

PSAT/NMSQT®

CollegeBoard / NATIONAL MERIT  
SCHOLARSHIP CORPORATION

# Prepare for the PSAT/NMSQT®

Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship  
Qualifying Test



---

# Contents

- 01** What Is the PSAT/NMSQT?
- 02** When Is the PSAT/NMSQT?
- 03** Skills Tested on the PSAT/NMSQT
- 04** How to Prepare for the PSAT/NMSQT
- 05** Sample PSAT/NMSQT Questions
- 06** Resources

# What Is the PSAT/NMSQT?

1



# 3.8+ million

students take the PSAT/NMSQT each year to get feedback on their skills, qualify for scholarships, and practice for the SAT.

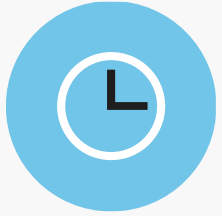
## Key Facts

The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®) assesses the same knowledge and skills as the SAT®, providing a check-in on college readiness before students take the SAT.

Scores for the SAT Suite of Assessments (SAT, PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT™ 10, and PSAT™ 8/9) are reported on a common vertical scale, allowing educators and students to measure progress. The PSAT/NMSQT also:

- Propels students toward college and career readiness.
- Is cosponsored by College Board and National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC®).
- Is the qualifying test for entry to the National Merit® Scholarship Program.
- Serves as an entry point to over \$300 million in additional scholarships.

# What to know about the PSAT/NMSQT



Test length:  
2 hours, 45 minutes



No points deducted  
for incorrect answers  
or unanswered  
questions (also called  
“rights-only” scoring)



Free, personalized  
SAT practice through  
Khan Academy® with  
students’ own  
PSAT/NMSQT scores

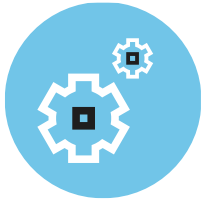


Scale range is  
320–1520 for the  
total score

# Benefits of the PSAT/NMSQT



Free, personalized SAT practice on Khan Academy based on students' PSAT/NMSQT answers



Aligned to the SAT. Historically, students who took the PSAT/NMSQT scored higher on the SAT, on average, than students who didn't take the test.



Entry to the National Merit Scholarship Program and increased access to additional scholarship providers



Online college and career planning tools on BigFuture™



Admission and financial aid information from colleges



Majors and career exploration with College Board and Roadtrip Nation®

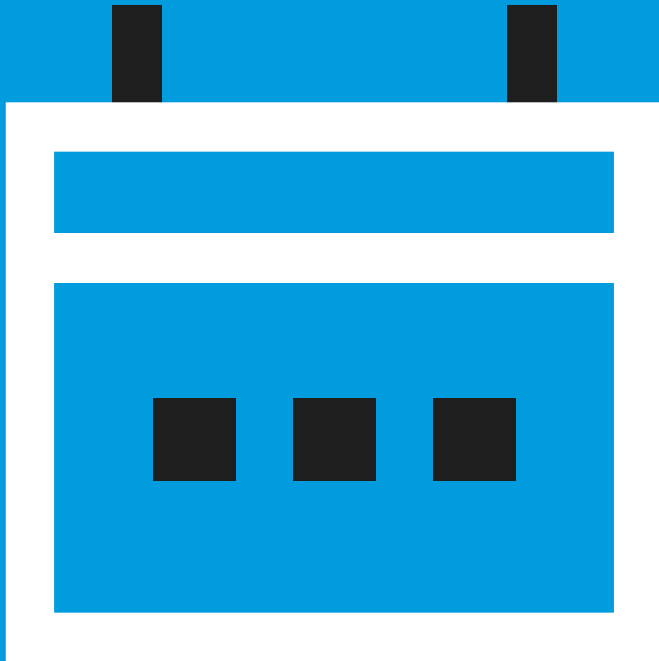
# 2

## When Is the PSAT/NMSQT?

---

# PSAT/NMSQT Test Dates

The Primary PSAT/NMSQT administration date is October 13. Students who cannot test on October 13 can take the test on October 26.





# 3

## Skills Tested on the PSAT/NMSQT

# Skills Tested

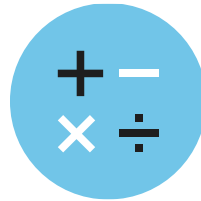
- Each test assesses the academic skills that students have developed, primarily through their coursework.
- These skills are considered essential for high school, college, and career success.



## Reading Test



## Writing and Language Test



## Math Test



# Reading Test

- 5 passages
- 47 passage-based questions;  
60 minutes

## Quick Facts

- All questions are multiple choice and based on passages.
- Some passages are paired with other passages or informational graphics such as graphs and tables.
- No mathematical computation is required.
- Topic-specific prior knowledge is never tested.
- The Reading Test is part of the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section.



---

# Reading Test

## What to Expect

In the Reading Test, students will encounter questions like those asked in a lively, thoughtful, evidence-based discussion.



# Writing and Language Test

- 4 passages
- 44 passage-based questions;  
35 minutes

## Quick Facts

- All questions are multiple choice and based on passages.
- Some passages are paired with informational graphics such as graphs and tables.
- No mathematical computation is required.
- Topic-specific prior knowledge is never tested.
- The Writing and Language Test is part of the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section.



# Writing and Language Test

## What to Expect

The Writing and Language Test puts students in the active role of an editor who is improving a written passage. Most questions ask students to decide which, if any, of the alternatives to an underlined portion of a passage most improves it.

