

ACT vs. SAT: Which Exam Is Right for Your College Goals?



PRESENTED BY

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Founder & CEO, Winward Academy

DECEMBER 5, 2023

ACT[®]

achieve
more[®]
SAT

[WINWARDACADEMY.COM](https://winwardacademy.com)

Agenda

01 General Information

02 Specifics of What's Tested on Each Exam

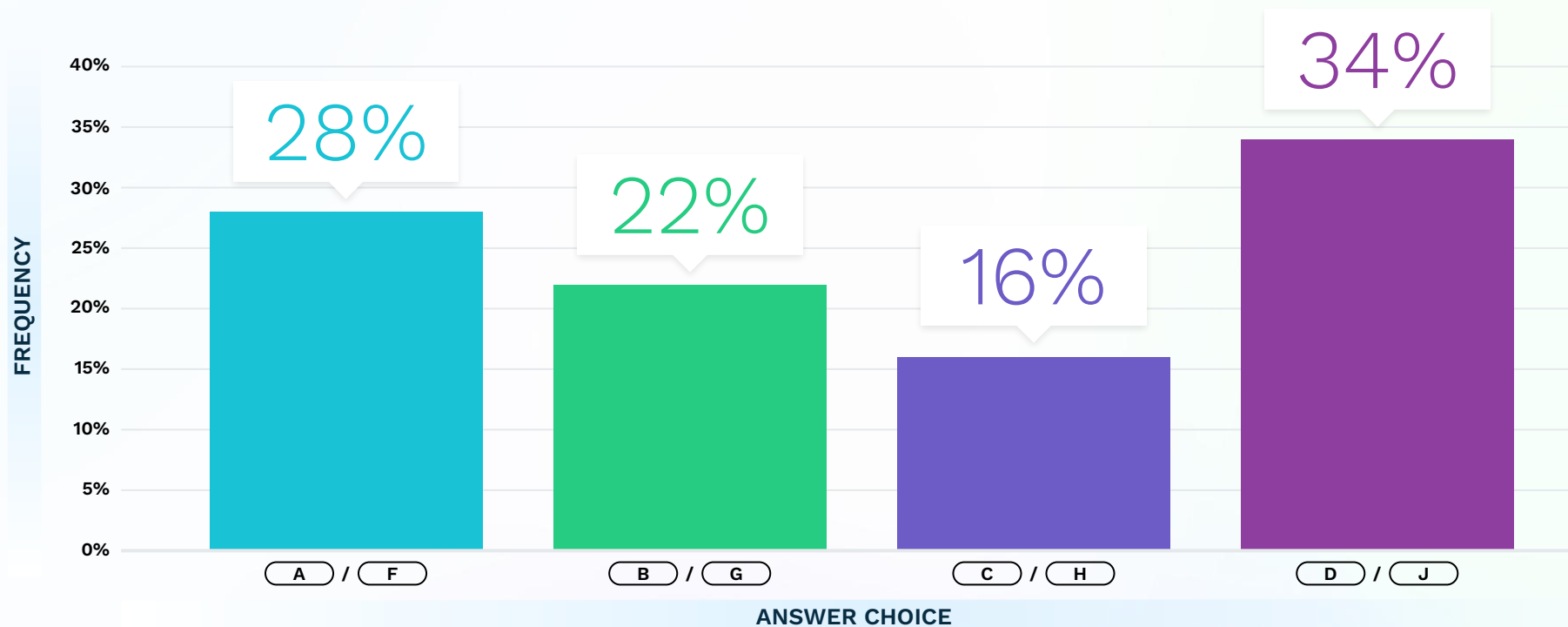
03 Test Day Advice

ACT VS. SAT

01 General Information

Test Taking Poll

What letter do you guess?



Exam Difference

General overview of ACT and SAT

ACT[®]

SAT[®]

LENGTH

2 hours 55 minutes (*without* writing)
3 hours 35 minutes (*with* writing)

3 hours (no essay)

SECTIONS

English, Math, Reading, & Science
(optional Writing section)

EBRW score & Math score

SCORED

1–36

400–1600

WHEN OFFERED

February, April, June, July,
September, October, & December

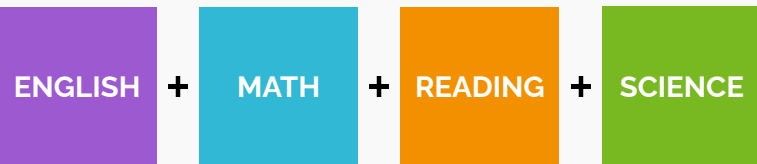
March, May, June, August,
October, November, & December



ACT & SAT Scoring Breakdown

ACT[®]

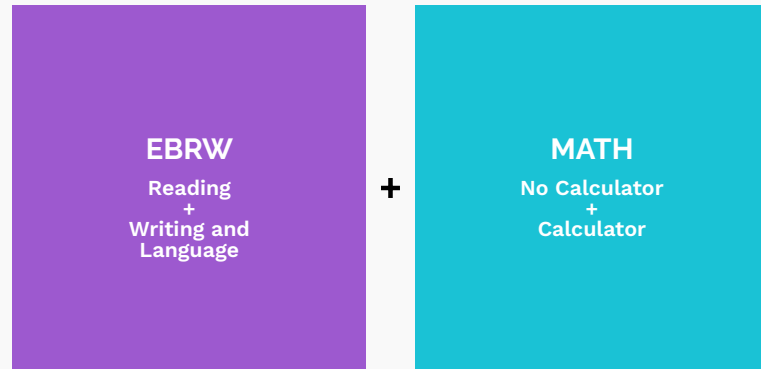
Calculated as
the average of each section



