

Five Ways to Rock the SAT - Without Paying for a Test Prep Course

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Here are five tips that will help you get a great SAT score...without paying for a test-prep course.

1. Take a Diagnostic Test:

The first thing that you should do is take a diagnostic or practice SAT or ACT test. You can order practice tests from Amazon.com or from the [College Board](#). After you take the entire practice test, grade it very carefully. (The answer key will be included with the practice test.) You want to take careful note of what questions you missed. There will probably be many sections that you did very well. Don't worry about those. You want to target exactly which sections that you need help with.

2. Make a Study Plan:

Make a list of the types of questions that you missed on the practice test. Did you blow it on the questions on the Math section? If so, which ones? Did you struggle with the Critical Reading sections? Did the read passage or grids confuse you? Be super specific about which types of questions you struggled with! Make a study list of all of the areas that you need to work on.

3. Make a Study Schedule:

Now it is time to create your schedule for your test preparation. I highly recommend that you put this on a timeline of six to eight weeks and plan to study at least five hours per week. It is entirely possible to

do all of your studying in that amount of time with a targeted plan. Plus, no one wants to drag this out any longer than need be.

FYI, “studying” does not mean flipping randomly through the SAT prep book. You need to develop an actual study plan. There are many different strategies to use. It could mean using flash cards to increase your vocabulary or doing extra math problems to sharpen your skills on questions that you missed. There are also computer programs that can walk you through different questions.

4. SAT Practice Tests:

Plan on taking at least six full-length practice tests while you are studying for the SAT. This is in addition to the five hours per week of studying. Why so many practice tests? This is the number one thing that you can do to improve your score.

Practice tests help in two different ways. First, when you grade the practice tests, you see exactly which sections of the test are giving you trouble. This helps you streamline your study plan. You can focus your studying more heavily on the sections that are giving you trouble. The second reason why practice tests help you is because doing them will increase your confidence with the test. When you get to the actual test day, you will be a pro since you have taken so many tests. This can also help reduce anxiety for the actual test.

5. Don't Procrastinate:

Start studying as soon as you can. Plan for an hour each day in addition to one full-length practice test once a week. Trying to cram at the last minute will not help – and in fact may hurt – your actual score.