

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTERS

THE PERFECT



102 MANUAL

FOR THE SAT* ESSAY

A STEP-BY-STEP, NO-NONSENSE GUIDE
TO THE PERFECT ESSAY

BY ANTHONY-JAMES GREEN

- 🌀 Learn what you have to do, and what you can never do, on the College Board's SAT* essay
- 🌀 Learn how to develop a perfect thesis, topic sentences, and evidence
- 🌀 Discover the "flawless" essay template and how to use it no matter what topic you're writing about
- 🌀 Hundreds of tips on grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure to keep your score intact
- 🌀 45 practice essay prompts and a full training program to improve your essay writing
- 🌀 And Much More!

*SAT® is a registered trademark of the College Entrance Examination Board, which neither sponsors nor endorses this product.

Contents

Chapter 1	You Can Get A Perfect Essay Score	1
Chapter 1.5	Why Does the Essay Matter?	2
Chapter 2	Essay Grading: The Basics	4
Chapter 3	The Essay is Graded by Subtraction	7
Chapter 4	The Deadly Sins of the SAT Essay	9
Chapter 4.5	Why Good Writers Write Bad Essays	13
Chapter 5	Fail to Plan, Plan to Fail	15
Chapter 6	The Perfect Essay Structure	17



Chapter 1

You Can Get A Perfect Essay Score

Not everyone can get a perfect score on the SAT - however, everyone can get a perfect score on the SAT essay. That means you, too.

The SAT essay is graded on a 0-12 scale. When my students get anything less than a 12, I feel like I've failed them. Why?

☞ **The SAT essay has nothing to do with your level of writing talent.**

I don't care if you're "a math person, not a writer." It doesn't matter. In fact, some of the best SAT essay writers I've ever worked with were great at math and terrible at English. But they understood the most fundamental element of the SAT essay:

☞ **The SAT essay does not gage your writing talent - it gages your ability to make a point and support it with evidence in a structured manner.**

There's a big difference between the two. William Shakespeare would probably get a 3 on his SAT essay - it's no place for fancy, disorganized prose. So, before you get started on my essay guide, just know this: if you have any doubts about your ability to ace this essay, get them out of your head now. There won't be room for them by the time I'm done with you anyhow....



Chapter 1.5

Why Does the Essay Matter?

There are people who think that the SAT essay doesn't matter. They're wrong.

The essay matters for three big reasons (listed in order of importance):

🌀 **Your essay score is available to every school who requests it.**

Some schools care more than others, but remember this:

Your application is never viewed in isolation - it's always viewed in comparison to other students' applications.

If you get a 7/12 on your essay, and another student with similar grades, SAT scores, and extracurricular activities gets an 11/12....tough luck.

🌀 **The schools you apply to can see your ESSAY!**

Some universities review it during their admissions process, others don't. At the end of the day, if you write an embarrassing essay, it could be read by an admissions committee. Believe me: if you write like a 3-year-old, colleges will care.

🌀 **It affects your score in the Writing section!**

A lot of people mistakenly believe that the SAT essay grade exists in a vacuum. You get your grade out of 12, and you get your Writing score separately - this is not true.

The essay is worth 30% of your Writing score, or roughly 200 points. If you get every single Writing question right, but you get a terrible essay score, you won't break 700. If you get a bunch of problems wrong, but you write a 12-quality essay, you can still break 700.

- ☞ Is it true that some schools don't give a hoot about the Writing section? **Yep.**
- ☞ Is it true that some schools don't view your essay? **Yep.**
- ☞ Is it true that some schools don't care about your SAT score at all? **Yep.**

If you're reading this guide, I'm assuming that you're applying to schools that do care about your Writing score and that will care about your essay.

If you want to know how much certain schools care about your SAT Writing score and essay, simply use Google and search:

“*[School Name] policy on SAT Writing*”
and
“*[School Name] policy on SAT essay*”

All schools make their SAT policies public. If you're in doubt, simply do the research to find out how much your essay and Writing score will matter for each school.

Writing a perfect essay is easy, but it takes studying and some practice. Don't kill your chances of getting into a great school by discounting the essay. Writing a great SAT essay is one of the easiest ways to improve your application and your chances of getting into a top school. Now that you know how important this essay is, it's time to show you how to knock it out of the park.



Chapter 2

Essay Grading: The Basics

As I mentioned earlier, your SAT essay is graded on a 0-12 scale. Here's how that works:

Two graders each get a chance to read your essay. They both rate it on a scale of 0-6. When they're done, they submit their scores to the College Board. Two things can happen:

1. Their scores are within a point of each other. If this is the case, their scores are added up, and that's the score you get. For instance, if you get a 4 and a 5, you'll end up with a 9, or if you get two 6s, you'll end up with a 12.
2. Their scores are more than a point away from each other. If this is the case, a master grader with all 12 points will read your essay and give you a final grade on the 0-12 scale.

