



# Standardized Tests

A fact of life for high school students.

PLAN EARLY TO TAKE THE SAT OR ACT AND SUBJECT TESTS. TYPICALLY, STUDENTS DO BEST AFTER TAKING THE SAT OR ACT A COUPLE OF TIMES.

THERE ARE MANY OPTIONS FOR TEST PREPARATION, FROM BOOKS TO CLASSES, TO ONLINE PREPARATION. DO SOME RESEARCH AND FIND THE ONE THAT IS BEST FOR YOU.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Love them or hate them, tests are an integral part of high school and college admissions. Throughout your high school years, you will be asked to take a variety of tests to evaluate your aptitude and understanding of various topics. Many states are aligning their high schools' curriculum with the new Common Core Standards and may require yearly assessment tests. Some states and/or school districts also require high school exit exams to prove a minimum level of knowledge before graduation. Additionally, students that take Advanced Placement courses or participate in International Baccalaureate programs will have the opportunity to take final AP or IB exams. Likewise, students that speak English as a second language may be required to prove proficiency in English with the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or the IELTS (International English Language Test System).

### What are college admissions standardized tests?

Both the SAT and ACT are college admissions tests designed to measure your reading, math, writing, and science abilities. Together with your transcript and other academic information, these tests give an indication of your readiness for college-level studies. A majority of colleges require the SAT or ACT.

### It's official! The redesigned SAT started in March 2016

The College Board launched the redesigned SAT (rSAT) test in March 2016 that incorporates significant changes:

- Vocabulary is more relevant, meaning that you will likely hear or even use these words in your daily life.
- Essays are no longer required, but are offered as an option. Most students are encouraged to complete the essay as many colleges require it. The new essay tests your ability to analyze evidence and explain how an author builds an argument.
- Math questions focus on fewer topics, with a particular emphasis on algebra. One math section does not allow students to use a calculator.
- Reading section requires students to analyze data in real world context such as articles related to science, history and social studies. It includes a passage drawn from Founding Documents of America or Great Global Conversation. You will be asked to cite evidence to support your answers.
- Scoring has changed – no penalties for wrong answers. So go ahead and guess!

Remember that although the test changed, the content hasn't changed. English grammar is still English grammar, and Algebra II is still Algebra II! The College Board provides sample tests and additional details on their website, that will help you prepare. The October PSAT reflects the changes made in the full, actual SAT test.

## SAT OR ACT?

All colleges will accept the ACT or SAT for admissions purposes. The Class of 2017 will have three options: The ACT, the retired SAT version if taken before it's final administration (October, November, December 2015 and January 2016) and the Redesigned SAT (March 2016 was the first sitting.) It will be important for students to verify how colleges will use the retired SAT versus the rSAT scores (e.g., will the scores be super scored?) Students in the class of 2018 and later will return to the traditional ACT versus SAT test option to submit to colleges.

### ACT Test

**What is the ACT Test?** ACT test results are used as one of the criteria for acceptance to a majority of colleges. The test measures academic achievement in English, Math, Reading and Scientific Reasoning. The exam is almost three hours long. (English: 45 min., Math: 60 min., Reading: 35 min., and Science: 35 min.) In addition, there is an ACT writing test which is 40 minutes long. You may sign up to take the test with or without the writing portion. The basic test costs \$39.50 and the optional writing test is an additional \$17.00.

**When should you take the ACT Test?** You can take the ACT Test anytime during high school, usually in junior and senior years. The test is given six times yearly usually in September, October, December, February, April and June. It is given at selected high schools that are listed on the website: [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org). You can choose to take the test at any available high school venue.

**How is the ACT Test scored?** The Composite Score is 1 to 36 (average of the four section scores) on the basic test. The Writing score is graded 1-12, and is reported separately and does not affect your Composite Score.

### Retired SAT Test (Used only by class of 2017 students that took the SAT prior to March 2016)

**What is the Retired SAT Test?** The Retired SAT had three components: Critical Reading, Mathematics, and Writing. There was a required 25 minute essay as part of the writing section. The test was three hours and forty-five minutes in length and included a 25 minute experimental section for which students were not be scored.

**When should you take the SAT Test?** Fall 2015 was the end of the Retired SAT. Class of 2017 students that took and showed strength on the Retired SAT can plan to submit these scores to colleges. It is wise to check with each college to make sure the school will accept these scores.

**How is the Retired SAT scored?** Each section of the Retired SAT has 200-800 possible points. The maximum score is 2400. National averages are approximately 1500 for a combined score.

