

College Entrance Exams in the U.S.: SAT vs ACT

In the United States, college entrance exams are standardized tests used by colleges and universities as part of their admissions process. These exams help institutions assess a student's academic readiness and compare applicants from different educational backgrounds. The two most common exams are the SAT and the ACT.

SAT Overview

The SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) is administered by the College Board. It evaluates a student's skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. The SAT is widely accepted by U.S. colleges and universities.

Format:

- Reading: 52 questions, 65 minutes
- Writing and Language: 44 questions, 35 minutes
- Math (No Calculator + Calculator sections): 58 questions, 80 minutes
- Optional Essay: Discontinued as of June 2021

Total Score Range: 400-1600

ACT Overview

The ACT (American College Testing) is administered by ACT, Inc. It assesses a student's knowledge in English, mathematics, reading, and science, with an optional writing section.

Format:

- English: 75 questions, 45 minutes
- Math: 60 questions, 60 minutes
- Reading: 40 questions, 35 minutes

- Science: 40 questions, 35 minutes
- Optional Writing (Essay): 1 prompt, 40 minutes

Total Score Range: 1-36 (composite average of 4 sections)

SAT vs ACT: Key Differences

- The SAT emphasizes evidence-based reading and problem-solving, while the ACT includes a science section.
- SAT has a longer reading section; ACT moves at a faster pace overall.
- ACT allows calculators on all math questions; SAT has a no-calculator section.
- ACT scoring is based on an average of four sections (1-36); SAT is a combined score (400-1600).
- Both are equally accepted by U.S. colleges - choose the one that fits your strengths and timing.