

What is the difference between the ACT and SAT?

The ACT is an achievement test, measuring what a student has learned in school. The SAT is more of an aptitude test, testing reasoning and verbal abilities.

The ACT has up to 5 components: English, Mathematics, Reading, Science, and an optional Writing Test. The SAT has only 3 components: Verbal, Mathematics, and a required Writing Test.

The College Board introduced a new version in 2005, with a **mandatory** writing test (SAT). ACT continues to offer its well-established test, plus an **optional** writing test. Take the ACT Writing Test only if required by the college(s) you're applying to.

The SAT has a correction for guessing. That is, they take off for wrong answers. The ACT is scored based on the number correct with no correction for guessing.

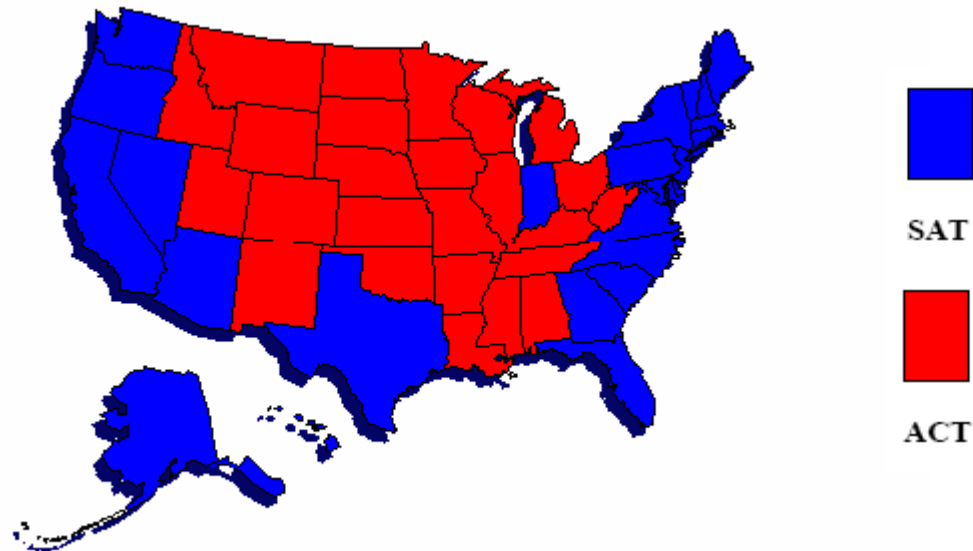
ACT lets the student decide what set of scores they want sent. The College Board's policy is to send all scores.

The ACT has an interest inventory that allows students to evaluate their interests in various career options.

Still Not sure what the differences are between the SAT and ACT?

1. Geography. There's a great geographic divide between the two tests. The SAT is the dominant college admissions test up and down the eastern seaboard and on the West Coast. ACT country can be found in the Midwest and South. Important fact: Nearly all colleges accept both!

SAT vs. ACT – state by state breakdown of who takes what



2. Science. Both the SAT and ACT test the old standards of math and English but one key difference is that the ACT has a science section. Don't worry, students don't need to know anything about amoebas or chemical reactions; the science section is more of a reading test.

3. Writing. Both the SAT and ACT include an essay, but the key difference is that the essay on the SAT is mandatory while the ACT essay is optional. If one plans on taking the ACT make sure to check with prospective colleges to see if they even require the essay.

4. Scoring. Each section of the SAT is scored on a scale of 200 to 800 with 2400 being the highest possible combined score. The ACT, on the other hand, scores each section on a scale of 1 to 36. The total composite score will also fall somewhere on that scale.

Princeton Reviews' Break Down of the SAT vs the ACT

To learn about the differences between the two tests and how they compare, take a look at the chart below.

| | SAT | ACT |
|--|---|---|
| What is the test structure? | 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. |
| What is the 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. |
| Is there a penalty for wrong answers? | Yes | No |
| How is the test scored? | 200-800 per section, added together for a combined score. A 2400 is the highest possible combined score. | 1-36 for each subject, averaged for a composite score. A 36 is the highest possible composite score. |
| Are all scores sent to schools? | Yes. If a student requests a score report be sent to specific colleges, the report will include the scores the student received on every SAT taken. | No. There is a "Score Choice" option. Students can choose which schools will receive their scores AND which scores the schools will see. |
| Are there other uses for the exams? | Scholarship purposes. | Scholarship purposes. Certain statewide testing programs. |

Kaplan's Break Down of the SAT vs ACT

| | SAT | ACT |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Length | 3 hours, 45 minutes | 3 hours, 25 minutes (including the 30-minute optional Writing Test) |
| Sections | 10 Sections: 3 Critical Reading, 3 Math, 3 Writing (including the Essay), 1 Experimental (unscored) | 4 test sections (5 with the optional Writing Test): English, Math, Reading, Science, Writing (Optional) |
| Reading | Reading comprehension passages and questions, and sentence completion questions | 4 Reading Comprehension passages, 10 questions per passage |
| Science | Science not included | Science (analysis, interpretation, evaluation, basic content, and problem solving) |
| Math | Math accounts for 1/3 of overall score Topics Covered: Arithmetic, geometry, algebra, and algebra II | Math accounts for 1/4 of overall score Topics Covered: Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and trigonometry |
| Essay | First thing you do; 25 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factored into overall score • More abstract topic (vs. the ACT) Pick a side and stick to it | Last thing you do (optional); 30 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not included in composite score <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic of importance to high school students Address counterarguments |

How SAT and ACT Scores Compare?

Look at the following scores conversion table.

| <i>SAT if you score a...</i> | <i>ACT it's about the same as a...</i> |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 2400 | 36 |
| 2340 | 35 |
| 2260 | 34 |
| 2190 | 33 |
| 2130 | 32 |
| 2040 | 31 |
| 1980 | 30 |
| 1920 | 29 |
| 1860 | 28 |
| 1820 | 27 |
| 1760 | 26 |
| 1700 | 25 |
| 1650 | 24 |
| 1590 | 23 |
| 1530 | 22 |

How can students find out if a school accepts the ACT, SAT or both?

Students should be able to find this information by visiting the desired university's official website
or by calling their admissions office.

How can students figure out which test to score better on?

Learning about the differences between the two tests is one thing,
knowing how one actually might score is another.

The only way to know for sure is to take a practice test.

2008~2009 Test Dates

| <i>SAT Test Dates</i> | <i>ACT Test Dates</i> |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| June 7, 2008 | June 14, 2008 |
| Oct. 4, 2008 | Sept. 13, 2008 |
| Nov. 1, 2008 | Oct. 25, 2008 |
| Dec. 6, 2008 | Dec. 13, 2008 |
| Jan. 24, 2009 | Feb. 7, 2009 |
| Mar. 14, 2009 | April 4, 2009 |
| May 2, 2009 | June 13, 2009 |
| June 6, 2009 | |