Rhode Island State Assessment Program

Rhode Island PSAT and SAT Achievement Level Descriptors
for Evidence-Based Reading and Writing

The Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (ERW) section of the redesigned SAT measures how well students demonstrate college and career readiness and how well students are performing relative to state-adopted college and career readiness ELA/literacy content standards. The ERW section of the SAT is designed to measure the attainment of essential ELA/literacy outcomes closely associated with college and career readiness and success as established by the best available evidence regarding necessary prerequisites for effective postsecondary entry without remediation. The ERW section is composed of two tests: (1) Reading and (2) Writing and Language.

The SAT **Reading Test** focuses on the skills and knowledge needed to demonstrate reading comprehension across a range of content areas, including US and world literature, history/social studies, and science passages; in passages of varying text types, including arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives; in single and paired passages; in passages accompanied by one or more informational graphics, such as tables, graphs, and charts; and in passages across a defined range of text complexity from early high school to postsecondary-entry levels. The SAT **Writing and Language Test** focuses on a range of revision and editing skills performed in the context of multiparagraph passages in a variety of content areas, including history/social studies, the humanities, and science, as well as passages on career-related topics; passages of varying text types, including arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and nonfiction narratives; passages accompanied by one or more informational graphics, such as tables, graphs, and charts; and passages across a defined range of text complexity from early high school to postsecondary-entry levels. The domain descriptions found in tables 3 (Reading) and 4 (Writing and Language) offer more detail on the specific skills and knowledge consistently assessed on each of the two tests.

In the course of demonstrating their reading, writing, language, and reasoning achievement, students demonstrate achievement of skills and knowledge associated with four **subscores** and two **cross-test scores**.

Subscores

- *Command of Evidence.* The Command of Evidence (CoE) subscore is derived from selected test questions on both the Reading and the Writing and Language Tests. Students must demonstrate a range of related skills and knowledge, including the developed abilities to cite textual evidence (e.g., determining the best textual evidence for the answer to another question), analyze the use of evidence in arguments, and interpret data expressed quantitatively (Reading Test) and to improve the topic development of text by revising main ideas, improving support, sharpening focus, and using data from informational graphics (Writing and Language Test).
- *Words in Context.* The Words in Context (WiC) subscore is derived from selected test questions on both the Reading and the Writing and Language Tests. Students must demonstrate the developed abilities to determine word/phrase meanings in context and analyze word choice rhetorically (Reading Test) and to use language precisely and concisely, maintain or enhance style and tone, and improve syntax (Writing and Language Test).

- *Expression of Ideas.* The Expression of Ideas (EoI) subscore is derived from selected test questions on the Writing and Language Test. Students must demonstrate the developed abilities to improve the topic development, organization, and rhetorical language use in text.
- *Standard English Conventions.* The Standard English Conventions (SEC) subscore is derived from selected test questions on the Writing and Language Test. Students must demonstrate the developed ability to observe the conventions of Standard Written English sentence structure, usage, and punctuation.

Cross-Test Scores

- *Analysis in History/Social Studies.* The Analysis in History/Social Studies cross-test score is derived from selected test questions on the Reading, Writing and Language, and Math Tests. Students must demonstrate the developed abilities to analyze texts and make or enhance meaning in the history/social studies content area (Reading Test; Writing and Language Test) and to perform tasks grounded in history/social studies contexts (Math Test).
- *Analysis in Science.* The Analysis in Science cross-test score is derived from selected test questions on the Reading, Writing and Language, and Math Tests. Students must demonstrate the developed abilities to analyze texts and make or enhance meaning in the science content area (Reading Test; Writing and Language Test) and to perform tasks grounded in science contexts (Math Test).
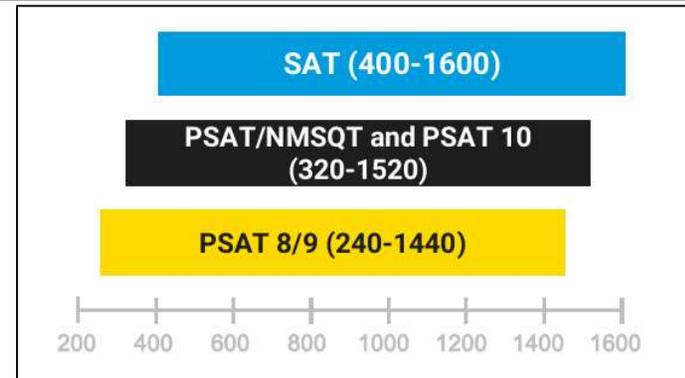
The Evidence-Based Reading and Writing Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) are designed to describe college and career readiness on the SAT. The achievement level descriptors are text descriptions of the fundamental skills and knowledge demonstrated by students in each category of achievement.

