

## Psyching Out the PSAT

### The **BIG** Idea

- What kinds of questions will I find on the PSAT, and what strategies should I use to answer them?

### AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: “Guess My Birthday!” (5 minutes)
- II. Play “Bull’s Eye! the PSAT Game Show” (35 minutes)
- III. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

### MATERIALS

- STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:**
  - Student Handbook page 17-30, “Bull’s-Eye! The PSAT Game Show”
- FACILITATOR PAGES:**
  - Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW, Taking Tests 2: Psyching Out the PSAT
  - Facilitator Resource 2, “Bull’s-Eye! The PSAT Game Show” Answer Key
  - Facilitator Resource 3, Test Strategies
  - Facilitator Resource 4, “Bull’s-Eye! The PSAT Game Show” Score Card
- White board, dry erase marker, and eraser for each pair (or Student Response Cards labeled A, B, C, D, and E)
- Blank paper [for the Student-Produced Response Math questions]
- Sharpened pencils
- Small prizes (if you’re rewarding Bull’s-Eye winners)
- Timer
- Calculators

### OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, student(s) will:

- Become familiar with the format of the PSAT (5 sections), and learn that it tests students’ knowledge of reading, writing, and math skills.
- Describe strategies for answering at least two types of questions on the PSAT.
- Explain how to figure out when it is better to take an educated guess on a standardized test question, and when to leave it blank.

## OVERVIEW .....

By participating in a mock game show, students get a taste of the kinds of reading, writing and math questions they might encounter on the PSAT. During this activity, you will present strategies for tackling each kind of multiple-choice question, and offer advice on when it is smart for students to make an educated guess and when it's better to skip a question and move on.

## PREPARATION .....

- Write the **BIG IDEA** and the day's agenda on the board.
- The following handouts can be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
  - **Student Handbook pages 17-30, “Bull’s-Eye! The PSAT Game Show”**
  - **Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW**
  - **Facilitator Resource 3, Test Strategies**
- Make one copy, per class, of the **Facilitator Resource 4, “Bull’s-Eye! The PSAT Game Show” Score Card.**
- You may wish to visit <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about.html> for a complete discussion of preparing for the PSAT and additional practice test questions.
- Pair students for the PSAT Bull’s Eye Game. You should pair up academically stronger students with students who need more support.

## IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS .....

### IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS DO NOW:

(You may choose to present the Warm Up activity as a written Do Now. Present the questions on the board or overhead, and have students write only their answers on index cards.)

#### Questions:

1. If you have to answer 13 questions in 25 minutes about how much time do you have to answer each question?
2. What are some things you can do to make sure you have enough time to answer all the questions on the PSAT?
3. Prediction question: Should you guess on the PSAT if you have no clue what the answer is? What if you could narrow down the answer to three out of five options, would you guess then? Explain your answer.

[Give the students 3 minutes to answer these questions. Then start with the discussion in the Warm Up as written. Call on students to volunteer their answers when they are directly addressed in the discussion.]

Only 5 minutes have been allotted for examples and discussion of each of 7 types of PSAT questions. If you run short of time, the even-numbered questions (second example of each type) may be omitted. Detailed explanations of test question answers aren't necessary. Focus on the strategies for each section. If students seem to want more detailed explanations for a section, brainstorm who they could get help from. For example, if students struggle with the math questions you may want to suggest that they ask their math teacher for help.

One Facilitator chose to make a PowerPoint for “**Bull’s-Eye! The PSAT Game Show,**” with a slide for each question.

You may choose to have a student in each class keep track of each team's points, using **Facilitator Resource 4, Bull’s-Eye! The PSAT Game Show” Score Card.**

## ACTIVITY STEPS

### I. WARM UP: “Guess My Birthday!” (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Last week, we talked about some reasons to take the PSAT. This week, we’re going to have a look at the kinds of questions you’ll find on the test and some strategies for answering them.

Before we get started, let’s talk about two things that are important to know when taking any standardized test.

- How do I make sure I have enough time to answer all the questions?
- Should I guess if I’m not sure of an answer?

[These questions should be written on the board, overhead transparency, or chart paper.]

Let’s talk about the first question: “How do I make sure I have enough time to answer all the questions?” One way to do this is to take a practice test and get a feel for how quickly you need to work. The other is to figure out how much time you have for each question. For example, if you’ll be expected to do 28 questions in 25 minutes, you know you need to answer each question in a little less than a minute.

Let’s try another example. If you had to answer 13 questions in 25 minutes, how much time should you spend on each question?

[Give the students 30 seconds to figure this out. Then call on a volunteer to give the answer (*a little under 2 minutes*). You may want to work this problem out on the board, overhead projector, or chart paper to assist struggling students. NOTE: If your students completed the DO NOW, skip the second example, which has already been answered.]

