

SAT vs ACT

Many students and parents begin the college prep process by comparing the ACT and SAT tests.

The [SAT](#) and [ACT](#) generally cover the same topics. Both ACT and SAT scores are used for college admissions decisions and awarding merit-based scholarships. Most colleges do not prefer one test over the other.

Compare the ACT and SAT tests

- ACT includes a Science section
- SAT includes one SAT Math Section on which you may not use a calculator

	SAT	ACT
Why Take It	Colleges use SAT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.	Colleges use ACT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.
Test Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading• Writing & Language• Math• Essay (Optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• English• Math• Reading• Science Reasoning <p>Essay (Optional)</p>
Length	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 hours (without essay)• 3 hours, 50 minutes (with essay)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 hours, 55 minutes (without essay)• 3 hours, 40 minutes (with essay)
Reading	5 reading passages	4 reading passages
Science	None	1 science section testing your critical thinking skills (not your specific science knowledge)
Math	Covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arithmetic• Algebra I & II• Geometry, Trigonometry and Data Analysis	Covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arithmetic• Algebra I & II• Geometry, Trigonometry, and Probability & Statistics
Calculator Policy	Some math questions don't allow you to use a calculator.	You can use a calculator on all math questions.
Essays	Optional. The essay will test your comprehension of a source text.	Optional. The essay will test how well you evaluate and analyze complex issues.
How It's Scored	Scored on a scale of 400–1600	Scored on a scale of 1–36
	SAT Prep Options	ACT Prep Options

Should I Take the SAT or the ACT

Students are increasingly taking [both the SAT and ACT](#). Changes made to the SAT in 2016 have made it easier than ever to prep for both tests concurrently — and earn competitive scores on both!

The best way to decide if taking the SAT, ACT, or both tests is right for you is to take a timed [full-length practice test](#) of each type. Since the content and style of the SAT and ACT are very similar, factors like how you handle time pressure and what types of questions you find most challenging can help you determine which test is a better fit. Try our [QUIZ: SAT, ACT, or Both?](#) to learn more.

SAT vs ACT Resources

<https://blog.prepscholar.com/act-vs-sat>

<https://www.studyusa.com/en/a/1305/act-vs-sat-ultimate-guide-to-choosing-the-right-test>

<https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/college-admissions-playbook/2013/10/21/how-to-choose-between-taking-the-act-sat>

