

Mc  
Graw  
Hill

Education

新

SAT

官方指南详解

写作分册

第二版

Christopher Black  
College Hill Coaching™

循序渐进地提高写作能力 ●

练就SAT高分作文

全面复习SAT语法考点 ●

精准应对改错题，句子、段落改进题

Christopher Black精心打造 ●



北京语言大学出版社  
BEIJING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS





Mc  
Graw  
Hill Education

# 新SAT

## 官方指南详解

写作分册

第二版

# CONQUERING

# SAT

# WRITING

Christopher Black  
College Hill Coaching™

袁丽娜 译

G 634 / 17:2

## 图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

新SAT官方指南详解·写作分册 / (美) 布莱克 (Black, C.) 编著; 袁丽娜译. —2版. —北京: 北京语言大学出版社, 2013.1

ISBN 978-7-5619-3421-0

I. ①新… II. ①布… ②袁… III. ①英语—写作—高等学校—入学考试—美国—教学参考资料 IV. ①G634

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2012)第294111号

北京市版权局著作权合同登记号: 01-2009-5440

McGraw-Hill's Conquering SAT Writing, second edition

Christopher Black

0-07-174913-6

Copyright © 2011 by Christopher Black.

All Rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including without limitation photocopying, recording, taping, or any database, information or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

This authorized bilingual edition is jointly published by McGraw-Hill Education (Asia) and Beijing Language and Culture University Press Co., Ltd. This edition is authorized for sale in the People's Republic of China only, excluding Hong Kong, Macao SAR and Taiwan.

Copyright © 2013 by McGraw-Hill Education (Asia), a division of McGraw-Hill Asian Holdings (Singapore) Pte. Ltd. and Beijing Language and Culture University Press Co., Ltd.

版权所有。未经出版人事先书面许可, 对本出版物的任何部分不得以任何方式或途径复制或传播, 包括但不限于复印、录制、录音, 或通过任何数据库、信息或可检索的系统。

本授权双语版由麦格劳-希尔(亚洲)教育出版公司和北京语言大学出版社合作出版。此版本经授权仅限在中华人民共和国境内(不包括香港特别行政区、澳门特别行政区和台湾)销售。

版权©2013由麦格劳-希尔(亚洲)教育出版公司与北京语言大学出版社所有。

本书封面贴有McGraw-Hill公司防伪标签, 无标签者不得销售。

---

书 名: 新SAT官方指南详解·写作分册(第二版)

Xin SAT Guanfang Zhinan Xiangjie · Xiezuofence (Di-er Ban)

责任印制: 陈 辉

---

出版发行: 北京语言大学出版社

社 址: 北京市海淀区学院路15号 邮政编码: 100083

网 址: www.blcup.com

电 话: 发行部 010-82303648 / 3591 / 3650

编辑部 010-82301019

读者服务部 010-82303653 / 3908

网上订购电话 010-82303668

客户服务信箱 service@blcup.com

印 刷: 北京中科印刷有限公司

经 销: 全国新华书店

---

版 次: 2013年1月第2版 2013年1月第1次印刷

开 本: 889毫米×1194毫米 1/16 印张: 15

字 数: 463千字

书 号: ISBN 978-7-5619-3421-0 / H · 12211

定 价: 36.00元

---

凡有印装质量问题, 本社负责调换。电话: 010-82303590

# 出版说明

为了帮助考生备考新SAT,我们从麦格劳·希尔出版公司引进了这套《新SAT官方指南详解》系列,一共三本:数学分册、写作分册以及阅读理解分册。希望能够帮助考生吃透新SAT官方指南,从容备考,取得理想的成绩。该系列丛书的作者均为美国一线有经验的新SAT考试辅导教师,有着丰富的实战经验,相信该系列图书的出版会为中国考生带来新的备考视角和启发。