### Redesigned SAT Test

**What is the Redesigned SAT Test?** The redesigned SAT is meant to better align with the Common Core Standards being used in high schools across America. The redesigned SAT has three components: Verbal – Reading and Writing; Quantitative – Math and Science; and Optional Essay. The test is three hours and thirty minutes and the essay is fifty minutes.

**When should you take the Redesigned SAT Test?** The first redesigned SAT was held in March 2016. Students can take the SAT anytime during high school, usually in junior and senior years. The test is given seven times yearly usually in October, November, December, January, March, May and June. It is given at selected high schools that are listed on the website: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org). You can choose to take the test at any available high school venue.

**How is the SAT scored?** The Verbal and Quantitative sections of the SAT are worth 800 possible points. The maximum score is 1600 and will include subscores for Reading, Writing, Math and Science. The essay will be out of 12 points. Test results are made available to you within three to five weeks of the testing date.

**What is the cost and where do you take the Redesigned SAT Test?** The cost of the test is \$54.50 with essay or \$43 without the essay (fees increase slightly each year.) Many area high schools are testing sites. You will find locations online or in your SAT Registration Bulletin. Sign up early to get the location of your choice.

## What to bring (and not to bring!) to the test.

Arrive a few minutes early with two sharpened, number 2 pencils, an eraser, your SAT admissions ticket, photo I.D., and an acceptable calculator (graphing, scientific or four-function calculators only—no laptops or QWERTY keyboards allowed.) You can bring a watch—without an alarm, a drink and/or snack for break time, and extra batteries for your calculator. Don't bring your cell phone, any electronic devices, scratch paper, books, rulers or highlighters.

## Additional Tests

**Subject Tests:** SAT Subject tests are offered through the College Board. There are 20, hour-long, subject-specific tests offered in five subject areas: math, science, foreign languages, English and history. Some schools (or specific majors) require or highly recommend two to three of these tests and may use the test scores to place students in the appropriate level introductory course. For colleges that do not require these tests, the scores can be used by students to demonstrate strength in an area of interest.

**AP Exams:** Advanced Placement courses are specific courses offered at the high school level that offer students a more challenging, college-level experience. Students that take these courses, are given the opportunity at the end of the course to take the corresponding AP exam. Depending on the final score, students can earn college credit, place out of introductory courses and demonstrate a high level of competency in a subject area. These exams are administered through the high school but are managed by the College Board.

**IB Exams:** The International Baccalaureate program is a program designed to challenge students with a specific pattern of course work all taught at a more advanced, challenging pace. Depending on the program offered at the high school, students are given the opportunity to take a Career-related IB exam to show proficiency in a career-related topic or, if the program is structured as such, take an IB Diploma exam for an overall IB score.

**TOEFL and/or IELTS:** The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing Service (IELTS) are both tests to show proficiency in the English language for students whom English is not their first language. Colleges may require scores from either of these tests for foreign language speakers. It is wise to check with each college you are interested in to see what their specific requirements are.

## STANDARDIZED TEST TIPS:

- During registration, you will be required to upload a headshot photo. It must look like you when you take the test. Hats, sunglasses and scarves are not allowed except for religious purposes.
- If you are late registering for the SAT, you can request a place on the waitlist for a specific date and location. Standby testing is no longer allowed. A \$46 waitlist fee is added if you are admitted. If you are late registering for the ACT, you can pay a \$49 stand-by testing fee for a specific date and location. If there isn't space, you will be refunded the \$49 fee.
- If you have questions, need to register late, get on a waitlist, change dates or location, or get scores early, call (866) 756-7346 or go to [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) for the SAT or call (319) 337-1270 or go to [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) if concerning the ACT.

# Understanding the standardized test essays

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

In addition, to evaluating your test-taking skills, the SAT and ACT test how well you can write without outside editing. Both the SAT and the ACT have a written essay portion on the exam. (The ACT and rSAT essays are optional, although required by many colleges.) Regardless of the test you choose here are a few tips that will help you through this portion of the test:

- Colleges understand that you have limited time (25 min on the retired SAT, 40 min on the ACT, and 50 min on the rSAT) to read the prompt, formulate your position and supporting examples, and write the essay: They will treat it as a good first draft. This means they don't expect it to be completely perfect.
- Essay graders have limited time to read your work and are looking for specific details: position, supporting examples, organization, vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, and word usage. Take time to acquaint yourself with the grading rubric on the next page so you'll remember what you need to accomplish.
- Don't draw bad attention. Yes, you do want to use powerful vocabulary; but if you can't remember how to spell a word, it is far wiser to change it to a simple word that won't be noticed than to try to wow the reader with your incorrectly spelled, impressive vocabulary word.