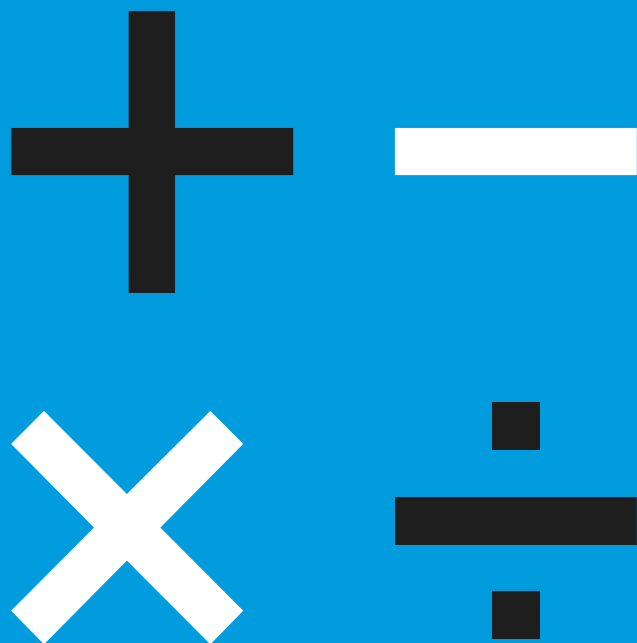


# Math Test

- 2 test sections; 70 minutes
- 48 questions (40 multiple choice, 8 student-produced responses)

## Quick Facts

- Most math questions will be multiple choice, but some will be student-produced responses.
- The Math Test is divided into 2 portions:  
Math Test – No Calculator  
and Math Test – Calculator.
- Some parts of the test will present a scenario and then ask several questions about it.



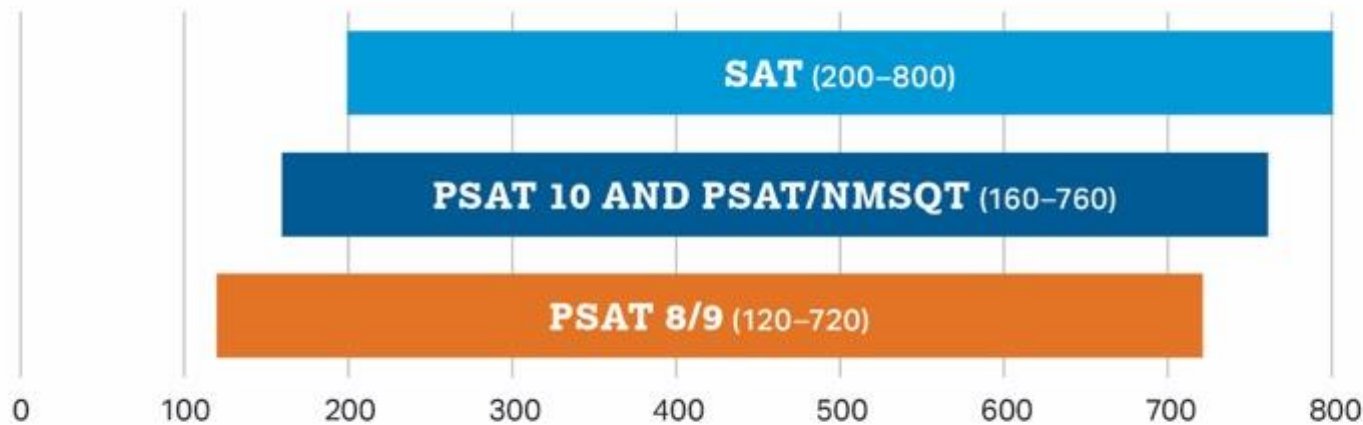
# Math Test

## What to Expect

The Math Test focuses on the math that matters most for college and career readiness. To succeed on the Math Test, students will need to demonstrate mathematical practices, such as problem solving and using appropriate tools strategically.



# How Does the PSAT/NMSQT Connect to the SAT?



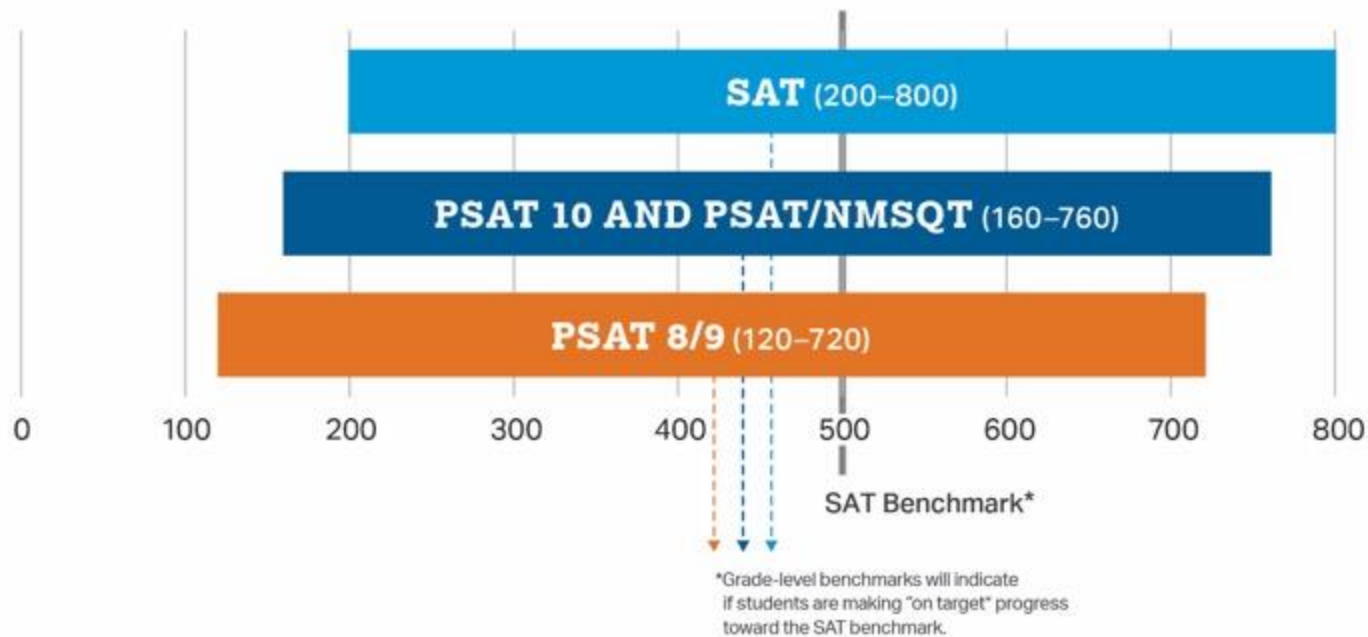
## Content and Domain Alignment

All tests in the SAT Suite are aligned to the same research backbone and focus on the same domain of knowledge and skills.

