

SAT Critical Reading Test-Taking Strategies

1. **Briefly read through the questions before reading the passage:** Read the questions first to familiarize yourself with the topic and areas to be focused on. This will also help you deduce the paragraph topics and the tone of the passage. Also, you will know the question types to help refine the details you will be looking for while reading the passage.
 - a. **Immediately answer any questions you can:** Often there are questions that ask you to define a particular word from the passage or explain a direct quotation. In these cases, you should answer these questions.
2. **Find the topic sentence for each paragraph:** The passages can be confusing and difficult to comprehend if the topic sentence cannot be identified. Keeping the topic sentence at the top of your mind throughout your reading will allow you to fill-in the supporting details and organize the author's thoughts.
 - a. **Understand the author's assertion:** The passage's objective may be to persuade, inform, argue or support. Knowing what the author's goal is and how they view the topic is key to understanding the passage.
3. **Use the passage to define unfamiliar vocabulary:** Sometimes the definition to a particular word is hidden to the passage's context.
4. **Underline key concepts:** A challenge of the longer passages is to remember the assertions, paragraph, topics, and tone. So that they may be quickly referenced to help "spark" your memory they should be marked and underlined.
5. **Interpret as if sitting in the seat of the author:** Our personal beliefs or understanding of an issue can often interfere with what the author is asserting. Be sure that you answer the question with regards to the author's view and not your own.
6. **Use scanning and speed reading techniques:** When referring back to the passage, it is not practical due to time constraints to re-read the entire passage. The test-taker must therefore scan the passage for keywords and focusing on the main ideas rather than starting from the beginning.
7. **Eliminate obviously wrong answer choices and cross them out:** Even if the correct answer is not known, obviously wrong answer choices can be eliminated and should be crossed out so that time isn't wasted reading them a second time. If at least two answer choices have been eliminated, then guessing is a worthwhile strategy rather than skipping the question since statistically your total score will improve.