众所周知,新SAT考试虽然分为三个项,分别考查学生的数学能力、分析能力、逻辑推理能力以及语言运用能力,而这三项考试却都是在全英文的环境下进行的。对于中国考生来讲,更重要的是理解出题方的思维方式和解题思路,而不是简单地记忆英语词汇;需要的是培养一种英语阅读素养,从而更快地在规定时间内完成题目。同时,逐渐养成的思维方式也会帮助考生更好地适应未来在大洋彼岸的大学生活,这也是新SAT考试的目的——帮助学校了解申请者是否已经在智力上为大学的学习做好了准备。这就是为什么我们从考试的发源国——美国,引进出版这套丛书的目的。施夷长技以制夷。出于以上考虑,我们针对不同分项考试的特点,在出版的过程中对每册书的翻译做了不同的处理。

**数学分册提供了数学术语英汉词汇表:**关于数学知识总复习部分,我们保留原英文的讲解。对于多数中国学生,SAT数学考试部分的内容还是比较容易的,考查的知识基本不出中国大陆高中数学教学的范围。考生通过书后所附的数学术语英汉对照词汇表,能够不费力地理解讲解内容。保留数学的英文复习部分的目的是让学生能够有更多的机会熟悉这些数学术语和常用表达,从而在实际的考试中节省阅读题目的时间。

**写作分册,除对考试要求介绍做了翻译以外,其他的内容全部采用英文。**这样的设计也是为了让考生能够有更多的机会了解并理解美国式的写作要求以及写作方法,从而在考试中避免使用中式英语,并为适应未来留学生活中的繁重学业做好必要的准备。美国大学的很多作业都是以小论文的方式出现,良好的写作技必然会大大提高学习的效率。考虑到讲解部分可能涉及一些考生不认识的单词,我们做了一个词汇表,供学生参考。

**阅读分册对题解,也就是答案解析部分采取了特殊处理。**考虑到参加该项考试考生的不同需求以及阅读理解考试自身的特点,我们对题解部分做了中文翻译,并将其放在英文题解的后面,供考生在看英文题解有困难时使用。我们的建议是,无论是做对还是做错了题目,做完题应翻阅英文题解。题解给了我们一个很好地了解美国人思维方式的机会,应充分利用并加以体会。否则就没有将该套丛书利用彻底。

最后,预祝考生在准备出国留学的过程中辛勤付出的同时,能够在收获自己的梦想的道路迈上坚实的一步。



# 新SAT考试简介

## 什么是新SAT考试

SAT考试的英文全称是学术能力评估考试(Scholastic Assessment Test), 分为SATI和SATII两部分。2005年SAT更名为SAT REASONING TEST。几乎所有美国大学在本科入学申请的过程中, 都要求申请者提供SAT考试成绩。这就是为什么在美国, 参加SAT考试的考生会达到200多万; 这也是为什么时下流行的美国电视剧《绯闻女孩》会将这项考试也写到剧本里去。对于美国高中生来讲, 要想进入自己梦想中的大学, 不参加SAT考试是不行的, 考不出好的成绩, 也是不行的。剧中的Blair, Nate, Serena, Dan为了考个好的SAT成绩都疯狂地备考。对于立志去美国读大学的中国中学生来讲, SAT考试是一定要拿下来的考试, 就像托福考试一样重要。托福考试测试你的英语水平, 而SAT考试测试你的智力水平。

## 新SAT考试内容

登录该考试的官方网站[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) 可以了解到该考试的官方简介。SAT考试共含三项, 数学、阅读以及写作, 共计10个section(部分)。整个考试时间为3小时45分钟。具体内容见下表。

阅读理解	总计67道问题	共计70分钟
	19道句子填空题 48道篇章阅读理解题	2section各25分钟 1section20分钟
写作	总计49道问题+作文	共计60分钟
	18道句子改错题 25道句子改进题 6道段落改进题 1篇作文	2section各25分钟 1section10分钟
数学	总计54道问题	共计70分钟
	44道选择题 10道填空题	2section各25分钟 1section20分钟

此外还有一个不计分的试验性题目, 25分钟。可能是阅读理解、写作或者数学不定。

## 新SAT考试的评分体系

SAT的总分为2400分, 每个分项考试的分数在200~800之间, 成绩单上会报告写作、数学、阅读理解三项考试各自的分数。考试结束后的一个月到六周内, 考生本人和所申请的院校会收到考试成绩报告单。考生收到的分数是一个标准分。这个分数并不反映你实际在每项测试中做对的题目数量。标准分是考生答对的题目数, 减去答错的题目数的一个差值, 然后将结果转换成一个等级中的一个分数得出的。这个等级是你的成绩相对于参加这次考试的其他考生成绩的相对值。

