

Comparative Features of the ACT and SAT 2008–2009

| | The ACT (ACT, Inc.) | SAT (College Board) |
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| Test Fee: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$31.00 • \$46.00 (with writing) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$45.00 |
| Test Purpose: | Designed to measure academic achievement in the areas of English, mathematics, reading, and science. | Designed to measure critical reading, writing, and mathematical reasoning skills. |
| Test Content: | <p>ACT English Test (75 items, 45 minutes) Usage/Mechanics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punctuation (13%) • Basic Grammar and Usage (16%) • Sentence Structure (24%) • Rhetorical Skills • Strategies (16%) • Organization (15%) • Style (16%) <p>ACT Mathematics Test (60 items, 60 minutes) Pre-Algebra and Elementary Algebra (23%, 17%) Intermediate Algebra and Coord. Geometry (15%, 15%) Plane Geometry and Trigonometry (23%, 7%)</p> <p>ACT Reading Test (40 items, 35 minutes) Arts and Literature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prose Fiction (25%) • Humanities (25%) (art history, art, music, philosophy, theater, architecture, dance, religion/ethics, literary criticism) <p>Social Studies and Natural Sciences (25%, 25%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History, Political Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Physical Sciences <p>ACT Science Test (40 items, 35 minutes) Interpretation analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem-solving skills in Biology, Earth/Space Sciences, Chemistry, and Physics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Representation (38%) Research Summaries (45%) Conflicting Viewpoints (17%) <p>ACT Writing Test (Optional) (1 prompt, 30 minutes) Measures writing skills emphasized in high school English classes and in entry-level college composition courses. Consists of one 30-minute essay.</p> | <p>SAT Writing (Mandatory) (60 minutes) Multiple Choice (35 minutes) Essay (25 minutes)</p> <p>SAT Mathematics (70 minutes) Arithmetic (20%) Algebra (35–40%) Geometry (25–30%) Data Analysis (10–15%)</p> <p>SAT Critical Reading (70 minutes) Sentence Completion Critical Reading in Humanities, Social Narrative (80% nonfiction)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% Extended Reasoning 10% Literal Comprehension 10% Vocabulary <p>Elementary Analogies Adding Short Passages</p> <p>No Science Test</p> |
| Method of Scoring: | Scores based on number of right answers. No penalty for guessing. | Scores adjusted for guessing. Correct answers carry full weight while a chance-level penalty is applied for each incorrect answer. |

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| Test Score Scales: | <p>ACT English Test: 1–36</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage/Mechanics: 1–18 • Rhetorical Skills: 1–18 <p>ACT Reading Test: 1–36</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts and Literature: 1–18 • Social Studies and Sciences: 1–18 <p>ACT Mathematics Test: 1–36</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Algebra and Elementary Algebra: 1–18 • Inter. Algebra and Coordinate Geometry: 1–18 • Plane Geometry and Trigonometry: 1–18 <p>ACT Science Test: 1–36</p> <p>ACT Composite: 1–36 (average of four test scores—does not include writing)</p> <p>ACT English and Writing: 1–36</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay Subscore: 2–12 | <p>SAT Writing: 200–800</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Choice: 20–80 • Essay: 2–12 <p>SAT Critical Reading: 200–800</p> <p>SAT Mathematics: 200–800</p> <p>No Science Test</p> <p>SAT Total: 600–2400 (sum of SAT Critical Reading, Math, and Writing Scores)</p> |
| Student Information: | <p>Student Profile Section</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background (Demographics) • High School Courses and Grades • Admission/Enrollment Information • Educational Plans, Interests, and Needs • Special Educational Needs, Interests, and Goals • College Extracurricular Plans • High School Information and Extracurricular Activities • Out of Class Accomplishments • Evaluation of High School Experience <p>Educational and Career Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACT Interest Inventory • World-of-Work Map • College Majors and Programs | <p>Student Descriptive Questionnaire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background (Demographics) • Educational Background • High School and Community Activities • Sports • Student Plans for College |
| Common Uses: | <p>Admissions (accepted by most, but not all, colleges and universities)</p> <p>Talent Identification</p> <p>Academic Advising</p> <p>Freshman Course Placement Decisions</p> <p>Awarding Course Credit, Especially in English and Math Courses</p> <p>Awarding Scholarships (not sole criterion)</p> | <p>Admissions (accepted by most, not all, colleges and universities)</p> <p>Talent Identification</p> <p>Academic Advising</p> <p>Awarding Scholarships (not sole criterion)</p> |
| Research Services: | <p>Class Profile Service</p> <p>Prediction Research Service</p> <p>Course Placement Service</p> <p>Retention Research Service</p> | <p>Class Profile Service</p> <p>Validity Research Service</p> |

Please Note: Every effort has been made to represent the ACT and SAT information accurately and concisely. All information has been drawn from official publications of the organizations offering the tests.