



PSAT Results Guide for Parents

Turn Your Student's Scores into College Success

Prepared by Scholar's Edge Test Prep September 2025



Dear Parents,

PSAT results are arriving soon, and we know many of you are wondering: "What do these numbers actually mean for my student's future?"

As parents ourselves and education professionals, we understand the mix of excitement and anxiety that comes with opening those score reports. That's why we've created this comprehensive guide to help you understand your student's results and create an action plan for success.

This guide will help you:

- Understand what your student's scores really mean
- Know if your student might qualify for National Merit scholarships
- Create a strategic plan for SAT preparation and college planning
- Communicate effectively with your student about their results
- Access resources and support for the journey ahead

Remember: PSAT scores are a starting point, not a final destination. Every student has the potential for growth and success.



Understanding Your Student's PSAT Scores

The Basics Every Parent Should Know

What the Numbers Mean:

- Total Score: 320-1520 (combines Reading/Writing + Math sections)
- Section Scores: 160-760 for each section
- Percentiles: Show how your student compares to other test-takers
- Subscores: Break down specific skill areas

Is This Score "Good"?

Here's how to interpret your student's performance:

1400+ (Top 1%): Outstanding performance

- What this means: Your student is exceptionally well-prepared for competitive colleges
- Parent response: Celebrate this achievement! Focus on maintaining excellence

www.scholarsedge.co
admin@scholarsedge.co
682-235-9465



1300-1399 (Top 5%): Excellent performance

- What this means: Strong college readiness with potential for National Merit
- Parent response: Be proud and start researching scholarship opportunities

1200-1299 (Top 15%): Very good performance

- What this means: Solid foundation with room for strategic improvement
- Parent response: Focus on targeted preparation for even stronger SAT scores

1100-1199 (Top 30%): Good performance

- What this means: Developing well with significant growth potential
- Parent response: Create a strategic preparation plan for substantial improvement

1000-1099 (Average range): Developing performance

- What this means: Important foundation skills in place, focused work needed
- Parent response: Invest in comprehensive preparation with a realistic timeline

Below 1000: Emerging performance

- What this means: Foundational skill building is needed across multiple areas
- Parent response: Consider comprehensive academic support beyond just test prep

Important Reality Check:

Most students improve significantly between the PSAT and SAT with proper preparation. These scores show current performance, not future potential.



Could Your Student Qualify for National Merit?

What Every Parent Needs to Know About \$2.5+ Million in Scholarships

The National Merit Program:

- Based solely on PSAT/NMSQT scores (not PSAT 8/9 or PSAT 10)
- Only students who take the test as juniors are eligible
- Approximately 50,000 students receive recognition nationwide
- 16,000 become Semifinalists competing for scholarships

Estimated 2024 Qualifying Scores by State:

Higher Qualifying States (1480-1520 typically needed):

- California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey, Virginia, Washington D.C.



Mid-Range States (1450-1480 typically needed):

- New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Texas, Florida, Washington, Colorado

Lower Qualifying States (1400-1450 typically needed):

- Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, West Virginia, Mississippi

Note: These are estimates based on historical data. Official cutoffs are announced in September of senior year.

What to Tell Your Student:

If they're close to your state's range:

- "You have a real shot at National Merit recognition!"
- "This could mean significant scholarship opportunities"
- "Let's make sure your senior year grades support your application"

If they're not quite there:

- "This is still an excellent score that opens many doors"
- "Focus on using this data to crush the SAT"
- "There are many other scholarship opportunities available"



Action Plans by Score Range

What Should Your Family Do Next?

