

## Why do Colleges want Test Scores?

Because grading scales and course offerings vary significantly from one high school to another, **standardized tests provide colleges one way to compare applicant strengths**. Remember that tests represent only one out of many components considered in the admissions process. Scores alone will neither guarantee admittance nor ensure rejection.

**Not all colleges require standardized tests.** [View a list of more than 800 colleges and universities that do not use SAT or ACT scores for admission.](#) In addition, junior colleges (2-year colleges) do not require standardized tests for admission.

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- **What are the ACT and SAT?**

**The ACT and SAT are standardized tests widely used by American college admissions as ONE component for assessment of an applicant's readiness for university studies.** Most colleges accept scores from either or both exams. In addition, the scores are sometimes used to determine awards of scholarships and grants.

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**The ACT (American College Testing) is administered by ACT, Inc.**

- The ACT is approximately 3 hours long and made up of four sections — English, Math, Reading, and Science Reasoning - with an optional 40-minute essay.

**The SAT (Scholastic Achievement Test, a.k.a. SAT Reasoning Test) is administered by College Board.**

- **The SAT transitioned to a newly redesigned version in March 2016.** The NEW SAT is a 3 hour test composed of 3 sections - Reading, Writing & Language, and Math - with an optional 50 minute essay.
- **The former version of the SAT test will not be administered after January 2016.** However, if you have already taken this test, colleges will accept it for a few more years. The OLD SAT was approximately 3 1/2 hours long and had three content areas: Critical Reading, Math, and Writing. It included a required essay.

- **Will the SAT redesign affect me?**

**College Board launched the new SAT in March 2016.** The SAT was redesigned to create a test that more accurately assesses things that matter most for college and career readiness. A link to the College Board website cites [eight key changes](#) made in the redesign to achieve this goal.

- Students in the Class of 2017 have the choice of taking the ACT, the old SAT (until December 2016) or the new SAT (beginning March 2016). Colleges will accept any or all of these tests.
- Students graduating in 2018 or later will have the choice of sending the ACT or new SAT to colleges (although colleges will also accept the old SAT for a few more years). A state-sponsored SAT (in the redesigned format) will be administered to all Juniors beginning April 2017.

- **SAT, ACT or both? Which tests should I take?**

**All colleges accept either the SAT or the ACT as part of their applications, but these tests differ in important ways.** You can read about these differences at the following links:

- [Kaplan: ACT vs SAT vs New SAT](#)
- [Princeton Review Comparison](#)
- [StudyPoints "Key Differences between the SAT and ACT"](#)
- [ACT.org's Comparison Chart](#)
- [PrepScholar.com's Comparison Guide](#)

- **How do I determine which test is the best fit for me?**

Give them both a try and then decide! Here are some options:

- **In your sophomore year, take the state-sponsored PSAT 10 in April.**
  - Watch for announcements from the CCC about when and how to register.
  - [Click here for more information about the PSAT.](#)
- **Take free practice tests, available on ACT and SAT websites, and compare your scores.**
  - [SAT Practice Tests](#)
  - [ACT Practice Test](#)
- **Consider taking a practice test at a local test prep center.**
  - These centers provide FREE, proctored practice tests on a regular basis, usually without obligation to purchase tutoring sessions.

- The proctored classroom environment simulates the actual ACT or SAT situation, as opposed to a self-timed environment at home.
  - [Click here for a list of local test prep centers.](#)
- **Do not register for an official SAT or ACT to simply practice or determine which test is right for you. Use other suggested ways to practice instead.**

It is important to know that even scores from official tests taken in middle school and 9th grade may be recorded on your ACT and SAT official record, even if they were taken as a part of some "talent search" programs. It is also important to know that during the application process, some colleges require students to report ALL scores. Therefore, it is advisable for students to use other means of practicing for these tests rather than than taking an official test as a practice session.

