

## ACT Prep Resources

ACT Online Prep <a href="http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation/act-online-prep.html">http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation/act-online-prep.html</a>	\$39.95
ACT Kaplan Live (Online) <a href="http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/act-kaplan-online-prep-live.html">http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/act-kaplan-online-prep-live.html</a>	\$133.99
Better Prep Success In person classes held in Bloomington, Springfield, Peoria, Champaign, Decatur Online materials available (recorded class sessions) <a href="https://betterprepsuccess.com">https://betterprepsuccess.com</a>	\$475 whole test \$110-\$140 single subject
Heartland Community College <a href="http://www.heartland.edu/continuingEd/youth/collegePrep.html">http://www.heartland.edu/continuingEd/youth/collegePrep.html</a>	\$90
ACT Up (phone app)	Free
McGraw-Hill ACT practice tests and problem solving videos for English, mathematics, science, and reading <a href="http://www.mhpracticeplus.com/act.php">http://www.mhpracticeplus.com/act.php</a>	Free
4tests Online ACT practice tests <a href="https://www.4tests.com/act">https://www.4tests.com/act</a>	Free
Kaplan <a href="https://www.kaptest.com/ACT/kaplan-ACT-prep/free-ACT-practice-test">https://www.kaptest.com/ACT/kaplan-ACT-prep/free-ACT-practice-test</a>	Free

## SAT Prep Resources

College Board Practice SAT Full versions of previous SATs <a href="https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/practice/full-length-practice-tests">https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/practice/full-length-practice-tests</a>	Free
Khan Academy SAT Prep Full practice exams as well as section specific tutorials <a href="https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat">https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat</a>	Free
PrepScholar.com SAT Grammar Guide <a href="http://blog.prepscholar.com/the-complete-guide-to-sat-grammar-rules">http://blog.prepscholar.com/the-complete-guide-to-sat-grammar-rules</a>	Free

This list is intended to be a resource for local and online options for test prep. Illinois State University does not endorse any specific companies nor make any claims as to their effectiveness.

Kaplan Online and In Person SAT Prep <a href="https://www.kaptest.com/sat/">https://www.kaptest.com/sat/</a>	\$299 - \$1599 depending on format and duration
Kaplan <a href="https://www.kaptest.com/sat/free-sat-practice-test">https://www.kaptest.com/sat/free-sat-practice-test</a>	Free

## TAP Prep Resources

<a href="http://www.il.nesinc.com/index.asp">http://www.il.nesinc.com/index.asp</a>  Go to Prepare for Your Test and choose ACCESS ICTS preparation materials. Find study guides and click on Test of Academic Proficiency (400). There are practice multiple choice questions to assess your skills in reading, language arts, mathematics, and writing.	The study guide is free. For a fee, An Expanded Study Guide (\$19.95) and Practice Tests (\$17.95 per sub test and \$29.95 for all subtests) are both available
Longsdale Publishing ICTS Basic Skills Online Course and Practice Test: <a href="http://www.longsdalepub.com/icts/">http://www.longsdalepub.com/icts/</a>	\$39.95
READING Practice with reading skills and comprehension <a href="http://www.ctcexams.nesinc.com/PDF/CBEST_OPT_Reading.pdf">http://www.ctcexams.nesinc.com/PDF/CBEST_OPT_Reading.pdf</a>	Free
MATH Practice with percents, fractions, decimals, problem solving, analyzing data etc. <a href="http://www.ctcexams.nesinc.com/PDF/CBEST_OPT_Math.pdf">http://www.ctcexams.nesinc.com/PDF/CBEST_OPT_Math.pdf</a> <a href="http://mathpower.com/">http://mathpower.com/</a> <a href="http://www.khanacademy.org/">http://www.khanacademy.org/</a>	Free
WRITING Practice effective writing skills <a href="http://www.ctcexams.nesinc.com/PDF/CBEST_OPT_Writing.pdf">http://www.ctcexams.nesinc.com/PDF/CBEST_OPT_Writing.pdf</a>	Free

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## Choosing between the ACT/SAT and the TAP

