



December

## College Entrance Exams and the Michigan Merit Exam (MME)

### The SAT

#### What is it?

The SAT is a standardized test used for college admission and is widely accepted by colleges nationwide. It measures knowledge and skills in the following areas: reading, writing and language, and math. There is also an optional essay. In making decisions about admission, many colleges use results from the SAT, along with high school courses, high school grades, class rank, and extra-curricular accomplishments.

The ACT is also a standardized test used widely by colleges. Up until last year, the State of Michigan has used the ACT as part of the Michigan Merit Exam (MME), a state-mandated test that is given each spring to juniors. Even though students will not have the opportunity to take the test for free, they can still sign up for it if they desire and use it for college admission. More information is available at <http://www.actstudent.org>.

#### When should students take it?

Students are now required to take the SAT as part of the MME. This year, students will be taking the SAT on April 11 here at school free of charge. Students who desire to take the test more than once in order to try and improve scores for college admission are encouraged to sign up for a national test, given on Saturday mornings. You can view upcoming dates and registration deadlines at <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/dates-deadlines>. Research shows that a little over half of the students who retest, do indeed improve their scores the second time around. Please note - for students who opt to test multiple times, keep in mind that colleges generally take a student's highest composite score.

#### How does a student register to test?

Students will complete the registration process at school for the SAT when it is offered as part of the MME in the spring. However, those that desire to test on their own will need to go to <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register> to complete the registration process and pay via credit card. **Counselors visited World History classes recently to help all juniors create a free College Board account.** This account is used for a variety of things: 1) to register for the SAT, 2) view test scores, 3) view AP test scores (for students who take AP exams), 4) utilize BigFuture (a free career and college exploration tool), 5) send test scores, etc. *It is very important that students create only ONE College Board account, and therefore, if students believe they may have already created an account (ex. they have reviewed AP scores, have looked up PSAT 10 scores, have already taken the SAT), please do not create another one. Utilize the tools available on the site to try and retrieve your username and/or password, and if all else fails, call the College Board.*

#### How can one prepare for the test?

The College Board provides multiple resources for students to prepare for the SAT.

- The free mobile app provides daily practice for the redesigned SAT. Students can get a question a day sent right to their mobile device.
- Students can take practice paper/pencil tests and have them scored electronically using the mobile app.
- The College Board had partnered with the Khan Academy to provide students with a multitude of practice questions and sample tests. Students can also create detailed study plans.

All of this is **FREE** and available at <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/practice>.

## How do scores get sent to colleges?

When students register for the test, they are given the opportunity to indicate up to 4 colleges to send their scores to for free. Students can log into their College Board account up to 9 days after the test and make additions/changes. After that, if scores need to go to a college that wasn't indicated initially, there is a fee of \$12 per college. Some students worry about sending the scores from their first attempt at the test for fear that they will be low and don't want the colleges to see them. We advise students to send scores, regardless of this worry. The reason is, colleges will utilize a student's highest score in making admission decisions and disregard lower scores. Thus, as long as a college has received the results from the higher score, they will cancel out the other.

## What's the difference between the ACT and the SAT?

Both the ACT and the SAT are nationally administered standardized tests that help colleges evaluate candidates. Almost all colleges and universities accept either test. The chart below provides a clearer picture as to the differences between the two tests.

Test Snapshot		
Features	SAT	ACT
Widely accepted	Almost all U.S. colleges	Almost all U.S. colleges
Tests the vocabulary you'll use	Yes	Yes
Everyday math formulas provided	Yes	No
Essay is optional	Yes	Yes
Penalty for guessing	No	No
Cost	\$57 (\$45 without essay) - fee waiver available for those who qualify  **taken once for FREE as part of the Michigan Merit Exam in April 2017	\$58.50 (\$42.50 without essay) - fee waiver available for those who qualify

Flexibility		
Schedule	SAT	ACT
Test days	7 times a year	6 times a year
Registration deadline	About 4 weeks before test day. You pay a late fee for registering later.	About 5 weeks before test day. You pay a late fee for registering later.

Test Format		
Structure and Timing	SAT	ACT
Testing time	3 hours + 50-minute essay (optional)	2 hours 55 minutes + 40-minute essay (optional)
Structure	3 tests + optional essay	4 tests + optional writing test
Number of questions	154	215
Time per question	1 minute, 10 seconds	49 seconds
Score range	Composite 400–1600 (SAT Essay: reported in 3 dimensions, each 2–8)	Composite 1–36 (writing domain scores: 2–12)
Test length and timing	<p><b>Reading Test</b> 65 minutes 52 questions</p> <p><b>Writing and Language Test</b> 35 minutes 44 questions</p>	<p><b>Reading Test</b> 35 minutes 40 questions</p> <p><b>English Test</b> 45 minutes 75 questions</p>

	<b>Math Test</b> 80 minutes 58 questions	<b>Math Test</b> 60 minutes 60 questions  <b>Science Test</b> 35 minutes 40 questions
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\*\*Information adapted from <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/>

### **Should you take the option essay for the SAT or ACT?**

Many students can save money and forego taking the optional essay component of either test when they sign up to test on one of the national test dates. The reason is two-fold. One, most colleges do not require it for admission. To determine if a college does require it, visit the school's website and go to the admissions page. The college will indicate either SAT with Essay or ACT Plus Writing on their list of admission requirements if they do expect students to take it. Second, if a college does require it, students take the SAT with Essay as part of the MME, and if they are satisfied with that score, can submit it to the colleges of interest.

### **What if I can't afford to pay for the test fees?**

Both the College Board (SAT) and the ACT offer fee waivers for students who meet certain income requirements (ex. qualify for free/reduced lunch). Students should contact their counselor for more information.

## **The Michigan Merit Exam**

The MME is the state assessment administered to all students enrolled in Grade 11 and is a requirement for graduation. It is given in the spring. The MME consists of three major components: the SAT college entrance examination, the WorkKeys job skills assessments in reading, mathematics, and locating information, and Michigan assessments in science and social studies. The combined MME assessment measures student learning in the Michigan high school standards, benchmarks, and core content expectations.

## **Ten Tips for Taking a Standardized Test**

1. Get plenty of sleep the night before the test.
2. If you feel nervous before beginning, try to relax by taking a few deep breaths.
3. Maintain confidence in your abilities and plan to do your best. Your attitude can affect your performance.
4. Listen carefully to all instructions and ask questions if you hear something you don't understand.
5. Focus your attention entirely on your work.
6. Position your answer sheet next to your test booklet so you can mark answers quickly and accurately.
7. Before answering each question, read it completely, as well as all the possible responses.
8. For the SAT and ACT, when you are unsure of an answer, choose the one you think is best and go on to the next question. Because there is no guessing penalty, be sure to answer every question.
9. Pace yourself throughout the test by occasionally checking the time.
10. If you complete the test before time is up, reread the questions and check your answers.

\*Information taken from [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)