

New York Times  
November 4, 2007  
GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

## ACT vs. SAT

By [MICHELLE SLATALLA](#)

FROM the moment I gave birth, I began to gird myself for the difficult questions that tiny, nosy people might one day ask. I prepared answers worthy of a White House press secretary to address such subjects as teenage sex (“never heard of it”) and drug use (“mild decongestants only”).

So I was ready when my daughter, a junior, cornered me in the kitchen the other day.

“Mom, can I ask you a question?” she asked.

“Sure, anything,” I lied.

She had heard from her teachers that some students score higher on the ACT and others on the SAT, and so she was wondering how I had decided which test to take, and did I think she should follow the same strategy.

I considered possible answers. The last time I was exposed to the horror of standardized testing was in 1979, when I vaguely remember rolling out of bed early one Saturday to frantically root around for two No. 2 pencils to take to a test center, where I nodded off during a particularly boring passage in the reading section.

“Wouldn’t you rather hear about my underage drinking?” I asked.

A generation ago, taking a standardized test was a no-brainer: it was mainly a matter of geography. In the Midwest, students took the ACT. If you lived on the coasts — or were applying to a highly selective college or university there — you took the SAT.

Now, with some [Ivy League](#) schools rejecting nine of 10 qualified candidates, applicants are looking for any edge to improve their chances. Many, particularly those in traditional SAT territory, are taking both tests and submitting the higher score or both scores. In the last five years, the number of ACT takers on the East Coast has risen 66 percent, and on the West Coast 46 percent, according to ACT Inc.

But not everybody has the time or money to prepare for both tests. And the truth is, most probably don't need to. While the tests have distinct personalities — the ACT is curriculum-based, while the SAT is aimed more at general reasoning and problem-solving skills — spokesmen for both say their formats favor only one type of student: the one with a good grasp of material taught in rigorous high school courses.

Similarly, colleges swear they don't prefer one over the other. "Since it's a choice you can make, it has the feeling of being a significant choice, fraught with implication, but I don't think it does matter," says Marlyn McGrath-Lewis, director of admissions at [Harvard](#) College. "Either is fine with us, and we don't have a feeling that either favors students with any particular profile."

Still, some college counselors believe otherwise. In the absence of quantitative studies, they suggest asking yourself a few questions.

### **1. Which format feels right?**

You can take predictive tests (the PSAT and PLAN) sophomore year and extrapolate scores you're likely to get on the SAT and ACT. The practice tests cover much the same material as their respective cousins, which they imitate in style and content.

Experts recommend that if your school gives both, take both. If not, test prep companies offer free full-length practice tests for the ACT and SAT online (at [Princetonreview.com](#), Petersons .com and [Ivybound.net](#)).

"Take each test in as realistic conditions as possible, with no distractions, timing yourself," says Scott Johns, a Peterson's product

manager. “Your score is a benchmark, but also think about how you felt about taking each test. Did you understand the format? Did one experience cause more stress than the other?”

## **2. How long can you sit without fidgeting?**

If you have a short attention span and difficulty maintaining focus, the ACT may be for you, says Marybeth Kravets, a college counselor in suburban Chicago and the “K” in the K & W college guides for students with special needs. The ACT lasts two hours, 55 minutes (plus 30 minutes with the optional writing test). The SAT lasts three hours, 45 minutes.

Similarly, counselors say that students with learning disabilities that make it difficult to process information may do better on the ACT. “That’s because the ACT questions are more knowledge-based and straightforward,” says Scott White, director of guidance at Montclair High School in New Jersey. “The SAT is more nuanced, puzzlelike, trickier.”

Both cover English and math, but there are notable variations in content. For instance, in measuring verbal skills, the SAT focuses on vocabulary whereas the ACT concentrates on grammar, punctuation and syntax. And if you want to avoid science and trigonometry, stick with the SAT, which has neither.

## **3. Overachiever or underachiever?**

College counselors say they see two groups of students, with distinctly different approaches to learning, who may score markedly higher on one test or the other.

