SATurday School â€l so it goes by Jason_Love Do you know what SAT stands for? Quick, you have five seconds. Insert Jeopardy music. That's right. It doesn't mean squat! It used to stand for Scholastic Aptitude Test, but then scholars got to arguing over "aptitude― and finally everyone agreed that SAT would stand for Stressed and Anxious Teenagers. Today's kids have extra reason to stress: The test is newly revamped. The College Board, those wacky inventors of the SAT, have introduced new grammar questions, advanced math, in-depth reading, and, the cherry on top, a 25-minute essay. For these reasons, students are flocking in record number to SAT-prep courses like Eureka One-on-One Review (www.eurekareview.com), which offers mock SATs throughout the year. In the spirit of not learning from my mistakes, I decided to retake the SAT myself. It would at least put to rest a burning question: Just

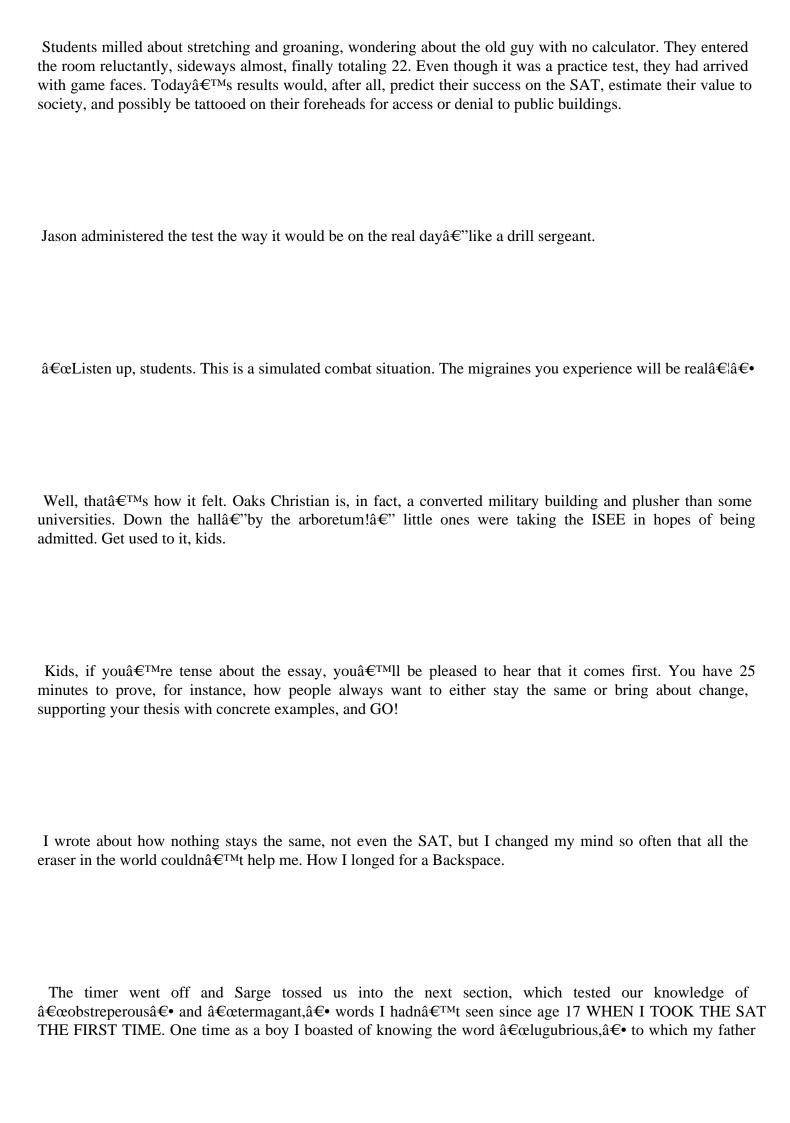
We assume that people grow smarter with age, but did you know that for every reality TV show you watch, your SAT score drops 2 points? My own schooling has been driven out by an onslaught of usernames; passwords; PIN codes; bank accounts; credit cards; phone, fax, cell, and pager numbers; lyrics to songs I don't even like!

