing literature passage.

Literature Sample Passage

The following text is from F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel *The Great Gatsby*.

[Jay Gatsby] was balancing himself on the dashboard of his car with that resourcefulness of movement that is so peculiarly American—that comes, I suppose, with the absence of lifting work in youth and, even more, with the formless grace of our nervous, sporadic games. This quality was continually breaking through his punctilious manner in the shape of restlessness.

This passage exhibits many of the qualities you'd expect to see in a challenging literary text, including uncommon vocabulary and sophisticated syntax (*syntax* being the arrangement of words, phrases, and clauses into sentences). Before digging into the details, though, let's consider the purpose of this passage in order to get a sense of the passage as a whole, which is useful regardless of the specific question you're being asked.

After reading the passage, we can conclude that its main purpose is to characterize Jay Gatsby. You can tell this (even if you find some of the vocabulary unfamiliar) by noting that all the details in the passage serve to describe Gatsby's manner, or the way in which he generally acts. The narrator indicates, for example, that Gatsby's manner is "peculiarly [i.e., uniquely] American," that he's lived a life of ease marked by participation in sports ("nervous, sporadic games") and freedom from hard labor ("absence of lifting work in youth"), and that he exhibits a kind of bored, infectious energy ("resourcefulness of movement," "formless grace") that fights against his tendency toward being reserved ("continually breaking through his punctilious manner in the shape of restlessness").

If we were asked to determine the central (main) idea of this passage, we could use the understanding we gained from identifying the passage's main purpose to assist us. We've already discovered that the author wants to describe Jay Gatsby's personality. We can now use that understanding to figure out what specifically the author is trying to tell us about that personality—that Gatsby's usual reserve ("his punctilious manner") is routinely disrupted by his restless energy. Going a bit deeper, we might also reasonably conclude that Gatsby is something of a contradictory figure, a person who's both restrained and energetic.

Note that even if you don't know what "punctilious" means, you should still be able to get the basic idea of the word (and the passage) from the more accessible information available to you. In this case, you can examine the language and structure of the passage's second sentence to figure out an approximate meaning for "punctilious."

Here's that last sentence again, with an example of how we might parse it.

This quality was continually breaking through his punctilious manner in the shape of restlessness.

- "This quality" refers to "resourcefulness of movement," mentioned in the passage's first sentence.
- "Was continually breaking through" suggests a deviation from a pattern.
- "His punctilious manner" indicates Gatsby's usual behavior.
- "In the shape of restlessness" indicates how the pattern is broken.

At a minimum, then, we can discover that the second sentence of the passage describes Gatsby's self-presentation as somewhat contradictory. But we can do a little better than that, even if we don't know what "punctilious" means precisely. Because Gatsby's usual behavior ("his punctilious manner") is disrupted by restlessness, we can reasonably assume that "punctilious" carries a sense of being different from or perhaps the opposite of "restless." While this doesn't get us quite all the way to "reserved," we're much closer to understanding the gist of the passage even after encountering an unfamiliar word. The key point here—which applies generally to the Reading and Writing section—is, Don't give up if you come across a word or phrase whose meaning you don't know. There's probably a lot you *can* still figure out, and even getting a general sense of the main purpose or central idea of a passage can go a long way toward helping you eliminate incorrect answer choices.

AN ALTERNATE FORMAT FOR LITERATURE TEXTS IN THE READING AND WRITING SECTION

Above, we discussed what a typical passage in the literature subject area on the Reading and Writing section looks like. Some questions, however, may vary from that format, though these questions can still be approached in the same basic way we described.

Here's an example of an alternate presentation style you might encounter.

"Ghosts of the Old Year" is an early 1900s poem by James Weldon Johnson. In the poem, the speaker describes experiencing an ongoing cycle of anticipation followed by regretful reflection: _____

Which quotation from "Ghosts of the Old Year" most effectively illustrates the claim?

- A) "The snow has ceased its fluttering flight, / The wind sunk to a whisper light, / An ominous stillness fills the night, / A pause—a hush."
- B) "And so the years go swiftly by, / Each, coming, brings ambitions high, / And each, departing, leaves a sigh / Linked to the past."
- C) "What does this brazen tongue declare, / That falling on the midnight air / Brings to my heart a sense of care / Akin to fright?"
- D) "It tells of many a squandered day, / Of slighted gems and treasured clay, / Of precious stores not laid away, / Of fields unreaped."

STRATEGY

If you encounter something in a Reading and Writing passage that you don't know or understand, such as an unfamiliar vocabulary term, focus on what you *do* know and understand. That's often enough to answer the question correctly, or it will at least help you rule out one or more incorrect answer choices. Don't give up.

NOTE

While our focus here is on preparing for the digital SAT, this advice is true for any reading activity you undertake in or out of school. Use what you *do* know and *can* understand from a text to help you figure out what you don't (yet) know or understand.

Instead of being presented as a traditional passage, the literature content in this question is spread across the answer choices. In this case, you're looking for the evidence from the literary work (in the form of a quotation) that best supports the claim that the speaker in the poem experienced "an ongoing cycle of anticipation followed by regretful reflection." The best answer here is B, by the way, because that quotation describes both anticipation ("brings ambitions high") and regret ("and each, departing, leaves a sigh") occurring cyclically ("Each [year]").

QUICK TAKE

History/social studies passages in the Reading and Writing section aim to share ideas and findings from research in history and the social sciences. These passages tend to include several **elements of research reports**:

- **research questions** (what issue researchers are interested in studying).
- **hypotheses** (what researchers think will happen in their study).
- **discussion of previous research** (to put the study in context).
- **methodology** (how researchers performed the study).
- **data** (the information researchers collected in the study).
- **findings** (what researchers discovered in the study).
- **implications** (the impact the study may have on science and/or real life).
- **recommendations for future research** (to further address findings from a study).

History/social studies passages also establish important **sequential, causal, and comparative relationships**, an understanding of which is central to comprehending most of these passages.

All the information needed to answer questions based on history/social studies passages is in the passages themselves.

History/Social Studies

Authors write history/social studies texts mainly to convey ideas and findings from research in the fields of history and social science, the latter including such areas of study as psychology, sociology, geography, and other subfields involving the study of people and societies.

Commonly found in many history/social studies passages are what we might describe collectively as elements of research reports: research questions, hypotheses, discussions of previous research, descriptions of methodology (i.e., how researchers went about conducting their study), data (e.g., statistics, observations), findings (i.e., what the researchers learned from the study), implications (i.e., the potential significance of the findings), and recommendations for further research. Because of their short length, individual Reading and Writing passages may not exhibit all these features, but you can expect to encounter many if not most of these elements across the history/social studies passages found on a test form.

In addition to these elements, you can expect to find a strong emphasis in history/social studies passages on establishing relationships. Passages may stress time or sequence relationships (e.g., what happened *before*, *after*, or *at the same time as* another event), causal relationships (e.g., one event happened *because* another event happened), and comparative relationships (e.g., one quantity was *greater* or *less than* another). Tracing these relationships is critical to success on many of the questions associated with history/social studies passages.

As always, all the information you'll need to answer questions about history/social studies passages is found in the passages themselves.

Reading and analyzing history/social studies passages will call most directly on your skill in and experience with reading texts in history and social studies classes. That's because history/social studies passages in the Reading and Writing section are designed to closely resemble the kinds of texts you'll read in high school and college history/social studies classes and because the associated questions require you to engage in the kinds of thinking typically expected in rich, challenging history/social studies courses.

History/social studies passages in the Reading and Writing section are written specifically for the test. This means that the passages focus only on the most relevant information for answering the associated questions. It also means that we can tailor these passages for maximum clarity and precision while still presenting you with an appropriate challenge.

Let's examine a sample history/social studies passage in terms of structure, one of our three main strategies for analyzing Reading and Writing passages. After noting the research-based elements we find in this passage, we'll consider how the passage establishes and signals relationships between and among the pieces of information presented.

History/Social Studies Sample Passage

Some studies have suggested that posture can influence cognition, but we should not overstate this phenomenon. A case in point: In a 2014 study, Megan O'Brien and Alaa Ahmed had subjects stand or sit while making risky simulated economic decisions. Standing is more physically unstable and cognitively demanding than sitting; accordingly, O'Brien and Ahmed hypothesized that standing subjects would display more risk aversion during the decision-making tasks than sitting subjects did, since they would want to avoid further feelings of discomfort and complicated risk evaluations. But O'Brien and Ahmed actually found no difference in the groups' performance.

Let's unpack this passage, first, in terms of the elements of research reports that it exhibits.

- **Research question.** Does posture influence cognition (thinking)?
- **Methodology.** The researchers (O'Brien and Ahmed) had study participants stand or sit while making risky simulated economic decisions.
- **Discussion of previous research.** Some earlier studies have suggested that posture can influence cognition. Although not stated explicitly, we can also reasonably infer from the passage that prior studies have found standing to be more unstable and cognitively demanding than sitting.
- **Hypothesis.** The researchers expected that standing participants would be less likely to take risks than sitting participants. (To spell this out more fully: The researchers expected the hypothesized outcome *because* they knew, presumably from prior research, that standing is more difficult to endure than sitting, so standing participants, preoccupied at some level with the challenge of standing, would be less likely to take risks.)
- **Finding.** The researchers found no difference in the risk-taking behavior of the standing and sitting participants they studied.

NOTE

While many history/social studies passages describe the results of observational or experimental studies, some passages may instead take other approaches, such as discussing important historical events or sociological concepts.

NOTE

We're going deep into this passage for this exercise, and you may wish to do so yourself with other passages as part of your practice for the digital SAT, but we wouldn't expect that you'd analyze passages at this level of detail on test day.

The passage doesn't specifically tell us what data the researchers collected, and it doesn't explicitly describe implications of the study's finding.

Now let's take a look at another aspect of text structure: how the passage establishes and signals relationships between and among information and ideas. We'll number the sentences here for ease of reference and use boldface to call out important connectives in the passage, but neither of these features will appear in actual test passages.

(1) Some studies have suggested that posture can influence cognition, **but** we should not overstate this phenomenon. (2) **A case in point:** In a 2014 study, Megan O'Brien and Alaa Ahmed had subjects stand or sit while making risky simulated economic decisions. (3) Standing is more physically unstable and cognitively demanding than sitting; **accordingly**, O'Brien and Ahmed hypothesized that standing subjects would display more risk aversion during the decision-making tasks than sitting subjects did, **since** they would want to avoid further feelings of discomfort and complicated risk evaluations. (4) **But** O'Brien and Ahmed actually found no difference in the groups' performance.

Sentence 1. Sentence 1 first makes a claim about previous investigations to provide context for the research study about to be described in the passage.

Some studies have suggested that posture can influence cognition

The sentence then uses the coordinating conjunction *but* to introduce the second clause.

but we should not overstate this phenomenon.

Let's consider the two ideas in sentence 1 separately for a moment, omitting the conjunction.

Some studies have suggested that posture can influence cognition.

We should not overstate this phenomenon.

If we paraphrase these ideas, or put them into simpler language that still accurately captures the meaning of the original ideas, we might come up with something such as the following.

Some research studies have found that a person's posture can affect cognition, or how the person thinks.

It would be a mistake to think that posture always affects cognition.

Just by examining the content and structure of this sentence, we can learn a lot about the passage.

- The use of a coordinating conjunction indicates that the two ideas presented in the sentence carry equal weight.
- The use of the conjunction *but* signals a contrast between the two ideas in the sentence.

The passage, in other words, is asking us to hold two ideas in our heads and to recognize (*but*) that the second idea should qualify our understanding of the first idea. We might rewrite (or mentally alter) sentence 1 for simplicity so that it reads something like the following.

Although some research studies have found that a person's posture can affect cognition, or how they think, it would be a mistake to think that posture always affects cognition.

Sentence 2. Sentence 2 provides both some information about the specific study discussed in the passage and an important connective link to sentence 1.

A case in point: In a 2014 study, Megan O'Brien and Alaa Ahmed had subjects stand or sit while making risky simulated economic decisions.

The information in the sentence itself is relatively straightforward: two researchers, Megan O'Brien and Alaa Ahmed, conducted a study in which participants either stood or sat while being asked to make economic decisions that carried (simulated) risk.

The phrase *a case in point* is the critical connector here. It acts as a bridge between sentences 1 and 2, letting us know that O'Brien and Ahmed's study is an example (*a case in point*) of the claim made in sentence 1. Recall that the claim, in our paraphrased version, was that although some research studies have found that a person's posture can affect cognition, that's not always true. *A case in point* signals to us, in other words, that sentence 2 (and beyond) provides an example of how it's not always the case that posture affects cognition.

Sentence 3. Due to its length and use of connectives, sentence 3 requires special attention.

Standing is more physically unstable and cognitively demanding than sitting; **accordingly**, O'Brien and Ahmed hypothesized that standing subjects would display more risk aversion during the decision-making tasks than sitting subjects did, **since** they would want to avoid further feelings of discomfort and complicated risk evaluations.

We have several clauses linked by punctuation and conjunctions. Let's examine each idea separately, so as not to get overwhelmed, while momentarily leaving out the connectives.

Standing is more physically unstable and cognitively demanding than sitting.

O'Brien and Ahmed hypothesized that standing subjects would display more risk aversion during the decision-making tasks than sitting subjects did.

They [standing study participants] would want to avoid further feelings of discomfort and complicated risk evaluations.

Although we need the connectives for a full understanding of the sentence, we can still get a lot of information out of the ideas considered separately. If we paraphrase them, we might come up with something like the following.

It's harder, both physically and mentally, to stand than to sit.

The researchers assumed that participants in the study who stood would be less likely to take risks during decision-making tasks than would participants who sat.

The researchers assumed that standing would make study participants feel even more uncomfortable when making complicated economic decisions and therefore encourage them to avoid risks during decision making.

Now let's consider how we might link these ideas with connectives. The original version of sentence 3 connects the first two ideas with *accordingly*, which here functions like the word "so."

It's harder, both physically and mentally, to stand than to sit, so the researchers assumed that participants in the study who stood would be less likely to take risks during decision-making tasks than would participants who sat.

This paraphrase now says, in essence, that *because* standing is harder than sitting, the researchers assumed (hypothesized) that standing would make participants less willing to take risks during the decision-making tasks.

Since is used in sentence 3 to link the last two ideas. *Since* is equivalent to "because" in this context, so let's just use that here as we work to tie the two ideas together.

The researchers assumed that participants in the study who stood would be less likely to take risks during decision-making tasks than would participants who sat because standing would make study participants feel even more uncomfortable when making complicated economic decisions.

Sentence 4. As we observed earlier, sentence 4 states the researchers' finding.

But O'Brien and Ahmed actually found no difference in the groups' performance.

But works here just as it did in sentence 1, signaling a contrast with what came before. Specifically, sentence 4 challenges the researchers' expectation expressed in sentence 3. Put another way, sentence 4 refutes the hypothesis the researchers laid out (sentence 3) by indicating that both sitting and standing participants showed similar degrees of risk tolerance.

As our analysis of this passage shows, paying close attention to text structure enables us to gain a rich understanding of the content of the passage. Even though you may have little or no prior

familiarity with the topic of whether posture affects cognition, you can follow what the passage is saying by focusing on how the passage organizes and presents relationships among the ideas and information it discusses.

Humanities

Authors write humanities texts mainly to share ideas and insights about culture, literature, art, language, and philosophy. Texts in the humanities subject area aren't literary themselves, however. Instead, they inform readers about particular works of art or their creators, analyze the arguments of philosophers past and present, or make and support argumentative claims about cultural phenomena.

To make this distinction clearer, think about the differences between a movie and a movie review. Most movies are designed to entertain and to immerse viewers in a fictional (or fictionalized) narrative. Movie reviews, on the other hand, inform audiences by telling them what a given movie is about and make evaluative claims about the movie supported with evidence (e.g., discussion of plot details, standout performances, impactful scenes, and appealing filmmaking techniques). Humanities passages in the Reading and Writing section are more like movie reviews than movies themselves. They explain, illuminate, or make and defend claims about the products, expressions, and values of human cultures.

Like literature passages, humanities passages use vivid language and telling details, but because humanities passages seek to inform, explain, or convince, they also have a lot in common with history/social studies and science passages. For example, they present central ideas or claims, flesh out these points with support and evidence, and establish sequential, comparative, and cause-effect relationships.

All humanities passages in the Reading and Writing section are written specifically for the test.

Depending on the classes you've taken in high school, you may or may not have a lot of experience reading and analyzing humanities texts. If these types of texts are new to you, don't worry. As always, all the information you'll need to answer the questions is found in the passages themselves. You're not expected to have previous familiarity with any of the topics discussed in humanities passages.

Let's examine a sample humanities passage now to better understand how you can go about analyzing it productively. In our analysis, we'll focus first on determining the main purpose and the structure of the passage and then on distilling the central idea or claim. We'll again number the sentences in the passage for ease of reference during our discussion, but be aware that sentence numbers don't appear in actual test passages.

QUICK TAKE

Humanities passages in the Reading and Writing section aim to share ideas and insights about culture, literature, art, language, and philosophy.

Humanities passages are something of a hybrid between literature passages and history/social studies and science passages. Like literature passages, humanities passages tend to use **evocative language and telling details**. Like history/social studies and science passages, however, their **aim is to inform/explain or convince**.

All the information needed to answer questions based on humanities passages is in the passages themselves.

Humanities Sample Passage

(1) To dye wool, Navajo (Diné) weaver Lillie Taylor uses plants and vegetables from Arizona, where she lives. (2) For example, she achieved the deep reds and browns featured in her 2003 rug *In the Path of the Four Seasons* by using Arizona dock roots, drying and grinding them before mixing the powder with water to create a dye bath. (3) To intensify the appearance of certain colors, Taylor also sometimes mixes in clay obtained from nearby soil.

As we noted in our introduction to humanities passages, these types of texts have as their main purpose either to inform or explain or to convince readers of something. Using that understanding, accompanied by an analysis of the passage's structure, you'll be better prepared to determine the passage's central idea or claim, which will help you regardless of the specific type of question that might be associated with the passage.

Sentence 1. Sentence 1 establishes a straightforward informative purpose for the passage.

To dye wool, Navajo (Diné) weaver Lillie Taylor uses plants and vegetables from Arizona, where she lives.

While we haven't yet analyzed Reading and Writing passages by text type—that happens in the next section—it's clear here that the author's intent is to explain an artistic process. One clue is the language the author uses. Taylor's approach is described in a neutral and objective way. If the passage were argumentative in type, by contrast, we'd expect to find language that sets out a claim that can be both defended and challenged. There's nothing like that here. Instead, the author provides a statement of fact about how Taylor uses plants and vegetables from the state in which she lives to create dyes for the wool she uses in her art.