For Scores 1300+ (Top 5%): Optimize Excellence

Your Student's Strengths:

- ✓ Strong college readiness across all areas
- ✓ Likely National Merit qualification
- ✓ Positioned for merit-based scholarships
- ✓ Ready for rigorous college coursework

Your Family's Next Steps:

1. Celebrate this achievement - your student has worked hard!
2. Research National Merit scholarships at target colleges
3. Plan strategic SAT preparation (2-3 months may be sufficient)
4. Begin exploring reach schools and merit scholarship opportunities
5. Maintain academic excellence through senior year



Timeline Suggestion:

- November-December: Light SAT prep focusing on perfect score strategies
- January-February: Intensive timing and test-day preparation
- March: Take the SAT with confidence
- Spring: Focus on college applications and scholarship research



For Scores 1100-1299 (Top 15-30%): Strategic Growth

Your Student's Strengths:

- ✓ Solid academic foundation in place
- ✓ Significant improvement potential (100-200+ points)
- ✓ Good positioning for quality four-year colleges
- ✓ Room for strategic skill development

Your Family's Next Steps:

1. Analyze subscores to identify specific improvement areas
2. Create a 4-month preparation timeline with clear goals
3. Register for spring SAT (March or May recommended)
4. Consider structured test prep program or tutoring
5. Research colleges in target score ranges

Timeline Suggestion:

- November: Begin diagnostic work and skill assessment
- December-January: Intensive preparation in weak areas
- February: Practice test mastery and timing work
- March: First SAT attempt
- April-May: Analyze results and consider retake if needed

Realistic Expectations: Students in this range typically see 100-200 point improvements with dedicated preparation. Your investment in test prep can literally translate to thousands of dollars in merit scholarships.



For Scores 900-1099 (Developing): Foundation Building

Your Student's Strengths:

- ✓ Important foundational skills developing



- ✓ Significant growth potential with proper support
- ✓ Time to build comprehensive college readiness
- ✓ Opportunity for dramatic score improvements

Your Family's Next Steps:

1. Don't panic - many successful students start here
2. Invest in comprehensive preparation (6+ months recommended)
3. Consider additional academic support beyond test prep
4. Plan for multiple SAT attempts with preparation between
5. Research colleges with holistic admissions approaches

Timeline Suggestion:

- November-January: Foundation building in reading, writing, and math
- February-April: Test-specific strategies and practice
- May: First SAT attempt
- Summer: Continued preparation if a retake is needed
- Fall senior year: Final SAT if necessary

Encouragement for Parents: This score range represents a tremendous opportunity. Students who start here and invest in comprehensive preparation often see the most dramatic improvements (200+ points). Your support and patience during this process will make all the difference.

For Scores Below 900: Comprehensive Support

Your Student's Reality:

- Foundational skills need strengthening across multiple areas
- May benefit from academic support beyond test prep
- An extended timeline is needed for meaningful improvement
- Success requires a comprehensive approach and patience

Your Family's Next Steps:

1. Focus on skill building first - reading, writing, math fundamentals
2. Consider academic tutoring in addition to test prep
3. Explore extended timelines (8+ months minimum)
4. Research alternative pathways - community college, test-optional schools
5. Build a comprehensive support team - teachers, tutors, counselors

Timeline Suggestion:

- November-February: Intensive foundational skill building



- March-May: Begin test-specific preparation
- Summer: Continued comprehensive preparation
- Fall senior year: SAT attempts with realistic expectations

Important Perspective: Success in life isn't determined by a single test score. Focus on building your student's confidence, work ethic, and foundational skills. Many successful people started with similar challenges and went on to achieve great things.

Having "The Conversation" with Your Student

How to Discuss Results Productively

DO's for Parent Conversations:

Start with positives: "I'm proud of the effort you've put into your education. These scores give us great information to work with."

Focus on growth potential: "These results show us exactly where to focus our energy for the biggest improvements."

Emphasize the journey: "This is just one step in your college preparation. We have time and strategies to reach your goals."

Be collaborative: "Let's work together to create a plan that sets you up for success."

DON'Ts for Parent Conversations:

Don't compare to others: Avoid: "Your friend Sarah scored higher" or "Your sister did better"

Don't catastrophize: Avoid: "This ruins your chances at college" or "We should have prepared more"

Don't make it about you: Avoid: "I'm disappointed" or "What will people think?"