4

SAT[®]

Calculated as Evidence-Based Reading
and Writing (EBRW) + Math



ACT & SAT Test Dates

ACT[®]

✓ September 9, 2023

October 28, 2023

December 9, 2023

February 10, 2024

✓ April 13, 2024

✓ June 6, 2024

July 13, 2024

✓ = ACT TEST INFORMATION RELEASE AVAILABLE (\$30)

SAT[®]

August 26, 2023

✓ October 7, 2023

November 4, 2023

December 2, 2023

**last pencil and paper SAT*

March 9, 2024

**digital SAT begins*

May 4, 2024

June 1, 2024

✓ = SAT QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SERVICE AVAILABLE (\$18)

Algebra II/Trig in Sophomore Year

ACT[®]

✓ September 9, 2023

October 28, 2023

December 9, 2023

February 10, 2024

✓ April 13, 2024

✓ June 6, 2024

July 13, 2024

✓ = ACT TEST INFORMATION RELEASE AVAILABLE (\$30)

SAT[®]

August 26, 2023

✓ October 7, 2023

November 4, 2023

December 2, 2023

**last pencil and paper SAT*

March 9, 2024

**digital SAT begins*

May 4, 2024

June 1, 2024

✓ = SAT QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SERVICE AVAILABLE (\$18)



Algebra II/Trig in Junior Year

ACT[®]

✓ September 9, 2023

October 28, 2023

December 9, 2023

February 10, 2024

✓ April 13, 2024

✓ June 6, 2024

July 13, 2024

✓ = ACT TEST INFORMATION RELEASE AVAILABLE (\$30)

SAT[®]

August 26, 2023

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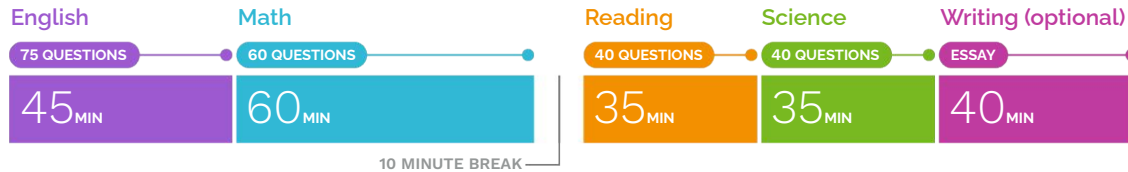


ACT Test Day

Comparing Regular Time vs. Extended Time

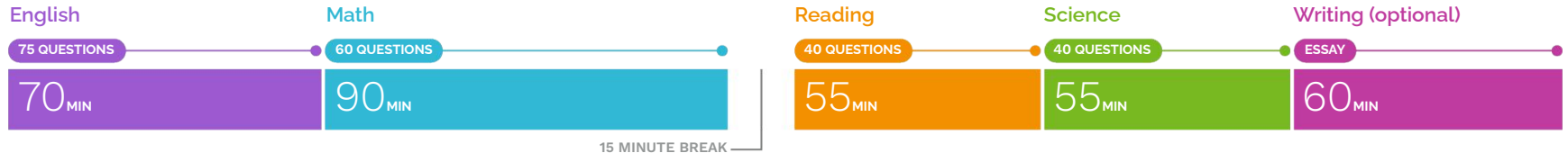
ACT: Regular Time

5 Sections, 3 Hours and 35 Minutes



ACT: 1.5 Extended Time

5 Sections, 5 Hours and 30 Minutes



SAT Test Day

Comparing Regular Time vs. Extended Time

SAT: Regular Time

4 Sections, 3 Hours

Reading

52 QUESTIONS

65_{MIN}

10 MINUTE BREAK

Writing & Language

44 QUESTIONS

35_{MIN}

Math: No Calc.

20 Q'S

25_{MIN}

5 MINUTE BREAK

Math: With Calculator

38 QUESTIONS

55_{MIN}

SAT: 1.5 Extended Time

4 Sections, 4 Hours and 32 Minutes

Reading

42 QUESTIONS

49_{MIN}

49_{MIN}

5 MINUTE BREAK

5 MINUTE BREAK

Writing & Language

44 QUESTIONS

53_{MIN}

Math: No Calculator

20 QUESTIONS

38_{MIN}

5 MINUTE BREAK

Math: With Calculator

38 QUESTIONS

42_{MIN}

5 MINUTE BREAK

41_{MIN}

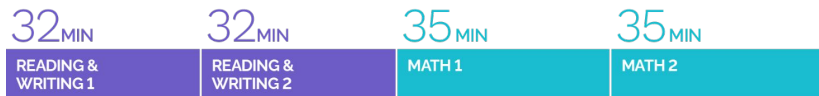


Overview of Changes

Timing and questions for the digital SAT

New Digital SAT [400–1600]

4 Sections, 2 Hours and 14 Minutes



Current Paper SAT [400–1600]

4 Sections, 3 Hours



ACT [1–36]

4 Sections, 2 Hours and 55 Minutes



THE DIGITAL SAT (dSAT) WAS DESIGNED TO APPEAL TO STUDENTS.

