

Need Help Deciding Which College Admission Test to Take?

Dear Student,

In your Universal Encouragement Program guidance survey, you indicated that you might like help deciding which college admission test to take. We can help you understand your options and develop a testing plan that fits your goals, schedule, and needs.

The **ACT and SAT** are the two main college admission tests in the United States. Most colleges that consider test scores accept either one. You generally do not need to take both, and neither test is the best choice for every student.

Start by checking your colleges' requirements.

Some colleges require test scores. Others are *test optional*, meaning you can choose whether to submit scores with your application. Still others do not consider scores in admission decisions. Requirements can change, so check each college's admissions website for the year you plan to enroll. Also check scholarship and specific program requirements, which may differ from general admission requirements.

If you have not yet identified colleges that interest you, that is okay—we can help you explore possibilities.

Compare the ACT and SAT before choosing.

The SAT includes Reading and Writing and Math sections and is taken digitally. The ACT includes English, Math, and Reading, with optional Science and Writing sections. Before selecting an optional ACT section, check whether your colleges or programs require or recommend it.

A useful starting point is to try a free official practice test for each exam. Compare your results, how comfortable you feel with the questions, and how well you manage the time. We can help you interpret the scores, which use different scales, and decide where to focus your preparation.

Use these official resources for current test dates, registration deadlines, fees, and preparation materials:

- **ACT:** www.act.org
- **SAT:** satsuite.collegeboard.org/sat
- **Free SAT practice tests:** satsuite.collegeboard.org/practice/practice-tests

Choose a sensible testing schedule.

Many students first take an admission test during the spring of junior year, leaving time to prepare and, if useful, take it again before college application deadlines. Your best schedule will depend on your coursework, readiness, and the deadlines for your colleges and scholarships.

If you are in middle school or early high school, there is usually no need to rush into admission testing. Focus on building your reading, writing, and math skills and developing effective study habits. School-offered assessments, such as the PSAT 8/9, PSAT 10, or PSAT/NMSQT, can provide practice and help identify skills to strengthen. The PSAT/NMSQT is the qualifying examination for the [National Merit Scholarship](#) competition.

Prepare with a purpose—and ask for support.

Preparation can help you become familiar with the test and become comfortable with the testing process. Start with free official resources, review your mistakes, and make a manageable study plan. Taking a test repeatedly does not guarantee a higher score. We can help you decide whether another attempt would be worthwhile.

If testing costs are a concern, ask us about fee waivers. If you have a disability or need testing accommodations, talk with us early so we can help you understand the request and approval process.

Please contact the guidance office to arrange a time to talk. If you have practice scores or a list of colleges that interest you, bring them along—but you do not need either to get started.

Your test score is only one part of your college planning. It does not define your abilities, your potential, or your future.

Sincerely,

Your Counselor