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# The Ultimate Student's Starter Kit to the SAT

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EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GET STARTED

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# Introduction

This eBook was created as the perfect starter kit for any student planning to take or retake the SAT. By beginning here, you'll have a better understanding of the test, and receive essential tools to set yourself up for success.

Most students know that their SAT score can have a big impact on their college admissions and scholarships, but don't know much about the test or how to tackle it. This guide breaks down the SAT and supplies you with practical advice on studying, scheduling your test, and evaluating your scores. With this eBook in hand, you'll be able to confidently take action in creating your study plan and framing your SAT and college goals.

This book features information from the [Albert Blog](#), where new academic resources are posted each day. Be sure to regularly check the blog and subscribe to hear about our new posts. You can also find tips and study guides for your AP classes and admissions advice for your dream schools on our blog.

E-mail us at [hello@albert.io](mailto:hello@albert.io) if you have any questions, suggestions, or comments!

# About Us

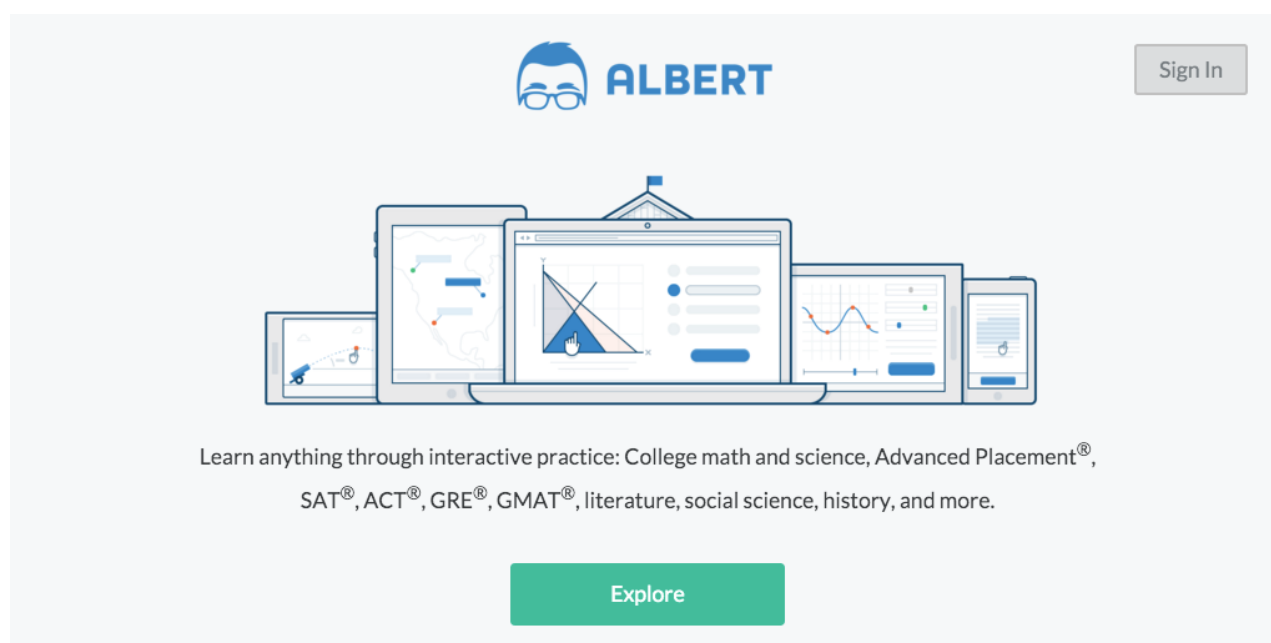
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# How Long is the New SAT?

If you took the SAT last year and are hoping to take it again soon, you may discover that the test you take starting in the 2014-2015 school year is very different than your previous attempts, but don't worry! The SAT is being redesigned to make it a more effective and accurate reflection of what college and the "real world" will be like. This means that there will be both major and minor changes you should know about.

The biggest concern that students have is, "how long is the new SAT?" But, a close second is, "will I still get penalized for wrong answers?" We will answer those questions, and more, in this article. Keep reading to learn all you need to know about the SAT's new format, and gain information on how to get a great score.

## **Differences Between the Current SAT and New SAT**

The table on the next page will outline some of the biggest changes on the 2016 SAT test as compared to the current SAT. It's especially important to note that the scoring system is very different this time around. If you took the SAT in the fall of 2015 and got a 1600, even if you do better on the retest, you will most likely get a lower score on the new exam. But don't panic! This doesn't mean you did worse. It can actually mean you did better! Keep reading to find out why this is!



## How Long is the New SAT? Cont.

"Old" SAT	New 2016 SAT
3 hours and 45 minutes long	3 hours long (3 hours and 50 minutes if you write the optional essay).
Sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical Reading</li> <li>• Writing (+ required essay)</li> <li>• Mathematics</li> </ul>	Focuses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence-Based Reading and Writing</li> <li>• Math</li> <li>• Essay (Optional)</li> </ul>
Focuses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memorization</li> <li>• Vocabulary</li> <li>• Arbitrary strategy and reasoning</li> </ul>	Focuses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applied knowledge</li> <li>• Words in context</li> <li>• Purposeful reasoning (with an emphasis on college readiness)</li> </ul>
Has a required 25-minute essay, which is given at the beginning of the test. The score is factored into the writing section.	Has an optional 50-minute essay, which is given at the end of the test. The score is reported separately from the rest of the exam.
Multiple-choice questions have 5 answer choices.	Multiple-choice questions have 4 answer choices.
Has 1 ¼point deduction for each wrong answer. This means that every 4 incorrect answers canceled out 1 correct one.	Has no deduction for wrong answers (also known as a guessing penalty).
How the test is scored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total scores range from 600-2400</li> <li>• Section scores range from 200-800</li> </ul>	How the test is scored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total scores range from 400-1600</li> <li>• Section scores range from 200-800</li> </ul>
How are scores reported? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper Only</li> <li>• No subscores reported</li> </ul>	How are scores reported? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper and digital formats available</li> <li>• Subscores reported</li> </ul>

# How Long is the New SAT? Cont.

## SAT Test Structure

Now that you understand the differences between the two tests, the first thing you should know about the 2016 SAT is it has a new and improved content structure. This means that your pacing and endurance strategies will have to be different than the old SAT, because the sections are set up differently.

Let's look at it like this:

"Old" SAT	New 2016 SAT
3 Critical Reading Sections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 67 multiple-choice questions</li> <li>• 70 minutes total</li> </ul>	1 Evidence-Based Reading and Writing Section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 65-minute Reading</li> <li>• 35-minute Language and Writing</li> </ul>
3 Math Sections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 44 multiple-choice questions and 10 write in answers</li> <li>• 70 minutes total</li> </ul>	1 Math Section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 55-minute section with calculator</li> <li>• 25-minute section without calculator</li> </ul>
3 Writing Sections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 49 multiple-choice questions</li> <li>• 1 25 minute Essay</li> <li>• 60 minutes total</li> </ul>	1 Essay Section (optional) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50 minutes total</li> </ul>

A quick note before we move on: you'll notice that the new SAT's format is pretty similar to that of the ACT. This means that instead of throwing short sections of mixed up content as you like 25 minutes of math here, 35 minutes of writing there, the SAT is now giving you longer periods of time to work on a single subject. This will aid your pacing and endurance. Find out how below!

## How Long is the New SAT? Cont.

### **Now Let's Dive Further Into Each of the New Sections and See How Different the New SAT Really is.**

If you don't write the optional essay (which you really should do, since it is scored separately, it can't technically hurt your composite scores – but more on that later), the new SAT is actually 45 minutes shorter than the old one. Let's take a quick look at the content that makes up that time.

#### **SAT Math**

If you, or maybe even an older sibling, have taken the old SAT, you probably remember that there were three different math sections that contain a total of 54 questions. The old SAT covers topics such as arithmetic, Algebra I, Geometry, and a little bit of Algebra II. You may also remember that you were allowed to use a calculator on all math sections.

The redesigned SAT, however, is quite different. Many of the questions will be application-based and have multiple steps. This means that the 2016 math sections require more critical thinking and reasoning (just like the real world!), as well as higher-level math, such as trigonometry. Not only will need to know how to apply formulas to real-life situations, you will also need to understand the theories behind certain mathematic principles.

Two new things for 2016 that are very different: There is one grid-in question that is worth 4 points. Grid-in questions are exactly as they sound: there are no answer choices to guide your process, so you must produce your own answer and bubble it in on your answer sheet. The second new feature is that there will be an entire section of math that you are *not* allowed to use your calculator on. But don't let that stress too much as the questions are mostly logic-based. Just be sure to know your multiplication tables!

## How Long is the New SAT? Cont.

### Here's a quick example:

If  $a^2 + 14a = 51 > 0$ , what is value of  $a + 7$ ?

No need to panic! Since  $A > 0$ , start running through numbers that add up to 51 when squared and added to 14 times the original number.

Your process might look like this:

$2 \times 2 = 4$  and  $14 \times 2 = 28$ ...Nope, that's going to be big enough. Okay, let me try 3.

$3 \times 3 = 9$  and  $14 \times 3 = 42$ .  $42 + 9 = 51$ ! Boom! So the answer to  $A+7$  is 10!

Make sure you stay calm and keep thinking. It's also helpful to jot some things down as you go, because while the new SAT gives you a little more time per section and more multiple-choice minutes, if you keep starting from the beginning when something goes wrong, you'll eat it all up.

Some other key topics you'll need to understand for the new SAT include:

1. Ratios and percentages
2. Linear equations
3. Complex equation manipulation

### Will the 2016 Math section be harder?

No, not really. Just make sure you prepare for the new format and focus on what's going to be tested. Just remember that the current test focuses on computational skills, while the 2016 SAT will focus more on real-world problem solving.



# How Long is the New SAT? Cont.

## **SAT Reading and Writing**

The old SAT had sections that cover your Critical Reading and Writing Skills. The Critical Reading section had a variety of questions such as sentence completion, which tests your vocabulary and multiple-choice questions based on both long and short passages, which you have to read within a certain time limit. The Writing Skills section consisted of an essay, sentence correction questions, and multiple-choice paragraph reorganization. Each section was divided into multiple parts and sprinkled throughout the test in approximately 30-minute increments. This made the test seem longer and harder, because your brain was always jumping around between subjects.

The new SAT, however, is very different! As we mentioned, this tests are now all compartmentalized by subject. So you can focus your brain into “reading mode” and get to work. While the timing is only a little bit short on the new SAT, it feels longer because for most students, it’s easier to focus on one thing at a time.

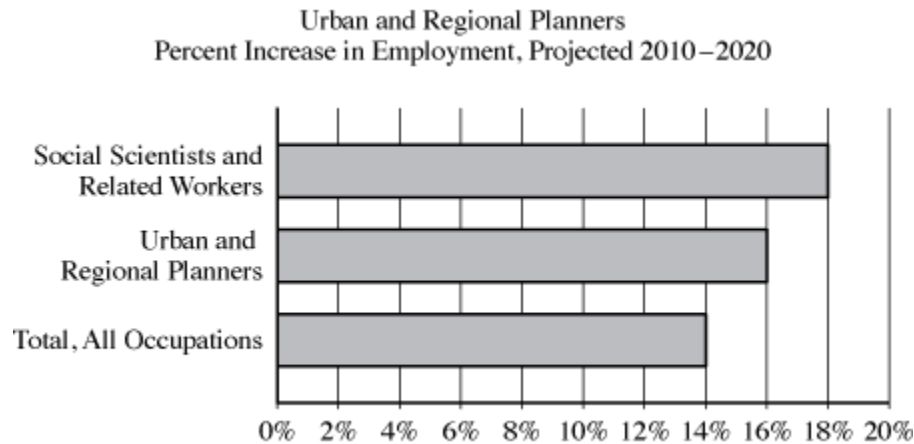
## **What will the questions on the New SAT be like?**

First, there will be no sentence completion questions, meaning you won’t really have to study those notoriously difficult SAT vocabulary words. Instead, you will have to understand the meanings of words in context. For example, “custom” can mean specially made like “a *custom* fitted gown” or a particular way of doing this as in “it is our *custom* to hug three times upon meeting.” Your job would be to read the surrounding sentences for clues, and then pick the answer that best describes how it works in that context.

The 2016 test will focus on evidence-based reading, meaning you have to interpret passages based on US and World Literature, History, and Science. You may see graphs, charts, and images in the reading and writing sections. If you’ve taken the ACT, you might recognize those kinds of questions from the Science section.

# How Long is the New SAT? Cont.

For example, you might be shown something similar to the following chart:



*Image Source: [CollegeBoard](#)*

And be asked to interpret the data on it. No big deal, right?

The SAT Writing Section will also have quite a few straightforward questions that require you to check the grammar and punctuation of passages.

All in all, the new SAT focuses on understanding words, sentences, and grammar in context, as opposed to testing your rote memorization skills.

## **The SAT Essay**

Now here is a pretty big change! The new SAT Essay creates the biggest time change between the two tests. The old test comes with a required, 25-minute timed essay question required you to respond to a short prompt about social, moral, or political issues. You had to create your own unique point of view and sustain your argument by providing supporting evidence, such as personal experiences and outside quotes.



## How Long is the New SAT? Cont.

While adding 50 minutes to the end of an already long test might seem like too much work, it's really not. Even when it is used wisely, the time will fly by. It might be encouraging for you to hear that the passages featured so far have been engaging. Also, while the College Board might consider the new essay optional, many colleges do not. It's always a better idea to have taken the essay and not need it, then need it and not have taken it –especially if you are taking the test as a junior and are still undecided about the kinds of colleges you want to attend.

### SAT Scores

Now that we've gone over the changes in timing and content of individual sections, let's take a look at the new and improved scoring system. You'll probably be excited to know that there will be **absolutely no deductions for wrong answers**. Gone are the days of being arbitrarily strategic about guessing. You can feel completely free to make educated guesses without fear of losing points!

You may also recall that the current SAT has a composite scoring range of 600-2400. The individual Critical Reading, Math, and Writing sections are scored on a 200-800 scale. However, the 2016 SAT will be very different. First, the scale will be from 400-1600. The maximum score you can get on each section of the new SAT, Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and Mathematics, will be 800 each. When you take the 2016 SAT test, you will receive these scores:

#### 2 section scores (200 - 800)

- Evidence-Based Reading and Writing
- Math

#### 3 test scores (10–40) Plus Essay score

- Reading
- Writing and Language
- Math



# How Long is the New SAT? Cont.

## 7 Subscores (1–15)

- Words in Context
- Command of Evidence
- Expression of Ideas
- Standard English Conventions
- Heart of Algebra
- Passport to Advanced Mathematics
- Problem Solving and Data Analysis

## 2 Cross-test scores

- Analysis in Science
- Analysis in History/Social Studies

## Essay score

- Two raters will grade your essay on a 1-4 scale based on each of these criteria: Reading (they have to make sure you actually thoroughly read the prompt) Analysis (they want to make sure you understand the author's argument and how its being presented) and Writing (how well you get *your* point across). The combined score of the two raters will be your final score.
- The highest score you can get on your Essay is 24.

You should not be too concerned about the changes to the 2016 SAT. Remember that the test creators at the College Board have redesigned the test to benefit you, and not to make it harder.

## A Quick Review:

- A new version of the SAT made its debut in March 2016
- The time varies: If you complete the optional essay, the test is exactly 4 hours long, including breaks.
- If you don't write the essay, the test is approximately 3 hours and 5 minutes long, including breaks.





