

# College Entrance Tests

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

College entrance tests are a way to predict your ability to perform in college-level classes. Because courses and grading standards differ from high school to high school, entrance tests provide colleges with a standardized method to compare you with other students.

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



## What About Community Colleges?

If you plan to attend a North Carolina community college, you will likely be required to take a placement test instead of the SAT or ACT. The placement test scores are used to place you accurately in courses such as English and math. The SAT or ACT is not required for admission to a community college but is sometimes used for specific majors.

## What Are the Types of Tests?

There are several different types of 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 through mathematical problems, reading comprehension, and writing. The PSAT is used to prepare students for the SAT. Community colleges most often use placement tests. The three placement tests that are used in North Carolina are the COMPASS, ACCUPLACER/CPT, and ASSET.

### Where Do You Go From Here?

When you are planning for college, look into the college entrance test requirements for each school. CFNC provides average test scores of incoming freshmen for each North Carolina college. Look in the admissions section of each school's profile at [CFNC.org](http://CFNC.org). Contacting the college or university can be the first step in finding out what test or tests you will need to take. A good rule of thumb in college planning is to start early, so begin thinking about college entrance tests in your sophomore year. Your high school counselor can be an invaluable resource.

If you have questions about any of these tests or need further information, call 866-866-CFNC or visit [CFNC.org](http://CFNC.org).

# CFNC.org

Helping you plan, apply, and pay for college

College  
Foundation  
of North Carolina

# SAT

The SAT Reasoning Test (formerly known as SAT I) measures critical thinking skills that are considered to be vital to academic success in college and beyond. The test is offered seven times a year in October, November, December, January, March/April, May, and June. The test is divided into three sections: critical reading, writing, and mathematics. You can score between 200 and 800 points on each section.

The critical reading portion of the SAT consists of three sections of short and long reading passages as well as sentence-completion questions. Some questions test your ability to think carefully about the passage while others ask about a word's definition based on its context. There are questions related to information stated in passages and questions that require you to identify writing techniques. Sentence completion questions will assess your logical ability to connect different parts of a sentence and the meaning of words.

The mathematics section consists of three segments of multiple choice and student-produced response questions. Questions in the mathematics section pertain to geometric sequences, sets, algebra, functions, geometry, measurements, data analysis, statistics, and probability. Approximately 10 student-produced response questions require that you solve a question and fill in the answer on a special grid.

The writing section, introduced in spring 2005, is composed of a short essay and multiple-choice questions. The essay assesses your writing competence based on your ability to express yourself while appropriately organizing and developing ideas and choosing words. The essay is scored by trained high school and college instructors who give each essay a score from one to six, six being the highest. The multiple-choice questions in this section evaluate your ability to identify errors and improve sentences and paragraphs.

After you have completed the test, you will receive three scores: one critical reading, one writing, and one math score. Each of these scores can range from 200 to 800. The scores will be combined for a total SAT score between 600 and 2400.

## 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 [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com), which offers a test preparation center with test-taking tips, sample tests, and questions of the day. At [CFNC.org](http://CFNC.org), you can prepare by using the tools in College Test Prep. There are also preparatory classes and books you can buy with practice exams on CD-ROM. Don't forget that publications such as Peterson's *Master the SAT* and The College Board's *The Official SAT Study Guide* provide great ideas and resources for college testing.

## What is a Fee Waiver?

College entrance test fee waivers are available for high school juniors and seniors who cannot afford to pay the test fees. Your school counselor can provide you with more information about this program and discuss financial eligibility guidelines. **Only your school counselor can provide the fee waiver.** You must register for the test by the regular registration deadline; fee waivers are not accepted for late or standby registration. If you participate in a fee-waiver service for either the SAT or the ACT, you may also be eligible to waive application fees at colleges to which you apply.

College Foundation of North Carolina | Helping You Plan, Apply, and Pay for College

Word of the Day for March 12

**conviction** (noun)

Strong belief, a proof or decision of guilt in a courtroom setting.

The senator's firm convictions concerning the issue of the death penalty were well-known among voters.

