

Prompts sat



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

SAT Essay Prompt Bank 5th Edition Compiled by	March 10, 2008
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SAT Practice Essay Prompts Prompt 1

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Many persons believe that to move up the ladder of success and achievement, they must forget the past, repress it, and relinquish it. But others have just the opposite view. They see old memories as a chance to reckon with the past and integrate past and present. Adapted from Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, *I've Known Rivers: Lives of Loss and Liberation*

Assignment: Do memories hinder or help people in their effort to learn from the past and succeed in the present? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Prompt 2 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. When people

form opinions about someone or something, what affects them most is not substance but style.

In other words, the way something appears or is presented is more important than what it actually is. This principle affects how people look at their leaders and their lives, the books they read, the products they buy, and even the subjects they take at school. Assignment: Is style more important than substance? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Prompt 3 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. If we valued honesty, we would be willing to risk our jobs to become whistleblowers and tell truths that our employers did not want revealed. If we valued success, we would give up our free time in order to excel in a subject or sport. In other words, the sacrifices we are willing to make reveal what we care about the most. Assignment: Can what we value be determined only by what we sacrifice? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue.

Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 4 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Something flawed is far more interesting than something perfect. Perfection is a trifle dull. It is not the least of life's ironies that this, which we all aim at, is better not quite achieved. -Adapted from W. Somerset Maugham, *The Summing Up* Assignment: Is perfection something to be admired or sought

after? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue.

Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 5 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. We need to remember that wisdom is not just about what we think or know, but more importantly, how we act. Simply being smart is not enough. I define wisdom as the application of intelligence and experience toward the attainment of a common good. In other words, the wisest people are those who look out not just for themselves but also for others. -Adapted from Robert J.

Sternberg, “ Teaching for Wisdom in Our Schools” Assignment: What makes a person wise? Are the wisest people merely smart or are they also concerned with the well-being of others? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. May 2006 SAT Essay Prompts Prompt 1 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Some people claim that each individual is solely responsible for what happens to him or her.

But the claim that we ought to take absolute responsibility for the kinds of people we are and the kinds of lives we lead suggests that we have complete control over our lives. We do not. The circumstances of our lives can make it more or less impossible to make certain kinds of choices. -Adapted from Gordon D. Marino, “ I Think You Should Be Responsible; Me, I’m Not So Sure” Assignment: Are we free to make our own decisions or are we limited in the

choices we can make? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue.

Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 2 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Certainly anyone who insists on condemning all lies should think about what would happen if we could reliably tell when our family, friends, colleagues, and government leaders were deceiving us. It is tempting to think that the world would become a better place without the deceptions that seem to interfere with our attempts at genuine communication.

On the other hand, perhaps there is such a thing as too much honesty. Adapted from Allison Kornet, “The Truth About Lying” Assignment: Would the world be a better place if everyone always told the complete truth? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 3 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. It is not that people dislike being part of a community; it is just that they care about their individual freedoms more.

People value neighborliness and social interaction until being part of a group requires them to limit their freedom for the larger good of the group. But a community or group cannot function effectively unless people are willing to set aside their personal interests. Adapted from Warren Johnson, The Future Is Not What It Used To Be Assignment: Does the success of a community – whether it is a class, a team, a family, a nation, or any other group – depend

upon people's willingness to limit their personal interests? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue.

Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 4 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. There is an old saying: " A person with one watch knows what time it is; a person with two watches isn't so sure. " In other words, a person who looks at an object or event from two different angles sees something different from each position. Moreover, two or more people looking at the same thing may each perceive something different. In other words, truth, like beauty, may lie in the eye of the beholder.

Adapted from Gregory D. Foster, " Ethics: Time to Revisit the Basics" Assignment: Does the truth change depending on how people look at things? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. October 2006 SAT Essay Prompts Prompt 1 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. While some people promote competition as the only way to achieve success, others emphasize the power of cooperation.

Intense rivalry at work or play or engaging in competition involving ideas or skills may indeed drive people either to avoid failure or to achieve important victories. In a complex world, however, cooperation is much more likely to produce significant, lasting accomplishments. Assignment: Do people achieve more success by cooperation than by competition? Plan and write an

essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 2 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

Sometimes it is necessary to challenge what people in authority claim to be true. Although some respect for authority is, no doubt, necessary in order for any group or organization to function, questioning the people in charge—even if they are experts or leaders in their fields—makes us better thinkers. It forces all concerned to defend old ideas and decisions and to consider new ones. Sometimes it can even correct old errors in thought and put an end to wrong actions. Assignment: Is it important to question the ideas and decisions of people in positions of authority?

Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 3 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. We don't really learn anything properly until there is a problem, until we make a mistake, until something fails to go as we had hoped. When everything is working well, with no problems or failures, what incentive do we have to try something new? We are only motivated to learn when we experience difficulties.

Adapted from Alain de Botton, *How Proust Can Change Your Life: Not a Novel*
Assignment: Does true learning only occur when we experience difficulties?

Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your

reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 4 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. There are two kinds of pretending. There is the bad kind, as when a person falsely promises to be your friend.

But there is also a good kind, where the pretense eventually turns into the real thing. For example, when you are not feeling particularly friendly, the best thing you can do, very often, is to act in a friendly manner. In a few minutes, you may really be feeling friendlier. Adapted from a book by C. S. Lewis Assignment: Can deception—pretending that something is true when it is not—sometimes have good results? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

November 2006 SAT Essay Prompts Prompt 1 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. It is wrong to think of ourselves as indispensable. We would love to think that our contributions are essential, but we are mistaken if we think that any one person has made the world what it is today. The contributions of individual people are seldom as important or as necessary as we think they are. Assignment: Do we put too much value on the ideas or actions of individual people? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue.

Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 2 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Many

people deny that stories about characters and events that are not real can teach us about ourselves or about the world around us. They claim that literature does not offer us worthwhile information about the real world. These people argue that the feelings and ideas we gain from books and stories obstruct, rather than contribute to, clear thought. Adapted from Jennifer L. McMahon, "The Function of Fiction"

Assignment: Can books and stories about characters and events that are not real teach us anything useful? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Prompt 3 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. "No one is perfect." There are few among us who would disagree with this familiar statement. Certain that perfection is an impossible goal, many people willingly accept flaws and shortcomings in themselves and others.

Yet such behavior leads to failure. People can only succeed if they try to achieve perfection in everything they do. Assignment: Can people achieve success only if they aim to be perfect? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 4 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Everybody has some choice. People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are.

I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want and, if they

can't find them, make them. Adapted from George Bernard Shaw, Mrs. Warren's Profession

Assignment: Do success and happiness depend on the choices people make rather than on factors beyond their control? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

December 2006 SAT Essay Prompts

Prompt 1 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. In order to be the most productive and successful people that we are capable of being, we must be willing to ignore the opinions of others. It is only when we are completely indifferent to others' opinions of us—when we are not concerned about how others think of us—that we can achieve our most important goals. Assignment: Are people more likely to be productive and successful when they ignore the opinions of others? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue.

Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Prompt 2 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. In many circumstances, optimism—the expectation that one's ideas and plans will always turn out for the best—is unwarranted. In these situations what is needed is not an upbeat view but a realistic one. There are times when people need to take a tough-minded view of the possibilities of success, give up, and invest their energies elsewhere rather than find reasons to continue to pursue the original project or idea.

Adapted from Martin E. P. Seligman, *Learned Optimism* Assignment: Is it better for people to be realistic or optimistic? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 3 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. It is easy to make judgments about people and their actions when we do not know anything about their circumstances or what motivated them to take those actions.

But we should look beyond a person's actions. When people do things that we consider outrageous, inconsiderate, or harmful, we should try to understand why they acted as they did. Assignment: Is it important to try to understand people's motivations before judging their actions? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 4 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

Abraham Lincoln said, " Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be. " In other words, our personal level of satisfaction is entirely within our control. Otherwise, why would the same experience disappoint one person but delight another? Happiness is not an accident but a choice. Assignment: Is happiness something over which people have no control, or can people choose to be happy? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

January 2007 SAT Essay Prompts Prompt 1 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Many people believe that our government should do more to solve our problems. After all, how can one individual create more jobs or make roads safer or improve the schools or help to provide any of the other benefits that we have come to enjoy? And yet expecting that the government—rather than individuals—should always come up with the solutions to society's ills may have made us less self-reliant, undermining our independence and self-sufficiency.

Assignment: Should people take more responsibility for solving problems that affect their communities or the nation in general? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 2 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Most human beings spend their lives doing work they hate and work that the world does not need. It is of prime importance that you learn early what you want to do and whether or not the world needs this service.

