The Simple Digital SAT® Reading & Writing Craft and Structure Cheat Sheet

Domain Overview & Workflow

What's Tested

Craft & Structure: ~28% of R&W → 13–15 of 54 Qs. Each Q = 1 short text (2 for Cross-Text) + 1 Q.
Order: these Qs come FIRST in each module, grouped by skill, easy → hard within each.

Skill	Stem clue
Words in Context	"logical & precise word"
Word meaning	"most nearly mean"
Purpose	"main purpose"
Structure / Function	"structure," "underlined"
Cross-Text	"Text 2 ... respond"

4-Step Workflow

1. Read the Q first: know your job.
2. Read the WHOLE text: clues can come before or after the blank (read both sides).
3. Predict: answer in your own words before looking at choices (8 words or fewer).
4. Eliminate: cut wrong-charge (+/–), too strong, half-right and off-text choices fast.

Timing

Pace: 27 Qs in 32 min per module → ~71 sec/Q. Word Qs are quick → save time for 2-text Qs.
No guessing penalty → never leave a Q blank. Flag it, come back later if time allows.

✓ Every right answer is provable from the text. If you can't point to it, it's wrong.

⚠ Outside knowledge never decides an answer. Use only what the text says on the page.

Words in Context: Fill the Blank

The Task

Stem: "Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?"
Cover the choices: say your own word, THEN look. That stops traps from steering you.

Find the Clue

Restatement: a colon, dash, "i.e." or the next sentence often repeats the blank's idea. e.g., "same pleasant musical quality" → *melodic*.
Charge: is the blank positive (+) or negative (–)? Cut the opposite charge first (fastest cut).

Signal	Blank is...
but, yet, though	opposite of clue
and, also, ;	same as clue
because, so	result of clue
colon (:), i.e.	= the clue
e.g., such as	category of example

Clue after the blank: "known for ___ boundaries... lab includes engineers, biologists, chemists" → mixed fields → *transcending* (crossing).

Eliminate

Degree: match strength, not just the direction. "Somewhat" ≠ "devastating" (too strong).
Plug it back in: reread the sentence w/ the choice; it must fit the clue exactly (no stretching it).

✓ Predict before you peek: your own word cuts 2–3 choices fast in just a few seconds.

⚠ Watch for opposites (reinforcing vs. transcending). Check the charge first.

Words in Context: "Most Nearly Mean"

The Task

Stem: "As used in the text, what does the word X most nearly mean?" Tests a 2nd meaning.
Method: cover the word, reread the sentence, put your own synonym in, then match a choice.

Second Meanings

Word	In context
quality	characteristic
check	restrain
sound	valid, solid
novel	new, original
command	mastery
qualify	limit, modify
wanting	lacking
entertain	consider
account	explanation
reserve	restraint
appreciate	recognize

Trap

Usual-meaning trap: the word's most common definition is usually the wrong choice.
Register: older or formal texts (1800s fiction) use older, formal senses of common words.

⚠ Never answer from the word alone. The sentence decides the meaning.

✓ Swap each choice in for the word: the right one keeps the sentence's meaning the same.

Words in Context: High-Utility Vocab

Words to Know

Word	Means
undermine	weaken
bolster	strengthen
corroborate	confirm w/ evidence
tentative	not final, hesitant
ambivalent	mixed feelings
pervasive	spread everywhere
negligible	too small to matter
unprecedented	never done before
mitigate	lessen (harm)
exacerbate	make worse
scrutinize	examine closely
innocuous	harmless
arbitrary	random, no reason
meticulous	very careful

Unknown Word?

Word parts: bene = good; mal = bad; ambi = both; un-/dis- = not; trans- = across.
Science words: posit = propose; anomaly = odd result; replicate = repeat a study.
Charge test: unsure? guess + or – from its parts, then cut choices w/ the wrong charge.

⚠ Don't pick a word b/c it sounds fancy or academic. It must match the clue in the text.

✓ No list covers every word. Clue + charge + elimination wins most word Qs.