[See yesterday's word](#)

SAT

- Companion Home
- Quantitative
- Critical Reading
- Sample Tests
- Test Tips
- Help
- Exam Information
- Word of the Day
- Question of the Day

ACT

GRE

## 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. Unlike the ACT, each SAT test score is reported; however, colleges generally only consider the highest scores across test dates. For example, if you scored 500 (critical reading), 430 (writing), and 400 (math) in January and then a 400 (critical reading), 440 (writing), and 500 (math) in June, some colleges would look at the highest scores in each section (500 critical reading, 440 writing, and 500 math) for a cumulative score of 1440.

## Free Test Prep at CFNC.org

College Test Prep is a comprehensive tool to help you prepare for the SAT and ACT, including a vocabulary builder with 2,000 words to boost your academic skills. At College Test Prep, you can:

- Learn new words adapted specifically to your learning ability and selected to challenge you.
- Answer practice questions.
- Review the writing process and analyze a sample SAT essay.
- Let your mentor know how you are doing and where you might need extra help.

Fifteen minutes on College Test Prep every day can make a real difference, and it's free!

## Registration

To register for the SAT, you may obtain a Registration Bulletin from your school counselor and mail in your application. It is also possible to register online by logging on to [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

### Cost and Test Dates

- \$45 (Your school counselor can help you determine if you are eligible for a fee waiver.)
- The SAT is given each year in October, November, December, January, March/April, May, and June. Contact your high school counselor or the College Board SAT Program for specific dates.

## Average Test Scores (SAT)

	<u>2008 National</u>	<u>2008 NC</u>
Critical Reading	502	496
Mathematics	515	511
Writing	494	482
Total SAT	1511	1489

## 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. Some colleges do not accept SAT Subject Test scores at all.

## How to Know if You Have to Take SAT Subject Tests

Check the admissions requirements for the colleges you have selected. If you are still unsure, talk with your school counselor or contact admissions counselors at the colleges of your choice.

## 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. Because SAT Subject Tests determine knowledge of a

specific subject, if you continue to study the subject and then retake the test, your score should reflect your increased knowledge. Like the SAT, the scores from each time you take the test are reported.

There are numerous study guides available. Students may also consider visiting the Subject Tests Learning Center at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) for test-taking tips and practice questions.

### Cost and Test Dates

- \$20 Registration Fee
- \$20 Language Test with Listening
- \$9 Each Additional Subject Test
- The SAT Subject Tests are given each year in October, November, December, January, May, and June, but not all tests are offered each month. Contact your high school counselor or the College Board SAT Program for specific dates.

## Average Test Scores

Average test scores vary depending on the subject. Below are average scores for 2008 college-bound seniors from selected subject tests.

English (Literature)	581
U.S. History	588
World History	589
Math Level 1	596
Math Level 2	639
Chemistry	630
Spanish	632

## For More Information

College Board SAT Program  
P.O. Box 025505  
Miami, FL 33102  
866-756-7346  
609-771-7137 (for students with disabilities)  
888-857-2477 (TTY)  
212-713-7789  
609-882-4118 (TTY)  
[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)



# The PSAT: Preliminary SAT/NMSQT

The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test measures verbal reasoning as well as critical reading, writing, and mathematical skills. The test is divided into five sections and takes two hours and ten minutes to complete. The PSAT allows you to familiarize yourself with the types of questions found on the SAT and provides valuable feedback on areas where you might benefit from additional study or practice. Because the PSAT has the same kinds of questions as the SAT, it is the best way to practice taking the SAT. When taken in the junior year, it also allows you to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Corporation's programs, which provide financial assistance for recipients. You will receive scores on each individual section of the PSAT. The scale for scores is 20-80.

## When to Take the PSAT

Students may take the PSAT in the sophomore or junior year. Unlike the SAT and the SAT Subject Tests, PSAT scores are not automatically reported. However, you may opt to have your scores sent to the schools of your choice.

To compete for National Merit Scholarships, you must take the PSAT in your junior year, unless you plan to graduate early. Information about the National Merit Scholarship Corporation is available at [www.nationalmerit.org](http://www.nationalmerit.org).

