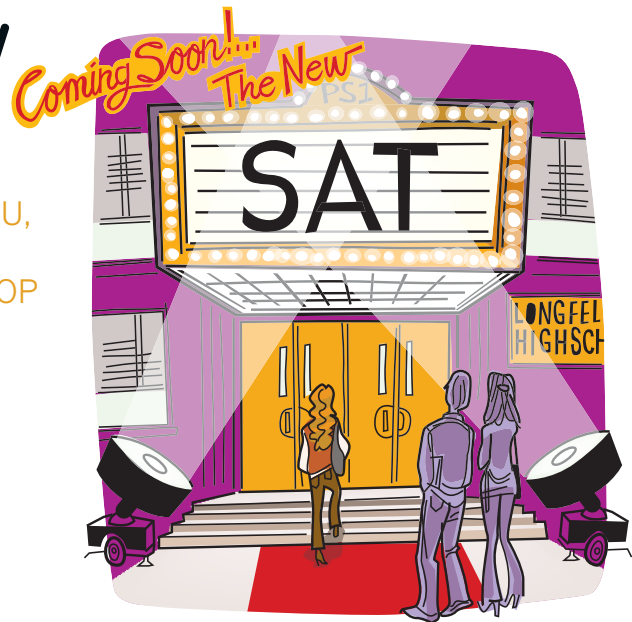


A Sneak Preview of the New SAT

COMING SOON TO A HIGH SCHOOL NEAR YOU, THE NEW SAT WILL CHANGE THE WAY YOU APPLY TO COLLEGE. *LC* GIVES YOU THE SCOOP ON THE TEST BEFORE IT PREMIERES.

By Sarah Montante



As if the old test weren't daunting enough, the makers of the SAT have come out with a new, "improved" version that some students fear will make getting into college even harder. Beginning in spring 2005, the test will be 30 minutes longer, and will include a Writing section. The Verbal section will be significantly modified and renamed "Critical Reading."

Each of these changes comes with a trade-off. You will have to write a timed essay, but you won't have to struggle with the strange logic of analogies. There will be more critical-reasoning passages on the new test, but many of them will be short, and at least one of them will be fiction. The top score will rise from 1600 to 2400, which means more questions—but also more chances to earn points.

Check out *LC*'s sample questions to get a jump on the new test.

▶ CRITICAL READING

The new name reflects a shift in the balance of questions toward Critical Reading. While some sentence completions remain, analogies have been eliminated. Short reading passages have been added to the existing long passages, with similar accompanying questions.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHUCK GONZALES



Short Reading Passage

Answer the questions, based on what is stated or implied in the passage.

As urban blight becomes a major problem in America, historians are developing theories to explain how and why neighborhoods deteriorate. The Broken Windows Theory suggests that once a neighborhood starts to look run-down, people stop caring about it. Neighbors who pick up trash off the street will stop doing it if more trash appears the next day. Homeowners who have replaced broken windows only to have them knocked out again either sell their homes or live with cardboard over their window frames. Property values go down, working-class families move out, and crime and poverty quickly take hold.

1. The reference to "urban blight" serves mainly to

- (A) create a context for the paragraph that follows
- (B) introduce the reader to American cities
- (C) make a generalization about all urban neighborhoods
- (D) call into question the importance of this issue
- (E) give an example of a contemporary historical issue

The correct answer is A. The phrase introduces the subject of the passage.

2. The sentences about trash and broken windows mainly

- (A) give background on urban neighborhoods
- (B) show what urban blight looks like
- (C) illustrate the theory
- (D) predict the future of American cities
- (E) emphasize the extent of the problem

The correct answer is C. The scenarios about trash and broken windows explain to the reader how this theory works.

> WRITING

While this section is new to the SAT, it may already be familiar to those of you who have taken the SAT II Writing Test or the ACT. In addition to the essay, the writing section will include multiple-choice questions that test your knowledge of grammar and usage.

