10 TIPS FOR SAT READING SUCCESS

TIP 1: KNOW THE QUESTION TYPES

Each of these question types assesses different skills in reading and analyzing a passage. Knowing how to recognize each type will help you decide which ones to answer first (the **vocabulary** items, because they are the quickest and easiest and will build your confidence early), which ones to answer last (the non-numbered **main idea** items, because the main idea will be so much clearer to you *after* you answer the specific line-numbered questions), and which ones will require you to seek specific evidence to support your answer (the **two-part evidence-based** questions.) Below are examples of the main types. Let's read the questions, then we'll watch a YouTube SAT expert guide us through his approach to answering them. Take notes in the space provided on any tips our expert offers.

http://reasonprep.com/new-psat-crash-course/

Question Type and Number [from the 2015 PSAT]	YouTube Episode # Space for My Notes
SPECIFIC LINE # QUESTIONS	

Vocabulary in Context
consist of a word in "quotes" and a line #
 	
5
 	
As used in line 26, "directed" most nearly means
  A) trained.
  B) aimed.
  C) guided.
  D) addressed.
 	
6
 	
As used in line 54, "want" most nearly means
  A) desire.
  B) lack.
  C) requirement.
  D) request.
	Episode 3
	Tips to Remember...

Literal-Level / Two-Part Evidence-Based
literal—no interpretation needed; directly stated.
"The author states, indicates, writes..."
 	
3
 	
The narrator indicates that the particular nature of Emma's upbringing resulted in her being
  A) despondent.
  B) self-satisfied.
  C) friendless.
  D) inconsiderate.
4
 	
Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?
  A) Lines 1-5 ("Emma... her")
  B) Lines 9-14 ("Her... affection")
  C) Lines 28-32 ("The real... enjoyments")
  D) Lines 32-34 ("The danger... her")
	Episode 2
	Tips to Remember...

Inference-Level / Two-Part Evidence-Based inference—interpretation needed; must read between lines *"The author implies, suggests... / it can be inferred that..."*	**Episode 4** **Tips to Remember...**

7

It can most reasonably be inferred that after Miss Taylor married, she had

A) less patience with Mr. Woodhouse.

B) fewer interactions with Emma.

C) more close friends than Emma.

D) an increased appreciation for Emma.

8

Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

A) Line 37 ("Miss... married")

B) Lines 47-48 ("The event... friend")

C) Lines 60-65 ("A large . . . recollection")

D) Lines 73-79 ("How . . . solitude")

Graph Questions will refer to a graph or to text explaining a graph **Graph Only Need to Get the Answer:**	**Episode 13** **&** **Episode 18** **Tips to Remember...**

18

Which statement best summarizes the information presented in the graph?

A) Far more people around the world own computers and cell phones today than in 2005.

B) The number of people sharing digital information has more than tripled since 2005.

C) The volume of digital information created and shared has increased tremendously in recent years.

D) The amount of digital information created and shared is likely to be almost 8 zettabytes in 2015.

Text and Graph Both Needed to Get the Answer:

27

What information discussed in paragraph 10 (lines 58-68) is represented by the graph?

A) The information in lines 58-62 ("Recent... reported")

B) The information in lines 62-64 ("These... hibernation")

C) The information in lines 64-65 ("Lolling... circulation")

D) The information in lines 67-68 ("It's... strokes")

Function / Purpose tests reader understanding of how an author uses a particular technique to create an effect or to achieve an emphasis *"serves to, the purpose of, the author uses___to"*	**Episode 8** **Tips to Remember…**

`11`

The references to the shoemaker, the programmer, and the apple farmer in lines 37-40 ("We can easily… community") primarily serve to

A) illustrate the quality of products and services in countries around the world.

B) emphasize the broad reach of technologies used to connect people.

C) demonstrate that recommendations made online are trustworthy.

D) call attention to the limits of the expansion of the global economy.

Analogy asks for the closest comparison with a situation, character, event, or concept in the passage *"which is most like / similar to / which best resembles"*	**Episode 5** **Tips to Remember…**

`9`

Which situation is most similar to the one described in lines 83-91 ("The evil . . . time")?

A) A mother and her adult son have distinct tastes in art and music that result in repeated family arguments.

B) The differences between an older and a younger friend are magnified because the younger one is more active and athletic.

C) An older and a younger scientist remain close friends despite the fact that the older one's work is published more frequently.

D) The age difference between a high school student and a college student becomes a problem even though they enjoy the same diversions.

GENERAL NO-LINE # QUESTIONS

Main Idea tests reader understanding of the main idea of a passage *"the main idea, the primary focus of, the main goal of"*	**Episode 16** **Tips to Remember…**

`21`

It is reasonable to conclude that the main goal of the scientists conducting the research described in the passage is to

A) learn how the hibernation patterns of bears and squirrels differ.

