

## ACT and SAT: Comparison and Contrast & WHY DO I NEED THESE TESTS?

As you start thinking about whether to take the ACT or the SAT, knowing the overall differences and similarities between the two may be helpful. Below you will see who needs to take one of these test.

| ACT  | SAT  |
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| <p><b>Accepted at all US colleges:</b> Both are nationally recognized tests that are accepted at all US colleges for admission consideration. People often hear the myth that schools really want everyone to take the SAT or that most schools only accept the ACT. It used to be that the ACT was more commonly known in the northern states while the SAT was more common in the southern states, but now both tests are given and accepted throughout the nation.</p>  |  |
| <p><b>Essay:</b> The ACT essay is optional (however, if you are taking it through the high school, you are required to complete the essay portion). The essay does not affect your composite score, but colleges may use the essay to identify what courses to place you in. The ACT essay is an argument. You are presented one topic and three perspectives/views on the topic. Your goal is to discuss all three (agreeing, disagreeing, qualifying) while presenting your own unique perspective or arguing in support of one of the given perspectives.</p>   | <p><b>Essay:</b> The SAT essay is optional (however, if you are taking it through the high school, you are required to complete the essay portion). The essay does not affect your total score, but colleges may use the essay to identify what courses to place you in. The SAT essay is a rhetorical analysis. Many students have not completed an essay like this in their previous classes. If you decide to take the SAT, work closely with your English teachers to better prepare for this essay.</p> |
| <p><b>Blank Answers and Wrong Answers:</b> Neither the ACT or SAT assigns a penalty for wrong or blank answers. The old version of the SAT used to give a penalty for wrong answers (<math>-\frac{1}{4}</math> a point), so four wrong answers canceled out one correct answer. However, in 2016, College Board redesigned the SAT so that you no longer get a penalty for wrong answers—you just do not earn any points for them. The ACT has never taken points off for wrong answers. What this means for you is that no matter which test you select to take, do not leave blank answers. Instead, after you have completed the questions that you can and when time is running out, select your “letter of the day” and fill all blanks with that answer.</p> |  |
| <p><b>Time:</b> 3 hours and 35 minutes with the essay</p>  | <p><b>Time:</b> 3 hours and 50 minutes with the essay</p>  |
| <p><b>Sections in order:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● English: 75 questions in 45 minutes,</li> <li>● Math: 60 questions in 60 minutes,</li> <li>● Reading: 40 questions in 35 minutes,</li> <li>● Science: 40 questions in 35 minutes, and</li> <li>● Essay: 1 essay in 40 minutes.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Sections in order:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reading: 52 questions in 65 minutes,</li> <li>● Writing and Language: 44 questions in 45 minutes,</li> <li>● Math w/o calculator: 20 questions in 25 minutes,</li> <li>● Math w/ calculator: 38 questions in 55 minutes, and</li> <li>● Essay: 1 essay in 50 minutes.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Scoring:</b> 1-36 based on the average of the sections (not including the essay)</p>   | <p><b>Scoring:</b> 400-1600 with the Reading and Writing sections forming one part of the score (200-800) and Math forming the other part (200-800). The essay is not included in the score.</p>   |

### WHO NEEDS TO TAKE ONE OF THESE TESTS?

-If you are planning to attend a 2 year college then you need to take the Accuplacer Test at that college.

-If you are planning to enlist in the military then you need to take the ASVAB test.

-You need to take either the ACT or SAT if you are planning to go straight to a 4 year college/university after high school. You do not need it if you plan to transfer to a 4 year college after completing 2 years at a community or technical college.