Strategies for the SAT & ACT

College&Career**Pathways**2023

How colleges evaluate your scores

- The best single time out
  or
- Super-score method (the best mix on each section)

Suggested testing timeline

- ACT or SAT in early spring.

- Assess scores over the summer.

- Retake SAT/ACT, if necessary, late spring or fall.

Online Testing Rollout

- SAT to start online testing in March 2024;
- Computer adaptive testing – prepare to feel like you're struggling!
- Difficulty adjusts to ability
- *Feeling like you're falling behind means you're doing just fine!*

Guessing strategy

Guess!

ACT: Select the letter you feel you've answered least.

All choices are equally represented; therefore, the letter you've chosen the least is likely to appear more frequently in the unanswered questions.

SAT: Computer-based adaptive testing is best-choice-per-question.

ACT percentile score chart

Score	ENGLISH	MATHEMATICS	READING	SCIENCE	COMPOSITE	STEM	Score
36	100	100	100	100	100	100	36
35	99	99	99	99	99	99	35
34	97	99	97	99	99	99	34
33	95	98	95	97	98	98	33
32	93	97	93	96	97	97	32
31	92	96	90	95	95	96	31
30	91	95	88	94	93	94	30
29	88	93	85	92	91	93	29
28	87	91	83	91	89	91	28
27	85	88	80	88	86	88	27
26	82	83	77	86	82	84	26
25	79	79	74	82	78	80	25
24	75	74	71	77	74	75	24
23	70	68	66	70	69	69	23
22	64	64	60	64	63	64	22
21	59	60	54	56	58	58	21
20	53	56	48	49	51	52	20
19	47	52	43	42	45	45	19
18	43	47	37	36	39	38	18
17	39	40	31	29	32	30	17
16	35	30	27	23	26	23	16
15	29	18	22	17	20	15	15
14	23	9	17	13	14	9	14
13	18	3	12	9	8	4	13
12	14	1	8	6	4	2	12
11	10	1	4	4	1	1	11
10	6	1	2	2	1	1	10
9	3	1	1	1	1	1	9
8	2	1	1	1	1	1	8
7	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
6	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
5	1	1	1	1	1	1	5
4	1	1	1	1	1	1	4
3	1	1	1	1	1	1	3
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mean	20.2	20.6	21.3	20.8	20.9	20.9	
S.D.	6.9	5.5	6.6	5.6	5.7	5.3	

SAT percentiles for total scores

Total Score	Nationally Representative Sample	SAT User
1600	99+	99+
1590	99+	99+
1580	99+	99+
1570	99+	99+
1560	99+	99+
1550	99+	99+
1540	99+	99+
1530	99+	99+
1520	99+	99
1510	99	99
1500	99	99
1490	99	99
1480	99	99
1470	99	98
1460	99	98
1450	99	98
1440	98	97
1430	98	97
1420	98	96
1410	97	96
1400	97	95
1390	97	95
1380	96	94
1370	96	94
1360	95	93
1350	94	92
1340	94	91
1330	93	90
1320	93	90
1310	92	89
1300	91	88
1290	90	87
1280	89	86
1270	88	85
1260	87	83
1250	86	82
1240	85	81
1230	84	80
1220	83	78
1210	82	77
1200	81	76
1190	80	74
1180	78	73

Total Score	Nationally Representative Sample	SAT User
1170	77	71
1160	76	69
1150	74	68
1140	73	66
1130	71	64
1120	70	63
1110	69	61
1100	67	59
1090	65	57
1080	63	55
1070	61	53
1060	60	51
1050	58	49
1040	56	47
1030	54	45
1020	52	43
1010	50	41
1000	48	40
990	46	38
980	44	36
970	42	34
960	40	32
950	38	31
940	36	29
930	35	27
920	33	26
910	31	24
900	29	22
890	27	21
880	26	19
870	24	18
860	23	17
850	21	15
840	20	14
830	18	13
820	17	12
810	16	11
800	14	9
790	13	8
780	11	8
770	10	7
760	9	6
750	8	5

Total Score	Nationally Representative Sample	SAT User
740	7	4
730	6	4
720	5	3
710	4	3
700	4	2
690	3	2
680	2	1
670	2	1
660	1	1
650	1	1
640	1	1
630	1	1-
620	1-	1-
610	1-	1-
600	1-	1-
590	1-	1-
580	1-	1-
570	1-	1-
560	1-	1-
550	1-	1-
540	1-	1-
530	1-	1-
520	1-	1-
510	1-	1-
500	1-	1-
490	1-	1-
480	1-	1-
470	1-	1-
460	1-	1-
450	1-	1-
440	1-	1-
430	1-	1-
420	1-	1-
410	1-	1-
400	1-	1-

