# SAT Speed Guide

by Kevin Fan

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# Introduction

Welcome! My name is Kevin Fan, and I wrote this guide to help you, a prospective SAT taker do better.

I know that if you are reading this guide, you probably want some credentials from me so here they are: I scored a 1600 on the August 2025 SAT and a 1520 on the 2025 PSAT.

But my score isn't what's at stake here. What is at stake is your score, and what I intend to do in this guide is prepare you differently from normal accuracy-based SAT guides. I intend to help you practice speed.

What does that mean? Well, with the advent of the new Digital SAT from the College Board, the SAT has become shorter and harder. In addition, with the introduction of adaptive testing, it has become necessary for students to do well on Module 1 for both subjects in order to receive the harder and much more challenging Module 2 that allows for a higher score. Achieving a high score has become far more difficult, especially as the Module 2 questions are very challenging and time consuming.

Therefore, speed has become evermore critical. In this guide, I want to train you on certain strategies for speed on the SAT (while also maintaining accuracy) on both modules of both sections.

Reading and math intrinsically have different methods, so I will introduce their strategies separately. But first, a disclaimer.

# Disclaimer

I want to make clear that this guide is not for you if you want to solely improve accuracy. This guide is for those who struggle with speed and commonly leave questions unanswered when they take the SAT. I cannot help you improve your own foundational knowledge or basic skills, only to help you apply those skills faster. Of course, I will introduce my own "formulas" in order to speed you up, but the intention is not to "teach" you any new content (such as the quadratic formula). There are a multitude of other great guides on the internet with grammar rules and math formulas that you can check out.

Also, there is a certain personal bias in my writing. I have always been a fairly fast test taker, and thus my experiences and strategies might not address all concerns of students. If you have questions, don't hesitate to email me.

Above all, when training for speed, we are not trying to sacrifice accuracy. It does not matter if you can do all 27 questions on the reading module in 5 minutes if they are all wrong. It sounds counterintuitive that we are still worrying about accuracy in a speed guide, but then again, the SAT IS based on how many questions you get right, not how fast you complete them.

# Why speed?

I have always held the belief that speed is more important than accuracy if you can maintain the same accuracy. Examples:

**Case A:** If it takes Person X 33 minutes to answer 27 questions the first time with a 75% accuracy rate, compared to Person Y taking 18 minutes to answer 27 questions the first time with a 75% accuracy rate.
**Case B:** If it takes Person X 33 minutes to answer 22 questions the first time with a 90% accuracy rate, compared to Person Y taking 18 minutes to answer 22 questions the first time with an 80% accuracy rate.

As you can see, in Case A, speed was useful and did not impact the accuracy rate when looking over the questions the first time. Person Y is able to take the extra 15 minutes to review and double check their answers and potentially improve their grade.

In Case B, speed was not as useful for Person Y and resulted in a lower accuracy rate when taking the test the first time. This is a problem and is important to address.

Moving away from that short and hopefully illustrative scenario, I would like to introduce a guiding line you should think about. What I consider the most important mantra for speed is:

Mantra for Speed

**The first pass is the most important one.**

When taking a test, most students use a linear method going from Question 1 to Question N, where N is the last question on the module/test. Thus, students see questions in order and answer questions in order, so we can construct a case that I call the "**first pass**" or "first time". This is where speed is most useful.

The faster you can get through the first pass and answer every question, the more time you have to check your answers afterwards. Everyone gets the same allotted time to take the test, so it is crucial that you use your time wisely. It is important to not get bogged down and get "time-pressured" into leaving answers blank when the module is done.

# Strategies to employ on the test

Below, I will introduce some strategies that I like to use, and offer opportunities for faster test taking. Of course, even if you are not purely trying to improve speed, you should use these strategies anyways.

## Reading

Process of elimination: This is the simplest strategy that teachers often teach in school. For most questions on the SAT, there are one or two options that you can rule out immediately. I suggest that you skim the passage and questions quickly. Get rid of the obviously wrong answers then focus on the others. (Note: I have had trouble with this. Sometimes, I accidentally excluded answers that were right. Be cautious of this.)

Skipping questions that are difficult: This is also a very simple strategy. If you scan over a passage and questions and the question seems too complex or answers are too long, you can probably assume it is a hard question and skip. Look back at the question on your second pass and answer it. (Note: Do not leave too many questions blank. Only skip the hardest ones if you really have no idea. This strategy may give you trouble if you end up getting time-pressured.)

Scanning passages/answers: When you actually need to start answering the question, read the passage. Lock in for a couple of seconds and scan/flyover the passage. There will definitely be fluff and extraneous information, but you will also find the information you need. You can fly over the answer choices and most importantly look at the differences between answers. This pairs with the process of elimination strategy. (Note: This works for the first pass well, but when checking your answers, make sure you fully read the passage/answers.)

Eyeball test: SAT questions will often ask you to complete a sentence, or for grammar questions to fill in a word. What you can do is quickly eyeball the space that you need to fill in, think of a word that works or fits, then look at the answer choices and see the closest option to the word you think might work. For grammar, I would say that you should be able to verbally sound out the sentence with one of the answer choices: if it sounds right orally, it is probably right. (Note: This strategy may not work as well for vocabulary if you don't know what the answer choices mean.)

Inductionfraudmaxxing (IFM): This strategy is one I have coined, and somewhat works with Eyeball Test. Essentially, this is another term for guessing. If a question is difficult

but you feel it is not difficult enough to be skipped, you can just eyeball it and pick the answer that seems most correct to you at that time and move on. Most of the time, the first answer you choose and makes sense to you will be the right answer. (Note: I shouldn't have to say this, but actually attempt the question before guessing. An attempt is better than none.)