PSAT-10 Achievement Level Descriptors
Grade 10: Evidence-Based Reading and Writing

Achievement Level 4: Exceeding Expectations	Achievement Level 3: Meeting Expectations	Achievement Level 2: Partially Meeting Expectations	Achievement Level 1: Not Meeting Expectations
Score Range: 590-760	Score Range: 430-580	Score Range: 370-420	Score Range: 160-360
The student exceeded grade level expectations and demonstrates a **thorough** understanding of the knowledge and skills needed *to be on track* for college and career readiness and achievement relative to the Common Core ELA/Literacy Content Standards	The student has met the grade level expectations and demonstrates **adequate** understanding of the knowledge and skills needed *to be on track* for college and career readiness and achievement relative to the Common Core ELA/Literacy Content Standards.	The student partially meets the grade level expectations and demonstrates an **incomplete** understanding of the knowledge and skills needed *to be on track* for college and career readiness and achievement relative to the Common Core ELA/Literacy Content Standards.	The student has not met the grade level expectations and demonstrates a **minimal** understanding of the knowledge and skills needed *to be on track* for college and career readiness and achievement relative to the Common Core ELA/Literacy Content Standards.

All scores on the PSAT 8/9, PSAT10, and SAT are all on the same vertical scale. This makes comparing scores across the tests easy when determining whether or not a student is on track to achieve readiness for college and careers.

Because the PSAT10 is given in 10th grade, the level of understanding a student needs to demonstrate in a content area is different than what is required on the SAT.

SAT (400-1600)

PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 (320-1520)

PSAT 8/9 (240-1440)

200   400   600   800   1000   1200   1400   1600

SAT Achievement Level Descriptors
Grade 11: Evidence-Based Reading and Writing

Achievement Level 4: Exceeding Expectations	Achievement Level 3: Meeting Expectations	Achievement Level 2: Partially Meeting Expectations	Achievement Level 1: Not Meeting Expectations
Score Range: 630-800	**Score Range: 480-620**	**Score Range: 420-470**	**Score Range: 200-410**
The student has exceeded grade level expectations and demonstrates a **thorough** understanding of the knowledge and skills needed for college and career readiness and achievement relative to the Common Core ELA/Literacy Content Standards.	The student has met the grade level expectations and demonstrates **adequate** understanding of the knowledge and skills needed for college and career readiness and achievement relative to the Common Core ELA/Literacy Content Standards.	The student partially meets the grade level expectations and demonstrates an **incomplete** understanding of the knowledge and skills needed for college and career readiness and achievement relative to the Common Core ELA/Literacy Content Standards.	The student has not met the grade level expectations and demonstrates a **minimal** understanding of the knowledge and skills needed for college and career readiness and achievement relative to the Common Core ELA/Literacy Content Standards.

READING TEST

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL 1: Not Meeting Expectations

Students at this level demonstrate a minimal understanding by using passages and/or pairs of passages in a specified range of text complexities from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry (see Table 1 on page 12). Students at this level will:

- Rarely identify information and ideas explicitly stated in a passage
- Rarely draw reasonable inferences from a passage
- Rarely extrapolate in a reasonable way from the information and ideas in a passage or apply information and ideas in a passage to a new, analogous situation
- Inconsistently cite textual evidence that best supports a given claim or point
- Identify an explicitly stated central idea or theme in a passage or determine an implicit central idea or theme from a passage with a single clear purpose
- Rarely identify a reasonable summary of a passage or of key information and ideas in a passage
- Determine a simple relationship between information, ideas, or people depicted in a passage (e.g., recognizing a basic comparison, contrast, or sequence)
- Determine the meaning of a relatively common word or phrase using clear context clues

- Rarely determine how the selection of specific words and phrases or the use of patterns of words and phrases shapes meaning and tone in a passage
- Identify basic text structures with a limited understanding of their impact
- Rarely identify the relationship between a particular part of a passage (e.g., a sentence) and the whole passage
- Inconsistently determine the point of view or perspective from which a passage is related or the influence this point of view or perspective has on content and style in a low to moderately complex passage
- Determine the main purpose of a low complexity passage
- Rarely identify a claim or counterclaim explicitly stated in an argument or determine an implicit claim or counterclaim from an argument
- Rarely assess an author's reasoning for soundness
- Rarely assess how an author uses or fails to use evidence to support a claim or counterclaim
- Recognize a straightforward similarity or difference in a pair of moderately complex passages (e.g., in reading passages on the same topic, recognizing basic similarities and differences in how an event is depicted)
- Locate simple data or make a simple accurate interpretation of data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart (e.g., comparing the size of two clearly labeled bars representing easy-to-interpret values on a bar graph)

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL 2: Partially Meeting Expectations

Students at this level demonstrate an incomplete understanding by using passages and/or pairs of passages in a specified range of text complexities from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry (see Table 1 on page 12). Students at this level will:

- Inconsistently identify information and ideas explicitly stated in a passage
- Inconsistently draw reasonable inferences from a passage
- Inconsistently extrapolate in a reasonable way from the information and ideas in a passage or apply information and ideas in a passage to a new, analogous situation
- Determine the best textual evidence for a conclusion when the evidence requires some interpretation or analysis
- Determine the central idea or theme of a complex passage
- Identify a simple summary of a passage or of key information and ideas in a passage
- Determine a basic relationship between information, ideas, or people depicted in a passage (e.g., establishing a cause-effect, comparison-contrast, or sequential relationship)
- Determine the meaning of a relatively common high-utility academic word or phrase in context; determine the literal meaning of a straightforward figurative expression in context
- Determine the main purpose or effect of an author's word choice in a complex passage or in a simpler passage when the purpose or effect is somewhat subtle (e.g., an author using words to convey a particular emotion)
- Describe basic text structures with a limited understanding of their impact

- Identify the relationship between a particular part of a passage (e.g., a sentence) and the whole passage
- Draw a straightforward reasonable inference about point of view or perspective in a complex passage (e.g., identifying a technique the author uses to shape point of view in a literary passage; distinguishing among the multiple perspectives in an informational passage)
- Determine the main purpose of a moderately complex passage
- Inconsistently identify a claim and counterclaim explicitly stated in an argument or determine an implicit claim or counterclaim from an argument
- Inconsistently assess an author's reasoning for soundness
- Inconsistently assess how an author uses or fails to use evidence to support a claim or counterclaim
- Identify a similarity or difference in a pair of moderately complex passages (e.g., recognizing that a particular detail appears in one passage but not the other)
- Locate data or make an accurate interpretation of data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart (e.g., drawing a valid conclusion based on an understanding of a bar graph's overall purpose; summarizing a clear trend from several data points)

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL 3: Meeting Expectations

Students at this level demonstrate an adequate understanding by using passages and/or pairs of passages in a specified range of text complexities from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry (see Table 1 on page 12). Students at this level will:

- Identify information and ideas explicitly stated in or draw reasonable inferences from a moderately complex passage
- Extrapolate in a reasonable way from the information and ideas in a moderately complex passage or apply information and ideas in such a passage to a new, analogous situation
- Determine the best textual evidence for a conclusion when the evidence requires some interpretation or analysis and the conclusion may require making an inference
- Determine the central idea or theme of a complex passage that features several important ideas (e.g., making the most defensible interpretation of a literary passage that is subject to multiple interpretations; distinguishing the author's or narrator's main point or perspective from other points or perspectives represented in the passage)
- Identify an accurate summary of a passage or of key information and ideas in a passage
- Determine a relationship between information, ideas, or people in a moderately complex passage (e.g., establishing a cause-effect, comparison-contrast, or sequential relationship)
- Determine the meaning of a relatively uncommon high-utility academic word or phrase in context; determine the literal meaning of a moderately challenging figurative expression in context
- Determine the main purpose or effect of an author's word choice in a complex passage or in a simpler passage when the purpose or effect is fairly subtle or complex (e.g., an author using word play or parody)
- Determine the overall structure of a passage with an understanding of its impact
- Determine the main purpose of a particular part of a passage (e.g., a detail or a metaphor) in relation to the passage as a whole

- Draw a reasonable inference about point of view or perspective in a complex passage (e.g., identifying where point of view switches in a literary passage; distinguishing among conflicting perspectives in an informational passage)
- Determine the main purpose of a complex passage or that of one of its paragraphs
- Determine a claim or counterclaim in a complex argument
- Assess an author's reasoning for soundness in a moderately complex argument; analyze an argumentative technique or flaw (e.g., an author using weak reasoning in support of a claim)
- Assess how an author uses or fails to use evidence to support a claim or counterclaim in a moderately complex argument
- Synthesize information and ideas from paired, moderately complex passages (e.g., authors' positions)
- Make an accurate, somewhat subtle or complex interpretations of data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart (e.g., comparing results in terms of two variables; recognizing an implication of the values represented on a table); draw a supportable connection between a graphic and its accompanying passage (e.g., characterizing a broad trend exhibited in a graph using the concepts and language of the passage)

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL 4: Exceeding Expectations

Students at this level demonstrate a thorough understanding by using passages and/or pairs of passages in a specified range of text complexities from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry (see Table 1 on page 12). Students at this level will:

