

Standardized Tests

There are four main standardized tests you should be familiar with and take if you are planning on attending college. Standardized tests measure a student's college readiness. So while High school grades are a useful indicator of how students perform in college, there is great variation in grading standards and course rigor within and across high schools. Therefore, the SAT/ACT tests are used as they are standardized across all students, schools, and states, providing a common and objective scale for comparison.

I would recommend taking both the SAT and the ACT tests in the spring of your junior year as the tests are very distinct. This would then allow you to re-take the test your senior year for only the test you performed your best at. You can also check with the colleges you are planning to attend to find out what test they prefer.

PLAN. The PLAN is the pre-ACT test taken by tenth-graders to help students estimate how well they will do on the ACT. It is a comprehensive guidance resource that helps students measure their current academic development, explore career/training options, and make plans for the remaining years of high school and post-graduation years. Additional information can be obtained from their web site at <http://www.act.org>

ACT Assessment. This standardized test used for admissions by colleges is designed to assess high school student's general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. The *tests cover four skill areas: English, mathematics, reading and science reasoning*. Scores for each section are averaged to create a composite score. A perfect score on the ACT Assessment is 36. Additional information can be obtained from their web site at <http://www.act.org>

PSAT. The PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test) is a two-part, exam that is very similar to the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test). The PSAT consists of two 25-minute verbal sections, two 25-minute math sections, and one 30-minute writing skills section. Most people take the PSAT in the fall of their junior year in high school. Some students choose to take it during their sophomore year. *Scores on the PSAT are used to determine National Merit Scholars*, students who qualify for merit-based scholarships distributed throughout the United States. For additional information, talk to your high school counselor, call the PSAT information line at (609) 771-7070, or visit their web site at www.collegeboard.com.

SAT. The SAT is one of two standardized tests used by colleges as part of their admissions criteria. The SAT *Reasoning Test* is a *three-hour forty-five minute exam that measures critical reading, math & writing*. Used for admission, scores on each section range from 200-800 points. The SAT *Subject Test or SAT II* consists of more than 20 subject-area or achievement tests designed to measure subject-area knowledge. Additional information can be obtained from their web site at www.collegeboard.com.

SAT vs. ACT: How do the Tests Compare?

Don't know the difference between the ACT and the SAT? Not sure which one you should take?

In general, the SAT focuses more on problem solving and critical thinking skills, while the ACT is a content-based test.

First, look at the requirements of the schools you want to attend — some require one or the other. For those that allow scores from either test, you have a choice to make (or take both!). The following is a comparison of the two tests. Review this information and hopefully it will help you make a more educated decision as to the test that is right for you!

| | SAT | ACT |
|---|---|--|
| Preferred by? | Public schools, middle, east coast schools | Private schools and west coast schools |
| How Questions Appear: | Order of difficulty | No order of difficulty |
| Score Choice? | No. Report will include all test scores. | Yes. Option to choose test scores sent. |
| Highest Math Level: | Algebra/Geometry; test provides formulas | Trigonometry (only 4 questions); test rarely provides formulas |
| Skills Heavily Tested: | Reasoning and critical thinking skills | Reasoning, analysis, problem solving, and application |
| Penalty for Wrong Answers? | Yes | No |
| Based on School Curriculum? | Less, however, the subject test is more. | More |
| Style of Test: | Multiple choice and written responses | Multiple choice; Optional writing test |
| Structure of Test: | Ten-section exam: Three Critical Reading, three Math, three Writing, and one Experimental. The Experimental section is masked to look like a regular section. | Four-section exam: English, Math, Reading, and Science Reasoning. An Experimental section is added to tests on certain dates only, and is clearly experimental. |
| Test Content: | Math: up to 9th grade basic geometry and Algebra II. Science: none. Reading: sentence completions, short and long critical reading passages, reading comprehension. Writing: an essay, and questions testing grammar, usage, and word choice. | Math: up to trigonometry. Science: charts, experiments. Reading: four passages, one each of Prose Fiction, Social Science, Humanities, and Natural Science. English: stresses grammar |
| When It's Offered/ Registration Deadlines: | 2008-2009 Testing Schedule <u>Test Date:</u> <u>Registration Deadline:</u> October 4 September 9 November 1 September 26 December 6 November 5 January 24 December 26 March 14 February 10 May 2 March 31 June 6 May 5 | 2008-2009 Testing Schedule <u>Test Date:</u> <u>Registration Deadline:</u> September 13 August 12 October 25 September 19 December 13 November 7 February 7 January 6 April 4 February 27 June 13 May 8 |
| Scoring: | 200-800 per section, added together for a combined score of 2400. The average combined score is about 1500. | 1-36 for each subject, averaged together for a composite score; median about 21 |
| For More Information: | The College Board (866) 756-7346 www.collegeboard.com | ACT (319) 337-1000 www.act.org |

Free Practice Tests

ACT Practice Sites:

1. <http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/index.html>

ACT Online Prep™ The ACT test prep program created by ACT test developers is now online!

The Real ACT Prep Guide The *official* prep book from the makers of the ACT. The only guide to include three real tests—each with an optional Writing Test.

Preparing for the ACT (PDF; 80 pages, 1,075KB)–**FREE** A booklet available through most high schools and colleges—includes test information, a complete practice test with scoring key, and a writing prompt with sample essays.

Practice test questions – **FREE**

Test tips – **FREE**

Test descriptions – **FREE**

SAT Practice Sites:

1. www.collegeboard.com

The **SAT Preparation Center** allows you to review directions, approaches and provides you with official SAT practice questions on Critical Reading, Mathematics and Writing, as well as tips and strategies for test day. **FREE***

The Official SAT Question of the Day™

Practice with a daily question, hint, and explanation.

Official SAT Practice Test

Print and take a practice test, then get a score report and answer explanations.

My College QuickStart™

A free personalized SAT planning kit for PSAT/NMSQT takers.

**Collegeboard.com registration required to access SAT Prep Center. This registration also allows you to register on-line for the SAT Test!*

2. www.takesat.com

Easy access-No registration required.

Explore different types of **VERBAL** and **MATH** questions.

Take **Practice Tests** in your area of weakness.

Use a **10 week plan** to schedule your revision.

Develop your vocabulary-**1000 Essential SAT words**.

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|---|--|
| Verbal Skills 100's of practice questions on: Sentence Completion; Analogies; Comprehension | Math Skills 100's of Math practice questions on: Problem Solving; Quantitative Comparisons; Grid-Ins |
| Vocabulary Development Essential Wordlists; 1000 words that you need to know for the SAT | Essential Information Dates and Deadlines; 10 week SAT prep plan; Register online |