The Ultimate 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. 1 short text (25–150 words; 2 texts for Cross-Text) + 1 Q each.

Order: C&S Qs come FIRST in each module, grouped by skill, easy → hard (WIC → purpose → structure → cross-text).

Skill	Stem clue	Task
Words in Context	"logical & precise"	Fill the blank
WIC (meaning)	"most nearly mean"	Define in context
Purpose	"main purpose"	Why text exists
Structure	"overall structure"	Map the moves
Function	"underlined sentence"	Sentence's role
Cross-Text	"Text 2 ... respond"	Relate 2 texts

4-Step Workflow

1. Read the Q first: know the job before the text (word? purpose? structure? text relationship?).
2. Read the WHOLE text: blanks and underlines depend on lines before AND after them (± 1 sentence).
3. Predict: your own word, purpose or relationship in ≤8 words before looking at choices (cuts traps fast).
4. Eliminate: wrong charge (+/−), too strong, half-right, off-text → cut, fastest cuts (wrong charge) first.

Timing & Bluebook

Pace: 2 modules × 32 min, 27 Qs each → ~71 sec/Q. WIC Qs go fast (~45 sec) → bank time for Cross-Text.
Mark & move: flag a stuck Q in Bluebook, return later. No guessing penalty → never leave a Q blank.
Adaptive: strong Module 1 → harder Module 2 → higher score ceiling. Accuracy early matters.

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

⚠ Don't pick a word b/c it sounds smart. Tested words are common academic words used precisely.

Words in Context: Fill the Blank

The Task

Stem: "Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?" The clue can sit anywhere.

Cover the choices: read, say your own word, THEN look. Stops trap answers from steering your thinking.

Find the Clue

Restatement: a colon, dash, "i.e." or the next sentence often repeats the blank's idea → match it exactly. e.g., "same pleasant musical quality" → *melodic* (= musical).
Charge: mark the blank + or −, then cut opposite-charge choices first (e.g., praise vs. criticism words).

Signal	Words	Blank is...
Contrast	but, yet, though	Opposite of clue
Continuation	and, also, ;	Same as clue
Cause/effect	b/c, since, so	Result of clue
Example	e.g., such as	Category of ex.
Restatement	: — i.e.	= the clue

Evidence after the blank: "known for ___ boundaries... lab includes engineers, biologists, chemists" → *transcending*.

Eliminate

Degree: text says "somewhat" → cut "devastating." Match strength, not just direction ("minor" ≠ "catastrophic").
Fit: word must pair naturally w/ neighbors and grammar (transcend *boundaries* ✓; anticipate *boundaries* ×).
Logic: right charge, wrong idea (scholarly vs. melodic) → cut.
Plug back in: reread the full sentence w/ the choice; it must sound like a precise academic writer.

✓ Predict before you peek: a 1-word prediction usually cuts 2–3 choices in seconds (then verify the clue).

⚠ Opposite traps are common (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 common word's LESS common sense.
Method: cover the word, reread the sentence, insert your own synonym, then match (not the usual sense).

Second Meanings

Word	Usual sense	Often in context
quality	goodness	characteristic
check	verify	restrain
sound	noise	valid, solid
novel	book	new, original
command	order	mastery
qualify	be eligible	limit, modify
reserve	save	restraint
wanting	desiring	lacking
entertain	amuse	consider
account	bank record	explanation
appreciate	value	recognize
issue	problem	publish

Trap Patterns

Primary-meaning trap: the word's most common definition is usually a decoy (e.g., check = verify, × here).
Related-but-off: Gatsby's "quality" = *characteristic*, not *standard* or *prestige* (near the word, wrong here).
Register: formal or older text (1800s fiction) → older, formal sense of the word (e.g., entertain = consider).

⚠ Never answer from the word alone. The full sentence, not your memory, decides the word's meaning.

✓ Swap each choice in for the word: the right one keeps the sentence's meaning unchanged (logic + tone).

Words in Context: High-Utility Vocab

Tier-2 Words to Know

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

Science words: posit = propose; anomaly = odd result; replicate = repeat a study; robust = strong, reliable.

Decode Unknown Words

Roots: bene/eu = good; mal/dys = bad; ambi = both; omni = all; chron = time; cred = believe; ver = true.
Prefixes: un-/in-/dis- = not; pre- = before; re- = again; sub- = under; trans- = across; post- = after; co- = with.
Charge test: unsure of a word? Judge +/− from its parts, then cut choices w/ the wrong charge.

⚠ Confusables: imply (hint) vs. infer (conclude); eminent (famous) vs. imminent (about to happen).

✓ No vocab list covers every word. Context + charge + elimination gets most WIC Qs right (charge first).

Text Structure & Purpose: Main Purpose

The Task

Stem: "Which choice best states the main purpose of the text?" → WHY the author wrote it, not just WHAT it says.
Formula: purpose = verb + object, e.g., "to illustrate why caution is needed." BOTH halves must match.

