

Creating a Game Plan: Designing Your Personal Testing Timeline

Football players have a set season: a set training schedule, a set of scheduled games, and a set of strategic game plans. A good coach motivates players to stick with the schedule and be ready for game day. Training is involved. Practice. Confidence. Test takers, too, should have game-days planned in advanced. It is crucial that students have a pre-determined plan for tackling standardized tests in order to be in control, perform at their absolute best, and succeed on test day.

For most students, the October PSAT kicks off the test-taking season. After this exam, students begin studying and practicing hard for an upcoming SAT – January, March, May or June. Students may take the SAT several times, or they may hit their mark after only one try. Other students may take a break from the SAT sport in general, and try-out for the ACT, another standardized college admissions test. Still others may take the SAT, and in their off season give the ACT a try, and then return to the SAT later. Every student is different, and game plans should cater to individual strengths and preferences.

Below is a brief snapshot of both the SAT and ACT. Detailed overviews of each test are available in the ABOUT ARTICLES section.

SAT	ACT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reasoning test• Writing, Reading and Math Sections• 25 minute essay• Scored out of 2400, with 800 points per section• 4 1/2 hours• Score Choice – you may take this test as often as you like. Submit the highest composite score.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aptitude test• English, Math, Reading and Science Sections• 30 minute persuasive essay• Scored out of 36, an average of the 4 sections• 3– 3 1/2 hours• Score Choice – you may take this test as often as you like. Submit the highest composite score.

Nearly all high school juniors and/or sophomores will register and take the PSAT at their high schools. Use the PSAT score as a diagnostic. It is not an absolute assessment as to how a student will score on an SAT, but it will serve as a good point of reference. Students should also obtain a copy of a practice ACT, available at high school guidance offices. Students should take this test under timed testing conditions.

To formulate a game plan, compare PSAT and ACT scores. A conversion chart is found below. Most students tend to score similarly on both tests. These students should plan on registering for both the SAT and the ACT throughout the academic year. Students who score significantly higher on the PSAT should focus exclusively on the SAT, with the possibility of revisiting the ACT at a later time. Those students who score significantly higher on the ACT should focus exclusively on the ACT, again with the option of revisiting the SAT at a later time.

Once a game plan is set, stick to it! This will ensure that goals are set, worked towards, and reached. Also, the testing schedule is very tight, and changing things around only prolongs the process. The test schedule also depends on the student's areas of expertise, personal schedule and

college choices. Remember that final exams, AP exams, SAT II's, concerts, games, etc. also need to be fit in. High school students tend to be extremely overloaded!

All students are different! Some may hit a home-run their first try. Others may need to take the test three times before hitting their marks (which is not uncommon.). Therefore, plan on taking tests multiple times.

Use the Testing Calendar found in the ABOUT ARTICLES section to design your personal testing schedule. Be sure to verify dates and registration deadlines online at www.collegeboard.com and www.act.org.

Below are sample game plans and an SAT/ACT score conversion chart. Keep in mind that these are only “samples.” Students who hit their marks should not necessarily continue testing.

Game Plan A (Most Comprehensive)

- Oct PSAT
- Dec. ACT
- Jan SAT
- March SAT
- April ACT
- May SAT

Game Plan C (Focus on SAT First)

- Oct PSAT
- March SAT
- May SAT
- June ACT
- Oct ACT

Game Plan B (Focus on ACT First)

- Oct PSAT
- Dec ACT
- Feb ACT
- April ACT
- May SAT
- June SAT
- Oct SAT

Game Plan D (Strong Test Takers)

- Oct PSAT
- Jan SAT
- March SAT
- April ACT

SAT/ACT Conversion Chart: Use the following to compare SAT and ACT Scores.

ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT	SAT
36	2400	29	1920	22	1530
35	2340	28	1860	21	1500
34	2260	27	1820	20	1410
33	2190	26	1760	19	1350
32	2130	25	1700	18	1290
31	2040	24	1650	17	1210
30	1980	23	1590	16	1140