



EMA  
SSAT

Four  
full-length  
tests included!

# The Official Study Guide for the Upper Level

# SSAT

## Includes:

**Four Full-Length Practice Tests,  
Study Questions, and Tips**

More Info and Updates are Available at [www.ssat.org](http://www.ssat.org)



The only prep guide written by the SSAT assessment development team!

# An Admission Checklist

## Create an Account on [ssat.org](https://ssat.org)

## Apply for Testing Accommodations and/or Sunday Testing, if Needed

Preapproval is required before a test registration can be created.

## Choose How and Where You Will Take the SSAT

Depending upon the test level you will take and your location, you will have different testing options. These may include taking a traditional paper-based test, taking a computer-based test at a Prometric test center, or taking the computer-based SSAT at Home.

## Select Score Recipients

List the schools to which you are applying during online registration, or wait until after you receive your scores.

## Order Additional Services

The SSAT offers, for additional fees, options to receive a copy of your writing sample, printed copies of your scores, and alerts to view your scores the moment they are available.

## Sign Up for the Character Skills Snapshot

Supplement your application with this online assessment that gives admission directors a better sense of who you are. Learn more at [ssat.org/snapshot](https://ssat.org/snapshot).

## Pay

Fees are payable by credit card (Visa, MasterCard, and Discover). Fee waivers are available from member schools for those in need. Contact the school to which you are applying in order to request a fee waiver. Learn more at [ssat.org/about/fee-waiver-program](https://ssat.org/about/fee-waiver-program).

## Print Your Admission Ticket, if Applicable

For paper-based tests, you will receive an admission ticket, which is your registration confirmation. If you will be testing at a Prometric test center or take the SSAT at Home, you will not need nor receive an admission ticket.

## Prepare and Practice

The best way to prepare for the SSAT is to become familiar with its format and practice using questions and sample tests developed by the same team that writes it. You can do all that in this book, and be sure to check out SSAT Practice Online ([ssat.org/practice](https://ssat.org/practice))!

## Apply to Schools the Easy Way

Make applying easier by using the Standard Application Online (SAO). Create just one online application to apply to schools. Learn more at [ssat.org/sao](https://ssat.org/sao).

**All this and more can be completed and managed through [www.ssat.org](https://www.ssat.org)!**



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The Enrollment Management Association's mission is to provide unparalleled leadership and service in meeting the admission assessment and enrollment needs of schools, students, and families.

The Enrollment Management Association is dedicated to the principle of equal opportunity, and its programs, services, and employment policies are guided by that principle.

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# Test Day Checklist

- ✓ Arrive or log in for testing 30 minutes before the exam to allow time for check-in.
- ✓ Have your admission ticket (for paper-based tests) in hand for fast entry to the test site.
- ✓ Review the Test Irregularity Policies (included with your admission ticket) to inform yourself of possible unusual circumstances and outcomes.
- ✓ Follow the proctor's instructions on where to go and sit.
- ✓ Read and listen carefully to the proctor's instructions as the exam begins and throughout the test.
- ✓ Remember all the useful tips you learned in this guide.
- ✓ If you will be taking the SSAT at Home, be sure to read and follow all guidelines and requirements provided with your registration for the SSAT at Home.

## Relax and good luck!



### What to Bring

- SSAT admission ticket (paper-based tests only)
- Several (at least 3) sharpened #2 pencils with erasers (paper-based tests only)
- Snacks and beverages for breaks (in a clear bag or container)

### What NOT to Bring

#### Clothing

- Coats
  - Hats
- Hooded sweatshirts may be worn; however, the hood must remain down at all times.

#### All Electronics

- Calculators
- Cell Phones\*
- Fitness Tracker
- Wristbands
- Media Players
- Watches
- Tablets, Devices, etc.
- Headphones/

#### Earbuds Personal Items

- Backpacks
- Bags
- Large Jewelry
- Purses

#### Other Items

- Books
- Erasers
- Mechanical Pencils
- Notes or Paper
- Pens
- Rulers

#### \*Note:

It's best to leave your cell phone at home, but if you need to bring it, you must turn it off and give it to the proctor before testing begins. It will be returned to you following testing.

