

**Prompt:**

Most American colleges and universities say that the SAT is an important factor in making decisions for admissions because they offer a standardized and accurate way of looking at student performance across the country. These colleges claim that given grading standards in different high schools, the SAT provide what they see as a fair way of assessing student performance through a common assessment. Others argue that these standardized tests should not be used in college admissions for one or more of the following reasons: they are inherently inaccurate; they are biased against minorities and lower socioeconomic groups; they are irrelevant to university-level work and to real life situations.

In two weeks, three admissions representatives from Stanford University, San Jose State University, and Foothill College will be here to listen to your opinions on whether or not the SAT should be abolished as admissions criteria.

Where do you stand?

You will individually write a 1-page editorial discussing where you stand, which may be published in the school or local newspaper. You are encouraged to use this editorial to aid you in talking to the college admissions representatives.

**MY ESSAY, FOLLOWED BY TASK ANALYSIS**

**These are the opening paragraphs of my editorial. Highlighted segments are discussed in task analysis.**

The SAT should no longer be used as an admissions criterion in college admissions. It is outdated, inadequate, and inefficient. In fact, what it does do efficiently is to needlessly complicate the admissions process, making it one more focused on high stakes testing which is more reflective of students' socioeconomic backgrounds than it is of their academic prowess or potential.

While some data has indicated that SAT scores positively correlate with freshman year of college GPA, the data has yet to be properly analyzed for potential other causes for this correlation. Correlation does not ever immediately imply direct causation, and a range of other factors could be at work here. For example, various studies have shown that SAT scores are higher for higher-income groups and for those whose parents have more education. This is a direct connection between data. Now, if those with higher SAT scores have more financial resources available to them and the resources of their own families as well-versed members of academia, then perhaps this could be the cause of the high freshman GPA. The SAT score would then merely be correlated and not a cause, itself a direct effect of other factors. These other factors are not insignificant: they reveal deep educational inequities across class and race, but of course, this is par for the course with the SAT. The average scores across race reveal

serious gaps in achievement: White students score averages of 527 on Reading, 536 on Math, and 515 on Writing. In contrast, Black students score averages of 428 on Reading, 428 on Math, and 417 on Writing and the score ranges for Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Other Latinos are all far below 500. Some may argue that these differences result from inequities within the public schooling system that provides inadequate education and resources to minorities, and they would be right. But, this does not exempt the SAT from blame.

According to my interpretation of the data provided, the SAT cannot be definitively seen as predictive of college success; high SAT scores may not be so much a cause of college success as much as a fellow effect of socioeconomic factors, which plenty of data supports. The College Board claims that the SAT “lets you show colleges what you know and how well you can apply that knowledge,” but their range of how you can apply that knowledge is limited to bubbling in answers and writing in a timed, artificial way. So the only thing the SAT appears to effectively do is to short-change those in lower socioeconomic brackets by being an “equal” measure in inequitable educational circumstances. It is perhaps not a surprise that the results play out so sharply across class lines when the test prep industry makes more than \$1 billion dollars per year. As Michael Figueroa, Reed Bobroff, Olivia Gatwood, and Eva Crespin powerfully recite in their spoken word poem, “Love Letter to Albuquerque Public Schools,” “Private corporations make money off our low scores. / Their salaries are boosted from ignorance. / They sit on a pedestal of a trust fund and fancy degrees. / These companies teach us what to think, / neo-slaves, bolted to a machine / that grinds and spits their money out.”

### Task Analysis

What?	Why?	Demands of the Task
1. I began by rereading my prompt.	Even though I wrote the prompt myself, I wanted to remind myself of the requirements so I could structure my writing accordingly. In this case, I knew to write it like an editorial that would have some good speaking points since it would be later used to help me publically present.	Knowing how to carefully read a prompt and use its directions as the basis for structure of writing; understanding what an editorial looks like and how to write one; knowing how to create writing that could also work effectively when spoken aloud.
2. I did a quick skim-survey of my texts.	This helped me remember important details from the texts so that I could later use them in my writing. It is a technique I have used in college with notes on texts before writing papers because it helps the material stay fresh in my mind.	Knowing how to skim effectively; knowing how to mentally bookmark pieces of information for later use.

