

ACT Assessment vs. SAT Reasoning Test

The Duke University Talent Identification Program does not recommend one test over the other. Both tests are acceptable for purposes of the 7th Grade Talent Search. Some considerations for parents may be testing dates and the location of test centers. Reproducing the information below for parents and students may prove helpful to them in making their decision on selecting the ACT or SAT. This comparison is also found on the Duke TIP Web site, www.tip.duke.edu.

ACT Test Format

The ACT is a measure of academic achievement closely tied to high school curriculum. High achievement on this instrument generally reflects direct exposure to the subject matter. The ACT is composed of four* multiple-choice sections: Math, English, Reading, and Science. The maximum score on each section is 36. A composite score is generated which addresses the total performance.

ACT Math

(Calculator allowed)

60 Questions – 60 minutes

Covering pre-algebra, elementary algebra, intermediate algebra, coordinate geometry, plane geometry and trigonometry.

ACT English

75 questions – 45 minutes

Covering punctuation, grammar and usage, sentence structure, strategy, organization and style.

ACT Reading

40 questions – 35 minutes

Measures reading comprehension by examining ability with conclusions, comparisons, generalizations, reasoning and referring.

ACT Science

40 questions – 35 minutes

Examines knowledge of biology, chemistry, physics and earth/space science. Emphasis is on reasoning skills rather than acquired knowledge.

*ACT offers an optional writing section. Duke TIP will not be registering students for the optional writing test. Students may choose to add this component to their registration once it is transmitted to ACT by contacting ACT directly.

SAT Test Format

The SAT Reasoning Test is a measure of the critical thinking skills you will need for academic success in college. The SAT assesses how well you analyze and solve problems—skills you learned in school that you will need in college. The SAT is composed of 3 sections, Math, Critical Reading, and Writing and each section is scored on a scale of 200-800.

SAT Math

(Calculator allowed)

70 minutes

Covering number and operations, algebra and functions, geometry, statistics, probability and data analysis. Includes multiple-choice and student-produced responses.

SAT Critical Reading

70 minutes

Covering reading comprehension, sentence completions and paragraph-length critical reading.

SAT Writing

60 minutes

Multiple-choice questions and student-written essay. Covers grammar, usage and word choice.

SAT Equating

Every SAT includes a 25-minute, unscored section. It can be either a critical reading, math or multiple-choice writing section. This section does not count toward the final score, but is used to try out new questions for future editions of the SAT to ensure that scores on new editions are comparable to earlier editions.

Duke TIP Ideology Concerning Preparation Courses. Duke TIP does not recommend that students take part in excessive test preparation. Talent Search testing is diagnostic in nature; unnecessary anxiety is often the only obvious result from some preparation programs. It is sufficient to be familiar with the structure of the test and guessing strategies as they are presented and to complete the practice test provided.