



美国名校入学考试指导系列

SAT

阅读分析及训练

李晓霞
|编著|

SAT
Critical Reading
Analyses
and Practice

清华大学出版社



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丛书序

SAT,又称学术能力评估测试,是 1901 年以来美国普遍使用的大学入学考试,也是国际学生申请美国本科必须参加的考试之一。经过多年不断地修改和完善,目前的 **SAT** 版本不仅测试考生的知识水平,而且注重考查他们运用知识和独立思考的能力。

考生要在 **SAT** 考试中取得高分并不容易,对母语不是英语的中国学生来说尤其如此,所以平时持之以恒的努力和考前全力以赴的冲刺都是必要的。为了提高考生平时练习的效率,有目标地进行考前突击复习,我们特意编写了这套美国名校入学考试指导系列。

在编写过程中,常春藤 100 教育的资深顾问团队将其多年丰富的入学申请成就和咨询经验进行了总结,同时,**SAT** 教学专家仔细研究了历年的 **SAT** 考题,并收集了大量美国历史、文化、新闻及教育方面的素材,以求我们的这套书更贴近真题,更有指导性、针对性和时代性。

这套丛书包括:

- **SAT** 数学宝典
- 美国大学入学申请文章写作及例文欣赏
- **SAT** 词汇宝典
- **SAT** 作文:你也可以拿满分
- **SAT** 阅读分析及训练
- **SAT** 语法攻略

其内容包揽了常春藤 100 教育 10 年来对美国著名大学录取标准的分析,东西方教育体制的比较,以及指导考生成功进入美国名校的经验和个案。在英语和数学方面,这套丛书从词汇、语法、阅读、写作,到几何、代数、统计、概率以及基础数论的计算和分析都做了详尽地解释和深刻地剖析,并给予考生以学习方法上的指导和考试技巧上的提示。此外,该丛书还收入了大量由常春藤 100 教育 **SAT** 专家撰写的相关练习和仿真限时考题。

在使用这套丛书的过程中,考生对 **SAT** 会从知之甚少到驾轻就熟,从茫然不知所措到坦然从容应对。本套丛书帮助考生丰富科学知识、接触美国文化、提高英语技能、熟悉考试模式、充分认识自我、增强应试能力。

从准备参加 **SAT** 考试,到如愿以偿进入理想的美国大学,是一个短至数月,长至几

年的过程。这个过程犹如在崎岖不平的小道上攀登,是对毅力的磨练和恒心的考验。对正处于个性形成期的中学生而言,这个过程对他们将来的人生轨迹和成功有着重要的作用。**SAT** 是一项有相当难度的考试,考生在准备考试的过程中,需有坚强的毅力克服重重困难,需有持久的恒心面对种种挑战。从这个意义上来说,准备 **SAT** 考试就是为将来锲而不舍勇往直前的人生铺路,以达到自信自强的目的。

参加 **SAT** 考试,进入理想的美国大学,需要考生的勤奋和努力,也需要家长的支持和培育。家长希望孩子受到良好的教育,更希望孩子敢于面对挫折,经得住生活的考验,有百折不挠的精神。当孩子复习考试遇到困难时,理解并帮助会给孩子温暖,鼓励并鞭策会给孩子动力。敢于参加 **SAT** 考试并为之付出努力本身就是积极向上的态度和行动。不管结果如何,通过这一过程,孩子会逐渐积累知识,培养毅力。这是不可多得的经历,是现代教育的理念,也是考生家长的期盼。

SAT 不仅寄托着家长的希望,更孕育着考生的成功!

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Analyses

本章介绍了 SAT 阅读部分,对如何完句填空、阅读文章、回答问题及选择答案作了详尽的分析和解释。

A. About the SAT Test

Formerly known as The Scholastic Aptitude Test or The Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), the SAT is now commonly known as The SAT Reasoning Test. It is a standardized test for college admissions in the United States. Introduced in 1901, it has changed several times in its scoring system and name. The current test, updated in 2005, takes three hours and forty-five minutes. Possible scores range from 600 to 2400, combining test results from three 800-point sections (math, critical reading, and writing).

B. About the SAT Critical Reading Section

As an important skill not only essential to college success, but also difficult to command, critical reading can never be overemphasized. It is one of the three major parts in the SAT test, making up of three scored sections, two 25-minute sections and one 20-minute section. This part asks multiple choice questions, each with five answers. The questions are weighted equally. For each correct answer, one raw point is added. For each incorrect answer one-fourth of a point is deducted. Questions usually go in the order of the difficulty of the passage, and the number of questions about each passage is proportional to the length of the passage. Overall, questions set towards the beginning of this part are easier, and questions set towards the end are harder. This

may not always be true, but it is the rule of thumb in the SAT test.

