


# Why Standardized Tests Matter Beyond College Admissions

Standardized tests like the ACT and SAT are more than an admissions formality – they can also lead to scholarships.

By Sonya Ellis, Contributor April 23, 2018



Students can earn college credit with just a standardized test score.  (GETTY IMAGES)

**VERY FEW** [high school](#) students welcome the opportunity to sit for a standardized test. Instead, tests like the [ACT and SAT](#) are often met with annoyance, dread or indifference. However, standardized exams have certain benefits.

Some are obvious, such as helping applicants gain admission to a [college or university](#). Here are three advantages of standardized tests that may be less evident to students.

[ **UNDERSTAND** [what's a good SAT score for college admissions.](#) ]

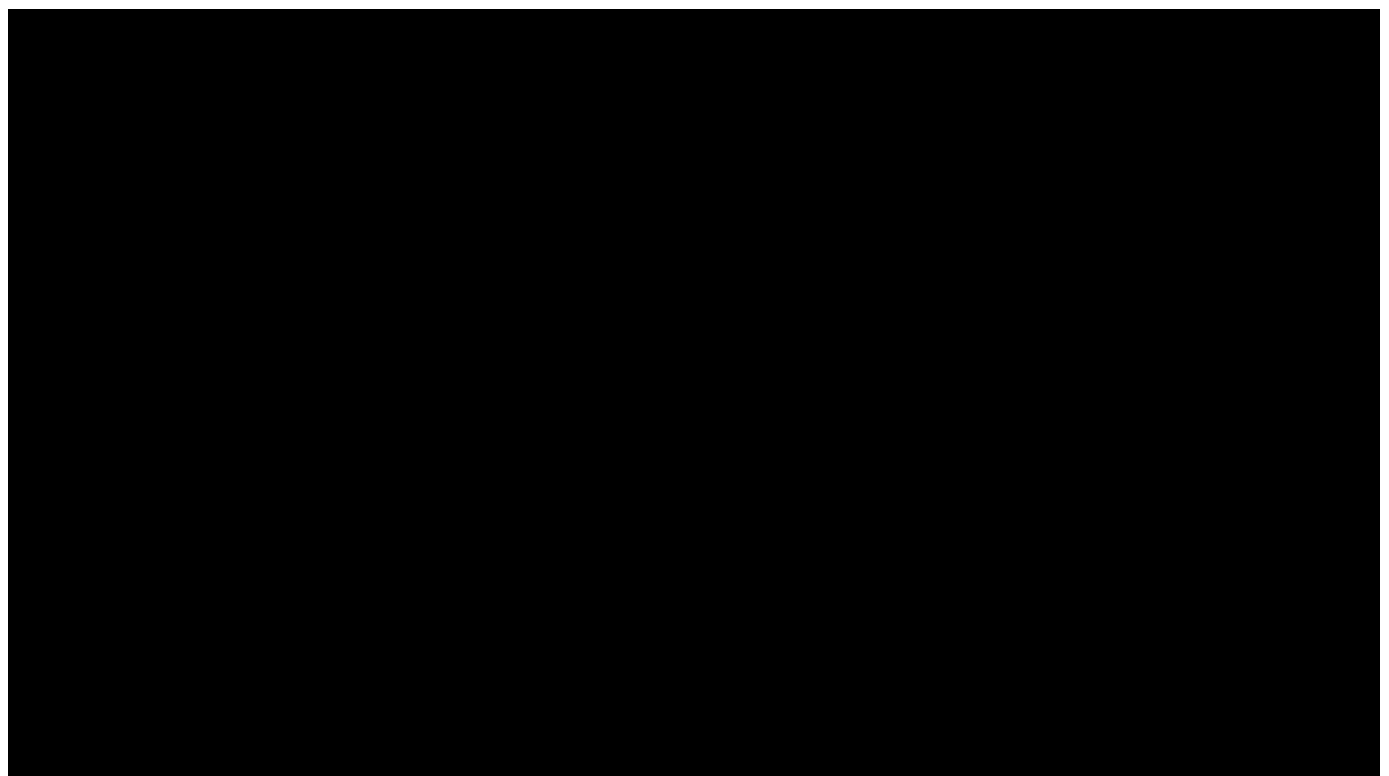
**1. Qualification for scholarships:** One of the best known score-dependent scholarships is the [National Merit Scholarship Program](#). This \$2,500 scholarship is awarded to high school students based on their PSAT/NMSQT score.

However, this is not the only scholarship students can win. Certain colleges and universities offer financial assistance on the basis of ACT or SAT scores. For instance, the University of Missouri's [Mizzou Scholars Award](#) – a renewable scholarship of \$10,000 per year – requires a minimum ACT score of 33 or a minimum SAT score of 1490.

Speak with your short list of schools to determine what scholarships might be available based on your standardized test scores.

You can also search for awards by [ACT](#) score and [SAT](#) score on Scholarships.com. Conducting thorough research and completing an appropriate study plan for any standardized tests you take can lessen the financial burden of college.

[ **SEE HOW TO** [increase the odds of winning college scholarships.](#) ]



**2. College credit:** In addition to popular academic course options like Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and dual enrollment, in which a student

enrolls in college courses and earns college credit while still in high school, it is also possible to earn credit with just a standardized test score.

The College-Level Examination Program, or [CLEP](#), for example, offers a way for students who have gained relevant skills outside the classroom to objectively verify their knowledge. A student who has completed an internship in the business sector, for instance, may find it worthwhile to sit for the Principles of Marketing exam and get college credit based on his or her score.

Students who are interested in this path may also want to consider [UExcel](#) exams, which similarly allow you to earn credit without having to take a course. Exam options range widely, from Introduction to Music to Workplace Communication With Computers.

Whether you are pursuing credit for knowledge gained via an internship, a volunteer opportunity or some other method, always first check with your top-choice schools if they accept the exam.

[ **LEARN HOW** [earning college credit in high school can save money](#). ]

**3. Preparation for college-level exams:** Students will take tests throughout their college careers. While the nature of these tests may change at the university level, the content on AP, IB, CLEP and UExcel exams, as well as on the ACT and SAT, is intended to help prepare high school students for the rigors of college.

For example, the [redesigned SAT's essay](#) requires students to conduct a form of analysis, a skill students will need to do well in many majors. Certain 100-level classes may also administer exams in similar formats to high school standardized tests.


Rather than viewing these tests as arbitrary barriers, it can help high school students to realize that they are likely moving toward harder tasks in the future.

Learning to take notes on ACT and SAT reading passages, for instance, can partially prepare students for the rigors of college learning. If it is difficult to read a short passage and answer 10 questions about that passage, it will likely be even harder to read an entire novel and retain strong recall over the weeks before writing a paper or taking a test.

Students studying for the ACT, SAT and other tests can take away transferable skills from their studies that will help later in life. Use standardized exams as opportunities to bolster and review the skill sets you've learned. Such tests can also build focus, study habits and academic stamina that will help you adjust to the difficulties of college.

## 10 Test Prep Tips for SAT and ACT Takers



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