

## A Comparison of the SAT I and the ACT

If you have the choice to take either the SAT I or the ACT, based on the requirements of the schools you wish to apply to, which should you take? How do you choose? Depending on your strengths and weaknesses, you may perform better on one test than the other. Take a look at the following table and answer the questions that follow.

<b>Basic Test Information</b>	
<b>SAT I</b>	<b>ACT</b>
<p>Tests critical reading, writing, and math skills in 9 sections (plus one experimental section that does not count against your score)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical reading including both short and long reading passages and sentence completions</li> <li>• Math including numbers and operations, algebra and functions, geometry and measurement, and data analysis, statistics, and probability</li> <li>• Writing including identifying sentence errors, improving sentences and paragraphs, and a student essay</li> </ul>	<p>Tests English, math, reading, and science reasoning in 4 subtests. There is also an optional essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage, mechanics, rhetorical skills</li> <li>• Algebra, geometry, trigonometry</li> <li>• Critical reading</li> <li>• Reading passages from the social sciences, natural sciences, prose fiction, humanities</li> <li>• Data representation, research summaries, conflicting viewpoints (science)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to identify genre, relationships among parts of a text, cause and effect, rhetorical devices, and comparative arguments</li> <li>• Reading fluency</li> <li>• Understanding of the meaning of words and the basic logic in sentences</li> <li>• Knowledge of math course work</li> <li>• Ability to reason mathematically</li> <li>• Ability to identify grammatical errors and recognize how to improve sentences and paragraphs</li> <li>• Knowledge of standard written English</li> </ul>	<p><b>Measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge and understanding of standard written English and rhetorical skills</li> <li>• Knowledge and understanding of ninth through eleventh grade course work in math</li> <li>• Reading comprehension across subject areas</li> <li>• Reasoning and problem solving in biology, chemistry, physical, and earth and space science (some general-level science background is helpful to understand the concepts)</li> </ul>
3 hours and 45 minutes in length	2 hours and 55 minutes in length
Multiple choice plus student produced responses. A 25-minute long essay	All multiple choice for required sections. The essay section is optional
Guessing penalty of a quarter-point	No guessing penalty; only correct answers count
Offered 7 times a year	Offered 6 times a year
Can be taken multiple times; the last 6 scores are reported to colleges	Can be taken multiple times; only the scores from the selected test date are reported to colleges

