



SAT vs. SAT Subject Tests

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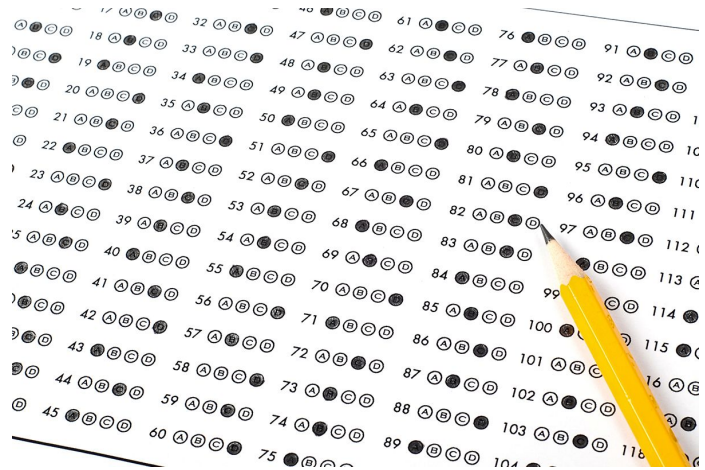
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The purpose of the [SAT](#) and [SAT Subject Tests](#) is for colleges to measure candidates on a standardized scale. The SAT measures critical thinking skills, while the SAT Subject Tests measure academic achievement. The SAT covers multiple topics, including English and Math while SAT Subject Tests focus on a particular subject such as Biology or a language such as Spanish, French and Latin.

Nowadays, the terms SAT and SAT Subject Tests are most commonly used. However, you may still hear the SAT (the one most colleges require) referred to as SAT 1 (SAT I) and the SAT Subject Tests referred to as SAT 2 (SAT II).

Most schools will require you to take the SAT or ACT in order to apply. A majority do not require the Subject Tests but, you may want to consider taking these tests and here's why...

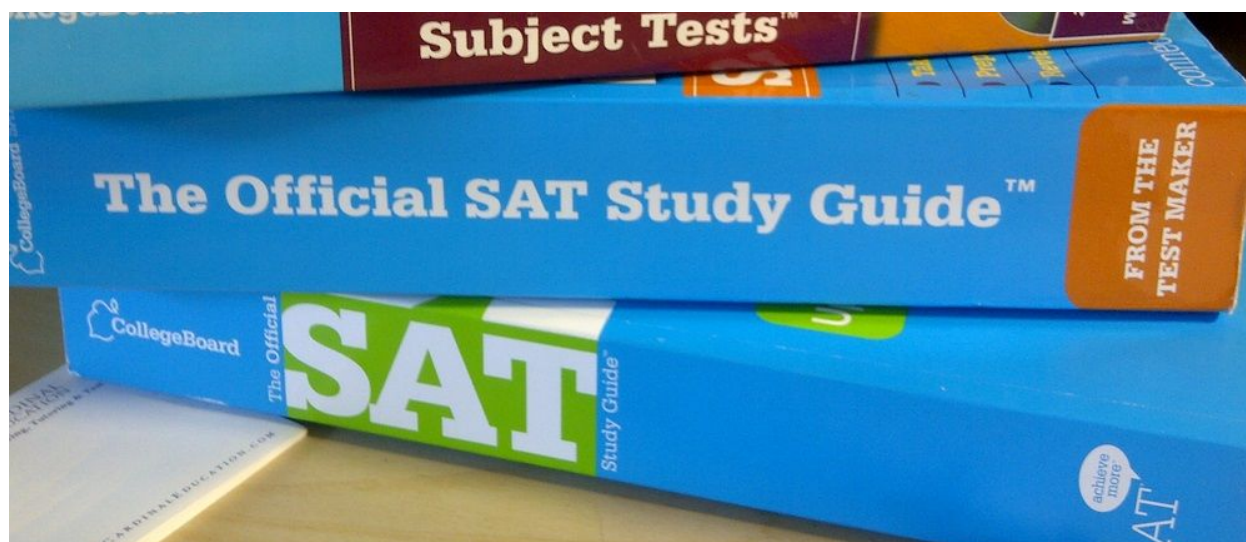
The SAT Subject Tests can help boost your college application. For example, if you want to pursue a history major and you took the history subject test(s), it shows the school that you are dedicated to that field. If you are really proficient in a specific course, taking the subject test will demonstrate to the school your ability in this subject. Sometimes, it may even boost your future class placement. If you earn a high enough score, these tests can transfer in as college credits and relieve the amount of classes you have to take. Combined with any advanced placement (AP) credits, this could allow you to graduate early!



There are a few key differences between the SAT and SAT Subject Tests, aside from being narrowed to one topic. First, the length; the SAT can run up to 3 hours and 50 minutes, but each Subject Test only lasts for 1 hour. The SAT covers reading, writing, math and an optional essay. There are 20 different subjects to choose from for the Subject Tests. You have the option to take multiple tests during your high school career as there is no restriction of how many you can take.

The topics offered for SAT Subject Tests are Literature, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics (both level 1 and 2), U.S. History, Physics, Modern Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Japanese, Korean, Chinese and the following which offer listening or non listening tests: French, Spanish, and German. Additionally, the SAT is scored from 400-1600 while the Subject Tests range from 200-800.

You are not penalized on the SAT for incorrect answers. You should always take a guess at the answer. The SAT also does not penalize you for leaving a question blank. When taking Subject Tests, you are deducted a fraction of a point for each incorrect answer so you should be slightly more cautious when choosing answers. For instance, a fourth of a point is taken off for each incorrect 5 choice question, a third for each 4 choice question and a half of a point for an incorrect 3 choice question. If you are unsure of an answer on a Subject Test, you may want to leave it blank as blank questions do not benefit or degrade your score.



Moreover, when choosing what day to take the test, keep in mind that you cannot take an SAT Subject Test(s) on the same day that you plan on taking the SAT. Also, not all subject tests are administered on every test date so plan carefully when deciding which tests to take. You can take up to 3 SAT Subject Tests in one day.

When preparing for the SAT Subject Test, you should ensure you have completed the class prior to taking the exam and have reviewed the material well. You should spend some time taking practice tests. You can also consider seeking out a tutor in order to obtain the best score.

The best time to take the SAT Subject Test in Biology is right after a 9th or 10th grade Biology (or 11th grade if taking AP Biology) course. Many students wait until Spring of their junior year to take the English Literature and Math exams. The SAT exam is typically taken in the Spring of junior year and many students will retake the test in the Fall of their senior year.

Most colleges/universities want applicants to have their SAT and at least two SAT Subject Test scores ready by the time they apply. A handful of highly selective colleges require applicants to submit one to three SAT Subject Tests. Some colleges/universities have more specific guidelines regarding the Subject Tests you need to take. For example, MIT requires one Math

SAT 2 and one Science SAT 2. Other schools including Duke and Tufts University will waive the SAT Subject Test requirement if you submit ACT scores, however, these schools will still look at the SAT Subject Test scores if you send them in with your application. Many other schools like New York University and Middlebury College allow students to submit SAT 2 results in place of SAT or ACT scores.

Tip: College/university SAT 1 and 2 policies vary widely. Be sure to always look up the testing requirement for every school you are planning to apply to.