Articles and Research

SAT vs. ACT: How do the Tests Compare?

What is the difference between the SAT and ACT? They're both standardized tests and they both 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.
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	**No**. There is a "Score Choice" option. Students can choose which schools will receive their scores AND which

	student received on every SAT taken.	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) (609) 771-7600 www.ets.org **The College Board** www.collegeboard.com	**ACT, Inc.**: (319) 337-1000 www.ACT.org