“The bright underachievers who are bored and get through school using one quarter of their brains will do better on the SAT, because you just need good reasoning skills for that,” says Mr. White. “And the overachievers, I don’t want to call them grinds, but they’re the ones who

get the highest grades in the toughest classes because they work really hard, will do better on the ACT.”

Mr. White’s theory was echoed by several counselors who responded to a comment he posted in August on the Web site of the National Association for College Admissions Counseling. Cigus Vanni, a school counselor at Cherry Hill High School West in New Jersey, was one who agreed. In a phone interview, he elaborated on the “grinds”: “There’s a cluster in the middle — the kids who would be average to above-average types of kids, the subgroup who don’t have the intellectual flash of the really tippy-top kids but who work really hard in school, and these are the kids who do better on the ACT. They are compliant with school, willing to go the extra mile, ask the extra question, do their homework. And for them, the ACT is much more like just another school-based test than the SAT is.”

In his experience, he says, differences in scores are not consequential for students at either end of the test-taking spectrum. “The great test takers are great test takers, no matter what instrument they’re playing. And the kids at the other end, who consistently get 350s on the SATs or 11s on the ACTs, they’re not going to do better no matter which test they take.”

#### **4. Girl or boy?**

The observation has been made that boys surpass girls on standardized tests. But the ACT gender gap has narrowed. Boys from the class of 2007 scored 21.2 on average, with girls just behind at 21 (the equivalent of 1500 on the SAT, according to the Princeton Review formula).

But boys as a group do better on the SAT, according to data published by both testing companies: 1037 for the class of 2007, compared with 1001 for girls.

That doesn’t mean that every boy should take the SAT and every girl the ACT. But, says John Katzman, chief executive of the Princeton Review, “Girls tend to fit pretty well into the group of high achievers, who get good grades and do well in school, who also do well on the ACT.”

He adds: “I sometimes give the advice that if you were to flip a coin, just go with the SAT if you’re a boy and the ACT if you’re a girl, in part for that reason.”

The test makers’ statistics also indicate that members of minority groups score better across the board on the SAT than on the ACT. But that can be explained, Mr. Katzman says: Top students in all ethnic groups tend to take the SAT, while some Midwestern states require all juniors to take the ACT, thus lowering the mean.

### **5. Which do you think you’ll do better on?**

You’ll probably live up to those expectations — especially if you are a girl or a member of a minority group. The reason is a phenomenon called “stereotype threat,” identified more than a decade ago by Claude M. Steele and Joshua Aronson after they discovered that individual test scores changed with the test taker’s sense of confidence.

“Women and minorities feel stereotypes in our society — that they don’t have the same innate academic abilities as men and Caucasians,” says Professor Steele, director of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at [Stanford University](#). “So if they are taking a test that they have been told is difficult and then they experience frustration in the middle of it, that makes the stereotype relevant to them and they perform dramatically worse.” But, he says, if you believe you will do well on a particular test, your performance is less likely to be impaired by difficult problems.

I told my own daughter, a good test taker who possesses what appears to me to be a magically endless supply of freshly sharpened pencils, that I would recommend either test for her, so long as she follows my final bit of parental advice.

“The real trick,” I said, “is to stay awake.”

[www.collegedegree.com/library/act-sat](http://www.collegedegree.com/library/act-sat)

## ACT vs. SAT - which test should I take and why?

Published on Tuesday May 8th , 2007



Ah, high school. So many memories-- lockers, cheerleaders, and wood shop; late night parties, morning rushes to class, and skipping classes. These were all the good memories, the things we want to remember. Then there's all the boring stuff like homework, projects, and testing. Testing for college, whether it's the [SAT](#) or [ACT](#), is something you'll try to forget, but will always linger on. Why you ask? Because there both super important tests that colleges use to decide where to place you, or if you can attend their school to begin with. Some employers even ask for your test scores after you graduate from college, so you know they have to be taken seriously if one is to succeed in this world. The question that many often debate over is which one to take. SAT or ACT? Which test is gonna make me look good and get me into my top school? Which test is going to pave the road I plan on traveling down for the rest of my life? Well, settle down young one, your answers will soon be answered, as we take a peak into each test to see which one proves to be better than the other.

