**Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT)**

**Overview**

The Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) is practice for the SAT Reasoning Test. Many students take the PSAT more than once, because scores tend to increase with repetition and because students generally become more comfortable with the test each time. During a student’s junior year, the PSAT is also used as a qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship Program as well as other national scholarship programs.

While the PSAT includes a writing skills section, it does not include a written essay, which is part of the SAT Reasoning Test.

**Test Duration**

Total test time is two hours and 10 minutes. This includes two 25-minute sections of critical reading, two 25-minute sections of mathematics, and one 30-minute section of writing.

**Test Dates**

The PSAT is offered once a year in mid-October. Schools may choose to participate in the exam either on a school day (usually a Tuesday) or on a Saturday.

**Skills Tested**

The critical-reading section tests extended reasoning, literal comprehension, and vocabulary in context.

The mathematics section tests algebra and functions; geometry and measurement; and data analysis, statistics, and probability.

The writing section tests grammar, usage, and word choice.

**Format/Questions**

The critical reading sections use sentence completions and passage-based readings. There are approximately 50 questions in the two sections. The mathematics section uses multiple-choice and student-produced responses. There are approximately 40 questions in the two sections. The writing section uses multiple-choice questions that include improving sentences, identifying sentence errors, and improving paragraphs. There are approximately 40 questions in the section.

**Additional Information**

Like the SAT, the PSAT uses a negative scoring system in which a student loses a fraction of a point for each incorrect answer. Because students have been trained for years and years to answer every question on a test, the PSAT and SAT present a special challenge to many. Teaching them how to recognize questions they should skip is an imperative part of the preparation for this test.

For more information about the PSAT, visit the www.collegeboard.org Website.

**The SAT Reasoning Test**

**Overview**

The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is widely used in college admissions to assess a student’s readiness for and potential for success in college. Scores from the SAT Reasoning Test are used by colleges to supplement students’ high school records. The SAT Reasoning Test measures a student’s abilities in critical reading, mathematics, and writing.

**Test Duration**

Total testing time is three hours and 45 minutes. This includes critical reading, two 25-minute sections and one 20-minute section; mathematics, two 25-minute sections and one 20-minute section; and writing, a 35-minute multiple-choice section and a 25-minute essay section.

**Test Dates**

The SAT Reasoning Test is offered several times throughout the traditional school year. Check with high school counselors or online for test dates.

**Skills Tested**

The critical reading section measures a student’s ability to identify genres, relationships among parts of a text, cause and effect, rhetorical devices, and comparative arguments. Reading passages are taken from different fields including the natural sciences, the humanities, the social sciences, and literary fiction.

The mathematics section measures a student’s ability in numbers and operations; Algebra I, II, and functions; geometry; and statistics, probability, and data analysis.

The multiple-choice writing section measures a student’s ability to recognize errors, improve sentences, and improve paragraphs within a written context. The essay section measures a student’s ability to develop and support a position on a topic. The student must first analyze a topic and consider his or her own viewpoint on it, and then support this position with reasoning and observations taken from the student’s own reading, studies, experiences, or observations.

**Format/Questions**

The critical reading sections include sentence completions and multiple-choice items based on reading passages. The mathematics sections include multiple-choice items and student-produced responses. The writing section includes multiple-choice items and an essay.

**Additional Information**

You lose ¼ of a point for wrong multiple-choice answers; therefore, you may consider leaving some questions blank if you are uncertain of the answer.

For more information about the SAT Reasoning Test, visit www.collegeboard.org. Practice questions are available.

**SAT Subject Tests**

**Overview**

Some colleges require the SAT Subject Tests for admission. Additionally, some colleges use scores from the SAT Subject Tests for placement purposes and/or fulfillment of course requirements for admission. Students should check with the colleges in which they are interested to find out how each school uses these tests.

Students must take two subject tests selected from five different areas: science (biology E/M, chemistry, physics); history and social studies (United States history or world history); foreign language (Chinese, French, German, Modern Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latin, and Spanish); literature; and mathematics (math level 1 or 2).

**Test Duration**

Each subject test is one hour long.

**Test Dates**

The SAT Subject Tests are given several times throughout the traditional school year. Check with your school counselors or online for the current dates.

**Skills Tested**

Each SAT test measures a student’s knowledge of a specific subject and his or her ability to apply that knowledge.

**Format/Questions**

The subject tests use primarily multiple-choice questions.

**Additional Information**

Students are advised to take the subject tests immediately upon completion of the courses for those tests. For example, if a student takes biology in 10th grade, then he or she should take that subject test in May or June of 10th grade instead of waiting until junior or senior year.

Native speakers of a foreign language are advised to take the language tests with listening sections. Non-native speakers, or speakers who have learned the language through course study, are advised to take the reading-only language tests.

Which two exams a student takes does not matter in general; however, if a student is certain of pursuing a specific course of study in college—physics, for example—then it is advisable that he or she take that specific subject exam. Again, students should check the requirements of each institution to which they plan to apply.

As on the SAT Reasoning Test, students lose a fraction of a point for each incorrect answer on the subject tests.

For more information about the SAT Subject Tests, visit www.collegeboard.org.

**The PLAN Test**

**Overview**

The PLAN is considered a pre-ACT test and is designed for 10th-grade students. This test has both academic assessment components and an interest inventory that helps students identify possible career paths.

**Test Duration**

Testing time for the achievement tests is one hour and 55 minutes. The PLAN has four sections: English, 30 minutes; mathematics, 40 minutes; reading, 20 minutes; and science, 25 minutes.

The UNIACT Interest Inventory, needs assessment, and high school course information sections require an additional 65 minutes.