- **Should I take the optional ACT Writing Test or the optional SAT Essay section?**

Because colleges have varying requirements, both the ACT and SAT organizations offer an optional essay section. The ACT calls this its optional "Writing Test," which is requested by registering for the ACT Plus Writing test. The SAT has a separate, required multiple-choice "Writing & Language Test," not to be confused with its optional "SAT Essay" section.

**It is wise to consider taking these optional writing sections since many colleges require it.**

To determine if colleges you are considering require the writing sections, use the search tools provided by the ACT and SAT organizations:

- [ACT Writing Test Requirement by College](#)
- [SAT Essay College Policies](#)

- **When should I take the tests?**

*As a general rule, most students take the ACT or SAT or both during the spring of their junior year.* Then, depending on the results, they may choose to take one of the tests again in June or in the fall of senior year.

**A state-sponsored college SAT is administered to Juniors in April of each school year.**

**The following considerations should be taken into account before committing to a SAT or ACT test date:**

- **Consider your academic readiness.** While the ACT and the new SAT have similar reading and writing sections, there are some important differences.
  - The new SAT Reading section contains more challenging vocabulary and questions relying on evidence-based reading. ACT Reading section is more of a reading comprehension test.
  - The new SAT Writing section is more focused on writing style and argument, while the ACT Writing test places more emphasis on grammar and conventions.
  - Both ACT and new SAT Math sections are heavily focused on algebra, including manipulating equations and expressions, writing equations to solve word problems, solving quadratics, and working with formulas. While both tests include questions in geometry and trigonometry, the ACT contains more problems and does not provide common formulas. The ACT also tests more topics than the new SAT, including logarithms, graphs of trig functions, and matrices, none of which are tested in the SAT.
- **Consider your testing calendar.** Do you have other tests that you plan to take in the spring of your junior year, including AP, IB or [SAT Subject Tests](#)? If you will be taking several of these tests, you may want to be finished with ACT or SAT tests prior to the spring.
- **Consider your college application calendar:**
  - If you are not satisfied with your test score, or your college application list includes universities where accepted applicants typically have mean scores higher than yours, you may want more time to retest to obtain a higher composite score.
  - Are you applying Early Decision or Early Action? If so, your first application may be due as early as October or November of your senior year. All application components, including standardized test scores, must be ready to send. Consider completing SAT or ACT testing no later than September of your senior year. [Click here to learn more about college application deadlines.](#)
  - Students considering participation in Division I, II or III athletics should be prepared to have test scores available by August before their senior year. See [Athletics in College](#). These students should have ACT or SAT testing completed by June of their junior year.
  - Fine Arts majors may need to be finished with testing so they can prepare portfolios and complete auditions in the fall.
- **Consider your other commitments.** Will you be participating in very time-consuming extra-curriculars in the spring of your junior year? Are you taking IB courses that require intensive research or study for IB Internal Assessments due in February or March? Are you a member of Choir or Band that requires extra time commitment in the fall or spring? Consider taking the ACT or SAT in the semester when you have most flexibility to prepare.

- **NEW: What is the state-sponsored SAT administered to all juniors in April?**

**In April of each school year, all juniors are offered a state-sponsored college entrance test at Fairview.**

- This is a FREE opportunity for juniors to take the test and receive an official score.
- **Beginning April of 2017, the SAT will be administered to all juniors.**
- This exam was determined by state legislators, along with input from school districts and PARCC, to be a comprehensive assessment for 11th grade Reading, Writing and Math. The state-sponsored test given in April will thus serve the dual purpose of assessing college and career readiness and providing students with an entrance exam result widely accepted by U.S. colleges. The decision was made to reduce the testing burden placed on students. [View the Dept. of Education News Release regarding this decision.](#)
- The score you receive will display on your transcript, which is sent to the colleges on your senior year application list. (If you receive a higher score on another test date, bring your score report to the counseling center and ask to have the higher score substituted on your transcript.)

- **How many times should I take the test?**

You may benefit from taking the ACT or SAT a couple of times - *but* research shows that your chances of improving your score after three times is very low. In addition, some colleges require you to send ALL of your test scores. Taking it more than three times could reflect poorly on you.

