

# SAT vs ACT

*Which test is best for your student?*

## College Admissions: SAT vs ACT

*Which test is best for your student?*



**Ned Johnson**  
Founder & Tutor-Geek

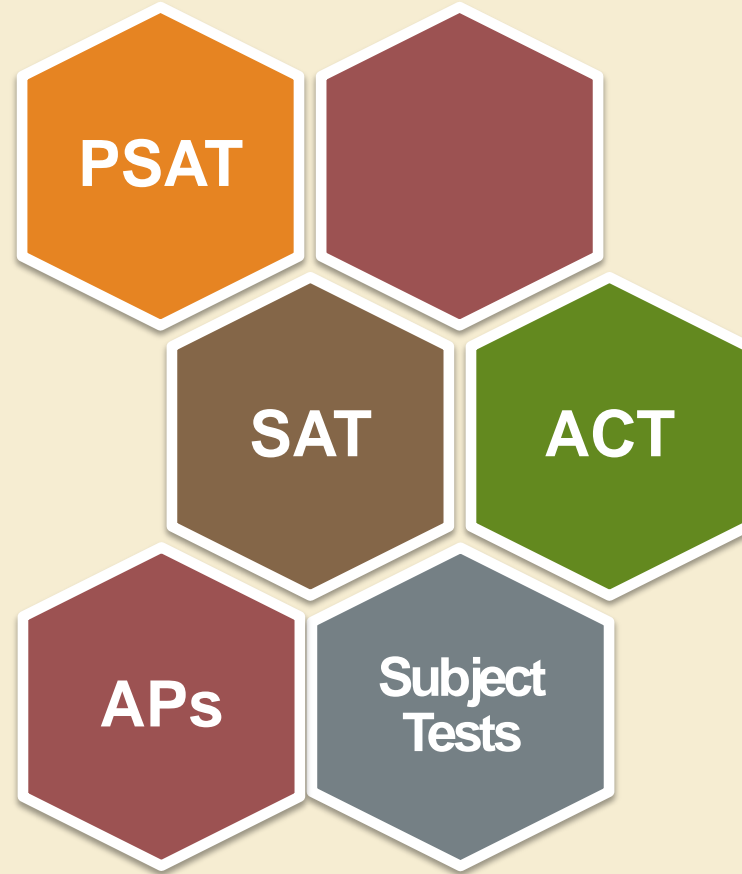


**Aaron Golumbfskie**  
Education Director

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## The Tests



The most important tests for college admissions are clearly the SAT and ACT, but it's important to understand how the others fit into the picture.

# SAT vs ACT

Which test is best for your student?

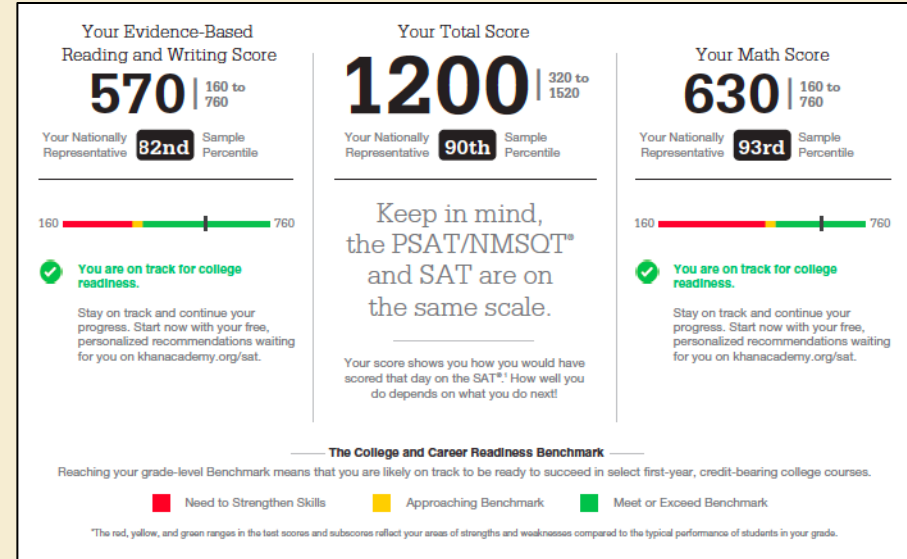
## The PSAT

Administered by schools in October

Just like the SAT but shorter & without essay

Colleges do NOT see the scores, which become available in December

National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test



*Practice precedes perfection. -- Oscar Wilde*

The PSAT provides students real testing experiences without real consequences. Feedback, while coming late, is valuable for understanding performance.

