

Standardized Testing

The Tests of College Admission

PSAT: Official Name: **Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.**

Cosponsored by the College Board and the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, the PSAT serves as valuable practice for the SAT. Usually taken during the fall of junior year (and sometimes offered to sophomores), the PSAT (when taken as a junior) is also used to select students for National Merit Scholarships. Duration: 2 hours, 45 minutes. www.collegeboard.org or www.nationalmerit.org.

SAT: Produced by College Board. Focuses on skills for college readiness. It includes two components: Mathematics and Evidence Based Reading and Writing. The SAT also has an optional essay component, which some colleges require. Duration: 3 hours, 50 minutes with the essay; 3 hours without the essay. www.collegeboard.org

ACT: Formerly called the American College Testing Program, the test is now officially simply the ACT (pronounced “A-C-T” not “act”). While still a test of problem-solving skills, the ACT closely tests a student’s knowledge of the “core curriculum” taught in most classrooms. The format of the ACT consists of five subject tests in English, math, reading, writing, and science reasoning. Colleges will not accept ACT without writing. Duration: 2 hours, 55 minutes. www.act.org

SAT Subject Tests: The College Board’s college admissions exams has 20 subject tests, each designed to measure what a student has learned in specific subjects such as English, history, language, mathematics, and science. SAT Subject Tests measure the extent of a student’s knowledge in a specific discipline. Students should consider taking these subject exams after the course material is completed. Duration: one hour for each subject test (up to three may be taken on one test date.) www.collegeboard.org

TOEFL: If English is not your first language, you may be required to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in addition to SAT/ACT. TOEFL has become an admission requirement for non-native English speakers at many English speaking college/universities. ETS is the Educational Testing Service that administers the TOEFL Test. www.ets.org/toefl

AP Exams: The AP Exams are part of the College Board’s Advanced Placement Program, which gives students the opportunity to take college-level courses while still in high school. By doing well on the AP exam at the end of the course, high school students may earn credits toward their college graduation. Duration: 2-3 hours. www.collegeboard.org

- Tips:**
- * We encourage taking both the SAT’s and ACT’s at least once in the spring of junior year to determine which test is most appropriate for you.
 - * It is possible that students may score significantly higher on one of the exams (SAT or ACT) than the other
 - * Colleges accept scores from either the SAT or ACT for admission.
 - * There is a growing list of colleges that are “Test Optional”. Check out the list at www.fairtest.org.
 - * Check college requirements/recommendations to decide whether or not to take the SAT and/or ACT with Essay.

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SAT vs. ACT Basics

Your test score can be a key factor determining whether or not you get accepted by the colleges to which you are applying. But before you sign up for the ACT or SAT, you should do a little research to determine which of these two tests will present you in the best possible light.

The Two Tests Compared		
	SAT	ACT
Structure	3 tests + optional essay	4 tests + optional writing test
Number of Questions	154	215
Time per Question	1 minute, 10 seconds	49 seconds
Score Range	Composite 400-1600 (SAT Essay: reported in 3 dimensions, each 2-8)	Composite 1-36 (writing domain scores: 2-12)
Test Length	<p>Reading Test* 65 minutes 52 questions</p> <p>Writing and Language Test* 35 minutes 44 questions</p> <p>Math Test 80 minutes 58 questions.</p> <p>*Part of the Evidence Based Reading and Writing Component</p>	<p>Reading Test 35 minutes 40 questions</p> <p>Writing and Language Test 45 minutes 75 questions</p> <p>Math Test 60 minutes 60 questions.</p> <p>Science Test 35 minutes 40 questions</p>
	No guessing penalty	No guessing penalty

So How Do I Choose?

Colleges will accept either exam, giving you the opportunity to take both tests—and then use the highest scores to your benefit. Some students may perform significantly better on one test than the other, so you should consider taking both.

