

Class of 2025

PSAT, SAT & ACT Testing Considerations

2023-2024 School Year (Junior Year)

dPSAT

That's right – you're taking the digital PSAT (dPSAT) in 2023! The junior dPSAT is the qualifying test for the prestigious [National Merit Scholarship program](#) – an accolade that, among other things, adds great weight to a college application. You'll be taking the dPSAT sometime in October, as schools can administer it throughout the month but not necessarily to all students on the same date or the same time. You should prep for the PSAT, not only because of the National Merit Scholarship, but because your junior PSAT score is a likely indicator of your junior SAT score. So, your results can help you decide whether you should consider and prep for the SAT or the ACT as your test of choice.

Which Scores Do Your Colleges See?

Keep in mind that colleges will see only the scores you officially send to them (as well as any scores that you self-report or that may appear on your high school transcript) – but you must follow each college's score reporting rules. Yes, many colleges are temporarily test-optional, but those colleges *will* consider your scores as part of the admissions process – and competitive scores improve your potential for admission. Many colleges accept self-reported scores when you apply, but you must have an official score report sent if you matriculate there.

- **SAT:** Some colleges ask you to send *all* your SAT scores while others allow you to select the score sets you'd like them to see. Virtually all colleges superscore the SAT, combining your best math and reading/writing scores from the tests you've taken in high school, and we anticipate that they'll superscore paper-based SAT scores with digital SAT scores. Keep in mind that colleges will see any lower scores you submit, which can have a negative impact on an admission decision – so you'll want to be prepared for the SAT. More on that below.
- **ACT:** Most colleges request your single best ACT score set or an ACT superscore, but some may ask for *all* your ACT scores. So, while the ACT is a more "risk-free" test (because you can cancel your scores *after* you get them), you want to be prepared for it since some of your colleges may ask for *all* your ACT scores. (Colleges won't see the ACT scores you've cancelled.)

ACT Essay

Honestly, almost no one requires or recommends the optional ACT Essay! Don't register for the Essay unless you know that a college to which you're applying wants it. (Note: The optional SAT essay was discontinued in Spring, 2021.)

SAT or ACT: Which is Your Better Test?

Because colleges treat the SAT and ACT equally, you'll want to determine which test to primarily or exclusively focus on before 2nd semester junior year, which is when you'll likely take your first SAT – digital starting with the March 9, 2024 test administration. So, part of your decision will be based on whether you'd rather take the dSAT, for which limited practice tests are available, or the paper-based ACT, for which there are plenty of available practice tests. One of the best ways to determine which should be your test of choice is to take the ACT at the end of your sophomore year – June 10, 2023 – and compare your results to your sophomore PSAT. That particular testing date is one for which you can get back a copy of the ACT you took along with your answers and the correct answers – a great opportunity to learn from

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your mistakes. To take advantage of this, you must request and pay for ACT's "Test Information Release" (TIR) when you register. If you feel ready, you can take the last of the paper-based SATs this coming summer (Aug 26, 2023) or fall (Oct 7, Nov 4, Dec 2, 2023) as long as you're confident you can achieve your SAT score goal on the paper test before the SAT goes digital in March 2024.

Note: you can test through first semester senior year to meet almost all college application deadlines – and through second semester senior year for colleges with rolling admissions and for Florida's Bright Futures Scholarship.

SAT & ACT Test-Prep Considerations

- **dSAT:** If you decide to focus on the dSAT, the College Board has made some practice tests available on its [Bluebook App](#) (which you can download to your laptop) as well as practice questions through Khan Academy (create a Khan Academy account by clicking [here](#)). Full-length linear paper-and-pencil practice tests (longer than the dSAT) are available from College Board as [downloadable PDFs](#). While these forms are recommended only for students who require paper-based accommodations on test day, we see no reason not to practice with them. This [website](#) contains 33 practice questions, including the 15 questions in Bluebook's test preview. Answers and their explanations are provided for all 33 questions. Score At The Top will have additional test-prep materials available to help you prepare.
- **SAT:** If you've decided to focus on the paper-based SAT because you believe you can reach your goal score by the end of 2023, we have *many* actual SAT tests to help you prepare!
- **ACT:** Colleges treat the SAT and the ACT in *exactly* the same way, and we have *numerous* actual ACT tests to help you prepare! **Also, ACT lets you delete a score from your permanent record – something the College Board does not permit for the SAT.**
- **TEST PREP:** Minimum prep time one of these tests is about 2-3 months (2-4 instructional hours/week plus practice tests/sections for weekly homework), or longer if your goal is a significant score gain that may require prepping for and taking the test multiple times. Also, your prep for the SAT/dSAT will be useful for the ACT, and vice versa, but some additional test-specific prep sessions will be required.

TEST REGISTRATION –

Always register as far in advance as possible to ensure taking a test at the most convenient test center for you:

- SAT: www.collegeboard.org
- ACT: www.myACT.org

When you register for either test, do **NOT** specify any colleges to receive your scores, even though you get several free score reports. Wait until you're ready to apply to college to send official score reports.

We hope you'll consider doing your test-prep with Score At The Top –
We've got 35+ years' experience helping students *score at the top* of their potential:

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