Don't dismiss their feelings: Avoid: "It's just a test" or "Scores don't matter" (they do matter, but aren't everything)

Sample Conversation Starters:

For any score level: "I looked at your PSAT results, and I see some really positive things. Want to talk about what they mean and how we can build on them?"

For lower scores: "These scores give us valuable information about where to focus our efforts. I'm confident we can see significant improvement with the right approach."

For higher scores: "You should be really proud of these results! Let's talk about how to build on this strong foundation."





Creating Your Family's Action Plan

Month-by-Month Success Timeline

November: Understanding and Planning

Family Tasks:

- ☐ Review PSAT results together as a family
- ☐ Identify your student's strongest and weakest areas
- ☐ Research your state's National Merit qualifying scores
- ☐ Schedule meetings with the school counselor
- ☐ Begin researching test prep options

Student Tasks:

- ☐ Take a baseline SAT practice test
- ☐ Begin addressing fundamental skill gaps
- ☐ Start building consistent study habits



December: Foundation Building

Family Tasks:

- ☐ Choose test prep approach (self-study, tutoring, class, online)
- ☐ Register for spring SAT date
- ☐ Set family expectations and study schedule
- ☐ Research colleges in target score ranges

Student Tasks:

- ☐ Begin structured test preparation
- ☐ Take monthly practice tests to track progress
- ☐ Use holiday break for intensive preparation
- ☐ Address specific skill gaps identified in PSAT



January-February: Intensive Preparation

Family Tasks:

- ☐ Monitor student's preparation progress
- ☐ Provide necessary support and resources
- ☐ Help the student manage stress and maintain balance
- ☐ Continue college research and visits

**Student Tasks:**

- ☐ Follow a consistent daily preparation schedule
- ☐ Take weekly practice tests
- ☐ Master test-taking strategies and timing
- ☐ Build endurance for full-length tests

**March: First SAT Opportunity****Family Tasks:**

- ☐ Ensure proper test day logistics (location, materials, etc.)
- ☐ Support student's final preparation week
- ☐ Plan post-test celebration regardless of outcome
- ☐ Prepare for score release and next steps

Student Tasks:

- ☐ Complete final practice tests
- ☐ Review key strategies and formulas
- ☐ Manage test anxiety and stay confident
- ☐ Execute test day plan

**April-May: Analysis and Next Steps****Family Tasks:**

- ☐ Review SAT results and compare to goals
- ☐ Decide whether retake is beneficial
- ☐ Adjust college list based on actual scores
- ☐ Begin focusing on other application components

Student Tasks:

- ☐ Analyze SAT performance and identify remaining weak areas
- ☐ Prepare for potential retake if scores don't meet goals
- ☐ Begin focusing more on grades, extracurriculars, essays
- ☐ Continue building college readiness skills





Resources and Support Options

What's Available to Help Your Family

Free Resources Every Family Should Know About:

Khan Academy SAT Practice:

- Personalized prep based on your student's actual PSAT scores
- Completely free with comprehensive lessons and practice tests
- Links directly to College Board for authentic preparation

BigFuture School (College Board):

- Free college and career planning platform
- Scholarship search and college matching tools
- Delivered directly to your student's phone

Local Library Resources:

- Many libraries offer free SAT prep classes
- Access to prep books and online resources
- Quiet study spaces for focused preparation

School-Based Support:

- Meet with your school counselor regularly
- Utilize any free test prep offered by your school
- Take advantage of SAT School Day if available

How to Choose What's Right for Your Student:

Self-motivated students: May succeed with free online resources

Students needing structure: Benefit from classes or online programs

Students with specific challenges: Often need personalized tutoring

Budget-conscious families: Start with free resources, add support as needed



Financial Investment vs. Return

Understanding the Economics of Test Prep

The Scholarship Reality:

- 100-point SAT increase can mean \$10,000+ in merit scholarships annually
- 200-point improvement often leads to \$20,000+ in annual awards
- Strong scores open doors to competitive full-ride scholarships

Cost-Benefit Analysis Example:

Investment in Test Prep: \$1,500

Potential Score Increase: 150 points Additional

Annual Merit Aid: \$15,000

Four-Year Benefit: \$60,000



Return on Investment: 4000%

Questions to Ask Yourself:

- What would a 100-point score increase mean for my student's college options?
- How much could higher scores save us in college costs?
- What's our family budget for test preparation?
- How much time can my student realistically commit to preparation?

