



How Can I Help My Son Do Well On the SAT Exams?

Q. My son took the SAT exams this year as it is his senior year. The results were fair. He is very anxious when taking tests and this impedes his ability to do well. Do you have any strategies that will help him remain calm and get a better score?

A. He is not the only one. Many children freeze on exams because the anxiety is so great. Some put too much pressure on themselves and others get too much pressure from their parents! Being able to remain calm and think clearly is important to passing all exams. It also requires self-confidence that he has prepared well and he is ready for the test. First, explain to your son that he has a few chances left this year to do well. Test dates for this school year include December 4, 2010, January 22, 2011 and March 12, 2011 for SAT and SAT subject exams. SAT only dates include May 7, 2011 and June 4, 2011. There are tests prep courses like Kaplan and many high schools offer free SAT preparation after school, as well. Some local libraries hold Saturday courses, too.

The **Greatschools.org**, **Ehow.com** websites and I offer the following guidelines for stress-free SAT exams:

1. Understand how the SAT works and what it actually measures. First: It comes in two parts, the SAT I (also called the SAT Reasoning Test) and SAT II (the Subject Test), which assesses students' knowledge of history, languages, math, and science. Second: Everyone can relax — the SAT is *not* an IQ test or a memory-retention test.

2. Make the Net his friend. There's a huge amount of resources on the Internet, from scheduling aids to study guides to test questions galore. Start with the [CollegeBoard](http://CollegeBoard.com) .com.

3. Choose a date! Less suspense = more serenity!

4. Take the PSAT in sophomore or junior year to discover your strengths and weaknesses.

5. Get an SAT exam guide that has as many practice [exams](#) as you can find. Practice is

the best way to adjust your pace in the different sections. Familiarity with the test will

allow you to get through the sections more quickly and make fewer mistakes.

6. Consider classes in person or online.

7. Get a tutor if possible.

8. Take a practice test.

9. Don't study the night before! It isn't that kind of test, so take comfort in the fact that your kid can't cram for it or write crib notes on his or her arm.

10. When the big day arrives, take it easy. Get up a little earlier so he's not rushed and flustered trying to get there on time. Prepare what he needs the night before and give him a good breakfast.

11. Set out everything you need for the exam the day before, including exam ticket,

photo ID, pencils, calculator, clothing including a light sweater or extra shirt, a wrist

watch and snack [foods](#) . Leave plenty of time to get to the exam site or at least 15 minutes before the exam starts.

12. Plan to go through the multiple-choice writing and math sections twice, answering the easier questions first, then go through the harder questions. On very difficult questions, try to eliminate as many wrong answers as possible and mark an 'X' next to them in the exam booklet, then make your best [educated](#) guess.

13. Spend at least five of the 25 minutes allotted to the essay section in writing down notes on all your thoughts (brainstorming). Then refer to these ideas as you organize them into paragraphs. Leave a minute or two at the end to proofread your essay and make any necessary corrections.

14. Try an interactive technique on critical reading sections by alternately reading the

text passage and the questions. The questions are sequenced in the order of the text,

so answer them in order. Answer or make best guesses on all questions for each text

passage as you proceed through the section.

15. Check mathematics answers by doing a rough estimate to see if your answer is reasonable. If you get a math answer by calculation that doesn't match any of the choices, re-read the question because you probably missed something.

16. Spend the next few months building his vocabulary knowledge. Being able to understand the questions is important. If he doesn't know what the words mean, then it will be difficult to answer the questions and difficult to imagine what's being read in his mind. For example, if reference is made about a tree moving as if doing a plie (plee-ay), one would have to know that a plie is a dance movement in which the knees are bent while the back is held straight. If you can not envision this because you were never exposed to ballet, then you may have difficulty answering the questions.

Also Keep In Mind.....

* You lose $\frac{1}{4}$ raw score point for each wrong answer on the SAT, versus gaining 1 raw point for each correct answer. Statistically, random guessing will not raise or lower your score. Educated guessing, however, is very likely to raise your score.

* Practice filling in 'grid-in' type answer blocks. Be careful when entering a number like $1\frac{1}{2}$, which has to be filled in as $\frac{3}{2}$ or 1.5.

* Questions in SAT exams are arranged from easiest to most difficult, except in the critical reading sections. Good Luck!

How to Survive the Holidays When Your Child Has a Learning Disability!

Q. My four year old son has a learning disability. He becomes frustrated easily

and tires easily which eventually leads to tantrums. He also has difficulty sharing and

playing with other children and really doesn't like to be touched by strangers

even though they are family. We are supposed to get together with our family for the

holidays. Any suggestions?

A. It can be very challenging for family members who do not see your child on

a regular basis, to understand his particular needs. It is even more challenging

for your son to tolerate new people, new sounds, new food, and a new environment.

Top that off with adults, who do not understand his condition, and who proclaim that

“if that was my child”, “he’s just rude,” and “stop acting like a baby etc.” Statements

that make you feel frustrated and only upset the child further.

- First, never let others, not even family; make you feel pressured to discipline your child for things that you normally would not.
- Next, I would explain to the host, that you may have to leave

early depending on how your son can tolerate the festivities.

- Keep your son in your view at all times so you can monitor his behavior and whether he is being frustrated by an adult.
 - Bring with you any electronic devices that may keep him busy like hand held games or a DVD player so he can watch a favorite movie etc.
 - Try to make sure he gets a good night’s sleep the night before and possibly a nap that day, so he is refreshed when he gets there.
 - Make sure he has fun while he is there so he gets to enjoy his family.
 - Dress him comfortably so there is no worry about clothes and being irritated by them.
 - Feed him before you go if you know your family is like mine and always late, so he doesn’t become agitated by hunger.
 - Know when to leave. If he becomes tired or over-stimulated, see if a brisk walk will calm him down. If not, go on home to reduce the risk of any tantrums.
- Happy Holidays!**

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