SAT to ACT Concordance Table

Table A1: SAT Total to ACT Composite

SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT
1600	36	1250	26	910	16
*1590	36	*1240	26	900	16
1580	36	1230	26	*890	16
1570	36	1220	25	880	16
1560	35	*1210	25	870	15
1550	35	1200	25	860	15
*1540	35	1190	24	*850	15
1530	35	*1180	24	840	15
1520	34	1170	24	830	15
1510	34	1160	24	820	14
*1500	34	1150	23	810	14
1490	34	*1140	23	*800	14
1480	33	1130	23	790	14
1470	33	1120	22	780	14
*1460	33	*1110	22	770	13
1450	33	1100	22	*760	13
1440	32	1090	21	750	13
*1430	32	*1080	21	740	13
1420	32	1070	21	730	13
1410	31	1060	21	720	12
*1400	31	1050	20	*710	12
1390	31	*1040	20	700	12
1380	30	1030	20	690	12
*1370	30	1020	19	680	11
1360	30	*1010	19	*670	11
1350	29	1000	19	660	11
*1340	29	990	19	650	11
1330	29	980	18	640	10
1320	28	*970	18	*630	10
*1310	28	960	18	620	10
1300	28	950	17	610	9
1290	27	940	17	600	9
*1280	27	*930	17	*590	9
1270	27	920	17		
1260	27				

Table A2: ACT Composite to SAT Total

ACT	SAT	SAT Range
36	1590	1570–1600
35	1540	1530–1560
34	1500	1490–1520
33	1460	1450–1480
32	1430	1420–1440
31	1400	1390–1410
30	1370	1360–1380
29	1340	1330–1350
28	1310	1300–1320
27	1280	1260–1290
26	1240	1230–1250
25	1210	1200–1220
24	1180	1160–1190
23	1140	1130–1150
22	1110	1100–1120
21	1080	1060–1090
20	1040	1030–1050
19	1010	990–1020
18	970	960–980
17	930	920–950
16	890	880–910
15	850	830–870
14	800	780–820
13	760	730–770
12	710	690–720
11	670	650–680
10	630	620–640
9	590	590–610

*Use this SAT score when a single score point comparison is needed.

Note: Concordance tables for the ACT Composite were derived from concordances of the ACT sum score.

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SAT Subject Tests

Most colleges do not require the Subject Tests. However, it's important to plan ahead. The SAT Subject Tests offer colleges a way to gauge your knowledge of particular subjects. Some colleges require one or more SAT Subject Tests, but even if a college does not require it, you may want to take the test to demonstrate your knowledge—especially if your high school grades are not a good indicator of what you have really learned.

SAT Subject Tests Offered	
English	Literature
Mathematics	Math Level 1, Math Level 2
Science	Biology E/M, Chemistry, Physics
History	U.S. History, World History
Languages	Chinese Listening, French, French Listening, German, German Listening, Modern Hebrew, Italian, Japanese Listening, Korean Listening, Latin, Spanish, Spanish Listening,

Students can take one, two, or three SAT Subject Tests on each test date. Each SAT Subject Test is one hour in length.

Visit <http://www.compassprep.com/subject-test-requirements-and-recommendations/> to learn which colleges require or recommend SAT Subject Tests, as well as how many are required, if specific tests are necessary, or if the ACT can replace Subject Test requirements.

Subject Tests scores can also be used for consideration for the Stanley Z. Koplik Award. For more details on this, visit <http://www.doe.mass.edu/scholarships/mastery/>.

Test Prep

Test prep resources range from free online programs such as Khan Academy and test prep apps, private individual tutors, and large testing companies such as Kaplan and Princeton Review. In addition, there are a number of computer software packages available as well as printed materials sold at bookstores. All of these offer intense review of tests designed to improve student performance. When reviewing the myriad of options, the following factors should be considered:

Any quality preparation requires significant commitment of time and energy on the part of the individual student. Even then, there is no guarantee at all that scores will improve. Commitment to a test prep plan should not compromise a student's academic and personal involvement at Westborough High School. Remember, **the transcript will be the most important credential** as students apply to college. An increase in scores combined with a drop in academic performance is not a good trade off. As well, there are no "quick fixes" or easy methods that will have a significant impact on scores. Existing academic research (2009 NACAC Discussion Paper-Preparation for College Admission Exams) suggest average gains as a result of committed test preparation are in the neighborhood of 30 total points on the SAT and less than one point on the ACT, substantially lower than gains marketed by test preparation companies.

