**SAT Session – Lesson 2 – 12/10/10**

**(Mrs. Buerkle & Mrs. Bliss)**

**SAT Intro – Strategies – Sentence Completion**

Before we start let me recommend some tips that will help you and your classmates to get the most out of this or any other lesson.

* Engage in active listening
* Highlight or make notes on the handout
* Jot down questions you would like to ask
* Listen to see if your question is asked as the lesson progresses
* If it doesn’t, raise your hand
* Listen to the questions that your classmates ask.

We want you to do your best on the SAT and will try to cover as much as possible in each session. The more we cover, the better you will do, so let’s work as a team to not derail, distract, detract, or delay the lesson in any way. After all, you are preparing for entrance to college where blurting out multitudes of questions will be unacceptable.

All information in this lesson is based on *Baron’s SAT 25th Edition*. It would be advantageous to purchase and use this book or another one like it.

**Get Acquainted with the SAT**

* SAT is an exam that most students take before they apply to college.
* It can be taken multiple times to try to improve your score
* It tests the 3Rs (Reading, wRiting, & aRithmetic)
* You can score between 200-800 in each of the 3 sections for a total possible score of 2400
* 4+ hour exam which includes two 10-minute breaks – plan to be there 4 ½-5 hours
* 10 subsections
	+ You will be scored on 9 – one is an experimental section, but you won’t know which one, so you have to do your best on all sections.
	+ Six 25-minute multiple choice sections
		- Two Math (one w/ ten grid-in questions)
		- Two Critical Reading (sentence completion & reading comprehension)
		- One Writing Skills (improving sentences, identifying sentence errors, & improving ¶s
		- One Experimental (either Math, Critical Reading, or Writing Skills)
	+ Two 20-minute multiple choice
		- One Math
		- One Critical Reading
	+ One 10-minute multiple choice
		- Writing Skills
	+ One 25-min Essay Writing

**Skill & Strategy: Avoid the agony of defeat**

**Strategies:**

Have you ever played a new game w/ someone that has played the game a million times & they destroy you? But then you learn the “secret” to the game, and it levels the playing field.

Or using a sports analogy: Sometimes I watch a game where two teams with equal skill & fitness compete, but one team is creaming the other. With a change in tactics, the losing team could quickly get on the same page w/ the winning team.

In both instances, we are talking about tactics or strategies. You can learn strategies that will quickly enable you to improve your scoring ability on the SAT.

**SKILLS**

To be at the top of your game, however, you will also need to improve your skills. Can you give some examples of skills in one of your favorite sports or activities? Now how about some related to the SAT? (*reading comprehension, vocabulary, sentence structure, essay crafting, etc.)*

We will be targeting both skills & tactics in these sessions.

**STRATEGIES**

**Just Leave Every Question Blank**

I’ve got great news for our first strategy! It seems that we don’t even need to bother studying for the SATs! That’s right, if you get an answer wrong you lose ¼ of a point but nothing is subtracted if you leave it blank.

The second page of your packet contains a excerpt from a math teacher’s blog (Mr. Mealor), <http://mrmealor.wordpress.com/2009/10/22/just-leave-every-question-on-the-sat-blank/> , which contains an interesting discussion of how the SAT is graded.

Obviously, you don’t want to leave every Q blank. The ¼-point deduction for wrong answers is a fairness factor that does not allow test-takers to benefit by a flurry of random wild guessing toward the end of the exam.

**Strategy #1** (honest this time  ) – **Goal Setting**

We will go after goal setting diligently once you get your PSAT scores. However, I want you to understand why the goal setting will be so important.

Setting your goal will help you know how many questions you, personally, should try to answer.

*What?! Shouldn’t I work as quickly as possible to try to answer as many questions as I can?*

The answer is NO! Let’s look at how the SAT is scored and how you can use this knowledge to increase your score.

In our sessions will learn some strategies that allow you to take advantage of your knowledge of how the exam is scored.

