



The RITES FACTS

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Reading Strategies to Increase Your Score on the SAT/ACT

How to Read Actively

Most students report that the SAT/ACT reading passages are uninteresting, and thus have difficulty motivating themselves to read them carefully, which is essential for scoring well. Reading “actively” is the best way to keep yourself focused to ensure better understanding and answering the questions correctly.

Approach the reading passages with “a plan of attack” to keep focused:

Step 1: Passage Preview

Read any introductory blurb that precedes the passage. This blurb usually previews the source of the passage, which can provide important clues. A passage adapted from a short story will be different than one adapted from a science journal. Read the blurb and think about your background knowledge about fiction and non-fiction, including what to anticipate from fiction (characters, setting, conflict) vs. non-fiction (topic, text organization, opinion).

Step 2: Talk-to-Text to Connect

Read the passage while “talking to the text” to better connect and comprehend. Read the piece as if you are conversing with the author. Question what you are reading, form opinions about whether or not you accept the information being presented, and pass judgment on the author’s opinions and arguments. Talking to the text can help you think about the author’s point or message and how the main ideas are supported.

Step 3: Read with Your Pencil

Make notes or mark up the passage as you read. Most critical-thinking questions will be based on the main idea the author is trying to make. You can try one or more of the following quick and efficient strategies:

- Make short notes in the margin to summarize each paragraph’s main ideas
- Underline repeated words, phrases, or concepts
- Annotate with boxes, stars, etc., whenever the author shifts focus, or the meaning of the piece changes gears; form an opinion and write down why the author shifted focus at that point

Step 4: Final Pause

Pause after completing the reading to reflect briefly on the author’s main point or argument. It helps if the passage is strongly opinionated, but even if the passage is more balanced or objective, noting this fact will help you answer the comprehension questions with success.