

SSAT Guidebook

created for

Cardinal Scholars

by

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Welcome to the Cardinal Scholars Guide to the Secondary School Admission Test! Whether you're a parent, student, tutor or other learner approaching this guide, we're glad you found us.

The Secondary School Admission Test, or SSAT, is an exam that helps determine admissions to many of the world's best independent high schools. This guide prepares you best for the SSAT when used as part of a comprehensive preparation program including one of Cardinal Scholars' dynamic, passionate tutors. Your prep program begins with a diagnostic test composed of past SSAT questions.

Students, tutors and parents all benefit from portions of this guide. Parents and tutors working together with their students create the highest likelihood for excellent SSAT scores and admission to exceptional schools.

First, a few words to each reader:

Letter to Students

Relax. We know you want to attend a high school you'll love, that will prepare you for success in college and beyond. We want that for you too, and we're here to help make that happen. Your tutor is your expert and personal guide. They come from a variety of backgrounds, but they all share a few traits in common: they're intelligent, personable, aware of your needs, and enthusiastically committed to helping you succeed.

That success starts with a diagnostic test. Don't worry - this is a no-pressure test. To help you best prepare for the SSAT, we need to all know where you're starting. What your strengths are - and what you will work to improve. This diagnostic produces a guide for your practice and studying. You'll get a report on topics you know really well, and areas where you'll want to improve. Maybe you're a whiz with Algebra but not so comfortable with the Verbal section's analogies yet. That's exactly what we all need to know. We want you to have the freedom to move on to sections and topics where you need to get stronger, and that's what the diagnostic makes possible.

Your tutor - and Cardinal Scholars as a whole - is dedicated to taking you from wherever you are now to wherever you want to be. Maybe your taking the test in a few months, maybe it's only weeks or days away. However much time you have, and however you may feel about this exam now, we're here to help you reach your greatest potential. We're going to work hard to make that happen - and we're confident you will too.

So let's get started. The next letter is for your parents or guardian. Feel free to skip on to the next section, or practice skimming it (a strategy we'll address with **Reading Comprehension**). But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Turn to the **Intro to the Test** section for a quick preview of what to expect on the SSAT.

Parents,

As you're considering how best to help your student prepare for the SSAT, you probably have some questions about the particulars of the exam as well. Our guide focuses on preparing students for the Upper Level of the exam, which students take any time between their 8th and 11th grade years for admission into independent high schools. If your student happens to be preparing for the Middle Level exam, the content and test taking strategies remain the same - the Upper Level test is just more difficult than the Middle Level. If your student is prepared for the Upper Level exam, they're ready for either one. Using this guide as part of the Cardinal Scholars tutoring program ably equips your middle or high school student for success on the SSAT.

The SSAT is offered on eight Saturdays each testing year ([*possibly footnote this fact] running from August 1st of one calendar year to July 31st of the following year), all around the world. Your student can sit for as many of these Standard testing sessions in a year as he or she desires. If you have religious or personal obligations that make these Saturday sessions untenable, your student can take **one** 'Flex' Test per testing year. Visit www.ssat.org for a list of testing dates and locations. Registration for the exam also occurs online.

Register early for the test to avoid any added fees or penalties. At print time, the current cost of the Upper Level exam is \$120. Limited financial hardship fee waivers are available through contacting the SSATB-member school(s) where your student is applying. The regular registration deadline for each administration of the exam closes three weeks before a given test date. Late registration, for an additional fee of \$40, is available for the following week. Finally, Rush registration is an option from two weeks out until the Wednesday before the test. Rush registrants must pay \$80 in addition to the regular registration fee.

Quantitative Reasoning (Math) Section

Let's dive in to preparing for our first scored, multiple-choice section of the SSAT. Just like with the other sections of the exam, the SSAT does math a little bit differently than your typical math class. For starters, they call it "Quantitative Reasoning". We'll use "Math", "Quantitative Reasoning," and possibly even "QR" interchangeably in this guide. As with the rest of the SSAT, you're being tested on your ability to do SSAT Math. The rules and operations are all the same, of course, but many questions look and sound different than what you're likely familiar with in your math courses.

There are actually **two Quantitative Reasoning sections** on the SSAT. They each consist of **25 multiple-choice** questions, and you have **30 minutes** to complete each section. The two sections have a mix of the same content and topics in math, and they're arranged in difficulty from easiest to most difficult questions. Instead of having to do 50 math problems for an hour, the Quantitative Reasoning section is broken up into these two sections. One comes after the Writing Sample, and the other follows the Verbal section later in the exam.

One last note in introducing the math section: no calculators. Yes, that's right, calculators are not allowed when taking the SSAT. The good news is that calculations are simplified. You won't be finding the greatest common factor of 47/119 and another number, and, if you're doing long division and come up with an answer like 107.9873, you'll know you either made an error in computation or you need to do some rounding. So you don't NEED a calculator. You can mark up your test booklet with necessary scratch work or calculations.

What you should already know:

Thankfully, you're not here to learn all of math from one SSAT Guidebook. You ARE here to learn how to apply the math you already know to SSAT-style Math questions. There are several mathematical topics that we won't be able to cover in this guide (imagine all your math textbooks sewn together, and you'll get a picture of why we're not re-teaching everything here). If you don't feel confident with some of these topics, that's okay – you can definitely work with your tutor or math teacher to get caught up in specific areas. Here's some of what we expect you to already know:

- Addition/subtraction
- Place value
- Squaring and square roots
- Order of Operations (PEMDAS)
- Basic Algebra equation solving ($2x = 4$, etc.)
- Standard geometric shapes and formulas (rectangles, Area of a square, etc.)

(for a complete list of topics covered in the Quantitative Reasoning section, see the "Further Practice" section at the end of this chapter)