	<u>ACT/SAT</u>	<u>TAP</u>
<b>Testing Schedule</b>	Offered 5-6 times a year on specific test dates with test results available approximately a month after the test date.	Offered Monday thru Saturday throughout the year at select Pearson VUE Test Centers with test results available within 4 weeks for the writing section, other scores available immediately.
<b>Test Registration</b>	Test registration is required (web registration) approximately 5 weeks prior to the test. To register visit: <b>ACT:</b> <a href="http://www.actstudent.org/regist/">http://www.actstudent.org/regist/</a> <b>SAT:</b> <a href="https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/">https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/</a>	Registration is required (web registration) and is based on availability. To register visit <a href="http://www.icts.nesinc.com/">http://www.icts.nesinc.com/</a>
<b>Testing Format</b>	Paper and pencil	Computer based
<b>Cost</b>	\$55-\$60	\$125
<b>Test Setting</b>	Classroom/Auditorium Setting primarily with juniors and seniors in high school	Computer testing lab generally with other college students and adults
<b>Content of Test</b>	<b>ACT:</b> English, Math, Reading, Science Reasoning, Writing <b>New SAT:</b> Reading, Writing & Language, Math	Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics, and Writing
<b>Score Requirements</b>	<b>ACT:</b> Composite score of 22 or higher and a writing score of 6 or higher <b>ACT taken before September 2016:</b> Composite score of 22 or higher and a writing score of 16 or higher <b>SAT:</b> Composite score of 1110 and a minimum score of 26 on Writing and Language Test. <b>SAT taken before March 2016:</b> Composite Score of 1030 with a minimum writing score of 450.	Each test area (Reading, Language Arts, etc) is scored separately with a score of 240 or higher (approximately 80% of items correct) required to pass.  All 4 test areas must be passed to pass the test as a whole. Results can be combined across administrations.
<b>Retesting</b>	Must take on a regular test date and must take the entire test on each administration.	Must wait a minimum of 30 days between test attempts. Need only retake tests previously not passed.



# Choosing between the ACT and SAT

The SAT contains three sections: Reading, Math, and Writing and Language. The ACT contains four sections: Reading, Math, English, and Science. Both also have an optional essay. Each section has a different format on the ACT compared to the SAT, but only a few differences really matter.

## Factor #1: How Broad Is Your Mathematical Knowledge?

The SAT and ACT both emphasize algebra questions in their math sections; however, **the ACT's Math section typically tests a wider range of mathematical concepts**, such as logarithms, graphs of trig functions, and matrices, that the SAT doesn't cover.

**The ACT also has significantly more questions on geometry and trigonometry than the SAT does.** On the ACT's Math section, about a quarter to a third of the questions will be about geometry or trigonometry while less than 10% of the SAT's math questions will focus on either of those topics. More SAT Math questions will focus on algebra, along with some other topics like data analysis and modeling.

In addition to testing a wider range of math topics, **the ACT doesn't give any formulas** at the beginning of the math test, so you'll need to have them all memorized. The SAT will give you the math formulas you need.

### Questions to ask yourself:

Can I memorize all the formulas I'll need?

Do I have strong geometry and trigonometry skills?

Would I prefer to have primarily algebra-related questions?

**Bottom Line:** If you're more comfortable with algebra than geometry and trigonometry, then the SAT Math section will likely be easier for you than ACT Math.

## Factor #2: How Confident Are You Without a Calculator?

One of the new changes to the SAT is that students will not be allowed to have a calculator for part of the Math section. SAT Math now has two parts: No Calculator (20 questions) and Calculator (38 questions), while the ACT allows you to use a calculator for all math questions.

Every question on the No Calculator part of SAT Math is solvable by hand; however, the problems will require calculations, and if you aren't comfortable with not having a calculator to help you, this part of the SAT may be challenging for you.

**Bottom Line:** If you prefer having a calculator to help you solve math problems, you may find ACT Math easier.

## Factor #3: Are You Comfortable With Scientific Terminology for ACT Science?

Lots of people make a big deal out of the ACT Science section, but it's not actually about science. It doesn't test much knowledge of actual information, such as freezing points or solubility rules, but it does use a lot of scientific language. **It also uses charts and graphs that will be familiar to students with strong science backgrounds.**

While the SAT is now incorporating more of these concepts into its three exam sections, you'll still be answering more questions like this for the ACT.

The information below is typical of the ACT Science section:

### Experiment 3

Powdered Mg (0.10 mol) was mixed with 0.50 mol of Fe powder and added to 100 mL of H<sub>2</sub>O at 20°C in an insulated container. The mixture was stirred constantly and the maximum temperature increase that occurred within 15 min was recorded. The procedure was repeated with different amounts of NaCl (see Table 2).

NaCl added (mol)	Maximum temperature increase (°C)
0	0
0.025	19
0.050	34
0.075	50
0.100	66
0.125	82*

\* Solution was boiling.

You can answer questions about this information without knowing that *Mg* means magnesium, or that *mol* stands for the unit of measurement *mole*, or that °C means degrees Celsius. But it's a lot faster and easier if you do know these things. And because the ACT Science section factors into the ACT composite score, if you don't know Science well, the Science section can lower your overall score.

