

## SSAT ADVICE: SYNONYMS AND ANALOGIES

The SSAT Verbal Section uses synonym and analogy questions to test your ability to recognize word meanings and logically relate words to each other. **Synonyms** are words with similar or same meanings; these questions will give you a word in capital letters and ask you to find another word that means the same thing. **Analogies** are statements that ask you to find a relationship between two words, and then find another pair of words that demonstrates the same relationship.

The SSAT tests difficult vocabulary, so **building your vocabulary** is the best long-term strategy to master both synonyms and analogies. Begin by working your way through a good SSAT-level word list, such as the Core Vocabulary list in *Ivy Global SSAT English*. Supplement your word list by reading as much as possible. Read a wide variety of genres—fiction, nonfiction, poetry, newspaper articles—and look up words you don't know. When you learn a new word, be sure you know how to use it in a sentence and can connect it with other words that mean the same thing. Test yourself regularly on your vocabulary, making sure you are reviewing old words as you learn new ones.

### SYNONYM ADVICE

The synonym questions on the SSAT give you a word in capital letters and then ask you to find another word that is closest in meaning. Here are some tips to help you tackle these questions:

- First, **skim the section** and answer questions with words you know immediately. Then, go back and try to tackle the words you are less familiar with. If you really don't know a word and can't make an educated guess, it is probably best to skip that question.
- For each question, **cover up the answer choices** and think of your own definition for the word in capital letters. Then, look for the answer choice that matches your definition. If no answer choice fits the definition you chose, you might need to think of a different definition for the word.
- For help finding definitions for a word, think of **contexts** where you might have heard the word used. A word's context is everything in the phrase or sentence around the word that might give you a clue about its meaning. Think of all the different phrases or sentences where you have heard the word before, and try to guess what meaning or meanings the word might have in these contexts.
- If you are still having trouble thinking of the definition for a word, see if you can remember its **connotation**. A word's connotation is its secondary meaning, or the feeling we get from the word. A word can have a positive connotation if it means something good, a negative connotation if it means something bad, or a neutral connotation if it is neither good nor bad. If you can remember that a word means something positive or negative, you can eliminate answer choices with the opposite connotation.
- Every synonym question will have **only one correct answer**. Before moving onto the next question, be sure to look through all five answer choices to make sure you have really selected the best match for the word in capital letters.

## ANALOGY ADVICE

The SSAT’s analogy questions give you two related words and then ask you to find two more words that share the same relationship. Here are some tips for tackling analogies:

- Start by identifying the relationship in the analogy by **re-writing it as a full sentence**. For example, the analogy might look something like “Kitten is to cat as ...” Write a full sentence that specifically states the relationship between a kitten and a cat: “A kitten is a baby cat.” Then, read all of your answer choices with this sentence in mind to see which one makes sense. For example, “puppy is to dog” would be a good answer because a puppy is a baby dog.
- If it looks like many of the answer choices have the same relationship as the words in the prompt, you might need to look for a more **specific relationship**. Try to think of another way the words could be connected, and see if this helps you narrow down your answer choices to only one correct answer.
- The SSAT uses many **common relationships** in this analogy section. If you get stuck on an analogy, see if it falls under one of these categories:
  - Synonyms and antonyms: “Empty is to full as ...”
  - Intensity and degree: “Hungry is to starving as ...”
  - Parts and wholes: “Player is to team as ...”
  - Examples and types: “Hound is to dog as ...”
  - Use and function: “Easel is to painter as ...”
- If you don’t know a word in an analogy, use your knowledge of **context** to guess at a relationship. See if you can remember where you might have heard the word used before, or where you might have heard another similar-sounding word. For example, if you don’t know the word “barometer,” you might have heard it used on the weather channel, so it probably has something to do with weather. You might also notice that it ends in “meter,” like “thermometer,” so it probably involves measuring something. Even if you didn’t know that a barometer specifically measures air pressure, this might give you just enough information to guess at the relationship in the analogy.
- If you still can’t figure out the relationship in the analogy, look at the relationships in the answer choices to see if these give you any clues. Use the **Process of Elimination** to cross out any answer choices where the words don’t seem to have a strong relationship, or where the words seem entirely unrelated to the words in the prompt. For example, if your prompt is “Barometer is to pressure,” you can probably cross out “puppy is to dog” because baby animals are entirely unrelated to weather measurement tools. After you have crossed out unrelated answers, take your best guess among the remaining possible answers.
- If you’re not able to use the Process of Elimination to narrow down any of your answer options—you really have no idea!—then it is better to **skip the question** rather than trying to guess. You can always come back to it if you have time.