Having figured out the main purpose of the passage, we can make some educated guesses about what we're likely to find in the rest of the passage. Because the passage's purpose is to explain, we should expect the rest of the passage to supply additional facts, details, and examples related to Taylor's art and creative process. Furthermore, because sentence 1 signals that the passage will explain a process, we might also reasonably expect that the connectives the author uses will establish sequential or cause-effect relationships, since these are typically key to texts that seek to explain.

Sentences 2 and 3. As we anticipated, sentences 2 and 3 build on and support the point made in sentence 1 with examples. Specifically, we learn how Taylor got the deep reds and browns in her rug *In the Path of the Four Seasons* as well as how Taylor is able to intensify certain other colors.

For example, she achieved the deep reds and browns featured in her 2003 rug *In the Path of the Four Seasons* by using Arizona dock roots, drying and grinding them before mixing the powder with water to create a dye bath.

To intensify the appearance of certain colors, Taylor also sometimes mixes in clay obtained from nearby soil.

The connective *for example* at the beginning of sentence 2 is important here for two reasons. First, it lets us know that what follows in the rest of the passage builds on and supports the point made in sentence 1. Second, in so doing, it lets us know (if we didn't already) that sentence 1 captures the central idea of the passage, because examples (sentences 2 and 3) can't fill that role.

Having now done this analysis, we recognize that the passage uses a simple structure of central idea (sentence 1) followed by supporting examples (sentences 2 and 3). The central idea itself is stated explicitly in sentence 1 and doesn't require much in the way of paraphrasing.

Science

Authors write science texts mainly to convey ideas and findings from research in the natural sciences, such as Earth science, biology, chemistry, and physics. Like history/social studies passages in the Reading and Writing section, science passages typically have elements of research reports: research questions, hypotheses, discussions of previous research, descriptions of methodology, data, findings, implications, and recommendations for future research. Because they're so brief, individual science passages may not have all these features, but you're likely to come across all of them at some point while reading the science passages in the Reading and Writing section.

One thing to note here is that although the general features of research reporting found in history/social studies and science passages are the same, the specific kinds of information and ideas presented often differ between the two subject areas. So instead of encountering data on consumer preferences or political movements, as in history/social studies passages, you may be presented with data on animal behavior or star formation.

You can expect to find relationships between and among information and ideas foregrounded in science passages, just as in history/social studies passages. Science passages, like their history/social studies counterparts, may stress time or sequence, cause-effect, or comparison-contrast relationships—or more than one type of relationship. Understanding these relationships is vital to understanding science passages and to answering many Reading and Writing test questions correctly.

Reading and analyzing science passages will call most directly on your skill in and experience with reading texts in science classes. That's because these classes help students such as you approach science writing with the tools, knowledge, and questions that professional researchers use in their own work. Science passages in the Reading and Writing section mimic the style and substance of real-world

QUICK TAKE

Science passages in the Reading and Writing section aim to share ideas and findings from research in Earth science, biology, chemistry, physics, and other natural science fields. Like history/social studies passages, science passages tend to include several **elements of research reports**:

- research questions.
- hypotheses.
- discussion of previous research.
- methodology.
- data.
- findings.
- implications.
- recommendations for future research.

Science passages (again like history/social studies passages) also establish important **sequential, causal, and comparative relationships**, an understanding of which is central to comprehending these texts. All the information needed to answer questions based on science passages is in the passages themselves.

scientific texts, meaning that “reading like a scientist” will help you successfully approach associated test questions. This doesn’t mean, however, that you need specialized scientific knowledge or prior familiarity with the topics under discussion to answer the questions. As always, all the information you’ll need to answer questions about science passages is found in the passages themselves.

Science passages in the Reading and Writing section are written specifically for the test.

Our analysis of a sample science passage will follow the same general approach as the one we used to examine a history/social studies passage. That’s because, despite important differences in passage content, history/social studies and science passages in the Reading and Writing section tend to follow the same basic structure. We’ll first look at the research reporting elements in the passage and then examine the relationships between and among information and ideas in the passage. We’ve again numbered the sentences for ease of reference, but these sentence numbers don’t appear in actual test passages. Also note that we’ve modified this passage to include sentence 3, which is the correct answer (key) to the associated test question, in order to make the passage more complete.

Science Sample Passage

(1) Jan Gimsa, Robert Sleight, and Ulrike Gimsa have hypothesized that the sail-like structure running down the back of the dinosaur *Spinosaurus aegyptiacus* improved the animal’s success in underwater pursuits of prey species capable of making quick, evasive movements. (2) To evaluate their hypothesis, a second team of researchers constructed two battery-powered mechanical models of *S. aegyptiacus*, one with a sail and one without, and subjected the models to a series of identical tests in a water-filled tank. (3) The model with a sail took significantly less time to complete a sharp turn while submerged than the model without a sail did.

First, let’s identify the research reporting elements found in this passage. When doing so, we’ll note where the information can be found in the passage and paraphrase it if doing so seems helpful. This passage is fairly dense, so this will take a bit of time and effort.

Research question. The research question is the main thing the scientists are interested in finding out about. Such questions are usually broad, general statements, without a specific expected result in mind. Sentence 1 of this passage informs us that Gimsa, Sleight, and Gimsa had previously made a claim (hypothesis) about the movement of a particular kind of dinosaur, *Spinosaurus aegyptiacus*, while sentences 2 and 3 tell us that another team of scientists carried out an experiment based on this hypothesis. Given that, we could reasonably formulate the research question as, How, if at all, was the movement of *S. aegyptiacus* affected by the presence of a sail-like structure running down its back?

Hypothesis. Hypotheses aren't the same as research questions, though they're related. A hypothesis puts the research question into terms that can be tested via observation or experimentation. The goal of the research, then, is to either support or refute (reject) the hypothesis using data collected in the study. This means that a hypothesis will indicate the result the researchers expect, with the rest of the study geared toward evaluating whether the results bolster or challenge that hypothesis.

Sentence 1 tells us that Gimsa, Sleight, and Gimsa had a hypothesis about the role of *S. aegyptiacus*'s sail-like structure, and sentence 2 tells us that "a second team of researchers" set out to test this hypothesis. The hypothesis being tested is identified explicitly in sentence 1: "the sail-like structure running down the back of the dinosaur *Spinosaurus aegyptiacus* improved the animal's success in underwater pursuits of prey species capable of making quick, evasive movements." This statement passes our "test" for hypotheses because it's capable of being supported or refuted by research: a well-designed study will help determine whether the sail-like structure did or didn't help the dinosaur catch fast-moving prey underwater.

Discussion of previous research. This passage does mention earlier research, but it does so in a way that's a little subtle. The "earlier research" is actually that of Gimsa, Sleight, and Gimsa, who came up with the hypothesis (sentence 1) that the "second team of researchers" (sentence 2) designed an experiment to test. This is how science often works, with one study building on another and the conclusion of one study serving to inspire the hypotheses of later studies. We don't know from the passage what the precise nature of Gimsa, Sleight, and Gimsa's previous work was, only that it led them to the hypothesis stated in sentence 1. Because all the information needed to answer the associated test question is in the passage itself, this tells us that we don't have to worry about how those three scientists came up with their hypothesis, only that they did and that it led another team to test it.

Methodology. Sentence 2 tells us directly what approach the second team of researchers used. They "constructed two battery-powered mechanical models of *S. aegyptiacus*, one with a sail and one without, and subjected the models to a series of identical tests in a water-filled tank." In other words, the second team set up an experiment in which they compared the underwater movements of two dinosaur models, one that had a sail (which, remember, was hypothesized to aid the species' movement) and one that didn't (thereby serving as a control condition for the purpose of comparison).

Data. Sentence 3 says that "the model [dinosaur] with a sail took significantly less time to complete a sharp turn while submerged than the model without a sail did." Put more simply, the model with the sail (the experimental condition) outperformed the model without the sail (the control condition) in the experiment.

It's at this point that we run out of passage. We can, however, draw a reasonable, text-based inference as to what the **finding** was. A *finding* is a conclusion that scientists reach based on their data and hypothesis. We can safely conclude from what we've already read that the finding here was confirmation of the hypothesis. We can reach that conclusion in just a few steps. (You can probably make this leap more quickly than we illustrate below, but we think it's a useful exercise to sometimes slow down during practice to make our thinking and question-answering processes more explicit.)

- The hypothesis was that the sail-like structure on the dinosaur's back would help the dinosaur chase and catch quick-moving prey underwater.
- The second team of researchers designed an experiment to test this hypothesis.
- Data from the study showed that in tests of maneuverability, the dinosaur model with the sail outperformed the model without the sail.
- The finding, therefore, is that the hypothesis is supported.

We can't make any reasonable inferences from the passage about the **implication** of the study, nor are there any stated or implied **recommendations for future research**.

Now that we've studied the passage for elements of research reports, let's examine the relationships in the passage. We'll again highlight key connectives in boldface, though they won't be marked that way on actual test forms.

Jan Gimsa, Robert Sleight, and Ulrike Gimsa have hypothesized that the sail-like structure running down the back of the dinosaur *Spinosaurus aegyptiacus* **improved the animal's success** in underwater pursuits of prey species capable of making quick, evasive movements. **To evaluate their hypothesis**, a second team of researchers constructed two battery-powered mechanical models of *S. aegyptiacus*, one with a sail and one without, and subjected the models to a series of identical tests in a water-filled tank. The model with a sail took significantly **less time** to complete a sharp turn while submerged **than the model without a sail did**.

There are three relationship links we want to call attention to. Note that these links aren't in the form of common transitional words and phrases, such as *but* and *on the other hand*, like we identified in the history/social studies passage sample earlier, but these phrases establish similar kinds of relationships.

- **"improved the animal's success."** This phrase identifies an important comparative relationship: Gimsa, Sleight, and Gimsa's hypothesis was that *S. aegyptiacus*'s sail-like structure would have made members of the species better able to catch fast-moving prey underwater than they otherwise would have been.

- **“To evaluate their hypothesis.”** This phrase identifies an important causal relationship: the second team of researchers conducted their experiment because of Gimsa, Sleigh, and Gimsa’s earlier hypothesis.
- **“less time . . . than the model without a sail did.”** This phrase identifies another important comparative relationship: the experimental model with the sail made sharp turns faster than did the control-condition model lacking a sail.

Summary: Passage Subject Area

Literature passages

- Taken from previously published novels, short stories, dramas, poems, and works of literary nonfiction (e.g., memoirs, personal essays)
- Notable for evocative word choice, telling details, and figurative language

History/social studies and science passages

- Written for the test
- Differ from each other in that history/social studies passages focus on people and societies, while science passages focus on natural phenomena
- Tend to include elements of research reports: research questions, hypotheses, discussions of previous research, methodology, data, findings, implications, and recommendations for future research; may also discuss topics other than research (e.g., historical events, emerging theories)
- Signal important sequential, causal, and comparative relationships using common transitional words and phrases (e.g., *but*, *on the other hand*) as well as phrases unique to a given passage (e.g., *to evaluate the hypothesis*, *improved the animal’s success*)

Humanities passages

- Written for the test
- Share information and insights about culture, literature, art, language, and philosophy
- Similar to literature passages in that they tend to feature evocative language and telling details
- Differ from literature passages in that their main aim is to inform/explain or convince

In reading and analyzing the sample passages, we used three main strategies, which we'll continue to employ throughout the rest of this chapter:

- Determining the main purpose of the passage
- Determining the central idea of the passage
- Analyzing the passage structurally

Text Type

In addition to having a subject area, each passage on the digital SAT has a **text type** closely tied to its main purpose.

Table 1 summarizes these text types and their associated main purposes.

Table 1. Passage Text Types and Main Purposes.

Text Type	Main Purpose
Literary	To share ideas and insights into the human condition in order to entertain or enlighten
Informative/explanatory	To convey factual information and ideas or to explain a process, procedure, or phenomenon
Argumentative	To convince readers to accept the “rightness” of a claim using logical reasoning and relevant evidence

As we observed when we examined passages by subject area, determining the main purpose of a passage allows us to get a high-level sense of the passage, or its gist. In this section, we'll apply that approach when examining sample passages by text type. We'll also consider the typical style and tone of each text type as well as features you'll commonly encounter in these passages.

QUICK TAKE

Passages of the **literary text type** consist of passages in the literature subject area (i.e., excerpts from novels, short stories, dramas, poems, and works of literary nonfiction).

The **general main purpose** of literary texts **is to entertain or enlighten**. On the test, literary passages **have specific purposes as well**, such as to describe a character's personality.

The **style and tone** of literary passages **vary widely** from passage to passage.

Common features include **evocative word choice**, **telling details**, and **figurative language**.

Literary Passages

The literary category in the Reading and Writing section is the same as the literature subject area discussed earlier. The literary category includes excerpts from previously published novels, short stories, dramas, and poems as well as works of literary nonfiction, such as memoirs and personal essays.

In the classroom, there are important differences between how we approach, say, a novel and a poem, but in the Reading and Writing section, the focus of questions on literary passages, regardless of what kind of source the passage is taken from, will be similar: reading and understanding what the author says directly or strongly implies, and understanding and explaining how and why the author made the writing choices they did. In other words, you won't have to know what iambic pentameter is or consider how the set for a play might be constructed.

Purpose. The **general main purpose** of literary texts—at least in the real world—is to **entertain or enlighten**. In the Reading and Writing section, we focus on the more specific purposes that particular literary passages have, such as describing

- the personality or actions of a character.
- how two characters interact.
- how one character views another character.
- what a particular setting (time, place) is like.
- how a series of events or actions unfolds.

Although this list is only a sampling of some of the more common purposes of literary passages, it should still give you a sense of the kinds of specific purposes found in literary passages in the Reading and Writing section.

Style and tone. Because literary passages in the Reading and Writing section are excerpted from previously published literature texts, their **styles and tones vary widely**. This makes sense because part of authors' goals in writing literary texts is to express ideas and describe experiences in unique ways.

Common features. You can expect that literary passages will use **evocative word choice, telling details, and figurative language**, among other features, to express ideas and points of view.

Let's consider how these elements play out in a sample literary passage.

Literary Sample Passage

The following text is from Herman Melville's 1854 short story "The Lightning-Rod Man."

The stranger still stood in the exact middle of the cottage, where he had first planted himself. His singularity impelled a closer scrutiny. A lean, gloomy figure. Hair dark and lank, mattedly streaked over his brow. His sunken pitfalls of eyes were ringed by indigo halos, and played with an innocuous sort of lightning: the gleam without the bolt. The whole man was dripping. He stood in a puddle on the bare oak floor: his strange walking-stick vertically resting at his side.

Before we examine the purpose and features of this passage, note the introductory information provided. Recall that this kind of information is offered only for literature passages because those are the only ones in the Reading and Writing section taken from previously published works. It's tempting to skip over that information and get right to the passage, but this information can provide some important clues about what the passage will contain.

STRATEGY

We recommend that you read the introductory information associated with literary passages, as this information can offer important clues to what you're about to read and/or useful context, such as details about the setting.

In this case, we're told that the passage was excerpted from a Herman Melville short story originally published in 1854. Melville was a famous nineteenth-century U.S. writer probably best known for the novel *Moby-Dick*, so you may know of him or have read some of his writing previously. If so, you might be better prepared for the writing style you encounter in the passage. Even if you don't know who Melville is, though, the fact that the passage is from a short story published in 1854 hints that you should expect to find language and literary techniques different from what you might find in a modern short story.

In addition to bibliographical information, the introductory material accompanying literature passages may include important contextual details, such as the setting of a short story or a brief recap of important events that occurred earlier in a novel. So don't skip this information.

Purpose. A close reading of this passage reveals a great many vivid details about "the stranger." We learn, for example, about his build ("lean"), demeanor ("gloomy"), hair ("dark and lank, mattedly streaked over his brow"), and face ("sunken pitfalls of eyes"). We're also told that "the whole man was dripping" and that he "stood in a puddle on the bare oak floor" and possessed an odd walking stick. Considering these details together, we can reasonably conclude that the (specific) main purpose of this passage is to describe the physical appearance of the character.

Common features. In this Melville passage, we find many examples of the three features commonly found in literary passages in the Reading and Writing section.

- **Evocative word choice.** The passage uses language in ways that we often associate with literature. In everyday conversations and in most nonfiction, it's uncommon, for example, to refer to hair being "mattedly streaked" over a brow or to characterize dark circles around the eyes as "indigo halos." The sentence "his singularity impelled a closer scrutiny" is a particularly strong turn of phrase, indicating that the stranger's oddness and uniqueness ("his singularity") inevitably drew ("impelled") careful looks ("a closer scrutiny"). (Even if the meaning of some of the words here is unfamiliar to you, you can still make a good guess about the intent of the sentence by observing that all the details that follow in the passage are related to the stranger's physical appearance.)
- **Telling details.** The passage uses numerous precise details to characterize the stranger. He's "lean" and "gloomy," with dark, lank, matted hair. The description of his eyes—"sunken pitfalls . . . ringed by indigo halos"—suggests that he's exhausted, perhaps due to lack of sleep. He's also described as "dripping," which indicates that he's been in the rain, on the water, or perhaps both.

- **Figurative language.** “Planted,” in the passage’s first sentence, is one example of figurative language in the passage. The stranger is obviously not “planted” in the literal sense. Instead, Melville uses the word to suggest that the stranger is unmoving, or fixed in place. “Pitfalls,” in the passage’s fifth sentence, is used in a similarly nonliteral way. According to the dictionary, a *pitfall* is either a trap, such as a pit, or a hidden danger. Based on how the rest of the passage characterizes the stranger, it’s more likely that Melville means to indicate that the stranger is exhausted, as sunken eyes with dark rings are common signs of fatigue. The author also employs a metaphor: the stranger’s eyes “played with an innocuous sort of lightning: the gleam without the bolt.” In this metaphor, the stranger’s eyes have a kind of light in them similar to that produced by lightning. However, we’re also told that this “gleam” is “innocuous” and lacks the “bolt” associated with lightning. The general idea here is that while the stranger’s eyes have a peculiar light to them, they lack the kind of energy, spark, and danger we think of when we think of lightning. Given that other details we’ve already examined suggest that the stranger is exhausted, it’s reasonable to conclude that this detail is intended to add to that picture. (It’s also possible that Melville was also or instead suggesting that the stranger is emotionally haunted by some experience that drained him of vitality, but we can’t really tell that for sure without more context than the passage provides.)

Informative/Explanatory Passages

History/social studies, humanities, and science passages in the Reading and Writing section may be of the informative/explanatory text type.

Purpose. Informative/explanatory passages, as the name suggests, either **aim to share factual information and ideas or to explain a process, procedure, or phenomenon**. Passages of this type may, for example, describe the cause and consequence of a historical event, reveal how an artist created a particular work, or detail the steps in an experiment.

