



Cracking the Code: Your Blueprint to SAT, ACT, and PSAT Success

Tom Ehlers
Founder
Method Learning



Method Learning



Tom Ehlers

Founder of Method Learning



Tom graduated from Princeton University and completed Princeton's Teacher Preparation Program. Early on, he developed a passion for learning which led to the inception of Method Test Prep. Running this small business allowed Tom to really focus on each student's needs and spend countless hours tutoring with the belief that all students have the ability to succeed. In addition, he has worked as an educational consultant with school districts across the country and advises them on ways to improve the districts' college admission test scores.

Founder

Tom is a father to twins Jonathan and Julia and enjoys traveling with his children and wife, Ally. In his down time, he reads, watches sports, and stays active. His motto in life, "Keep your face to the sunshine and you will never see the shadows."

What's Our Goal?



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Use higher ACT
and SAT scores
to...



Get accepted to
more places/have
more options



Earn more \$\$ in
academic merit
aid

A higher score can...

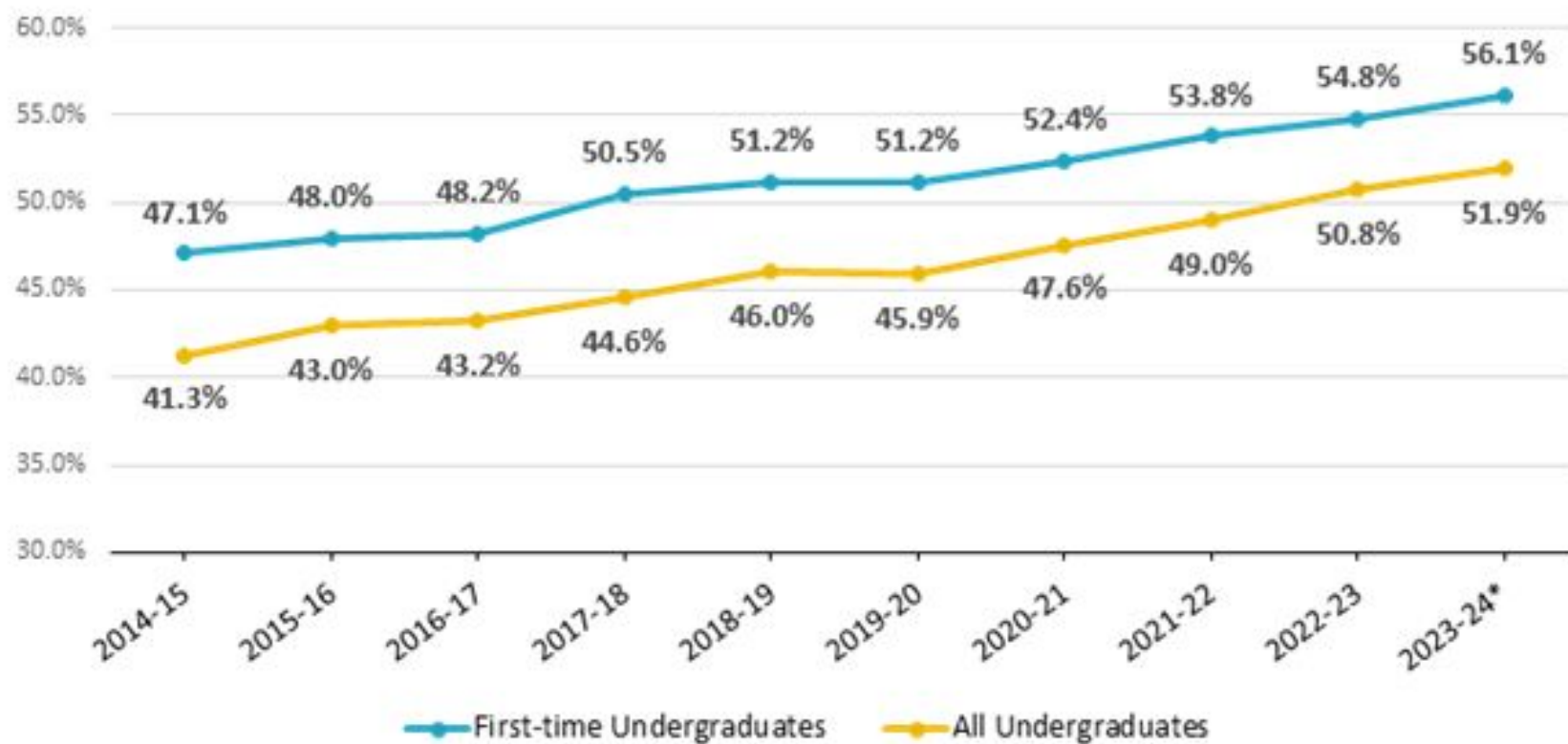


- help you earn a larger academic merit aid package
- help with admissions chances
- help get admissions to a particular program at a college
- help you place out of certain classes