- Identify information and ideas explicitly stated in or draw reasonable inferences from a complex to highly complex passage
- Extrapolate in a reasonable way from the information and ideas in a complex to highly complex passage or apply information and ideas in such a passage to a new, analogous situation
- Determine the best textual evidence for a conclusion when the evidence is subtle, abstract, or figurative and the conclusion requires making one or more inferences
- Determine the central idea or theme of a highly complex passage
- Identify an accurate summary of a highly complex passage or of key information and ideas in such a passage
- Determine a subtle or complex relationship between information, ideas, or people in a highly complex passage
- Determine the meaning of an uncommon high-utility academic word or phrase in context, including an archaic usage found in a passage from an earlier time period; determine the literal meaning of subtle or complex figurative language in context
- Determine the main purpose or effect of an author's word choice in a highly complex passage or in a simpler passage when the purpose or effect is subtle or highly complex (e.g., the author establishing meaning chiefly through tone via understatement, exaggeration, or sarcasm)
- Analyze the overall structure of a passage with a clear understanding of its impact
- Determine the main purpose of a particular part of a passage in relation to the passage as a whole when the purpose is subtle or complex (e.g., the author using rhetorical questions to indicate self-evident truths)
- Draw a nuanced inference about point of view or perspective in a complex to highly complex passage (e.g., tracing a subtle shift in point of view in a literary passage; associating particular opinions with the individuals who hold them in an informational passage)

- Determine the main purpose of a highly complex passage or of a particular section of such a passage (e.g., two or more paragraphs)
- Identify a claim or counterclaim explicitly stated in a highly complex argument or determine an implicit claim or counterclaim from such an argument
- Assess an author's reasoning for soundness in a complex to highly complex argument; analyze a subtle argumentative technique or flaw (e.g., an author using biased characterizations in support of a claim)
- Assess how an author uses or fails to use evidence to support a claim or counterclaim in a complex to highly complex argument
- Synthesize information and ideas from paired, complex to highly complex passages (e.g., subtle or complex comparisons)
- Make an accurate subtle or complex interpretation of data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart (e.g., comparing results in terms of three or more variables; determining which bars on a bar graph can reasonably be considered part of an overarching category); draw a subtle or complex supportable connection between a graphic and its accompanying passage (e.g., summarizing the results displayed in a table using the concepts and language of the passage)

WRITING AND LANGUAGE TEST

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL 1: Not Meeting Expectations

Students at this level demonstrate a minimal understanding by using passages in a specified range of text complexities from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry (see Tables 1 and 2 on pages 12–13). Students at this level will:

- Use supporting information to achieve a simple purpose (e.g., providing a short list of examples)
- Delete information that is obviously irrelevant to the main focus of a paragraph or passage (e.g., eliminating a detail that has no clear relationship to a passage's topic)
- Order the sentences in a paragraph to achieve a simple purpose (e.g., grouping related information together; establishing a basic chronology)
- Introduce a paragraph that has a clear, well-defined focus
- Use a transitional word or phrase to establish a simple logical relationship between sentences (e.g., indicating sharp contrast)
- Make an effective word or phrase choice in a straightforward situation (e.g., using a common but still appropriate expression instead of an awkward or meaningless one)
- Eliminate obvious wordiness or redundancy (e.g., removing repetition within a short phrase)
- Combine sentences in a relatively simple way (e.g., making a second sentence into a relative clause of the first) or to achieve a relatively simple purpose (e.g., eliminating obvious awkwardness or repetition)
- Form conventional, complete sentences, recognizing and correcting a clear and substantial disruption in structure (e.g., eliminating an obvious comma splice; correcting a lack of parallelism in a simple series of words; replacing a nonstandard relative pronoun with a standard one)
- Recognize and correct an obviously inappropriate shift in verb tense (e.g., the use of present tense when the context clearly calls for past tense)

- Maintain subject-verb or pronoun-antecedent agreement in a straightforward situation (e.g., ensuring agreement between subject and verb when the number of the subject is clear and the subject and verb appear close together in the sentence)
- Use conventional expression in a straightforward situation (e.g., recognizing and correcting a nonsensical expression; choosing a preposition that establishes a logical relationship [e.g., *with*, *for*]; selecting appropriately between common words that are frequently confused, such as *to* and *too*)
- Distinguish between singular and plural possessive nouns and between plural and possessive nouns
- Use commas to set off a simple nonrestrictive element (e.g., a phrase describing the person just named)
- Eliminate obviously unnecessary and disruptive punctuation (e.g., between verb and direct object)

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL 2: Partially Meeting Expectations

Students at this level demonstrate an incomplete understanding by using passages in a specified range of text complexities from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry (see Tables 1 and 2 on pages 12–13). Students at this level will:

- Clarify an aspect of the structure of a paragraph or passage (e.g., using a phrase to set up examples that follow in subsequent sentences)
- Use supporting information to achieve a straightforward purpose (e.g., providing a cause for an effect; offering direct support for a claim)
- Delete information that is clearly irrelevant to a paragraph or passage (e.g., eliminating a detail that interrupts an explanation or sequence or that obviously digresses from the main topic)
- Use a general understanding of an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart, to revise a passage (e.g., drawing on knowledge of what a graph's bars represent to improve the accuracy of a passage's description of the graph)
- Order the sentences in a paragraph to achieve a straightforward purpose (e.g., placing a supporting detail immediately after a sentence that makes a claim)
- Introduce or conclude a passage based on a general understanding of the passage's content and purpose (e.g., adding a conclusion that restates the passage's main claim)
- Use a transitional word or phrase to establish a straightforward logical relationship between sentences (e.g., indicating sequence or contrast; introducing a definition)
- Make an effective word or phrase choice based on vocabulary knowledge and an understanding of the context (e.g., recognizing when a particular word is or is not commonly used to describe a person or object)
- Eliminate wordiness or redundancy within a sentence (e.g., recognizing when adjectives with the same meaning or very similar meanings, such as *fast* and *rapid*, are used to describe the same thing)
- Maintain a basic consistency in style and tone within a passage (e.g., revising language that is clearly too colloquial or formal for the context)
- Combine sentences in a straightforward way (e.g., making a second sentence into a prepositional phrase of the first) or to achieve a straightforward purpose (e.g., establishing a logical arrangement of sentence elements)
- Form conventional, complete sentences, recognizing and correcting a disruption in structure (e.g., eliminating an obvious, rhetorically inappropriate fragment; maintaining parallelism in a simple series of phrases; establishing a clear relationship between an introductory and main clause)

- Determine appropriate verb tense or pronoun person and number on the basis of an understanding of the context (e.g., correcting an inappropriate shift from past tense to present or past perfect tense; making a needed shift from past to present tense to signal a change in time frame; correcting an inappropriate shift from third person *they* to second person *you*)
- Recognize and correct an obviously vague or ambiguous pronoun (e.g., replacing a pronoun without a clear antecedent with the appropriate noun)
- Maintain subject-verb or pronoun-antecedent agreement in a somewhat challenging situation (e.g., ensuring agreement between subject and verb when a short phrase intervenes)
- Use conventional expression in a somewhat challenging situation (e.g., choosing the preposition that appropriately completes a phrasal verb; selecting appropriately between less-common words that are frequently confused, such as *effect* and *affect*)
- Distinguish among singular, singular possessive, plural, and plural possessive nouns
- Appropriately punctuate items in a series (e.g., a three-item series of nouns with accompanying adjectives)
- Use punctuation to set off a nonrestrictive element (e.g., an interrupting phrase); eliminate punctuation inappropriately setting off a simple restrictive element (e.g., a job title that precedes a person's name)
- Eliminate unnecessary punctuation in a somewhat challenging situation (e.g., between noun and preposition; between verb and a clause serving as its object)

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL 3: Meeting Expectations

Students at this level demonstrate an adequate understanding by using passages in a specified range of text complexities from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry (see Tables 1 and 2 on pages 12–13). Students at this level will:

- Establish and clarify the structure of a paragraph or passage (e.g., adding a sentence to frame a paragraph's discussion or to present a claim that the paragraph subsequently supports)
- Use supporting information to develop a point or claim logically (e.g., offering a specific, relevant example; using a quotation that clarifies a concept or observation)
- Sharpen the focus of a paragraph or passage by making a careful decision about adding, revising, or deleting information (e.g., eliminating material that is broadly relevant to a topic but that is poorly placed or integrated)
- Locate or accurately interpret data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart, to revise a passage (e.g., identifying the value in a table that is associated with a particular condition; distinguishing between accurate and inaccurate interpretations and between relevant and irrelevant information)
- Order the sentences in a paragraph to address a critical issue of logic or cohesion (e.g., adding a sentence to fill a discernible gap in a chronological sequence; repositioning a sentence to provide a needed transition between ideas)
- Introduce or conclude a passage based on an understanding of the passage's content and purpose (e.g., ensuring that the conclusion offers an adequate sense of closure; achieving a particular rhetorical aim, such as suggesting implications of the findings discussed in the passage)

- Use a transitional word, phrase, clause, or sentence to establish a logical relationship between sentences or paragraphs (e.g., signaling a shift in emphasis or focus)

- Make a nuanced word or phrase choice based on well-developed vocabulary knowledge and a well-developed understanding of the context (e.g., distinguishing among relatively uncommon words that have similar denotations but differing connotations or uses)

- Eliminate relatively subtle wordiness or redundancy within a sentence or between sentences (e.g., recognizing when information overexplains a concept already made clear and correcting accordingly; deleting repetition involving fairly sophisticated language)

- Make a careful decision about style and tone in a passage based on an understanding of the context (e.g., revising language that is too colloquial or formal in a fairly challenging context; achieving a particular rhetorical aim, such as establishing a particular sentence pattern or choosing language that sets a contextually appropriate mood)

- Combine sentences to accomplish a relatively subtle purpose (e.g., inserting a conjunction to establish a logical relationship; blending elements of two sentences to improve the logic and flow of ideas)

- Form conventional, complete sentences, recognizing and correcting a relatively subtle disruption in structure (e.g., eliminating a rhetorically inappropriate fragment created by the use of a semicolon; maintaining parallelism in a series of phrases; choosing or eliminating a conjunction based on an understanding of the syntax of a relatively sophisticated or long sentence; correcting an obvious dangling modifier)