The return from your work must be the satisfaction that work brings you and the world's need of that work. Income is not money, it is satisfaction; it is creation; it is beauty. Adapted from W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* Assignment: Is it more important to do work that one finds fulfilling or work that pays well? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Prompt 3 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. The education people receive does not occur primarily in school. Young people are formed by their experiences with parents, teachers, peers, and even strangers on the street, and by the sports teams they play for, the shopping malls they frequent, the songs they hear, and the shows they watch. Schools, while certainly important, constitute only a relatively small part of education. Adapted from Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Education for the Twenty-First Century" Assignment: Is education primarily the result of influences other than school?

Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 4 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. If we are dissatisfied with our circumstances, we think about changing them. But the most important and effective changes—in our attitude—hardly occur to us. In other words, we should worry not about how to alter the world around us for the better but about how to change ourselves in order to fit into that world.

Adapted from Michael Hymers, "Wittgenstein, Pessimism and Politics" Assignment: Is it better to change one's attitude than to change one's circumstances? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. March 2007 SAT Essay Prompts Prompt 1 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. From the time people are very

young, they are urged to get along with others, to try to "fit in." Indeed, people are often rewarded for being agreeable and obedient.

But this approach is misguided because it promotes uniformity instead of encouraging people to be unique and different. Differences among people give each of us greater perspective and allow us to make better judgments. Assignment: Is it more valuable for people to fit in than to be unique and different? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 2 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

It is easy to imagine that events and experiences in our lives will be perfect, but no matter how good something turns out to be, it can never live up to our expectations. Reality never matches our imaginations. For that reason, we should make sure our plans and goals are modest and attainable. We are much better off when reality surpasses our expectations and something turns out better than we thought it would. Adapted from Baltasar Gracian y Morales, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* Assignment: Is it best to have low expectations and to set goals we are sure of achieving?

Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 3 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Every event has consequences that are potentially beneficial. We may not always be happy about an experience, but we should at least gain in some

way from it. For example, the worldwide gasoline shortage in the early 1970's created many hardships but inspired efforts to conserve energy.

Whether the gains are large or small, there is something positive or useful for us in everything that happens to us. Assignment: Do we really benefit from every event or experience in some way? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. May 2007 SAT Essay Prompts Prompt 1 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Materialism: it's the thing that everybody loves to hate.

Few aspects of modern life have been more criticized than materialism. But let's face it: materialism—acquiring possessions and spending money—is a vital source of meaning and happiness in our time. People may criticize modern society for being too materialistic, but the fact remains that most of us spend most of our energy producing and consuming more and more stuff. Adapted from James Twitchell, "Two Cheers for Materialism" Assignment: Should modern society be criticized for being materialistic? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue.

Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 2 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Knowledge is power. In agriculture, medicine, and industry, for example, knowledge has liberated us from hunger, disease, and tedious labor. Today, however, our knowledge has become so powerful that it is beyond our control. We know how to do many things, but we do not know where, when,

or even whether this know-how should be used. Assignment: Can knowledge be a burden rather than a benefit?

Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 3 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. We do not take the time to determine right from wrong. Reflecting on the difference between right and wrong is hard work. It is so much easier to follow the crowd, going along with what is popular rather than risking the disapproval of others by voicing an objection of any kind. Adapted from Stephen J.

Carter, Integrity Assignment: Is it always best to determine one's own views of right and wrong, or can we benefit from following the crowd? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 4 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. It is often the case that revealing the complete truth may bring trouble—discomfort, embarrassment, sadness, or even harm—to oneself or to another person.

In these circumstances, it is better not to express our real thoughts and feelings. Whether or not we should tell the truth, therefore, depends on the circumstances. Assignment: Do circumstances determine whether or not we should tell the truth? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

June 2007 SAT Essay Prompts Prompt 1 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

People are happy only when they have their minds fixed on some goal other than their own happiness. Happiness comes when people focus instead on the happiness of others, on the improvement of humanity, on some course of action that is followed not as a means to anything else but as an end in itself. Aiming at something other than their own happiness, they find happiness along the way. The only way to be happy is to pursue some goal external to your own happiness. Adapted from John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*

Assignment: Are people more likely to be happy if they focus on goals other than their own happiness?

Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Prompt 2 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

Heroes may seem old-fashioned today. Many people are cynical and seem to enjoy discrediting role models more than creating new ones or cherishing those they already have. Some people, moreover, object to the very idea of heroes, arguing that we should not exalt individuals who, after all, are only flesh and blood, just like the rest of us.