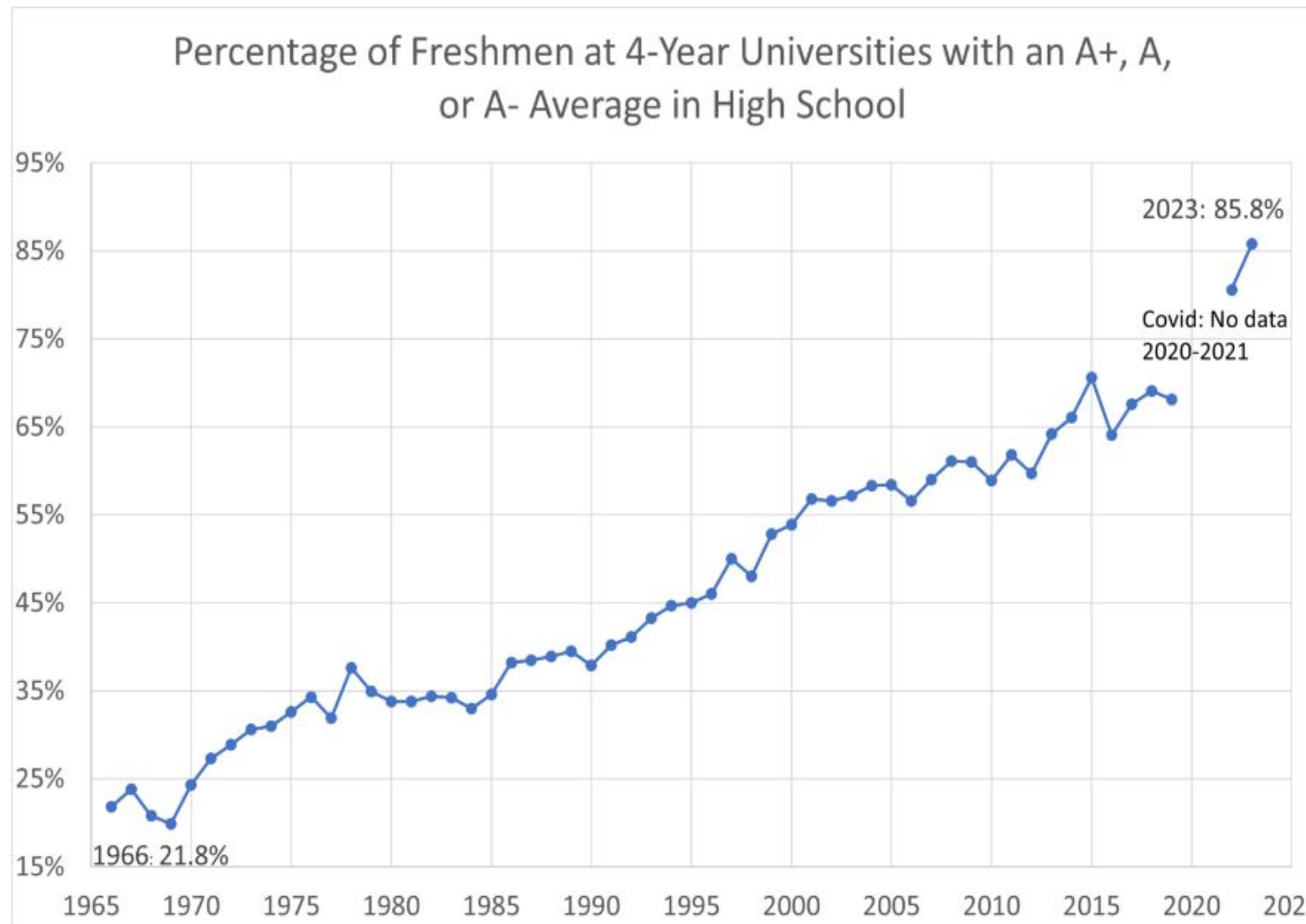
Tuition discounts are rising!



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The rise of grade inflation



Grade Inflation in U.S. High Schools, 1966–2022, “American Freshman Survey” from the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA (1966–2019, 2022, and 2023 data — the 2022 and 2023 data have not been normed and weighted as were prior years, but those years are listed to indicate the data’s continued trend rather than the precision of the percentages.)

