

## The SAT: The Test's Importance, Format and Breakdown

### The SAT:

The SAT is a Princeton-based college admissions exam with three components – critical reading, writing and math – tested over a grueling four and a half hours. Each component is scored out of 800 points, with a perfect composite score of 2400.

The SAT is a decisive factor in college admissions, and improving SAT scores truly opens doors for students. The test is offered several times a year, and many students do take the test two or three times. Most colleges consider only a student's best scores for each component. In a sense, scores can be "mixed and matched." For example, should a student take the SAT in March and score a 600 in each section, and then again in May and score a 540 in math, a 640 in reading, and a 630 in grammar – most colleges will consider the 600 in math, the 640 in reading and the 630 in grammar. However, the SAT recently reverted back to "score-choice". This policy allows colleges to see *only* the test scores that you report. **Be sure to check with admissions offices to be certain of which score reporting policy is accepted at specific institutions.**

### Scoring:

Students receive a base score of 200 points in each section, and then additional points for each correctly answered question. Incorrect answers result in a \_ point deduction. Questions may be left blank on the test. These questions do not result in any additional point deduction; however, blank questions do not contribute to a higher score.

Because high scores can not be attained if there are too many blanks, students should limit the number of questions they leave unanswered. **Students scoring at a 550 or higher should not leave any blanks on the test.** Students that score below a 500 should leave questions in which they cannot eliminate answers blank.

### Structure and Format:

The structure and breakdown of the SAT are detailed below. Each test is a compilation of 10 sections, in random order. One of these 10 sections is considered experimental. The experimental section is given for research purposes only, and is often more difficult than the other test sections. **The experimental section does not count towards a student's score.** The experimental section varies randomly from test to test, and may test critical reading, math or writing. **Students will not know which section of the SAT is experimental, and should therefore apply themselves fully to all sections of the test.** Students should keep in mind, however, that one of the sections is indeed experimental, and should not "freak out" if they do encounter a difficult section.

**Critical Reading** – 3 sections, in no particular order

**Section 1:**

5 Sentence Completions  
Short Reading(s) – 4 questions  
2 medium-length readings

**Section 2:**

8 sentence completions  
Short Reading(s) – 4 questions  
1 Long Reading

**Section 3:**

6 Sentence Completions  
1 Long (15 min) Reading Passage

**Grammar/Writing** – 2 multiple-choice sections and a 25-minute essay section

**25-Minute Essay:**

Students are evaluated on their ability to construct an organized, reasonable persuasive essay on a given topic. The essay is always the first section of the SAT.

**Multiple Choice Section 1:**

11 “Fix the Sentence” Questions  
23 Usage Questions  
6 “Fix the Passage” Questions

**Multiple Choice Section 2:** this section is always Section 10 of the SAT

14 “Fix the Sentence” questions

**Math** – 3 sections, in no particular order. Mathematical formulas are provided.

**Section 1:**

20 multiple-choice questions

**Section 2:**

8 multiple-choice questions  
10 grid-in (short answer) questions

**Section 3:**

16 multiple-choice questions