In addition to any for-pay test prep you may use, the counseling staff highly recommends that students take advantage of the free services and resources offered at the College Board and ACT websites, as well as other free resources on-line. Given the academics and social time constraints of The Westborough High School schedule, the best preparation for doing well on any standardized test continues to be working hard in the most challenging courses a student is capable. Any other review strategy, from an organizational program to individual tutoring, is best left to the summer when students can devote the full attention required to yield meaningful results.

SAT & ACT Test Prep Resources

Please note that the resources listed are not endorsed in any way by our Counseling Department.

Khan Academy SAT Prep www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat Free prep for the SAT, including videos and practice tests.

Sylvan Learning Center: www.sylvanlearning.com

Offering SAT & ACT test prep, personalized instruction in a small group setting, and timed practice tests.

Kaplan Test Prep www.kaptest.com

Offering SAT & ACT test prep, in a classroom setting, online, or private and small group tutor sessions.

Princeton Review www.princetonreview.com

Offering SAT & ACT test prep, in a classroom setting, small group session, private tutoring, or online.

Summit Education Group: www.mytutor.com

Offering SAT & ACT test prep, either one-on-one or in a classroom setting, plus free practice testing.

Quinsigamond Community College: <https://www.ed2go.com/qcc/online-courses/sat-act-preparation-1?tab=detail>

Offering SAT prep classes through the Continuing Education program.

Ivy Bound Test Prep: www.ivybound.net or call: 877-975-1600

Offering SAT & ACT Test prep in either a private, online or classroom setting. Also offers a "summer boot camp" for test prep. Based out of Boston.

SAT Scores and SAT Score Reports FAQs

How are score reports sent to colleges?

When you register to take an SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Test, you are allowed **four free score reports** to colleges **at the time of registration**. A complete report must be sent to all colleges to which you plan to apply that require scores.

You can use the College Board website, www.collegeboard.org, to send additional score reports to colleges and scholarship programs (Visa, MasterCard, or American Express credit card required). After the first four for free, there is a fee per score report—and scores are typically sent to colleges within one to two weeks.

- **Can't a college just download my scores when I apply?**
No. You must have an official score report sent to the college.
- **Do colleges see all of my SAT scores?**
Colleges will see all scores from completed exams at the time you arrange to send them. The only exception to this is if you use the Score Choice option (see below for details). Colleges are NOT sent new scores unless you opt to send a report after a future exam.
- **Does my School Counselor have copies of my scores?**
School Counselors receive students' SAT scores. However, when a student fails to note their high school code number (6 digit code) at the time of registration and/or the testing itself, the scores are not forwarded.

Score Choice for the SAT

Score Choice gives students the option to send SAT scores by test date in accordance with a particular college's score-use practice. Score Choice is optional, and if students choose not to use it, all scores are sent automatically. Each college, university and scholarship program has different score-use practices. Students are responsible for following an institution's practice, and colleges and universities will only receive the scores that students send them.

Availability

- Only scores from an entire SAT test (EBRW, Math, and Writing, if taken) can be sent. Scores of individual sections from different sittings cannot be selected independently for sending.

No Additional Cost

- Students can send any or all scores to a college on a single report — it does not cost more to send one, multiple or all test scores.
- Students receive four free score reports with their test registration fee. We continue to recommend that students take full advantage of the four free score reports included with their registration.

More Information

- Score Choice does not affect score reports sent to students or to their high schools — both will continue to receive all scores.