If you’re finding a particular question a real struggle, what should you do? [Allow students to respond. (*Answer: Skip it and come back to it at the end, if you have more time.*)]

The second question is more difficult: “Should I guess if I’m not sure of an answer?” The answer is ... “It depends.” That’s because when the PSAT is scored, you get 1 point

for each right answer, but you lose  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a point for each wrong answer. If you skip a question, and leave it blank—then you don't get any points for it, but you don't lose any points either. The experts advise guessing only when you can take an “educated” guess. Let's see how this works.

[On chart paper, white board, or an overhead transparency write down the points earned and deductions for right, wrong and skipped questions. See chart below.

Cover up the points earned/deducted side with a black piece of paper. Once you have gone over this information, ask students to recall the different values for each section (right, wrong, or skipped). Then remove the paper so students can check their answers.]

You got the question:	Points Earned/Deducted
Right	+ 1 pt
Wrong	- $\frac{1}{4}$ pt
You Skipped It	0 pt

Let's try an experiment with a pretend, totally bogus, fake PSAT question.

[Write on board.]

When is my birthday?

- (A) January 15
- (B) April 15
- (C) July 15
- (D) October 15
- (E) February 15

[If there are students who know your actual birthday, tell them you've picked a new one for the purposes of this test. Read the question and the five choices aloud.]

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Write your answer on a piece of paper. [If students are protesting that they can't possibly guess, acknowledge that it's a hard choice when they have no info to go on.]

Raise your hand if you think you have the right answer. [Students respond.]

Now, raise your hand if you think you probably have the wrong answer [Students respond.]

Look at these five dates on the board, as I give you a clue about my birthday. . .  
Okay, here's the clue: My birthday is NOT during the winter time.

Now that you have this information, can you eliminate any of the choices? In other words, can you figure out if any of these 5 choices are definitely NOT the answer?

[Help students eliminate choices "A" and "E" both of which fall during the winter. Put a line through these choices to indicate they are wrong.]

Only three choices remain. You have a 1 in 3 chance of getting it right. Take another guess: When is my birthday?

Let's take another poll. Raise your hand if you think you have the right answer. [Students respond.]

Now, raise your hand if you think you probably have the wrong answer. [Students respond.]

Now, another clue: My birthday is NOT during the spring time. Which of the three remaining choices can you eliminate?

[Help students eliminate choice "B" since April falls during the spring time. Put a line through this choice to show that it is wrong.]

Let's take another poll. Raise your hand if you think you have the right answer. [Students respond.]

Now, raise your hand if you think you probably have the wrong answer [Students respond.]

[Smile then say,] Okay, one more BIG clue about my birthday. During my birthday month, kids dress up in scary costumes and go trick-or-treating.

Look at the answers and take another guess: When is my birthday?

Raise your hand if you think you have the right answer. [Students respond – probably all raising their hands.] And now, raise your hand if you think you have the wrong answer. [Students respond – probably no one will raise his/her hand.]

[Circle the right answer – in this example: (D) October 15.]

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** So, as you can see, when you can figure out which answers are **WRONG**, it's worth taking a guess because your chances of being right are better than if you took a wild guess. On the PSAT, wild guesses are not a good idea. Better to leave some questions blank. You can still do very well on the PSAT without answering every question right. But if you can eliminate an answer or two, it's ok to guess.

## II. Play “Bull’s-Eye! The PSAT Game Show” (35 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** The PSAT is divided into 5 sections. Who can remember from last class, what subjects are tested on the PSAT? (Allow students to respond- *Reading, Math and Writing.*) There are 2 reading sections, 2 math sections, and 1 multiple-choice writing section. Today, we’re going to take a look at the kinds of questions you’ll find on the PSAT. You’ll be working with a partner to solve each problem.

Here is how the game will work. I am going to assign each of you a partner. You and your partner will complete 2 practice questions from each section on the PSAT. I’m going to put a question on the overhead, and you are going to work with your partner to figure out the answer. You also have all the questions listed on **Student Handbook pages 17-30, “Bull’s-Eye! The PSAT Game Show.”** Before we begin each section, I will tell you how much time you will have to complete the question. I will be keeping track with my timer. When you hear the timer start beeping, you need to put your pens/pencils down immediately. Groups who continue to work after the allotted time will not be awarded points for that question.

I will then ask one person from each pair to hold up your white board (or response card) so I can see your answer. All teams with the right answer get 1 point each.

While I am excited to see if you got the right answer, today it’s more important to explain how you figured it out. For each question, one team with the right answer will be chosen to explain how they got the answer. I will only select pairs who have worked well together. You need to talk and work out the problem with your partner. If your explanation makes sense, your pair will get 5 bonus points.

[Explain how the score will be tracked. See **Implementation Options** for a suggestion on keeping score. Divide the class into pairs. Give each pair of students a white board, eraser, and erasable marker, or a set of Answer Response cards, each with the letters A through E.]

[NOTE: Feel free to award prizes at the conclusion of the game, or eliminate points altogether if competition will make it difficult for your students to focus on the explanations.]

