

# 2006 Total Group Writing Subscore Report

## Introduction

Since the March 2005 administration, the SAT Reasoning Test has included a writing section. Writing is a core skill needed for success in both college and the workplace. Research has shown that a student's ability to write an effective first draft of a short, timed essay relates positively to the student's ability to perform successfully in college courses that require writing. The addition of the writing section reinforces the importance of writing skills throughout a student's education and supports the academic achievement of all students, bolstering their chances for academic success in college.

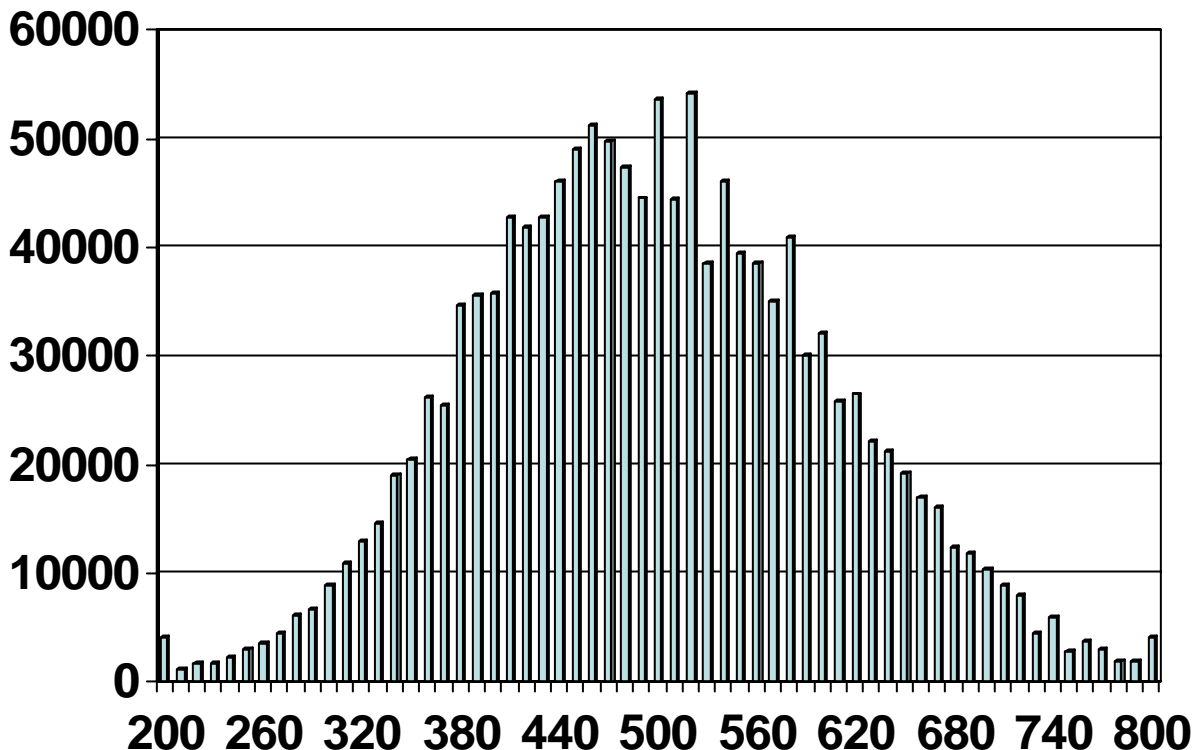
The SAT writing section includes multiple-choice questions and an essay. The multiple choice questions, which are similar to the multiple-choice questions on the former SAT Subject Test in Writing, reveal how well students use standard written English. The multiple-choice questions will test students' ability to identify sentence errors, improve sentences, and improve paragraphs.

The essay measures the student's skill using writing to develop a point of view on an issue. Students must first think critically about the issue presented in the essay assignment, forming their own individual perspective on the topic. Then they must develop that point of view, using reasoning and evidence based on their own reading, studies, experience, or observations to support their ideas. We recognize that an essay written in a short amount of time will not be polished, but represents the initial phase of the writing process: the first draft.

## Performance Summary

Of the 1,465,744 students in the 2006 College-Bound Seniors cohort, 1,376,745 took the SAT Reasoning Test after the January 2005 administration, and therefore have an SAT writing section score. As with the critical reading and the mathematics sections, scores on the SAT writing section are scored on a scale of 200-to-800. For the graduating class of 2006, the Writing mean score was 497, with a standard deviation of 109. Figure 1 shows the distribution of scores across the entire score range.

