

SAT vs. ACT: How do the Tests Compare?

What are the differences between the SAT and ACT? They are both standardized tests and factor into the college admissions process. To learn about the differences between the two tests and how they compare, take a look at the chart below.

	SAT	ACT
When 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.	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. Writing: though listed as optional, most colleges require this portion of the test.
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.
Best time to register?	At least six weeks before the test date	At least four weeks before the test date
Need more information?	Educational Testing Service (ETS) www.ets.org The College Board (866) 756-7346 www.collegeboard.com	ACT, Inc.: (319) 337-1270 www.actstudent.org

WHAT DOES THIS SCORE MEAN???

Score comparisons between ACT composites, SAT I composites with writing, and SAT I composites without writing.

This chart is an estimate based on current and previous information

ACT Composite	SAT I New Score (Writing)	SAT I Old Score (No writing)
15	1060	740
17	1210	830
19	1350	910
20	1410	950
21	1500	990
22	1530	1030
23	1590	1070
24	1650	1110
25	1700	1140
26	1760	1180
27	1820	1220
28	1860	1260
29	1920	1300
30	1980	1340
31	2040	1380
32	2130	1420
33	2190	1470
34	2260	1520
35	2340	1580
36	2400	1600

Sources: 1) College Board, Data Extrapolated; 2) ACT concordance study