The SAT Critical Reading includes sentence completions and questions about short and long passages. In the sentence completion part, there are several incomplete sentences with one or two blanks. From the five given answers, you are required to complete each sentence with the best choice. A good foundation in syntax and a rich vocabulary will greatly facilitate the completion of these sentences. In the passage part, there are short and long passages, each followed by a few questions. In terms of vocabulary, it is not as intense as the sentence completion part, but the questions may also test your understanding of certain words in the passages and your interpretation of the meaning of the complex sentences. Since some passages may be as long as over 800 words and reading them takes a considerable of time, skimming and scanning skills are crucial for the successful performance in this part. Now let's take a look at sentence completion and questions about passages separately.

a. Sentence Completion

The sentence-completion part is a measurement of your vocabulary and ability to identify the logical relationships between words and sentences. You are required to demonstrate your understanding of a large vocabulary extending far beyond everyday English. Moreover, you should be able to employ the second, third, or even the fourth sense of a word, which is often neglected by careless readers. In addition, you must have the ability to use the grammar knowledge, analyze the sentence structure and perceive the logic development of complicated sentences. Therefore, you should read each sentence very carefully because every word or part of the sentence is there for a reason. Only in this way can you select one or two words that best complete a given sentence.

About one-blank and two-blank sentences, some students may think the former are easier to complete than the latter. It might be true in some cases, but generally speaking, two-blank sentences give more clues and turn out to be less challenging. For one thing, in one-blank sentences, you need to know all the five choices, or your guessing is just hit-or-miss, while in two-blank sentences there are ten words given and there is bound to be some less difficult words. When you complete two-blank sentences, take one-blank at a time, whichever is easier for you and whichever you have more information for. If you identify one word doesn't fit into the sentence, you can dismiss both of the words in that choice. For another, two-blank sentences are normally longer than one-blank ones. Consequently, from the context there are more clues which in turn help you spot the best choice. Logically the two words in one choice can either rein-

force each other or contradict with each other. The setback is that the logic development in long sentences may not be straightforward and it may take longer time to figure out.

In sentence completion part, try to fill in the blanks with your own words first, so that when you are looking at the answer choices, you are basically looking for something that you are already thinking about. If you can't find the word that you are looking for, you should aggressively get rid of bad answer choices, the ones that are obviously wrong. I would suggest if you can get rid of at least one or two incorrect answer choices, you should take a guess and move on to the next question. Also, when you read the sentences through, you should pick up on words like *although*, *rather* or *however*; words that are going to shift the logic of the sentence usually set up some kind of contrast. The following are the examples of one-blank and two-blank sentences.

One-blank Sentences

Example 1

The military coup is planning a _____ scheme to overthrow and replace the incumbent government.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <i>A. subversive</i> | <i>B. eclectic</i> |
| <i>C. cacophonous</i> | <i>D. defunct</i> |
| <i>E. impromptu</i> | |

- First and foremost, you need to know the meanings and, better still, the parts of speech of these five choices. Before you try to make your choice, look at the sentence to have the general idea and get as many clues as possible from the words and structure given. Then come up with a word of your own. Here is one approach you may employ to tackle this sentence: When you plan something, it can't be E (*impromptu*). It can't be D (*defunct*) either unless it is proven by the fact. Choice C (*cacophonous*) is about sound, noise or voice while Choice B (*eclectic*) is about components/elements from different sources. Besides, the words *overthrow* and *replace* imply what kind of scheme is being planned. The answer is A (*subversive*).

Example 2

There are general _____ against the president after the company suffered financial losses on the market.

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| <i>A. obituaries</i> | <i>B. epitaphs</i> |
| <i>C. obloquies</i> | <i>D. epitomes</i> |
| <i>E. equinoxes</i> | |

- From the incomplete sentence, we can know that the missing word is a noun with a de-

rogatory sense, similar to *blame*, *reproach*, or *reprimand* in meaning. Of all the five choices, only Choice C is close to these words in meaning, and it is the right choice. Of course, unless you are familiar with these five SAT words, it is quite hard for you to get the right answer.

Two-blank Sentences

Example 3

After attending his lectures and listening to his _____ speeches, Susan decided to change her preconceived notion that he was _____ and hard to fathom.

