

SAT and ACT: The Basics

SAT

The new SAT—with writing, critical reading and mathematics sections—is in its second year.

The one-hour writing section is the latest addition to the test. It has two parts:

- Write an essay by taking a position on an issue and using reasoning and examples to support your position (25 min.)
- Answer multiple-choice questions that ask you to identify sentence errors, improve sentences, and improve paragraphs (35 min.).

Since many colleges and universities do not require the writing score, you should research the schools you're interested in before you begin to prepare for the test. The SAT math section includes topics from third-year college-preparatory math—exponential growth, absolute value, functional notation, and negative and fractional exponents. Quantitative comparisons from the old SAT are no longer part of the test. The final piece of the puzzle is the critical reading section (previously known as the verbal section); this section includes short and long reading passages from a variety of texts. Though analogies were eliminated, sentence-completion questions remain.

The perfect score is 2400 (as opposed to 1600); and the exam houses three sections, each scored on a 200 to 800 point scale.

The test takes three hours and 45 minutes to complete, including an un-scored 25-minute variable section. The 2006-2007 test dates are:

- October 14
- November 4
- December 2
- January 27
- March 10
- May 5
- June 2.

The College Board will also offer Sunday administrations the day after each Saturday test date for those students who cannot test on Saturday for religious reasons. The October Sunday Test will be held on October 22 to avoid conflict with Jewish holiday Simchat Torah.

Visit www.collegeboard.com for more SAT information and to register for the exam.

ACT

In early 2005, ACT also changed its test by adding a 30-minute Writing Test as an optional component to the ACT Assessment, for students testing within the U.S. who are applying to college. The ACT Writing Test complements the English Test.

Colleges and universities make their own decisions about whether to require the results from the ACT Writing Test for admission and/or course-placement purposes. Based on the requirements of the institutions they are considering, students decide whether to take the Writing Test. According to ACT, students will not be required to take a test that they do not need to take, thus incurring unnecessary expense, and institutions will have the freedom to require the tests that best meet their information needs. To find out which colleges require the writing portion, visit ACT's Web site (actrs19.act.org/app3/writPrefRM/).

For 2006-2007, the ACT is offered on:

- September 16
- October 28
- December 9
- February 10
- April 14
- June 9