**Tips for the SAT Writing Test**

Here are five SAT essay secrets (ok, they're not *that* secret) to help you earn a great score:

**Keep It Tidy**

Handwriting is becoming a lost art. Unfortunately, this is one occasion where your skill with a pencil matters.

Graders read tons of essays each day. If they cannot decipher your script, they will lower your score. Do yourself a favor and write legibly.

**Size Does Matter**

You know the maxim "quality not quantity?" Well, ETS hasn't heard that one. Their graders like long essays. There are 45 lines to fill–get as close to that as possible.

But ramblers beware: your essay should end when the page does. You won't get an extra sheet of paper!

**(Indented) Paragraphs Are Your Friend**

Remember the basic essay structure you learned in school: introductory paragraph, body paragraphs and a conclusion? The graders love it!

Make sure your introduction includes a thesis that clearly states the main argument of your essay. Next, include two to three paragraphs that support your thesis. Finally, write a conclusion that briefly summarizes your points. Indent your paragraphs!

Follow this format and graders will see your essay as logical and complete.

**For Example…**

Use your body paragraphs to back up your thesis statement *by citing specific examples*. You can draw on your literature and history classes for inspiration. You can even use examples from your own life. Don't waste time worrying whether you've found the perfect examples. Just make sure they support your thesis.

**Use Big Words (Yes, We're Serious)**

A few well–placed big words can have a strong impact on the graders of your SAT essay. We suggest a light peppering in the introduction or conclusion; they might be lost in the body. Don't go overboard, and don't misuse a word!

**Tips for Taking the SAT**

* Expect easy questions at the beginning of each set of sentence completion questions and math questions.
* Earn as many points as you can on easy questions (For each correct answer you receive one point, no matter how hard or easy the question is).
* You don’t have to answer every question. You can do well even if you omit some questions.
* Work Steadily. Don’t waste time on a question that’s too hard for you. If you can’t answer the question, mark it in your test book and go on. You can go back to it later on if you have time.
* Mark your answers in the correct row of ovals on the answer sheet. Be especially careful if you skip questions.
* Try guessing. When you can, eliminate at least one answer to a multiple-choice question.

**About guessing**

Educated guessing means guessing an answer whenever one or more of the choices can be eliminated as definitely wrong. Encourage students to use educated guessing.

Because ¼ of a point is deducted for a wrong answer to multiple-choice questions, random guessing is not recommended. Advise students to leave that question blank and move on to the next one.

*\* Students can earn an above-average score by getting only half the questions right and omitting answers for the rest of the questions.*