

Everything

Your Kid Forgot To Tell You

*A Parents Guide
To The PSAT,
SAT, & ACT*

By: Tom Ehlers & Donald McCarthy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Click To Navigate

1. The SAT, ACT, & PSAT Process
2. Freshman Year
3. Sophomore Year
4. Junior Year
5. Which month's ACTs and SATs are the best ones to take?
6. Should students take both the SAT and the ACT?
7. What about students who are not good test takers?
8. How much of SAT/ACT test prep is learning test-taking strategies?
9. When is the last time a student can take the SAT or ACT?
10. What are the differences between the SAT and ACT?
11. What is a "good" SAT or ACT score?
12. About Method Test Prep.



THE SAT, ACT, PSAT PROCESS *A Parent's Guide*

At Method Test Prep, if there is one thing we want every parent to know, it is this: students can improve their SAT and ACT scores significantly; it just takes practice. These are not IQ tests. The ACT and SAT are tests on how well students know the ACT and SAT, nothing more. Each question a student gets correct on the ACT results in a 1 point increase on that ACT sub-section. Each question a student gets correct on the SAT often results in a 10-point increase! So five more math questions correct and five more reading questions correct means a 100-point increase on one's SAT scores! The point is, a higher SAT/ACT score is attainable and means getting accepted to more colleges and being offered more financial aid and scholarship money.





FRESHMAN YEAR:

What do you need to do with regard to the SAT/ACT?

“Parents and students who are worrying about the SAT or ACT freshman year are putting too much emphasis on these tests”

Nothing. Students and parents should not be thinking about the ACT or SAT freshman year. Students should put their energy into working hard in school and getting the best grades possible. Parents and students who are worrying about the SAT or ACT freshman year are putting too much emphasis on these tests, which might do more harm than good. If your child's school subscribes to www.methodtestprep.com, then he or she can start to work through the checklist to build critical math, reading, and writing skills that will lead to success in high school and college.





SOPHOMORE YEAR:

What do you need to do with regard to the SAT/ACT?

Still not much. Many schools have sophomores take the PSAT, but the test was really designed to be a test taken in the fall of junior year. We care much more about a student's junior year PSAT scores, so we try to make sure that any sophomore taking the PSAT goes in with the right mindset. It is just a chance to be exposed to SAT questions so that when you take the PSAT again junior year, you will already be familiar with the questions. Again, if your child's school subscribes to www.methodtestprep.com, then he or she can start to work through the checklist to build critical math, reading, and writing skills that will lead to success in high school and college.





“The key is to break up ACT/SAT prep into manageable chunks of time so it actually gets done.”

[Learn More](#)

JUNIOR YEAR:

What do you need to do with regard to the SAT/ACT?

This is the important year. Many parents and students want to get some ACT/SAT prep out of the way in the summer since the school year will be busy with sports, tough classes, etc.. The key is to break up ACT/SAT prep into manageable chunks of time so it actually gets done. And research shows that people learn more effectively for the long term when they spread the material out and reinforce the learning rather than trying to cram. Whether you start to prepare during the summer or not, the key, of course, is to not wait until the last minute. That only raises the level of anxiety surrounding these tests.





WHICH MONTH'S ACTS AND SATS ARE THE BEST ONES TO TAKE?

The best ACTs and SATs to take are the tests that offer the ACT Test Information Release Service and the SAT Question and Answer Service. When you order this optional service, the ACT or SAT will send you back the full results of the test so your child can see exactly which questions he or she got wrong and can fix those types of mistakes next time. For the ACT, the TIR Service is offered in December, April, and June. For the SAT, the Q and A Service is offered in January, May, and October. These are the best tests to take. Unfortunately, there are many myths out there that certain SATs or ACTs are “easier,” but these rumors are not true. The tests are curved and if most students score lower on a certain exam, the curve will be more lenient.





SHOULD STUDENTS TAKE BOTH THE SAT AND THE ACT?


Yes, most students should. Just about every college in the country accepts either the ACT or SAT, so colleges are giving students two chances to be successful. Most students might as well take advantage of both chances. Also, many of the strategies and the concepts tested are the same on the SAT and ACT so when students prepare for one, they are really preparing for both. About 30% of students will score high enough on one exam to be significant. Since it is often difficult to predict which test will be the better test for a student, we recommend students take each test once to see which test seems to suit them better.