- It is much shorter (46 min. shorter)
 - 36 fewer minutes in Reading
 - 10 fewer minutes in Math
- Long reading passages are removed
- Calculators are allowed on all math sections



SAT vs ACT: Math

	NEW DIGITAL SAT	CURRENT PAPER SAT	CURRENT PAPER ACT
MATH TIMING	70 MINUTES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 35 min Stage 1• 35 min Stage 2	80 MINUTES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 25 min <i>without</i> calculator• 55 min <i>with</i> calculator	60 MINUTES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• One 60 min section
MATH QUESTIONS	44 QUESTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 22 Q in Stage 1<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5–6 SPR• 22 Q in Stage 2<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5–6 SPR	58 QUESTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 20 Q <i>without</i> calculator<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 SPR• 38 Q <i>with</i> calculator<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 SPR	60 QUESTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All with calculator• All multiple choice
TIME PER QUESTION	1.6 min per question, <i>both stages</i>	1.25 min per question <i>without</i> calculator 1.45 min per question <i>with</i> calculator	1 min per question



SAT vs ACT: Reading and Writing

	NEW DIGITAL SAT	CURRENT PAPER SAT	CURRENT PAPER ACT
VERBAL TIMING	64 MINUTES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 32 min Stage 1• 32 min Stage 2	100 MINUTES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 65 min on Reading• 35 min on Writing + Language	80 MINUTES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 45 min English• 35 min Reading
VERBAL QUESTIONS	54 QUESTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 27 in Stage 1• 27 in Stage 2	96 QUESTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 52 on Reading• 44 on Writing + Language	115 QUESTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 75 on English• 40 on Reading
TIME PER QUESTION	1.2 min per question, <i>both stages</i>	1.25 min per question on Reading 0.8 min per question on Writing + Language	0.6 min per question on English 0.88 min per question on Reading



