



State of California – Military Department
California Cadet Corps

CURRICULUM ON CITIZENSHIP

Strand C7: Study Skills

Level 11

This Strand is composed of the following components:

- A. Preparing to Learn
- B. Taking Tests
- C. **Building Your Learning and College Prep**



Table of Contents

C. Building Your Learning and College Prep	3
OBJECTIVES	3
C1. SAT Test Taking Strategies	4
C2. ACT Test Taking Strategies	7
C3. Vocabulary Building Strategies	10
C4. Current Events	14
C5. Proofreading	14
References	16

C. Building Your Learning and College Prep

OBJECTIVES

DESIRED OUTCOME (Leadership)

Cadets will know how to effectively take the ACT or SAT. They will also understand how to build lifelong learning skills through the study of current events, vocabulary building strategies, and proofreading techniques.

At the end of instruction, each cadet will be able to:

1. Identify the sections of the SAT, know the focus of each section, and describe test taking strategies
2. Identify the sections of the ACT, know the focus of each section, and describe test taking strategies
3. Identify vocabulary building strategies
4. Describe the benefits of learning about Current Events and how to go about it
5. Describe how to effectively proofread written documents


 achieve
more

C1. SAT Test Taking Strategies


 SAT[®]

The Scholastic Aptitude Test, or SAT, is used by many colleges and universities to test **aptitude** and knowledge for entrance eligibility to the school. It tests in five areas: Reading, Writing and Language, Math (No Calculator), Math (Calculator), and Essay, which is optional. Some schools require the essay portion, others don't. The student receives an Evidence Based Reading and Writing score and a Math score of 200-800 each, for a total score of up to 1600. The essay is scored separately, with Reading, Analysis, and Writing all worth from 2 to 8 points each. Students can take the test multiple times to improve their score, and scores do tend to rise with test **familiarization**. Actively preparing for the test, by either a class, online preparation program, or self-study book, is recommended and will raise your scores. There are many ways to prepare for the SAT, including many free sample tests available on the internet. The key is to prepare, not just to take it cold.

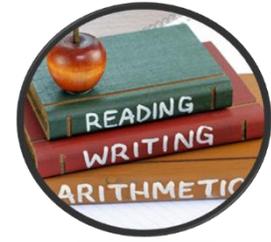
General test-taking tips for the SAT:

- Read the instructions for each section of the test before the test starts. Don't waste testing time with instructions – do this before each separate time period starts.
- Be neat. Don't put **stray** marks on the answer key because the scoring machine may not be able to tell the difference.
- Make sure you're putting the answer to the right question on the answer sheet—it can be easy to get off track and put your answers in the wrong number.
- Go through and quickly answer the questions you're sure about. Mark the others, then go back and more deliberately work on the questions you find more difficult.
- Cross off answers in the SAT booklet you know to be incorrect—often, this will lead you to the correct answer. You can write in the test booklet, so go ahead and cross them out or put notes in the booklet.
- Go back through Section B5 on taking multiple choice tests and follow those tips. There's only one answer to every question, and you should use elimination of the obvious incorrect answers to help you get to the correct answer. *There's no penalty on the SAT for guessing, so if you can't determine the correct answer, **guess**. Don't leave it blank!*
- Your first instinct is usually correct. Don't go back and change your answer unless you're sure you were wrong.
- Manage your time. The SAT consists of several smaller timed tests. Know how much time you have and don't spend a lot of time on any one question. Manage your time so that you're completing each of the sections. Bring a watch—you can't use your phone.
- Fully read each question. Don't assume a question is the same one you saw in a test prep book. Read the question and all answers before committing to an answer.
- Be familiar with the test. There are 52 Reading questions (65 minutes), 44 Writing & Language questions (35 minutes), 58 Math questions (80 minutes) and one Essay (50 minutes).



The parts of the SAT are as follows:

- Critical Reading Section – Sentence Completion (25% of Reading)
- Critical Reading Section – Reading Comprehension (short and long) (75% of Reading)
- Writing Section – Multiple Choice: Usage, Sentence Correction, and Paragraph Correction
- Math Section – With Calculator
- Math Section – Without Calculator
- Writing Section – Written Essay (optional)



Critical Reading – Sentence Completion:

The Sentence Completion questions are one of the two question types of the SAT Critical Reading section. Out of the 67 questions that include two different question types, 19 are Sentence Completion questions.

