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SESSION 2: STANDARDIZED TESTING

The goal of this session is to introduce students to the various tests that are used by colleges, to help them determine which tests to take, and to demonstrate how to register for the tests.

Objectives:

At the end of this session, students:

- understand the different types of standardized testing
- know how and when to register for the different tests
- have reviewed sample questions and testing strategies

Activities and Handouts:

Activity #1: Understanding the Tests

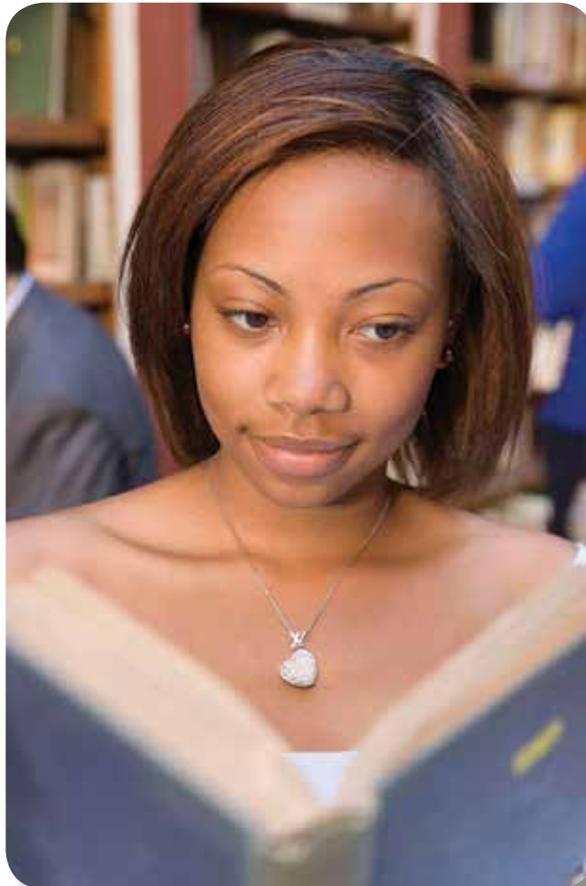
Handout: Understanding Standardized Tests for Juniors and Seniors

Activity #2: Test Registration

Handout: Guidelines and Timetable

Activity #3: Practice Session

Handouts: Ten Brief Test Taking Tips
Sample Test Questions
ACT Science Question and Explanations
Sample Prompts for Timed Writing
SAT Essay Scoring Guide



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SESSION 2: STANDARDIZED TESTING

ACTIVITY #1: UNDERSTANDING THE TESTS

Opening Discussion:

The majority of colleges require one of the two admission tests, the SAT or the ACT. Many colleges and universities give applicants the option of reporting scores from either of the two testing programs. Students should weigh the advantages of taking both or either test. Retakes may be needed in the senior year, since students do not always receive their highest score from their first testing. Some institutions may have a stated preference for one test or the other. Bulletins describing the programs and practice tests should be available in high school guidance offices. For students who meet low income standards, test fee waivers are available.

Students should develop the strongest testing profile possible. The first step is to have taken the a preliminary test. If the students have taken or will take the PSAT /NMSQT or PLAN, talk to them about reviewing the results as they prepare to take the SAT or ACT, respectively. The best way to get ready for the SAT is to take challenging courses, study hard, and read and write in and outside of the classroom. Students should be strongly encouraged to continue in math, science and English for all four years of high school. While grades and coursework are more important in the admission process than testing, colleges that require the SAT or ACT do want to see strong scores.

Some colleges may waive the ACT and or SAT tests for admission purposes but may require test scores for placement purposes. Students should consult the website of the schools in which they are interested to learn about their admission and placement policies.

Activity/Handouts:

Understanding Standardized Tests for Junior and Seniors

Instructions:

1. Ask students what test(s) they have already taken and plan to take.
2. Give students a copy of the handout.
3. Walk the students through the handout, emphasizing the differences between the two tests.
Answer questions about which test(s) might be appropriate.