B) determine the role that fat plays in hibernation.

C) illustrate the important health benefits of exercise for humans.

D) explore possible ways to prevent human diseases.

Author's Tone, Point of View, or Mood	Episode 14
tests reader understanding of the author's attitude toward what he's writing about or the overall impression he's trying to create	Tips to Remember…
"the author's attitude toward, the author feels, the impression the author gives of, the author adopts the perspective or point of view of "	
23	
What main effect do the quotations by Andrews in lines 10-18 have on the tone of the passage?	
A) They create a bleak tone, focusing on the difficulties hibernators face during the winter.	
B) They create a conversational tone, relating scientific information in everyday language.	
C) They create an ominous tone, foreshadowing the dire results of Andrews's research.	
D) They create an absurd tone, using images of animals acting as if they were human.	

TIP 2: QUESTION ORDER MATTERS!

Smart test-takers do not do the questions in the order that they appear. Take a few notes on how and why recognizing question types and keywords can help you.

http://reasonprep.com/new-psat-crash-course/

Question Order Tips [from the 2015 PSAT]	YouTube Episode # Space for My Notes
What type of question should we do first, how do we spot this type, and why should we do this type first?	Episode 1 Tips to Remember…
2	
Which choice best summarizes the first two paragraphs of the passage (lines 1-14)?	
A) Even though a character loses a parent at an early age, she is happily raised in a loving home.	
B) An affectionate governess helps a character to overcome the loss of her mother, despite the indifference of her father.	
C) Largely as a result of her father's wealth and affection, a character leads a contented life.	
D) A character has a generally comfortable and fulfilling life, but then she must recover from losing her mother.	

What are Keywords and Word Searches—and how will they help?	Episode 9 & Episode 11 Tips to Remember…
12 The passage's discussion of life in the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s primarily serves to A) introduce the concept of social networking. B) demonstrate that technology has improved social connections. C) list differences between the Soviet Union and other countries. D) emphasize the importance of examining historical trends. **14** The author indicates that, in comparison to individuals, traditional organizations have tended to be A) more innovative and less influential. B) larger in size and less subject to regulations. C) less reliable and less interconnected. D) less efficient and more expensive.	
What type of question should we do last, how do we spot this type, and why should we do this type last?	Episode 6 Tips to Remember…
1 The main purpose of the passage is to A) describe a main character and a significant change in her life. B) provide an overview of a family and a nearby neighbor. C) discuss some regrettable personality flaws in a main character. D) explain the relationship between a main character and her father.	

38

The author of Passage 1 suggests that the usefulness of de-extinction technology may be limited by the

A) amount of time scientists are able to devote to genetic research.

B) relationship of an extinct species to contemporary ecosystems.

C) complexity of the DNA of an extinct species.

D) length of time that a species has been extinct.

39

Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

A) Lines 7-9 ("Thanks... life")

B) Lines 9-11 ("Only... genetically")

C) Line 13 ("It will be... difficult")

D) Lines 13-14 ("It will take... succeed")

40

As used in line 27, "deepest" most nearly means

A) most engrossing.

B) most challenging.

C) most extensive.

D) most fundamental.

TIP 3: AVOID THE TRAP ANSWER

It is vital to remember is that even a single word can make an answer choice wrong. Every single word in each answer choice is put there by the SAT for a reason and that every question can be answered using details in the passage. If a single word in the answer choice isn't supported by the passage text, you need to eliminate it, even if the rest of the answer sounds good. Imagine you just read a passage talking about how human evolution shaped the environment. It gives a few examples. First, it talks about how the transition from earlier species like *homo habilus* to Neanderthals led to more tool usage like fire, which caused wildfires and shaped the ecology. It then talks about *homo sapiens* 40,000 years ago and their overhunting of species like woolly mammoths to extinction. So then we run into this question:

> **52**
>
> Which of the following best describes the main focus of the passage?
>
> A: The transition between *homo habilus* and Neanderthals [TOO SPECIFIC]
> B: The study of evolution [TOO BROAD]
> C: How the environment shaped human evolution [REVERSED RELATIONSHIP]
> D: The plausibility of evolution [UNRELATED CONCEPT]
> E: The world will be entirely devastated by man's actions [TOO EXTREME]
> F: *homo sapiens* emerged 40,000 years ago [TRUE BUT DOESN'T ANSWER THE Q.]
> G: The influence of human development on ecology [BINGO!]

As you're reading these answer choices, a few of them probably sound really plausible to you. Surprise! Each of the answers from A-F has something seriously wrong about it. Each one is a classic example of a wrong answer trap given by the SAT.

