

# SAT vs ACT: Which Test is Right for You?

Many students and parents begin the college prep process by comparing the ACT and SAT tests. The [SAT](#) and [ACT](#) generally cover the same topics. Both ACT and SAT scores are used for college admissions decisions and awarding merit-based scholarships. Most colleges do not prefer one test over the other. Neither the SAT or ACT is harder than the other. Different students tend to do better on one test over the other.

Compare the ACT and SAT tests

- ACT includes a Science section
- SAT includes one SAT Math Section on which you may not use a calculator

	SAT	ACT
<b>Why Take It</b>	Colleges use SAT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.	Colleges use ACT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.
<b>Test Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Writing &amp; Language</li> <li>• Math</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English</li> <li>• Math</li> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Science Reasoning</li> </ul> Essay (Optional)
<b>Length</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 hours, 55 minutes (without essay)</li> <li>• 3 hours, 40 minutes (with essay)</li> </ul>
<b>Reading</b>	5 reading passages	4 reading passages
<b>Science</b>	None	1 science section testing your critical thinking skills (not your specific science knowledge)
<b>Math</b>	Covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arithmetic</li> <li>• Algebra I &amp; II</li> <li>• Geometry, Trigonometry and Data Analysis</li> </ul>	Covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arithmetic</li> <li>• Algebra I &amp; II</li> <li>• Geometry, Trigonometry, and Probability &amp; Statistics</li> </ul>
<b>Calculator Policy</b>	Some math questions don't allow you to use a calculator.	You can use a calculator on all math questions.
<b>Essays</b>	None	Optional. The essay will test how well you evaluate and analyze complex issues.
<b>How It's Scored</b>	Scored on a scale of 400–1600	Scored on a scale of 1–36