- A. *incomprehensible* ... *ambiguous* B. *equivocal* ... *misleading*
 C. *garrulous* ... *loquacious* D. *laconic* ... *succinct*
 E. *voluble* ... *iniquitous*

- In the previous example, you need to take two blanks into consideration. Apart from the meaning of the sentence, you have to think about its logic. The words *change* and *preconceived* indicate that the word in the second blank is contrary to that in the first in meaning. To make things even clearer, the phrase *hard to fathom* implies that the word for the second blank has some negative meaning. Only Choice E has two words with totally different meanings, so it is the right answer.

Example 4

His book on the history of this topic is admittedly conventional or even _____; nonetheless, it is _____ work that covers a considerable amount of ground.

- A. *exclusive* ... *an inclusive* B. *meticulous* ... *a comprehensible*
 C. *rapacious* ... *an analogous* D. *dubious* ... *a comprehensive*
 E. *contingent* ... *an indisputable*

- Here are the three steps to analyze the above sentence.
 - i. The word *even* implies that the word for the first blank goes down further in meaning from the neutral word *conventional*, so it should be a negative word and, like *conventional*, about quality.
 - ii. The word *nonetheless* goes to the opposite and switches from the negative to positive direction. Therefore, the second blank must have a positive word about quantity related to *amount*.
 - iii. The words for both blanks should be qualified to modify *book/work*. In other words, they should form the right collocations with *book/work*.
 Of all the five choices, only Choice D matches the analysis.

The four preceding sentences are presented to show that vocabulary plays a key role

in correctly completing sentences with blanks in the SAT. If you know none of the words in the choices, you are at the mercy of guessing. Nevertheless, finding clues from the words and structure given is equally important. If you know the logic development of the ideas and what the writer/author of the sentence wants to say, the chances of making the right choice are high.

b. Passage-based questions

In the passage part, topics may vary from social sciences, humanities to natural sciences and personal narratives. Quite often you are required to compare two related passages of opposing views on one topic. The length of the passages chosen ranges from 100 words to 850 words. In addition to vocabulary, this part tests your ability to skim, scan, analyze, synthesize, and summarize the information in a passage. You should also be able to make inferences by perceiving the author's tone, diction, attitude, and purpose. Though challenging or even formidable for many high school students, the SAT Critical Reading is not at all impenetrable or inscrutable. Let us start with passages.

What kinds of prose are chosen in the SAT critical reading section?

Even though the passages in the SAT critical reading section cover a great variety of topics, they generally fall into three categories: narratives (to tell), arguments (to persuade) and exposition (to explain). When you skim a passage, ask yourself what the purpose of the passage is: Is it to tell a story with a conflict, to persuade you to accept an opinion, or to analyze a concept with facts?

Narratives center upon conflicts which present problems for protagonists to solve. This kind of prose usually starts with the introduction of a conflict followed by the conflict development before it is solved. When you read, pay special attention to when, where, who, what and how. But don't go too much into detail at the first reading, or you may waste time on the details that are irrelevant to any of the questions.

Unlike narratives, argumentative prose focuses on a thesis. It tries to persuade readers to believe in the author's argument. When you read an argumentative passage, it is equally important to understand what the author argues for as well as what he/she argues against. Remember to answer questions based on the author's arguments and logic, not what you think is right or wrong.

Different from the two categories above, expository prose is meant to provide readers with factual information. It is written in the third person from a neutral point of view and without emotion, so it is objective supported by what has happened or what exists. Im-

portant information is obtained from causes and effects which explain what brings out the final result.

What types of questions are asked in the SAT critical reading section?

Reading passages is only part of the critical reading process. To gauge your comprehension, different types of questions are asked in the SAT. How these questions are answered directly affects your score for this part and your overall score. You may find the critical reading part more time-consuming, more challenging and harder to excel in than any other parts in the test, but once you know what to expect, answering these questions becomes much easier.

First, unlike classroom questions from your teachers, these questions are objective, namely, they have answers every good English teacher will agree upon and the answers are cut-and-dried. As you work on this part, there is no need to stretch beyond the passage or combine your personal experience with the information presented. All you are required to do is to focus on what is conveyed or implied in the reading materials.

Second, though of large quantity and great variety, the SAT passage-based reading questions can be classified into questions of purpose, central idea and general structure. From a different perspective, they can also be divided into literal, inferential and analytical questions, which overlap with the previous classification, i. e. , all the questions of purpose, general idea, and structure can be literal, inferential or analytical. Literal questions are usually easier. They are about the information directly presented in the passage. Sometimes they can be about the meaning of a certain word or phrase in the passage, or about a pronoun and its antecedent or reference. Answers to inferential questions are harder to get. You are to make inferences or draw certain conclusions based on a sentence and/or the context around it. With analytical questions, you have to analyze, synthesize or summarize, quite often, the whole text to get the right answer.