### SCORING:

**Retired SAT and ACT Essays** are scored by two readers – each giving a score from 1 – 6. As long as the scores are within one point of each other, they are added together for a score from 2 – 12 (12 being the highest score you can receive.) If the scores are off by more than one point, a third reader will weigh in on your essay. Remember that the essay is only one section on the entire test. Keep calm and you will be able to finish it in the required time limit without any problem.

**Redesigned SAT Essays** will be scored by two readers – each giving a score from 1 – 4. As long as the scores are within one point of each other, they are added together for a score from 2 – 8 (8 being the highest score you can receive.) If the scores are off by more than one point, a third reader will weigh in on your essay.

### SCORING RUBRICS:

Each of the testing companies provide a scoring rubric for the essay portion of the test. These rubrics will give you a good idea of what the readers are looking for. Use the links below to find the rubrics:

#### Retired SAT:

[HTTP://PROFESSIONALS.COLLEGEBOARD.COM/TESTING/SAT-REASONING/SCORES/ESSAY/GUIDE](http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/sat-reasoning/scores/essay/guide)

#### Redesigned SAT:

[HTTPS://COLLEGEREADINESS.COLLEGEBOARD.ORG/SAT/SCORES/ESSAY](https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/scores/essay)

#### Updated ACT:

[HTTP://WWW.ACT.ORG/AAP/PDF/WRITING-TEST-SCORING-RUBRIC.PDF](http://www.act.org/aap/pdf/writing-test-scoring-rubric.pdf)

READ THE  
PROMPT AND  
THEN TAKE A  
MOMENT TO  
ORGANIZE  
YOUR  
THOUGHTS  
BEFORE YOU  
START  
WRITING.

YOU'LL SAVE  
TIME IF YOU  
HAVE A PLAN.

# SAT/ACT Goal setting TRACK IT!

WORK  
SHEET

We know the very mention of taking the SAT can rattle even the most confident student. But with a little planning and strategy, you can reduce the stress associated with this vital part of your application package. First, do a little research. Check out some of your top choice schools and see what their average SAT scores are for their incoming class.

**DREAM COLLEGE:**

Middle 50% scores for:

**SAT:**

**ACT:**

**DREAM COLLEGE:**

Middle 50% scores for:

**SAT:**

**ACT:**

**DREAM COLLEGE:**

Middle 50% scores for:

**SAT:**

**ACT:**

Compare your practice scores with the schools you've chosen above. Are you below the middle 50%? The higher your scores are in the middle 50% and above, the more competitive you become for the school and potentially more merit aid you might receive.

**BASED ON THIS INFORMATION DECIDE ON A REALISTIC SCORE GOAL:**

My goal score for the SAT is:

My goal score for the ACT is:

# Now it's time to make a plan:

WHICH ACTUAL TESTS WILL YOU TAKE? Remember, the SAT is offered OCT, NOV, DEC, JAN, MAR, MAY AND JUN. The ACT is offered: SEP, OCT, DEC, FEB, APR, JUN

SAT OR ACT & SUBJECT TESTS DATES	REGULAR REGISTRATION DEADLINE	LATE REGISTRATION DEADLINE (LATE FEE APPLIES)	PLAN TO REGISTER FOR THIS TEST	REGISTERED

Register for the SAT or Subject Tests: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

Register for the ACT: [www.ACTStudent.org](http://www.ACTStudent.org)

WHEN WILL YOU TAKE YOUR PRACTICE TESTS:

PRACTICE TESTS	DATE	LIST SECTION SCORES - SAT: MATH, READING/WRITING ACT: ENGLISH, MATH, READING, SCIENCE	COMPOSITE SCORE:	ESSAY SCORE:
PRACTICE TEST 1				
PRACTICE TEST 2				
PRACTICE TEST 3				
PRACTICE TEST 4				



**rSAT TESTS:**

<b>PRACTICE OR ACTUAL</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>READING/ WRITING</b>	<b>MATH</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>ESSAY</b>

**AP TESTS:**

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>SCORE</b>

**TOEFL:**

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>SCORE</b>

**OTHER TESTS:**

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>SCORE</b>