**Bottom Line:** Comfort with scientific terms and experience gathering scientific data from charts and graphs **will give you a greater advantage on the ACT.**

## Factor #4: Are You Able to Remember the Location of Details in Reading Passages?

An often-overlooked aspect of whether the SAT or ACT is easier for a given student is the detail questions in the Reading sections of each test. **The SAT, in short, gives the student more information to work with.**

After you read about two pages of an academic book, do you tend to remember where the different pieces of information are located within the reading? Or do you need to go back over it to find a specific detail? Your answer to this question can make a difference between your SAT and ACT Reading scores.

This is because one big (and somewhat odd) difference between the SAT and the ACT is their treatment of details in the reading section. Both tests include questions about small, specific details from the readings, **but the SAT will usually tells you what line they're talking about, while the ACT frequently does not.** Here's a simple example from an ACT Reading section:

2. The narrator states that she was most afraid of:
- F. contracting polio.
  - G. missing the trip.
  - H. being in the dark.
  - J. naming her illness.

This kind of question isn't a challenge if you have the line numbers where the information is, but during the ACT it can be difficult and time-consuming if you need to skim the passage to remember which part each question is referring to. **On the SAT, most questions have a line number, and, even if they don't, the SAT Reading questions always proceed in chronological order.** This means you'll have a general idea of where the key information is, even if you're not given an exact line reference.

If you easily remember where information is in a passage, these ACT questions will be a piece of cake and give you extra time for the harder ones. If you don't, ACT Reading will frustrate you and suck your precious time.

**Bottom line:** The ability to remember the location of details in reading **will give you a greater advantage on the ACT.**

### **Factor #5: How Easily Can You Cite Evidence For Your Answers?**

One of the changes to the updated SAT is a new type of question found in the Reading section. **They are known as evidence support questions.** For these two-part questions, the first question will ask a standard question about the passage, and then the following question will ask the student to cite evidence that supports their first answer. Check out an example of one of these question pairs that was released by the College Board:

1. The passage most strongly suggests that Adelita used which of the following to navigate her 9,000-mile journey?
  - A) The current of the North Atlantic gyre
  - B) Cues from electromagnetic coils designed by Putman and Lohmann
  - C) The inclination and intensity of Earth's magnetic field
  - D) A simulated "magnetic signature" configured by Lohmann
  
2. Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?
  - A) Lines 1–3 ("In 1996 . . . way")
  - B) Lines 30–32 ("Using . . . surface")
  - C) Lines 53–55 ("In the wild . . . stars")
  - D) Lines 64–67 ("Neither . . . it is")

As you might see, these questions can be tricky because they require higher-level thinking and strong reasoning skills. If you're stuck on the first question, you likely won't get the second question right either. If you take the ACT, you won't have to worry about questions like these.

**Bottom Line:** If you aren't used to finding evidence to support your reasoning, **the new evidence support questions may make SAT Reading more challenging for you.**



## Factor #6: Which Types of Writing Questions Do You Prefer?

Some of the SAT's biggest changes occurred on its Writing section. Both the SAT and the ACT will now use passage-based questions, but the topics that those questions focus on differ between the two tests.

**The ACT is slightly more focused on grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.** The ACT also includes "big picture" questions that ask about the main idea of the passage, while the SAT doesn't include these types of questions in its Writing section.

**On the other hand, the SAT focuses more on questions about writing style.** The SAT also includes what are known as "precision" questions that require the test-taker to select the most appropriate word. Because of precision questions and other similar questions, **the SAT tends to test vocabulary more than the ACT.**

**Bottom Line:** With the SAT's updates, the Writing sections for both tests are more similar than they were before. However, if you have a solid knowledge of grammar and sentence structure, you may find ACT English easier while if you prefer questions about writing style and vocabulary, SAT Writing may be easier for you.

## Format-Related Abilities

### Factor #7: Are You Able to Avoid Getting Stuck on Challenging Questions?

Especially in the Math sections of both tests and the Science section of the ACT, it's easy for many students to get wrapped up in trying to "figure out" a particularly challenging problem. This can turn into spending four to five minutes on one question and missing others as a result.

Why is this important? The ACT gives much less time per question. Below is a chart showing the time per question on both tests, for reference.

Test	Section	Total Time	Total Questions	Time per Question
ACT	English	45 minutes	75	36 seconds
	Math	60 minutes	60	60 seconds
	Reading	35 minutes	40	53 seconds
	Science	35 minutes	40	53 seconds

SAT	Math	No Calculator: 25 minutes Calculator: 55 minutes	No Calculator: 20 Calculator: 38	No Calculator: 75 seconds Calculator: 86 seconds
	Reading	65 minutes	52	75 seconds
	Writing	35 minutes	44	48 seconds

**Bottom Line:** The ability to move on from difficult questions **will give you a greater advantage on the ACT.**

## So How Do I Choose Between the ACT vs SAT?

We've listed several important factors, and the chart below will help organize your thoughts. For each row, decide which skills are strengths or weaknesses for you.

