

[UPDATED 2024 Jan 17] Postsecondary Planning Night, January 2024: Testing Script

Slide 17 - Testing [Welcome]

Thanks, Ms. Gentile. And hello again, everyone! I'm Mr. Poutre. I'm going to cover some key points about testing and college entrance exams.

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Slide 18 - SAT vs ACT

There are two major exams used for colleges in the U.S. - the SAT and the ACT. Colleges don't really care which you take. The tests are similar, although there are some notable differences.

The SAT covers reading, writing and maths - two modules for each now that the SAT is all-digital. That's right! No more paper/pencil SAT.

The new digital SAT is "adaptive," so the difficulty of the second module for reading/writing and maths depends how well you do the first module.

It's timed as usual but because it's digital, it's a bit different - plan for 2 hours and 14 minutes - 32 minutes for 27 items in the 1st reading/writing module and another 32 minutes for 27 questions in the second, then 35 minutes for 22 items on the 1st maths module and another 35 minutes for 22 items in the second (altogether 98 questions, with 71 seconds per reading/writing questions and 95 seconds per maths question).

There are 54 short reading passages, one question per passage. It's mostly multiple choice, with some "student-produced" response pieces for maths.

There should be 4 unscored questions mixed in each section amongst the scored questions. But it's still a 1600-point score with reading/writing and maths each on a scale of 200-800.

The ACT is still paper/pencil. It covers English, math, and reading, and has a science reasoning section that tests your critical-thinking skills but not specific science knowledge. There's also an optional writing.

I won't go into as much detail because it's unchanged but runs 2 hours 55 minutes and the composite score is scaled 1-36, with the subscores from each of the 4 required sections comprising that, not including the writing.

Other Exams: PSAT, SAT II, AP/IB, & TOEFL

There are some other exams I want to cover real quickly.

Sophomores and juniors would've taken the PSAT - the Practice SAT - in October. That score can help you with your test prep.

(Some of you might've heard about the old SAT II subject tests, but those are discontinued. A few years ago, College Board also added an essay to the SAT, but they discontinued that, too. So, fewer exams to worry about relative to years gone-by.)

AP/IB exams - they can be helpful to showcase your hard work and advanced knowledge, as well as get you some college credit, but they're usually not part of the admission process for colleges.

If you are not a native English speaker or English is your second language, some colleges may require an English proficiency exam such as the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or IELTS. If that's you, ask your counselors about it. Colleges might also waive it for various reasons, such as a specific number of years you've received English-based instruction at a US high school.

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Slide 19 - Scores & Reports

To access your PSAT and SAT reports, you need to visit the CollegeBoard.org website, and you'd similarly visit the ACT.org website to get your ACT scores.

If you already have an account, then you just need to log in and select your scores to view, or select "missing scores" to locate them. If you have trouble with seeing your scores you will need to contact Collegeboard so they can help.

Your PSAT scores are available in your Collegeboard accounts.

Students should all have a College Board account, and may also have an ACT.org

account.

ACT scores are typically available a couple of weeks after test-day.

SAT scores should now be available within days thanks to the digital format, although students won't have any access to their questions/answers.

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Slide 20 - Test Prep

Many students try both the SAT and ACT to see which they prefer. Pay attention to how you handle time pressure and the types of questions you find most challenging, to help you determine which test is a better fit. Students should take at least ONE test a second time. It is advised that you do not take a test more than three times (diminishing returns for all that money and time).

Khan Academy has great free test-prep for the SAT, and they're partnered with College Board to make it official. You can send SAT scores to Khan Academy for personalized practice recommendations, interactive lessons, instant feedback, and more.

ACT has the free ACT Academy. You definitely want to prepare somehow - on your own, using free materials, taking practice versions, and so on.

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Slide 21 - Registration & Test Dates

You sign up for the SAT on CollegeBoard.org and the ACT on ACT.org. Our SAT (or school CEEB) code at Washington-Liberty is 470125.

If you receive free or reduced-price lunch, please contact your counselor or Ms. Catino, and we can support you with fee waivers.

Upcoming test dates and corresponding registration deadlines for both the SAT and the ACT are available on the College Board and ACT websites.

You can see here 2023 test dates taken right from their respective websites.

[Upcoming dates: SAT Mar 9 w/reg. Feb 23 + ACT Apr 13 w/reg. March 8 OR Feb 10 w/*late* reg. Jan 22]

You want to take note of both test and registration dates as well as when the scores should be available for those so you can make a plan that'll meet your needs - I know CollegeBoard is very strict about test dates, what you can/can't bring, ID, and all that - so be thoughtful about timing and be prepared!

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Slide 22 - Test-Optional

Another thing to consider is that many more colleges implemented test-optional policies during the pandemic, and many plan to continue them.

"Test-optional" means that colleges give you the option of submitting SAT/ACT scores with your application or not.

We suggest that students take the SAT or ACT to help keep their options open. Some colleges still ask to see students' test scores for admission. Some schools have also continued to request test scores for students' eligibility for what they might call merit aid or scholarships.

EVERY SCHOOL IS DIFFERENT. Check colleges' websites for the most up-to-date information, read each test-optional policy carefully, and keep in contact with your admissions counselor at each college.

Again, we expect the Test Optional trend to continue.

When looking at statistics from recent years, you may see higher scores than years past: meaning students who scored well on tests are still submitting their scores, and students who didn't score as well aren't submitting. On average 45-55% of students are submitting scores when applying to colleges.

Remember that we're here to help you, and this is a team effort. We definitely want you to be prepared for various outcomes, so that you can be as successful as possible.

Next, Ms. Smithgall will talk about what to focus on your Junior Year. Thanks!

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