## Reading Clarification

These strategies are all really the same. Essentially what you need to do is read quickly, glean the information and put down an answer and move on. The most important thing to do is not get bogged down. You should not be spending more than 30 seconds on a reading question in Module 1 at least.

Unfortunately, Module 2 is where the speed is most needed but also most lacking. Here the passages are long and challenging. You may need to skip more questions, but also do not get time-pressured. Any answer is better than no answer.

**Reading TL;DR**

Process of elimination, scan passages, skip hard questions, guess if necessary; maximize the amount of time for you to check your answers.

## Math

Algebraically solving: I feel very strongly that many questions on the math section of the SAT are served well by using algebra and paper/pencil to solve. There is no need sometimes to take time to type in and set up equations on Desmos when it is much easier to write paper and pencil quickly. Even scribbles for work suffice if you know how to do it. Paper/pencil is in my opinion the best strategy for doing problems faster.

Desmos: The most common tip for math on the DSAT is to learn how to use Desmos. I agree with this sentiment, but I feel it is not the fastest for speed. It is useful for certain problems requiring graphing or linear equations, but for others not so much. Learn to determine whether Desmos or handwritten work is the best for your use case. (This somewhat contradicts the last point, but it is not a null-sum scenario. You should learn both algebraic solving and Desmos, to both conceptually understand how to do problems and quickly do them.)

Checking answers: This is not strictly related to speed, but checking your answers in math is very important. Learning to plug in variables and use relationships is important.

(Note: I cannot stress this point enough. Many a time I have been saved by checking my answer)

Eyeball test: The eyeball test in math is similar to IFM in reading. Basically, if your answer reasonably makes sense, then it probably is right. Meaning, if you look at the question and the answer matches (without doing the work), then it should be fine. (Note: This is still not a substitute for actually doing the work. It is merely a speed tactic.)

## Math Clarification

Math is often considered easier than the reading section, and with good reason. The concepts tested on the SAT are often introduced in school and only tested through Algebra 2, thus most test-takers are familiar with the content. College Board knows this, and gives you many easy math questions until it tosses curveballs such as the last 2-3 questions on Module 2. Speeding through the module until you get to the two difficult questions is a good idea.

I would like to emphasize for math specifically that no strategy or tool can alleviate a gap in knowledge. If you don't know how to do a problem, Desmos can't save you. You would be better off in that case skipping the problem and moving on.

**Math TL;DR**

Algebraically solving, Desmos; maximize the amount of time you have for the last few hard questions in the module

# Timing

In the previous section, I introduced strategies that I use. I feel it is important to remember that you are using these strategies primarily to speed through your first pass of the test so that you have answers to every question and so that you will have abundant time to check.

Here, I would like to talk about more quantitative timing:

## Reading Timing

The pacing of Reading averages to about 1 minute and 15 seconds per question. However, this is simply too much time to take.

On certain questions, you should take no more than 20 seconds glancing, answering, and moving on. These question types are: vocabulary and conventions.

Rhetorical synthesis (the bullet notes) should take you no more than 30 seconds.

Purpose, supporting the passage, or cross-text connections, inferences, complete logically, can take you up to 1 minute.

These are not hard and set rules, but when I time myself these are the numbers I see on average. This type of pacing is built using the strategies I have provided and will indubitably give you a leg up on time when checking your answers.

## Math Timing

Math timing is comparatively easier. You should spend a maximum of 15 seconds on "easy" math questions. These are simple algebra or word problems that basically give you the answer.

"Medium" problems, like trig or quadratic questions may require up to 40 seconds.

If it is a hard math question requiring significant setup and calculation, you should allot yourself 3 minutes to solve it.

This pacing gives you ample time to work on the hard math problems that make or break scores.

## Suggested Practice

I strongly suggest taking the College Board Official Practice Tests on Bluebook. They are somewhat accurate to the actual questions you take on the SAT, albeit a bit easier. Emphasize Test 9. Try to time yourself and test how fast you can complete a module, or a whole practice test.

For unofficial sources, I suggest using `oneprep.xyz`, a massive question database with College Board and other practice materials' questions. This is the resource I used to practice a little bit.

Finally, any other guide you find online likely has good tips. Erica Meltzer's blog *The Critical Reader* is very useful for learning grammar rules.

## My Experience

I took the August 2025 SAT junior year and scored a 1600. I recall that the Module 2 Reading questions were very challenging and often the answers themselves were longer than the questions. To practice, I took 2–3 practice tests on Bluebook and did 30 or so problems on `oneprep.xyz`.

I took the 2025 PSAT and scored a 1520. This PSAT was harder than the SAT I took in terms of maximum difficulty, but the math section was exceptionally easy on both modules. I didn't prepare as much for this test as I did for the SAT.

## Conclusion

This is just part 1 of my SAT Guide. In the next part, I will discuss accuracy and provide annotated tests.

*Thanks for reading this guide!*

If you like it, visit **conversions.studio** for more guides and the second part to this guide.

# Caveats, PS, Epilogue, Coda, etc

This guide may not have been what you expected. To be completely honest, speed is not something you can "read" or "know". It is something that you practice. It is something you build intuition for.

If this guide disappointed you, do not despair. Read the next part of my SAT guide, and you will be even more thoroughly disappointed.

All jokes aside though, please don't hesitate