

About PSAT/NMSQT

The PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) is a program co-sponsored by the College Board and [National Merit Scholarship Corporation](#). For many students, the PSAT/NMSQT is the first official step on the road to college. It assesses skills developed through years of study in a wide range of courses as well as through experiences outside the classroom.

The PSAT/NMSQT also provides all test-takers with access to MyRoad, the College Board's online majors, college, and career exploration program to allow them to begin college and career planning.

Students take the PSAT/NMSQT to:

- **Help assess academic skills necessary for college-level work**
- **Prepare for the SAT**
- **Enter Competitions for National Scholarships**
For more information, go to [Scholarship and Recognition Programs](#).
- **Receive information from colleges**
For more information, go to [Student Search Service](#).
- **Begin college and career planning**

Encourage your younger students to take the test.

In 2005, 53% of PSAT/NMSQT test-takers were sophomores or younger students. Younger test-takers have more time to develop the skills reported on [Score Report Plus](#) that they need to improve to succeed in high school and college. Students who take the test as sophomores need to take it again as juniors to qualify for [National Merit scholarship programs](#).

http://www.collegeboard.com/prof/counselors/tests/psat/about_psat.html

The PSAT gives high-school juniors a chance to qualify for National Merit Scholarship Corporation scholarship programs. It's given once a year, in October, mostly to juniors and sophomores.

Like the SAT, but Shorter

The PSAT is a little bit more than two hours long. It consists of two twenty-five minute Verbal sections, two twenty-five minute Math sections, and one half-hour Writing Skills section.

The PSAT is great practice for the SAT. Although it's shorter than the SAT, the PSAT has all the question-types and tests much the same knowledge. Virtually all of the techniques and strategies that apply to the PSAT also apply to the SAT.

When to Take the PSAT

The PSAT scores that are counted for scholarships and other awards are from your junior year. Many students take the PSAT as sophomores, though, for practice. This gives you risk-free exposure to the exam's format, question-types, and content. You can compare your test-run score to SAT I scores achieved by students at colleges on your wish list. If your scores are low, compared to the college averages, you may want to begin formal preparation for the PSAT and SAT I. Since the exam is designed

to test skills acquired over a period of time, early preparation is often the only way to see a significant increase in your test scores.

<http://www.math.com/students/kaplan/psat.html#when>

Score Report Plus

[Score Report Plus Sample \(.pdf/1.82MB\)](#) *Requires [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) (latest version recommended).*

[Resources for Understanding Score Report Plus](#)

About Score Report Plus

Two copies of students' PSAT/NMSQT score reports are mailed to schools in early December. The score report has eight sections:

1. **PSAT/NMSQT Scores.** Critical reading, math, and writing skills scores are each reported on a 20-80 scale. The average scores of juniors are between 47 and 49. Unless students earn scores that are much lower than average, they're probably developing the kinds of critical reading, math problem-solving, and writing skills needed for academic success in college.
2. **PSAT/NMSQT Score Ranges.** No test measures precisely what someone knows, and many factors can affect results. That is why test makers think of each score as a range that extends from a few points below to a few points above the score earned.
3. **Percentiles.** The national percentiles compare junior scores with those of all juniors taking the test; scores for sophomore or younger students are compared to sophomores.
4. **Overview of PSAT/NMSQT answers.** Score Report Plus should be used with the student's PSAT/NMSQT test book. For each test question, this section lists the correct answer, the student's answer, and the level of difficulty. It also summarizes how well a student did on easy, medium, and hard questions.
5. **Personalized "Improve Your Skills" section.** This section provides personalized critical reading, math, and writing skills feedback based on each student's pattern of responses across test questions. The skills listed are those that the student has the best chance of improving with some additional attention. The "How to Improve" suggestions for each skill are written by teachers and may help students strengthen their skills. This section also shows which test questions pertain to the skills described. The feedback provided is especially useful for younger test takers who have time to improve their academic skills before going to college.
6. **National Merit Scholarship Corporation information.** The total of the critical reading, math, and writing skills scores is the Selection Index used by [National Merit Scholarship Corporation](#) to designate groups to be honored in its scholarship programs.
7. **Educational Plans.** Lists self-reported grade average and intended college major. This section gives helpful counseling information, including a description of the type of study that complements student interests, along with associated skills and recommended high school courses.