## Scoring

All tests in the SAT Suite are on a common score scale that provides consistent feedback, enabling teachers to adjust instruction to better support students who are ahead or behind.

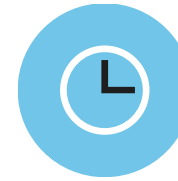
# How Does the PSAT/NMSQT Connect to the SAT?



The score students get on the PSAT/NMSQT is the same score they would have gotten on the SAT if they'd taken it on the same day.

# How Does the PSAT/NMSQT Compare to the SAT?

**PSAT/NMSQT**  
**SAT**



**Time**

2 hours, 45 minutes

3 hours, 50 minutes



**Section Score  
Range**

160–760

200–800

# 4

# How to Prepare for the PSAT/NMSQT

# Know How the PSAT/NMSQT Is Scored

## Rights-Only Scoring

- 1 point for each correct answer
- No points deducted for incorrect answers or unanswered questions

## Math Student-Produced Responses

- Enter answers as (reduced) fractions or decimals.
- If rounding a decimal, make sure to enter as many characters as are allowed.

## Scale

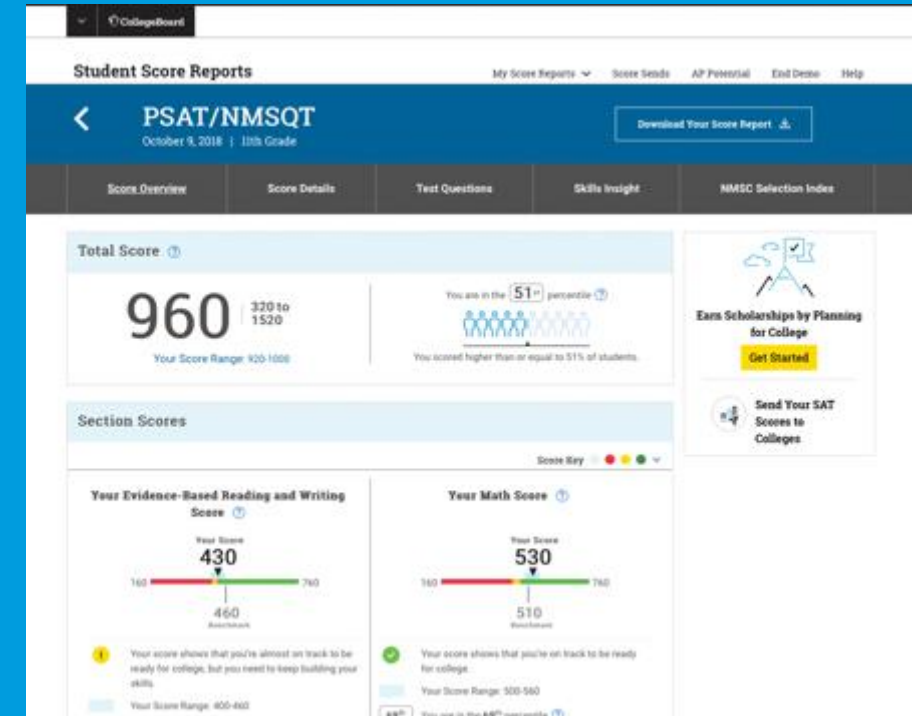
- 160–760 for each test section
- 320–1520 for the total score



# Personalized Skills Information

## The PSAT/NMSQT Score Report

- Contains information to help students improve academic skills.
- Lists skills that students have the best chance of improving with additional work.
- Connects to free, personalized practice recommendations on Khan Academy.



# Preparation Starts in School

## Read

Continuous reading improves vocabulary and develops essential skills.

## Take Challenging Courses

This helps students develop and strengthen their critical thinking skills.



# 5

# Sample PSAT/NMSQT Questions





# Reading Test

## Passage-Based Questions

### Passage Excerpt:

[. . .] The coming decades will likely see more intense clustering of jobs, innovation, and productivity in a smaller number of bigger cities and city-regions. Some regions could end up bloated beyond the capacity of their infrastructure, while others struggle, their promise stymied by inadequate human or other resources.

*Adapted from Richard Florida, The Great Reset.  
© 2010 by Richard Florida.*

As used in line 2, “intense” most nearly means

- (A) emotional.
- (B) concentrated.
- (C) brilliant.
- (D) determined.



# Reading Test

## Passage-Based Questions

### Passage Excerpt:

[. . .] The coming decades will likely see more intense clustering of jobs, innovation, and productivity in a smaller number of bigger cities and city-regions. Some regions could end up bloated beyond the capacity of their infrastructure, while others struggle, their promise stymied by inadequate human or other resources.

*Adapted from Richard Florida, The Great Reset.  
© 2010 by Richard Florida.*

As used in line 2, “intense” most nearly means

- (A) emotional.
- (B) concentrated.**
- (C) brilliant.
- (D) determined.



# Reading Test

## Passage-Based Questions

This question asks students to determine word meaning within a social science context. While students may frequently use the word “intense” to describe personalities or emotions, the context of this sentence requires students to recognize that “intense” can also mean “concentrated.” Choice B is the best answer because the context makes clear that the clustering of jobs, innovation, and productivity will be more concentrated in, or more densely packed into, “a smaller number of bigger cities and city-regions.” In these ways, the question draws students back to the text rather than rewarding only isolated vocabulary knowledge.

# Writing and Language Test

## Passage-Based Questions



### Passage Excerpt:

[. . .] As Kingman developed as a painter, his works were often compared to paintings by Chinese landscape artists dating back to CE 960, a time when a strong tradition of landscape painting emerged in Chinese art. Kingman, however, **5** vacated from that tradition in a number of ways, most notably in that he chose to focus not on natural landscapes, such as mountains and rivers, but on cities. [. . .]

5

- (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) evacuated
- (C) departed
- (D) retired

# Writing and Language Test

## Passage-Based Questions



### Passage Excerpt:

[. . .] As Kingman developed as a painter, his works were often compared to paintings by Chinese landscape artists dating back to CE 960, a time when a strong tradition of landscape painting emerged in Chinese art. Kingman, however, **5** vacated from that tradition in a number of ways, most notably in that he chose to focus not on natural landscapes, such as mountains and rivers, but on cities. [. . .]

