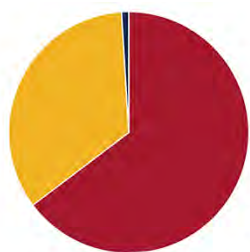


To Test or Not To Test

Until recently, taking the ACT or SAT was something college-bound students generally considered obligatory, knowing that most four-year colleges and universities would require a standardized test score. Even as the number of test optional schools slowly climbed over time, the safer route had traditionally been to preserve one's unconditional eligibility by securing official scores.

The pandemic upended testing policy across the college admission landscape and accelerated the loosening of testing requirements, at least temporarily. Over 95% of selective four-year colleges and universities currently let students decide whether to have scores considered or not. And at some institutions, like the UCs, the CSUs, Cal Tech, Dickinson, and Reed, test scores are not even reviewed during the admissions process, although they can sometimes be used for placement and to satisfy certain core requirements.

PRE-PANDEMIC TESTING POLICY BREAKDOWN FOR THE 400+ SCHOOLS COMPASS TRACKS



Testing Policy

#

%

SAT/ACT Required

268

64.7%

Test Optional

142

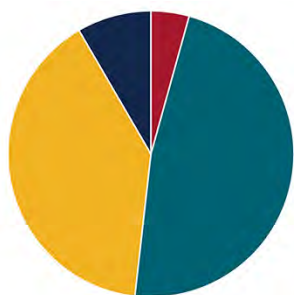
34.3%

Test Flexible

4

1.0%

CURRENT TESTING POLICY BREAKDOWN FOR THE 400+ SCHOOLS COMPASS TRACKS



Testing Policy

#

%

SAT/ACT Required

18

4.3%

Test Optional-1 year trial

36

8.6%

Test Optional-multiyear trial

162

38.8%

Test Optional-permanent

166

39.8%

Test Free

35

8.4%

*Test Optional trial lengths are relative to the 2020-21 admissions cycle. Schools in the one-year trial category intended to only be test optional for the class of 2021, and have yet to provide an updated policy. Schools in the multiyear trial category began their temporary test optional trials with the class of 2021.

KEEPING OPTIONS OPEN

With the decision now shifted largely to applicants, it is important to understand what to do with this theoretical advantage. For many students in the class of 2021, who reached their senior year without a chance to fulfill their testing plans, the option to apply without scores was not so much a choice as a necessity. But thanks to the collective foresight of most colleges and universities, last year's applicants did not find their possibilities much constrained by not submitting test scores; the absence of scores was not a conspicuous omission in the midst of a pandemic. Widespread test site closures meant ACTs and SATs taken nationally were down about 30% in 2020 (down more in some areas), and this resulted in a corresponding drop in applications submitted with scores. Colleges reviewed a lot more applications without test scores this past year, and plenty of students will enroll at selective colleges this fall without having produced (or revealed) an ACT or SAT score.

CLASSES OF 2022 & 2023: TESTING WILL REBOUND, AND A SCORE CAN BE A PLUS

In 2020, most colleges appropriately assumed that an applicant with no test scores did not have safe, readily available opportunities to test before their application was due. Whereas in prior years at test optional colleges there may have been speculation that uncompetitive scores were being concealed, the class of 2021 got more of the benefit of the doubt.

As testing opportunities improve, an increasing number of selective colleges will expect—and will receive—scores from most applicants. Instead of focusing on what they can forgo, students planning to apply to competitive colleges should consider what others with similar opportunities are apt to present as strengths. Like all discretionary qualities volunteered in an application, scores remain a valuable piece of the holistic review process at many schools, especially those where demand for admission drastically outstrips supply.

All things being equal, applicants who have scores to report retain a potential advantage over those who sit out testing from the start. Therefore, the most prudent path is to err on the side of obtaining strong scores, if feasible. Having the option to send scores—to all colleges, to some colleges, or to no colleges—optimizes a student's decision-making opportunity.

We've already seen that a relaxed testing policy does not make a highly selective school less competitive; in fact, it can boost a college's popularity, increasing the imbalance of available spots and demand for them. Colleges that were already sought after reached record high levels of interest in 2020, especially in their early application rounds, resulting in record low early admit rates. Even more sobering have been figures like those reported by University of Pennsylvania, which had an early admit rate among score submitters that was nearly twice as high (18.4%) as that among those who did not submit scores (9.5%). While such a statistic causes consternation, it is an extreme case that should not be imputed to the broader field. What can be assumed is that those who chose to submit scores, on average, had some of the strongest overall applications. So while the presence of scores may correlate to higher admission rates at some schools, it can't be said that sending scores will automatically lead to better outcomes.

Moreover, students who are disadvantaged or discouraged by testing will have more possibilities than ever before, as the option to withhold scores will remain common for the class of 2022 and beyond. In fact, many highly selective schools such as Amherst, Boston College, Colgate, Columbia, Cornell, Harvard, Rice, UVA, and Williams have confirmed that they are retaining test choice policies at least through the 2021–2022 admission cycle.

PARSING TEST OPTIONAL POLICIES

As these policy extensions are announced, however, appraise the wording of them for additional insight into a school's motive and attitude toward testing. Statements released by a number of popular schools like the ones listed on the previous page contain notably consistent themes, such as:

- The decision to continue suspending the testing requirement is due to the pandemic;
- The suspension is—for now—temporary;
- Those who are able to obtain ACT/SAT scores are welcome to submit them;
- Those who have test scores from other standardized exams may submit those;
- This policy has contributed to a significant increase in applications.

There is a mistaken tendency to treat all colleges the same. It's easy to think that general statements about how "colleges act" hold true everywhere when, of course, they do not. It may be helpful, therefore, to place any given 4-year college into one of three general test-policy contexts:

- **STILL IMPORTANT**

The smallest collection of colleges (accounting for about 1% of 4-year enrollment) receives outsized attention and spurs some of the cynicism and anxiety around the college admissions process. These colleges are exceedingly popular and therefore have admit rates at or below 10%. Nearly every applicant is qualified; nearly every applicant is denied. Test optional policies, if anything, have lowered admission rates further. Applicants must provide a strong case for admission. Students can choose to demonstrate a strength in testing or choose to blend in with other non-submitters. As the data on the next pages show, finding a way to stand out can still provide an advantage.

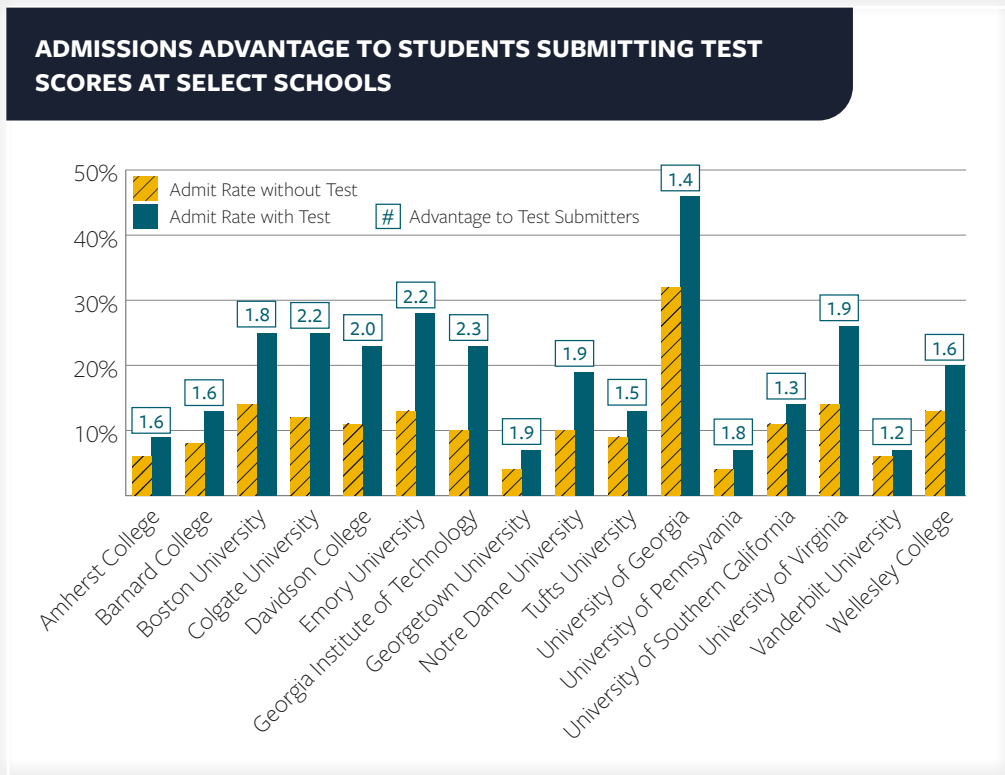
- **PLUS FACTOR**

A much larger set of colleges (accounting for about 19% of 4-year enrollment) has an average admission rate that is still competitive but far more reasonable. Supply and demand imbalances still necessitate a difficult and careful selection process but applications are read supportively. Test scores have traditionally mattered but not more than a sustained track record of academic achievement. Strong test scores can be a plus factor but not a singular difference maker.

- **LOWER PRIORITY**

In terms of total enrollment numbers (the remaining ~80%), the third pool is by far the largest and consists of colleges that accept the majority of their applicants and evaluate applications based largely on a binary assessment of whether a student has shown the capability to succeed at their institution, or not. Admission decisions don't hinge on small differences in test scores and it appears that testing will only further diminish in importance at these schools moving forward. However, these schools have established baseline standards and some will even maintain cut-scores as criteria for certain monetary awards or placement decisions.

TEST OPTIONAL OUTCOMES



The data in the table on the next page is a sampling of statistics from the 2020 admissions cycle at several well-known colleges with competitive admissions. Only a limited number of schools have shared this level of detail from their class of 2021 applicants. While far from exhaustive, this group offers a glimpse into the additive role test scores and submission decisions played in the most competitive contexts.

The figures imply a greater likelihood of admission for applicants with test scores versus those without. This apparent edge gained by test scores is reflected in the graph above.