**Test Dates**

Schools, at their discretion, administer the PLAN. Schools may administer the test on any day they choose. ACT recommends that the test be administered sometime between September and December, but it may be given in the spring as well.

**Skills Tested**

The PLAN is a curriculum-based test that measures students’ grasp of skills and knowledge commonly taught in schools as well as their ability to apply that knowledge. Subject areas covered include English, mathematics, reading, and science. For more detailed information regarding each subject, see the section’s overview of the ACT.

**Format/Questions**

All questions are multiple-choice: 50 items for English, 40 items for mathematics, 25 items for reading, and 30 items for science.

**Additional Information**

The ACT provides free practice materials and resources on its website at [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).

The PLAN is designed to be used as part of a system that includes the EXPLORE in eighth or ninth grade, the PLAN in 10th grade, and the ACT in 11th or 12th grade.

**The ACT Assessment**

**Overview**

The ACT is a standardized college entrance examination that measures students’ knowledge and skills in English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning, and the application of these skills to future academic tasks.

Most colleges will use either ACT or SAT scores for admissions purposes. Students should check with the colleges in which they are interested to find out each school’s specific requirements or preferences.

The writing test on the ACT is optional, and students may choose whether or not to take it depending on the requirements of the colleges to which they are applying.

**Test Duration**

Total testing time without the writing portion is two hours and 55 minutes. This includes 45 minutes for English, 60 minutes for mathematics, 35 minutes for reading, and 35 minutes for science.

The writing test takes an additional 30 minutes.

**Test Dates**

The ACT is given several times throughout the traditional school year. Check online or with school counselors for dates.

**Skills Tested**

The English test covers standard written English including punctuation, grammar and usage, and sentence structure. Also covered are rhetorical skills including strategy, organization, and style.

The mathematics test measures skills students have typically acquired by the end of 11th grade. Students will need knowledge of basic formulas and computational skills, but are not required to know complex formulas or perform extensive computation.

The reading test requires that students show understanding of both direct and implied meaning. Students are asked to use referring and reasoning skills to determine main ideas; locate and interpret significant details; understand sequences of events; make comparisons; comprehend cause-effect relationships; draw generalizations; analyze the author’s or narrator’s voice and method; and determine the meaning of context-dependent words, phrases, and meanings.

The science test assumes that students are in the process of taking the core science course of study (three years or more) and have completed a course in earth science and/or physical science and a course in biology. The test presents scientific information in the form of data representations (graphs, tables, etc.), research summaries, and conflicting viewpoints. Students are asked questions that require them to recognize and understand the basic features of, and concepts related to, the provided information; examine critically the relationship between the information provided and the conclusions drawn or hypotheses developed; and generalize from given information and draw conclusions, gain new information, or make predictions.

The optional writing test consists of one writing prompt that will define an issue and describe two points of view on that issue. Students are asked to respond to a question about their position on the issue. They may take one of the viewpoints offered in the prompt or develop a different one.

**Format/Questions**

Except for the writing test, multiple-choice questions are used in all the sections.

**Additional Information**

The ACT provides a multitude of information and practice materials on the website [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).

Unlike the SAT, the ACT does not use negative scoring.

Students may use certain types of calculators on the mathematics section, but they may not use them on the science section.

**The New SAT**

**Overview**

The new SAT will be first administered in March 2016. It will be accepted nationally, including all Hawaii colleges, as well as all Ivy Leagues.

**Test Duration**

Testing time for the New SAT is about four hours. There are three sections that you will be expected to complete during this time: Evidence-Based Reading and Writing, Math, and an essay.

**Test Dates**

The New SAT Test will be offered several times throughout the traditional school year. More details will follow once it gets closer to being administering.

**Skills Tested**

The College Board writers, rather than struggling to develop a new format, simply copied that of the ACT, placing error-ridden passages on the left side of the page and multiple-choice problems offering edits on the right.  The Writing section of the redesigned SAT steals so unabashedly from ACT English that when placed side by side, these two sections are nearly indistinguishable.

The new essay prompt asks students to explain how an author builds an argument and strengthens the logic and persuasiveness of a position.  This is no opinion piece.  The closing sentence of the prompt makes that clear: “*Your essay should not explain whether you agree with [the author’s] claims, but rather explain how [the author] builds an argument to persuade his audience.”*This new essay will be more useful in assessing students’ analytical and reasoning skills, but many students may be wary of spending 50 minutes on a writing assignment after completing a nearly 4-hour test administration.

Like the ACT, the SAT Reading section will consist of passages that are no more than 750 words long and always come from the domains of Science, Literature, and Humanities/Social Studies.  In addition, the College Board will inject ACT Science-style charts, graphs, and figures into the science passages.

On the new SAT Math test, students will face tougher problems but have more time to solve them. New questions will emphasize “conceptual understanding” over heuristics and speed, and, on one of the two Math sections, students will be barred from using their calculators. Algebra will be the king of the redesigned SAT Math section. According to the numbers offered in this week’s preview, geometry will be taking a major backseat: going from a whopping 40% of questions on the current SAT to a mere 10% on the redesigned test.

**Format/Questions**

Evidence-based Reading and Writing will be assessed through multiple-choice questions. For math, there will be multiple choice questions, as well as grid-ins.

Finally, there will be a prompt that can be answered in essay format if the student chooses to do so.

**Additional Information**

The New SAT will not deduct points for incorrect responses; therefore, it is in the best interest of the students to answer every question, even if it is a guess.

For more information, visit [www.deliveringopportunity.org](http://www.deliveringopportunity.org).