5

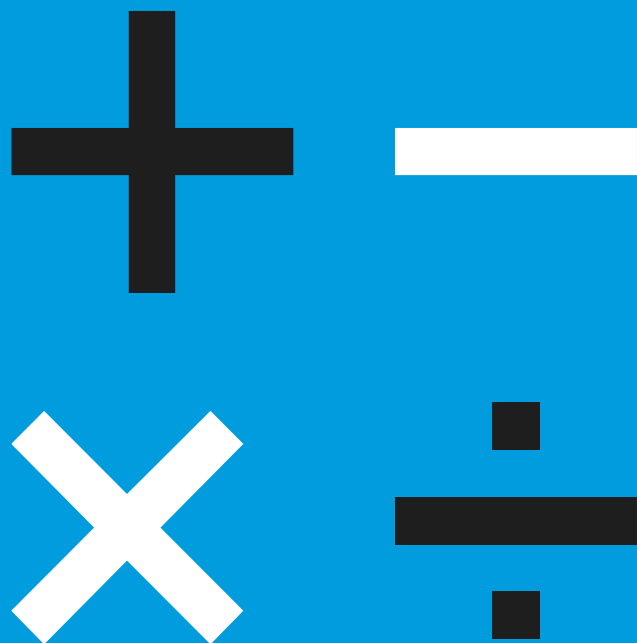
- (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) evacuated
- (C) departed**
- (D) retired



# Writing and Language Test

## Passage-Based Questions

This question asks students to determine which word makes the most sense in the context of a sentence. "**Departed**" is the most contextually appropriate way to indicate that Kingman had deviated from the tradition of Chinese landscape painting in a number of ways. In this sort of question, students must demonstrate not only facility with language in general but also skill in using language in particular contexts to convey meaning clearly and precisely.



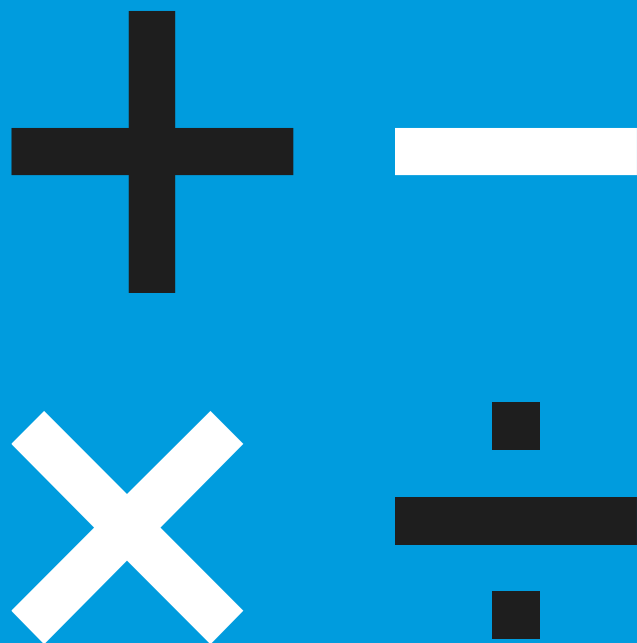
# Math Test

**Calculator: Not Permitted**

In this equation, what is the value of  $k$ ?

$$\frac{5(k+2)-7}{6} = \frac{13-(4-k)}{9}$$

- (A)  $\frac{9}{17}$
- (B)  $\frac{9}{13}$
- (C)  $\frac{33}{17}$
- (D)  $\frac{33}{13}$



# Math Test

## Calculator: Not Permitted

In this equation, what is the value of  $k$ ?

$$\frac{5(k+2)-7}{6} = \frac{13-(4-k)}{9}$$

In this problem, students will demonstrate their fluency in solving equations in one variable.

Choice B is correct. Simplifying the numerators yields

$$\frac{5k+3}{6} = \frac{9+k}{9}$$

and cross-multiplication gives  $45k + 27 = 54 + 6k$ .

Solving for  $k$  yields  $k = \frac{9}{13}$

(A)  $\frac{9}{7}$

**(B)  $\frac{9}{13}$**

(C)  $\frac{33}{17}$

(D)  $\frac{33}{13}$



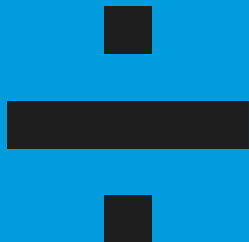


# Math Test

## Calculator: Permitted

Aaron is staying at a hotel that charges \$99.95 per night plus tax for a room. A tax of 8% is applied to the room rate, and an additional onetime untaxed fee of \$5.00 is charged by the hotel. Which of the following represents Aaron's total charge, in dollars, for staying  $x$  nights?

- (A)  $(99.95 + 0.08x) + 5$
- (B)  $1.08(99.95x) + 5$
- (C)  $1.08(99.95x + 5)$
- (D)  $1.08(99.95 + 5)x$



# Math Test

## Calculator: Permitted

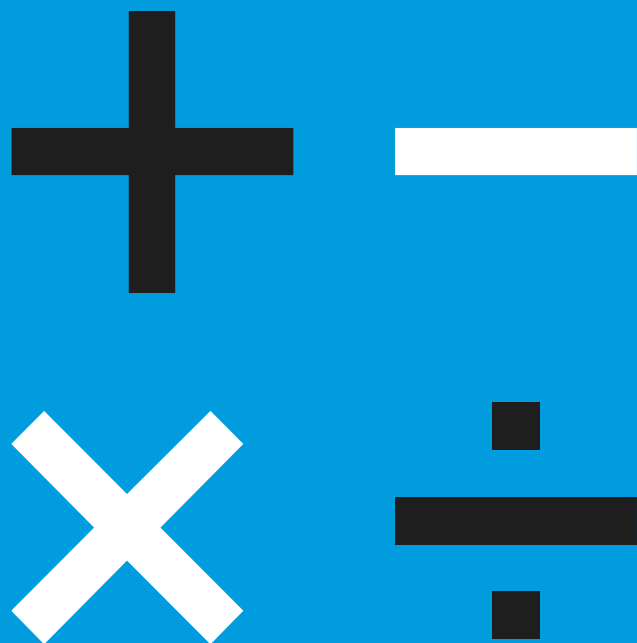
Aaron is staying at a hotel that charges \$99.95 per night plus tax for a room. A tax of 8% is applied to the room rate, and an additional onetime untaxed fee of \$5.00 is charged by the hotel. Which of the following represents Aaron's total charge, in dollars, for staying  $x$  nights?