The highest-scoring applicants often tend to have other advantages, including structural privileges such as high SES, level of parental educational attainment, and so on. This societal reality reflected in test scores is the white-hot center of the firestorm over whether tests should be required, optional, or eliminated. For now, the college admission world is broadly settling on the middle ground position.

	Score Submit Rate	Admit Rate with Scores	Admit Rate without Scores
Amherst College	51%	9%	6%
Barnard College	41%	13%	8%
Boston University	42%	25%	14%
Colgate University	41%	25%	12%
Davidson College	50%	23%	11%
Emory University	50%	28%	13%
Georgia Institute of Technology	63%	23%	10%
Georgetown University	81%	7%	4%
Notre Dame University	51%	19%	10%
Tufts University	50%	13%	9%
University of Georgia	50%	46%	32%
University of Pennsylvania	61%	7%	4%
University of Southern California	49%	14%	11%
University of Virginia	58%	26%	14%
Vanderbilt University	56%	7%	6%
Wellesley College	40%	20%	13%

*The data above combines results from early and regular rounds.

Compass carefully monitors and reports out on test-taking behavior and the use of scores. The graph on the previous page and the table above offer only a snapshot of different test optional scenarios last year. Visit our website for the most updated compilation of this data for 400+ schools, and reach out to a Compass Director to discuss how these variables shape your testing plans.

“I love getting to empower students with the skills and tools to grow more confident in their own capabilities. Standardized testing (and high school in general) can be daunting and stressful, and it’s immensely rewarding to hear from students that our lessons have put them at ease. Academic tutoring programs can also be particularly fun to teach. My students may leave our lessons feeling more confident about their tests or excited about their classes, but I also often leave our lessons feeling optimistic about the future and their generation’s role in shaping it. I love to leave a lesson thinking, ‘The kids are alright!’ ”



Alex K
Compass Tutor
Stanford University

The Competitive Landscape

The following is a sampling of admission statistics at over 400 well-known colleges. The test scores represent the range in the middle half of the class entering in 2019 or 2020. These scores should not be viewed as cutoffs or qualifying scores. For updates, please visit compassprep.com/college-profiles

The Number of Applicants and Class Size columns give you some context for the Admit Rate (% of students accepted): a high acceptance rate doesn't necessarily mean a large first year class. The % Submitting SAT and ACT columns provide a sense of how popular the use of SAT scores versus ACT scores is at a particular institution (compare the University of Michigan to the UC system, for example).

	Number of Applicants	Admit Rate	Class Size	SAT Total 25th–75th Percentile	Submit SAT	ACT Comp 25th–75th Percentile	Submit ACT
Abilene Christian University	11,379	61%	932	1015–1230	48%	21–28	48%
Adelphi University	13,006	74%	1,245	1080–1270	74%	22–27	20%
Agnes Scott College	1,838	68%	274	1100–1310	57%	23–29	34%
Albion College	4,043	69%	415	990–1200	76%	21–27	25%
Allegheny College	4,380	73%	400	1140–1350	46%	24–30	27%
American University	20,036	39%	1,607	1220–1390	50%	27–32	31%
Amherst College	10,603	12%	234	1410–1530	66%	31–34	45%
Appalachian State University	16,664	77%	3,496	1100–1270	49%	22–28	49%
Arizona State University—Tempe	34,188	86%	10,044	1130–1340	58%	22–28	58%
Auburn University	17,946	85%	4,914	1170–1300	17%	25–31	83%
Augustana College	6,894	57%	543	1090–1270	57%	23–28	40%
Austin College	4,288	49%	340	1120–1310	56%	22–29	39%
Babson College	6,362	26%	600	1270–1450	74%	27–32	35%
Baldwin Wallace University	3,864	70%	659	1060–1260	43%	21–27	77%
Ball State University	24,475	69%	3,551	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bard College	4,912	65%	482	1234–1413	33%	27–31	16%
Barnard College	9,411	14%	690	1370–1500	62%	31–34	46%
Bates College	7,696	14%	479	1210–1420	61%	27–33	35%
Baylor University	33,680	68%	3,731	1200–1350	50%	26–31	50%
Beloit College	3,140	58%	187	1100–1290	29%	21–29	29%
Bennington College	1,382	60%	138	1240–1360	23%	25–31	11%
Bentley University	9,017	47%	944	1230–1410	85%	27–31	24%
Berea College	1,966	30%	413	1090–1298	15%	23–27	80%
Berry College	4,328	71%	577	1090–1320	50%	24–30	49%
Binghamton University—SUNY	38,116	43%	2,897	1320–1440	99%	29–32	31%
Biola University	4,342	64%	715	1070–1290	77%	22–29	32%
Birmingham-Southern College	3,384	54%	332	1110–1310	17%	22–29	74%
Boise State University	10,788	81%	2,832	960–1180	82%	21–26	42%
Boston College	29,382	26%	2,408	1350–1480	67%	31–34	44%
Boston University	61,007	20%	2,914	1340–1460	70%	30–34	33%
Bowdoin College	9,402	9%	464	1340–1510	67%	30–34	40%
Bradley University	10,202	73%	1,027	1090–1270	72%	22–28	48%
Brandeis University	11,798	31%	895	1280–1500	69%	29–33	32%
Brigham Young University—Provo	11,292	69%	6,309	1210–1400	29%	26–32	88%
Brown University	36,793	8%	1,751	1440–1550	70%	33–35	43%
Bryn Mawr College	3,311	38%	359	1260–1470	68%	26–32	34%

	Number of Applicants	Admit Rate	Class Size	SAT Total 25th–75th Percentile	Submit SAT	ACT Comp 25th–75th Percentile	Submit ACT
Bucknell University	9,890	38%	986	1230–1390	66%	27–31	32%
Butler University	14,592	76%	1,104	1160–1310	70%	25–30	60%
California Institute of Technology	8,007	7%	225	1510–1570	45%	35–36	34%
California Lutheran University	5,568	74%	516	1070–1240	81%	20–27	27%
California State Polytechnic University—Pomona	36,660	55%	3,863	1030–1250	91%	19–27	25%
California State Polytechnic University—San Luis Obispo	52,371	38%	4,788	1230–1410	80%	26–32	42%
California State University—Chico	25,908	72%	2,561	1000–1170	90%	18–24	28%
California State University—Fresno	18,122	58%	3,059	950–1130	97%	16–22	30%
California State University—Fullerton	45,449	68%	5,425	1010–1180	97%	18–23	23%
California State University—Long Beach	67,402	42%	4,908	1020–1230	95%	20–26	20%
California State University—Los Angeles	31,442	76%	4,000	890–1060	97%	15–20	24%
California State University—Monterey Bay	11,461	86%	879	960–1160	93%	17–23	29%
California State University—Northridge	27,738	66%	4,010	900–1110	95%	16–22	17%
California State University—Sacramento	25,709	83%	3,607	920–1110	95%	16–22	19%
California State University—San Bernardino	14,435	78%	2,286	910–1070	98%	15–20	24%
Carleton College	6,892	21%	453	1340–1508	52%	30–34	59%
Carnegie Mellon University	26,189	17%	1,637	1460–1560	76%	33–35	35%
Carroll College	2,709	78%	254	1070–1270	45%	22–28	61%
Case Western Reserve University	28,786	27%	1,357	1350–1520	58%	30–34	59%
Central Michigan University	19,396	69%	2,088	1010–1210	93%	20–26	19%
Centre College	2,212	76%	355	1130–1380	26%	26–32	79%
Chapman University	14,252	58%	1,586	1180–1350	68%	25–30	42%
Christopher Newport University	7,311	76%	1,155	1100–1260	87%	23–28	25%
Claremont McKenna College	5,306	13%	315	1330–1460	62%	31–34	44%
Clark University	7,153	47%	487	1160–1360	66%	27–32	15%
Clarkson University	6,673	75%	790	1160–1350	89%	23–30	32%
Clemson University	28,600	62%	4,199	1230–1380	59%	27–32	41%
Coe College	7,431	63%	379	1050–1255	34%	21–27	75%
Colby College	13,584	10%	522	1380–1520	52%	31–34	38%
Colgate University	8,583	27%	765	1300–1460	57%	30–33	43%
College of Charleston	15,214	74%	2,052	1080–1240	60%	21–28	41%
College of St. Benedict	2,052	80%	438	1040–1255	11%	22–28	92%
College of the Holy Cross	7,087	38%	735	1300–1410	40%	29–32	19%
College of William and Mary	14,201	42%	1,521	1300–1490	77%	30–34	32%
College of Wooster	5,582	65%	530	1160–1350	55%	24–31	58%
Colorado College	10,257	14%	539	1250–1440	50%	29–33	43%
Colorado School of Mines	12,044	55%	1,172	1280–1430	83%	28–33	52%
Colorado State University	28,906	84%	4,579	1080–1270	80%	23–29	38%
Columbia University	40,084	6%	1,492	1500–1560	61%	34–35	52%
Concordia College—Moorhead	3,395	68%	517	956–1343	3%	21–27	87%
Connecticut College	6,882	38%	434	1310–1420	24%	30–33	17%
Cornell College	2,515	86%	290	1080–1253	36%	23–29	68%
Cornell University	51,500	11%	3,249	1410–1530	73%	32–35	36%
Creighton University	8,681	77%	1,014	1155–1320	32%	24–30	81%
CUNY—Baruch College	20,303	43%	2,268	1130–1330	94%	N/A	N/A
CUNY—Hunter	33,750	35%	2,556	1150–1350	95%	N/A	N/A