[Place the transparency of **Student Handbook pages 17-30, “Bull’s Eye! The PSAT Game Show”** on the overhead projector, and instruct students to turn to that page in their handbook. Use a piece of paper to cover all but one question so the students can focus on just one question at a time. Use **Facilitator Resource 2, “Bull’s-Eye! The PSAT Game Show” Answer Key** to work through the sample test questions, explanations, and strategies.]

### III. WRAP UP (5 minutes)

[Thank students for playing “Bull’s-Eye!”. Tell them that if they would like to get some more practice, they can go to the PSAT Web site:

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html>]



## DO NOW

### Taking Tests 2: Psyching Out the PSAT

**Directions:** You will have three minutes to read the questions below and write your responses.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. If you have to answer 13 questions in 25 minutes about how much time do you have to answer each question?

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2. What are some things you can do to make sure you have enough time to answer all the questions on the PSAT?

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3. Prediction question: Should you guess on the PSAT if you have no clue what the answer is? What if you could narrow down the answer to three out of five options, would you guess then? Explain your answer.

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## “Bull’s-Eye! The PSAT Game Show” Answer Key

Test-taking strategies have been adapted from the College Board’s website: <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html>

**[Note: The explanations for each question are intended as resources for you. If the students’ explanations for the questions are adequate, please feel free to skip reading the explanations. If the students are unclear, you can use the explanations to clarify the question.]**

For each type of question, tell the students to write down two strategies that will be most helpful to them.]

### READING SECTION

Each of the two reading sections on the PSAT lasts 25 minutes.

#### Sentence Completion

The first type of reading question is Sentence Completion, and, as you might expect, the goal is to complete a sentence by picking the best of 5 choices. There are 13 questions of this type. **Sentence Completion** questions measure how well you know the meanings of different words, and test your ability to put different parts of a sentence together so they fit logically. Give the students 2 minutes to complete each question.

1. The addition of descriptive details to the basic information serves to \_\_\_\_\_ the book by producing a fuller account.
  - (A)  invalidate
  - (B)  diminish
  - (C)  objectify
  - (D)  celebrate
  - (E)  enrich

- **EXPLANATION OF QUESTION 1:**

The correct answer is (E), enrich. The addition of descriptive detail to basic information is something that most likely would expand, enhance, or enrich a book; this interpretation is reinforced by the conclusion of the sentence, which refers to “a fuller account” as the result of that addition.

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

2. Although some think the term "bug" and "insect" are \_\_\_\_\_, the former term actually refers to \_\_\_\_\_ group of insects.
- (A)  parallel -- an identical
  - (B)  precise -- an exact
  - (C)  interchangeable -- a particular
  - (D)  exclusive -- a separate
  - (E)  useful -- a useless

• **EXPLANATION OF QUESTION 2:**

The correct answer is (C), Interchangeable – a particular. The word "although" at the beginning of the sentence indicates that the two parts of the sentence contrast with each other. Choice C is correct because it presents a situation where most people think of the two terms as interchangeable (can be substituted for each other), but the first of the two terms, bugs, actually refers to specific (or particular) types of insects.

• **STRATEGIES:**

- 1) Read the sentence to yourself. Before you look at the five choices, say to yourself, "What word might finish this sentence?"
- 2) Read the sentence, and try putting each of the 5 choices in the blank. Which one makes the most sense?

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

## Passage-Based Reading

American Indians are often thought of as one group, but they do not constitute a single, unified ethnic grouping. There are literally hundreds of cultural and linguistic—that is, ethnic—distinctions: the Navajo of Arizona, for example, have little in common with the Mohawks of New York. The Inuits and the Aleuts of Alaska are categorized as American Indians, but they are ethnically distinct from each other and from the American Indians of the contiguous states as well. It is estimated that from 300 to 550 different American Indian languages were in use in North America before European colonization; about 150 are still spoken today.

While the Ingalik language and culture differ from those of the Seminoles, there is a general history that all American Indians have in common: an origin in the prehistoric past somewhere in northeast Asia (their immigration to the Western Hemisphere, over a period of thousands of years, was an event so remote that evidence of it is lost in the strata of ancient rock or ice deposits) and, in more recent centuries, confrontation with European explorers and settlers followed by extreme social and economic discrimination by the European Americans.

For all American Indians, an integrated way of life was irrevocably upset by the arrival of Europeans and their expropriation of the land. The trauma of culture conflict had its origins in the very first contacts between the Europeans, who could not comprehend the American Indians’ attitude toward land as an everlasting resource for common use, and the American Indians, who could not comprehend the notion of land as private property that could be sold and lost forever.