SAT percentiles for section scores

Total Score	Evidence-Based Reading and Writing		Math	
	Nationally Representative Sample	SAT User	Nationally Representative Sample	SAT User
800	99+	99+	99+	99+
790	99+	99+	99+	99
780	99+	99+	99	99
770	99+	99+	99	99
760	99+	99	99	98
750	99	99	98	97
740	99	98	98	97
730	99	98	97	96
720	98	97	97	95
710	97	96	96	94
700	97	95	95	94
690	96	94	94	92
680	95	92	93	91
670	93	91	92	89
660	92	89	91	88
650	90	87	90	86
640	88	85	89	84
630	86	82	87	82
620	84	79	85	81
610	81	77	83	78
600	79	73	81	76
590	76	70	79	73
580	74	67	76	70
570	71	64	73	67
560	68	60	71	65
550	65	57	68	61
540	62	53	65	58
530	58	49	61	54
520	55	46	57	49
510	51	42	52	45
500	48	39	47	40
490	44	35	44	37
480	41	32	40	34
470	38	28	36	32
460	34	25	32	29
450	31	22	29	25
440	28	19	25	22
430	24	16	23	20
420	22	14	20	17

Total Score	Evidence-Based Reading and Writing		Math	
	Nationally Representative Sample	SAT User	Nationally Representative Sample	SAT User
410	19	12	17	14
400	16	10	15	12
390	13	8	13	10
380	11	6	10	8
370	9	5	9	7
360	7	4	7	5
350	5	3	5	4
340	3	2	4	3
330	2	1	3	2
320	2	1	2	1
310	1	1	1	1
300	1	1	1	1
290	1-	1-	1-	1-
280	1-	1-	1-	1-
270	1-	1-	1-	1-
260	1-	1-	1-	1-
250	1-	1-	1-	1-
240	1-	1-	1-	1-
230	1-	1-	1-	1-
220	1-	1-	1-	1-
210	1-	1-	1-	1-
200	1-	1-	1-	1-

Practice tests

- Understand directions to save time.
- Both test-makers make actual former tests available.
- Most students experience a moderate improvement from 2–3 whole practice tests.

Math

- Up through trigonometry for both tests.

- Remainders, odds & evens, exponent rules, prime numbers, roots, one-variable algebra, two-variable algebra, functions, quadratic styles, geometry (memorize formulas for ACT), mean/mode/median, combinations, and permutations.

- SAT includes "free response" math questions.

Critical reading

- Prose fiction

  Characters!

- Social science

  Arguments!

- Humanities

  Inspiration!

- Natural science

  Why we were wrong!

Passages

- Read passage **first.**
- Write brief notes:
    1) Highlight main ideas/topics in each paragraph.
    2) Underline key words.
    3) Indicate conflict.
- Answer question before looking at answer choices.
- SAT: Double-check "linked questions," where second question depends on answer you got for first question.

Multiple choice writing

- Most correct.
- Most relevant.
- Most concise.

TIP: Pick the **shortest** grammatically correct answer.

The Digital SAT will have "standard English" Qs mixed into the Reading section

Grammar to know

- Subject-verb agreement
- Pronouns & prepositions
- Punctuation
- Usage (Further or farther? Much or many?)

SAT essay

- Focus on rhetorical analysis.
- Identify figures of speech, "slippery slopes," mistakes/oversights in the argument, and "good points" that persuade the intended audience.
- Eliminated on the Digital SAT

SAT essay

Analyzing what authors do and why

Your introduction can be very basic; nothing more than:

- In [his/her] essay, [author] [explores/is troubled by/discusses] [the main topic/subject of the essay].
- The main goal of [the author] is to [convince/persuade/explain to] the reader of [main goal of the author] about [the main topic/subject of the essay.].

SAT essay

Analyzing what authors do and why

Start your body paragraphs by using the sentence "root" of:

[Author] uses [rhetorical device/technique/structure] in order to have [a specific effect/argue a specific point] on the reader.

SAT essay

Analyzing what authors do and why

Other rhetorical devices and persuasive techniques:

- compare/contrast
- metaphor
- repetition

- "slippery slope"
- cause-to-effect
- repetition

. . . and the test does not grade you on how "technical" the persuasive techniques you identify are.

Length: At least 1½ pages; 4–5 paragraphs of 5–6 sentences.

ACT essay: 6-paragraph format

- Strongly rewards a rebuttal paragraph (second-to-last paragraph).
- 5 goals of education — address at least 3.
- Grammar a concern only if systematic or repeated (both ACT/SAT).
- Read once by 2 different readers in 2 minutes.
- Length: at least 2 pages.

Science

- Understand and apply the scientific method to various experiments, diagrams, and arguments.

TIP: Use your fingers to "anchor" the chart or experiment you need to review as you come across those in the passage!

Preparation & resources

- College Board new "Blue Book"
- ACT Inc. new "Red Book"
- Khan Academy
- ACT and SAT pamphlets
- wikibooks.org
- freerice.org
- wikipedia.org/wiki/list_of_Greek_and_Latin_roots_in_English