

INTRODUCTION

The SAT is one of the exams many high school students take so that scouting colleges can see which students may or may not fit in with the rest of their student body. The test scores range on a scale from 600 to a 2400, which is equivalent to a 36 on the ACT. It is a test that many colleges require their applicant to have taken, unless the Act has been taken. Some colleges will accept the ACT as a substitute, but many colleges in the east prefer to see SAT scores.

What is the SAT?

The SAT is a test that was developed and is administered by the College Board, which a non-profit organization in the United States. The SAT was originally introduced as the Scholastic Aptitude Test, but the name was later changed to the Scholastic Assessment Test. Today, ironically enough, it does not stand for anything; it is an empty acronym. The current test that is used today was introduced in 2005, when there was a written portion that was added to the exam. The added writing now makes the test a 3 hour and 45 minute ordeal, and it costs about \$50 to take the test in the United States.

It is an exam that shows the test-takers ability to apply skills that he or she has learned in a classroom setting. Most students take the test more than once in hopes of improving their skills, because the average student will get a higher score the second time because he or she will now know what to expect.

Some colleges, such as Harvard and Yale, require their applicants to take subject tests. Subject tests are tests that further test you on specific subjects so that colleges can help with course placement and advise you about what courses you select to take. There are over 20 different subjects you can choose from, and the section is just added to your test.

What does the SAT consist of?

The SAT consists of three 800 point sections: Mathematics, Critical Reading, and Writing. Each section is scored from 200-800 points, so you get 600 points simply for showing up and trying, although you may want to study and shoot for a better score than a 600. The average SAT score is about 1500, but many schools have a low acceptance rate, so it is good to make sure you get in plenty of studying.

Of the three separate sections, the Writing section is the one that most people struggle with. According to satscores.us, there was a study done in 2008 that showed that the average scores for the three different sections were as follows:

Mathematics: 515

Critical Reading: 502

Writing: 494

Each of the three major sections, Mathematics, Critical Reading, and Writing, are divided into three parts, with 10 sub-sections. There is also an additional experimental section that is an additional 25 minutes; this section can be in any one of the three different sections. This experimental section is not

counted toward your own score. It is simply to help normalize questions for future administrations of the SAT. Here is some more in-depth information about each of the separate major sections:

Mathematics

- It is commonly known as the “Quantitative Section” or “Calculation Section.” It consists of three different scored sections. It is broken down, timewise, into two 25 minute sections and one 20 minute section
- One of the 25 minute sections is all multiple choice, and it consists of 20 questions
- The other one of the 25 minute sections has 10 write-on questions and 8 multiple choice questions. The 10 write-on questions don’t have a penalty for guessing, because there aren’t any limits to the guessing
- The 20 minute section consists of 16 questions, and they are all multiple choice

Critical Reading

- The Critical Reading section is also made up of two 25 minute sections and a 20 minute section
- There are questions that range from finishing passages to questions about sentence structure and lengthy passages
- The majority of the Critical Reading section is made up of passages that students read and then there are several questions that will follow. The time restraints keep the students from being able to reread passages, which allows colleges to see what students can deduce from information that they have likely only been able to read once
- Generally, during the Critical Reading section, questions at the beginning of the section are easier and questions at the end of it are harder

Writing

- Many people think that it is simply an essay, but the Writing section of the SAT also includes a few multiple choice questions
- This is the newest section in the SAT; it was introduced in 2005
- Most of the multiple choice questions are questions about grammar and sentence structure; the questions ask you to identify errors
- All essay portions are responses to prompts that are given to the students. There is no required structure given

SAT Test Preparation Tips and Strategies

Take it more than once! This is, by far, what will improve your score the most. Many students go into the test “cold turkey,” without having studied at all. It is easiest to get a feel for the exam when you have taken it before. After having taken it once, take practice tests and study with other people that need to take the test. There are many SAT practice manuals that have tests that are very similar to the actual exam.

Also, be sure you familiarize yourself with all of the materials that you are allowed to use on the exam. For instance, many sections in the Mathematics section allow you to use a calculator. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the calculator that you plan to use on the exam so that you can do problems quickly. The more you practice, the quicker you will be able to do the problems. Because the SAT is a timed test, it is very important to be able to think quickly.