



□ **What Do My PSAT Scores Mean?**  
**(and what about this alphabet soup?)**



**Woodlands  
Test Prep**



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# □ What Do My PSAT Scores Mean?

- PSAT Score Report – What do these numbers mean?
- SAT vs. ACT – Which one should I take? When?
- How do I get ready for these tests?

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# □ PSAT Score Report

- Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (AKA Verbal)
  - On a scale of 160 – 760
  - Combines results from both Reading and Writing sections
- Math
  - On a scale of 160 – 760
  - Combines results from both Math sections
- Total Score
  - On a scale of 320 – 1520
  - “Should” be comparable to score the student would have received on the SAT. Probably true in the middle but less true as scores approach 1520.
- Percentiles
  - Nationally-representative means compared to a reference population created from research, NOT the students who actually took the test.
  - Compares students to their own grade: 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades in one group, 11<sup>th</sup> grade in another.



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# □ PSAT Score Report

## □ National Merit Selection Index

- Comprised of the individual Test Scores (see below) added together, and then that sum multiplied by 2.
- Verbal sections make up 2/3 and Math 1/3 of index.

### □ Reading Test

- Ranges from 8 – 38
- Covers Reading portion only

### □ Writing Test

- Ranges from 8 – 38
- Covers Writing portion only

### □ Math Test

- Ranges from 8 – 38
- Covers both math sections together

### Example:

Reading: 26

Writing: 28

Math: 30

Total of the above = 84

$84 \times 2 = 168$  Selection Index

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# □ PSAT Score Report

- Remember that PSAT scores are NOT reported to colleges. For most students, they only serve as a great resource to indicate what areas need work for the SAT.
- Remember that the test is aimed at 11<sup>th</sup> graders, particularly in math. The math test is heavily focused on algebra, including Algebra II. Ninth and 10<sup>th</sup> graders need to remember that they will cover that material in time.
- For students in National Merit Commended or Semifinalist range, the qualifying scores from Class of 2022 were:
  - Commended – 207 (set on a national basis)
  - Semifinalist – 220 (set on a state-by-state basis)
- Students' scores on spring SATs go up more often than down. Relatively lower SAT scores show larger gains.



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# □ PSAT Score Report

## □ Resources to improve

- Students can and should log in to their College Board account to see their full PSAT score report. There, they will see other skills and improvement steps.
- Also on the College Board site, students can link their College Board account to Khan Academy for personalized, free SAT practice. A great resource!
- Students can also use the question-level feedback to note which question types they are doing well with and which ones need work. Focusing their attention on the areas that need work is the first step to improvement!





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## □ SAT vs. ACT – Which one is right for me?

- All colleges accept either test. You have choices!
- You can choose to focus on only one test.
- Each test has a “personality.”
- Each student’s processing style, strengths, and weaknesses create preferences for one test or the other.
- Watch our video for help: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HifB0POv2KI&t=74s>

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# □ SAT vs. ACT – Which one is right for me?

## □ SAT

- Just like PSAT, only slightly longer
- More time per question
- Tons of words in every section – even math!
- Focused math: almost all algebra and data analysis
- Data analysis across 3 sections is easier
- Extended time is easier to get approved

## □ ACT

- 4 sections: English, Math, Reading, Science
- Much faster paced
- Straightforward; easier reading level overall
- Math covers broader range of topics – there's geometry!
- Science section calls for more rigorous data analysis than SAT

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## □ SAT vs. ACT – Which one is right for me?

- To decide which one is better, compare ACT score with either SAT score (best) or PSAT score (good).
- Take a full-length official practice test at home to get a baseline score. No need to take on the record!
- Compare scores using College Board tables (ACT vs. SAT) or Woodlands Test Prep tables (ACT vs. PSAT).



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# □ When should I take the SAT/ACT?

- Consider math level – Both tests cover Algebra II. Fall testing is ok if the student has already taken Algebra II. Spring testing is recommended if taking Algebra II in 11<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Consider AP classes - SAT May date is right as AP testing begins.
- Consider extra-curricular activities – When is crunch time? When can extra prep time be absorbed?
- Consider early decision / admission deadlines – For senior year, how many test dates will be available for re-taking the target test?
- Consider taking multiple times – Most students take their chosen test at least twice and often three times. Make sure to allow time.



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# □ Test Prep Strategies – “Pro Tips”

- Consider how the student learns best and his or her realistic motivation level
  - In a group or class
  - One on one tutoring
  - Independently – books or videos
- Prep before taking a test “on the record”
- Try to take the first time when the test booklet (actual questions) is available
  - SAT: October, March, or May
  - ACT: December, April, or June





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# □ Test Prep Strategies – “Pro Tips”

- Check out your target scores at schools you're interested in
  - College Board website
  - School website (Naviance or Family Connection)
  - Guidebooks
- Consider trying the other test if you're still not happy with results after two tries on one



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# □ Finally.....

- Remember – These tests are only a tool. You can learn to use this tool in order to achieve your goals.
- “To laugh often and love much; to win the respect of intelligent persons and the affection of children; to earn the approbation of honest citizens and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to give of one’s self; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to have played and laughed with enthusiasm and sung with exultation; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived—this is to have succeeded.”
  - ~ Bessie Andersen Stanley





# Useful Links

- College Board (SAT): <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat>
- ACT, Inc.: <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration-information.html>
- ACT vs. P/SAT Overview: <https://www.woodlandstestprep.com/act-vs-sat-summary>
- ACT vs. P/SAT Tables and Details: <https://www.woodlandstestprep.com/act-vs--sat>
- Woodlands Test Prep YouTube Channel with answers to your questions: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUujvwwsC5FPoI0Fbz-bcsg>