Figure 1: Distribution of SAT writing section scores for the 2006 graduating class



### Multiple choice subscores

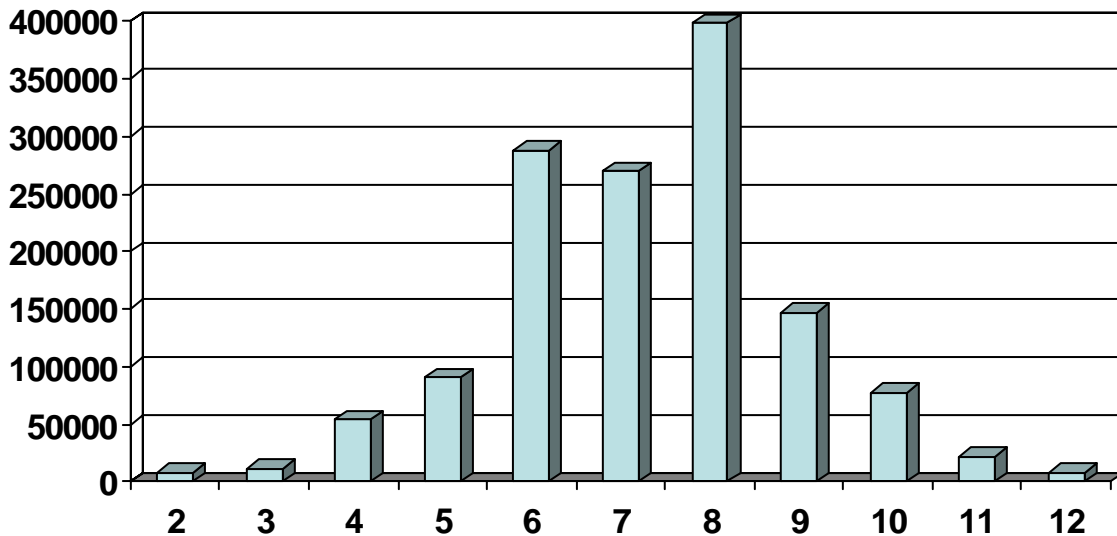
The writing section is comprised of one essay question and 49 multiple-choice questions. The multiple-choice writing questions measure students' ability to answer questions correctly that cover these areas: Improving Sentences, Identifying Sentence Errors, and Improving Paragraphs. The multiple-choice questions are scored on a 20-80 scale, and the graduating class of 2006 has a mean score of 50 on these questions, with a standard deviation of 11.

### Essay

The essay question asks students to write in response to an essay assignment, or prompt, which they must address in order to receive a score. The prompts are carefully selected to enable students to react and respond quickly in a variety of ways. The prompt gives students the opportunity to use a broad range of experiences, learning, and ideas to support their points of view on the issue addressed. The prompt consists of either a pair of quotations or a short paragraph (no more than 80 words in total length) adapted from some authentic text.

Essays are scored in a manner that is fair and consistent, using a holistic approach. In holistic scoring, a piece of writing is considered as a total work, the whole of which is greater than the sum of its parts. The essay is scored by 2 qualified readers, who take into account such aspects as complexity of thought, substantiality of development, and facility with language. A reader does not judge a work based on its separate traits, but rather on the total impression it creates. Each reader scores the essay on a 1-6 scale, with a 0 representing a blank or off-topic essay. The two scores are combined to form the overall essay score, graded from 2-12. For the 2006 class, the mean score on the essay is 7.2 with a standard deviation of 1.7. The distribution of scores for the students is highlighted in Figure 2 below. Note that, for the 2006 cohort, only 0.1% of the essays written received a score of 0.

Figure 2: Distribution of SAT Writing essay scores for the 2006 graduating class



The inter-rate reliability\* estimates for the essay scores have ranged from 0.75 to 0.81. Any essay that has a score difference of two or more points across readers is sent to a chief reader for resolution. During the test administrations from October 2005 to March 2006, the average number of essays sent to a chief reader ranged from approximately 2.8% to 4.1%.

### Performance by subgroups

Performance across the essay, multiple-choice questions, and the overall writing section demonstrated similar trends to those seen on the other sections of the SAT Reasoning Test. Table 1 summarizes the performance on the writing section by gender and ethnicity.

	# of students N	Essay		Multiple-choice		Total Writing Section	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Overall	1,376,745	7.2	1.7	50	11	497	109
Female	740,103	7.4	1.6	50	11	502	108
Male	636,642	7.1	1.7	49	11	491	110
American Indian	8,754	7.0	1.6	47	10	474	101
Asian	127,826	7.5	1.8	51	12	512	119
Black	143,305	6.5	1.6	43	9	428	93
Hispanic	145,724	6.8	1.6	45	10	451	98
White	778,885	7.5	1.6	52	10	519	100
Other	49,898	7.3	1.7	49	11	493	110
No Response	122,348	7.0	1.9	48	12	482	127

As can be seen in the table above, female students did notably better than male students on the writing section. It is important to note that this pattern of performance is consistent across both the multiple-choice and the essay questions.

In addition, it can also be seen that the achievement gap across numerous racial/ethnic groups is consistent with the other sections of the SAT Reasoning Test.

To learn more about the SAT writing section or the SAT Reasoning Test, please visit The College Board website at <http://www.collegeboard.com>.

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\* Inter-rate reliability refers to the extent to which two or more raters (or in this case, readers) show consistent scoring with one another