

ACT vs. SAT: What's the difference?

Both the ACT and the SAT are nationally administered standardized tests that help colleges evaluate candidates. Most colleges and universities accept either test. So as you begin to think about college and creating the best application package possible, your admissions plan should begin with the question, "Which test should I take?" When weighing your options, keep in mind that there are differences in test structure and the type of content assessed. Use the chart below to see which test makes the most of your strengths to help you determine which test might be best for you.

	ACT	SAT
Test Length	3 hours, 25 minutes <i>(including the 30-minute optional Writing Test)</i>	3 hours, 45 minutes
Test Structure	4 Test Sections <i>(5 with the optional Writing Test):</i> English, Math, Reading, Science, Writing (Optional), Experimental Test <i>(sometimes added and clearly labeled)</i>	10 Sections: 3 Critical Reading, 3 Math, 3 Writing <i>(including the Essay)</i> , 1 Experimental <i>(unscored but included as a regular section)</i>
» Reading	Reading Comprehension—4 passages with 10 questions per passage	Reading Comprehension—short and long passages with questions Sentence Completion
» Math	Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, algebra II, and trigonometry	Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and algebra II
» Science	Analysis, interpretation, evaluation, basic content, and problem solving	Science not included

<p>» Essay</p>	<p>Last thing you do (optional): 30 minutes</p> <p>Not included in composite score</p> <p>Topic of importance to high school students</p>	<p>First thing you do: 25 minutes</p> <p>Factored into overall score</p> <p>More abstract topic (vs. ACT)</p>
<p>Scoring</p>	<p>Composite score of 1–36, based on average of scores from 4 tests</p> <p>4 scores of 1–36 for each test</p> <p>Plus optional Writing Test Score of 0–12</p>	<p>Total score out of 600–2400, based on adding scores from 3 subjects</p> <p>3 scores of 200–800 for each subject</p> <p>Score of 0–12 for the Essay</p>
<p>Wrong Answer Penalty</p>	<p>No penalty for wrong answers.</p>	<p>¼ point subtracted for each wrong answer. <i>(except for Math Grid-In questions)</i></p>
<p>Sending Score History</p>	<p>You decide which score is sent</p>	<p>Your entire score history will be sent automatically.</p> <p>NEW—Beginning with Class of 2010, you decide which test score is sent.</p>
<p>Test Contact Information</p>	<p>ACT, Inc. 1-319-337-1000 actstudent.org</p>	<p>The College Board 1-866-756-7346 collegeboard.com</p>