The chief difference between an informative/explanatory passage and an argumentative passage (which we’ll discuss next) lies in their respective purposes. Informative/explanatory passages treat the information and ideas they share as factual, or as describing the real state of things in the world. Arguments, by contrast, deal with matters about which people can reasonably disagree. Whereas informative/explanatory passages assert and support central ideas (main points) that we as readers assume to be true, argumentative passages assert claims that readers must be convinced of the correctness of through logical reasoning and relevant evidence.

The difference is fairly easy to spot in practice. Consider again the following example from the humanities passage we analyzed earlier.

QUICK TAKE

Passages of the **informative/explanatory text type** may come from the history/social studies, humanities, or science subject areas.

The **main purpose** of informative/explanatory passages is to **share factual information and ideas or to explain a process, procedure, or phenomenon**.

Informative/explanatory passages tend to have a **formal style** and **objective tone**.

Common features include a **central idea** and **supporting details**.

To dye wool, Navajo (Diné) weaver Lillie Taylor uses plants and vegetables from Arizona, where she lives.

As a statement of the central idea of an informative/explanatory text, the sentence simply relates a fact: Taylor uses plants and vegetables found in Arizona to make dyes for the wool she weaves. We'd expect—correctly, as we found out beforehand—that the rest of the passage offers factual details to support that central idea.

If, however, the passage had been written as an argument, we'd expect the author to assert a claim that reasonable people could challenge, such as the following hypothetical example.

Navajo (Diné) weaver Lillie Taylor's use of local plant- and vegetable-based dyes makes her weavings among the most vibrant being made today.

This claim isn't factually true or false. It's an interpretation being made by the author. We can tell this, in part, by the author's use of subjective language. "Among the most vibrant" isn't something that can objectively be proved true (or false). It's an assertion based on the author's assessment. Given that, we'd expect the author to present logical reasoning and relevant evidence to back up that claim. The details found in the informative/explanatory version of the passage could, in fact, be recast into the argumentative mold.

Informative/explanatory: For example, she achieved the deep reds and browns featured in her 2003 rug *In the Path of the Four Seasons* by using Arizona dock roots, drying and grinding them before mixing the powder with water to create a dye bath.

Argumentative: For example, the deep browns and reds featured in Taylor's 2003 rug *In the Path of the Four Seasons* stand out far more than similar colors in other contemporary rugs, thanks to Taylor's use of dried and ground Arizona dock roots.

Informative/explanatory: To intensify the appearance of certain colors, Taylor also sometimes mixes in clay obtained from nearby soil.

Argumentative: Taylor's occasional use of locally sourced clay in her dyes further adds to the striking appearance of her weavings.

It should be clear by now that claims aren't limited to assertions about controversial topics, such as "pro" or "con" positions in a debate over a hotly contested issue. Claims can be found in any sort of text in which an author is offering their own interpretation or judgment, such as a critic's review of a movie or book, a historian's analysis of why something in the past happened, or a scientist's discussion about why the results of an experiment were different from what had been expected.

Style and tone. Informative/explanatory passages tend to have a **formal style** and **objective tone**. By “formal style,” we mean that they tend to use language you’d find more often in academic settings than in everyday conversations, and by “objective tone,” we mean that they attempt to describe things as they are in reality.

Common features. As suggested above, informative/explanatory passages contain a **central idea** and **supporting details**. The central idea is the main point the author is trying to make, while the supporting details flesh out that point. Continuing with the Lillie Taylor weaving sample, we can sketch out this structure. In doing so, we’ll break down the supporting details into more distinct points than in the original passage to make their individual contributions to the passage clearer.

Central idea: To dye wool, Navajo (Diné) weaver Lillie Taylor uses plants and vegetables from Arizona, where she lives.

Supporting details:

- Taylor created the rug *In the Path of the Four Seasons* in 2003.
- This rug featured deep reds and browns.
- These reds and browns were achieved using Arizona dock roots.
- These dock roots were dried and ground by Taylor, who then mixed the resultant powder with water to create a dye bath.
- Taylor also sometimes mixes clay into her dyes.
- This clay is obtained from nearby soil.
- The use of this clay intensifies the appearance of certain colors.

Before we go on to the argumentative text type, two last points about informative/explanatory passages are worth making here:

- The central idea may be stated explicitly (as in the Lillie Taylor weaving sample), or you may need to infer it using evidence from the text.
- If stated explicitly, the central idea may appear anywhere in the passage, not just the first sentence. Although authors often begin paragraphs with topic sentences, sometimes the central idea appears at the end or even in the middle of a passage.

Argumentative Passages

History/social studies, humanities, and science passages in the Reading and Writing section may also be argumentative in nature instead of informative/explanatory. We’ve already discussed how arguments differ from informative/explanatory texts, but we’ll recap here.

Purpose. Arguments seek to convince readers of the “rightness” of the author’s point of view, interpretations, or recommendations.

QUICK TAKE

Passages of the **argumentative text type** may come from the history/ social studies, humanities, or science subject areas.

The main purpose of argumentative passages is to **convince readers of the “rightness” of a claim** using logical reasoning and relevant evidence.

Argumentative passages tend to have a **formal style** and **objective tone**.

Common features include a **central claim**, **logical reasoning**, and **relevant evidence**.

We use “convince” here rather than “persuade” because arguments, unlike persuasive pieces, rely chiefly on logical reasoning and relevant evidence to support their claims. Persuasive pieces may use logical reasoning and evidence as well, but they may also draw on other writing techniques, such as appeals to emotion. While we find persuasive writing in many areas of our lives, such as in newspaper opinion columns, in politics, and in advertising, the argumentative mode is more typical of academic writing in the nonliterary subject areas sampled in the Reading and Writing section.

It’s worth mentioning here explicitly that when we use the terms *argument* and *argumentative*, we’re not using them in the sense of “fight” or “fighting,” as in “I had an argument with my friend last night.” Rather, we use them in a more technical way to refer to pieces of writing that make logical arguments or that use logical argumentation to assert and support claims. Arguments in this sense sometimes concern issues that people sharply disagree about, but that isn’t always the case. As we observed earlier, authors of all sorts, writing texts serving many different purposes, use the argumentative form.

Style and tone. Like informative/explanatory passages, argumentative passages tend to have a formal style and objective tone. The latter is true even though arguments do tend to make greater use of subjective language, or the language of evaluation, than do informative/ explanatory texts. Even when authors of arguments offer opinions or judgments, they do so in ways that suggest these assessments describe the way things really are; as part of the “bargain,” readers who have weighed the claims and considered the reasoning and evidence supporting them are then free to accept or reject these assessments.

Common features. Argumentative passages contain a **central claim** that is backed up by **logical reasoning** and **relevant evidence**. The central claim is the main point the author is trying to convince readers of. As we noted earlier, this claim doesn’t have to be about a controversial issue. It can, in fact, be any sort of assertion about which reasonable people can disagree.

The nature of evidence in arguments varies by subject area, as we’ve already observed. In other words, what counts as evidence in, for example, the humanities differs from what counts as evidence in science. In humanities passages, such as the Lillie Taylor sample, evidence may come in the form of analyses of specific works of art, such as Taylor’s 2003 rug *In the Path of the Four Seasons*, whereas evidence in science passages may consist of data that support a hypothesis. To be meaningful, evidence must be relevant both to the topic and the subject area.

Logical reasoning is, metaphorically speaking, the connective tissue of an argument. It's the analysis—the “thinking”—that the author performs to connect the evidence being presented with the claim being asserted.

Let's consider the following sample argumentative passage in terms of its main purpose, style and tone, and key features.

Argumentative Sample Passage

(1) Many animals, including humans, must sleep, and sleep is known to have a role in everything from healing injuries to encoding information in long-term memory. (2) But some scientists claim that, from an evolutionary standpoint, deep sleep for hours at a time leaves an animal so vulnerable that the known benefits of sleeping seem insufficient to explain why it became so widespread in the animal kingdom. (3) These scientists therefore imply that prolonged deep sleep is likely advantageous in ways that have yet to be discovered.

Note that we've added the answer to the question associated with this passage into the passage itself so that you can focus on how the text is put together. Also note that we've again numbered the passage's sentences here for ease of reference, but you won't find sentence numbers in the passages you read for practice or on test day.

Purpose. Given that this passage is an argument, we should expect that it would assert a debatable claim. This is, indeed, the case, but just what that central claim is requires some work to uncover.

Sentence 1 states that “many animals, including humans, must sleep” and “sleep is known to have a role in everything from healing injuries to encoding information in long-term memory.” Although these statements might broadly be considered claims, neither qualifies as this passage's central claim. Reading through the rest of the passage, we learn that the information in sentence 1 is mostly background. It doesn't, in other words, capture the basic point of the passage.

How about sentence 2? This sentence even uses the word “claim,” but it's not actually the passage's claim. It's the hypothesis that “some scientists” believe to be true. In the passage, sentence 2 mainly serves to qualify, or add considerations to, the commonly accepted ideas, cited in sentence 1, that many animals must sleep and that sleep has many known benefits. Sentence 2 doesn't directly challenge earlier findings that sleep is beneficial, but it does qualify these findings. To these scientists, the evolutionary danger to a species of long-lasting deep sleep is so profound that the benefits researchers have already found for sleep (“from healing injuries to encoding information in long-term memory”) can't really explain why many species engage in such sleep.

That leaves us with sentence 3, which does, in fact, come closest to capturing the passage's central claim. It asserts that the scientists who found a problem with commonly accepted ideas about deep sleep believe ("imply") that there must be something else beneficial ("advantageous") to deep sleep that science has yet to discover.

If we string the various points made in the three sentences into a single statement of the passage's claim, we might come up with something like the following.

Some scientists believe that long periods of deep sleep must have evolutionary benefits for animals beyond those already discovered.

This version of the claim leans heavily on sentence 3 but also incorporates ideas from the first two sentences—specifically, that deep sleep has benefits and that deep sleep also has evolutionary drawbacks (i.e., leaves animals vulnerable).

REMINDER

Earlier in this chapter, we mentioned that not all science (or history/social studies) passages in the Reading and Writing section strictly follow the research reporting model. This argumentative passage is an example of one that doesn't.

As a side note, it's worth calling out here that the passage doesn't actually explain how the scientists went about trying to prove their hypothesis, as in many passages in the Reading and Writing section. Instead, the focus here is on logical reasoning, and specifically on how these scientists came to believe that conventional explanations for why many animals engage in long periods of deep sleep are inadequate given that deep sleep is a profound evolutionary disadvantage.

Taking a structural approach to analyzing this passage, we might sketch out the following.

Sentence 1	Background: Sleep benefits animals.
Sentence 2	Problem: These benefits don't explain why some animals routinely engage in seemingly dangerous long periods of deep sleep.
Sentence 3	Qualification: While sleep does have known benefits for animals, science hasn't figured out yet why many animals engage in long periods of deep sleep, given how risky it is from an evolutionary standpoint.

Although this passage doesn't strictly follow the research report structure we discussed above, we can still find some research reporting elements.

Sentence 1	Discussion of previous research: Although we're not told directly that the benefits of sleep for animals were discovered by prior scientific research, it's a reasonable, text-supported conclusion.
Sentence 2	Implication: We can consider sentence 2 an implication since it points out a shortcoming of previous research.

- Sentence 3 Recommendation for future research: Again, we're not told directly that "more research is needed," but the idea is strongly implicit, since scientists' understanding of the benefits of sleep for animals has been shown to be inadequate.

Style and tone. The passage clearly adopts a formal style and objective tone. The formality of the style is apparent in the sentence structures used and the vocabulary choices made by the author. Sentence 1 is a good example of an objective tone: the ideas that many animals must sleep and that sleep has many benefits for these animals are presented as facts, and while the passage goes on to point out a limitation of scientific understanding of sleep, it never questions the basic "rightness" of the ideas expressed in sentence 1. Overall, the passage takes on a tone of neutral reporting on a scientific phenomenon.

Common features. We've already discussed the passage's claim. Let's consider how logical reasoning and evidence are used.

The evidence here isn't in the form of data, such as results from an experiment or observational study. Instead, the evidence is in the form of a weakness found in current scientific explanations of the value of sleep to animals. Specifically, the evidence is that current explanations can't account for why some animals engage in long periods of deep sleep, which, from an evolutionary standpoint, is dangerous since it leaves animals defenseless for extended periods of time. We can reasonably infer from the passage that this evidence, as well as the current scientific explanations, are based on research even though the studies leading to those conclusions aren't discussed.

The logical reasoning used here is closely tied to the passage's structure, which we've already analyzed.

- Sentence 1 Previous research has found that animals gain many benefits from sleep.
- Sentence 2 **However**, some scientists believe that this previous research doesn't adequately explain why some animals engage in long periods of deep sleep.
- Sentence 3 **Therefore**, more research is needed to find a better explanation for sleep in animals, one that accounts for why some animals engage in long periods of deep sleep.

We've highlighted the words *however* and *therefore* to call attention to the logical reasoning used in the passage. *However* highlights that sentence 2 challenges or undercuts sentence 1, while *therefore* highlights the conclusion that logically follows from sentence 2 being the case.

Summary: Passage Text Type

Literary passages (same features as for passages in the literature subject area)

- Purpose: In general, to entertain or enlighten; specific purposes vary by passage
- Style and tone: Vary widely from passage to passage
- Common features
 - ♦ Evocative word choice
 - ♦ Telling details
 - ♦ Figurative language

Informative/explanatory passages

- Purpose: To share factual information and ideas or to explain a process, procedure, or phenomenon
- Style and tone: Formal and objective
- Common features
 - ♦ A central idea
 - ♦ Supporting details

Argumentative passages

- Purpose: To convince readers of the “rightness” of a claim
- Style and tone: Formal and objective
- Common features
 - ♦ A central claim
 - ♦ Logical reasoning
 - ♦ Relevant evidence

Text Complexity

Our last topic specifically related to Reading and Writing passages is text complexity. You should be aware that passages in the Reading and Writing section may vary in terms of how challenging or easy the texts themselves are to read. Some passages may be relatively easy for most test takers, while others may pose a significant challenge. Since the SAT measures your readiness for college and careers, the challenge level of the texts you'll be asked to read on test day has to match the expectations that college instructors have for their incoming students and that employers have for people beginning workforce training programs.

This may sound daunting, especially if you don't feel you're a strong reader, but don't worry too much about this aspect of the test section. In this chapter, we've given you several ways to examine passages and break them down regardless of their difficulty, and most of the samples

we presented were from the middle and the higher end of the text complexity range used in the Reading and Writing section. Remember, too, that all the information needed to answer test questions is found in their associated passages (and sometimes informational graphics, the topic of our next chapter), so even if you run into some unfamiliar words or difficult-to-understand concepts, you likely can use what you *do* know about passages in general and specific passages in particular to get a good handle on what the questions are asking and, at the very least, eliminate some incorrect answer choices, turning your response from a random guess into an educated one (and one with a vastly higher probability of success). Finally, because each Reading and Writing passage has only one question associated with it, you can give your best effort and move on from any one passage that you feel you don't understand well, as there's no penalty for guessing on the digital SAT.

Summary: Reading and Writing Passages

Each Reading and Writing passage has

- a **subject area** (literature, history/social studies, humanities, science)
 - ♦ **Literature passages**
 - Purpose: To share ideas and experiences in vivid, memorable ways
 - Style and tone: Vary widely from passage to passage
 - Common features
 - Evocative word choice
 - Telling details
 - Figurative language
 - ♦ **History/social studies and science passages**
 - Purpose: To share ideas and findings from research
 - Common features
 - Elements of research reports
 - Research questions
 - Hypotheses
 - Discussion of previous research
 - Methodology
 - Data
 - Findings
 - Implications
 - Recommendations for future research
 - Sequential, causal, and comparative relationships

- ♦ **Humanities passages**
 - Purpose: To share ideas and insights about culture, literature, art, language, and philosophy
 - Common features
 - Evocative language
 - Telling details
- a **text type** (literary, informative/explanatory, argumentative)
 - ♦ **Literary passages**
 - Purpose
 - In general, to entertain or enlighten
 - Specific purpose varies by passage (e.g., to describe a character's personality)
 - Style and tone: Vary widely from passage to passage
 - Common features
 - Evocative word choice
 - Telling details
 - Figurative language
 - ♦ **Informative/explanatory passages**
 - Purpose: To share factual information and ideas or to explain a process, procedure, or phenomenon
 - Style and tone: Formal and objective
 - Common features
 - A central idea
 - Supporting details
 - ♦ **Argumentative passages**
 - Purpose: To convince readers of the “rightness” of a claim
 - Style and tone: Formal and objective
 - Common features
 - A central claim
 - Logical reasoning
 - Relevant evidence
- a **text complexity** (difficulty) ranging from relatively easy to significantly challenging

Some Reading and Writing passages include an informational graphic (the topic of our next chapter).

KEYS TO SUCCESS ON THE READING AND WRITING SECTION

- All the information needed to answer a given question is in the passage itself (or in an associated informational graphic).
- Base your answers to questions on what the passage says explicitly and what the passage strongly implies.
- If you struggle with a passage, give your best answer and move on. (You can always flag questions to return to if time permits.)
- Answer every question, even if you have to guess. Whenever possible, make educated rather than random guesses by focusing on what you *do* understand about a passage and eliminating incorrect answer choices. There's no penalty for guessing on the digital SAT.
- Remember that you *can* do this. You have the tools now (if you didn't before) to get the information you need from Reading and Writing passages to answer the associated questions.



CHAPTER 9

Reading and Writing: Informational Graphics

In this chapter, we'll discuss and walk through examples of the three kinds of informational graphics you may encounter in the Reading and Writing section: tables, bar graphs, and line graphs. We'll consider the important features common to all three graphics types so that you'll be better prepared to analyze such figures during practice and on test day. We'll then examine a sample of each type of graphic. We'll also talk about what you'll have to do with the graphics on test day—and what you won't, namely performing calculations (which is why a calculator isn't allowed for the Reading and Writing section).

Why Include Informational Graphics on a Test of Reading and Writing?

Before we get started, though, we should explain why informational graphics are included in the Reading and Writing section in the first place.

The SAT is a test of your college and career readiness. As we saw in the previous chapter, Reading and Writing passages simulate the kinds of reading and writing activities you not only engage in now in your high school classes but that you'll also participate in in college or workforce training. An important part of the way that many authors convey information and ideas in several of the subject areas represented in the Reading and Writing section is through the use of informational graphics. These graphics display data in ways that are typically easier to understand and work with than written descriptions are, and they often display more data than the author has an opportunity to discuss in writing (though extraneous data are minimized in graphics in the Reading and Writing section so that you can focus on the data relevant to answering a given question).

You'll also need to be able to read and analyze data from informational graphics in your everyday life. Tables, bar graphs, and line graphs—the three types of informational graphics in the Reading and Writing section—are among the most common ways authors in history/social studies, the humanities, and science as well as in workplace settings and popular media display data visually. You may not need to produce

such data displays on your own, but you do need to be an informed consumer of such displays to navigate successfully in our increasingly data-driven world.