# SAT vs ACT

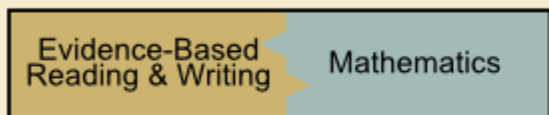
*Which test is best for your student?*



About half the students we see do equally well on the SAT or the ACT. The other half perform better on one test relative to the other. Deciding which test to take should be a thoughtful decision but not a stressful one!

*Never measure the height of a mountain until you have reached the top.  
Then you will see how low it was. -- Dag Hammarskjold*

### SAT | Total 400-1600



200-800

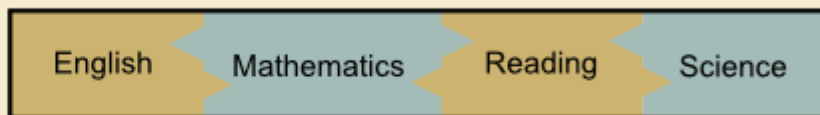
200-800

Cross-test

Scores

- + History / Social Studies
- + Science

### ACT | Composite 1-36



1-36

1-36

1-36

1-36

Students should focus their efforts on the scores that matter most to colleges: the section scores and, more importantly, the total SAT or composite ACT score.

*The worst form of inequality is to try to make unequal things equal. -- Aristotle*

**New SAT to ACT Concordance Table**

**Table 7**

New SAT Total (400-1600)	ACT Composite Score	New SAT Total (400-1600)	ACT Composite Score	New SAT Total (400-1600)	ACT Composite Score	New SAT Total (400-1600)	ACT Composite Score
1600	36	1330	28	1060	21	790	14
1590	35	1320	28	1050	20	780	14
1580	35	1310	28	1040	20	770	14
1570	35	1300	27	1030	20	760	14
1560	35	1290	27	1020	20	750	13
1550	34	1280	27	1010	19	740	13
1540	34	1270	26	1000	19	730	13
1530	34	1260	26	990	19	720	13
1520	34	1250	26	980	19	710	12
1510	33	1240	26	970	18	700	12
1500	33	1230	25	960	18	690	12
1490	33	1220	25	950	18	680	12
1480	32	1210	25	940	18	670	12

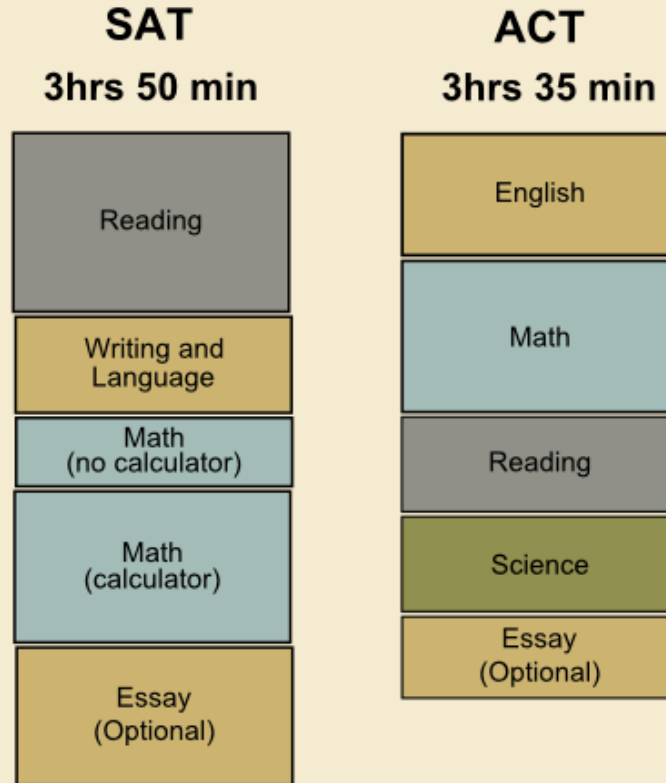
US Colleges accept SAT and ACT scores on an equal basis. They'll consult a concordance chart to put all students on even footing, no matter which test they took.

