

Glossary of Terms

A look at admissions exams

AP (Advanced Placement)

APs are college-level exams traditionally given at high schools during the month of May. The scoring grid goes from 1–5 (higher is better), with 3 representing a passing score. AP exam scores are used by admissions officers to give students college credit at virtually every college and university. Some colleges will recognize a grade of 3 as qualifying for credit. Most, though, require a 4 or 5. For more information, visit PrincetonReview.com/APIInfo.

SAT

The SAT is one of the core admissions exams. Historically, the SAT was popular in the West and the East, but is now accepted at most schools nationwide. Scores range from 600–2400, with the average score being about 1500. A good score is anything over 1800, and 2200+ is the number to aim for if you're applying to the most competitive schools. The SAT has Math, Reading and Writing sections and an essay. It can be taken 2–3 times, since colleges only count your highest section scores. For more information, visit PrincetonReview.com/SATInfo. To register for the SAT, go to CollegeBoard.com.

ACT

The ACT is one of the core admissions exams. Historically, the ACT was the dominant college entrance exam in the Midwest and the South but, is now accepted at most schools nationwide. It's scored on a 1–36 basis (the average score is about 21). A good score is anything above 26, and 29+ will put you in the running for admission at the most selective schools. The ACT has 4 tests: English, Reading, Math and Science as well as an optional 30-minute Writing Test. Some schools may require the Writing Test, so be sure to ask before you sign up. The practice ACT is called the PLAN. For more information, visit PrincetonReview.com/ACTInfo. To register for the ACT, go to ACT.org.

PSAT/PLAN

Available as practice for the SAT or ACT, these tests have absolutely nothing to do with college admissions. However, they're a strong indicator of your current testing aptitude—if you do well on these tests, you're likely to do well on the SAT/ACT. There's no essay or Algebra II on the PSAT and it's about half the length of the SAT. Very good, junior-year PSAT testers may qualify for the National Merit scholarship program. The PSAT and PLAN are offered at your school, and you sign up through your counselor.

SAT Subject Tests

These are one-hour, multiple-choice exams that focus on individual subjects (formerly known as SAT II exams). SAT Subject Tests are offered in Biology (Ecology or Molecular), Chemistry, Physics, World History, U.S. History, Math Level I, Math Level 2, English Literature and a host of foreign languages. These exams are required by many schools and can be submitted to colleges to show strength in a subject where perhaps your grade is a little soft. Check with individual colleges to see what they require. If you are fluent in a foreign language, take the Language with Listening Subject Test on the first Saturday in November. You may take up to three Subject Tests in one day (although we don't recommend it—it's pretty tiring), and each Subject Test is scored on the 200–800 scale. For more information, visit PrincetonReview.com/SATSubjectTestsInfo. To register for SAT Subject Tests, go to CollegeBoard.org.



Have questions about your testing plan?

Our friendly and knowledgeable experts are ready to assist you Monday–Friday, 9am–9pm, weekends, 10am–4pm, ET.



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