SAT/ACT Scores better predictor of college success



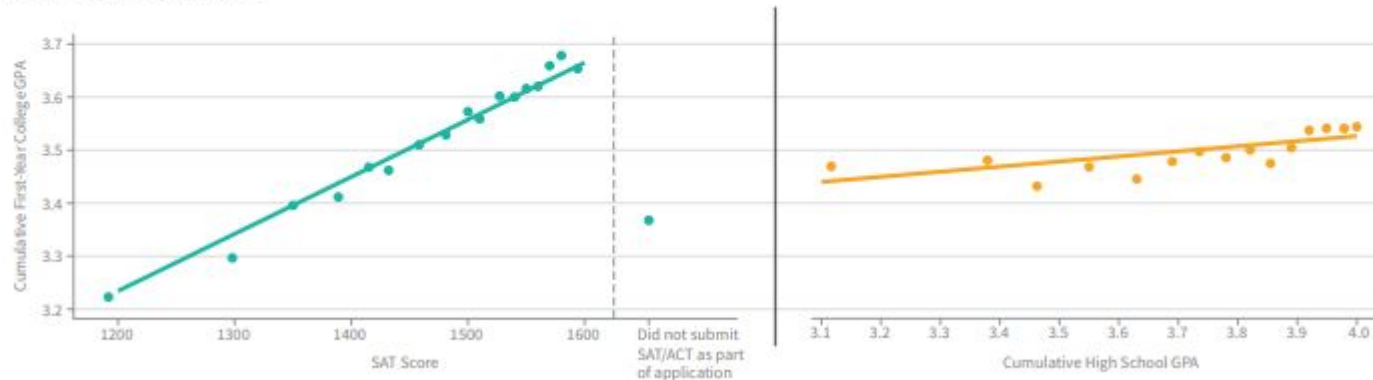
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Finding #2: High school GPA does a poor job of predicting academic success in college

In contrast to these test score patterns, students with a perfect (scaled) high school GPA of 4.0 achieve a cumulative GPA in college that is less than 0.1 points higher than a student with a 3.2 high school GPA, indicating **high school GPA does little to predict academic success in college.**

Higher SAT/ACT scores are associated with higher college GPAs but higher high school GPAs are not.

This figure depicts the relationship between students' performance on standardized college entry exams (SAT/ACT) as well as their high school GPAs relative to their academic performance in college (first-year college GPA) when controlling for race, gender, and family income, as well as other characteristics such as first-generation and legacy status.





If you only remember
ONE THING from this
presentation...



Predictability warrants preparation

The exams are *standardized*: they must
test the same set of skills in the same
way on every administration



If a student gets just 1 more question correct on the SAT, how many points does his or her score often go up?

National Averages



SAT

1030

(out of 1600)

ACT

19

(out of 36)



Should a student take
both the SAT and ACT?



If you get a question wrong
on the SAT or ACT, you lose
how many points?

Changes to the ACT



- Can be much shorter than old ACT (as short as 2 hours, 5 minutes)
- More time per question
- Science section optional and more “science-y”



What are the
differences between
the SAT and ACT?

Differences between exams



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SAT

- 50% Math
- Digital only
 - Adaptive
- Shorter reading passages
- More emphasis on vocab
- Fewer math topics but more in depth

ACT_(w science)

- 25% Math
- Digital or paper/pencil
- Science reasoning section
- Longer reading passages
- Less emphasis on vocab
- Greater variety of math topics



How much time
should I put in each
week to prepare for
the tests?



What would I do if I had an 11th grader?
(or if I was in 11th grade)



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Oh my goodness, I do!

11th grade timeline

- Fall PSAT
- SAT in the fall or winter?
- April or June ACT
- SAT in the spring of junior year





The ACT “My Answer Key” Service

- October 2025
- April 2026
- June 2026

SAT 2025 -2026 Test Dates



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Aug. 23, 2025	Aug. 8, 2025 Register	Aug. 12, 2025
Sept. 13, 2025	Aug. 29, 2025 Register	Sept. 2, 2025
Oct. 4, 2025	Sept. 19, 2025 Register	Sept. 23, 2025
Nov. 8, 2025	Oct. 24, 2025 Register	Oct. 28, 2025
Dec. 6, 2025	Nov. 21, 2025 Register	Nov. 25, 2025
March 14, 2026	Feb. 27, 2026 Register	March 3, 2026
May 2, 2026	Apr. 17, 2026 Register	April 21, 2026
June 6, 2026	May 22, 2026	May 26, 2026

ACT 2025 -2026 Test Dates



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July 12, 2025

Test Date	Regular Registration Deadline Late Fee Applies After This Date	Late Registration Deadline
September 6, 2025	August 1	August 19
October 18, 2025	September 12	September 30
December 13, 2025	November 7	November 24
February 14, 2026	January 9	January 23
April 11, 2026	March 6	March 24
June 13, 2026	May 8	May 29
July 11, 2026*	June 5	June 24