It's good to know how the grading works, but do know this: there's nothing you can do to ensure that you'll get one or two graders, so don't even worry about it.

“Okay,” you might say, “that’s all well and good, but how the heck do people put a numerical grade on an essay?” Great question.

How can the College Board grade your essay? What's the difference between a “*good*” essay and a “*bad*” essay, really?

Because the SAT cannot grade essays on a consistent **subjective** scale, they have built an **objective** scale with which to grade your essays instead.

Time for some definitions:

Subjective:

Based on opinions, personal judgments, or mental preferences.

Examples of subjective statements:

“Pizza is the best food in the entire world.”

“That building is beautiful.”

“Tom is a total jerk.”

Objective:

Fact-based, indisputable.

Examples of objective statements:

“There is salt water in the ocean.”

“Humans need oxygen to survive.”

“5 is a larger number than 2.”

The College Board is smart - they realized that if their graders could grade essays based on any sort of personal preference, scores would be entirely unreliable. For instance, imagine that you write an essay praising the deliciousness of red meat, only to find out that your essay has been graded by a militant vegetarian - not the best situation to be in, eh?

To avoid these sorts of sticky situations, the College Board has created a robotic, objective system of SAT grading that rewards the organized, robotic writer far more than the Picasso-minded abstractionists. Since your graders can't give you points for "**saying something smart**" or "**making a really awesome point**" (these are subjective), they do something else instead:

The SAT starts you off with a perfect score, and then pings you every time you make an objective mistake.

Continue reading to find out just how important this is...



Chapter 3

The Essay is Graded by Subtraction

*“You are Perfect Until
Proven Imperfect”*

If you understand one point, your essay score is going to skyrocket:

Every student starts with a perfect SAT essay score. Graders are trained to look for errors in your essay and ping you every time you make them. Some errors matter more than others (and we’ll go over all of them in the next chapter). All you need to know is this:

If you know what all of the SAT essay errors are, and you don’t make any of them, then you’ll end up with a perfect essay score.

*“Your Essay Doesn’t
Need To Be Good - It Just
Needs To Be Flawless”*

As I like to say to my students:

Imagine your essay as a loaf of bread: there’s nothing particularly good about a loaf of plain bread, but there’s nothing wrong with it, either. The SAT essay that most resembles a loaf of bread is that essay that’s most likely to get a perfect score.

You can write the most boring, insipid essay of all time - as long as you don’t screw up, you’ll still get a 12.

Here are things that the SAT graders cannot take points off for:

- 🌀 Being “boring”
- 🌀 Being clichéd
- 🌀 Being ridiculous
- 🌀 Saying things they disagree with
- 🌀 Quoting people they don’t like
- 🌀 Having opinions they don’t share
- 🌀 Not being “stylish”
- 🌀 Referencing information they don’t know about
- 🌀 Making “bad” points
- 🌀 Writing short sentences

See where I’m going with this? These are all subjective reasons for pinging an essay, and so they cannot be used against you. Only objective errors matter.

What are these objective errors? Read on, my friends!



Chapter 4

The Deadly Sins of the SAT Essay

The essay graders can only lower your score if you make objective errors. Having a thorough understanding of all these errors is essential. Memorize them and keep them in mind as you plan and write your essay and you'll get a perfect score. Here they are (in loose order of importance):

☞ **Not writing about the topic presented.**

If you write about a subject other than the one presented by the SAT, you automatically get a 0. Write your essay about the prompt provided, please!

☞ **Not developing a clear thesis.**

Selecting a point of view and then supporting it with evidence is the entire point of writing this essay - if you don't have a clear thesis, you're never going to get a good score. As you'll learn later, developing your thesis is the first step in writing a strong essay.

☞ **Lack of a coherent “thread” throughout your essay.**

Put simply, if your essay is all over the place, you're going to get a terrible score. You need to develop a streamlined essay that layers ever more detailed evidence to support your thesis. If you randomly skip to certain points, or omit evidence, or keep switching from **A** to **B** to **D** to **A** again, you're in trouble. You need an intro, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion, and you need them in that order.

🌀 **No clear topic sentences.**

If you're writing a paragraph stating that dogs are furrrier than cats, your first sentence should be: "Dogs are furrrier than cats." Don't beat around the bush - you need clear topic sentences that tell the reader exactly what each paragraph is going to be about. I'll show you how to write these later on.

