

# The SATs: EXPLAINED

KOUSHIN UNBER

If you're somebody who has ever considered going to university in the USA, you're bound to have come across the most popular standardised tests known across the world: the SATs. By the time a student is in class 11, this test becomes a big part of life for those aspiring to study abroad. Since many high schools calculate grades and GPA differently, the SAT can provide a standardised data point for colleges to compare students.

The Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) is meant to assess basic high school level skills with 4 sections: reading, writing, and math (calculator and non-calculator). The entire test comes in the form of multiple-choice questions, and is rather abruptly timed, unlike the other exams we sit for which usually give us more than enough time to finish all questions. Therefore, test takers have to be highly skilled at time-management in order to secure a good score. Answers to the questions are also highly objective, so the possibility of answers that are grey or open to discussion are eliminated.

The SAT really is a measurement of skill more than anything else. Unlike your usual school exams, you do not need to memorise or learn difficult concepts and know how to actively recall and apply them in questions. In fact, applying or inferring any of your pre learned knowledge in the reading passages is going to cost you; a repeated piece of advice for the SAT is to only focus on what is in the passage and nothing else. You need stellar comprehension skills and a good knowledge of English grammar to score well in the Reading and Writing section, and as for the Math section, a basic knowledge of geometry, trigonometry, probability and statistics, algebra, and functions should be enough. Most of these math skills are things that are included in your school curriculum anyway, so not much extra preparation is needed to learn new math concepts.

Scores range from 400 to 1600, as a sum of the Math section and Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section. What makes a good SAT score differs across countries, schools, and cultures. For the most competitive schools such as the Ivies, MIT, and Stanford, a score that is between 1460-1560 is the average. However, the worldwide average is 1050. A score of 1350 would put you in the top 10 percent of test takers and help make your application competitive at more selective schools. There is no objective good SAT score, just one that helps you get admitted to a college that you want to go to.

**The SAT really is a measurement of skill more than anything else. Unlike your usual school exams, you do not need to memorise or learn difficult concepts and know how to actively recall and apply them in questions.**

From March 2023, international test centres began administering the digital SAT in order to make it easier to take, easier to give, and more relevant for students. Students will be using their own personal devices instead of paper, and the test will become shorter in terms of duration and passage length.

There is a misconception surrounding students, teachers or guardians that the SAT measures your intelligence, your earning potential, or your ability as a student. Students often doubt themselves or question their intelligence when they end up getting a low test score when in reality, it does none of those things. The Princeton Review states "all the SAT really measures is how well you take the SAT. It does not reveal how smart - or how good - a person you are." This is an important distinction to remind others and yourself when discussing the test.

Since they are not a necessity for admission in most public/private colleges in Bangladesh and, there are not a wide variety of options available for official SAT training as opposed to the standard O/A level or HSC/SSC examinations. However, many resources are available online for you to teach yourself - such as Khan Academy, CollegeBoard, etc. It is safest to start your SAT prep around 3 months before your test day.

The SATs are going to be an important part of your US college admissions journey, especially if you're an international student. Even though high school grades and SAT scores are much more likely to increase your chances of getting into a selective college than anything else, it's important not to attach your self-worth or intelligence to your SAT scores - something a lot of people are guilty of doing. Remember that at the end of the day, the SATs really just measure how good you are at taking the SAT.

*Koushin Unber is a high school student.*



ILLUSTRATION:  
ABIR HOSSAIN



4 YouTube channels to help you prepare for the SAT

#### Star Tutors

If you've already mastered the SAT syllabus and are trying to get a better understanding of the question pattern, Star Tutors is the channel you're looking for. It has an extensive list of question paper walkthroughs where the instructor goes over an entire SAT paper and explains the thought processes behind its answers.

#### Hayden Rhodea

Hayden Rhodea has over 400 videos dedicated to tackling various aspects of the SAT including Math, Reading, and the optional Writing section. The channel's videos are straightforward, and Hayden presents tricky concepts in an easy-to-understand manner.

#### SupertutorTV

SupertutorTV addresses a variety of questions students may have and gives the viewer solid advice on a variety of concerns regarding the SAT, like preparing and managing the anxiety that comes with preparing for the exam.

#### Khan Academy SAT

Being the only College Board partnered organisation for SAT preparation in the world, you can count on Khan Academy SAT's videos to be reliable and accurate. The channel also covers the bulk of the topics tested on the exams, and their impeccable style of teaching, combined with the efficiently spaced learning modules, makes their videos a must-watch for exam candidates.

