

What you need to know about college admission tests

- Your child will want to take a college admission test, such as the SAT® or other college entrance exams, when he or she is a junior or senior.
- Because every high school is different and has different standards and courses, colleges use admission tests to see how every student performs using the same material. The tests also help colleges know whether students are ready for college-level work.
- Many colleges also require or recommend SAT Subject Tests™ that measure achievement in English, mathematics, sciences, history and foreign languages. These tests can be used for admission, placement or advising.
- College admission tests are given several times during the year. Your child will have to register in advance and most registration deadlines are about a month before the test date.
- Students can register online at test websites (for example, go to www.SAT.collegeboard.org). There is a fee to register for each test. However, fee waivers are also available for those who qualify, which reduce the amount a student must pay for these tests.

How to Help Your Child Prepare

- It is important to remind your child that these tests are not the only thing colleges use to make their decisions.
- There are tools and resources to help your child get ready to take the tests. Many of these tools and resources are free or affordable. Go to www.SAT.collegeboard.org/practice to find out more.
- One of the best ways to prepare for the SAT is to take the PSAT/NMSQT®. Your child can take this test in the sophomore or junior year. The test is given every October. Ask your school counselor for details.
- Your child can take college admission tests more than once. Most students take a college admission test in the spring of their junior year and retake it in the fall of their senior year.
- Before taking an actual test, a student should take several practice tests to get a sense of how the test is set up, as well as the timing of the different sections.
- Have your child review the results of every test in addition to learning the score. This will help indicate what skills he or she needs to work harder on.

What you need to know about college admission tests (page 2)

Conversation Topics

- What your child has heard about college admission tests
- Whether your child is stressed about these tests, and how that can be helped
- What your child thinks about tests in general
- Some good ways to get ready for admission tests
- Who to ask for advice about these tests

For more information

For information about the SAT and to register, visit www.SAT.collegeboard.org. Check your local library or consult with a librarian for resources related to college admission tests as well.

Lo que debe saber sobre los exámenes de admisión

- Es recomendable que su hijo o hija tome un examen de admisión universitaria, como el SAT u otros, cuando esté en el grado 11 de la secundaria. A más tardar se debe tomar en el otoño del grado 12 para estar a tiempo con las fechas límites de las universidades.
- Debido a que todas las secundarias son diferentes y tienen distintos estándares y cursos, las universidades utilizan exámenes estándares de admisión para evaluar cómo se desempeñan los estudiantes. Asimismo, dichos exámenes ayudan a las universidades a determinar si los estudiantes están preparados para el trabajo de nivel universitario.
- Puede ser que una universidad exija o recomiende una prueba por asignatura SAT Subject Test. Dependiendo de la prueba, se evalúa el nivel de inglés, matemáticas, ciencias, historia y el dominio de idiomas extranjeros. Dichas pruebas se pueden utilizar con fines de admisión, colocación o asesoría.
- Los exámenes de admisión universitaria se realizan varias veces al año. Su hijo o hija deberá inscribirse con antelación. Las fechas límite para la inscripción son, por lo general, un mes antes del examen.
- Los estudiantes pueden inscribirse por Internet (por ejemplo en www.SAT.collegeboard.org). Hay un costo de inscripción. Sin embargo, aquéllos que califican, pueden recibir una exención de cuota, la cual reduce el costo del examen. Hable con el consejero escolar al respecto.

Cómo ayudar a sus hijos a prepararse

- Es importante recordarle a su hijo o hija que estos exámenes no son lo único que las universidades toman en cuenta al tomar decisiones.
- Existen herramientas y recursos que le pueden ayudar a su hijo o hija a prepararse para los exámenes. Muchas de esas herramientas y recursos son gratuitos o a precios módicos. Visite www.SAT.collegeboard.org/practice para más información.
- Una de las mejores maneras de prepararse para el examen SAT es tomando el PSAT/NMSQT®. Se puede tomar este examen en los grados 10 y 11. Se imparte en octubre. Pida mayores informes a su consejero escolar. Y de paso, puede calificar para becas y reconocimiento por el Programa Nacional de Reconocimiento Hispano.

Lo que debe saber sobre los exámenes de admisión (page 2)

- Los exámenes de admisión universitaria se pueden tomar más de una vez. La mayoría de los estudiantes toman el examen en la primavera del grado 11 y lo vuelven a tomar en el otoño del grado 12.
- Antes de tomar el examen de verdad, el estudiante debe hacer varios de práctica. De esta manera se familiariza con el formato y el tiempo que tiene para completar cada sección.
- Haga que su hijo o hija revise los resultados y el puntaje de cada examen. Eso le ayudará a ver en qué áreas necesita poner más empeño.