TRAP 1: WRONG ANSWER A: TOO SPECIFIC

A: The transition between *homo habilus* and Neanderthals

This type of wrong answer focuses on a smaller detail in the passage. It's meant to trick you because you might think to yourself, "well, I see this mentioned in the passage, so it's a plausible answer choice." Wrong! Think to yourself – can this answer choice really describe the entire passage? Could it basically function as the title of this passage? You'll find **that** it's just way too specific to convey the point of the overall passage.

TRAP 2: WRONG ANSWER B: TOO BROAD

B: The study of evolution

This type of wrong answer has the opposite problem – it's way too broad. Yes, theoretically the passage concerns the study of evolution, but only one aspect of it, and especially as it relates to the impact on the environment. To give another ludicrous example, if you talked to your friend about your cell phone, and he said your main point was about the universe. Yes, you were talking about the universe, but only a tiny fraction of it. This is way too broad.

TRAP 3: WRONG ANSWER C: REVERSED RELATIONSHIP
C: How the environment shaped human evolution

This wrong answer choice can be tricky because it mentions all the right words. But of course the relationship between those words needs to be correct as well. Here, the relationship is flipped. Students who read too quickly make careless mistakes like these!

TRAP 4: WRONG ANSWER D: UNRELATED CONCEPT

D: The plausibility of evolution

This kind of wrong answer preys on the tendency of students to overthink the question. If you're passionate about arguing about evolution, this might be a trigger answer since ANY discussion of evolution becomes a chance to argue about the plausibility of evolution. Of course, this concept will appear nowhere in the passage, but some students just won't be able to resist. Do you see the point? On the surface, each of the answer choices sounds possibly correct. A less prepared student would think that all of these were plausible answers. But plausible isn't good enough. The right answer needs to be 100%, totally right. Wrong answers might be off by even one word - you need to eliminate these.

Trap 5: WRONG ANSWER E: TOO EXTREME

E. _entirely_ devastated

These answer choices use words like "always, never, best, most, only, absolutely, entirely, all, every" or any other words that suggests a too-forceful, too all-encompassing, too-oversimplified response.

Trap 6: IT'S TRUE BUT DOESN'T ANSWER THE QUESTION

F. _homo sapiens_ emerged 40,000 years ago

These are also tricky since it will give you information which is factually true [and you may actually know a lot about the topic!] but the information simply does not answer the question.

Now, take a few notes on the Traps uncovered in the following YouTube clips addressing the 2015 PSAT exam:

http://reasonprep.com/new-psat-crash-course/

Trap Questions [from the 2015 PSAT]	YouTube Episode # Space for My Notes
35 What is the author's main point about the disadvantages of the modern economic system? A) It provides only a few people with the advantages of culture. B) It replicates many of the problems experienced in the past. C) It creates divisions between different categories of people. D) It gives certain people great material advantages over others. **36** Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question? A) Lines 37-39 ("The master... conditions") B) Lines 43-45 ("There was... State") C) Lines 46-47 ("The inevitable... prices") D) Lines 65-66 ("All intercourse... end")	**Episode 23** **Traps you See & Tips to Remember...**
31 The author uses "dwelling, dress, food, and environment" (lines 7-8) as examples of A) things more valued in the present than in the past. B) bare necessities of life. C) things to which all people are entitled. D) possible indications of differences in status	**Episode 21** **Traps you See & Tips to Remember...**

TIP 4: SKIM THE PASSAGE, THEN DO THE QUESTIONS.

In your prep for the SAT, you may have read different strategies for how to read a passage and answer questions. Some students read the questions before reading the passage. Others read the passage in detail first. Here is the best strategy:

- Do any vocabulary items first, even before reading the passage. These are quick and easy and will build your confidence.
- Skim the passage. Read every line, but <u>don't</u> try to understand every single line or try to write notes predicting what the questions will be. Just get a general understanding of the passage. You want to try to finish reading the passage in 4 minutes, if possible.
- Next, go to the questions. If the question refers to a line number, then go back to that line number and understand the text around it. If you can't answer a question within 30 seconds, skip it and save it till last. **Don't be afraid to skip around. You can come back to it later, and for now it's more important** to get as many points as possible. Ultimately, take a guess—leave nothing blank!
- If you follow these guidelines, you will have about 50-seconds per question to finish on time.

This strategy is a revelation for students who used to close-read a passage and run out of time. This skimming method works because the questions will ask about far fewer lines than the passage actually contains. For example, lines 5-20 of a reading passage might not be relevant to any question that follows. Therefore, if you spend time trying to deeply understand lines 5-20, you'll be wasting time. By taking the opposite approach of going back to the passage when you need to refer to it, you guarantee reading efficiency. You're focusing only on the parts of the passage that are important to answering questions. Critical Skill: You must be able to skim effectively. This means being able to quickly digest a text without having to slowly read every word. By reading the passage closely, you absorb a lot of details that aren't even useful for answering the questions.