As the name suggests, in this part of Critical Reading, you will have to fill in the blanks with the appropriate answers that complete the meaning of the statement. These are multiple choice answers, each of which provides two words to fill in the blanks in the sentence. The hint to the correct answer is in the statements themselves. It tests your understanding of vocabulary and reading **comprehension**. You need to understand the meaning of the sentence in order to select the best answer.

Critical Reading – Reading Comprehension (Short and Long):

Reading Comprehension questions test your ability to understand a passage and answer questions based on what is stated and implied in the passage. You need to read the passage first so you can identify the main idea of the passage and appreciate features such as the author's tone and attitude as well as the organization of the passage. Scroll back to the relevant point in the text as you do each question.

Passages on the SAT vary in length from short paragraphs that take 3 minutes to read and answer two questions, to ones that take 15 minutes to read and answer 13 questions. One section will contain two related long passages.

Identify the main idea in each passage. Ensure you read the **italicized** introductory text. The most important sentences in each paragraph are the first and last. Focus the majority of your time answering the questions—not reading and re-reading the passage.

There's no quick fix to help you pass this section or to improve your critical reading skills, other than practice. Take some of the free on-line tests to check your abilities in this area, and if you need to work on it, take a course in reading comprehension.

Writing and Language Test:

This is a test that gives you 35 minutes to answer 44 multiple choice questions on grammar, language usage, and **syntax**. Essentially, the SAT Writing Test is asking you to be an editor, i.e., to fix mistakes in sentences and passages and revise them to make them better.



Math Section – Student Produced Response (grid) and Multiple Choice

The Math test focuses on algebra (more than half the questions), arithmetic, **probability** and data analysis, plane geometry, and trigonometry.

The Math Section has two parts that take 80 minutes. There are 58 multiple choice questions and one set of “extended-thinking” grid-in questions. Grid-in questions (student-produced response questions) are problems with no answer choices. You have to solve the problem then enter the answer in a grid.

The test is broken into two sections:

Section 3, without a calculator, has 20 questions in 25 minutes. 15 of the questions are multiple choice, and 5 are grid-in.

Section 4, with a calculator, has 38 questions in 55 minutes. 30 of the questions are multiple choice, and 8 are grid-in.

You should take sample tests on the internet or in a class to get a feel for the types of questions to expect.

Writing – Optional Written Essay:

Good writing skills are critical to success in college and the workplace. The SAT essay tests students’ writing skills and, in particular, their ability to write **concisely, coherently**, and quickly. Like every other section of the SAT, the writing section measures what students have learned in the classroom and how well they apply that knowledge outside of the classroom.

The SAT Essay is optional, though some schools require it. You will be given a passage to read. You need to explain in your essay how the author builds an argument to persuade an audience. Support your explanation with evidence from the passage. You won’t be asked to agree or disagree with a position on a topic or to write about your personal experience.

You have 50 minutes to write your essay.

We can’t emphasize too much the benefit of preparing for the SAT. Of course, learning your course work, improving your writing ability and reading comprehension and knowledge of mathematics is critical, but you can improve your success by being PREPARED for the test. At the very least, go online to free sites and take practice tests. If you don’t do well on the practice tests, look into a course, either online or in person, that helps students do better on the SAT. If you’re applying to colleges, your SAT score is a critical component of your applications.

SAT & ACT Test Tips Quick Reference

- ✓ Read instructions for each section *before* test starts.
- ✓ Be neat. Don't put **stray** marks on answer key.
- ✓ Ensure you put answer to the right question on answer sheet.
- ✓ Quickly answer questions you're sure about. Then go back to more difficult questions.
- ✓ Cross off answers (in SAT booklet—not answer sheet) you know are incorrect.
- ✓ Review Section B5 on taking multiple choice tests.
- ✓ If needed, guess—Don't leave it blank!
- ✓ Your first instinct is usually correct.
- ✓ Manage your time.
- ✓ Read the question & all answers before committing to an answer.
- ✓ Be familiar with the test.



