

SAT vs ACT

Many students and parents begin the college prep process by comparing the ACT and SAT. Two of the most common questions they ask are:

- Is the ACT easier than the SAT?
- Do colleges prefer scores from the SAT or ACT?

The [SAT](#) and [ACT](#) generally test the same types of content. Both ACT and SAT scores are used for college admissions and merit-based scholarships. The biggest differences between the tests are that the ACT has a Science Test, and there's one SAT Math Section for which you cannot use a calculator.

SAT

ACT

Colleges use SAT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships	Why take the test?	Colleges use ACT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships
Reading (65 min) Writing & Language (35 min) Math (25 min. w/o calculator; 55 min. w/ calculator) Essay (Optional) (50 min)	Test Structure	English (45 min) Math (60 min) Reading (35 min) Science Reasoning (35 min) Essay (optional) (40 min)
3 hours w/o essay 3 hours, 50 minutes w/ essay	Length	2 hours, 55 minutes w/o essay 3 hours, 40 minutes w/ essay
5 reading passages	Reading	4 reading passages
None	Science	1 science section testing your <i>critical thinking skills</i> , NOT your specific science knowledge
Arithmetic Algebra I and II Geometry, Trigonometry, and Data Analysis	Math	Arithmetic Algebra I and II Geometry, Trigonometry
Some math questions DO NOT allow you to use a calculator	Calculator?	You CAN use a calculator on all math questions
Optional. The essay will test your comprehension of a source text.	Essays	Optional. The essay will test how well you evaluate and analyze complex issues.
Scale of 400 – 1600 (200-800 per area)	How it's Scored	Scored on a scale of 1-36 (then each section averaged for an overall composite)

Registration, practice tests, and upcoming dates can be found online at

SAT www.collegeboard.org www.sat.org

ACT www.actstudent.org