- Determine appropriate verb tense and mood or pronoun person and number on the basis of a well-developed understanding of the context (e.g., making a needed shift into conditional mood to suggest a possible but not certain outcome)

- Recognize and correct a vague or ambiguous pronoun based on an understanding of the context (e.g., replacing an ambiguous pronoun with a noun after a close reading to determine what the appropriate noun should be)

- Make careful distinctions among the possessive determiners *its* and *their,* the contractions *it's* and *they're,* and the adverb *there*

- Maintain subject-verb or pronoun-antecedent agreement in a challenging situation (e.g., ensuring agreement between subject and verb when a clause or multiple short phrases intervene and possibly suggest a different number for the verb than the subject warrants)

- Use conventional expression in a challenging situation (e.g., selecting appropriately between relatively uncommon words that are frequently confused, such as *discrete* and *discreet*)

- Make careful distinctions among singular, singular possessive, plural, and plural possessive nouns based on an understanding of the context (e.g., noting that the article the establishes that the noun it precedes is singular or singular possessive)

- Make a careful decision about how or whether to use punctuation to set off one or more sentence elements based on an understanding of the context (e.g., determining whether an element is restrictive or nonrestrictive through a close reading of the context and then punctuating or not punctuating accordingly; using matching punctuation, such as two commas rather than a comma and a dash, to set off a nonrestrictive element)

- Eliminate unnecessary punctuation in a challenging situation (e.g., between a long subject and the predicate; after a word or phrase, such as *including*, that sets up a list of examples)

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL 4: Exceeding Expectations

Students at this level demonstrate a thorough understanding by using passages in a specified range of text complexities from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry (see Tables 1 and 2 on pages 12–13). Students at this level will:

- Make a sophisticated decision relating to the structure of a paragraph or passage (e.g., using a clause to set up information when the content and language are complex and the linkage is subtle)

- Use supporting information to develop a point or claim logically on the basis of a thorough understanding of a challenging context (e.g., drawing on logic and an understanding of the context to indicate the last step in a complex sequence; including an example that is similar in content to one or more other examples in a paragraph)

- Sharpen the focus of a paragraph or passage by making a sophisticated decision about adding, revising, or deleting information (e.g., adding or retaining nonessential but relevant material because it enhances meaning and clarity)

- Accurately interpret, paraphrase, or summarize data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart, to revise a passage (e.g., encompassing multiple data points in a single relevant general statement)

- Order the sentences in a paragraph to address a complex or subtle issue of logic or cohesion (e.g., deciding to reposition rather than delete a sentence that, when properly placed, improves the flow of ideas in a paragraph)

- Use a transitional word, phrase, clause, or sentence to establish a complex or subtle logical relationship between sentences or paragraphs; recognize when such a device is not needed or problematic (e.g., drawing on an understanding of the context to eliminate a word or phrase, such as *therefore*, that wrongly suggests a cause-effect relationship)

- Make a sophisticated word or phrase choice based on highly developed vocabulary knowledge and a thorough understanding of a challenging context (e.g., distinguishing among uncommon words that have similar denotations but differing connotations or uses when the distinctions are subtle)

- Eliminate subtle wordiness or redundancy within a sentence or between sentences and paragraphs (e.g., recognizing that a sophisticated-sounding but wordy expression is less effective than a simpler and more economical one; eliminating the second appearance of the same detail in successive paragraphs)

- Make a sophisticated decision about style and tone in a passage based on a thorough understanding of the context (e.g., achieving a subtle rhetorical aim, such as closely matching a sentence pattern already established in a passage)

- Combine sentences to accomplish a complex or subtle purpose (e.g., drawing on an understanding of the context to place a blended sentence's emphasis on its most important idea)

- Form conventional, complete sentences, recognizing and correcting a complex or subtle disruption in structure (e.g., ensuring the completeness of a sentence with an uncommon structure, such as a sentence containing a subject clause beginning with *that*; correcting minor and easily overlooked violations of parallelism, such as the omission of a preposition, in a series of phrases)

- Maintain subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement in a complex situation (e.g., between subject and verb when the two are widely separated and when intervening text suggests a different number for the verb than the subject warrants)

- Use conventional expression in a complex situation (e.g., selecting appropriately between uncommon words that are frequently confused, such as *defuse* and *diffuse*)
- Use a semicolon to join two closely related independent clauses
- Use a colon to introduce a list or an elaboration (e.g., a noun phrase renaming a previously mentioned concept; an independent clause explaining a point introduced earlier in a sentence

Table 1a: Text Complexity Definition

The redesigned SAT's passages/passage pair represent a specified range of text complexity from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry. Text complexity is defined as:

1. Quantitative measures – readability and other scores of text difficulty; often best measured by computer software.
2. Qualitative measures – levels of meaning, structure, and language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands; often best measured by an attentive human reader.
3. Reader and task considerations – background knowledge of reader, motivation, interests, and complexity generated by tasks assigned; often best assessed by educators employing their professional judgment.

