

PSAT 9

Reading Test

The Reading Test will ask you questions that are a lot like ones you'll experience in a lively, thoughtful, evidence-based discussion.

It's About the Everyday

The Reading Test focuses on the skills and knowledge at the heart of education: the stuff you've been learning in high school, the stuff you'll need to succeed in college. It's about how you take in, think about, and use information. And guess what? You've been doing that for years.

It's not about how well you memorize facts and definitions, so you won't need to use flashcards or insider tricks or spend all night cramming.

Quick Facts

- All Reading Test questions are multiple choice and based on passages.
- Some passages are paired with other passages.
- Informational graphics, such as tables, graphs, and charts, accompany some passages— but no math is required.
- Prior topic-specific knowledge is never tested.
- The Reading Test is part of the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section.

What the Reading Test Is Like

When you take the Reading Test, you'll read passages and interpret informational graphics. Then you'll use what you've read to answer questions.

What You'll Read

To succeed in college and career, you'll need to apply reading skills in all sorts of subjects. Not coincidentally, you'll also need those skills to do well on the Reading Test.

The Reading Test always includes

- One passage from a classic or contemporary work of U.S. or world literature.
- One passage or a pair of passages from either a U.S. founding document or a text in the great global conversation they inspired. The U.S. Constitution or a speech by Nelson Mandela, for example.
- A selection about economics, psychology, sociology, or some other social science.
- Two science passages (or one passage and one passage pair) that examine foundational concepts and developments in Earth science, biology, chemistry, or physics.

What the Reading Test Measures

A lot more goes into reading than you might realize — and the Reading Test measures a range of reading skills.

Command of Evidence

Some questions ask you to:

- Find evidence in a passage (or pair of passages) that best supports the answer to a previous question or serves as the basis for a reasonable conclusion.
- Identify how authors use evidence to support their claims.
- Find a relationship between an informational graphic and the passage it's paired with.

Words in Context

Many questions focus on important, widely used words and phrases that you'll find in texts in many different subjects. The words are ones that you'll use in college and the workplace long after test day.

The PSAT 8/9 focuses on your ability to:

- Use context clues in a passage to figure out which meaning of a word or phrase is being used.
- Decide how an author's word choice shapes meaning, style, and tone.

Analysis in History/Social Studies and in Science

The Reading Test includes passages in the fields of history, social studies, and science. You'll be asked questions that require you to draw on the reading skills needed most to succeed in those subjects. For instance, you might read about an experiment then see questions that ask you to:

- Examine hypotheses.
- Interpret data.
- Consider implications.

Answers are based only on the information in the passage.

Writing and Language Test

The Writing and Language Test asks you to be an editor and improve passages that were written especially for the test — and that include deliberate errors.

It's About the Everyday

When you take the Writing and Language Test, you'll do three things that people do all the time when they write and edit:

1. Read.
2. Find mistakes and weaknesses.
3. Fix them.

The good news: You do these things every time you proofread your own schoolwork or workshop essays with a friend.

It's the practical skills you use to spot and correct problems — the stuff you've been learning in high school and the stuff you'll need to succeed in college — that the test measures.

Quick Facts

- All questions are multiple choice and based on passages.
- Some passages are accompanied by informational graphics, such as tables, graphs, and charts — but no math is required.
- Prior topic knowledge is never tested.
- The Writing and Language Test is part of the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section.

What the Writing and Language Test Is Like

To answer some questions, you'll need to look closely at a single sentence. Others require reading the entire piece and interpreting a graphic. For instance, you might be asked to choose a sentence that corrects a misinterpretation of a scientific chart.

What the Writing and Language Test Measures

Questions on the Writing and Language Test measure a range of skills.

Command of Evidence

Questions that test command of evidence ask you to improve the way passages develop information and ideas. For instance, you might choose an answer that sharpens an argumentative claim or adds a relevant supporting detail.

Words in Context

Some questions ask you to improve word choice. You'll need to choose the best words to use based on the text surrounding them. Your goal will be to make a passage more precise or concise, or to improve syntax, style, or tone.

Analysis in History/Social Studies and in Science

You'll be asked to read passages about topics in history, social studies, and science with a critical eye and make editorial decisions that improve them.

