Introduction to SAT, ACT, and PSAT
Agenda
Introduce the ACT, SAT, and PSAT standardized tests. Provide insight regarding the subjects tested, college admission score ranges and more.

- What are ACT and SAT tests?
- SAT Subjects and Sample Questions
- ACT Subjects and Sample Questions
- Sample Score Ranges
- Costs and Locations
- Scholarships for High Scores
- PSAT Subjects
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Helpful Resources
ACT vs SAT
Both are standardized tests that assess students’ academic readiness for college

- Both are College Entrance Exams.
- Both indicate how successful a student is likely to be in college course work.
- Both are accepted at most Colleges and Universities around the country. Some Universities on the West Coast or East Coast will accept only SAT but this is not common.
- Community Colleges do not require completion of either, but most Universities require at least one.

Sources: www.collegeadmissionspartners.com/resources/application-process/sat-or-act-2/
ACT vs SAT (continued)
They test slightly different abilities and cover multiple subject areas

- SAT is said to be a reasoning test. It tests students' knowledge of Reading, Writing, and Math as well as students’ ability to reason in these areas.

- ACT is said to be a test of the content that you have learned in school. But it does also test some of the analytical skills tested on the SAT. It covers topics in English, Math Reading, Science and Writing.

The combination of high school grades and ACT/SAT test scores is the best predictor of student academic success in college

Sources: www.collegeadmissionspartners.com/resources/application-process/sat-or-act-2/
SAT** Subjects and Structure
Students are tested for Critical Reading, Writing, and Math skills

- The **critical reading** section includes reading passages and sentence completions
  - 3 sections, 24+24+19 questions, 25+25+20 minutes

- The **writing** section includes a short essay and multiple-choice questions on identifying errors and improving grammar and usage.
  - 2 sections, 1 essay, 35+14 questions, 25+25+10 minutes

- The **mathematics** section includes questions on arithmetic operations, algebra, geometry, statistics and probability.
  - 3 sections, 20+18+16 questions, 25+25+20 minutes

** Redesigned starting spring of 2016
Redesigned SAT
The College Board is launching a redesigned SAT starting March 2016,

- SAT is being redesigned to:
  - provide a more comprehensive picture of student readiness
  - become focused on the knowledge, skills, and understandings that are essential for college success
  - better reflect, through its questions and tasks, the kinds of meaningful, engaging, rigorous work that students must undertake in the best high school courses being taught today

- Key Changes:
  - Four alternative responses instead of five
  - Rights-only scoring
  - Scores out of 1600 instead 2400
  - Test Sections
    - Evidence-based Reading and Writing (scoring range = 200-800)
      - Reading Test
      - Writing and Language Test
    - Math (scoring range = 200-800)
    - Essay (optional, scoring range = 2-8)

Sources: sat.collegeboard.org
SAT Sample Reading Question

Directions:
Read the sentence. Choose the word or set of words that, when inserted in the sentence, best fits the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

1. Hoping to ------ the dispute, negotiators proposed a compromise that they felt would be------ to both labor and management.

(A) enforce..useful
(B) end..divisive
(C) overcome..unattractive
(D) extend..satisfactory
(E) resolve..acceptable

Sources: sat.collegeboard.org/practice
1. After being dropped a certain ball always bounces back to $\frac{2}{5}$ of the height of its previous bounce. After the first bounce it reaches a height of 125 inches. How high (in inches) will it reach after its fourth bounce?

A. 20  
B. 15  
C. 8  
D. 5  
E. 3.2

Sources: sat.collegeboard.org/practice
ACT Subjects and Structure

Students are tested for English, Math, Reading, Science, and Writing skills

- **English**
  - Assesses students’ knowledge of English grammar and writing
  - 45 minutes, 75 questions, 5 passages

- **Math**
  - Assesses students’ knowledge of Middle School and High School Math including Algebra, Geometry, and Trigonometry
  - 60 minutes, 60 questions

- **Reading**
  - Assesses students’ understanding of reading passages in the areas of Prose Fiction, Social Studies, Humanities, and Natural Sciences
  - 35 minutes, 40 questions, 4 passages

- **Science**
  - Assesses students’ understanding of science passages in the areas of Biology, Earth/Space Sciences, Chemistry, and Physics
  - 35 minutes, 40 questions, 7 passages

- **Writing**
  - Assesses students’ writing skills based on an essay on a given topic
  - 30 minutes
Passage I

Geysers are spectacular hydrothermal events. The word geyser is derived from an old Icelandic verb, gjose, meaning to erupt. It refers specifically to a reservoir of hot water that intermittently and explosively ejects part or all of its contents. Activity in most geyser areas ranges over a wide spectrum: quiescent hot pools, vigorously boiling pools, dry stream jets, mud pots, and geysers. Although there are several thousand hot springs in the world, there are not more than about 400 geysers. In Yellowstone National Park, the most extensive geyser area, the ratio of hot springs to geysers is about ten to one.

A geyser is essentially a hot spring but its unique characteristic is that it periodically becomes thermodynamically and hydrodynamically unstable. A very special set of circumstances must exist for a hot spring to erupt. It must have a source of heat. It must have a place to store water while it is heated up to just the right temperature, an opening of the optimum size out of which to throw the hot water, and underground channels adequate for bringing in fresh water after an eruption. Only very rarely does the right combination exist. When there is little water but intense heat, a steam vent called a fumarole exists. A mud pot occurs when the hot water is laden with dirt. If there is plenty of incoming water but it is comparatively cool, it is a hot pool; or if too hot, a spouter continuously spitting out steam and hot water. If the opening is too large or the reservoir so shaped that circulation can occur freely, instabilities may not be able to develop and the hot spring simply boils. A geyser erupts when a part of its stored hot...