Exam Structure & Scoring

Breakdown by subject

READING AND WRITING SECTION

Module 1

A blend of easy, medium,
and hard questions

32
MINUTES

27
QUESTIONS

BRIEF PAUSE

Module 2

Adaptive: easier or harder based on
performance in Module 1

32
MINUTES

27
QUESTIONS

2

"PRE-TEST"
QUESTIONS IN
EACH MODULE

**These are not scored*

MATH SECTION

Module 1

A blend of easy, medium,
and hard questions

35
MINUTES

22
QUESTIONS

BRIEF PAUSE

Module 2

Adaptive: easier or harder based on
performance in Module 1

35
MINUTES

22
QUESTIONS

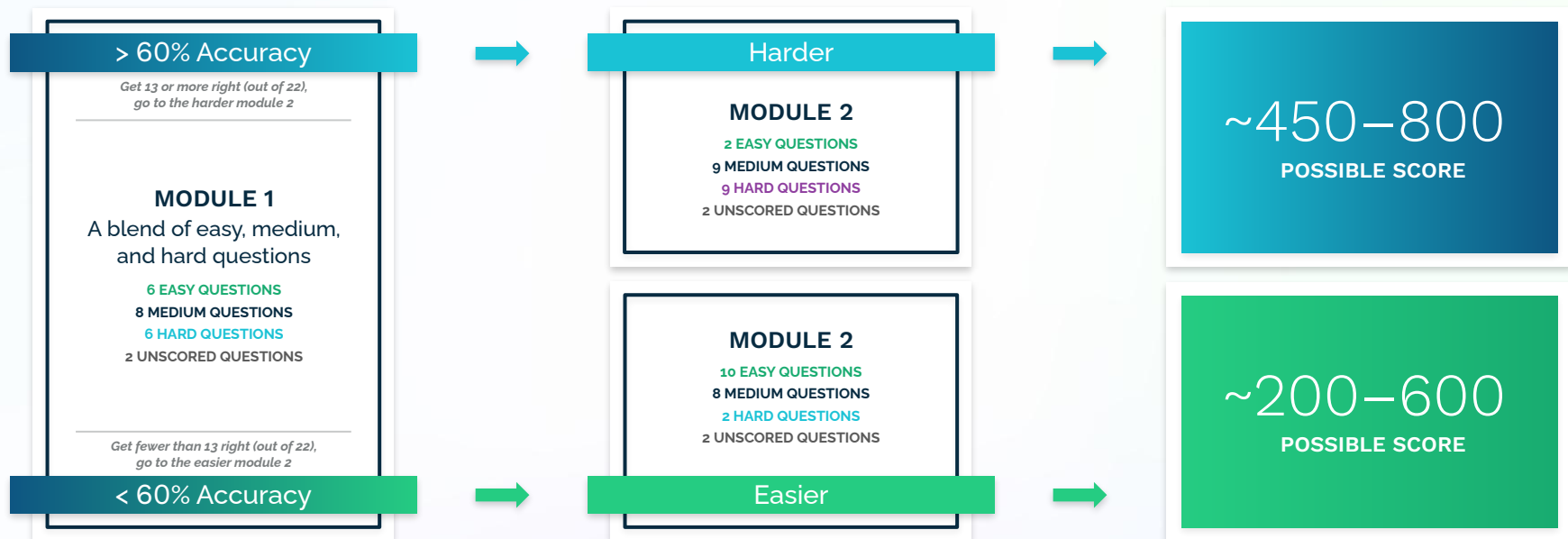
✓ USING A CALCULATOR IS ALLOWED ON BOTH MODULES



Exam Structure & Scoring

Adaptive scoring module breakdown for the Math section

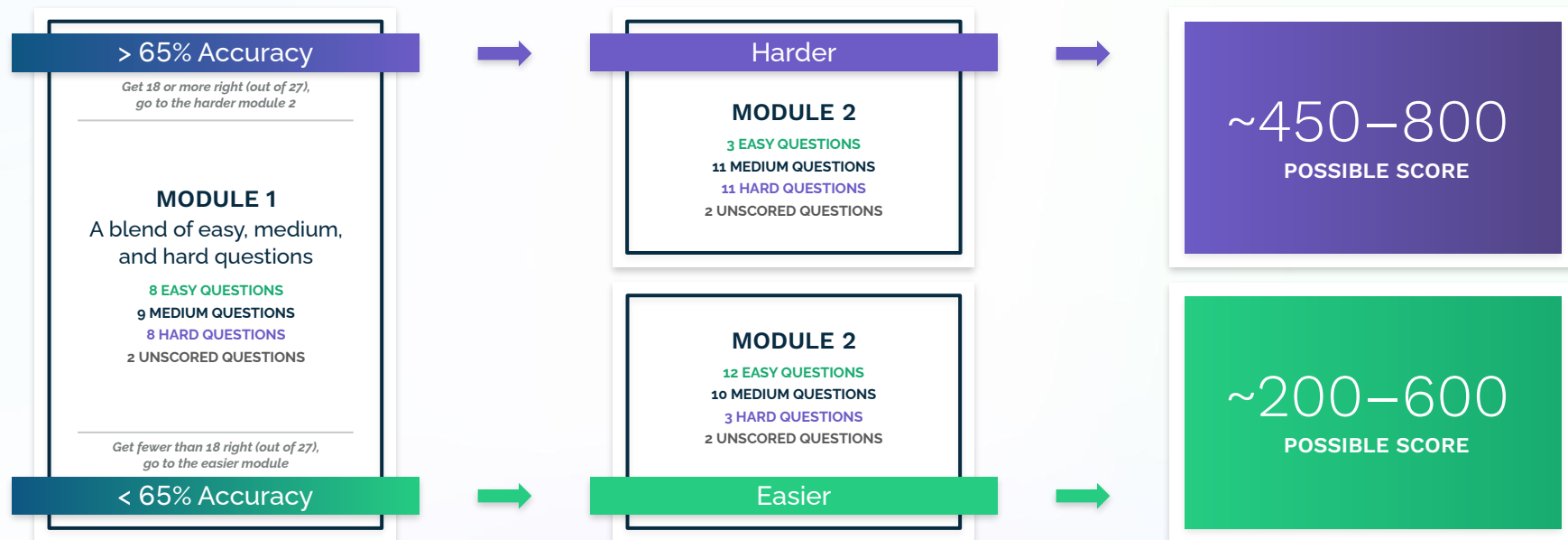
MATH EXAM SECTION



Exam Structure & Scoring

Adaptive scoring module breakdown for the Reading and Writing section

READING AND WRITING EXAM SECTION



Exam Structure & Scoring

Point value comparison

CURRENT SAT



1 QUESTION

=

1 POINT VALUE

All questions **are** worth the same point value

DIGITAL SAT



1 QUESTION

≠

1 POINT VALUE

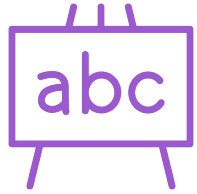
All questions **are not** worth the same point value

ACT VS. SAT

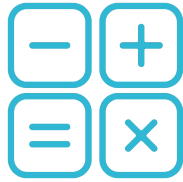
02 Specifics of What's Tested on Each Exam

Core Content Tested

Let's get specific



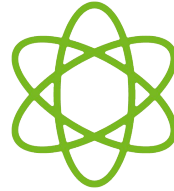
English



Math



Reading



Science



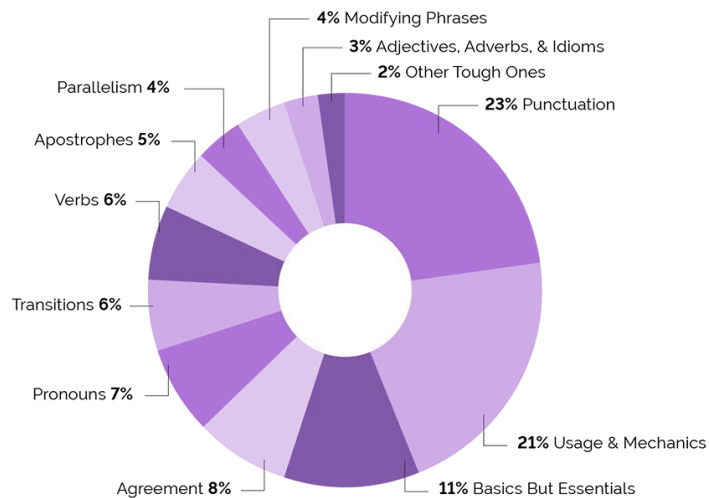
Writing



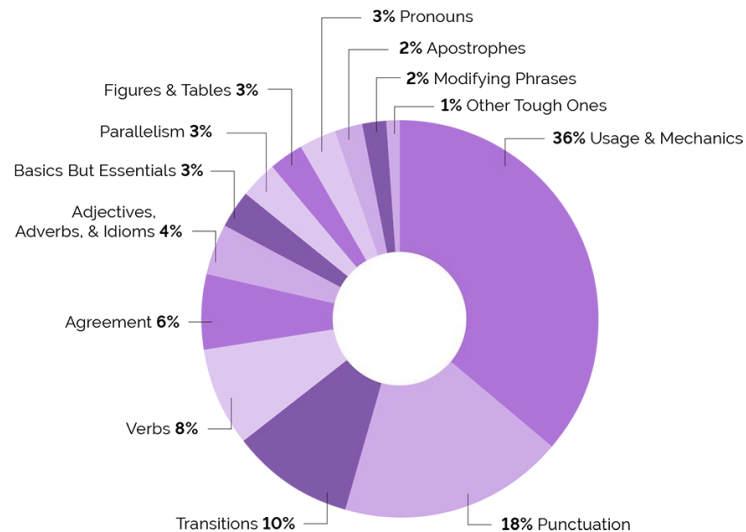
English Question Frequency

ACT[®]