	Number of Applicants	Admit Rate	Class Size	SAT Total 25th–75th Percentile	Submit SAT	ACT Comp 25th–75th Percentile	Submit ACT
Dartmouth College	21,392	9%	1,057	1430–1550	57%	32–35	43%
Davidson College	5,621	20%	520	1310–1460	60%	30–33	47%
Denison University	8,812	29%	625	1200–1410	38%	27–31	39%
DePaul University	27,869	70%	2,774	1070–1280	72%	N/A	N/A
DePauw University	5,581	67%	382	1130–1360	60%	23–29	38%
Dickinson College	5,375	52%	490	1250–1370	61%	27–31	18%
Drake University	6,624	68%	738	1110–1350	26%	23–30	69%
Drew University	3,989	73%	343	1120–1300	61%	24–30	15%
Drexel University	31,237	77%	2,332	1190–1370	87%	25–31	21%
Drury University	1,602	71%	325	1020–1240	16%	21–28	87%
Duke University	41,471	8%	1,730	1480–1570	55%	33–35	57%
Duquesne University	8,335	77%	1,195	1130–1250	67%	23–28	29%
Earlham College	2,070	63%	172	1100–1370	62%	23–30	34%
East Carolina	19,234	79%	4,364	1030–1190	69%	19–24	65%
Eastern Michigan	15,957	75%	1,922	980–1190	89%	19–26	20%
Elmhurst College	4,299	66%	478	980–1170	N/A	20–26	N/A
Elon University	15,306	72%	1,587	1160–1310	66%	25–30	45%
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University	9,581	61%	1,499	1130–1320	66%	23–30	40%
Emerson College	15,353	33%	942	1200–1390	64%	27–31	34%
Emory University	28,211	19%	1,344	1400–1510	61%	31–34	39%
Fairfield University	12,586	56%	1,118	1200–1330	50%	27–30	15%
Florida Institute of Technology	9,803	70%	689	1150–1320	75%	23–30	34%
Florida International	16,911	58%	3,763	1120–1260	92%	23–29	8%
Florida State University	63,691	32%	6,009	1230–1350	65%	27–31	35%
Fordham University	47,930	46%	2,270	1240–1450	74%	28–32	32%
Franklin and Marshall College	9,062	37%	553	1240–1380	52%	28–31	25%
Furman University	5,194	65%	519	1260–1382	41%	28–32	42%
Gallaudet University	477	61%	183	785–985	21%	14–19	84%
George Mason University	21,198	89%	3,561	1110–1290	68%	24–30	7%
George Washington University	26,405	43%	1,978	1290–1430	50%	29–33	27%
Georgetown University	21,190	17%	1,592	1380–1530	75%	31–35	46%
Georgia Institute of Technology	40,852	21%	3,260	1380–1520	71%	31–35	51%
Georgia Southern University	17,250	91%	5,341	1000–1158	67%	18–24	39%
Georgia State	24,457	67%	5,286	970–1150	69%	20–26	35%
Gettysburg College	6,468	48%	650	1270–1410	N/A	27–32	N/A
Gonzaga University	8,409	73%	1,052	1180–1330	71%	25–30	42%
Goshen College	984	92%	200	940–1153	83%	20–27	22%
Goucher College	2,598	79%	232	980–1230	65%	22–30	17%
Grinnell College	8,004	23%	460	1370–1530	55%	31–34	45%
Gustavus Adolphus College	4,957	69%	642	N/A	N/A	25–30	61%
Hamilton College	7,443	18%	438	1410–1500	43%	32–34	40%
Hampden-Sydney College	3,056	57%	228	1060–1320	89%	20–27	30%
Hampton University	9,551	36%	927	1030–1160	12%	20–25	26%
Hanover College	3,127	65%	290	1030–1240	49%	21–26	40%
Harvard College	40,248	5%	1,407	1460–1580	72%	33–35	45%
Harvey Mudd College	3,397	18%	209	1490–1560	71%	34–35	42%
Haverford College	4,530	18%	334	1360–1510	74%	32–35	33%
Hendrix College	1,628	70%	284	1150–1370	26%	25–31	90%
High Point University	11,298	74%	1,400	1090–1260	58%	22–28	39%

	Number of Applicants	Admit Rate	Class Size	SAT Total 25th–75th Percentile	Submit SAT	ACT Comp 25th–75th Percentile	Submit ACT
Hillsdale College	2,208	36%	339	1275–1465	34%	29–32	69%
Hobart and William Smith Colleges	3,439	66%	458	1190–1350	55%	26–30	19%
Hofstra University	24,062	69%	1,390	1160–1330	72%	24–31	19%
Hollins University	3,056	81%	203	1040–1250	76%	21–29	35%
Hope College	3,748	86%	686	1130–1330	76%	23–31	51%
Howard University	24,325	39%	2,360	1140–1260	78%	22–26	37%
Humboldt State University	17,115	83%	543	970–1190	91%	16–24	29%
Illinois Institute of Technology	5,033	61%	518	1200–1380	70%	26–32	34%
Illinois State	16,151	82%	3,860	1020–1220	82%	20–26	53%
Illinois Wesleyan University	3,896	57%	441	1120–1290	65%	24–29	57%
Indiana University—Bloomington	44,169	77%	8,097	1150–1360	75%	24–31	60%
Iowa State University	20,223	88%	5,071	1040–1290	17%	21–28	85%
Ithaca College	12,906	76%	992	1170–1310	52%	26–31	14%
James Madison University	23,922	80%	4,505	1130–1270	56%	23–28	14%
John Brown University	1,176	76%	319	1060–1260	14%	23–29	84%
Johns Hopkins University	30,164	10%	1,355	1470–1570	63%	33–35	37%
Kalamazoo College	3,456	74%	384	1150–1360	44%	25–30	20%
Kansas State University	8,937	95%	2,986	N/A	0%	20–27	89%
Kennesaw State University	15,691	75%	6,533	1050–1220	77%	20–26	49%
Kent State	18,085	84%	3,879	1030–1190	30%	20–26	81%
Kenyon College	6,614	37%	446	1280–1460	53%	30–33	51%
Knox College	3,397	68%	318	1090–1350	54%	24–31	41%
Lafayette College	8,215	36%	606	1270–1420	75%	28–33	29%
Lake Forest College	4,482	58%	388	1100–1275	51%	23–30	36%
Lawrence University	3,028	69%	377	1210–1400	45%	26–32	47%
Lehigh University	12,389	50%	1,370	1280–1420	70%	29–33	28%
Lewis & Clark College	5,620	80%	512	1220–1363	56%	27–31	36%
Lipscomb University	3,621	62%	692	1090–1290	23%	22–29	84%
Louisiana State University—Baton Rouge	28,960	73%	6,701	1080–1280	15%	23–28	85%
Loyola Marymount University	18,576	50%	1,468	1230–1380	65%	27–31	42%
Loyola University Chicago	25,453	71%	2,129	1170–1370	58%	25–31	54%
Loyola University Maryland	10,489	80%	1,008	1150–1310	53%	25–30	17%
Loyola University New Orleans	6,259	72%	767	1050–1230	41%	21–26	65%
Luther College	4,108	62%	527	1040–1270	19%	22–28	83%
Macalester College	6,373	39%	547	1290–1430	59%	29–33	57%
Marist College	11,260	49%	1,358	1210–1360	N/A	26–31	N/A
Marquette University	15,324	82%	1,651	1170–1320	25%	25–30	60%
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	20,075	7%	1,070	1510–1570	77%	34–36	42%
Mercer University	5,651	78%	866	1170–1330	50%	25–31	43%
Miami University—Oxford	26,844	92%	3,824	1160–1350	29%	24–30	82%
Michigan State University	45,426	76%	8,389	1110–1280	80%	23–29	38%
Michigan Technological University	7,476	70%	1,201	1160–1340	81%	25–30	38%
Middlebury College	9,174	22%	602	1340–1520	63%	31–34	44%
Mills College	848	84%	123	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Millsaps College	5,223	69%	204	1080–1290	13%	21–26	92%
Milwaukee School of Engineering	4,059	60%	574	1190–1350	24%	25–30	82%
Mississippi State University	16,127	80%	3,223	1050–1270	6%	22–30	93%
Missouri State University	9,591	87%	2,649	1060–1200	9%	21–27	89%

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Missouri University of Science & Technology	5,528	81%	1,111	1230–1370	10%	25–31	93%
Montclair State	12,728	76%	3,101	1000–1060	44%	N/A	N/A
Morehouse College	3,554	58%	605	1010–1210	59%	20–25	40%
Mount Holyoke College	3,480	52%	456	1320–1450	43%	27–30	25%
Muhlenberg College	4,543	62%	517	1170–1340	60%	26–31	23%
New College of Florida	1,382	70%	157	1190–1365	80%	25–30	34%
New Jersey Institute of Technology	8,201	73%	1,380	1200–1370	89%	24–31	17%
New School	9,413	57%	1,467	1150–1380	36%	25–30	14%
New York University	80,210	21%	6,701	1390–1510	64%	31–34	27%
North Carolina State University—Raleigh	31,374	46%	4,665	1250–1400	50%	27–32	50%
Northeastern University	64,459	20%	3,128	1430–1540	54%	33–35	31%
Northern Arizona University	37,386	82%	5,217	1040–1230	29%	19–25	43%
Northwestern University	39,263	9%	1,901	1430–1540	58%	33–35	55%
Oberlin College	9,309	35%	680	1270–1450	63%	28–33	41%
Occidental College	6,939	41%	402	1290–1440	70%	28–33	41%
Ohio State University—Columbus	49,087	68%	8,679	1230–1390	36%	26–32	80%
Ohio University	22,518	87%	3,126	1050–1250	25%	21–26	89%
Ohio Wesleyan University	4,281	67%	399	1080–1330	32%	22–28	64%
Oklahoma State University	15,277	70%	4,200	1040–1265	30%	21–28	89%
Old Dominion University	13,651	95%	3,147	960–1170	86%	18–25	17%
Oregon State University	15,786	84%	3,042	1080–1320	72%	21–28	40%
Pacific Lutheran University	3,306	86%	589	1110–1290	57%	23–29	17%
Pennsylvania State University—University Park	73,861	54%	8,465	1150–1340	77%	25–30	18%
Pepperdine University	11,768	42%	733	1210–1390	70%	26–31	38%
Pitzer College	4,260	17%	225	1330–1485	30%	31–33	24%
Point Loma Nazarene University	2,949	84%	554	1120–1280	72%	23–28	44%
Pomona College	10,388	9%	399	1390–1530	68%	32–35	48%
Portland State	6,861	96%	1,996	990–1220	45%	18–24	35%
Pratt Institute	7,090	49%	700	1190–1410	70%	25–30	20%
Presbyterian College (SC)	2,141	75%	342	1000–1230	73%	19–26	58%
Princeton University	32,804	6%	1,335	1470–1560	71%	33–35	50%
Providence College	10,817	54%	1,000	1210–1360	44%	27–31	14%
Purdue University—West Lafayette	57,279	67%	8,869	1190–1430	82%	25–33	46%
Queens University of Charlotte	3,437	68%	335	1050–1220	54%	20–27	41%
Quinnipiac University	22,753	72%	1,900	1090–1260	71%	23–28	22%
Randolph-Macon College	2,460	71%	208	1050–1240	91%	21–27	22%
Reed College	5,647	42%	365	1305–1490	72%	30–34	36%
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	20,402	43%	1,778	1330–1500	72%	29–33	28%
Rhode Island School of Design	3,832	26%	479	1230–1470	83%	26–32	19%
Rhodes College	5,074	51%	442	1250–1400	40%	27–32	73%
Rice University	23,455	11%	993	1460–1570	59%	34–36	41%
Ripon College	2,900	70%	221	990–1220	22%	19–25	80%
Rochester Institute of Technology	19,494	70%	2,571	1220–1410	78%	27–32	25%
Rollins College	6,076	61%	504	1120–1330	62%	24–32	37%
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey—New Brunswick	41,286	61%	7,315	1210–1430	90%	25–32	18%
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey—Newark	13,732	72%	1,402	1020–1200	95%	19–25	9%