What would I do if I had a 10th grader?
(or if I was in 10th grade)



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Put all of my academic
energy into my classes

Take the most challenging classes I can and focus on my GPA

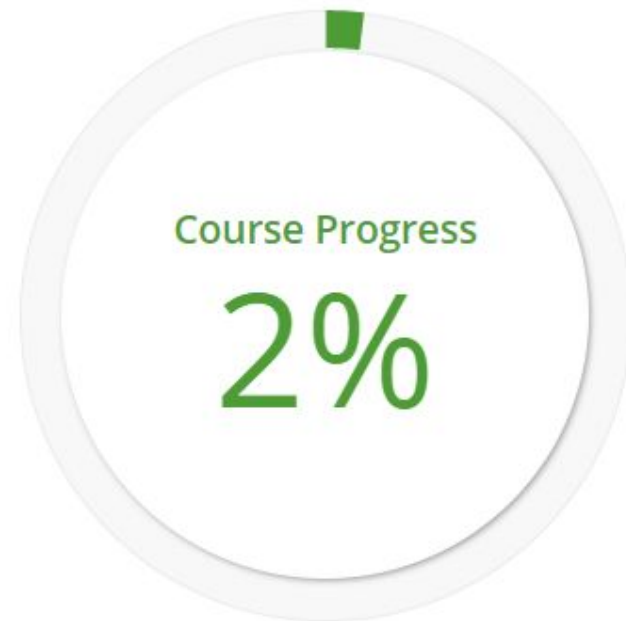


So what is the next step? How can I improve my score most efficiently?



SAT

The SAT course provides students with a comprehensive overview of the most effective strategies and most relevant content for raising their SAT scores. It also offers robust features for teachers looking to improve their students' SAT skills and performance in math, reading, and English.

[Continue →](#)

Units

1/17

[View Units](#)

Lessons

1/51

[View Lessons](#)

Quizzes

0/59

[View Quizzes](#)

Test Sections

0/11

[View Tests](#)



Functions

Report Issue

Answered: 0 of 1

Play Audio

Segment 1 of 3

Next Segment

Understanding Functions

Think of a function like you think of software: it takes an input (something you type in) and gives you an output (a result) according to a program. Typical notation gives the function a name like f , an input, and an output.

$$f(\underbrace{x}_{\text{input}}) = \underbrace{2x^2 + 5x}_{\text{output}}$$

Once the function is defined (just like f is defined above), anything that shows up in the "input" variable (here, that's x) gets plugged in whenever the variable shows up in the output. *No matter what the input is—a number or another variable—it gets plugged in.* Here are a few examples using the function above. Inputs are shown in blue.

$$f(4) = 2(4)^2 + 5(4)$$

$$f(4) = 52$$

$$f(a) = 2(a)^2 + 5(a)$$

$$f(a) = 2a^2 + 5a$$

$$f(p + q) = 2(p + q)^2 + 5(p + q)$$

$$f(p + q) = 2(p + q)(p + q) + 5p + 5q$$

$$f(p + q) = 2p^2 + 4pq + 2q^2 + 5p + 5q$$

Now, give the basic function question below a try.



Catch All Geometry

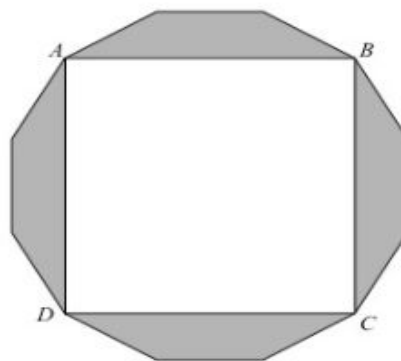
Report Issue

Questions 1 of 8

00:01:14

View Results

QUESTION 1 OF 8



In the figure above, square ABCD is inscribed in a regular dodecagon (12 sides). Each side of the dodecagon has length 10. What is the area of the square?

(A) $200\sqrt{3} + 300$

(B) 700

Incorrect

(C) $200\sqrt{3} + 400$

Correct

(D) 900

View Explanation

Next Question

An ice-cream truck driver's monthly profit can be modeled by the equation $p = 2k + m + 3n$, where p is the monthly profit in dollars, k is the number of ice-cream cones sold, m is the number of ice-cream sandwiches sold, and n is the number of ice pops sold. What is the ice-cream truck driver's monthly profit if he sells 200 ice-cream cones, 100 ice-cream sandwiches and 50 ice pops?

