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## How the SAT Essay Is Scored

Essays are scored in a manner that is fair and consistent using a holistic approach. In holistic scoring, a piece of writing is considered as a total work, the whole of which is greater than the sum of its parts. The SAT essay is scored by qualified readers, who take into account such aspects as complexity of thought, substantiality of development, and facility with language. A reader does not judge a work based on its separate traits, but rather on the total impression it creates.

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## Scoring Guide

The Scoring Guide expresses the criteria readers use to evaluate and score the student essays. The Guide is structured on a six-point scale. Since the SAT essay is scored holistically, readers are trained to use the Scoring Guide in conjunction with anchor papers, which have been scored by consensus as representative examples. The language of the Scoring Guide provides a consistent and coherent framework for differentiating between score points, without defining specific traits or types of essays that define each score point.

### **Score of 6**

An essay in this category demonstrates **clear and consistent mastery**, although it may have a few minor errors. A typical essay is

- ✓ effectively and insightfully develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates outstanding critical thinking, using clearly appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- ✓ is well organized and clearly focused, demonstrating clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas
- ✓ exhibits skillful use of language, using a varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary
- ✓ demonstrates meaningful variety in sentence structure
- ✓ is free of most errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics

### **Score of 5**

An essay in this category demonstrates **reasonably consistent mastery**, although it will have occasional errors or lapses in quality. A typical essay

- ✓ effectively develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates strong critical thinking, generally using appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- ✓ is well organized and focused, demonstrating coherence and progression of ideas
- ✓ exhibits facility in the use of language, using appropriate vocabulary
- ✓ demonstrates variety in sentence structure
- ✓ is generally free of most errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics

### **Score of 4**

An essay in this category demonstrates **adequate mastery**, although it will have lapses in quality. A typical essay

- ✓ develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates competent critical thinking, using adequate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- ✓ is generally organized and focused, demonstrating some coherence and progression of ideas
- ✓ exhibits adequate but inconsistent facility in the use of language, using generally appropriate vocabulary
- ✓ demonstrates some variety in sentence structure

- ✓ has some errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics
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## How the SAT Essay Is Scored cont.

### **Score of 3**

An essay in this category demonstrates **developing mastery**, and is marked by **one or more** of the following weaknesses:

- ✓ develops a point of view on the issue, demonstrating some critical thinking, but may do so inconsistently or use inadequate examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position
- ✓ is limited in its organization or focus, but may demonstrate some lapses in coherence or progression of ideas
- ✓ displays developing facility in the use of language, but sometimes uses weak vocabulary or inappropriate word choice
- ✓ lacks variety or demonstrates problems in sentence structure
- ✓ contains an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics

### **Score of 2**

An essay in this category demonstrates **little mastery**, and is flawed by **one or more** of the following weaknesses:

- ✓ develops a point of view on the issue that is vague or seriously limited, demonstrating weak critical thinking, providing inappropriate or insufficient examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position
- ✓ is poorly organized and/or focused, or demonstrates serious problems with coherence or progression of ideas
- ✓ displays very little facility in the use of language, using very limited vocabulary or incorrect word choice
- ✓ demonstrates frequent problems in sentence structure
- ✓ contains errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics so serious that meaning is somewhat obscured

### **Score of 1**

An essay in this category demonstrates **very little or no mastery**, and is severely flawed by one or more of the following weaknesses:

- ✓ develops no viable point of view on the issue, or provides little or no evidence to support its position
- ✓ is disorganized or unfocused, resulting in a disjointed or incoherent essay
- ✓ displays fundamental errors in vocabulary
- ✓ demonstrates severe flaws in sentence structure
- ✓ contains pervasive errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that persistently interfere with meaning

### **Score of 0**

Essays not written on the essay assignment will receive a score of zero.