

Colleges will accept either the SAT or ACT. So which should you take?

The NEW SAT vs. the ACT

The short answer is that with the new redesigned SAT they will be much more similar. The changes to the SAT have eliminated many of the two tests' major differences in both style and content. Nonetheless, there remain some important variations between the tests – some long-standing and some newly introduced. The New SAT has 3 sections: Reading, Writing & Language, and Math; while the ACT has 4 sections: English, Math, Reading, and Science.

ACT Reading questions tend to be more straightforward. ACT questions are often easier to understand on a first read. On the SAT, you may need to spend time figuring out what you're being asked before you can start solving the problem. The New SAT will have 5 reading passages, while the ACT will have 4 passages.

The SAT Writing and Language has a stronger emphasis on vocabulary in context. If you're an ardent wordsmith, you'll love the SAT. If you're not sure what "ardent wordsmith" even means and words aren't your thing, you may do better on the ACT. The New SAT will test will include the Writing and Language section in the same score as the Reading. The SAT will be slightly more focused on writing style, where the ACT English is slightly more focused on grammar, language usage and mechanics.

The New SAT Math questions will be closer to the ACT questions in style. The ACT has more geometry and some trigonometry questions, compared to the algebra and little amount of geometry you'll find on the SAT. The New SAT focuses heavily on algebra and are designed to make it more similar to the tests you take in your math class, meaning harder questions in a more straightforward way.

The ACT has a separate Science section, while the SAT does not. The ACT asks more questions than the New SAT will. On the New SAT the College Board is attempting to incorporate those skills into the other three sections. The redesigned SAT will include questions that ask you to analyze a chart or graph, as well as reading passages that are on scientific topics.

The Essay is optional on the New SAT and the ACT. The New SAT will have 50 minutes versus the ACT 40 minutes. On the New SAT you'll be given a text and asked to analyze the author's argument. They don't want your opinion. Whereas on the ACT, you will be given three perspectives on an issue and you must argue for your own opinion. CSU's and many other colleges do not consider the Essay, while UC's and more selective colleges require it.

The ACT is more of a "big picture" exam. College admissions officers care about how you did on each section of the SAT. On the ACT, they're most concerned with your composite score. So if you're weak in one content area but strong in others, you could still end up with a very good ACT score.

Other factors to consider:

- Testing dates: check the family calendar and consult with your parents.
- Check under the admissions section of college websites—they may prefer one exam over the other
- Some colleges will also consider or require Subject Exams (SAT)—plan carefully for both.
- Do not take the SAT without **some** kind of prep: a class, book, sample tests, etc.
- If you are happy with your PSAT scores, take the SAT; if you aren't, consider the ACT.
- If you try one exam twice and you're not happy with the results, don't take it a third time—try the other.
- Community colleges do not require either—but we suggest that you take one to keep your options open
- Many students get better results their Junior year—we strongly recommend testing in the Spring!!!

How/When should I choose colleges to receive my SAT/ACT scores?

ACT and SAT give you 4 college choices for the initial price that you paid for the test. You should choose four colleges **AS SOON AS YOU REGISTER FOR THE TEST.**

You have until *approximately one week after you take your test* to change or add colleges to your list.

If you aren't sure where to send them, here is one idea:

- With your 4 **SAT** choices:

- 1) Use college code 3594* = all 23 CSU's
- +2) One UC= all UC's that you apply to (9)
- +3) random dream college of your choice
- +4) another college of your choice

= 34 (+-) colleges get your scores

ACT

Choose your four colleges:

- 1) Choose One CSU: you will be able to send your scores to all of the CSU's (23) through the CSU application site**
- + 2) One UC = all UC's will have access
- +3) random dream college of your choice
- +4) another college of your choice

= 34 (+-) colleges get your scores

Each time you take an ACT or SAT test, you have another set of four choices. Unless you ask them not to, the new scores will be sent along with all of your previous scores. Colleges prefer that you send them ALL of your scores. They will choose your best scores.

You may send your scores to as many colleges as you like. After the first four selections you will pay about \$12 per selection for both ACT and SAT. If you wait too long (approximately one week after you take a test) to select colleges, you will pay the \$12 fee for each college choice.

*from the College Board *Send Scores* window, choose *More Search Options*, then type in the code. *Cal State University Mentor Long Beach* will appear in the left window. Select *Add* and it will jump into the right side window. CSU Mentor Long Beach is the main office for CSU and represents all 23 colleges.

**For an illustrated guide, go to the Paraclete website, choose *Academics* from the top menu, *Counseling and Guidance*, then *College* from the right margin. Go to the bottom of that page and open the *ACT scores to all CSU's* document. You will do this DURING the application season for CSU's in October-November of Senior year.