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Saint Louis University	15,573	58%	1,902	1170–1380	36%	25–30	76%
Samford University	3,912	93%	900	1070–1250	36%	23–29	84%
San Diego State University	64,784	37%	4,852	1110–1290	85%	22–29	36%
San Francisco State University	31,430	84%	2,779	940–1130	89%	16–23	19%
San Jose State University	32,348	67%	3,322	1030–1240	93%	19–26	20%
Santa Clara University	16,488	51%	1,259	1280–1430	68%	28–32	39%
Sarah Lawrence College	4,053	53%	398	1240–1420	45%	28–31	26%
Scripps College	2,938	35%	220	1320–1470	61%	29–33	45%
Seattle University	7,914	83%	805	1130–1310	75%	24–30	40%
Seton Hall University	19,757	74%	1,631	1150–1330	87%	24–29	23%
Sewanee: The University of the South	4,191	56%	490	1160–1340	40%	25–30	62%
Siena College	7,728	81%	840	1070–1280	65%	22–28	14%
Simmons University	2,905	83%	451	1080–1250	89%	24–29	11%
Skidmore College	10,433	32%	718	1250–1390	49%	27–31	24%
Smith College	5,249	37%	527	1350–1490	54%	31–34	26%
Soka University of America	427	52%	102	1200–1370	83%	26–32	25%
Southern Methodist University	14,010	53%	1,531	1300–1480	39%	29–33	55%
Southwestern University	4,576	49%	361	1130–1270	63%	23–29	42%
Spelman College	9,118	53%	576	1060–1190	71%	20–25	49%
St. John Fisher College	4,720	64%	601	1070–1260	95%	21–26	30%
St. John's College Annapolis	909	60%	129	1200–1420	65%	26–32	20%
St. John's University (NY)	29,059	72%	3,135	1080–1300	77%	23–29	11%
St. Lawrence University	5,952	47%	572	1190–1350	42%	28–32	17%
St. Mary's College (IN)	2,033	81%	374	1070–1243	55%	24–28	49%
St. Mary's College of California	5,364	77%	468	1080–1260	84%	21–28	34%
St. Mary's College of Maryland	2,604	79%	381	1090–1250	85%	23–29	22%
St. Michael's College	3,184	88%	377	1130–1280	47%	24–29	7%
St. Olaf College	5,231	51%	729	1160–1370	39%	25–32	72%
Stanford University	45,227	5%	1,607	1420–1550	72%	31–35	45%
Stetson University	13,005	72%	934	1110–1300	54%	22–29	30%
Stevens Institute of Technology	10,475	40%	969	1340–1500	76%	31–34	20%
Stonehill College	6,961	68%	652	1120–1290	56%	24–29	7%
Stony Brook University—SUNY	37,083	49%	3,322	1240–1420	88%	26–32	20%
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry	2,018	61%	386	1120–1310	87%	23–29	43%
SUNY—Geneseo	10,250	61%	891	1150–1290	89%	24–29	22%
Susquehanna University	4,863	85%	620	1100–1290	74%	22–28	15%
Swarthmore College	11,630	9%	374	1400–1530	68%	31–34	40%
Syracuse University	35,299	44%	3,660	1180–1380	70%	26–30	32%
Taylor University	2,177	70%	416	1100–1283	76%	22–28	52%
Temple University	33,805	71%	4,860	1110–1270	74%	23–30	14%
Texas A&M University—College Station	43,307	63%	11,099	1170–1380	61%	25–32	39%
Texas Christian University	21,145	48%	2,287	1120–1310	39%	25–31	46%
Texas Lutheran University	3,000	56%	419	990–1160	84%	20–24	14%
Texas State University	25,461	85%	5,861	1010–1160	77%	19–25	21%
Texas Tech University	29,131	70%	6,520	1070–1240	62%	22–27	37%
The Catholic University of America	5,668	85%	818	1130–1330	63%	24–29	21%
The Citadel	2,524	80%	582	1030–1200	59%	21–26	37%
The College of New Jersey	13,199	51%	1,428	1150–1300	88%	24–30	20%

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The Cooper Union	2,326	16%	186	1305–1530	81%	30–35	26%
Thomas Aquinas College	204	79%	117	1150–1390	76%	26–31	26%
Towson University	12,295	79%	2,394	1050–1190	92%	20–25	18%
Transylvania University	1,782	90%	270	1080–1350	10%	23–30	80%
Trinity College (Hartford)	5,952	36%	572	1310–1420	18%	30–32	13%
Trinity University	9,394	34%	634	1270–1420	53%	28–33	46%
Truman State University	4,595	63%	901	1150–1350	10%	24–31	92%
Tufts University	23,127	16%	1,615	1400–1510	59%	32–35	41%
Tulane University	43,892	11%	1,801	1360–1470	30%	30–33	68%
Union College (Schenectady, NY)	7,622	41%	466	1210–1400	52%	28–33	29%
United States Air Force Academy	10,747	13%	1,132	1220–1420	49%	29–33	51%
United States Coast Guard Academy	1,930	20%	279	1212–1400	82%	25–30	51%
United States Merchant Maritime Academy	1,693	25%	280	1200–1340	N/A	25–31	N/A
United States Military Academy	11,675	10%	1,171	1160–1380	88%	25–30	30%
United States Naval Academy	15,699	9%	1,194	1250–1510	N/A	27–34	N/A
University at Albany—SUNY	26,127	57%	2,695	1100–1240	83%	22–28	12%
University at Buffalo—SUNY	30,247	67%	4,415	1140–1310	73%	23–29	19%
University of Akron	13,321	77%	2,577	960–1210	22%	19–26	89%
University of Alabama	39,560	80%	6,507	1070–1330	23%	23–31	77%
University of Alaska, Anchorage	3,673	83%	1,356	1020–1220	24%	17–24	22%
University of Arizona	43,540	85%	7,334	1110–1340	46%	21–29	49%
University of Arkansas—Fayetteville	19,777	78%	4,726	1110–1270	24%	23–29	89%
University of California—Berkeley	88,076	18%	6,117	1300–1520	82%	27–35	41%
University of California—Davis	76,647	41%	6,389	1150–1410	71%	25–31	29%
University of California—Irvine	97,942	30%	5,765	1240–1410	100%	N/A	N/A
University of California—Los Angeles	108,877	14%	6,386	1290–1510	80%	29–34	40%
University of California—Merced	25,924	85%	1,951	950–1140	93%	17–22	33%
University of California—Riverside	49,434	66%	4,857	1080–1280	96%	22–29	30%
University of California—San Diego	100,073	38%	6,447	1280–1460	89%	26–33	34%
University of California—Santa Barbara	90,963	37%	4,847	1250–1450	81%	26–33	37%
University of California—Santa Cruz	55,062	65%	4,205	1160–1350	86%	23–30	30%
University of Central Florida	45,118	44%	7,323	1170–1340	79%	25–30	21%
University of Chicago	34,372	7%	1,848	1510–1560	53%	34–35	58%
University of Cincinnati	23,960	76%	5,242	1120–1310	21%	23–29	88%
University of Colorado—Boulder	44,171	84%	6,326	1140–1340	73%	24–31	45%
University of Connecticut	35,096	49%	3,603	1190–1390	90%	26–32	19%
University of Dallas	4,645	52%	379	1130–1335	61%	23–30	46%
University of Dayton	16,456	81%	2,171	1030–1220	32%	23–29	80%
University of Delaware	26,500	68%	4,144	1170–1360	77%	24–30	22%
University of Denver	22,723	61%	1,375	1180–1350	49%	26–31	45%
University of Florida	38,069	37%	6,554	1320–1450	85%	28–33	50%
University of Georgia	28,024	48%	5,646	1120–1390	68%	27–32	63%
University of Hawaii—Manoa	17,747	62%	2,201	1060–1260	45%	20–26	32%
University of Houston	28,645	63%	5,225	1140–1290	87%	22–28	33%
University of Idaho	9,938	74%	1,425	990–1210	98%	20–26	32%
University of Illinois—Chicago	22,696	73%	4,381	1030–1260	81%	21–28	28%
University of Illinois—Urbana-Champaign	43,473	63%	7,530	1220–1440	75%	27–33	50%
University of Iowa	24,132	84%	4,510	1130–1310	27%	22–29	87%