### History of the SAT and ACT



First, let's take a look at the history behind each test to see if we can determine the origins of each and why a student must be put in this predicament in the first place. The [SAT](#), once known as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (now just referred to as the SAT reasoning test), was

originally developed in the early 1900's by Carl Brigham. It was developed for use in several northeastern states to allow students from any socioeconomic background a chance to get into a college (before the test students were only allowed into colleges based on their parents status in college!) The SAT became more formal in the middle of the century as it was picked up for use by more and more colleges as a way to determine a students intelligence. Its name and structure would change a bit over time to bring us the SAT we know and love today. The [ACT](#), on the other hand, didn't surface until the late 1950's. The American College Testing program introduced it's testing assessment to enable students to decide on which colleges they should attend while providing colleges with information on how to properly teach the student. The ACT would prove to be a favorite of Midwestern and southern states, with those on the coasts generally prefer the SAT. Much as changed for each test over the years as the battle waged on, and now both tests have become accepted nationwide at most four-year colleges with no predominant bias.

### **Structure and content of the SAT and ACT**

A good way to discuss the differences of each test is to look into how each is structured. We'll start with the SAT, which can be [broken up into 3 "mini" tests](#) which focus on different elements. The first part of the SAT is the math assessment test, which consists of a combination of multiple choice and "grid-in" questions that span various math principles. These include numbers and operations, algebra and functions, geometry and measurement, and finally data analysis, statistics, and probability. The math section of the SAT is designed to be standard with that of a tenth grade student. The second part of the SAT is the critical reading assessment, which includes sentence completion multiple choice questions along with longer passage type questions. The third installment of the SAT that was just recently introduced (to further compete with the ACT) is the writing section. This involves writing a short essay based on an assigned topic.

The ACT, however, is structured a little differently and involves different content. While the SAT contains three sections, the [ACT is divided into four multiple choice tests](#), with an optional fifth writing essay (which was also added after the SAT's addition of an essay). The first section is reserved for english, focusing on mechanics and rhetoric skills. The mathematics test focuses on beginning algebra skills through more advanced trigonometry questions not found on the SAT. The reading section asks questions related

to arts and literature and finally the science section deals with evaluation and problem solving. The optional essay is very similar to the SAT in terms of length and writing ability. The ACT acts to ask for more information about different topics while the SAT is more focused on more specific areas.

## How the SAT and ACT are scored



Major differences in how these tests are scored are a big reason for much of the discussion over which test is better than the other. We already know that the SAT is split into 3 different parts; each part of the test is worth up to 800 points, for a total combined score potential of 2400 points. For each correct answer you get on the SAT, you'll receive one point towards your final score. However, for each answer you get wrong (not that your smarty pants self will be getting any wrong!), you'll have one point detracted from your score. Answers left blank are not counted at all (which means you will not get penalized for leaving an answer blank but your total will be less than 800). The ACT, on the other hand, is graded just a little differently. Each of the four separate tests are graded on a scale of 1 to 36. The optional essay can add points to your score, and unlike the SAT, no points are detracted for wrong answers. The tests also provide sub scores for three of the four tests that do not relate to the final score, but provide some extra analysis of a students strength or weakness. It's probably a good idea to [compare the SAT and ACT tests side by side](#) to really get a good idea of how the different scores compare to each other. While it may seem the ACT is better because of the lack of wrong answer penalty, it really doesn't make your chances of getting a better score any easier.

## Taking the SAT and ACT



So far we've learned much about the [differences between the actual tests](#), but what about taking them? Is there anything that sticks out in the test taking process that gives either test an advantage? For the SAT, registration fees are around \$50 while the ACT is a little cheaper at around



\$29, so if money decides which test you'll be taking, it's obvious that the ACT is the way to go. Time could also be a decision making factor you may have overlooked, with the SAT clocking in at around 5 hours and the ACT taking almost half as much less time to complete. The SAT gives students an extra day each year with the test being held seven times over the ACT's 6, although you usually need less preparation time for the ACT when considering registration deadlines. When the time comes to sending your scores out to colleges, the ACT allows for a little more flexibility by allowing the student to pick which scores of the test a college can see, whereas every SAT score is sent by default.

