

# College Entrance Exams



## What are College Entrance Exams?

College entrance exams are standardized tests that measure a student's aptitude or potential for future success. Many colleges and universities use the scores from these exams to consider whether a student will be a good fit for their institution academically and whether they will be successful. College entrance exam scores are just one part of the college admissions application process; and depending on the college/university, they may be weighed more or less heavily than other factors such as GPA, course selection, essays, extracurricular activities, recommendation letters, etc.

## Which Test Should I Take, and How Many Times Should I Take It?

The SAT and ACT are the college entrance exams often required in college admissions. Volumes have been written about these exams and many resources exist to help students determine which might be the better test for them. The best place to start is the testing agency websites themselves: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) (SAT) and [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) (ACT). Most schools will accept either test for application purposes, and so it is important for students to understand these tests and determine which might likely be a better fit personally, if not both. Since the introduction of the revised SAT in March 2016, the SAT and ACT are more alike now than they were in the past. It really is a matter of preference in deciding which to test (if not both) to take. The SAT has three required sections: reading, writing and language, and mathematics. The ACT has four required sections: English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning. Both tests have an optional writing test.

Generally, students are encouraged to take both the ACT and the SAT at least once to determine if one test will highlight a student's strengths better. If one score is significantly better than another, then students are encouraged to take the test with the better results at least one more time. In some cases, it is advantageous for a student to take both tests again, particularly if they did well on both. No matter which test a student focuses on, it is always recommended that they take at least one test twice, since many students improve their scores when they take it again. Likewise, many colleges "super score" test scores for admissions purposes and/or scholarships, meaning that they take the best combination of scores from all of the dates that a student takes the tests. Whether you take one or both of these tests more than twice is an individual consideration and could be helpful for things like waitlist admissions decisions, scholarship consideration and more.

## Why is it Important for Me to Take These Tests?

Most colleges and universities require students to submit college entrance exam scores as part of their admissions application, so it is imperative that students take these tests to ensure that they keep all available options open when searching for a college fit. In many cases, a student's college application will not be considered complete without test scores; however, there are some colleges that maintain a "test optional" policy, meaning that students can choose whether or not to submit their scores OR choose how their scores are used. It is important for students to read the admissions requirements on a college's website carefully to understand whether test scores are required for admissions. *Note: A list of test optional schools can be found at:* <http://fairtest.org/university/optional>

### How Can I Prepare for These Tests?

Numerous options exist to assist students in preparing for the SAT and ACT. The more exposure to the test format and types of questions students can gain in advance of taking the exams the better. It is always wise to start with the testing agency websites. Both College Board and ACT offer a range of prep resources from free practice questions to low-cost online courses. The best type of prep depends on the individual student. Some students do well with self-directed prep options such as books and online courses, while other students fare better with courses taught in-person by instructors. CHS offers a PSAT and SAT prep course in the fall as well as an SAT prep course in the spring of each year. For information about the CHS prep course and a list of additional test prep resources see the CHS Counseling website: [www.ccs.k12.in.us/chs/counseling](http://www.ccs.k12.in.us/chs/counseling).

### When Should I Take These Tests?

Since CHS students have opportunities to take practice exams in grades 9 (PSAT 8/9), 10 (PSAT), and 11 (PSAT), students are advised to take the SAT and/or ACT for the first time early in the spring semester of their junior year. Both tests are offered several times throughout the school year on Saturdays, and a testing schedule can be found on the testing agency websites as well as the CHS website. The testing agencies set the exam dates, so make certain that you consider your other commitments and plan ahead to make sure that the SAT/ACT are a priority. Many students are able to finish their college entrance exam testing by the end of their junior year if they take the tests for the first time in the winter and then again in late spring/early summer. However, it is not uncommon for students to take the ACT and/or the SAT one last time during the fall semester of their senior year.

### How Do Colleges Get My Scores?

There are two primary ways that colleges receive test scores: directly from the testing agency or from the student's high school transcript. Many schools will only accept scores received directly from the testing agencies, and students should take note of the application requirements at their chosen schools. Scores can be sent directly from the testing agencies in one of two ways. First, when students register for the exams they have an opportunity to send scores to a select number of schools as part of their exam registration fee. Both the ACT and SAT allow for up to four free score reports as part of the registration process. Second, students can login to their SAT or ACT accounts after they have taken the exams and request that their scores be sent to colleges for a fee. Both tests offer different options for picking which scores to send to schools, and students are encouraged to read the information presented carefully.

### Can I Receive Testing Accommodations on These Tests?

Students with a documented disability may be able to receive testing accommodations if they follow the testing agency process associated with applying for accommodations. The CHS Counseling Staff can assist you in determining whether you might qualify and how to apply, but it is important to note that the testing agencies are the decision makers in this process. Access to accommodations can only be granted by the testing agencies, and applications for accommodations can take several weeks to process. More information about testing accommodations can be found at: <http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/for-students-with-disabilities> (SAT) and <http://www.actstudent.org/regist/disab/> (ACT).

### How Do I Register to Take the Tests?

Students need to register online for the SAT at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) and for the ACT at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org). Students must create a free account with the testing agency, and from that account they can register for exams, check exam scores, and send scores to colleges. There are fees associated with taking the exams, and students should refer to the registration websites for specific details. Students should take care to read all directions for exam registration, as very specific test security measures are in place and detailed instructions exist for uploading pictures and providing identification on test day. The deadline to register for each test ends approximately one month prior to the exam date for which a student is registering. It is important that students plan ahead to make sure they meet registration deadlines and avoid paying late fees or missing an exam opportunity all together. When choosing where to take the exams, please note that CHS is a test administration site for all SAT dates and most ACT dates. For your reference our school code is 150445, and our test center number is 15-165.