

What score would you like to get on the SAT Math Test?

You'd be surprised to learn that one important way to IMPROVE your math score is to answer FEWER questions!

Every SAT Math test consists of fifty-four questions. Typically, about fifteen of these are easy, about twenty-eight are medium, and about nine are hard, and they are arranged in a way similar to what is shown below.

Here is a typical pattern for the three math sections:

Sec. 2			Sec. 4						Sec. 8		
			Multiple Choice			Grid-In					
E	M	H	E	M	H	E	M	H	E	M	H
1-6	7-17	18-20	1-4	5-7	8	9-10	11-15	16-18	1-5	6-14	15-16

Question numbers

It is important to remember that the multiple choice questions on the test are scored in such a way that an incorrect answer is worse than no answer at all. Believe it or not, for a math score of 500 you need to get only about thirty (56%) of the questions correct; to get a 600 you need only about thirty-seven correct answers (69%). The trick is to keep *down* the number of questions you get wrong! How can you do this?

Do the "math": the total number of easy and medium questions is about forty-three. If you want to get a 500, you never even have to look at the hard questions, or even the last few medium questions in each set. (Remember, you need only about thirty correct answers!). For a 600 you still need only about thirty-seven correct answers, so you should answer all of the easy questions, try all of the medium ones, leave blank the medium ones you are really unsure of, and *never even read* the hard ones! This strategy has two advantages:

1. You avoid answering the questions you are most likely to get wrong anyway.
2. You spend more time on each of the questions you have a good chance of getting correct.

Look at these results for Dave, Allison, and Manuel. (The names have been changed to protect the guilty!)

	Dave	Allison	Manuel
Total Correct	34	34	34
Total Incorrect	20	10	2
Total Left Blank	0	10	18
Raw Score	29	32	34
Scaled Score	540	560	580



Each of the students got thirty-four questions correct, but look at the differences among their scores! What's the deal?

Dave tried all of the problems and answered every one. Allison skipped all of the hard questions (How did she know which ones they were? --- Look at the first chart!) and answered all but one of the questions she worked on, even when she was rather uncertain about the answers. Manuel skipped all the hard ones, too, but he *also* left nine medium questions blank because he was unsure how to do them. Way to go, Manuel!

Bonus tip: Unlike the multiple choice questions, there is *no penalty* for wrong answers on the "grid-ins", so *always* put an answer for every one of these, even if you haven't read the question. You've got nothing to lose!

