



Introduction

The TestPrepSHSAT Advantage

1. **Learn the SHSAT -- and SAT and PSAT -- test design.** The new SHSAT is designed around the common core curriculum much like the new SAT. Our course provides a unique opportunity for 6th to 9th graders to not only study for the SHSAT but to get a head start on successful SAT preparation. Standardized exams like the SHSAT or SAT are not like typical classroom exams, and they often do not reward the same approaches. Students need to understand the test design and learn the underlying rules, an aspect of test preparation too often overlooked.
2. **Study the core subject material in math and English Language Arts (ELA) from dozens of skill-based lessons.** Many SHSAT preparation books essentially provide only exams, which is not helpful for the vast majority of students who need to learn more about the topics covered on the SHSAT. In addition to teaching you about the test design, the lessons in this book cover the subject material that underlies the SHSAT. Furthermore, our online course supplement has the deepest repository of math and ELA lessons available for the SHSAT to assist students of any level including hundreds of video and written lessons that cover subject material from the fundamentals up through the majority of required SAT topics.
3. **Practice, Practice, Practice -- Quality not just Quantity.**
 - a. **Quality** - Too many prep books advertise their quantity of problems, but few address the far more important issue of quality. We believe every exam problem should provide more than a question and answer. Our walkthroughs review the different methods to solve SHSAT and SAT problems including the most effective approach, a thorough review of wrong answer choices and typical test design traps, and related strategies to optimize student performance.
 - b. **Quantity** - We have not forgotten that a great deal of practice is a must for successful preparation. Included in this book are two real full-length SHSAT practice exams plus up to 1,000 additional mini-exam and exercise problems all organized for effective learning. Most lessons are followed by targeted skill practice and then SHSAT level problems to develop a student's mastery of the exam.

What is the new SHSAT exam and why should I prepare for it?

Any student hoping to gain admission to a specialized high school should prepare for the SHSAT. Perhaps more importantly, 6th to 9th graders everywhere can get a head start on the new SAT from this SHSAT course. This course might be the best way for middle school students to learn SAT design and strategy with age-appropriate material.

The SHSAT Math and English Language Arts (ELA) exam is a 3-hour standardized admission exam given each fall toward the end of October to nearly 30,000 8th and 9th-grade students in New York City seeking to gain admission to one of nine specialized high schools. Each of these specialized high schools offers a challenging curriculum and top-tier education tuition-free to motivated New York City students who do well on the exam. Similar education opportunities in private schools can frequently cost \$20,000 or more annually.

The new SAT and new SHSAT are more alike than ever. As a result, even if you are from Nebraska and a specialized high school is not your goal, any future college-bound 6th to 9th grader has a lot to gain from this preparation course. The SHSAT exam changed for the calendar year 2017 to align the exam closer to skills taught in the classroom as part of the common core curriculum. One significant change included replacing the old 45 question verbal exam with the new 57 question ELA exam -- only 47 questions are graded, and ten unmarked questions will be used to field-test future changes to the exam format. Old scrambled paragraph and logical reasoning sections were eliminated in favor of 20 revise-edit questions that align more closely with the writing and language common core -- and also the SAT. Additionally, the number of reading questions increased to 37 questions and six passages with approximately six questions each. The non-fiction only passage topics cover history, anthropology/sociology, the arts, science, and biographies, but that may change in the future to include literary and other fictional topics. The total exam time was extended to 90 minutes, so students have approximately 90 seconds to answer each question, the same as before the changes. Reading, which was already the most significant part of the SHSAT verbal exam, is even a larger fraction of the new SHSAT as a result of the changes. In all, these changes make the SHSAT essentially the new SAT Junior -- an extremely useful exam for learning about the SAT. The following course will start by focusing on the crucial SHSAT Reading exam section. Reading, unlike math and language(grammar), does not depend on various rules and theorems. It is less dependent on previously learned content and relies only on the ability to read and understand American English, so it is a great place to learn the rules of the standardized exam. The course continues with writing and language and finally math. The lessons in this course will directly translate to improved PSAT and SAT scores and develop a student's understanding of the unique design and features of the SAT. For the first time, students at the middle school level can effectively learn the SAT through high-quality SHSAT preparation without being constrained by the lack of exposure to high school level subject material. The abbreviation SHSAT throughout also refers to SAT and PSAT unless otherwise stated.