## 注册考试

中国考生可以直接在College Board网站注册账户后，使用信用卡在网上支付考试费以及其他考试服务费。网站接受的信用卡有Master Card和Visa。国内的中国银行长城国际卡、招商国际卡等均可支付。SAT考试的费用是45美元，专业考试每科为9美元，外加专业考试基本费用20美元。国际考生还要支付26美元的附加费。考试结束后，考生将免费收到一份官方的成绩单，考试组织方还免费向4所大学寄送考生的成绩单。如果需要额外的寄送，则需要另外支付9美元/次。其他有关收费的信息，可以登陆College Board的网站查询。

## 发送成绩单

College Board现在提供电子发送和邮寄成绩单两种服务。在College Board网站注册账户后，可以免费发送电子成绩单，但是有些学校不接受这种方式。所以考生应该提前了解申请院校的具体要求。邮寄出的纸质成绩报告单会在College Board接受寄送请求后（通常需要一周的时间）的四个星期后自动送到。考生可以选择是否将以前的考试成绩一并送出，但是不能选择寄送写作、数学或是阅读理解的各项成绩。



# 编写理念

本书中相当一部分材料是基于College Hill学习方法而编写，这种方法我在教学实践中使用了15年之久。这种方法注重提高考生的推理技能，因此为准备参加SAT这类推理性考试的学生提供坚实的基础。这一方法遵循七条原则。

1. **好学生会下功夫理解思维运作的机理。**例如，我们应当知道，大脑在进化过程中，逐渐形成了自动解决某些特定问题的能力。我们能够自然而然地学会说话，学会做手势，但是我们不可能在没有指导的情况下学会写作。这是因为说话和做手势能帮助我们的祖先生存和繁衍，但是写作并不具备这些功能。因此，没有与生俱来的写作技能。写作是需要我们换一种思维方法的非自然过程，跟我们单纯的讲话不同。

2. **好学生会下功夫提高推理技能。**解决棘手问题时，我们使用不同的推理技能。通过训练这些技能可以得到提高，就像棒球手的投球技巧可以提升一样。这些推理技能包括概念化问题、分析问题、发现模式、处理思维图像、简化问题、回忆信息、运用逻辑推理的能力。好学生会下功夫提高这些技能，并关注如何运用这些技能解决棘手的问题。要写出一篇好文章，你必须学会分析你的读者、任务、文章、段落、句子、从句、短语和措词。这些不是天生具备的技能，因此需要进行有针对性的训练。

3. **好学生关注那些训练有素的写作专家们关注的问题。**学校教育很容易使你只顾取得高分，而不去关心真正的写作者应当关心的问题。一个好學生不应该只关心如何在SAT写作考试中拿到高分，也应该关心解决一位好的写作者需要解决的问题，如：如何才能写出值得人们阅读的好文章？怎样才能说服一位持相反观点的读者？怎样才能吸引他们的注意力？怎样分析一个不易理解的话题？

4. **好学生通过思维模式构建对某一学科的理解体系。**思维模式是一套相互关联的概念，就像机械装置一样在大脑中运行。你可以操控这些概念，检测假设、进行演绎。比如，“平衡比例概念”帮助学生理解如何操作等式。好的写作者懂得用思维模式打磨写作技艺。例如，作家们往往把段落概念当作旅程中的“踏脚石”，把例子和推理概念当作建筑的“地基”。

5. **好学生会抛弃不良的思维习惯。**我们写作时的坏习惯通常源于我们口语中的习惯。好的写作者懂得随意交谈与写一篇规范的文章之间的区别。我们要做不同的假设，并且遵循不同的规则。

6. **好学生不断地寻求新挑战。**生活会给你很多所谓的“捷径”。但是最好别走这些捷径。你选择了最有效的SAT写作训练方法，虽然可能并不轻松，但是你的路是正确的。

