

Resource Manual

Expert Tips for SAT Reading



WINWARD
ACADEMY



Before reviewing specific tips for the SAT Reading section, let's ensure you know the rules that apply to the entire test.

Never leave an answer choice blank. There is no penalty for a wrong answer, so you should always provide an answer, even if it's a guess.

When practicing, never leave a mistake behind. You'll repeat errors if you don't identify and learn from them, so you must understand the answer to every question you ever practice. The best way to make sure you actually know a concept is to teach it to someone else.

Never do a timed practice without a scantron. Yes, you have to practice bubbling. Many students make mistakes by filling in a different bubble than they intended or by skipping a line. Don't be one of them.

Format of the SAT Reading Section

The 52 questions are divided into five passages with 10 or 11 questions each. The passages typically appear in the same order: (1) U.S. or world literature, (2) history or social science, (3) science, (4) history or social science, and (5) science.



10 Tips for the SAT Reading



Questions: 52 Total



Time: 65 Minutes

(13 minutes per passage)

Now for the specific tips:

1. Light your fire

The SAT Reading section happens first – so you need to be ready to be super focused the moment you start. As we like to say, this is the time to light your fire! When you sit down for the Reading section, you should feel sharp and focused. Believe that you're going to find those answers quickly. Pacing is key. Be mentally prepared to sit down and do it.

2. Read for the main idea

Approach the section by first getting through a passage in about 3.5 minutes. On this initial read, your goal should be to know where information is, not to memorize perfectly what every sentence says. You'll refer back to the passage to answer the questions, so you just need to know where to find content when you know what the questions are asking for.

3. Find the answer

Your job is to find the answers. Don't rely on your memory. Look back in the passage and find the answer that you're looking for. And to preview tip #4, make sure you're answering the question that's being asked.

4. Answer the question asked

SAT Reading questions can be sneaky. Sometimes, the answer choices will be accurate; they will be real things from the passage, but they won't answer the question being asked. You must understand: just because something is accurate from the passage doesn't mean it's the right answer to that question.

5. Understand your task

The goal isn't for you to call us after the SAT and tell us every detail about the beautiful reading passages. Instead, we want to hear how you found every answer. Your job is not to read and then remember for hours or for days; your job is to read so that you're finding answers to questions. For example, if you had an open book science test, you wouldn't go to your desk and first read the chapter from start to finish. Instead, you would identify what a question is asking and then go find the answer. Same thing here: your job is to play hide-and-go-seek. All the information is there; you just have to find it.

6. Eliminate extremes

If you ever see a question with answers that say "always, never, the best, or the worst," those answers aren't correct. The passages won't describe offensive or extreme situations or beliefs, so those types of extreme answers won't be correct.

7. Read actively

If you find yourself reading and nothing is sinking in, then you must refocus yourself. Take a moment; adjust your posture; close your eyes; take a deep breath. Return to the passage when you can read actively and stay sharp. When you get to a question and it asks about a bug's mating call, you must be able to go, "Oh yeah, that mating call sentence was right here," and then find that precise line in the passage. You'll constantly be going back and forth between the passage and the questions.

8. Know your order

Just because a question is the first one asked, doesn't mean you have to answer it first. It's ok to skip around the questions to first answer ones about specific content. Then save questions that ask about general idea, structure, and tone for last. Answering line references and vocab in context questions first will help you better understand the overall goal of the passage to then better answer big picture questions.

9. Underline key information

We say key information because sometimes students will underline every word in the passage. That won't help. Only underline information like names or numbers or underline when the tone or the events shift. If something unexpected or surprising happens, underline that.

10. Never insert your own ideas

This isn't your class at school and your teacher isn't asking you to come up with your own ideas. Your job is to find what the question is asking for.

As a final note, the questions for each passage are ordered largely chronologically alongside the passage (so if question 10 is answered in line 20 and question 12 is answered in line 40, then question 11 would be between lines 20 and 40). Students often find that answering questions as they read maximizes their score.