

Comparing the SAT (Current & New) to the ACT



When released in 2016, the new SAT will have undergone a major overhaul that will take some getting used to. The redesign will affect determining whether a student's best-fit test is the SAT or ACT. Below is a comparison of the new SAT to the current SAT and the ACT.

	Current SAT (administered prior to March 2016)	New SAT (administered in March 2016 and beyond)	ACT
Description	The new SAT will require similar skills and test similar content to that of the ACT and current SAT. The new SAT will have a new scoring structure, no required essay, new sections, new content, and more. This overhaul comes after the ACT surpassed the SAT as the most popular college entrance exam for the first time in 2012 – and has been on top ever since. In addition to aligning with the Common Core, the SAT will place more emphasis on problem solving and the understanding of topics in context.		
Format	10 sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 3 Critical Reading; 3 Mathematics; 3 Writing (including essay); 1 experimental (not scored) ✓ Questions have 5 answer choices 	5 sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 1 Writing & Language test; 1 Reading Test; 1 Mathematics test comprised of 2 sections; 1 Essay (optional) ✓ Questions have 4 answer choices ✓ 	5 sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 1 English test; 1 Mathematics test; 1 Reading test; 1 Science test; 1 Essay (optional) ✓ Math questions have 5 answer choices; English, Reading, & Science questions have 4 answer choices
Timing	3 hours, 45 minutes	3 hours, 50 minutes (including essay)	3 hours, 25 minutes (including essay)
Scoring	Combined score: 600-2400 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Critical Reading 200-800; Math 200-800; Writing: 200-800 ✓ Writing score comprised of Multiple Choice and Essay sub-scores ✓ ¼ point deduction for incorrect answers 	Combined score: 400-1600 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evidenced-Based Reading & Writing: 200-800; Math: 200-800 ✓ Essay score reported separately ✓ "Cross-Test Scores" provide analysis in History/Social Studies and analysis in Science, based on selected questions in the Reading, Writing and Language, and Math Tests ✓ No deduction for incorrect answers 	Composite score: 1-36 (average of 4 tests) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ English: 1-36; Math: 1-36; Reading: 1-36; Science: 1-36 ✓ Writing score not factored into composite score ✓ Combined English/Writing score reported separately: 1-36 ✓ No deduction for incorrect answers
Writing/English	Identify and correct errors in single sentences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Standard English grammar and usage ✓ Punctuation not tested Limited and predictable set of errors	Improve passages by using words carefully and with purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Standard English grammar and usage ✓ Punctuation ✓ Logical structure ✓ Effective rhetoric ✓ Draw connections from passages paired with tables, charts, graphs, and other informational graphics 	Revise and edit a writing sample <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Standard English grammar and usage ✓ Punctuation ✓ Logical structure ✓ Effective rhetoric ✓ Commonly confused words
Math	Arithmetic, Algebra I and II, Geometry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Apply core math skills to solve non-standard problems ✓ Formulas provided 	Pre-algebra through Trigonometry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Emphasis on problem solving, modeling, using appropriate tools strategically, and recognizing and using algebraic structure ✓ Calculator allowed on 1 section 	Pre-algebra through Trigonometry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Apply math skills to solve standard problems ✓ Emphasis on word problems ✓ Formulas not provided
Grid-In Questions	10 grid-in questions (no answer choices provided)	17 to 22% of the test are grid-in questions (no answer choices provided)	No grid-in questions
Reading	Vocabulary-based sentence completions Total of 7 short and long reading passages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Inference, tone, and purpose questions ✓ Questions follow order of passage 	Emphasis on analysis in history/social studies passages and the interpretation of words in context 4 long passages and 1 dual passage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 2 passages accompanied by related graphics ✓ 1 historical document passage 	Very little emphasis on vocabulary 4 long reading passages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Questions require close reading of each passage ✓ Questions do not follow the order of the passage ✓ Less time per question than SAT
Science	No Science section	Science questions will be included throughout all tests	40 questions distributed over 7 passages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reasoning test that rarely requires outside science knowledge
Essay	25 minute required section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students asked to take a stance on the topic and support with reasoning ✓ Always section 1 of 10 	50 minute optional section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Demonstrate comprehension of a source by producing an analysis of the text supported by critical reasoning and evidence ✓ Scored on a 2-8 scale ✓ Always at the end of the test 	40 minute optional section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students must evaluate and analyze 3 perspectives provided, then state their own opinion and explain the relationship between the different perspectives ✓ Always at the end of the test

Current SAT vs. ACT Concordance



ACT and the College Board have completed a concordance study that is designed to examine the relationship between two scores on the ACT and SAT. These concordance tables do not equate scores, but rather provide a tool for finding comparable scores.

ACT Composite Score and SAT Critical Reading and Math		ACT Combined English/Writing Score and SAT Writing Score	
ACT Composite	SAT Critical Reading + Math	ACT English/Writing	SAT Writing
36	1600	36	800
35	1560	35	800
34	1510	34	770
33	1460	33	740
32	1420	32	720
31	1380	31	690
30	1340	30	670
29	1300	29	650
28	1260	28	630
27	1220	27	610
26	1190	26	590
25	1150	25	570
24	1110	24	550
23	1070	23	530
22	1030	22	510
21	990	21	490
20	950	20	470
19	910	19	450
18	870	18	430
17	830	17	420
16	790	16	400
15	740	15	380
14	690	14	360
13	640	13	340
12	590	12	330
11	530	11	310