

# Glossary of Terms

A look at admissions exams

## AP (Advanced Placement)

APs are college-level exams traditionally given at high schools during the month of May. The scoring grid goes from 1–5 (higher is better), with 3 representing a passing score. AP exam scores are used by admissions officers to give students college credit at virtually every college and university. Some colleges will recognize a grade of 3 as qualifying for credit. Most, though, require a 4 or 5. For more information, visit [PrincetonReview.com/APIInfo](https://PrincetonReview.com/APIInfo).

## SAT

The SAT is one of the core admissions exams. Historically, the SAT was popular in the West and the East, but is now accepted at most schools nationwide. Scores range from 600–2400, with the average score being about 1500. A good score is anything over 1800, and 2200+ is the number to aim for if you're applying to the most competitive schools. The SAT has Math, Reading and Writing sections and an essay. It can be taken 2–3 times, since colleges only count your highest section scores. For more information, visit [PrincetonReview.com/SATInfo](https://PrincetonReview.com/SATInfo). To register for the SAT, go to [CollegeBoard.com](https://CollegeBoard.com).

## ACT

The ACT is one of the core admissions exams. Historically, the ACT was the dominant college entrance exam in the Midwest and the South but, is now accepted at most schools nationwide. It's scored on a 1–36 basis (the average score is about 21). A good score is anything above 26, and 29+ will put you in the running for admission at the most selective schools. The ACT has 4 tests: English, Reading, Math and Science as well as an optional 30-minute Writing Test. Some schools may require the Writing Test, so be sure to ask before you sign up. The practice ACT is called the PLAN. For more information, visit [PrincetonReview.com/ACTInfo](https://PrincetonReview.com/ACTInfo). To register for the ACT, go to [ACT.org](https://ACT.org).

## PSAT/PLAN

Available as practice for the SAT or ACT, these tests have absolutely nothing to do with college admissions. However, they're a strong indicator of your current testing aptitude—if you do well on these tests, you're likely to do well on the SAT/ACT. There's no essay or Algebra II on the PSAT and it's about half the length of the SAT. Very good, junior-year PSAT testers may qualify for the National Merit scholarship program. The PSAT and PLAN are offered at your school, and you sign up through your counselor.

## SAT Subject Tests

These are one-hour, multiple-choice exams that focus on individual subjects (formerly known as SAT II exams). SAT Subject Tests are offered in Biology (Ecology or Molecular), Chemistry, Physics, World History, U.S. History, Math Level I, Math Level 2, English Literature and a host of foreign languages. These exams are required by many schools and can be submitted to colleges to show strength in a subject where perhaps your grade is a little soft. Check with individual colleges to see what they require. If you are fluent in a foreign language, take the Language with Listening Subject Test on the first Saturday in November. You may take up to three Subject Tests in one day (although we don't recommend it—it's pretty tiring), and each Subject Test is scored on the 200–800 scale. For more information, visit [PrincetonReview.com/SATSubjectTestsInfo](https://PrincetonReview.com/SATSubjectTestsInfo). To register for SAT Subject Tests, go to [CollegeBoard.org](https://CollegeBoard.org).

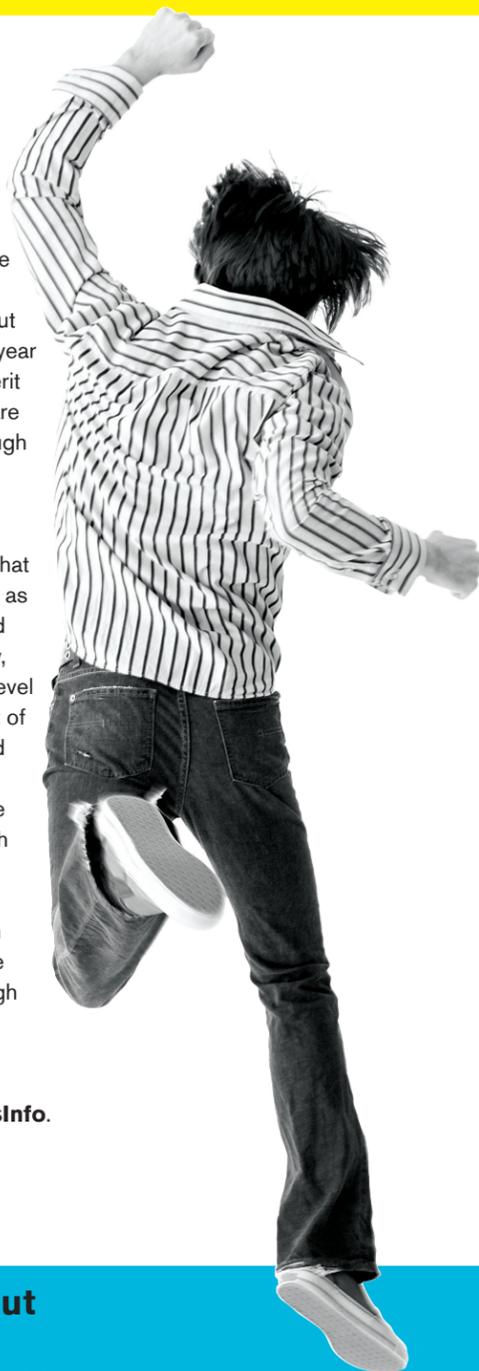
### Have questions about your testing plan?

