

Math Tips For The SAT

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You don't have to be a math genius to do well on the SAT. Part of the secret is to be able to use shortcuts to get to the answer fast. This way you'll have more time to spend on the problems that do require lots of computations.

Here are some shortcuts for the math section of the SAT.

Plug in numbers for variables.

On problems with complicated formulas with a number of variables, it can be faster to plug in actual numbers for each variable than to use formulas to figure out what the variables are.

Estimate if you can.

If you see that the answer choices vary widely, use rounded off numbers in your calculations. For example, you can round off $4,867 \times 6,732$ to $5,000 \times 7,000$, which would give you 35,000,000. By estimating, you can easily eliminate choices that are not close to 35 million such as 35,000 or 35 billion.

Beware of the traps.

When they write the test, test makers include a number of traps that catch most students. Your job is to not be fooled. Typical tricks test makers try to get away with include: giving more information than you need to solve a problem, offering incorrect choices that you can arrive at by partially completing the problem or by using the correct information with wrong calculations, and giving numbers in the answer choices that remind you of numbers in the equation. Be cautious of answers that are too easy to calculate, especially at the end of the SAT Math section when the problems are supposed to be the most difficult.

Know how to answer the SAT I Student-Produced Response questions.

There are no negative answers or answers greater than 9,999. Percentages must be filled in as .75 or $\frac{3}{4}$, NOT 75.

Eliminate choices and guess.

If you can eliminate one or two wrong answers then guess the correct one. The more wrong answers you can eliminate the better your odds of picking the correct answer. Be sure to mark these questions so if you have time at the end you can go back and double check your choices.