## How Long is the New SAT? Cont.

With this knowledge of the new SAT, you will be ready to prepare for the next time you take the test, or for the first time you take the test! Never again will you wonder, “how long is the SAT?” because now you know.

### **What Are The Next Steps?**

It’s time to get to work!

You can read about when to start studying for the SAT here, or check out the blog about how long to study for the SAT.



# Ready to Score Higher?

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[Start Practicing](#)

# How Long Should You Study for the SAT?

## Your 8 Step Guide

Because the new SAT has finally been administered for the first time, many students, now confident in the exam's new format, have started working hard on their SAT study plans to achieve the best SAT score that they can. Usually, students call this score their "target score" – you've probably heard your friends use the term, or maybe even your guidance counselor.

**But what exactly is a target SAT score, and how do you set it? And once you've determined what it should be, how long should you study to achieve it?**

Figuring out how long you should study for the SAT can be difficult – but it doesn't have to be. Our 8-step guide will walk you through each step of the SAT preparation process, so you know everything you need to achieve your version of a perfect SAT score.

Are you ready? Because here we go:

### **1. Pick Your 3 or 4 Top Choice Schools.**

The first step of good SAT prep is the most exciting. You'll need to start researching what kind of college you'd like to attend. Since you should begin studying for the SAT in the fall of your junior year at the very latest, you might not have a solid idea of where you'd like to go. Don't worry – this isn't a problem.

If you don't have your favorite universities already picked out, what you should do is choose 4 colleges that you *might* like to attend. You can pick an in-state public university and private college, and then the same thing, but out of state.

# How Long Should You Study for the SAT?

## Your 8 Step Guide Cont.

You need to have a general idea of where you might end up to complete the next step.

### 2. Set Your Target Score Based on the Schools' 75<sup>th</sup> Percentile Scores.

Once you have your top choice schools selected, the next step in deciding how long you should study for the SAT is setting your target score. Your target score is the SAT score that you need in be considered a competitive candidate for admission.

What you should do is do a quick internet search for "X average SAT score" replacing the X with the name of each school you're interested in attending. As soon as you find its average test score, you will probably notice that they are divided into two categories: the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile and the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.

Much like the percentile rankings you will receive on your actual SAT score report, the higher percentile numbers are the better ones. When a college says that 25 percent of its students scored a 1200 on the SAT and 75 percent scored a 1450, it means that the students who scored a 1200 are at the bottom of the class. To be a competitive applicant, you want to be in the top of the class, so you'll need to score *at least* in each school's 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.

For example:

My Schools & Scores	25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	75 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	New SAT
Baylor	1650	1970	1100-1310
Texas A&M	1560	1900	1040-1270
Oral Roberts	910	1130	610-750
Oklahoma State	990	1210	660-810

## How Long Should You Study for the SAT? Your 8 Step Guide Cont.

Most schools will not have their new SAT percentiles listed yet (and they probably won't until late Fall 2016 at the earliest) so to figure out where you stand, all you need to do is multiply the old score by  $\frac{2}{3}$  because 1600 (the new perfect score) is  $\frac{2}{3}$  of 2400 (the old perfect score) and voilà! You now have your new score.



*[Image Source: Pixabay](#)*

This is a key step in determining how long you should study for the SAT. Students have traditionally taken the official SAT in the spring of their junior year without any preparation, just to see how they might do. Do not participate in this tradition! It's a complete waste of both your time and registration fee.

To create an effective SAT study plan, you obviously need to know how close you are to your target score.

# How Long Should You Study for the SAT?

## Your 8 Step Guide Cont.

To do this, you should purchase an SAT practice booklet like [this one](#) from the College Board and set aside a morning to take a practice exam.

Treat this mock exam like it was the real thing. You might ask a parent or sibling to help you monitor the time to keep you on track. You'll also only want to take a break when you would be able to on the real exam. The point is to mimic the condition of test day, so you can monitor your endurance and test-fatigue, as well as a base score.

If this doesn't sound like something you could do, you can always take a mock SAT at a local test prep center. To find a location near you, you would just need to look up "SAT test Prep in X" replacing X with your town or a town near by.

**A quick warning:** these test prep centers might let you take the practice SAT for free, but if you want to know exactly what your answers were or have a tutor walk you through what you did wrong, you'll have to pay extra. Sometimes, you'll even have to enroll in their test prep program. often purchasing an entire test prep package. Taking your mock SAT in a "real" testing environment can be great practice, but just make sure you ask questions upfront.

### 4. Create a Study Plan Based on the SAT Point Improvement You Need.



*[Image Source: Pixabay](#)*

# How Long Should You Study for the SAT?

## Your 8 Step Guide Cont.

Okay, so you've taken a mock exam and have set a target SAT score...now what? Well, the next step you need to take is actually pretty simple. Just compare your practice score to your target score, and then consult the following chart:

Point Improvement Needed	Hours of Studying Required
0-50	10 or less
50-150	10-20
150-250	20-40
250-350	40-80
More than 350	More than 100

As you can see, the amount of point improvement you need is the biggest factor when you are making your SAT study timeline. If you need less than 100 points to reach your goal, then you probably only need to spend a few hours studying. You might review some simple test taking strategies like pacing and guessing or basic SAT content that was a little fuzzy the first time around.

However, if you need a 250 or more point improvement, you'll notice that a complete overhaul of your study schedule is needed. At this point, you'll want to begin treating the SAT like an actual class. If you don't procrastinate and set aside an hour or two each day, you can catch up on test's core content and exam strategies without getting overwhelmed.

This is why it's a good idea to take your first practice test at the end of your sophomore year, or in the fall of your junior year as a last resort. Starting early gives you plenty of time to study for the SAT.

# How Long Should You Study for the SAT?

## Your 8 Step Guide Cont.

**Remember:** When you are preparing for the SAT, slow, consistent studying is better for understanding and retaining core content than trying to cram it all in at the last minute. The latter will only stress you out and cause you to under perform.

### 5. Register for the Real Test.

Take a look at your long-term schedule and pick an SAT date that presents the least amount of conflict to your existing commitments. That means that taking the SAT the same weekend as your AP exams or the big game is a terrible idea. [You can find a complete list of the 2016 – 2017 SAT dates here.](#)

The earlier you can get started, the better. So, an ideal situation would be that you took your practice test to see where you stand at the end of your sophomore year, or near the beginning of the summer, and took the rest of the summer to study, so you would be ready for the October SAT.

**But, we all know that the ideal situation never seems to happen in test prep.**

So, when registering for the actual SAT, make sure to leave yourself *at least* one month to study. If you study an hour a day after school for an entire month, that's at least 20 hours of prep or at least 50-100 points in SAT score improvement. It's also not unusual for students who got a late start to set aside 3-4 hours each weekend for SAT prep, especially if they are overwhelmed by homework during the week.

### 6. Set Incremental Improvement Goals.

You aren't going to be able to improve your SAT scores overnight. In fact, depending on the point increase you need to reach your target goal, it's a good idea to set incremental improvement goals throughout the studying process.



# How Long Should You Study for the SAT?

## Your 8 Step Guide Cont.

You should write down these incremental score goals and post them in an easy to see place in your house, like your desk or maybe even on the refrigerator, so that the rest of your family is aware of what you want to achieve and can help keep you on track.

For a score increase from an 1100 to a 1300, your goals might look a little something like this:

	March SAT	April Practice Test	May Practice Test	June SAT
Math	500	550	580	600
Evidence-based Reading and Writing	600	680	700	700
Composite	1100	1230	1280	1300

For this type of score improvement, you would need at least 20-40 hours of studying. So, as you can see, you'll need to leave yourself plenty of time to put in the required hours. While the above table can give you a picture of *when* your scores should increase, the table below will show you the time you need to put in so your scores will actually increase.

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
Rest	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour	2-3 hrs

**Total weekly hours studied: 7-8 hours.**

At 7-8 hours a week, it would take you 5 weeks, or just over 1 month to completely study for the SAT. Of course, you should adjust the tables above to fit your own timeline and the score increase that you need.

# How Long Should You Study for the SAT?

## Your 8 Step Guide Cont.

### 7. Analyze Your Results.

At least once a month, you should set some time aside to reexamine your SAT study plan to ensure that its working for you. If you have poor study habits, then you'll probably spend way longer studying for the SAT than you actually need to.

To examine how you're doing, and how much more time you'll need to study, just through the following list:

- Figure out if you're spending your daily study time actually studying, or if you're texting your friends that you're studying and hate it.
- Review the types of mistakes you are making. Do you *still* struggle with reading graphs? Are percentages giving you trouble? If you can't conquer a specific concept, then it's time to seek outside help (from a parent, tutor, teacher, or friend) so you don't get too discouraged and you continue to improve.
- Ensure that you do not feel burnt out. If you are improving rapidly, it might be time to ease up on your weekly study hours, perhaps scaling back from 7-8 hours a week to 2-3. There is no benefit in studying to the point of fatigue. You'll find yourself unable to focus, so you'll stop improving.

### 8. Retake the SAT as Necessary.

The last thing you need to do when deciding how long you need to study for the SAT is deciding how many times you'll retake the exam. [You can read detailed advice about if you should retake the SAT here.](#)

If you are not seeing improvement in your official test scores, you will need to devote more hours over a longer period of time to studying for the SAT.

# What's a Good SAT Score? What's a Bad SAT Score?

The SAT seems to have changed its format many times in the past few years, going from a perfect score of 1600 to 2400, and now back down to 1600. The SAT essay, which used to be required, is now optional and has a different format. Because of this, it can be difficult for students and parents alike to decide if their score SAT is good or not.

**But you don't need to worry because we've got you covered.**

Many different elements can determine a “good” score on the SAT. Below, you'll find a list of all of them.

Just a quick reminder: as of March 2016, all future SATs given will be the revised version, meaning that the highest possible score is now a perfect 1600. All the information in this article is about this new exam.

## **The Higher the Better**

As mentioned, the highest score that you can earn on the new 2016 SAT is 1600. To earn this score, you must achieve an 800 in math (there will be two sections; you may use a calculator on the first, but not the second) and on the two-part section called Evidence-based Reading and Writing. Unfortunately, few students will achieve these top marks. When 2400 was a perfect score, the national average was about 1500, so as long as your scores were “above average” you could consider them good.

# What's a Good SAT Score? What's a Bad SAT Score? Cont.

Nowadays, things are obviously a little bit different. But scholars are predicting that the national average for the new SAT will be about 1000, so roughly 500 on each of the sections.

## So What Does This Mean For You?

Obviously, you want your SAT score to be the highest that it can be. You also want to have a consistent performance between the two categories. That is, it would look bizarre to colleges if you scored an 800 in math and a 200 in Evidence-based Reading and Writing. Your extremely low score would practically cancel out your perfect one, so if you know one subject will be particularly tricky for you, make sure to allocate more study time so that your scores will be on consistent across the board. This doesn't mean that you should get the same score on each section, but since colleges are looking for well-rounded students who are capable of doing a variety of work, it's best to get them as close as possible.

## How Does the SAT Affect my College Application?

This is where what constitutes a "good" SAT score becomes extremely relative since it depends on what kind of school you want to attend.

If you are looking into a school that is more selective and has a highly competitive admissions process, like an Ivy League school, Stanford, Rice, etc., then you will need SAT scores that are well above the national average. They should be as close to perfect as you can get them, and no less than a 650 on each of the sections.

But, maybe you aren't as interested in those highly competitive schools. Maybe you want to go to a larger university like Baylor, a liberal arts school like Rollins College, or maybe even a state school close to home. If that's the case, a good SAT score is one that puts you in the top 25% of that respective school's applicants.

# What's a Good SAT Score? What's a Bad SAT Score? Cont.

## Let Us Break That Down For You

When you take the exam, whether for the first, second, or third time, you need to go into the test with a target SAT score range. For example, "On the May SAT, I will score between 700-750 on both math and Evidence-based Reading and Writing."

Now, maybe you don't need to score that high. What's important is that your scores are competitive for the school that *you* want to go to.

The first thing you need to do is make a list of the schools you are interested in attending. If you aren't sure what kind of school you want to go to quite yet, pick a state school and private university near where you live and start from there.

Then, you'll then want to create a table that looks something like this:

School Name	25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile (2400)	75 <sup>th</sup> Percentile (2400)	75 <sup>th</sup> Percentile (1600)
Baylor University	1650	1970	1310
Rollins College	1655	1960	1310
University of Texas (Austin)	1690	2060	1370

After you've inserted the names of your favorite schools, you will want to do a quick internet search for their average test scores. So for Baylor, you would look up "average SAT scores Baylor." In your results, you should find the 25<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentile score ranges for each school.



## What's a Good SAT Score? What's a Bad SAT Score? Cont.

The 25<sup>th</sup> percentile means that students who report these scores are only better than 25 % of their classmates. In other words, they are the bottom of the class. If you score in this range, you will need to compensate in other areas of your application. Meaning that if you have low SAT scores, you'll need a fantastic personal statement, a great GPA, and stellar teacher recommendations.

The 75<sup>th</sup> percentile means that students who fall in this SAT score range are better than 75% of their classmate. To have a good chance of being admitted, you need to make sure that your scores fall into the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher.

Now, most of the SAT score ranges available will be for the old SAT. So, if you're taking the SAT in March 2016 or after, you have a little bit more work ahead of you.

**You'll now need to convert the old SAT scores into the new ones.**

To do this, take each school's 75<sup>th</sup> percentile score and multiply it by  $\frac{2}{3}$ . This because 1600 is  $\frac{2}{3}$  of 2400, the old perfect score. Then, since SAT scores only end in 0, you'll need to round your answer to the nearest 10. So, for Baylor, you would do the following:

$1970 \times \frac{2}{3} = 1313.33333$ , rounded to the nearest 10 is 1310.

Thus, to have a good chance of being admitted to Baylor, you would need about 1310 on the new 2016 SAT.

After you've determined the target score for each school that you're interested in, you should average them out. So using the examples above, your target score on the new SAT would be 1330.



# What's a Good SAT Score? What's a Bad SAT Score? Cont.

## What If You've Already Taken the SAT and Don't Want to Take it Again?

Unless you scored a perfect 1600, taking the SAT multiple times is pretty much always in your best interest. There is always room for improvement! However, perhaps you're a senior and application deadlines are quickly approaching. You need to know where you can apply with the scores you have *now*.

You should start with a quick search of "schools that accept X SAT score" or, you can visit this [list](#) and see where you fit in.

## Are You In Need Scholarship Money?

If so, a high SAT score can work in your favor. In this case, a good SAT score is one that earns you the financial aid that you need, although as usual, the higher the score, the better the scholarship.

You can find these scholarships directly on colleges' websites, or from third party websites like [this one](#). Typically, to receive scholarships from third parties, you will need to score in the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher on the SAT. However, most colleges do offer financial or need-based for scores lower than this, often in the form of a grid or calculator on their website. You can see an example [here](#). That is, if you earned X on the SAT, you are given Y in scholarship money. These score ranges are normally very cut and dry, meaning that there are no exceptions.

## What Do You Want to Major in?

The field that you want to go into also affects what a good SAT score is for you. For example, if you want to go into the engineering field, then you will need to have higher math scores. It is also essential that your scores are on par with what that college requires. Often, low scores will bar you from entering a certain major within the school, even if you qualify for the school in general.



