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SAT and ACT: which test is right for you?

Colleges and universities accept both tests equally, so the choice is up to you. Both tests generally have the same types of content. The differences are that the SAT has one Math section for which you cannot use a calculator and the ACT has a Science Test.

Below is a comparison chart to compare the tests.

	SAT	ACT
Why take it	Colleges use SAT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.	Colleges use ACT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.
Test structure	Reading Writing and Language Math Essay (optional)	Reading English Math Science Reasoning Essay (optional)
Length	3 hours (without essay) 3 hours, 50 minutes (with essay)	2 hours, 55 minutes (without essay) 3 hours, 40 minutes (with essay)
Reading	5 reading passages	4 reading passages
Science	None	1 science section testing your critical thinking skills (not your specific science knowledge)
Math	Arithmetic Algebra I & II Geometry, Trigonometry and Data Analysis	Arithmetic Algebra I & II Geometry, Trigonometry
Calculator policy	Some math questions don't allow you to use a calculator.	You can use a calculator on all math questions.
Essays	Optional. The essay will test your comprehension of a source text.	Optional. The essay will test how well you evaluate and analyze complex issues.
Scoring	Scored on a scale of 400-1600	Scored on a scale of 1-36

The best way to decide which test is right for you is to take a practice test in each. To take a free practice test go, for example, to www.princetonreview.com/college/sat-act. Since the content of both tests is 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.

Remember: The earlier you start preparing for a test, the better you may be prepared to get better scores.

Have questions or need additional information, see your counselor.

Source: Adopted from The Princeton Review at www.princetonreview.com/college/sat-act