But we desperately need heroes—to teach us, to captivate us through their words and deeds, to inspire us to greatness. Adapted from Psychology Today, "How To Be Great! What Does It Take To Be A Hero?"

Assignment: Is there a value in celebrating certain individuals as heroes? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position

with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 3 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

The advancements that have been made over the past hundred years or more are too numerous to count. But has there been progress? Some people would say that the vast number of advancements tells us we have made progress. Others, however, disagree, saying that more is not necessarily better and that real progress—in politics, literature, the arts, science and technology, or any other field—can be achieved only when an advancement truly improves the quality of our lives. Assignment: Have modern advancements truly improved the quality of people's lives? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue.

Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 4 It is not true that prosperity is better for people than adversity. When people are thriving and content, they seldom feel the need to look for ways to improve themselves or their situation. Hardship, on the other hand, forces people to closely examine—and possibly change—their own lives and even the lives of others. Misfortune rather than prosperity helps people to gain a greater understanding of themselves and the world around them. Assignment: Do people truly benefit from hardship and misfortune?

Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. October 2007 SAT Essay Prompts Prompt 1 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following

excerpt and the assignment below. A person does not simply "receive" his or her identity. Identity is much more than the name or features one is born with. True identity is something people must create for themselves by making choices that are significant and that require a courageous commitment in the face of challenges.

Identity means having ideas and values that one lives by. Adapted from Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* Assignment: Is identity something people are born with or given, or is it something people create for themselves? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 2 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

We value uniqueness and originality, but it seems that everywhere we turn, we are surrounded by ideas and things that are copies or even copies of copies. Writers, artists, and musicians seek new ideas for paintings, books, songs, and movies, but many sadly realize, "It's been done." The same is true for scientists, scholars, and businesspeople. Everyone wants to create something new, but at best we can hope only to repeat or imitate what has already been done. Assignment: Can people ever be truly original? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue.

Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 3 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. All people who have achieved greatness in something knew what they excelled

at. These people identified the skills that made them special—good judgment, or courage, or a special artistic or literary talent—and focused on developing these skills. Yet most people achieve superiority in nothing because they fail to identify and develop their greatest attribute.

Adapted from Baltasar Gracian y Morales, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*
Assignment: Do people achieve greatness only by finding out what they are especially good at and developing that attribute above all else? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 4 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Having many admirers is one way to become a celebrity, but it is not the way to become a hero. Heroes are self-made.

Yet in our daily lives we see no difference between " celebrities" and " heroes. " For this reason, we deprive ourselves of real role models. We should admire heroes—people who are famous because they are great—but not celebrities—people who simply seem great because they are famous.

Adapted from Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*
Assignment: Should we admire heroes but not celebrities? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

November 2007 SAT Essay Prompts Prompt 1 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. People today have so many choices. For instance, thirty years ago most television viewers

could choose from only a few channels; today there are more than a hundred channels available. And choices do not just abound when it comes to the media. People have more options in almost every area of life. With so much to choose from, how can we not be happy? Assignment: Does having a large number of options to choose from make people happy?

Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 2 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. We are often urged to solve problems by ignoring traditional approaches and by finding solutions that are innovative or unconventional. We are encouraged to be creative and to trust that a new way of thinking will yield new insights. But innovation may be impractical and unnecessary.

The best ways of fixing problems are often the tried-and-true ways. Assignment: Is it always necessary to find new solutions to problems? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 3 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Many people consider the arts—literature, music, painting, and other creative activities—unnecessary because they provide us with nothing more than entertainment.

Yet the arts are extremely valuable because they have much to teach us about the world around us and also because they help people find meaning in life. Assignment: Is the main value of the arts to teach us about the world

around us? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 4 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. All people judge or criticize the ideas and actions of others.

At times, these criticisms hurt or embarrass the people receiving them. Other criticisms seem to be intended to make the critics appear superior. And yet criticism is essential to our success as individuals and as a society. Adapted from Ken Petress, "Constructive Criticism: A Tool for Improvement" Assignment: Is criticism—judging or finding fault with the ideas and actions of others—essential for personal well-being and social progress? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

December 2007 SAT Essay Prompts Prompt 1 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. The first problem for all of us is not to learn but to unlearn. We hold on to ideas that were accepted in the past, and we are afraid to give them up. Preconceptions about what is right or wrong, true or false, good or bad are embedded so deeply in our thinking that we honestly may not know that they are there. Whether it's women's role in society or the role of our country in the world, the old assumptions just don't work anymore.

