

Tips for PSAT

Remember the following tips when taking the PSAT

***** WRITE ALL OVER THE TEST BOOKLET *****

Remember that this results in a higher score

- Cross out answers that you determine to be wrong.
- Don't visualize things in your head – write them down so you don't make careless mistakes.
- Skip the question if only one answer can be eliminated as incorrect.
- Must answer if you can eliminate 2 answers. Statistically, over the course of the exam you will come out ahead if you guess among two or three answers. Try to use educated guessing to choose versus random, flip the coin guessing.
- It's not necessary to answer every question. Remember
 - Answer $\frac{1}{2}$ of the questions in any section right – approximately 52/80
 - Answer $\frac{3}{4}$ of the questions in any section right – approximately 65/80
- In each section – $\frac{1}{2}$ the questions will be easy – $\frac{1}{2}$ will be harder.
- **Math** – the questions are presented Easy – Hard
- **Writing** – the questions are presented Easy – Hard
- **Critical Reading** – the fill in the blank questions are presented easy to hard but the reading questions are randomly organized. Still $\frac{1}{2}$ will be easy questions. If you are not connecting with a question, skip it – it might be the hardest question.
- **Guessing** – guess wrong and you lose $\frac{1}{4}$ point
 - Guess only when you can eliminate 2 answers, otherwise best to leave question blank.
 - Try to make an educated guess if possible, otherwise randomly guess from 2 or 3 answers.

Section 1: Critical Reading

25 minutes, 24 Questions (All Multiple Choice)

- Each section always starts with vocabulary which are in order from easy to hard
- Each reading has associated questions
- Half of these are easy.... half are hard
- They are NOT shown in order of difficulty so
- If you are looking at the first question and you are unsure of the answer – skip it because it might be the hardest question - - you can always come back to it later

1-8: Sentence Completion questions testing Vocabulary

- These questions go from easy to hard so the first 4 are easier than the last 4
- Understand the sentence by plugging in your own words for the blanks or using positive/negative meanings
- Eliminate answer choices that don't correspond with your entry
- Answers to the first 4 are usually words that high school students have seen
- Answers to the last 4 are usually words that high school students haven't seen

9-12: Short "Dual" Readings:

- Find a question(s) associated with just one of the short passages and read this first
- Answer the questions about both of the passages last
- Remember that there is always a contrast between the two
- Maybe one is happy – the other sad
- Maybe one agrees with an issue – the other disagrees, etc.

13-24: Long "Dual" Readings

- Similar strategy to the short "dual" readings
- Answer the questions associated with just one of the readings first
- Answer the questions about both of the passages last
- Note the contrast between the two – this can really help to answer some of the questions

Section 2: Math

25 minutes 20 Questions (All Multiple Choice)

1-10: Easier questions.....11-20: Harder questions

- Sometimes you can plug in the answers to determine which answer is right.
- Sometimes you can pick your own numbers to use in place of the variables to make the problem easier. Pick numbers that are easy to work with.
- If a formula is referenced – write it down, i.e. average, area.
- Many formulas and geometry rules for common shapes are listed at the beginning of each section.
- Write down all information given.
- Draw and label diagrams whenever possible.
- Rewrite equations in an area where you have room to work.
- Geometry diagrams are drawn to scale unless otherwise stated. Use them to estimate values and eliminate unreasonable choices.
- Use your calculator, even if the calculation is simple. Answer choices contain commonly made errors and calculators can help to avoid them.
- If a question at the beginning of the section seems difficult, you're probably misinterpreting it, or missing something. Try skipping it and coming back to it with later with fresh eyes.
- If a question at the end of a section seems easy, you're probably misinterpreting it or missing something. Be careful!

Section 3: Critical Reading

25 minutes, 24 Questions (All Multiple Choice)

25-29: Sentence Completion questions testing Vocabulary

- 25-27 are easier.
- 27-29 are harder.

30-33: Short Readings

- 2 of the 4 questions are easier.
- 2 of the 4 questions are harder – they are not in order so you don't know which are easy or hard.

Section 4: Math

25 minutes, 18 Questions

First 8 Questions multiple choice, Last 10 Questions Student Produced Responses

- Of the 8 multiple choice in this section, 1-4 are easier 5-8 are harder
- The 10 grid-in questions are shown in order from easy to hard
- 9-13 are easier... 14-18 are harder
- Strategies from Section 2 Math also apply here.

Section 5: Writing

30 Minutes, 39 Questions

This section contains three kinds of questions

- Questions 1-20 are in order from easy to hard.
- 1-10 are easier... 11-20 are harder.
- Questions 21-34 are in order from easy to hard.
- Questions 21-27 are easier... 28-34 are harder.
- Questions 35-39 are NOT in order from easy to hard. However, 3 of them are easier, 3 of them are harder