

Dr. Perelman's SAT Essay Writing Tips

“The SAT essay is a completely artificial and unnatural piece of writing.” –Les Perelman

1. Before the test, prepare two historical biographies and two works of literature as examples. If the examples don't fit, change them so they do. Details count; factual accuracy doesn't.
2. When doing the essay portion of the test, ignore the short reading. Instead, write you essay responding to the specific prompt, such as: “Do memories hinder or help people in their effort to learn from the past and succeed in the present?” Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on the issue. Support you position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experiences, or observations.
3. Fill both pages. No matter what anyone says to you, length matters.
4. Take one side of the prompt question or the other. Don't try to equivocate or be complex.
5. Write a five-paragraph essay with a topic sentence as the first sentence of each paragraph.
 - a. Start with a short introductory paragraph with a specific thesis sentence that directly addresses the question in the prompt.
 - b. Now write a first development paragraph. Use your best example.
 - c. Now write a second development paragraph. Put in lots of detail.
 - d. Now write a third development paragraph. Put in lots of detail.
 - e. Conclusion. Restate the thesis and include a quotation.
6. Use “plethora” and “myriad” along with other “big” words. Don't be afraid that you are using the words incorrectly. Use of “big” words counts!
7. Have two or three quotation ready. Insert one in the concluding paragraph even if it isn't really relevant to your thesis or your argument. My favorite is FDR's, “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

Remember, the readers who grade these essays have to read between 20 – 30 essays per hour in four-hour blocks.