🌀 **Lack of evidence.**

Your thesis is the "what?" of your essay. The topic sentences are the "why?" The evidence is the "so what?" and the "prove it!" You need sufficient evidence to back up your "why?"s or you're dead. For instance, if I said, "New York is better than North Dakota," that would be my "what?" A "why?" might be, "New York is better than North Dakota because it is warmer." That's all well and good, but so what? Is a warmer place better than a colder place? Do I have proof that it actually is warmer, or am I just saying that? If you don't provide relevant, valid evidence, you'll never break an 8/12. Evidence backs up your "why?"s and proves that they're relevant and true.

🌀 **Failing to recognize the other point of view.**

All SAT essays, whether they seem like it or not, are written in the "X is better than Y" format. For instance, if you're arguing that technology has made our lives easier, you're also arguing that lack of technology makes our lives harder, right? You need to recognize both sides of an issue or you'll lose points. Your fourth paragraph will be devoted to recognizing, and then debunking, the opposing point of view.

🌀 **Providing irrelevant examples or evidence.**

Making digressions of any kind. Irrelevance will kill your SAT score, and this is where most "good writers" get in huge trouble - they try to be creative, but they end up being incoherent. If you're trying to prove that the Yankees are better than the Giants, including a sentence about "your uncle, the scientist, who loves Twinkees" is going to lose you points. Your evidence and examples can stink, but they need to be related to the point you're trying to prove.

 **Bad grammar.**

Remember: the essay is part of the Writing section. If you make tons of grammatical errors, you're going to lose points. A single mistake here or there won't affect your score, but once you hit a critical mass of mistakes, you're cooked. Don't worry about where that critical mass is - instead, learn how to write simple, well-structured sentences and paragraphs that use proper tense, numbering, and subject-verb agreement. "Bad sentence structure" fits in here, and it's frequently cited by the College Board as one of the main reasons why they eliminate points.

 **Lack of variety in sentence structure.**

You need to mix it up a bit. Write like this and you will end up losing points: "I like chicken more than steak. Chicken is good. It is flavorful and full of protein. Chicken is nutritious. Chicken is a good food that is not expensive." You need to have a small arsenal of sentence variety at your disposal. You should be writing like a robot, but make sure that your robot isn't a one-trick pony.

 **Lack of transition between paragraphs.**

Each paragraph you write will be dedicated to a certain idea. There's nothing worse than toggling between ideas with no transition whatsoever. Ever seen something like this before?:

“Therefore, milk is a delicious, healthy beverage that makes our bones strong, and it should be included in our school lunches. My uncle absolutely hates bureaucracy”

What the @*%?!?

These sentences might connect two paragraphs that have to do with each other, but you'd never know that by reading them. You'll need to write smooth transitions between your paragraphs or you risk cutting your essay's thread.

🌀 **Errors in spelling and vocabulary.**

If you constantly misspell words or use them incorrectly, you'll lose points. Once again - a couple tiny mistakes won't matter, but there's a critical mass you can't afford to hit.

🌀 **Lack of varied vocabulary.**

If your essay reads like a third-grader's, you're in trouble. You don't need to be Shakespeare, but you do need to include a couple "fifty dollar words" if you're going to avoid "vocab ping."

🌀 **Illegible handwriting.**

If I can't read it, I can't understand it. If I can't understand it, it makes no sense. PING!

Do you notice that all of these errors are objective? You either have a thesis or you don't. You either use evidence or you don't. You either have a conclusion or you don't. If you can learn to avoid these errors (and trust me - you can), then you're on your way to a perfect 12.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of memorizing and then avoiding these errors. They're all that stand between you and a perfect score.



Chapter 4.5

Why Good Writers Write Bad Essays

Over the years that I've spent teaching the SAT, I've noticed something very strange:

- ☞ My best English students are almost always my worst SAT writers.
- ☞ While this might seem strange at first, there's actually a very simple explanation for this:
- ☞ Great writers are scared to write simple, boring essays, so they end up peppering their essays with mistakes.
- ☞ The fancier you try to get when you write your essay, the more errors you're going to end up making.

There are a few reasons for this:

- ☞ **“Poetic” writing usually involves complex sentences.**

My less writing-inclined students are happy to write sentences such as, “We can learn much from the mistakes of others.” However, my more writing-inclined students will often write like this: “Although there is much to be gained from our successes, there is also much that we can learn from the failures of others; therefore, it is not only success, but also failure, that serves as a unique opportunity for us to learn.” Blech! These sorts of sentences are over-the-top and laborious to read. KEEP IT SIMPLE! Simple sentences are impossible to fudge up with grammatical errors. The more complicated your sentences are, the easier it'll be to mess them up.

🌀 **Great writers often want to include more information than is necessary.**

Many of my best students are tempted to include extra information in their essays. This is a huge mistake. Say just enough to prove your point, and then move on! Including three extra examples plus “a funny story you heard one time” is not going to help you.