% BREAKDOWN BY QUESTION TYPES



SAT[®]





English Question Frequency

ACT[®]

LESSON	FREQUENCY	VALUE
Punctuation	23%	9–10 pts
Usage & Mechanics	21%	6–7 pts
Basics But Essentials	11%	3–5 pts

SAT[®]

LESSON	FREQUENCY	VALUE
Usage & Mechanics	36%	100–200 pts
Punctuation	18%	60–70 pts
Transitions	10%	30–40 pts

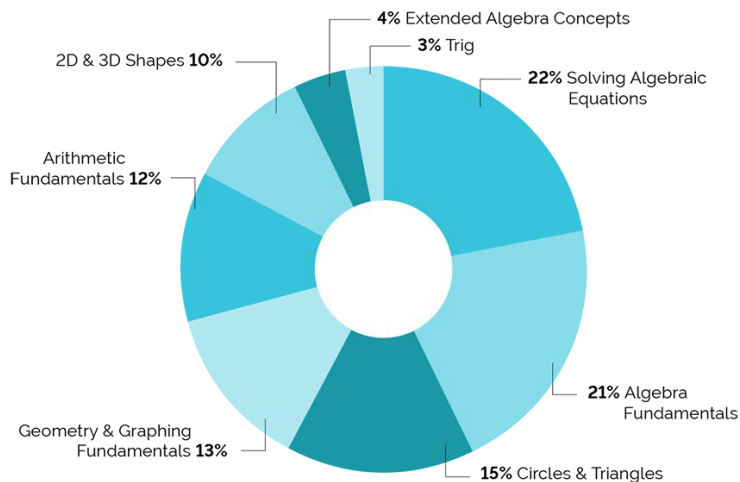




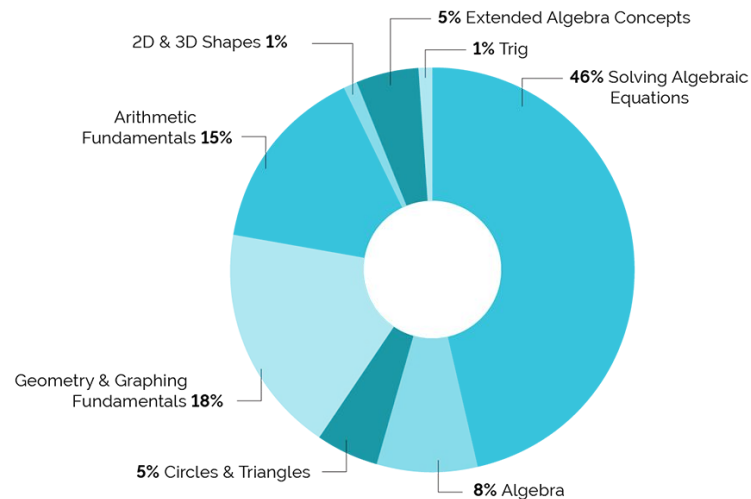
Math Question Frequency

ACT[®]

% BREAKDOWN BY QUESTION TYPES



SAT[®]





Math Question Frequency

ACT[®]

LESSON	FREQUENCY	VALUE
Solving Algebra Equations	22%	6–7 pts
Algebra Fundamentals	21%	6–7 pts
Circles & Triangles	15%	3–5 pts
Geometry & Graphing Fundamentals	13%	3–5 pts
Arithmetic Fundamentals	12%	3–5 pts

SAT[®]

LESSON	FREQUENCY	VALUE
Solving Algebra Equations	46%	200–300 pts
Geometry & Graphing Fundamentals	18%	80–90 pts
Arithmetic Fundamentals	15%	70–80 pts
Algebra Fundamentals	8%	40–50 pts
Circles & Triangles	5%	30–40 pts

