

## ONE MONTH SAT STUDY GUIDE



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I'm Heeju, and I recently finished high school in Toronto and am heading to Dartmouth College this fall. My current obsessions include neo-classical ballet, black holes, and exploring video games. As someone who prepared for the SAT using only books and free online resources, I'm thrilled to be a part of Khan Academy's SAT project which will provide quality prep material to anyone who seeks it.

### **4 weeks until the test**

- Read and understand the format of the test. Know what each section looks like, how long you have, the style of question, and so on. Most importantly, understand what the instructions are for each section (and subsection). That way, you won't have to waste precious seconds reading and processing the directions – rather, you can jump straight to answering the questions.
- Review the basics:
  - Spend time reading articles, novels, textbooks, anything you can get your hands on. Reading is the largest time sink. The more quickly you can read a passage and process its content accurately, the better. Make sure you read content from a variety of sources, since all kinds of genres show up on the SAT, from fiction to history to science. Get comfortable with them!
  - Practice using good grammar. The more intuitive your skills, the faster you'll respond.
  - Recall the fundamentals of math. Linear systems, functions, Euclidean geometry... SAT math questions aren't like straightforward homework questions – you need to be able to apply the concepts. In order to do that, you should be comfortable with all math skills tested on the SAT.
- Take a diagnostic – a FULL practice test. Simulate testing conditions as best as you can: go somewhere that is quiet and unfamiliar. Use a timer, and stick to the timer. Don't bring any books, people, or electronics with you. Review your answers as you would during the real test. Don't take shortcuts – don't check your answers immediately, stop your timer early, or give yourself 30 extra seconds.
  - While you take the test, note your physical reactions. When do you get tired? When do you begin zoning out? When do you get hungry? What steps could you take to combat this?
  - Mark your answers, and try to categorize mistakes. What kinds of questions did you always get right? Which types were you confident in, only to find out you

were wrong? Which ones forced you to guess, resulting in you guessing wrong?

- Similarly, categorize what you got right. Which types of questions do you answer both quickly and accurately? Which ones take you some time, but ultimately are solved?
- Make a game plan. Prioritize what areas need to be studied, and which ones just need an occasional dusting.
- Most importantly, be honest with yourself – telling yourself “oh, I would have gotten that right on the *real* thing” might feel good now, but could leave you blanking on the SAT.

### **3 weeks until the test**

- Hone in on the areas that need work. Use online resources, workbooks, and textbooks to nail down the areas that need work. Alternate this with...
- ...taking practice tests! This serves four purposes: to get yourself accustomed to how the test reads and works, to develop and hone your own way of approaching the SAT, to increase your testing stamina, and to test your understanding of all the concepts in the format and style of the SAT.
  - Throughout this process, make sure that what you know doesn't rust away. The worst thing you can do is forget what you already understand.
  - Make sure to consistently re-evaluate your confidence and accuracy in all areas of the test.

### **1 week until the test**

- By this point, you should be solid in almost all concepts. Take a few days to review *everything* – both what you know and what you don't know – and re-evaluate what you need to work on. Then review it! Granted, you've only had one month, but why set the bar low for yourself?
- As you approach the test day, take a practice test every day. Get yourself mentally and physically accustomed to what it's going to feel like in that testing room.

### **The night before the test**

- The night before, do parts of a practice exam that give you particular trouble. Don't exhaust yourself the night before by doing an entire test. Remind yourself of all your strategies.
- Get a good night's rest. Set your alarm and then put all your electronics away!

### **The morning of the test**

- Eat a good breakfast, but not one that's too heavy – you don't want to feel sleepy or nauseous during the test!
- Do a last minute review of all the concepts that you still aren't sure about (maybe on the car ride there), and then put them away. Take some deep breaths and clear your mind – a cluttered brain will only hinder you during the test.