

My SAT Experience

- Jacob Keller

The SAT has always been something to dread for me. Haunting tales from an older brother of piles of homework from tutoring centers and hours spent toiling on interminable tedium the horror!

Ultimately the most daunting attribute of the SAT is the considerable weight it has on getting into an admirable school. Although I've only just begun my junior year at Marblehead High School, I have started the round of SAT related activities that come with the plan to go to college; in fact, I took the SAT in Salem on Oct. 3. I did this because the test will be refashioned after this December; it will lose its predictability and it will become harder to prepare for. Taking the "old" test is the safest way to get a strong score come the college application process.

Preparing for the test for many people includes ritually attending a tutoring program to better understand the test's workings. In my case it's spending an hour and a half at Sullivan Tutoring working through practice sections every week. Staff there explain to you common patterns in questions, tips that address these commonalities, and a guide that shows you precisely what the people who grade the essay are looking for.

With these rules in mind I took my first shot at the SAT, one of many I will be taking. I woke up at 6:00 in the morning, ate breakfast and packed my things required for the test. I arrived at Salem High School (the testing center for this SAT) and awkwardly waited in the lobby for fifteen minutes with a hundred or so other people. It was time. Our group slowly shuffled through a set of doors, photo I.D.s in our hands. We quickly found our testing rooms and soon the test began. First was the essay, which we had 25 minutes to complete. I found myself squandering much time figuring out the examples I was going to use to answer the prompt and so did not finish the essay. As Sullivan stressed and now I stress having taken the test: it is necessary to practice by writing a complete essay. The prompts for the most part ask, in essence, the same question. Even going over a few historical events, important people, and characters from literature beforehand will help you with the essay tremendously.

Next followed a math section, which I had 25 minutes to complete. I found the math for the most part easy, and reached all of the questions. However, I did stumble over one at the very end and didn't figure out the solution until it slapped me in the face during the break after the section. Based off of my experience with this, I have to say it's imperative to remain temperate: clear your head in these situations if you find yourself struggling. After about a five minute break, in which I realized I was very hungry (a recurring feeling throughout the test session despite numerous snacks), the next section began. This too was a math section which I again took on with ease. Following was a reading section which I additionally did not struggle with as a result of some of the tips I learned. Another 5 minute break came preceding grammar. My confidence in my performance in this section certainly was subordinate to that of the math and reading, however, I believe I did okay. Next followed a reading section, in which I caught myself from

missing an entire page of questions. Always look for “stop” in bold, capital letters (an almost baleful amateur mistake I made). Following was one more break in a mix of four sections.

Overall I learned that despite being 3 hours and 45 minutes long (not including breaks), the time went by exceptionally quickly. I spent so much focus on the questions of each section that what I had assumed the test would seem, unbounded in its length and ability to induce boredom, was simply something that created a briskly growing hatred of testtaking. More importantly, I realized how substantial pacing is with this test; additionally, I learned how much I need to prepare for the final “old” test creeping up on me this December. My first SAT experience was alarming, irritating, and undoubtedly informative.

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