

ACT and SAT Reasoning Test Comparison



	ACT	New SAT
Purpose	Assessment Test: measures what you know (like a cumulative final)	Evidence-Based Test: measures your ability based on the latest research on the skills colleges value most.
Content	<p>English: grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, style</p> <p>Math: algebra; coordinate and plane geometry; trigonometry (only 4 out of 60 questions)</p> <p>Reading Comprehension: arts, literature, social studies</p> <p>Science: reasoning questions based on reading passages</p> <p>Writing (optional): 30 minute student-written essay (required for UCs and some private colleges)</p>	<p>Evidence-Based Reading: measures skill in reading and comprehending texts across a wide range of genres, purposes, subjects and complexities (multiple choice)</p> <p>Math: measures algebra, problem solving and data analysis and advanced math (calculator portion and no-calculator portion. Multiple choice and student produced responses)</p> <p>Evidence-Based Writing: measures knowledge and skills in revising and editing tests widely varied in purpose, subject, and complexity (multiple choice and passages)</p>
Length of exam	3 hours + 40-minute essay (optional)	3 hours + 50-minute essay (optional)
How questions appear	No order of difficulty	In order of difficulty
Scoring method	Scores based on number of right answers only. <i>No penalty</i> for wrong answers	Scores based on number of right answers only. <i>No penalty</i> for wrong answers
Scoring	1 – 36 for each subject, averaged together for a composite score	400-1600 each for Critical Reading, Math and Writing (Essay is reported in 3 dimensions, each 2-8)
Practice Test	PLAN: taken typically in fall of sophomore year	PSAT: taken typically in fall of junior year
Best time to take the real test	BEST: Spring of Junior year 2 nd Best: Early fall of Senior year	BEST: Spring of Junior year 2 nd Best: Early fall of Senior year
When you should register	At least 4 weeks before the test date	At least 6 weeks before the test date
Should you prepare for the test?	ABSOLUTELY	ABSOLUTELY
How to prepare	Free sample test from high school Counseling Center; on-line help from website below; test prep books for purchase	Free sample test from high school Counseling Center; on-line help from website below; free mobile app, free Khan Academy
Cost (fee waivers available)	Regular registration: \$ 42.50 ACT plus essay: \$ 58.50 Late Registration: add \$ 27.50	Regular Registration: \$ 45.00 SAT plus essay: \$ 57.00 Late Registration: add \$ 28.00
For more information	ACT www.actstudent.org (319) 337-1270	CollegeBoard www.collegeboard.com (866) 630-9305