

# 10 Winning Strategies

to beat the SHSAT



**Bell Curves**

Get Ahead of the Curve!



# SHSAT Registration

**How to register:** Contact your guidance counselor before the end of September to register for the SHSAT. Within a few weeks, you will receive your SHSAT admission ticket.

**When:** The SHSAT is typically administered to 8th graders in late October, and to 9th graders one week later.

**How often:** The SHSAT may be taken once in the 8th grade and once in the 9th grade.

**How much:** Free!

**For more info:** <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/resources/testing/SHSAT.htm>



Some schools require that you rank them as your first option in order to be considered for admission.

## Get the facts!

There are many rumors about the SHSAT. The first step to a great score is learning what's true and what's not.

|   | True                     | False                    |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| The SHSAT is a test of a student's intelligence.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The SHSAT is required for admissions to all New York City Specialized High Schools.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The SHSAT is the sole criterion for admissions for most of New York City's Specialized High Schools.                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The SHSAT tests vocabulary and grammar.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The SHSAT favors students who score extremely well in one section and poorly in another, over those those who simply do well in both. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The SHSAT allows the use of most calculators for the math sections.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The questions are arranged in increasing order of difficulty.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A student will earn more points by guessing randomly than by leaving a question blank.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Answers: F F F F F F F F F F

Research the Specialized High Schools in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades and find out which school is right for you.

## Know what you need!

The SHSAT is the sole factor used by most Specialized High Schools to determine which applicants are admitted. Applicants are ranked by their score, and the top-scorers are admitted. Since the SHSAT is so important, you must know what score will make you attractive to the schools you want to attend. Also, ranking the schools in order of preference is important, as some schools are in such high demand that if you do not rank it as your first choice you may not be admitted even if you score higher than the cutoff score. The chart below shows recent cut-off scores for several of the Specialized High Schools.

| School   | Lowest SHSAT Score Admitted in 2010 |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Stuyvesant High School   | 565                                 |
| Bronx High School of Science   | 525                                 |
| High School of American Studies at Lehman College                    | 510                                 |
| High School for Mathematics, Science and Engineering at City College | 496                                 |
| Queens High School for the Sciences at York College                  | 492                                 |
| Staten Island Technical High School                                  | 485                                 |
| Brooklyn Technical High School                                       | 485                                 |
| Brooklyn Latin School  | 475                                 |

With the exception of LaGuardia, which requires an audition, all Specialized High Schools disregard your grades and any factors other than your SHSAT score when determining who to admit. So, if your grades weren't so hot, this is a great chance to still get into a great school!

## Build your endurance with real practice!

The SHSAT allows a total 150 minutes for both sections, but recommends you use 75 minutes for each section. Taking practice tests will not only build your endurance and stamina, but it will also help you learn to apportion your time appropriately. Like an athlete, you will perform at your best only if you train and practice realistically.

| Number of Questions | Content                         | Total Point Value |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| 5                   | Section 1: Scrambled Paragraphs | 10                |
| 10                  | Section 1: Logical Reasoning    | 10                |
| 30                  | Section 1: Reading              | 30                |
| 50                  | Section 2: Math                 | 50                |
| Total Points        |                                 | 100               |



Remember, you can flip to whichever section of the test you wish to at any time. If you're tired of Math, do some Reading!

## Learn what will be tested!

Knowing what's going to be on the test allows you to prepare for the test. To get your best score, spend 2-3 months before the test reviewing rules and learning effective strategies.

### Scrambled Paragraphs

(5 multi-part questions)

Scrambled Paragraph questions test a student's ability to:

- create an ordered, logical paragraph
- understand the natural flow of a text

### Logical Reasoning

(10 multiple-choice questions)

Logical Reasoning questions test a student's ability to:

- draw valid conclusions using the information and concepts presented
- figure out codes and determine the relative positions of objects based on clues

### Reading

(30 multiple-choice questions)

The Reading section measures the ability to:

- understand an author's purpose and reasoning
- make multiple, layered inferences
- understand the central idea
- identify the relationship of ideas within and across different texts

### Mathematics

(50 multiple-choice questions)

The Mathematics section tests:

- number operations and definitions
- algebra
- geometry and measurement
- word problems and mathematical reasoning
- data analysis, statistics, and probability

Knowing what to expect on the SHSAT will make you more confident and enable you to do better!

## Guess!

The SHSAT doesn't penalize students for guessing – in other words, blank answers and incorrect answers both receive 0 points. So, **you should answer every question. But that doesn't mean you have to spend time on every question. While SHSAT questions are not in a predictable order of difficulty, you can skip the hard questions and try them later.** If you run out of time, fill in random answers for the remaining questions and collect some free points!