- A) 350
- B) 450
- C) 650
- D) 800

$$\begin{aligned} p &= 2(200) + 100 + 3(50) \\ &400 + 100 + 150 \\ &650 \end{aligned}$$



[Dashboard](#)[Courses](#)[School](#)[Classes](#)[Tom](#)[Dashboard](#) / [Digital SAT](#) / [Tests](#) / [Test #2](#)

Test #2

☒ Super Score ☐ First Attempt[Submit](#)

Score

Reading and Writing

Math

Reading and Writing

The Reading and Writing section of the digital SAT focuses on key elements of comprehension, rhetoric, and language use that the best available evidence identifies as necessary for college readiness and success.

[Start Reading and Writing](#)

Math

Attempt	Score	Correct	Answered	Questions	Time Spent	Complete	Time Out
1	—	In Progress	In Progress	44	23 min	—	—

[Continue](#)

[Course ▾](#)[Classes](#)[Assignments](#)[School](#)[👤 Tom](#) [☰](#)

Missed and Mastered Vocabulary Words

A vocabulary word is considered "mastered" when you have correctly defined it more than one time in the vocabulary quiz.

Filter:

[All Time](#)[This Year](#)

Words Missed	Total: 7
scrupulous	1
vitriolic	1
perspicacious	1
resolve	1
voracious	1
vapid	1
monotony	1

Words Mastered	Total: 0
----------------	----------

[Practice Vocabulary Words](#)



Create your free Parent Account

Get access to:

- SAT and ACT Review Packets
- College Resume template
- College Planning timeline



Questions?



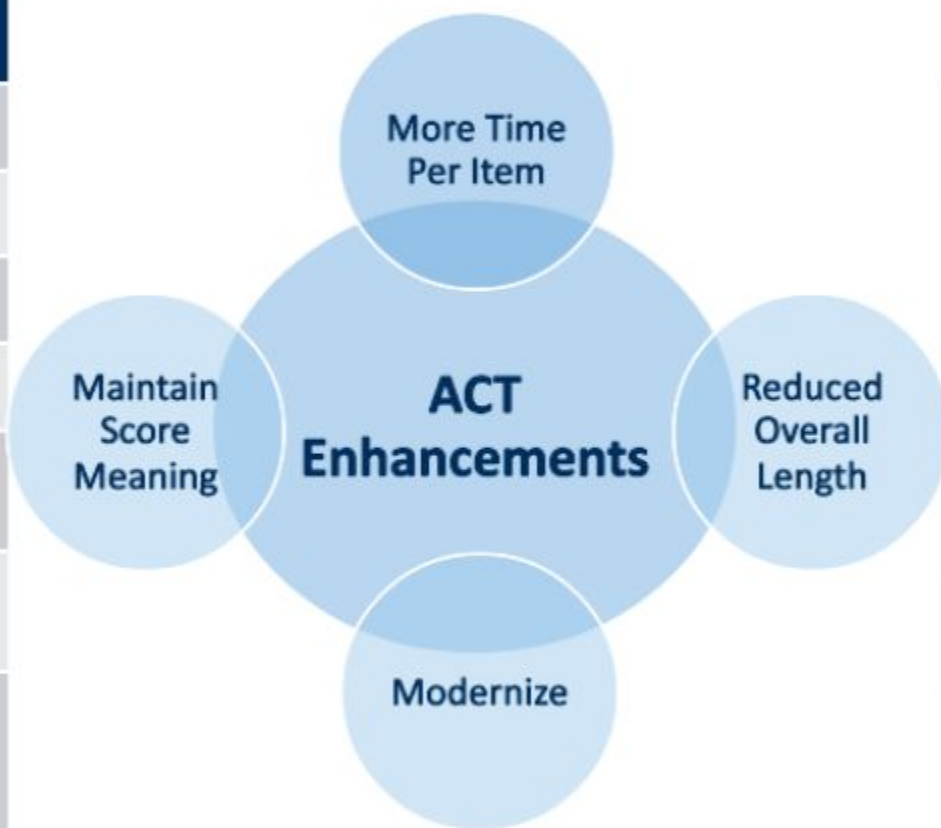
Call: 1-877-871-PREP

Email: tom@methodlearning.com

ACT Current State to Future State

Current State		
English	75 items	45 min
Reading	40 items	35 min
Math	60 items	60 min
Science	40 items	35 min
5 th Test [^] (Field Test)	12-28 items	20 min
Writing	1 item	40 mins
	National + Writing S/D + writing	195 min 235 min 175 min 215 min

[^] State/District students do not receive 5th test



Proposed Future State		
English	50 items (10 FT)	35 min
Reading	36 items (9 FT)	40 min
Math	45 items (4 FT)	50 min
Science	40 items (6 FT)	40 mins
Writing	1 item	40 min
	National & S/D +Science +writing	125 min 165 min 205 min

- Total count includes Field Test (FT) items
- Current studies may result in adjustment to total minutes

Key Enhancements

Estimated Time Per Item

Subject	Current (seconds/item)	Enhanced (seconds/item)	Est. Increase in seconds/item
English	36	42	6 (17%)
Math	60	67	7 (11%)
Reading	53	67	14 (27%)
Science	53	60	7 (13%)

Important Note: The enhanced ACT blueprint remains a linear assessment and is not a computer adaptive test. A student's max score potential is not routed into "tracks" based on their performance on initial section questions.

