

SAT Essay Scoring Guide

SCORE OF 6	SCORE OF 5	SCORE OF 4
An essay in this category demonstrates <i>clear and consistent mastery</i> , although it may have a few minor errors. A typical essay	An essay in this category demonstrates <i>reasonably consistent mastery</i> , although it will have occasional errors or lapses in quality. A typical essay	An essay in this category demonstrates <i>adequate mastery</i> , although it will have lapses in quality. A typical essay
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effectively and insightfully develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates outstanding critical thinking, using clearly appropriate examples, reasons and other evidence to support its position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effectively develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates strong critical thinking, generally using appropriate examples, reasons and other evidence to support its position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates competent critical thinking, using adequate examples, reasons and other evidence to support its position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is well organized and clearly focused, demonstrating clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is well organized and focused, demonstrating coherence and progression of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is generally organized and focused, demonstrating some coherence and progression of ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exhibits skillful use of language, using a varied, accurate and apt vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exhibits facility in the use of language, using appropriate vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exhibits adequate but inconsistent facility in the use of language, using generally appropriate vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates meaningful variety in sentence structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates variety in sentence structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates some variety in sentence structure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is free of most errors in grammar, usage and mechanics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is generally free of most errors in grammar, usage and mechanics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has some errors in grammar, usage and mechanics
SCORE OF 3	SCORE OF 2	SCORE OF 1
An essay in this category demonstrates <i>developing mastery</i> , and is marked by ONE OR MORE of the following weaknesses:	An essay in this category demonstrates <i>little mastery</i> , and is flawed by ONE OR MORE of the following weaknesses:	An essay in this category demonstrates <i>very little or no mastery</i> , and is severely flawed by ONE OR MORE of the following weaknesses:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops a point of view on the issue, demonstrating some critical thinking, but may do so inconsistently or use inadequate examples, reasons or other evidence to support its position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops a point of view on the issue that is vague or seriously limited, and demonstrates weak critical thinking, providing inappropriate or insufficient examples, reasons or other evidence to support its position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops no viable point of view on the issue, or provides little or no evidence to support its position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is limited in its organization or focus, or may demonstrate some lapses in coherence or progression of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is poorly organized and/or focused, or demonstrates serious problems with coherence or progression of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is disorganized or unfocused, resulting in a disjointed or incoherent essay
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays developing facility in the use of language, but sometimes uses weak vocabulary or inappropriate word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays very little facility in the use of language, using very limited vocabulary or incorrect word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays fundamental errors in vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lacks variety or demonstrates problems in sentence structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates frequent problems in sentence structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates severe flaws in sentence structure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage and mechanics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains errors in grammar, usage and mechanics so serious that meaning is somewhat obscured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains pervasive errors in grammar, usage or mechanics that persistently interfere with meaning

Essays not written on the essay assignment will receive a score of zero.

Scoring SAT Essays

Understand the Scoring Guide

The following is a general description of the qualities that distinguish an essay at each scoring level.

Score of 6

Essays in this category demonstrate *clear and consistent mastery*, although they may have a few minor errors.

Although essays in this category differ in approach, style and opinion, and have slight differences in quality, they all demonstrate the clear and consistent mastery of writing skills specified in the Scoring Guide. They are all outstanding pieces of writing. Whether a student decides to use a narrative, expository or argumentative approach; or whether the essay is structured through cause and effect, comparison and contrast, or any other rhetorical strategy; or whether the student uses one example that is substantially developed or several examples that build an argument; all of these essays demonstrate a clear understanding of the aims and modes of writing. They communicate perceptive ideas in a style marked by precise diction and varied syntax. These essays are not perfect, nor are they expected to be, for each is only a first draft, written in the allotted 25 minutes. They are all, however, distinguished by their:

- **Complexity of thought:** These essays demonstrate critical thinking skills that go well beyond the usual considerations of an issue. They show a full understanding of the complexities involved and present ideas that provide the reader with an insight into the assigned issue that moves beyond generalities to provide a precise, clear and interesting point of view.
- **Substantiality of development:** The examples, evidence and reasoning used to support the essay's point of view are all fully drawn out, giving the reader a clear sense of why and how the student has come to the conclusions presented. Moreover, the essay builds its point of view in a smooth, logical, well-organized fashion, maintaining a consistent focus on its ideas. Each sentence, as well as each paragraph, builds on the one before it to elaborate a clearly articulated point of view.
- **Facility with language:** These essays demonstrate an understanding of the aims and modes of writing. The rhetorical strategy chosen is purposefully employed for its effectiveness, and the diction used is equally precise and efficient. Sentences vary in length and type to more effectively communicate the essay's point of view.

Score of 5

Essays in this category demonstrate *reasonably consistent mastery*, although they will have occasional errors or lapses in quality.

These well-written essays exhibit an understanding of the aims and modes of writing, and the rhetorical strategies chosen to achieve those aims are generally effective. They present cohesive and reasonable arguments using mostly appropriate evidence from the student's reading, observations or experience. Their prose demonstrates an above-average control over the elements of effective writing, using some syntactic variety and exhibiting an appropriate level of vocabulary. These essays may be uneven in their focus or development, but they communicate their ideas in a creditable fashion.

Score of 4

Essays in this category demonstrate *adequate mastery*, although they will have lapses in quality.

These essays are competent pieces of writing. They exhibit an acceptable understanding of the aims and modes of writing and are generally clear and coherent. The evidence or reasoning may be superficial or minimal, however, and the development may be somewhat uneven. These essays may contain a few lapses in diction or syntax but, for the most part, they convey the writers' ideas clearly.

Score of 3

Essays in this category demonstrate *developing mastery*.

These essays may oversimplify the issues involved or use evidence that is inappropriate or insufficient to make their own case. These writers communicate their ideas to some degree, but their understanding of the aims and modes of writing is inconsistently displayed. Their control over such elements of writing as organization, diction and syntax reveal only an emerging competence. In addition, these essays may contain an accumulation of errors in the conventions of Standard Written English.

Score of 2

Essays in this category demonstrate *little mastery*.

These seriously limited pieces of writing may grossly oversimplify the issues involved or use evidence that is clearly inappropriate or insufficient. These writers communicate their ideas, but just barely. Their writing reveals consistent weaknesses manifested in a lack of development and organization, as well as grammatical problems or mechanical errors so severe that meaning is somewhat obscured.

Score of 1

Essays in this category demonstrate *very little* or *no mastery*.

These essays develop no real viewpoint or line of logical reasoning. Their writing reveals weaknesses manifested in a severe lack of development and organization, as well as grammatical problems or mechanical errors that persistently interfere with meaning.

Score of 0

Students will receive a score of zero if they do not write an essay, if their essay is not written on the essay