

The PSAT:

Exam Overview & Section Breakdown



Exam Overview

FORMAT

- Reading, Writing, Math
- 4 answer choices for multiple choice questions
- Adaptive test (by section): second module difficulty is determined by how students score on the first module

SCORING

- 320–1520 total points
- Reading + Writing: 160–760 points
- Math: 160–760 points

GUESSING PENALTY

- NO deduction for wrong answers





The PSAT:

Section Breakdown



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READING & WRITING

54 multiple-choice questions

Total time: 64 minutes (two 32-minute modules)

READING

- Tests ability to summarize and analyze arguments
- Made up of short passages—1 question per passage
- Passages come from a variety of texts (poems, plays, prose, and essays)
- Each module starts with a set of questions testing vocabulary within passages
- Some questions test graphics (charts, graphs) related to the passage


WRITING

- Tests grammar rules related to verbs, pronouns, transitions, sentence-structure, and punctuation
- Questions ask sentences within a passage or information from bulleted notes
- No graphics

MATH

44 questions total, includes both multiple-choice and student-produced questions

Total time: 70 minutes (two 35-minute modules)

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- Tests algebra, data analysis, arithmetic, and trigonometry (emphasis on advanced algebra)
 - Provides commonly used formulas (ex. Pythagorean theorem, special right triangles, and area)
 - Tests ability to apply Math concepts
 - Calculator allowed on all questions