

SAT vs. ACT COMPARISON CHART

The SAT and ACT are two very different college entrance exams. Both are nationally administered and are used to help colleges evaluate applicants. The SAT is essentially a three-part aptitude test (Reading, Math, Writing) while the ACT is more of an achievement test with four core sections (English, Math, Reading, Science) and an optional Writing Section. Many colleges will accept either test or both exams. Some colleges require one (typically the SAT). The chart below will help you understand the structure and content of the SAT and ACT.

	SAT	ACT
Length	3 Hours, 50 minutes (includes optional 50 minute essay)	3 hours, 25 minutes (includes optional 30-minute Writing Test)
Sections	4 sections plus optional essay: 2 Math, 1 Reading, 1 Writing & Language	4 sections (plus optional writing test), English, Math, Reading, Science, Writing
Subjects	Reading Math Writing & Language Essay	English Math Reading Science Writing (optional) 1 prompt 30 minutes
Reading	5 passages with questions 10-11 questions per passage	4 passages, 10 questions per passage
Science	N/A	Science (analysis, knowledge, problem solving)
Math	80 minutes, 58 questions: Algebra (35%), problem solving & data analysis (25%), Algebra II (27%), Geometry & Trigonometry (10%)	60 items, 60 minutes Arithmetic, algebra, geometry and trigonometry
Essay Score Composition	Optional (final section, 50 minutes) ½ Math, ½ Reading & Writing	Optional (final section) ¼ English ¼ Math ¼ Reading ¼ Science
Scoring	Aggregate score of 400-1600 based on 2 scores 200-800 (Math, evidence based Reading & Writing) Essay scored separately with Reading Analysis & Writing each reported on a 2-8 scale	Composite score 1-36 based on average of 4 sections (English, Math, Reading, Science)
Penalties	No penalties for incorrect answers	No penalties for incorrect answers
Additional info	www.collegeboard.org	www.actstudent.org

Source: 2009 College and Career Readiness Workshops Resource Manual