

# USApplicants

## Should I take the SAT or the ACT?

The SAT and ACT are both accepted by American universities. While they test many of the same things, they are very different tests. Many students find that they have a strong preference for one or the other.

Below are the key differences in the tests, as well as questions to ask yourself as you decide which test to take.

	SAT	ACT	Questions for you
<b>General design</b>			
Approach	Tricky questions in five sections; less time-pressure, more brain teasers	Straightforward questions in five sections; simpler problems, faster pacing	<b>Are you better at processing a lot of information quickly, or analyzing less information more deeply?</b>
Scoring	4 answer choices per question Some short answer math questions (called grid-ins)	4 answer choices per question, but 5 answer choices for math Individual section scores averaged to give composite score	<b>Are you a good all-around student or better at one or two specific subjects?</b>
Structure	5 sections - Reading (65 min) - Writing and Language (35 min) - Math w/o calculator (25 min) - Math with calculator (55 min) - Essay – optional (50 min) Total time: 3 hours 50 minutes	5 sections - English (45 min) - Math (60 min) - Reading (35 min) - Science (35 min) - Essay – optional (40 min) Total time: 3 hours 35 minutes	<b>Do you struggle with time pressure? How good is your mental stamina?</b>
<b>Specific Content</b>			
English	Essay asks you to analyze an argument Basic grammar rules, with emphasis on sentence construction Heavier emphasis on rhetorical skills (e.g. style, organization) Occasional charts and tables	Essay asks you to compare viewpoints about a policy or idea Basic grammar rules, emphasis on punctuation Some rhetorical skills (e.g. style, organization)	<b>Are you a stronger writer or grammarian? Would you rather analyze someone else's essay or craft an argument about a policy issue?</b>
Reading Comprehension	More questions asking about whole passage (e.g. main idea) Passage types follow no set pattern Significantly longer section Occasional charts and tables	Specific passage type and order Fewer specific line references in questions Noticeable time pressure	<b>Are you a versatile reader, comfortable with different types of information? How well do you read for sustained periods of time?</b>
Math	More advanced topics than GCSE Deceptive problem prompts Stronger emphasis on data analysis One section with calculator, one section without	More advanced topics than GCSE Straightforward prompts Calculator allowed on all questions	<b>Do you prefer solving math problems or understanding math concepts? How quick of a mathematician are you?</b>

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Data analysis	No dedicated section, questions are interspersed through all 4 multiple-choice sections	Science section: interpretation of data, charts and graphs	<b>Would you rather analyze charts and graphs by themselves or within a larger context?</b>
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