

Comparing ACT and SAT - About the tests...

ACT

- Isn't as long as the SAT
- Fewer sections, potentially less stressful
- Colleges take seriously as a substitute for SAT's
- Approx. 3 hrs. long
- Overall score of 1-36
- Comprised of four sections.

English: 75 questions,
45 minutes, score of 1-36
Sentence Structure, Grammar and Usage, Punctuation and Rhetorical Skills

Math: 60 questions
60 minutes, score of 1-36
Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry

Reading: 40 questions
35 minutes, score of 1-36
Passage based on Prose Fiction, Social Science, Humanities, Natural Science

Science: 40 questions
35 minutes, score of 1-36
Charts and Graphs, Experiments,
Conflicting viewpoints

Optional Essay: 30 minutes, subscore 2-12 (will account for 1/3 of English/Writing score) Persuasive Essay

SAT

- Recently revamped the reading comprehension section
- Added a writing section
- Often used with scholarships/grants
- Approx. 3 hrs. 45 min.
- Overall score of 200-800, max. score of 2400
- Comprised of three sections

Critical Reading: 67 questions
70 minutes, score of 200-800
Reading Comprehension, Sentence Completions, Short Reading Passages

Math: 54 questions
70 minutes, score of 200-800
Basic Arithmetic, Algebra I, II, Geometry

Writing: 49 questions
60 minutes, score of 200-800 (subscores: essay 2-12, multiple choice 20-80)
Grammar, Persuasive Essay

Specific Comparisons ...

ACT

- Offered six times per year
- Five-section exam: English, Math, Reading, Science Reasoning, and Writing (optional)
- The Experimental section is added to tests on certain dates only and is clearly experimental
- Math: up to trigonometry
- Science: charts and experiments
- Reading: four passages, one each of Prose Fiction, Social Science, Humanities, and Natural Science
- English: stresses grammar
- Writing: persuasive essay (optional)
- No penalty for wrong answers
- 1-36 for each subject, averaged for a composite score
- Scoring - 36 is the highest possible composite score
- Not all the scores are sent to the schools. There is a "Score Choice" option. Students can choose which schools receive their scores and which scores the schools see.
- Other uses other than college entrance - scholarships and certain statewide testing programs
- Best time to register - at least four weeks before the test date

ACT, Inc.
319.337.1000
ACTStudent.org

SAT

- Offered seven times per year
- Ten-section exam: three Critical Reasoning, three Math, three Writing, and one experimental (masked to look like a regular section)
- Math: up to basic geometry and Algebra II
- Science: none
- Reading: sentence completions, short and long critical reading passages, reading comprehension
- Writing: an essay, and questions testing grammar, usage, and word choice
- Yes, there is a penalty for wrong answers
- Scoring: 200-800 per section, added together for a combined score, 2400 is the highest
- All scores are sent to schools if a student requests a score report be sent to specific colleges, the report will include the scores the student received on every SAT test taken
- Other uses other than college entrance - scholarships
- Best time to register - at least six weeks before the test date

Educational Testing Services (ETS)
609.771.7600
ETS.org
CollegeBoard
collegeboard.com

The ACT may be better for you if:

- You did great on the PLAN or had a PSAT or SAT score inconsistent with your academic performance.
- Your vocabulary is not as strong as your reading score, you read well and relatively quickly, it is three parts verbal - English, Reading and Science, no knowledge outside of what the test presents.
- You are great at writing papers, but haven't had formal grammar instruction, more a test of punctuation, sentence and paragraph structure. Students find it common sense and much like proof-reading.
- You prefer to write essays that are argumentative, persuading with ideas even if you lack perfect recall of facts and figures, questions are asked about everyday issues in your life and school.
- You fear you will choke under pressure.
- Score choice, you may select your best score to be sent and to whom.
- You are more academic than "test savvy", the ACT is more curriculum-based and straightforward.
- There is more advanced math but more likely similar to what was learned and encountered in school.
- All of your friends AREN'T doing the ACT so competition and comparing scores is less of an issue.

The SAT may be better for you if:

- You did great on the PSAT test.
- You have an outstanding vocabulary.
- Your grammar is excellent. The addition to the essay section, the Writing section tests the deviation between standard written English and the way we actually speak the language.
- You find it easier to write an essay that uses illustrative examples rather than argumentative.
- You are a quick-thinker, no matter how academic you are. The math section has some math reasoning, the reading section depends on if you see things the same way the test-makers see things; remember the test is called SAT Reasoning Test.
- You are high-energy or impulsive. There are nine sections and an essay. This can feel long. There are more stops and starts with the SAT which makes it feel like it is moving along faster.
- All of your friends ARE doing it. Some feel it is a rite of passage and common to do, for better or for worse. High school wouldn't be complete without it.