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## Structure

*The whole is  
other than  
the sum of  
its parts.  
-- Aristotle*



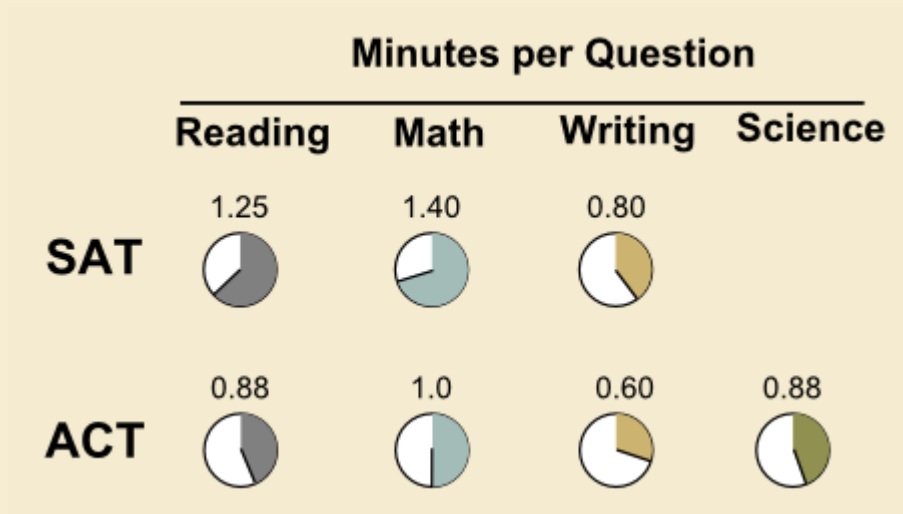
The SAT and ACT remain much longer tests than students face in school; therefore, practice tests are an essential tool for developing stamina and focus.

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## Timing & Pace

*Time is the longest distance between two places. -- Tennessee Williams*



Despite the changes to the SAT that make it more ACT-like, the speededness of the tests can be the defining difference for students deciding which test is right for them.



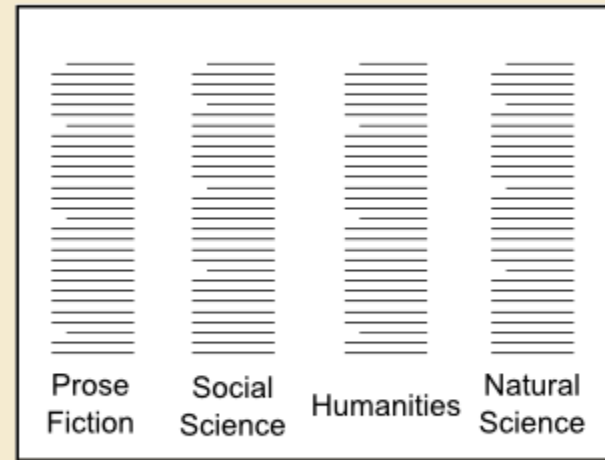
*The trouble about man is twofold. He cannot learn truths which are too complicated; he forgets truths which are too simple. -- Rebecca West*