- **How should I prepare?**

There are many opportunities for test preparation for the SAT and ACT which range in cost and approach.

Most importantly, choose a program that fits your learning style and that you will USE!

Plan your study schedule so that your preparation finishes within two weeks of the date when you are scheduled to take the test. One schedule many students use is to take a prep course in the summer and take the test in the fall.

**Test Preparation Options:**

1. **Test Prep Books:**

Both the ACT and SAT, as well as many other companies, publish test prep books. You can find these books online or at local bookstores. A sampling is available through the Fairview Academic Achievement Center.

## 2. **Online Programs:**

The ACT, SAT, and many other companies also offer online test prep programs. These courses are available for a range of fees.

Free online prep for the Redesigned SAT, which launches in March 2016, is now available at [Kahn Academy](#).

## 3. **Classroom courses:**

If you prefer to attend a test prep class, watch for classes through BVSD's Lifelong Learning, and other private companies.

## 4. **Private Tutors:**

Tutors are an additional option for test prep. See [Private SAT and ACT Test Preparation Classes](#) for more information.

### • **How do I register to take the SAT or ACT?**

Register for the SAT or ACT on their respective websites. Online registration is the fastest and most efficient method but mail-in registration is also available. You will need the Fairview CEEB code: 060118 and a recent digital photo of yourself for your admission ticket.

- [ACT.org](#)
- [CollegeBoard.org](#)

Regular registration ends about six weeks prior to the test date. Late registration (with an additional fee) closes about two weeks later. Register early if you have a preference for location or if you are applying for accommodations. See test dates here:

- [ACT Test Dates](#)
- [SAT Test Dates](#)

If you miss the registration windows, you can apply for Standby Testing (ACT) or Waitlist (SAT) but you must sign-up during the Standby Request Period.

- [Standby Testing \(ACT\)](#)
- [SAT Waitlist](#)

- **How and when do I send my scores to colleges?**
  - When you register to take the ACT or the SAT, you will have the option of listing up to 4 places where you'd like to have your scores sent. There is no additional fee for this service.
  - If you prefer to wait until after you see your scores, you can submit a request on the ACT or College Board websites to have your scores sent to colleges and scholarship sites of your choice. There is a fee for each report that you request.
  - ACT maintains the scores by test date and allows you to choose which date(s) you would like to send. [How to send ACT scores](#)
  - College Board SAT Score Choice allows you to select your best scores by test date to send. [How to send SAT scores](#)
  - Some colleges allow you to select your best SAT scores and/or ACT test dates, but a few require that you send **ALL** scores. **Always check individual college requirements before registering for tests and sending scores.**
  - Many colleges do not retain application materials for more than a year, and some purge the materials at the end of each application season. While most students take the tests in their junior year, it's generally safer to start sending scores after August 1st before your senior year, as that is the date most colleges begin accepting application materials for your graduating class. You are also more likely to have compiled a more realistic college application list by then.
  
- **I receive testing accommodations for my classes at Fairview. How do I apply for accommodations on the ACT or SAT?**
  - Both the ACT and the College Board provide appropriate accommodations for students who have documented disabilities.
    - [SAT for Students with Disabilities](#)
    - [ACT for Students with Disabilities](#)
  - The process for submitting documentation to request test accommodations is coordinated by the Fairview Counselors. Contact your counselor if you plan to take the ACT or SAT and believe that you qualify for accommodations.
  - Begin the process several weeks before you plan to take the test for the first time. Choose your test date and register for the ACT or SAT. Then, email your test registration form to your counselor.
  - Your counselor and teachers will submit documentation to the testing companies. This documentation will be reviewed and a decision will be made about the accommodations you may receive.
  - You may appeal the decision if you feel it is incorrect. Remember to work with your counselor who will be the person communicating with the testing company.
  - Once you are approved for accommodations by College Board, this approval will remain in effect until one year after your high school graduation. It can be used on the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, PSAT/NMSQT, and AP Exams. You do not need to request accommodations a second time.