Identifying Sentence Errors

These questions ask students to identify the error in usage.

It is likely that the construction of the stadium,
(A)

previously slated to begin in September,
(B) (C)

would be postponed until spring. No error
(D) (E)

The correct answer is D. The verb form *to be* is in the wrong tense. The sentence deals with an event that will happen in the future, so instead of writing the verb in the conditional, the author should choose the future construction: “will be.”

Improving Sentences

These questions test students’ knowledge of grammar and usage.

The Senator objected to the bill on the grounds that it was unconstitutional and because it was biased in favor of the rich.

- (A) because it was biased in favor of
- (B) because it was biased
- (C) biased toward
- (D) it had biased toward
- (E) favored



The correct answer is C. The Senator objects to the bill for two reasons, and these must be treated equally in the grammatical construction. The first reason is given in the form of an adjective—unconstitutional—so the second reason must also be an adjective.

Improving Paragraphs

Students will be presented with a short, written passage similar to a rough draft of an essay and will be asked to improve individual sentences and overall structure.

Guantánamo Bay is one of the most unusual places in the world. Located in Cuba, almost no one there speaks Spanish. The United States leases the land from Cuba under a 100-year-old treaty, but the Cuban government will not accept rent payments from the American government, and regards the base as enemy-occupied territory. The military base has no strategic importance because of its remote position in the Caribbean Ocean.

1. Which revision would most improve the logic of this paragraph?

- (A) move the first sentence to the end
- (B) move the second sentence to the end
- (C) place the third sentence between the first and second sentences
- (D) place the fourth sentence between the first and second sentences
- (E) no revision needed

The correct answer is D. The fourth sentence supports the statement that Guantánamo Bay is an unusual place, and should follow this statement.

2. How would you improve the second sentence?

- (A) remove the word “almost”
- (B) change “speaks” to “speak”
- (C) change “there” to “Guantánamo Bay”
- (D) change “Located in” to “Placed in”
- (E) change “Located in” to “Although it is located in”

The correct answer is E. The sentence is not grammatically correct because it lacks a subject. “It” is the subject of the revised sentence, and refers to Guantánamo Bay in the preceding sentence.

The Essay

The essay portion of the SAT will be almost identical to the current SAT II writing test. The test makers will present you with a statement such as, “Failure is the opposite of success,” and ask you to take a position on it. You will be graded on how well you support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your own life or studies.

> SCORING

Students will receive three separate scores on the new SAT for Math, Critical Reading, and Writing. Each of these scores will be given on the familiar scale of 200-800. The total number of points on the test will be 2400.

The Writing score will further be broken down into two sub-scores: multiple choice and essay. A machine will grade the

multiple-choice portion of the Writing test, while trained high school and college teachers will score the essay. At least two people will read each essay and assign a score based on overall quality and demonstration of writing competence. The teachers will not know each other’s scores, nor will they know your identity or your school. They will score the essay purely on the basis of its effectiveness and will not necessarily deduct points for errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar. They will, however, need to be able to read your essay in order to score it. Be sure to write neatly.

> PREPARATION

You can prepare for the new SAT just as well as you could prepare for the old one. The best way is to practice. In fall 2004, the College Board will post sample questions on the online SAT Learning Center, and when you register to take the SAT, you’ll receive a free guide to the new test, including practice questions. Take advantage of these and other resources at www.collegeboard.com.

Remember: The SAT doesn’t measure intelligence or innate ability. It assesses student reasoning based on skills acquired in high school. If your initial score shows room for improvement, there’s a lot you can do to bump it up—especially since you’ll have 800 more points to work with.

WHAT’S GOING TO CHANGE ON THE SAT?

OUT WITH THE OLD—IN WITH THE NEW SAT!

OLD		NEW	
Verbal	Analogies	Critical Reading	Sentence completions
	Sentence completions		Short critical-reading passages
	Long critical-reading passages	Writing	Multiple-choice questions (grammar and usage)
			Student-written essay