### SAT



**52 quest / 65 min**

### ACT



**40 quest / 35 min**

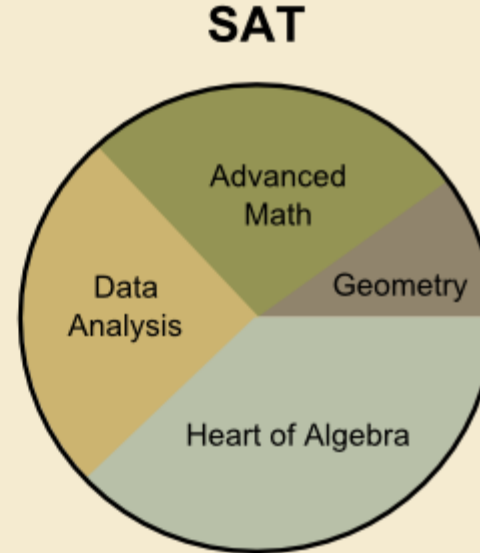
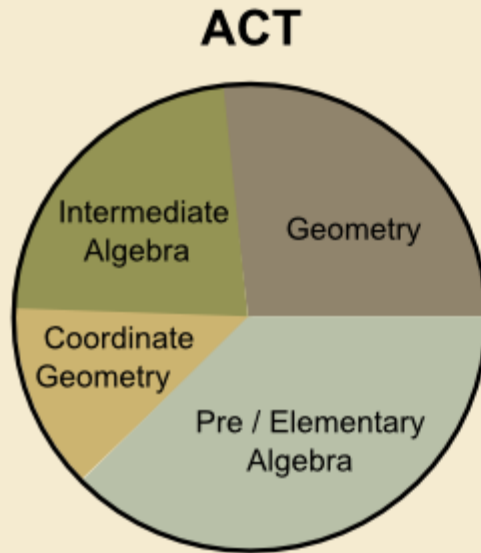
While structurally similar, students have almost twice as long for the SAT as for the ACT reading sections. During that time, they face much more complicated passages.

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## Math Sections

*I know a trick worth two of that. -- William Shakespeare*



The ACT covers more math than does the SAT but in a more straightforward way. The SAT still tends to be the trickier test, requiring students to do more reasoning.

Aaron is staying at a hotel that charges \$99.95 per night plus tax for a room. A tax of 8% is applied to the room rate, and an additional one-time untaxed fee of \$5.00 is charged by the hotel. Which of the following represents Aaron's total charge, in dollars, for staying  $x$  nights?

- A)  $(99.95 + 0.08x) + 5$
- B)  $1.08(99.95x) + 5$
- C)  $1.08(99.95x + 5)$
- D)  $1.08(99.95 + 5)x$

When a scientist dives in salt water to a depth of 9 feet below the surface, the pressure due to the atmosphere and surrounding water is 18.7 pounds per square inch. As the scientist descends, the pressure increases linearly. At a depth of 14 feet, the pressure is 20.9 pounds per square inch. If the

pressure increases at a constant rate as the scientist's depth increases, which of the following linear models best describes the pressure in pounds per square inch at a depth of  $d$  feet below the surface?

- A)  $p = 0.44d + 0.77$
- B)  $p = 0.44d + 14.74$
- C)  $p = 2.2d - 1.1$
- D)  $p = 2.2d - 9.9$

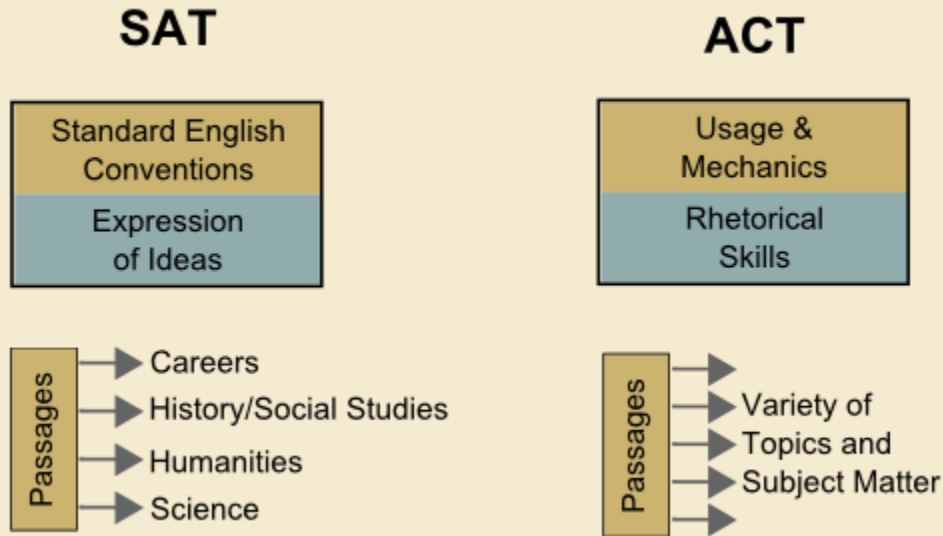
*Blessed is the man, who having nothing to say,  
abstains from giving wordy evidence of the fact.  
-- George Eliot*

