



ACT/SAT Test Preparation

Overview

Many colleges and universities accept ACT and SAT scores along with students' GPAs and other credentials in order to evaluate readiness for postsecondary education. Not only do the test scores influence a college's decision to admit the student, but student performance on these tests is an important factor in the college application process and will also help determine course placement for incoming students. For this reason, earning high scores on the ACT or SAT tests can help improve student's chances of gaining admission to their desired college and ensure that they are placed into classes that are accurate for their level of knowledge.

As a general rule of thumb, students can aim to take their first test during the Spring of their junior year of high school, and then again during the Fall of their senior year. The general recommendation is to take it twice so that the student has time to improve their score if necessary, otherwise, students can choose to do one or the other. Many students take both tests but those who prefer to take only one should complete both an ACT and SAT practice test to examine the scores and determine which one they would like to take.

This document acts as a guide for ACT and SAT preparation including background information on each test and the subjects they consist of. These guidelines will include the steps necessary to assist students with understanding the test, finding a starting place for studying, reviewing for the test, and creating a solid time management and study plan. The resources and study strategies below will provide great practice for students as they prepare for taking either the ACT or SAT (or both).

Time Management Plan

It is crucial that students create a study strategy and time management plan to prepare for taking the ACT and/or SAT. First, it ensures the student has ample time for efficient coverage of all test content. Having more time allows them to identify and address their weaknesses. Second, a well-structured plan fosters discipline and consistency in your student's study routine, preventing last-minute cramming. Third, time management allows the student to simulate actual test conditions during practice tests, ensuring they can complete all sections within the allotted time on test day. Ultimately, a well-executed study and time management

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plan maximizes the chances of achieving their target scores by promoting focused, organized, and comprehensive test preparation.

The ACT

The ACT consists of four multiple-choice test sections which include English, Reading, Mathematics, and Science, and an optional Writing portion. The English section of the test evaluates the student's grammar and language usage skills. The Reading portion asks students to read closely, exercising logical reasoning in regard to the passages. This section requires students to assess assertions and supporting proof, identify the main ideas in a passage, compare and contrast, show an understanding of cause and effect, etc.

The Math section assesses the student's mathematical knowledge of formulas and requires practice of computational skills in subjects including algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. Finally, the science portion evaluates the student's ability to interpret and analyze data presented in scientific contexts, such as graphs, charts, and experiments. Each section is scored on a scale of 1 to 36, and the scores from these sections are averaged to calculate the student's composite score, also on a scale of 1 to 36. Additionally, there is an optional Writing section. The composite score is the most commonly reported score and is used by colleges for admissions decisions.

ACT Prep Guidelines

Before the student begins studying for their test they should work on getting a baseline score so they know what topics they are prepared for and which they still need to work on. Next, the students should create a time management plan, review the material, and test themselves frequently until they feel prepared to take the test.

The SAT

The SAT is another multiple-choice test that consists of two sections including Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and Math. The Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section assesses the student's reading and writing skills. It includes Reading, Writing and Language portions, which test the student's ability to understand and analyze written passages, as well as grammar and language usage. The Math portion evaluates mathematical knowledge, including algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. Each section is scored on a scale of 200 to 800, with a maximum composite score of 1600. The SAT does not penalize for incorrect answers, so it helps the student to answer every question.

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SAT Prep Guidelines

Comparable to the guidelines for the ACT, students should first take a practice test to determine a baseline. This will give them an idea of the areas that will need the most improvement in order to do well on the SAT. Next, they should understand the test and how it is scored, and organize their schedule to make time for studying the material. Once the student has demonstrated their knowledge of a particular topic they can move on until they have studied and shown understanding of the topics that will be on the test.

Additional Test-Taking Tips

Preparing for tests like the ACT and SAT can be daunting and stressful because the results often seem to hold huge significance in the context of college admissions decisions. However, the more prepared a student is, the better they will feel about taking the test. Additionally, being more prepared will help our students combat any lingering testing anxiety that they might experience. NorthBridge wants to ensure that each student is comfortable and confident as they approach their testing date by reminding them of the following strategies:

- Set a test date and begin studying early.
- Understand the test format, create a study schedule, and take practice tests.
- Practice Time Management
- Practice Process of Elimination
- Review answers
- Practice healthy habits
- Find time to relax
- If it's the first try be open to re-taking the test
- Take a deep breath and do their best