Budget-Friendly Approaches:

- Start with free resources to gauge your student's response to preparation
- Add targeted tutoring for specific problem areas only
- Use group classes for cost-effective structured learning
- Combine approaches - free resources plus occasional tutoring sessions



Frequently Asked Questions from Parents

Real Answers to Your Most Common Concerns

"My student is a bad test-taker. Will prep really help?"

Answer: Most "bad test-taking" is actually a lack of familiarity with the test format and strategies. Students who learn proper techniques and practice regularly almost always improve significantly. Test anxiety can also be addressed through preparation and confidence-building.

"Should my sophomore take the PSAT seriously?"

Answer: The PSAT 10 (for sophomores) doesn't count for National Merit, but it's excellent practice and provides valuable data. Encourage effort without pressure. Many students improve 200+ points between sophomore and junior year PSATs.

"My student's grades are great, but PSAT scores are low. What's wrong?"

Answer: This is common and usually indicates either test anxiety or unfamiliarity with standardized test formats. Strong students often see the biggest improvements with proper preparation because they have the foundational knowledge.

"Is it worth retaking the SAT multiple times?"

Answer: Most students improve on their second SAT attempt. A third attempt can be beneficial if there are still significant gaps. However, after three attempts, improvements typically plateau.



"Should we focus on SAT or ACT?"

Answer: Since your student took the PSAT, continue with SAT preparation unless there are specific reasons to switch. The PSAT data provides a perfect foundation for SAT strategy.

"How much time should my student spend preparing?"

Answer: Most successful students spend 1-2 hours per day, 4-6 days per week for 2-4 months. Quality and consistency matter more than total hours.

"What if my student doesn't want to prepare?"

Answer: Help them understand how scores directly impact their college options and costs. Sometimes students need to see the connection between preparation effort and life outcomes. Consider making it a family goal rather than just their responsibility.



Next Steps for Your Family

Your 30-Day Action Plan

This Week:

1. Have "the conversation" with your student about their results
2. Schedule a meeting with your school counselor
3. Research your state's National Merit qualifying scores
4. Take a family inventory of preparation resources and budget

Week 2:

1. Have your student take a full SAT practice test for baseline
2. Research test prep options that fit your family's needs and budget
3. Register for a spring SAT date (March or May recommended)
4. Begin preliminary college research based on current and target scores

Week 3:

1. Choose your preparation approach and begin implementation
2. Set up a family study schedule and expectations
3. Gather preparation materials (books, online accounts, tutoring arrangements)
4. Create accountability systems for consistent preparation

Week 4:

1. Review first month of preparation progress
2. Adjust study plan based on what's working and what isn't
3. Schedule regular check-ins with your student about progress and challenges
4. Continue building excitement about college possibilities

**Remember: You're Not Alone in This Journey**

College preparation can feel overwhelming, but thousands of families successfully navigate this process every year. Your student's PSAT results are valuable data, not a final judgment. With proper planning, realistic expectations, and consistent effort, your family can turn these scores into college success.

The most important factor in your student's success isn't their starting PSAT score—it's having a supportive family who believes in their potential and provides the resources and encouragement they need to grow.

You've got this. Your student's got this. Let's make it happen together.

**About This Resource**

This guide was created by the education professionals at Scholar's Edge Test Prep as a service to parents and families navigating PSAT results and college planning. We believe every student deserves access to quality information and support in reaching their academic potential.

For additional support and resources:

- Website: www.scholarsedge.co
- Email: admin@scholarsedge.com
- Phone: 682-235-9465

This guide may be shared freely with other families and parent groups. We appreciate attribution when distributing.