7. **好学生努力使世界变得更美好。**当然，在SAT写作考试中得到750分不会使这个世界变得更美好。但是在这个过程中你学到的技能，如果运用得当，就可能会达到这个效果。

在本书的学习过程中，我尽力不将这些原则一下子都灌输给你，而只是在必要的时候将有关原则融入学习材料。但是，在你的学习生涯中不时地想想这些原则会让你受益匪浅。

# Contents 目录

## Part I: Introduction 引言 I

### Lesson 1: The importance of good writing skills 良好写作技能的重要性 3

- Writing: a tool for success 3
- Why students are not being prepared for college writing 3
- Beware the pitfalls of academic-speak 3
- Beware the salespeople 4
- The real “secret” to acing the SAT essay 4

### Lesson 2: The SAT Writing SAT写作简介 5

- What does the SAT Writing test? 5
- What's on the SAT Writing? 5
- What is the experimental section? 6
- What will I be asked to write about on the essay? 6
- How is the essay scored? 6
- How will colleges use the SAT Writing score? 7
- Isn't it true that Ernest Hemingway would have failed the SAT essay? 7
- Don't the essay graders give scores based primarily on length and number of paragraphs? 7
- Will colleges see my SAT essay? 7
- How is the overall Writing score determined? 7
- Are some SATs easier than others? 8
- If I take the SAT, will I also have to take the SAT II: Writing? 8

## Part II: The Essay SAT短文写作 9

### Lesson 3: Lay the groundwork 基础性的准备 11

1. Know what the readers are looking for 11
2. Read good persuasive prose 11
3. Learn to read like a writer 12
4. Be specific 14
5. Prepare with Source Summaries 15
6. Practice 22
7. Know the instructions 22
8. Overcome perfectionism 22

### Lesson 4: Analyze the writing task 分析SAT写作任务 23

1. Give yourself time to think 23
2. Read the assignment carefully 23
3. Define your terms to show your point of view 23
4. Stay focused on the question 25



**Lesson 5: Gather your ideas 整理想法、观点 26**

1. Brainstorm examples before picking a thesis 26
2. Keep your mind open 26
3. Choose specific examples 26
4. Choose interesting examples 27
5. Choose manageable examples 27

**Lesson 6: Organize your essay 组织短文 29**

1. Craft your thesis 29
2. Write a manageable outline 30
3. Connect your ideas logically 31
4. Play devil's advocate 31

**Lesson 7: Write the essay 短文写作 34**

1. Use natural language 34
  2. Use strong verbs 34
  3. Write with personality and intelligence 37
  4. Use personal and concrete nouns 38
  5. Minimize jargon and slang 38
  6. Eliminate wordiness 40
  7. Minimize prepositional phrases 40
  8. Eliminate redundancy 40
  9. Don't state the obvious 41
  10. Eliminate clichés 41
  11. Connect your thoughts logically 43
  12. Vary your sentence structure and length wisely 43
  13. Eliminate sentences to nowhere 44
  14. Choose your words carefully 44
  15. Explain but don't overexplain 45
  16. Leave your reader thinking 48
  17. Don't tell us what you're doing—just do it 48
- Answer Key 49

**Lesson 8: Practice your essay writing skills SAT模拟写作练习 51**

1. Practice essays 51
2. Sample graded essays 66

**Part III: The Multiple-Choice Questions 多项选择题 73**

**Lesson 9: Improving sentences 句子改进题 75**

1. How to attack Improving Sentences questions 75
  2. Be careful 75
  3. All else being equal, shorter is better 76
  4. Check for dangles 76
  5. Watch out for extra problems 77
- Answer Key 79

**Lesson 10: Identifying sentence errors 识别错误题 80**

1. How to attack Identifying Sentence Errors questions 80
2. Make sure it's a legitimate mistake 80
3. How to attack tough Identify Sentence Errors questions 81
- Answer Key 83