New Composite Score: Starting Fall 2025

ACT { **English**
Math
Reading } → **COMPOSITE**

ACT + **Science** → **STEM SCORE**
+ **Writing** → **ELA SCORE**

Starting in fall 2025, the ACT Composite will be English, math, and reading. Students can still take all five subjects previously offered on the ACT test, but they will have more flexibility to choose their own test experience tailored to their education needs.

Students who choose to take the science section will receive a STEM score, and students who choose to take the writing section will receive an ELA score.



Features of the Digital Test

Section 2: Math

Directions ▾

0:00

Hide

100%

[Calculator](#) [Reference](#) [More](#)

Calculator **Expand**

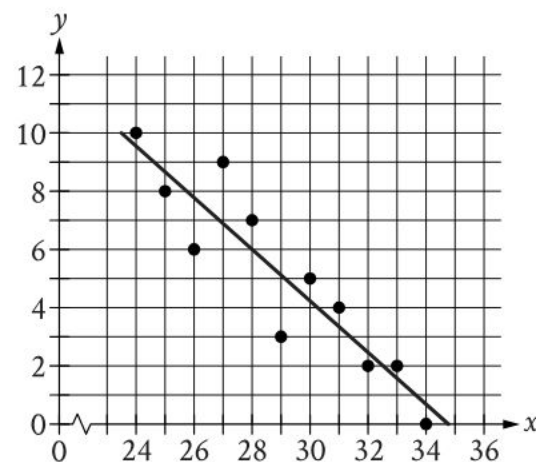
1

2

powered by **desmos**

1 Mark for Review

The scatterplot shows the relationship between two variables, x and y . A line of best fit for the data is also shown.



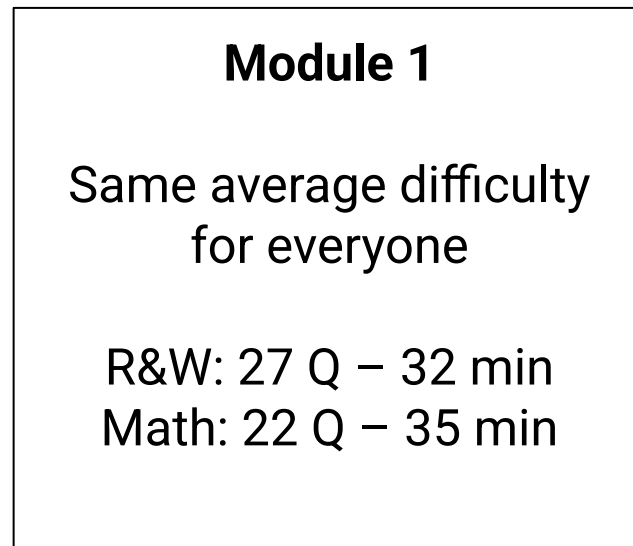
At $x = 32$, which of the following is closest to the y -value predicted by the line of best fit?