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## Dear Student,

The private schools you'll find in books and on television may be interesting, but the real world of private schools is even more amazing. You're reading this guide because you think that a private school might be right for you, and you're ready for one of the first steps—taking the SSAT.

This book will introduce you to the SSAT, the test format, and what to expect on test day. It contains practice tests that resemble the one you'll be taking, plus preparation tips to help you do your best on the SSAT and the Character Skills Snapshot.

*The Official Study Guide for the SSAT* gives you:

- The definition of an admission test
- Descriptions of the test sections
- Test-taking strategies
- An introduction to the Character Skills Snapshot
- Plenty of sample questions to practice
- Full-length practice tests
- Information about how to interpret scores
- Registration and test day checklists



What won't you find here? Shortcuts, tricks, or gimmicks. This is the only book that contains sample questions and practice tests written by the SSAT assessment developers and the test-taking strategies to help you to do your best. There are some valuable hints that can help you stay on track and maximize your time. But when it comes down to it, getting familiar with the test format and scoring, studying specific content types covered on the test, and solving practice questions is the best way to prepare for the SSAT. In addition to this guide, we offer an online practice program (see page 6) that provides even more sample questions, subject quizzes, and practice tests.

The path ahead will be exciting, and you'll probably learn a lot about yourself on the way. We wish you the best as you prepare for this journey, which will help you apply to a school that can change your life.

**The SSAT Assessment and Research Team**

## Dear Parent/Guardian,

Congratulations on your decision to explore a private school education for your child! For more than 50 years, the SSAT has been the gold standard in admission testing for the world's best private schools. We know that the process of taking the SSAT can be fraught with concern and distress, but it needn't be. The SSAT is one important step on the road to a private school education—one that should be taken seriously but should not cause undue anxiety.

The results of admission testing, while integral to an application, are just one of many factors considered by admission officers when determining if your child and their school make a great match. The degree of emphasis placed on scores depends on the school and on other information, such as transcripts and teacher recommendations. For the vast majority of schools, students with a wide range of SSAT scores are admitted.

Here are a few questions that admission officers contemplate when reviewing an applicant's scores:

- Are the scores consistent with the student's academic record?
- Do the scores highlight areas of academic strength or weakness?
- How do these scores compare with those of other students in the applicant pool?
- How do these scores compare with students who have enrolled over the last few years?

As a parent, you have a central role to play in helping your child to succeed in the school application process by reminding them to keep the SSAT in perspective. Schools are most interested in finding out who your child is.

There are a multitude of sources, both on- and offline, that promise to prepare your child for the SSAT and increase their test score. This guide was created by our assessment development team to support your child's preparation efforts with legitimate information, test-taking strategies, and practice tests. We encourage you to use this guide as your official source for SSAT preparation and the Character Skills Snapshot information. On page 73, we share tips to help you support your student during this important preparation for taking the SSAT.

Finally, we urge you to use the [ssat.org](http://ssat.org) website not only to register your child for the test but also to access information about the private school application process, search for schools that are the right fit for your child and your family, and take advantage of our online practice program.

We hope *The Official Study Guide for the Upper Level SSAT* will help to make your family's experience of testing and applying to private school a successful and enjoyable one.

Good luck!



Heather Hoerle, Executive Director & CEO, The Enrollment Management Association



# Chapter One: What Is the SSAT?

## What Is the Purpose of the SSAT?

The SSAT is designed for students who are seeking entrance to private schools worldwide. The purpose of the SSAT is to measure the verbal, quantitative, and reading skills students develop over time and that are needed for successful performance in private schools. The SSAT provides private school admission professionals with meaningful information about the possible academic success of students at their institutions, regardless of background or experience.

The SSAT is not an achievement test, although knowledge of a certain amount of mathematical content is necessary in order to do well on the quantitative sections of the test. Your most recent classroom math test, for example, was probably an achievement test: Your teacher designed it to evaluate how much you know about what was covered in class. The SSAT, on the other hand, is designed to measure the overall verbal, quantitative, and reading skills you have acquired, instead of focusing on your mastery of particular course materials.

