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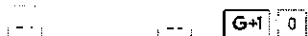
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The ACT vs New SAT: What's the Difference?

0 Comments 11 April 2016



For decades, students have had to weigh their options whether they should the ACT, SAT or both. With the changes to the SAT that took place in March of 2016, students may be even more confused as to how these tests are different.

While there are a few large differences, in a lot of ways, the tests are very similar. First off, the **scoring range for the SAT is from 400-1600 and the ACT scores range from 1-36**. Additionally, as of the SAT change this year, **neither test penalizes you for guessing**. That means whether the guess is at random or educated, you should answer every question on both tests.

The reading sections remain somewhat similar, with the **new SAT having five passages** and the **ACT having four**. The questions overall may now be more complex and time-consuming for SAT takers, while the ACT questions are more straightforward.

With the changes to the new SAT, **now writing an essay for both tests is optional**. The SAT essay has a 50 minute time limit and will give you a prompt that asks you to evaluate an existing argument. On the other hand, the ACT's 40-minute essay will ask you to come up with your own argument and use evidence to support it.

The math sections also have some slight differences. The basic content will generally include algebra, geometry, and trigonometry for both tests, however the answer options differ slightly, as all ACT math questions are multiple choice and the SAT now has a few fill-in-the-blank questions. One big difference here is that **you will not be able to use your calculator on all math sections of the SAT**, while ACT math section remains entirely calculator-friendly.

Two relatively large differences between the two tests are that **the SAT doesn't have a science section, while the ACT does**. Timing is also a huge factor, as the pacing of each test is different: the SAT requires more time per question or problem while the ACT questions and timing are more fast-paced.

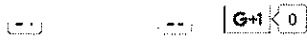
So how do I choose?

There are a few ways to decide which test is right for you. For starters, thinking about your test-taking and academic strengths and

weaknesses can give you a good idea where you will excel. Students who enjoy scientific studies might want to consider the ACT as the SAT doesn't have a science section. On the other hand, students who like to think through questions may want to take advantage of the SAT's more lax time restraints versus taking the ACT.

Another way to compare the two would be to take a look at the free practice tests offered through each test's official website. (Visit the [ACT practice packet here](#) and the [SAT practice tests here](#).) Whether you actually take the full tests or simply read through the questions with the time limits in mind, this can be one of the best ways to get a first-hand idea what each test can possibly be like when you sit down for the real thing.

Regardless of the test you decide to take, **don't forget to update your College Greenlight profile with your scores to improve your list of colleges and scholarships you'll be matched with!**



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