Adapted from Gloria Steinem, "A New Egalitarian Lifestyle" Assignment: Do people need to "unlearn," or reject, many of their assumptions and ideas? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this

issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 2 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Our determination to pursue truth by setting up a fight between two sides leads us to believe that every issue has two sides—no more, no less.

If we know both sides of an issue, all of the relevant information will emerge, and the best case will be made for each side. But this process does not always lead to the truth. Often the truth is somewhere in the complex middle, not the oversimplified extremes. Adapted from Deborah Tannen, *The Argument Culture* Assignment: Should people choose one of two opposing sides of an issue, or is the truth usually found "in the middle"? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Prompt 3 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. All around us appearances are mistaken for reality. Clever advertisements create favorable impressions but say little or nothing about the products they promote. In stores, colorful packages are often better than their contents. In the media, how certain entertainers, politicians, and other public figures appear is more important than their abilities. All too often, what we think we see becomes far more important than what really is. Assignment: Do images and impressions have too much of an effect on people?

Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your

reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 4 Until fairly recently, technological innovations and inventions were intended to serve basic human needs or desires. Today, however, the most important and urgent problem confronting us is no longer the satisfaction of basic needs. The primary purpose of modern technology is to solve the unintended problems caused by the technology of years past.

Adapted from Dennis Gabor, *Innovations: Scientific, Technological, and Social*
Assignment: Is the most important purpose of technology today different from what it was in the past? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. January 2008 SAT Essay Prompts Prompt 1 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. It is better to try to be original than to merely imitate others. People should always try to say, write, think, or create something new.

There is little value in merely repeating what has been done before. People who merely copy or use the ideas and inventions of others, no matter how successful they may be, have never achieved anything significant.
Assignment: Is it always better to be original than to imitate or use the ideas of others? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 2 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

Often we see people who persist in trying to achieve a particular goal, even when all the evidence indicates that they will be unlikely to achieve it. When they succeed, we consider them courageous for having overcome impossible obstacles. But when they fail, we think of them as headstrong, foolhardy, and bent on self-destruction. To many people, great effort is only worthwhile when it results in success. Adapted from Gilbert Brim, "Ambition"

Assignment: Is the effort involved in pursuing any goal valuable, even if the goal is not reached? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue.

Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 3 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Newness has become our obsession. Novelty is more interesting to us than continuing with whatever is "tried and true." We discard the old so we can acquire the most recent model, the latest version, the newest and most improved formula. Often, we replace what is useful just because it is no longer new. Not only with material goods but also with cultural values, we prefer whatever is the latest trend.

Assignment: Should people always prefer new things, ideas, or values to those of the past? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 4 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Since we live in a global society, surely we should view

ourselves as citizens of the whole world. But instead, people choose to identify and associate with smaller and more familiar groups.

People think of themselves as belonging to families, nations, cultures, and generations—or as belonging to smaller groups whose members share ideas, views, or common experiences. All of these kinds of groups may offer people a feeling of security but also prevent them from learning or experiencing anything new. Assignment: Is there any value for people to belong only to a group or groups with which they have something in common? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

March 2008 SAT Essay Prompts Prompt 1 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Organizations or groups that share a common goal often mention teamwork as their secret to success by insisting that people in the group work together for the good of the entire group. However, by requiring each individual to accept the decisions of the others in the group, organizations may discourage the expression of individual talent. Ultimately, a group is most successful when all of its members are encouraged to pursue their own goals and interests.

Assignment: Are organizations or groups most successful when their members pursue individual wishes and goals? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. Prompt 2 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Being loyal—faithful or

dedicated to someone or something—is not always easy. People often have conflicting loyalties, and there are no guidelines that help them decide to what or whom they should be loyal.

Moreover, people are often loyal to something bad. Still, loyalty is one of the essential attributes a person must have and must demand of others.

Adapted from James Carville, *Stickin': The Case for Loyalty Assignment*: Should people always be loyal? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Prompt 3 Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below. Winning feels forever fabulous.

But you can learn more from losing than from winning. Losing prepares you for setback and tragedy more than winning ever can. Moreover, loss invites reflection and a change of strategies. In the process of recovering from your losses, you learn how to avoid them the next time. Adapted from Pat Conroy, *My Losing Season Assignment*: Do people learn more from losing than from winning? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.