(A)  $(99.95 + 0.08x) + 5$

**(B)  $1.08(99.95x) + 5$**

(C)  $1.08(99.95x + 5)$

(D)  $1.08(99.95 + 5)x$



# Math Test

## Calculator: Permitted

This problem asks students to interpret a situation and formulate a linear expression that represents the situation mathematically. The construction of mathematical models that represent real-world scenarios is a critical skill.

The total charge is the room rate, the 8% tax on the room rate, and a fixed fee. If Aaron stayed  $x$  nights, then the total charge is  $(99.95x + 0.08 \times 99.95x) + 5$ , which can be rewritten as  $1.08(99.95x) + 5$ .



# Math Section

## Student-Produced Responses

### Sample Grids

Instead of choosing a correct answer from a list of options, students will need to solve problems and enter their answers in the grids provided on the answer sheet.

Answer:  $\frac{7}{12}$

Write answer in boxes. →

7	/	1	2
0	0	0	0
1	1	0	1
2	2	2	0
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

← Fraction line

Grid in result.

Answer: 2.5

2	.	5
0	0	0
1	0	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	0
6	6	6
7	7	7
8	8	8
9	9	9

← Decimal point

Acceptable ways to grid  $\frac{2}{3}$  are:

2	/	3
0	0	0
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	0
4	4	4
5	5	5
6	6	6
7	7	7
8	8	8
9	9	9

.	6	6	6
0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

.	6	6	7
0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	0
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

Answer: 201– either position is correct

2	0	1
0	0	0
1	1	0
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5
6	6	6
7	7	7
8	8	8
9	9	9

2	0	1
0	0	0
1	1	0
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5
6	6	6
7	7	7
8	8	8
9	9	9

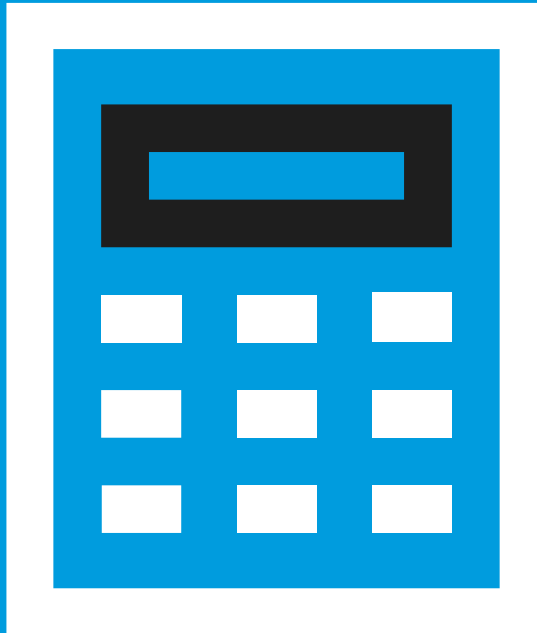
**NOTE:** You may start your answers in any column, space permitting. Columns you don't need to use should be left blank.

# Math Section

## Math Test — Calculator

### Students: Know Your Calculator

- A scientific or graphing calculator is recommended.
- Students should bring a familiar calculator. Test day is not the time to figure out how to use a new calculator.





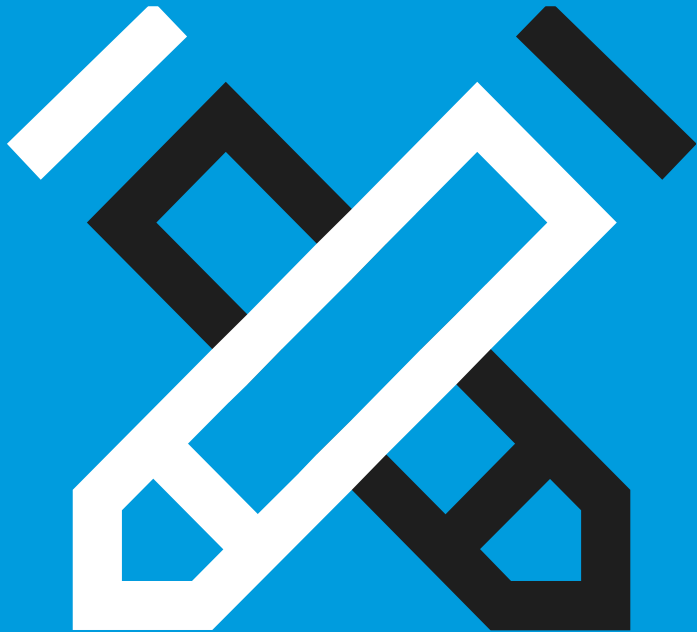
# Math Section

## Math Test — Calculator



### Additional Calculator Tips for Students

- Don't try to use your calculator on every question—no question requires one.
- Decide how to solve each problem; then decide whether to use a calculator.
- Make sure your calculator is in good working order with fresh batteries.
- Students will not be permitted to use laptops or other computers, tablets, cell phones or smartphones, etc. Please reference the student guide for a complete list of prohibited items.



