

BCS COLLEGE UPDATE

October 2011



DATES TO REMEMBER

- ❖ Oct 12 PSAT Test, 8 am @ BCS for 9th-11th graders
- ❖ Nov 4 Registration Deadline for Dec 10 ACT
- ❖ Nov 8 Registration Deadline for Dec 3 SAT
- ❖ Dec 3 SAT Test Date
- ❖ Dec 10 ACT Test Date
- ❖ Jan 1 FAFSA opens (only applies to Seniors)

RECOMMENDED READING

- ✓ *Crash Course for the SAT, 4th Edition (College Test Preparation)* by Princeton Review, Jul 19, 2011, \$9.99 at amazon.com or Barnes & Noble
- ✓ *Crash Course for the ACT, 3rd Edition (College Test Preparation)* by Princeton Review (Paperback - Feb 20, 2007), \$9.99 at amazon.com or Barnes & Noble

PSAT TEST PREP

- ❖ PSAT Skills Insight is a free online test prep. No access code is necessary. collegeboard.org/psatskills
- ❖ For students who took the PSAT last year - My College QuickStart is a free online personalized planning kit for all PSAT test takers. It presents their data in 4 main parts:
 - 1) Online Score Report - an enhanced score report that allows students to review each test question, the student's answer and the correct answer with answer explanations.
 - 2) SAT Study Plan - a customized study plan based on their PSAT test performance, highlighting skills for review and practice.
 - 3) College Matches - a starter list of colleges based on the student's state and indicated choice of major.
 - 4) Major & Career Matches - major & career matches that are compatible with the student's interests & personality type.

You will need a College Board website account (free account that you set up) and the access code printed on your PSAT paper score report from last year. Students were given this information in January after taking last year's PSAT. Freshmen will not be able to access QuickStart until after they take the PSAT. collegeboard.org/student/testing/psat/quickstart.html

The PSAT test results are mailed to BCS, not to the student's home. Test results will be given to your student in December or January.

BRING ON PSAT TEST DAY, OCT 12TH

- ✓ No. 2 pencils and eraser
- ✓ The same calculator that you use at BCS: TI-83, TI-83 Plus, or TI-84 Plus

PLANNING CALENDAR

Freshman

- ✓ Remember that your transcript will include grades from 9-12th
- ✓ Begin your resume. You'll need this information for college applications. It will be easier to keep up with the information as you go. List the activities by year and in the following four categories that appear on the college application: Extracurricular Activities, Community or Volunteer Service, Talents/Awards/Honors, and Employment/Internships/Summer Activities.

Sophomore

- ✓ Don't forget that every grade counts on your transcript.
- ✓ Update your resume.

Junior

- ✓ Take the SAT/ACT this fall and in May/June if you plan to attend a four year university.
- ✓ To play Division I or II sports, contact coaches at colleges you're considering and register with the NCAA Clearinghouse at ncaa.org. Send your SAT/ACT scores to NCAA Clearinghouse (9999). Mail official transcripts to NCAA Eligibility Center, Certification Processing, PO Box 7136, Indianapolis, IN 46207-7136.
- ✓ What matters to you in a college: size, distance from home, academics, athletics, majors offered, etc.?
- ✓ Check out college admissions requirements for colleges you are interested in.
- ✓ Plan official college visits.
- ✓ Students interested in military academies must begin the process.

Senior

- ✓ Update your resume.
- ✓ If necessary, register to retake the SAT/ACT.
- ✓ All Texas public colleges and universities accept the Apply Texas Application at applytexas.org which is available online August 1st.
- ✓ Work on the application essays. The essay topics are listed at applytexas.org. Check your college's requirements for essays.
- ✓ If your colleges require SAT Subject Tests, register. When you register, request that your results be sent to your colleges.
- ✓ Submit college applications by the deadline. Deadlines are posted on the applytexas.org website or the college website.
- ✓ Request your official high school transcript. Fill out a "Transcript Release Form" and turn into the Front Office.
- ✓ If you have not made any official college visits, do so prior to submitting your application if possible.
- ✓ If your college requires letters of recommendation, be thinking about whom you want to write one for you.
- ✓ If you applied early, verify that all your application materials have been received.

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PSAT & SAT TEST TIPS

- ✓ Write all over the test booklet. Don't try to do the work in your head. Your answers will be on the bubble sheet.
- ✓ Don't go back and forth between the test booklet and answer sheet to bubble answers after every question. Complete a passage or page and then transfer all of the answers to the bubble sheet.
- ✓ Slow down, using the whole time allowed to work on fewer problems and answering more of the problems correctly. You'll get a higher score if you do only 75% of the problems and answer them correctly than if you do all of the problems and answer only half correctly.
- ✓ Unlike the ACT, most of the problems are arranged in increasing order of difficulty within their sections. The first third of the questions in a section are easy. The next third of the questions are medium-difficulty and the last third of the questions are hard. When you're working on easy problems, pick the choice that seems right to you. When working on medium problems, be careful, take more time. If you're working on hard problems, eliminate the choices that first seem attractive to you, they are most always traps.
- ✓ Use the Process of Elimination to determine the correct answer.
- ✓ All questions count the same, so answer the easy questions first. 1 point for a correct answer, 0 points for a question left blank, and minus .25 points for a wrong answer.
- ✓ On the test booklet mark the questions as you go. Mark those that you skip and to which you want to return if you have time. Cross out the questions that you know you don't want to go back to.
- ✓ Write the answer on top of the bubble grid before you bubble it in. The scoring machine only reads the bubbles. If you bubble incorrectly, the computer will mark it wrong.