### SHSAT Scoring

Josefina Schmoie

| Question | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Correct  | B  | H  | C  | K  | C  | F  | E  | G  | D  | F  | D  | H  | C  | G  | D  | F  | B  | J  | B  | K  |
| Student  | ✓  | J  | ✓  | F  | ✓  | J  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | G  | A  | ✓  | B  | ✓  | C  | ✓  | D  | ✓  | C  | F  |
| Question | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 |
| Correct  | A  | H  | C  | H  | D  | K  | B  | K  | B  | F  | D  | J  | A  | F  | B  | K  | D  | G  | D  | J  |
| Student  | B  | ✓  | B  | ✓  | ✓  | J  | ✓  | G  | A  | ✓  | C  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  | -  |

Answered: 31

Correct: 15

Skipped: 9

### Bell Curves Student

| Question | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Correct  | B  | H  | C  | K  | C  | F  | E  | G  | D  | F  | D  | H  | C  | G  | D  | F  | B  | J  | B  | K  |
| Student  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | K  | A  | ✓  | ✓  | K  | ✓  | G  | C  | G  | ✓  | ✓  | B  | G  | ✓  | ✓  | C  | ✓  |
| Question | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 |
| Correct  | A  | H  | C  | H  | D  | K  | B  | K  | B  | F  | D  | J  | A  | F  | B  | K  | D  | G  | D  | J  |
| Student  | ✓  | G  | ✓  | K  | ✓  | ✓  | C  | ✓  | C  | ✓  | C  | ✓  | ✓  | K  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | K  | C  | ✓  |

\*highlighted columns are guesses

Answered: 40

Correct: 23

Guessed: 13

#### Raw Scores

Correct Answers = +1  
Wrong Answers = 0  
Skipped Answers = 0

Use your time wisely to answer the number of questions that you need to achieve your target score.



# Plug in your own numbers when variables are in the answer choices!

## Multiple-Choice Questions

- Angelo has  $a$  markers. He has half as many markers as Carmen has. Together, Angelo and Carmen have 200 more markers than Mike. In terms of  $a$ , how many markers does Mike have?  
**A.**  $3a - 200$   
**B.**  $3a + 200$   
**C.**  $a/2 + 200$   
**D.**  $a - 200$   
**E.**  $3a/2 - 100$
- There are  $j$  tickets available to a concert at Venue A, and  $k$  tickets available at Venue B. Venue B has five more than three times as many seats as Venue A. What is the value of  $k$  in terms of  $j$ ?  
**F.**  $j + 5$   
**G.**  $3j + 5$   
**H.**  $3j - 5$   
**J.**  $5j$   
**K.**  $5j + 5$
- Given that  $x$  is an even integer, which of the following **cannot** be an odd integer?  
**A.**  $x/2$   
**B.**  $2x - 1$   
**C.**  $2x + 1$   
**D.**  $x - 1$   
**E.**  $x/3$

Answers: A, G, E

SHSAT math questions are often made more difficult by testing multiple concepts at the same time.

## Answer Reading questions in your own words before looking at the choices!

Line

...For centuries before trading with Europe, the Swahili had sailed the African coast in small, seaworthy boats of their own design. They were expert navigators, and their  
5 knowledge of the dangerous coastal waters enabled them to expand their influence along 3,000 kilometers of East African coastline. In this region, known as the Swahili corridor, the Swahili traded salt, cloth, and  
10 iron products for a wide range of goods from groups living in the African interior.

In the ninth century, the Swahili began also trading with Persian Gulf merchants, who  
15 in turn traded with China.

1. What was most important in enabling the Swahili to establish their trade along the East African coast?
  - A. large holdings of gold and ivory
  - B. knowledge of the coastal waters
  - C. ability to trade with European countries
  - D. knowledge of European art
  - E. possession of goods from China
2. Who were the Swahilis' first trading partners?
  - F. the Chinese
  - G. European countries
  - H. other African societies
  - J. Red Sea merchants
  - K. Persian Gulf merchants

Answers: B, H

## Read only what you need to answer the given question!

*Line* In the 1940s and 1950s, millions cheered for the first and, so far, the only professional female baseball league in the United States. Concerned that major-league teams might be shut down because players were being drafted to serve

5 in World War II, Philip K. Wrigley, owner of the major-league Chicago Cubs, chose the finest players from the amateur women’s softball leagues and established the American All-Girl Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL)

10 in 1943. The quality of play in the women’s league was so high that the games attracted many loyal fans in a number of Midwestern cities. In fact, in the best year of the league, over a million spectators attended AAGPBL

15 games. Public interest fluctuated over the years, however, and when television brought major-league baseball into people’s homes in the 1950s, it wiped out the AAGPBL and many other minor league operations as well.