UNDERSTANDING STANDARDIZED TESTING FOR JUNIORS AND SENIORS

PSAT/NMSQT and PLAN Tests. You may have already taken the PLAN (offered by the ACT) and/or the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT offered by the College Board/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) as a sophomore. Ideally, all students should take the PSAT/NMSQT and/or PLAN in the fall of junior year. Taking the test as a junior may qualify you for some scholarship consideration and identify you to colleges as a potential applicant. Reviewing the results of the PLAN and PSAT/NMSQT will help you to prepare for the ACT and SAT respectively. The results of these tests are not reported to colleges. They are for your benefit only.

	<i>SAT</i>	<i>ACT</i>
When is it administered?	Seven times per year	Six times per year
What is the test structure?	Ten-section exam: Three Critical Reading, three Math, three Writing, and one unscored subsection. The unscored subsection is masked to look like a regular section.	Four-section exam: English, Math, Reading, and Science Reasoning. An unscored subsection is added to tests on certain dates only, and is clearly experimental.
What is the test content?	Math: numbers, operations, Algebra, geometry, data analysis, statistics, and probability. Reading: extended reasoning, literal comprehension, vocabulary in context, and sentence completions. Writing: an essay, improving sentences, identifying sentence errors, and improving paragraphs.	Math: up to trigonometry. Science: charts, experiments. Reading: four passages, one each of prose fiction, social science, humanities, and natural science. English: stresses grammar.
Is there a penalty for wrong answers?	Yes ¼ point off for incorrect answers	No
How is the test scored?	200-800 per section. A 2400 is the highest total score.	1-36 for each subject, averaged for a composite score. A 36 is the highest possible composite score.
Are all scores sent to schools?	No. There is a “Score Choice” option. Students can choose which scores to send (by test date) to colleges in accordance with an institution’s stated score-use practice.	No. There is a “Score Choice” option. Students can choose which schools will receive their scores AND which scores the schools will see.
Are there other uses for the exams?	Scholarship purposes. Some colleges may use scores for placement	Scholarship purposes. Certain statewide testing programs. Some colleges use scores for placement
Best time to register?	At least six weeks before the test date The earlier the better	At least six weeks before the test date The earlier the better
How to contact?	SAT Customer Service: 866/756-7346 or sat.collegeboard.org/contact	ACT, Inc. www.actstudent.org



Additional Tests:

SAT Subject Tests: The SAT Subject Tests are hour-long tests based on high school course work offered across five subject areas: Mathematics, Science, English, History and Languages. The tests allow students to demonstrate knowledge and showcase achievements in specific subjects. Students should check the websites of colleges they are considering for more information on SAT Subject Test requirements.

Advanced Placement Exams: AP exams are three-hour exams in specific subject areas and are designed to be taken upon the completion of an AP course or the equivalent. They are rigorous exams that include both multiple choice and essay sections. More than 1,400 colleges and universities accept AP credits. To learn more about AP exams go to <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/takingtheexam>. AP exams are scored on a scale of 1–5.

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) tests a student’s ability in English and is a test for students for whom English is not the first language. The test measures skills in reading, listening, speaking, and writing in English and requires the student to combine two or more of these skills to respond to a question. It is usually an internet based exam given by appointment designated test centers. Paper-based tests are offered only in remote areas. For more information go to www.ets.org.



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SESSION 2: STANDARDIZED TESTING

ACTIVITY #2: TEST REGISTRATION

Opening Discussion:

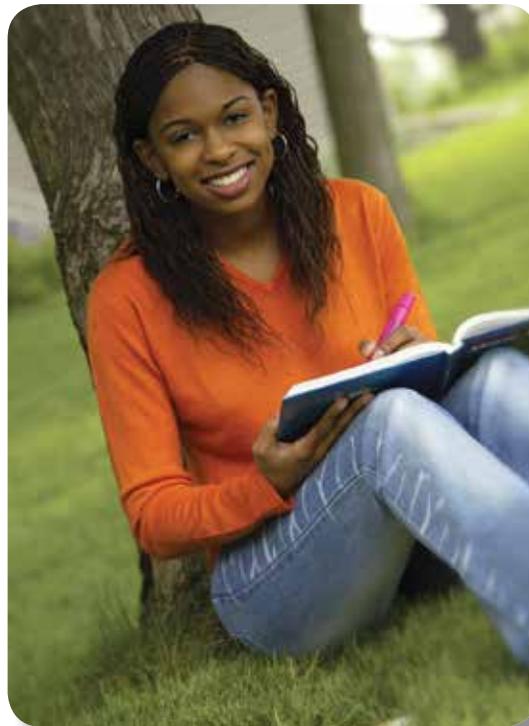
This activity will give the facilitator the opportunity to inform students it is important for them to register independently, on-time and accurately, and that fee waivers, as well as accommodations for disabled students, are available.

Activity/Handout:

General Guidelines and Testing Timetable

Instructions:

1. Give each student a copy of “General Guidelines and Testing Timetable.”
2. Walk the students through the handout.
Ask students to highlight when they might be able to take specific tests.
3. Find out what to bring on your SAT testing day at <http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-test-day-checklist>.
4. If computer access is available and there is sufficient time, log on to **sat.org/register** or **www.actstudent.org** and walk through the registration process for each test. Have students complete as much information as possible.





GENERAL GUIDELINES AND TESTING TIMETABLE

Guidelines:

- SAT Tests are offered in Jan, March/April, May, June, October, November and December.
- ACT tests are offered in Feb, April, June, September, October, and December.
- Registration deadlines for both tests are usually at least six weeks prior to the test date.
- Results for the tests can be obtained online usually within three weeks of the administration or a paper copy of results may be sent within four weeks.
- Many students take the SAT once or twice. There is no evidence that taking the SAT multiple times significantly changes your score. Students have the option to choose which SAT scores they send (by test date) to colleges in accordance with an institution's stated score-use practice. Students have the option to send ACT score from a single test date.

Testing Timetable:

11th Grade

- PSAT/NMSQT should be taken in October
- At least one of the test should be taken in the spring semester
- SAT Subject Tests in May or June, when appropriate for specific colleges
- AP tests in May if enrolled in AP courses

12th GRADE

- Final ACT and SAT Tests First Semester (should be completed by the end of December)
- Latest date to take SAT Subject Tests
- AP tests in May if enrolled in AP courses

Helpful Hints for SAT/ACT Registration Procedure

- Register on time in order to avoid a late fee.
- Use the same information each time (full name, address, birth date), otherwise a student may be considered to be two different people.
- The **test center code** is essential for the student to be able to take the test in the location desired. If the student registers late, he or she may not get the center requested.
- The **high school code** is necessary in order for the high school to receive the scores.
- The **college codes** should be included with registration once students know there is a good possibility they will be applying. Students will receive four score reports every time they registers for the SAT. These four score reports must be used at the time of registration or up to nine days after the test date. We highly recommend that students take advantage of these score reports, as additional reports are subject to a fee. Many colleges require that the scores be sent to admission offices directly. If scores are not sent to colleges, there may be a delay in making decisions and/or considering a student for scholarships. Students using an SAT fee waiver receive four additional score sends they may use at any time.

- **Fee waivers** are available from the guidance office if a student shows financial need. For information: www.actstudent.org/faq/feewaiver.html or sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-fee-waivers
- **Students with diagnosed learning or other disabilities** should check with their high school guidance office about obtaining special testing accommodations, minimally several months in advance of the test date. (Special early application for registration required). Information regarding SAT accommodations may be found at <http://collegeboard.org/students-with-disabilities>

On the day of the test:

- Come well rested
- Arrive early
- Eat a good breakfast (these are long tests!)
- Bring with you: admission ticket, approved calculator, at least two #2 sharpened pencils, picture ID



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SESSION 2: STANDARDIZED TESTING

ACTIVITY #3: PRACTICE SESSION

Opening Discussion:

Understanding and practicing the types of questions asked on the SAT or ACT are absolutely necessary steps in the college process. Emphasize to the students that these tests measure critical thinking.