Most estimates of American Indian population at the time of the European arrival hover around the one million mark. However, for a number of reasons it is believed likely that the population might have been two or more times that. The Europeans introduced not only conflicting ways of life, but diseases to which the American Indians had no resistance, and whole populations died. By 1860 there were only about 340,000 American Indians in the contiguous states and by 1910 some 220,000. Improvement in medical care even on remote reservations at about that time resulted in a decline in the death rate, and the American Indian population started to grow. The Census Bureau records that from 1950 to 1970 this population more than doubled, from 357,000 to 793,000.

3. The author indicates that the **trauma of culture conflict** initially resulted from the
- (A)  migration of American Indians from northeast Asia to the Western Hemisphere
  - (B)  linguistic and cultural differences between the various American Indian groups
  - (C)  extreme social and economic discrimination practiced by European Americans
  - (D)  different attitudes toward land held by Europeans and American Indians
  - (E)  decline of the American Indian population after the arrival of the Europeans

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from  
[www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

- **EXPLANATION OF QUESTION 3:**

The correct choice (D) locates the origin of the conflict in differing attitudes toward land — like the sentence in the passage. Since the “trauma of culture conflict” refers to the conflict between European culture and American Indian culture, choices (A), (B), and (E) can be eliminated. (C) refers to the conflict between the Europeans and the American Indians, but not the origins of the conflict according to the author.

4. As used in the paragraph above, the word **common** most nearly means

- (A)  coarse
- (B)  familiar
- (C)  mediocre
- (D)  plain
- (E)  shared

- **EXPLANATION OF QUESTION 4:**

The correct response is (E) shared. In this question you have to choose the meaning of “common” that best fits the way it is used in the passage. In this passage, the Indians view land as a resource to be shared by all members of the community. You know that because it is the opposite of the Europeans view of land as private property.

- **STRATEGIES:**

- 1) You may find it helpful to read the questions first to get an idea of what to look for. Or, you may prefer to read the passage and try to answer the questions.
- 2) Read each passage and any accompanying information carefully. Follow the author’s reasoning and be aware of features such as assumptions, attitudes, and tone.
- 3) You may find it helpful to mark the passages as you are reading, but don’t spend too much time making notes.
- 4) Read each question and all the answer choices carefully.
- 5) Select the choice that best answers the question asked. Don’t select a choice just because it is a true statement.

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from  
[www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

## MATH SECTION

The PSAT has math questions that test your basic understanding of algebra, geometry, data analysis, measurement, probability and statistics. So, you definitely want to pay attention in math class, do your homework, and ask your teacher questions if you don't understand something. The first part of the math section has 28 multiple-choice questions. Give the students 1 1/2 minutes to complete each question.

**Explain to the students that some of the math questions are very difficult and we may not be able to explain all of the answers. Brainstorm with the students where they can go for help. (Math teacher, after school tutorials, etc. )**

### Multiple-Choice

5. If  $n$  is an odd integer, which of the following must be an odd integer?

- (A)   $n - 1$
- (B)   $n + 1$
- (C)   $2n$
- (D)   $3n + 1$
- (E)   $4n + 1$

• **EXPLANATION OF QUESTION 5:**

The correct response is (E),  $4n + 1$ . Choice E states  $4n + 1$ . Since we know that  $n$  equals an odd integer let's replace it with 3, to keep it simple. 4 multiplied by 3 equals 12. If I add 1 to 12, I get 13. Since the question asked for an odd integer, choice E is the right response.

Below are reasons for why the other choices are incorrect. You DO NOT need to explain all of this reasoning. If you find that you have more time and your students want a more detailed answer, you may want to use the explanation below.

If  $n$  is an odd integer, like 3 or 5, if you add one or subtract one from it you will get an even number. This eliminates choices 1 and 2. Choice C is eliminated because any integer multiplied by 2 will be an even integer. Choice D cannot be correct because it states  $3n - 1$ . Since we know that  $n$  is an odd integer let's replace it with 3, keep it simple. 3 multiplied by 3 equals 9. If I take 1 away from 9, I am left with 8 and 8 is an even number.

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

6. Two seniors, Abby and Ben, and two juniors, Cathy and Dave, are to be assigned to 3 lockers, # 46, #47, and # 48. Below are three rules that must be followed before the lockers can be assigned.

- \* All 3 lockers are to be assigned
- \* Abby and Ben cannot share a locker with each other.
- \* A senior cannot share a locker with a junior.

The locker assignments of all four students can be determined from the assignments of which of the following pairs?

- I. Abby and Ben
- II. Ben and Cathy
- III. Cathy and Dave

- (A)  I only
- (B)  II only
- (C)  III only
- (D)  I and II only
- (E)  I, II, and III only

• **EXPLANATION OF QUESTION 6:**

**(You may want to draw three lockers numbered 46, 47, and 48 on the board, chart paper or an overhead transparency before starting to explain this question.)**

The correct response is (D), I and II only. In the rules you know that all three lockers have to be assigned. You are also told that Abby and Ben cannot share a locker. Since they need 2 different lockers, two out of the three original lockers are now occupied. The last rule states that a senior cannot share a locker with a junior. Both Abby and Ben are seniors and Cathy and Dave are both juniors. So Cathy and Dave are unable to share with either Abby or Ben. This means that Cathy and Dave have to share lockers with each other.

