

ACT vs. SAT

Which Test is Right For You?

Scores from the ACT and SAT can be an important part of the college application. Since scores from both tests are accepted by all colleges, how do you decide which test will best highlight your academic skills? While the ACT and SAT are similar in their level of difficulty, the following details some of the differences between them.

For more information on these tests, visit act.org and collegeboard.org.

ACT

Offered by ACT, a non-profit organization.

Digital and paper testing formats

Includes four sections: English, Reading, Math, and Science

Calculators are allowed on all math questions

Takes 2 hours and 55 minutes; add 40 minutes for writing test

215 questions

Scores range from 1–36

Cost is \$68 (\$93 with optional writing test).

SAT

Offered by College Board, a non-profit organization.

Fully digital; uses Bluebook testing app

Includes two sections: Reading and Writing, and Math

Calculators are allowed on all math questions

Takes about 2 hours

98 questions

Scores range from 400–1600.

Cost is \$60.

Things to Consider

► Different approaches to testing science.

The ACT includes a science test, which constitutes one-quarter of a student's total score. The SAT includes science questions throughout the test, but does not have a separate science section.

► Differences in the math sections.

All of the ACT math questions are multiple choice. Most SAT math questions are multiple choice, but some require you to write your own answer. The SAT math score accounts for one-half of a student's total score, while the ACT math score accounts for one-quarter of a student's total score. Calculators are permitted on both tests.

Should you take the ACT, the SAT, or both?

All colleges accept both the ACT and SAT; however, some colleges now have a test-optional policy. Unless you are certain that the colleges you're considering don't require test scores, you should take the ACT or SAT. Check the application requirements for each school you plan to apply to.

Submitting scores from both the ACT and SAT means that you are splitting your prep time between the two tests. Many experts recommend that you take a full-length practice test for each one, determine which one you're likely to do better on, and then devote all of your time and energy to preparing for that test.

For information and practice tests, visit act.org and collegeboard.org, and download the Bluebook app (SAT). If you have questions about these tests, or about which tests you should take, talk to your counselor.

**The information in this InfoSheet is current as of the 2024 testing year, but is subject to change by the testing organization.*