Expression of Ideas

Some questions ask about a passage's organization and its impact. For instance, you will be asked which words or structural changes improve how well it makes its point and how well its sentences and paragraphs work together.

Standard English Conventions

This is about the building blocks of writing: sentence structure, usage, and punctuation. You'll be asked to change words, clauses, sentences, and punctuation. Some topics covered include verb tense, parallel construction, subject-verb agreement, and comma use.

Math Test

The Math Test covers a range of math practices, with an emphasis on problem solving, modeling, using tools strategically, and using algebraic structure.

It's About the Real World

Instead of testing you on every math topic there is, the PSAT 8/9 asks you to use the math that you'll rely on most in all sorts of situations. Questions on the Math Test are designed to mirror the problem solving and modeling you'll do in:

- College math, science, and social science courses
- The jobs that you hold
- Your personal life

For instance, to answer some questions you'll need to use one or two steps — because in the real world a single calculation is rarely enough to get the job done.

Quick Facts

- Most math questions will be multiple choice, but some — called grid-ins — ask you to come up with the answer rather than select the answer.
- The Math Test is divided into two portions: Math Test – Calculator and Math Test – No Calculator.
- Some parts of the test include several questions about a single scenario.

Focus

The Math Test will focus in depth on two of the areas of math that play the biggest role in a wide range of college majors and careers:

- [Heart of Algebra](#), which focuses on the mastery of linear equations and systems.
- [Problem Solving and Data Analysis](#), which is about being quantitatively literate.

There will also be some [Passport to Advanced Math](#) questions; these require the manipulation of complex equations.

What the Math Test Measures

Fluency

The Math Test is a chance to show that you:

- Carry out procedures flexibly, accurately, efficiently, and strategically.
- Solve problems quickly by identifying and using the most efficient solution approaches. This might involve solving a problem by inspection, finding a shortcut, or reorganizing the information you've been given.

Conceptual Understanding

You'll demonstrate your grasp of math concepts, operations, and relations. For instance, you might be asked to make connections between properties of linear equations, their graphs, and the contexts they represent.

Applications

These real-world problems ask you to analyze a situation, determine the essential elements required to solve the problem, represent the problem mathematically, and carry out a solution.

Calculator Use

Calculators are important tools, and to succeed after high school, you'll need to know how — and when — to use them. In the Math Test – Calculator portion of the test, you'll be able to focus on complex modeling and reasoning because your calculator can save you time.

However, the calculator is, like any tool, only as smart as the person using it. The Math Test includes some questions where it's better not to use a calculator, even though you're allowed to. In these cases, students who make use of structure or their ability to reason will probably finish before students who use a calculator.

The Math Test – No Calculator portion of the test makes it easier to assess your fluency in math and your understanding of some math concepts. It also tests well-learned technique and number sense.

Grid-In Questions

Although most of the questions on the Math Test are multiple choice, 18 percent are student-produced response questions, also known as grid-ins. Instead of choosing a correct answer from a list of options, you'll need to solve problems and enter your answers in the grids provided on the answer sheet.

Gridding-In Answers

- Mark no more than one circle in any column.
- Only answers indicated by filling in the circle will be scored (you won't receive credit for anything written in the boxes located above the circles).
- It doesn't matter in which column you begin entering their answers; as long as the responses are recorded within the grid area, you'll receive credit.
- The grid can hold only four decimal places and can only accommodate positive numbers and zero.
- Unless a problem indicates otherwise, answers can be entered on the grid as a decimal or a fraction.

$$\frac{3}{24}$$

- Fractions like $\frac{3}{24}$ do not need to be reduced to their lowest terms.
- All mixed numbers need to be converted to improper fractions before being recorded in the grid.
- If the answer is a repeating decimal, students must grid the most accurate value the grid will accommodate.

Below is a sample of the instructions students will see on the test.

Write answer in boxes. →

Answer: $\frac{7}{12}$

Grid in result. →

Fraction line ←

Answer: 2.5

Decimal point ←

Answer: 201

Either position is correct.

Acceptable ways to grid $\frac{2}{3}$ are:

Key Content Changes

Like other assessments in the [SAT Suite of Assessments](#), the new PSAT 8/9 includes a Reading Test, a Writing and Language Test, and a Math Test.