It is important to remember the following:

* It is a timed test
* You get 1 raw score point for every correct answer
* You gain or lose nothing for blank answers
* You lose ¼ raw score point for wrong answers
* All questions have the same raw score value of 1 point.
	+ So, you get the same 1 point value for a question that you answer in 15 seconds as one that takes you 3 minutes to solve.
* The number of points you receive on a section is your raw score. The raw scores are converted to scaled scores (ex. Critical reading raw score 47 = scaled SAT score 610, raw score 51 = SAT score 640). Therefore, increasing your raw score by 4 pts on the critical reading section increases your overall score by 30 points!

Once you receive your PSAT score, that score will be converted to an equivalent SAT score. Then you will set a reasonable but challenging SAT score goal for yourself. Knowing this goal score, will help you know how many questions you should try to finish on the exam in order to achieve this score. One of the biggest mistakes made by students is to rush through the exam trying to complete the whole thing or as much as possible. Their scores would increase dramatically if they slowed down and ensured that they answered a reasonable number of questions accurately!

**Strategy #2 - Getting the Biggest Bang for Your Buck**

* Remember that an easy question is worth the exact same amount as a hard one.
* Getting the easiest math question right gets you the same gain as getting the hardest one right.
* Answering easy questions is quicker than answering hard ones.

The 20 question Math multiple choice section progresses from easiest to hardest. The book uses an example of supposing a student rushed through questions 1-15 and got 9 right and 6 wrong and then worked on the hardest questions answering them all getting 2 right and 3 wrong. He completed all of the questions. This would be a raw score of 8 ¾. If he had gone slowly and carefully, and not made any careless errors on the easy and medium questions, he might have run out of time and not finished the 5 hardest ones. But say he got 13 right, 2 wrong, and skipped 5 (the 5 hardest). His raw score would have been 12 ½. If he maintained this same level of success on the other 2 Math sections, he would have increased his math raw score by 10 points or 80 SAT points!

Another example of a strategy (especially for someone who is not a speedy reader) is when you are faced with 2 long reading passages, one with 5 questions and one with 10, skip the one with 5 questions (go back if you have time). With the same amount of time spent reading, you can answer 10 questions carefully instead of 5 and then having to read another passage and maybe get to answer 2 more.

The Barron’s book likes to say, “The best way to increase your score is to answer fewer questions.” What they mean by this is that you be realistic about how many questions you will have time to answer carefully, systematically, and strategically, and make you answer all of the ones that, for you, are answerable. Meanwhile, don’t get bogged down with the ones that are too hard. Get credit for what you know and don’t worry about what you don’t know. We will work on reducing what you don’t know (at least on the ELA-related portions).

**SENTENCE COMPLETION**

* All three critical reading sections start with fill-in the blank sentence completion questions.
* 8 + 5 + 6 = 19 all together.
* Uses reading comprehension & vocabulary skills
* Sentences deal w/ topics w/ which you are likely familiar (in your general knowledge set), but if you aren’t familiar w/ the topic of a sentence, don’t worry, you should still be able to answer the question. It is not meant to be a test of your general knowledge. Do not waste time thinking a thought like, “OMG! I don’t know about the political relations between King Philip of Spain and Queen Elizabeth of England during the 16th century!”
* The set of directions for the Sentence Completion portion almost never changes over the years, and when it does, the meaning does not. Spend ABOLUTELY not time reading the directions or examples!!!! You will know what to do when you see the questions! If you skip reading the directions, you could answer 2 more questions.

**Tactics for a single-blank question**

1. Read the sentence.
2. Before looking at the answer choices, think of a word that would fit.
3. Look at the choices. If your word is there, pick it.
4. If your predicted word is not there, look for synonym.
5. If you don’t see your prediction, read all of the choices before choosing one, and don’t be hasty about your selection. They often throw in a tempting word that is wrong!

Right now, on your own, try the following sample question from the Baron’s book:

Physical laws do not, of course, in themselves force bodies to behave in a certain way, but merely ------ how, as a matter of fact, they do behave.

1. determine
2. preclude
3. counteract
4. describe
5. commend

**Context Clues & Break Down Words Into Recognizable Parts:**

Now let’s look at the next example all together:

The ----- of Queen Elizabeth I impressed her contemporaries she seemed to know what dignitaries and foreign leaders were thinking.