Deciding on which test to take has become more of a recent debate than it was in the past. For years the two tests were separated by their geographical affiliations, but as [each test has changed](#) and become more competitive over the years, combined with the outcry by supporters from both sides, the two assessments have become widely accepted by every college. This has obviously forced an issue upon high school students that many did have to decide on in the past. The better test to take? It's really not a question that can be answered completely, and will constantly be one of debate because of its subjective nature. While doing the research for this article, this author has made his own decision based on what each test seems to stand for. The SAT is designed more for documenting a student's ability and knowledge in how to take a test while the ACT is more of an observation of what you have learned while in high school. Based on that, it seems if you have the book smarts and do a great job in class, then shoot for the ACT. If you're the type who picks up fast and can take a test without too much studying, then the SAT has your name on it. Think about which skill set you want to show to colleges and make your decision; the bottom line is what kind of intelligence you think you have.

- SPARKNOTES
- <http://www.sparknotes.com/testprep/books/act/chapter1section2.html>

## The ACT versus the SAT

The SAT dominates the national discussion of standardized testing; the ACT seldom gets mentioned. However, each year, nearly the same number of students take each test. Traditionally, American colleges used the SAT, rather than the ACT, as the standard-bearer in college admissions. But recently an increasing number of colleges around the country have begun to accept ACT scores from applicants, either in addition to SAT scores or in lieu of them. For you, the important question is which of the two tests should you take?

You should do the following two things when deciding whether to take the ACT or the SAT:

1. Find out whether the colleges to which you are applying require one test rather than the other.
2. If it doesn't matter which test you take, decide which test is better suited to your skills (i.e., the test on which you'll score better).

### College Requirements

The majority of colleges in the U.S., particularly those on the East and West Coasts, still require an SAT score as part of the application. But depending on the schools to which you are applying, you may have a choice between the ACT and the SAT, so be aware of your options. Given the varying preferences at American colleges, you should carefully examine your application requirements before registering for either test. Beware of tricky wording as well: when the writers of the ACT tell you that most U.S. colleges and universities “accept” ACT results, don't be fooled into thinking that those schools will take the ACT in place of the SAT—many are merely willing to look at your ACT score in addition to your SAT score. In order to avoid confusion (and possibly despair) near application deadline time, make sure you know which scores schools want. If you are confused about a school's requirements, contact that college or university's admissions office for clarification.

Also remember that the new writing section offered in February 2005 is an optional requirement. Some schools will require it and others won't, so make sure you know each institution's requirements. Note that if you do choose to take the writing test, your writing scores will be sent to all schools regardless of whether or not they require the writing test. Schools must specifically request not to be sent the writing scores, which is fairly unlikely.

### Choosing the Right Test for You

The ACT and the SAT are both meant to test your knowledge of the fundamentals of a high school education in the United States. Yet the writers of the two tests are guided by very different philosophies, and the two exams have different formats and test different subject matter. These differences are significant enough that you might feel much more comfortable taking one test rather than the other. We will describe these differences below:

<b>Differences in Testing Philosophy</b>	
<b>ACT</b>	<b>SAT</b>
The ACT strives to assess the knowledge you've acquired, meaning that the test focuses on subjects and skills taught in high school.	The SAT tries to assess "innate ability." It does so using tricky and confusing phrasing to determine your test-taking skills (i.e., your performance under pressure and your ability to identify what's being asked).

You should consider your strengths in comparison with the subjects tested by both tests. The ACT may appear more difficult than the SAT because it tests a broader range of subjects, but keep in mind that a weakness in one subject may not be as damaging on the ACT as on the SAT. You should also keep in mind that although the SAT may deal with simpler topics than the ACT, the SAT questions are often deliberately worded to confuse the test taker. In addition, you can study actual subject matter to improve your ACT score, while improving your SAT score requires you to understand test-taking tricks.

