

Testing Information

Number 2

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Test	Date	Grade
ACT	February 20th	Junior
ASVAB	November 30th	Juniors and Seniors

SAT vs ACT:

So many memories-- lockers, cheerleaders, and wood shop; late night parties, morning rushes to class, and skipping classes. These were all the good memories, the things we want to remember. Then there's all the boring stuff like homework, projects, and testing. Testing for college, whether it's the [SAT](#) or [ACT](#), is something you'll try to forget, but will always linger on. Why you ask? Because there both super important tests that colleges use to decide where to place you, or if you can attend their school to begin with. Some employers even ask for your test scores after you graduate from college, so you know they have to be taken seriously if one is to succeed in this world. The question that many often debate over is which one to take. SAT or ACT? Which test is gonna make me look good and get me into my top

school? Which test is going to pave the road I plan on traveling down for the rest of my life? Well, settle down young one, your answers will soon be answered, as we take a peak into each test to see which one proves to be better than the other.

History of the SAT and ACT

First, let's take a look at the history behind each test to see if we can determine the origins of each and why a student must be put in this predicament in the first place. The [SAT](#), once known as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (now just referred to as the SAT reasoning test), was originally developed in the early 1900's by Carl Brigham. It was developed for use in several northeastern states to allow students from any socioeconomic background a chance to get into a college (before the test students were only allowed into colleges based on their parents status in college!) The SAT became more formal in the middle of the century as it was picked up for use by more and more colleges as a way to determine a student's intelligence. Its name and structure would change a bit over time to bring us the SAT we know and love today. The [ACT](#), on the other hand, didn't surface until the late 1950's. The American College Testing program introduced its testing assessment to enable students to decide on which colleges they should attend while providing colleges with information on how to properly teach the student. The ACT would prove to be a favorite of Midwestern and southern states, with those on the coasts generally prefer the SAT. Much as changed for each test over the years as the battle waged on, and now both tests have become accepted nationwide at most four-year colleges with no predominant bias.

Structure and content of the SAT and ACT

A good way to discuss the differences of each test is to look into how each is structured. We'll start with the SAT, which can be [broken up into 3 "mini" tests](#) which focus on different elements. The first part of the SAT is the math assessment test, which consists of a combination of multiple choice and "grid-in" questions that span various math principles. These include numbers and operations, algebra and functions, geometry and measurement, and finally data analysis, statistics, and probability. The math section of the SAT is designed to be standard with that of a tenth grade student. The second part of the SAT is the critical reading assessment, which includes sentence completion multiple choice questions along with longer passage type questions. The third installment of the SAT that was just recently introduced (to further compete with the ACT) is the writing section. This involves writing a short essay based on an assigned topic.

The ACT, however, is structured a little differently and involves different content. While the SAT contains three sections, the [ACT is divided into four multiple choice tests](#), with an optional fifth writing essay (which was also added after the SAT's addition of an essay). The first section is reserved for english, focusing on mechanics and rhetoric skills. The mathematics test focuses on beginning algebra skills through more advanced trigonometry questions not found on the SAT. The reading section asks questions related to arts and literature and finally the science section deals with evaluation and problem solving. The optional essay is very similar to the SAT in terms of length and writing ability. The ACT acts to ask for more information about different topics while the SAT is more focused on more specific areas.

How the SAT and ACT are scored

Major differences in how these tests are scored are a big reason for much of the discussion over which test is better than the other. We already know that the SAT is split into 3 different parts; each part of the test is worth up to 800 points, for a total combined score potential of 2400 points. For each correct answer you get on the SAT, you'll receive one point towards your final score. However, for each answer you get wrong (not that your smarty pants self will be getting any wrong!), you'll have one point deducted from your score. Answers left blank are not counted at all (which means you will not get penalized for leaving an answer blank but your total will be less than 800). The ACT, on the other

hand, is graded just a little differently. Each of the four separate tests are graded on a scale of 1 to 36. The optional essay can add points to your score, and unlike the SAT, no points are detracted for wrong answers. The tests also provide sub scores for three of the four tests that do not relate to the final score, but provide some extra analysis of a students strength or weakness. It's probably a good idea to [compare the SAT and ACT tests side by side](#) to really get a good idea of how the different scores compare to each other. While it may seem the ACT is better because of the lack of wrong answer penalty, it really doesn't make your chances of getting a better score any easier.

Taking the SAT and ACT

So far we've learned much about the [differences between the actual tests](#), but what about taking them? Is there anything that sticks out in the test taking process that gives either test an advantage? For the SAT, registration fees are around \$50 while the ACT is a little cheaper at around \$29, so if money decides which test you'll be taking, it's obvious that the ACT is the way to go. Time could also be a decision making factor you may have over looked, with the SAT clocking in at around 5 hours and the ACT taking almost half as much less time to complete. The SAT gives students an extra day each year with the test being held seven times over the ACT's 6, although you usually need less preparation time for the ACT when considering registration deadlines. When the time comes to sending your scores out to colleges, the ACT allows for a little more flexibility by allowing the student to pick which scores of the test a college can see, whereas every SAT score is sent by default.

Deciding on which test to take has become more of a recent debate then it was in the past. For years the two tests were separated by their geographical affiliations, but as each test has changed and become more competitive over the years, combined with the outcry by supports from both sides, the two assessments have become widely accepted by every college. This has obviously forced an issue upon high school students that many did have to decide on in the past. The better test to take? It's really not a question that can be answered completely, and will constantly be one of debate because of it's subjective nature. While doing the research for this article, this author has made his own decision based on what each test seems to stand for. The SAT is designed more for documenting a student's ability and knowledge in how to take a test while the ACT is more of an observation of what you have learned while in high school. Based on that, it seems if you have the book smarts and do a great job in class, the shoot for the ACT. If you're the type who picks up fast and can take a test without too much studying, then the SAT has your name on it. Think about which skill set you want to show to colleges and make your decision; the bottom line is what kind of intelligence you think you have.