Below are reasons for why the other choices are incorrect:

In choice I, if you assign Abby and Ben to their lockers, the last one left has to go to Cathy and Dave to share. Don't be fooled by this choice, because there is at least one more that will work. In choice II, If you assign Ben to one locker and Cathy to another, you know that Dave has to be in the locker with Cathy and that Abby has to be in the locker that was not assigned yet. In choice III, you can assign Cathy and Dave to one locker, say #46. You have #47 and #48 left. You have no information about which locker number will be Abby's and which will be Dave's. So Choice III is an incorrect answer. This is why response (D) is the correct response.

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

### STRATEGIES:

- 1 Look at the answer choices before you begin to work on each question.
- 2 Read each question carefully, even if it looks like a question you don't think you can answer. Don't let the form of the question keep you from trying to answer it.
- 3 If your answer isn't among the choices, try writing it in a different form. You may have the same answer in a different mathematical format.

### Student-Produced Response

The second math section asks for "Student-Produced Responses." There are 10 questions in this section. For this type of question, there are no multiple-choice answers to choose from. You have to come up with the answer to the problem on your own, and write it on the answer sheet. There's no penalty for guessing in this section. Give each student 2½ minutes to complete each question.

7. How many different three-digit numbers between 100 and 1,000 have 5 as the tens digit?

- **EXPLANATION OF QUESTION 7:**

The correct response is 90. In the 100's, the numbers with 5 as the ten digits are 150, 151, 152, ..., 159 (ten numbers). Also, there will be 10 such numbers in the 200's, 300's, all the way up to the 900's. Therefore, you multiply  $10 \times 9$  and you get 90 three-digit numbers between 100 and 1,000 that have 5 as the tens digit.

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)



8. The results for three candidates in an election are shown in the table above. If each voter voted for exactly one candidate, what is the fewest number of voters who would have had to vote differently in order for Candidate Z to have received more votes than Candidate X?

RESULTS OF AN ELECTION	
Candidates	Number of Votes
x	7,400
y	2,375
z	5,250

• **EXPLANATION OF QUESTION 8:**

The correct answer to this question is 1076.

For this question, let  $k$  be the number of voters who changed their vote. Since you want to make  $k$  as small as possible, the  $k$  voters should come from those who voted for Candidate X. To determine an answer to the problem, you would need to solve the inequality  $5,250 + k > 7,400 - k$ . Solving this inequality yields  $2k > 2150$  or  $k > 1075$ . Therefore, 1,076 voters who had voted for Candidate X would have to change their vote and vote for Candidate Z in order for Candidate Z to receive more votes than Candidate X. The correct answer to this question is 1076.

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

- **STRATEGIES:**

- 1) Since answer choices aren't given, a calculator may be helpful in avoiding careless mistakes on these questions.
- 2) Write your answer in the boxes above the grid. The dot stands for a decimal point. The slash would be used to show a fraction, like  $\frac{3}{4}$
- 3) Do not worry about which column to begin gridding the answer. As long as the answer is gridded completely, you will receive credit.
- 4) Some questions may have more than one right answer.

[After you have gone over the strategies for Student-Produced Response questions, put the "Math Section: Student Produced Response Practice Grids" of **Student Handbook page X, "Bull's Eye: The PSAT Game Show"** on an overhead, or copy onto chart paper. Direct students' attention to the "Math Section: Student Produced Response Practice Grids" of **Student Handbook page X, "Bull's Eye: The PSAT Game Show."** Explain to the students that on the real test, they may get an answer that seems difficult to grid in the boxes. (See next page for "Student Produced Response Practice Grids Answer Key")]

- **Explanations for each GRID IN question:**

1. This question has the students recording dollars and cents. There is no place on the grid for dollar signs, so the students leave off the dollar sign and grid in the actual number. Putting the decimal point in the right spot is important.
2. This question has the students recording a mixed fraction, meaning a whole number with a fraction [2 (whole number) and  $\frac{1}{3}$  (fraction)]. Since there is no way to grid this in, student's need to turn it into an improper fraction, like  $\frac{7}{3}$  Note the correct way to grid the slash that shows that this is a fraction.
3. This question addresses a repeating number. Since the students have only a limited number of boxes, they will just fill in 4 three times.
4. This question addresses percents. Since there is no percent symbol in the grids, the students need to turn the percent into a decimal. To do this, move the decimal place over two places to the left. (20% becomes .20, but zeros after the decimal place do not need to be filled in.)

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from  
[www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

### Math Section: Student Produced Response Practice Grids Answer Key

1. \$1.75

.	/	/	.
0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

2.  $2\frac{1}{3}$

.	/	/	.
0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

3. .44444.....