Research has demonstrated that test preparation improves scores on standardized tests for some students. This section will introduce students to sample questions and test taking strategies. ACT and SAT practice tests can be downloaded from their websites at www.actstudent.org and sat.org/practice respectively.

Activity/Handouts:

Ten Brief Test Taking Tips**Sample SAT Test Questions and Explanations**

The SAT is changing in 2016. Visit www.sat.org/practice for more information about the revised test.

ACT Science Question Explanation**Sample Prompts for Timed Writing****SAT Essay Scoring Guide**

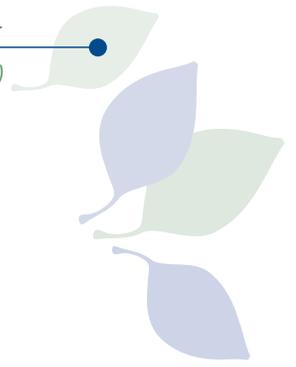
Instructions:

1. Go over the “Test Taking Tips” with the students and remind them to keep the handout for a reference to review the night before taking any standardized test.
2. Simulate a testing environment by giving students several different test questions, asking them to complete the questions in a set amount of time.
3. Review the answers to the questions and use the discussion time to talk about the types of questions and strategies for answering them.
4. Go over the “ACT Science Question Explanation” and encourage them to go to the ACT website to review sample questions.
5. Give the students the writing prompts from both the SAT and ACT and give them time to brainstorm ways they might respond to the prompts.
6. Students can learn more about how their exams are scored by visiting sat.collegeboard.org/scores.



TEN BRIEF TEST TAKING TIPS FOR STANDARDIZED TESTS

1. Be sure to read and pay careful attention to directions.
2. Read every possible answer—the best one could be the last one.
3. Work as rapidly as possible, but don't work carelessly.
4. Eliminate answers you are certain are incorrect.
5. Don't spend too long on any one question. Instead, skip difficult questions and move on. Mark questions in the test booklet to which you need to return. Be careful to skip that same question on the answer sheet. Return to these questions if time permits.
6. Make sure to record every answer in the correct place on the answer sheet. If you change an answer, be sure to erase changes completely.
7. The SAT subtracts 1/4 point for each wrong answer—but does not penalize students for omitting a question. If you can narrow your answer choices to two possibilities, it is in your favor to make your best guess.
8. Because the ACT test does not subtract points for incorrect answers, you should make an “educated guess” and not leave questions blank.
9. Use every minute of the time given for the test. If you finish early, go back and complete questions skipped, make sure you have not mismarked the answer sheet, and check your work.
10. Being familiar with testing format and procedures will help you do your best. Be sure to take some practice tests prior to test day.



SAMPLE SAT QUESTIONS:

(Additional practice questions and materials can be downloaded at sat.org/practice).

Sentence Completion:

The sentence below has two blanks, each blank indicating that something has been omitted. Beneath the sentence are five sets of words labeled A through E. Choose the word or set of words that, when inserted in the sentence, best fits the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

Hoping to ----- the dispute, negotiators proposed a compromise that they felt would be ----- to both labor and management.

- (A) enforce . . . useful
- (B) end . . . divisive
- (C) overcome . . . unattractive
- (D) extend . . . satisfactory
- (E) resolve . . . acceptable

Math Question #1:

A special lottery is to be held to select the student who will live in the only deluxe room in a dormitory. There are 100 seniors, 150 juniors, and 200 sophomores who applied. Each senior's name is placed in the lottery 3 times; each junior's name, 2 times; and each sophomore's name, 1 time. What is the probability that a senior's name will be chosen?

- (A) $\frac{1}{8}$
- (B) $\frac{2}{9}$
- (C) $\frac{2}{7}$
- (D) $\frac{3}{8}$
- (E) $\frac{1}{2}$

Math Question #2:

$$|4x - 7| = 5$$

$$|3 - 8x| = 1$$

What value of x satisfies both of the equations above?