C2. ACT Test Taking Strategies

The ACT (originally American College Testing, now the acronym stands on its own) is a college assessment test used as part of the admissions process in American colleges and universities. Students generally have the option to take either the SAT or the ACT (or both) for **inclusion** with your college admissions packet. All schools accept both tests. The ACT is slightly different from the SAT and includes four subjects:

- Reading Comprehension
- English
- Science
- Math
- Essay (optional)

The ACT works better for students who do well in a time crunch, while the SAT offers slightly more time to ponder the questions. The Science portion addresses a student's scientific reasoning skills (not knowledge of scientific subjects). Otherwise, the tests are similar.

The ACT is scored on a scale of 36 points. The optional essay is scored separately and is not added into the composite score of the other subjects. Points are not deducted for wrong answers.

The general test-taking tips listed for the SAT in section C2 apply to the ACT as well, as does the recommendation to prepare for the ACT by taking online practice tests.

Reading Section:

The Reading section of the ACT is a 40-question, 35-minute test that covers four reading passages. The four passages include:

- (1) Prose Fiction/Literary Narrative
- (2) Social Science
- (3) Humanities
- (4) Natural Science

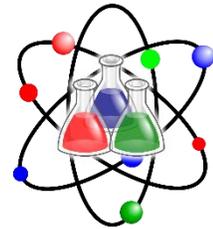
**English Section:**

The English Section of the ACT presents 75 questions within a 45-minute timeframe. It includes five reading passages, followed by multiple choice questions regarding reading comprehension, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and usage. Other questions look at organization, strategy, and style.

Questions cover a wide range of reading comprehension. You're likely to see questions about the main point of the passage, writer's tone, intent, and point of view.

Science Section:

The Science section of the ACT consists of 40 questions in 35 minutes, for an average of just over 50 seconds per question. Students often expect the Science section of the ACT to be like the Math section, but it's actually more like the Reading section.



The Science section includes seven passages that cover various scientific topics. Passages often contain charts, graphs, scientific opinions, or experiment summaries. For each of the seven passages there are four to seven questions. The key to doing well on the Science section of the ACT is being able to quickly and accurately read and comprehend scientific findings, postulates, and data.

There are three types of questions: Data Representation (30-40%), Research Summaries (45-55%), and Conflicting Viewpoints (15-20%). Data representation questions require you to read and understand data presented in tables, read graphs, and interpret scatterplots. Research summaries require you to analyze and interpret the results of experiments. Conflicting viewpoints questions are designed to test your ability to comprehend, analyze, and compare two conflicting viewpoints.

The Science section is designed specifically to test science SKILLS. If you're going to take the ACT, you need to be successful in science classes in high school. At the minimum, you need three years of high school science curriculum, including at least one course in biology, physical science, and earth science. For the ACT, you should understand how to apply the scientific method, collect and analyze data, and evaluate and test a hypothesis.

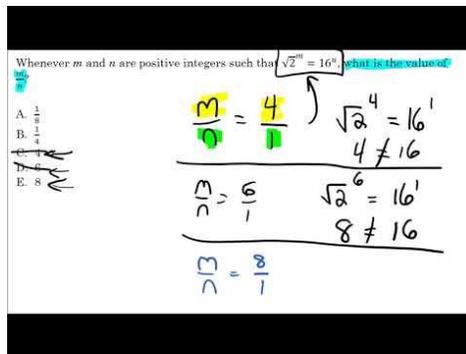
Math Section:

The math section of the ACT is a 60-question, 60-minute test designed to test your math skills and knowledge. There are eight categories: Number & Quantity (7-10%), Algebra (12-15%), Functions (12-15%), Geometry (12-15%), Statistics & Probability (8-12%), Integrating Essential Skills (40-43%) and Modeling (>25%).

The general instructions on the ACT Math section are fairly long. Read through them the day before the test; don't waste time reading them during the test.

Your best approach to math questions are to first read the question, then review the information provided in both the question and answers. Next, solve the question by **backsolving**, traditional math, picking numbers, or strategically guessing. Make sure you're answering the specific question as it's posed. Backsolving generally saves time. If there are **integers** in the answers, plug them into the problem to see what works.