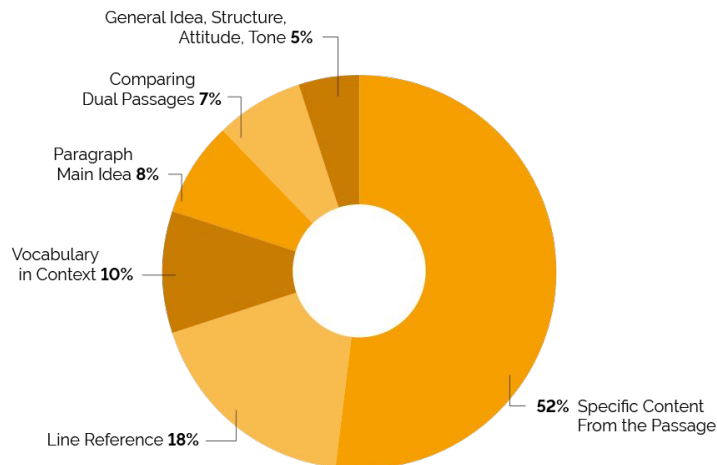




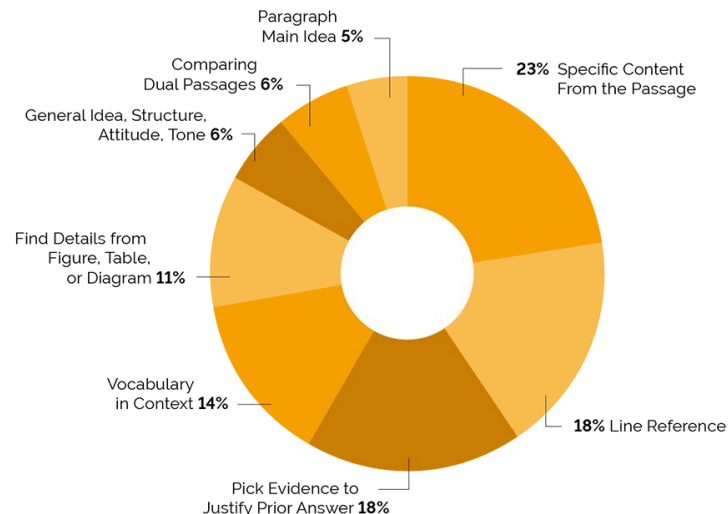
Reading Question Frequency

ACT

% BREAKDOWN BY QUESTION TYPES



SAT





Reading Question Frequency

ACT[®]

LESSON	FREQUENCY	VALUE
Specific Content	52%	16–18 pts
Line Reference	18%	5–6 pts
Vocab in Context	10%	3–4 pts

SAT[®]

LESSON	FREQUENCY	VALUE
Specific Content	23%	60–70 pts
Line Reference	18%	50–60 pts
Pick Evidence	18%	50–60 pts



SAT “Pick Evidence” Questions

SAT

9

Example Question 1

Why does Akira say his meeting with Chie is “a matter of urgency” (line 32)?

- A) He fears that his own parents will disapprove of Naomi.
- B) He worries that Naomi will reject him and marry someone else.
- C) He has been offered an attractive job in another country.
- D) He knows that Chie is unaware of his feelings for Naomi.

10

Example Question 2

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

- A) Line 39 (“I don’t . . . you”)
- B) Lines 39-42 (“Normally . . . community”)
- C) Lines 58-59 (“Depending . . . Japan”)
- D) Lines 72-73 (“I see . . . you”)

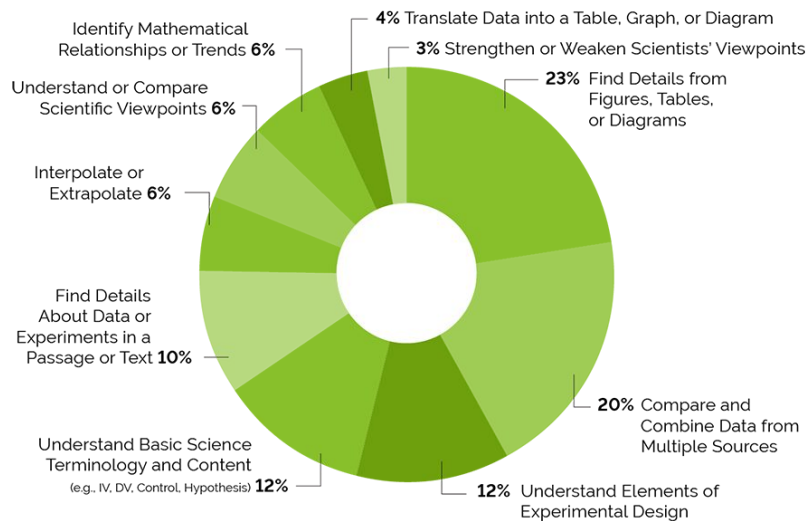
Worth 50–60 pts





Science Question Frequency

ACT[®]



% BREAKDOWN BY QUESTION TYPES



ACT VS. SAT

03 Test Day Advice

Tips for Success

General tips to maximize performance

01

NEVER
LEAVE A
QUESTION
BLANK

02

GUESS
THE SAME
LETTER...
ALWAYS

03

WRITE ALL
OVER THE
BOOKLET...
IT'S YOURS

04

PRACTICE
BUBBLING
WITH A
SCANTRON



Testing Advice

Ways to improve performance on exams



TAKE DIAGNOSTIC

Take diagnostic exams early for ACT and SAT



COMPARE SCORES

Compare scores for the ACT and SAT exams



DETERMINE TEST

Determine which test to take and when



REVIEW GAPS

Review content area gaps to craft study plan



DO MORE PRACTICE

Take more practice exams to improve score



CORRECT MISTAKES

Review mistakes with detailed corrections

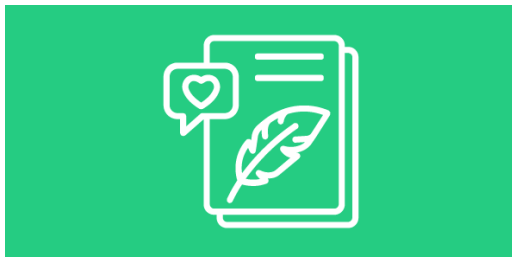
Holistic College Applications

Advice for Class of 2022 and beyond



PREPARE FOR EXAMS EARLY

The test optional shift doesn't mean students won't take the ACT & SAT, especially when pursuing scholarships, athletics, and competitive programs.



PLAN FOR STRONG APPLICATIONS

The trend of colleges becoming more "holistic" in their review of students' applications shifts more weight to experiences, interest, recommendations, and character.



