

## THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SAT AND THE ACT

	SAT	ACT
<b>WHY TAKE IT</b>	Colleges use SAT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.	Colleges use ACT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.
<b>TEST STRUCTURE</b>	Reading Writing & Language Math Essay (Optional)	English Math Reading Science Reasoning Essay (Optional)
<b>LENGTH</b>	3 hours (without essay) 3 hours, 50 minutes (with essay)	2 hours, 55 minutes (without essay) 3 hours, 40 minutes (with essay)
<b>READING</b>	5 reading passages	4 reading passages
<b>SCIENCE</b>	None	1 science section testing your critical thinking skills (not your specific science knowledge)
<b>MATH</b>	Covers: Arithmetic Algebra I & II Geometry, Trigonometry and Data Analysis	Covers: Arithmetic Algebra I & II Geometry and Trigonometry
<b>CALCULATOR POLICY</b>	Some math questions don't allow you to use a calculator.	You can use a calculator on all math questions.
<b>ESSAYS</b>	Optional. The essay will test your comprehension of a source text.	Optional. The essay will test how well you evaluate and analyze complex issues.
<b>SCORES</b>	Scored on a scale of 400–1600	Scored on a scale of 1–36

### SAT versus ACT: How do I choose?

The best way to decide if the SAT or ACT is right for you is to **take a timed full-length practice test in each**. Since the content and style of the SAT and ACT are very similar, factors like how you handle time pressure and what types of questions you find most challenging can help you determine which test is a better fit. For example, the pace of the SAT gives you a tad more time to think through problems, while the ACT can be more of a time crunch. Some students really thrive under the pressure of the clock, while others prefer the extra time to ponder a question.

## **SAT vs. ACT: Should I take both tests?**

At the very least, you should take a practice test of both ACT and SAT (available on each website or in the paper prep booklets). If you take both actual tests, and you want to retest for better scores, choose the one that you preferred and work on improving the score of that test.

## **OTHER THOUGHTS ON SAT VS. ACT**

The “new” SAT, which launched on March 5, 2016, is now basically a carbon copy of the ACT.

The two tests have far more commonalities than differences, but there are a few things that set them apart:

- The SAT doesn't have a science section.
- Both tests have optional essays.
  - The ACT essay asks you to come up with your own argument and support it.
  - The SAT essay asks you to evaluate an argument that someone else has already written for you.
  - Neither is easier or harder; it's just an issue of personal preference.
- Math
  - The SAT has a “with calculator” and “without calculator” section, and 13 of its problems have you fill in your own answer. The “without calculator” problems aren't difficult because they don't require any difficult arithmetic.
  - The ACT lets you use a calculator on all its math problems, and all the answers are multiple choice.
- Both tests are about the same amount of time, but the SAT is far less time intensive. This is the big issue that really separates the two exams.
  - The SAT gives you far more time per problem, so it's a much less intense testing experience.
  - Alternatively, the ACT makes you go at a fast pace.

Aside from those differences, the tests are practically identical.

- The material tested is the same.
- The formatting is basically the same.
- They both test your knowledge of math, English grammar, and reading comprehension.
- They both take 3-4 hours to complete.
- They both accomplish the same exact same goal. Colleges will accept one or the other.