

ACT vs SAT: Key differences between the ACT and SAT

ACT vs SAT: which test is a better fit for your student? Students may take whichever test they prefer (assuming there are available testing locations for both tests). If you're not sure which test your child would prefer, consider the key differences between the ACT and SAT. Some students find that the ACT caters to their strengths more so than the SAT, and vice versa.

Need a quick side-by-side comparison of the tests? Check out our ACT vs. SAT Comparison Chart.

SAT	VS	ACT
Content-based test	Type of Test	Content-based test
Reading: 1, 65-min section; Math: 1, 25-min section (no calculator) & 1, 55-min section (w/ calculator); Writing & Language: 1, 35-min section; Essay: 1, 50-min section (optional)	Test Format	English: 1, 45-min section; Math: 1, 60-min section; Reading: 1, 35-min section; Science: 1, 35-min section; Writing: 1, 40-min essay (optional)
Reading, relevant words in context, math, grammar & usage, analytical writing (optional)	Content Covered	Grammar & usage, math, reading, science reasoning, and writing (optional)
Questions are evidence and context-based in an effort to focus on real-world situations and multi-step problem-solving	Test Style	Straightforward, questions may be long but are usually less difficult to decipher
Math and Evidence-Based Reading & Writing are each scored on a scale of 200-800. Composite SAT score is the sum of the two section scores and ranges from 400-1600	Scoring	English, Math, Reading, and Science scores range from 1-36. Composite ACT score is the average of your scores on the four sections; ranges from 1-36
No – you do not lose points for incorrect answers	Penalty for Wrong Answers?	No – you do not lose points for incorrect answers

<p>Yes – you can choose which set(s) of SAT scores to submit to colleges. However, some colleges require or recommend that students submit all scores. Students should review the score-reporting policy of each college to which they plan to apply.</p>	<p>Score Choice?</p>	<p>Yes – you can choose which set(s) of ACT scores to submit to colleges. However, some colleges require or recommend that students submit all scores. Students should review the score-reporting policy of each college to which they plan to apply.</p>
<p>Math questions generally increase in difficulty level as you move through that question type in a section. Reading passage questions generally progress chronologically through the passage, not by difficulty level. Writing & Language passage questions do not progress by difficulty level.</p>	<p>Difficulty Levels</p>	<p>For the English and Reading sections, the difficulty level of the questions is random. For the Math section, questions generally increase in difficulty as you progress through the section. For the Science section, passages generally increase in difficulty as you progress through the test, and questions generally become more difficult as you progress through a passage.</p>
<p>Arithmetic, problem-solving & data analysis, heart of algebra, geometry, pre-calculus, and trigonometry; formulas provided</p>	<p>Math Levels</p>	<p>Arithmetic, algebra I and II, functions, geometry, trigonometry; no formulas are provided</p>
<p>Seven times per year: March or April, May, June, August, October, November, December (note that some states offer the SAT as part of their state testing requirements; these tests are not administered on the national test dates)</p>	<p>Offered when?</p>	<p>Seven times per year: February, April, June, July, September, October, December (note that some states offer the ACT as part of their state testing requirements; these tests are not administered on the national test dates)</p>
<p>Typically about four weeks before the test date</p>	<p>Registration deadline?</p>	<p>Typically about five to six weeks before the test date</p>
<p>www.collegeboard.com</p>	<p>More Information</p>	<p>www.act.org</p>

Related Topics:

- SAT or ACT? Find out **which test is more popular** in your state.
- Want to learn more about the ACT? Visit our **ACT Test** page.
- Want to learn more about the SAT? Visit our **SAT Test** page.

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