Text Structure & Purpose: Main Purpose

The Task

Stem: "Which choice best states the main purpose of the text?" → WHY the author wrote it.
Formula: purpose = verb + topic (e.g., explain + a finding). BOTH parts must match the text exactly.

Purpose Verbs

Verb	Text does...
Argue	takes a side
Explain	shows how or why
Describe	gives details only
Illustrate	uses an example
Challenge	disputes a view
Present	reports a study
Compare	2+ things side by side
Qualify	limits a claim

Find the Purpose

Opinion words ("we should not overstate") reveal purpose; a study after = example.
Study texts: "surprisingly" or "unexpectedly" → purpose is often to share an unexpected result.
Literary texts: purpose = show a character, mood or relationship (e.g., "to portray growing unease").
Scope: the purpose covers the WHOLE text; a choice about 1 sentence is too narrow.

⚠ Neutral text → neutral verb. "Criticize" or "prove" needs strong language.

✓ Finish "The author wants to show that..." in your own words, then match a choice.

Text Structure: Sentence Role & Flow

Underlined Sentence

Stem: "...function of the underlined sentence...?" Read the sentences before AND after it.

Role	Clue
Sets up	next lines explain it
Elaborates	adds to prior line
Contrasts	but, however
Gives example	e.g., case in point
Concludes	so, thus
Qualifies	limits: only, some

Example: "His singularity impelled a closer scrutiny." → **sets up** the description that follows.
Literary lines: may reveal character, shift the mood or mark a turn ("But now...", "Then").

Overall Structure

Stem: "...the overall structure of the text?" → list the text's moves in order (each sentence's job).

Pattern	Moves
Claim → support	point, then proof
View → challenge	belief, then doubt
Hypothesis → test	idea, study, result
Problem → solution	issue, then fix

Match the order: choice must list the moves in the SAME order as the text; 1 wrong step → cut.

⚠ Right parts in the wrong order = wrong answer. Check every step; cut any extra move.

✓ Label each sentence in 2–3 words (claim, example, twist) before you read the choices.

Cross-Text Connections

The Setup

Format: 2 short texts on the same topic + 1 Q about how they relate (Text 1, Text 2).
Typical stem: "How would the author of Text 2 most likely respond to [claim] in Text 1?"
Similarity Qs: "Both authors would most likely agree..." → pick only what BOTH texts support.

Method

1. Summarize each text in ≤10 words.
2. Find the overlap: the ONE shared claim the Q asks about, not all of each text.
3. Predict: agree, disagree or partly agree? "Contrary to expectations" = disagreement.
4. Answer as the author: stay in that author's view; skip your own opinion entirely.

Relationship	Text 2 signal
Agrees	confirms, consistent
Disagrees	found no..., contrary
Partly agrees	true only when...
Extends	adds a new case
Questions method	sample, design flaw

Sample: Text 1: early diversity drives later diversity. Text 2: pools ended equally diverse → Text 2: "plausible but not supported."

⚠ Match the degree: one contrary study weakens a theory; it doesn't prove it wrong.

✓ Circle WHO responds to WHOM. Text 2's view of Text 1 is not Text 1's view of Text 2.

Tone, Traps & Final Checks

Tone Words

Tone	Means
Ambivalent	mixed, torn
Skeptical	doubtful
Nostalgic	missing the past
Measured	balanced, careful
Dismissive	brushes it off
Wry / ironic	dry; says the opposite
Reverent	deeply respectful
Indifferent	doesn't care

Common Traps

Half-right: first half fits the text, second half adds an idea the text never says → cut the choice.
Too strong: "proves," "always," "all" → rarely right; texts hedge (may, suggests) → match that.
True but not the point: the detail is in the text, but it isn't WHY the text was written.
Out of scope: brings in an idea, group or field the text never mentions, even if it's true.
Reversed: swaps Text 1/Text 2 or cause/effect.

Final Check

Prove it: point to the exact words that back every part of your choice before you click.

⚠ Hedged text → hedged answer. "Some studies suggest" never supports "research proves."

✓ Stuck between 2? Pick the one closer to the text's actual words, not the flashier one.