## Comparing the SAT (Current and Redesigned) to the ACT

A guide from Summit Educational Group

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When it is released in 2016, the new SAT will be a significant change from the current test. Also, the redesign will affect how we determine whether a student is better-suited for the SAT or ACT. Below is a broad comparison of the new SAT to the current SAT and the ACT.

## Current SAT

## New SAT (Spring 2016)

ACT
The new SAT will require similar skills and test similar content to that of the ACT and current SAT. Many of the changes to the new SAT's format will make it look a lot like the ACT, but the SAT will retain its focus as an aptitude test. Among the biggest changes to the SAT are a sharper focus on critical-thinking, an emphasis on real-world problems, a new scoring system, and an overhaul of the essay section. Overall, the redesigned SAT will place a bigger emphasis on problem-solving and understanding context. Comparatively, the ACT will remain more of an achievement test, requiring a broad knowledge of many concepts, as well as considerable speed and endurance.

## Format \&

 Length
## 10 short sections:

- 3 Critical Reading; 3 Mathematics; 3 Writing (including Essay); 1 experimental (not scored)
- Questions have 5 answer choices
- Total testing time: 3 hours, 45 minutes

Combined score: 600-2400

- Critical Reading: 200-800; Math: 200-800; Writing: 200-800
- Writing score comprised of Multiple Choice and Essay subscores.
- $1 / 4$-point deduction for incorrect answers

Identify and correct errors in single sentences

- standard English grammar and usage
- punctuation not tested

Limited and predictable set of errors

Arithmetic, Algebra I and II, Geometry

- apply core math skills to solve mostly non-standard, "tricky" problems
- formulas provided

10 Grid-In questions (no answer choices)

Reading

Science

## Essay

25 minutes, always the first section

- broad theme
- can be approached formulaically or creatively

5 long sections (comprising 3 "tests" and an optional essay):

- Writing \& Language; Reading; 2 Math; Essay
- Questions have 4 answer choices
- Total testing time: 3 hours, 50 minutes (with essay)

Combined score: 400-1600

- Evidence-Based Reading and Writing: 200-800; Math: 200-800
- Essay score reported separately
- "Cross-Test Scores" report performance on Science and History/ Social Studies across entire test
- No deduction for incorrect answers

Revise and edit a piece of writing for,
logical structure, and effective rhetoric

- standard English grammar and usage
- punctuation
- logical structure
- effective rhetoric
- includes informational graphics

Pre-Algebra through basic Trigonometry

- strong emphasis on Algebra

Calculator prohibited on one section
12 Grid-In questions (no answer choices)
1 Extended Thinking question (4 points)

## Vocabulary de-emphasized

4 long passages and 1 paired passage

- 2 passages include diagrams/charts
- 1 passage from U.S. "founding document"

The new SAT does not have stand-alone Science section, but Science questions will be included throughout the Math, Reading, and Writing \& Language tests.

50 minutes, always the last section

- analyze a passage and evaluate author's reasoning and rhetoric
- students' opinions discouraged
- Essay is scored on 2-8 scale on three traits (Reading, Analysis, and Writing)

5 long sections (comprising 4 "tests" and an optional essay):

- English; Mathematics; Reading; Science; Writing (optional essay)
- Most questions have 4 answer choices (Math has 5)
- Total testing time: 3 hours, 25 minutes (with essay)

Composite score: 1-36 (average of 4 tests)

- English: 1-36; Math: 1-36; Reading: 136; Science: 1-36
- Writing score not factored into Composite score
- Combined English/Writing score provided separately: 1-36
- No deduction for incorrect answers

Revise and edit a piece of writing for,
logical structure, and effective rhetoric

- standard English grammar and usage
- punctuation
- logical structure
- effective rhetoric
- commonly confused words

Pre-Algebra through basic Trigonometry

- math tested in straightforward manner
- extensive range of concepts tested
- emphasis on word problems
- formulas not provided


## 4 long passages

- very little emphasis on vocabulary
- straightforward questions that require close reading of passage
- order of questions is random
- less time per question

40 questions distributed over 7 passages

- emphasis on charts, diagrams, etc.
- Science is a reasoning_test-rarely requires prior science knowledge

30 minutes, always the last test

- narrow topic "relevant" to high school students
- demands a more structured response
- optional, but required by most schools