The following are a few examples of the SAT critical reading questions:

Example 1

The primary purpose of the passage is to _____.

- This question of purpose is inferential or analytical. You can't get the right answer by reading only one phrase or one sentence. You need to read the whole passage, and analyze it to make inferences or draw conclusions.

Example 2

In line 9, “pine” most nearly means _____.

- This is a literal question regarding a word. It may test your understanding of its second, third, or even fourth sense. To identify which sense is used, you need to comprehend the context in which this word is used. The word *pine* usually means a coniferous tree, but do you know it is also a verb, meaning to long painfully, to yearn deeply? From the context, you must judge which meaning is employed here.

Example 3

The “paradox” in line 34 and 43 refers to _____.

- This is another literal question concerning a word, but it asks for its reference. To answer this kind of question, you need to go back to the sentences before or read the sentences after this word to find the reference.

Example 4

The author’s strategy in the first paragraph of Passage 1 is best described as one that uses _____.

- This question is about the author’s style or tone. Only by analyzing the first paragraph of Passage 1 can you be sure which answer to choose.

Example 5

The author would most probably agree that _____.

- The answer to the question is not explicitly expressed, but implied in the reading material, so you must get the general attitude of the author in the reading material to understand the implication and make inferences.

While most reading comprehension questions are straightforward, some questions can be tricky with negative words. Be aware of these small but critical words. Here are two examples.

Example 6

The narrator mentions all of the following as problems EXCEPT _____.

Example 7

Which of the following arguments will the author disagree with?

- In this kind of questions, pay special attention to the negative words EXCEPT, DISAGREE, or sometimes NOT. Bear these negative words in mind when you make choices. Find the answer that is NOT mentioned, supported, or is contrary to the author’s opinion, attitude, etc.

When you read passages in the SAT test, you should read quickly, especially in the first skimming. When you answer the question, however, I would suggest that you take your time. It doesn't mean that you take no notice of time, but that you need to understand what the question asks about and where to find the right answer. Many students read extremely slowly at first reading, and then rush through the questions with many wrong answers. Some don't read the question carefully, and they are likely to miss words like *except*, *the least* or *not*. In other words, the answer choice is going to be what is not mentioned or what contradicts the content of the passage. Therefore, reading the question carefully is really important. Don't spend too much time reading the passage. Instead, spend more of your time locating the right answer and answering the question. Remember: you don't get points for reading the passage; you only get points for successfully answering questions.

I believe the preceding elaborate explanations have given you some ideas about the SAT critical reading section. It is challenging, and you can't expect yourself to make great progress in this area overnight, but with assiduous work and commitment, you are sure to overcome the difficulty and succeed in what you are striving for.

Chapter 2

Preparation

为了考出好成绩,务必要有充分的准备。这一章从词汇、语法、阅读技巧等方面给考生建议和忠告,为他们在备考过程中助一臂之力。

As the proverb says opportunities only favor those who are prepared, your success lies in your persistence and perseverance in getting yourself ready for challenges ahead. The SAT is not a test you can excel without effort. If, by any chance, you breeze through it, the chances are that other students can do it well too.

As the SAT is a norm-referenced test—Norm-referenced tests (NRTs) compare a person's score against the scores of a group of people who have already taken the same exam, your performance in the test is compared with those of the other test-takers, most of whom are native speakers of the English language in the United States. The critical reading part is difficult for American high school students, let alone for our Chinese students to whom English is a second or foreign language. To get 95 percentile in the SAT (2000 or higher out of 2400), you must do all you can to improve your reading skill and comprehension. You must read all the time to enlarge your vocabulary and consolidate your grammar knowledge.

A. Build Up Vocabulary Bank

The SAT critical reading section questions the student's understanding of the vocabulary, content and style of specific reading passages. This section is the most time demanding, with some passages taking up to 15 minutes. Vocabulary plays a key role in both sentence completion and passage comprehension, so it is necessary to boost your knowledge of SAT-level words.

a. Make use of contexts

One way to improve your vocabulary is reading. By reading a great deal, you will encounter new and valuable words. You will learn the meanings of many of these words in context by perceiving a clear connection between a new word and the words that surround it.

