

SAT Passage-Based Reading Process

Now that we've explained the rules and patterns of SAT Passage-Based Reading Questions, let's look at the process you should use to answer these types of questions.

1. Skim the passages as quickly and superficially as you can.

It may sound strange, but the best way to address SAT Critical Reading is to read each passage as little as possible the first time around. (In fact, when possible, you should do your best to skip the reading the entire passage altogether.) There are two main reasons for this. First, reading the passage too closely is either going to bore you to sleep or distract you from your main focus, which should be attacking the SAT in a systematic way, [like a machine](#). Second, reading the passage is mostly a waste of time anyway, because many SAT questions will refer you to specific parts of the passage that you will have to read again later.

Your only goal at this point is to get a rough idea of some of the concepts that appear in the passage. That's all. Once you've done that, you move on to the first question.

2. Identify the type of Passage-Based Reading Question you're dealing with.

[If it's a Word Use Question, proceed to Step 3.]

[If it's a Citation Question, proceed to Step 5.]

[If it's a General Passage Question, proceed to Step 10.]

3. Find the quoted word in the text.

Remove that word from the sentence in the text, and replace it with each answer choice. Read each new sentence with the substituted word, and see if it makes any sense. One of the new sentences should make a lot more sense than the other four new sentences. The one that makes the most sense is the one you like.

4. Check for hidden SAT patterns.

If the answer you like is also the first thing that comes to mind when you think of the quoted word from the question, reconsider your answer.

[If you're absolutely certain that you have the right answer, then mark that answer on your answer sheet.]

[If you're not absolutely certain, DON'T mark an answer. If you're not certain, you'll probably be wrong, and you'll lose points. DON'T GUESS! If you don't remember why you shouldn't guess, check out [our guessi ng di scussi on](#).]

5. Read the citation.

Find the citation in the text that the question is referring to. Read it. If the citation is a line citation and the cited line picks up in the middle of a sentence, go back up to the beginning of that sentence and start there. (It may also help to read the sentence before or after the citation, but this usually isn't necessary.)

6. Find four wrong answers.

It's important to look for wrong answers first. When you come across an answer that matches one of the wrong answer patterns we talked about, cross it out.

[If you cross out exactly four answer choices, go to Step 7.]

[If you cross out all five answer choices, go to Step 8.]

[If you cross out fewer than four answer choices, go to Step 9.]

7. Look at the remaining answer choice.

See if the remaining answer choice fits the right answer pattern (in other words, see if it restates essential points in the citation). If it does, that's great. If it doesn't really fit any pattern at all, but the other answers are all clearly wrong, you can still be pretty sure you have the right answer.

[If you're sure that you're right, mark the answer and move on to the next question.]

[If you're not completely sure, DON'T GUESS. If you don't remember why you shouldn't guess, look at [our guessing discussion](#).]

8. Keep trying.

Believe it or not, crossing out all five answers is actually better than not crossing out enough answers. It means that you're reading with a critical eye, which is exactly the right way to handle the SAT!

Now you have to figure out where you went wrong. Look at the citation and the answer choices again, and see if you can figure out where your mistake is. (If necessary, read the lines immediately before and immediately after the citation.)

[If you can find your mistake, go back to Step 6.]

[If you can't find your mistake, and none of the answers look good, then skip the question. Don't ever guess. If you don't remember why you shouldn't guess, look at [our guessing discussion](#).]

9. Be more critical.

You aren't reading the passage critically enough. Remember that it's important to look for wrong answers. If you can find any reason at all not to like an answer choice, cross it out and move on the next choice. If necessary, read the lines immediately before and immediately after the citation.

[If you can find more wrong answers, go back to Step 6.]

[If you can't find more wrong answers, skip the questions. Don't guess from the answers that you haven't eliminated. You'll probably be wrong, and you'll lose points. If you don't remember why you shouldn't guess, look at [our guessing discussion](#).]

10. Save General Passage Questions for later.

Skip General Passage Questions until you've answered all the Citation Questions. Once you've answered (or skipped) all the Citation Questions, go back to the General Passage Questions. Go to Step 5, and use ALL the citations in the Citation Questions you've answered to help you answer the General Passage Questions. By the time you've answered all the Citation Questions, you probably won't need to do a whole

lot of reading to answer the General Passage Questions. If you do need to do extra reading, remember to keep it as close to skimming as possible—don't waste time and energy immersing yourself in a passage.



Two Important Notes

There are two important things you should keep in mind while answering Passage-Based Reading questions.

1. Make sure you read questions and citations COMPLETELY.

If you miss a word like *not* or *because*, you won't be able to answer the question correctly.

2. Make sure you read the key parts of the passage.

Even if the question doesn't ask you to, it's usually a good idea to read these key parts of the passage:

- the italicized introduction to the passage
- the opening sentence of the passage
- the closing sentence of the passage

These parts of the passage will often contain key information that gives you an idea of the passage, and it only takes a few seconds to read them!

SAT Passage-Based Reading Process Conclusion

That's it!



When you use this process, you're basically looking for reasons NOT to like each answer choice. When you've identified four wrong answer choices, you look for a reason that you like the remaining answer choice!

Now we'll show you this incredible process IN ACTION against real SAT questions!