## Preparation

Challenging courses, problem-solving activities, and a well-established reading practice are the best preparation for the PSAT. You can find practice questions and answers and test-taking tips at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

## Registration

You may register for the PSAT through your high school. Contact your school counselor for more information. Online registration for the PSAT/NMSQT is not available.

### Cost and Test Dates

- \$13
- The high school determines the date that you will take the test and should provide you with registration materials. It is often given in October.

## Scores

Your scores are reported directly to your school. You may not access them online or by phone. Your school is responsible for distributing them and providing extra copies to you. If your scores qualify you to be a Commended Student or Semifinalist in the National Merit Scholarship Program, your school will notify you in September of your senior year.

## Average Test Scores

### Juniors 2007-2008

	<u>National</u>	<u>NC</u>
Critical Reading	46.7	45.7
Mathematics	48.2	47.9
Writing	45.9	44.8

### Sophomores 2007-2008

	<u>National</u>	<u>NC</u>
Critical Reading	41.8	42.1
Mathematics	43.1	44.6
Writing	41.2	41.4

## For More Information

PSAT/NMSQT Office  
P.O. Box 6720  
Princeton, NJ 08541-6720  
866-433-7728  
609-882-4118 (TTY)  
212-713-8105  
[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

## ACT Assessment

The ACT Assessment measures skills in English, math, reading, and science reasoning. There is also an optional Writing Test. Unlike the SAT, which measures aptitude, 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 is offered six times a year in September, October, December, February, April, and June. Questions are multiple-choice, and the entire exam takes just over four hours to complete. (The Writing Test adds 30 minutes to approximately three hours of actual test-taking time.) 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.

Students who plan to take the ACT and hope to attend one of the 16 UNC campuses must take the ACT with the Writing Test. Other colleges in the state may also require the ACT Writing Test. Check with individual college admissions offices to see what is required.

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 [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).

### Students with Special Needs

Special arrangements are available for students who are disabled as well as those with religious objections to Saturday test dates. Fee waivers may be available for students who demonstrate financial need.

## Preparation

ACT recommends long-term preparation using your high school curriculum to provide the instruction you will need. Research has shown that students who choose to take four or more years of English and three or more years of course work in math, science, and social studies score better on the ACT regardless of factors such as grade point average, gender, ethnicity, or family income.

## 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.

## Registration

Students wishing to take the ACT may register electronically at [www.act.org](http://www.act.org). You may also contact ACT in writing at the contact information below under For More Information and have registration materials mailed to you.

### Cost and Test Dates

- \$31 or \$46 with the Writing Test
  - The ACT is given each year in September, October, December, February, April, and June.
- Contact your high school counselor or ACT for specific dates.

## Average Test Scores

In 2007, the average national and North Carolina test scores for the ACT were as follows:

	National	NC
English	20.7	20.2
Mathematics	21.0	21.4
Reading	21.5	21.4
Scientific Reasoning	21.0	20.7
Composite Scores	21.2	21.0

## For More Information

ACT  
301 ACT Drive  
P.O. Box 414  
Iowa City, IA 52243-0414  
319-337-1270  
319-337-1701 (TDD)  
[www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)

## Need Help Preparing for College Tests?

Take advantage of the FREE, comprehensive test prep courses for the SAT, ACT, and GRE at [CFNC.org](http://CFNC.org). College Test Prep features easy-to-use tutorials, interactive practice sessions that dynamically adapt to each student's ability level, and a vocabulary builder that contains 2,000 words. Whether you have a week or a year until the test, this section of the site will reinforce your academic skills and build your confidence as you approach test day.

Here is what you will find at [CFNC.org](http://CFNC.org):

**SAT** – Prepare for the SAT with these tutorials, practice sessions, and test-taking tips.

**ACT** – Test your knowledge of four ACT subject areas: English, Reading, Math, and Science Reasoning.

**GRE** – Use this resource to study for the Graduate Record Examination for graduate school admission.

**Vocab Builder** – Use this tool to prepare for all three tests. The Vocab Builder contains more than 2,000 words and adapts to your ability level.

