

THE NEW SAT: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



PRIMARY THEMES & DETAILS OF SAT RE-DESIGN

Themes:

- emphasis on citing evidence; permeates entire test, including math
- informational data graphics throughout entire test, including reading and writing
- reading from a wide range of texts, including “Founding Documents” and works from the “Great Global Conversation”
- derive meaning of Tier 2 vocabulary through context, rather than in isolation
- math focus is narrower (emphasis on algebra, less geometry) and deeper (fewer topics but more in-depth questions)
- essay requires students to explain and analyze how an author crafts an argument
- science and history/social studies tested throughout; cross-test scores generated in both areas

Details:

- 3 sections: evidence-based reading and writing, math, and the essay
- 3 hours long
- no advanced vocabulary or sentence completions
- return to the 1600 point scale
- no penalty for wrong answers

1926

“The SAT is a psychological test designed primarily to assess aptitude for learning rather than mastery of subjects already learned, and to assess ability independently of any school curriculum.”

2016

“The SAT must reflect the kinds of meaningful, engaging, rigorous work that students undertake in the best high school courses being taught today, thereby creating a robust and durable bond between assessment and instruction.”

CURRENT SOPHOMORES – CLASS OF 2017

Current sophomores will encounter both tests and thus will have several options with respect to their testing plans.

Important Dates:

October 2015 – first administration of new PSAT
January 2016 – last administration old SAT
March 2016 – first administration of new SAT

Considerations:

If a student's October 2015 PSAT scores puts her or him in the running for a recognition program, s/he will most likely need to take a confirmatory new SAT test in 2016 to remain eligible for the competition. March and May SAT scores will be delayed by a minimum of 6 weeks (i.e., March scores will likely not be available until after the May test administration). As a result, students may need to undertake some prep over the summer before senior year with the aim of re-testing in the fall.

Recommendation: We recommend the following testing schedule for current sophomores:

October 14, 2015 – take new PSAT
January 23, 2016 – take old SAT
March 5, 2016 – take new SAT
May 7 or June 4, 2016 – take 2 SAT Subject Tests (format/content unchanged at this time); please refer to chart below

Fall Testing:

Fall testing is not optimal for most juniors. Juniors should focus on their classes, realizing that spring and senior fall will present multiple opportunities to test. A lower-than-anticipated score on an early test puts students at risk for having their confidence shaken.

Test Prep:

We strongly encourage students to take advantage of the free on-line prep available from Khan Academy (www.khanacademy.org) via its partnership the College Board; this material is scheduled to be available in June. In addition, Concord Academy will offer an optional on-campus prep course next fall; further details will be provided to parents and students in early September.

ACT:

Some students may choose to take the ACT in February, April, or June of 2016. While we encourage students to consider the ACT, we also urge them to take the SAT in January and March. Doing so provides students with the most flexibility during this transition year.

SAT Subject Tests: Although the College Board has indicated it plans to revamp the SAT Subject Tests, it has not released any information about when this might occur. Therefore, if current sophomores opt to take one or more Subject Test(s) in the sophomore year (which is unlikely), they will be taking the tests as they are currently designed. Please refer to the chart below for more information.

Students should consult with their teachers and advisors, but as a general guide, here are the departmental recommendations (assuming the student has performed well in class):

Subject Test	When to take test:
Math Level 1	After completing Statistics or Accelerated Precalculus.
Math Level 2	After successfully completing Statistics, Trigonometry, and Precalculus, OR after taking Accelerated Precalculus and Accelerated Trigonometry.
Literature	Near the end of junior-year coursework.
Languages	Not before completion of level 3 of a language.
Sciences	At the end of a course; students often perform best with the Advanced or Accelerated coursework.
U.S. History	Upon completion of U.S. History coursework. Additional study and preparation will be necessary.

(Please keep in mind that the majority of colleges requiring Subject Tests ask for only two from different subject areas.)

The New SAT and the College Application Process: All of the college admissions officers to whom we've spoken have indicated that during the transition from the old to the new SAT (i.e., for the 2016-17 admission cycle), colleges will accept either test.

CURRENT FRESHMEN – CLASS OF 2018

Current freshmen will be firmly rooted in the new PSAT and new SAT. Although the College Board has announced plans to revamp the SAT Subject Tests, it has not released any information about when this might occur. Therefore, if current freshmen opt to take one or more Subject Test(s) in the freshman or sophomore years (which is unlikely), they will likely be taking the tests as they are currently designed. Please refer to the chart above for more information.