

Choosing between the SAT and the ACT should be a thoughtful but not stressful decision, since half of our students do equally well on either test. The other half, however, perform better on one, so it's worth spending the time to discover whether there's an easier test for you before you prepare or register for either. The SAT and ACT are sufficiently different that it makes sense for students to focus their efforts on one test and do their best rather than to be divided and conquered.



SCORES

Colleges have no SAT/ACT preference but use a concordance to compare all test-takers on the same scale.

SAT

Total Score 400-1600

- 200-800 Evidenced-Based Reading & Writing
- 200-800 Mathematics

	SAT	ACT
1600	36	
1500	34	
1430	32	
1370	30	
1310	28	
1240	26	
1180	24	
1110	22	

ACT

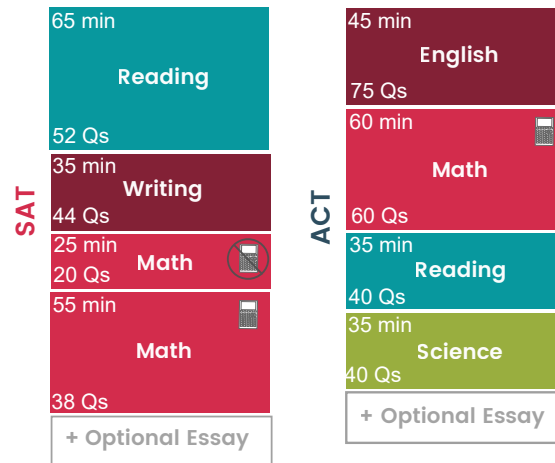
Composite Score 1-36

- 1-36 English
- 1-36 Math
- 1-36 Reading
- 1-36 Science

Notably, the SAT weighs math more heavily than does the ACT. The ACT does have a Science section, but see below.

STRUCTURE

Both tests are three hours long - longer than tests students take in school. Remaining focused and making good decisions throughout the whole test is as important as knowledge of math or grammar.

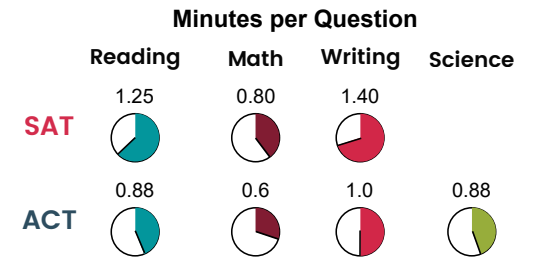


The SAT has one math section that does not allow the use of a calculator, though computation is not a focus.

Each has an optional essay required by some but not all colleges. Students may also be given an unscored "experimental" section on either test.

POWER vs. SPEED

The primary difference between the two tests is time. The hardest questions on the SAT are harder than those on the ACT - but students have much more time to answer them.



Most students struggle to complete ACT sections in time, especially the fastest-paced Science and Reading sections.

SCIENCE?

The ACT Science section is poorly named: it should be called the Reading Charts & Graphs section. The Reading section doesn't ask students about books they've read, and the Science section doesn't ask for biology or chemistry facts. It's all about finding and interpreting information given in the passage.



Students who "hate" science should NOT discount the ACT because of this section, and good science students shouldn't expect this section to be easy - it is incredibly fast-paced.

REASONING vs. ASSESSMENT

Questions on the SAT seem less familiar than those on the ACT, which more closely resemble work done in school. The ACT seeks to assess whether students learned what they were taught in school, while the SAT asks students to reason through more challenging and unfamiliar material, often perceived to be "trickier."

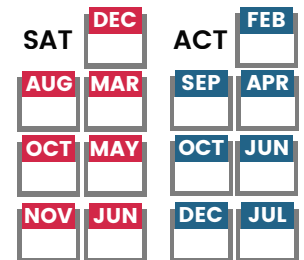
POLICIES & PROCEDURES

The SAT and ACT are each offered 7 times a year. Plan your calendar ahead so you have time to prepare and rest for test day.



Students who qualify for accommodations, such as extra time, should strongly consider the ACT, on which extra time is more helpful. The ACT also offers other helpful accommodations such as multi-day testing.

Most colleges honor SAT Score Choice, so you're in control of which scores you share. The ACT, however, allows students to delete scores after the fact, reducing stress and providing ultimate flexibility.



Still unsure as to which test to take?

The best way to find out is always to take full-length practice tests and compare not just the scores but the experiences as a whole.