# What's a Good SAT Score? What's a Bad SAT Score? Cont.

If you are going into the humanities field, then your math scores can be anywhere from 50 to 75 points lower than the recommended score, and you will still be considered a viable candidate for admission. However, your Evidence-based Reading and Writing scores will need to be higher to highlight your strengths.

## What Score Do *You* Want?

Your target SAT score should not be the score that your parents want you to get or the score that your friends got. While encouragement and academic peer pressure can be beneficial to a certain point, it is important to pay attention to your goals and dreams.

Your friends are not on the same track that you are. While you may be in the same classes now, when you go to college, your academic paths will probably be different. You need to determine what scores you'll need to get into the school that *you* want to go to.

That may mean that you only need 1000, or maybe you're Harvard-bound and need that perfect 1600. Work for the score that you want to have and a score that you will be proud to justify when you apply for colleges.

## Key Takeaway When Answering, "What is a Good SAT Score?"

Please remember that SAT scores are not the only piece of the college admission puzzle. Your grade point average, club participation, volunteer experience, essays, and teacher recommendations will also heavily impact how the admissions committee views you.

Also, keep in mind that your SAT scores do not define you, so if your scores are not where you want them to be, then do not worry. You can always retake the test.





# Ready to Score Higher?

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Stop stressing about the SATs.

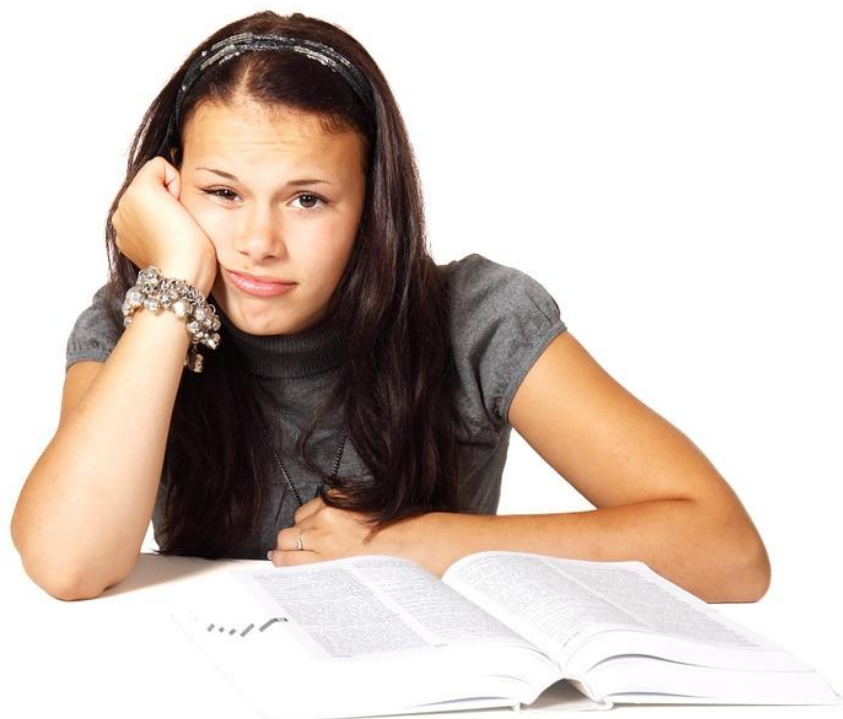
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# What is the Average SAT Score?



[Image source: Pixabay](#)

Everybody wants to be above average, but especially when it comes to the SAT. To get into the best colleges and receive generous scholarships, you will need a higher than average SAT score.

## **So, What Exactly is the Average SAT Score, then?**

Well, as of March 2016, the College Board released a redesigned SAT. The exam used to have three sections and be scored out of 2400, with an average score of about 1500. However, the new SAT only has two sections and a perfect score of 1600. So, to calculate the probable new average, we just need to do a little bit of math.



## What is the Average SAT Score? Cont.

Since 1600 is  $\frac{2}{3}$  of 2400, to get the new average, we just need to multiply the old average of 1500 by  $\frac{2}{3}$ . **So, the 2016 average SAT score is likely to be around 1000.**

**But wait: there's still more to consider.**

1000 is likely to be the national average, but the College Board also tends to release information on average SAT scores by gender, ethnicity, and state.

### Let's Dive In:

In 2015, nearly 1.7 million students took the SAT – a new record. The College Board has since released its annual Total Group Profile Report. You can find a copy of it [here](#). This report lists the national average of SAT scores in each section for every year since 1972. You will note, however, that the writing section was not introduced until 2005, so that's why the earlier data is missing.

If you're interested in even more specific data, the report also includes information about the GPA's of each student, what grade they are in, how much money their family makes, and what kind of classes they have taken in high school.

While all that data is definitely interesting, and if you're trying to procrastinate it can be fun to read, it can still be a little over whelming to sort through.

**So to make it easier on you, here are the Highlights:**

**For the retired 2015 SAT, the national averages were:**

- Critical Reading: 495
- Mathematics: 511
- Writing: 484
- **Total: 1490**

## What is the Average SAT Score? Cont.

So, based on the 2/3 rule, the average **SAT scores for the redesigned 2016 exam won't change much.**

Since the predicted national average for 2016 will be 1000, each section is also expected to hover around 500 points each.

**Here are the averages for the retired 2015 SAT scores by gender:**

Gender	Reading	Math	Writing	Total
Male	497	527	478	1502
Female	493	496	490	1479

**And by ethnicity:\***

Ethnicity	Exams Taken	Reading	Writing	Math	Total
American, Indian, or Alaska Native	10,031	481	482	460	1423
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	211,238	525	598	531	1654
Black or African American	219,018	431	428	418	1277
Mexican or Mexican American	130,026	448	457	438	1343
Puerto Rican	30,192	456	449	442	1347

## What is the Average SAT Score? Cont.

Ethnicity	Exams Taken	Reading	Writing	Math	Total
Other Hispanic, Latino, or Latino American	162,655	449	457	439	1345
White	800,236	529	534	513	1576
Other	65,063	490	519	487	1496
No Response	70,062	434	492	436	1362
Total	1,698,521	495	511	484	1490

\*It should be noted that identifying your ethnicity on the SAT is completely optional and is only used for general information like this. Most students, however, do decide to identify themselves.

The gaps between the different genders and ethnicities are a great cause for concern for many educators. They are something that is being researched extensively, and, with the introduction of the new 2016 SAT, will hopefully begin to close.

### Feeling Overwhelmed?

All this information can be fun to read, but what's really important is that you fall into the average score range for the school that you want to attend. For some students, like those who want to attend an Ivy League school, this score will be well above the national average of 1000. But for other schools, you won't need to score so high.

## What is the Average SAT Score? Cont.

Here's some quick info to help you figure out what your average SAT score range should be if you want to go to any of the Ivy League schools:

### Average SAT Scores at The Ivy League

School Name	Average SAT Score (Middle 50%)
Brown University	2000-2330 / 1330-1550
Columbia University	2090-2350 / 1390-1560
Cornell University*	1330-1510
Dartmouth College	2050-2340/1360-1560
Harvard University	2130-2400/1420-1600
Princeton University	2100-2400/1400-1600
University of Pennsylvania	2050-2330/1360-1550
Yale University	2120-2390/1410-1590

\*Remember that Cornell doesn't currently consider the writing section of the SAT when admitting students, so its average score range still stands after the redesign of the SAT because the same two sections are still being considered.

The scores on the left are current, while the scores on the right are estimates adjusted for the new SAT.

Not interested in the Ivy League? Check out these options:

# What is the Average SAT Score? Cont.

## Average SAT Scores at Top Public Universities

School Name	Average SAT Score (Middle 50%)
College of William and Mary	1890-2180 /1260-1450
Georgia Tech	1870-2150 /1240-1430
UC Berkeley	1840-2240/1230-1490
UCLA	1750-2150/1160-1430
UC San Diego	1750-2080/1160-1390
University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign	1840-2120/1220-1430
University of Michigan	1910-2210/1270-1470
UNC Chapel Hill	1780-2100/1180-1400
University of Virginia	1870-2070/1250-1380
University of Wisconsin	1740-2070/1160-1380

As with the chart above, the scores listed on the left are the averages out of 2400 and the scores on the right are out of 1600 for the new SAT.

As you can see, the SAT score range for these schools is slightly lower than the scores required for the Ivy League, but they are still well above the national average of 1500 on the old SAT and 1000 on the new one.



## What is the Average SAT Score? Cont.

If these scores still seem too high for what you are hoping to achieve, take a look at [this list](#) to get an idea of what options you have. You can also Google “colleges that accept X SAT score” to get a better idea. But, as always, you should always attempt to improve your scores.

Remember: you can always take the SAT more than one time. In fact, it’s pretty normal to take the exam two or three times; usually for the first time in the spring of your junior year, and the second the fall of senior year. Consistent and focused preparation for the exam is guaranteed to give you the score you need.



# When Should I Start Studying for the SAT?

## Your Guide

Standardized tests are an essential component of any college application. While they are not the most important part, admissions officers are known to place a substantial amount of weight on SAT scores when considering applicants.

**The SAT scores' function is to support other parts of the application.**

Let's say you have a 4.0 GPA. It would be puzzling to admissions officers if you didn't have equally stunning SAT scores. This gap would lead them to believe that:

1. You have some holes in your content knowledge that you have been able to mask during your regular schooling.
2. You did not adequately prepare a SAT study plan, and so you under performed.

Neither of these situations is a good one to be in!

**To avoid this, it's best to start a consistent SAT study plan as early as your sophomore year of high school, and no later than the start of your junior year.**

It's pretty standard practice for American high school students to take the SAT *at least* two times. The first attempt at the exam is usually made in the spring of their junior year, perhaps in March or May. After a long summer of studying, they would retake the test in October, and, if things didn't go as well as they'd hoped, take the exam one last time in November.

# When Should I Start Studying for the SAT?

## Your Guide Cont.

Yet, as the college admissions process becomes more and more competitive, students are now encouraged to devote the better half of their senior years entirely to “finishing strong” (that is, avoiding senioritis and getting straight A’s senior year) and developing stellar college applications.

**It is becoming more and more common for students to begin preparing for the SAT as early as the fall of their junior year, and in some cases, their sophomore spring.**

**Take a look at this Timeline:**

Junior March/May	Junior Summer	Senior October	Senior November
Take SAT →	Study →	Retake SAT →	Retake SAT →
			(Optional)

As you can see, this “traditional” timeline leaves little room for error. What if you get sick or have a sports tournament and can’t make a certain testing date? **If you start studying for the SAT earlier, you will have more options and less stress.** This way, you don’t have to panic as you approach a self-imposed deadline created by lack of preparation.

Another thing to keep in mind if you want to apply to any schools Early Action or Early Decision, your **senior year November** scores are **not guaranteed** to arrive in time. If they arrive after the deadline, then they will probably not be considered by the admissions committee. You definitely want to avoid this!

- The **Early Action & Early Decision** deadline is usually November 1<sup>st</sup>, so you’ll need to take the SAT by **October of your senior year** to ensure your scores arrive in time.



# When Should I Start Studying for the SAT?

## Your Guide Cont.

- The **Regular Decision** deadline varies by school, but is usually in the first two weeks of January, meaning that the **December SAT of your senior year** is your last chance to take the exam.

### **Before you start your SAT practice, here's something to keep in mind:**

In the past, students have taken the exam without in prep in the spring of their junior year as a sort of “dry run.” They would typically do this just to see where they stand with their content knowledge and what kind of score they can achieve right off the bat.

### **Don't do this!**

Taking the official SAT “just to see what would happen” is a complete waste of your time, not to mention your \$43.00 registration fee.

Instead, consider taking a timed practice SAT at the beginning of your test preparations. Whether from a local tutoring firm, or at your kitchen table from a prep book, taking an SAT before you've really studied is great for assessing your content knowledge (i.e. it gives you a base score), but not so great for your college admission chances.

If you want to take a practice test at an actual testing center, you just need to do a quick internet search for “mock SAT in (insert your city here)” or “SAT prep in (insert your city here).”

A quick caveat: if you take a practice test at one of these prep centers, you might not have to pay to take the actual exam, but they might charge you if you want to review your answers with a tutor, or see exactly which questions you got wrong. You'll need to ask about this up front before you take the test.

# When Should I Start Studying for the SAT?

## Your Guide Cont.

With that said, you should start studying for the SAT way before you take your first practice exam. Here's how:

### **Year by Year SAT Study Plan**

#### **Freshman Year**

##### ***Fall Semester***

Establish good study habits and start high school off the right way! Your freshman year, you will be taking either Algebra I or Geometry. Pay attention in class! These concepts will be heavily tested on the new SAT.

Try not to zone out during English class either. Freshman year English is famous for doling out foundational knowledge about grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and organization – all concepts that will be heavily featured on the new SAT.

##### ***Spring Semester***

Keep up the good work! Study hard and pay attention in your classes. This way, you won't have to reteach yourself any information when you're an upperclassman. Talk about unneeded stress.

#### **Sophomore Year**

##### ***Fall Semester***

You should now be in Geometry or Algebra II. It is essential for you to have completed your study of Geometry before you take the SAT. Algebra II is helpful to have under your belt, but if you don't take it until you're a junior, you should be okay.

# When Should I Start Studying for the SAT?

## Your Guide Cont.

### ***Spring Semester***

Keep studying hard and paying attention in class. If you notice any particular math concepts are difficult for you, seek help *now*, rather than wait and see if they pop up on the SAT.

You should be reading extensively to practice thinking critically about different texts and increasing your vocabulary (not with random words, but studying and understanding how the same word in different contexts can have many different meanings).

You should also start thinking about what kind of college you want to go to. Do you want to attend a big university or a small college? Would you prefer to be close to home or farther away? What sort of budget does your family have? These kinds of questions are a great way to start narrowing down your choices.

### **Junior Year**

Now it's really time to get down to business. You should be in Algebra II or Pre Calculus by now. You should be well read, have a good vocabulary, and be able to create persuasive and well-constructed prose.

### ***September***

Take a practice SAT to where you stand score-wise. Based on your results, you can pick out a few colleges that fall within, or slightly higher than this score range.

### ***October***

You need to register for the December or January SAT. Take a look at your school schedule and decide which of the two is most convenient. You will also need to devise your SAT study plan. Review your practice test results and identify the areas that were your weakest. Did you do better in math? Excellent. Pinpoint the areas that you still need to improve.

# When Should I Start Studying for the SAT?

## Your Guide Cont.

Maybe you did lower than you'd hoped on Evidence-based Reading and Writing, if so, then you'll want to devote a larger portion of your study time to it.

### ***November***

Keep your nose in the books! It's a good idea to treat the SAT like it's a class that gives you nightly homework. Consistency is key to success on this test.

### ***December***

Take the test and give yourself a break from studying while you wait for the scores to come back. If you signed up for the January test, keep studying.

### ***January***

If you didn't take the test in December, it's your time now! If you did, take a look at your score report. Note your improvements since your first practice test and adjust your SAT study schedule accordingly.

### ***February***

Whether you took it in December or January, you will have your scores back by now. Give yourself a week or two off, and then dive right back in, targeting your weaknesses in each section.

### ***March***

If you took the test in December, March is the perfect time for your second try. If you have been consistent with your studying, you should see a score improvement of 100+ points.

### ***April***

The SAT is not offered this month. If you took the March test, depending on your scores, you might be done. If you took the January test, keep studying!