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University of Kansas	15,042	91%	3,829	1080–1320	21%	22–29	89%
University of Kentucky	18,759	96%	5,348	1070–1310	23%	22–29	88%
University of La Verne	6,864	55%	495	1040–1190	91%	19–24	21%
University of Maine	13,118	90%	2,140	1070–1250	94%	21–27	11%
University of Mary Washington	5,939	75%	912	1090–1260	77%	23–29	18%
University of Maryland—College Park	32,211	51%	4,313	1290–1460	84%	29–34	28%
University of Massachusetts—Amherst	42,157	64%	5,766	1190–1390	89%	26–32	18%
University of Memphis	13,317	85%	2,541	990–1200	7%	19–26	93%
University of Miami	40,131	33%	2,358	1260–1400	55%	28–32	40%
University of Michigan—Ann Arbor	65,021	26%	6,879	1340–1520	64%	31–34	48%
University of Minnesota—Twin Cities	38,237	70%	5,966	1260–1430	14%	25–31	91%
University of Mississippi	16,253	88%	3,232	1020–1250	26%	21–29	85%
University of Missouri	20,015	81%	5,431	1120–1340	10%	23–29	90%
University of Montana	4,910	94%	1,482	1055–1245	39%	20–26	71%
University of Nebraska—Lincoln	17,495	78%	4,771	1130–1310	10%	22–28	89%
University of Nevada—Las Vegas	13,262	81%	4,475	1030–1230	24%	19–25	83%
University of New Hampshire	18,797	85%	2,630	1100–1270	76%	24–30	10%
University of New Mexico	12,181	49%	2,594	1000–1290	30%	19–25	83%
University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill	44,382	24%	4,445	1270–1460	65%	27–33	70%
University of North Carolina—Charlotte	19,946	80%	3,999	1110–1270	56%	22–27	52%
University of North Carolina—Greensboro	9,872	88%	2,432	990–1150	56%	19–25	47%
University of North Carolina—Wilmington	13,633	68%	2,025	1160–1310	41%	23–27	61%
University of North Dakota	5,662	87%	1,614	1020–1200	12%	21–26	83%
University of North Georgia	7,033	77%	2,438	1050–1200	78%	21–26	45%
University of North Texas	21,308	84%	5,235	1050–1230	81%	19–26	39%
University of Notre Dame	21,253	19%	2,193	1400–1550	42%	32–35	58%
University of Oklahoma	15,451	83%	4,422	1110–1280	34%	23–29	66%
University of Oregon	28,719	83%	3,920	1080–1270	72%	22–29	43%
University of Pennsylvania	42,205	9%	2,321	1460–1570	65%	33–35	35%
University of Pittsburgh	32,549	64%	4,230	1243–1420	81%	28–32	33%
University of Portland	12,633	77%	809	1140–1310	73%	23–29	37%
University of Puget Sound	5,182	84%	615	1150–1370	59%	25–30	37%
University of Redlands	4,713	75%	702	1100–1250	71%	23–28	28%
University of Rhode Island	23,856	76%	3,302	1100–1250	90%	23–28	13%
University of Richmond	12,060	31%	811	1290–1440	59%	30–33	40%
University of Rochester	20,216	29%	1,387	1300–1500	64%	29–33	28%
University of San Diego	13,171	59%	997	1170–1340	68%	25–31	40%
University of San Francisco	21,867	48%	1,293	1130–1330	72%	23–29	36%
University of South Carolina	34,957	68%	5,742	1140–1330	61%	25–31	38%
University of South Dakota	3,392	91%	1,232	1000–1230	4%	20–25	90%
University of South Florida	38,700	49%	5,705	1170–1310	74%	25–30	26%
University of Southern California	59,712	16%	3,460	1360–1510	69%	30–34	41%
University of St. Thomas (MN)	6,718	83%	1,412	1160–1350	8%	24–29	95%
University of Tennessee	25,423	78%	5,512	1140–1290	24%	25–31	86%
University of Texas—Austin	57,241	32%	8,459	1220–1450	79%	26–33	47%
University of Texas—Arlington	12,650	83%	3,707	1040–1250	80%	20–27	23%
University of Texas—Dallas	15,411	79%	3,476	1230–1430	84%	26–33	39%

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University of Texas—El Paso	10,972	100%	3,599	900–1110	75%	17–22	15%
University of Texas—Rio Grande Valley	12,097	80%	5,338	950–1120	55%	17–22	63%
University of Texas—San Antonio	21,597	84%	5,330	1030–1200	82%	19–25	29%
University of the Pacific	13,096	66%	808	1130–1360	85%	23–31	31%
University of Toledo	9,673	95%	2,363	1000–1210	31%	20–26	79%
University of Tulsa	9,793	36%	831	1090–1360	39%	24–31	82%
University of Utah	18,419	79%	4,483	1140–1340	24%	22–29	80%
University of Vermont	18,564	71%	2,487	1180–1340	72%	26–31	28%
University of Virginia	40,878	23%	3,785	1330–1490	70%	30–34	36%
University of Washington—Bothell	4,158	88%	985	1050–1265	72%	20–27	18%
University of Washington—Seattle	43,778	56%	7,027	1220–1430	81%	27–33	28%
University of Wisconsin—Madison	45,941	57%	7,306	1300–1440	27%	27–32	78%
University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee	8,583	97%	3,190	1060–1230	7%	19–24	91%
University of Wyoming	4,919	94%	1,424	1050–1240	33%	21–28	75%
Ursinus College	3,530	52%	431	1150–1350	72%	24–30	17%
Utah State	15,276	91%	4,411	1050–1310	15%	21–28	90%
Valparaiso University	5,991	87%	637	1090–1270	66%	22–29	43%
Vanderbilt University	36,646	12%	1,698	1470–1570	45%	33–35	56%
Vassar College	8,663	25%	594	1380–1490	64%	32–34	40%
Villanova University	22,083	31%	1,700	1320–1460	60%	30–33	40%
Virginia Commonwealth University	17,368	91%	3,827	1060–1250	84%	21–28	16%
Virginia Military Institute	1,543	60%	482	1070–1260	88%	22–28	32%
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	30,770	66%	6,608	1170–1370	83%	25–31	24%
Wabash College	1,522	63%	240	1120–1320	83%	22–29	51%
Wake Forest University	11,959	32%	1,452	1300–1460	50%	30–33	45%
Washington and Jefferson College	2,722	85%	291	1090–1280	60%	22–28	21%
Washington and Lee University	6,178	19%	462	1460–1500	55%	32–34	45%
Washington College	2,901	80%	260	1070–1280	78%	23–29	19%
Washington State University	21,198	80%	4,191	1020–1210	83%	20–26	23%
Washington University in St. Louis	27,949	16%	1,801	1480–1560	37%	33–35	67%
Wayne State University	15,716	73%	2,968	1020–1230	88%	21–27	21%
Weber State	7,984	100%	3,020	N/A	0%	18–24	89%
Wellesley College	6,581	20%	580	1370–1510	68%	31–34	41%
Wesleyan University	12,632	21%	720	1340–1510	49%	31–34	37%
West Virginia University	18,639	82%	4,732	1050–1240	57%	21–27	65%
Western Kentucky	8,578	98%	3,120	980–1170	10%	19–26	95%
Western Michigan	16,582	85%	2,613	1010–1210	67%	20–27	22%
Westmont College	3,074	64%	406	1110–1330	76%	21–30	43%
Wheaton College (IL)	1,800	87%	479	1230–1430	66%	26–32	50%
Wheaton College (MA)	3,580	77%	458	1180–1340	52%	25–31	7%
Whitman College	4,964	54%	294	1260–1420	47%	29–33	25%
Whittier College	6,220	76%	512	1030–1213	74%	20–25	35%
Willamette University	4,010	80%	326	1120–1340	43%	24–31	25%
Williams College	8,745	15%	482	1430–1540	67%	33–35	43%
Wofford College	4,109	53%	496	1190–1318	43%	27–31	35%
Worcester Polytechnic Institute	11,269	59%	1,298	1310–1470	71%	29–33	24%
Xavier University	14,758	76%	1,210	1070–1280	40%	22–28	74%
Yale University	35,220	7%	1,264	1470–1560	70%	33–35	46%
Yeshiva University	1,442	67%	558	1160–1410	44%	24–31	51%

Understanding and Comparing Scores

SCALED SCORES AND TEST RELIABILITY

One of the most important features of standardized tests is their ability to provide consistent scores from year to year and from test date to test date. SAT scores are converted to a 200–800 scale in order to account for any small differences between tests; ACT scores are converted to a 1–36 scale.

Standardized test makers follow strict guidelines when setting their initial reference group and determining the initial scale. Once those things are set, they rarely change because they don't need to. A 30 on ACT English means the same thing whether it was taken in September 2008 or September 2018. In order to accomplish this feat, one additional concept must be added—equating. Not every test can have the same questions, so not every test form can have the exact same difficulty. However, by always mapping performance back to the reference group, ACT can make small adjustments to the scale to smooth away these differences. The math is tricky, but the goals are simple. Make the results of each test date as fair as any other test date and make sure that no student is disadvantaged by the abilities of other students taking the exam.

RAW SCORES AND GUESSING

An important area in which the SAT and ACT are finally aligned is in scoring correct, incorrect, and blank answers.

The old SAT made a one-quarter raw point deduction for each wrong answer to dissuade students from random guessing. The current SAT eliminates this so-called guessing penalty. The SAT and the ACT now both use “rights-only” scoring, meaning that the number of correct answers is all that matters. Students should never leave a multiple choice question blank on either exam.

Leaving Blank

- 1 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 2 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 3 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 4 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 5 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 6 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 7 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 8 (A) (B) (C) (D)

Raw Points: 0

Random Guessing

- ✓ 1 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 2 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 3 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 4 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 5 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- ✓ 6 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 7 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 8 (A) (B) (C) (D)

Raw Points: 2

Process of Elimination

- ✓ 1 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 2 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- ✓ 3 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 4 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 5 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- ✓ 6 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- ✓ 7 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 8 (A) (B) (C) (D)

Raw Points: 4

Even without the guessing penalty, the SAT and ACT are best approached with a guessing strategy. Students stand to maximize their points when they go into the test with a plan for where to invest their time. This may include being prepared to guess randomly on portions of the test due to lack of time. Guessing is still more effective than leaving questions blank.