In short, the ability to make sense of and critically analyze data displays is important not only in your current and future classes but also in many other areas of your life after high school.

Common Features of Informational Graphics

QUICK TAKE

Each informational graphic in the Reading and Writing section includes a **title**, one or more **labels** for its key components, and **data** in quantitative (numerical) form.

Some graphics will also include a **legend** and/or **additional information** to help you make sense of the data.

Regardless of type, each informational graphic in the Reading and Writing section has a **title**, one or more **labels**, and **data**, while some graphics also have a **legend** and/or **additional information**. It's important to recognize and make use of these features, as they provide critical clues to how to read and interpret a given graphic.

To help make this discussion more concrete, we'll refer to the following sample table.

Informational Graphic Sample 1

Participants' Evaluation of the Likelihood That Robots Can Work Effectively in Different Occupations

Occupation	Somewhat or very unlikely (%)	Neutral (%)	Somewhat or very likely (%)
Television news anchor	24	9	67
Teacher	37	16	47
Firefighter	62	9	30
Surgeon	74	9	16
Tour guide	10	8	82

Rows in table may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Title. Each graphic has a title. This title lets you know what the general topic of the graphic is, but it often provides additional useful information.

Let's consider the title for the sample graphic above.

Participants' Evaluation of the Likelihood That Robots Can Work Effectively in Different Occupations

Even without the graphic, we can draw some reasonable conclusions about the topic addressed and the kind of data displayed. The graphic focuses on people's perceptions of how likely robots are to successfully take on a range of jobs. Given that, it's likely that the data displayed will be quantitative and drawn from a survey or similar tool.

Labels. Although different kinds of informational graphics label key elements in different ways, all types of graphics use such labels to identify their constituent parts. These labels are vital to understanding what the displayed data represent.

Let's focus on a portion of the sample informational graphic above.

Occupation	Somewhat or very unlikely (%)	Neutral (%)	Somewhat or very likely (%)
------------	-------------------------------	-------------	-----------------------------

This graphic uses the label "Occupation" for the leftmost column. Looking down the column, we see a list of five types of jobs: television news anchor, teacher, firefighter, surgeon, and tour guide. Examining the full graphic, we can reasonably conclude that participants in the study were asked their view of the likelihood that a robot could successfully perform each of those jobs.

The remaining columns are headed by three labels: "Somewhat or very unlikely (%)," "Neutral (%)," and "Somewhat or very likely (%)." Although this table lacks an overarching label for these three columns, we can reasonably infer that each of these columns corresponds to a possible response on the survey (or other tool) participants were given. The "(%)" symbol in each column tells us that the data are percentages, which isn't surprising given that we've already concluded that participants were given a survey (or the like) and asked to rate likelihood.

Data. Data are, of course, the heart of informational graphics. These data can take many forms and can be collected in many different ways. The data you encounter in informational graphics in the Reading and Writing section will typically be quantitative (numeric) in nature, although other types are possible. Quantitative data can consist of counts (e.g., how many times something occurred), percentages (e.g., what proportion of people behave in a given way), measurements (e.g., the body lengths of animals raised under different conditions), monetary values (e.g., the cost, in U.S. dollars, of various items), and so on. There's really no theoretical limit to the kinds of quantitative data that can be displayed.

As we've already determined, our sample table presents percentages—specifically, the percentages of participants who held certain views on the likelihood of robots successfully performing various types of jobs.

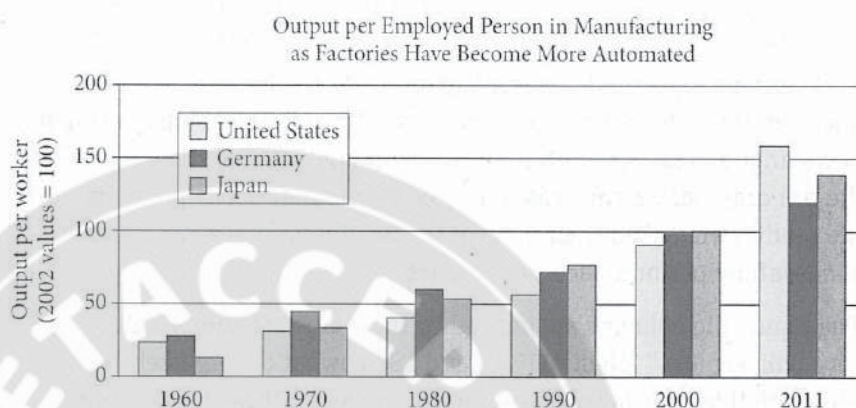
Occupation	Somewhat or very unlikely (%)	Neutral (%)	Somewhat or very likely (%)
Television news anchor	24	9	67

These rows from the full table represent the percentages of participants who rated the likelihood of a robot successfully performing the job of television news anchor as somewhat or very unlikely (24 percent)

and somewhat or very likely (67 percent), as well as the percentage of participants who had no strong opinion on the matter (“neutral”; 9 percent).

Legend. Graphs used in the Reading and Writing section will also contain a legend. A *legend* is a guide to how to interpret the bars or lines in the figure, as in the sample below.

Informational Graphic Sample 2



In this bar graph, which presents data about employee output in factories exhibiting greater levels of automation over time, the legend—the small box in the upper left-hand corner—tells us that the three bars for each year represent three different nations: the United States (light gray), Germany (black), and Japan (dark gray).

Additional information. Creators of informational graphics strive to make the data displayed as clear and understandable as possible. Sometimes, however, they supply additional information to guide how readers interpret the figures.

For example, in the sample table presented earlier in this chapter, we’re given this additional information.

Rows in table may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

This note is intended to allay concerns from attentive readers who discover (and may then be distracted by the fact) that the percentages in the table—specifically, the totals for the firefighter and surgeon rows—add up to something other than 100 percent (101 and 99, respectively). Pay attention to these notes, as they can significantly aid your understanding of a graphic and its data.

Informational Graphics in the Reading and Writing Section

Now let’s examine each of the three types of informational graphics found in the Reading and Writing section: tables, bar graphs, and line graphs.

Tables

Authors use tables to organize and display a wide variety of data. These authors tend to favor using tables over graphs when the goal is to convey data precisely (e.g., exact percentages of survey participants answering in certain ways) or when they want to display data that don't share a common scale or unit of measurement, such as the length of selected passenger airline routes in miles alongside the average cost in U.S. dollars of tickets to fly those routes.

Let's examine another table, this time about changes to road capacity. Because we already studied a fairly simple table, we've selected a more complex one to discuss here. Bear with us on this because we're going to analyze this table in detail so that you get a better sense of just how much information you can obtain, even though no single question in the Reading and Writing section will require you to go into this much depth on test day.

Informational Graphic Sample 3

Effect of Route Capacity Reductions in Several Regions

Region	Vehicles per day on altered road		Vehicles per day on surrounding roads		Change in regional traffic
	Before alteration	After alteration	Before alteration	After alteration	
Rathausplatz, Nürnberg	24,584	0	67,284	55,824	-146.6%
Southampton city center	5,316	3,081	26,522	24,101	-87.5%
Tower Bridge, London	44,242	0	103,262	111,999	-80.3%
New York highway	110,000	50,000	540,000	560,000	-36.4%
Kinnaird Bridge, Edmonton	1,300	0	2,130	2,885	-41.9%

Title. The title tells us that the data in the table are intended to illustrate a cause-effect relationship ("effect of")—specifically, the impact that reductions in road capacity (i.e., restrictions on the amount of traffic that can use a given road) had on the numbers of vehicles per day on various roads in various regions. We can also reasonably expect, as turns out to be the case, that the data will be quantitative.

Labels. We need to pay attention to several labels here. The label for the leftmost column is "Region," and it heads a list of different locations around the world. Continuing from the left, the second and third columns have two labels. The topmost, "Vehicles per day on altered road," applies to both columns; each column also has its own label: "Before alteration" and "After alteration," respectively. This indicates that these columns display the average number of vehicles

QUICK TAKE

Authors use **tables** when it's important to represent exact values from the data or when the data of interest lack a common scale or unit of measurement (e.g., distances and prices).

per day on an altered road, both before and after the alteration. (The numbers in the third column are all lower than the corresponding numbers in the second column because, as the table's title indicates, the "alteration" referred to involved reducing the traffic capacity of the road(s) in the locations listed in the leftmost column.) The fourth and fifth columns are labeled similarly to the second and third, but this time they describe the effect, in terms of vehicles per day, on roads surrounding those whose capacity was reduced. The rightmost column, "Change in regional traffic," lists negative percentages indicating reductions in traffic.

Data. The data displayed in this table are of two kinds. The first, found in the second through fifth columns (again counting from the left), are counts (or, more likely, estimated averages) of the number of vehicles using a road or roads in a given location (identified in the leftmost column) under various conditions. The second type of data, found in the rightmost column, consists of percentages indicating the extent of change in traffic. As we previously noted, these percentages are all negative because the data pertain to efforts to reduce traffic.

The big question here is, what can we make of these data?

First, let's reconsider the title. From it, we know that the table intends to show a cause-effect relationship between the amount of traffic on roads in several different regions and efforts to reduce the traffic capacity of those roads.

Second, let's consider some of the conclusions we're able to draw from the data. In doing so, we'll identify specific data points as well as patterns.

- Each of the listed regions experienced decreases in traffic on altered roads. For example, in Tower Bridge, London, traffic on an altered road decreased from 44,242 vehicles per day before the alteration to 0 after. (Presumably, the road was closed to vehicle traffic.)
- While some of the regions (e.g., Rathausplatz, Nürnberg) experienced a similar drop in traffic (in terms of number of vehicles per day) on surrounding roads after road alteration was complete, other regions (e.g., New York highway) saw increases in such traffic.
- The decrease in traffic across the regions varied from very high (e.g., -146.6% in Rathausplatz) to moderate (-36.4% for New York highway).

Now let's consider whether we can reach a "big picture" understanding of the data in the table, making use of the conclusions we've already drawn.

Let's first remind ourselves of what the table intends to illustrate. As we mentioned when we discussed the title, the table is meant to show a cause-effect relationship. Specifically, it's meant to show the effect of road capacity reduction efforts on the amount of traffic.

When we analyzed the labels and data in the table, we observed that the table not only indicates the effect of road capacity reduction efforts on specific roads but also on surrounding (neighboring) roads. This might lead us to wonder why both capacity-reduced roads and surrounding roads are included in the table. Given what we've already identified as the purpose of the table, the most likely reason is that if traffic is intentionally reduced on specific roads (columns 2 and 3 of the table) but actually goes up on surrounding roads (columns 4 and 5), the *total* amount of vehicle traffic may not be reduced as much as planners may have hoped, and thus road capacity reduction may not always lead to robust reductions in total traffic.

If we go back to our analysis of the data, we find that this was the case. While two regions in the table—Rathausplatz, Nürnberg, and Southampton city center—experienced reductions in both traffic on the altered road and surrounding roads, the other three regions in the table experienced an increase in the amount of traffic on surrounding roads once a given road was altered to reduce traffic. These latter three regions therefore also had smaller percentages in the “change in regional traffic” column.

From all of this, we can reasonably conclude that efforts to reduce vehicle capacity on roads are less likely to be successful in actually reducing vehicle traffic overall if changes to one road just lead drivers to move to surrounding roads. Thus, while all the road alterations presented in the table reduced overall traffic (as indicated by the negative percentages in the rightmost column), the more successful efforts in Rathausplatz and Southampton managed to reduce traffic on specific roads *and* keep displaced traffic from spilling over onto surrounding roads.

Bar Graphs

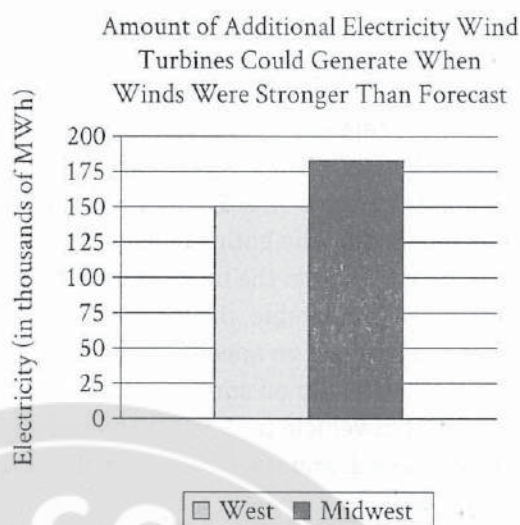
Authors use bar graphs to display data when they want to highlight comparisons in the data. In doing so, they sacrifice some of the precision of tables to make it easier for readers to grasp these comparisons visually.

Let's start with a straightforward example of a bar graph, which we'll analyze in terms of how the common features of graphics presented above are represented.

QUICK TAKE

Authors use **bar graphs** when they want readers to be able to easily make comparisons with data and when exact figures are less important than overall patterns.

Informational Graphic Sample 4



Title. The title for this graphic tells us that the data indicate how much extra electricity wind turbines can generate when the wind is stronger than forecasted. We note from this that the data do *not* represent the total amount of electricity generated by wind turbines but rather the “excess” amount produced when stronger-than-expected winds occur.

Labels. Bar graphs (and line graphs) include labels for one or more axes. In this simple graph, only one axis—the y-axis, or vertical axis—is so labeled: “Electricity (in thousands of MWh).” (*MWh* are megawatt hours.) This label is accompanied by a scale, which divides the graph into 25-unit increments from 0 to 200. Note, however, that the label indicates that these numerals represent *thousands* of MWh, so the scale actually ranges from 0 MWh to 200,000 MWh, not 0 to 200. Each increment on the graph represents 25,000 MWh.

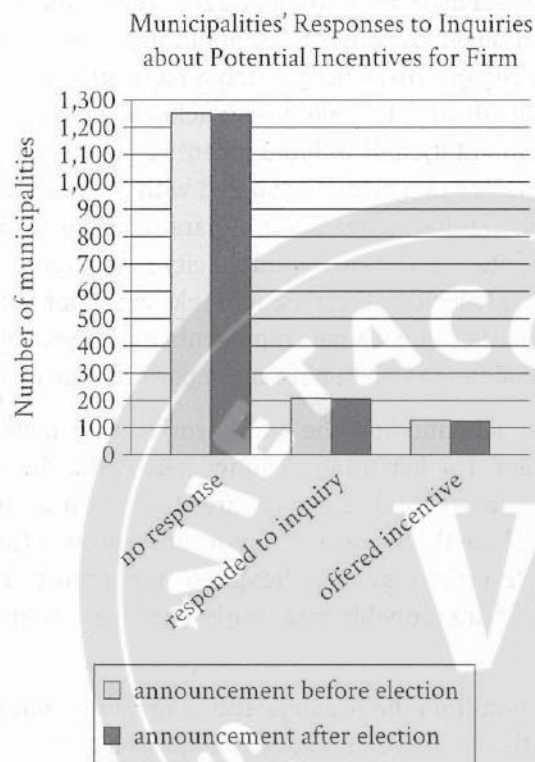
Legend. The legend indicates that the first bar represents the “West,” while the second bar represents the “Midwest.” Paying attention to the legend not only allows us to make sense of the bars but also gives us an important hint about what’s being compared in the graph—in this case, the additional electricity generated by wind turbines in two regions.

Data. Bringing the above analyses together, we can figure out that the graph is trying to tell us how two different regions (West, Midwest) compare in terms of the amount of “extra” electricity that wind turbines generate during stronger-than-forecasted winds. In this bar graph, we can simply compare the height of the two bars to see that the Midwest generates more such electricity than does the West. Because the bar for the West tops out exactly at the 150 mark, we can precisely determine that output; because the bar for the Midwest, by contrast, tops out at between 175 and 200, we can only really estimate

the amount. (This is a key difference between a table and a graph, as we noted before. The graph was doubtlessly built from precise values, but these values have been somewhat obscured here because the exact values are less important than the comparison.)

Now let's take a quick look at another, slightly more complex bar graph.

Informational Graphic Sample 5



To make sense of this graph, we'll need the context provided in the accompanying passage. This exercise is good practice for test day, as many graphics questions in the Reading and Writing section will not only require you to read and interpret graphics but also make connections between graphics and the passages that accompany them.

Here's the passage for that figure:

In the United States, firms often seek incentives from municipal governments to expand to those municipalities. A team of political scientists hypothesized that municipalities are much more likely to respond to firms and offer incentives if expansions can be announced in time to benefit local elected officials than if they can't. The team contacted officials in thousands of municipalities, inquiring about incentives for a firm looking to expand and indicating that the firm would announce its expansion on a date either just before or just after the next election.

Pairing the information from the passage and the figure, we can make better sense of the graph's title, "Municipalities' Responses to Inquiries about Potential Incentives for Firm." We can figure out that the graph depicts how various city governments (municipalities) responded to business firms' requests for financial incentives to expand into their cities. By reading the labels, we see that the (vertical) y-axis represents number of city governments, in increments of one hundred, while the (horizontal) x-axis represents three types of responses from city governments to businesses' inquiries about incentives: "no response" (presumably a city government ignoring a request), "responded to inquiry" (presumably a city government acknowledging a request but doing nothing about it), and "offered incentive" (a city government giving out requested incentives). Coupled with the passage, the legend tells us that the first bar in each pair of bars represents a business announcing a potential expansion into a city long enough before an election that local elected officials could take credit for the expansion, while the second bar in each pair represents a business announcing a potential expansion too late to have an impact on a local election.

Now that we understand how the graph works, we can start to make sense of the data. The key thing to notice here is the similarity of the heights of the two sets of bars for all three types of responses from city governments. While there are very minor differences in the two bars' heights in the "no response" and "responded to inquiry" conditions, those differences are probably meaningless from a statistical standpoint.

Using information from the passage and graph, we can reasonably conclude that the surveyed city governments don't seem to have been motivated by the timing of businesses' requests for incentives. In the context of the passage, this would further lead us to conclude that the researchers' hypothesis—"municipalities are much more likely to respond to firms and offer incentives if expansions can be announced in time to benefit local elected officials than if they can't"—is incorrect. If the hypothesis *had* been correct, we would expect the first bars for at least the "responded to inquiry" and "offered incentive" conditions to be noticeably higher than the corresponding second bars. Instead, they're nearly or exactly equal.