<p>3. I chose a side.</p>	<p>I knew that it would be important to decide what I would argue for before I began writing because this would determine what texts I would be using and of course, what subclaims I would make to support the larger argument. I debated between the two, but decided to choose the one I actually agreed with.</p>	<p>Knowing how to decide between opinions and to choose a definitive topic; understanding how to choose texts to support argument; knowing how to create subclaims and recognizing which ones would be both relevant and helpful to my main argument.</p>
<p>4. “The SAT should no longer be used as an admissions criterion in college admissions. It is outdated, inadequate, and inefficient.”</p>	<p>I was debating whether or not to open with a quote from one of my supporting sources—one of my favorite techniques of paper-writing in college—or to begin with a simple assertion of my claim. My experiences with debating in class and persuasive papers—as well as more casual arguments—have taught me that beginning with a concise claim is often compelling and useful. I also use the “rule of three” in the second sentence because a writing teacher once taught me that lists of three are for whatever reason an important rhetorical strategy, which lend rhythm and gravity to writing and speech.</p>	<p>Knowing how to open with a claim; knowing how to write a simple and concise claim; understanding how to use “the rule of three.”</p>
<p>5. “Correlation does not ever immediately imply direct causation, and a range of other factors could be at work here.”</p>	<p>Honestly, a lot of the data used to purport that the SAT predicts freshman year GPA or any other sort of success is really poorly done, something I know through having just a rudimentary understanding of statistics and by having had a master’s in statistics student at Stanford look over my data. I also use a fairly well-known claim outside of the statistics world—“correlation does not imply causation”—to reveal</p>	<p>Basic understanding of statistics is needed; knowing how to then use that understanding to critique other data analyses; using well-known and accepted claims to contradict other claims.</p>

	the incompetence of the data analysis which claims to prove the connection between high SAT scores and later success.	
6. “Now, if those with higher SAT scores have more financial resources available to them and the resources of their own families as well-versed members of academia, then perhaps this could be the cause of the high freshman GPA. The SAT score would then merely be correlated and not a cause, itself a direct effect of other factors.”	Now that I have made my earlier claim, I want to show the implications of this claim. That is what I am doing here, drawing out the effects of my subclaim towards a plausible conclusion that would support my main argument.	Again, understanding of data analysis is needed; knowing how to show concrete effects of claim; knowing how to connect subclaim to main argument.
7. “White students score averages of 527 on Reading, 536 on Math, and 515 on Writing. In contrast, Black students score averages of 428 on Reading, 428 on Math, and 417 on Writing and the score ranges for Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Other Latinos are all far below 500.”	Pure data can be an excellent tool in argumentation because it does not work as an argument itself and therefore cannot be contradicted. Rather, it works to support claims and that is why I brought it in here.	Knowing how to select relevant information from texts; knowing how to use data to support arguments.
8. “The College Board claims that the SAT ‘lets you show colleges what you know and how well you can apply that knowledge,’ but their range of how you can apply that knowledge is limited to bubbling in answers and writing in a timed, artificial way. “	One of the most effective ways of arguing happens when you take the words of whom you are arguing against and then use them to support your claim. This is a variation of that: the College Board’s words do not support my claim; they would in fact contradict it. But I reveal that reality contradicts the College Board’s claim by using persuasive language.	Knowing how to use persuasive language; knowing how to selectively cite opposing sources.
9. “It is perhaps not a surprise that the results play out so sharply across class lines when the test prep industry makes more than \$1 billion dollars per year. As Michael	I chose to pair together raw data with a poem because they make a fitting match in argument. Again, the data itself is not an argument and thus cannot be contradicted;	Knowing how to use raw data to support your claims; knowing how to read and interpret a poem; knowing how to make intertextual connections across relevant

<p>Figuroa, Reed Bobroff, Olivia Gatwood, and Eva Crespín powerfully recite in their spoken word poem, ‘Love Letter to Albuquerque Public Schools,’ ‘Private corporations make money off our low scores. / Their salaries are boosted from ignorance. / They sit on a pedestal of a trust fund and fancy degrees. / These companies teach us what to think, / neo-slaves, bolted to a machine / that grinds and spits their money out.’”</p>	<p>the poem is what extends the data into an argument: that companies that provide standardized testing devalue students’ knowledge for a profit. The poem is itself a type of argument that cannot be directly contradicted: its claims can, but the lived experiences of those who speak the poem cannot be. You can disagree with someone’s claim, but you cannot deny someone’s lived experiences. Thus, the mix of data and poetry create a fierce argument.</p>	<p>excerpts of text; understanding how poems function as argument.</p>
<p>10. I do a final skim proofread to check for grammar, punctuation, and fluidity of argument.</p>	<p>I adhere to the mantra of “Write first; edit later.” It helps me get more work done faster without the pressure of having to get it perfect the first time around. Rereading has consistently help me correct for small mistakes and also to create more elegant and less cluttered writing.</p>	<p>Knowing the guidelines of grammar and punctuation for Standard American English; knowing what distinguishes awkward wording from elegant wording; knowing how to create and edit for fluid arguments—arguments in which claims flow from one another and all of the information transitions well, is relevant, and connected.</p>