

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

a guide from

**TESTTAKERS**  
The Smart Choice for Test Preparation

When it is released in 2016, the new SAT will be a significant change from the current test. Below is a broad comparison of the new SAT to the current SAT and the ACT.

	Current SAT	New SAT (Spring 2016)	ACT
<b>Description</b>	The new SAT will require similar skills and feature content similar 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 certain distinctions. Among the biggest changes to the SAT are an intended greater emphasis on critical-thinking, contextual reading analysis and real-world problem solving, a "new" scoring system, and an overhaul of the essay. Comparatively, the ACT will remain more of an achievement test, requiring a broad knowledge of many concepts, time management and answering speed, and test taking endurance.		
<b>Format &amp; Length</b>	<b>10 short sections:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 Critical Reading;</li> <li>• 3 Mathematics;</li> <li>• 3 Writing (including Essay);</li> <li>• 1 experimental (not scored)</li> <li>• Questions have 5 answer choices</li> <li>• Total testing time: 3 hours, 45 minutes</li> </ul>	<b>4 long + 1 optional section:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing &amp; Language; Evidence-Based Reading; Math (2 sections); Essay (optional)</li> <li>• Questions have 4 answer choices</li> <li>• Total testing time: 3 hours, 50 minutes (including Essay)</li> </ul>	<b>4 long + 1 optional section:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English; Mathematics; Reading;</li> <li>• Science; Writing (optional Essay)</li> <li>• Most questions have 4 answer choices (Math has 5)</li> <li>• Total testing time: 3 hours, 25 minutes (with Essay)</li> </ul>
<b>Scoring</b>	<b>Combined score: 600-2400:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical Reading; Math; Writing (each 200-800)</li> <li>• Writing score based on Multiple Choice and Essay subscores.</li> <li>• ¼-point deduction for incorrect answers</li> </ul>	<b>Combined score: 400-1600:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence-Based Reading and Writing &amp; Language: 200-800; Math: 200-800</li> <li>• Essay score reported separately</li> <li>• "Cross-Test Scores" report performance on Science and History/ Social Studies across entire test</li> <li>• No deduction for incorrect answers</li> </ul>	<b>Composite score: 1-36 (average of 4 tests):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English; Math; Reading; Science (each 1-36)</li> <li>• Writing (Essay) score not factored into Composite score</li> <li>• Combined English/Writing score provided separately: 1-36</li> <li>• No deduction for incorrect answers</li> </ul>
<b>Writing / English</b>	<b>Identify and correct errors in single sentences:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard English grammar and usage</li> <li>• Punctuation not tested</li> <li>• Limited and predictable set of errors</li> </ul>	<b>Revise and edit a piece of writing for logical structure and effective rhetoric:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard English grammar and usage</li> <li>• Punctuation is tested</li> <li>• Logical structure</li> <li>• Effective rhetoric</li> <li>• Includes informational graphics</li> </ul>	<b>Revise and edit a piece of writing for logical structure and effective rhetoric:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard English grammar and usage</li> <li>• Punctuation is tested</li> <li>• Logical structure</li> <li>• Effective rhetoric</li> <li>• Commonly confused words</li> </ul>
<b>Math</b>	<b>Arithmetic, Algebra I and II, Geometry:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply core math skills to solve mostly non-standard, "tricky" problems</li> <li>• Formulas provided</li> <li>• 10 Grid-In questions (no answer choices)</li> </ul>	<b>Pre-Algebra through basic Trigonometry</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong emphasis on Algebra</li> <li>• Calculator not allowed on one section</li> <li>• 12 Grid-In questions (no answer choices)</li> <li>• 1 Extended Thinking question (4 points)</li> </ul>	<b>Pre-Algebra through basic Trigonometry</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Math tested in straightforward manner</li> <li>• Extensive range of concepts tested</li> <li>• Emphasis on word problems</li> <li>• Formulas not provided</li> </ul>
<b>Reading</b>	<b>Vocabulary-based sentence completions + 7 short or long reading passages:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many inference, tone, purpose questions</li> <li>• Questions follow progressive order of the passage</li> </ul>	<b>Vocabulary de-emphasized 4 long passages and 1 paired passage:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 passages include diagrams &amp; charts</li> <li>• 1 passage from historical U.S. "Founding Document"</li> </ul>	<b>4 long passages:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very little emphasis on vocabulary</li> <li>• Straightforward questions that require close reading of passage</li> <li>• Questions do not follow the progressive order of the passage</li> <li>• Less time spent to answer each question compared to SAT</li> </ul>
<b>Science</b>	<b>No Science section.</b>	<b>No stand-alone Science section, but Science-related questions will be included throughout the Math, Reading, and Writing &amp; Language tests.</b>	<b>40 questions distributed over 7 passages:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on charts, diagrams, etc.</li> <li>• Questions rarely require prior science knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>Essay</b>	<b>25 minutes (always the 1<sup>st</sup> section):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad range of topics; scored 2-6 each by 2 readers</li> <li>• Persuasive essay that allows for formulaic responses</li> </ul>	<b>50 minutes (always the last section):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze a passage and evaluate author's reasoning and rhetoric</li> <li>• Students' opinions discouraged</li> <li>• Essay is scored on 2-8 scale each on three traits (Reading, Analysis, and Writing)</li> </ul>	<b>30 minutes (always the last test):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrow topic "relevant" to high school students</li> <li>• Demands a more structured response</li> <li>• Optional, but required by most schools</li> </ul>