

SAT vs ACT: Key Differences

SAT	vs.	ACT
reasoning test	Type of Test	content-based test
Critical Reading: 2, 25-min sections & 1, 20-min section; Math: 2, 25-min sections & 1, 20-min section; Writing: 1, 25-min essay, 1, 25-min section, & 1, 10-min section	Test Format	English: 1, 45-min section; Math: 1, 60-min section; Reading: 1, 35-min section; Science: 1, 35-min section; Writing: 1, 30-min essay (optional)
reading, vocabulary, grammar & usage, writing, and math	Content Covered	grammar & usage, math, reading, science reasoning, and writing (optional)
tricky, questions can be phrased in ways that make them difficult to decipher	Test Style	straightforward, questions may be long but are usually less difficult to decipher
Math, Critical Reading, and Writing scores will each range between a 200-800; total SAT score ranges between 600-2400	Scoring	English, Math, Reading, and Science scores will each range between 1-36. Composite ACT score is the average of your scores on the four sections; ranges between 1-36
yes – you lose $\frac{1}{4}$ of a point for incorrect answers (except on grid-in math questions)	Penalty for Wrong Answers?	no – you do not lose points for incorrect answers
yes – you can choose which set(s) of SAT scores to submit to colleges	Score Choice?	yes – you can choose which set(s) of ACT scores to submit to colleges
questions increase in difficulty level as you move through that question type in a section (except reading passage questions, which progress chronologically through the passage)	Difficulty Levels	difficulty level of the questions is random
arithmetic, data analysis, algebra I and II, functions, geometry; formulas are provided in the test booklet	Math Levels	arithmetic, algebra I and II, functions, geometry, trigonometry; no formulas are provided
with private schools and schools on the east and west coasts; however, every four-year college in the US accepts SAT scores	Tends to be more popular?	with public schools and schools in the Midwest and south; however, every four-year college in the US accepts ACT scores
seven times per year: January, March or April, May, June, October, November, December	Offered when?	six times per year: February, April, June, September, October, December (note that some states offer the ACT as part of their state testing requirements; these tests are not administered on the national test dates)
typically about four weeks before the test date	Registration deadline?	typically about five to six weeks before the test date
www.collegeboard.com	More Info	www.act.org

Table 1

Concordance Between ACT Composite Score and Sum of SAT Critical Reading and Mathematics Scores

<i>SAT CR+M (Score Range)</i>	<i>ACT Composite Score</i>	<i>SAT CR+M (Single Score)</i>
1600	36	1600
1540-1590	35	1560
1490-1530	34	1510
1440-1480	33	1460
1400-1430	32	1420
1360-1390	31	1380
1330-1350	30	1340
1290-1320	29	1300
1250-1280	28	1260
1210-1240	27	1220
1170-1200	26	1190
1130-1160	25	1150
1090-1120	24	1110
1050-1080	23	1070
1020-1040	22	1030
980-1010	21	990
940-970	20	950
900-930	19	910
860-890	18	870
820-850	17	830
770-810	16	790
720-760	15	740
670-710	14	690
620-660	13	640
560-610	12	590
510-550	11	530

Table 2

Concordance Between ACT Combined English/Writing Score and SAT Writing Score

<i>SAT Writing (Score Range)</i>	<i>ACT English/Writing Score</i>	<i>SAT Writing (Single Score)</i>
800	36	800
800	35	800
770-790	34	770
730-760	33	740
710-720	32	720
690-700	31	690
660-680	30	670
640-650	29	650
620-630	28	630
610	27	610
590-600	26	590
570-580	25	570
550-560	24	550
530-540	23	530
510-520	22	510
480-500	21	490
470	20	470
450-460	19	450
430-440	18	430
410-420	17	420
390-400	16	400
380	15	380
360-370	14	360
340-350	13	340
320-330	12	330
300-310	11	310

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