(A) 0.4

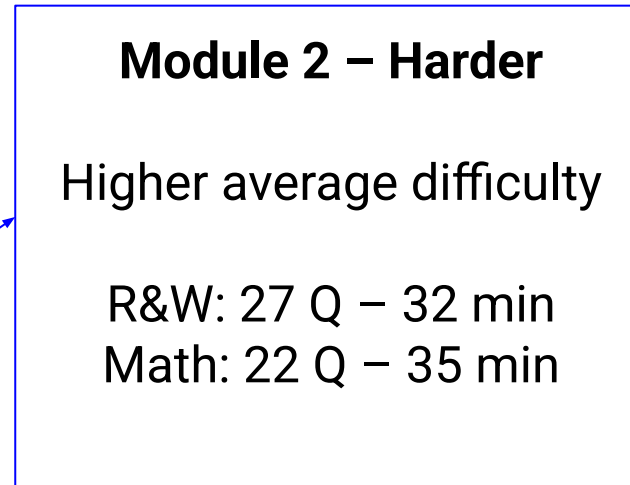
(B) 1.5

(C) 2.4

Section-Level Adaptivity

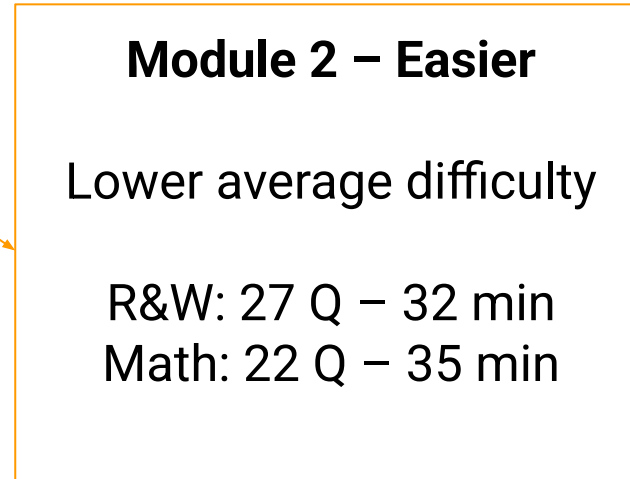


*Slightly > 50% correct**



No score cap

*< 50% correct**



Significant score cap in
upper-mid 500s

Section 1: Reading and Writing

0:00

Directions ▾

Hide

 Annotate  More

In recommending Bao Phi's collection *Sông I Sing*, a librarian noted that pieces by the spoken-word poet don't lose their ____ nature when printed: the language has the same pleasant musical quality on the page as it does when performed by Phi.

1  Mark for Review 

Which choice completes the text with the most logical and precise word or phrase?

☒ A scholarly ☐ B melodic ☒ C jarring ☐ D personal 

New Annotation: "the language has the same pleasant musical quality"

CLOSE X

Highlight Color: Underline style: 

Save

Cancel

Section 1: Reading and Writing

0:00

100% 

Directions ▾

Hide

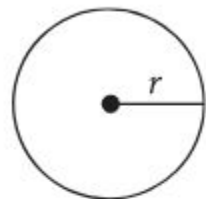
 Annotate
⋮ More

Check Your Work

On test day, you won't be able to move on to the next module until time expires.
For these practice questions, you can click **Next** when you're ready to move on.

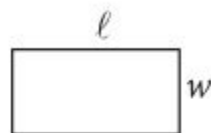
Section 1: Reading and Writing Questions

☐ Unanswered ☒ For Review

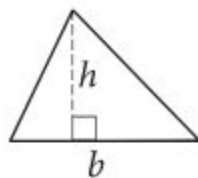


$$A = \pi r^2$$

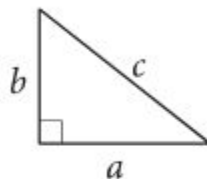
$$C = 2\pi r$$



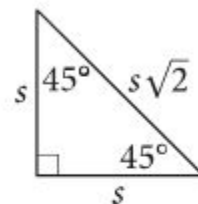
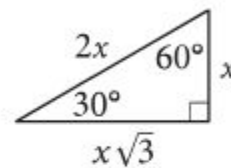
$$A = \ell w$$



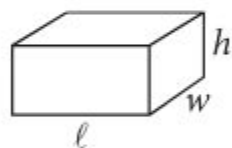
$$A = \frac{1}{2}bh$$



$$c^2 = a^2 + b^2$$



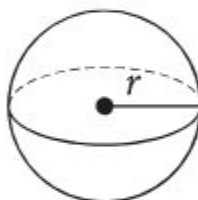
Special Right Triangles



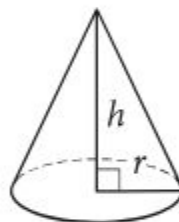
$$V = \ell wh$$



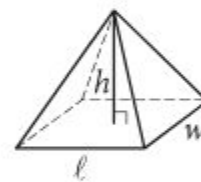
$$V = \pi r^2 h$$



$$V = \frac{4}{3}\pi r^3$$



$$V = \frac{1}{3}\pi r^2 h$$



$$V = \frac{1}{3}\ell wh$$

The number of degrees of arc in a circle is 360.

The number of radians of arc in a circle is 2π .

The sum of the measures in degrees of the angles of a triangle is 180.

Key Enhancements

Change	Description
More time per item	Average of ~10 sec per item (varies among subjects).
Testing time reduced	- Composite score received after 125 minutes, rather than 195 or 175 minutes. - For students taking all four current core subjects, ~30 minutes shorter for national testing. - For students taking all four current core subjects, ~10 minutes shorter for state/district testing.
Fewer items per section	~44 items shorter in total (across English, math and reading). - Minimized impact to reporting categories.
Eliminate the 5 th Test for National test takers	- Aligns testing experience for state/district and national testers – creating a more inclusive research sample when testing new items (prior EFTs were only in National). - Test new items in real-world circumstances, not in isolated section. - More field test items each year. - Over time, will enable faster score reporting.
Learners can choose to take with or without science section (as writing is today)	- English, math, and reading sections taken by all students will generate a Composite score. - When a student chooses to take science, it will appear as a section score and be used to calculate the STEM score (science + math) but will not be used to calculate the Composite (same as writing today). - States/districts can choose to offer science and/or writing.