Temas de conversación

- Qué sabe acerca de los exámenes de admisión universitaria
- Si se siente abrumado por estos exámenes, cómo puede ayudarle usted
- En general, qué piensa sobre los exámenes
- Algunas buenas maneras de prepararse para los exámenes de admisión
- A quién pedir consejo sobre estos exámenes

Para más información

Para obtener información sobre el SAT e inscribirse, visite www.SAT.collegeboard.org. Busque más información sobre los exámenes de admisión universitaria en su biblioteca local, o pregunte al bibliotecario.

Frequently asked questions about the PSAT/NMSQT®

1. Why should students take the PSAT/NMSQT®?

The PSAT/NMSQT is great preparation for the SAT®, and juniors who take the test and meet other program entry requirements may enter National Merit Scholarship Corporation programs. Most importantly, the PSAT/NMSQT is a comprehensive educational tool that gives valuable feedback to the student and the school. Students will receive scores in critical reading, mathematics and writing skills and can compare their scores with those of sophomores or juniors across the country. A question-by-question review of answers enables students to see which answers they got right and wrong and to refer to the original test booklet for additional practice. Best of all, with their Score Report *Plus*, students receive personalized feedback on specific academic skills. Students who take the PSAT/NMSQT will also receive online access to My College QuickStart™, a free personalized college and career planning kit, with access until they graduate high school.

2. Who should take the PSAT/NMSQT?

Students take the PSAT/NMSQT in their junior year to qualify for National Merit Scholarship Corporation competitions. It is also beneficial for sophomores and younger students to take the test because it provides comprehensive information to help improve academic skills needed for success in college and life beyond college. Of the more than 3.5 million students that take the test each year, more than half of all testers were sophomores and younger.

3. What should students do to prepare for this test?

The *Official Student Guide to the PSAT/NMSQT* contains plenty of useful information, including a full-length practice test. Students should review the guide and take the practice test to be sure they understand the directions and know the types of questions that will be asked. Classroom learning is the basis for test questions, so the best way students can prepare is to take a rigorous course of study.

4. If students don't do well on this test, will their chances of getting into college be diminished?

Absolutely not. If anything, taking the PSAT/NMSQT will improve their chances of going to college since the test provides information on the skills that need improvement in preparation for the SAT and college. PSAT/NMSQT scores are not sent to colleges.

Frequently asked questions about the PSAT/NMSQT (page 2)

5. How many times may a student take this test?

Only once a year, but there is no limit on how many years a student may participate. It is important for juniors to take the test in order to enter National Merit Scholarship Corporation competitions, as well as to prepare for the SAT. For younger students, the main benefit is to gain valuable feedback on improving their academic skills and start thinking about college at an earlier age.

6. When may schools expect to see results from the PSAT/NMSQT?

Schools will receive Student Score Reports in early December and will notify students regarding when, where and how to get their individual reports. Schools also receive an extra copy for the student's file.

7. What is the PSAT/NMSQT Score Report *Plus*?

The PSAT/NMSQT Score Report *Plus* gives students comprehensive, personalized feedback on their test performance, allowing them to see which questions they answered incorrectly and which academic skills they should work to improve. Students can log in to My College QuickStart and access suggestions for improving each of these skills and sample questions that give additional practice in each skill area. Score Report *Plus* also shows whether students meet entry requirements for National Merit Scholarship Corporation competitions.

SAT® FAQs

1. Why should you take the SAT?

The SAT® is the nation's most widely used college admission test, a distinction that it has held for more than seven decades. The SAT is taken by more than two million students every year and is accepted by virtually all colleges and universities. The SAT measures knowledge of subjects learned in the classroom, including reading, writing and math — and how well you can apply that knowledge outside of the classroom. The SAT helps colleges get to know you better by giving them insight into how you think, solve problems and communicate.

2. When should I take the SAT?

The College Board recommends that you take the SAT in the spring of your junior year and again in the fall of your senior year, if you feel you can improve your score. Research shows that students receive little benefit from repeating the SAT multiple times. Students receive, on average, a 40-point increase across all three sections when they take it a second time. Score increases are lower on subsequent retesting.

3. How is the SAT developed?

Meticulous care goes into developing and evaluating each test. Test developers write the questions for the SAT, sometimes incorporating questions submitted by high school and college teachers from around the country. A test committee made up of high school and college faculty and administrators reviews each test before it is administered. To ensure that the SAT is a valid measure of the skills and knowledge specified for the tests, as well as fair to all students, the SAT Program maintains rigorous standards for administering and scoring the tests and for reporting test scores.

4. What else does the SAT provide?

The SAT experience does not start or end with the test. The College Board is there for you at each step on your path to college. From the moment you register for the test, you can take advantage of the College Board's free online practice materials and many useful tools, including SAT Skills Insight™, which helps you understand what skills are tested on the SAT; a college search tool; financial aid and scholarship information; and a profile of several careers and majors. The College Board also helps you understand the details of your scores with My Online Score Report.

