

ACT vs. SAT

Many students and parents begin the college prep process by comparing the ACT and SAT tests. The [SAT](#) and [ACT](#) generally cover the same topics. Both ACT and SAT scores are used for college admissions decisions and awarding merit-based scholarships. Most colleges do not prefer one test over the other.

Compare the ACT and SAT tests

ACT	SAT
WHY TAKE IT: Colleges use ACT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.	WHY TAKE IT: Colleges use SAT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.
TEST STRUCTURE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 4 reading passages ◦ 35 minutes ◦ 40 questions • English Test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 45 minutes ◦ 75 questions • Math Test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 60 minutes ◦ 60 questions • Science Test (<i>testing your critical thinking skills not your specific science knowledge</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 35 minutes ◦ 40 questions 	TEST STRUCTURE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 4 single passages and one pair of passages ◦ 65 minutes ◦ 52 questions • Writing & Language Test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 35 minutes ◦ 44 questions • Math Tests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 80 minutes ◦ 58 questions
TESTING TIME: 2 hours 55 minutes + 40 minutes for optional essay	TESTING TIME: 3 hours
PENALTY FOR GUESSING: No	PENALTY FOR GUESSING: No
MATH SKILLS TESTS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arithmetic • Algebra I & II • Geometry • Trigonometry 	MATH SKILLS TESTS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arithmetic • Algebra I & II • Geometry • Trigonometry • Data Analysis
CALCULATOR POLICY: You can use a calculator on all math questions.	CALCULATOR POLICY: One math section is with calculator and one is without.
SCORE RANGE: Composite 1-36 (Optional essay scores 2-12).	SCORE RANGE: Composite 400-1600.
FREE WAIVER ACCEPTED: Yes	FREE WAIVER ACCEPTED: Yes