



# ACT VS. SAT COMPARISON

|                           | ACT  | SAT  |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| <b>LENGTH</b>             | 3 HOURS, 25 MINUTES<br>215 multiple-choice questions.  | 3 HOURS, 45 MINUTES<br>160 multiple-choice plus 10 grid-in questions.  |
| <b>SCORING</b>            | NO PENALTY FOR WRONG ANSWERS<br>Composite Score (from 1-36) reported.<br>Average of all subscores.   | PENALTY FOR WRONG ANSWERS<br>Individual Reading, Writing, Math subscores (range 200-800) reported.   |
| <b>SCORE CHOICE</b>       | YES<br>Schools are beginning to superscore.  | YES<br>Most schools superscore.  |
| <b>LAYOUT</b>             | PREDICTABLE ORDER– 5 Sections<br>English, Math, Reading, Science, Writing.<br>Only 1 section for each subject.<br>Questions proceed from easiest to hardest.   | ORDER VARIES – 10 Sections<br>3 sections for each subject plus 1 experimental.<br>Flips back and forth between verbal and math.<br>Questions typically proceed from easiest to hardest but sometimes vary.   |
| <b>STYLE OF QUESTIONS</b> | STRAIGHTFORWARD<br>More similar to tests taken in school.<br>Generally each question tests one concept.  | MORE COMPLEX<br>Generally takes more time to figure out what question is asking.<br>Questions might involve more than one concept.   |
| <b>ESSAY</b>              | AT THE END – Optional (but Recommended)<br>Not included in Composite Score.<br>Generally on a specific topic relevant to high school students; based more on opinion.<br>Example: Should children of immigrants be taught in their native language at school or be forced to learn in English? | AT THE BEGINNING (Required)<br>Included in Writing Score.<br>Generally a broader question but you can cite historical examples, articles you've read, or personal experiences to support your opinion.<br>Example: Does challenging authority make a society stronger? |
| <b>MATH</b>               | ALGEBRA 2, GEOMETRY, TRIGONOMETRY<br>More advanced math (although only 4 questions on trig).   | ALGEBRA 2 AND GEOMETRY<br>Less advanced math.  |
| <b>READING</b>            | LESS VOCABULARY<br>10 questions on each of the following, always in this order: Prose Fiction, Social Science, Humanities, Natural Science.  | MORE VOCABULARY<br>Tests vocabulary more often, and tests more advanced words.   |
| <b>ENGLISH/ WRITING</b>   | MORE GRAMMAR<br>At beginning of test.<br>Focus on punctuation, especially commas.<br>Broader testing of rhetorical skills, including organization, style, strategy.<br>Are you a good editor?  | LESS GRAMMAR<br>Mainly traditional concepts.<br>Less focus on rhetorical skills.<br>Are you a grammar nerd?  |
| <b>SCIENCE</b>            | YES<br>All the information you need is presented.<br>Understanding of scientific method and well-constructed experiments is helpful.<br>3 types of questions: Charts/Graphs, Experiments, Conflicting Scientists   | NO SCIENCE SECTION   |
| <b>WORK STYLE</b>         | Generally requires the ability to focus on one subject for a long period of time.<br>Pacing and moving quickly through questions is important.<br>More content-based.  | Favors students who are good test-takers, who like to solve puzzles, and who prefer material organized into smaller chunks.<br>More focus on critical thinking and problem solving.  |