5. How fair is the SAT?

The SAT is carefully designed to be a fair test for all students. It is also the most rigorously researched and analyzed standardized test in the world. Each question on the SAT goes through an in-depth pretesting and review process to ensure that every single question is fair to all students across genders and ethnicity groups.

SAT FAQs (page 2)

6. How valid is the SAT in predicting college success?

The SAT, along with high school grades, is the best predictor of success in college. The SAT gives you an opportunity to show colleges what you know and what you know you can do. Taking the SAT is the first step in finding the right college for you — the one where you'll best succeed and discover the tools necessary to pursue your passions and achieve your career goals.

7. How many questions must I answer correctly to get an average score on the SAT?

The average score on the SAT is about 500 on the critical reading section, 500 on the writing section and 500 on the mathematics section. Some of the questions are easy, and some are hard, but the majority are of medium difficulty. Medium difficulty questions are answered correctly by about one-third to two-thirds of students. The SAT is designed so that a student who answers about half the questions correctly will receive an average score.

8. How do colleges use the writing score?

Different colleges use the writing score in different ways. Writing scores may be used for admission decisions, and possibly for placement in English composition courses. Some colleges may choose to use writing scores for research purposes only, and not for decisions about admission or placement. In addition to the raw writing score, colleges that are sent a student's SAT score will also be able to access the student's essay.

Recent studies show that the writing section, of all three sections, is the best predictor of a student's academic success in college.

9. How should I get ready?

There are many ways to practice for the test. Here are some ideas:

- Study hard, read outside of the classroom and take challenging classes.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT®. It is great practice for the SAT.
- Take advantage of the College Board's free online readiness/practice tools, which include a free official practice test, sample questions, The Official SAT Question of the Day™ and other low-cost tools.
- Know that research proves that you don't need expensive test-preparation courses to prepare you to do well on the test.
- If you've already taken the SAT once, consider taking it again. There's a good chance that you'll improve your score.

Source: www.collegeboard.org

The SAT[®] at a glance

Critical Reading	
Content/items	Multiple-choice items, including sentence completions and passage-based reading, measuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended reasoning • Literal comprehension • Vocabulary in context
Score	200-800
Time	70 minutes (two 25-minute sections, one 20-minute section)
Mathematics	
Content/items	Multiple-choice items and student-produced responses measuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers and operations • Algebra I and II and functions • Geometry and measurement • Data analysis, statistics and probability
Score	200-800
Time	70 minutes (two 25-minute sections, one 20-minute section)
Writing	
Content/items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple choice: identifying sentence errors; improving sentences; improving paragraphs • Student-written essay: effectively communicating a viewpoint; defining and supporting a position
Score	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200-800 • Multiple-choice subscore: 20-80 • Essay subscore: 2-12
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 minutes • Multiple choice: 35 minutes (one 25-minute section, one 10-minute section) • Essay: 25 minutes

Source: *The College Board*

Handout 7E

Strategies for success with the SAT® essay

It seems like everybody has a different opinion about how to do well on the SAT® essay. Some people say you should write a strict five-paragraph essay, with an introduction, a conclusion and three specific examples. Some people say you should read well-known books like *The Great Gatsby* or *The Scarlet Letter* and refer to them as often as you can. Some people say that the real key is to write as much as humanly possible. Some say you should do all of these at once!

We want students to know that there are no shortcuts to success on the SAT essay. The high school and college teachers who will score your essay have seen it all before. These teachers are not going to give high scores to an essay just because it is long, or has five paragraphs, or uses literary examples. The scorers are experts at identifying truly good writing — essays that insightfully develop a point of view with appropriate reasons and examples and use language skillfully.

So what can you do to write a successful SAT essay? Here are some strategies the College Board would like you to consider:

Read the entire assignment. It's all there to help you. Every essay assignment contains a short paragraph about the issue, usually from a specific author or book. Don't ignore this important information in your rush to answer the question. Imagine that you are talking to the author of the paragraph about the issue. What would you say to him or her? Would you argue or agree? What other ideas or examples would you bring up? Answering these questions will help you develop your own point of view.

Don't oversimplify. Developing your point of view doesn't mean coming up with as many examples as you can. Sometimes students cut a great example short to move on to something else, and end up oversimplifying. Take the time to really explain an example; that's the best way to fully develop your point of view. An essay with one or two thoughtful, well-developed reasons or examples is more likely to get a high score than an essay with three short, simplistic examples.

There's nothing wrong with "I." You are asked to develop your point of view on the issue, not give a straight report of the facts. This is your opinion, so feel free to use "I," and give examples that are meaningful to you, even ones from your personal life or experiences. Of course you need to support your ideas appropriately, and show that you can use language well, but remember: The essay is an opportunity for you to say what you think about an important issue that's relevant to your life. So relax and be yourself, and you will do just fine.

Source: *The College Board*

Handout 7F