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SAT Test: Not Your Big Brother's Exam

By: June Mala

The SAT Test continues to evolve with every generation of students, and the current SAT Test is an exception. Gone are those old mental teasers known as “analogies” which required you to decide if Obfuscate is to Obscure like Dilly-Dally is to Linger. Of course, for those who loved these verbal games, this is a disadvantage, especially for those who are not so keen on writing.

There is a new writing section added to the SAT Test which requires every student to compose an essay on a given subject. Most college bound students in the past were required to complete an SAT Achievement Test in writing, which is almost identical to the writing section on the SAT Test. The difference is that the Writing Test was taken separately, whereas the new Writing Section is taken as part of the SAT Test. This means a longer test, and it seems that taking the SAT Test nowadays is as much a test of endurance as it is of knowledge.

The SAT Test stands for “Scholastic Aptitude Test” and is meant to measure one’s critical thinking skills and the ability to analyze and solve verbal and math problems. The SAT Test is not an IQ Test, and is not intended to gauge one’s native intelligence. Each section is given a score in the range of 200 and 800, and is given seven times a year in the United States and its territories, and is offered 6 times a year to overseas students. There is a Critical Reading Section, a Math Section and a Writing Section.

The SAT Test is comprised of six 25 minute sections and two 20 minutes sections. These can occur in any order, but the essay is always first and the 10 minute multiple choice section is always last. There is one section that is not scored, but is used to test new questions on test takers (The College Board uses this as a means of evaluating which questions are good and should be used again, and which are not appropriate). There is no way a student can guess whether a test section is unscored or is scored (although many clever students claim to be able to guess).

The Critical Reading Section of the SAT Test totals 70 minutes and includes two 25 minute sections and a 20 minute section. This is the same breakdown for the Math section of the SAT Test. The Writing Section is an hour long, and tests writing skills along with grammar usage and word choice. The Critical Reading section tests reading comprehension and vocabulary.

The Subjects covered in the Math Section of the SAT Test include numerical operations, algebra, geometry, statistics, probability, exponential growth, absolute value, functional notation, linear function, exponents, properties of tangent lines and other subject. A student is permitted to use a four-function, scientific or graphing calculator on the math section, but a calculator is not needed to solve any of the problems on the SAT Test.

Many people once had the idea that the SAT Test was a measure of intelligence and only needed to be taken once. The idea of SAT Test preparation was unheard of. Nowadays, this is considered to be an outdated concept, and the test is seen as a gauge of skills rather than a measure of intelligence.

Students usually take the test several or many time and often use SAT Test preparation booklets, software or courses to prepare for the test. Most colleges do not penalize students who performed poorly on one SAT test and well on another and have the policy of dropping the lowest scores when considering an application for admission. Therefore, many students feel that they have nothing to lose in taking the SAT Test as many times as they wish.

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