



IVY BOUND

www.ivybound.net | 877-975-1600 | info@ivybound.net

Helping students enhance their academic futures

How the Class of 2012 and 2011 should approach the SAT -- by Mark Greenstein & Ivy Bound's Senior Instructors, July 2009

The "new" SAT has a 2400 as a top score, whereas 1600 was the top SAT I score through January 2005. The 800 "new" points are really the addition of a one hour "Writing" test (the former SAT II Writing) onto the New SAT. The SAT II Writing was dropped after the January 2005 test. The "Writing" aspect is three sections of a ten section SAT:

- 1) a 25 minute essay, evaluated by two humans,
- 2) a 25 minute multiple choice section testing error recognition, sentence improvement, and paragraph improvement
- 3) a 10 minute multiple choice section testing more sentence improvement.

Not all students need to prep for the Writing. The University of California Schools, and about 40 of the colleges that formerly required SAT II Writing will scrutinize the SAT I Writing scores for this year's applicants. The vast majority of the colleges scrutinizing Writing are among the most competitive "top 100" universities (as ranked by US News, about 50 – 60 national universities and 40 – 50 liberal arts colleges). Many college admissions committees do not trust how the SAT Writing is evaluated. Some say that having humans grade the essay is too subjective; others say that this is not subjective enough. Other college admissions committees think their current evaluation system, including well-crafted essays and letters of recommendation, is a better gauge of an applicant's ability than a "canned", "artificial" one-hour test.

Thus our general suggestion regarding prep for the Writing depends on your situation. There are exceptions to all rules, but with a lot of experience behind us, and good knowledge of college admission requirements, here is a general plan for students with the following expectations:

Class of 2011 seeking a Top Tier liberal arts college: prep for the Writing unless your PSAT score is 75+; take two additional SAT Subject Tests in the subjects of your choice.

Class of 2011 seeking a Top Tier math / science program: prep for the Writing unless your PSAT score is 75+; take SAT Subject Test in Math Level 2 and at least one science.

Class of 2011 with the time / commitment to do everything possible to assure the best admissions / scholarship opportunities: prep for the Writing irrespective of your PSAT score; plan on taking three additional SAT Subject Tests.

Class of 2011 seeking a 4-year college but otherwise undecided: prep for SAT Math, Critical Reading, and perhaps Writing. Prep when you have the most time; consider 3 – 4 weeks in the summer as a "part time job" doing SAT Prep. Be prepared to prep for Writing. Take the SAT in the fall if your target colleges change "upward" or if the same colleges alter their standards for the class of 2010. Take SAT Subject Tests or AP tests in the subjects where you are strongest.

Class of 2012 seeking a top tier college: prep for SAT Math, Critical Reading, and Writing. Especially if you have a busy academic-year schedule, consider starting by Summer 2009 so as to be ready for the October PSAT, and the November, December, or January SAT.

Class of 2012 seeking an athletic scholarship: prep for SAT Math, Critical Reading, and Writing. Start by Summer 2009 so as to be ready for the October PSAT, and the November, December, or January SAT.

Class of 2012 seeking a 4-year college but otherwise undecided: prep for SAT Math, Critical Reading, and perhaps Writing. Prep when you have the most time; consider 3 weeks in the summer as a “part time job” doing SAT Prep.

HOW IVY BOUND PREPARES ITS STUDENTS:

For SAT, Ivy Bound Test Prep offers private tutoring, semi-private tutoring, and classes. All students receive binders of strategies and practice materials; all receive practice tests licensed from The College Board, and all are invited to group “Test-and-Review” sessions at no charge.

Classes for Math and Critical Reading (“CR”) generally run 35 – 45 hours over 11 – 14 weeks. Tutoring for Math and CR generally runs 20 – 25 hours, more if starting PSAT (or SAT) scores are below 1000 and less if starting PSAT (or SAT) scores are 1200 or above. Students should plan to begin 3 – 5 months prior to their target SAT date, and know there is nothing wrong with starting earlier, so long as the student has had a semester each of Algebra and Geometry.

Ivy Bound’s Writing prep is 10 hours of class (8 – 9 hours is the likely time commitment if doing private tutoring), and includes Ivy Bound instructors evaluating six essays submitted by the student. While Ivy Bound focuses on ACT and SAT test prep, many students find that **a byproduct** of the Writing prep is improved essay and grammar skills for their English classes. Another benefit: the fast-paced single essay is the element of standardized testing most replicated in colleges at exam time

Writing remains the most “coachable” of the sections. Ivy Bound’s students tend to make significant gains in a short time.

Because some students do not need Writing prep, Ivy Bound generally keeps the courses separate, and charges less if only doing Math and CR. Students who wish to add ACT prep do receive our Writing binder, as the grammar component of the ACT is always factored into the composite score, and because the essay, though “optional” is desired by most colleges (an applicant who won’t do the 30 minute essay at the end looks lazy, cavalier, or arrogant, qualities colleges often penalize come decision time).

Ivy Bound’s success rate is very high. Last year’s score increases among diligent students averaged over 200 points (based on a previous SAT or PSAT) and we look forward to more members of the Class of 2011 and 2012 joining in that success.