

Frequently Asked Questions about the PSAT/NMSQT

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1. Why should students take the PSAT/NMSQT®?

The PSAT/NMSQT is great preparation for the SAT®, and juniors who take the test and meet other program entry requirements may enter National Merit Scholarship Corporation programs. Most important, the PSAT/NMSQT is a comprehensive tool that gives valuable feedback to the student and the school. Students will receive scores in critical reading, mathematics, and writing skills and can compare their scores with those of sophomores or juniors across the country. A question-by-question review of answers enables students to see which answers they got right and wrong and to refer to the original test booklet for additional practice. Best of all, with their Score Report, students receive a personalized statement of specific academic skills that need attention, along with suggested steps to improve those skills. High school students who take the PSAT/NMSQT will also receive free access to My College QuickStart™, a free personalized planning kit, with access until they graduate high school.

2. Who should take the PSAT/NMSQT?

Students take the PSAT/NMSQT in their junior year to qualify for National Merit Scholarship Corporation competitions. It is also beneficial for sophomores and younger students to take the test because it provides comprehensive information to help improve academic skills needed for success in college and life beyond college. In 2006, more than half of all testers were sophomores and younger.

3. What should students do to prepare for this test?

The *Official Student Guide to the PSAT/NMSQT* contains plenty of useful information, including a full-length practice test. Students should review the guide and take the practice test to be sure they understand the directions and know the types of questions that will be asked. Classroom learning is the basis for test questions, so the best way students can prepare is to become familiar with the test and its format.

4. If students don't do well on this test, will their chances of getting into college be diminished?

Absolutely not. If anything, taking the PSAT/NMSQT will improve their chances of going to college since the test provides information on the skills that need improvement in preparation for the SAT and college. PSAT/NMSQT scores are not sent to colleges.

5. How many times may a student take this test?

Only once a year, but there is no limit on how many years a student may participate. It is important for juniors to take the test in order to enter National Merit Scholarship Corporation competitions, as well as to prepare *for* the SAT. For younger students, the main benefit is to gain valuable feedback on improving their academic skills and start thinking about college at an earlier age.

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6. When may schools expect to see results from the PSAT/NMSQT?

Schools will receive Score Reports in early December and will notify students regarding when, where, and how to get their individual reports. Schools also receive an extra copy for the student's file.

7. What is the PSAT/NMSQT Score Report?

The Score Report includes not only scores and itemized feedback on test questions but also an "Improve Your Skills" section. For each section of the test—critical reading, math, and writing skills—students will receive personalized feedback based on their performance on the PSAT/NMSQT, as well as suggestions for improvement. The Score Report also shows whether students meet entry requirements for National Merit Scholarship Corporation competitions. Used with My College QuickStart, high school students are able to get additional preparation for the SAT and begin planning for college and a career.

Source: College Counseling Sourcebook, 4th Edition