

# ACT vs. SAT:

## A Quick Guide for Distinguishing Between the Two Tests

**Which Should I Take –the ACT or SAT?** First and foremost, it is important to review the requirements imposed by the college, university, or technical school to which you are applying. Questions to consider as you decide which test is better for you:

**Is this test needed as a condition for enrollment into the school (college, university, technical school) that I have chosen?** \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

**Which test will the school accept?** \_\_\_ ACT \_\_\_ SAT

**What score will the college/university/technical school accept?** \_\_\_\_\_ ACT \_\_\_\_\_ SAT

	ACT	SAT
<b>Background subject matter needed for optimal success:</b>	<p>English, Mathematics, Reading, Science, and an optional Writing Test. The ACT is not an aptitude or an IQ test. The test questions on the ACT are directly related to what you have learned in your high school courses in English, mathematics, reading, and science.</p> <p>The ACT has a Science section, while the SAT does not. It is meant to test your reading and reasoning skills, based upon a given set of facts.</p> <p>The ACT tests more advanced math concepts. The ACT requires you to know a little trigonometry, in addition to the algebra and geometry you'll find on the SAT. That said, the ACT Math section is not necessarily harder, since many students find the questions to be more straightforward than those on the SAT.</p>	<p>It tests the skills you're learning in school: reading, writing and math. However, the SAT is broken up into more sections. On the SAT, the content areas (Critical Reading, Math, and Writing) are broken up into ten sections, with the required essay at the beginning. You do a little math, a little writing, a little critical reading, a little more math, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The critical reading section includes reading passages and sentence completions.</li> <li>• The writing section includes a short essay and multiple-choice questions on identifying errors and improving grammar and usage.</li> <li>• The mathematics section includes questions on arithmetic operations, algebra, geometry, statistics and probability.</li> </ul> <p>The SAT has a stronger emphasis on vocabulary. If you're an ardent wordsmith, you'll love the SAT. If words aren't your thing, you may do better on the ACT.</p>
<b>Writing</b>	Optional writing test. You take the 30-minute ACT Writing Test only if required by the college, university, or technical school	Mandatory writing test. The 25-minute SAT essay is required, and is factored into your Writing score.

	ACT	SAT
<b>Scores</b>	College admissions officers are most concerned with your composite score. So if you're weak in one content area but strong in others, you could still end up with a very good ACT score. The ACT is scored based on the number of correct answers with no penalty for guessing. Your ACT score is based only on what you know. The ACT is the only college admission test based on the number of correct answers—you are not penalized for guessing.	College admissions officers are concerned about how you did on each section of the SAT. The SAT has a correction for guessing. That is, they take off for wrong answers.
<b>RCPS Subject Matter Coursework Needed to Prepare for Testing:</b>	English: 9th Grade Literature/Composition – 1 unit 10 <sup>th</sup> Grade Literature/Composition – 1 unit American Literature/Composition (11 <sup>th</sup> ) – 1 unit	English: 9th Grade Literature/Composition – 1 unit 10 <sup>th</sup> Grade Literature/Composition – 1 unit American Literature/Composition (11 <sup>th</sup> ) – 1 unit
	Math: Math I or Accelerated Math I – 1 unit Math II or Accelerated Math II – 1 unit Math III or Accelerated Math III – 1 unit OR Coordinate Algebra – 1 unit Analytic Geometry – 1 unit Advanced Algebra – 1 unit OR Accelerated Coordinate Algebra/Analytic Geometry A Accelerated Analytic Geometry B/Advanced Algebra	Math: Math I or Accelerated Math I – 1 unit Math II or Accelerated Math II – 1 unit Math III or Accelerated Math III – 1 unit OR Coordinate Algebra – 1 unit Analytic Geometry – 1 unit Advanced Algebra – 1 unit OR Accelerated Coordinate Algebra/Analytic Geometry A Accelerated Analytic Geometry B/Advanced Algebra
	Science: Life Science/Biology – 1 unit Physical Science – 1 unit	There is not a science portion on the SAT
<b>Prep Course</b>	<a href="#">EXPLORE</a> – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade (November) <a href="#">PLAN</a> – 10 <sup>th</sup> grade (November)	<a href="#">ReadiStep</a> – 8 <sup>th</sup> grade (October) <a href="#">PSAT</a> - Sophomore and junior years (October) SAT Prep – Elective course recommended junior year Creative Writing - Elective course recommended junior year <a href="http://www.collegeboard.org">College Board SAT online practice test (www.collegeboard.org)</a>

	ACT	SAT
<b>When Should I take this test?</b>	<p>Junior year. Pick a test date that is at least two months ahead of the application deadlines of all the colleges and scholarship agencies you might want to apply to.</p> <p>Include matching of mean scores to median college, university, or technical school scores and national average comparison to encourage a senior year test if needed.</p>	<p>Junior year. Most students take the SAT during the spring of their junior year of high school. Many students choose to take the SAT a second time in the fall of their senior year after becoming familiar with the test day experience.</p> <p>For the SAT Subject Tests™, most students take them toward the end of their junior year or at the beginning of their senior year. In general, you should take tests such as World History, Biology E/M, Chemistry or Physics as soon as possible after completing the course in the subject. Students tend to do better on other tests like languages after at least two years of study</p> <p>Include matching of mean scores to median college, university, or technical school scores and national average comparison to encourage a senior year test if needed.</p>
<b>I plan to take the test 1 time</b>	Spring of junior year	Spring of junior year
<b>I plan to take the test 2 or more times</b>	Spring of junior year and fall of senior year	Spring of junior year and fall of senior year
<b>Which test is easiest?</b>	NEITHER! The tests are organized differently and measure differently. You and your parents need to choose the one that is most appropriate for you and your goals.	NEITHER! The tests are organized differently and measure differently. You and your parents need to choose the one that is most appropriate for you and your goals.