

SAT vs. ACT

What are the differences?
Check out this side-by-side comparison
and see for yourself.



SAT

ACT

How often is it administered?

Seven times per year

Six times per year

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.

Five-section exam:
English, Math, Reading, Science Reasoning, and Writing (optional)
An Experimental section is added to tests on certain dates only, and is clearly experimental.

What is the test content?

Math: up to geometry and algebra II
Reading: sentence completions, short and long critical reading passages, reading comprehension
Writing: grammar, usage, word choice, and a mandatory essay

Math: up to trigonometry
Reading: four passages, one each of Prose Fiction, Social Science, Humanities, and Natural Science
Writing: optional essay
Science: charts, graphs, and data interpretation
English: stresses grammar

Is there a penalty for wrong answers?

Yes, 1/4 of a point for each wrong answer on multiple-choice questions

No

How is the test scored?

200–800 per section, added together for a score of 600–2400
2–12 for the essay

1–36 for each subject, averaged for a composite score
2–12 for the Writing Test

Are all scores sent to schools?

No. Students in the Class of 2010 and younger may opt in to a new score reporting option allowing them to choose which scores to release by test date.

No. There is a “Score Choice” option. Students can choose which schools receive their scores AND which scores the schools see.

Are there other uses for the exams?

Scholarship purposes
Certain statewide testing programs

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Certain statewide testing programs

Need more information?

Educational Testing Service (ETS):
609-771-7600, ETS.org
The College Board: collegeboard.com

ACT, Inc.: 319-337-1270,
ACTstudent.org

800-2Review • PrincetonReview.com



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