Here are two examples:

Example 1

... In this program, the students have hardly learned more than what they could pick up from their hobbies during out-of-school hours, so it is no exaggeration to say that this program is palpably a farce ...

What does the word palpably mean in the context?

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| A. apparently | B. probably |
| C. remarkably | D. disruptively |
| E. consistently | |

- From the context, it is obvious that the program is not successful. Besides, the word *farce* (foolish show) further confirms the meaning of the first part of the sentence. Therefore, Choice A is the right answer.

Example 2

... the researchers become convinced not only that such patients cannot endure any praise or appreciation but that they react inversely to the progress of the treatment.

The word inversely most probably means _____

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| A. inadvertently | B. poorly-versed |
| C. the opposite way | D. deliberately |
| E. conscientiously | |

- In the context, the conjunction *not only ... but also* shows that the second part of the sentence furthers the concept of the first part. *Praise* and *progress* are both positive words. Therefore, it is safe to say that if such patients react poorly to praise, they don't accept progress in the normal way. Instead, they react to progress negatively. Choice C is correct.

b. Find new words' relatives

Once you are a junior or senior, or even just a sophomore, you have already had a fairly large English vocabulary bank. Therefore, mostly probably many new words are

not totally new to you. You will know their “relatives” either in meaning, spelling, pronunciation, formation, or usage.

Look at the following examples:

Match the word in CAPITAL with one of the five words listed:

Example 3

Perennial

A. *perfect*

B. *noticeable*

C. *unceasing*

D. *superlative*

E. *figurative*

- You may already know the words *permanent* and *annual*. They are *perennial*'s relative in word formation and meaning. If you put these two words together, you can get *perennial* which means all-year-round, or continuing. *Continuing* is a relative of *perennial* in meaning. Which of the five words means continuing or non-stopping? Obviously *unceasing* is the right choice. In this way, you learn the word faster and retain it for a longer time.

Example 4

Embellish

A. *embezzle*

B. *employ*

C. *enumerate*

D. *accentuate*

E. *adorn*

- The words *embellish* (beautify) and *embezzle* (use fraudulently) are very similar in spelling. Identify the distracter and avoid the trap. Instead, make use of their spellings to tell them apart in meaning. Choice C *enumerate* reminds us of numbers while Choice D *accentuate* has something to do with accent or stress. If you look up *embezzle* and *employ* in a dictionary, you'll find they have nothing to do with each other in meaning. Now you can associate *embellish* with *adorn*. They are relatives in meaning.

Quite often words of the same root are similar in meaning. These words are relatives in both meaning and spelling. Have a look at the following group of words:

Example 5

Imaginary, imaginative, imaginable

- These three adjectives are all derived from *imagine* and all have something to do with *imagination*, but, due to their different suffixes, there are some differences in their meanings and in their usage. Check a good dictionary to see the differences.

However, some words may share the same root, but are totally irrelative in meaning. These words are relatives in spelling, but not in meaning, so don't be misled by how similar they look.

Example 6

official (formal) , *officious* (nosy) ;
phone (call , telephone) , *phony* (not genuine , counterfeit) ;
different (not the same) , *indifferent* (apathetic) ;
restful (peaceful) , *restive* (impatient , stubborn) ;
interested (showing interest) , *disinterested* (unbiased)

There are more of such pairs, but only five are listed to show that it can be wrong to guess the meaning of a word simply by its spelling.

c. Set up word webs

With unknown words, you may set up word webs, associating new words with other words new or familiar to you in spelling, meaning (similar or opposite) and usage. For instance,

<i>demography—census</i>	<i>chide—castigate—chastise</i>
censure	
<i>consent—consensus</i>	<i>censor—censorious</i>

Censure is an SAT word. In meaning, you may associate it with *chide*, *castigate*, *chastise*; in meaning and spelling, *censor* and *censorious* can be easily connected with it. *Censure*, *census*, and *consensus* look quite similar and they can be confusing. Why don't you put them together to see how different they are and in what way? Once you know which means what, you can further expand the web to include *demography*, *consent*, etc. Learning a word in relation with other words is much easier than memorizing it in isolation. To put it in another way, setting word webs shortens the familiarization process.

d. Remember prefixes, suffixes and roots

With the exception of singular syllable words, many English words consist of a root, a suffix and/or a prefix. A root normally gives you the basic meaning of a word while a suffix may change its parts of speech and a prefix may change its meaning. For instance, the words *cacophonous* and *prescription* may look difficult for you, but if you divide them into three parts, you'll find them much easier to understand and remember:

Example 7

phone (*n. v.*) (sound , telephone , call)

cacophony (*n.*) (inharmonious sound)

cacophonous (*a.*) (having inharmonious/discordant sound)

Example 8

scribe (*v.*) (write)

prescribe (*v.*) (write the direction before a treatment is applied)

prescription (*n.*) (a direction from a doctor for the use of a medicine)

Sometimes, however, words with negative prefixes do not necessarily have negative meanings.