**Lesson 11: Improving paragraphs 段落改进题 84**

1. How to attack Improving Paragraphs questions 84
2. Consider your attack options 85
- Answer Key 87

## **Part IV: The Fundamental Rules of Grammar for Writing and Editing** **写作和修改需要的基本语法规则 89**

**Interlude: Keeping perspective 正确认识一些语法问题 91**

1. Don't sweat the small stuff 91
2. Don't worry about *who* vs. *whom* 91
3. Don't worry about split infinitives 91
4. Don't worry about ending a sentence with a preposition 91
5. Don't worry about starting a sentence with *And*, *But*, or *Because* 92
6. Don't worry about starting sentences with adverbs like *Hopefully* or *Clearly* 92
7. Don't worry about possessive antecedents 93
8. Don't worry about *that* vs. *which* 93
9. Don't worry too much about *bad/badly* and *good/well* 94
10. Don't worry about disappearing *thats* 94
11. Don't worry about disappearing words, as long as they are implied by parallelism 94

**Lesson 12: The parts of speech 词性 95**

1. Words are what words do 95
2. Verbs—the sentence drivers 95
3. Nouns 96
4. Clauses 96
5. Pronouns 96
6. Prepositions 97
7. Prepositional phrases 97
8. Modifiers 97
9. Participles 98

**Lesson 13: Subject-verb agreement 主语与动词在人称、数上的一致 99**

1. Subject-verb agreement 99
2. Inverted sentences 99
3. Intervening words 99
4. Tricky subjects 100
5. Trimming sentences 102
6. Tips for improving your essay 104
7. Tips for the multiple-choice questions 104
- Answer Key 105



**Lesson 14: Parallelism 平行结构 106**

1. The law of parallelism 106
2. Infinitives and gerunds 106
3. Parallel constructions 107
4. Tip for improving your essay 108
5. Tip for the multiple-choice questions 108
- Answer Key 109

**Lesson 15: Comparison problems 比较结构 110**

1. Illogical comparisons 110
2. Check for countability: *fewer/less*, *number/amount*, and *many/much* 110
3. Check the number: *more/most*, *between/among*, and *-er/-est* 110
4. Number shift 111
5. Tip for improving your essay 112
6. Tip for the multiple-choice questions 112
- Answer Key 113

**Lesson 16: Pronoun problems 代词 114**

1. Pronoun-antecedent agreement 114
2. Missing or ambiguous antecedents 114
3. Pronoun consistency 115
4. Pronoun case 116
5. Subjective pronouns 116
6. Objective pronouns 116
7. Possessive pronouns 117
8. Reflexive pronouns 117
9. Tip for improving your essay 118
10. Tip for the multiple-choice questions 118
- Answer Key 119

**Lesson 17: Modifier problems 修饰语 120**

1. Dangling and misplaced participles 120
2. Other misplaced modifiers 122
3. Confusing adjectives and adverbs 124
4. Comparative adjectives and adverbs 124
5. Redundancy 125
6. Tip for improving your essay 126
7. Tip for the multiple-choice questions 126
- Answer Key 127

**Lesson 18: Tense and voice problems 时态和语态 129**

1. Tricky tenses 129
2. The perfect tenses 129
3. Verbs expressing ideas or works of art 130
4. The passive voice 132
5. Tip for improving your essay 132
6. Tips for the multiple-choice questions 132

Answer Key 133

**Lesson 19: Idiom problems 习语 134**

1. What is an idiom? 134
  2. Watch your prepositions 134
  3. Tip for improving your essay 134
  4. Tip for the multiple-choice questions 134
- Answer Key 136

**Lesson 20: Mood problems 语气 137**

1. The subjunctive mood 137
  2. Don't overdo it 137
  3. Watch your *ifs* 137
  4. Tip for improving your essay 138
  5. Tip for the multiple-choice questions 138
- Answer Key 139

**Lesson 21: Diction problems 措词 140**

1. What is a diction error? 140
  2. Common diction errors 140
  3. Tip for improving your essay 142
  4. Tip for the multiple-choice questions 142
- Answer Key 143

**Lesson 22: Irregular verbs 不规则动词 144**

1. Past participles 144
  2. Common irregular verbs 144
  3. Tip for improving your essay 146
  4. Tip for the multiple-choice questions 146
- Answer Key 146

