

High School Checklist

Freshman:

1. Maintain a high GPA (freshman year classes count!)
2. Set your 4-year plan
3. Keep up with Advising
4. Join fun clubs in your school
5. Begin to think about college
7. Volunteer work in your community
8. Activity Chart (record everything!)

Sophomore:

1. Continue taking challenging classes
2. Go on your first college visit
3. Continue Volunteering
4. Update your activity chart
5. Start Saving money for college!

Junior:

1. Maintain good grades
2. Seek advice from others about classes and colleges
3. Continue visiting colleges to narrow your search
4. Talk to right people that can navigate you to your successful future
5. Continue Volunteering
6. Update your activity chart
7. Update Resume
8. Continue saving money!
9. Consider taking the SAT in the spring

Seniors:

1. Take the SAT again if needed
2. Ask your guidance counselor questions
3. Prepare your college applications
4. Continue Volunteering
5. Update your activity chart
6. Submit your college applications on time
7. Submit FAFSA
8. Celebrate your hard work, graduate and begin your next adventure!

Connect Your Students to the Benefits of the PSAT/NMSQT



Power Up Potential

The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®) is an assessment given to 10th- and 11th-grade students. The second test in the SAT® Suite of Assessments, it's designed to help prepare them for the SAT, college, and careers. **Historically, students who take the PSAT/NMSQT score higher on the SAT, on average, than those who don't take the test.**

Connections to Scholarships

Students who take the PSAT/NMSQT in 11th grade may enter the National Merit® Scholarship Program, an academic competition for recognition and scholarships.

Our other scholarship partners also use the PSAT/NMSQT to find students qualified to apply for their programs. These organizations give out nearly \$160 million in combined awards every year.

Free SAT Practice on Khan Academy

The SAT is the only college admission test that offers free SAT practice tailored to each student. Students who sign up for Official SAT® Practice on Khan Academy® get a practice plan built just for them. When they link their College Board and Khan Academy accounts, students get a personalized study plan based on their results on tests like the PSAT/NMSQT or SAT so they can focus on the skills they need to work on most. Students also get access to:

- Thousands of practice questions with instant feedback
- Video lessons that explain problems step by step
- 8 full-length practice tests
- Studying and test-taking strategies

Research shows that students who spend 20 hours on Official SAT Practice gain an average of 115 points from the PSAT/NMSQT to the SAT.

Students can access free, personalized SAT practice anytime, anywhere at satpractice.org.

ACT vs SAT: Key differences between the ACT and SAT (From studypoint.com)

SAT	VS	ACT
Content-based test	Type of Test	Content-based test
Reading: 1, 65-min section; Math: 1, 25-min section (no calculator) & 1, 55-min section (w/ calculator); Writing & Language: 1, 35-min section; Essay: 1, 50-min section (optional)	Test Format	English: 1, 45-min section; Math: 1, 60-min section; Reading: 1, 35-min section; Science: 1, 35-min section; Writing: 1, 40-min essay (optional)
Reading, relevant words in context, math, grammar & usage, analytical writing (optional)	Content Covered	Grammar & usage, math, reading, science reasoning, and writing (optional)
Questions are evidence and context-based in an effort to focus on real-world situations and multi-step problem-solving	Test Style	Straightforward, questions may be long but are usually less difficult to decipher
Math and Evidence-Based Reading & Writing are each scored on a scale of 200-800. Composite SAT score is the sum of the two section scores and ranges from 400-1600	Scoring	English, Math, Reading, and Science scores range from 1-36. Composite ACT score is the average of your scores on the four sections; ranges from 1-36
No	Penalty for Wrong Answers?	No
Yes – you can choose which set(s) of SAT scores to submit to colleges. However, some colleges require or recommend that students submit all scores. Review the policy of each college	Score Choice?	Yes – you can choose which set(s) of ACT scores to submit to colleges. However, some colleges require that students submit all scores. Review the policy of each college.
Math questions generally increase in difficulty level as you move through that question type in a section. Reading passage questions generally progress chronologically through the passage, not by difficulty level. Writing & Language passage questions do not progress by difficulty level.	Difficulty Levels	For the English and Reading sections, the difficulty level of the questions is random. For the Math section, questions generally increase in difficulty as you progress through the section. For the Science section, passages generally increase in difficulty as you progress through the test, and questions generally become more difficult as you progress through a passage.
Arithmetic, problem-solving & data analysis, heart of algebra, geometry, pre-calculus, and trigonometry; formulas provided	Math Levels	Arithmetic, algebra I and II, functions, geometry, trigonometry; no formulas are provided
Seven times per year: March or April, May, June, August, October, November, December (note that some states offer the SAT as part of their state testing requirements; these tests are not administered on the national test dates)	Offered when?	Six times per year: February, April, June, July, 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	Website	www.act.org

Tips for Scoring Higher on College Admissions Tests

Plan Ahead and Practice

- Read the instructions in advance so you know the rules on test day. Also take a practice exam to make sure you know the timing well. You want to focus on the questions instead of worrying about the instructions and time parameters.

Figure Out Which Mistakes You Make Most and Why You Make Those Mistakes

- Students oftentimes make the same mistake over and over again on several questions without getting to the bottom of why they're picking the incorrect answer. Are the questions you're getting wrong all similar? If so, you should learn the skill you might be missing.

Find Free Study Materials and USE THEM!

- Carefully read through the resources Khan Academy, College Board and the ACT offer. Taking their practice exams will help boost your score.
- You can also go to your local library and find old exams there to photocopy and take.

See if you do better on the SAT or ACT

- Sometimes students try the SAT and end up preferring the ACT. Explore both because you might wind up having a preference.

If Essays Are Optional, Do Them!

- You want to show colleges you are putting forth your best effort and will even do optional work.

Ask for Help

- Ask teachers at school why you may have gotten a question wrong. Find upperclassmen who have taken the exam and ask for their advice.

Learn Grammar Rules and Required Math Skills

- Make sure you know the concepts that are projected to be on the exam (see SAT vs. ACT worksheet that explains the common math topics on the exams).

Devote Time to Studying

- Plan ahead and review the materials weeks before the exam day.
- Do NOT procrastinate and study for the ACT the night before.

PRACTICE AND PRACTICE MORE! GOOD LUCK!

THE COMMON APPLICATION

2017-2018 Common Application Essay Prompts

The word limit on the essay will remain at 650.

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story. [No change]
2. The lessons we take from *obstacles we encounter* can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a *challenge, setback, or failure*. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience? [Revised]
3. Reflect on a time when you *questioned* or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your *thinking*? What *was the outcome*? [Revised]
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution. [No change]
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or *realization* that *sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others*. [Revised]
6. *Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?* [New]
7. *Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.* [New]

Columbia SPLASH: How to Succeed in High School and Beyond!

Exit Survey-

What was the most useful thing you learned at this workshop?

Did this workshop help address your concerns about applying to college? Do you feel comfortable studying for the SAT/ACT now?