SSAT tests are not designed to measure other characteristics, such as initiative, resilience, or teamwork, that may contribute to your success in school. As a complement to the SSAT's assessment of cognitive skills, we also offer the Character Skills Snapshot, which was designed expressly to measure character skills valued by private schools. To learn more about the Snapshot, visit [ssat.org/snapshot](http://ssat.org/snapshot).

## How Is the SSAT Designed?

The SSAT measures three constructs: verbal, quantitative, and reading skills that students develop over time, both in and out of school. It emphasizes critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are essential for academic success.

The overall difficulty level of the SSAT is built to be at 50%–60%. This means that on average, 50%–60% of the test takers can answer the questions correctly. The distribution of question difficulties is set so that the test will effectively differentiate among test takers, who vary in their level of abilities.

To develop the SSAT, The Enrollment Management Association convenes content committees composed of content experts and independent school teachers. The committees write and review items, and reach consensus regarding the appropriateness of the questions. Questions judged to be acceptable after the committee review are then pretested and analyzed. Those that are statistically sound are selected and assembled into test forms.

## The SSAT Is Reliable

The SSAT is a highly reliable test. A test is said to have a high reliability if it produces similar results under consistent conditions. Reliability coefficients range between 0.00 (no reliability) and 1.00 (perfect reliability). On the SSAT, the scaled-score reliability is higher than 0.90 for both the verbal and quantitative sections, and is approaching 0.90 for the reading section.

## The SSAT Is a Norm-Referenced Test

A norm-referenced test interprets an individual tester's score relative to the distribution of scores for a comparison group, referred to as the norm group. The SSAT norm groups consist of all the test takers (same grade) who have taken the test for the first time on one of the Standard SSAT administrations in the United States and Canada typically within the past three years.

The SSAT reports percentile ranks, which are referenced to the performance of the norm group. For example, if you are in the eighth grade, and your percentile rank on the March 2019 verbal section is 90%, it means that verbal

scores for 90% of all the other eighth-grade students (who have taken the test for one of the SSAT administrations in the United States and Canada typically using the most recent three years of data) fall below your scaled score. The same scaled score on the SSAT may have a slightly different percentile rank from year to year, and the SSAT percentile ranks should not be compared to those of other standardized tests because each test is taken by a different group of students.

In contrast, a criterion-referenced test interprets a test taker's performance without reference to the performance of other test takers. For example, you would receive a 90% on a classroom test if you answered 90% of the questions correctly. Your score is not referenced to the performance of anyone else in your class.

It is important to remember that the SSAT norm group is highly competitive. You are being compared to all the other students (same grade) who are taking this test for admission into private schools, some of which are the most selective in the country. Most important to remember is that the SSAT is just one piece of information considered by schools when making admission decisions, and for the vast majority of schools, students with a wide range of SSAT scores are admitted.

## The SSAT Is a Standardized Test

The SSAT is scored in a consistent (or standard) manner. It adheres to standard administration processes and practices, based on the testing mode. The reported (or scaled) scores are comparable and can be used interchangeably, regardless of which test form was taken. A scaled score of 710 on the June 2018 Upper Level verbal section, for example, has the same meaning as the scaled score of 710 from the December 2016 Upper Level verbal section, although the forms are different. This score interchangeability is achieved through a statistical procedure referred to as *score equating*. Score equating is used to adjust for minor form difficulty differences, so that the resulting scores can be compared directly.

Standard also refers to the way in which tests are developed and administered. A standard process for writing, testing, and analyzing questions—before they ever appear on a live test—is used. The Enrollment Management Association provides precise instructions to be followed by qualified and experienced test administrators from the moment students are admitted to the test center until the time of dismissal. Any deviations from the uniform testing conditions are reported by the test administrator in writing. Of course, a student may apply for testing accommodations, but the processes and procedures for the test's administration remain the same.

## Should I Guess on the SSAT?

The answer is: It depends. You must first understand how the test is scored.

When your test is scored, you will receive one point for each correct answer. One quarter of a point is deducted for each incorrect answer. You will not receive or lose points for questions that are not answered. If you guess, try guessing only when you can eliminate at least one (but optimally more than one) answer choice.

