Choosing between SAT and ACT

Avyay Tulsyan

The SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) and the ACT (American College Testing) are standardized tests taken by millions of students every year applying to U.S. colleges. It is highly recommended that students take either of these tests if they plan to apply to U.S. colleges as it provides a basis to compare students from around the globe.

The SAT and ACT have several key differences, and students should choose between the two based on what is easier for them. Some students find the SAT easier while others find the ACT easier. Taking a diagnostic test (An official practice test of both the SAT and the ACT) will help choose between the two.

If you find it difficult to work under a time crunch, the SAT might be easier for you. The reason for this is that the SAT gives you more time per question in all sections of the exam. In the ACT, time management is one of the things students need to work on the most.

The ACT and SAT also differ in the types of math concepts they test. The ACT has a large focus on geometry, which makes up 35-45% of the ACT Math section. On the other hand, less than 10% of SAT Math questions involve geometry. Furthermore, unlike the ACT, the SAT provides you with a lsit of certain mathematical formulae and laws. However, you should still memorize the important formulae which are not included in the list provided by the SAT.

Another important difference is the importance of Math in your final score. On the SAT, your Math score accounts for half of your final score. However, on the ACT, Math only accounts for 25% of your final score since there are four sections on the ACT. Additionally, the ACT has five answer choices in Math while the SAT has four, making the odds of guessing a Math answer correctly higher on the SAT. Additionally, the SAT also includes Grid-In Math questions where students must fill in their own answers. These questions account for 22% of SAT Math.

Moreover, the ACT has an entire section reserved solely for Science. However, this Science section focuses little on actual scientific concepts and instead tests the ability of the student to analyse graphs, hypotheses and scientific data. However, instead of devoting a section to Science, the SAT tests scientific concepts indirectly in the other sections.

At the end of the day, the SAT and ACT have a multiplicity of differences although they fulfil the same purpose. Since universities don’t prefer one to the other, students should take a diagnostic test using official practice tests which are available online so that they choose the one that they’ll score a higher percentile in. Through simply choosing the right test to take, students’ scores can be boosted by a significant margin.