CCSS Text Complexity Model

Table 1b: Text Complexity Levels Referenced in the Redesigned SAT ALDs

Level of Text	Description
Low Complexity Text	These are texts whose information and ideas as well as structure, purpose, and language are relatively simple and direct and require relatively little analysis.
Moderately Complex Text	These are texts whose information and ideas as well as structure, purpose, and language require some analysis.
Complex Text	These are texts that can be difficult to understand at first because the information, ideas, structure, purpose, and language may be difficult or unfamiliar.
Highly Complex Text	These are texts that can be challenging even for very skilled readers. Often, the information, ideas, structure, purpose, and language are very difficult or unfamiliar.

Table 2: CCSS Language Progressive Skills Standards

Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year's grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades. The following skills, marked with an asterisk (*) in Language standards 1–3, are particularly likely to require continued attention in higher grades as they are applied to increasingly sophisticated writing and speaking (see p. 56 of the CCSS).

L.3.1f. Ensure subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement.

L.3.3a. Choose words and phrases for effect.

L.4.1f. Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons.

L.4.1g. Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., *to/too/two; there/their*)

L.4.3a. Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely.*

L.4.3b. Choose punctuation for effect.

L.5.1d. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense.

L.5.2a. Use punctuation to separate items in a series.†

L.6.1c. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in pronoun number and person.

L.6.1d. Recognize and correct vague pronouns (i.e., ones with unclear or ambiguous antecedents).

L.6.1e. Recognize variations from Standard English in their own and others' writing and speaking, and identify and use strategies to improve expression in conventional language.

L.6.2a. Use punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements.

L.6.3a. Vary sentence patterns for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style.‡

L.6.3b. Maintain consistency in style and tone.

L.7.1c. Place phrases and clauses within a sentence, recognizing and correcting misplaced and dangling modifiers.

L.7.3a. Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy.

L.8.1d. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb voice and mood.

L.9–**10.1a.** Use parallel structure

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* Subsumed by L.7.3a
† Subsumed by L.9–10.1a
‡ Subsumed by L.11–12.3a

Table 3: SAT Reading Test Domain

Content Dimension	Description
Text Complexity	The passages/pair on the SAT Reading Test represent a specified range of text complexities from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry.

Information and Ideas

These questions focus on the informational content of text.

Reading closely	These questions focus on the explicit and implicit meaning of text and on extrapolating beyond the information and ideas in a text.
Determining explicit meanings	The student will identify information and ideas explicitly stated in text.
Determining implicit meanings	The student will draw reasonable inferences and logical conclusions from text.
Using analogical reasoning	The student will extrapolate in a reasonable way from the information and ideas in a text or apply information and ideas in a text to a new, analogous situation.
Citing textual evidence	The student will cite the textual evidence that best supports a given claim or point.
Determining central ideas and themes	The student will identify explicitly stated central ideas or themes in text and determine implicit central ideas or themes from text.
Summarizing	The student will identify a reasonable summary of a text or of key information and ideas in text.
Understanding relationships	The student will identify explicitly stated relationships or determine implicit relationships between and among individuals, events, or ideas (e.g., cause-effect, comparison-contrast, sequence).
Interpreting words and phrases in context	The student will determine the meaning of words and phrases in context.

Rhetoric

These questions focus on the rhetorical analysis of text.

Analyzing word choice	The student will determine how the selection of specific words and phrases or the use of patterns of words and phrases shapes meaning and tone in text.
Analyzing text structure	These questions focus on the overall structure of a text and on the relationship between a particular part of a text and the whole text.

Analyzing overall text structure	The student will describe the overall structure of a text.
Analyzing part-whole relationships	The student will analyze the relationship between a particular part of a text (e.g., a sentence) and the whole text.
Analyzing point of view	The student will determine the point of view or perspective from which a text is related or the influence this point of view or perspective has on content and style.
Analyzing purpose	The student will determine the main or most likely purpose of a text or of a particular part of a text (typically, one or more paragraphs).
Analyzing arguments	These questions focus on analyzing arguments for their content and structure.
Analyzing claims and counterclaims	The student will identify claims and counterclaims explicitly stated in text or determine implicit claims and counterclaims from text.
Assessing reasoning	The student will assess an author's reasoning for soundness.
Analyzing evidence	The student will assess how an author uses or fails to use evidence to support a claim or counterclaim.

Synthesis

These questions focus on synthesizing multiple sources of information.

Analyzing multiple texts	The student will synthesize information and ideas from paired texts. (Note: All of the skills listed above may be tested with either single or paired passages.)
Analyzing quantitative information	The student will analyze information presented quantitatively in such forms as graphs, tables, and charts and/or relate that information to information presented in text.

Table 4: SAT Writing and Language Test Domain

Content Dimension	Description
Text Complexity	The passages on the SAT Writing and Language Test represent a specified range of text complexities from grades 9–10 to postsecondary entry.