# Take the 2021-22 PSAT/NMSQT

How to Sign Up:

\_\_\_\_\_

Test Day/Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

Time:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Location:

**Make sure you bring:**

- Two No. 2 pencils
- Calculator (optional)

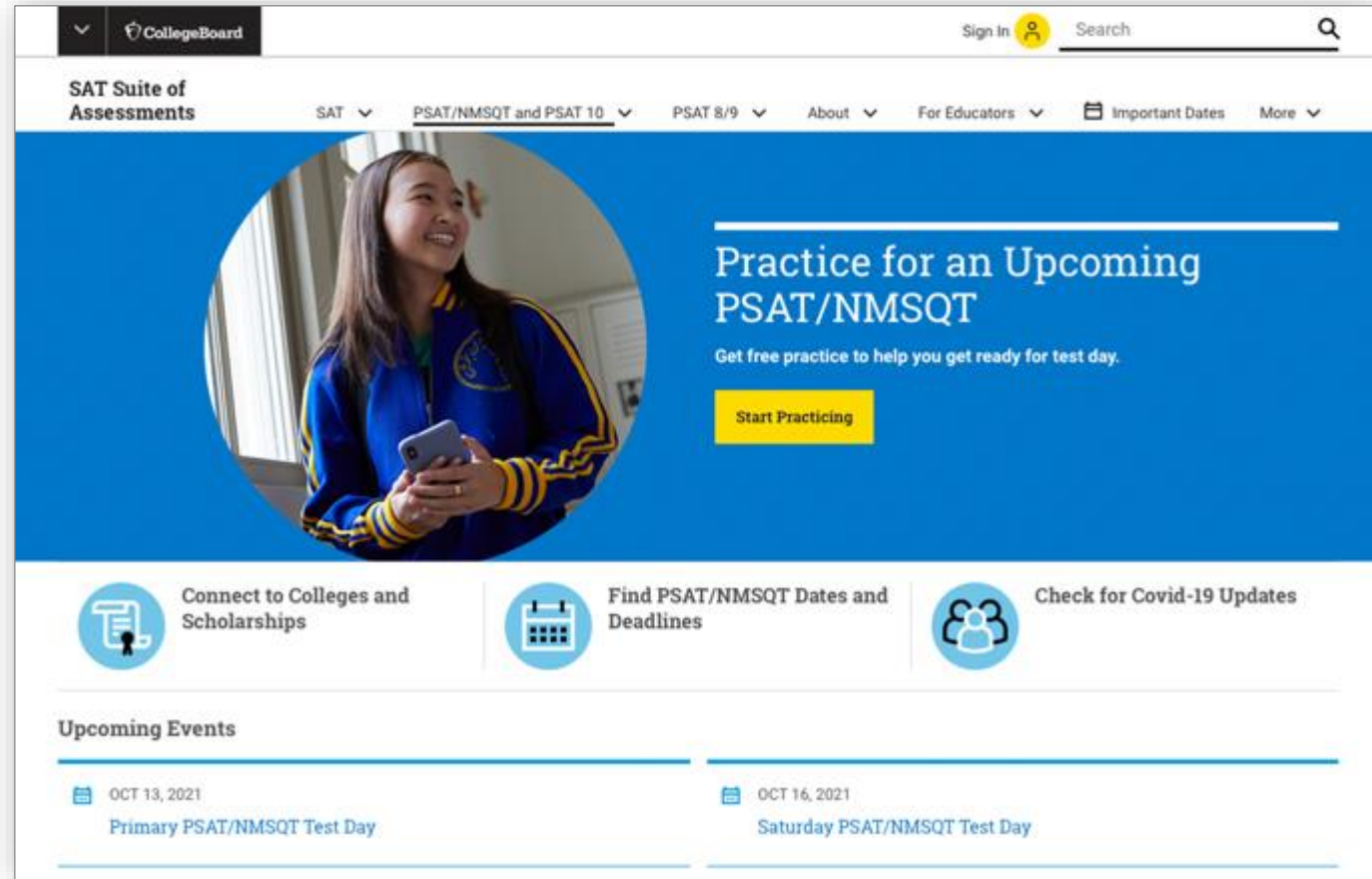
# 6

# Resources



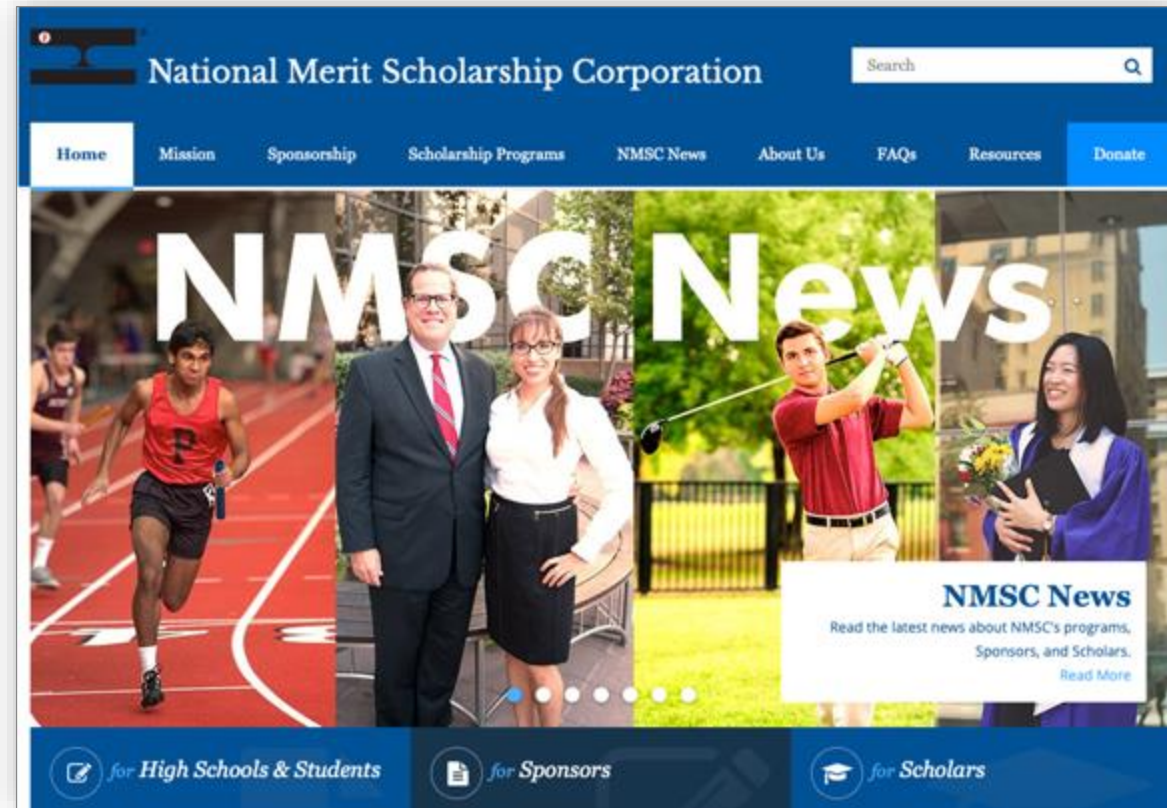
# Resources

For general information about the PSAT/NMSQT, please visit [collegeboard.org/psat](https://collegeboard.org/psat)