Line Graphs

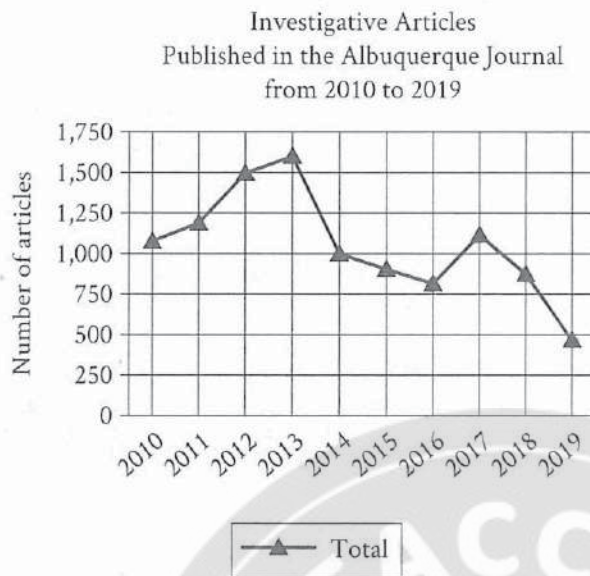
The third and final informational graphic type you may encounter in the Reading and Writing section is the line graph. Like bar graphs, line graphs prioritize illustrating comparisons, but line graphs also make it easy to spot trends in data.

Let's consider a relatively straightforward line graph.

QUICK TAKE

Authors use **line graphs** when they want to make it easy for readers to draw comparisons and/or identify trends in data, such as change over time.

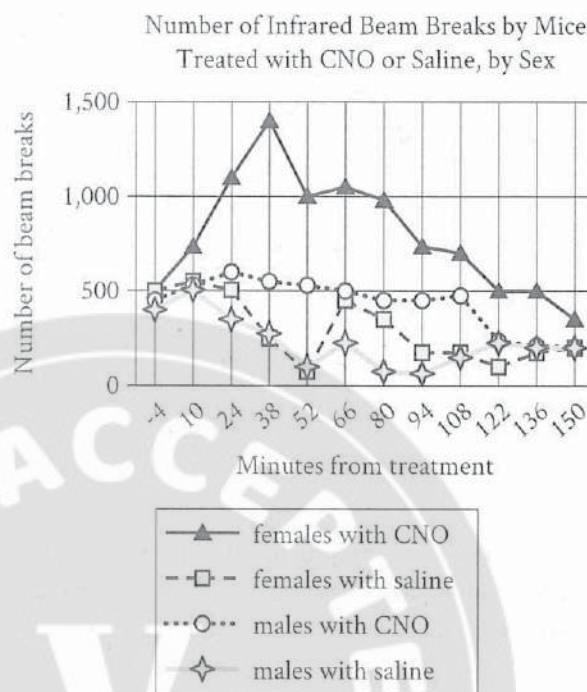
Informational Graphic Sample 6



As we mentioned above, line graphs excel at illustrating trends. This graph's title informs us that the graph depicts the number of investigative articles published in the *Albuquerque Journal* in the time span from 2010 to 2019. The y-axis label tells us that the vertical axis represents the number of articles published, in increments of 250. Although unlabeled, the x-axis represents years from 2010 to 2019, inclusive. The legend indicates that each triangle in the graph represents the total number of investigative articles published in a given year. In terms of data, we can (roughly) identify the number of investigative articles published by the *Journal* each year, but the more interesting bit is analyzing how this number has changed over time. The overall trend isn't perfectly consistent, but the general pattern is a decrease in the number of investigative articles published, which reached a low (in the years represented) in 2019 after a peak in 2013.

A more complex line graph in the Reading and Writing section may look like the following.

Informational Graphic Sample 7



Rather than analyze this figure in detail, which would require working through the passage context, we really just want to illustrate here how line graphs can become more complex than the simple example we reviewed previously. But don't worry: more complex line graphs such as this will have the same basic features as simpler ones and can be evaluated in similar ways. The main difference is that in addition to being able to examine a single trend, such as the number of investigative articles a single newspaper published over time, you can compare multiple trends.

In this case, two variables are represented in the graph: (1) sex of the mice (male, female) and (2) treatment condition (treated with CNO, treated with saline). The combination of these two variables—females treated with CNO, females treated with saline, males treated with CNO, males treated with saline—results in the four lines graphed above. As the legend indicates, each of these lines has its own symbol (triangle, square, circle, diamond) and line style (solid black, dash, dot, solid gray), making it easier to tell them apart.

These lines are plotted against a grid in which the y-axis represents the number of infrared beam breaks by the mice, in increments of five hundred, and the x-axis represents time—specifically, minutes from the time at which the female and male mice were treated with either CNO or saline—in fourteen-minute increments.

Even without knowing more about the scientific study in question, we can both identify some specific data points and recognize some differences in how mice of different sexes responded to the two treatment conditions. For example, thirty-eight minutes after treatment (x-axis), female mice treated with CNO (solid black line with triangles) broke infrared beams approximately 1,450 times (y-axis). We can also recognize that during the period after the treatment, these mice broke infrared beams more often than did female mice treated with saline or male mice treated with either CNO or saline.

One interesting note about this graph is the inclusion of “-4 minutes” on the x-axis. Recall that the x-axis represents minutes from treatment. It’s reasonable to conclude, then, that “-4 minutes from treatment” represents four minutes *before* the treatment with either CNO or saline was administered. Researchers likely included this information as a baseline—specifically, to indicate, for purposes of comparison, how the mice behaved just before receiving one of the two treatments.

What You Will and Won’t Do with Reading and Writing Informational Graphics

Reading and Writing questions associated with informational graphics may ask you to do one or more of the following three things:

- **Locate data**, such as identifying a specific value from a table.
- **Interpret data**, such as recognizing trends in data and making comparisons.
- **Make connections** between data and the information and ideas in the associated passage.

To this point, we’ve focused primarily on the first two bullets, but you’ve probably already gotten some idea of how the information and ideas in the passages associated with graphics not only help you figure out what a given graphic means but also provide a context and a purpose for locating and interpreting data. We’ll provide a few examples of this third type of task in chapters 11 and 12.

It’s important to note here that **you won’t be asked to perform calculations** with data from graphics in the Reading and Writing section. This means, for example, that you won’t have to add, subtract, multiply, or divide using the data from graphics. For this reason, the use of a calculator isn’t allowed (and wouldn’t be beneficial) in the Reading and Writing section.

QUICK TAKE

When analyzing informational graphics in the Reading and Writing section, you may be asked to **locate data**, **interpret data**, and/or **make connections** between data and the associated passage.

You **won’t**, however, have to perform calculations, and the use of a calculator isn’t permitted in the Reading and Writing section (nor would it help to have access to one).

Summary: Reading and Writing Informational Graphics

Three types of informational graphics appear in the Reading and Writing section.

- **Tables**
- **Bar graphs**
- **Line graphs**

Regardless of type, informational graphics have certain features in common.

- A **title** indicating the purpose of the graphic
- **Labels** for a graphic's important elements (e.g., x- and y-axes)
- **Data**, typically in quantitative (numerical) form
- In addition, graphics may also have
 - ♦ a **legend** that explains the meaning of the bars or lines in a graph.
 - ♦ **additional information** that helps you interpret the graphic.

For graphics-related questions in the Reading and Writing section, you'll be asked to

- **locate data** (e.g., find a specific value in a table),
- **interpret data** (e.g., identify trends or make comparisons), and/or
- **make connections** between data and the information and ideas in the associated passage.

You *won't* be asked to **perform calculations** in the Reading and Writing section, and the use of a calculator isn't allowed in that section.

CHAPTER 10

Reading and Writing: Questions—Introduction

The following chapters discuss the kinds of questions you'll encounter in the Reading and Writing section and give you opportunities to immediately practice what you've learned.

Recall that the Reading and Writing section has questions in four broad categories, which we refer to as *content domains*. Each content domain has a “big idea,” or common focus, tying all the questions in the domain together at a conceptual level. Table 1 summarizes the section's four content domains and the focus of their respective questions.

Table 1. Reading and Writing Section Content Domains.

Reading and Writing Content Domain	The Big Idea
Information and Ideas (chapters 11 and 12)	Testing your understanding of what you read
Craft and Structure (chapters 13 and 14)	Testing your understanding of how and why authors write the way they do
Expression of Ideas (chapters 15 and 16)	Testing your ability to revise passages to meet particular writing goals
Standard English Conventions (chapters 17 and 18)	Testing your ability to edit passages for conventional sentence structure, usage, and punctuation

Each of the following pairs of chapters will

- provide a broad overview of a particular content domain, including the “big idea” (focus) of the domain;
- indicate about how many questions you can expect to encounter from that domain on test day;
- identify the key types of questions included in the domain;
- offer a range of sample questions and answer explanations; and
- give you an opportunity to immediately practice by answering questions from that domain and reading the associated answer explanations.

CHAPTER 11

Reading and Writing: Questions— Information and Ideas

Overview

Reading and Writing questions in the **Information and Ideas** content domain are designed to test your ability to read and demonstrate understanding of passages that represent a range of subject areas, text types, and text complexities as well as of informational graphics. The main goal of these questions is to see whether you can **read carefully to determine what the passages say explicitly and what they strongly imply**.

REMINDER

For a full discussion of the kinds of passages you'll find in the Reading and Writing section as well as analysis of these passages' key features, see chapter 8.

Proportion of the Test Section

About **26 percent** of the Reading and Writing section is made up of Information and Ideas questions. This translates to approximately **twelve to fourteen Information and Ideas questions** per test form.

Overview of Information and Ideas Question Types

The Information and Ideas content domain includes three main types of questions:

- **Central Ideas and Details** questions, which test your ability to locate or reasonably infer the main point of a passage and to identify and use supporting details.
- **Command of Evidence** questions, which test your ability to identify and use either textual evidence or quantitative data found in a passage and in any accompanying informational graphic to support or challenge points or claims.
- **Inferences** questions, which test your ability to draw reasonable, text-based conclusions from what you've read in passages.

All questions in this content domain (and in the Reading and Writing section in general) are multiple-choice in format. Each question has a single best answer (*key*) and three incorrect answer choices (*distractors*) that represent common errors students make when answering such questions. All the information needed to answer each

question is in the passage (or in any accompanying informational graphic), so you should always base your answers on what a given passage (and/or graphic) says directly and what it strongly implies.

Information and Ideas Question Types in Detail

In this section, we'll discuss each of the three Information and Ideas question types in detail. We'll describe the general purpose of each type so that you understand better how to approach such questions on test day. As part of this discussion, we'll walk through some sample questions so that you get a strong sense of the kinds of skills and knowledge required to successfully answer questions of a given type.

Central Ideas and Details Questions

As the name suggests, **Central Ideas and Details** questions ask you to determine the main point of a given passage and to identify and make use of supporting details.

Questions about Central Ideas

When you're asked to determine the **main point (central idea)** of a passage, the answer you choose should capture all the important information and ideas in the passage. Answer choices that only reflect some of the information and ideas in the passage will be incorrect, as are, of course, choices that mischaracterize the passage or that make assertions about the passage that aren't supported in the text.

Let's begin with a fairly straightforward sample question.

Information and Ideas Sample Question 1

The following text is from Edith Nesbit's 1902 novel *Five Children and It*. Five young siblings have just moved with their parents from London to a house in the countryside that they call the White House.

It was not really a pretty house at all; it was quite ordinary, and mother thought it was rather inconvenient, and was quite annoyed at there being no shelves, to speak of, and hardly a cupboard in the place. Father used to say that the ironwork on the roof and coping was like an architect's nightmare. But the house was deep in the country, with no other house in sight, and the children had been in London for two years, without so much as once going to the seaside even for a day by an excursion train, and so the White House seemed to them a sort of Fairy Palace set down in an Earthly Paradise.

Which choice best states the main idea of the text?

- A) The house is beautiful and well built, but the children miss their old home in London.
- B) The children don't like the house nearly as much as their parents do.
- C) Each member of the family admires a different characteristic of the house.
- D) Although their parents believe the house has several drawbacks, the children are enchanted by it.

Now let's evaluate each of the answer choices. Recall that we're searching for the answer choice that best captures the main idea of the passage without introducing any misstatements or unsupported assertions.

In this case, choice D is the best answer, as it best reflects the passage's main idea. The passage makes two basic points. First, the parents are well aware of problems with the house. The mother calls the house "inconvenient," and the father describes the ironwork as "like an architect's nightmare." On the other hand, the children view the house as "a sort of Fairy Palace set down in an Earthly Paradise." Choice D clearly reflects both of those ideas.

The other three answer choices mischaracterize what the passage says, making them incorrect options for the main idea. Neither part of choice A is correct, per the passage. Even the narrator refers to the house as "quite ordinary," which undermines the idea that the house is beautiful, and, as we've already seen, both the father and mother recognize that the house has shortcomings. Additionally, nothing in the passage suggests that the children miss their former home in London. Choice B is similarly inaccurate, as the reverse is actually true: the children love the house more than do their parents. Choice C is also incorrect because while the children find things to admire about the house, all we know from the passage about the parents is that the mother finds the house "inconvenient" and that the father complains about the ironwork.

Part of the straightforwardness of this question comes from the fact that choices A, B, and C are simply wrong based on what we know from the passage. More challenging Central Ideas and Details questions focused on main ideas may also require you to distinguish the main idea from statements about the passage that are accurate but still not the best expression of the main idea. In other words, you'll also have to distinguish between a *main* idea and *subordinate* ideas or mere details.

Let's consider another example. This time, we'll have to consider both whether the choices are accurate, given what we know from the passage, and whether they appropriately capture the passage's main idea.

Information and Ideas Sample Question 2

In many of his sculptures, artist Richard Hunt uses broad forms rather than extreme accuracy to hint at specific people or ideas. In his first major work, *Arachne* (1956), Hunt constructed the mythical character Arachne, a weaver who was changed into a spider, by welding bits of steel together into something that, although vaguely human, is strange and machinelike. And his large bronze sculpture *The Light of Truth* (2021) commemorates activist and journalist Ida B. Wells using mainly flowing, curved pieces of metal that create stylized flames.

Which choice best states the text's main idea about Hunt?

- A) He often depicts the subjects of his sculptures using an unrealistic style.
- B) He uses different kinds of materials depending on what kind of sculpture he plans to create.
- C) He tends to base his art on important historical figures rather than on fictional characters.
- D) He has altered his approach to sculpture over time, and his works have become increasingly abstract.

When working on this question, it's helpful to remember our discussion in chapter 8 of the structure of passages and how we can use an understanding of structure to help us out. The passage's first sentence makes a general statement about Hunt and his creations, while the second and last sentences provide examples supporting this statement. Because the second and last sentences only offer supporting examples, it's unlikely that we'll find the main point of the passage there.

As it happens, choice A, which is the best answer, is a close paraphrase of the passage's first sentence. The first sentence makes a general statement about Hunt and his work—he often uses “broad forms rather than extreme accuracy” to depict his subjects—while the second and last sentences offer two examples illustrating that general statement. (“Unrealistic style” is a reasonable translation of “broad forms,” with *broad* here suggesting a lack of precision or fidelity, in contrast to “extreme accuracy.”)

Choice B is an example of a (mostly) accurate statement about the passage that still fails to capture the passage's main point. It's true, or at least highly probable, that Hunt uses different materials depending on the kind of sculpture he plans to create, and we observe from the two examples cited in the second and last sentences of the passage that *Arachne* and *The Light of Truth* do use different materials—steel and bronze, respectively. However, this choice focuses only on the examples and ignores the general statement in the passage's first sentence. Therefore, choice B can't be the best answer.

Choices C and D are more like the incorrect answer options we considered in the previous sample question. Choice C is incorrect because the passage doesn't say that Hunt tends to base his works on important historical figures rather than on fictional characters.

In fact, the passage's first example, *Arachne*, describes a work based on a figure from mythology. (Although you might know that Ida B. Wells is a famous historical figure, this knowledge isn't crucial to answering the question, as the answer choice is still inaccurate based only on what we find directly in the passage.) Choice D is incorrect because the passage gives no indication that Hunt has changed his approach over time.

Let's consider one final Central Ideas and Details example, this time on the more challenging side of things.

Information and Ideas Sample Question 3

In a study of new technology adoption, Davit Marikyan et al. examined negative disconfirmation (which occurs when experiences fall short of one's expectations) to determine whether it could lead to positive outcomes for users. The team focused on established users of "smart home" technology, which presents inherent utilization challenges but tends to attract users with high expectations, often leading to feelings of dissonance. The researchers found that many users employed cognitive mechanisms to mitigate those feelings, ultimately reversing their initial sense of disappointment.

Which choice best states the main idea of the text?

- A) Research suggests that users with high expectations for a new technology can feel content with that technology even after experiencing negative disconfirmation.
- B) Research suggests that most users of smart home technology will not achieve a feeling of satisfaction given the utilization challenges of such technology.
- C) Although most smart home technology is aimed at meeting or exceeding users' high expectations, those expectations in general remain poorly understood.
- D) Although negative disconfirmation has often been studied, little is known about the cognitive mechanisms shaping users' reactions to it in the context of new technology adoption.

NOTE

You may see the phrase "et al." in some passages about scientific (or social scientific) research (e.g., "Davit Marikyan et al." in this sample passage). This just means that the study being discussed was undertaken by several people, not all of whom are named. You may see slight variations on the same idea (e.g., "[researcher's name] and colleagues") in other questions.

Determining the main idea of this passage requires some persistence because of the complexity of the text itself. If you find some of the concepts, vocabulary, and sentence structures challenging, try to focus on the basic points and the connections between them.

In this case, we might say that the first sentence of the passage raises the question of whether "something bad" (negative disconfirmation) can be turned into "something good" (a positive outcome). The second sentence more or less just tells us that the subjects of the study were users of smart-home technology. For the purpose of understanding the passage and answering the associated question, it doesn't really matter what smart-home technology is, only that it's the case that Marikyan and colleagues studied users of this technology because those users are especially likely to experience the bad feeling described in the first sentence. At heart, the last sentence tells us that the researchers found that in many cases, the "something bad" (initial sense of disappointment) could be turned into "something good" (satisfaction).

STRATEGY

Don't get distracted by what a passage doesn't tell you. Focus on what it *does* tell you directly or what it strongly implies. That's all questions will ask you about.

We actually don't know from the passage the specific reason or reasons smart-home technology users' feelings changed, only that "many users employed cognitive mechanisms to mitigate those [negative] feelings." Because Reading and Writing passages are so short, expect that some details will be left out.

Now let's evaluate the answer choices for the question associated with this passage, keeping in mind that we're looking for the passage's main idea. Even from our simple breakdown of the passage above, we can recognize that choice A is the best answer, as it captures all the elements we traced. The first sentence of the passage tells us that the researchers were interested in negative feelings associated with the adoption of new technology. The second sentence informs us that smart-home technology users are prone to disappointment with the technology ("feelings of dissonance") when their high expectations aren't met. The third sentence lets us know that the researchers discovered that many smart-home technology users found a way to feel better about having adopted the technology.

You may have noticed that the key doesn't actually mention smart-home technology, and this might lead you away from choice A (and choice D) and toward choices B and C, which do refer directly to smart-home technology. The best way to avoid this misconception is to recognize that the researchers described in the passage were, first and foremost, interested in a phenomenon—negative disconfirmation—and that smart-home technology users are just one example of a category of people who, in the researchers' view, often experience this phenomenon.

