

SAT / ACT TEST PREPARATION

What to look for in a prep course:

If you believe that your son or daughter would benefit from a prep class, consider what constitutes a good course. Is it a guarantee that promises an increase of x number of points? Of course it's impossible to guarantee anyone any score on these tests! All the guarantee is really stating is what they'll do if you're not happy with your test scores. We could guarantee everyone perfect scores! The point is, what do we do if you don't get them?

Here are what we think the most important characteristics of a good prep course have:

- **Quality and experience of the instructors**

Anyone who's ever sat in a classroom knows that the ability of the teacher is more important than anything. Ask about the instructor's experience. Do they use college kids with no teaching experience? Do the instructors know the test and not just the material on it? Teaching math on the SAT is *much* different than teaching Algebra I in high school. Our instructors could tell you every Math and English concept tested on the ACT for the last ten years! Ask to interview the teacher over the phone. Ask the instructor what the most common English grammar and Math topics are on the ACT.

- **Flexibility of scheduling**

Kids today are immersed in organized activities. They often have less free time than their parents! It's very normal for a student to have to miss a class for some reason. How does the company handle make-ups? Do you have to drive across the state to make it up? Will the instructor meet with the student individually to make up the class? We will. And all of our classes are in the same location.

- **Availability and cost of instructors on an individual basis**

How difficult and expensive is it to meet the instructor for extra help? We run our office like a dentist's. Call and make an appointment - no extra charge, ever. Same location as where the class was held - not some coffee shop or library.

- **Option to return for additional help - preferably one-on-one**

Make sure you read the fine print when it comes to returning for additional help. Often there are many restrictions, and many times, the only option you'll have is to sit in the exact same class you just took. We let our students come back forever, for free. We don't care how many classes you came to or how much homework you did, or what your score is. If you want more help for any reason, it's free. You can sit in the class again as many times as you want, or, what we actually prefer is to work with you individually and focus on just the areas you need to work on. We like to think that we teach you how to take the test in the class and then follow that up with practice and review on an individual basis.

- **Other factors to consider:**

- Class size (Ours is around 6 per class)
- Course Materials (We use "real" SAT's & ACT's so you can trust the scores.)
- Recommendations from other parents, students, and high school counselors
- Location (We have a permanent center where students can visit anytime to practice)
- Class time (Do you really think the average teen can pay attention for an entire 3-hour class or worse, an all-day class? Our classes are each two hours long for a very good reason.)
- Price

Final Thoughts:

- **Hiring a private tutor**

Again, interview the tutor and make sure he/she knows the test *and* the content. Some tutors spend half the hour watching the student practice and the other half correcting the student's mistakes. Little time may be spent focusing on the individual student's strengths and weaknesses. Often, tutors have 2 or more students at the same time. We do private tutoring as well as classes, but it's always one-on-one and it always encompasses strategy as well as content. And because we know the tests so well, we can adapt the program to the individual.

- **One or two-day workshops**

These can be fine for someone who just wants to see what's on the test and get exposed to it. They can also scare the pants off someone who needs more thorough preparation. We don't do them because of that very reason. And remember, free tests are available at school and on-line. Paying money to go take a practice test and get it scored can be a waste of money.