When you're done, tally up the strengths and weaknesses for each test. Give one point for each strength, and take away one point for each weakness. For example, if trigonometry is a strong point for you, give ACT one point. If memorizing formulas is a weakness, take away one point from ACT.

	Test Advantage	Strength	Weakness
Applying trigonometry and geometry skills	ACT		
Answering math questions without a calculator	ACT		
Memorizing formulas*	ACT		
Comfort with scientific terms	ACT		
Remembering locations of details in reading*	ACT		
Applying grammar and punctuation skills*	ACT		
Skiping over questions that take too long*	ACT		
Answering questions in chronological order	SAT		
Finding evidence to support your answers*	SAT		
Answering questions on writing style*	SAT		
Living in one of the mandatory SAT testing states	SAT		

*\*These skills are also helpful on the other test, just less so.*

The test with the higher score may be the one for you.

# Content Differences between the ACT and SAT

## Math

The SAT and ACT are very similar in terms of math, but the ACT has more and harder math.

### Both Tests Cover:

- > Properties of Integers and Rational numbers
- > Sequences
- > Linear and Quadratic Equations:
- > Word problems:
- > Functions
- > Basic Geometry, including Lines, Triangles, Polygons, Circles, 3-D and Coordinate geometry
- > Data Interpretation, Statistics and Probability

### The ACT Also Covers:

- > Matrices
- > Complex numbers
- > Trigonometry
- > Logarithms
- > Conic Sections

## Writing/ English

Like the Math section, both tests cover the topics below and the ACT also covers the topics listed at right.

### Both tests cover:

Faulty Modifier  
Parallel Construction  
Sentence Fragments  
Pronouns  
Verb Forms

Conciseness and Redundancies  
Number Agreement  
Idioms  
Adjective vs Adverb

**The ACT also covers:**

comparison/description  
word choice (non-idiom)  
transitional logic: which words are best to move from one idea to another  
macro-logic: how to order sentences and paragraphs  
author's formality and tone

## Reading

The main difference between the SAT and ACT Reading sections is that the SAT includes fill-in-the-blank questions and the ACT's Reading is only passages and questions about them.

**The SAT covers:**

Passages: main point, identifying details, inferring information, vocabulary in context, and the function of specific parts

Sentence Completion: relationship between 2 words and vocabulary-based questions

**The ACT covers:**

Passages: main point, inferring information, vocabulary in context, and the function of specific parts

Fact Finding: without line number references, find and explain a phrase or sentence

Comparisons/Contrasts

Cause-Effect

Author Method

# Science

The SAT does not have a Science section, so if you like science, the ACT has a huge advantage for you.

- > Basic Science Knowledge (Physics, Chemistry, Biology)
- > Data Representation: analysis, interpreting trends, and calculations based on data
- > Research Summaries, including:
  - > Experimental design/Researcher intent
  - > Hypothetical Experimental changes
  - > Interpreting experiments
  - > Understanding of viewpoints
  - > Comparing viewpoints

## What are the rule differences on the ACT vs SAT?

**Guessing:** On the SAT, there is a  $\frac{1}{4}$  point penalty for each wrong answer (each correct answer is worth 1 full point). There is no penalty for omitting (just not answering) a question. On the ACT, there is no guessing penalty--guessing wrong and omitting are the same.

**Passages:** While SAT passages do tend to follow the same basic patterns, they are not labeled by type or topic. The ACT, on the other hand, always labels its 4 passages (that are always in the following order): Literary Narrative, Social Science, Humanities, and Natural Science.

**Sections:** The SAT doesn't title its sections--Math is obvious, but Reading and Writing have to be differentiated by question type. The ACT titles its sections in huge bold letters.

**Questions:** The tests have very similar question styles in Math and Reading; the English questions in both tests involve students choosing how to replace underlined parts of sentences and paragraphs. However, they differ in how they apply this format. The easiest way to understand this is to compare the English section of the ACT to the Writing section of the SAT. You can download a PDF of each test here: [SAT](#), [ACT](#).

**Test Structure:** The SAT alternates between Math, Reading and Writing sections, and until the change in 2016, the essay is always the first section (in 2016 it will be the last section and optional.)

There are always 10 SAT sections: 3 math, 2 writing, and 3 reading, and 1 experimental section that is not identified (it looks like all the other sections) or scored. They don't go in any particular order, but you'll never see 2 math sections back-to-back. A sample order of SAT sections might be:

1. Essay
2. Math
3. Writing
4. Reading
5. Experimental
6. Math
7. Reading
8. Math
9. Reading
10. Writing

So, in the end, on the SAT, you're scored on 8 sections and the essay.

The organization of the ACT is much simpler: it has 4 sections that are always in the following order: English, Math, Reading and Science. Sometimes there is an experimental section, but it's always Section 5, so you know which one it is.