Understanding the exam is instrumental to effective preparation

Most preparation books overlook the benefits of understanding the design of standardized tests, yet it is a key component to successful preparation. For example, standardized reading exams like the SHSAT or SAT are not like a typical classroom English course that rewards creativity and unique insights. The design of standardized, multiple-choice reading exams requires an objective approach. Test designers carefully develop and review each question according to specific rules. There must be only one correct answer, and the exam cannot be designed to leave any uncertainty as to the correct answer. Subjective insights cannot call into question one answer choice versus another. Otherwise, thousands of students each year would call into question the validity of the exam. As a result, students must often suppress their inclinations, honed over many years of reading and writing class, to make subjective interpretations and sometimes draw seemingly reasonable judgments. Instead, students must develop a different set of analytical skills covered throughout this course geared toward excelling at the "evidence-based reading" on the SHSAT, PSAT, and SAT exams -- and similar approaches targeted at writing and language and math.

How can I make the most of this course?

Students of different experience levels with the SHSAT may choose to follow the course in different ways -- a person with little exposure to the SHSAT might choose to read and practice everything in order, while a student with more experience might skip directly to certain chapters. Regardless of your experience level, this course offers something for you. Let us tailor your study program for you and answer questions along the

way to help you reach your maximum potential. The SHSATAcademy Advantage Learning Program is affordable and designed after successful programs like to Kumon to help students advance at their own pace and learn for themselves. The common attribute of successful test takers will be hard work and smart study. We want to keep you focused on doing both.

The main reason for mistakes on the SHSAT, PSAT, and SAT

SHSAT mistakes very often result from reasons other than lack of prior knowledge in the subject matter, and that is perhaps more prevalent for reading where prior subject knowledge is not critical in the same way it is on the math exam. Most students think good grades in algebra, geometry, or English class will necessarily translate to a high SHSAT math or ELA score. That is not necessarily true. While subject knowledge is an essential requirement, it is not sufficient. Prior exposure to courses like algebra and geometry are a huge plus in math, for example. Both topics comprise a large part of the math test, and there is a chasm between students who have seen these courses early enough to gain familiarity and those who have not seen the material or are currently taking such courses when the SHSAT exam is given in late October in the 8th grade. If this is an issue for you, consider planning and preparing early for the SHSAT. That said, even among students with excellent grades and top-level state math and ELA exams scores, only about half the test takers will gain admission.

The SHSAT -- and SAT and PSAT for that matter -- ask questions in strange ways. Questions often repeat topics and phrase prompts in ways students are not used to seeing in their classroom setting. Accurately diagnosing what the question prompt is asking is a large part of the battle. Moreover, questions are written in ways that require test takers pay extra careful attention to detail. Every word is important, and a loss of focus will result in mistakes that often separate two students who both have a strong grasp of the subject matter. The following typical reasons for mistakes on the SHSAT explain why student results do not always correlate with school grades. One or two reasons may come as a surprise. In either case, this course will teach each student how to evaluate their results and weaknesses to improve their score on the SHSAT.

TOP 5 REASONS FOR MISTAKES:

1. **Subject-Matter Knowledge** - does not know the subject matter or lacks confidence in the procedures to solve
2. **Time pressure** - student runs out of time before finishing
3. **Confused by Question Prompt** - cannot identify what the question is about
4. **Misses Details** - did not pay attention to a particular word or detail in the prompt or answer choice
5. **Calculation Errors** - student made an execution error while solving

What tests are best for practice?

In the case of the SHSAT and SAT alike, questions are written according to specific rules and patterns, and the ability to excel on the exam depends on learning to take advantage of these rules and procedures. Many of the difficulties students have on the SHSAT result from poor test-taking skills, not poor subject-matter knowledge. Any material that breaks the rules of the real test will encourage bad habits or prevent good habits from developing. Even "harder" questions will not help unless they are guaranteed to follow the same rules, so don't assume harder questions will better prepare you for the actual test. Official sources are the best, and anyone who states otherwise is probably trying to sell you something you probably should not buy.