A typical image taken of the surface of Mars by a camera is 11.2 gigabits in size. A tracking station on Earth can receive data from the spacecraft at a data rate of 3 megabits per second for a maximum of 11 hours each day. If 1 gigabit equals 1,024 megabits, what is the maximum number of typical images that the tracking station could receive from the camera each day?

- A) 3
- B) 10
- C) 56
- D) 144

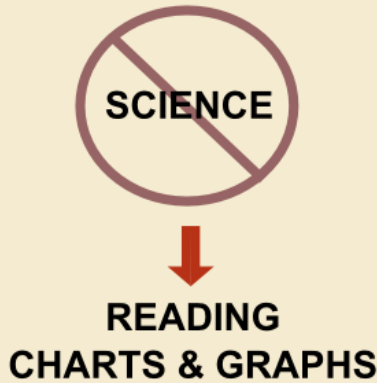
Problems are wordier and reference real-world applications (as do Common Core standards). The total number of words on the redesigned SAT – including all section – will be rising very sharply, increasing the reading burden for students.

*It is better to fail in originality than succeed in imitation. -- Herman Melville*



The format of the redesigned SAT Writing section mirrors that of the ACT. These sections tend to be the easiest to improve on either test and thus rarely factor into the decision as to which test to take.

*We know very little, yet is astonishing we know so much. -- Bertrand Russell*



**Passage 1**

Five bicycle riders traveled during the same 35 sec time interval along a 1 km segment of a straight path. Point P was located at one end of the segment.  $D$ , measured in meters, was a rider's distance along the path from Point P at time  $t$ . Measurement of  $D$  began simultaneously for all riders at  $t = 0$  sec.

Figure 1 is a graph of  $D$  versus  $t$  for Riders 1 and 2. Figure 2 is a graph of  $D$  versus  $t$  for Riders 3, 4, and 5.

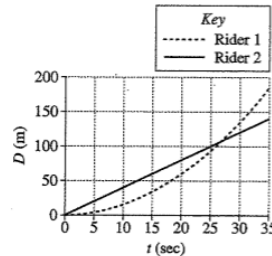


Figure 1

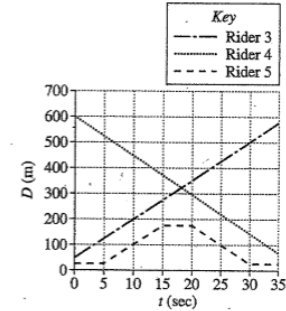


Figure 2

- Consider two of the riders temporarily renamed Rider A and Rider B. Rider A traveled in the same direction as Rider B throughout the 35 sec interval. Initially, Rider A traveled more slowly than Rider B and fell behind. But Rider A pedaled faster and faster and, in less than 30 sec, caught up with and passed Rider B. Who were Riders A and B?

Rider A	Rider B
A. Rider 1	Rider 2
B. Rider 2	Rider 3
C. Rider 3	Rider 5
D. Rider 5	Rider 4

The SAT Science section is more about reading charts and graphs than it is about understanding science, so science lovers might not love it and science phobic students shouldn't fear it.

*Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing. -- Ben Franklin*



The essays on both the SAT and ACT are now optional critical responses to a given text rather than open ended writing tasks.

The essay question doesn't change:

As you read the passage below, consider how Paul Bogard uses

- evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.
- reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence.
- stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed.

Write an essay in which you explain how Paul Bogard builds an argument to persuade his audience that natural darkness should be preserved. In your essay, analyze how Bogard uses one or more of the features listed in the box above (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of his argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

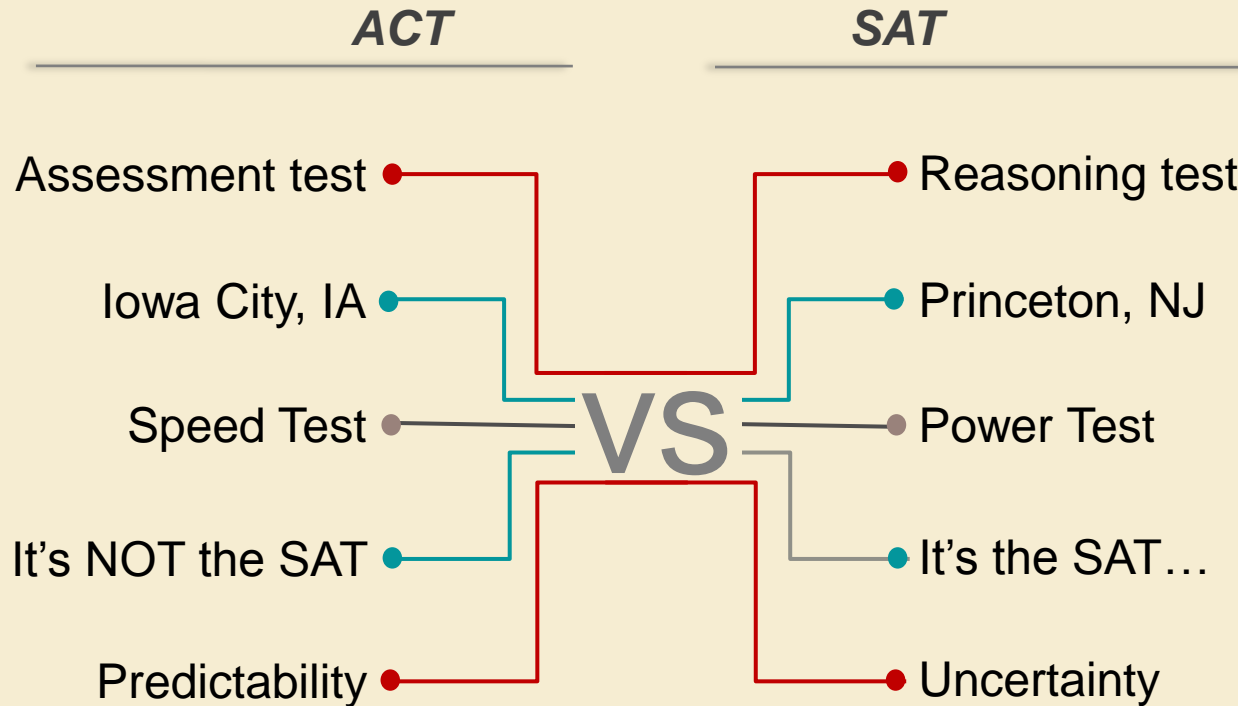
Your essay should not explain whether you agree with Bogard's claims, but rather explain how Bogard builds an argument to persuade his audience.

**While both essays are optional, some colleges may still require students to take them. Even those, however, won't weight the results very heavily.**

# SAT vs ACT

Which test is best for your student?

## Which Test: ACT vs. SAT



About half of our students do equally well on the SAT and ACT, so don't worry if it's not crystal clear which test is better for you. There may be no better test, so just take the one that fits into your schedule.

