

THE DIGITAL SAT vs. THE ACT

Knowing what to expect on the digital SAT and the paper-based ACT is the best way to decide which test will better suit your strengths. We broke down each exam's content and formatting so you're prepared for test day.

DIGITAL SAT

MATH

- Tests algebra, data analysis, arithmetic, and trigonometry (emphasis on advanced algebra)
- Provides commonly used formulas (ex. Pythagorean theorem, special right triangles, and area)
- Multiple-choice and grid-in questions
- Tests ability to apply Math concepts
- Calculator allowed on all questions

READING

- Tests ability to draw inferences and conclusions from evidence, and to summarize and analyze arguments
- Made up of short passages—1 question per passage
- Passages come from a variety of texts (poems, plays, prose, and essays)
- Does **NOT** include vocabulary section, though vocabulary is tested within passages
- Some questions test graphics (charts, graphs, pictures) related to the passage

WRITING (combined with Reading section)

- Tests grammar rules related to verbs, pronouns, transitions, sentence structure, and punctuation
- Questions ask about sentences within a passage
- At least one passage with graphics

NO SCIENCE SECTION

PAPER ACT

MATH

- Covers same material as SAT (slightly more emphasis on geometry, trigonometry, and pre-calc)
- Does **NOT** provide commonly used formulas for students
- Multiple-choice questions only
- Tests ability to apply Math concepts
- Calculator allowed on all questions

READING

- Tests speed and instant recall
- Made up of long passages—10 questions per passage
- Passages consist of one literary narrative and three essays
- Does **NOT** include vocabulary section, though vocabulary is tested within passages

WRITING (separate from Reading section)

- Tests same material as SAT
- Questions ask about sentences within a passage
- No graphics

SCIENCE

- Tests ability to analyze charts/graphs and draw conclusions
- Focuses more on *logic and scientific thinking*, not on actual scientific knowledge

SAT

NO ESSAY SECTION

SCORING

- Composite Score: 400-1600 points (sum of 2 section scores below)
- Reading/Writing Score (200-800 points) + Math Score (200-800 points)
- No guessing penalty
- *Test is adaptive—as student does well, questions get harder but are worth more points*

LOGISTICS

- Approximately 2 hours long
- Taken at an official test site
- Can be taken on any laptop or tablet through an app downloaded to the student's device

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- More commonly accepted by international universities
- Given in more international locations

SUPER SCORING*

Many universities super score, but some may not

ACT

ESSAY

- Tests ability to write a persuasive argument in response to a specific, modern-day issue
- Students must incorporate three short viewpoints from different sides of the debate (these are provided in the prompt)
- Essay score is **NOT** included in student's ACT composite score
- Essay is *optional*

SCORING

- Composite Score: 1-36 points (average of 4 section scores below)
- English Score (1-36 pts) + Math Score (1-36 pts) + Reading Score (1-36 pts) + Science Score (1-36 pts)
- Essay scored on a scale of 2-12 points
- No guessing penalty
- *Test is **NOT** adaptive*

LOGISTICS

- Over 3 hours long
- Taken at an official test site
- Taken with paper and pencil

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- Not always accepted by international universities (although accepted by ALL U.S. universities)
- Fewer international test sites
- Exam is *computer-based* for international students (students with accommodations may take paper test)

SUPER SCORING*

Many universities super score, but some may not

*Super scoring is the process of taking the highest section scores from multiple test sittings to create a new composite score.