Figure 1: Backsolving



(Beyond the Test, 2017)

With less than a minute per question, it's critical to keep moving. Don't let yourself get bogged down.

In your test preparation, ensure you're familiar with number properties (odd, even, prime, and order of operation), triangles (30-60-90 and 45-45-90 rules, Pythagorean triplets 3:4:5, 5:12:12 and their multiples), common shapes and math relationships (values, ratios, and percentages), and common theories and formulas.

Look for obviously wrong answers. These include **oddball** answers and answers that are clearly too big or too small. Identifying trap answers will help you quickly eliminate answers and narrow your selection of answer options.

If you're not satisfied with your ACT score, try again! Fifty-seven percent of students who retake the ACT improve their score and 21% had no change. But don't just sign up and retake the test. Go through the same preparation steps we've discussed here, including those practice tests! It's best to first take the SAT or ACT in the spring of your junior year as this gives you time to work on it and improve your score.

Writing - Optional Written Essay:

Like the SAT, the ACT essay is optional. However, unlike the SAT, the ACT essay requires you to give your opinion on the issue, which is presented in a short passage. You will read the passage, analyze the different viewpoints, then give your opinion. (Muniz, 2018)

Use books and other resources. Know the correct way to use a dictionary and *thesaurus*. Have access to these resources at your fingertips. Put a dictionary app on your phone!

It helps to know the root of a word as this can give you big clues to its meaning. Some examples are shown in the following chart:

Prefix/Suffix	Meaning	Example
ad-	to	addict
-al	relating to	maternal
ambi-	both	ambidextrous
ante-	before	antecedent
anti-	against	antifreeze
-arium	place of	aquarium
auto-	self	autobiography
centi-	hundred	centimeter
circum-	around	circumvent
con-	with	concert
de-	from/down	depart
arch-	ancient	archetype
aster/astro-	star	astronomy
audi-	hear	audible
bene-	good/well	benefit
bio-	life	biology
olig-	few	oligarchy
op/oper-	work	operation
osteo-	bone	osteoporosis
path-	feeling	sympathy
ped-	child	pediatrics
phil-	love	philosophy

You can often determine the meaning of a word through use of ‘**context clues**’. A context clue is something in the way the word is used in the sentence or paragraph that gives you a clue as to its meaning. There are several types:

- An Antonym or Contrast Clue is a phrase or words that indicate opposite.

but, in contrast, however, instead of, unlike, yet

Example: Unlike his *quiet and low-key* family, Brad is *garrulous*.

- A Definition or Example Clue is a phrase or words that define or explain.

A **context clue** is something in the way the word is used in the sentence or paragraph that gives you a clue as to its meaning.

is defined as, means, the term, [a term in boldface or italics] set off with commas

Example: *Sedentary* individuals, people who are not very active, often have diminished health.

- A General Knowledge Clue is a where the meaning is derived from the experience and background knowledge of the reader; "common sense" and logic.

The information may be something basically familiar to you.

Example: Lourdes is always sucking up to the boss, even in front of others. That *sycophant* just doesn't care what others think of her behavior.

- A Restatement or Synonym Clue is when another word or phrase with the same or a similar meaning is used.

in other words, that is, also known as, sometimes called, or

Example: The *dromedary*, commonly called a camel, stores fat in its hump.

Practice:

1. Joan loves to buy **exotic** foods: vegetables and herbs from China, spices from India, olives from Greece, and cheeses from France.

- a) **Expensive**
- b) **Seasonings**
- c) **Rare**
- d) **from other places**

2. Emotionally disturbed people may be troubled by **morbid** thoughts. For instance, they may often think about suicide or murder.

- e) **Disturbing**
- f) **dealing with death**
- g) **psychologically ill**
- h) **scary**

3. At first, the surgery seemed to be successful. But several hours later, the patient's condition began to **deteriorate**, and it continued to worsen over the next few days.

- i) **Stabilize**
- j) **surprise everyone**
- k) **Change**
- l) **decay or decline**

4. In Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, the **miserly** Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by three spirits who changed him into a generous man.

- m) **Cheapskate**
- n) **single and elderly**
- o) **Unhappy**
- p) **wealthy**

5. Raul is an **indulgent** father. For instance, he lets his daughter stay up as late as she likes, and he never insists that she does her homework.