20 That most people had sexist attitudes toward women’s athletics is evident from some of the team names, most of which alluded more to gender and appearance (Chicks, Peaches) than ballplaying skills. But in their six games a week

25 (two on Sundays), the women demonstrated that they were true athletes. The league quickly advanced from a modified form of softball to a serious game of baseball.

30 The women played hard and well, and major-league players and managers spoke highly of the league. One Hall of Famer called the thrilling, fourteen-inning championship game in 1946 the greatest he had ever witnessed, male or female.

1. What was the major reason for the end of the professional women’s baseball league?
  - A. The AAGPBL began using male ballplayers during the 1950s.
  - B. Women no longer competed against men after the war was over.
  - C. All-male minor leagues cut into the AAGPBL market.
  - D. People lost interest in baseball during the 1950s.
  - E. Baseball fans lost interest in minor-league baseball during the 1950s.
2. What was Philip K. Wrigley’s chief motivation in starting the league?
  - F. a desire to publicize his major-league team
  - G. a desire to keep wartime morale high among women
  - H. a belief in the long-term future of women’s participation in baseball
  - J. a desire to keep baseball available despite the war
  - K. a fear that fans would lose interest in professional sports

Answers: E, J

Don’t read the whole passage in one swoop. After reading a question, find and read only the information necessary to answer it.

## Read Logic Questions carefully, and draw a diagram!

In this example, Questions 1 and 2 refer to the information below.

There are five coasters stacked on a table. The bottom coaster is Coaster 1, the top coaster is Coaster 5. Each coaster is a different color.

- 1) The red coaster is above the green coaster.
  - 2) The yellow coaster is below the blue coaster.
  - 3) The orange coaster is between the red coaster and the yellow coaster.
  - 4) The yellow coaster is Coaster 2.
1. Which color is Coaster 1?
    - A. red
    - B. green
    - C. blue
    - D. orange
    - E. Cannot be determined from the information given.
  2. Which color is Coaster 5?
    - F. red
    - G. green
    - H. blue
    - J. orange
    - K. Cannot be determined from the information given.
  3. All of the officers at the air show were pilots. Some pilots at the air show wore their uniforms.

Based only on the information above, which of the following must be true?

    - A. All persons wearing uniforms at the air show were pilots.
    - B. Only pilots attended the air show.
    - C. If Zelda was an officer at the air show, then she must be a pilot.
    - D. All of the officers at the air show wore their uniforms.
    - E. If Peter was a pilot at the air show, then he wore his uniform.

Answers: B, K, C

It's important to remember that you can only work with the information given to you. If a question says the black car is in front of the red car, it isn't necessarily directly in front of it. Use Venn diagrams, symbols, and drawings to help you visualize the problem.

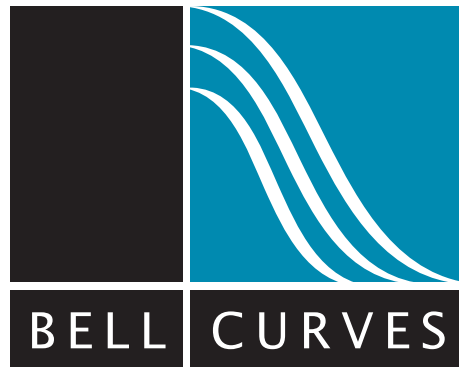
## Search Scrambled Paragraph questions for clues!

Nicéphore Niépce, who was a French inventor, was interested in lithography, which is a printmaking technique.

- \_\_\_ Q. It was so successful, in fact, that French newspapers said the French public suffered from 'Daguerreotypomania.'
- \_\_\_ R. He was experimenting with lithography when he found a way of copying etchings onto glass and pewter plates using a chemical that changes when it is exposed to light.
- \_\_\_ S. He shared his findings with Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, who improved the process and announced it to the French Academy of Sciences in 1839.
- \_\_\_ T. The Daguerreotype, the photography method named after Daguerre, met with great success.
- \_\_\_ U. He learned to burn images onto the plates and then print the images on paper.

Answers: 6, 2, 4, 5, 3

Pronouns, conjunctions such as 'but' or 'however,' and the recurrence of similar topics can all help you group and order your sentences.



**Contact us for SHSAT Courses and Tutoring!**

151 West 46<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 900 New York, NY 10036  
sat.bellcurves.com | 877-223-3828