WHAT ABOUT STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT GOOD TEST TAKERS?

Many students who believe they are “bad test takers” just need more practice in order to boost their confidence. The SAT and ACT are very repetitive, predictable tests. Rather than being an IQ test, the SAT is more a test of how many SAT questions one has practiced. The same goes for the ACT. Many students just don’t realize how much practice it takes. Doing the “Question of the Day” doesn’t cut it. Not for the SAT or ACT. Not for most things in life. One reason why some students do so much better in school than on the SAT or ACT is that they put in a tremendous amount of time on their schoolwork. They need to put in a similar amount of time practicing on authentic SAT or ACT questions.



HOW MUCH OF SAT/ ACT TEST PREP IS LEARNING TEST- TAKING STRATEGIES *And How Much Of It Is Learning The Content?*

Good question. It depends. For most students, it is more content. For example: We have to remind students, “We know the ACT and SAT are going to test you on exponents. Here is a typical way exponents are tested on the ACT and SAT and here is a strategy for solving any question like this.” Yes, there are test-taking strategies, i.e. reading comprehension strategies, when to guess, how to narrow questions down to two answer choices, but over the course of 12 hours of test prep, more time is typically spent on the content: the math, reading, and grammar skills that we know students are going to be tested on over and over.

WHEN IS THE LAST TIME A STUDENT CAN TAKE THE SAT OR ACT AND STILL USE THE SCORES TO APPLY TO COLLEGE?

The main point we always emphasize here is that students can always take the SAT or ACT one more time if need be. At Method Test Prep we never want a student feeling like it is “now or never.” We have had many seniors take the December ACT and the January SAT and have colleges withhold a final application decision. Also, we have had students raise their ACT or SAT scores late in their senior year and get financial aid or a scholarship package based on the better scores.





SAT

ACT

“The SAT and ACT have many similarities, but there are also some stark differences between them.”

[Learn More](#)

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SAT AND ACT?

The SAT and ACT have many similarities, but there are also some stark differences between them. The ACT's math and reading comprehension questions tend to be viewed as slightly easier, but the timing on these sections is much more difficult than on the SAT. The SAT's reading comprehension relies on critical thinking and the ACT's relies more on going back to the passage and finding an answer. The SAT's math is trickier and relies more on figuring out what is being asked, while the ACT's math tends to be more straightforward, but includes more figuring. The ACT also has a science section, but calling it a science section is somewhat misleading because it is mostly about testing one's capabilities reading and interpreting graphs and charts.



WHAT IS A “GOOD” SAT OR ACT SCORE?

A good SAT or ACT score varies from student to student and from college to college. It is always a good idea to do some research into what the colleges you are considering expect from the scores. Some colleges are more rigorous than others (and not always the colleges you'd expect). The average SAT score is a 510 in all three areas (adding up to a 1530), but they vary from test to test. Anytime a student hits a 600, he or she deserves a pat on the back. Here's a chart that breaks down where students might land.

Reading	Total # Of Questions	Questions Correct	Questions Incorrect	Questions Omitted
500	67	34	22	11
600	67	49	14	4
700	67	60	6	1
Math Score				
500	54	29	18	7
600	54	41	12	1
700	54	49	5	0
Writing Score				
500	49	22	18	9
600	49	33	11	5
700	49	43	6	0

The average ACT score is around a 21. For students to be competitive, they should look for at least a 25 overall. Once a student ends up in the high 20s, they are golden.





About Method Test Prep

We understand that all students learn differently. That is why our team, headed by Ivy League graduates, has spent years developing effective teaching methods and learning techniques that have proven to help students raise their SAT and ACT scores. All of our programs are designed to meet the needs of students' unique learning styles and modalities. We are committed to going above and beyond because we care about the achievement of our students, whose success is clear evidence of our values and expertise.

[Meet The Team](#)

Proven Teacher Led SAT & ACT Classes
Improve Your Score Today

[Learn More](#)

