The Ultimate Digital SAT® Reading & Writing Information and Ideas Cheat Sheet

Domain Overview & Workflow

What's Tested

Info & Ideas: ~26% of R&W → 12–14 of 54 Qs, ~6–7 per module. 1 short text (25–150 words) + 1 Q each.
Texts: lit (prose, poetry, drama), history/social studies, humanities, science. Some add a table or graph.

Skill	Stem clue	Task
Central Ideas	"main idea"	Sum up whole text
Details	"according to"	Find stated fact
Textual Evid.	"support/weaken"	Pick finding/quote
Quant. Evid.	"uses data"	Graph → claim
Inferences	"logically"	Finish the logic

4-Step Workflow

1. Read the Q first: know the job before the text (main idea? support/weaken? complete the text?).
2. Read the text: tag claim, evidence, pivot words (but, however, yet, recently) that flag the main idea.
3. Predict: your own answer in ≤10 words before choices.
4. Eliminate: cut too broad, too narrow, off-topic, or contradicts text → keep the choice that survives.
Best ≠ perfect: "most" in the stem → pick the strongest of 4; 3 have a fatal flaw (overreach, off-topic, distortion).

Timing & Bluebook

Pace: 2 modules × 32 min, 27 Qs each → ~71 sec/Q. Graph & quote Qs run long; bank time on Conventions Qs.
Mark & move: flag in Bluebook, return later. No guessing penalty → never leave a Q blank on either module.
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 exact line in the text, it's wrong.

⚠ Outside knowledge never decides an answer — a true fact loses if the text doesn't say it as written.

Central Ideas & Details: Main Idea

Find the Central Idea

Central idea = what the WHOLE text claims or shows. Not 1 detail; not just the topic or the opening setup.
Formula: topic + author's point. e.g., "bees" × → "bees use dance to share food sites" ✓ (topic alone loses).
Where it lives: after a pivot (However, But, Yet, Recent research…) or in the last sentence (conclusion).
Structure cue: old view → new finding → central idea = the new finding (the old view is only the setup).
Two views: "Some argue X… but Y" → author's side (Y) = central idea, not X (signals: but, yet, however).

Answer Choice Filter

Trap	Looks like	Why wrong
Too narrow	1 detail	Misses the whole
Too broad	Big claim	Beyond the text
Distortion	Text's words	Twists meaning
Old view	1st sentence	Author rejects it
Off-topic	True fact	Not in the text

Prove It

Check test: does every sentence in the text fit the choice? If 1+ sentence clashes → cut (whole-text fit test).
Extremes: always, only, proves, all, never vs. text hedges (may, suggests, some) → mismatch = cut.
Paraphrase: right answer restates the text in new words; wrong ones often recycle its exact words.
Literary main idea: what happens + how character feels about it. e.g., "narrator hides grief behind routine."
Science texts: question → method → finding → meaning. Central idea = finding + what it means.

✓ Sum up the text in 1 sentence before reading choices; pick the choice closest to your summary.

⚠ "Scientists once believed X" is setup — the central idea is what they found instead (or why it was wrong).

Central Ideas & Details: Details & Lit Texts

Detail Questions

"According to the text" → answer is stated, often paraphrased. Find keyword, read that sentence ±1.
Character Qs: "what is true about X?" → find the line that describes X directly; ignore how you'd feel.
Pronouns: track who "she," "they," "this" refer to — many wrong choices swap the subject or who did what.
Numbers & names: details w/ dates, %, or names must match exactly — 1 swap = wrong (check twice).

Literary Texts

Genre	Read for	Tip
Prose	Character, mood	Note actions
Poetry	Speaker, images	Read past breaks
Drama	Dialogue, cues	Who → whom?

Intro blurb: line before the text names work, author, date, situation → frames the main idea. Always read it.
Old language (1800s–early 1900s): slow down; paraphrase each sentence in modern words (thee, hath, ere).
Tone words: wistful, ironic, earnest, ambivalent, resigned → match to concrete word choices in the text.