.	/	/	.
0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

4. 20%

.	/	/	.
0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

## WRITING SECTION

There are three kinds of writing questions—all multiple choice. Today we’re going to look at the first two kinds of questions. Give each student 2 minutes to complete each question.

### Identifying Errors

There are 14 questions on this part of the test. Your goal is to find a grammatical error (mistake) in each sentence. If there’s no mistake, choose (E), “no error.”

9. The starling is such a pest in rural areas that it has become necessary

A

B

to find ways of controlling the growth of their population. No error.

C

D

E

- **EXPLANATION OF QUESTION 9:**

The error in this sentence is (D), of their. The pronoun “their” in the phrase “of their” should be “its” because the pronoun refers to the singular noun “starling.” The correct sentence reads:

**The starling is such a pest in rural areas that it has become necessary to find ways of controlling the growth of its population.**

10. Air pollution caused by industrial fumes has been studied for years, but only

A

B

recently has the harmful effects of noise pollution become known. No error.

C

D

E

Source: [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

- **EXPLANATION OF QUESTION 10:**

The error in this sentence is C: the verb “has” (which is singular) does not agree in number with the noun “effects” (which is plural). The correct sentence reads: **Air pollution caused by industrial fume has been studied for years, but only recently have the harmful effects of noise pollution become known.**

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

- **STRATEGIES:**

- 1) Read the entire sentence carefully but quickly.
- 2) Look at choices (A) through (D) to see whether anything needs to be changed to make the sentence correct.
- 3) Don’t waste time searching for errors. Mark (E) No error, on your answer sheet if you believe the sentence is correct as written.
- 4) Move quickly through questions about Identifying Sentence Errors. The other kinds of questions (Improving Sentences and Improving Paragraphs) will probably take more time. And all these questions are worth the same thing—1 point.
- 5) Mark questions that seem hard for you and return to them later.

## Improving Sentences

In this section, you’re looking for a way to make the passage better. (There’s also an “improving paragraphs” section, which we’re skipping for the sake of time.) There are 20 improving-sentences questions and 5 improving-paragraphs questions on the PSAT. Give each student 1½ minutes to complete each question.

11. Hearing the Statue of Liberty did not have a pedestal, a campaign was begun by Joseph Pulitzer to raise money for the construction of one.

- (A)  a campaign was begun by Joseph Pulitzer to raise money
- (B)  a campaign to raise money was initiated by Joseph Pulitzer
- (C)  money was raised in a campaign by Joseph Pulitzer
- (D)  Joseph Pulitzer began a campaign to raise money
- (E)  Joseph Pulitzer had campaigned to raise money

- **EXPLANATION OF QUESTION 11:**

The correct response is (D). “Hearing the Statue of Liberty did not have a pedestal” needs to be followed by the name of the hearer, so only choice D or E could be correct. Of these sentences, D is better because the sentence describes the start of Pulitzer fund-raising, making “began” correct.

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

12. Underestimating its value, breakfast is a meal many people skip.

- (A)  Underestimating its value, breakfast is a meal many people skip.
- (B)  Breakfast is skipped by many people because of their underestimating its value.
- (C)  Many people, underestimating the value of breakfast, and skipping it.
- (D)  Many people skip breakfast because they underestimate its value.
- (E)  A meal skipped by many people underestimating its value is breakfast.

• **EXPLANATION OF QUESTION 12:**

The correct response is (D). None of the other choices conveys the information presented in the sentence as effectively and directly as choice (D).

• **STRATEGIES:**

- 1) Read the entire sentence carefully but quickly. Note the underlined portion because that is the portion that may have to be revised.
- 2) Remember that the portion with no underline stays the same.
- 3) Think of how you would revise the underlined portion if it seems wrong. Look for your revision among the choices given.
- 4) Replace the underlined portion of the sentence with each choice if you don't find your revision. Concentrate on the choices that seem clear and exact when you read them.

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from  
[www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

# TEST STRATEGIES

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## I. READING SECTION

### Sentence Completion

**STRATEGIES:**

- 1) Read the sentence to yourself. Before you look at the five choices, say to yourself, "What word might finish this sentence?"
- 2) Read the sentence, and try putting each of the 5 choices in the blank. Which one makes the most sense?

### Passage-Based Reading

**STRATEGIES:**

- 1) You may find it helpful to read the questions first to get an idea of what to look for. Or, you may prefer to read the passage and try to answer the questions.
- 2) Read each passage and any accompanying information carefully. Follow the author's reasoning and be aware of features such as assumptions, attitudes, and tone.
- 3) You may find it helpful to mark the passages as you are reading, but don't spend too much time making notes.
- 4) Read each question and all the answer choices carefully.
- 5) Select the choice that best answers the question asked. Don't select a choice just because it is a true statement.