# When Should I Start Studying for the SAT?

## Your Guide Cont.

### **May**

Now is the time for the January test-takers to make their second attempt. If you are overwhelmed by the process of taking the SAT the same month as all your AP exams, then you can wait until June.

### **June**

One last shot to take the SAT.

*Congratulations! You're done. Now you have the summer to yourself and your senior year to focus on other things.*

### **Okay, but what if it's already too late for me to start this timeline?**

No worries – we've got you covered.

### **Senior Year**

#### **September**

Take a practice SAT to see where you stand score-wise. Based on your results, you can pick out a few colleges that fall within, or slightly higher than, this score range. You need to register for the October and December SAT.

You will also need to devise your SAT study plan. Take a look at your practice test results and identify the areas that were your weakest. Did you do better in math? Excellent. Pinpoint the areas that you still need to improve. Maybe you did lower than you'd hoped on Evidence-based Reading and Writing, if so, then you'll want to devote a larger portion of your study time to it.

#### **October**

Study hard and take the SAT for the first time.

# When Should I Start Studying for the SAT?

## Your Guide Cont.

### ***November***

Review your results from your first attempt and adapt your SAT study plan accordingly.

### ***December***

Take the SAT again and wait on your scores.

*Congratulations – you’re done!*

**As you can see, there is a lot more room for improvement, and a lot less stress if you begin studying for the SAT your junior year.**

This year’s juniors and seniors are in an interesting situation about when they should start studying for the SAT. Because of March 2016, the College Board is now giving a brand new version of the SAT. Here’s what you need to know:

### **The New SAT Format**

Here’s the deal: the College Board has been very vocal that the **SAT’s goal is to determine how ready high school student’s are for their first semester of college.** If they score well on the test, they will be able to succeed at a top-tier university. If they don’t do as well, they either need to study more, or attend a less-selective school.

To ensure that the SAT is an accurate predictor of what college will be like, the College Board has recently revamped the exam. As of March 2016, 2400 will no longer be the perfect score.



# When Should I Start Studying for the SAT?

## Your Guide Cont.

Here's a quick rundown:

Old SAT	New SAT
2400 is the perfect score	1600 is the perfect score
The essay is required	The essay is optional
Has three sections	Has two sections
Has a guessing penalty	Has no guessing penalty

Now, let us explain:

The old SAT wanted students to excel at problem solving and logical thinking, so it would combine several concepts within the same problem, as well as actively try to trick students. The new SAT wants students to complete questions with real-world applications. It also tries to align with the Common Core. Because of this, the questions should seem more like what you've learned in school – so technically you start studying for the SAT your first day of freshman year.

One way the new format of the 2016 SAT aims to accentuate its new emphasis on real-world application is **testing you on vocabulary that you should know for college and will use later in life**. Gone are days where you are tested on strange words that not even your English teacher knows!

The College Board has also **eliminated the guessing penalty**. The old SAT took away  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a point for every question you got wrong. The new SAT wants you to try your best on each question, so a wrong answer has no effect on your score.

# When Should I Start Studying for the SAT?

## Your Guide Cont.

The old SAT had three sections: Critical Reading, Math, and Writing. The writing section included a compulsory essay that always began the exam.

The new SAT technically has two sections: **Math and Evidence-based Reading and Writing**, but they are divided into the following subsections:

- Math with a calculator
- Math without a calculator
- Reading
- Writing and Language

The essay has now been moved to the end of the exam, is completely optional (although it might be required by some schools), and is scored separately from the rest of the test. The last small change has to do with question organization. On the old SAT, the questions were presented chronologically by difficulty within each section. On the new exam, the questions order could be considered “random.” The questions will no longer be presented in any particular order and their perceived difficulty will heavily depend on the skill set of each particular student.

**Now you are familiar with the New SAT’s format and when to start studying for the SAT. But maybe you’ve already taken the exam. So then what should you do?**

Well, here are some SAT score ranges for different colleges:

### The Ivy League

School Name	Average SAT Score (Middle 50%)
Brown University	2000-2330 / 1330-1550

# When Should I Start Studying for the SAT?

## Your Guide Cont.

School Name	Average SAT Score (Middle 50%)
Columbia University	2090-2350 /1390-1560
Cornell University*	1330-1510
Dartmouth College	2050-2340/1360-1560
Harvard University	2130-2400/1420-1600
Princeton University	2100-2400/1400-1600
University of Pennsylvania	2050-2330/1360-1550
Yale University	2120-2390/1410-1590

\*Remember that Cornell doesn't currently consider the writing section of the SAT when admitting students (as of the 2015-2016 school year), so its average score range still stands after the redesign of the SAT because the same two sections are still being considered.

The scores on the left are current, while the scores on the right are estimates adjusted for the new SAT.

Not interested in the Ivy League? Check out these options:

### Top Public Universities

School Name	Average SAT Score (Middle 50%)
College of William and Mary	1890-2180 /1260-1450

# When Should I Start Studying for the SAT?

## Your Guide Cont.

School Name	Average SAT Score (Middle 50%)
Georgia Tech	1870-2150 /1240-1430
UC Berkeley	1840-2240/1230-1490
UCLA	1750-2150/1160-1430
UC San Diego	1750-2080/1160-1390
University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign	1840-2120/1220-1430
University of Michigan	1910-2210/1270-1470
UNC Chapel Hill	1780-2100/1180-1400
University of Virginia	1870-2070/1250-1380
University of Wisconsin	1740-2070/1160-1380

The scores on the left are current, while the scores on the right are estimates adjusted for the new SAT.

### Top Liberal Arts Colleges

School Name	Average SAT Score (Middle 50 %)
Williams College	2020-2320/1350-1540
Amherst College	2020-2290/1350-1530
Swarthmore College	2030-2300/1350-1520

# When Should I Start Studying for the SAT?

## Your Guide Cont.

School Name	Average SAT Score (Middle 50%)
Bowdoin College	2050-2280/1370-1520
Middlebury College	1930-2240/1290-1490
Pomona College	2070-2320/1380-1550
Wellesley College	1980-2270/1320-1510
Carleton College	2000-2270/1330-1510
Claremont McKenna College	1980-2250/1320-1500
Davidson College	1840-2150/1230-1430

The scores on the left are current, while the scores on the right are estimates adjusted for the new SAT.

If these scores still seem too high, or you are interested in other colleges, take a look at [this list](#).

### A quick recap:

The SAT has a new format in 2016 and will now be scored out of 1600 instead of 2400. There are only two sections: math and Evidence-based Reading and Writing. You should start studying for the SAT in the fall of your junior year, if possible. It will save you lots of stress. Always aim high, but there are colleges and universities to accommodate every score range.

So there you have it, you now know when to start studying for the SAT and what to expect on the exam. Now get to work!

# When Should You Take the SAT? Best SAT Test Dates

Taking the new SAT is a pretty big deal. While it's not the most important part of your college application, it's still a pretty big component, as college admissions officers like to see competitive test scores. Picking the best SAT test date is essential to your success on the exam and your success on the exam is what makes you a competitive candidate for college admission.

This information can be stressful to read – but not to worry because we've got you covered.

Are you wondering when you should take the SAT? We'll go through the most important things to consider when picking your SAT test date. Are you stressing about how much time you have to study? We'll touch on that here, but [you should check out this article for more detailed information on an SAT study timeline.](#)

Okay, think you're ready to get started? Alright, then it's time to begin.

## 1. How Well Do You Know the Material?

It's obviously not a good idea to take the SAT unless you have a really good understanding of the material that's going to be on the test. The new SAT has 2 main sections: Math and Evidence-Based Reading and Writing. These two sections are further segmented into Math with a calculator and Math without one, and then a Reading test, as well as a Writing and Language test.



# When Should You Take the SAT? Best SAT Test Dates Cont.

The new SAT makes a point to avoid relying solely on supposedly “innate” qualities like information processing speeds and problem-solving skills. Even though skills like these are built over the course of your entire education, the new SAT only wants to make sure you’ve mastered the content taught recently in school.

To excel on the SAT Math Test, you need to have Algebra and Geometry under your belt. It’s okay to be in Algebra II when you take the SAT, but you’ll do even better if you’ve finished it already.

To score high on the SAT Evidence-Based Reading and Writing Test, you need to be a grammar master. Punctuation, sentence structure, organization, and style should be no match for you. Most of the skills presented on the exam will have been covered in depth by the end of your sophomore year.

So, depending on your course load, you’ll be ready to ace test for the final time by the fall of your junior year – leaving you to spend your senior year of high school crafting the perfect senior prank, preparing for prom, and applying to college.

## 2. How Long Have You Studied?

Before you take the SAT, you need to have already done two things already: 1) completed a practice SAT and 2) put in the appropriate amount of study time, usually no less than 10-15 hours. However, students who want top SAT scores typically put in at least 40 hours of work before their first official exam.

[You can read more about how long to study for the SAT here.](#)

# When Should You Take the SAT? Best SAT Test Dates Cont.

If you've already taken the SAT, don't think that you will see any score improvement if you don't continue to study in between attempts. We recommend that you treat the ACT like an actual class that gives you nightly homework. By setting aside at least one hour a day after school to study for the SAT, you'd be surprised by just how much review you'll get done in no time at all.

Another strategy of top students is taking the SAT right after a major holiday from school. The two dates that are the best for this are the October SAT, because you've had the entire summer to hone your skills, or the January date because you can fit in *at least* 2 weeks of intense studying over winter break.

## 3. What Deadlines Do You Have To Meet?

You don't want to procrastinate on taking the SAT if you are applying to any special scholarships. You'll also need to be finished earlier than most other students if you intend to apply to any colleges Early Action or Early Decision.

Remember: your **senior year October** scores are not guaranteed to arrive in time for these deadlines, and if they arrive late, then officers of admission tend to A) treat your application as incomplete if you did not submit any other scores, or B) only consider scores from a previous test, which may not be as good.

Either way, this situation is definitely not a good one to be in, so make sure you keep track of your deadlines.

- The **Early Action & Early Decision** deadlines are usually November 1<sup>st</sup>, so it is *essential* that you take the SAT by June of your junior year to ensure your scores arrive in time. Don't take any chances!
- The **Regular Decision** deadline varies by school, but is usually in the first two weeks of January, meaning that the December SAT of your senior year is your last chance to take the exam.



# When Should You Take the SAT? Best SAT Test Dates Cont.

If you are being recruited to play a sport, you might also need to complete your testing earlier so that your recruiter is able to give you an offer of admission with confidence.

## 4. Do You Have Any Major Events Coming Up?

The best SAT test date is the one that gives you the least amount of stress. Because today's high school students are so busy, it is going to be nearly impossible to take the test when you have absolutely nothing else going on. However, picking a calm Saturday when you have the *least* amount of conflict is a great idea.

You might want to avoid the May SAT because you'll be busy preparing for finals and your AP exams. Or maybe you'll still be out of town on winter break for the January test, and the November SAT in the same weekend as the big game.

Students who take the SAT during busy times like these are less likely to put in the hours of studying needed to excel on the test. This is because their mind is occupied by the other big events. Another common result is that they tend to be less focused on their exam while they're actually taking it. Unfortunately, this almost always results in poor scores.

Take a step back and look at your long-term schedule. Doing so will reduce your testing anxiety so that when you actually take the exam, your scores will likely improve.

## 5. Does Your School Offer a Free Test?

Sometimes, high schools will give out vouchers for a free SAT.



# When Should You Take the SAT? Best SAT Test Dates Cont.

These vouchers are usually sponsored by the state and are only given to juniors for a test in the spring.

While the registration fee is \$43.00 without the optional essay and \$54.50 with it, for most students, it is still a blessing to be able to take the test without having to pay. Do you know anyone who doesn't like getting stuff for free? Because we don't!

Your best bet would be to check in with your school's guidance counselor to see what your high school's exact situation would be, but you could also look on your school district's website for information. As a last result, you could do an internet search for "SAT voucher X" replacing the X with your state.

## 6. How Many Times Do You Want to Take the SAT?

A big factor in your decision of when to take the SAT should be how many times you plan to take the SAT. [You can read a detailed post about whether or not to retake the exam here.](#) But generally, those who plan on taking the official SAT (so not a practice test) the standard 2-3 times should take the test for the first time no later than the fall of their junior year. That way, even if you have conflicts with 1 or 2 of the testing dates, you will still have plenty of time to fully prepare for each SAT. By fully prepared, we mean that you can't slack off in between attempts. You still need to study for each SAT.

By starting as early as possible, you can avoid the stress created by missing the self-imposed deadlines and lack of adequate preparation time created by procrastination.

**Even though these questions should give you a pretty good idea of when you take the SAT, you might still feel uneasy. And we know why.**



# When Should You Take the SAT? Best SAT Test Dates Cont.

Upperclassmen and college students (particularly your older siblings) who have been finished with the SAT for quite some time seem to enjoy spreading false information about the SAT test dates solely to freak you out. Some of these SAT myths have even made it into the minds of guidance counselors and concerned parents.

**But never fear. We're here to separate the SAT facts from the fiction.**

## **Fiction: Certain SAT Test Dates Are Actually Easier Than Others.**

Wouldn't it be so amazing if this was the truth? We really wish we could tell you the perfect month to take the SAT to get the perfect score with less work, but that month doesn't exist.

This SAT myth began when people started believing that the score is scaled (curved) based on the performance of every student who took the SAT on a particular date. So, if you took the exam on the same day as the naturally smarter students who studied very hard for the test, you're in trouble (the March SAT was nearly made notorious based on this myth,) but if you took the test the same day as younger or less-prepared students (dates like May, when everyone else is too busy with their AP tests) a perfect score was easily yours.

However, the SAT is scored on a year-by-year, sometimes even decade-by-decade curve, rather than test-by-test. Because the SAT is a standardized test, the results must be standard *across all dates*. This means that a 1400 on the March 2016 SAT should pull just as much weight as a 1400 on the January 2020 SAT.

There is no inflation in standardized testing. To ensure this, each SAT has questions from a previous exam on it and the students who answer these questions *over many years* are compared to each other.



# When Should You Take the SAT? Best SAT Test Dates Cont.

So, to those of you with siblings, it's time to rejoice. When they take the SAT, you can compare scores and finally see who's the smarter one.

## **Fact: Taking The SAT Multiple Times Can Negatively Impact My College Admission Chances.**

This SAT myth is actually slightly true because most schools still have access to your entire testing record when you apply. [You can read our in-depth look at if you should retake the SAT here.](#) However, a quick summary will tell you that unless you are improving by 100+ points with each retake, schools might see your many attempts as hopeless grabs at an unattainable goal.

## **Colleges can see every SAT I take? What about selective scoring?**

**Selective scoring** is when the colleges you apply to only see the test results that you want them to see. Meaning that if you did great on the October SAT, had no improvement on the December test, but jumped up 150 points on the March exam, you only have to submit your October and March scores. They don't even have to know that the December test happened. The only catch is that the admissions committee will see ALL scores submitted from a particular test date. So, if you did great in Math (750) and okay in Evidence-based Reading and Writing (650) they will see both scores.

**Super scoring** is when you get to combine your performance from more than one test date to create the best score possible. Meaning that if you got a 750 in Math and a 650 in Evidence-based Reading and Writing on the October SAT for a score of 1400, but your Math score jumped to 800 in January, schools that super score would consider your application as though you had scored a 1450 in one sitting.

If you are interested in which schools practice super scoring and selective scoring, and which schools require applicants to submit all of their test scores, you can find a comprehensive list on the College Board's website [here](#).