Detail Traps

Right words, wrong link: choice joins 2 real details into a false cause → effect that the text never states.
Reversal: swaps who did what, or flips ↑/↓, more/less, before/after (check every verb and comparison).
Half right: 1st half matches, 2nd half adds an unsupported claim → whole choice wrong (1 bad half sinks it).

⚠ Poems: speaker ≠ poet. Give feelings to "the speaker," not the author (even in a 1st-person poem).

✓ Lit Qs reward literal reading — the answer is in the lines, not in hidden symbolism you have to decode.

Command of Evidence: Textual (Support/Weaken)

Claim → Evidence

Task: pick the finding that would most directly **support**, **weaken**, or **illustrate** a claim (often a hypothesis).
Step 1: find the exact claim; mark its variables (who, what changes, which direction) (e.g., dose → growth ↑).
Step 2: predict ideal evidence: "if X causes Y → group w/ X shows more Y." than a matched group w/o X
Step 3: test each choice — does it hit the same variables AND the right direction? (both must match the claim)

Q asks	Right answer shows
Support	Same vars, same direction
Weaken	Same vars, opposite result
Illustrate	Concrete case of claim

Hypothesis Logic

Cause claim "A causes B" → support: A present → B ↑; A absent → B unchanged (more A → more B).
Comparison claim: needs data on BOTH groups compared. Data on 1 group alone can't support "more than."
Scope match: claim about wild wolves → evidence must be about wild wolves, not dogs or zoo wolves.

Elimination

Off-variable: true-sounding finding about a different factor or group than the claim names → cut, even if accurate.
Wrong direction: shows the opposite of what the Q asks → cut. Re-read the Q verb (support vs. weaken).
Restates claim: repeats or rewords the hypothesis w/o new data → not evidence → cut (it's circular).
Too weak: fits claim AND rival ideas → pick tighter fit.

⚠ "Weaken" Qs: test-takers pick the supporting choice by reflex. Re-check the verb before you click.

✓ "Would most directly support" = hypothetical. Findings needn't be real — just on-target for the claim.

Command of Evidence: Textual (Quotations)

Quotation Qs

Setup: a claim about a literary work (e.g., "speaker feels cut off from nature") → pick the quote proving it.
Break the claim down: speaker + feeling/trait + object. Quote must hit ALL parts (e.g., speaker + longing + home).
Predict: what would a line showing isolation say? Alone, apart, unseen, distant, shut out (jot it down first).
Claim words to circle: change, contrast, both, despite, longs for, rejects — the quote must show that exact relation.

Choice type	Verdict
Hits whole claim	✓ Keep
Right mood, wrong object	× Partial
Opposite feeling	× Contradicts
Vivid but unrelated	× Decoy

Decoding Old Lines

Paraphrase each quote first: "thou art" → you are; "'tis" → it is; "ere" → before; "hath" → has; "doth" → does.
Figurative language: metaphors still carry literal meaning — "winter of my heart" = sadness, coldness.
Context: who is "he"/"she" in the quote? Check the intro blurb and the claim before you choose an answer.

Non-Literary Quotes

Scholar/critic claims: same method — match the quote to every element of the claim (e.g., a historian's view).
Contrast claims ("shifts from hope to doubt"): quote must show BOTH sides, not just the start or end.
Speaker vs character: claim about narrator's view → quote must be narrator, not another character's line.

⚠ Most beautiful or dramatic line ≠ answer. Pick the one that literally states the claim's idea in plain words.

✓ Cover the quotes, write a 3–5 word "ideal line," then find the choice that matches it best (saves rereading).

Command of Evidence: Quantitative (Reading Data)

Read the Graphic First

10-sec scan: **title**, **axes**, **units**, **legend**, groups/years — before the text → then read the text's claim.

