

How can you prepare for college admission tests?

Dear Students and Families,

As you navigate middle and high school, planning for postsecondary education is an exciting milestone. In response to student interest in college readiness, this guide provides updated information on pre-college practice tests and college entrance exams, along with recommendations for structuring your testing timeline.

1. Overview of Admission & Practice Tests

College entrance exams give postsecondary institutions a standardized measure of academic readiness. Today, the standardized testing landscape includes adaptive digital formats and flexible options.

Practice & Preliminary Tests

- **PSAT/NMSQT & PSAT 8/9:** Administered digitally by the College Board. The PSAT 8/9 introduces middle schoolers and freshmen to the test structure, while the PSAT/NMSQT (taken in 10th or 11th grade) prepares students for the SAT and serves as the qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship Program in 11th grade.
- **PreACT:** Designed by ACT for 9th and 10th graders, the PreACT offers a practice experience modeled after the ACT exam, helping predict performance and identify academic strengths.

College Entrance Exams

- **Digital SAT:** A 2-hour, 14-minute digital, section-adaptive exam hosted on College Board's Bluebook app. It consists of two main sections: Reading & Writing and Math (calculators are permitted throughout the entire math section).
- **ACT:** A standardized test covering English, Math, Reading, and Science (with an optional Writing test).

Note on Test-Optional Policies: *Many colleges operate under test-optional or test-blind admissions policies. However, submitting strong scores can enhance college applications, course placement, and merit-based scholarship opportunities. Check specific admissions requirements for each institution you are considering.*

2. Recommended Testing Approach

- **Middle School & 9th Grade (Exploration):** Focus on strong study habits, challenging coursework, and foundational math and reading skills. Students may take the PSAT 8/9 to get comfortable with digital testing.
- **10th Grade (Baseline):** Take the PSAT/NMSQT or PreACT during the school year to establish a baseline score, identify knowledge gaps, and determine whether the SAT or ACT style suits you best.
- **11th Grade (Primary Testing):** Take the official SAT or ACT in the winter or spring. High-scoring juniors should take the PSAT/NMSQT in October for National Merit eligibility.
- **12th Grade (Finalizing Scores):** If necessary, retake the SAT or ACT in the late summer or early fall to improve scores before application deadlines. Most students see score improvements on their second or third attempt.

3. Preparation Strategies & Official Resources

Consistent, low-stress preparation yields the best results. Utilize official, free practice platforms:

- **College Board (SAT & PSAT):** Download the [Bluebook App](#) for full-length digital practice tests, or practice interactive questions on [Khan Academy](#).
- **ACT & PreACT:** Access practice questions, test prep guides, and full-length practice tests via [ACT Student Services](#).

Next Steps

For personalized advice on course selection, test timing, or accommodations, please contact the Guidance Office to schedule an appointment with your counselor.

Sincerely,

Your Counselor