

The **SAT** Versus **ACT**: Which Test To Take

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We are often asked which test is easier: the SAT or ACT. Unfortunately, we have a lapse in our powers of divination and can not predict on which test you will score higher. We can say that you can make an educated guess as to which test better suits you by understanding what they cover and how they are structured and scored. The main differences between the two exams are as follows:

Content

- The SAT has a stronger emphasis on vocabulary.
- The ACT tests grammar and punctuation. The SAT does not.
- The ACT contains the Science Reasoning Test which covers the use of data representation, research summaries, and conflicting viewpoints in the natural sciences. The SAT does not.
- About 7% of the ACT math questions are based on trigonometry. The SAT does not test trigonometry.

Structure

- The test questions on the SAT get increasingly harder within each section. They do not on the ACT.
- The ACT is all multiple choice. The SAT has "Student-Produced Response" mathematics questions.
- Both tests are about three hours long. The ACT has 215 questions while the SAT has about 140, meaning that you will have less average time to spend on each question on the ACT.

Scoring

- There is a slight penalty for wrong answers on the SAT. There is none on the ACT.
- For the ACT there are scores for the four components of the test and a composite score that is the average of the four scores. The SAT is broken into the Math score and the Verbal score.

The Bottom Line:

Our advice is to take the practice exams for both tests and opt for whichever makes you feel most confident. After trying both most students have a pretty strong feeling about which one suits their own test taking style.