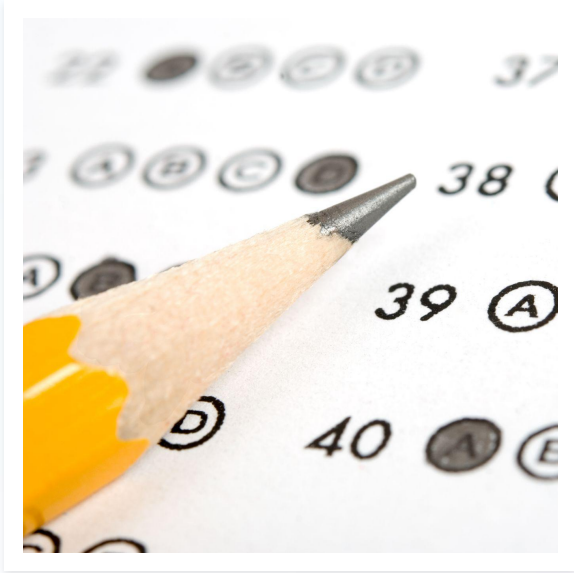
EXPECT HIGHER SCORE AVERAGES

Test optional colleges' reported average test scores will be the same or higher given that students are only reporting scores when they're high.



Test Day Checklist

Important items not to forget on test day



- ✓ Photo ID
- ✓ Registration ticket
- ✓ Directions to your site
- ✓ Three or more #2 pencils
- ✓ Calculator
- ✓ A watch without an audible alarm
- ✓ Pencil sharpener
- ✓ Eraser
- ✓ Tissues
- ✓ Snacks
- ✓ Bottled water
- ✓ Comfortable outfit



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Thank You!

Please stay on with questions and reach out to me any time for support.

Jennifer Winward, Ph.D.
Founder & CEO, Winward Academy
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Frequently Asked Questions



Is the ACT or SAT preferred by colleges?
How do students pick?



How are they different? Which one is harder?



How many practice exams do students typically take before the real one?



What is one thing to prioritize to boost a score?



What about a superscore? Is that only for SAT?



When will ACT section retakes start?

ACT VS. SAT

04 Appendix

Progression and Timeline from PSAT Exam to National Merit Scholar

OCTOBER 2023
JUNIOR PSAT
1,300,000 Test Takers

Each year, approximately 1.3 million juniors take the PSAT and enter the National Merit Scholarship Program. Only junior year PSAT scores are considered.

MAY 2024
COMMENDED STUDENT
34,000 Commended Students

The top 50,000 students are recognized either as Commended Students (34,000) or as Semifinalists (16,000). For the Class of 2023, a Selection Index of 207 was required to achieve Commended Student status.

SEPTEMBER 2024
SEMIFINALIST
16,000 Semifinalists

The 16,000 Semifinalists continue in the competition. Semifinalists are determined proportionally by state, and the score cutoffs vary by year.

FEBRUARY 2025
FINALIST
15,000 Finalists

Almost 95% of all Semifinalists eventually are named National Merit Finalists (15,000). A Semifinalist must meet certain academic requirements, attain a qualifying SAT or ACT score, and complete an application to become a Finalist.

MARCH–MAY 2025
SCHOLAR
~7,880 Scholarships

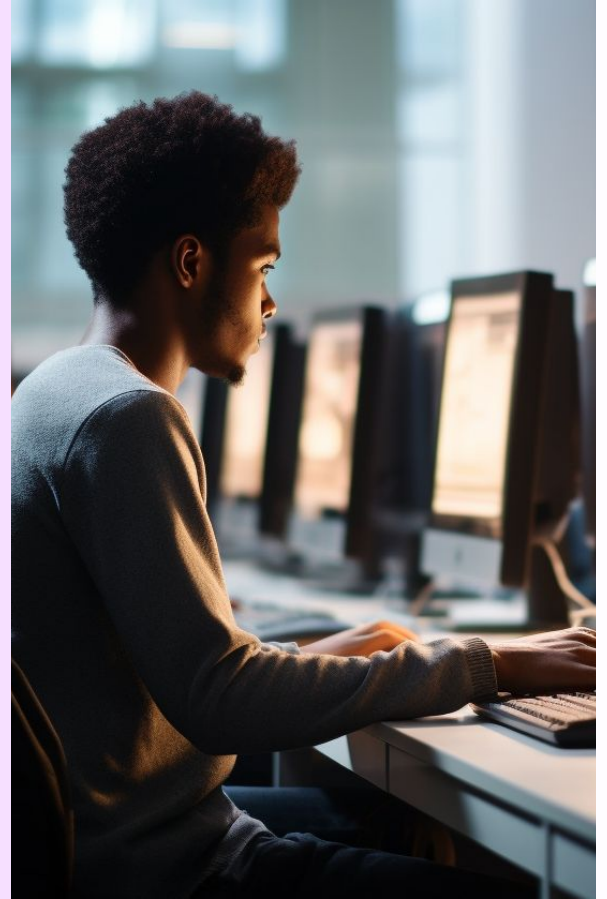
From the pool of Finalists, approximately 7,880 students will be awarded scholarships from NMSC or sponsoring colleges or corporations. Special Scholarships are given to 1,500 students who meet eligibility criteria established by the corporate sponsors. Special Scholarship recipients need not be Finalists.



