

The College Quest Guide

SAT, PSAT & ACT Test Guide



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Some Admission Statistics

School	Applied	Accepted	% Accepted	SAT Middle 50% -ile	ACT Middle 50% -ile
Stanford	25,298	2,400	9%	1330 - 1540	30 - 34
Duke	20,400	4,202	20%	1380 - 1570	29 - 34
- Duke/Engineering	3,369	995	29%	1410 - 1560	32 - 34
Davidson	4,493	1,183	26%	1260 - 1440	29 - 32
Notre Dame	13,945	3,765	27%	1320 - 1500	31 - 34
UNC CH	21,507	7,309	34%	1180 - 1380	26 - 31
Elon	9,434	3,990	43%	1730 - 1960*	25 - 29
Appalachian State	13,182	7,655	58%	1080 - 1250	26+
UNC Wilmington	9,311	5,449	59%	1120 - 1240	25+
NC State	16,442	9,867	60%	1090 - 1260	22 - 27
ECU	14,653	9,119	62%	920 - 1100	19 - 23
UNC Asheville	2,464	1,807	73%	1050 - 1270	21 - 27
UNC Charlotte	10,336	7,906	76%	1480 - 1730*	N/A

*All 3 sections +Average

➔ Target schools where your student's score is 50%-ile or up

SAT & ACT Standardized Tests

- Majority of colleges require SAT or ACT, and will accept either (e.g., NC State, Duke, UNC)
- Some colleges not longer require standardized tests for admission, such as Wake Forest (see www.fairtest.org)
- SAT is a *reasoning test* - think “tricky word problems”
 - 10 sections in 3 areas; 2400 point scale (800+800+800)
 - More vocabulary, no trig, no quadratics
 - 3 3/4 hours, 140 questions; penalty for wrong answers
- ACT as a *knowledge test* - think “quick recall & solutions”
 - 4+1 sections, in 4 areas (includes science & optional writing)
 - 36 point scale
 - More grammar & punctuation, trig, quadratics
 - 3 hours, 215 questions; no penalty for wrong answers
- “Score Choice” is now available for both tests

PSAT/NMSQT Standardized Tests

- **Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test**
- **Similar to SAT, but shorter, less difficult, with no essay**
- **Scheduled by high schools in October each year**
- **Important to qualify for certain merit scholarships but only in junior year**
- **Given to sophomores free by Wake County Public Schools; optional for juniors in WCPSS**
- ➔ **Ensure your student takes PSAT as sophomore & junior**
- ➔ **Good & excellent students should consider taking a PSAT (or SAT) prep course before October of junior year to quality for recognition and potential merit scholarships**

SAT & ACT Standardized Tests

- Schools use the best individual subject scores (e.g. math) from different test dates, even years apart
- Most students take the SAT &/or ACT several times
 - 3, 5 or more is not unusual & not a negative for schools
- Good “test takers” usually do better on SAT
- Good students that do “not test well” usually do better on ACT
- Consider taking both SAT and ACT tests in junior year
- The most competitive students take SAT or ACT prep classes and annual tests, starting as early as 7th grade
- *SAT Subject Tests* (up to 3) may also be required or recommended for top schools & certain majors

SAT Subject Tests

- **60 minute exam of knowledge & skills in a specific topic**
- **Available in English, history, math, sciences & languages**
- **Given on same dates and times as SAT**
- **Required or “highly recommended” by some more selective schools and majors for admissions and/or placement**
- **Most schools will consider results of subject tests for admission**
- **Determine early if Subject Tests are recommended/required by your student’s candidate schools or major**
- **Take SAT Subject Test as soon as possible after taking AP course/exam in same topic (e.g., junior year)**
- **Consider a Subject Test prep program**

SAT/PSAT/ACT Test Preparation

- Does it help to study and practice for any tests?
“Studies collected by FairTest show that good coaching programs can raise a student's (SAT) scores by 100 points or more.” (www.fairtest.org)
- Excellent students should complete SAT prep program before 11th grade PSAT test in October
 - Scholarship opportunity
- Math scores often highest just after completing Algebra 2
 - Take SAT and/or ACT at end of Algebra 2 class
- Vocabulary, reading & writing improve with more general education
 - Take SAT and/or ACT yearly and in fall of senior year
- ➔ Take SAT and/or ACT test preparation programs at least in junior & senior years

What Colleges Want: Admission Criteria

- Example: NC State

1. Level and difficulty of high school classes taken
2. Overall GPA and class rank
3. SAT or ACT plus Writing scores, not more than 5 years old
4. Extracurricular activities, including leadership and community service

- Example: Davidson

1. Rigor - the difficulty of high school course selections
2. Success - grades received in an applicant's particular course of study
3. Writing ability and personal impact - an evaluation of essays and recommendations
4. Involvement, leadership, and service - the depth and breadth of extracurricular pursuits
5. Testing - scores on the SAT and/or ACT

- Each school weighs admission criteria differently

➔ Excellent academics is *not enough* at top tier schools

College Application: *The Winning Combinations*

Most Selective Colleges

- Almost all A's, AP/IB, honors or college courses
- Extremely high test scores
- Deep involvement
- Distinct essays & recommendations
- Unique talent

Very Selective Colleges

- A / B Mix
- Some AP/IB and honors
- High test scores
- Superior involvement
- Strong essays & recommendations

Selective Colleges

- Mostly A's & B's
- College prep courses
- Good test scores
- Good involvement
- Good essays
- Good recommendations

Less Selective Colleges

- A / B / C Mix
- College prep courses
- Some involvement
- Standard essays
- Good recommendations

College Quest Today

- The College Quest can be very stressful and competitive
 - Admission to better schools & financial aid at all schools
- Vital for each student to choose right college
 - Costs, transfer rate, graduation rate & job prospects
- Colleges prefer students with both strong academics *PLUS* meaningful extracurricular activities
- Every College Quest is unique
- Key is planning, attention to detail, and timely actions
- Best time to start is before the 10th grade
- Seek and take advantage of all available advice & help

**Good Luck on
Your Personal
College Quest
from**

