

Renaissance Ideas in Politics

This essay assignment will help you practice for the writing portion of the SAT. You will be asked to write a short essay in which you develop a point of view on a given topic using appropriate reasons and examples. You will be given 25 minutes to write this essay. Follow the steps below to help you use the time wisely and give you practice in writing short essays.

THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING ISSUE

As the arts flourished during the Renaissance, new political ideas were also born. Italian philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli believed that a good ruler could not always honor his word and had to put his needs and that of the state above promises made to the people. Machiavelli thought that “the end justified the means” and that morals should be removed from politics.

ASSIGNMENT

Do you agree with the Machiavellian principle that power and ruthlessness are more useful to a ruler than idealism? Write a short essay in which you develop your position on this issue. Support your point of view with reasoning and examples from your reading and studies.

Prewriting (2–3 minutes)

1. Remember that the writing portion of the SAT is a timed assignment. You will have only 25 minutes to write the essay, but spending 2 or 3 minutes on these prewriting tasks will allow you to organize your thoughts and will help you write your essay.
2. Think about the issue and decide on your point of view.
3. Think about what the main ideas of your essay will be. What details will you use to support those ideas?
4. Prepare a short outline to organize your thoughts. Remember that your essay will need an organized, coherent structure.

Writing (20 minutes)

5. Your essay should be carefully structured and written in paragraph form. You should have three parts to your essay: an introduction, which presents your thesis and main ideas; a body, which elaborates on your ideas and supports those ideas with details; and a conclusion, which sums up your essay.
6. It is important to show that you can effectively develop your ideas. Present your point of view logically and clearly. Stay focused on your topic.
7. You will have only 25 minutes to write your essay, so use your time wisely.

Proofreading (2–3 minutes)

8. Try to leave a few minutes to reread your essay and make revisions.
9. Last, check the following:
 - Capitalization and spelling of all proper names and places
 - Punctuation, grammar, and spelling

EVALUATING

SAT essays are graded on a scale of 1 to 6, with 6 being the highest score. The maker of the SAT, the College Board, describes the grading system as follows:

- **Score of 6:** An essay in this category effectively and insightfully develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates outstanding critical thinking. It is well organized, clearly focused, and free of most errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- **Score of 5:** An essay in this category effectively develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates strong critical thinking. It is well organized and focused, and is generally free of most errors in grammar, usage and mechanics.
- **Score of 4:** An essay in this category develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates competent critical thinking. It is generally organized and focused, and has some errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- **Score of 3:** An essay in this category develops a point of view on the issue, but may do so inconsistently or use inadequate evidence to support its position. It is limited in its organization or focus, and contains an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- **Score of 2:** An essay in this category develops a point of view on the issue that is vague or seriously limited and provides inappropriate or insufficient evidence to support its position. It is poorly organized, and contains errors so serious that meaning is somewhat obscured.
- **Score of 1:** An essay in this category develops no viable point of view on the issue, or provides little or no evidence to support its position. It is disorganized or unfocused, and contains pervasive errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that persistently interfere with meaning.
- **Score of 0:** Essays not on the assignment will receive a score of zero.