SAMPLE SAT QUESTIONS EXPLANATIONS

Explanation of Sentence Completion:

One way to answer a sentence completion question with two words missing is to focus first on just one of the two blanks. If one of the words in an answer choice is logically wrong, then you can eliminate the entire choice from consideration.

- Look at the first blank in the example above. Would it make sense to say that “negotiators” who have “proposed a compromise” were hoping to enforce or extend the “dispute”? No, so neither (A) nor (D) can be the correct answer.
- Now you can focus on the second blank. Would the “negotiators” have proposed a compromise that they believed would be divisive or unattractive to “both labor and management”? No, so (B) and (C) can be eliminated, and only choice (E) remains.
- Always check your answer by reading the entire sentence with your choice filled in. Does it make sense to say “Hoping to resolve the dispute, the negotiators proposed a compromise that they felt would be acceptable to both labor and management”? Yes.

Correct answer: (E)

Explanation of Math Question #1:

To determine the probability that a senior’s name will be chosen, you must determine the total number of seniors’ names that are in the lottery and divide this number by the total number of names in the lottery. Since each senior’s name is placed in the lottery 3 times, there are $3 \cdot 100 = 300$ seniors’ names. Likewise, there are $2 \cdot 150 = 300$ juniors’ names and $1 \cdot 200 = 200$ sophomores’ names in the lottery. The probability that a senior’s name will be chosen is

$$\frac{300}{300 + 300 + 200} = \frac{300}{800} = \frac{3}{8}.$$

Correct Answer: (D)

Answer to Math Question #2:

OR

Correct Answer:

$\frac{1}{2}$ or .5

			/	2
0	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	5
2	3	4	5	6
3	4	5	6	7
4	5	6	7	8
5	6	7	8	9
6	7	8	9	0
7	8	9	0	1
8	9	0	1	2
9	0	1	2	3

.	5		
0	1	2	3
1	2	3	4
2	3	4	5
3	4	5	6
4	5	6	7
5	6	7	8
6	7	8	9
7	8	9	0
8	9	0	1
9	0	1	2



While the ACT is also a multiple choice standardized tests, there are some differences as noted in “Understanding Standardized Testing for Juniors and Seniors” from Session II. The most notable difference is found in the science section of the test. Following is a description of that section from the ACT website.

ACT SCIENCE TEST DESCRIPTION

The Science Test is a 40-question, 35-minute test that measures the skills required in the natural sciences: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem solving.

You are not permitted to use a calculator on the Science Test.

The test assumes that students are in the process of taking the core science course of study (three years or more) that will prepare them for college-level work and have completed a course in earth science and/or physical science and a course in biology.

The test presents seven sets of scientific information, each followed by a number of multiple-choice test questions. The scientific information is presented in one of three different formats:

- data representation (graphs, tables and other schematic forms)
- research summaries (descriptions of one or more related experiments)
- conflicting viewpoints (expressions of several related hypotheses or views inconsistent with one another)

The questions require you to:

- recognize and understand the basic features of, and concepts related to, the provided information
- examine critically the relationship between the information provided and the conclusions drawn or hypotheses developed
- generalize from given information and draw conclusions, gain new information, or make predictions



ACT PROMPT FOR TIMED WRITING

Educators debate extending high school to five years because of increasing demands on students from employers and colleges to participate in extracurricular activities and community service in addition to having high grades. Some educators support extending high school to five years because they think students need more time to achieve all that is expected of them. Other educators do not support extending high school to five years because they think students would lose interest in school and attendance would drop in the fifth year. In your opinion, should high school be extended to five years?

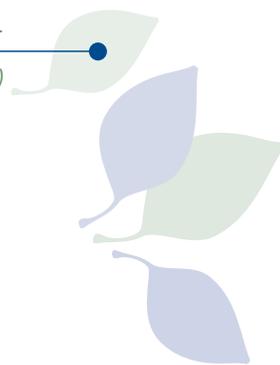
In your essay, take a position on this question. You may write about either one of the two points of view given, or you may present a different point of view on this question. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

SAT PROMPT FOR TIMED WRITING

“Many persons believe that to move up the ladder of success and achievement, they must forget the past, repress it, and relinquish it. But others have just the opposite view. They see old memories as a chance to reckon with the past and integrate past and present.”