# When Should You Take the SAT? Best SAT Test Dates Cont.

[You can find an in depth look about when to start studying for the SAT here.](#) But for a quick reference, an ideal ACT timeline looks a little something like this:

## **Sophomore Spring**

Take a practice SAT test to target your strengths and weaknesses. You probably will have taken the PSAT 10 at this point to get some exposure to the world of standardized testing. You'll also want to start thinking about what kind of college you want to go to so you can set your target score.

## **Junior Summer**

Take this time to hunker down and review for the SAT. While it might not sound too fun to spend your summer hitting the books, you'll find that putting in a few hours of studying a week will put you miles ahead of your peers who are scrambling to begin test preparation in the fall. Three months, even when segmented by days at the lake and sleepovers, is plenty of time for adequate review.

## **Junior Fall**

It's time for your first attempt at the test! Depending on your answers to the 6 questions above, it could be October, November, or December. Participating in any of these SAT dates as a junior will put you well ahead of the curve. You should take a break from studying while you wait for your scores, and if they are not what you hoped, make sure to take the time to evaluate your study process to ensure continued improvement.

## **Junior Spring**

It's time for your second, and hopefully final attempt at the SAT. There are 4 dates in the spring: January, March, May, and June. If you want to take the test a 3rd time and don't want to spend a second summer doing test prep, the January and June tests are far enough apart that you can fit in quite a few hours of studying in between.



# When Should You Take the SAT? Best SAT Test Dates Cont.

## A Quick Recap on When to Take the SAT;

- Review the numbered list above to determine when you should take the SA.
- Make sure you haven't fallen victim to any of the SAT myths mentioned.
- Begin studying the fall of your junior year, at the absolute latest.

Now what are you waiting for? Go register for the SAT!



# Ready to Score Higher?

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Stop stressing about the SATs.

Albert has got your back!

With thousands of practice questions, personalized statistics, and anytime, anywhere access, Albert helps you learn faster and master the difficult concepts you are bound to see on test day.

Click below or visit [www.albert.io/test-prep](http://www.albert.io/test-prep)

[Start Practicing](#)

# 2016-2017

## SAT Test Dates

Looking for the SAT test dates for the 2016 – 2017 school year? Well, you’ve come to the right place.

Whether you’re a senior trying one more time to get a perfect score, or perhaps an ambitious sophomore looking for a head start, here’s everything you need to know to set your study schedule:

### SAT Test Dates 2016 – 2017\*

SAT Testing Date	SAT Subject II Tests?	Registration Date	Late Registration Date	Scores Released
Oct 1, 2016	Yes	Sep 2, 2016	Sep 16, 2016	Oct 18-23, 2016
Nov 5, 2016	Yes	Oct 7, 2016	Oct 21, 2016	Nov 22-27, 2016
Dec 2, 2016	Yes	Nov 4, 2016	Nov 18, 2016	Dec 19-24, 2016
Jan 28, 2017	Yes	Dec 30, 2016	Jan 13, 2017	Feb 20-15, 2017
Mar 11, 2017	No	Feb 10, 2017	Feb 24, 2017	Mar 28 - April 2, 2017
May 6, 2017	Yes	Apr 7, 2017	Apr 21, 2017	May 22-17, 2017
June 3, 2017	Yes	May 5, 2017	May 19, 2017	June 20-25, 2017

\*\*It should be noted that the College Board has listed these SAT test dates as “anticipated,” so they are subject to change at any time. This list is current as of February 2016.



## 2016-2017 SAT Test Dates Cont.

**So you know the SAT test dates for 2016 – 2017... Now what should you do?**

This year is the first time that the new SAT will be offered all year round, but rest easy – this is nothing for you to worry about. If anything, it just makes the SAT testing process easier. Unlike last year, if you take the test in January and want to try again for a better score in March, it'll still be the same test. There's no new format to learn. This leaves so much less room for stress, right?

**So now that that worry is out of the way, it's time for you to make a game plan.**

**First things first, you need to pick a date to take the exam.**

There are a lot of factors that can affect how to get perfect scores on the new SAT; one of which is when you take it.

Here are just a few things to consider when picking your SAT date:

### **1. Your content knowledge.**

When you take the new SAT should largely be determined by your mastery of the exam's material. How good are you with a semicolon? Can you spot and eliminate redundancies in paragraphs or infer meanings from them? Do you have a good handle on your multiplication tables and the Pythagorean theorem? If not, it's time to get to work.

### **2. Your Preparation Time**

It's a good idea to have a solid eight to ten weeks of test prep behind you (and maybe even a timed practice test or two) before your first big attempt at the new SAT. From the time you begin studying, you should devote at least one hour a day to studying for the SAT. Treat it like you would treat an actual class with nightly homework.

## 2016-2017 SAT Test Dates Cont.

### 3. Your favorite schools' deadlines

When you decide to take the SAT might also depend on when you're applying to a school. For example, if you're applying Early Action or Early Decision, you will need to have your final scores much sooner than if you simply apply Regular Decision. It is also important to keep an eye on scholarship deadlines, as missing those can be a costly mistake.

The **Early Action& Early Decision** deadline is usually November 1<sup>st</sup>, so you'll need to take the SAT by October of your senior year to ensure your scores arrive in time.

The **Regular Decision** deadline varies by school, but is usually in the first two weeks of January, meaning that the December SAT of your senior year is your last chance to take the exam.

### 4. Your Schedule.

Is your sister getting married in May? Do you have a big sports tournament in October? What about finals in December? If you have a big event before the exam, then you probably should not take the test then if you want to get perfect scores on the new SAT.

Adding the stress of a big standardized test on top of other important commitments can produce a lot of unneeded stress for high school students. By taking a step back and looking at the bigger picture, you can save yourself a lot of frustration. Start early and plan well. If you do this, your scores will be better AND you won't get stomach ulcers or go prematurely gray.

### So after you've picked your SAT date...what's the next step?

Now it's time for you to start studying!

## 2016-2017 SAT Test Dates Cont.

You'll need to pick a SAT preparation plan and stick to it. To get perfect SAT scores, you'll find that consistency during your study period. Try to keep as regular a schedule as possible and *don't procrastinate*. Of course, that's easier said than done, but you'll find that chipping a little bit away every day is much more productive than trying to cram everything at the very last minute.

### Think you're finished studying?

Awesome! Then now it's time for you to actually sign up for one of the 2016 -2017 SAT dates. You can do so on the College Board website [here](#). If for some reason you are not able to register online, you can find instructions on how to register by mail [here](#).

### A final quick tip to keep in mind:

As soon as you pick your testing date, actually register for it. Do it right then and there. No excuses.

Don't wait until the registration deadline to reserve your seat, because you never know if a certain date is going to be particularly popular. The seats might fill up before you sign up, leaving you completely out of luck.

It's a good idea to take your test either at your school, or a school nearby in your district. You do *not* want to add undue stress to the morning of your SAT by forcing yourself to travel long distances to an unfamiliar location. This could negatively impact your scores on the SAT. You can find a list of locations that offer the exam on the College Board website [here](#).

Just remember that the SAT registration deadline is the day you have to register *by* not the day you should register *on*.

On which 2016 – 2017 SAT test date are you planning to take your exam? Let us know in the comments below!

# SAT Prep: What to Eat Before the Big Test

You're ready for this. You've learned all your obscure vocabulary words and taken endless practice tests. It's time to rock this SAT (or ACT)!

But before you race off to your testing center to finish this dreaded day, don't forget to fuel up! It's important not only to prepare yourself mentally, but physically for the long test ahead.

SAT prep isn't all about practice tests and flashcards. For a different kind of free SAT prep. Check out these tips for what to eat at each important point leading up to your SAT/ ACT so you can start your test feeling energized and healthy!

## 1. The Day Before

Runners carbo-load before big marathons and adults make sure to get a good night's sleep before a big presentation! It's important to keep your body healthy for the day ahead of you so that you'll wake up well rested and feel prepared!

In a [Chicago Tribune article](#), Jennifer Ventrelle, clinical nutritionist at the Rush University Medical Center, says that it's a good idea to do some aerobic exercise like running or going for a bike ride the day before your test. Exercise helps get blood and the oxygen it carries to your brain, which keeps you more alert and less stressed!

Of course, don't kill yourself. No need to pump lots of iron and be sore all day while you're trying to focus on taking a 4 hour test!

In addition to a good workout, make sure you eat a healthy meal before your big day! The night before your test, trade your greasy burger for some brain food.

# SAT Prep: What to Eat Before the Big Test

## Cont.

According to [EatingWell.com](http://EatingWell.com), foods rich in omega-3 such as oily fish, foods rich in iron like beans, or foods rich in water like leafy greens can help to boost your brain functioning. Berries, avocados and even dark chocolate have included in this category as well! Try one of Eating Well's "brain food" dinner recipes [here](#), or have your favorite home-cooked healthy meal.

Most importantly, be sure to relax as much as possible. Cramming before the test will really only hurt, so try to watch a movie and sip on some tea instead of chugging coffee and pulling an all-nighter!

## 2. Breakfast

We've heard it a million times: breakfast is the most important meal of the day! Breakfast has been proven to boost your metabolism, help you maintain a healthy weight, boost your energy and most importantly, help you focus! Make sure you do not skip out on this important meal! Stay away from sugary breakfasts like pastries or unhealthy cereals to avoid a crash during your test. Instead, try some more brain foods that will sustain your energy and help wake you up!

A bowl of oatmeal with berries and walnuts is a perfect way to combine some brain foods and fuel your body! Or, if you're more of an eggs person, make a breakfast burrito in a whole-wheat tortilla or have some scrambled eggs with multi-grain toast.

Also, make sure you get yourself hydrated early! Drink at least a full glass of water before arriving at your testing site.

Whatever you make, be sure it's something you love! When you wake up and eat a meal you're excited about you'll start your day off in a positive mood as you go off to rock your SAT or ACT!



# SAT Prep: What to Eat Before the Big Test

## Cont.

### 3. Snack

Although you are not permitted to eat in the testing room, you may bring snacks to eat with you in the hall or outside during the break periods. Most importantly, make sure you have a water bottle. Avoid bringing coffee or other caffeinated beverages that may make you anxious or make you crash during the test.

Stick to healthy brain foods for your mid-test snack. Bring some trail mix, fruit, or nutrition bars. If you're feeling really fancy make yourself a fresh-fruit smoothie the night before you test and bring it in a water bottle to your testing site with an ice-pack in your bag!

This will be a nice treat to look forward to for your break and keep you motivated for the home stretch!

### 4. After

CONGRATS! You are done! Time to let off some steam.

Go get that greasy hamburger, fries, and milkshake you've been dreaming of. You deserve it!

Or, if you're more of a "calm after the storm" kind of person, have some soup, tea or any of your personal comfort foods to unwind after a stressful day!

Whatever you chose to eat after the test, try to focus on that and the rest of your day instead of harping on the test! You deserve a break!

# Should You Retake The SAT?

We don't know of anyone who likes taking standardized exams. But tests like the SAT are often required for college admissions, so you just have to grin and bear it.

You have to study extremely hard for weeks, wake up early on a Saturday, and spend nearly four hours in a quiet, tense exam hall being really, really focused. So, after it's all over, take a few minutes and enjoy your feelings of freedom because they won't last long.

Because guess what?

**You'll need to retake the SAT.**

"But, why???" You might ask. Well, here's why: SAT Score Increase Needed.

It's pretty standard practice for American high school students to take the SAT at least two times. The first attempt at the exam is usually made in the spring of their junior year, perhaps in March or May. After a long summer of studying, they would retake the test in October, and, if things didn't go as well as they'd hoped, take the exam one last time in November.

Yet, as the college admissions process becomes more and more competitive, students are now encouraged to devote the better half of their senior years entirely to "finishing strong" (that is, avoiding senioritis and getting straight A's senior year) and developing stellar college applications.

So what does that have to do with how many times you retake the SAT?

**A lot, actually.**

## Should You Retake The SAT? Cont.

It's a wise choice to begin studying for the SAT no later than the fall of your junior year and take the SAT as early as you can. In fact, it would be in your best interest to begin as early as spring of sophomore year. This way, if you don't score as highly as you want to, you have plenty of time to take it again and create less pressure for yourself as you approach the self-imposed deadline created by waiting until the last minute.

You can read more about when to start studying for the SAT [here](#).

### **But how many times is too many?**

Remember that your goal in retaking the SAT should be to increase your scores. Whether you are trying to qualify for a certain scholarship or be a competitive candidate for a particular school, 2-3 times is the standard number for SAT retakes. More than that and you start to look desperate. It's also highly unlikely that your scores will continue to increase after the third time, as most students experience what is known as "score stagnation" by this point.

### **What do you mean "desperate?"**

Unless you are improving by 100+ points with each retake, schools might see your many attempts as hopeless grabs at an unattainable goal. If, after you have studied extensively, you feel like you now have a better mastery of the content and could increase your score by a sizeable margin, it is in your best interest to take a mock exam before you retake the actual SAT.

Many local test prep centers offer mock exams for a small fee. You can also purchase a test prep book like [this one](#) and administer the exam to yourself, or ask a friend or parents to step in as the proctor. The idea is to recreate the conditions of test day as accurately as possible, meaning that if you are taking the exam at your desk, you need to adhere to the strict time limits, only take a break if one would be available on the actual exam, etc. By doing this, you can get a pretty good picture of what you will score on test day.





# Should You Retake The SAT? Cont.

By self-administering these “benchmark tests,” you will be able to track your personal progress while saving yourself the hassle of hiding low scores, or little to no score increases, from colleges who do not allow selective scoring. You will also save yourself from wasting money on registrations fees for scores you don’t plan to use anyway.

## What is selective scoring?

**Selective scoring** is when the colleges you apply to only see the test results that you want them to see. Meaning that if you did great on the October SAT, had no improvement on the December test, but jumped up 150 points on the March exam, you only have to submit your October and March scores. They don’t even have to know that the December test happened. The only catch is that the admissions committee will see ALL scores submitted from a particular test date. So, if you did great in Math (750) and okay in Evidence-based Reading and Writing (650) they will see both scores.

**Super scoring** is when you get to combine your performance from more than one test date to create the best score possible. Meaning that if you got a 750 in Math and a 650 in Evidence-based Reading and Writing on the October SAT for a score of 1400, but your Math score jumped to 800 in January, schools that super score would consider your application as though you had scored a 1450 in one sitting.

If you are interested in which schools practice super scoring and selective scoring, and which schools require applicants to submit all of their test scores, you can find a comprehensive list on the College Board’s website [here](#). It is important to know about these policies as early on in your testing cycle as possible, so you know which strategy to employ.

## To Recap:

- Only retake the official SAT if you are confident in your ability to increase your scores by about 100 points (as demonstrated through mock exams).\*



## Should You Retake The SAT? Cont.

- Be aware if the colleges to which you want to apply practice super scoring, selective scoring, or require that all scores be submitted.

\*The only exception to this rule would be if you are, for example, about ~50 points away from a scholarship or admissions cutoff point. Then, by all means, retake the SAT even if your score will not increase by 100 or more points. In this sort of situation, a second try that would yield only a small score increase would be totally worth it.

So now you know when and why to retake the SAT, but how do you increase your scores? While there unfortunately isn't a magical formula to boost SAT scores overnight...

**Here are some key strategies that you must follow to achieve your version of a perfect score:**

**Study for both sections.**

Let's say you need a score of 1400 on the new SAT to be a competitive candidate for the school of your choice. You took the test in October and scored a 550 on Evidence-based Reading and Writing, and a 650 on the Math – giving you a total score of 1100. This is pretty far from your goal! Obviously, you performed better in Math and need way more work in reading and writing, but this doesn't mean you should stop prepping for Math.