All the other answer choices can be ruled out because they get the passage wrong. Choice B is incorrect because the passage says nearly the opposite: the passage's last sentence tells us that many smart-home technology users do, in fact, get over their initial disappointment. Both parts of choice C lack support in the passage. The passage doesn't tell us that smart-home technology is designed to meet or exceed users' high expectations, nor does it tell us that these expectations remain poorly understood.

Choice D is interesting—and tempting—because it plays into our assumptions, even though the passage doesn't directly support either idea it presents. We might guess that negative disconfirmation has been the subject of a lot of research just from the fact that it has a technical name and was something Marikyan and colleagues analyzed, but the passage never says that the phenomenon has "often" been studied. We might also assume that because the passage doesn't describe the "cognitive mechanisms" that allowed smart-home technology users to cope with their feelings of disappointment, little is known about these mechanisms. But, again, the passage doesn't say that. We therefore shouldn't jump to the conclusion that a lack of detail in the passage about the mechanisms means that scientists themselves don't understand the mechanisms.

Questions about Details

Questions about **details**, as opposed to ones about central ideas, will ask you to locate and use small bits of information from the passage. Sometimes the answer to a details-focused question will be explicitly stated in the passage; other times it will be strongly implicit.

In some cases, the best answer will be straightforward, as in the following example.

Information and Ideas Sample Question 4

Artist Justin Favela explained that he wanted to reclaim the importance of the piñata as a symbol in Latinx culture. To do so, he created numerous sculptures from strips of tissue paper, which is similar to the material used to create piñatas. In 2017, Favela created an impressive life-size, piñata-like sculpture of the Gypsy Rose lowrider car, which was displayed at the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles, California. The Gypsy Rose lowrider was famously driven by Jesse Valadez, an early president of the Los Angeles Imperials Car Club.

According to the text, which piece of Favela's art was on display in the Petersen Automotive Museum in 2017?

- A) A painting of Los Angeles
- B) A painting of a piñata
- C) A sculpture of Jesse Valadez
- D) A sculpture of a lowrider car

Here, we simply need to identify which answer choice is factually accurate per the passage. That option is choice D, as the passage's third sentence informs us that Favela "created an impressive life-size, piñata-like sculpture of the Gypsy Rose lowrider car" and that it was "displayed at the Petersen Automotive Museum." The other choices, by contrast, are inaccurate. The passage's only mentions of Los Angeles are as the location of the Petersen Automotive Museum and the Imperials Car Club, which rules out choice A. Choice B (as well as choice A) can be ruled out because the passage indicates that Favela is a sculptor, not a painter, and because no paintings are mentioned. Choice C is incorrect because the only reference in the passage to Valadez is as a driver of the Gypsy Rose lowrider car.

In other details-focused questions, you'll have to determine what the passage most strongly suggests. By "strongly suggests," we mean that the passage won't directly state the information or idea, but the information or idea will be heavily implied. Think of something "strongly suggested" as being a close paraphrase of what the passage directly says, a synthesis of multiple pieces of information found in the passage, or a statement that can be reasonably regarded as true given the information presented in the passage. The best answer will be put into different words than those found in the passage, but it will be closely connected to evidence in the passage, as in the following example.

Information and Ideas Sample Question 5

In a paper about p-i-n planar perovskite solar cells (one of several perovskite cell architectures designed to collect and store solar power), Lyndsey McMillon-Brown et al. describe a method for fabricating the cell's electronic transport layer (ETL) using a spray coating. Conventional ETL fabrication is accomplished using a solution of nanoparticles. The process can result in a loss of up to 80% of the solution, increasing the cost of manufacturing at scale—an issue that may be obviated by spray coating fabrication, which the researchers describe as “highly reproducible, concise, and practical.”

What does the text most strongly suggest about conventional ETL fabrication?

- A) It typically entails a greater loss of nanoparticle solution than do other established approaches for ETL fabrication.
- B) It is less suitable for manufacturing large volumes of planar p-i-n perovskite solar cells than an alternative fabrication method may be.
- C) It is somewhat imprecise and therefore limits the potential effectiveness of p-i-n planar perovskite solar cells at capturing and storing solar power.
- D) It is more expensive when manufacturing at scale than are processes for fabricating ETLs used in other perovskite solar cell architectures.

The best answer to this question is choice B. Although this answer choice isn't stated word for word in the passage, it's strongly implied by the combination of the second and last sentences. The second sentence lets us know that “conventional ETL fabrication” involves using a solution of nanoparticles. The last sentence tells us that this process is inefficient because it results in “a loss of up to 80% of the solution,” which raises the costs of manufacturing. We're also told in that sentence that the new process involving spray coating may represent an improvement. If we flip that around, it's basically the same as saying that the old process is worse (“less suitable”) than the new one may be.

Let's digress for a moment to talk about the word *obviated* in the passage's last sentence. You may or may not know that the verb *obviate* means to make something unnecessary. Even if you didn't know that going into the passage, however, you can get a good sense of the meaning of *obviated* from context clues in the passage. If the new spray coating process, as McMillon-Brown and colleagues claim, is “highly reproducible, concise, and practical,” while the conventional solution-based process is inefficient, we can make a reasonable guess that *obviated* has something to do with making the problems associated with the solution-based process go away. We'll talk more about how to make use of context clues in chapter 13 when we discuss vocabulary-related questions.

Now let's consider the other answer choices for this question. Choice A is incorrect because the passage only talks about a single conventional (standard) process, not multiple established approaches. Choice C is incorrect because the passage describes the conventional process as inefficient and therefore wastefully expensive, not “imprecise” or ineffective per se. The old process seems to work; it's just costly.

STRATEGY

When you answer questions about Reading and Writing passages, don't fixate on what you don't know or understand. Focus on what you *do* know and understand. This can often be enough to answer a given question correctly, even if some details remain hazy.

Choice D is incorrect because the passage only discusses one type of perovskite solar cell architecture: p-i-n planar perovskite solar cells. Although the passage alludes to other types of architectures, it doesn't tell us anything about them.

Command of Evidence Questions

Command of Evidence questions assess your ability to make use of both textual evidence and quantitative data in passages and informational graphics to answer associated questions. This is an important set of skills because you'll frequently have to recognize and make use of evidence—facts, figures, quotations, data, and the like—as you read, write, participate in discussions, and make presentations in high school and college classes as well as in the workplace and everyday life.

Questions about Textual Evidence

As we noted in chapter 8, the nature of **textual evidence** varies by subject area. In the following example, we'll examine how this bears out in a literature passage.

Information and Ideas Sample Question 6

Sense and Sensibility is an 1811 novel by Jane Austen. In the novel, Austen describes Marianne Dashwood's ability to persuade others of the rightness of her artistic judgments, as is evident when Marianne visits with John Willoughby, a potential suitor: _____

Which quotation from *Sense and Sensibility* most effectively illustrates the claim?

- A) "Above all, when she heard him declare, that of music and dancing he was passionately fond, she gave him such a look of approbation as secured the largest share of his discourse to herself for the rest of his stay."
- B) "Their taste was strikingly alike. The same books, the same passages were idolized by each—or if any difference appeared, any objection arose, it lasted no longer than till the force of her arguments and the brightness of her eyes could be displayed."
- C) "It was only necessary to mention any favourite amusement to engage her to talk. She could not be silent when such points were introduced, and she had neither shyness nor reserve in their discussion."
- D) "They speedily discovered that their enjoyment of dancing and music was mutual, and that it arose from a general conformity of judgment in all that related to either. Encouraged by this to a further examination of his opinions, she proceeded to question him on the subject of books."

On first encountering this question, you may wonder where the passage you're supposed to read is and how you're supposed to answer this question if you haven't read *Sense and Sensibility*.

The format of this question is probably different from many you've encountered, but it shouldn't be intimidating. Remember that with all Reading and Writing questions, the information you need to answer correctly is always provided in the passages (and any graphics).

With a question such as this, your task is twofold:

- First, you'll be presented with a **claim** about the work of literature. In this case, the claim is that "Austen describes Marianne Dashwood's ability to persuade others of the rightness of her artistic judgments" and that this is made clear in a scene where Marianne talks with another character, John Willoughby. Recall from chapter 8 that a *claim* is an assertion—in this instance, an interpretation of a literary work—that people can reasonably disagree on.
- Second, you'll have to determine which of the answer choices best **supports** that claim in a way indicated by the question itself. In this case, you're asked to find which choice "most effectively illustrates the claim." The answer choices are carefully selected so that you can understand them on their own, whether or not you've read the literary work in question.

NOTE

It's always safe to assume with questions of this sort that the quotations in the answer choices are accurate excerpts from the literary work in question.

For this question, we're searching for the one quotation among the four offered in the answer choices that best illustrates that Marianne is able to convince others that her views on art are the correct ones.

Choice B does this most effectively. This quotation tells us, first, that Marianne and John have virtually identical opinions on art ("their taste was strikingly alike") and, second, that were John ever to disagree, Marianne's reasoning ("arguments") and physical appeal ("the brightness of her eyes") would quickly convince him to change his mind.

Choice A might seem like it's on the right track, but when we read it closely, we discover that this quotation merely indicates that Marianne approved of ("gave . . . a look of approbation" regarding) John being enthusiastic about ("passionately fond" of) music and dancing. In other words, there's nothing in this quotation about Marianne being persuasive. Choice C is incorrect because this quotation only tells us that Marianne herself was passionate about certain things ("favorite amusement[s]") and would talk boldly and at length about them with others. Again, this choice is in the right neighborhood, so to speak, but it doesn't illustrate Marianne persuading anyone, so it can't be the best answer. Choice D is tempting because, like choice B, it indicates that Marianne and John had a great deal in common, but, again, it doesn't support the point that Marianne was able to persuade John to accept her views on music and dancing.

Let's now shift to looking at a textual Command of Evidence question in a different subject area.

Information and Ideas Sample Question 7

In the 1980s, many musicians and journalists in the English-speaking world began to draw attention to music from around the globe—such as mbaqanga from South Africa and quan họ from Vietnam—that can't be easily categorized according to British or North American popular music genres, typically referring to such music as “world music.” While some scholars have welcomed this development for bringing diverse musical forms to prominence in countries where they'd previously been overlooked, musicologist Su Zheng claims that the concept of world music homogenizes highly distinct traditions by reducing them all to a single category.

Which finding about mbaqanga and quan họ, if true, would most directly support Zheng's claim?

- A) Mbaqanga is significantly more popular in the English-speaking world than quan họ is.
- B) Mbaqanga and quan họ developed independently of each other and have little in common musically.
- C) Mbaqanga and quan họ are now performed by a diverse array of musicians with no direct connections to South Africa or Vietnam.
- D) Mbaqanga and quan họ are highly distinct from British and North American popular music genres but similar to each other.

Let's begin by figuring out what the passage is trying to communicate. First, we're told that the category of “world music” was created by English-speaking musicians and journalists to describe types of music that didn't fit conventional British and North American popular music forms. Second, we learn that mbaqanga and quan họ are examples of two musical traditions that have both been categorized as “world music.” Third, we're informed that Zheng objects to the concept of “world music” in general terms because, in Zheng's view, it ignores important differences between and among the musical traditions lumped into the category.

The question itself asks which finding about mbaqanga and quan họ, if true, would most directly support Zheng's claim, which is that it's inappropriate to homogenize (blend together) diverse musical traditions into the category of “world music.” What we're looking for among the answer choices, in other words, is the best support for Zheng's claim.

Choice B is the best answer here. If mbaqanga and quan họ emerged separately and have little in common musically, this finding would support Zheng's criticism of conceiving of diverse musical traditions as belonging to the single category of “world music.”

NOTE

We use the phrase “if true” in questions such as this because we want to present a range of possibilities in the answer choices for you to consider without making you wonder about what actually happened in the study. At the same time, all the choices will be plausible—things that could reasonably have been discovered during research.

STRATEGY

When answering textual Command of Evidence questions such as this, read the passage carefully to determine what claim is being made. Then read the question closely to make sure you understand what you're looking for among the answer choices (e.g., support for the claim). And then carefully evaluate each answer choice to determine how it would affect the claim (support or weaken it)—or whether it's even relevant to the claim.

Choice A is incorrect because this finding wouldn't really affect Zheng's claim one way or the other, as the greater popularity of mbaqanga in the English-speaking world relative to quan hò would be irrelevant to what Zheng is arguing. Choice C is incorrect because it also wouldn't directly relate to Zheng's claim, which is about essential differences between and among diverse musical traditions and not about who performs the music. Choice D is incorrect because it would actually weaken Zheng's claim. Zheng asserts that highly distinct musical traditions shouldn't be lumped together, but the finding in choice D would indicate that mbaqanga and quan hò are actually similar to each other, which suggests it might not be such a bad thing to categorize them both as "world music."

Questions about Quantitative Evidence

While some Command of Evidence questions require you to work with textual evidence, others call on you to make use of **quantitative evidence** in the form of data obtained from informational graphics.

Let's examine a pair of examples.

Information and Ideas Sample Question 8

Comfort Range and Temperature-Adjustment Preferences from One Survey

Participant	Comfort rating	Preferred temperature adjustment
20	-2	Cooler
1	+1	Cooler
21	+1	Cooler

Nan Gao and her team conducted multiple surveys to determine participants' levels of comfort in a room where the temperature was regulated by a commercial climate control system. Participants filled out surveys several times a day to indicate their level of comfort on a scale from -3 (very cold) to +3 (very hot), with 0 indicating neutral (neither warm nor cool), and to indicate how they would prefer the temperature to be adjusted. The table shows three participants' responses in one of the surveys. According to the table, all three participants wanted the room to be cooler, _____

Which choice most effectively uses data from the table to complete the statement?

- A) and they each reported the same level of comfort.
- B) even though each participant's ratings varied throughout the day.
- C) but participant 20 reported feeling significantly colder than the other two participants did.
- D) but participant 1 reported feeling warmer than the other two participants did.

REMINDER

Chapter 9 covers in detail how to work with informational graphics found in the Reading and Writing section.

NOTE

Some passages in the Reading and Writing section, such as this one, contain a blank. This blank is where the answer choice would go if it were added to the passage.

This question asks you to make some straightforward interpretations of data from the table in order to correctly complete the blank in the passage with the best answer choice.

Choice C is the best answer. According to the table, on the -3 (very cold) to +3 (very hot) scale used in the survey, participant 20 provided a response of -2 (near the “very cold” end of the scale), while the other two participants provided a response of +1 (on the “warm” side of the scale). Given that the scale only includes seven points (-3, -2, -1, 0, +1, +2, +3), a difference of three (-2, +1) can reasonably be considered significant, as choice C describes it.

The same rationale shows why choice A is incorrect. While participants 1 and 21 gave the same comfort rating response (+1), participant 20 gave a response of -2; this establishes clearly that one of the three participants experienced a different level of comfort than did the other two. Choice B is incorrect because the table provides only one rating per participant, so we can’t tell whether perceptions changed throughout the day. Choice D is incorrect because participant 21 gave the same response (+1) as participant 1, meaning that participant 1 didn’t feel warmer than both of the other participants (though participant 1 did feel warmer than participant 20 [-2]).

Other quantitative Command of Evidence questions, such as our next example, require more—and more complex—interpretation of data on your part.

Information and Ideas Sample Question 9

Distribution of Ecosystem Services Affected by Invasive Species by Service Type

Region (Overall)	Provisioning (75%)	Regulating (21%)	Cultural (4%)
West	73%	27%	0%
North	88%	12%	0%
South	79%	14%	7%
East	83%	6%	11%
Central	33%	67%	0%

To assess the impact of invasive species on ecosystems in Africa, Benis N. Egoh and colleagues reviewed government reports from those nations about how invasive species are undermining ecosystem services (aspects of the ecosystem on which residents depend). The services were sorted into three categories: provisioning (material resources from the ecosystem), regulating (natural processes such as cleaning the air or water), and cultural (nonmaterial benefits of ecosystems). Egoh and her team assert that countries in each region reported effects on provisioning services and that provisioning services represent the majority of the reported services.

Which choice best describes data from the table that support Egoh and colleagues’ assertion?

- A) Provisioning services represent 73% of the services reported for the West region and 33% of those for the Central region, but they represent 75% of the services reported overall.
- B) None of the percentages shown for provisioning services are lower than 33%, and the overall percentage shown for provisioning services is 75%.
- C) Provisioning services are shown for each region, while no cultural services are shown for some regions.
- D) The greatest percentage shown for provisioning services is 88% for the North region, and the least shown for provisioning services is 33% for the Central region.

Let's consider first what main points the passage and table are trying to get across. The passage tells us that Egoh and colleagues were trying to determine the effects of invasive species on African ecosystems and that they used government reports to collect data about these effects. From these reports, the researchers calculated what percentage of reports of invasive species, by region, documented effects on three categories of ecosystem services: provisioning, regulating, and cultural. (The passage defines what each of these categories represents.) Let's use the West region as an example. Of the government reports from nations in the West region citing impacts of invasive species on ecosystem services, 73 percent of those reports were about impacts to provisioning services, while the other 27 percent were about impacts to regulating services (and no reports—0 percent—were about impacts to cultural services).

The top row of the table identifies the percentage of all the impact reports across regions that were about each of the three categories of services. According to those data, 75 percent of reports across regions were about impacts to provisioning services, 21 percent were about impacts to regulating services, and 4 percent were about impacts to cultural services. Continuing our previous example of the West region, we see that that the nations in that region reported impacts similar to those reported for Africa as a whole: 73 percent of reports described impacts to provisioning services, 27 percent to regulating services, and 0 percent to cultural services.

The claim the researchers make, as reported in the passage, is that (1) all regions experienced effects on provisioning services and that (2) impacts on provisioning services represent the majority of reports of affected ecosystem services. We're then directed to choose the answer that describes data from the table supporting the researchers' assertion (claim).

Now let's evaluate the answer choices. Choice B is the best answer, as it accurately uses data from the table to support both aspects of the researchers' assertion. We can tell, first, that provisioning services were affected in all regions listed on the table because all regions have a percentage greater than 0 for this category, with (as choice B alludes to) the Central region, at 33 percent, having the lowest percentage of reports of impacts on provisioning services. We can also tell, from the top row of the table, that 75 percent of reports across all regions related to provisioning services.

As we examine the other answer choices, keep in mind that the researchers' assertion (claim) was that each region reported effects on provisioning services and that reports of provisioning services impacts make up the majority of all impact reports.

Choice A is incorrect because it doesn't adequately support the researchers' assertion. Choice A only cites the percentage of impact reports relating to provisioning services for two regions and for the continent as a whole, not for each region. Choice C is incorrect because it also fails to support the assertion adequately. While choice C does mention that each region reported impacts on provisioning services, it doesn't support the part of the assertion that claims that reports of impacts on provisioning services represented the majority of all impact reports. Choice D is incorrect because although it does accurately list the range of percentages of impact reports by region related to provisioning services, it, like choice C, doesn't demonstrate that the majority of all impact reports were related to provisioning services.

