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INTRODUCTION TO THE SSAT
**Scoring**

You will receive separate scores for your Verbal, Reading, and Quantitative sections.

Middle Level test takers will receive a score on the scale of 440-710 for each section, for a total score of 1320-2130.

Upper Level test takers will receive a score on the scale of 500-800 for each section, for a total score of 1500-2400.

If you are in grade 8, you might be thinking, “This isn’t fair! I have to take the same test as someone in grade 11! How can I score highly compared to them?”

But your score will be compared only to the scores of the other grade 8 students who took the test. Along with your score, you will get a Percentile (a number out of 100). The Percentile shows how you scored compared to your peers of the same grade. For example, if your Percentile is 75, it means you did better than 75% of the students in your grade.

The Writing Sample is not scored. If you write a terrible essay, your SSAT scores will not be affected. However, a copy of your essay will be sent along with your SSAT scores to every school that you apply to. So do the best you can, because the essay is your school’s first glimpse of your writing abilities and personality.

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**To guess or not to guess?**

Every question that you answer correctly on the SSAT earns you one point. Every question that you leave blank is worth zero points. Every question you answer incorrectly is penalized by the loss of 0.25 of a point.

However, this does not mean that you should leave questions blank if you are not sure of the answers. Making *educated* guesses will increase your score. If you can eliminate one or two answer choices for a difficult question, it is in your best interest to guess the answer.

**Educated guessing will improve your score!**

Consider this: Let’s say you are attempting the 60 multiple choice SSAT Verbal questions. You are sure that one of the answer choices for each question is wrong, but because you are too nervous to guess out of the remaining four choices, you leave everything blank. You end up with a score of zero. Your friend, who is also taking the test, also knows that one answer choice for each question can be eliminated. Since there are now only 4 choices for her to choose from, for each question, she has a 1 in 4 chance of choosing the correct answer. Probability tells us that she will get 1 question right for every 3 that she gets wrong. Out of 60 questions, she could therefore end...
up with 20 correct answers (for a total of +20 points) and 40 incorrect answers (for a total of -10 points).

This means that with 20 points, minus the 10 point penalty, your friend could end up with a grand total of 10 points. That may not seem like a lot, but it is more than zero!

**What if I can’t eliminate any answer choices?**

You should not guess on every question. Skip questions wisely. Each question on the SSAT is worth only one point, no matter how hard it is. Your first priority is to answer all the easy questions correctly. Skip the hard ones and come back to them later.

Some of the questions on the SSAT are so hard that only a handful of students who take the test will answer them correctly. Don’t waste your testing time on these questions. Come back to them later if you have time. Eliminate answer choices and guess if you can; leave them blank if you can’t.

**What if I need scratch paper during the test?**

The test book is yours – use it! Nothing you write on the test book will count toward your score. Feel free to jot down notes, draw diagrams, cross out answer choices you want to eliminate, or circle questions so you remember to return to them later. The test book is your scratch paper – in fact, it is the only scratch paper you are going to get on test day, so use it as needed.

On the other hand, make sure your answer sheet is kept clean and used *only* for answers.
VERBAL SECTION
The Verbal section consists of 60 questions: 30 Synonyms and 30 Analogies. You’ll have 30 minutes to complete them all.

A **synonym** is a word or phrase whose meaning is the same as or similar to that of another word or phrase. A synonym for “happy” could therefore be: cheerful, joyful, ecstatic...

A sample Synonym question on the SSAT may look like this:

1. BALDERDASH:
   (A) smorgasbord
   (B) generation
   (C) protuberance
   (D) nonsense
   (E) dormancy

An **analogy** is a sentence that demonstrates a relationship between two things or two sets of things. **Example:** good is to bad as love is to hate

Your job is to identify the relationship shown in the question and select the word or set of words that shares the same relationship. A sample Analogy question on the SSAT may look like this:

2. Honest is to deceit as
   (A) piety is to prayer
   (B) loyal is to traitor
   (C) truth is to snake
   (D) dark is to lightness
   (E) cheat is to cheater

Answering 60 questions in just 30 minutes can be intimidating for students. You should answer all the questions that you know first. Then go back to the more difficult questions and spend the remaining time working through the questions by making educated guesses.

The best way to do well on the Verbal section is to have a broad vocabulary base. Reading for fun is the best and fastest way to increase your vocabulary. If you don’t read very often, start now! The Vocabulary section in this book (see page 83) contains many words that have appeared on the SSAT. Studying these words is the bare minimum that you should do to prepare for the vocabulary you will encounter on this test.

**Tackling the Verbal Section**

We recommend that you skip ahead to solve the Analogy questions first, as they can be answered correctly even if you don’t know some of the words. Answer as many of these as possible. After you have attempted most of these, you should tackle the Synonyms. While there are techniques for answering Synonym questions, they are much more difficult to solve if you don’t know the words to begin with. It is wise to spend more time solving the Analogies than the Synonyms, since you are likely to get more of them right.
Analogy Questions

Analogies on the SSAT will appear in two different forms (X, Y, Z, and W all stand for different words or phrases):

1. X is to Y as
   (A) Z is to W
   (B) Z is to W
   (C) Z is to W
   (D) Z is to W
   (E) Z is to W

2. X is to Y as Z is to
   (A) W
   (B) W
   (C) W
   (D) W
   (E) W

Your task is to figure out how X and Y are related, and then find the answer choice in which Z and W are related in the same way.

I. Approaching Analogies

The first thing you need to do is make a sentence that shows a possible relationship between the two question or stem words. The best sentences will:

- Use one of the words to define the other
- Be clear and concise

Consider the following example:

1. Bird is to fly as
   (A) egg is to hatch
   (B) snake is to hiss
   (C) horse is to race
   (D) rabbit is to hop
   (E) cat is to purr

Try to make a sentence that demonstrates a relationship between the words “bird” and “fly”. Your sentence should look like a definition.

What did you come up with? We came up with: “A bird is an animal that flies.”

Once you have created a sentence, you need to insert or “plug” the answer choices into your sentence. Let’s do that for each of the answer choices.

(A) Is an egg an animal that hatches?
   Not really.

(B) Is a snake an animal that hisses?
   Yes.

(C) Is a horse an animal that races?
   Yes, sometimes.

(D) Is a rabbit an animal that hops?
   Yes.

(E) Is a cat an animal that purrs?
   Yes.
Our sentence helped us eliminate one answer choice, (A), but we found that all the other choices are still options. This is a sign that our sentence is not specific enough. You might also find that your original sentence is too specific and all of the choices can be eliminated. Adjust the sentence and try again.

How can we change the sentence? Birds are animals that fly. Why do they fly? Well, birds fly because it’s their most effective method of locomotion.

Try to write a more specific sentence.

We came up with: “A bird is an animal that flies to get around.” Now let’s plug it into the remaining answer choices.

(B) Is a snake an animal that hisses to get around?
    No.
(C) Is a horse an animal that races to get around?
    No. Some of them race, but only to a finish line!
(D) Is a rabbit an animal that hops to get around?
    Yes.
(E) Is a cat an animal that purrs to get around?
    No.

With our adjusted sentence, (D) is the best answer. Remember that the SSAT is designed so that there are usually at least two very good answer choices, and you will need to be able to determine the best one.

**Exercise 1**

Write a sentence that explains or defines the relationship between each set of words. The first one has been done for you.

1. Actor is to stage
   An actor performs on a stage as part of his or her job.

2. Principal is to school

3. Comedian is to laugh

4. Herd is to elephant

5. Artist is to painting