Exam Scoring and Structure

Digital SAT exam overview

- The dSAT is 2 hours long
- There are two sections
 - Reading and Writing
 - Math
- Each section has two separately timed modules
- Long reading passages are removed from the exam
- Scored out of 1600 points
- Calculator is allowed on ALL math questions
- This is an adaptive test - why?
 - More efficient as it gathers a score from fewer questions
 - More secure because students are all working on different problems



Exam Structure & Scoring

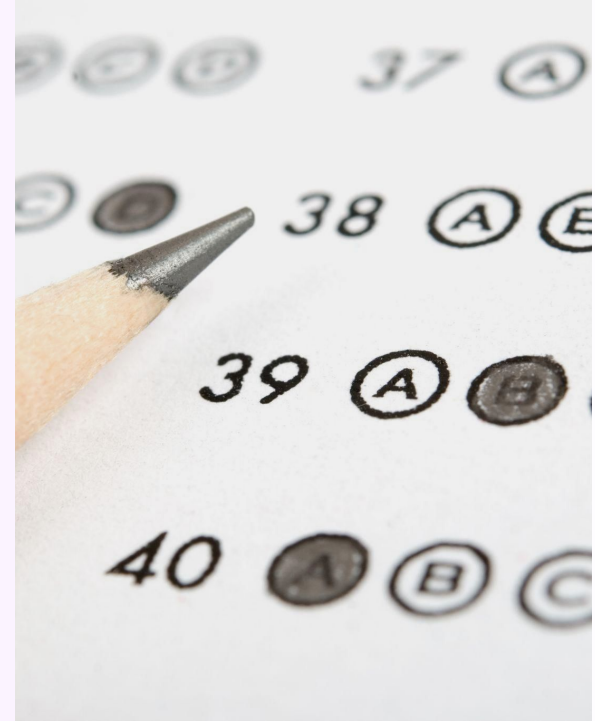
Introduction to Item Response Theory scoring

ITEM RESPONSE THEORY (IRT)

- ✓ Method of developing and scoring tests with questions (items) of different difficulty levels
- ✓ Purpose: To effectively differentiate test-takers in terms of ability on an underlying trait (i.e., math skills)

WHAT DOES IRT TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION?

- ✓ Number of questions answered correctly
- ✓ Difficulty of each question
- ✓ Probability of answering correctly—based on item difficulty and test-taker ability





English Overview

ACT[®]

75

QUESTIONS

45

MINUTES

Exam Structure:

Tests abilities in grammar, usage, and mechanics in multiple choice format

SAT[®]

44

QUESTIONS

35

MINUTES

Exam Structure:

Tests abilities in grammar, usage, and mechanics in multiple choice format





Math Overview

ACT[®]

60

QUESTIONS

60

MINUTES

Exam Structure:

Tests content in algebra 1 and 2, geometry, data analysis, and trig

Calculator Usage:

✓ **Allows a calculator on all** 60 problems

SAT[®]

58

QUESTIONS

80

MINUTES

Exam Structure:

Tests content in algebra 1 and 2, geometry, data analysis, and trig

Calculator Usage:

⚠ **Non-calculator** (20 Question) portion

✓ **Calculator** (38 Question) portion





SAT Math Calculator Use



Non-Calculator Portion

SAT



Calculator Portion

NON-CALCULATOR PORTION OVERVIEW

20 *IN* 25
QUESTIONS MINUTES

Question Format:

15 MULTIPLE-CHOICE

5 GRID-IN

Question Categories:

- Distribute and combine like terms
- Complex numbers
- FOIL
- Multiple linear systems
- SOHCAHTOA

CALCULATOR PORTION OVERVIEW

38 *IN* 55
QUESTIONS MINUTES

Question Format:

30 MULTIPLE-CHOICE

8 GRID-IN

Question Categories:

- $f(x)$ & composite functions
- Real life algebra word problems
- Slope-intercept form of a line
- Percent word problems
- Converting units





Reading Overview

ACT[®]

40

QUESTIONS
(4 Passages)

35

MINUTES

Exam Structure:

Has single passages and dual passages
in literature, social science, humanities,
and natural science

SAT[®]

52

QUESTIONS
(5 Passages)

65

MINUTES

Exam Structure:

Has single passages, dual passages, and single
passages with figures in literature, historical
documents, social science, and natural science





Science Overview

ACT[®]

40

QUESTIONS
(6 Passages)

35

MINUTES

Exam Structure:

Questions requiring students to
interpret figures and tables or to read
about scientific content

Calculator Usage:

 **Calculator NOT** allowed on questions

SAT[®]



No Science Section
in the SAT

Where the SAT Includes Science:

One longer 65-minute **Reading** section that has
two scientific passages





Science Overview

ACT[®]

40

QUESTIONS
(6 Passages)

35

MINUTES

Exam Structure:

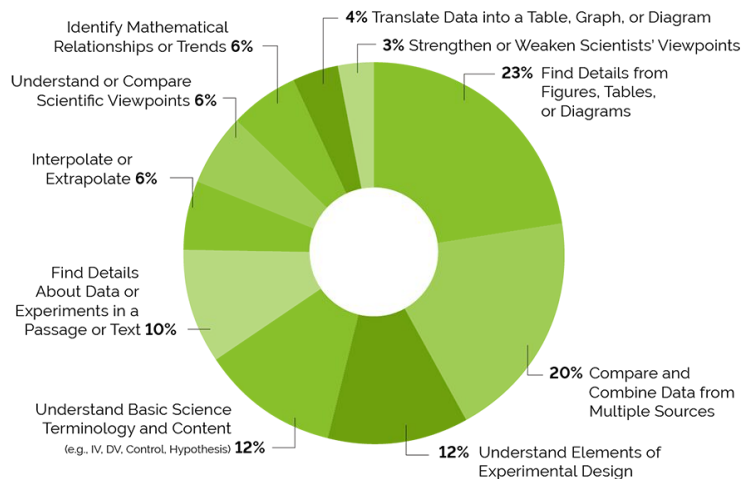
Questions requiring students to interpret figures and tables or to read about scientific content

Calculator Usage:

⚠ Calculator NOT allowed on questions

Question Frequency

% BREAKDOWN BY QUESTION TYPES



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