Purpose Verbs

Verb	Text does...
Argue / claim	takes a clear side
Explain	how or why sth works
Describe	gives details, no stance
Illustrate	ex. supports a point
Challenge	disputes a view
Compare	2+ things side by side
Present	reports a study/finding
Qualify	limits a claim

Find the Purpose

Author's claim: evaluative words ("we should not overstate...") = purpose; a study after it = *case in point*.
Study texts: setup → hypothesis → result. "Contrary to expectations," "surprisingly" → purpose often = present an unexpected finding (not to refute the field).
Literary texts: purpose = convey character, mood or a relationship, e.g., "to portray a character's growing unease."
Scope: main purpose covers the WHOLE text; a choice about 1 sentence is too narrow (it's a mere detail).
Two-part check: test the verb first (argue? describe?), then the object; cut any choice that fails either.

⚠ Strong verbs (criticize, refute, prove) need clearly negative or definitive language. Neutral text → neutral verb.

✓ Finish "The author wants to show that..." in your own words, then match the choice (verb + object).

Text Structure & Purpose: Structure & Function

Function of Underlined Sentence

Stem: "Which choice best states the function of the underlined sentence in the text as a whole?" Read the sentence before AND after to see its job in context.

Role	Clue
Introduces / sets up	next lines detail it
Elaborates	adds to prior line
Contrasts	but, however nearby
Gives example	e.g., case in point
Qualifies	limits: only, some
Concludes	sums up: so, thus

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

Overall Structure

Stem: "Which choice best describes the overall structure of the text?" → list the text's moves in order.

Pattern	Moves
Claim → support	point, then evidence
View → counterview	belief, then challenge
Problem → solution	issue, then fix
Hypothesis → test	idea, study, result
Phenomenon → cause	event, then why

Match the order: choice must list the moves in the SAME order; 1 wrong step → cut (even if parts are true).

⚠ A choice can name real parts in the wrong order, or add a move the text never makes. Check every step.

✓ Label each sentence in 2–3 words (claim, ex., twist) before reading choices (then map the order of moves).

Cross-Text Connections

The Setup

Format: 2 short texts (Text 1, Text 2) on the same topic + 1 Q on how they relate (often a study + a response).
Stems (most common forms): "Based on the texts, how would [author of Text 2] most likely respond to [claim] in Text 1?" or "...most likely describe the view in Text 1?"
Similarity Qs: "Both authors would most likely agree..." → pick only what BOTH texts support (not just 1).

Method

1. Summarize each: Text 1 = claim/view; Text 2 = new evidence/view. ≤10 words each (keep it tight).
2. Find the overlap: the ONE claim the Q asks about, not everything in each text (the 2 texts' point of contact).
Shared terms: Text 2 often echoes Text 1's key word or idea → that echo marks the overlap (e.g., same key term).
3. Predict: agree, disagree or partly agree? "Contrary to expectations" in Text 2 = its data clash w/ Text 1.
4. Answer as the author: stay inside the named author's view; don't add your own opinion or outside facts.

Relationship	Signal in Text 2
Agrees / supports	confirms, consistent
Disagrees	found no..., contrary
Qualifies	true only when...
Extends	adds a case, applies
Questions method	sample, design flaw

Sample: Text 1 theory: early diversity drives later diversity. Text 2: experimental pools ended equally diverse anyway → "plausible but not supported by our findings."

⚠ Match the degree: one contrary study undercuts a theory but doesn't "prove it wrong" or make it "absurd."

✓ Circle WHO responds to WHOM. Text 2's view of Text 1 ≠ Text 1's view of Text 2 (read the stem twice).

Tone, Traps & Final Checks

Tone & Attitude Words

Tone	Means
Ambivalent	mixed, torn
Skeptical	doubtful, unconvinced
Wry / ironic	dry; says the opposite
Nostalgic	longing for the past
Measured	balanced, cautious
Dismissive	rejects as unworthy
Reverent	deeply respectful
Indifferent	doesn't care

Default tone: SAT authors are usually measured; extreme tones (scornful, ecstatic) need strong proof.

Domain-Wide Traps

Half-right: 1st half matches the text well, 2nd half adds a claim the text never makes → cut (common trap).
Too strong: proves, refutes, always, all → rarely right; texts hedge (may, suggests) → choose the matching hedge.
True but not the point: detail is really in the text but isn't WHY the author wrote it (a classic purpose-Q trap).
Reversed: swaps Text 1/Text 2, cause/effect, or who did what to whom → cut (common in cross-text Qs).
Out of scope: brings in an outside idea, group, time or field the text never mentions, even if true → cut.
Too narrow / broad: covers only 1 detail, or claims more than the text supports (scope mismatch either way) → cut.

Final Check

Prove it: point to the exact words in the text that back every part of your choice (if you can't find them, cut it).

⚠ Hedged text (may, some) → hedged answer. "Some studies suggest" never supports "research proves."

✓ Stuck between 2? Pick the one closer to the literal text, not the more interesting or more dramatic one.