🌀 **Good writers get attached to their writing.**

If you want a perfect essay score, you need to treat your essay like the objective, robotic piece of junk that it is. Good writers get attached to their subject matter, and it prevents them from following the proper structure.

Remember: Following proper essay structure is the only way to get a perfect essay score, and the more emotionally attached you are to your writing, the more clouded your objective, structure-based judgment will become.

When I have my students write practice essays, I often force them to write about seemingly silly subjects such as the following:

Sally is smarter than Jenny. Agree? Disagree? Why?

Trees are better than flowers. Agree? Disagree? Why?

J is a better letter than T. Agree? Disagree? Why?

Chocolate is better than vanilla. Agree? Disagree? Why?

Bugglygook is a better planet than Jumbaloosha. Agree? Disagree? Why?

I have my students write about such silly topics because when you write about silly topics, it's easy to focus on the structure of your essay rather than on the content. Focusing on the content of your essay is usually what kills your structure. First get your structure down, then work on your content and style. In that order.

If you can remember to write simple sentences, limit the information you include in your essays, and focus on objective structure, you're going to write a perfect essay with ease.

Don't fall into fancy writing syndrome - it's easier to write like a robot, and it'll get you much better results if you do!



Chapter 5

Fail to Plan, Plan to Fail

You only have 25 minutes to write your essay. That means you should read the prompt and start writing instantly, right? WRONG.

If you write your essay without taking the time to plan it out first, you might as well just take a nap instead. You'll get the same score.

By now, you know that getting a perfect essay score on the SAT is all about avoiding errors. Well, know this:

The only way to avoid errors in your essay is to plan your essay before you start writing it.

Think of some of the major sins that the College Board takes points off for:

- ☞ Lack of a thesis-Lack of topic sentences
- ☞ Lack of a coherent thread
- ☞ Lack of evidence
- ☞ Irrelevant evidence
- ☞ Bad transitions between paragraphs

If you have no idea what you're writing when you start to write, I guarantee that you will make almost all of the above mistakes. Begin with the end in mind, figure out precisely what you want to say, and then write about it.

If you create a simple plan for your essay before you write it, you can write a perfect essay - even better, you'll write it much more quickly than you would an unplanned essay.

Imagine that you're about to go on a road trip to California - would you just jump in the car and start driving? Of course not - you'd get started faster, but you'd end up losing countless hours figuring out where the heck you were trying to go. If you spent 30 minutes downloading a map, filling up on gas, and filling your tires with air, you'd end up getting there twice as fast. Planning your essay is like preparing for a trip - putting in a bit of prep work beforehand will end up getting you there faster, even if you do start a few minutes later.

Here's what you need to figure out before you start writing:

- 🌀 Your thesis
- 🌀 Your three "why?"s
- 🌀 Your evidence for each of the three "why?"s

That's it. You can write them all in shorthand, but you need to write them before you start.

At the risk of being a broken record, let me say this: I have never seen a 3-quality essay with a plan, and I've never seen a perfect essay without one. If you're serious about doing well on the SAT essay, you'll take the time to write a plan.

In the next chapter, I'll give you an idea of how your essay is going to be structured, and from there we'll look at how to develop each of the elements of your plan so that you can plug your thesis, your topic sentences, and your evidence into your essay template.



Chapter 6

The Perfect Essay Structure

Before you learn any more about your thesis sentence, your topic sentences, and your evidence, you need to know where you're going to put them.

You are going to write a 5-paragraph essay. No more, no less.

Every perfectly structured essay follows this formula:

- ☞ Tell your reader what you're about to say.
- ☞ Say what you want to say.
- ☞ Tell your reader what you just said.

Sounds repetitive, right? That's because it is. Your essay is going to be the most repetitive thing you've ever written - you just need to master the art of saying the same things in different ways (covered later). For now, just know that your essay will look like this:

Paragraph 1: Intro to your thesis and your topic sentences.

Paragraph 2: First topic sentence, backed up by evidence.

Paragraph 3: Second topic sentence, backed up by evidence.

Paragraph 4: Third topic sentence, backed up by evidence.

Paragraph 5: Conclusion, re-statement of thesis, summary of your three topic sentences.

We'll get into much more structural detail later, but for now, I want you to get a mental image of how your essay is going to look. It's basically going to be a statement, three paragraphs backing up that statement, and then a final paragraph letting the reader know what he or she just read.

Now that you have an image of your essay (even if it is a slightly ghostly one), we can move on to the key elements of your essay plan.

VISIT MY STORE

<http://store.anthonyjamesgreen.com/catalog/product/perfect-12-essay-manual>

to get the rest of “**The Perfect 12 Manual**” today, and, for a limited time, apply code **MYESSAYGUIDE** for a \$5 discount on the purchase price.

THANKS FOR READING!