### Subject Tests

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Demonstrate competency in subject matter for admissions purposes

Required by some but not all colleges

Taken during SAT administrations

### Advanced Placement Tests

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Earn college credit to potentially place out of introductory courses

Typically tied to year-long courses in school

Taken in a two-week period in early May

#### Subject Tests

Math Level 1  
Math Level 2  
Literature  
US History  
World History  
Biology  
Chemistry  
Physics  
Languages

#### Advanced Placement Tests

Calculus AB  
Calculus BC  
English Literature  
English Language  
US History  
World History  
European History  
Art History  
Biology  
Chemistry  
Physics 1  
Physics 2  
Physics C  
.....  
.....

Subject tests may or may not be required – check admissions requirements. Taking AP classes demonstrates rigor, but acing AP exams is less important.

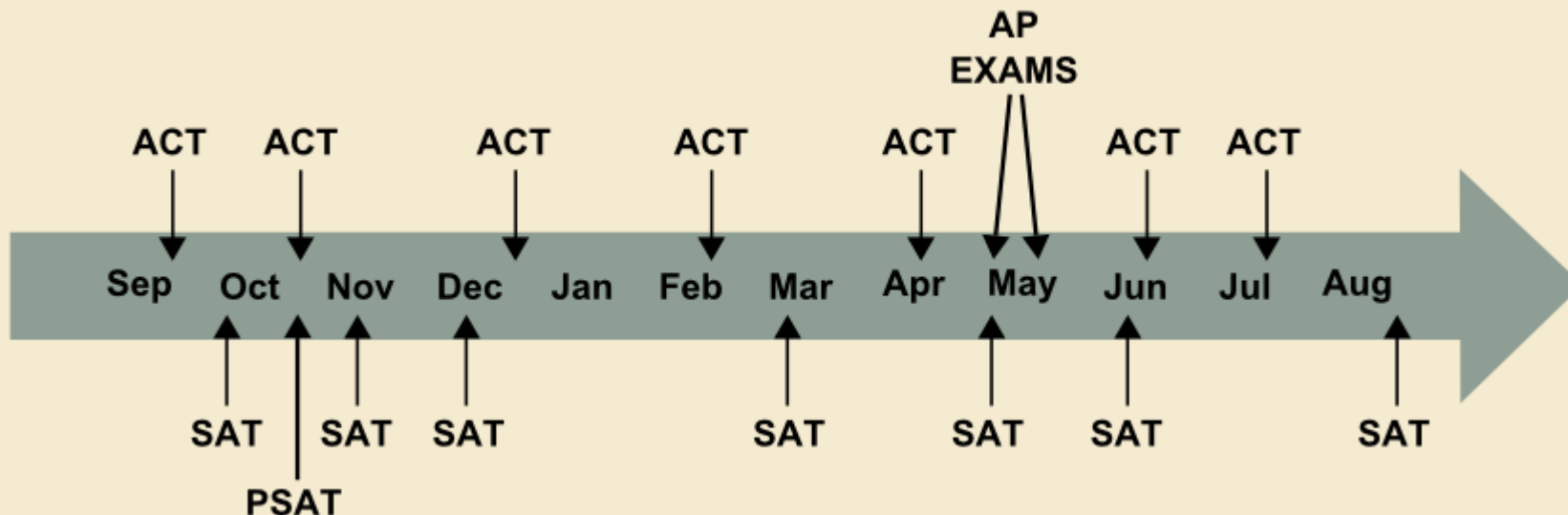


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## Testing Timeline

*Don't be fooled by the calendar. There are only as many days in the year as you make use of. -- Charles Richards*



The best time to take the SAT or ACT is when your student can be well prepared and, ideally, well rested, but starting early can provide plenty of options to retake the test, which often can lower students' stress levels.

### Yerkes – Dodson Law



Test preparation reduces anxiety by replacing uncertainty with knowledge, skills, and a sense of control so that students can perform their best on test day.

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Many details of the tests have changed over the years but two facts remain unchanged: they remain a test of acquired skills and, thus, students can prepare well and increase their scores.

Whether you decide on the SAT or the ACT, it'll be ok!

Thanks for your time and attention.

## Questions?

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