Our friendly and knowledgeable experts are ready to assist you Monday–Friday, 9am–9pm, weekends, 10am–4pm, ET.



800-2Review (800-273-8439)  
[PrincetonReview.com](https://PrincetonReview.com)

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# High School Testing Timeline

SAT® | ACT® | PSAT® | SAT Subject Tests™ | AP®



**Not sure which test to take, or when? We've put together a timeline and some recommendations you can follow. Keep in mind that you might want to individualize this timeline based on your academic performance, college goals, schedule and test-taking ability.**

## Freshman Year

We recommend that you don't take tests during the first year in high school—not even the PSAT. We find that the scores often cause unnecessary stress and worry for families. The only exception is for students who are doing very well in their Biology classes and are planning to take AP Biology before the end of their junior year. If you fall in this category, then we think it's a good idea for you to take the Biology SAT Subject Test in Ecology.

## Sophomore Year

### October: Take the PSAT or the PLAN.

These tests are opportunities for risk-free practice that shouldn't be missed. The PSAT is a practice run for the SAT, and the PLAN serves the same purpose for the ACT. While intensive preparation for either test isn't necessary, we do offer several prep options that are a relatively relaxed way to begin the ongoing process of becoming a skilled tester. For more information, visit [PrincetonReview.com/PSAT](https://PrincetonReview.com/PSAT).

### May: If you're taking an AP class, then you'll have the chance to take the corresponding AP exam this month.

Some students take an AP class, but then don't take the AP exam. Don't miss this opportunity! Good performances in AP exams show admissions officers your high potential for achievement at the college level. In addition, more than 1,400 colleges and universities accept AP exams for course credits. High scores on AP exams may earn you college credit, helping you save time and money.

### May/June: Take any appropriate SAT Subject Test.

Traditionally, sophomores take SAT Subject Tests in either World History or Chemistry. So if that's your plan, there are a couple of important things to keep in mind. The World History Subject Test focuses on non-European cultures. Thus, if you are in Honors or AP World History, you'll be ready for this test. However, if you're coming out of AP European History, you'll struggle if you don't prepare. The Chemistry Subject Test is quite difficult, both in terms of content and the sheer number of questions you have to answer. You'll need to have taken Honors Chemistry to handle this exam.

## Summer Between 10th & 11th Grade

Without academics and extracurriculars on your plate, the summer before your junior year is the best time to prepare for the SAT and/or ACT. You'll have already learned the vast majority of the material that will appear on the SAT and ACT. Plus, you'll be ready to take the PSAT in October of your junior year, when your scores can put you in the running for a National Merit Scholarship. We offer a variety of programs with schedules designed to fit your on-the-go summer lifestyle, including private tutoring; weekday, weekend, day or evening classes; and two-week camps.

**See the last page for an in-depth description of college admissions exams.\***



## Junior Year

There are several testing timelines that you can pursue based on your personal goals and schedule, but generally students tend to follow two typical paths—either the “aggressive timeline” or the “traditional timeline.”

### Aggressive Timeline

Includes high achievers, kids with proactive parents, students who had a lot of time to prepare during the previous summer but who anticipate being extremely busy in the spring, students who want to try to achieve National Merit status and students who will apply as Early Decision candidates.

**October – SAT, followed by PSAT**

**November – Language Listening Subject Tests for fluent speakers**

**December – Try the ACT**

**Winter – Refresher preparation**

**January/March – A second crack at the SAT, if necessary**

**April – A second crack at the ACT, if necessary**

**May – APs and SAT Subject Tests\***

**June – SAT Subject Tests**

\*There are many possible combinations of Subject Tests. If you have questions about your testing plan, call us at **1-800-2Review** (800-273-8439).

### Traditional Timeline

**September/October – Light prep (PSAT Clinic)**

**October – PSAT**

**Fall/Winter – Intensive prep**

(can do extended prep starting in November or beginning in January)

**January/March/April – Take the SAT or ACT**

**May/June – SAT Subject Tests (if needed) or a second attempt at the SAT**

## Senior Year

Senior year can be complicated because there are several factors that may affect your testing timeline. From the broadest perspective, if you choose to follow the aggressive timeline, then October should be your last ACT/SAT/Subject Test attempt. Traditional timeline students have up to and including December of their senior year to take the SAT or ACT and still make it in time for most colleges' admission deadlines.