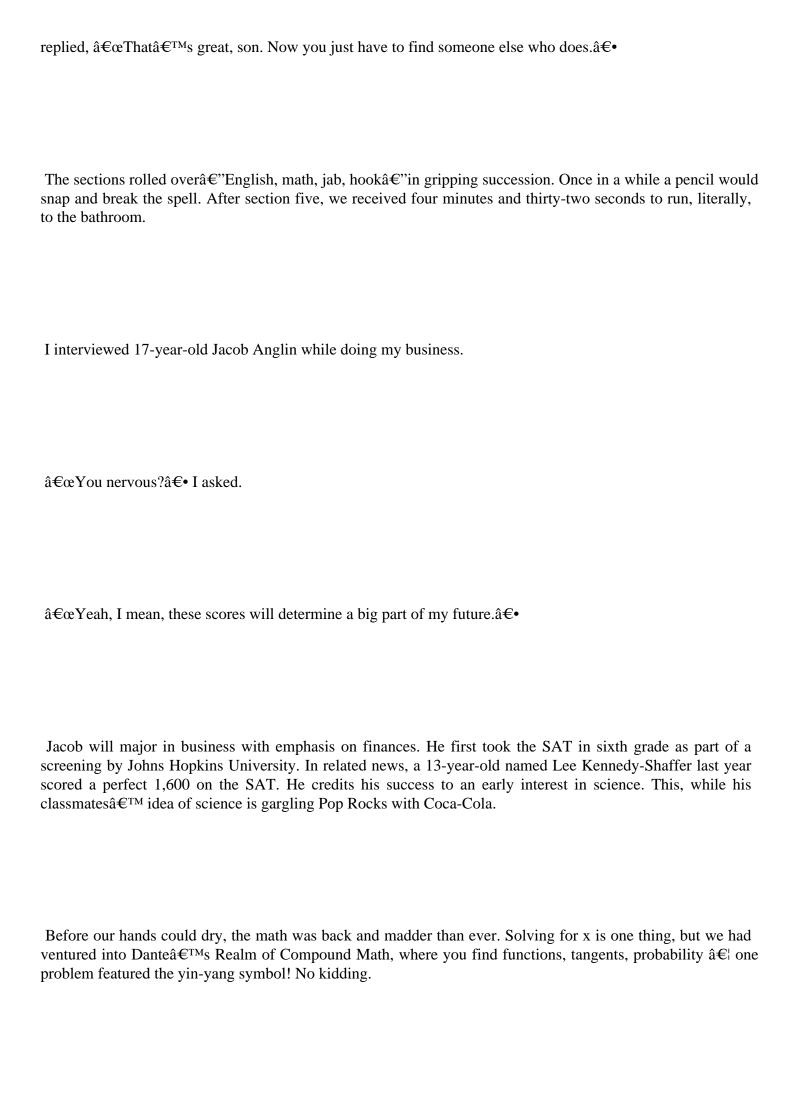
how dumb have I become in these 15 years since high school?

What was I saying?
Yes, I took the SAT at 17 and scored a stingy 1,070. We must consider, however, that I was sitting next to Debbie Toops who was emitting potent pheromones. My score was a blow to the family, who had previously considered me smart. Little did they know that until the third grade I thought "elemeno― was one big letter between "k― and "p.―
Preparation
For moral support, I revisited my alma mater, Newbury Park High School. The grounds were much as I remembered: iron gates secured with bullet-proof padlocks, guards by the light tower, buzzards circling overhead. I called on my two favorite people: Mr. Nelson, the trig teacher who inspired me to surf, and Mr. Ellis, an English teacher who has published two books of poetry and also taughted me how to write good.
I found Mr. Nelson tutoring students over a brown bag sandwich, just as he once did for me. I sat down beside 18-year-old Brendan Konrath, who wasâ€"on purposeâ€"spending his lunch hour like this:
"A biker rode a 60-mile route at a speed of r miles per hour. If she had ridden 5 miles per hour faster, how much shorter would the ride have been in minutes in terms of r.―

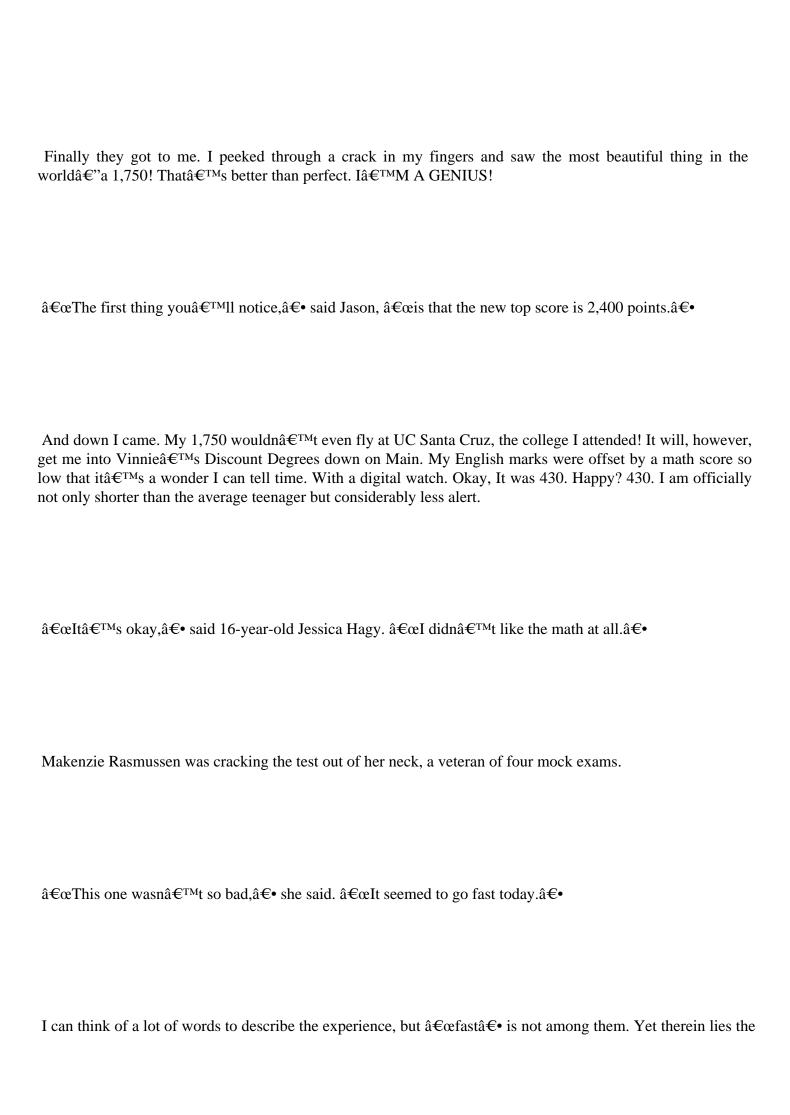
Answer: You don't lose your innocence when you start dating; you lose your innocence the day someone asks you to solve for minutes in terms of r.
To think that I once came close enough to the answer that Mr. Nelson gave me partial credit. Today I can't recall a lick of math but can tell you exactly what Mike Olive was wearing the day he beat me up in wood shop. So it goes.
In his own words, Brendan did "okay― on the SAT, good enough to be waved in by two colleges. In high school parlance, he is sittin' pretty. Of course, it did beg the question, "What are you doing here on your lunch hour?!―
Brendan chuckled. "I'm still applying to other schools to keep my options open.―
"So you'll be retaking the SAT?―
Brendan laughed. Let's not get crazy.

