

## **What is the National Merit Scholarship Award?**

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For the majority of students, the PSAT is just a practice exam, used to get an idea of what the SAT will be like. The opportunity to receive the National Merit Scholarship award is just the icing on the cake.

### **What is the National Merit Scholarship?**

The scholarship is used to recognize and honor the academic achievements of students across the United States, as well as to encourage continued education. There are three tiers to the scholarship – Semi-finalist, Finalist, and Winner. The scholarship revolves around junior year PSAT scores, and students must score in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile to receive the award. The cut-off PSAT number varies from state to state, but usually hovers around 210 and above.

### **8 things to know about the National Merit Scholarship Process:**

1. Your score is obtained from the three sections of the PSAT. Math, reading, and writing scores all combine to form the total score.
2. Only high school juniors will be considered for this scholarship. Even if sophomores or freshmen take the exam, they will not be eligible.
3. Students will not find out if they have won an award until September of their senior year. 50,000 students will receive scholarships and recognition. Approximately 34,000 of these students will be given the “Commended Scholar” award and will not proceed to the next round.
4. The remaining 16,000 students will be notified that they are Semi-finalists. Semi-finalists will need to get a letter of recommendation from their high school guidance counselor and submit a SAT score.
5. 15,000 Finalists will be notified in February of their senior year. These Finalists will need to submit their academic records, two sets of test scores, a high school official’s letter of recommendation, information about the school’s curriculum and grading system, and information about their activities and leadership roles. They will also need to write and submit an essay.
6. Winners will be announced in March of senior year.
7. 8,300 students receive the National Merit Scholarship each year.
8. You are a winner even if you do not receive the National Merit Scholarship. Colleges are impressed with Commended, Semi-finalist, and Finalist students.

For more information, go to [www.nationalmerit.org](http://www.nationalmerit.org)