

Avoid Inexperienced SAT/ACT Courses and Instructors

By Mick Rosenblum

This is not the first time that I've warned my readers about the plethora of misleading and misguided SAT and ACT courses and instructors that have flooded the market in recent years. The sad truth is that finding a genuine SAT and/or ACT expert can prove to be a challenging task, and if a student takes one of the literally hundreds of ineffective courses or hires any of the thousands of inexperienced, misinformed instructors, that student is likely to simply give up in frustration.

It is equally probable that a parent who has already shelled out thousands of dollars for an SAT or ACT program is not highly motivated to pay another course (effective or not) an additional chunk of money to repair the damage! So often, students come to me after other courses have failed to serve them properly, and I can only imagine of the numbers of students who have simply given up hope of improving their scores in the aftermath of a poor quality course or instructor.

Here's a case in point: Recently, a student contacted me after previously attending a so-called SAT prep course. Both the parent and the student explained to me that they had become considerably concerned and rather distressed when their previous "SAT math instructor" had stated that the SAT is a test of Algebra II and, therefore, the students must be well-versed in Algebra II in order to master the test. Imagine the student's surprise (and, indeed, relief) when I explained that the SAT, at that time, did not contain Algebra II questions, although the new SAT may present a few (very few) Advanced Algebra concepts. What is truly amazing, however, is that this so-called SAT instructor and this so-called SAT course apparently knew little or nothing about the nature or content of the test itself!

Unfortunately, such a scenario is not uncommon. First of all, I am suspicious of any SAT instructor who is incapable of teaching *all* areas of the tests. After all, the student is responsible for mastery of all sections of SAT and ACT. Secondly, I continually warn students and parents of any SAT program that does not approach the test as one of reasoning rather than accumulated high school coursework.

One must also be suspicious of instructors who do not present sets of printed study and instructional materials to each student and who do not have clear, well-defined study schedules. Instructions such as "look over what we did this session" or "take a test at home, and bring it in next time" should raise red flags, because students need to be told, specifically, what to study, and instructors who simply "go over" tests that students take at home are likely to defeat the purpose of reasoning test preparation and training.

Therefore, I strongly encourage you to give me a call prior to subscribing to any SAT or ACT course or hiring any SAT or ACT instructor. The phone call doesn't cost you anything and may save you thousands of dollars, hundreds of hours, and considerable frustration spent on expensive yet ineffective programs.

Mick Rosenblum has been teaching and tutoring SAT and ACT for more than thirty years. He is the owner of A-Academics and author of SAT Magic (first, second, and third editions) and is considered to be among the most experienced SAT and ACT test preparation specialists.