“THE WEALTH OF INFORMATION AND TESTING SUPPORT THE COMPASS STAFF HAVE PROVIDED TO OUR FAMILIES HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN HELPING OUR STUDENTS ACHIEVE THEIR BEST SCORES.”

CLARA BIRD, DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE COUNSELING, PROVIDENCE HIGH SCHOOL

EXPERIMENTAL SECTIONS

The ACT includes a 20-minute experimental section after the Science Test. College Board may present students with a similar experimental section after the final math section on the SAT.

Although this experimental section will not count toward your score, you should take it seriously.

SCORING COMPARISON

SAT	ACT	KEY DIFFERENCES
TOTAL SCORE 400–1600	COMPOSITE 1–36	The SAT's total score is the sum of its two 200–800 area scores. The ACT's composite score is the rounded average of the four test scores.
Reading and Writing 200–800	English 1–36 Reading 1–36	SAT Reading and Writing scores are combined into a single 200–800 score. ACT English and Reading Tests each receive 1–36 scores.
Math 200–800	Math 1–36	SAT Math is scored based on two sections, calculator and no calculator, each with a mix of multiple choice and grid-in problems. ACT Math has one multiple choice section with no grid-ins and allows a calculator on all problems.
N/A	Science 1–36	There is no single section on the SAT that is comparable to the Science Test on the ACT. However, there are science-themed questions and passages throughout the SAT.
N/A	Writing (optional) Raw: 2–12 in four domains Total: Average of four domain scores	The SAT Essay has been eliminated, as of the June 2021 administration. ACT domain scores are the sum of two readers' scores (1–6 in four domains); the final Writing score is the average of the four domains. The ACT Writing score is not included in the ACT Composite score.

“IT’S WONDERFUL TO KNOW THAT I CAN COUNT ON COMPASS TO OFFER EACH OF MY STUDENTS EXCELLENT TEST PREPARATION AND ACADEMIC TUTORING, WITH PLANS SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO MEET THEIR NEEDS AND THEIR GOALS. PARENTS APPRECIATE THE COMPASS PHILOSOPHY OF SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITHOUT ADDING TO THE FRENZY OF THE COLLEGE PREPARATION AND APPLICATION PROCESS. I LOVE KNOWING THAT I CAN CONNECT WITH THE COMPASS TEAM EASILY AND HAVE ALL OF MY QUESTIONS ANSWERED—AND THERE IS SIMPLY NOTHING BETTER THAN THE COMPASS GUIDE, WHICH IS GENEROUSLY SHARED AND AVAILABLE TO ALL.”

—LISA SOHMER, SOHMER COLLEGE COUNSELING

SAT/ACT CONCORDANCE

One of the key decisions a student needs to make is whether to take the SAT or ACT. Compass has always recommended that students focus their preparation time on one test, and this remains true even as the tests become more similar.

However, it's not immediately obvious how to compare a student's performance on each test because the SAT and ACT are on such wildly different scales (400–1600 for SAT, 1–36 for ACT) and test similar concepts in different ways.

This is where a concordance table comes into play. Concordances are the result of studies that look at how students who took both tests within a short period of time performed on each. Based on this common data, College Board and ACT can say with confidence that a 1350 on the SAT concurs, or converts, to a 29 on the ACT.

When College Board redesigned the SAT for March of 2016, it built a “derived concordance” based on the old SAT/ACT concordance and some initial sample data.

Since then, College Board and ACT have been working together to develop a concordance based on actual student performance. The new concordance was released in June of 2018 and is presented here and in the following pages.

Why does the ACT to SAT concordance present the SAT as a range of scores? For every point increase on the ACT, there are 3–4 10-point increments on the SAT. Thus, each ACT point represents a range of points on the SAT.

ACT COMPOSITE TO SAT TOTAL RANGE

ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT
36	1570–1600	22	1100–1120
35	1530–1560	21	1060–1090
34	1490–1520	20	1030–1050
33	1450–1480	19	990–1020
32	1420–1440	18	960–980
31	1390–1410	17	920–950
30	1360–1380	16	880–910
29	1330–1350	15	830–870
28	1300–1320	14	780–820
27	1260–1290	13	730–770
26	1230–1250	12	690–720
25	1200–1220	11	650–680
24	1160–1190	10	620–640
23	1130–1150	9	590–610

“I genuinely enjoy what I do, and I want my students to enjoy this process if they can. My favorite part of any program is the first few minutes of the first lesson; that’s when I just chat with my students and get to know them as people, not as test-takers. This brief time serves multiple purposes: I learn a bit about how their minds work by how they answer questions, which I can then use to tutor them more effectively; it starts to build trust because they realize I’m interested in them as the awesome people they are beyond the SAT or ACT; and it allows them to relax and realize this process might actually be enjoyable.”



Flip L
Compass Tutor
Northwestern University

SAT TO ACT CONCORDANCE

The concordance tables work in either direction. If you have an SAT score, use the table below to determine your concordant ACT score. Note that a perfect score on the ACT of 36 concurs to a range of 1570–1600 on the SAT.

SAT TOTAL TO ACT COMPOSITE

SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT
1600	36	1340	29	1080	21	820	14
1590	36	1330	29	1070	21	810	14
1580	36	1320	28	1060	21	800	14
1570	36	1310	28	1050	20	790	14
1560	35	1300	28	1040	20	780	14
1550	35	1290	27	1030	20	770	13
1540	35	1280	27	1020	19	760	13
1530	35	1270	27	1010	19	750	13
1520	34	1260	27	1000	19	740	13
1510	34	1250	26	990	19	730	13
1500	34	1240	26	980	18	720	12
1490	34	1230	26	970	18	710	12
1480	33	1220	25	960	18	700	12
1470	33	1210	25	950	17	690	12
1460	33	1200	25	940	17	680	11
1450	33	1190	24	930	17	670	11
1440	32	1180	24	920	17	660	11
1430	32	1170	24	910	16	650	11
1420	32	1160	24	900	16	640	10
1410	31	1150	23	890	16	630	10
1400	31	1140	23	880	16	620	10
1390	31	1130	23	870	15	610	9
1380	30	1120	22	860	15	600	9
1370	30	1110	22	850	15	590	9
1360	30	1100	22	840	15		
1350	29	1090	21	830	15		

“WE ARE SO GRATEFUL FOR THE SUCCESS OUR DAUGHTER SAW ON THE ACT AFTER WORKING WITH COMPASS. THE TUTORS WERE PROFESSIONAL, INSPIRATIONAL, AND HELPFUL; PROVIDING LESSONS APPLICABLE TO THE ACT AS WELL AS OTHER ASPECTS OF HER SCHOOLING. WE SAW AN INCREASED LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE, FOCUS, AND COMPETENCY THAT WILL CARRY HER FAR INTO HER ACADEMIC CAREER.”

—STEPHANIE T, MOTHER OF VANESSA, 11TH GRADER AT WEST RANCH

SECTION CONCORDANCE

Rather than averaging the ACT English and Reading scores, the new concordance adds the two together and compares those to the SAT Evidence-Based Reading and Writing score.

These conversions are more likely to be used for course placement than for admission.

SAT READING AND WRITING TO ACT ENGLISH + READING

SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT
800	72	690	63	580	46	470	33	360	22
790	72	680	61	570	45	460	32	350	21
780	71	670	60	560	44	450	31	340	20
770	71	660	58	550	43	440	30	330	19
760	70	650	57	540	42	430	29	320	18
750	70	640	55	530	40	420	28	310	17
740	69	630	54	520	39	410	27	300	16
730	68	620	52	510	38	400	26	290	15
720	67	610	51	500	37	390	25	280	14
710	66	600	49	490	35	380	24		
700	64	590	48	480	34	370	23		

SAT MATH TO ACT MATH

SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT
800	36	690	30	580	24	470	17	360	14
790	35	680	29	570	24	460	17	350	14
780	35	670	28	560	23	450	16	340	13
770	35	660	28	550	23	440	16	330	13
760	34	650	27	540	22	430	16	320	13
750	33	640	27	530	21	420	16	310	12
740	33	630	27	520	20	410	15	300	12
730	32	620	26	510	19	400	15	290	11
720	32	610	26	500	18	390	15	280	11
710	31	600	25	490	18	380	15	270	10
700	30	590	25	480	17	370	14	260	10

“THE INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION MY SON RECEIVED FROM COMPASS ALLOWED HIM TO FOCUS ON THE AREAS WHERE HE NEEDED EXTRA KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE AND TO MOVE PAST TOPICS HE HAD ALREADY MASTERED. THE SKILLS OF THE TUTORS AND THE QUALITY OF THE MATERIALS PROVIDED WERE EXCELLENT. EVERYONE WAS PROFESSIONAL AND KNOWLEDGEABLE. MY SON’S SCORE IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY FROM HIS FIRST PRACTICE TEST TO HIS ACTUAL TEST.”

—KIM C, MOTHER OF MATT, 11TH GRADER AT SIERRA CANYON UPPER

COMPARING SAT AND ACT SCORES

The first step in deciding between the SAT and the ACT is to take practice tests of each and compare your scores.

