



**BAY AREA
TUTORING**
ASSOCIATION

YOUR

COLLEGE ADMISSION SUCCESS STORY

STARTS HERE!



While good grades are essential to college entrance, success on the SAT/ACT is critical to acceptance into a 4-year university. However, figuring out how the tests work, understanding the differences between the two and knowing how to prepare your student for either test can be challenging.

BURNING QUESTIONS...WE KNOW YOU HAVE THEM!

SHOULD MY STUDENT TAKE THE SAT, THE ACT, OR BOTH?

Both the ACT and the SAT are nationally administered standardized tests that help colleges evaluate candidates. Some schools favor the SAT, others prefer the ACT, but generally, the tests are interchangeable. If your student is struggling with the SAT, have them take the ACT to see if they do better and vice versa.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO?

Overall, the ACT is curriculum-based (i.e. what students have learned in school), while the SAT is aimed more at general reasoning and problem-solving skills.

- Questions on the ACT tend to be more straightforward and easier to understand the first time you read them. On the SAT, you may need to spend time figuring out what you're being asked before you can start solving the problem.
- The SAT has a stronger emphasis on vocabulary.
- The ACT has a Science section, while the SAT does not. However, the ACT science section is really assessing a student's ability to read and understand graphs, scientific hypotheses, and research summaries. You don't need to be a science whiz to do well.
- The ACT tests more advanced math concepts. In addition to basic arithmetic, algebra I and II, and geometry, the ACT tests your knowledge of trigonometry, too. The SAT covers algebra 1 and geometry and a small fraction of algebra II. That said, the math questions on the ACT are more straightforward, which makes them easier for some.
- The ACT Writing Test is optional on test day, but required by many schools.
- The SAT has a correction for guessing. That is, test takers are penalized for wrong answers. The ACT is scored based on the number of correct answers with no penalty for guessing.
- Because of the way the test is timed, students have less time per question on the ACT; this time constraint can throw a lot of test takers.
- The ACT is more of a "big picture" exam. While college admissions officers care about how you did on each section of the SAT, on the ACT, they're looking at your composite score. So, for example, if you are weak in math, it will show on the SAT. With the ACT, you could still end up with a good score, even if you are weak in one area.

WHEN SHOULD MY STUDENT START TO PREPARE FOR THE SAT/ACT?

As soon as they are ready. Keep in mind that they'll be better prepared for the math sections once they've taken high school algebra and geometry. For the English and reading sections, students need a solid foundation in grammar, punctuation and rhetoric strategies. For the writing section, they'll write an essay which will test their ability to develop a point of view based on the excerpt presented, support their point of view with examples and follow the conventions of standard written English. They'll also answer multiple-choice questions relating to improving sentences, identifying sentence errors and improving paragraphs.

HOW DOES THE SAT WORK?

The content areas (critical reading, math, writing) are broken up into 10 sections, with the required essay at the beginning.

**A 25-minute
essay**

**Six 25-minute
sections**
(mathematics, critical
reading and writing)

**Two 20-minute
sections**
(mathematics, critical
reading and writing)

**A 10-minute
multiple-choice
writing section**

Total test time: 3 hours and 45 minutes

Scores for each of the three sections of the SAT are reported on a scale of 200 to 800 yielding a maximum score of 2400. Each reader gives the essay a score from 1 to 6 (6 is the highest score).

Students typically register online at <http://sat.collegeboard.com> at least one month in advance for a local test center or high school in their area.

HOW DOES THE ACT WORK?

The content areas (English, Math, Reading and Science) ACT are broken up into four sections, plus an optional writing test:

English

Reading

Math

Science

Optional writing test
(some schools may
require the writing test,
so be sure to ask before
you take it).

Total test time: 3 hours or 3 hours and 25 minutes with the writing section.

The score is a composite of 1-36, based on average scores from the 4 test sections. Optional Writing Test score of 0-12 (not included in the overall score)

Registration deadlines fall approximately five weeks before each [ACT test date](#). Register online at www.ACT.org.

WHEN SHOULD MY STUDENT TAKE THE SAT/ACT?

Most students take the SAT/ACT for the first time during their junior year (The SAT is offered in October, November, December, January, March, May and June. The ACT is offered in September, October, December, February, April and June). Depending on the desired score, students may test twice or more in their junior year and possibly, once more in October of their senior year.

WHAT'S A GOOD SCORE?

The average SAT score for the class of 2013 in California was 1505 and the average ACT score was 22. Those scores should be enough to get your student considered for admittance to most schools within the Cal State system, depending on their GPA. However, many state schools are impacted and require higher scores. For example, students will need upwards of a 1700 on the SAT and at least a 24 on the ACT to be considered at Cal Poly San Louis Obispo, even higher if they want to get into engineering or architecture. If they have their heart set on a UC, they'll also need a higher than average score. Consider these average SAT/ACT scores for a few of the UC schools:

	SAT	ACT
UC BERKELEY	2076	31
UCLA	2052	30
UCSD	1993	29
UC DAVIS	1906	28
UCSC	1793	26
UC RIVERSIDE	1720	25
UC MERCED	1634	23

DOES MY STUDENT REALLY NEED PRIVATE TEST PREP SERVICES?

Consider these questions:

- Does your student care about the score, but lack the self-motivation to do the studying on their own?
- Does your student have a very busy schedule (sports, music, band, creative arts, etc.)?
- Is your student a nervous test-taker?
- Does your student struggle with core concepts?
- Does your student have trouble finishing tests during the time constraints?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, test prep services will make a difference and give your student the confidence to do their best.

HOW CAN THE BAY AREA TUTORING ASSOCIATION HELP MY STUDENT?

Our small group and private tutoring sessions use the SAT curriculum and practice tests to enhance your students' math, critical reading and writing skills. We cover test-taking approaches, practice questions and sample essays for review and analysis. While no one can promise a perfect score, we can give your student the tools they need to put forth their best effort. We provide the materials and over 10 years of experience helping students prepare for the single most important test they'll take in high school.





At Bay Area Tutoring Association, we don't just prepare students for a test. We prepare them for the future.

Please call **510-792-1614**
or visit our website at **www.bayareatutor.org**
to learn more about our SAT/ACT prep services.