STRATEGY

Higher-complexity quantitative Command of Evidence questions, such as this one, will often present answer choices that accurately represent data from the informational graphic but that are still incorrect because they don't effectively answer the question. Remember that you're not just looking for an accurate statement but rather for one that is accurate *and* best meets the question's requirement (in this case, finding support in the table for a claim made by the researchers).

Inferences Questions

Finally, let's look at **Inferences** questions. When a Reading and Writing question asks you to draw an inference, it's asking you to come to the most reasonable conclusion (represented by the question's key) based on information and ideas in the passage itself. You won't be asked to make giant leaps in logic or to provide your own subjective interpretation. Instead, you'll read carefully to determine what the passage says directly and what it strongly implies and then use that information to answer the question.

Let's first examine a relatively straightforward example to get a better sense of the kinds of inferences these questions will ask you to make.

Information and Ideas Sample Question 10

Researchers recently found that disruptions to an enjoyable experience, like a short series of advertisements during a television show, often increase viewers' reported enjoyment. Suspecting that disruptions to an unpleasant experience would have the opposite effect, the researchers had participants listen to construction noise for 30 minutes and anticipated that those whose listening experience was frequently interrupted with short breaks of silence would thus _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

- A) rate the listening experience as more negative than those whose listening experience was uninterrupted.
- B) rate the experience of listening to construction noise as lasting for less time than it actually lasted.
- C) perceive the volume of the construction noise as growing softer over time.
- D) find the disruptions more irritating as time went on.

STRATEGY

You may find it helpful to anticipate what the best answer to a question would look like before actually reading the answer choices. Doing so could help you find the right answer more quickly.

In questions with a blank, such as this, we need to select the answer choice that best completes that blank. In the case of Inferences questions, that answer will be the choice that represents the most reasonable inference based on the information and ideas we're supplied with in the passage.

The passage for this question presents a fairly simple scenario. Researchers have found that disruptions in enjoyable experiences often increase participants' perceptions of enjoying the experience. (The passage doesn't tell us why this is so, so we know we won't be asked about the reason.) The passage also tells us that researchers believe disruptions in unenjoyable experiences should have the opposite effect.

Before we consider the answer choices, let's think about what the passage is signaling about the right answer. If (1) interruptions to enjoyable experiences increase participants' positive perceptions of those experiences compared to the perceptions of those who had uninterrupted good experiences and if (2) researchers believe the opposite occurs when unenjoyable experiences are interrupted, we can reasonably conclude, or infer, that interruptions to unenjoyable experiences increase participants' *negative* perceptions of those experiences compared to the perceptions of those who had uninterrupted bad experiences. This is almost, in fact, what we find in choice A, which is the best answer to this question.

We can rule out choices B, C, and D on the same basic grounds. None of the inferences in these choices is supported by the passage, nor do any of the choices describe an effect opposite to the one described in the passage.

This question illustrates nicely two key takeaways about Inferences questions in general.

- The best answer to Inferences questions (as with all Reading and Writing questions) is based on what's explicitly stated and what's strongly implied in the associated passages.
- The best answer to Inferences questions is the choice that most logically completes the passage text (represented by the blank).

Choices B, C, and D might have some appeal because they sound like reasonable statements on their own, but they're neither supported by the passage nor the most logical way to fill in the passage's blank.

Let's now consider a more demanding Inferences question.

Information and Ideas Sample Question 11

As the name suggests, dramaturges originated in theater, where they continue to serve a variety of functions: conducting historical research for directors, compiling character biographies for actors, and perhaps most importantly, helping writers of plays and musicals to hone the works' stories and characters. Performance scholar Susan Manning observes that many choreographers, like playwrights and musical theater writers, are concerned with storytelling and characterization. In fact, some choreographers describe the dances they create as expressions of narrative through movement; it is therefore unsurprising that _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

- A) some directors and actors rely too heavily on dramaturges to complete certain research tasks.
- B) choreographers developing dances with narrative elements frequently engage dramaturges to assist in refining those elements.
- C) dramaturges can have a profound impact on the artistic direction of plays and musicals.
- D) dances by choreographers who incorporate narrative elements are more accessible to audiences than dances by choreographers who do not.

Since this passage is more complex than the last one we analyzed, let's take the text apart to get a better idea of what it's saying.

We might sketch out the passage in these terms:

1. Dramaturges perform a variety of roles, including helping writers of plays and musicals develop stories and characters (first sentence).
2. Many choreographers, like writers of plays and musicals, care about storytelling and character development (second and last sentences).
3. It therefore shouldn't surprise us that _____ (last sentence).

The word *therefore* signals to us that what we place in the blank should be a logical consequence of the preceding information. Put another way, *therefore* tells us that if (1) and (2), above, are true, then (3) logically follows as a result or consequence.

The word *unsurprising* in the passage's last sentence is also useful to note here. The use of this word reinforces the point that what should fill the blank is predictable (unsurprising) based on the information we've been given.

We can figure out this logical consequence, even before considering the answer choices, just from what the passage tells us.

1. Dramaturges help writers of plays and musicals develop stories and characters.
2. Many choreographers also care about developing good stories and characters.
3. It therefore shouldn't surprise us that many choreographers work with dramaturges.

Choice B matches up pretty closely with our own passage-based inference making, and it turns out to be the best answer to the question. We'd expect (i.e., shouldn't be surprised by the fact that) many choreographers would turn to dramaturges for help since many choreographers, like writers of plays and musicals, care about good storytelling and strong characters.

Choice A is incorrect because it's not supported at all by the passage. Nothing in the passage suggests anyone is overly reliant on dramaturges, and the passage adopts a strongly positive tone toward them. Choice C is incorrect because although it's a reasonable assertion on its own, it doesn't make sense in the blank, which is leading us to draw a conclusion about the role of dramaturges in choreography. Choice D, like choice A, isn't supported by the passage, and, like choice C, it doesn't make sense in the blank.

Summary: Information and Ideas Questions

Main purpose: To assess whether you can read carefully to determine what passages (and sometimes informational graphics) say explicitly and what they strongly imply

Proportion of the test section: About 26 percent (approximately twelve to fourteen questions)

Question types

- **Central Ideas and Details:** Locate or reasonably infer the main point of a passage; identify and use supporting details
- **Command of Evidence:** Identify and use textual evidence and/or quantitative data to support or challenge points or claims
- **Inferences:** Draw reasonable, text-based conclusions from what you've read in passages

CHAPTER 12

Reading and Writing: Questions—Information and Ideas Drills

1

The ice melted on a Norwegian mountain during a particularly warm summer in 2019, revealing a 1,700-year-old sandal to a mountaineer looking for artifacts. The sandal would normally have degraded quickly, but it was instead well preserved for centuries by the surrounding ice. According to archaeologist Espen Finstad and his team, the sandal, like those worn by imperial Romans, wouldn't have offered any protection from the cold in the mountains, so some kind of insulation, like fabric or animal skin, would have needed to be worn on the feet with the sandal.

What does the text indicate about the discovery of the sandal?

- A) The discovery revealed that the Roman Empire had more influence on Norway than archaeologists previously assumed.
- B) The sandal would have degraded if it hadn't been removed from the ice.
- C) Temperatures contributed to both protecting and revealing the sandal.
- D) Archaeologists would have found the sandal eventually without help from the general public.

2

The following text is adapted from María Cristina Mena's 1914 short story "The Vine-Leaf."

It is a saying in the capital of Mexico that Dr. Malsufrido carries more family secrets under his hat than any archbishop.

The doctor's hat is, appropriately enough, uncommonly capacious, rising very high, and sinking so low that it seems to be supported by his ears and eyebrows, and it has a furry look, as if it had been brushed the wrong way, which is perhaps what happens to it if it is ever brushed at all. When the doctor takes it off, the family secrets do not fly out like a flock of parrots, but remain nicely bottled up beneath a dome of old and highly polished ivory.

Based on the text, how do people in the capital of Mexico most likely regard Dr. Malsufrido?

- A) Few feel concerned that he will divulge their confidences.
- B) Many have come to tolerate him despite his disheveled appearance.
- C) Most would be unimpressed by him were it not for his professional expertise.
- D) Some dislike how freely he discusses his own family.

3

NASA's *Cassini* probe has detected an unusual wobble in the rotation of Mimas, Saturn's smallest moon. Using a computer model to study Mimas's gravitational interactions with Saturn and tidal forces, geophysicist Alyssa Rhoden and colleagues have proposed that this wobble could be due to a liquid ocean moving beneath the moon's icy surface. The researchers believe other moons should be examined to see if they too might have oceans hidden beneath their surfaces.

Which choice best states the main idea of the text?

- A) Rhoden and colleagues were the first to confirm that several of Saturn's moons contain hidden oceans.
- B) Research has failed to identify signs that there is an ocean hidden beneath the surface of Mimas.
- C) Rhoden and colleagues created a new computer model that identifies moons with hidden oceans without needing to analyze the moons' rotation.
- D) Research has revealed that an oddity in the rotation of Mimas could be explained by an ocean hidden beneath its surface.

4

Hip-hop pedagogy is a form of teaching that's gaining popularity across school subjects. It involves incorporating hip-hop and rap music into lessons as well as using hip-hop elements when teaching other subject matters. For example, Quan Neloms's students look for college-level vocabulary and historical events in rap songs. Researchers claim that in addition to developing students' social justice awareness, hip-hop pedagogy encourages student success by raising students' interest and engagement.

Which finding, if true, would most strongly support the underlined claim?

- A) Students tend to be more enthusiastic about rap music than they are about hip-hop music.
- B) Educators report that they enjoy teaching courses that involve hip-hop and rap music more than teaching courses that don't.
- C) Courses that incorporate hip-hop and rap music are among the courses with the highest enrollment and attendance rates.
- D) Students who are highly interested in social justice issues typically don't sign up for courses that incorporate hip-hop and rap music.

5

Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Héctor Tobar has built a multifaceted career as both a journalist and an author of short stories and novels. In an essay about Tobar's work, a student claims that Tobar blends his areas of expertise by applying journalism techniques to his creation of works of fiction.

Which quotation from a literary critic best supports the student's claim?

- A) "For one novel, an imagined account of a real person's global travels, Tobar approached his subject like a reporter, interviewing people the man had met along the way and researching the man's own writings."
- B) "Tobar got his start as a volunteer for *El Tecolote*, a community newspaper in San Francisco, and wrote for newspapers for years before earning a degree in creative writing and starting to publish works of fiction."
- C) "Many of Tobar's notable nonfiction articles are marked by the writer's use of techniques usually associated with fiction, such as complex narrative structures and the incorporation of symbolism."
- D) "The protagonist of Tobar's third novel is a man who wants to be a novelist and keeps notes about interesting people he encounters so he can use them when developing characters for his stories."

6

Electra is a circa 420–410 BCE play by Sophocles, translated in 1870 by R.C. Jebb. Electra, who is in mourning for her dead father and her long-absent brother, is aware of the intensity of her grief but believes it to be justified: _____

Which quotation from *Electra* most effectively illustrates the claim?

- A) "O thou pure sunlight, and thou air, earth's canopy, how often have ye heard the strains of my lament, the wild blows dealt against this bleeding breast, when dark night fails!"
- B) "I know my own passion, it escapes me not; but, seeing that the causes are so dire, will never curb these frenzied complaints, while life is in me."
- C) "Send to me my brother; for I have no more the strength to bear up alone against the load of grief that weighs me down."
- D) "But never will I cease from dirge and sore lament, while I look on the trembling rays of the bright stars, or on this light of day."

7

Tadpole Body Mass and Toxin Production after Three Weeks in Ponds

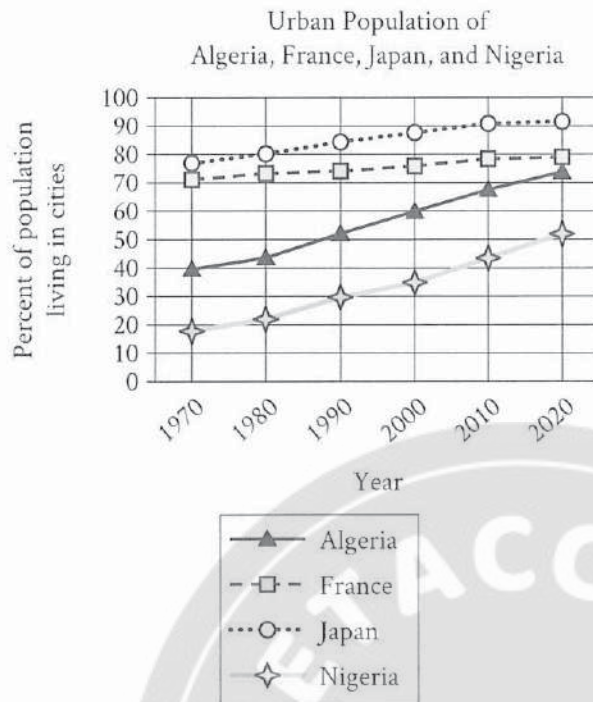
Population density	Average tadpole body mass (milligrams)	Average number of distinct bufadienolide toxins per tadpole	Average amount of bufadienolide per tadpole (nanograms)	Average bufadienolide concentration (nanograms per milligram of tadpole body mass)
High	193.87	22.69	5,815.51	374.22
Medium	254.56	21.65	5,525.72	230.10
Low	258.97	22.08	4,664.99	171.43

Ecologist Veronika Bókony and colleagues investigated within-species competition among common toads (*Bufo bufo*), a species that secretes various unpleasant-tasting toxins called bufadienolides in response to threats. The researchers tested *B. bufo* tadpoles' responses to different levels of competition by creating ponds with different tadpole population densities but a fixed amount of food. Based on analysis of the tadpoles after three weeks, the researchers concluded that increased competition drove bufadienolide production at the expense of growth.

Which choice uses data from the table to most effectively support the researchers' conclusion?

- A) The difference in average tadpole body mass was small between the low and medium population density conditions and substantially larger between the low and high population density conditions.
- B) Tadpoles in the low and medium population density conditions had substantially lower average bufadienolide concentrations but had greater average body masses than those in the high population density condition.
- C) Tadpoles in the high population density condition displayed a relatively modest increase in the average amount of bufadienolide but roughly double the average bufadienolide concentration compared to those in the low population density condition.
- D) Tadpoles produced approximately the same number of different bufadienolide toxins per individual across the population density conditions, but average tadpole body mass decreased as population density increased.

8

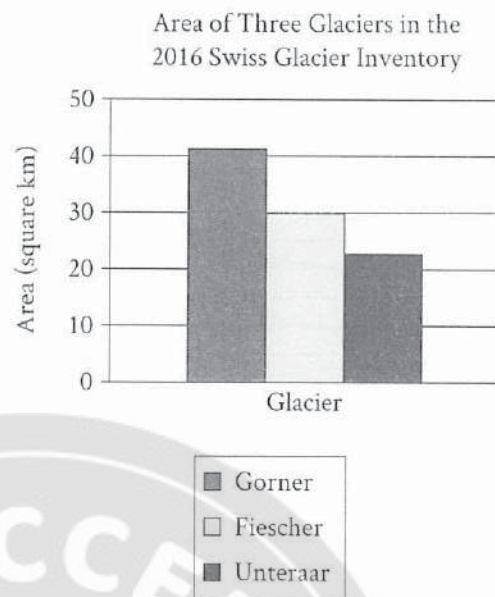


The share of the world's population living in cities has increased dramatically since 1970, but this change has not been uniform. France and Japan, for example, were already heavily urbanized in 1970, with 70% or more of the population living in cities. The main contributors to the world's urbanization since 1970 have been countries like Algeria, whose population went from _____

Which choice most effectively uses data from the graph to complete the assertion?

- A) less than 40% urban in 1970 to around 90% urban in 2020.
- B) less than 20% urban in 1970 to more than 50% urban in 2020.
- C) around 40% urban in 1970 to more than 70% urban in 2020.
- D) around 50% urban in 1970 to around 90% urban in 2020.

9



To monitor changes to glaciers in Switzerland, the government periodically measures them for features like total area of ice and mean ice thickness, which are then reported in the Swiss Glacier Inventory. These measurements can be used to compare the glaciers. For example, the Gorner glacier had _____

Which choice most effectively uses data from the graph to complete the example?

- A) a larger area than either the Fiescher glacier or the Unteraar glacier.
- B) a smaller area than the Fiescher glacier but a larger area than the Unteraar glacier.
- C) a smaller area than either the Fiescher glacier or the Unteraar glacier.
- D) a larger area than the Fiescher glacier but a smaller area than the Unteraar glacier.

10

Henry Ossawa Tanner's 1893 painting *The Banjo Lesson*, which depicts an elderly man teaching a boy to play the banjo, is regarded as a landmark in the history of works by Black artists in the United States. Scholars should be cautious when ascribing political or ideological values to the painting, however: beliefs and assumptions that are commonly held now may have been unfamiliar to Tanner and his contemporaries, and vice versa. Scholars who forget this fact when discussing *The Banjo Lesson* therefore _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

- A) risk judging Tanner's painting by standards that may not be historically appropriate.
- B) tend to conflate Tanner's political views with those of his contemporaries.
- C) wrongly assume that Tanner's painting was intended as a critique of his fellow artists.
- D) forgo analyzing Tanner's painting in favor of analyzing his political activity.

11

In many cultures, a handshake can create trust between people. Engineer João Avelino and his team are designing a robot to shake hands with a human in order to improve human-robot interactions. The robot hand adjusts its movements and pressure to better imitate the feel of a human hand. The researchers want the robot's handshake to feel realistic because _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

- A) people are less likely to interact with robots that don't look like humans.
- B) it's easier to program a robot to perform handshakes than it is to program a robot to perform some other types of greetings.
- C) the robot in the researchers' study may have uses other than interacting with humans.
- D) lifelike handshakes may make people more comfortable interacting with robots.

12

Tides can deposit large quantities of dead vegetation within a salt marsh, smothering healthy plants and leaving a salt panne—a depression devoid of plants that tends to trap standing water—in the marsh's interior. Ecologist Kathryn Beheshti and colleagues found that burrowing crabs living within these pannes improve drainage by loosening the soil, leading the pannes to shrink as marsh plants move back in. At salt marsh edges, however, crab-induced soil loosening can promote marsh loss by accelerating erosion, suggesting that the burrowing action of crabs _____

Which choice most logically completes the text?

- A) can be beneficial to marshes with small pannes but can be harmful to marshes with large pannes.
- B) may promote increases in marsh plants or decreases in marsh plants, depending on the crabs' location.
- C) tends to be more heavily concentrated in areas of marsh interiors with standing water than at marsh edges.
- D) varies in intensity depending on the size of the panne relative to the size of the surrounding marsh.