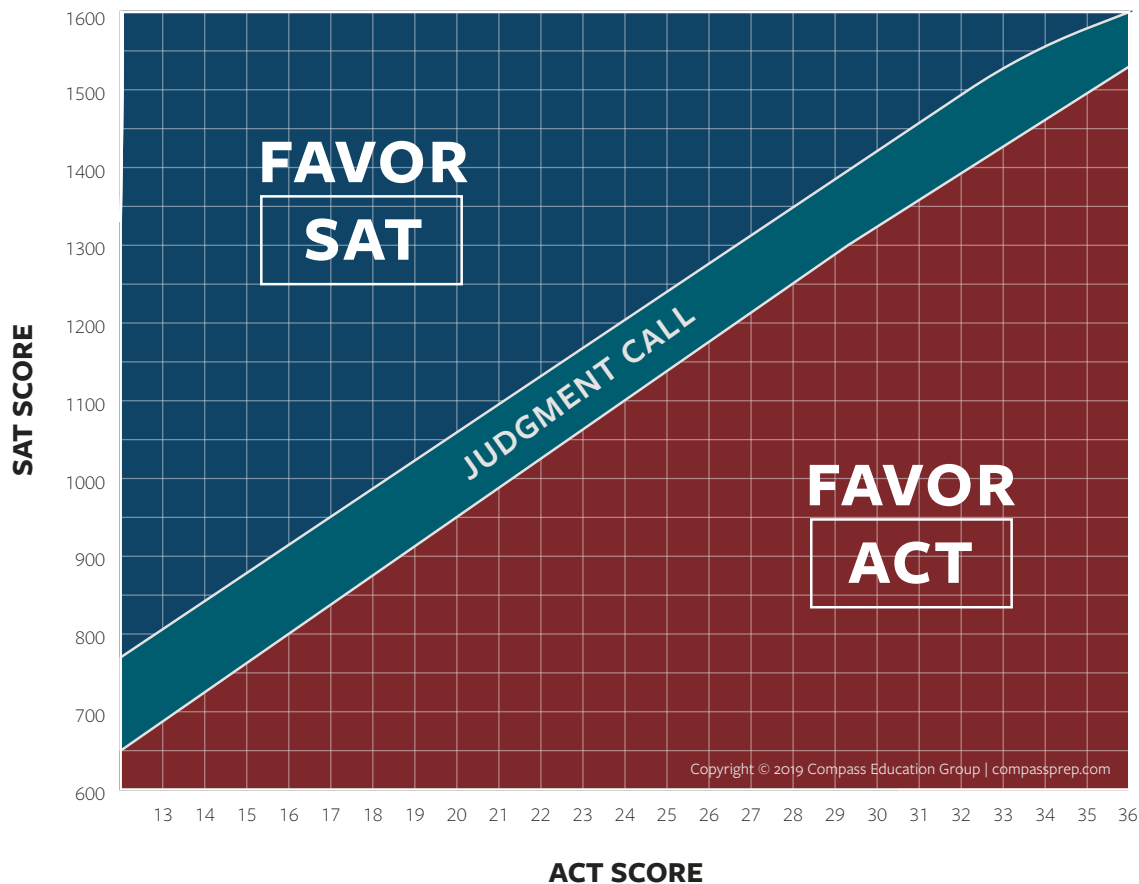
While a concordance table can tell you what your SAT score maps to on the ACT, it does not clearly indicate whether you should prepare for the SAT or ACT. To aid in this decision, Compass has analyzed available data and developed a comparison tool in both graph (below) and table (right) forms. Many students will find that their scores intersect somewhere in the “Judgment Call” band, but some may discover that one test is better suited to their strengths.

“WHEN WE REFER FAMILIES TO COMPASS, WE KNOW THAT WE ARE CONNECTING THEM TO PROFESSIONALS WHO CAN MANAGE THE ENTIRETY OF THE ADMISSION TESTING PROCESS. STUDENTS OFTEN SAY HOW MUCH THEY LOVE THEIR TUTORS AND HOW MUCH THEIR SCORES HAVE IMPROVED.”

—MOLLY BRANCH, CO-DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE COUNSELING, WINDWARD SCHOOL

WHICH TEST DO YOU FAVOR?

SOURCES: 2018 SAT/ACT CONCORDANCE; COMPASS ANALYSIS



ACT/SAT COMPARISON CHART

Find the row with your ACT score in the left column and track right to find the column with your SAT score. This will help you determine whether your scores favor the ACT, favor the SAT, or are so close that you should make a judgment call based on additional information.

ACT	IF YOUR SAT SCORE IS					
36	<1530	FAVOR ACT	1530–1600	REQUIRES JUDGMENT CALL		FAVOR SAT
35	<1490		1490–1580		>1580	
34	<1450		1450–1560		>1560	
33	<1420		1420–1520		>1520	
32	<1390		1390–1480		>1480	
31	<1360		1360–1440		>1440	
30	<1330		1330–1410		>1410	
29	<1300		1300–1380		>1380	
28	<1260		1260–1350		>1350	
27	<1230		1230–1320		>1320	
26	<1200		1200–1290		>1290	
25	<1160		1160–1250		>1250	
24	<1130		1130–1220		>1220	
23	<1100		1100–1190		>1190	
22	<1060		1060–1150		>1150	
21	<1030		1030–1120		>1120	
20	<990		990–1090		>1090	
19	<960		960–1050		>1050	
18	<920		920–1020		>1020	
17	<880		880–980		>980	
16	<830		830–950		>950	
15	<780		780–910		>910	
14	<730		730–870		>870	
13	<690		690–820		>820	
12	<650		650–770		>770	
11	<620		620–720		>720	
10	<590		590–680		>680	
9	<520		520–640		>640	

SAT SCORE REPORT

College Board's online and paper score reports are filled with detailed information about the individual student's performance and how it fits in with larger testing populations. While this information may be useful when preparing to retake the exam, the most important pieces for applying to colleges appear at the top: total score, section scores, and SAT User Percentile—National.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE is the sum of your two section scores: Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and Math. Both sections are on a scale of 200–800; the total score is on a scale of 400–1600. Both College Board and ACT use scaled scores to account for slight differences in difficulty among test forms.

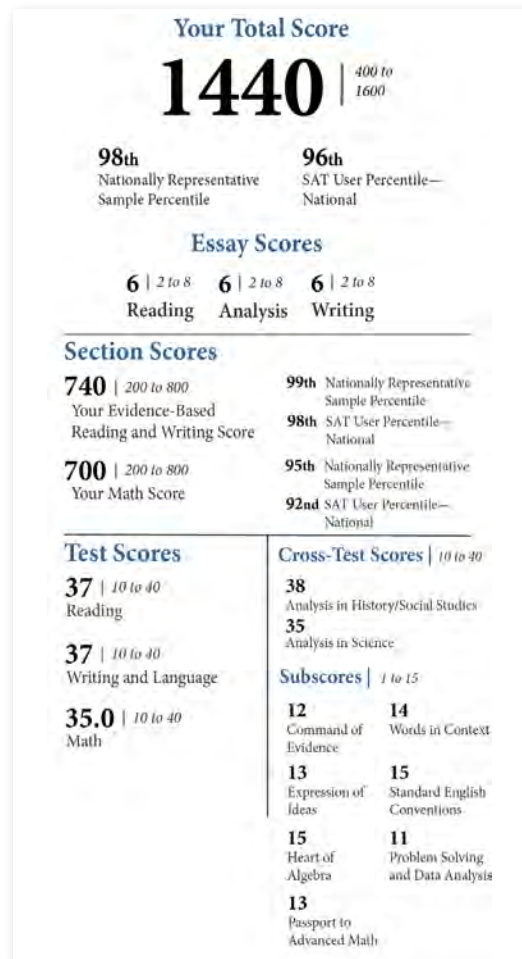
SECTION SCORES are the most commonly used scores. The first two parts of the SAT—a reading comprehension test followed by an editing test—are combined into the “Evidence-Based Reading and Writing Score.”

The “Math Score” is made up of two parts: the first without calculator and the second with calculator. Section scores and total score are what colleges use for admission purposes.

TEST SCORES exist primarily to break up performance on Reading from that on Writing and Language. These scores also appear on PSAT reports and are used to calculate the Selection Index for National Merit. While test scores may help determine where time should be spent studying, they are not important for college admission.

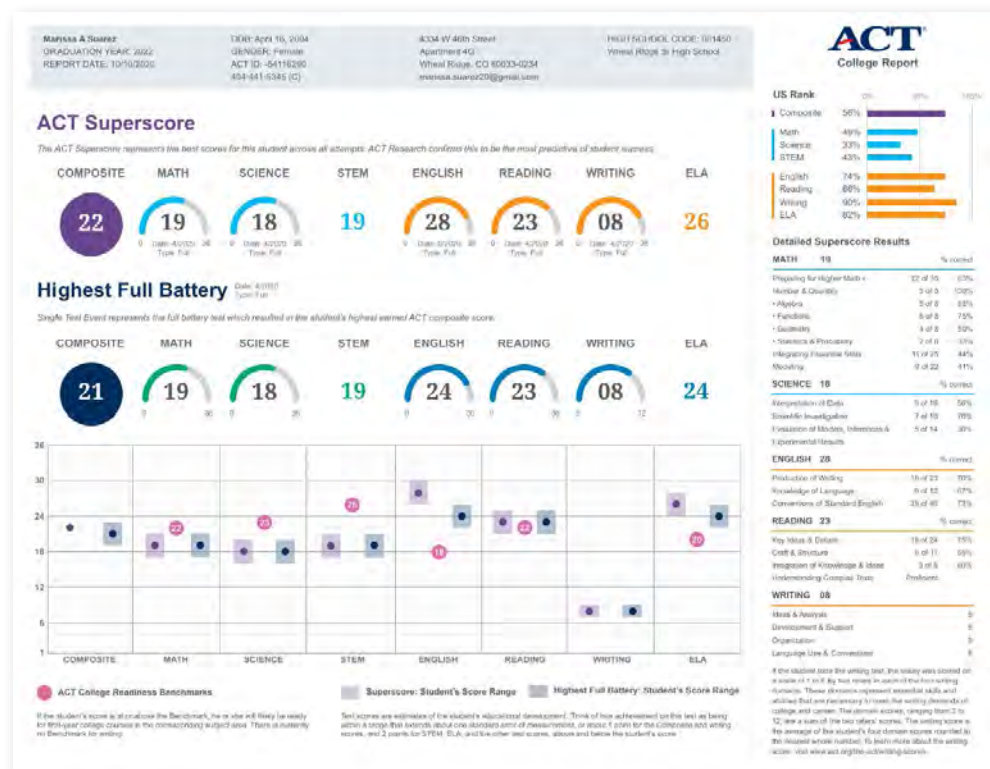
Similarly, the **CROSS-TEST SCORES** and **SUBSCORES** are generally ignored by college admission offices. Only a subset of questions across the tests make up these scores; for instance, twenty-one questions on the natural science Reading Test passages, six questions on the science-themed Writing and Language Test passage, and seven to nine of the Math Test questions compose the Analysis in Science cross-test score.