<b>Differences in Format</b>		
	<b>The New ACT</b>	<b>The New SAT</b>
Total Time	175 minutes (plus 30 minute optional writing test)	225 minutes (plus 25 minute experimental section)
Total Number of Sections	4 (plus the optional writing test)	3 (plus 1 experimental section)

The differences in format are not terribly significant.

### **Taking Both Tests**

If time and money allow, you may want to consider taking both the ACT and the SAT. That way, you can have your choice of the two scores when applying to colleges. If you're applying to a mix of schools, some of which accept the SAT and some the ACT, you're covered on all sides. While we emphasized the differences between the two tests, studying for both tests actually would overlap a great deal. Both the ACT and the SAT ultimately test your ability to think, and both cover the basics of a high school education.

# Which Test Scores to Send: SAT or ACT?

By [Lynn O'Shaughnessy](#) | Apr 15, 2009 | [5 Comments](#)

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Some teenagers perform better on the **SAT**, while others fare better on the **ACT**. And frankly it doesn't matter because all colleges and universities will accept scores from either test. The ACT is more popular in the Midwest, while the SAT is the favored test on either coast.

The ACT is considered less coachable. That's because it tests for knowledge that teenagers should have already absorbed in their high school classes. In contrast, the SAT tests for problem-solving abilities and is more of an aptitude test.

Even after the scores are in, however, it can be difficult to know whether your teenager's ACT or SAT results are more impressive. A perfect SAT score is 2400. A perfect ACT score is just 36. Wonder no longer. Here's an SAT/ACT conversion chart, so you can compare scores of both tests:

ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT
36	2400	23	1590
35	2340	22	1530
34	2260	21	1500
33	2190	20	1410
32	2130	19	1350
31	2040	18	1290
30	1980	17	1210
29	1920	16	1140
28	1860	15	1060
27	1820	14	1000
26	1760	13	900
25	1700	12	780
24	1650	11	750

Send whichever score is higher on this chart. For example, if your teen got 2100 on the SAT but 34 on the ACT, send the ACT.

What if neither the ACT or SAT scores look good? There's always Plan B: check out the [list of ACT and SAT-optional schools](#) at FairTest.org.

## KAPLAN: Should You Take the ACT or SAT?

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Both the ACT and the SAT are nationally administered standardized tests that help colleges evaluate candidates. All schools accept either test interchangeably. So as you begin to think about college and creating the best application package possible, your admissions plan should begin with the question, "Which test should I take?"

### What's the Difference Between the ACT and SAT?

#### Test Structure and Format

	ACT	SAT
Length	3 hours, 25 min (with Writing Test)	3 hours, 45 minutes
Structure	4 Sections (English, Math, Reading, Science) plus an optional Writing Test	10 Sections (3 Critical Reading, 3 Math, 3 Writing, and 1 Experimental, which is unscored)

#### Scoring

	ACT	SAT
Score	Composite of 1-36 based on average scores from the 4 test sections  4 scores of 1-36 for each test  Optional Writing Test score of 0-12 (not included in the overall)	Total score range of 600-2400 based on adding scores from 3 subjects  3 scores of 200-800 for each subject  Score of 0-12 for the Essay

**ACT****SAT**

	score)	
Wrong Answer Penalty	No penalty for wrong answers	¼ point subtracted from your raw score for each wrong answer (except for Math Grid-Ins)
Sending Score History	You decide which score is sent	You decide which score is sent *Some colleges require you to send all scores, check with the college to be sure

**Content****ACT****SAT**

Reading	<p>Composite of 1-36 based on average scores from the 4 test sections</p> <p>4 scores of 1-36 for each test</p> <p>Optional Writing Test score of 0-12 (not included in the overall score)</p>	<p>Total score range of 600-2400 based on adding scores from 3 subjects</p> <p>3 scores of 200-800 for each subject</p> <p>Score of 0-12 for the Essay</p>
Math	No penalty for wrong answers	¼ point subtracted from your raw score for each wrong answer (except for Math Grid-Ins)

	ACT	SAT
Science	You decide which score is sent	You decide which score is sent  *Some colleges require you to send all scores, check with the college to be sure
Essay	Optional Final Section  30 Minutes  Not Included in Composite Score  Topic of importance to high school students	First Section  25 Minutes  Factored into overall score  More abstract topic