Answer Explanations

QUESTION 1

Choice C is the best answer because it most clearly identifies what the passage indicates about the discovery of the sandal. A “particularly warm summer” revealed the sandal, and centuries of ice had kept the sandal “well preserved.”

Choice A is incorrect because this choice doesn't reflect the information in the passage. The sandal is similar to Roman sandals in its lack of protection from cold, but there's no indication that the sandal itself or its design was a result of Roman influence. **Choice B** is incorrect because the passage says the opposite. The sandal had been preserved by the ice for centuries. **Choice D** is incorrect because there's no information in the passage suggesting that archaeologists would've found the sandal without the help of someone such as the treasure-hunting mountaineer.

QUESTION 2

Choice A is the best answer because it most accurately describes how, according to the passage, the people in the capital of Mexico regard Dr. Malsufrido. The passage cites a saying in the capital that Malsufrido keeps more secrets than any archbishop. It also says that when he takes off his hat, “the family secrets do not fly out . . . but remain nicely bottled up,” suggesting that he won't reveal the secrets he's learned.

Choice B is incorrect because it doesn't reflect the passage. While the passage says Malsufrido's hat is large and appears to have been brushed in the wrong direction, it doesn't support a broader characterization of Malsufrido as being regarded as ill-dressed or disheveled. **Choice C** is incorrect because Malsufrido's professional expertise isn't discussed in the passage. **Choice D** is incorrect because the passage indicates that Malsufrido keeps (other) families' secrets “bottled up” in his head, not that he shares details about his own family.

QUESTION 3

Choice D is the best answer because it best states the main idea of the passage. The passage says researchers have proposed that Mimas's wobbly rotation “could be due to a liquid ocean moving beneath the moon's icy surface.”

Choice A is incorrect because it doesn't reflect the passage. Rhoden and colleagues proposed, rather than confirmed, that one, and not several, of Saturn's moons may contain a hidden ocean. **Choice B** is incorrect because it conflicts with the passage. Researchers have identified at least one sign—the unusual wobble in Mimas's rotation—that may be due to a hidden ocean beneath the moon's surface. **Choice C** is incorrect because it doesn't reflect the passage. The model Rhoden and colleagues developed was limited to Mimas and was, in fact, the basis for them proposing a hypothesis regarding Mimas's wobbly rotation.

QUESTION 4

Choice C is the best answer because it presents the finding that would most strongly support the underlined claim. Courses incorporating hip-hop and rap music having among the highest enrollment and attendance rates would strongly suggest that these courses encourage student success by raising students' interest and engagement.

Choice A is incorrect because students being more enthusiastic about rap music than about hip-hop music wouldn't support the claim that hip-hop pedagogy, which includes both rap and hip-hop music, encourages student success by raising students' interest and engagement. *Choice B* is incorrect because educators' enthusiasm for hip-hop pedagogy isn't directly relevant to the claim that hip-hop pedagogy encourages student success by raising students' interest and engagement. *Choice D* is incorrect because some students opting out of taking courses influenced by hip-hop pedagogy wouldn't support the claim that hip-hop pedagogy encourages student success by raising the interest and engagement of those students who do take such courses.

QUESTION 5

Choice A is the best answer because it consists of the quotation from a literary critic that best supports the student's claim. The example of Tobar approaching the subject of one of his novels "like a reporter," including conducting interviews and research, shows Tobar applying journalism techniques to his fiction writing.

Choice B is incorrect because although it tells us about Tobar's initial career as a journalist and his transition to creative writing, it doesn't say anything directly about him applying journalism techniques to his fiction. *Choice C* is incorrect because it illustrates Tobar applying fiction techniques to his nonfiction writing, whereas the claim the student makes is that Tobar applied journalism techniques to his fiction writing. *Choice D* is incorrect because while it tells us that a character in one of Tobar's novels applied a journalism technique to his fiction writing, it doesn't tell us that Tobar himself did that.

QUESTION 6

Choice B is the best answer because it consists of the quotation from *Electra* that most effectively illustrates the claim. Electra states that she "know[s] her own passion," which shows that she's aware of the intensity of her grief. But she also claims that the "causes are so dire"—meaning the reasons for her grief are so awful—that she can't let it go, which shows that she believes her grief is justified.

Choice A is incorrect because although "strains of my lament" and "bleeding breast" show that Electra is aware of the intensity of her grief, this choice doesn't suggest that she believes she has a legitimate reason for feeling that way. *Choice C* is incorrect because although "load of grief that weighs me down" shows that Electra is aware of the intensity of her grief, this choice doesn't suggest that she believes she has a legitimate reason for feeling that way. *Choice D* is incorrect because although "dirge" and "sore lament" show that Electra is aware of the intensity of her grief, this choice doesn't suggest that she believes she has a legitimate reason for feeling that way.

QUESTION 7

Choice B is the best answer because it most effectively supports the researchers' conclusion with data from the table. According to the table, tadpoles in the high population density group—that is, the group with the most tadpoles and therefore the highest level of competition among them—had much higher average bufadienolide concentrations (374.22 nanograms per milligram of tadpole body mass) than did the tadpoles in the medium and low population density groups (230.10 and 171.43, respectively). Also according to the table, tadpoles in the high population density group had the lowest average body mass (193.87 mg) relative to the medium and low population density

groups (254.56 and 258.97, respectively). These data support the claim that increased competition drove (i.e., increased) bufadienolide production at the expense of growth.

Choice A is incorrect because although this statement is supported by the table, it doesn't mention bufadienolide production, which it would need to do to support the claim. *Choice C* is incorrect because although this statement is supported by the table, it doesn't mention average body mass ("growth"), which it would need to do to support the claim. *Choice D* is incorrect because although this statement is supported by the table, the claim requires support regarding either the average amount of bufadienolide per tadpole or average bufadienolide concentration, not the average number of distinct bufadienolide toxins per tadpole, which is irrelevant to the claim.

QUESTION 8

Choice C is the best answer because it most effectively uses data from the graph to complete the assertion. In the graph, the line representing Algeria's urban population (third line from the top; dark solid line with triangles) indicates that the proportion of the population living in cities was 40 percent in 1970 and slightly above 70 percent in 2020.

Choices A, B, and D are incorrect because they each inaccurately represent data from the graph.

QUESTION 9

Choice A is the best answer because it most effectively uses data from the graph to complete the example. The graph displays area measurements (in square kilometers) for three glaciers. The leftmost (dark gray) bar in the graph, which represents the Gorner glacier, is taller than the two others, with a value of slightly above 40 square kilometers.

Choices B, C, and D are incorrect because the graph establishes that the Gorner glacier (more than 40 square kilometers) is larger than either the Fiescher glacier (middle, light gray bar; 30 square kilometers) or the Unteraar glacier (rightmost, black bar; somewhat more than 20 square kilometers).

QUESTION 10

Choice A is the best answer. The passage warns modern scholars against "ascribing [attributing] political or ideological values" to Tanner's 1893 painting *The Banjo Lesson* that may have been "unfamiliar to Tanner and his contemporaries." The passage's main concern, in other words, is that modern scholars may claim that the painting expresses ideas or values that Tanner may not have intended because he painted the work over a century ago, and thus those scholars may judge the painting by inappropriate standards.

Choice B is incorrect because Tanner's contemporaries are only briefly mentioned in the passage, and there's no suggestion that modern scholars are at risk of conflating (confusing) Tanner's views with those of his contemporaries. *Choice C* is incorrect because the passage offers no support for the idea that Tanner meant to critique his fellow artists with *The Banjo Lesson*, as the passage only briefly mentions Tanner's contemporaries. *Choice D* is incorrect because the passage is mainly concerned with how modern scholars interpret *The Banjo Lesson* and says nothing to suggest that modern scholars are at risk of focusing more on Tanner's political activity than on his painting.

QUESTION 11

Choice D is the best answer because it most logically completes the text. The passage says that handshakes can create trust and that the engineers' goal is to "improve human-robot interactions." This suggests that they want the robot's handshake to feel realistic because they want humans to trust the robot and therefore feel more comfortable interacting with it.

Choice A is incorrect because the passage never discusses the appearance of this robot or any other robots, so there's no basis to make this inference.

Choice B is incorrect because the passage never discusses any other types of greetings, so there's no basis to make this inference. **Choice C** is incorrect because the passage never discusses any uses for the robot other than interacting with humans, so there's no basis to make this inference.

QUESTION 12

Choice B is the best answer because it most logically completes the text. The passage says that crab burrowing in the pannes enables marsh plants to grow there again. It also says that crab burrowing at the edges of salt marshes speeds up marsh loss. Taken together, these pieces of information suggest that burrowing crabs can either help or hurt marshes, depending on where the crabs are located.

Choice A is incorrect because the passage never discusses pannes of different sizes. **Choice C** is incorrect because the passage never suggests that crabs do more burrowing in the pannes (interior areas prone to standing water) than they do at salt marsh edges. **Choice D** is incorrect because the passage never discusses the intensity of crab burrowing, nor does it discuss the size of pannes relative to the size of surrounding salt marshes.

CHAPTER 13

Reading and Writing: Questions—Craft and Structure

Overview

Reading and Writing questions in the **Craft and Structure** content domain are designed to test your ability to demonstrate understanding of how and why authors write texts the way they do. The passages you'll consider for these questions represent a range of subject areas, text types, and text complexities. There are three main areas of focus in Craft and Structure questions: using and determining the meaning of vocabulary, analyzing the structure and purpose of passages, and making supportable connections between two topically related passages.

Proportion of the Test Section

About **28 percent** of the Reading and Writing section is made up of Craft and Structure questions. This translates to approximately **thirteen to fifteen Craft and Structure questions** per test form.

Overview of Craft and Structure Question Types

The Craft and Structure content domain includes three main question types:

- **Words in Context** questions, which test your ability to use and determine the meaning of high-utility academic words and phrases in the contexts in which they appear.
- **Text Structure and Purpose** questions, which test your abilities to analyze and describe how and why passages are put together the way they are and to determine the main purpose of passages.
- **Cross-Text Connections** questions, which test your ability to draw supportable connections between two topically related passages.

All questions in this content domain (and in the Reading and Writing section in general) are multiple-choice in format. Each question has a single best answer (*key*) and three incorrect answer choices (*distractors*) that represent common errors students make when

answering such questions. All the information needed to answer each question is in the passage (or passage pair), so you should always base your answers on what a given passage (or pair of passages) says directly and what it strongly implies.

Craft and Structure Question Types in Detail

In this section, we'll discuss each of the three Craft and Structure question types in detail. We'll describe the general purpose of each type so you'll better understand how to approach such questions on test day. As part of this discussion, we'll walk through some sample questions so you get a strong sense of the kinds of skills and knowledge required to answer questions of a given type.

Words in Context Questions

Words in Context questions ask you to either use or determine the meaning of high-utility academic words and phrases in the contexts in which they appear.

WHAT ARE "HIGH-UTILITY ACADEMIC WORDS AND PHRASES"?

We use the term *high-utility academic words and phrases* to describe the vocabulary tested in Words in Context questions in the Reading and Writing section. These words and phrases are ones that you'll encounter fairly often in your readings in class across a range of subject areas. Some examples of high-utility academic vocabulary are *analyze*, *dissent*, *simulate*, and *ambiguous*.

The tested words and phrases are ones whose meaning has high value (utility) to you because they're often key to unlocking the meaning of texts you'll read, especially the more complex texts you'll encounter in your coursework in high school and college.

By contrast, Words in Context questions *don't* test the meaning and use of words and phrases that are

- common in casual, everyday speech.
- specific to a given field of study (e.g., *isotope*, *magma*, *interest rate*, *lobbyist*).
- so uncommon that learning their meaning isn't a high college and career readiness priority (e.g., *apricate*, *ultracrepidarian*, *lachrymose*).

To answer these questions, you'll need to pay close attention to the context, or the language surrounding the tested word or phrase, to get a clear sense of either what word or phrase (among the provided answer choices) should fill a given blank in a passage because it makes the most sense in context or what definition (among those provided in the answer choices) most nearly captures the meaning of the tested word or phrase as it's used in the passage.

It's crucial to note here that you can use clues from this context to help determine the best answer to each question. This is true even if you don't know the precise meaning of a tested word or phrase.

To be clear, strong vocabulary knowledge is beneficial with these sorts of questions, and students who know the meaning of and how to properly use more high-utility academic words and phrases than others will generally be more successful with these questions. However, context clues can help direct you to the answer, or at least help you eliminate incorrect answer choices, even when a tested word or phrase is unfamiliar to you.

STRATEGY

Passages for Words in Context questions will provide **context clues** that will help you understand the use or meaning of tested words and phrases.

PREPARING TO ANSWER WORDS IN CONTEXT QUESTIONS

The single best preparation you can undertake for answering Words in Context questions is reading, especially wide and/or deep reading of challenging texts. That's because the words and phrases tested in Words in Context questions are those you'll commonly find in texts in many different subject areas but not commonly hear or use in casual conversation. Vocabulary lessons in classes can also be beneficial, particularly if they focus on high-utility academic words and phrases (sometimes known as *tier two vocabulary*).

We won't say *not* to use word lists as a vocabulary-building tool, but there are a couple of things you should understand if you do decide to go that route.

First, College Board doesn't publish an official list of words and phrases tested on the digital SAT, so any list you find out there may or may not match up with the vocabulary you'll encounter in Reading and Writing questions. Many so-called SAT words, in fact, aren't actually ones we test because they're used so infrequently in the real world that knowing their meaning or how to use them yourself isn't particularly valuable in most circumstances.

Second, learning the isolated (out-of-context) meaning of words and phrases may not be particularly useful when encountering those words and phrases in particular contexts in the Reading and Writing section.

That said, any vocabulary learning is likely to be of at least some benefit to you, whether on the test, in classes, in the workplace, or in your everyday life.

Let's look at some examples of Words in Context questions, starting with those that ask you to fill in a passage's blank with the most logical and precise word or phrase from among the answer choices.

Craft and Structure Sample Question 1

Visual artist Gabriela Alemán states that the bold colors of comics, pop art, and Latinx culture have always fascinated her. This passion for the rich history and colors of her Latinx community translates into the _____ artworks she produces.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

- A) unknown
- B) reserved
- C) definite
- D) vivid

STRATEGY

"Most logical and precise" in this question reminds you that you're looking for the most contextually appropriate word or phrase from among the answer choices.

STRATEGY

Context clues are elements of a text that suggest the meaning of a particular word or phrase found in it. Context clues include, but aren't necessarily limited to, definitions, restatements, and synonyms and antonyms. In this case, the context clues come mainly in the form of the synonym "bold" and the related concept of "passion." Something that's bold and expresses passion is likely to be "vivid" and unlikely to be "unknown," "reserved," or "definite."

In questions such as this, you'll have to determine the answer choice that best fills in the blank in the most logical and precise way.

The gist of the passage is that Alemán produces art that reflects her "passion for the rich history and colors of her Latinx community." The position of the blank in the passage as well as the answer choices we're offered indicate that we're looking for an adjective—a descriptive word to modify the noun "artworks."

As we've previously noted, passages associated with Words in Context questions such as these will include context clues pointing to the word or phrase intended to fill the passage's blank. In this case, "bold colors" (first sentence of the passage) and "passion" and "rich history and colors" (last sentence) suggest that we want a word here that conveys the idea that Alemán's artworks are vibrant. This makes choice D the best option, as "vivid" effectively captures the ideas of boldness, vigor, and intensity.

The other choices aren't as logical or precise in this context. "Unknown" (choice A) and "definite" (choice C) make little sense in context, while "reserved" (choice B) suggests the opposite of what's intended by the context.

Here's a more challenging sample question that also asks you to determine the most logical and precise word or phrase in context.

Craft and Structure Sample Question 2

Economist Marco Castillo and colleagues showed that nuisance costs—the time and effort people must spend to make donations—reduce charitable giving. Charities can mitigate this effect by compensating donors for nuisance costs, but those costs, though variable, are largely _____ donation size, so charities that compensate donors will likely favor attracting a few large donors over many small donors.

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

- A) predictive of
- B) subsumed in
- C) independent of
- D) supplemental to

Even though this question is more challenging than the first one we considered, you can approach it in the same way.

First, let's make sure we understand the passage. We're told that researchers found that charities can mitigate (reduce) the negative impact of nuisance costs on giving by compensating the donors for these costs. We're also told that because these costs have some kind of relationship to donation size, charities compensating for these costs would likely favor (prefer) working with a few large donors than a lot of small donors.

The blank in the passage before “donation size” indicates that we’re going to need to choose the phrase from the answer options that makes the most sense in context. By doing so, we’ll complete the passage logically by describing the relationship that’s currently missing between nuisance costs and donation size.

At this point, we should be asking ourselves what kind of relationship between nuisance costs and donation size would lead charities to prefer taking money from a few large donors rather than many small donors. After considering all the choices, we find that choice C makes the most sense in context. “Independent of” indicates that the “amount” of nuisance cost doesn’t depend on donation size. In other words, while nuisance costs vary, they’re largely not tied to (i.e., are independent of) donation size. In practice, this would mean that charities would have to pay out roughly the same amount of compensation (in whatever form) to small donors as to large ones. Because the charities would be getting a lot of money from each of a few large donors, compensating these donors wouldn’t have much impact on how much money the charities ultimately took in. On the other hand, these same charities would have to pay out roughly the same amount to each small donor, of whom there would be many more and each of whom would only be giving a little money. If the compensation were, say, a \$5 gift card, the charity would be better off handing out a few \$5 gift cards to a small number of big donors than a lot of \$5 gift cards to many small donors.

None of the other answer choices makes sense in context. Nothing in the passage indicates that nuisance costs are predictive of (choice A), subsumed in (choice B), or supplemental to (choice D) donation size, and choosing any of those options for the key would leave the passage without a good explanation for why charities compensating donors for nuisance costs would likely prefer to work with fewer large donors than many smaller ones.

Now let’s turn to a Words in Context example for which you must determine the context-based meaning of a word or phrase.

Craft and Structure Sample Question 3

The following text is from Booth Tarkington’s 1921 novel *Alice Adams*.

Mrs. Adams had always been fond of vases, she said, and every year her husband’s Christmas present to her was a vase of one sort or another—whatever the clerk showed him, marked at about twelve or fourteen dollars.

As used in the text, what does the word “marked” most nearly mean?

- A) Stained
- B) Staged
- C) Watched
- D) Priced

STRATEGY

The context clues here aren’t limited, as in the previous example, to synonyms and closely related concepts. For this question, it’s important to use reading and reasoning skills to establish the intended relationship between nuisance costs and donation size. The passage as a whole suggests that nuisance costs have little relation to donation size, so “independent of” (choice C) is the best answer.