As you make gains in one section, you do not want to forfeit any progress you made on the other by neglecting to study for it. To beat this, you'll need to develop a smart study plan and be accountable.

## Should You Retake The SAT? Cont.

Your week might look a little something like this:

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
Review semi-colons, commas, and dashes	Review Percentages	Practice timing on reading passages	Review the Foil Method	Practice vocabulary In context	Time yourself on data analysis about prose	Rest. You deserve it!

As you can see, although the Evidence-based Reading and Writing material is highly favored in this study plan, the Math is still present. Students also hoping to make the jump from a 1050 to a 1400 should be studying more concepts a day than are present on this chart.

Which brings us to...

### Set incremental goals.

Improving your SAT score is possible, but it is going to take a lot of hard work. The amount of work you need to put in is directly proportional to how many points you need to improve.

Say you need to increase your score 200 points. Just know that this change will not happen overnight. To avoid discouragement, a better plan of action would be to set few incremental goals instead.

## Should You Retake The SAT? Cont.

For a score increase from 1000 to 1200, they might look a little something like this:

	January SAT	March Practice Test	April Practice Test	May SAT
Math	450	490	550	570
Evidence-based Reading and Writing	550	590	620	630
Composite Score	1000	1080	1170	1200

It's a good idea to write down your current score, goal score, and the smaller increases you hope to make in between. Keep them somewhere public like on your desk or the refrigerator so that your family can see them and help hold you accountable.

## Should You Retake The SAT? Cont.

SAT Score Increase Needed	How Hard it Will Be	How You Can Achieve it
0-50 more points	It won't be too hard. Many students can achieve this level of improvement with little to no extra work.	You might need to memorize another formula or two and work on your pacing. There is a possibility that you could achieve this score on your second attempt with no prep at all if the curve works in your favor.
50-150 more points	Still in the realm of complete possibility. You will need to put work into it, though.	You need to buckle down and start treating the SAT like an actual class. You should take a practice test and pinpoint what category of question you tend to get wrong. As you notice trends in your mistakes, it will be easier to stop making them.

## Should You Retake The SAT? Cont.

SAT Score Increase Needed	How Hard it Will Be	How You Can Achieve it
150-250 more points	If you are very motivated and willing to make sacrifices (mainly of your time) then this is still achievable.	If you need this level of score increase, it means that you have some pretty big gaps in your content knowledge. It can be difficult for even the highly motivated to learn the material on his or her own. At this point, you'll want to consider working with a tutor who can explain the tricky concepts to you and keep you on track.

## Should You Retake The SAT? Cont.

SAT Score Increase Needed	How Hard it Will Be	How You Can Achieve it
250-350 more points	This level of score increase will be very hard to achieve. It is only possible for those who are highly motivated, accountable, and teachable.	Not only do you need to start treating the SAT like a class with nightly homework to achieve this level of improvement, you will need to do so consistently over many weeks, perhaps even a few months. You will also need to begin working with a tutor, preferably in private sessions because you have a lot of content to learn. It would also be helpful to work on timing, pacing, and guessing strategies alongside your content work.

## Should You Retake The SAT? Cont.

SAT Score Increase Needed	How Hard it Will Be	How You Can Achieve it
Over 350 more points	Score increases of this much are highly unlikely. You will need to recalculate your target SAT score and possibly accept the possibility that a few of your former target schools are out of your reach.	You are misunderstanding major chunks of the content on the SAT. Often, this is caused by poor teaching at your school. Maybe you also neglected to pay attention during freshman or sophomore year when this fundamental content was introduced. You will need to get a private tutor and put in hundred of hours of work.



# Should You Retake The SAT? Cont.

## Steps you can take **RIGHT NOW** to improve your SAT score:

- Take a practice test.
- Identify your areas of weakness.
- Make a SAT study plan to address those areas.
- Set incremental score goals.
- Stay focused and don't get discouraged.

Be sure to check out our resources to help you get started.

## Remember:

- You should retake the SAT if you've only taken it once.
- You should retake the SAT if you took a mock exam and improved by 100+ points.
- You should retake the SAT if you are almost at the score you need for a scholarship.

So there you have it. Now you know if you should retake the SAT, how to improve your scores, how likely it is for you to improve your scores, and everything in between.

Best of luck on the road to your perfect score!



# Ready to Score Higher?

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Stop stressing about the SATs.

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With thousands of practice questions, personalized statistics, and anytime, anywhere access, Albert helps you learn faster and master the difficult concepts you are bound to see on test day.

Click below or visit [www.albert.io/test-prep](http://www.albert.io/test-prep)

[Start Practicing](#)

# What is the PSAT 10?

## The Ultimate Guide

It's no secret that the College Board completely redesigned the SAT in 2016. If you know any juniors or seniors, you probably witnessed them freaking out as they scrambled to understand the new format and excel on the test. As an underclassman, you mightn't found this funny, or maybe not paid any attention to it at all, because you knew by the time it was your turn to take the new SAT, all the kinks would be worked out.

But, the College Board made some less-publicized changes to the SAT testing process that will affect younger students for years to come, specifically sophomores.

Now if you didn't know this, don't worry. Although, if you're student who's on top of your game, which you probably are since you're reading this article, you mightn't heard about the **brand new test** being administered for the first time during the 2015 -2016 school year. It's called the PSAT 10 and this is your ultimate guide to tackling the PSAT 10.

### What is the PSAT 10?

In the past, high school students have taken the PSAT/NMSQT (which stands for Pre-SAT / National Merit Scholar Qualifying Test – more on that later) two times: once in the fall of their sophomore year for practice, and then again in the fall of their junior year, when it actually counts. Unless they had participated in an early identification program like [DUKE TIP](#) where students take the SAT in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, taking the PSAT/NMSQT as a sophomore was many students' first exposure to the world of national standardized testing.

# What is the PSAT 10? The Ultimate Guide Cont.

But, it became very clear that sophomores weren't quite ready for the material on the PSAT/ NMSQT and there was too much confusion as to whether 10<sup>th</sup> graders with a high enough score could qualify to be a National Merit Scholar.

So, the College Board decided to create a completely new exam, catered specifically to the content knowledge level of sophomores. Thus, the PSAT 10 was born.

The PSAT 10 is scored on the same scale as the new SAT (so out of 1600) and follows the same format of two main sections, Math and Evidence-based Reading and Writing, which are divided into smaller subsections.

It's also important for you to remember that the PSAT 10 is purely a practice SAT and an introduction to national standardized testing. While you should still strive to do well, a high or even perfect score will not qualify you for the National Merit Scholar program. Only juniors are eligible to participate.

## PSAT 10 vs. PSAT/ NMSQT

There are very few differences between the PSAT 10 and the PSAT/ NMSQT, but you should still take a look at the tables to make sure you can tell the tests apart.

Differences	
PSAT 10	PSAT/NMSQT
For sophomores	For juniors
No National Merit Scholar Eligibility	High-scorers are eligible to become National Merit Scholars
No outside scholarships eligibility	High-scorers are eligible for outside scholarships

# What is the PSAT 10? The Ultimate Guide

## Cont.

Similarities
<b>PSAT 10 &amp; PSAT/NMSQT</b>
No penalty for guessing
Based on the New SAT
2 sections divided into 4 subsections
Assists students with selecting AP courses

### Should take the PSAT 10 or PSAT / NMSQT?

There is no harm in taking both exams. If anything, there isn't much of a conflict of PSAT 10 vs. PSAT / NMSQT. Both exams help you prepare for the SAT, both exams can point out your academic strengths and weaknesses.

So, if you skip the PSAT 10, all you lose out on is a good chance to practice. Skipping the PSAT / NMSQT is a little more serious, because as stated, you would miss out on the opportunity to be considered for quite a few scholarships.

So, to settle PSAT 10 vs. PSAT / NMSQT, do yourself a favor: just take both.

### What does the PSAT 10 look like?

You're bound to be curious about what the PSAT 10 looks like on the inside. Well never fear, because we have the answers, straight from the CollegeBoard.

# What is the PSAT 10? The Ultimate Guide Cont.

## PSAT 10 Reading Test

The PSAT 10 Reading Test follows the same pattern as the new SAT and PSAT/NMSQT Reading Tests. It's less about memorizing crazy vocabulary or practicing your speed-reading skills, and more about the thoughtful examination of words in context, making guesses based on given information, and locating important points within the passage. Sounds easy enough? That's because these are skills you use everyday in your high school English classes. The PSAT 10 doesn't want to trick you or confuse you, it only wants you to practice what you already know.

The layout of the Reading Test is pretty easy to follow. It's entirely composed of multiple-choice questions based on passages and information graphics. Your job is to comb through these passages and locate the correct answers.

The [CollegeBoard](#) says that the following passage types will be included on the PSAT 10:

- One passage from a classic or contemporary work of U.S. or world literature.
- One passage or a pair of passages from either a U.S. founding document or a text in the great global conversation they inspired. The U.S. Constitution or a speech by Nelson Mandela, for example.
- A selection about economics, psychology, sociology, or some other social science.
- Two science passages (or one passage and one passage pair) that examine foundational concepts and developments in Earth science, biology, chemistry, or physics.

All the answers to the questions about these passages are contained inside them. You'll never need to rely on any information you learned outside the test to excel on the Reading section.

# What is the PSAT 10? The Ultimate Guide

## Cont.

Are you still feeling nervous? Well then, here are a few sample questions straight for the test makers themselves:

**Select an Answer**

The description in the first paragraph indicates that what Ethan values most about Mattie is her

- ☐ A fitness for farm labor.
- ☐ B vivacious youth.
- ☐ C receptive nature.
- ☐ D freedom from worry.

[Image Source: CollegeBoard](#)

To view the passage that this question is referencing, head on over to the [College Board website](#). But even before reading the passage, you'll notice that the question directs you to a specific location within the passage (so you don't have to worry about hunting all over for it) and asks you *to make a guess* based on the information given. So, all you have to is read Ethan's description about Mattie and match it to the answer. Easy!

# What is the PSAT 10? The Ultimate Guide Cont.

**Are you still feeling nervous? Well then, here are a few sample questions straight for the test makers themselves:**

**Select an Answer**

Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

- ☐ A Lines 1–4 (“Mattie...farm”)
- ☐ B Lines 4–9 (“He had...anyhow”)
- ☐ C Lines 9–10 (“But it...hearth”)
- ☐ D Lines 11–13 (“She had...will”)

*[Image Source: CollegeBoard](#)*

This sort of question is new to the redesigned SAT, so its presence on the PSAT is to be expected. While it might seem overwhelming at first, all you really have to do is locate the specific information that prompted your answer to the previous question and the match it to an answer choice. These new reading questions are meant to encourage sophomores to begin to rely on textual evidence to support their claims, rather than just a gut feeling or a guess.

## PSAT 10 Writing and Language Test

If you like doing things your own way, you are sure to enjoy completing the writing and language test. That’s because this section of the PSAT 10 asks you to become an editor. The College Board has purposefully included errors in the texts it asks you to read and your job is to locate them all.





# What is the PSAT 10? The Ultimate Guide Cont.

It's a pretty straightforward test. After all, you've probably read over your own work before you turned it in for a grade, proofread a friend's paper to make sure there weren't any errors, or even participated in a writing and editing workshop at school. Having done these things, along with possessing a working knowledge of English grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, organization, and style will ensure you excel on the PSAT 10 Writing Test.

Does that seem like a long list? Are you panicking? Well, you shouldn't be. By your sophomore year, if you've been paying attention in English class, you've already learned all of the technical concepts we mentioned. While you might need to brush up on a few concepts, you shouldn't stress about it too much.

But, instead of telling you what's on the PSAT 10 Writing Test, let us show you.

**Here are some Writing and Language questions straight for the College Board.**

The first question is in reference this sentence: "When any one of these changes occur, it is likely the result of careful analysis conducted by transportation planners." This is an example of a simple grammar question.

# What is the PSAT 10? The Ultimate Guide

## Cont.

Here are some Writing and Language questions straight for the College Board.

The first question is in reference this sentence: “When any one of these changes occur, it is likely the result of careful analysis conducted by transportation planners.” This is an example of a simple grammar question.

### Select an Answer

- ☐ (A) NO CHANGE
- ☐ (B) occur, they are
- ☐ (C) occurs, they are
- ☐ (D) occurs, it is

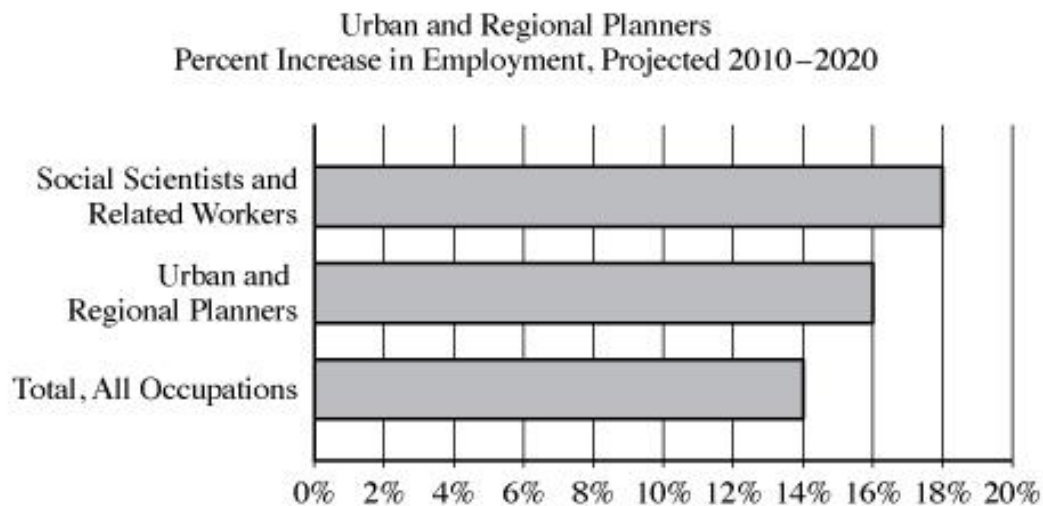
*[Image Source: CollegeBoard](#)*

So, to pick the right answer, you have to first decide if the verb should be “is” or “are.” To do this, you find the subject of the sentence, which in this case is “one” and, since one is a singular noun, the verb has to be a singular verb. So the verb is “is.” Now, you are left to pick between “A” and “D.” Since your subject is singular, all your verbs have to be, too. So the answer is “D.”

While that might seem like a lot of work for a simple question, you’ll be able to run through these pretty quickly once you get the hang of it. And, just to repeat what we said earlier, all you need is a grasp of grammar to excel on this part of the PSAT 10. You don’t need to have any prior knowledge about the subjects the passages are discussing.

# What is the PSAT 10? The Ultimate Guide Cont.

This next question is a new type, as the College Board has only started to use graphs during the 2015-2016 school year.



*[Image Source: CollegeBoard](#)*

To solve this question, all you have to do is carefully examine the accompanying graph and eliminate answer choices until you are left with the best option.

## Select an Answer

Which choice completes the sentence with accurate data based on the graph?

- (A) NO CHANGE
- (B) warning, however, that job growth in urban and regional planning will slow to 14 percent by 2020.
- (C) predicting that employment of urban and regional planners will increase 16 percent between 2010 and 2020.
- (D) indicating that 14 to 18 percent of urban and regional planning positions will remain unfilled.

