

When Should You Take the ACT and SAT?

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Seven. The number of times the ACT and SAT are each offered every year. As you consider the school and personal activities that quickly fill up your schedule, it can be challenging to find the best times to take these tests, especially when you should take either test three or more times to achieve your best possible results! (Some students may find one test easier and/or score higher, so trying both is a good idea, too!)

How do you know when you should take the ACT or SAT? Here are a few questions to help you figure it out.

What's your college application timeline?

Many colleges open applications (and scholarships!) July 1 or August 1, so it can help to test twice and put up a solid score in your junior year so that your score results are available prior to sending in your application. Score results can take 2-8 weeks to receive.

If you're applying to selective schools, like Harvard or Stanford, SAT Subject Tests might also be required. These tests (depending on subject) are offered in August, October, November, December, May and June. June is a great time to take these because you've probably just prepared for and taken your finals—the material will still be fresh in your mind. If you submit an SAT score, you'll typically be asked to submit three Subject Test scores. Most results take two weeks, although June tests can take up to 6 weeks.



ACT & SAT score results can take 2-8 weeks to receive. Make sure you plan ahead!

What's your academic load?

Are you taking honors or AP classes? Will your high school classes be harder in the fall or spring semester? Are you taking summer school?

It's good to take into consideration both your academic load and extracurricular activities. If you have a big game the night before you plan to take the test, you might

not receive the score you want. Or maybe you're in a performance group, band, debate, or other activity with a busy season. These activities, all beneficial, can shift your focus from an upcoming standardized test, so make sure you plan around them when choosing your test dates.

Also, the more math you've had, the better your math score. Err on the side of having more math under your belt.

Have any personal or family commitments?

It's not just school activities that can keep you from taking the ACT or SAT on a specific date. Remember to look ahead at your social calendar, too. Do you have any weddings, family reunions, or other big events to schedule around? What about mission trips, study abroad, college visits, or family vacations this summer? Do you have any medical procedures (wisdom teeth, etc.) planned? May not register for the June ACT if you've been selected to attend the **Cornhusker Boys' or Girls' State convention!**

Look ahead and remember that just because you have the test day free doesn't mean you will be at your best to take it that day. Think about everything else going on at the same time before you sign up for the test.

So, when should you take the ACT or SAT?

While it's best to take a test twice in junior spring (including a mandated test date, if applicable) and twice in senior fall, it will vary based on your personal circumstances. For example, if your college of choice has a scholarship deadline of August 1 your senior year, you will want to schedule at least three testing dates starting in your junior year, rather than waiting until the spring.

Whatever you do, plan ahead!

And remember to give yourself a cushion in case of sudden sickness, accidents, or other unforeseen events that might affect your test preparation and performance. Give yourself the best chance for the best results to maximize those scholarship dollars!