Key Enhancements

(Final determination of changes will be made after summer linking and dual mode studies.)

Sections	Changes to Items, Passages, and Other Specifications
English	• Adding stems. • Reducing the length of some English passages. • Adding an argumentative essay and items. • Rebalancing reporting categories.
Math	• Reducing the number of foils in math from five to four. • Reducing the number of items aligned to Integrating Essential Skills reporting category. • Reducing the number of items aligned to advanced topics (higher grade level items). • Reducing the number of items with context (require longer time to read). • Rebalancing reporting categories.
Reading	• Reducing the length of some reading passages. • Rebalancing reporting categories.
Science	• Ensuring at least one passage per form addresses an engineering and design topic. • Increasing the number of items requiring scientific background knowledge (DCI). • Rebalancing reporting categories.
Writing	• No change.



1. If students were routed into the more difficult second math section, it was much more difficult than the math on the Blue Book practice exams



2. On balance, students prefer the Digital SAT to the previous, paper SAT.
No surprise:

- Much shorter exam
- More time per question
- Much shorter reading passages



3. The SAT remains a very literal test:

- If an answer choice is not supported in the passage, eliminate the choice.
- If there is one word wrong in an answer choice, eliminate the choice.



4. Students who take the Digital SAT multiple times will have a large advantage:
- Less questions means each question is worth more. Just getting two more questions correct, could mean a 40-50 point increase

An Example: “Red Flag” Words



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Where's the error?

The congressional panel issued their findings after conducting an investigation that lasted for over a year.

The congressional panel issued their findings

The congressional panel issued its findings



SAT vs. ACT: on which
test do you have more
time per question?

Private tutoring and classes



**Method
Learning**

- For students and families who want/prefer live instruction:
 - we offer many **class** and **private tutoring** options at MethodLearning.com



How many sections are on the SAT? the ACT? (putting aside the optional essay section)



Poll: True/False: The
ACT Science Section
test students on science
knowledge?



College admissions
today is more
competitive than ever
before



Strong test scores give
strong grades more
credibility



The less information an applicant gives, the more the college will scrutinize the information the applicant does give



A high score is better
than no score



Anything that a college says is optional,
(if you are serious about going to that
college), you do.



Students who submit strong test scores are offered more generous academic merit aid packages.



The SAT and ACT test students on skills they will need for success in college: reading comprehension, fundamental math and grammar concepts.



Students can and will be
successful on these exams with
the right preparation



There is a “Submitter Advantage”
(Students who submit strong test scores have
a greater chance of being accepted)



For parents/students who
want/need something in
addition to the web-based
program...

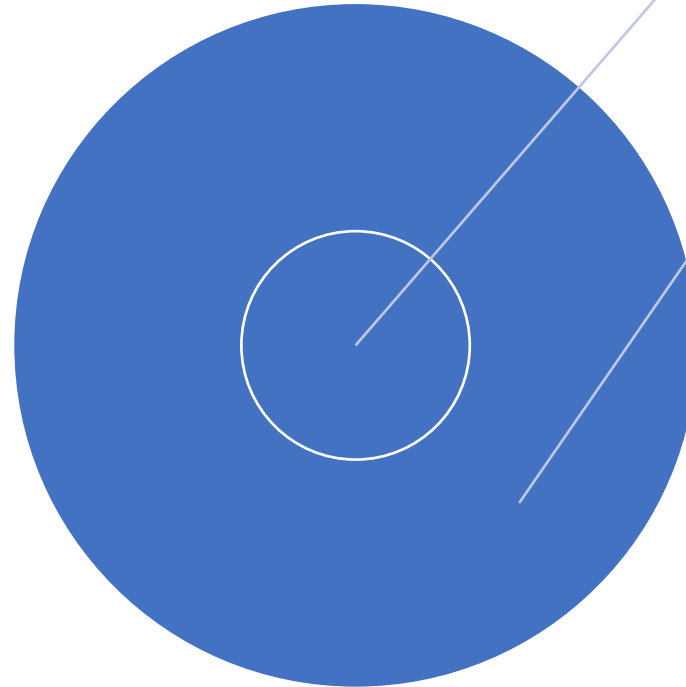


1. Use Methodize
2. Take one of our classes
3. Private tutoring

Polls: How many times?



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Ideal number
of times?

How many
times can a
student take
these exams?



Can you mix and match
your best scores?