

ACT vs. SAT

Which Test is Right For You?

Scores from the ACT and SAT are 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.

Includes the following sections: English, Reading, Math, and Science.

Calculators are allowed on all math questions. There is a Science section.

Takes 2 hours and 55 minutes. There is an optional 40 minute ACT writing test.

215 questions (With more questions, you have less time per question.)

Scores range from 1-36

Cost is \$52 / \$68 with the ACT writing test.

SAT

Offered by College Board, a non-profit organization.

Includes the following sections: Reading, Writing and Language, and Math.

Calculators are not allowed on a portion of the math test. There is no specific Science section.

Takes 3 hours. There is an optional 50 minute SAT Essay.

154 questions (You have more time per question, but the questions may be more involved.)

Scores range from 400-1600.

Cost is \$49.50 / \$64.50 with the SAT Essay.

Other Considerations

ACT Writing Test and SAT Essay. Both are optional and do not affect your overall score. When deciding whether or not to take the ACT writing test or SAT Essay, consider the following:

- ▶ **College Requirements.** Some colleges require these writing assessments and some do not. If you're not sure if the college(s) you're applying to require the ACT writing test or SAT Essay, err on the side of caution. Take it.
- ▶ **Your Writing Skills.** If you're a strong writer, it's a good idea to take the optional writing test, even if it isn't required.

Taking both the ACT and SAT. Some students decide to take both tests. Submitting scores from both can provide colleges with more information about you. This, however, means that you're splitting your prep time between the two tests.

Many college admission officers recommend that you take practice tests to determine which test you are likely to do better on—and then devote all of your time and energy to preparing for that test.

SAT Subject Tests. College Board also offers 20 one-hour SAT Subject Tests in specific areas (e.g., Chemistry, Spanish). Some selective colleges require or recommend students take one or more Subject Tests. Even if they aren't required or recommended, if you are very strong in a particular subject, consider taking the corresponding SAT Subject Test.

For information and practice tests, visit act.org and collegeboard.org. If you have questions about these tests, or about which test(s) you should take, talk to your counselor.

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