

Scholastic Aptitude Test

The Scholastic Aptitude Test or the SAT is a standardized test used in the United States for college admissions. High school students usually take the SAT at the end of their junior year (11 grade) of High School or at the beginning of their senior year (12 grade). Students are able to re-take the test as many times as they like on any of the test dates, which occur 6-8 times a year. The test is administered all over the world, and most big cities have at least one testing center.

The SAT is developed and run by College Board, an American non-profit organization created to provide teenagers with access to higher education. It was founded in 1899 and was originally called the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB). Not only does it develop standardized testing, it also develops the Advances Placement (AP) Program. AP classes are offered in most High Schools in the U.S. and provide students with university level classes. These classes allow students to gain college credit and skip some of the basic courses at the university.

Today, the SAT is made up of three main parts: Evidence-Based Reading and Writing, Mathematics and the Essay, but over its long history, the SAT has undergone several changes in format, types of questions and scoring. The first standardized exam was administered by the CEEB in 1901. It consisted of a series of essay questions on topics such as Greek, Latin and Physics, it was completed over the course of 5 days. After the development of the IQ test in 1905, the SAT changed its approach to the test, now testing not specific knowledge, but aptitude for learning. By 1961 the SAT was taken by over 800 thousand students annually.

A lot of changes were made to the SAT between 1994 and 2005: the use of calculators became permitted, the reading passages were chosen to mimic texts students might encounter in college, the scoring system was changed from 1600 to 2400, and an essay section was introduced. Some of these changes were reversed in 2016: the scoring system changed back to 1600 and the essay became optional.

In recent years, the SAT has been criticized for not being a good reflection of students' academic ability. The test puts a lot of emphasis on speed and time management, prioritizing it over knowledge and reasoning. The reading section contains 52 questions based on 5 reading passages and has a time limit of 65 minutes. Even without the time it takes to read and understand each passage, this gives a student a little over a minute to answer each question, some of which are quite difficult. The other sections are no better. The whole exam takes 4 hours and 5 minutes to complete, and the breaks between its four sections are very short: a 10-minute break between the Reading and Writing sections, 5 minutes between Writing and Math, and only 2 minutes between Math and the essay. Because of these issues, more and more universities are becoming "test-optional", meaning that they do not require their students to submit standardized test scores.

In the summer of 2018, there was a scandal regarding the August SAT. The test got leaked to the Internet a few days before the exam. Because of this College Board threatened to cancel all the scores. This news resulted in a lot of panicked high school seniors, who would not have time to re-take the test before their college applications were due. A lot of desperate students turned to the ACT (American College Testing), the SAT's main rival, as an alternative standardized test.

Students can take the SAT...

1. ...only one time.
2. ...up to six times.
3. ...up to eight times.
4. ...more than 8 times.