Graphic	Check
Bar graph	Groups compared, scale
Line graph	Trend over time, slope
Table	Row vs column labels
Scatterplot	+/− relationship

Units: %, thousands, per capita, mean vs total — a choice w/ the wrong unit is wrong (check the axis label).
Scale: y-axis may not start at 0 → small gaps look big. Read the actual numbers on the axis, not bar heights.

Data Vocabulary

Increase/decrease = change over time. **Greater than** = comparison at 1 point in time (same year).
Trend: overall direction; 1 dip ≠ reversal of the trend.
Proportion vs count: 40% of a small group can be fewer people than 20% of a big one (check the base).
Correlation: data show A & B move together, not that A causes B (no cause unless the text says so).
Estimation: "about," "roughly" → round from the graph; choices are far enough apart to tell apart easily.

Typical Data Traps

True but irrelevant: choice reads the graph right but doesn't address the claim → cut, even if every number is right.
Wrong group/year: right number from the wrong row, column or year (re-check the row and column labels) → cut.
Overreach: the data show only 3 cities, but the choice claims "all cities" or "everywhere" → too broad, cut.

⚠ Every number in a wrong choice may be accurate. Accuracy ≠ relevance — it must finish the claim.

✓ Check each choice against the graphic itself; never trust memory of a bar's height or a line's slope.

Command of Evidence: Quantitative (Claim + Data)

"Completes the Example"

Stem (typical): "Which choice most effectively uses data from the table to complete the example?"
Step 1: read the last sentence — what must the data show? Find the variable, groups + direction to look for.
Step 2: locate that exact comparison in the graphic; ignore other columns, rows and years (distractors).
Step 3: pick the choice that's (a) accurate AND (b) makes the exact point the text's final sentence sets up.
Read the text's lead-in: "For example, …" or "This is shown by…" → data must be the example, not a new point.

Worked Example

Claim: e-bike sales outgrew standard bike sales, 2019–22.
Data: e-bikes 1.2M → 2.9M; standard 4.1M → 3.8M.
Right: e-bikes ↑ while standard ↓. **Wrong**: "standard outsold e-bikes in 2022" — true, not about growth.

Claim word	Data must show
Increase	Later value > earlier
Outpaced	Faster growth
Most/least	Extreme value
Similar	Close values
Despite	Unexpected result

Weaken w/ Data

Weaken Qs: find the group/time where the claim predicts X but the graphic shows the opposite (that row wins).
Hypothesis + table: find the row the hypothesis predicts; the choice naming that row's result wins.

⚠ Accurate + off-claim = wrong. Accurate + wrong comparison = wrong. Need accurate AND on-claim.

✓ Cross out choices w/ any misread number first, then test the rest against the claim (any wrong figure = out).

Inferences (Logical Completion)

The Task

Stem: "Which choice most logically completes the text?" Text ends in a blank: finish the argument's logic.
Goal: the conclusion the text's evidence forces — not the most interesting or most general possible claim.
Read for logic: premise 1 + premise 2 → conclusion. Note signal words before the blank: thus, so, suggests, unless.

Logic Patterns

Text gives	Inference
A → B; A happened	B likely happened
Expected X, saw Y	Other factor at work
Only A has trait	Trait not from B
Old view + new data	Old view incomplete
Rules out cause 1	Cause 2 more likely

Hedging: right answers often hedge (may, could, at least some). "Proves/all/never" usually overreach.
Bridge the gap: right answer links the last fact back to the text's open question or puzzle left hanging.

Traps

Too far: plausible in real life, but it needs facts or assumptions the text never gives → cut, even if likely true.
Repeat: restates a premise already given; doesn't add the next logical step or complete the logic → cut.
Reverse: flips cause → effect, or the direction of a finding (↑ vs. ↓, more vs. less) → cut; re-read the premise.
Off-scope: brings in a new group, place, or time the text never mentions → cut, even if it sounds realistic.
Lit inference: must follow from a character's own words/actions, not guesses about motives.

⚠ The answer must follow from ALL the info, not just the sentence right before the blank (scan the whole text).

✓ Predict the blank in your own words; pick the choice needing the fewest new assumptions.