Example 9

passionate (having intense emotion) , *impassionate* (filled with passion)

flammable (combustible) , *inflammable* (flammable)

Though both *impassionate* and *inflammable* have the negative prefixes *im-* and *in-*, they are synonyms to *passionate* and *flammable* respectively. These are just two exceptions to the general rule of negative prefixes.

Remembering English prefixes, suffixes and roots may not solve all your vocabulary problems, it is, nonetheless, one of the useful ways to help you learn and memorize new words.

e. Cramming and rote-learning

While often considered classic and negative, cramming and rote-learning are becoming more and more common among students who would like to augment their vocabulary within a few months or only a few weeks. These ways have proved to be very effective, especially in memorizing new words.

By cramming, I suggest that you go over an SAT glossary, learn 20 to 30 words a day. Towards the end of a week, review all the words, including the sentences in which they appear. To make cramming more meaningful, you may write down all the new words you come across in a text, memorize the text. In this way not only do you get to know the new words, but also how they are used in the context.

Rote-learning sounds simplistic and childish, but if you read aloud new words several times, better still, if you use your index finger to write the word in the air or on the desk at the same time, you are making use of several of your senses (mouth, ears, eyes, finger) which enforce each other to help you learn new words through different channels.

Learning new words, especially when you try to learn many new words within a short period of time, is a constant battle against oblivion. It is said that it takes at least four or five times to encounter a new word before it stays in your memory. Given the fact that learning new words is a time-consuming process, it is better to start now and be persistent and consistent.

B. Consolidate Grammar Knowledge

In linguistics, grammar is a set of structural rules that govern the composition of sentences, phrases, and words in any given natural language. Without proper grammar knowledge, it is almost impossible to have reading comprehension; without advanced grammar knowledge, it is hard to understand long and complex sentences. In the SAT critical reading section, many of the sentences and passages are formal and academically related, thus more complex in their structures and meanings. You must follow the grammar rules in the texts to understand what the authors are driving at. The following are a few suggestions to help you improve reading comprehension with your grammar knowledge.

a. Find the main subject and verb

Sentences with several clauses may look long and intimidating, but don't panic. No matter how long or how complicated a sentence is, you will find it easy to understand if you peel off its nonessential parts and find its main subject and verb.

Here are some examples:

Example 1

*A small quantity of a toxic chemical may have little impact if it is spilled into the ocean from a ship, **but** the same amount of the same chemical can have a much bigger impact pumped into a lake or river (*where there is less clean water to disperse it*).*

- This coordinate sentence has two clauses joined by *but*.

In the first clause, there are the subject, verb and the object plus a *if* conditional clause.

In the second clause, there are the subject, verb and the object plus a past participle phrase in which there is an attributive clause introduced by *where*.

Therefore, the skeleton of this sentence is like this:

... quantity ... may have ... impact if ... , but ... amount ... can have ... impact pumped ... where ...

Example 2

At last, however, as he approached a humble cabin, his eyes brightened, for he read (in the heart of the woman who saw him coming) that she had taken pity on his forlorn condition and that her hospitality would overcome the dread his appearance caused.

- In the above sentence, there are only three words in its main clause: his eyes brightened.

As ... cabin is a time clause;

for ... caused is a clause of reason;

in *for ...* clause, the verb *read* is followed by two *that* clauses as objects;

... for he read ... that she had taken pity on his forlorn condition and that her hospitality would overcome the dread his appearance caused

About *for*: It is usually used as a preposition: *I bought a book for you*. However, in this sentence, it is used as a conjunction, similar to *because*, *as*, *since*, but it is weaker. When *for* is used as a conjunction, it can never be used at the beginning of a sentence.

The prepositional phrase in brackets shows where: (*in the heart of the woman who saw him coming*). In this phrase, there is an adjective clause *who ... coming*, modifying *the woman*.

In the second *that* object clause, there is also an attributive clause *his appearance caused*, modifying *the dread*.

To make this long sentence easy to understand, look at its basic structure:

... , as ... , ... eyes brightened, for ... in ... who ... that ... and that ...

