

THE SAT vs. THE ACT

Knowing what to expect on the SAT and ACT is the best way to decide which test will better suit your strengths. We broke down each exam's content and formatting so you're prepared for test day.

SAT

MATH

- Tests algebra, data analysis, arithmetic, pre-calculus, and trigonometry (emphasis on advanced algebra)
- Provides commonly used formulas (ex. Pythagorean theorem, special right triangles, and area)
- Multiple-choice and grid-in questions
- Tests ability to apply Math concepts
- No calculator allowed on 34% of questions

READING

- Tests ability to draw inferences and conclusions from evidence
- Questions include line numbers and appear in order in the passage so students can easily navigate
- Some questions test graphics (charts, graphs, pictures) related to the passage
- Does **NOT** include vocabulary section, though vocabulary tested within passages
- Includes Founding Documents/Global Conversation passage

WRITING

- Tests grammar rules related to verbs, pronouns, idioms, sentence structure, style, and punctuation
- Questions ask about sentences within a passage
- At least one passage with graphics

NO SCIENCE SECTION

ACT

MATH

- Covers same material as SAT with slightly more emphasis on geometry
- Does **NOT** provide commonly used formulas for students
- Multiple-choice questions only
- Tests ability to apply Math concepts
- Calculator allowed on *entire* section

READING

- Tests speed and instant recall
- Most questions do **NOT** include line numbers, so students must *remember what they read*
- Does **NOT** include vocabulary section, though vocabulary is tested within passages

WRITING

- Tests same material as SAT
- Questions ask about sentences within a passage
- No graphics

SCIENCE

- Tests ability to analyze charts/graphs and draw conclusions
- Focuses more on *logic and scientific thinking*, not on actual scientific knowledge

SAT

NO ESSAY SECTION

SCORING

- Composite Score: 400-1600 points (sum of 2 section scores below)
- Writing/Reading Score (200-800 points) + Math Score (200-800 points)
- *No guessing penalty*

EXTRA TIME

Students who receive extra time for a learning difference are held to a strict schedule for each section

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- More commonly accepted by international universities
- Given in more international locations
- Exam is *paper-based*

SUPER SCORING*

Most universities super score

ACT

ESSAY

- Tests ability to write a persuasive argument in response to a specific, modern-day issue
- Students must incorporate three short viewpoints from different sides of the debate (these are provided in the prompt)
- Essay score is **NOT** included in student's ACT composite score
- Essay is *optional*

SCORING

- Composite Score: 1-36 points (average of 4 section scores below)
- English Score (1-36 pts) + Math Score (1-36 pts) + Reading Score (1-36 pts) + Science Score (1-36 pts)
- Essay scored on a scale of 2-12 points
- *No guessing penalty*

EXTRA TIME

Students who receive extra time for a learning difference are held to a strict schedule for each section

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- Not always accepted by international universities (although accepted by ALL U.S. universities)
- Fewer international test sites but offered more often throughout the year
- Exam is *computer-based* for international students (students with accommodations may take paper test)

SUPER SCORING*

Many universities super score, but some may not

*Super scoring is the process of taking the highest section scores from multiple test sittings to create a new composite score.