

A Fireside Chat with Franklin Roosevelt



ABOUT THE SOURCE Franklin Roosevelt was inaugurated as president in March 1933. In his first hundred days in office, Roosevelt pressed Congress to pass a host of new bills to help revive the economy. This legislation marked the start of the New Deal. Many Americans at this time were fearful that the Depression would continue. President Roosevelt gave radio addresses to reassure the people that better days were ahead. In the address below, Roosevelt describes the basics of his recovery program.



*As you read, note the specific ideas that shape Roosevelt's plan for economic recovery. The following word may be new to you: **assimilate**. You may want to use a dictionary to look it up.*

First, I think that we all wanted the opportunity of a little quiet thought to examine and **assimilate** in a mental picture the crowding events of the hundred days which had been devoted to starting the wheels of the New Deal . . .

I think it will interest you if I set forth the fundamentals of this planning for national recovery; and this I am very certain will make it abundantly clear to you that all of the proposals and all of the legislation since the fourth day of March have not been just a collection of haphazard schemes but rather the orderly component parts of a connected and logical whole . . .

First, the Farm Act: It is based on the fact that the purchasing power of nearly half our population depends on adequate prices for farm products. We have been producing more of some crops than we consume or can sell in a depressed world market. The cure is not to produce so much. Without our help the farmers cannot get together and cut production, and the Farm Bill gives them a method of bringing their production down to a reasonable level and of obtaining reasonable prices for their crops. I have clearly stated that this method is in a sense experimental, but so far as we have gone we have reason to believe that it will produce good results.

It is obvious that if we can greatly increase the purchasing power of the tens of millions of our people who make a living from farming and the distribution of farm crops, we will greatly increase the consumption of those goods which are turned out by industry . . .

If all employers in each competitive group agree to pay their workers the same wages—reasonable wages—and require the same hours—reasonable hours—then higher wages and shorter hours will hurt no employer. Moreover, such action is better for the employer than unemployment and

The New Deal

Primary Source

low wages, because it makes more buyers for his product. That is the simple idea which is the very heart of the Industrial Recovery Act . . .

We are not going through another winter like the last. I doubt if ever any people so bravely and cheerfully endured a season half so bitter. We cannot ask America to continue to face such needless hardships. It is time for courageous action, and the Recovery Bill gives us the means to conquer unemployment with exactly the same weapon that we have used to strike down Child Labor . . .

If I am asked whether the American people will pull themselves out of this depression, I answer, "They will if they want to." The essence of the plan is a universal limitation of hours of work per week for any individual by common consent, and a universal payment of wages above a minimum, also by common consent. I cannot guarantee the success of this nationwide plan, but the people of this country can guarantee its success. I have no faith in "cure-alls" but I believe that we can greatly influence economic forces . . . I do have faith, and retain faith, in the strength of common purpose, and in the strength of unified action taken by the American people.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt
July 24, 1933

Source: Franklin Roosevelt, "Radio Address from the White House," July 24, 1933

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. What was the basic idea behind Roosevelt's plan for recovery?

2. What did Roosevelt say he needed for his plan to work?

3. What feelings did Roosevelt try to inspire in his listeners? Give examples to support your answer.

The Minimum Wage

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

In 1938 Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act, which established a minimum wage. It also set the maximum number of hours that employers could require employees to work in a week. Southern Democrats had opposed the bill, arguing that it would harm the nation's industries.

ASSIGNMENT

Do you think the nation's economy benefits when the government establishes minimum wage laws and other measures that intervene in the relationship between employers and employees? 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 in order to do well on the SAT.

Writing (20 minutes)

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. You will have only 25 minutes to write your essay, so use your time wisely.

Proofreading (2-3 minutes)

1. Try to leave a few minutes to reread your essay and make revisions.
2. 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.