

# 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 includes a Science section
- SAT includes one SAT Math Section on which you may not use a calculator

	SAT	ACT
<b>Why Take It</b>	Colleges use SAT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.	Colleges use ACT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.
<b>Test Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading</li><li>• Writing &amp; Language</li><li>• Math</li><li>• Essay (Optional)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• English</li><li>• Math</li><li>• Reading</li><li>• Science Reasoning</li></ul>
<b>Length</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 hours (without essay)</li><li>• 3 hours, 50 minutes (with essay)</li></ul>	<p>Essay (Optional)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 hours, 55 minutes (without essay)</li><li>• 3 hours, 40 minutes (with essay)</li></ul>
<b>Reading</b>	5 reading passages	4 reading passages
<b>Science</b>	None	1 science section testing your critical thinking skills (not your specific science knowledge)
<b>Math</b>	<p>Covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arithmetic</li><li>• Algebra I &amp; II</li><li>• Geometry, Trigonometry and Data Analysis</li></ul>	<p>Covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arithmetic</li><li>• Algebra I &amp; II</li><li>• Geometry and Trigonometry</li></ul>
<b>Calculator Policy</b>	Some math questions don't allow you to use a calculator.	You can use a calculator on all math questions.
<b>Essays</b>	Optional. The essay will test your comprehension of a source text.	Optional. The essay will test how well you evaluate and analyze complex issues.
<b>How It's Scored</b>	Scored on a scale of 400–1600	Scored on a scale of 1–36