Words in Context

Many questions on the PSAT 8/9 focus on important, widely used words and phrases found in texts in many different subjects. Some questions ask you to figure out a word's meaning based on context. The words are ones that you will probably encounter in college or in the workplace long after test day.

No longer will students use flashcards to memorize obscure words, only to forget them the minute they put their test pencils down. The redesigned exams will engage students in close reading and honor the best work of the classroom.



Command of Evidence

The Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section asks you to interpret, synthesize, and use evidence found in a wide range of sources. These sources include informational graphics, such as tables, charts, and graphs, as well as multiparagraph passages in the areas of literature and literary nonfiction, the humanities, science, history and social studies, and on topics about work and career.

For every passage or pair of passages you'll see during the [Reading Test](#), at least one question will ask you to identify which part of the text best supports the answer to the previous question. In other instances, you'll be asked to find the best answer to a question by pulling together information conveyed in words and graphics.

The [Writing and Language Test](#) also focuses on command of evidence. It asks you to do things like analyze a series of sentences or paragraphs and decide if it makes sense. Other questions ask you to interpret graphics and to edit a part of the accompanying passage so that it clearly and accurately communicates the information in the graphics.



Math that Matters Most

The Math Test focuses in-depth on two essential areas of math: Problem Solving and Data Analysis, and Heart of Algebra. It also includes some Passport to Advanced Math questions.

Problem Solving and Data Analysis is about being quantitatively literate. It includes using ratios, percentages, and proportional reasoning to solve problems in science, social science, and career contexts.

The Heart of Algebra focuses on the mastery of linear equations and systems, which helps students develop key powers of abstraction.

Passport to Advanced Math focuses on more complex equations and the manipulation they require.

Current research shows that these areas are used disproportionately in a wide range of majors and careers. [Learn more about the Math Test.](#)



Problems Grounded in Real-World Contexts

Throughout the PSAT 8/9, you'll be asked questions grounded in the real world, directly related to work performed in college and career.

The Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section includes questions on literature and literary nonfiction, but also features charts, graphs, and passages like the ones students are likely to encounter in science, social science, and other majors and careers.

Questions on the Writing and Language Test ask you to do more than correct errors; they ask you to edit, revise, and improve texts from the humanities, history, social science, science, and career contexts.

The Math section features two-step applications to solve problems in science, social science, career scenarios, and other real-life situations. The test sets up a scenario and asks several questions that give you the opportunity to dig in and model it mathematically.



Analysis in Science and in History/Social Studies

The PSAT 8/9 asks you to apply your reading, writing, language, and math knowledge and skills to answer questions in science, history, and social studies contexts. In this way, the assessments call on the same sorts of knowledge and skills that you'll use in college, at work, and throughout your life to make sense of recent discoveries, political developments, global events, and health and environmental issues.

The PSAT 8/9 includes a range of challenging texts and informational graphics that address these sorts of issues and topics in the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section and the Math section. Questions will require you to read and understand texts, revise texts to be consistent with data presented in graphics, synthesize information presented through texts and graphics, and solve problems that are grounded in science and social science.



U.S. Founding Documents and the Great Global Conversation

When you take the PSAT 8/9, you'll be asked to read a passage from U.S. founding documents or the global conversation they inspired.

The U.S. founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the Federalist Papers, have been inspired by and have helped to inspire a conversation that continues to this day about the nature of civic life.

Authors, speakers, and thinkers from the United States and around the world, including Edmund Burke, Mary Wollstonecraft, Nelson Mandela, and Mohandas Gandhi, have broadened and deepened the conversation around such vital matters as freedom, justice, and human dignity.

The PSAT 8/9 includes texts from this global conversation. The goal is to inspire a close reading of these rich, meaningful, often profound texts, not only as a way to develop valuable college and career readiness skills but also as an opportunity to reflect on and deeply engage with issues and concerns central to informed citizenship.



No Penalty for Guessing

On the new PSAT 8/9, you simply earn points for the questions you answer correctly. So go ahead and give your best answer to every question — there's no advantage to leaving them blank.

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-8-9>