My College Quick Start

Beginning with the fall 2006 PSAT/NMSQT, all high school students who take the test will receive, when score reports are returned in early December, *My College QuickStart*, a personalized online college planning package, with access until they graduate high school.

It includes:

- **Interactive, supplemental score report online** that links to the questions and answer explanations to help students learn from their results; also includes PSAT/NMSQT state percentiles and SAT score projections.
- **Personalized SAT study plan** that is based upon the student's performance on the PSAT/NMSQT and links to SAT study resources.
- **Personalized lists of colleges and majors.** Students receive personalized lists of colleges, majors, and careers that link to MyRoad to help them make decisions that are right for them. They can learn about their personality type using the personality profiler and can view articles with advice on key topics on the road ahead.
- **College and career planning with MyRoad™**

Download the My College QuickStart™ presentation:

[PDF version](#) (.pdf/1.77MB)

Requires Adobe Acrobat Reader (latest version recommended).

[PPT version](#) (.ppt/4.25MB)

Requires Microsoft PowerPoint Viewer (Windows/Macintosh)

The Mathematics Section

Overview

Time	Content	Item Types	Score
70 min. (two 25-min. sections and one 20-min. section)	Number and operations; algebra and functions; geometry; statistics, probability, and data analysis	Five-choice multiple-choice questions and student-produced responses	200-800

The SAT includes expanded math topics, such as exponential growth, absolute value, and functional notation, and place greater emphasis on such other topics as linear functions, manipulations with exponents, and properties of tangent lines.

Important skills formerly measured in the quantitative comparison format, such as estimation and number sense, will continue to be measured through the multiple choice and student response (grid-in) questions.

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/about/sat/math.html>

The Critical Reading Section

Overview

Time	Content	Item Types	Score
70 min. (two 25-min. sections and one 20-min. section)	Critical reading and sentence-level reading	Reading comprehension, sentence completions, and paragraph-length critical reading	200-800

The critical reading section, formerly known as the verbal section, includes short reading passages along with the existing long reading passages. Analogies have been eliminated, but sentence-completion questions and passage-based reading questions remain.

The Critical Reading Section measures:

- [Sentence Completions](#)
- [Passage-based Reading](#)

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/about/sat/reading.html>

The Writing Section

Overview

Time	Content	Item Types	Score
60 min.	Grammar, usage, and word choice	Multiple choice questions (35 min.) and student-written essay (25 min.)	200-800

The writing section includes both multiple-choice questions and a direct writing measure in the form of an essay.

Short Essay

- The short essay measures your ability to:
 - Organize and express ideas clearly
 - Develop and support the main idea
 - Use appropriate word choice and sentence structure
- You'll be asked to develop a point of a view on an issue, using reasoning and evidence — based on your own experiences, readings, or observations — to support your ideas.
- The essay will be scored by trained high school and college teachers. Each reader will give the essay a score from 1 to 6 (6 is the highest score) based on the overall quality of the essay and your demonstration of writing competence.
- Get more information about the essay:
 - [Sample Essay Question](#)
 - [Essay Scoring Guide](#)

Multiple-Choice

- The multiple-choice writing questions measure your ability to:
 - Improve sentences and paragraphs
 - Identify errors (such as diction, grammar, sentence construction, subject-verb agreement, proper word usage, and wordiness)
- Try multiple-choice questions:
 - [Identifying Sentence Errors](#)
 - [Improving Sentences](#)
 - [Improving Paragraphs](#)

SAT Preparation Center™

Know what to expect on test day by reviewing practice questions, taking a practice test, and more.

[The Official SAT Question of the Day™](#)

Practice with a daily question, hint, and explanation.

Official SAT Practice Questions

Read test directions and try official practice questions.

Official SAT Practice Test

Print and take a practice test, then get a score report and answer explanations online.

http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/prep_one/prep_one.html

PGCPS - Department of Test Administration Director of Test Administration

301-952-6224 Fax: 301-952-6228 College Board Testing

http://www.pgcps.org/~testing/tst_ad_coll_bd.html