—Adapted from Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, *I’ve Known Rivers: Lives of Loss and Liberation*

Assignment: Do memories hinder or help people in their effort to learn from the past and succeed in the present? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.



ESSAY SCORING GUIDE

To learn more about the essay-scoring process, visit sat.collegeboard.org/scores/sat-essay-scoring-guide.

A framework for scoring SAT essays

The SAT Scoring Guide **expresses the criteria readers use to evaluate and score the student essays**. The guide is structured on a six-point scale. Since the SAT essay is scored holistically, readers are trained to **use the SAT Scoring Guide in conjunction with anchor papers, which have been scored by consensus as representative examples**. The language of the Scoring Guide provides a consistent and coherent framework for differentiating between score points, without defining specific traits or types of essays that define each score point.

Score of 6

An essay in this category demonstrates **clear and consistent mastery**, although it may have a few minor errors.

A typical essay:

- Effectively and insightfully develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates outstanding critical thinking, using clearly appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- Is well organized and clearly focused, demonstrating clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas
- Exhibits skillful use of language, using a varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary
- Demonstrates meaningful variety in sentence structure
- Is free of most errors in grammar, usage and mechanics

Score of 5

An essay in this category demonstrates **reasonably consistent mastery**, although it will have occasional errors or lapses in quality. A typical essay:

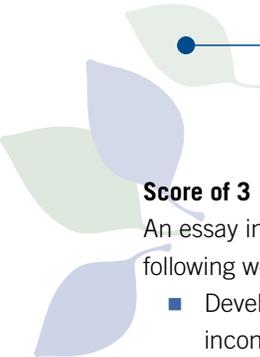
- Effectively develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates strong critical thinking, generally using appropriate examples, reasons and other evidence to support its position
- Is well organized and focused, demonstrating coherence and progression of ideas
- Exhibits facility in the use of language, using appropriate vocabulary
- Demonstrates variety in sentence structure
- Is generally free of most errors in grammar, usage and mechanics

Score of 4

An essay in this category demonstrates **adequate mastery**, although it will have lapses in quality.

A typical essay:

- Develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates competent critical thinking, using adequate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- Is generally organized and focused, demonstrating some coherence and progression of ideas
- Exhibits adequate but inconsistent facility in the use of language, using generally appropriate vocabulary
- Demonstrates some variety in sentence structure
- Has some errors in grammar, usage and mechanics



Score of 3

An essay in this category demonstrates **developing mastery**, and is marked by **one or more** of the following weaknesses:

- Develops a point of view on the issue, demonstrating some critical thinking, but may do so inconsistently or use inadequate examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position
- Is limited in its organization or focus, but may demonstrate some lapses in coherence or progression of ideas
- Displays developing facility in the use of language or sometimes uses weak vocabulary or inappropriate word choice
- Lacks variety or demonstrates problems in sentence structure
- Contains an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage and mechanics

Score of 2

An essay in this category demonstrates **little mastery**, and is flawed by **one or more** of the following weaknesses:

- Develops a point of view on the issue that is vague or seriously limited and demonstrates weak critical thinking, providing inappropriate or insufficient examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position
- Is poorly organized and/or focused, or demonstrates serious problems with coherence or progression of ideas
- Displays very little facility in the use of language, using very limited vocabulary or incorrect word choice
- Demonstrates frequent problems in sentence structure
- Contains errors in grammar, usage and mechanics so serious that meaning is somewhat obscured



Score of 1

An essay in this category demonstrates **very little** or **no mastery**, and is severely flawed by one or more of the following weaknesses:

- Develops no viable point of view on the issue, or provides little or no evidence to support its position
- Is disorganized or unfocused, resulting in a disjointed or incoherent essay
- Displays fundamental errors in vocabulary
- Demonstrates severe flaws in sentence structure
- Contains pervasive errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that persistently interfere with meaning

Score of 0

Essays not written on the essay assignment will receive a score of 0.

