SHSAT Study Guide: The Shortest Reliable Route to a Strong Score

Welcome—nervous is normal, and preparation is a repeatable process, not heroics. This **SHSAT study guide** gives you a practical plan for the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test while working full-time.

1. SHSAT Exam Format and Scoring

For the main Grade 9 SHSAT, plan for **107 questions in 112 minutes**: 55 Mathematics and 52 ELA Reading Comprehension questions. Treat each section as roughly half the score and half your study time. Grade 9 candidates have about one minute per question; the separate Grades 10–11 paper has 57 questions in 112 minutes.

There is no single universal pass mark. Offers depend on your score and each program's admissions criteria, so there is no formal "fail." A low result can close selective options; review realistic programs and alternative routes with your counselor.

2. The Four Knowledge Areas

- ### Reading Comprehension

  Identify main ideas, evidence-based inferences, tone, purpose, and relevant details. Example: ask what a character's repeated avoidance of a topic suggests.

- ### Algebra and Number Sense

  Solve equations, inequalities, ratios, percentages, exponents, and functions. Example: if three notebooks cost $12, how much do five cost?

- ### Geometry and Measurement

  Work with angles, triangles, circles, coordinates, area, and volume. Example: find the area of a circle with a radius of five.

- ### Data Analysis and Probability

  Interpret tables and graphs; calculate mean, median, range, probability, and percent change. Example: use an attendance table to find the percentage increase.

3. Test-Trap Runbook

- **Stalling.** *Symptom:* two minutes on one item. *Check:* make a quick elimination. *Fix:* guess and move; wrong answers are not penalized. *Verify:* your remaining clock. *Cost:* possible points.
- **Unsupported reading choices.** *Symptom:* "It feels right." *Check:* locate textual support. *Fix:* reject outside knowledge. *Cost:* avoidable points.
- **Arithmetic slips.** *Symptom:* the answer looks strange. *Check:* estimate, signs, and units. *Fix:* write one clean line of work. *Cost:* points already earned.
- **Untimed drilling.** *Symptom:* practice feels easy, but test-day pace does not. *Fix:* finish mixed sets with a timer. *Cost:* false confidence.

4. SHSAT Test Prep Plan for a Full-Time Schedule

Use this as a starting baseline: **six hours weekly for six weeks**, adjusted after your diagnostic. Four 45-minute weekday sessions plus two 90-minute weekend sessions provide six focused hours.

1. Use official SHSAT sample questions as a diagnostic and record every miss.
2. Repair math and reading alternately, spending half your time on each. Keep an error log showing the cause and a better method.
3. Take one timed SHSAT practice test within the full time limit, then review it before your next session.
4. In week six, repeat timed practice, repair recurring weaknesses, and use short mixed sets.

Practice questions should follow instruction: learn the skill, answer a timed set, and then explain every error.

5. The Last 48 Hours

- Review your error log, algebra basics, formulas, and test directions. Avoid new topics.
- Complete one short timed set, then rest. Skip a full mock.
- Confirm your SHSAT exam date, location, required identification, and current test-day rules. Eat normally and sleep.

6. Conclusion and Frequently Asked Questions

Conclusion

Your shortest reliable route is to **diagnose, repair, and then rehearse under the clock**. Steady work beats panic, and every reviewed mistake makes the next one easier.

What is the pass mark?

There is no universal pass mark. Your score is considered alongside program-specific admissions criteria.

Can I guess?

Yes. There is no penalty for wrong answers, so a considered guess is better than leaving a blank.

Can I use a calculator?

No. Practise fraction, percentage, and estimation skills without one.

When is the SHSAT exam date?

It varies by year and grade. Follow the official date in your school's testing notice.

What if my score misses my target?

Use it to target realistic programs and ask your counselor about alternative routes.