*[Image Source: CollegeBoard](#)*

## What is the PSAT 10? The Ultimate Guide Cont.

So, it can't be "A" because the graph doesn't confirm that 16% of new jobs in all occupations will be related to urban and regional planning.

It can't be "B" because the graph doesn't say that job growth in urban and regional planning will slow to 14% by 2020.

Finally, it can't be "D" because the graph doesn't say that 14-18% of urban and regional planning positions will remain unfilled.

So, it has to be "C."

These questions might seem a little tricky at first, but if you put on your detective hat, you'll find that enough critical thinking will always solve the case.

You can find more practice problems, and the context for the ones we listed [here](#).

### PSAT 10 Math Test

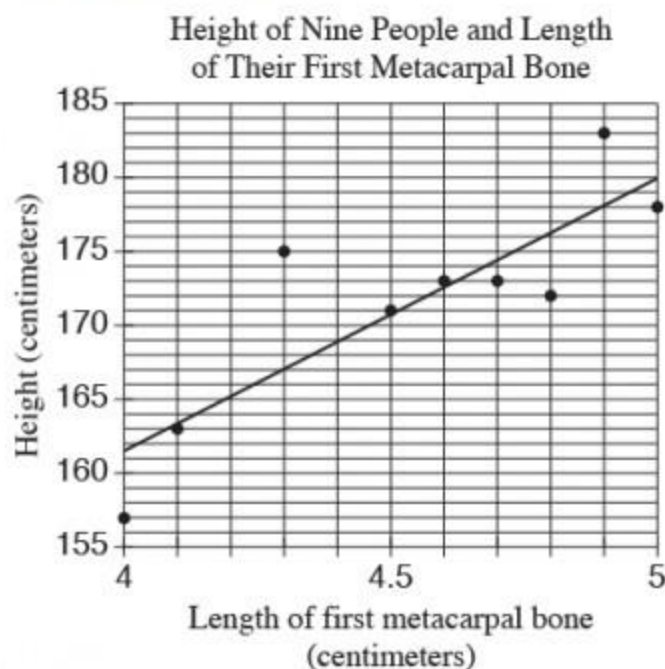
The PSAT 10 Math Test will only cover concepts that all sophomores would know. Things like logic, algebra, and modeling will be tested. The College Board wants you to be ready for the kind of math you're going to have to use in college and on the job, so you'll notice that many of the problems you are asked to solve will have real-life applications.

# What is the PSAT 10? The Ultimate Guide Cont.

Like this math question about a medical study:

Questions 3–5 refer to the following information.

The first metacarpal bone is located in the wrist. The scatterplot below shows the relationship between the length of the first metacarpal bone and height for 9 people. The line of best fit is also shown.



How many of the nine people have an actual height that differs by more than 3 centimeters from the height predicted by the line of best fit?

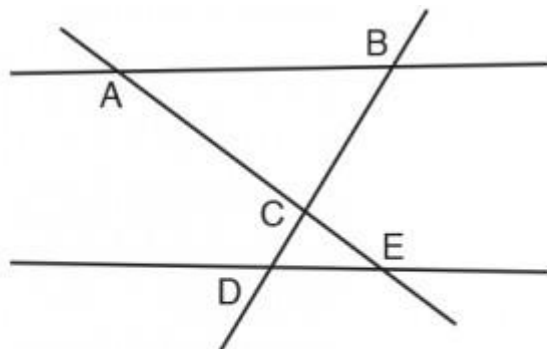
*[Image Source: CollegeBoard](#)*

To solve this equation, all you have to do is read the graph. Locate the actual height of each bone, and then calculate the difference between it and the best fit. So the answer to this question would be **4**.

# What is the PSAT 10? The Ultimate Guide

## Cont.

Sophomores should also be familiar with Geometry, so you shouldn't be surprised to see questions like this on test day:



Note: Figure not drawn to scale.

In the figure above,  $\triangle ABC \sim \triangle EDC$ . Which of the following must be true?

[Image Source: CollegeBoard](#)

### Select an Answer

(A)  $\overline{AE} \parallel \overline{BD}$

(B)  $\overline{AE} \perp \overline{BD}$

(C)  $\overline{AB} \parallel \overline{DE}$

(D)  $\overline{AB} \perp \overline{DE}$

[Image Source: CollegeBoard](#)



# What is the PSAT 10? The Ultimate Guide Cont.

To get the right answer, you'd need to know that since triangle ABC is similar to triangle EDC, angle BAC is congruent to angle CED, so, because of the converse of the interior angle theorem, line AB is parallel to DE.

You can find more math practice problems, as well as the context of the examples here on the [College Board website](#).

## How does the PSAT 10 prepare you for the PSAT / NMSQT and SAT?

The PSAT 10's purpose is to function as a sort of benchmark exam, so you can track your content knowledge. Taking it also prepares you for the sometimes-rigid environment of national standardized testing. You can practice sitting in one place for long periods of time and concentrating regardless of the distractions around you.

It's also a good idea to take the PSAT 10 if you struggle with any sort of testing anxiety. Because if you're already a little familiar with the content and pacing of the exam, it won't be as scary to you when it actually counts.

So there you have it. You now know what the PSAT 10 is, whether you should take the PSAT 10 vs. PSAT / NMSQT, and everything in between.

If you've already taken the PSAT 10 and are wondering how you stack up, [you can read about good PSAT scores for sophomores here](#).

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors?

Congratulations! You've made it halfway through your high school career. As we're sure you know, now is the time to start thinking about college choices. The first exciting step is to take the PSAT/NMSQT. This guide walks you through the test, explains how to understand your score and gives you an idea of what a good PSAT score is for your junior year. Look forward to taking the PSAT/NMSQT at your school sometime in October or November.

## Changes to the PSAT:

You'll need to know about the changes to the rules and content of the test that the College Board released in 2015 to prepare for your best PSAT score possible. These changes are in concordance with the updated SATs.

## PSAT Test Timing:

The test's timing is the first big change. The new PSAT clocks in at 2 hours and 45 minutes, which is 35 minutes longer than the old test. That fact might stress you out, but it's an improvement for test-takers. The new PSAT/NMSQT has fewer questions and more time to answer them. Here's a chart explaining the time allotted and number of questions for each test section.

Section	Time	Number of Questions
Reading	60 minutes	47 questions
Writing and Language	35 minutes	44 questions



# What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors?

## Cont.

Section	Time	Number of Questions
Math	70 minutes	48 questions
Total	165 minutes	139 questions

### New PSAT Question Format:

Get ready for some more good news: there are now fewer choices for each question. That's right, you only have to choose from four answers instead of five for each question on the new PSAT. Also, there are no more penalties for wrong answers, so you have a 25% chance of getting any question correct!

Along with these new rules, the new PSAT/NMSQT has different focuses for each section. We'll explain each section in detail including what you should study and how to answer questions. We can help you achieve the kind of score you want on the PSAT/NMSQT by showing you how to make your most educated guesses. Let's start with the Reading section.

### An Introduction to the New PSAT Reading Section:

For this part of the test, you draw your answers from passages ranging in length from about 500 to 750 words. To get a good PSAT score, remember that the text always supports the correct answer.

### What PSAT Reading Questions Ask:

The multiple choice questions ask you to analyze, infer and draw conclusions from the selections you read. The College Board selects passages from U.S. and world literature, history, social studies, and science.



# What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors?

## Cont.

To do well in this portion, you need to understand a text as a whole as well as make connections between similar passages. Along with comprehending the texts, you will have to interpret data from charts, graphs, and tables.

Another type of question focuses on word choice in a passage. Students choose what words mean in the context of each selection and decide how word choice influences the text's meaning. This update is a relief for test-takers because you no longer have to cram for hours studying vocabulary you wouldn't use in real life.

### **PSAT Reading Question Organization:**

The new PSAT even reorganized the question difficulty in the Reading section. Instead of beginning with easy questions and progressing to harder ones as the test goes on, the questions will start out generally and gain specificity. The first questions are themes, points of view, and text structure; followed by details, facts, and words in context.

Want to judge where you're strong and where you may need to study more? Test yourself [here](#).

### **What's on the PSAT Writing and Language Section:**

This section is very similar to the Reading portion but has differences in the questions it asks. You will see passage-based questions, as in the Reading section, but instead, you will need to revise and edit the text presented. The questions ask you to improve the text's development, organization, language use, grammar, and punctuation. Again, the answers are all based on context, so you don't have to memorize endlessly tedious grammar rules.

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors?

## Cont.

The passages range from 400 to 450 words and cover topics like careers, history, social studies, science, and the humanities. Just like in the Reading section, tables, graphs, and charts may supplement the selections. Some questions will ask you to edit or revise a passage based on the graphic information displayed.

### **PSAT Writing Section Question Format:**

Instead of the comprehension-based questions you answer in the Reading portion, the general format of questions for this section gives the student three revisions to an underlined portion of text with an option not to change the selection. Then, the test asks you to choose the correct answer based on context and common sense.

Here's a sample of the [Writing and Language](#) section to familiarize yourself with this addition to the PSAT/NMSQT.

### **How to Study for the PSAT Math Section:**

The Math section tests your abilities in basic algebra, problem-solving and data analysis, as well as other relevant concepts learned in high school Math like statistics and basic geometry. The questions ask you to problem solve, use given tools in a strategic manner and apply concepts you've learned. The new PSAT also provides commonly used formulas in the test booklet. You won't have to study a bunch of equations; your only job will be to use the formulas appropriately to answer certain questions.

### **PSAT Math Question Format:**

Of the 48 overall questions, about eight will be student-generated (not multiple choice). The section without a calculator runs for 25 minutes with 17 questions, and the section that uses a calculator is 45 minutes and has 31 questions.

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors?

## Cont.

### Helpful PSAT Math Tips:

The Math section can be complicated. Here are some quick tips from the College Board to help. If you want to read a more in-depth version, click [here](#).

- Make sure to use your test booklet for scratch work. That means you can diagram, sketch or solve problems in the book. These calculations will come in handy when you go back to check your answers.
- Try to eliminate choices if you can't think of an answer readily. Plug the answers into your formulas and work backward. Remember that there is no penalty for incorrect answers, so figure out the most likely choice and make your best guess.
- Student-derived answers will never be negative or higher than 9,999.
- A zero cannot be gridded in the leftmost column of the answer grid. Instead of 0.25, you would grid .25 or  $\frac{1}{4}$ .
- Similarly, a fraction does not have to be reduced unless the numbers will not fit on the grid. As an example, you don't have to convert  $\frac{10}{6}$  to  $\frac{5}{3}$ .

### PSAT Math Calculator Help:

Make sure you're ready for the Math portions calculator rules. Look [here](#) for some facts to clear up any misconceptions or confusion about what to expect.

Want to feel fully prepared and confident on test day? Check out the sample [Math section](#) if you still have questions as to what will be on the test or how to prepare.



# What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors?

## Cont.

### **What PSAT Scores Mean:**

Now that you know how to study for each section, you need to learn how to decipher your score report. Understanding these numbers will help you decide if you've gotten a good PSAT/NMSQT score. There are four scores on each report, and they all measure different aspects of how well you did. Let's walk through the practicalities of the scaled, section, and raw scores, as well as the National Merit Selection Index.

### **Scaled Score:**

The largest number on the score report is your scaled score, which ranges from 320 and 1520. It represents your overall PSAT score. Half of this number comes from the Math portion, and the other half denotes your score on the Reading and Writing and Language sections combined. The test averages the two "verbal" sections together and accounts for half of your scaled score.

You might notice a difference in the top scores for the PSAT and SAT. The PSAT scaled score's highest number is 1520 instead of 1600 to account for the relative difficulty of the two tests. The Math section scores range from 160 to 760, and the Reading and Writing tests are scored together based on the same scale.

### **Section/ Test Score:**

You could probably guess that the section (or test) score expresses your score for the individual portions of the PSAT. Your report will list three numbers that range between 8 and 38. Unlike the scaled score, you will get a number for each portion of the test: Math, Reading, and Writing and Language.

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors?

## Cont.

### **Raw Score:**

Then, there are three other numbers. Those are your raw scores, and they show how many questions you answered correctly in each section. Refer to the chart at the beginning of the article to explain this score more accurately.

To understand the scores' relation to one another, remember that the raw score converts to the section score and the section score turns into the scaled score.

Here's how to convert the section score into your scaled scores for each portion of the PSAT. All you have to do is multiply your Math section score by 20. Then, add your Reading and Writing scores together and multiply by 10.

### **Compare Old and New PSAT scores:**

Since these scores have changed with the test update, you may be wondering how they compare to scores from the old PSAT/NMSQT. Here's a [table](#) from the College Board that shows the concordance between the two exams. To crunch even more numbers, this [PDF](#) offers charts and comparisons for all the scores on the test.

### **National Merit Index Selection:**

Though this number is not part of your PSAT score, the National Merit Index Selection will be the most significant score if you want to place in the scholarship contest. This score determines the eligibility for Commended Scholars and Semifinalists. For the new PSAT, the Selection Index will fall between 48 and 228. To get this number, the NMSC adds each section score together and multiplies by two. Then they take the top one percent of all the scores for that year into consideration for the scholarship. You'll learn more about the type of scholarships and selection process later in this article.

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors?

## Cont.

### What are the Nationally Representative Sample and User Percentiles?

Along with all these scores, you'll receive two more percentiles that compare your score to the rest of the eleventh-grade population in America. These numbers can give you an idea of whether your score is as "good" as you want it to be in the context of a large sample size. You can measure yourself against these numbers to see what you need to fix before the SATs.

One score is the Nationally Representative Sample percentile, and the other is the User percentile. The Nationally Representative Sample will probably be a higher number than the User percentile because the first score encompasses the projections for all junior students in the country, even those that may not take the PSATs.

The other number, the User Percentile, only reflects your relation to the scores of students who are very likely to take the test. You can consider this score to be more reliable and based on more concrete data than the first score.

To explain User percentiles more precisely this chart shows possible scaled scores for juniors taking the new PSAT in relation to their User percentile scores. With this, you can decide how to achieve your personal best score on the new PSAT.

### 11th Grade User Percentile Scores Per Section:

Converted Section Score	Reading and Writing	Math
760	99+	99+
750	99+	99+
740	99+	99

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors?

## Cont.

Converted Section Score	Reading and Writing	Math
730	99+	98
720	99	98
710	99	97
700	99	97
690	98	96
680	98	96
670	97	95
660	96	94
650	95	93
640	94	93
630	92	92
620	91	90
610	89	89
600	86	88
590	84	86
580	82	83
570	79	80
560	77	78



# What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors?

## Cont.

Converted Section Score	Reading and Writing	Math
550	74	74
540	71	70
530	67	66
520	63	61
510	59	59
500	60	55
490	55	50
480	50	45
470	46	39
460	42	36
450	39	33
440	35	27
430	28	23
420	25	19
410	23	16
400	21	14
390	18	11
380	15	8

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors?

## Cont.

Converted Section Score	Reading and Writing	Math
370	11	6
350	7	3
340	5	2
330	4	1
320	2	1
310	1	1
300	1	1
290	1-	1
280	1-	1
270	1-	1
260	1-	1
250	1-	1
240	1-	1
230	1-	1-
220	1-	1-
210	1-	1-
200	1-	1-
190	1-	1-

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors?