## The ACT at a Glance

Like the [SAT](#), the ACT is a nationally administered, standardized paper-and-pencil test that helps colleges evaluate candidates. Colleges now accept your ACT or SAT scores interchangeable. This means that you have the opportunity to decide on which test you'll perform better. And in many cases, students prepare for and take both exams. Is the [ACT or SAT better for you?](#)

Generally, you'll take the ACT for the first time in the spring of your junior year. This allows you to reserve the summer months for college applications or enough time to re-take the test during the fall of your senior year if you're not satisfied with your score.

## The Anatomy of the ACT

The ACT lasts 2 hours and 55 minutes (excluding the optional Writing Test) or 3 hours and 25 minutes with the Writing Test. The order of test sections and the total number of questions covered in each test section never changes:

Section	Length	Question Types
<a href="#">English</a>	45 Minutes	40 Usage/Mechanics Questions 35 Rhetorical Skills Questions
<a href="#">Mathematics</a>	60 Minutes	14 Arithmetic Questions 10 Elementary Algebra Questions 9 Intermediate Algebra Questions 9 Coordinate Geometry Questions 14 Plane Geometry Questions 4 Trigonometry Questions
<a href="#">Reading</a>	35 Minutes	10 Social Studies Questions 10 Natural Sciences Questions 10 Prose Fiction Questions 10 Humanities Questions
<a href="#">Science</a>	35 Minutes	15 Data Representation Questions 18 Research Summary Questions 7 Conflicting Viewpoint Questions
<a href="#">Writing Test</a>	30 Minutes	You write in response to a question about your position on an issue



## KAPLAN: Your ACT Score

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Each of the four multiple-choice ACT test sections (English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science) is scored on a scale of 1-36. You will also receive a composite score, which is the average of your four test scores (1-36).

Your score report also includes national rankings where you can compare your performance against students across the country. For instance, if you ranked in the 90th percentile on the Mathematics Test, you did better than 89 percent of other students, while 10 percent fared better than you.

### The ACT Writing Test

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If you take the Writing Test, you will receive a Writing Test subscore (ranging from 0 to 12) and a combined English/Writing score (ranging from 1 to 36), along with comments about your essay. Keep in mind that you must take both the English and Writing Tests to receive Writing scores. The Combined English/Writing score is created by using a formula that weights the English Test score two-thirds and the Writing Test score one-third to form a combined score. This combined score is then reported on a 1-36 scale.

Not all schools use the Writing Test score in the same way. Some elite schools that have traditionally required the SAT Writing Subject Test are using the ACT Writing Test as a formal piece of the admissions process. Other schools have indicated that they will look at Writing Test scores, but that they will not give them much, if any, consideration. These schools are primarily trying to get an understanding of the scores in conjunction with their applications. A third group of schools is still on the fence and is waiting for more information to become available before making a decision.

On the ACT website you can search for [Writing Test requirements by school](#). As you refine your target school list based on your scores, you should reconfirm with each school to determine how they will be using your Writing score.

### Receiving Your ACT Score

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Most ACT scores are available online within 2 ½ weeks after each national test date. This service allows you to view your scores before your official score report arrives by mail. (Score reports for those testing outside the U.S. are not available online). The ACT website offers a complete listing of [score availability dates](#).

[Score reports](#) are usually mailed to your home within 4 to 7 weeks after each test date. If you took the Writing Test, your score report will be mailed only after your Writing scores are available.

### What's a Good ACT Score?

Test Section	Class of 2007	Class of 2008
English	20.7	20.6
Mathematics	21.0	21.0
Reading	21.5	21.4
Science	21.0	20.8
Writing	7.6	7.3
Total Composite	21.2	21.1

### Taking the ACT More Than Once

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If you aren't happy with your score, don't despair! Most students take the ACT officially more than once, and some even take it three times! Use the information in your score report to help you understand your strengths and weaknesses and to hone your preparation for your next ACT. And remember that with the ACT, you decide which scores are sent to colleges.