**Lesson 23: Awkwardness and coordination 句子的协调 147**

1. Coordinating ideas 147
  2. Run-on sentences 147
  3. Using colons and semicolons 148
  4. Tips for improving your essay 148
  5. Tips for the multiple-choice questions 148
- Answer Key 150

**Part V: Three Practice Tests 全真模拟试题 151**

**Practice Test I 全真模拟试题1 153**

- Practice Test I Answer Key 168
- Score Conversion Table 169
- Practice Test I—Sample Essays 170
- Practice Test I Detailed Answer Key 173



**Practice Test 2 全真模拟试题2 177**

Practice Test 2 Answer Key 192

Score Conversion Table 193

Practice Test 2—Sample Essays 194

Practice Test 2 Detailed Answer Key 197

**Practice Test 3 全真模拟试题3 201**

Practice Test 3 Answer Key 216

Score Conversion Table 217

Practice Test 3—Sample Essays 218

Practice Test 3 Detailed Answer Key 221

**Vocabulary 词汇表 225**

# **Part I**

## **Introduction 引言**

**Lesson 1—The importance of good writing skills**

良好写作技能的重要性

**Lesson 2—The SAT Writing SAT写作简介**



## Lesson 1—The importance of good writing skills 良好写作技能的重要性

### Writing: a tool for success

The ability to write well is perhaps the most important learnable skill in academics and business.

In a 2004 report by the National Commission on Writing,<sup>1</sup> executives at 102 major American companies employing 8 million people estimated that these companies spend over 3 billion dollars annually correcting writing deficiencies. “People unable to express themselves clearly in writing limit their opportunities,” said Bob Kerrey, former U.S. senator, president of the New School University, and chairman of the Commission. The survey also concluded that “people who cannot write and communicate clearly will not be hired and are unlikely to last long enough to be considered for promotion.” According to Joseph M. Tucci, president and CEO of EMC Corporation, “one might think that [because of technologies like grammar and spell checkers] the value of fundamental writing skills has diminished in the workplace, [but actually] the need to write clearly and quickly has never been more important than in today’s highly competitive, technology-driven global economy.”

Colleges are no less adamant about the importance of good writing skills. In a 2003 College Board survey,<sup>2</sup> 1,044 college professors rated persuasive writing as the “most important” academic skill and as the “most often assigned” means of evaluating students. However, this survey also indicated that high school students were not being adequately prepared for the challenges of college writing. College professors consistently rated their students’ writing skills substantially lower than high school teachers did, and assigned substantially more essays than did high school teachers, who gave more multiple-choice tests. Furthermore, although teachers and professors rated practically all of the grammar and usage skills included on the survey high in importance, the survey indicated that high school classroom work did not focus on these skills.

Good writing ability, it seems, is a precious commodity. It is not surprising, then, that writing has now become a very important part of the SAT. In a College Board survey, 74% of college admissions officers said that they would use the SAT Writing in their admissions decisions, and 68% said that they would download and read their applicants’ essays.

### Why students are not being prepared for college writing

If business executives and college professors value writing skills so highly, why don’t high schools focus more intensely on teaching good expository writing skills? There seem to be several reasons. First, teaching writing skills is demanding and time-consuming. To do it well, teachers must first master the difficult art of clear and cogent writing themselves. Then they must teach this art to their students. But most high school English teachers are responsible for more than 100 students at a time, each of whom thinks and writes differently and so needs individualized instruction. Ever try to give useful feedback on 100 essays? It’s enormously taxing, if it’s possible at all. Second, many high school English teachers consider themselves more teachers of literature than teachers of writing and grammar. They prefer exploring the mind of Holden Caulfield to exploring the techniques of cogent writing. It’s hard to blame them; Holden is a fun guy. Third, a small minority of teachers actually work against the goal of teaching good expository writing skills.

### Beware the pitfalls of academic-speak

Ironically, English teachers include not only some of the greatest champions of clear persuasive writing, but also some of its greatest enemies. Some of my best friends—like me—are English teachers, but a small minority of us tend to value empty and flowery writing over clear and logical writing. They prefer abstract, vague, and intellectual-sounding language to straightforward expression, and assume that if an essay is hard to decipher, it must contain profound ideas. Smart students usually figure out how to please such teachers; they learn to write floridly to get a good grade. On the SAT, however, you don’t want to confuse pompous writing with good writing.

