



## COLLEGE ADMISSION TESTS:

### WHICH TEST IS A BETTER FIT?



**SAT OR ACT?** Which test should you take? There are many who say that one is easier than another. Don't let this myth determine which test you will take. The decision to take one test over another can make a difference in the college acceptance letters you receive. Be sure you understand the differences between the tests in order to make the best choice for you! The following information will help to determine which test matches your particular testing profile.

While the SAT and ACT are very different tests, they both fulfill the same role in the admissions process. They both provide college admissions officers with two things: a predictor of first-year academic achievement in college, and a common yardstick to use in comparing students from a wide range of educational backgrounds.

The ACT was traditionally required by colleges in the mid-west, and the SAT was the test of choice in the northeast and on the east and west coasts. But now an increasing number of students are taking the ACT, and **the majority of schools in the United States now accept both SAT or ACT test results.**

#### Factors that make the SAT and ACT very different types of tests:

- The ACT includes a science reasoning test which is 40 questions and 35 minutes; SAT does not include a science reasoning test.
- The ACT math section includes trigonometry concepts (7%) covered in Algebra II and/or Pre Calculus; the SAT math does not. SAT math covers Algebra I and Geometry concepts (sometimes this can hinder students who took these courses as 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders).
- The SAT tests vocabulary much more than the ACT.
- The SAT has a guessing penalty; the ACT does not.
- The ACT tests English grammar; the SAT does not.
- The SAT has an experimental section; the ACT does not.
- The SAT has a writing component; the ACT has an *optional* writing component.
- The ACT is all multiple choice; the SAT includes both multiple choice and grids.

Admissions officers and educators often describe the difference between SAT and ACT in these terms:

- the ACT is a content-based test
- the SAT tests critical thinking and problem solving

However, this contrast isn't exactly watertight. Many questions on the ACT test critical thinking, and there is a predictable range of content material tested on the SAT. The SAT and ACT reward different attributes, so performing well on each test can all boil down to what kind of test taker you are.

Depending on your particular strengths and weaknesses, you may perform much better on one test than the other. As a result, many students embarking on the admissions process are now considering taking both the SAT and ACT – this helps identify which test provides a better showcase for their abilities.