

# College Entrance Tests



## What Are College Entrance Tests and How Are They Used?

Because courses and grading standards differ from high school to high school, college entrance tests provide colleges with a standardized method to compare you with other students. These tests are one tool used to predict your academic performance in college-level courses.

Remember, these tests are just one of many factors considered in the college admissions process. Colleges and universities also consider your high school academic transcript, extracurricular activities, essays, and recommendations in the admissions process.

## What Are the Types of Tests?

There are several different college entrance tests. For example, most four-year colleges and universities accept the SAT and ACT. These two tests are general in nature and examine reasoning skills through mathematical problems, reading comprehension, and writing. North Carolina's community colleges do not require the ACT or SAT for admission, and instead focus on accurate placement into courses using your unweighted high school GPA (see page 4). Check the website of your local community college, compare your high school GPA to their placement requirements, and contact them if you have any questions.

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## SAT

The SAT measures critical thinking skills that are considered vital to academic success in college and beyond. The total possible score range is 400-1600. The SAT will be based on “rights-only” scoring, e.g., you receive a point for a correct answer but no deduction for an incorrect answer.

### Preparation

The heart of the SAT is analytical reasoning; therefore, cramming information won't be of much assistance. In general, it is best to use study guides or sample tests to familiarize yourself with the types of questions and reasoning skills used in the exam. An excellent source of information about the SAT is collegeboard.org, which offers a test preparation center with test-taking tips, sample tests, and questions of the day. College Board has a new partnership with Khan Academy (khanacademy.org) to offer a more personalized online option for SAT practice.

### When to Take the SAT

At least half of all students take the SAT twice, and there is no limit on the number of times you may take the exam. Many students take the SAT once or twice during their sophomore or junior year as a diagnostic tool, and again in October of their senior year. Colleges generally consider the highest scores across test dates (called super-scoring).

Redesigned SAT	Score Range
Evidence-Based Reading and Writing	200-800
Math	200-800
Essay (optional)	2-8
Possible Score Range	400-1600

## SAT Subject Tests

The SAT Subject Tests measure knowledge in the following subject areas (including some subsections).

- English (Literature)
- History (U.S. History and World History)
- Math (Math Level 1 and Math Level 2)
- Science (Biology with either an ecological or molecular focus, Chemistry, and Physics)
- Languages, some with a listening section (Chinese, French, German, Spanish, Modern Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Japanese, and Korean).

All SAT Subject Tests are one-hour, multiple-choice tests. Some colleges may use the tests for admission decisions; other colleges use the SAT Subject Tests for college placement or advising. Check the admissions requirements for the colleges you have selected to see if any SAT Subject Tests are required or recommended.

### Preparation

Taking SAT Subject Tests as soon as possible after completing course work in the subjects being tested will help, because the information will be fresh in your memory. For language tests, however, it is recommended that students wait until after they have completed at least two years of study.

### Cost and Test Dates

- \$26 registration fee
- Plus \$26 language test with listening
- Plus \$16 each additional subject test

**For more information visit [collegeboard.org](http://collegeboard.org)**



## Students with Special Needs

Special arrangements are available for students with disabilities, as well as those who cannot test on Saturday for religious reasons. Fee waivers may be available for students who demonstrate financial need.

## ACT

The ACT measures skills in English, math, reading, and science reasoning. You will receive scores on each individual section, as well as a composite score. The composite score is the average of these sections. The scale for scores is 1–36. There is also an optional Writing Test. The ACT is curriculum-based, meaning questions directly correspond to high school courses and assess a student’s ability to handle college courses. In North Carolina, the ACT may be offered during a regular school day at your public high school. Questions are multiple-choice, and the entire exam takes just over four hours to complete.

### Preparation

ACT recommends long-term preparation using your high school curriculum to provide the instruction you will need.

Test preparation activities to improve test-taking skills and review of content may also help. Also, check out College Test Prep at [CFNC.org](http://CFNC.org). Test-taking tips and sample questions are also available at [actstudent.org](http://actstudent.org).

### When to Take the ACT

There is no limit to the number of times you may take the ACT. There are, however, restrictions on the time frame between test administrations. You should consider taking the test during your junior year. There are advantages to testing as a junior, such as gaining necessary feedback in time to influence course work taken in your senior year. Taking the ACT during your junior year also provides the opportunity to take the test again if you feel your scores don’t accurately portray your ability. Importantly, students who take the ACT more than once have the option of choosing the date of the scores they wish to submit to colleges during the admissions process.

### Cost

- \$38 or \$54.50 with the Writing Test

**For more information visit [actstudent.org](http://actstudent.org)**





## North Carolina Community College Placement Policies

North Carolina's community colleges do not require the ACT or SAT for admission, and instead focus on accurate placement into courses using your unweighted high school GPA. For instance, if you want to enter an electrical engineering program at a community college, the college needs to ensure that you are fully prepared for the challenging math and English courses you'll be taking.

Currently, community college placement policies across the state vary slightly so it's best to check the website of your local community college, compare your high school GPA to their placement requirements, and contact them if you have any questions. You'll want to do this well in advance of the semester you plan to enroll. Fall of your senior year in high school is a great time to check. If you've already taken an ACT or SAT, the campus might also consider these as part of your placement process.

### Example

Here's a quick example of what you might find at a campus using the new RISE (Reinforced Instruction for Student Excellence) standards for entering students. The focus will be on your high school GPA (must be from the last 10 years), which corresponds with three categories:

#### 1. Unweighted HS GPA of 2.8 and Above

You can begin courses in your chosen program with no placement test or co-requisite courses.

#### 2. Unweighted HS GPA Above 2.2 and Less than 2.8

You can begin courses in your chosen program with no placement test while taking a co-requisite math or English. A co-requisite a course that is required to be taken along with another course.

#### 3. Unweighted HS GPA Less than 2.2

You'll need to enroll in a one-semester transition course before beginning your chosen program. You will not take a placement test.

**CFNC.org** 866.866.CFNC

Helping you plan, apply, and pay for college

CFNC Pathways Form TE2 (09/18)

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