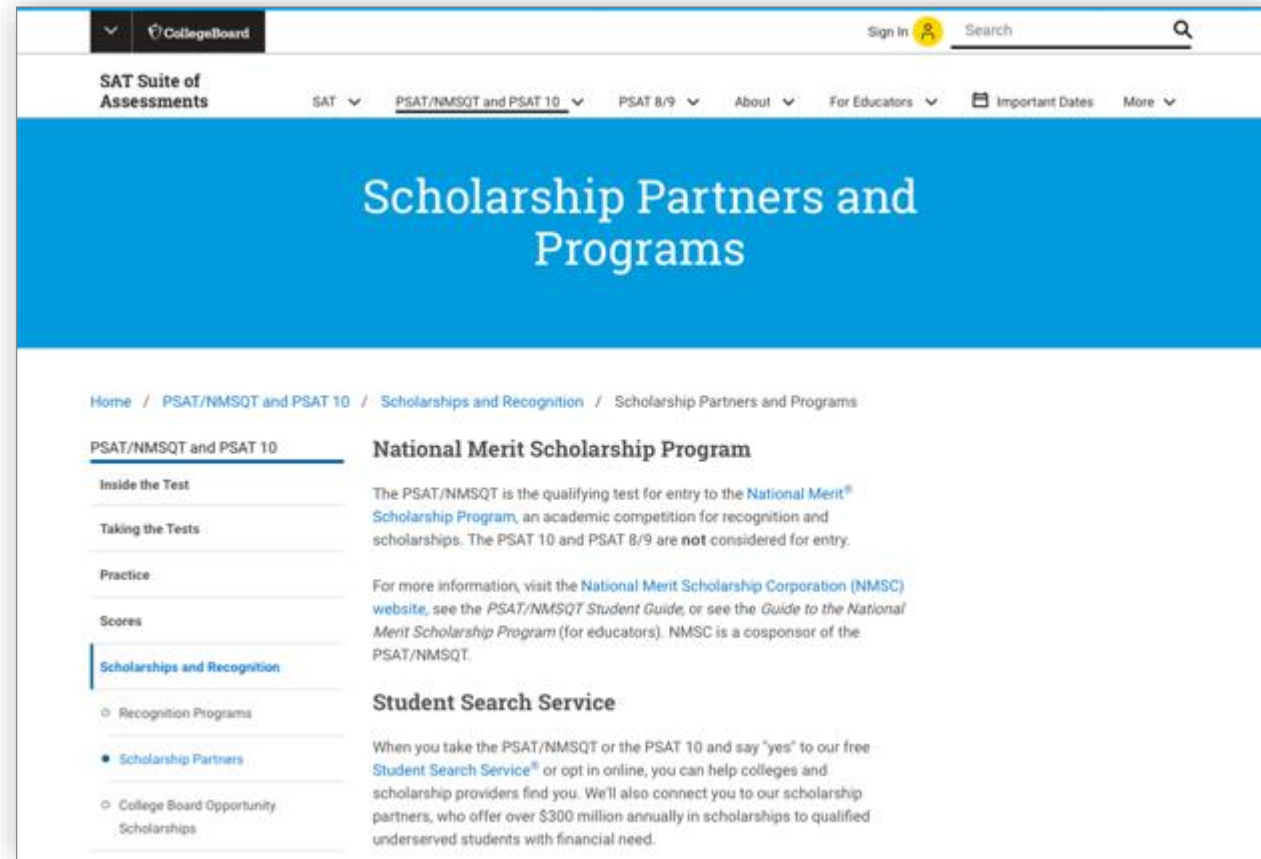
# Resources

To find out more about NMSC and the National Merit Scholarship Program, visit [\*\*nationalmerit.org\*\*](https://nationalmerit.org)



# Resources

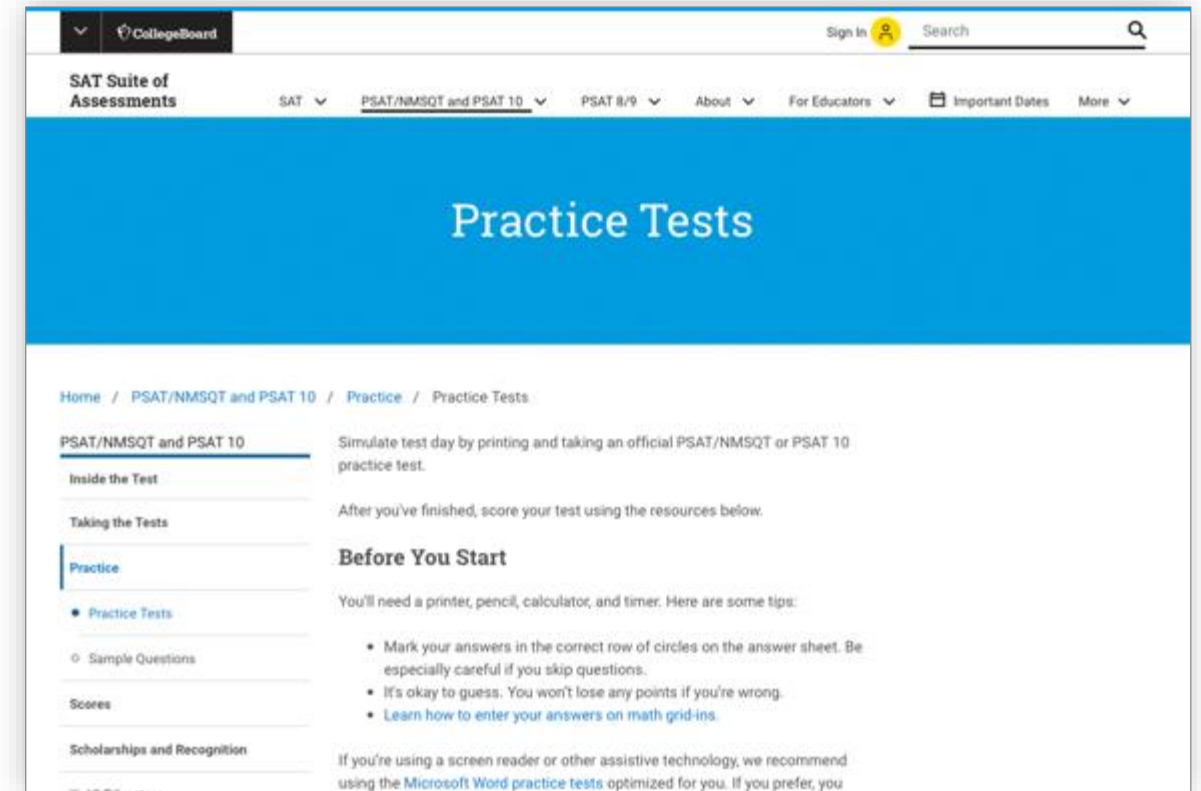
To find out more about scholarship opportunities, visit [psat.org/scholarships](https://psat.org/scholarships)



