

How Can You Prepare for the ACT or SAT I?

Your performance on these tests depends on several variables, including your general aptitude, your ability to take tests, and your educational background. Several other factors may have significant influence on your test scores:

- ❖ If you have not had at least *Geometry* and *Algebra II*, you will not score as well as students who have had these courses. You are likely to improve your score if you take other math courses beyond the basic ones. An advanced math course, such as *Pre-Calculus*, is especially important for the **ACT**.
- ❖ If you are taking a math course, such as *Algebra II*, or a science course, such as *Physics* or *Chemistry*, which uses mathematical concepts during the semester that you take the **SAT I** or **ACT**, you are more likely to do well, as these concepts will be fresh in your mind.
- ❖ Verbal skills are developed in a variety of courses such as *English*, *History*, foreign languages, and other courses that require critical reading, writing and language usage, and analysis. Extensive reading and writing experiences both in and out of school can improve your ability to perform well on either test.
- ❖ If you select the more challenging courses and levels, such as honors or accelerated classes, you may enhance your probability of doing well on these tests. If you select easier courses or levels, you may be passing up an opportunity to fully develop your academic abilities.
- ❖ Taking the **PSAT** is one of the best preparations you can have for the **SAT I**. The feedback sheet you receive with your score each year will greatly assist you as you prepare to take the next year's **PSAT** or **SAT I**.
- ❖ The **PLAN** helps you think about careers you might enjoy and jobs that might interest you. In addition, **PLAN** results can help you set goals and make plans for the rest of high school and beyond.
- ❖ Free practice tests are available in your Guidance Office. When taking a practice test, try to simulate as closely as possible the time and other conditions you will experience on testing day. This will help you pace yourself and become familiar with the test.

A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT'S GUIDE

TO

**PSAT, SAT I, SAT II,
PLAN, and ACT**



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What is the PSAT/NMSQT?

The Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT)/ National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT) is a two-hour and ten minute multiple-choice test that measures critical reading and mathematical reasoning abilities important for academic performance in college. For eleventh grade students, the PSAT is also the qualifying test for entry into competitions for National Merit Scholarships. It consists of two 25-minute Critical Reading sections, two 25-minute Math sections, and a 30-minute Writing section. PSAT scores can be used to estimate performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, SAT.

Educated guessing, whereby you can rule out one or more answers for multiple-choice questions, is encouraged. However, you will be penalized for incorrect answers, therefore wild guessing is discouraged.

What is the SAT I?

The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT I) is a three-hour and forty-five minute, multiple-choice aptitude test. The SAT I is comprised of three separately timed components including critical reading, mathematics, and a writing component. It consists of three Critical Reading sections (two 25-minute sections and one 20-minute section), three Math sections (two 25-minute sections and one 20-minute section), and two Writing sections (one 35-minute multiple-choice section and one 25-minute essay). The critical reading portion assesses vocabulary acquisition, critical reading strategies, and reading comprehension. The math portion assesses problem solving including arithmetic reasoning, algebra, and geometry. The writing portion assesses effective writing abilities, including understanding of the English sentence structure and defining, as well as supporting, a viewpoint. Scores for each section are reported on a scale ranging from 200 to 800 with a composite score range of 600 to 2400.

Educated guessing, whereby you can rule out one or more answers for multiple-choice questions, is encouraged. However, you will be penalized for incorrect answers, therefore wild guessing is discouraged.

What is the SAT II?

The SAT II is the replacement for what was previously known as the Achievement Tests. You may take up to three subject-area SAT II tests on a given test date. SAT II tests are given on the same date time as the SAT I. It is therefore impossible to take both the SAT I and the SAT II tests on the same test date. You should plan your test-taking schedule accordingly. Subject Tests are one-hour, multiple-choice exams (except the writing test, which has a 20-minute essay section included) in various high school subjects (e.g., American History and Social Studies, Physics, Chemistry, French, Math, World History, etc.). Many competitive colleges require applicants to have taken two or more SAT II tests prior to their application cutoff date. Some colleges require one or more tests for placement purposes (usually the Writing Test and/or one of the Math tests). These tests can be taken at any time prior to enrolling at the college. Your guidance counselor can assist you in determining whether or not you will need to take the SAT II subject-area tests and when you should take them.

What is the PLAN?

As a "pre-ACT" test, PLAN is a curriculum-based achievement test that covers skills and knowledge commonly taught in high schools that are also judged important for success in both high school and college. The test consists of English (30 minutes), mathematics (40 minutes), reading (20 minutes), and science reasoning (25 minutes). The content of PLAN tests is closely tied to the achievement tests in the ACT Assessment. Your performance on the PLAN test can be used to predict your success on the ACT Assessment.

You will not be penalized for incorrect answers on the PLAN; therefore, you should answer all questions, even if you have to guess.

What is the ACT?

The American College Testing Assessment (ACT) is a comprehensive, guidance-oriented service that assists colleges, high schools, and students in the transition from high school to college. You participate in the program by completing an educational/biographical questionnaire, an interest inventory, and four tests of educational development in English, mathematics, social studies, and natural sciences. After analyzing the information submitted, ACT prepares reports for use by you, your high school, and colleges in career and college planning, admissions, placement, and academic advisement.

You will not be penalized for incorrect answers on the ACT; therefore, you should answer all questions, even if you have to guess.

How are the test scores used and reported?

College admissions officers and scholarship committees use these tests as one of several indicators of your ability to do college-level work. PSAT scores are not reported to colleges by the Educational Testing System. Each time you take the SAT I, scores are reported to your high school and colleges that you designate. If you take the SAT I more than once, all scores are reported. SAT II has the "score choice" which allows you to decide whether or not to send your scores to colleges after you find out how you did. Unlike SAT I, ACT maintains a separate record for each test date. Only the record from the test date(s) you specify will be released to colleges.

Which test should you take for college admissions?

When it comes time to decide which tests to take, you have two choices—SAT I or ACT. Please check with each college and university for its specific admission requirements. Almost all four-year colleges and universities accept ACT and SAT I scores equally.

Where can you get additional information?

1. Check with your school's Guidance Department.
2. You can also access the following web sites for additional information and practice tests:

**PSAT, SAT
PLAN, ACT**

www.collegeboard.com
www.act.org