

COMPARISON OF THE SAT AND THE ACT

	SAT	ACT	KEY DIFFERENCES
FOR-MAT AND LENGTH	5 sections Writing & Language; Reading; 2 Math; Essay Total testing time: 3 hours, 50 minutes (includes essay)	5 sections English; Math; Reading; Science; Writing Total testing time: 3 hours, 35 minutes (includes essay)	The SAT has a stronger emphasis on math, whereas the ACT has a stronger emphasis on science. Overall testing time and section lengths are similar. SAT questions generally require more critical thinking, but the SAT also provides 30-40% more time per question.
SCORING	Total Score: 400-1600 Evidence-Based Reading and Writing: 200-800 Math: 200-800 Essay (not added into total score): 2-8 in each of three domains	Composite Score: 1-36 (average of 4 test scores) English: 1-36 Math: 1-36 Reading: 1-36 Science: 1-36 Writing (not averaged into composite score): 2-12	The ACT Composite Score is the average of your four test scores, so a change in one test score may not be reflected in the Composite. The ACT Composite is divided into relatively few possible scores, so an increase of one point can represent a significant difference in abilities. The SAT Total Score is the sum of the test scores.
WRITING & LANGUAGE/ ENGLISH	Revise and edit a piece of writing Standard English grammar and usage Punctuation Logical structure Effective rhetoric	Revise and edit a piece of writing Standard English grammar and usage Punctuation Logical structure Effective rhetoric	The SAT Writing & Language and ACT English Tests are similar in format and content. The SAT has more emphasis on rhetoric and typically has more complex passages, but offers about 33% more time per question than the ACT does. The SAT also includes questions relating to data graphics.
MATH	Pre-algebra through basic trigonometry 12 Grid-In questions (no answer choices) Strong emphasis on Algebra Calculator prohibited on one section	Pre-algebra through basic trigonometry Extensive range of concepts tested Formulas not provided 5 answer choices per question (rest of test has 4)	The SAT and ACT Math Tests cover similar ranges of concepts. The ACT requires a broad, basic knowledge of many concepts. The SAT requires a deep knowledge of a core set of concepts, particularly algebra. The SAT offers about 38% more time per question than the ACT does.
READING	4 single passages and 1 paired passage 2 passages include diagrams/charts 2 vocabulary-in-context questions per passage 2 evidence questions per passage	4 single or paired passages Consistent order of subject areas: Literary Narrative and Prose Fiction, Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences	The ACT Reading Test emphasizes basic reading comprehension but challenges students with its speed. The SAT Reading Test emphasizes defining vocabulary in context, understanding the role of the author, and defending answers with textual evidence. The SAT typically contains more complex passages, but offers about 43% more time per question.
SCIENCE	The SAT does not have a stand-alone Science section, but 21 science questions are included throughout the Math, Reading, and Writing & Language Tests	40 questions distributed over 6 or 7 passages Emphasis on charts, diagrams, etc. Science is a reasoning test—rarely requires prior specific science knowledge	The ACT Science Test measures interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem-solving skills. The test uses scientific language and reasoning, but rarely requires any specific knowledge from your academic science classes. While there are science questions throughout the SAT, there is no specific Science section.
ESSAY	50 minutes Analyze a passage and evaluate author's reasoning and rhetoric Student opinions discouraged Scored on 2-8 scale on each of three domains: Reading, Analysis, Writing	40 minutes Evaluate three perspectives on a contemporary issue Student opinions encouraged Scored on 2-12 scale on each of 4 domains: Ideas & Analysis, Development & Support, Organization, Language Use & Conventions	The ACT essay emphasizes crafting and comparing arguments. The SAT essay emphasizes understanding and analyzing how arguments are crafted. The ACT allows for more creativity, whereas the SAT requires strong analytical reading skills and provides more time to write the essay.