The screenshot shows the College Foundation of North Carolina website. The main heading is "College Test Prep". Below it, there is a description: "CFNC.org now offers comprehensive FREE test prep courses for the SAT, ACT, and GRE. CFNC Test Prep features easy-to-use tutorials, interactive practice sessions that dynamically adapt to each student's ability level, and a vocabulary builder that contains 2,000 words. Whether you have a week or a year until the test, this section of the site will help you to reinforce your academic skills and build your confidence as you approach test day." There are also links for "SAT - Tutorials, practice sessions, and test-taking tips to help you prepare for the SAT", "ACT - Tests your knowledge of four ACT subject areas: English, Reading, Math, and Science Reasoning", "GRE - Tools to help you study for the Graduate Record Examination for Graduate school admission", and "Vocab Builder - Contains over 2000 words and adapts to your ability level".

The screenshot shows the "SAT Companion Home" page. It features a table with columns for "Category", "Tutorial", "Practice questions", and "Percentage correct". The table shows progress for various SAT sections: Sentence Completion (77%), Reading Passages (71%), Arithmetic (67%), Algebra (74%), Geometry (74%), and Data Analysis (74%). There are also links for "SAT Companion extras: Vocab Builder", "SAT Essay", and "Customize My Account".

## SAT or ACT: How Do You Know?

Check with your school counselor or the admissions office at the colleges of your choice to see which test is required or recommended.

# Community College Placement Tests

The COMPASS, ASSET, and ACCUPLACER/CPT measure mathematics, reading, and writing skills. Prospective students may be required to take one of these tests prior to registering for curriculum courses at a community college. These tests are used primarily to place students in courses that match their current skill levels. Unlike the other tests in this publication, the COMPASS and ACCUPLACER/CPT are electronic tests. The computer gives you questions based on your responses. For example, you will receive a more challenging question if you answer an item correctly. Likewise, you will receive a less challenging question if you answer incorrectly. The COMPASS and ACCUPLACER/CPT are not timed, although it takes most students two to three hours to complete. The ASSET is a timed test. You may not use notes or books during your test. Some colleges will not allow a calculator. Typically, you can receive your scores immediately after finishing the test.

## Preparation

For ASSET and COMPASS, visit [www.act.org/asset](http://www.act.org/asset) or [www.act.org/compass/sample](http://www.act.org/compass/sample) for test-taking tips and sample questions. For the ACCUPLACER, go to the website listed at the end of this section.

If you would like to brush up on a particular area, focus your skills in English and math. For English, you may find it helpful to spend some time reading and looking up words you do not understand. You might practice writing an essay or review basic grammar. Math topics may include pre-algebra, elementary and intermediate algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. It might be helpful to work out some math problems beforehand. For additional suggestions, you may talk to the admissions office before taking the placement test.

## When to Take Community College Placement Tests

Placement tests are typically taken in the spring, prior to graduating from high school. North Carolina community colleges administer the tests to students prior to their enrolling in community college courses. Contact your community college to arrange a time to take a test. Some community colleges will allow you to retake a placement test to improve your score.

## Registration

Each community college may differ in the way it structures placement test registration. When you visit the community college you wish to attend, be sure to ask about placement testing.



## Cost and Test Dates

- Currently there is no charge to take a placement test at a community college.
- Contact your community college admissions office for test dates and times.

## Average Test Scores

Community colleges have “cut-off” scores to help determine the courses in which students will be most successful. You will talk with someone after testing who will interpret your scores for you.

## For More Information

Contact your community college admissions office for more information, or contact the testing centers listed below:

### COMPASS and ASSET

ACT  
500 ACT Drive  
P.O. Box 168  
Iowa City, IA 52243-0168  
319-337-1054  
[www.act.org/compass](http://www.act.org/compass)  
[www.act.org/asset](http://www.act.org/asset)

### ACCUPLACER/CPT

The College Board  
45 Columbus Avenue  
New York, NY 10023  
866-607-5223  
[www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/accuplacer/index.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/accuplacer/index.html)