

Using the SAT® to connect students and colleges

The SAT helps college admissions officers make **fair and informed admissions decisions**. Combined with a student's academic record, it is a **proven, reliable** indicator of college success. Since its launch in 1926, the SAT has helped millions of students connect with college success and today remains the most reliable, effective measure of a student's college readiness. The SAT tests the subject matter learned by students in high school and the critical thinking skills necessary to succeed in college.

SAT facts

The SAT is offered **seven times a year** in the United States and six times at international sites. The test:

- . Takes **three hours and 45 minutes**
- . Consists of **10 separately timed sections**:
 - . Three sections test critical reading (70 minutes total)
 - . Three sections test mathematics (70 minutes total)
 - . Three sections test writing (60 minutes total)
 - . One variable (unscored) section tests critical reading, mathematics, or writing (25 minutes total)
- . Assesses **critical thinking** and **problem solving skills** in **three areas**:
 - . Critical reading
 - . Mathematics
 - . Writing
- . Includes **three kinds of questions**:
 - . Multiple-choice questions
 - . **Student-produced responses** (mathematics only)
 - . **Essay** question
- . Is **machine-scored**, except for the essay

Why should students take the SAT?

Students and parents often ask why it is important to take the SAT. Reasons include:

- . All colleges accept the SAT as an **objective measurement** of students' college readiness.
- . Used with GPAs and high school transcripts, SAT scores allow colleges to **fairly compare** applicants.
- . Taking the SAT gives students **access to scholarship** opportunities.
- . Most colleges require an admissions test like the SAT.
- . The SAT provides students with the most comprehensive performance feedback of any admissions test.

Many institutions **require a writing assessment** for admission. Students who take the SAT automatically fulfill such requirements.

Learn more about the [scholarship search tool](#) in the student area of our site.

How difficult is the SAT?

The SAT is developed to reflect accepted educational standards. The data show that the material on the SAT and the time allocated to each section are appropriate for the intended test-taking population:

- . On average, students answer **50 to 60 percent of questions correctly**.
- . **80 percent finish** nearly the entire test.
- . Almost all students **complete at least 75 percent** of the questions.

Encourage your students to **become familiar with the test** before they take their first SAT. (The following link takes you to the student area of this site.) [The SAT Preparation Center™](#) offers:

- . Sample questions
- . Answer explanations
- . Official SAT practice test
- . Personalized score report