

 **Admittedly's**

SAT vs ACT *Breakdown*

Standardized testing is an essential part of the college admissions process, and almost all of the T30 universities require it again. There is no universally “better” exam. Both tests are accepted by virtually all U.S. colleges and are designed to measure college readiness, though they emphasize slightly different skills and have different formats.

The best choice depends on a student’s strengths, testing style, and scheduling needs. You can reference the table below to help you decide which test best fits your needs.

Ultimately, the goal is to achieve a score in the **middle 50% range** of your target institutions. We recommend you take a full-length practice of both tests with our preferred partner Advantage Testing to help you decide which test is right for you.

	SAT	ACT
Test Sections	• Reading & Writing • Math	• English, Math, Reading • Science (optional) • Writing (optional)
Adaptive Test	Yes. The second module of each section adapts to performance on the first module.	No. The ACT has a linear design format. Questions do not change in difficulty during the test.
Length	3 hours, including breaks	3 hours for the core sections Closer to 5 hours if taking both optional sections: Writing + Science
Math Content	Focuses heavily on algebra and data analysis, with limited geometry and trigonometry Conceptually more challenging.	Includes more geometry and trigonometry and typically includes more advanced math concepts that crosses into pre-calculus: quadratic equations, radical & rational expressions, polynomials, complex numbers, & functions
Reading Content	Shorter but denser reading passages that require systematic thinking akin to solving a puzzle or math equation	Longer passages that require stamina and sustained reading comprehension while managing time per question effectively
Science	No dedicated science section, though scientific passages appear in Reading & Writing	Includes an optional Science Comprehension section that tests data interpretation and scientific reasoning rather than science knowledge. We recommend you opt into this section if you’re gearing towards a STEM major (computer science, engineering, environmental science, data science, biology, chemistry)
Availability	Offered <u>multiple times per year</u> at designated testing centers	Also offered <u>multiple times per year</u> , but with fewer testing dates outside of the US
Scoring	400–1600 composite score, with subscores across the 2 main sections. Most colleges will accept your SAT superscored.	Composite score from 1–36, with subscores across the 4 main sections. Most colleges will accept your ACT superscored.
Best Suited For	Students who prefer having more time to think through questions, are strong in algebra, and do not respond anxiously to adaptive digital testing.	Students who process information quickly, are comfortable with trigonometry, perform well under a faster pace, and do well with memorization. If you have extended time due to accommodations (e.g., ADD, ADHD, etc.), we generally recommend the ACT since the questions are conceptually easier and you will have more time per question.