

## STANDARDIZED TEST IMPROVEMENT TIPS

**Do not expect your scores to improve significantly just by repeatedly taking the test...they won't.**

- 1) Scores increase by either increasing your knowledge of the test material or of the test structure/procedures. Most courses and books will do a little of both.
- 2) Take the practice tests seriously!
  - a. Go to a library, use a watch to keep track of the time and pace yourself throughout the test sections, etc.

**Try for scores of 600 in math and verbal or better for SAT and 29 or higher for ACT.**

**If you can't increase your scores on the SAT, try the ACT!**

- 1) The tests are set up different:
  - a. The ACT does NOT penalize for wrong answers. If you are running out of time, do the "two minute drill". Pick your favorite column and fill in ALL the bubbles...then go back and continue answering what you can until time elapses.
  - b. The SAT, penalizes you  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a point for every wrong answer, so don't guess unless you can definitively eliminate at least one of the possible answers.
  - c. On the SAT, the math section is set up with the easy questions at the beginning, the medium in the middle, and hard questions at the end.
    - i. Be VERY careful towards the end of that section.
    - ii. Be suspicious of those hard questions...there's probably some minor wording twist in the question that will completely change your answer.
    - iii. Be very careful about guessing on that last  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the questions...you will probably guess wrong most of the time.

**Log onto the College Board website and view you're detailed scores reports.**

- 1) They'll tell you whether you are guessing too much or too little (on the SATs) and you can figure out which specific sections you need to improve the most by looking at the correct/incorrect/omitted tally.
- 2) Put your CORRECT Social Security number on the SAT/ACT exam, DO NOT GUESS. It will cause problems later in your college application process. Have the scores sent to USMA from the College Board. You must order your scores online from the College Board using the codes below.
  - a. The code for West Point is SAT- 2924.
  - b. The code for West Point is ACT - 2976.

**Use the following resources to help improve test scores:**

- 1) [www.march2success.com](http://www.march2success.com). This is a FREE online test prep program run by the US Army; you must register online to use it.
- 2) **Wilford Funk's "30 days to a Better Vocabulary,"** This book can increase your scores up to 100 points and it costs about \$5. The local school or library may have a copy.
- 3) **The "Princeton Review" or "Crack the SAT or ACT"** is a DVD and book set that could also give great tips on improving scores.

## TIPS FOR THE ACT

- 1) Scoring - Every question should have an answer.
- 2) Structure - Solve what you can and move on. Avoid speed bumps, they waste time.
- 3) Buy a watch keep track of your own time, **DO NOT RELY ON THE CLOCK OR THE PROCTOR**. This may sound dumb but it really does help because you're more in control.
- 4) Use the 2 minute drill on ACT only - answer all questions. Pick a column and fill in the bubble than go back and do the questions as time allows.
- 5) Eliminate all the ones you know are wrong answers, cross them out and don't look at them again.
- 6) Use practice tests and time yourself. Practice, A LOT.

FYI:

- ENGLISH - Sentence structure, Punctuation, Grammar - you have 8 1/2 minutes per passage there are 4.
- MATH - Pre-Algebra, Algebra I & II, Geometry and graphing, and Trigonometry
- READING - Prose fiction, Social Science, Humanities, Natural Science
- SCIENCE REASONING - Charts & Graphs, Experiments and Conflicting viewpoints

## TIPS FOR THE SAT

The best advice is “do not get bent on trying to improve the SAT, take the ACT, too.” Don't guess on the SAT questions. It doesn't make sense but you can actually get a better score by answering fewer questions if they are the right answer. If you don't know the answer, don't guess unless you have eliminated all other answers for sure. Just move on to the next question. Hard to believe you can answer *fewer* questions than your previous attempts and get a *better* score, but that is frequently the key to success for many SAT-takers!

FYI:

MATH;

- 1-7 are easy questions
- 7 - 14 middle - look for words that will change the answer totally
- 15 - 20 hard - if you aren't certain of the answer, leave it

## IN CLOSING

Research has shown that students can go from SAT "Risk" to ACT scholars. Trust me on this. I know you've taken exams but using these tips will help. One student went up 30 points by just practicing while being timed with his own watch. He realized that he was spending more time looking for the clock and watching the proctor than he was paying attention to the questions. The night before the exam, don't study, get a good night sleep instead!