- q) **lazy and caring**
- r) **stupid and kind**
- s) **strict and mean**
- t) **lenient and tolerant**

Answers: Can you describe what the clues were for these?

- 1. d
- 2. f
- 3. l
- 4. m
- 5. t



C4. Current Events

Leaders and smart people are aware of current events going on in the world, nationally, and locally near where you live. Are you?

We should study what is going on in the world, our country, our state, our county, our city, and our neighborhoods.

We should know the names of people in our city, county, state, and national government who shape policy and make decisions for us and about us.

We should know the names of important leaders around the world, and we should be able to find the location of places in the news.

When should you study current events? At least once a week, but it would be better to keep up with what's going on every day, at least at the highlight level.



Where do you get information about current events? Some good places are news radio, newspapers, news magazines, and the internet. There are many excellent news sites on the internet. Select a few that aren't **biased** toward reporting "their take" on the news and keep up with what's going on in the world.

Why bother? The world is interconnected, and you're a part of it. It's a sign of intelligence to know what's going on, and as you get through college and into the job market, people will expect you to be aware of the world around you. Leaders need to know what's going on. Leaders use information to make decisions, including what's going on around them and their **subordinates**.

How can you get started?

Four Easy Steps:

- In the car, listen to a new station, not music
- At least once a week, read a newspaper or go through the highlights on a news website
- Watch at least 15 minutes of news per night, and talk to your family and friends about what's going on
- Take a weekly online quiz on current events

C5. Proofreading

What is **proofreading**, and why is it important? Proofreading means checking through a document to detect and correct errors. It's a critical step in the completion of any project, whether a paper written by a student in school or a document written in the workplace. Our 'work' says a lot about us, and if our work is full of errors, typos, or poor grammar, then what it says about us is that we're ignorant, lazy, or uncaring, and have no attention to detail. That doesn't send a good message in school or the workplace.

Proofreading means checking through a document to detect and correct errors.

In the era of computers, it's even less acceptable to have errors in our work. They're too easy to detect and fix, and if you submit a document that is full of errors, you have failed, even if the information in the document is brilliant. However, do not rely solely on online proofreading programs because they are not always 100% accurate, nor do they always understand context or content.

What are proven ways to proofread?

- Have others check your work before you turn it in
- Go through a checklist yourself before you turn something in
- Take some time “away” from your work before you look at it with a “fresh eye” to see what mistakes you may have made and whether what you have written makes sense to someone else who will read it
- Use a free online proofreading program (but don't rely on it 100%)

You should use all the above methods—not just one—to proofread your work before you turn it in.

When you manually proofread your document, the checklist below lists what to look for. Obviously, it makes a difference whether the document is handwritten or typed, whether it includes artwork, if it's a student paper, or some other type of document, etc. But in general:

- ✓ Is every sentence started with a capital letter?
- ✓ Does every sentence end with punctuation?
- ✓ Have I spelled all words correctly?
- ✓ Do I have any run-on sentences (two or more sentences run together)?
- ✓ Do I have any sentence fragments (incomplete sentences)?
- ✓ Is my work legible? (Can others read it?)
- ✓ When I read out loud what I have written, does it make sense to me?
- ✓ Do I have a clear beginning (introduction)?
- ✓ Do I support my thesis or main idea with lots of good details or ideas?
- ✓ Do I have a conclusion in my writing that “sums up” my important points?
- ✓ Is artwork properly inserted?
- ✓ If I used text wrapping, are there hanging ends?
- ✓ Are my paragraphs, spacing, and numbering **consistent** throughout the document?



When should you NOT proofread?

- While you are writing a first draft
- In the middle of thoughts/while you are brainstorming
- Before you have had some time “away” from your work

Practicum

Take a couple of online proofreading quizzes

References

Beyond the Test. (2017, September 29). *ACT Math Strategy - Backsolving Method*. Retrieved from YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Sd xpssNGso>

Muniz, H. (2018, June 25). <https://blog.prepscholar.com/act-vs-sat>. Retrieved from PrepScholar: <https://blog.prepscholar.com/act-vs-sat>