TIP 5: READ THE ITALICIZED PASSAGE BLURB

This is a quick tip that many students ignore. Each passage comes with an italicized introduction, like this:

Questions 10-15 are based on the following passage.

The following passage is an excerpt from a 1909 novel. Georgia, the main character, is a reporter in an otherwise all-male newsroom.

Georgia was to be married. It was the week before Christmas, and on the last day of the year she would become Mrs. Joseph Tank. She had told Joe that if

The blurb gives you context for the entire passage, making skimming more meaningful and allowing you to answer main idea types of questions more effectively.

TIP 6: TELL YOURSELF YOU'RE REALLY INTERESTED IN THE PASSAGE SUBJECT MATTER

The SAT has passages about a lot of weird topics. Victorian novels, underwater basket-weaving, and the evolution of gerbils are all fair game. It's unlikely that you're naturally thrilled about all the subjects you'll read about. This makes it easy to tune out when you're reading the passage. This makes it harder to answer the questions, which will make you more frustrated. Instead, adopt this mindset: For the next 10 minutes, I am the world's most passionate person about whatever subject this passage is about. Force yourself to care about what the passage is telling you. Pretend that someone's holding a puppy hostage if you don't answer enough questions correctly. If you try to stay engaged while reading, you'll understand the passage better and you'll answer questions with way more accuracy.

TIP 7: EXPAND YOUR VOCABULARY IN 3 ENCOUNTERS

Flash cards typically get way too much attention from students. It feels good to study vocab flashcards because it seems like you're making progress. "I studied 1,000 vocab words - this must mean I improved my score!" Here is what you need to know to learn vocab effectively. You need three encounters with a word in different contexts to drive it from short to long-term memory. When you first learn it, pronounce it so you feel comfortable using it—then use it for the first encounter in some memorable way, perhaps by complimenting someone with it—or insulting him if he's a good sport willing to partake in some two-way vocab-bashing. For you second encounter, string several words together in a story in your head the next day—the story does not need to make total sense; just add sentences sequentially from your list until you've expended them all. Third, use the word in a real context—in an essay you are writing, in a conversation, in a book you are reading, and if all else fails, rehearse, rehearse, rehearse in a solo or group vocab quiz-jam session.

TIP 8: IF YOU FINISH WITH EXTRA TIME, DOUBLE CHECK

Your goal at the end of all this work is to get so good at SAT Reading that you solve every question and have extra time left over at the end of the section to recheck your work. What's the best way to double check your work? Double-check any questions you marked that you're unsure of. Try hard to eliminate answer choices. If it's a reading passage question, make sure that the passage supports your answer. If I'm 100% sure I'm right on a question, I mark it as such and never look at it again. If I'm not sure, I'll come back to it on the third pass. At least 2 minutes before time's up, I rapidly double-check that I bubbled the answers correctly. I try to do this all at once so as not to waste time looking back and forth between the test book and the answer sheet. Go 5 at a time ("A D E C B") for more speed. If you notice yourself spending more than 30 seconds on a problem and aren't clear how you'll get to the answer, skip and go to the next question.

TIP 9: ANSWER FIRST, BUBBLE LATER & SCRIBBLE UP THAT BOOKLET!

Here's a bubbling tip that will save you 2 minutes per section. When I first started test taking in high school, I did what many students do: after I finished one question, I went to the bubble sheet and filled it in. Then I solved the next question. Finish question 1, bubble in answer 1. Finish question 2, bubble in answer 2. And so forth. This actually wastes a lot of time. You're distracting yourself between two distinct tasks - solving questions, and bubbling in answers. This costs you time in both mental switching costs and in physically moving your hand and eyes to different areas of the test. Here's a better method: solve all your questions first in the book, then bubble all of them in at once. This has several huge advantages: you focus on each task one at a time, rather than switching between two different tasks. You also eliminate careless entry errors, like if you skip question 7 and bubble in question 8's answer into question 7's slot. By saving just 10 seconds per question, you get back 200 seconds on a section that has 20 questions. This is huge.

In the spirit of writing directly in the booklet, freely cross out wrong answer choices as you eliminate them, place question marks by questions that you are not certain about, make note, underline—whatever helps. After all, you bought the book (it wasn't cheap) and it gets thrown out after the test is over.

TIP 10: WE'LL NEVER, EVER, EVER (uh, Taylor Swift?)...READ THE DIRECTIONS.

Practice so much you know what to do…in the test room on test day, you'll know the kids who never practiced before the test. You'll be on question #4, and they'll still be reading the directions.