



Math Strategies

Strategy #1: “Always read the question”

After you have finished working on the problem, always go back and read what the question was asking. Often students will get halfway through solving the problem or solve for x when the question required them to solve for $3x$.

Strategy #2: “Plug in the Answer”

Working on a problem to get an answer and then simply selecting the answer you got from the problem disables a huge advantage the multiple-choice question often gives you. Often with long algebra problems you might benefit from plugging in the multiple-choice answers and working the problem backwards. Additionally, it can never hurt to refer to the answers in the process of solving the problem.

Strategy #3: “Process of Elimination”

Using the process of elimination is a combination of common sense and logical thinking. For example:

$[21(-31) + 41(2)]$ Simplify this equation.

- A. -569
- B. 569
- C. -63
- D. 63

You may have heard someone say that the SAT is a logic test. Problems like this are a direct example of utilizing logic in the SAT. Initially when you look at this problem, it may be tempting to pull out your calculator and begin punching in numbers. However, let's see if we can solve it quicker using the process of elimination. When looking at the first part of this equation, we can quickly get an estimate of $21(-31)$. We can see that it will be a negative number that will be around -600. Looking at the second part of the equation $41(2)$, we can see that it will be a positive 2-digit number that will be added to our estimated -600. Upon seeing this we can ascertain that the answer will be a negative 3-digit number. The only possible solution is A.

This reduces the problem worktime from nearly a minute to write out and work, to roughly 5-10 seconds. When you encounter easy problems, applying this strategy will allow you to have more time to work on the harder problems in the test and conserve brain power.



You can also use this concept in more complicated problems, although I suggest eliminating answers as you go, instead of working through the entire problem in your head. If you can, eliminate obviously wrong answers right off the bat, and then only work the problem until you have eliminated the other wrong answers. It is common that you will be able to eliminate three answers before finishing the problem.

Strategy #4: “Take Problems One Step at a Time.”

Often problems in the SAT (specifically long word problems) can be very difficult if you try to understand the whole thing at once. Take it SLOW. Read one sentence at a time and digest what it is saying before you move onto the next one. Writing down what parts of sentences mean can be very beneficial especially if you struggle with understanding the problem. I will show you a more in-depth breakdown of this concept in the word problem examples.

Strategy #5: “Only use your calculator if it will save you time.”

Time is the biggest factor in the SAT, so do not waste time using your calculator unnecessarily.