Keep in mind that you cannot combine scores from different test dates to create your best composite score, and you cannot report only your Writing scores (or only your multiple-choice scores) from a test date. All scores from a test date will be reported together.

Learn more about free practice test opportunities with Kaplan!

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## The SAT at a Glance

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Like the [ACT](#), the SAT is a nationally administered, standardized paper-and-pencil test that helps colleges evaluate candidates. All colleges now accept scores from the SAT and ACT interchangeably. This means you'll have the opportunity to decide on which test you'll perform better. And in many cases, students prepare for and take both exams. Is the [SAT or ACT is better for you?](#)

Generally, you'll take the SAT for the first time in the spring of your junior year. This allows you enough time to re-take the test during the fall of your senior year if you're not satisfied with your score.

### The Anatomy of the SAT

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The SAT lasts 3 hours and 45 minutes and tests your critical thinking skills, as well as your ability to analyze and solve problems in math, critical reading, and writing. The 25-minute essay will always be the first section you see, and the 10-minute multiple-choice writing section will always be the last. The other sections can appear in any order.

Section	Length	Question Types
<a href="#">Critical Reading</a>	Two 25 Minute Sections One 20 Minute Section	19 Sentence Completions 48 Reading Comprehension
<a href="#">Math</a>	Two 25 Minute Sections One 10 Minute Section	44 Multiple-Choice 10 Grid-Ins
<a href="#">Writing</a>	One 25-Minute Section One 10-Minute Section One 25-Minute Essay	18 Identifying Sentence Errors 25 Improving Sentences 6 Improving Paragraphs
Experimental	One 25-Minute Section	Can be Critical Reading, Math, or Writing. Does not count towards your score

## KAPLAN: Your SAT Score

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One of the most common questions we get from students and parents is: "What does this score mean?"

The SAT is graded on a 2400-point scale, with the Math, Critical Reading, and Writing sections all being worth 800 points each. It is important to remember that the SAT returns scores on a bell-curve. This means that the median score on each section will always be close to 500 (the midpoint between 200 and 800), with a decreasing frequency of scores down to 200 and up to 800.

Your score report also includes percentile rankings. These let you compare your performance against students across the country. For instance, if you ranked in the 90th percentile on the Math section, you did better than 89 percent of other students, while 10 percent fared better than you.

### The SAT Writing Section

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Keep in mind that not all schools use the Writing section in the same way. Some elite schools that have traditionally required the SAT Writing Subject Test are using the SAT Writing section as a formal piece of the admissions process. Other schools have indicated that they will look at Writing section scores, but that they will not give them much, if any, consideration. These schools are primarily trying to get an understanding of the scores in conjunction with applications. A third group of schools is still on the fence and is waiting for more information to become available before making a decision.

As you refine your target school list based on your scores, you should ask schools how they will be using your Writing score.

### Receiving Your SAT Score

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You can usually expect to find your SAT scores online 2-3 weeks after your Test Day. The College Board offers a full listing of [score availability dates](#). On the [College Board](#) site, you'll also find:

- Your raw score and 200-800 point scaled score for the Math, Critical Reading, and Writing sections.
- Your 0-12 essay sub-score.
- Information about your responses including questions that you answered right, answered wrong, or omitted.

- Your estimated percentile rank for college-bound seniors based on the test you took. (Note: Your percentile rank will help you understand how you scored in comparison to other test takers.)
- A printable copy of your essay.

This information will also be sent to your home about 4-6 weeks after your Test Day so that you have an official score report. You can also use the College Board site and your official score report to confirm the colleges to which you sent your scores.

## What's a Good SAT Score?

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### Test Section

### Average Score for the Class of 2008

Writing	494
Critical Reading	502
Math	515
Essay	7.2 (out of 12)

## Taking the SAT More Than Once

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If you got your dream score, congratulations! You can now get to work on your SAT Subject Tests, AP exams, and College Admissions. If you're not happy with your score, don't despair. Keep in mind that most students take the SAT more than once, and some even take it three times! Use the information in your score report to help you understand your strengths and weaknesses and to hone your preparation for your next SAT.

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