Having said that, it doesn't mean that structure alone will solve all the problems in reading comprehension. In the above two examples, you can't have a thorough understanding unless you know the meaning of the words *impact*, *pump*, *disperse*, *approach*, *forlorn*, *hospitality*, etc.

b. Don't take negative words at surface value

Generally speaking, negative words have negative meaning, but in some structures there may be a twist in their meaning.

Example 3

The world's oceans and rivers have never been under more pressure from pollution.

- You may think that this sentence is a negative sentence, but lo and behold, it means: The world's oceans and rivers are under more pressure from pollution than they were anytime before.

In other words, the world's oceans and rivers are under unprecedented pressure from pollution.

In English, the structure ... *never/not* ... *more/less* (comparative degree) ... is comparative in form, but superlative in meaning.

Example 4

A: *The stock market is fluctuating a lot these days.*

B: *I can't care less.*

A: *I know. You've invested nothing there.*

- In the above dialogue, what B actually means is that he/she cares about the stock market the least, or he/she doesn't care about it at all.

Example 5

I have never been happier.

- The meaning of example 5 is *Now I'm the happiest of all my life.* Or *I'm very happy now.*

Another similar structure is ... *never* ... *enough/too* ... It means ... *the more* ... *the more* ...

Example 6

You can never be too careful when you drive.

- This sentence means the more careful you are, the safer you will be.

Example 7

A woman can never have enough hats and a man can never have enough ties.

- Here is the meaning: The more hats a woman has, the better; the more ties a man has, the better.

c. Catch content words and transitional words

In the SAT critical reading, some passages can be as long as over 800 words. Time is a critical issue. When you read a passage, especially for the first time, you don't have time to look at every word carefully. Instead, use your grammar knowledge to catch content words and transitional words. Only when a sentence or a part of a paragraph is related to a question should you read every word in it carefully to get the inferences or implications.

Content words are the nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc. These words tell you

who does what, what happens when and where, or how something is done, etc. For example, when you read the following, instead of reading every word, you should quickly catch the words in bold to get the gist:

Example 8

***Obesity** is a **growing problem** around the world, and has **tripled** since 1980 in some areas of **North America**, the **United Kingdom**, **Australasia** and **China**.*

Example 9

***Early attempts** at making and using **internal combustion engines** were **hampered** by the **lack of suitable fuels**, particularly liquids.*

Transitional words can be connectors like *however*, *nonetheless*, *therefore*, *in the end*, *as a result*, *on the contrary*, *on the other hand*, etc. These words are not part of a sentence, so they are often separated from the rest of a sentence by a comma. Besides, transitional words can also be conjunctions like *but*, *so*, *because*, *while*, *though*, or prepositional phrases such as *in spite of*. These words belong to a sentence, so they can't stand alone.

Transitional words will help you to discover logical connections in a reading passage. Catching these transitional words will help you to get a better understanding of the reading material.

Example 10

***While** it is true that many poets of the 1840's were still closely bound to the romantic tradition, their work was **nevertheless** developing, surmounting its romantic beginnings and striving toward more objective narration and the new possibilities of revealing the lyric "I" in poetry.*

Example 11

***Even though** suffering from a shortage of manpower, the company refused to hire more employees, **since** many university graduates are not up to its expectations.*

If you can pay special attention to both content words and transitional words and skip functional words, you can speed up without sacrificing reading comprehension.

d. Take sentences of inverted word order in stride

Quite often, for emphasis purposes, there are sentence in which the verb or part of the verb is in front of the subject. If you are puzzled by this kind of the sentence, re-

write it mentally in regular word order before trying to understand its meaning.

Example 12

Seldom did they have the chance to see the Governor in person.

- The above sentence means: They seldom had the chance to see the Governor in person.

Example 13

So hungry were the boys that they ate everything in sight.

- Written in regular word order, the sentence is: The boys were so hungry that they ate everything in sight.

Example 14

Should you have any questions about inverted word order, check a grammar book for more explanations.

- If you should have any questions about inverted word order, check a grammar book for more explanations.

The SAT doesn't test your grammar knowledge per se, but in its critical reading and writing sections, and in its essay writing part, your grammar knowledge and your ability to use it will play an important role in your performance.

C. Read, Read, Read

Read all the time. Reading is the best way to prepare not only for the SAT critical reading section, but for the writing part as well. The more you read, the faster you can process the information and the better you can write. You will benefit from reading in both language and knowledge.

