

The SAT Essay

Analyzing Arguments

The essay prompt

almost always the same

As you read the passage below, consider how the author uses:

- **Evidence**, such as facts or examples, to support his claim
- **Reasoning** to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence
- **Stylistic or persuasive elements** (rhetorical devices) such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed

SAT ESSAY

SAT passages:

- Try to convince the reader of the veracity of the author's claim
- Are around 650-750 words
- Are meant to be **analyzed** and written about in around 50 minutes

So.....

- You can have an idea of the **types of argument-building techniques** the author might use **before** you open your booklet.
- **You can prepare yourself with SAT essay examples** from persuasive passages about many different issues.

Definition of Terms

- Evidence
 - Information and ideas used in the essay
 - **Facts, statistics, quotations from other experts, results of experiments or other research, examples**
- Reasoning
 - Connective tissues that hold the argument together
 - **How the author uses clear, logical reasoning to draw a connection between claim and evidence to support the claim**
- Stylistic and persuasive elements
 - **Rhetorical techniques** used to strengthen the power of an argument

Common Rhetorical Devices and Persuasive Elements

- Ethos: appeal to authority
- Pathos: appeal to the reader's emotions
- Logos: appeal to logic
- Anecdote: personal illustrative story
- Statistics and data
- Vivid words: words that jump at you
- Inclusive language: using words like "we"
- Figurative language: simile, metaphor, personification, etc...
- Counterargument : stating the opposite argument

Understanding the Analytical Task

- Fifty minutes
 - 15-20 minutes
 - Read the prompt **at the end** of the passage and **underline the thesis of the author**.
 - Understand the thesis
 - Read a 750—word essay
 - Annotate the passage
 - 10-15 minutes
 - Recognize the author’s main stylistic and rhetorical elements
 - **Outline your essay**
 - 20-25 minutes
 - Provide an eloquent introduction
 - Articulate a precise thesis statement
 - Show a logical and cohesive progression of ideas
 - Keep a formal style and objective tone
 - Show strong command of language

Layout of the Essay Introduction

- Brief introduction
 - **Title of the article** or essay; **name of author**
 - State the **author's main idea** (found at end of passage, the prompt)
 - **Your thesis:** a well thought out statement stating **your** main points about the passage
 - Example: The author is trying to persuade the reader by using statistics, vivid words and an anecdote.

Layout of the Essay Body

- Body organization
 - Write your **topic sentence** (the main idea of the paragraph)
 - Introduce the feature and **provide a quote** or a **paraphrase**
 - Explain the quote
 - Specifically state **how** the feature provides **evidence to support the author's reasoning**
 - **Analyze the effect** the feature is likely to have on the audience
- Conclusion
 - Summarize your response

5 tips that are told

- Give a clear thesis
- Include both an introduction and conclusion
- Use effective language and word choice
- Only use information from the passage
- Focus on relevant points

5 tips not told

- Read the prompt before the passage
- Your facts must be accuratebut your interpretation doesn't have to
- Write more than one page
- **Be 'subjective' when reading the passage**
- Memorize and identify persuasive techniques

Why are the following features persuasive

- Type #1: Facts and statistics
- Type #2: Anecdotes
- Type #3: Counterarguments and counterclaims
- Type #4: Vivid language
- Type #5: Direct address and appeal to the reader

Type #1:Facts and Statistics

- There is something in the (data, research, other events/information) that **backs up** the author's claim.
- By presenting information and facts, rather than just opinion and spin, the author **empowers the reader to connect the dots** on her own, which in turn **gives the reader ownership** over the argument and makes it more persuasive.

Type #2: Anecdotes

- Anecdotes can be **powerful** because they are more **relatable and interesting** to the reader than facts.
- **People tend to put more faith in experiences** if they can personally connect with experiences.

Type #3: Counterarguments and Counterclaims

- Giving some space to another point of view makes the discussion **seem to be more “fair”**.
- **True discussion of the counterargument** shows a **deeper understanding** of the topic than a **one-sided argument**.
- It demonstrates that the author **knows the topic well** and the reader is **more likely to trust** his claims.

Type #4: Vivid language

- Vivid language **puts the reader in the author's shoes** and **draws them into the passage.**
- It makes the topic **more interesting and engaging** for the reader.

Type #5: Direct Addresses and Appeals to the reader

- It **appeals to the emotions** and it causes the reader to **agree with author emotionally rather than logically**.
- **Rhetorical questions** get the reader to **step into the author's world** and **engage with the topic** on a deeper level.

Template for body paragraph

- Introduce feature and provide a quote or paraphrase
- Specifically state how feature provides evidence to support the author's reasoning
- Discuss how feature reflects the authors thinking and the way the author ties his or her claim
- Analyze the effect feature is likely to have on the audience