## Cont.

Converted Section Score	Reading and Writing	Math
180	1-	1-
170	1-	1-
160	1-	1-
Mean Score	489	498
Standard Deviation	95	91

[Source: CollegeBoard](#)

While the data is preliminary, you may be interested to know that a 99th percentile score in Reading and Writing and Language is 700 while the same percentile score in Math is a 740. These scores are good benchmarks to see where you need to be to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship.

Obviously, the top 99<sup>th</sup> percentiles are fantastic scores. Don't feel pressured to meet those exceedingly high standards. It may be easier to think about "good" junior year PSAT scores this way: the 50th percentile is right in the middle of the population of students taking the test. Scores around the 50th percentile in each section are 470 to 480. Depending on your high school grades and your ambitions, you can decide where you'd like to be with respect to the middle scores.

### **NMSC Scholarship Eligibility Based on PSAT Scores :**

If you're lucky enough to make it to the top one percent of test-takers, look forward to participating in the National Merit Scholarship Competition. To register for entry in the National Merit Scholarship, you must be an eleventh grader taking the PSAT/NMSQT in the first half of the school year.



# What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors?

## Cont.

If you take the test in 2015, for example, you will be entering to receive scholarships awarded in 2017, during the spring of your senior year. The best way to tell if you qualify for the program is right on your score report. If the number on your Selection Index has an asterisk (\*) next to it, you don't qualify.

### **NMSC Finalists and Semifinalists:**

Of the 1.5 million test-takers, around 50,000 students compete in the scholarship program. 2/3 of these students receive Letters of Commendation. While you will not continue the scholarship competition with a commendation, you can apply for Special Scholarships sponsored by corporations and businesses.

Other opportunities exist for commended students; like the [National Achievement Scholarship program](#) for African-American students, the [National Hispanic Recognition Program](#), and the [Telluride Association](#), which offers scholarship money for juniors to take summer programs in the humanities and social sciences.

In early September of the next year, NMSC notifies Semifinalists for the competition. The organization awards Semifinalist status based on individual state scores to keep the program fair across the country.

There aren't any examples of state cutoffs right now, though, because the new PSAT/NMSQT started in 2015, and it takes two years for the contest to finish. For now, just use the chart shared earlier to give you an example of the kinds of scores you need to get into the 99th percentile.

Semifinalists receive applications to complete, and around 15,000 selected students become Finalists.

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors?

## Cont.

Here's a chart that shows the kinds of scholarships offered and who is eligible to receive them.

A Total of 8,600 Scholarships Offered				
	National Merit® \$2500 Scholarships	Corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarships	Corporate-sponsored Special Scholarships	College-sponsored Merit Scholarships
Who is considered?	All Finalists compete with all other Finalists in their state or other selection unit.	Finalists who meet criteria specified by a corporate sponsor, usually: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• children of employees;</li> <li>• residents of specific communities; or</li> <li>• Finalists with certain college major or career plans</li> </ul>	High-performing program participants (although not Finalists) who meet a sponsor's criteria; most are for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• children of employees;</li> <li>• residents of specific communities; or</li> <li>• participants with certain college major or career plans</li> </ul>	Finalists who plan to attend a sponsor college and have informed NMSC that the sponsor college is their first choice
Who selects winners?	A committee of college admission officers and high school counselors	NMSC's professional staff	NMSC's professional staff	Officials of each sponsor college
What is the monetary value?	Awards provide a one-time payment of \$2,500.	Varies by sponsor—awards can be one-time or renewable. (See chart on page 10.)	Varies by sponsor—awards can be one-time or renewable. (See chart on page 10.)	Awards are renewable for 4 years of study at the sponsor institution. Stipends range from \$500 to \$2,000 per year.
When does NMSC begin sending scholarship offers?	Late March	Early March	Early March	Early May

[Source: CollegeBoard](#)

If you want an even more detailed explanation, including a list of corporations, businesses, and colleges that sponsor scholarships, look [here](#).



## What's a Good PSAT Score for Juniors? Cont.

Qualifying for the NMSC isn't the only way to measure your score as "good" or "bad." Look back at the chart rating User percentiles to find the numbers you could most plausibly achieve. Now that you know what to learn and how to study, you're on track to achieve your best possible PSAT scores.

If you want to learn even more about the junior year PSAT/NMSQT— from test day rules to practice tests – check out [this](#) PDF from the College Board. Don't worry, your best PSAT score is within your reach, and you have plenty of tools and references at your disposal. No matter what a good PSAT score means to you, you will achieve it if you focus and study hard.

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Sophomores?

The PSATs are the first daunting test on the way toward your college career. You probably have a bunch of questions: what is on the test, how to know if you did well, and what it means to have a good PSAT score for your sophomore year. We understand that it's scary and overwhelming, but the easiest way to do your best is to start practicing as soon as possible. For some of you, that may mean taking the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10 this year. With the right information and preparation, you can achieve your personal best PSAT scores. Since there are some differences between the tests and pros and cons to taking either one, this guide will explain your options to demystify the confusing tangle of tests that lead to the college of your dreams.

## **New Rules for the PSAT:**

In coordination with the new SATs, the PSATs are now updated. A lot of these innovations can make the test less intimidating to students. For example, you only have to choose from four multiple choice answers for each question instead of five. Since there is also no penalty for selecting the wrong answer, you have a 25% chance of getting any question correct; even if you guess!

The time increase compared to the old test may seem like a downside to the new PSAT. Instead of a 2 hour and 10-minute test, the new version is 35 minutes longer. The idea of a longer test might make you squirm just thinking about it, but don't worry, there are fewer questions on the new test and more time to answer them.

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Sophomores?

## Cont.

Here's a breakdown of the sections by question and time.

Section	Time	Number of Questions
Reading	60 minutes	47 questions
Writing and Language	35 minutes	44 questions
Math	70 minutes (Calculator section: 45 minutes/ No calculator section: 25 minutes)	48 questions (40 multiple choice/ 8 student-generated)
Total	165 minutes	139 questions

### Differences Between the PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT:

Besides the fact that the PSAT 10 is shorter and easier than the PSAT/NMSQT, a big difference is the time of year that high schools hold the test. Students take the PSAT/NMSQT in the first half of the school year, between October and November. In comparison, schools hold the PSAT 10 in February and March.

So, you can only really take one test in your sophomore year. Deciding which test to take be a hard choice for some students, but remember that you still have another year to take the PSAT/NMSQT in eleventh grade.

One upside to taking the PSAT/NMSQT as a sophomore comes from seeing where you would place regarding the National Merit Scholarship.



# What's a Good PSAT Score for Sophomores?

## Cont.

You won't be able to qualify in tenth grade, but you can take the time and practice to find where you could use some help and where you rank among other students across the country. However, if you're just looking to get a feel for the test and aren't concerned about rankings, the PSAT 10 might be a better fit.

The new tests also have different focuses in their questions. We'll break the sections down for you so you can be more confident in preparing for these big exams.

### **How to Study for the New PSAT Reading Section:**

The new PSATs take passages from literature, social studies, history articles, and science to emphasize analysis, parsing out vocabulary from context, and interpreting scientific evidence. To analyze history and social studies texts, you'll have to find patterns in the passages and decide how to solve problems in the document.

You'll probably be relieved to hear that the vocabulary will be context-based. That means you can kiss your flashcards good-bye; you don't have to cram to memorize esoteric words anymore. All you have to do is define a word's meaning based on its location in a passage. The scientific analysis relies on your ability to spot well-supported theories and explain experiments in chosen passages.

[Here](#) are some sample questions for you to look over from the College Board.

### **Explaining the PSAT Writing Section:**

The PSATs combine your Reading and Writing test scores and average them. That way, you're judged on the two portions together, even though each test is slightly different.

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Sophomores?

## Cont.

Luckily, the PSAT Writing section contains only multiple choice questions. It draws on your ability to analyze arguments, informative or explanatory texts, and nonfiction essays. The passages are similar in topic to those in the Reading section.

The difference emerges in the type of questions these portions ask. There are questions linked with charts, graphs, and tables, which you will evaluate together. The questions refer to the passages as a whole or ask for in-sentence editing. In-sentence editing means that the questions will ask about the grammar in a specific part of a sentence.

If you're still considering whether to take the PSAT 10 or PSAT/NMSQT, it'll help to know that the PSAT 10 will have high school reading level texts while the PSAT/NMSQT will focus on more complex, college-level passages. So, if you just want to get a feel for the test and not overwhelm yourself with the material, the PSAT 10 may be a good place to start.

These [questions](#) contain a sample of material found on the SAT, PSAT, and PSAT 10. Gauge how challenging the toughest questions are for you to give yourself an understanding of which test to take first.

### A Look at the New PSAT Math Section:

In this section, there is a combination of multiple choice and student-generated answers. About one in five questions will be in this “grid-in” format. However, as an update to the test, there will be two math portions— one with and one without use of a calculator.

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Sophomores?

## Cont.

The math section focuses more on word problems than the previous PSAT, in accordance with changes in the SAT. You'll need to use problem-solving, modeling, and be able to recognize and solve algebraic structure. As opposed to some of the higher-level mathematics found on the SATs, the PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 will mostly contain pre- and basic algebra and basic statistics.

Test your knowledge and determine what you need to brush up on with these [questions](#).

### Understanding Your PSAT Scores:

Now that you're familiar with the test's set-up, you may be worried about how to figure out all those numbers on your score sheet. When you receive your PSAT report, you'll be looking at four different scores; scaled, section, raw and National Merit Selection Index. Let's take a look at the individual scores you'll be getting and what they mean overall.

#### Scaled Score:

This number shows your overall PSAT score, between 320 and 1520. The top score is less than 1600 because of the relative difficulty of the SAT over the PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10. The score only combines two sections, one for Math and the other averages Reading and Writing and Language together.

#### Section/ Test Scores:

As the name suggests, these are the scores you receive per section, which range from 8 to 38. Each score refers to a single portion of the test.

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Sophomores?

## Cont.

### **Raw Scores:**

These scores explain the number of questions you answer correctly in each section. The raw scores vary because the number of questions in each section is different (go back to the chart at the beginning of the article for individual section break-downs).

### **National Merit Selection Index:**

This number is the scale that the National Merit Scholarship Corporation uses to rank the scores for Commended Scholars and Semifinalists. The new PSAT's selection index will range between 48 and 228.

### **Calculating Your PSAT Scores:**

Since we've gotten the terms out of the way, we can focus on how the PSATs calculate its scores. The raw score converts to your section score, which turns into your scaled score. As mentioned before, only two numbers go into your overall scaled score. Half is for Math, and the other half combines the Reading and Writing sections. The PSAT gives scores between 160 and 760 for both the Math and the two incorporated "verbal" sections.

Here's a trick to manipulate your individual section scores to calculate scaled scores. It can come in handy when you're trying to figure out how much better you need to do in different subjects to achieve the scaled score you desire.

It's pretty simple. Multiply your Math section score by 20 and add your Reading and Writing section scores, then multiply it by 10.

Want to compare old PSAT scores with the new ones? Click [here](#) to find a table from the College Board.

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Sophomores?

## Cont.

If all those numbers are starting to make your head spin, hold on for some more data. The score report will give you two percentiles to compare yourself to the rest of the country's students. One is called the Nationally Representative Sample, and the other is the User Percentile. Though the Nationally Representative Sample may be a more appealing (read: higher) number, the one you'll want to focus on is the User Percentile. That's because the first number includes all students in your grade, even those who won't take the PSAT.

The User Percentile only takes into account the data from students very likely to take the PSAT. Here's a chart that compares the total scaled scores with both percentiles for tenth graders. This chart can be an excellent tool to project good PSAT scores for sophomores and what scores you may reasonably achieve.

### User Percentile Scores for 10th Grade:

Converted Section Score	Reading and Writing	Math
760	99+	99+
750	99+	99+
740	99+	99
730	99+	99
720	99+	99
710	99	98
700	99	98
690	99	98
680	98	97

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Sophomores?

## Cont.

Converted Section Score	Reading and Writing	Math
670	98	97
660	97	96
650	96	96
640	95	95
630	93	94
620	92	93
610	90	92
600	88	90
590	86	89
580	84	86
570	81	83
560	79	81
550	76	78
540	72	75
530	69	72
520	66	68
510	62	65
500	59	62

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Sophomores?

## Cont.

Converted Section Score	Reading and Writing	Math
490	55	58
480	52	54
470	49	49
450	42	43
440	38	38
430	35	33
420	31	29
410	27	24
400	24	21
390	21	17
380	17	13
370	14	11
360	11	8
350	8	6
340	6	3
330	4	2
320	2	2
310	1	1

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Sophomores?

## Cont.

Converted Section Score	Reading and Writing	Math
300	1	1
290	1-	1
280	1-	1-
270	1-	1-
260	1-	1-
250	1-	1-
240	1-	1-
230	1-	1-
220	1-	1-
210	1-	1-
200	1-	1-
190	1-	1-
180	1-	1-
170	1-	1-
160	1-	1-

[Source: CollegeBoard](#)



# What's a Good PSAT Score for Sophomores?

## Cont.

### An Easier Way to Understand Your PSAT Scores:

You must be tearing your hair out over all these figures by now. But, let's take a step back and think about it. 50% is the middle of a population, like a 2.0 GPA out of 4. So, think of a "good" PSAT score as one that ranges above the 50th percentile range. If you want to compare some more, this chart projects minimum section and total scores for 70th, 80th, 90th, and 99th percentiles.

Percentile	Reading and Writing Score	Math Score	Composite Score
70%	540	530	1070
80%	570	560	1130
90%	610	600	1210
99%	700	720	1420

Since new students are taking these tests every year, scores will fluctuate a bit. Also, because this version of the PSAT is new, the College Board's data may not be as comprehensive as it will be in a few more years.

As you can see by the charts, the Math section is more competitive than the Reading and Writing. If you want to score in the 99th percentile, you'll need 30 to 40 points more than you would in the Reading and Writing sections. However, the scores aren't usually off by that much and at some percentile levels, Reading and Writing are more competitive than Math.

# What's a Good PSAT Score for Sophomores?

## Cont.

### Thinking Ahead to the NMSC:

Let's say you received a highly competitive score. If you're already around the 95th percentile as a tenth grader, you're on course to qualify as a National Merit Semifinalist or Finalist. However, you'll still have some way to go because the NMSC only awards the top 1% of PSAT test takers in their junior year.

From that top 1%, 8,600 scholarships are awarded to finalists in the form of National Merit Scholarships, Corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards, and College-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards.

That may sound discouraging, but for the other 2/3 of students who receive commendation awards from the organization, there are plenty of scholarships to go around. There's the [National Achievement Scholarship](#) program for African-American students, the [National Hispanic Recognition Program](#), and the Telluride Association, which offers scholarship money for eleventh-grade summer programs in the social sciences and humanities. Check out even more sponsoring organizations [here](#).

### Where to Go Next:

Though most students qualify for summer programs around seventh grade, you can still get into some in high school with exemplary SAT scores. Associations like [Duke TIP Option](#) and [Johns Hopkins' Center for Talented Youth](#) have great summer programs aimed at high school students. If you're looking into this as an option, you should take the PSAT in tenth grade and the SAT junior year.

We know that's a lot to digest all at once. Just keep these tips in mind: take on as much as you think you can handle, recognize what your personal "good" score is and [practice](#), [practice](#), [practice](#)! It's a little overwhelming at first, but it'll be worth it to get that oversized acceptance envelope in the mail.



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