Perhaps the most confusing aspect of this report is the presence of two different percentile ranks. College Board now presents students with a **Nationally Representative Sample Percentile** and an **SAT User Percentile—National**. The first, higher, percentile is based on a sample group; the better percentile to consider is the SAT User Percentile—National, as this represents the pool of students who are likely taking the SAT for college admission purposes.



ACT SCORE REPORT

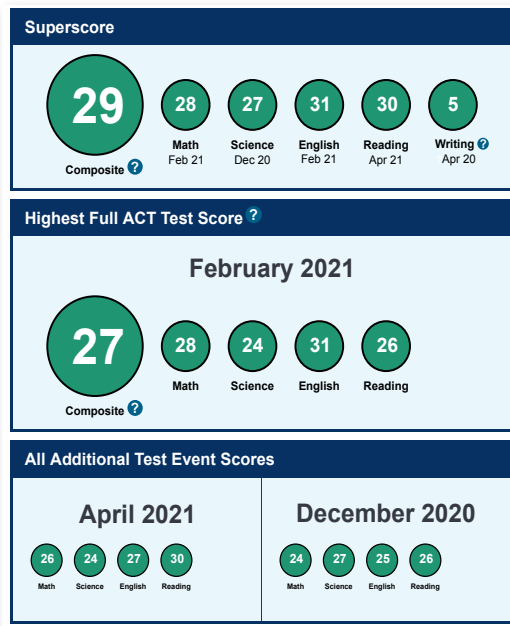
While SAT provides a total score that is the sum of two section scores, ACT provides a **COMPOSITE SCORE**, which is the average of the four tests: English, Math, Reading, and Science. Each test is on a scale of 1–36. The biggest difference between the SAT report and the ACT report, however, is that students have the option of sending colleges a Superscore Report, which includes their highest Composite score as well as a Composite score made up of their best performance in each subject across all test sittings. The student below received a 21 on the April ACT but shows a 22 when her tests are superscored.



ACT's regular score reporting only allows a student to report one test date at a time to one college at a time. The Superscore report is the same price, but the student can report all relevant scores. There are several important caveats. The free reports that a student receives with each registration are regular reports, not Superscore reports. Second, a Superscore Report does not automatically update. If you send a report after your June test, you will need to resend the report—and pay a second fee—if you improve your performance in September. Third, sending a Superscore Report does not make it any more or less likely that a college will superscore the ACT. Regular reports are just as easy for colleges to superscore. The reporting convenience and cost-saving is for the student.

SUB-SCORE REPORTING

Colleges also receive a breakdown of a student's performance in each subject. For example, the student above did better on Functions than on Statistics and Probability. While this information might be useful for a student's own preparation, it serves no real value for colleges and can be safely ignored.



WHAT TEST DATES ARE INCLUDED WITH A SUPERSCORE REPORT?

All of the scores shown in this image will be sent to each college or agency that you choose to receive your superscore. All scores from every test event that were part of the superscore will be sent. Every superscore report you choose to send will also include your highest full ACT test.

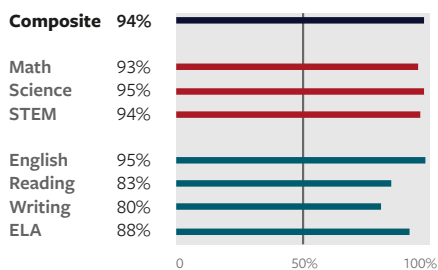
The student to the left has a 29 Composite at colleges that superscore. Without superscoring, though, her best performance is the 27 she attained in February 2021. At non-superscoring colleges, she may prefer to send only that result. For example, the December 2020 exam has a better Science score than her February test, but her Math and English scores fall well short.

Most colleges will evaluate a student by a superscore or by the best Composite from a single test date, and the

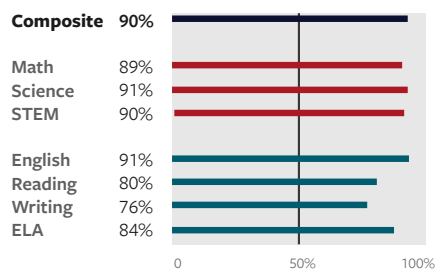
Superscore Report provides a great—and cost-efficient—option. However, to achieve the most granular control over score reporting, students need to send individual test date reports.

Though students always take the ACT in the same order—English, Math, Reading, Science and, optionally, Writing—the score report groups Math and Science so that ACT can average the two into the **STEM SCORE**. Likewise, English, Reading, and Writing are combined into the **ELA (ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS) SCORE**. ACT will not provide an ELA score without the Writing. Fortunately, much like the SAT's cross-test scores and subscores, ACT's STEM and ELA scores are not typically used for college admission; they exist for school and district administrators. Some states still require students to complete the Writing test when taking a mandated, state-funded ACT. Students paying their own way should not take Writing, as it is no longer used by any admission office of note.

US RANK



STATE RANK



Like College Board, ACT provides two sets of percentile ranks. In the case of ACT, both sets of numbers are determined using data from three prior classes of test takers and not from sample groups. U.S. Rank gives the student's performance relative to that of the entire U.S. test taker population; State Rank shows performance relative to that of the population of the student's state. The terms "Percentile" (SAT) and "Rank" (ACT) mean the same thing: the percentage of students scoring at or below the student's score.

SAT and ACT Percentiles

SAT PERCENTILE RANKS

The SAT percentile ranks that appear on your score report are not determined by the date you took the test. Instead, they are based on the performance of the most recent three graduating classes. College Board is currently reporting two types of percentiles: Nationally Representative Sample Percentile and SAT User Percentile. The Nationally Representative Sample Percentile appears on your score report but is inflated because it is intended to represent all students, even those who would not normally take the SAT. The User Percentile, below, is based on the results from actual test takers and better reflects how you stack up versus other applicants.

Percentile ranks are useful for comparing a student's performance to that of a population taking the same test. They should not be used for comparing performance between different tests. To compare SAT to ACT scores, concordance tables are more accurate (see pages 30–35).

SAT USER PERCENTILES: TOTAL, EVIDENCE-BASED READING & WRITING AND MATH

SCORE	TOTAL	SCORE	TOTAL	SCORE	TOTAL	SCORE	ERW	MATH	SCORE	ERW	MATH
1600	99+	1200	74	800	11	800	99+	99	500	40	42
1590	99+	1190	73	790	10	790	99+	99	490	37	39
1580	99+	1180	72	780	9	780	99+	98	480	34	36
1570	99+	1170	70	770	8	770	99	97	470	30	33
1560	99+	1160	69	760	7	760	99	96	460	27	30
1550	99	1150	67	750	6	750	98	96	450	24	27
1540	99	1140	66	740	5	740	98	95	440	21	24
1530	99	1130	64	730	5	730	97	94	430	18	22
1520	99	1120	62	720	4	720	96	93	420	15	19
1510	98	1110	61	710	3	710	95	92	410	13	17
1500	98	1100	59	700	3	700	94	91	400	11	15
1490	98	1090	57	690	2	690	93	90	390	9	12
1480	97	1080	55	680	2	680	91	89	380	7	10
1470	97	1070	54	670	1	670	90	87	370	5	8
1460	97	1060	52	660	1	660	88	86	360	4	7
1450	96	1050	50	650	1	650	86	84	350	3	5
1440	96	1040	48	640	1	640	83	82	340	2	4
1430	95	1030	46	630	1	630	81	81	330	1	3
1420	95	1020	45	620	1-	620	78	79	320	1	2
1410	94	1010	43	610	1-	610	76	77	310	1	1
1400	94	1000	41	600	1-	600	73	75	300	1-	1
1390	93	990	39	590	1-	590	70	72	290	1-	1
1380	92	980	38	580	1-	580	67	69	280	1-	1-
1370	92	970	36	570	1-	570	64	66	270	1-	1-
1360	91	960	34	560	1-	560	60	64	260	1-	1-
1350	90	950	33	550	1-	550	57	61	250	1-	1-
1340	89	940	31	540	1-	540	54	58	240	1-	1-
1330	89	930	29	530	1-	530	50	54	230	1-	1-
1320	88	920	28	520	1-	520	47	50	220	1-	1-
1310	87	910	26	510	1-	510	44	46	210	1-	1-
1300	86	900	25	500	1-				200	1-	1-
1290	85	890	23	490	1-						
1280	84	880	22	480	1-						
1270	83	870	20	470	1-						
1260	82	860	19	460	1-						
1250	81	850	18	450	1-						
1240	80	840	16	440	1-						
1230	78	830	15	430	1-						
1220	77	820	14	420	1-						
1210	76	810	12	410	1-						

Source: College Board, *Understanding Scores 2020*

ACT PERCENTILE RANKS

ACT, like College Board, uses the three most recent graduating classes to calculate percentile ranks. The percentiles are defined as the percentage of students who scored at or below a given score. For example, since 88% of recent ACT takers had a Composite score of 28 or below, 12% scored 29 and above.

ACT COMPOSITE AND TEST PERCENTILE RANKS

SCORE	COMP	ENGLISH	MATH	READING	SCIENCE
36	100	100	100	100	100
35	99	99	99	98	99
34	99	96	99	96	98
33	98	94	98	94	97
32	96	92	97	91	96
31	95	91	96	89	95
30	93	89	94	86	93
29	90	88	93	84	92
28	88	86	91	82	90
27	85	84	88	80	88
26	82	82	84	77	85
25	78	79	79	74	82
24	74	75	74	71	77
23	70	71	70	66	71
22	64	65	65	61	64
21	59	60	61	55	58
20	53	55	58	50	51
19	47	49	54	44	45
18	41	45	49	39	39
17	35	41	42	34	32
16	28	37	33	29	26
15	22	33	21	24	19
14	16	25	11	19	14
13	10	19	4	14	10
12	5	15	1	10	7
11	2	11	1	5	4
10	1	7	1	3	3
9	1	3	1	1	1
8	1	2	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1	1
6	1	1	1	1	1
5	1	1	1	1	1
4	1	1	1	1	1
3	1	1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1	1

Source: National Norms for ACT Test Scores Reported During the 2020-2021 Reporting Year