Beyond HCA – Standardized Testing

SAT and ACT Information – Which Test to Take?

SAT
The SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) tests the skills you are learning in school: reading, writing, and math. Your strength in these subjects is important for success in college and throughout your life.

• The reading section includes reading passages and sentence completions.
• The writing section includes a short essay and multiple-choice questions on identifying errors and improving grammar and usage.
• The math section includes questions on arithmetic operations, algebra, geometry, statistics, and probability.

Each section of your SAT (critical reading, mathematics, and writing) will be scored on a 200- to 800-point scale, for a possible total of 2400 points. You will also receive two “sub scores” on the writing section: a multiple-choice score from 20 to 80, and an essay score from 2 to 12. How are these scores calculated? Two steps happen before you see a final score.

First, your raw score is calculated by:

• Adding points for correct answers.
• Subtracting a fraction of a point for wrong answers.

Remember: Questions that you skipped do not count either for or against your score, and points are not taken away for wrong answers on the math questions where you needed to enter the answer into a grid.

Second, your raw score is converted into a scaled score. This is where the score of 200–800 points comes from, and this conversion is done through a statistical process called “equating.” This process makes it possible to compare your score with the scores of other students who took alternative versions of the test and to your own scores on previous tests.

1. **Registration:** It is the responsibility of the student and parent to register for the SAT. It is highly recommended that you register online.

• Online registration requires a free account with [College Board](https://www.collegeboard.org) (see instructions under #5 below).
• Online registration is time efficient and ensures consistent identification information throughout all testing.
• With online registration, you receive immediate confirmation of the test site and you print your own admission ticket.
• An online account provides the fastest access to scores and facilitates sending scores to colleges, determining status, etc.
• Be sure to include the HCA CEEB Code where requested. Otherwise, we will not receive the scores. The HCA Code is 111808.

2. **Recommended SAT Schedule:**
   - Spring of junior year (generally March or May)
   - Fall of senior year (generally October or November)
   - One additional time if scores do not appear to reflect ability

3. **Bookmark this website:** [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). There is a great deal of helpful information. The home page provides the option of “For Parents” or “For Students.”

4. **Create a free account at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) if you have not already done so.**
   - Choose “For Students” from the home page.
   - Choose “Create a Free Account” and follow the instructions.
     - Create only one account and use it throughout the high school years. If you create more than one account, you will not be able to access test scores and other information through the new account.
     - While creating the account you can list one parent to be copied on important email correspondence.

5. **Use Hebron Christian Academy’s CEEB Code when requested:** 111808

6. **The different tests associated with College Board**
   - **PSAT** – Given during school in mid-October of the freshmen, sophomore, and junior years. The junior year PSAT is also the qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship program.
   - **SAT Reasoning Test** – Our recommendation is to take this test in the spring of the junior year, the fall of the senior year and perhaps one additional time. It consists of three sections: Critical Reading, Math and Writing. Parents and students are responsible for registration and fees.
   - **SAT Subject Tests** – These are required by some colleges and are generally taken the year you study the subject of the test. Parents and students are responsible for registration and fees.
   - **AP Exams** – A part of our AP Courses, these exams are given at the school in May of each year. The school handles the ordering of exams and student accounts are billed for the exam cost.

**ACT**

The ACT (American College Testing) is a national college admissions examination that consists of subject area tests in: English, mathematics, reading, and science. The ACT Plus Writing includes the four subject area tests plus a 30-minute writing test. ACT results are accepted by all 4-year colleges and universities in the U.S.
The ACT includes 215 multiple-choice questions and takes approximately 3 hours and 30 minutes to complete, including a short break (or just over four hours if you are taking the ACT Plus Writing). Actual testing time is 2 hours and 55 minutes (plus 30 minutes if you are taking the ACT Plus Writing).

The ACT is administered on six test dates within the United States, U.S. territories, Puerto Rico, and Canada during September, October, December, February, April, and June. The registration fee includes score reports for up to four college choices, if you list valid codes when you register.

**SAT versus ACT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAT</th>
<th>ACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tries to assess “innate ability” using tricky questions and confusing phrasing to determine test-taking skills – performance under pressure and the ability to identify what is being asked.*</td>
<td>Tries to assess the knowledge you have acquired – focuses on subjects and skills taught in high school.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No science section.</td>
<td>Has a science section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required writing (essay) section, and the writing score factors into the composite score.</td>
<td>Optional writing (essay) section, and if taken the score does not factor into the composite score.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a penalty for wrong answers in the multiple-choice sections (1/4 point for each wrong answer).</td>
<td>No penalty for wrong answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All scores are reported to colleges – you cannot hide bad scores or how many times you have taken the test. This changed in the spring of 2009.</td>
<td>You choose which scores to send – you can hide bad scores and how many times you took the test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good test-takers may do better.*</td>
<td>Good students may do better.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests critical reading, math, and writing.</td>
<td>Tests English, math, reading, and science – with an optional writing section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scored 200-800 per section and then combined.</td>
<td>Scored 1-36 in each subject and averaged for composite score (writing is scored separately).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests critical thinking skills and your ability to analyze and solve problems.*</td>
<td>More curriculum based, tests college preparedness.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 minutes longer than the ACT.</td>
<td>45 minutes shorter than the SAT.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Math goes up to Geometry and Algebra II.  
Math goes up to Trigonometry.

Questions are arranged in order of difficulty.  
No order of difficulty.

More emphasis on vocabulary.  
Less emphasis on vocabulary.

*While this is the general perception, not everyone agrees.

**Which test to take if the college gives you a choice**

The SAT is still more common in our area and with the schools to which our students apply. The general consensus is that approximately 80% of students do roughly the same (percentile) on both tests. About 10% do significantly better on the SAT and about 10% do significantly better on the ACT.

One strategy is to take both, but do not have them send your scores to colleges. See if you do significantly better on one and then take that one a second time. This may end up costing a bit more since you have a certain number of free reports that you can use on test day. Later reports require an additional fee.

**Table 1 – Concordance between ACT Composite Score and Sum of SAT Critical Reading and Mathematics Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAT CR+M (Score Range)</th>
<th>ACT Composite Score</th>
<th>SAT CR+M (Single Score)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1540-1590</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1490-1530</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1440-1480</td>
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<td>1400-1430</td>
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<tr>
<td>1210-1240</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1220</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAT Writing (Score Range)</td>
<td>ACT English/Writing Score</td>
<td>SAT Writing (Single Score)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>36</td>
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<td>730-760</td>
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Table 2 – Concordance between ACT Combined English/Writing Score and SAT Writing Score
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