SAT® vs ACT®

	SAT	Current ACT	ACT (Spring 2025)
Why Take It	Colleges use both ACT and/or SAT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.		
Test Structure	2 sections: • Math • Evidence-based Reading & Writing	4 - 5 sections: • English, Math, Reading, Science Reasoning • Essay (Optional)	3 - 5 sections: • English, Math, Reading • Science Reasoning and/or Essay (Optional)
Reading/Writing?	2 combined modules Single questions per passage	• Separate sections • Multiple questions per passage	• Separate sections • Multiple questions per passage
Math	Arithmetic, Algebra I & II, Geometry, Trig, Data Analysis	Arithmetic, Algebra I & II, Geometry, Trig, Probability & Statistics with 5 answer choices	Arithmetic, Algebra I & II, Geometry, Trig, Probability & Statistics with 4 answer choices
Test Format	Online only	Online or Paper & Pencil	Online or Paper & Pencil
Testing Time	2 hours, 14 min	2 hours, 55 min (w/out essay) 3 hours, 40 min (w/essay)	2 hours - 3 hours, depending on which version of the test is taken
How It's Scored	Composite score: 400 - 1600 (Sum of section scores) Section scores: 200 - 800	Composite score: 1 - 36 (Avg of Eng, Reading, Math & Science) Section scores: 1 - 36	Composite score: 1 - 36 (Avg of English, Reading & Math) Section scores: 1 - 36
Cost	$68	$69 (no essay) - $94 (w/essay)	TBD

Unsure Whether to take the SAT or ACT?

The best way to decide is by taking a timed, full-length practice test of each. While the SAT and ACT are similar in content and style, key differences—like pacing and question types—can help you determine which test is the better fit.
Discover your strengths and choose the right path for you!

Check out our prep options!
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*ACT® and SAT® scores are provided by schools featured. These scores are representative of the median score for those who enrolled in school for Fall 2023. Students within a wide range of scores have received admissions to these schools based on their entire application package. Contact the school for more specific information. SAT®, PSAT® and AP® are registered trademarks of the College Board, which is not affiliated with and do not endorse The Princeton Review's products. ACT® is a registered trademark of ACT, Inc. The Princeton Review is not affiliated with Princeton University.