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

## II. MATH SECTION

### Multiple-Choice

#### STRATEGIES:

1. Look at the answer choices before you begin to work on each question.
2. Read each question carefully, even if it looks like a question you don't think you can answer. Don't let the form of the question keep you from trying to answer it.
3. If your answer isn't among the choices, try writing it in a different form. You may have the same answer in a different mathematical format.

### Student-Produced Response

#### STRATEGIES:

- 1) Since answer choices aren't given, a calculator may be helpful in avoiding careless mistakes on these questions.
- 2) Write your answer in the boxes above the grid. The dot stands for a decimal point. The slash would be used to show a fraction, like  $\frac{3}{4}$ .
- 3) Do not worry about which column to begin gridding the answer. As long as the answer is gridded completely, you will receive credit.
- 4) Some questions may have more than one right answer.

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from  
[www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)



## III. WRITING SECTION

### Identifying Errors

#### STRATEGIES:

- 1) Read the entire sentence carefully but quickly.
- 2) Look at choices (A) through (D) to see whether anything needs to be changed to make the sentence correct.
- 3) Don't waste time searching for errors. Mark (E) No error, on your answer sheet if you believe the sentence is correct as written.
- 4) Move quickly through questions about Identifying Sentence Errors. The other kinds of questions (Improving Sentences and Improving Paragraphs) will probably take more time. And all these questions are worth the same thing—1 point.
- 5) Mark questions that seem hard for you and return to them later.

### Improving Sentences

#### STRATEGIES:

- 1) Read the entire sentence carefully but quickly. Note the underlined portion because that is the portion that may have to be revised.
- 2) Remember that the portion with no underline stays the same.
- 3) Think of how you would revise the underlined portion if it seems wrong. Look for your revision among the choices given.
- 4) Replace the underlined portion of the sentence with each choice if you don't find your revision. Concentrate on the choices that seem clear and exact when you read them.

SOURCE: Test questions, explanations, and strategies excerpted and adapted from [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

## "Bull's-Eye! The PSAT Game Show Score Card"

**Directions:** Assign each pair a number before starting the game. If a team gets a question right, put a check in that team's box for the question being answered.

Team#	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
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12												
13												
14												
15												
16												
17												



## Bull's-Eye! The PSAT Game Show

### Reading: Sentence Completion

**DIRECTIONS:** Choose the word(s) that best completes each sentence.

1. The addition of descriptive details to the basic information serves to \_\_\_\_\_ the book by producing a fuller account.

- (A)  invalidate
- (B)  diminish
- (C)  objectify
- (D)  celebrate
- (E)  enrich

Source: [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

2. Although some think the term "bug" and "insect" are \_\_\_\_\_, the former term actually refers to \_\_\_\_\_ group of insects.

- (A)  parallel -- an identical
- (B)  precise -- an exact
- (C)  interchangeable -- a particular
- (D)  exclusive -- a separate
- (E)  useful -- a useless

Source: [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

**TIPS FOR ANSWERING SENTENCE COMPLETION QUESTIONS:**

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Reading: Passage-Based Reading

**DIRECTIONS:** Read each passage. Then answer the question below it.

American Indians are often thought of as one group, but they do not constitute a single, unified ethnic grouping. There are literally hundreds of cultural and linguistic—that is, ethnic—distinctions: the Navajo of Arizona, for example, have little in common with the Mohawks of New York. The Inuits and the Aleuts of Alaska are categorized as American Indians, but they are ethnically distinct from each other and from the American Indians of the contiguous states as well. It is estimated that from 300 to 550 different American Indian languages were in use in North America before European colonization; about 150 are still spoken today.

While the Ingalik language and culture differ from those of the Seminoles, there is a general history that all American Indians have in common: an origin in the prehistoric past somewhere in northeast Asia (their immigration to the Western Hemisphere, over a period of thousands of years, was an event so remote that evidence of it is lost in the strata of ancient rock or ice deposits) and, in more recent centuries, confrontation with European explorers and settlers followed by extreme social and economic discrimination by the European Americans.

For all American Indians, an integrated way of life was irrevocably upset by the arrival of Europeans and their expropriation of the land. The trauma of culture conflict had its origins in the very first contacts between the Europeans, who could not comprehend the American Indians' attitude toward land as an everlasting resource for common use, and the American Indians, who could not comprehend the notion of land as private property that could be sold and lost forever.

Most estimates of American Indian population at the time of the European arrival hover around the one million mark. However, for a number of reasons it is believed likely that the population might have been two or more times that. The Europeans introduced not only conflicting ways of life, but diseases to which the American Indians had no resistance, and whole populations died. By 1860 there were only about 340,000 American Indians in the contiguous states and by 1910 some 220,000. Improvement in medical care even on remote reservations at about that time resulted in a decline in the death rate, and the American Indian population started to grow. The Census Bureau records that from 1950 to 1970 this population more than doubled, from 357,000 to 793,000.

