

## The Smart Tester: How is the SAT scored?

The SAT tests are scored unlike other tests and understanding the scoring system results in higher scores.

Broadly speaking, the SAT I is scored on a range of 400 to 1600 in ten point increments with the Math and Verbal portions scored from 200 to 800 each. The individual SAT II tests are scored like the two halves of the SAT I on a range of 200 to 800. To be considered for the “top” schools, an SAT I score of over 1300 is nearly essential while scores over 650 for the SAT II tests are generally considered strong, depending on the test

However, how do your answers end up as a score? First, your raw score must be calculated. For every question that you get correct you are awarded one point, and for every question you answer incorrect you lose one quarter of a point – except for the quant comp math section where you lose one third of a point for a wrong answer and for the math grid-in, where you are not penalized for wrong answers. Leaving a question blank doesn't hurt your raw score, but doesn't help you either.

The resulting raw score on math or verbal is then rounded to the nearest whole number and the “scaled score” (200 to 800) is found by looking at the scoring table for that test. For example, on a recent SAT a raw score on the math of 60 (all correct) results in a perfect score of 800 while a score of 55 (four questions wrong) translates into a 720 for the math portion of the test.

Different tests have different scoring tables so you could get the exact number right and wrong on two SATs and score 30-50 points differently. This is due to the fact that some SAT tests are deemed “easy” or “hard” and the scoring tables are adjusted accordingly to ensure uniform score distribution among different tests. The determination of the scoring table may happen **after you take the test** – this is why it takes a couple weeks to get your scores back. Each SAT is only administered once.

What does this mean for you though? Simple answer: **don't leave any question blank that you have to look at and think about.** Why is this? Lets take a look at the following table that shows what happens to your index score on the Math and Verbal portions of the SAT when you get a question correct, wrong or leave it blank:

<u>Section</u>	<u>Correct</u>	<u>Wrong</u>	<u>Blank</u>
<u>Math</u>	+10	-2.5	0
<u>Verbal</u>	+8	-2.0	0

Now, lets say you have five questions on the verbal that you really aren't sure on so you leave them all blank – your score won't be hurt, but it is the **absolutely wrong** thing to do. If you randomly guess on the five, chances are you will get one correct and four wrong on average as there are only five choices to work with. In this instance you will gain 8 points from your one correct answer and lose 8 (4 times minus 2) from your wrong answer, also no effect on your score.

However, if you understand the test -- and especially if you learned from the best and took a Testtakers program – you will know that the key is eliminate wrong answers and guess intelligently. If you can narrow all of them down to a 50/50 shot and aren't even that lucky and get only 2 questions correct then the net effect on your score will be plus 10! Plus 16 for two correct answers; minus six for three wrong answers.

The moral of the story, **GUESS!** The test is scored such that random guessing will not affect your score while intelligent guessing will result in a score improvement. Here is another trick, on many verbal questions the hardest answer is twice as likely to be correct as any other! Which type of questions you may ask? We won't give everything away! Call or email us to find out about our programs for the October 11<sup>th</sup> test date!

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