1. The production of steam causes the eruption of a geyser because:
   
   A. steam is lighter than water.  
   B. geysers require intense heat.  
   C. steam takes up more space than water.  
   D. hot water rises while cold water sinks.
1. Abandoned mines frequently fill with water. Before an abandoned mine can be reopened, the water must be pumped out. The size of pump required depends on the depth of the mine. If pumping out a mine that is $D$ feet deep requires a pump that pumps a minimum of $4D - 250$ gallons per minute, pumping out a mine that is 150 feet deep would require a pump that pumps a minimum of how many gallons per minute?

A. 362  
B. 500  
C. 800  
D. 1,250  
E. 1,750
Sample College Entrance Exam Score Ranges

- Michigan State University  (middle 50\textsuperscript{th} percentile)*
  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAT Math</th>
<th>SAT Reading</th>
<th>ACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>550-690</td>
<td>420-580</td>
<td>23-28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- University of Michigan  (middle 50\textsuperscript{th} percentile)
  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAT Math</th>
<th>SAT Reading</th>
<th>ACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>650-760</td>
<td>610-700</td>
<td>28-32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Oakland University (50\textsuperscript{th} percentile)
  - ACT Range 20-26

- Western Michigan Univ. (50\textsuperscript{th} percentile)
  - ACT Range 19- 25

* This means most of the students who enrolled had ACT or SAT scores in the range, but some were higher and some were lower. Other factors such as GPA, school leadership, sports and activities are very important considerations.

Sources: www.collegeapps.about.com
Costs and Locations

➤ **ACT plus Writing** = $54.50
  - *Free Test in every Michigan High School on March 3rd, 2015*
  - [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)

➤ **SAT** = $52.50
  - Additional subject tests are $26
  - *Free test in every Michigan High School beginning March, 2016*

➤ **PSAT** = $14.00
  - Every student should attempt the PSAT to gain practice for SAT and to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship.
  - [SAT.collegeboard.org](http://SAT.collegeboard.org)

➤ Fees are paid online, usually 2 weeks in advance.

➤ **Locations**
  - Each of the WLCSD High Schools is a test center for ACT, and PSAT and is applying for status for SAT as well. More testing centers can be found on the ACT and SAT websites, for our local area.
Scholarships for High Scores

- The National Merit Scholarship is based on very high performance on the PSAT exam taken during the 11th grade. The cost is only $14, every student should take the PSAT exam.

- Each college may offer scholarships and tuition grants based on high scores on ACT or SAT. Many colleges will match the National Merit Scholarship as well.

- To find out more about Scholarships and Funding College, attend a WLCSD Financial Aid night at one of our high schools in January.
PSAT Subjects and Structure

PSAT is a mini-SAT test, redesigned starting 2015 fall. Students are tested for Critical Reading, Writing, and Math skills.

- **Critical Reading**
  - Two 25-minute sections
  - Sentence completion, passage-based reading
  - Analyze, evaluate, and think logically about what they read

- **Math**
  - Two 25-minute sections
  - Multiple-choice student-produced response (grid-ins)
  - Use arithmetic, algebra, and geometry to think logically and solve familiar and unfamiliar problems

- **Writing**
  - One 30-minute section
  - Improving sentences, identifying sentence errors, improving paragraphs
  - Express ideas in standard written English, recognize faults, and use language with sensitivity to meaning
Who is eligible to take ACT or SAT? Any age limits?
- Students of all ages and grade levels are eligible to take the ACT or SAT. This includes middle and high school students. Most of the test takers are high school students.

How often is a student allowed to take each test?
- There is no limit or rule of thumb. But the law of diminishing returns kicks in if the tests are taken too many times. We have seen a lot of students give the ACT/SAT tests 2-3 times with good improvement in their scores.

Is there a penalty if you score lower on the 2nd or 3rd attempt?
- Not per se. But the colleges do look for a good progression of scores if the tests are taken multiple times.

What are acceptable scores for each test?
- **SAT**: score ranges: 0-800 on each topic area
- **National Average** the (new) **SAT is 500** in each topic area
- **ACT**: score ranges: 0 to 36
- **National Average is 21**
- 15 or below considered very low by most 4 year colleges
- 28 or above considered excellent

Helpful Resources

- **Websites?**
  - [http://www.actstudent.org/](http://www.actstudent.org/)
  - [https://www.collegeboard.org/](https://www.collegeboard.org/)

- **Study books?**
  - Official SAT Study Guide
  - The Real ACT Prep Guide
  - Barrons Test Prep
  - Kaplan Test Prep
  - Princeton Review
  - McGraw Hill

- **Tutoring Programs for SAT and ACT?**
  - Princeton Review
  - Barrons Test Prep
  - Maya

- **FREE support with ACT/SAT prep?**
  - Free Online Practice Tests
  - Princeton Review Free Test
  - Maya Free Class Sessions @ WLW

- **Test Preparation Strategies?**
  - Do a deeper dive of the content areas that need brushing up
    - Use test preparation books and web resources for self study
    - Consider taking test preparation classes
  - Practice, practice, practice ...
    - Get over test anxiety
    - Improve speed
    - Improve focus