Source: [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

## Reading: Passage-Based Reading

3. The author indicates that the **trauma of culture conflict** initially resulted from the
- (A)  migration of American Indians from northeast Asia to the Western Hemisphere
  - (B)  linguistic and cultural differences between the various American Indian groups
  - (C)  extreme social and economic discrimination practiced by European Americans
  - (D)  different attitudes toward land held by Europeans and American Indians
  - (E)  decline of the American Indian population after the arrival of the Europeans
4. As used in the paragraph above, the word **common** most nearly means
- (A)  coarse
  - (B)  familiar
  - (C)  mediocre
  - (D)  plain
  - (E)  shared

Source: [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

**TIPS FOR ANSWERING PARAGRAPH-BASED READING QUESTIONS:**

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Math: Multiple Choice

**DIRECTIONS:** Solve each problem. Then decide which is the best of the choices given.

5. If  $n$  is an odd integer, which of the following must be an odd integer?

- (A)   $n - 1$
- (B)   $n + 1$
- (C)   $2n$
- (D)   $3n + 1$
- (E)   $4n + 1$

Source: [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

6. Two seniors, Abby and Ben, and two juniors, Cathy and Dave, are to be assigned to 3 lockers, # 46, #47, and # 48. Below are three rules that must be followed before the lockers can be assigned.

- \* All 3 lockers are to be assigned
- \* Abby and Ben cannot share a locker with each other.
- \* A senior cannot share a locker with a junior.

**The locker assignments of all four students can be determined from the assignments of which of the following pairs?**

- I. Abby and Ben
- II. Ben and Cathy
- III. Cathy and Dave

- (A)  I only
- (B)  II only
- (C)  III only
- (D)  I and II only
- (E)  I, II, and III only

Source: [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)



**TIPS FOR ANSWERING MATH MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS:**

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Math: Student-Produced Response

**DIRECTIONS:** Solve each problem and mark your answer in the grid below.

7. How many different three-digit numbers between 100 and 1,000 have 5 as the tens digit?

**ANSWER:** \_\_\_\_\_

Source: [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

8. The results for three candidates in an election are shown in the table above. If each voter voted for exactly one candidate, what is the fewest number of voters who would have had to vote differently in order for Candidate Z to have received more votes than Candidate X?

RESULTS OF AN ELECTION	
Candidates	Number of Votes
x	7,400
y	2,375
z	5,250

**ANSWER:** \_\_\_\_\_

Source: [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

7. 

.	/	/	.
0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

8. 

.	/	/	.
0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

### Math Section: Student Produced Response Practice Grids

1. \$1.75

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1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

2.  $2\frac{1}{3}$

.	/	/	.
0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

3. .44444.....

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1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

4. 20%

.	/	/	.
0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

**TIPS FOR ANSWERING MATH STUDENT PRODUCED RESPONSE QUESTIONS:**

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- ---

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- ---

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## Writing: Identifying Sentence Errors

**DIRECTIONS:** If there is an error, select the one underlined part that must be changed to make the sentence correct. If there is no error, select E.

9. The starling is such a pest in rural areas that it has become necessary to find ways  
A B C  
of controlling the growth of their population. No error.  
D E

- (A)
- (B)
- (C)
- (D)
- (E)

Source: [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

10. Air pollution caused by industrial fumes has been studied for years, but only  
A B  
recently has the harmful effects of noise pollution become known. No error.  
C D E

- (A)
- (B)
- (C)
- (D)
- (E)

Source: [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

**TIPS FOR ANSWERING WRITING (IDENTIFYING SENTENCE ERROR) QUESTIONS:**

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Writing: Improving Sentences

**DIRECTIONS:** Select the answer that produces the most effective sentence. Follow requirements of standard written English. Choose the answer that best expresses the meaning of the original sentence.

Answer (A) is always the same as the underlined part. Choose answer (A) if you think the original sentence needs no revision.

11. Hearing the Statue of Liberty did not have a pedestal, a campaign was begun by Joseph Pulitzer to raise money for the construction of one.

- (A)  a campaign was begun by Joseph Pulitzer to raise money
- (B)  a campaign to raise money was initiated by Joseph Pulitzer
- (C)  money was raised in a campaign by Joseph Pulitzer
- (D)  Joseph Pulitzer began a campaign to raise money
- (E)  Joseph Pulitzer had campaigned to raise money

Source: [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

12. Underestimating its value, breakfast is a meal many people skip.

- (A)  Underestimating its value, breakfast is a meal many people skip.
- (B)  Breakfast is skipped by many people because of their underestimating its value.
- (C)  Many people, underestimating the value of breakfast, and skipping it.
- (D)  Many people skip breakfast because they underestimate its value.
- (E)  A meal skipped by many people underestimating its value is breakfast.

Source: [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html)

**TIPS FOR ANSWERING WRITING (IMPROVING SENTENCES) QUESTIONS:**

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

For more information about PSAT Test Prep, visit the College Board's website:  
<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/prep.html>.