



# SAT<sup>®</sup> Skills Insight<sup>™</sup>

## Using SAT® Skills Insight™

**SAT® Skills Insight™** demonstrates how the SAT is linked to the knowledge and skills taught in the classroom. Educators can use Skills Insight to see the skills typically mastered at each score band and develop strategies for improvement, with a clear framework for integrating essential academic skill insights into classroom instruction and curriculum to increase college readiness.

Skills Insight provides:

- Skills and scores
- Detailed information on the academic skills related to students' scores
- Real test questions and answers
- Suggestions by score band to help improve college readiness skills that are needed to succeed on the SAT, in the classroom, and in college

### **Step 1: Review student data**

Find the student score data you would like to review. If you're interested in viewing state and/or total group aggregate reports, you can find these at <http://professionals.collegeboard.org/data-reports-research/sat/> under the tab College-Bound Seniors. If you're interested in viewing reports for your students' particular high school and/or district, go to <http://professionals.collegeboard.org/testing/sat-reasoning/scores/cb-seniors-k-12> for a description of the types of reports available.

### **Step 2: Use Skills Insight**

Once you've gauged your students' general level of performance on the SAT, you can use Skills Insight to understand how students, as individuals or a group, are performing in specific academic skill areas. This valuable feedback helps identify the strengths and weaknesses of students in a given SAT score band.

### **Step 3: Review skills and suggestions for improvement**

The listed suggestions not only provide ways in which students can move into a higher score band. These can be woven into lesson and curricular planning.

**No matter what your role, Skills Insight can be a valuable tool.**

**For state-level policymakers**

Once you identify your states' average scores, you can use the skills and suggestions for improvement to align curriculum and instruction with college readiness goals.

**For superintendents/principals**

You can use the skills and suggestions for improvements to inform curriculum and instruction in order to increase the level of college readiness at your school or district.

**For classroom teachers**

You can use Skills Insight to:

- Determine students' individual skill strengths and weaknesses
- Understand the links between the skills being taught in the classroom and the skills covered on the SAT
- Focus instruction on areas where students need improvement, and adjust lesson plans accordingly
- Look at the types of skills tested in each score band and have students answer sample questions

# Critical Reading

Academic Skills at Each Score Band and Suggestions for Improvement

200–290

300–390

400–490

## Determining the Meaning of Words

### Academic Skills\*

A typical student in this score interval can do the following:

- Determine the meaning of words in a simple sentence by using context clues including familiar phrases and other vocabulary in the sentence
- Use context clues when selecting missing vocabulary at the sentence level
- Use knowledge of root words, prefixes and suffixes when selecting missing vocabulary at the sentence level
- Use the context of a sentence or a short section of text to clarify the meaning of unknown words or to select the appropriate meaning of familiar and simple words that have multiple meanings
- Use knowledge of root words to determine the meaning of words needed to complete a compound or complex sentence
- Recognize and understand less common words and specialized vocabulary (terms used in a particular occupation or field of study)
- Use context clues (such as an embedded definition) to select missing vocabulary at the sentence level
- Use the context of a sentence or a short section of text to clarify the meaning of unknown words (when definitions may or may not be embedded in the text) or to select the appropriate meaning of familiar and simple words that have multiple meanings
- Use sentence structure to negotiate the meaning of the sentence
- Make sense of complex sentences with logical constructions that include terms such as *but*, *although*, *or*, *if*, *then* and *not*

### Suggestions for Improvement

To advance to the next highest score band, students should focus on the following skills:

- While reading, look for words with familiar roots. Think about how roots, prefixes and suffixes work together.
- While reading, use the context of the rest of the sentence to determine the meanings of unknown or multiple meaning words (such as *light* or *run*).
- When reading, consider root words to help determine the meaning of an unknown or difficult word.
- When encountering an unknown or difficult word in a text, try to find out if that word is jargon, or the specialized vocabulary of a specific field.
- When encountering an unknown word or a word with multiple meanings (such as *light* or *run*) in a text, look at the context of the sentence for clues to what the word means.
- When reading, pick out a long sentence and break it down into smaller parts. Think about how the structure of the sentence creates relationships among the ideas in the sentence. Think about how words like *but*, *although*, and *also* create certain relationships.
- When reading a text, identify a compound or complex sentence and break it down into smaller parts. Think about how those parts work together and consider how the structure of the sentence sets up relationships among the ideas in the sentence.
- When encountering an unknown word or a word with multiple meanings (such as *light* or *run*) in a text, look at the context of the sentence for clues to what the word means.
- When reading a text (such as a newspaper or magazine article) about an unfamiliar subject, look for words that might be part of a specialized vocabulary — that is, words that are primarily used within a certain field — and determine their meaning. Choose a subject and find a book written by a specialist for other specialists in that field, looking for specialized vocabulary words in the text.

## Understanding Literary Elements

### Academic Skills\*

This particular skill group is not represented in this score band. However, it is an important academic skill tested on the SAT. We encourage students to review the skills and examples in the next highest score band where this particular skill group does appear.

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### Suggestions for Improvement

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- When reading a novel, short story or play, try to identify the different ways authors create character. What is revealed about a character through his or her dialogue and interactions with other characters?