The SAT usually uses passages from novels and texts that are on high school reading lists in North America. Quite often excerpts from science journals and famous speeches are chosen. You may argue that you don't have North American high school curriculum and you don't know what the students read there. Well, on the Internet, you can find almost anything from Abraham Lincoln's speeches to stem cell research. So long as you keep on reading in English, you will develop a strong sense of the language and be better at it later.

a. Be positive and persistent

When you prepare to read, if you psych yourself out right off the bat by hinting yourself that you are going to suffer, then you are sure to fail. If you expect the reading process to be boring and pointless, you won't look for interesting aspects or rewarding experience.

On the other hand, if you are positive and always assume that there is something interesting to gain from everything you read, your attitude will profoundly change the way you read. Instead of simply following the lifeless printed words, you read for a purpose and for information. Then you are an active reader.

Developing a good reading habit is not something you can achieve at one stroke. It requires persistence over a period of time. Some students are passionate about reading, but their enthusiasm vanishes as they find excuses to avoid it. If you are one of them, remember to be persistent. Whatever you do in daily life affects your personality. If you keep dropping small reading tasks because of small obstacles, you will end up dropping bigger goals because of even smaller obstacles. Persistence is going against obstacles and negative emotions and accomplishing a task under any conditions. It is an acquired skill and not some kind of gift. By training yourself to be persistent, you will become a persistent person.

Here are a few guidelines to help you become persistent:

- hold on even if you feel like quitting;
- keep your goal in sight and visualize your reward;
- be persistent even when doing small reading tasks; this quality will reflect in your character when you face bigger challenges later;
- be confident that you will reach your goals.

Many students have told me that they want to take the SAT, but they don't enjoy reading. If you feel the same way, you are not alone. Reading, especially reading academic materials, requires painstaking effort. It is like climbing a mountain, fun and exciting at the beginning, but gradually some climbers start to give up due to the long process and the strenuous work. Be positive and persistent! Only those who are determined and devoted can reach the top.

Here is one aphorism of Harvard University: Pain of study is temporary, has not learned, the pain is life-long. Please enjoy the unavoidable suffering.

b. Learn to guess

When you read, you may come across new words. It is a good idea to use dictiona-

ries, but it spoils the reading activity if you stop to use a dictionary every time you have a new word. In the real test, you are not allowed to use a dictionary, or you have no time to do so. What should you do then? Learn to guess!

In each SAT test, there are about 20 sentence completion questions. Their focus is on verbal inference skills: namely, to test your ability to figure out the meaning and usage of unfamiliar words in a sentence.

Example 1

Despite his getbasg, he is terzg working hard to accumulate his fortune regardless of the zdfasdf from his parents.

- Here getbasg, terzg, and zdfasdf are gibberish words, replacing new words you may have in a text.

What part of speech are they?

getbasg is a noun following *his*, and it's related to *fortune*;

terzg is an adverb, modifying *working hard* and logically it confirms *despite*;

zdfasdf is also a noun. Since it is after *regardless of*, it means something against the main verb/clause.

What could they possibly mean?

Getbasg: wealth,

Terzg: still,

Zdfasdf: objection or opposition.

By guessing the part of speech and the meaning of the new words, you can roughly get the general idea of the sentence and the logic connection within it. You don't have to be precise and exact, since nobody asks you to translate the sentence into Chinese. Later, you can look up the words in a dictionary and add them to your vocabulary list.

c. Learn to skim and scan

In the SAT test, you are reading to answer questions, and you are under time constraints. You are tested not on how you read, but on how you can quickly get the information to answer the questions. With that purpose in mind, you should employ skimming and scanning techniques. They help you to read the passages and locate specific information faster.

When you start a passage, remember to skim first. It is done at a speed three to four times faster than normal reading. Read very quickly to get the gist, the main idea or the purpose. Don't read word by word. Read in chunks and try to look at the content

words (verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc.) and signal/transitional words. Sometimes the first and the last few lines of a paragraph are more important than the others. If you are lost or confused, stop and skim again.

Next, go over the questions and answer those you are sure about after the first skimming. Then, scan to find specific information for the rest of the questions. Different from skimming, Scanning involves moving your eyes quickly on the page seeking specific words and phrases. It requires you to go to a certain sentence or paragraph related to a question to find the answer. You are hopping around in the passage instead of going over it from the beginning to the end.

After finishing making all the choices, check the answer key and find out what mistakes you have made. Read again and ask why you made these mistakes. Is it due to new words, grammar, or carelessness? Remembering why you made these mistakes will help you avoid repeating the same mistakes later.

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