

# ACT vs. SAT: How Different Are They?

At a glance, **the two tests aren't that different**. Both the ACT and SAT are nationally recognized standardized tests and common admission requirements for US schools. Catering primarily to high school juniors and seniors, each test measures students' proficiency in various critical skill areas — such as problem solving and reading comprehension — that are necessary for college success.

Additionally, because **all US colleges and universities accept scores from either the ACT or SAT**, there's no advantage in taking one test over the other. This means you can apply to the same schools, regardless of which test you decide to take!

But what about the actual content of the two tests? Though not identical, the ACT and SAT are more closely related than ever before as a result of [the SAT's massive redesign in 2016](#). Now, both exams:

- Contain similar sections (Reading, Math, etc.) in a **predetermined order**, with each section appearing just once
- Offer an **optional essay section** whose score does *not* count toward your total score
- Use **rights-only scoring**, meaning you will not be penalized for incorrect answers
- Contain entirely **passage-based Reading and English/Writing questions** (called “English” on the ACT and “Writing and Language,” or “Writing,” on the SAT)

Despite all of these similarities, **there are still many ways in which the ACT and SAT differ from each other**. For one, the SAT is overall slightly longer than the ACT. What's more, the number of questions and time limits are different for corresponding sections.

Here is a brief overview of the basic structural and logistical differences between the ACT and SAT:

	ACT	SAT
<b>Total Time</b>	2 hrs 55 mins without Writing 3 hrs 35 mins with Writing	3 hrs without Essay 3 hrs 50 mins with Essay
<b>Order of Sections</b>	1. English 2. Math 3. Reading 4. Science 5. Writing (optional)	1. Reading 2. Writing and Language 3. Math No Calculator 4. Math Calculator 5. Essay (optional)
<b>Time Per Section</b>	<b>English:</b> 45 mins <b>Math:</b> 60 mins <b>Reading:</b> 35 mins <b>Science:</b> 35 mins <b>Writing (optional):</b> 40 mins	<b>Reading:</b> 65 mins <b>Writing and Language:</b> 35 mins <b>Math No Calculator:</b> 25 mins <b>Math Calculator:</b> 55 mins <b>Essay (optional):</b> 50 mins
<b># of Questions</b>	<b>English:</b> 75 questions <b>Math:</b> 60 questions <b>Reading:</b> 40 questions <b>Science:</b> 40 questions <b>Writing (optional):</b> 1 essay	<b>Reading:</b> 52 questions <b>Writing and Language:</b> 44 questions <b>Math No Calculator:</b> 20 questions <b>Math Calculator:</b> 38 questions <b>Essay (optional):</b> 1 essay
<b>Scoring</b>	<b><u>Total score range:</u> 1-36</b>  Each section uses a scale of <b>1-36</b> . Your total score is the <b>average</b> of your four section scores.  The optional Writing section uses <u>a scale of 2-12</u> and does not count toward your final score.	<b><u>Total score range:</u> 400-1600</b>  The Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) and Math sections each use a scale of <b>200-800</b> and are combined for a total score.  The optional Essay uses <u>three separate scales of 1-8</u> and does not count toward your final score.
<b>Cost</b>	<u>\$46.00 without Writing</u> <u>\$62.50 with Writing</u>	<u>\$47.50 without Essay</u> <u>\$64.50 with Essay</u>
<b>Who Accepts Scores?</b>	<u>Accepted by all colleges and universities in the US</u>	Accepted by all colleges and universities in the US