



A+ Test Prep and Tutoring Newsletter

Creating Bright Futures

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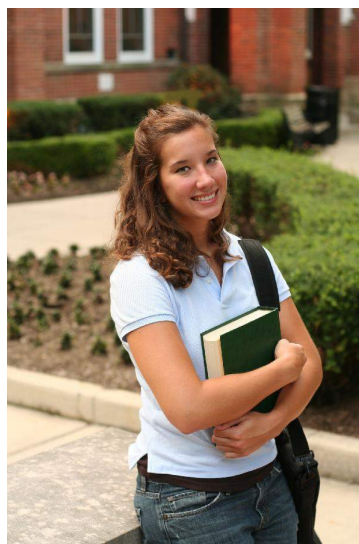
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• Q&A About Standardized Testing and College Admissions



Professionals within the college planning industry often reflect on the relationship between standardized testing and the College Selection and Admission (CSA) process. There are several approaches and strategies recommended to help students better understand and gain an advantage in the college admission process. A few of the most common questions and areas of confusion are addressed in the Q & A below.

A Personal Story of Success



By Jason Tribble, A+ Instructor

Let me share Mike's story with you. He lives in another state and spent the summer of 2005 with his grandmother, Mary, who lives in the Philadelphia area. Because she was very concerned about his behavior in school and his grades, Mary signed Mike up for one-to-one Academic Coaching for the summer.

Mike had just completed eighth grade. Mary told us that throughout eighth grade Mike had been skipping school, receiving multiple detentions and suspensions, and achieving very poor grades. When I started working with Mike he was quiet and sullen. He had really long bangs that hid his eyes; he would slouch forward and mumble responses to questions. Mike was a very angry young man due to various factors in his home life, including the break-up of his parents'

Question #1: Do colleges consider the SAT and ACT equally or do they prefer one to the other?

Answer: If a college states that they accept and evaluate scores from either test, they have no preference. Colleges are not out to trick you. If they have a preference, they will make it known in their information and literature. If the college only refers to one test in their literature, you may want to call and inquire if that specific test is mandatory and the only one the college will accept. Consult with A+ and/or your guidance counselor to review the differences between the tests and to determine if one test may better demonstrate your strengths and skills.

Question #2: How much does standardized testing influence your admission status?

Answer: This varies from college to college. Most colleges agree that standardized testing is a significant factor when evaluating a student for admission. Test scores are the one standard measure that allow colleges to compare and evaluate students from across the country. The size of the school and the level of competitiveness are factors that influence the weight of standardized testing on college admission. A large state university typically uses standardized scores to make their first round of eliminations resulting in a more manageable number to further evaluate. Each college maintains their own "cutoff number" and eliminates students who fall below that number. Very select colleges across the nation are able to maintain an extremely high academic standard when observing an applicant pool of mainly qualified students. Since most of the candidates applying for admission have achieved high scores, they need to have an excellent transcript to match. These same select schools may deny admission to certain candidates with very high scores if they fall shy in other categories. Most institutions, if asked, will go on record stating that grades and curriculum are the most significant factor when being considered for admission. We believe this to be true as long as you do not fall below the "cutoff."

Question #3: Do colleges penalize a student for taking standardized tests several times?

Answer: No. A college will not penalize you for taking standardized tests several times, although

marriage.

As our work together continued Mike began to open up more, describing how he felt about school, peers, and his family situation. With guidance he analyzed his behavior and realized how negatively it was impacting his life and his achievement in school. Mike realized that his current pattern of behavior (partying, skipping school, and fighting) stemmed from a self- destructive attitude, which could have a disastrous outcome. I knew we'd turned the corner on Mike's behavior when he arrived for session one day with a good haircut! There had been no issue with his academic ability; Mike is a very bright young man. He just needed organizational skills and clear goals to focus his energies.

In November 2005, after Mike had returned home and been back in school for a few months, we received a call from Mary. She told us about Mike's progress in school. He had stopped associating with certain people who encouraged him to ditch school, had improved his grades to a solid B average, and had not received any detentions or suspensions. He was determined to maintain his commitment to his schoolwork. I had sensed Mike's resolve to change when our sessions together concluded but I could not have expected any better news of his progress.

As an instructor, such positive feedback about a troubled student's progress provides me with inspiration. After all, it's why we do what we do for our students.

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it may cause admission officers to consider why you did. According to most professionals, it is typical to take the test 2 or 3 times. Most students will have achieved their optimum score within 2 or 3 attempts and will have worked through the issue of nerves and inexperience the first time they take the test. Additional attempts may seem extreme or unnecessary, but you will not be penalized for them. You are the only one to determine if extraordinary scenarios such as illness, emotional stress, or lack of sleep influenced your previous performance, and if you would benefit by taking it again.

Question #4: Now that The College Board sends all SAT scores to your identified colleges, do colleges truly only consider your best-combined score?

Answer: This also varies. Most colleges will combine your best results in separate categories and consider this score. However, there are some colleges that evaluate scores by test date and will not take one category result from one test date and combine it with another. The best approach is to read the literature of the colleges you are interested in or call and ask about their policy.

Question #5: Are students who choose not to take or submit test scores (Test Optional Schools only) evaluated differently than students who submit testing results?

Answer: If a college employs the policy of "Test Optional," they will evaluate your application file absent of standardized test scores. These colleges will evaluate you for admission based on their specific requirements and the information given to them to assess. Often these colleges will have additional admission requirements such as a personal interview or a graded paper from your high school. As always, check with each college to which you are applying in order to fully satisfy their requirements.

The level of importance that standardized testing plays in your admission status will vary from college to college. It is extremely important that you research and thoroughly understand each college's specific admission criteria. Do not make assumptions about all colleges based on one college's policies. We also recommend that you take the time to evaluate your performance against each college's criteria to determine if the school is a good match for you.

This article was contributed by Tina Gregor, co-owner of College Pursuit, an educational consulting firm. She can be reached at 215-542-7512 or tgregor@collegepursuit.biz.

- **SSAT Flex Testing**



Students who want to take the Secondary School Admissions Test (SSAT), but are unable to take the test on one of the national test dates, may now take the test at A+ Test Prep and Tutoring in Jenkintown. Our test center code is 0132. Please call our office for more information.

[SSAT Flex Testing](#)

- **Monthly Promotion**

One-to-One SAT Preparation Programs

**\$100 Off a
Complete SAT
Preparation
Program**

Offer Expires: 12-29-06

**Spring SAT
Special Offer**

Offer applies
to SAT
programs of
19.5 hours or
more.

Use offer code
N1106.

Note: This
offer cannot
be combined
with any other
offer.

[SAT Preparation
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