1. symbiosis
2. malevolence
3. punctiliousness
4. consternation
5. perspicacity

Now first let me point out that this is an example of a sentence where the author has helped to define the word right in the sentence. However, since there are some pretty hard words in the choices, it is still a pretty hard question. You are looking for a word that means what? You can certainly at least eliminate some of the choices. Who can offer suggestions of choices to eliminate? Why? Which answer would you choose? Why?

Baron’s points out that you could use your knowledge of related words to answer this question. They say that “spic” in “perspicacity” shows up in other more familiar words like “despicable” and “conspicuous”. And that we should be able to figure out that “spic” means “look”. “Despicable” is someone who should be looked down upon and a “conspicuous” object is noticeable… “Perspicacity” means having the ability to see through and discern (insightful)… Now, I will remember that that is what “spic” means but I would not have made that deduction on my own, but you might have. On the other hand, I was able to eliminate all of the other word choices and narrow it down to “perspicacity”. Symbiosis, malevolence, and consternation were all easy words for me. Punctiliousness reminded me of punctual and didn’t seem right, so I picked perspicacity. We will look more at roots of words at a later date.

**Signal Words:**

What do the following words have in common?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| although | despite | however | nevertheless | on the other hand | still |
| but | even though | in contrast | on the contrary | rather than | yet |

They are **contrast signal words**. When you see words like these, you will be looking for an antonym.

Example:

In sharp contrast to the previous night’s revelry, the wedding was ----- affair.

1. a fervent
2. a dignified
3. a chaotic
4. an ingenious
5. a jubilant

What do the following words have in common?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| additionally | and | furthermore | likewise |  |
| also | besides | in addition | moreover |  |

These are **support signal words**. These types of words indicate that you will be looking for a synonym or near-synonym.

Example:

During the Middle Ages, plague and other ----- decimated the populations of entire towns.

1. pestilences
2. immunizations
3. proclivities
4. indispositions
5. demises

What do the following words have in common?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **accordingly** | **consequently** | **hence** | **so…that** | **thus** |
| **because** | **for** | **in order to** | **therefore** | **when…then** |

These are cause-and-effect signals. Look for words or phrases where one thing causes another.

Example:

Tarantulas apparently have little sense of -----, for a hungry one will ignore a loudly chirping cricket laced in its cage unless the cricket happens to get in its way.

1. touch
2. time
3. hearing
4. self-preservation
5. temperature

What do the following words have in common?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| abnormal | curious (odd) | incongruous | odd | surprising |
| anomalous | illogical | ironic (irony) | paradoxical | unexpected |

In this case, you are looking for contrast, something unexpected and maybe unwanted.

Example:

The historian noted irony in the fact that developments considered ----- by people of that era are now viewed as having been -----.

1. inspirational..impetuous
2. bizarre..irrational
3. intuitive..uncertain
4. actual..grandiose
5. improbable..inevitable

**Double Blank Questions**

1. Test one blank at a time, not two.
2. Quickly decide which blank you will work on.
3. Test the corresponding word in each answer choice. If a word doesn’t work, you can eliminate that answer pair.

Example 1: to be done by me as a demo (start with the 2nd word). Ask the students what word we would be looking for as a predicted 2nd word.

The author portrays research psychologists not as disruptive ----- in the field of psychotherapy, but as effective ----- working ultimately toward the same ends as the psychotherapists.

1. proponents .. opponents
2. antagonists .. pundits
3. interlocutors .. surrogates
4. meddlers .. usurpers
5. intruders .. collaborators

Example 2: do together as a class (start with 1st word).

The author inadvertently undermined his thesis by allowing his biases to ---- his otherwise ---- scholarship.

1. bolster .. superior
2. cloud .. unfocused
3. compromise .. judicious
4. confirm .. exhaustive
5. falsify .. questionable

**Tip: Remember, you can write on the exam, so go ahead and cross-off answer choices as you eliminate them!**

**For Practice:**

1. Log on to your Collegeborad account.
2. Click “SAT Practice”
3. Choose “Sample Practice Questions”
4. Click the blue “Practice Now” next to Sentence Completion.
5. This will give you 9 practice questions. Answer as many questions as you can during this period. When you finish, print out the summary and give it to me (put your name on it if it isn’t on there automatically).
6. As you go along, write down all of the words that you encounter that give you difficulties. You can make flashcards, etc.