## Organization and Ideas

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- Understand the central idea(s) in a simple text or in a short section of a longer text
- Determine the main idea of a text and apply it to a different context
- Understand the relationship of ideas within and across different texts
- Integrate information from short sections of different texts

### Suggestions for Improvement

There are no specific suggestions for improvement for this skill group in this particular score band. However, we encourage students to review the suggestions and examples in other score bands.

- When reading a text (such as a book, an essay, a newspaper or a magazine article), identify the author's ideas and think about the relationships among those ideas. Identify the main idea and the supporting ideas.
- When reading two texts by different authors on the same topic or on related topics, identify each author's ideas and think about how those ideas relate to each other.
- When reading a longer text, notice how its parts work together. Consider how the author introduces and concludes his or her idea. Consider what support or evidence the author provides.
- Look for two texts about the same topic by different authors. Compare and contrast how each author feels about the topic and how each author addresses the topic.
- After reading an essay, a newspaper article or a magazine article, consider what conclusions and predictions can be made. Consider what might come next if the essay or article were to continue.

# Critical Reading, continued

500–590

600–690

700–800

## Determining the Meaning of Words

### Academic Skills\*

- Use the context of a sentence or larger section of text to determine the meaning of unknown words or to differentiate among multiple possible meanings of words
- Understand how syntax (the arrangement of words and phrases in a sentence) influences the relationship among words and ideas within a sentence
- Demonstrate increased comprehension of specialized vocabulary
- Understand familiar words in unfamiliar contexts and differentiate among multiple possible meanings for words in unfamiliar contexts
- Understand sophisticated and specialized vocabulary
- Determine the meaning of a word when there is little or no supporting context
- Negotiate complex syntax (the arrangement of words and phrases in a sentence), and integrate ideas within and across sentences
- Understand how words can sometimes be used in unusual ways that directly refute common usage
- Access broad and extensive vocabulary within complex syntactical structures and in a variety of contexts
- Analyze the context of a sentence or larger sections of text to clarify the meaning of unknown words, differentiate among multiple possible meanings of words, detect nuances and infer connotations

### Suggestions for Improvement

- When reading a text about an unfamiliar topic, look for familiar words to help determine what any unknown words might mean.
  - When encountering an unknown word or a difficult word in a text, look it up in a dictionary that provides information on the origins and history of a word.
  - When encountering a difficult section of text, break down the ideas sentence by sentence and even within sentences. Think about how the ideas work together.
  - When reading a difficult text, look for familiar words that are used in unfamiliar ways.
  - When reading a text about an unfamiliar topic, look for familiar words to help determine what any unknown words might mean.
  - When encountering a difficult word in a text, use the context of the sentence and surrounding sentences to determine the word's meaning. Also consider the context when determining how a word is being used. For example, does the rest of the sentence indicate that a word is being used with a certain connotation?
  - To improve vocabulary, read a difficult text and look up any unfamiliar words in a dictionary that provides information on the origins and history of a word.
- This is the top score band and students who score at this level will likely have mastered the skills listed at all other levels. However, students can always benefit from more practice. We encourage students to review the skills and examples listed in the 500–590 and 600–690 score bands.

## Understanding Literary Elements

### Academic Skills\*

- Identify nuances and attitudes of characters
- Determine characterization from dialogue, thoughts and actions, interactions among characters, and narrative perspective
- Analyze characters' function in a narrative
- Interpret dialogue from a character's or the narrator's perspective
- Analyze the roles and relationships among characters and between characters and the narrator

### Suggestions for Improvement

- When reading a novel, short story or play, choose a character and think about what purpose he or she serves. Consider: Is the character a protagonist, an antagonist or an important minor character? Is the character a foil or a tragic hero? Does the character provide comic relief? How does the character relate to the story's theme? How does the character affect the plot?
  - When reading a novel, short story or play, pick out a line of one character's dialogue. Think about how other characters would react to what that character says. Keep in mind what is known about each character.
  - When reading a novel, short story or play, identify the ways in which the characters (including the narrator) contribute to the work's overall meaning or message. Consider the ways in which the characters relate to each other and to the narrator.
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## Organization and Ideas

### Academic Skills\*

- Integrate ideas within and across sentences and texts
- Comprehend generalizations about texts
- Analyze and compare concepts across texts
- Draw text-based conclusions beyond the main idea
- Determine the function of a selected portion of text within a longer text
- Analyze main ideas and concepts within and across complex and sometimes opposing texts
- Compare and contrast explicit and implicit supporting ideas across texts
- Recognize components of an author's argument within a text
- Analyze context, sentence structure and sentence variation to construct meaning within and across sentences and texts
- Interpret multiple layers of a text

### Suggestions for Improvement

- Find two challenging essays by different authors on the same topic. Consider how each author addresses the topic. Think about how each author treats the main idea. Consider whether the authors use similar evidence and supporting ideas or use other methods to support their main ideas.
  - When reading an argumentative text, identify the parts of the author's argument. Consider: What is the thesis? What evidence does the author provide? Does the author cite others? How does he or she conclude the argument?
  - When reading a text, look at its organization and its style. Consider how the organization and style work together to contribute to the work's effectiveness.
  - When reading a text, think about the stated topic and also consider its larger meaning or purpose. Consider whether or not the text has a meaning beyond its stated intention.
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