In Room B32, we found Mr. Ellis writing, as always, on his whiteboard. Mr. Ellis is not your average English teacher. Think Robin Williams in Dead Poetâ€ TM s Society. By the time you reach Mr. Ellisâ€ TM s class, youâ€ TM re expected to know your grammar and be ready to learn whatâ€ TM s happening between the lines.
Mr. Ellis couldn't say much about the SAT, but we did reminisce about the day he played a song of Bob Dylan's to help us learn the sonnet. He and I sang it together for old times' sake. "If you seeee her, say hello. She might be in Tangier. She left here laaast early spring, is livin' there, I hear.―
It should be noted that although Mr. Ellis remembered the words, I had a better voice.
The Big Day
I arrived at Oaks Christian High School, site of the mock SAT, with butterflies in my stomach. Well, it was the beginning of butterflies. Worms. Jason Moreno, owner of Eureka One-on-One Review, ushered me into the aptitude dungeon.
I had prepared for the test only by drinking extra coffee that morning. I didn't even bring a calculator. Jason said that theoretically I could finish the test without one, just as theoretically I could become President.





Where I live, math usually goes like this: "If I earn x amount of dollars per day and my wife spends y, how long will it take the repo man to reach our home?―
Because the SAT penalizes for wrong answers, I found myself staring out the window, where Oaks High students were doing the backstroke in their Olympic-sized pool. Proctor Jason told me that I had made the mistake of rushing through the easy problems to get to the impossible ones. Only 8% of the country gets the final math question right despite a one-in-five chance of guessing. One divided by five is, umâ€
"There are just too many traps,― he said.
Aftermath (and After-English)
The test had started at 9:00 a.m. and ended sometime the following Tuesday. No, it ended at 12:45 p.m. We turned in our sheets while Jason lectured now-arriving parents. They listened not only because Jason is six-foot-four but because he made some good points. The SAT, he said, does not test the three r's. It tests a fourth r: reasoning. The full name of the exam is, in fact, The SAT Reasoning Test.
"That is why,― Jason says, "students with straight A's often score below average on the SAT.―
The room began to buzz as they handed out our scores, our self-esteem, our FUTURE. Some kids nodded their heads, pleased but still cool; others slumped so far into their seats that they became little piles of clothing. One boy used a word that falls outside the scope of this article.



crux of our tale: Practice kills the pain. Students who had already taken the SAT were most at ease in the trenches.
"There is no penalty for retaking the test,― says Jason. "Most colleges and all UCs look only at your top scores.―
This year a projected 43,827 students will apply for 3,831 freshmen openings at UCLA. If I had a calculator, I could tell you the percentage. UCLA will expect a SAT score of 2,043. You also must be related in some way to Albert Einstein.
There you have it.
The stakes are high and the odds stacked heavily against, but kids, that's no reason to fret. As someone who has taken the test on either side of the 90's, I can tell you that this is only one in a long series of annoying tests and that my own marks didn't prevent me from fulfilling a lifelong dream of never waking up to an alarm clock.
Just be sure to air out your skills once in a while. Use the Pythagorean Theorem to hang a picture; introduce the word "obstreperous― in casual conversation. Otherwise, your smarts give way to an attrition of pin codes and passwords and reality TV until one day you find yourself alone with the letter "elemeno.― SATurday School †so it goes by Jason_Love