# Resources

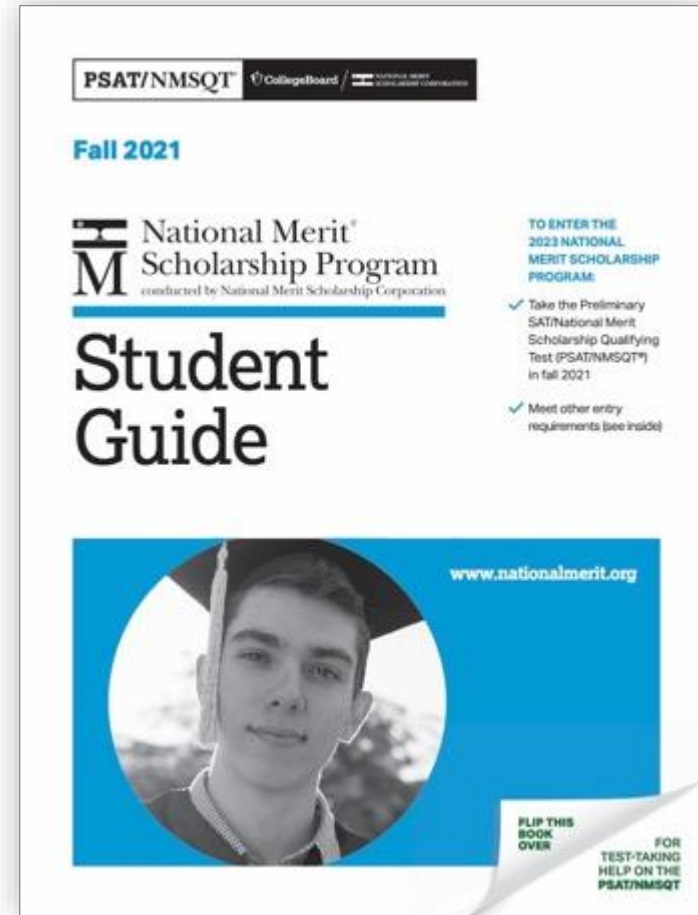
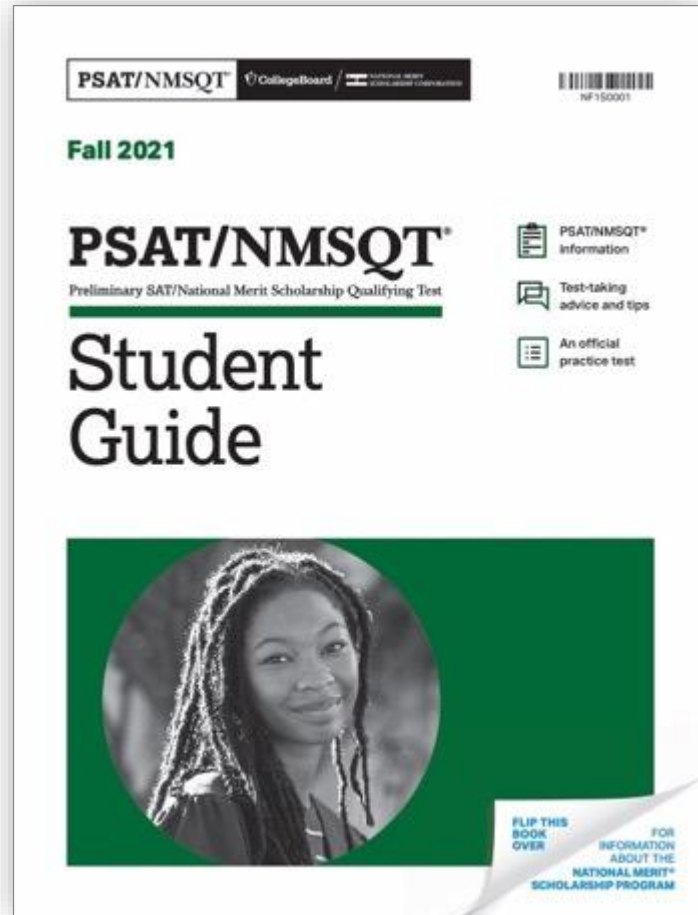
For free, personalized resources aligned to the SAT Suite, visit [khanacademy.org/sat](https://khanacademy.org/sat)

Take a PSAT/NMSQT practice test in the *PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide*, available from your counselor or at [collegeboard.org/psatpractice](https://collegeboard.org/psatpractice)



# Resources

Read the full *PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide* for details about the test and the National Merit Scholarship Program.



# Good luck!

**PSAT/NMSQT**

 CollegeBoard

 NATIONAL MERIT  
SCHOLARSHIP CORPORATION