

# SAT ESSAY

## What is it?

- The SAT essay is now optional, but some colleges require students to submit SAT essay scores with their application. So it is highly recommended that all students complete the essay.
- No college will base your admission decision on getting a perfect score on an essay you had 50 minutes to write. The goal is to show that you can write a decent essay in that time, and a score of a 6/6/6 will usually suffice.

## What to expect:

- You will be presented with an article or speech by an author presenting a claim and attempting to persuade the reader of its validity.
- You will be asked to examine the author's choices in presenting the argument.
  - Identify the point the author is making and the reasons provided.
  - Explain how the author builds the argument to persuade the reader.
  - Analyze how the author makes the point.

## What NOT to do:

- You will not need prior knowledge about the topic.
- You will not simply summarize the article/speech.
- You will not share your personal opinion about the argument.

## How it is scored:

- Your essay will be evaluated by two scorers. Each will use a rubric to assign a score of 1-4 in each of three categories:
  - Reading: How well did you understand and paraphrase the text?
  - Analysis: How well did you explain how the author builds the argument to persuade the reader using persuasive elements?
  - Writing: How well did you write your response? Is there: an easy to follow structure, a clear thesis, sentence variety, precise wording, a logical progression of ideas, a flow to the paragraphs, etc.

## What to do:

1<sup>st</sup>) Read the text and annotate persuasive elements that the author uses. [~10 minutes]

- Ethos:
  - Expertise
    - What: Author's job title, background, or experience with the topic
    - Why: Makes what the author says more believable
  - Anecdotes
    - What: Author's personal experience or experience of someone the author knows
    - Why: People put more faith in experiences they can personally connect with
- Logos:
  - Facts and Statistics
    - What: Numerical or non-numerical data
    - Why: Facts are more powerful than opinion
  - Counterarguments and Counterclaims
    - What: Partially presents another point of view
    - Why: Makes the argument seem more fair and shows the author has a deeper understanding of the topic
  - Explanation of evidence
    - What: Shows how the evidence logically relates to the main argument
    - Why: Explains the logic behind the argument/point, making it easier to understand
- Pathos:
  - Vivid language
    - What: Similes, metaphors, adjectives, and descriptive wording
    - Why: Puts the reader in the author's shoes and draws them in
  - Direct address/appeal to the reader/audience
    - What: Asking rhetorical questions, or using words like "us" or "you"
    - Why: Engages the reader with the topic on a deeper and more personal level

2<sup>nd</sup>) Outline 2-3 persuasive elements to discuss [~3 minutes]. Make sure to consider:

- What is the technique?
- Why did the author use it?
- What is the effect on the reader?

3<sup>rd</sup>) Formulate a thesis [~2 minutes]

- *In (title of text), (author) effectively builds his/her argument that \_\_\_\_\_ by using \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ .*

4<sup>th</sup>) Write! [~30 minutes] Make sure to include:

- Clear introduction with a background on the text and a thesis statement
- Body paragraphs with clear topic sentences and a link back to the thesis
- Clear conclusion with a summary of the main points and a re-statement of the thesis
- Transition statements that help the essay to flow
- Varied, elevated, and precise wording
- Sentence variety

5<sup>th</sup>) Proofread, looking for issues that are tested in the Writing and Language section.

[~5 minutes]

- No redundancy
- No ambiguity
- No misplaced modifiers
- Correct punctuation (commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes)
- Verb agreement
- Economize your words