This situation arises when teachers confuse expository writing with literature. The purpose of literature—novels, stories, and poems—is to expand human experience by evoking emotions and thoughts in the reader through imagery and other suggestive literary devices. The purpose of expository writing, on the other hand, is to instruct through clear and logical prose. Good expository writing is always precise, but good literature is often deliberately imprecise.

<sup>1</sup> Writing: A Ticket to Work...or a Ticket Out, *Report of the National Commission on Writing*, September 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Curriculum Survey on Reading and Writing, found at [www.collegeboard.com/highered/ra/sat/sat\\_research.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/highered/ra/sat/sat_research.html).



Don't try to make ideas seem more profound than they are; pretensions serve no good purpose in persuasive writing. Denis Dutton, editor of *Arts and Letters Daily*, sponsors an annual Bad Writing Contest in which he solicits published prose that epitomizes pompous and deliberately vague academic-speak. Here is an example.

This book was instigated by the Harvard Core Curriculum Report in 1978 and was intended to respond to what I took to be an ominous educational reform initiative that, without naming it, would delegitimize the decisive, if spontaneous, disclosure of the complicity of liberal American institutions of higher learning with the state's brutal conduct of the war in Vietnam and the consequent call for opening the university to meet the demands by hitherto marginalized constituencies of American society for enfranchisement.

—William Spanos, *The End of Education: Toward Posthumanism*

Read this sentence over until you can decipher it. Be patient; it may take a few days. Surprisingly, this is not a casual first draft. It is the final draft of the first sentence of a book written by an English professor. Good writers craft their first sentences carefully to draw readers in. This sentence, it seems, has been crafted to keep readers out, or at least to make them feel less brilliant than the author. Writers of such sentences often defend them by saying that profound ideas require dense and difficult language. Untrue. Let me offer this revision.

The Harvard Core Curriculum Report of 1978 attempted to undermine the movement to reveal how American universities contributed to atrocities in Vietnam, as well as the consequent movement to give disenfranchised minorities more power in American universities. This ominous report deserves a critical response.

This revision conveys all of the relevant ideas lurking in the original sentence, but makes them accessible to every intelligent reader. No thoughtful person can claim that the first version conveys more subtle reasoning than the second. It doesn't. It is merely more pompous and vague.

This example, and perhaps your own experience with some English teachers, might lead you to believe that clear writing is not valued in college. Fortunately, only a small minority of professors value pompous writing more than clear and cogent writing. Simply know that this minority is out there, and avoid such professors if you can. Even more fortunately, the SAT essay graders are trained to give higher marks to clear writing than to pompous writing.

Good persuasive writing is clear, instructive, and respectful conversation, not an opportunity to show off. The teachers who grade SAT essays are trained to reward clear and logical writing, not vague and pompous writing.

### **Beware the salespeople**

There are a lot of people with different opinions of what will get you a good score on the SAT essay. Some say that you must write according to a certain "formula," cite Shakespeare, avoid personal examples, or use big SAT words. When you hear such things, be careful. Sometimes the opinion comes from someone selling a test-prep program.

In my 15 years of preparing hundreds of students to take the SAT Writing, I have learned to be very skeptical of simple-sounding formulas. The SAT is a reasoning test. If you are serious about improving your SAT Writing score, learn to think like a writer. My students have had a good deal of success with this approach, improving their scores, on average, over 115 points on the Writing SAT alone. Success on the SAT is not simply a matter of memorizing some tricks.

### **The real "secret" to acing the SAT essay**

Those who score highest on the SAT Writing are those who have learned to think and write clearly, logically, and creatively. You can't become a millionaire by swallowing a pill, and you can't ace the SAT just by memorizing a formula for writing an essay. Things that sound too good to be true usually are. But that doesn't mean that writing a good essay is terribly difficult. You simply have to learn to think a bit more like a good writer.

If you learn the craft of gathering, analyzing, and expressing your thoughts in writing, you will enjoy a great deal more success in college and beyond. Oh, and you'll ace the SAT Writing.