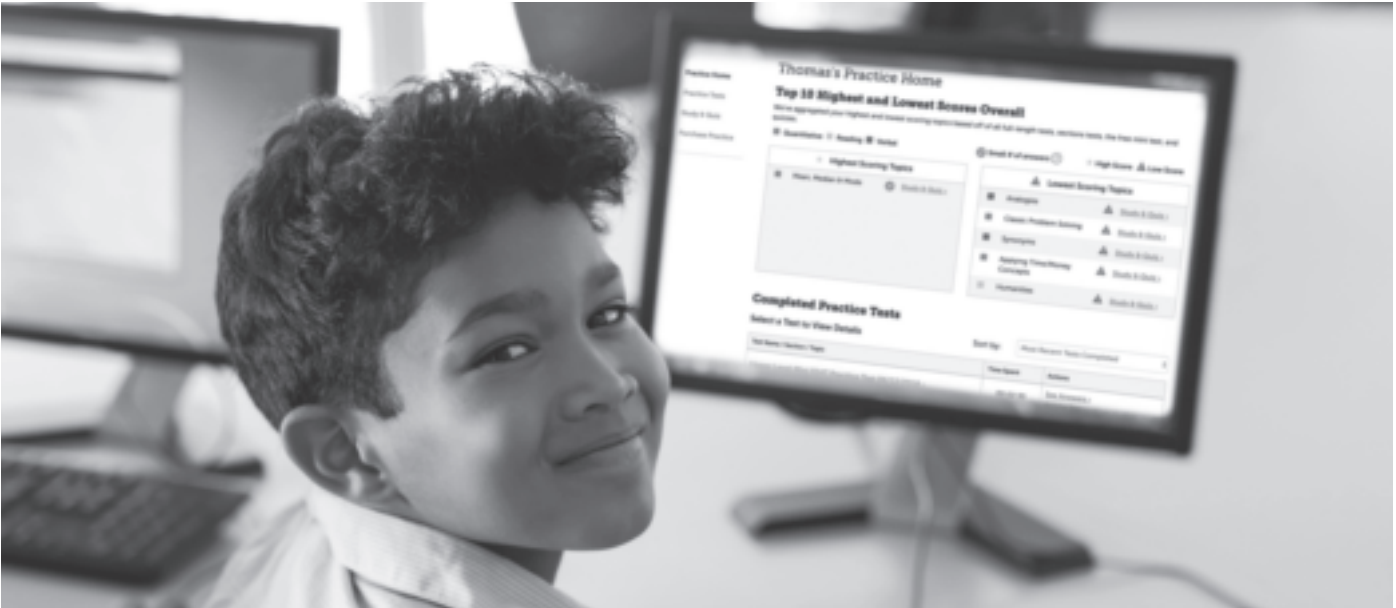
A few things to keep in mind:

**Keep moving.** Do not waste time on a question that is hard for you. If you cannot answer it, make a note of it, skip over it, and move on. If you have time left in the section, go back to it then.

**Take care with each question.** You receive one point for each correct answer, no matter how hard or easy the questions are. Approach all questions with equal consideration; don't risk losing points to careless errors on seemingly easy questions.

**Check your answer sheet.** If taking the test on paper, mark your answers in the correct row on the answer sheet. Be especially careful if you skip questions.





## SSAT Practice Online

A perfect complement to this study guide, our online practice program is another official source for SSAT practice. SSAT Practice Online helps you prepare by providing practice questions similar to those appearing on the SSAT, and identification of exactly which topics you should focus on before you test. Other key features include: section tests that target quantitative, reading, or verbal practice; SSAT topic quizzes with tips on how to answer each question; and study tools. Visit [ssat.org/practice](https://ssat.org/practice) or access the program via your SSAT account.

### [ssat.org/practice](https://ssat.org/practice)

*Students who use a fee waiver for the SSAT registration are also provided free access to the online practice program for both the Middle and Upper Level SSAT, as well as free access to the Admission Academy, a resource to help families navigate the K–12 private school admission process.*