Expression of Ideas

These questions focus on revision of text for topic development, accuracy (consistency between text and graphic[s]), logic, cohesion, and rhetorically effective use of language.

Development	These questions focus on revising text in relation to rhetorical purpose. (Prior knowledge of the topic is not assessed, though consistency of the material within a passage may be.)
Proposition	The student will add, revise, or retain central ideas, main claims, counterclaims, topic sentences, and the like to structure text and convey arguments, information, and ideas clearly and effectively.
Support	The student will add, revise, or retain information and ideas (e.g., details, facts, statistics) intended to support claims or points in text.
Focus	The student will add, revise, retain, or delete information and ideas in text for the sake of relevance to topic and purpose.
Quantitative information	The student will relate information presented quantitatively in such forms as graphs, charts, and tables to information presented in text.
Organization	These questions focus on revision of text to improve the logic and cohesion of text at the sentence, paragraph, and whole-text levels.
Logical sequence	The student will revise text as needed to ensure that information and ideas are presented in the most logical order.
Introductions, conclusions, and transitions	The student will revise text as needed to improve the beginning or ending of a text or paragraph and to ensure that transition words, phrases, or sentences are used effectively to connect information and ideas.
Effective language use	These questions focus on revision of text to improve the use of language to accomplish particular rhetorical purposes.
Precision	The student will revise text as needed to improve the exactness or content appropriateness of word choice.
Concision	The student will revise text as needed to improve the economy of word choice (i.e., to eliminate wordiness and redundancy).
Style and tone	The student will revise text as necessary to ensure consistency of style and tone within a text or to improve the match of style and tone to purpose.

Syntax	The student will use various sentence structures to accomplish needed rhetorical purposes.

Standard English Conventions

These questions focus on editing text to ensure conformity to the conventions of Standard Written English sentence structure, usage, and punctuation.

Sentence structure	These questions focus on editing text to correct problems in sentence formation and inappropriate shifts in construction within and between sentences.
Sentence formation	These questions focus on editing text to correct problems with forming grammatically complete and standard sentences.
Sentence boundaries	The student will recognize and correct grammatically incomplete sentences (e.g., rhetorically inappropriate fragments and run-ons).
Subordination and coordination	The student will recognize and correct problems in coordination and subordination in sentences.
Parallel structure	The student will recognize and correct problems in parallel structure in sentences.
Modifier placement	The student will recognize and correct problems in modifier placement (e.g., misplaced or dangling modifiers).
Inappropriate shifts in construction	These questions focus on editing text to correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense, voice, and mood and pronoun person and number.
Verb tense, mood, and voice	The student will recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense, voice, and mood within and between sentences.
Pronoun person and number	The student will recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in pronoun, person, and number within and between sentences.
Conventions of Usage	These questions focus on editing text to ensure conformity to the conventions of Standard Written English usage.
Pronouns	These questions focus on the proper use of pronouns.
Pronoun clarity	The student will recognize and correct pronouns with unclear or ambiguous antecedents.
Possessive determiners	The student will recognize and correct cases in which possessive determiners (*its*, *your*, *their*), contractions (*it's*, *you're*, *they're*), and adverbs (*there*) are confused with each other.
Agreement	These questions focus on ensuring grammatical agreement.

Pronoun-antecedent agreement	The student will recognize and correct lack of agreement between subject and antecedent.
Subject-verb agreement	The student will recognize and correct lack of agreement between subject and verb.
Noun agreement	The student will recognize and correct lack of agreement between nouns.
Frequently confused words	The student will recognize and correct instances in which a word or phrase is confused with another (e.g., *accept/except, allusion/illusion*).
Logical comparison	The student will recognize and correct cases in which unlike terms are compared.
Conventional expression	The student will recognize and correct cases in which a given expression is inconsistent with Standard Written Conventional English.
Conventions of Punctuation	These questions focus on editing text to ensure conformity to the conventions of Standard Written English punctuation.
End-of-sentence punctuation	The student will recognize and correct inappropriate uses of ending punctuation in cases in which the context makes the intent clear.
Within-sentence punctuation	The student will correctly use and recognize and correct inappropriate uses of colons, semicolons, and dashes to indicate sharp breaks in thought within sentences.
Possessive nouns and pronouns	The student will recognize and correct inappropriate uses of possessive nouns and pronouns as well as differentiate between possessive and plural forms.
Items in a series	The student will correctly use and recognize and correct inappropriate uses of punctuation (commas and sometimes semicolons) to separate items in a series.
Nonrestrictive and parenthetical elements	The student will correctly use punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off nonrestrictive and parenthetical sentence elements as well as recognize and correct cases in which restrictive or essential sentence elements are inappropriately set off with punctuation.
Unnecessary punctuation	The student will recognize and correct cases in which unnecessary punctuation appears in a sentence.