

SAT FAQ's: HOW IS THE SAT SCORED?, WHAT'S A GOOD SAT SCORE?, and some cool SAT trivia!

History of the SAT

(Probably won't need this on the test, but it might come in handy in a game of Trivial Pursuit!)

The Scholastic Aptitude Test--the SAT-- is a college admissions test with a long and interesting history! With military and Ivy League roots, the SAT has been used in varying forms for **80 years** to evaluate college readiness.



According to a Frontline article on [PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org), the test was first known as the Army Alpha. It was administered to army recruits during World War I to test intelligence. After the war, Princeton instructor Carl Brigham modified the test for college admissions. About 1000 Princeton applicants took the first version as an experiment in 1926.

Six years later, in 1933, Harvard president James Bryant Conant took 'opportunity' to a new level. He wanted to provide more access to education, regardless of a student's economic status. Harvard introduced a scholarship, but needed a method to assess eligibility. The SAT came to Conant's attention as a suitable test to qualify disadvantaged students for the new award.



Enter the College Board. The College Board is a non-profit organization comprised of over 6000 educational organizations. Since 1899, the College Board mission has always been to increase access to higher education. In 1938, Harvard dean Henry Chauncey approached the College Board about using the SAT to qualify scholarship applicants. Then a few years later, the SAT became the College Board's standard assessment for college admission.

And, as they say, the rest is history!

SAT Components and Scoring (There's more than you might think!!)

THE BASIC SAT:

The basic SAT test has several components. The 'standard' sections of the SAT are: Reading, Writing and Language, Math, and an optional Essay.

- The "Evidence-Based" Reading, Writing and Language score comes from 2 multiple choice tests.
 - The Reading Test counts for about half of the Reading, Writing and Language grade. On the Reading Test, you will have 65 minutes to answer 52 questions over five reading passages.

- The Writing and Language test counts for the rest of the Reading, Writing and Language score. You will have 35 minutes to answer 44 questions over four passages. You must choose the answers that are the most accurate grammatically and structurally for the context. You will encounter two *types* of questions:
 - Expression of Ideas. Multiple choice answers provide alternatives to the original passage for improved organization or effectiveness.
 - Standard English Conventions—Multiple choice answers provide alternatives to punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure.
- The Math Test is designed to be a “real world” applied math assessment. You will use skills learned in algebra, geometry, and some trigonometry, and perhaps some analysis skills learned in science classes to work through steps and solve a problem. It has two sections:
 - Calculators are allowed in the first section, which is 38 questions in 55 minutes.
 - NO calculators are allowed on the second section, which is 20 questions in 25 minutes.
- The Essay is optional, and will assess your reading, writing, and analysis skills. The essay portion allows 50 minutes to read a passage, then write about the author’s argument presentation. Some schools require the essay, some schools do not require it as part of the application. Schools *not* requiring the essay either. . .
 - (1) do not use it at all, or
 - (2) will consider it in the application if it is provided, or
 - (3) use it for advising when enrolling in classes.

The SAT structure and scoring “at-a-glance”:

SAT BASIC TEST	Total Time allowed	Number of questions	Scoring
Reading	65 minutes	52	200-800
Writing and Language	35 minutes	44	
Math (With calculator)	55 minutes	38	200-800
Math (Without calculator)	25 minutes	20	
Optional Essay:	50 minutes	1 passage for 1 essay	
Reading			2-8
Writing			2-8
Analysis			2-8

- Cross Tests and Subscores:
 - The SAT provides scores for two “Cross Tests”-- one for History/Social Studies Analysis, and the other for Science analysis. **These are NOT separate tests, nor are they additional questions for these scores.** Rather, your answers to selected questions in all of the other tests are used to calculate these extra scores. Each “Cross Test” score range is 10-40 for each subject area.
 - An additional set of “Subscores,” each ranging from 1 to 15, are reported for the following skills:
 - Reading, Writing and Language

ABOUT THE SAT
Kay Adkins
January 18, 2018

- Command of Evidence
- Words in context
- Expression of Ideas
- Standard English Conventions
- Math
 - Heart of Algebra
 - Problem Solving and Data Analysis
 - Passport to Advanced Math
- Subject Tests: SAT Subject Tests are **EXTRA** and **OPTIONAL** 1-hour tests in specific subjects. These are appropriate for students who wish to demonstrate how they excel at certain subjects. Twenty different subject Tests are available for:
 - Math (Level 1 or Level 2),
 - Science (Biology, Chemistry, or Physics),
 - English,
 - History,
 - and Languages (i.e. Spanish, French, German, Chinese).

(For more information, see the [College Readiness web pages on Collegeboard.org](http://CollegeBoard.org))

Recent changes in the SAT

In March 2016, the College Board significantly changed the format and scoring of the test.

ESSAY CHANGES

The most obvious change? The once mandatory essay, is now optional.

The old SAT essay was a part of the Reading and Writing section. Ranked by 2 graders on a 1 to 6 scale, the total point range for the “old” essay was 2 to 12. The essay grade was included in the score calculation for the Reading/Writing section.

On the redesigned SAT, the optional essay is reported as a stand-alone score. Scores from 2 to 8 are awarded to the essay in 3 different categories: reading skills, writing skills, and analysis skills. A perfect score on the essay would be 24.

CONTENT CHANGES

In general, the old test emphasized mainly reasoning skills. The new SAT assesses more complex skills needed for college and career readiness (such as analysis and problem-solving).

SCORING CHANGES

OLD: Prior to March 2016, the SAT was scored on a 2400-point maximum scale. The essay grade was included in the Reading and Writing test. Points were given for correct answers, *and points were deducted for incorrect answers*

ABOUT THE SAT

Kay Adkins

January 18, 2018

NEW: The new SAT is based on a 1600-point maximum scale --800 for Reading, Writing and Language, and 800 for Math (see Scoring table above). The essay grade, if taken, is reported as a separate grade.

AND (drumroll, please!), **points are no longer deducted for incorrect answers! No penalty for guessing incorrectly. In other words—answer ALL questions, even if you have to guess. You might get it right!**

Pre-March 2016 test-takers can see how their old format-scores convert to the new-format scores on the [College Board web site](#).