MATH TEST TIPS

- ✓ Know your math definitions.
- ✓ Math sections of the SAT test mostly basic arithmetic, algebra, and geometry.
- ✓ Unlike the ACT, most of the problems are arranged in increasing order of difficulty within their sections.
- ✓ Plug In for algebra and geometry problems with variables in the answer choices. Start by picking a number for the variable in the problem. When you Plug In the answer choices, begin with choice "C", the middle number. By starting in the middle, you eliminate answer choices. If choice "C" is too small, try a larger number.
- ✓ There are certain types of Plugging In questions for which 0 and 1 are great and easy to use. Always check all answer choices.

READING TEST TIPS

- ✓ Instead of reading thoroughly, quickly skim the essay. Go to the questions. Do the line-specific questions first and the general questions later.
- ✓ Do all of the easy questions - the short questions, those with line or paragraph numbers in the question, and those with lots of proper nouns (capitalized words) in the question and answer choices (easier to find when you are scanning the passage for the answer).
- ✓ In a line or paragraph number question, always read the five lines before and the five lines after the indicated line or paragraph.

WRITING TEST TIPS

- ✓ Write as much as you can in the time allotted.
- ✓ There is no "right" or "wrong" answer to the prompt. Express judgments by taking a position on the issue in the prompt. Don't argue for both sides of the issue.
- ✓ Make sure your essay has an introduction paragraph, two body paragraphs for the two examples, and a conclusion paragraph for a total of four paragraphs.
- ✓ Take time to write a brief outline on the test booklet to organize your thoughts before you begin.
- ✓ Introduction paragraph should include a definitive thesis – do you agree or disagree with the prompt; why you believe what you do, and finish the introduction by previewing the examples you're going to talk about.
- ✓ Body paragraphs should be specific, not general. Develop only one example per paragraph. Relate your example back to your thesis, showing the reader how the example supports your point of view.
- ✓ Begin body paragraphs with a transition word (however, while, moreover, despite, even though, although, in addition). Start with your strongest example first.
- ✓ Conclusion paragraph should refer back to your examples and original thesis. Sum up what you've said and answer the question, "Why do you see it this way?"
- ✓ Present a neatly written response. Neatness does count. Grammar and spelling is important.
- ✓ Appearance matters. Your essay must look well-structured. Indent your paragraphs, and keep your introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion separate from each other.

PSAT SCORING

- ✓ Add a zero to your PSAT score to see roughly what you would score on the SAT.

SAT SCORING

The total score for each section on the SAT test is on a 200-800 point scale. 1 point for a correct answer, 0 points for a question left blank, and minus ¼ point for a wrong answer.

Preceding excerpts from Crash Course for the SAT, 4th Edition (College Test Preparation) by Princeton Review (Jul 19, 2011)

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ACT TEST TIPS

- ✓ Write all over the test booklet. Don't try to do the work in your head. Your answers will be on the bubble sheet.
- ✓ Don't go back and forth between the test booklet and answer sheet to bubble answers after every question. Complete a passage or page and then transfer all of the answers to the bubble sheet.
- ✓ NEVER leave a bubble empty. Unlike the SAT, the ACT does not have a guessing penalty. GUESS.
- ✓ On the test booklet mark the questions as you go. Mark those that you skip and to which you want to return if you have time. Cross out the questions that you know you don't want to go back to.
- ✓ Write the answer on top of the bubble grid before you bubble it in. The scoring machine only reads the bubbles. If you bubble incorrectly, the computer will mark it wrong.
- ✓ If you don't know the answer, figure it out by process of elimination. If you can identify the wrong answers, you have the right answer. Every time you figure out a certain answer choice is wrong, be sure to cross it out so that you don't accidentally pick it.
- ✓ If there is time leftover, go back and check your work and make sure no bubbles were left blank.
- ✓ Unlike the SAT, the easiest questions don't come first, and the hardest questions don't show up only at the end.
- ✓ All questions count the same, so answer the easy ones first.

ENGLISH TEST TIPS

- ✓ Remember that 25 percent of the underlined words or phrases are perfect just the way they are.
- ✓ Anything that is not underlined is perfect just the way it is. Use those sentences to guide you in evaluating the underlined portions. Keep in mind that both parts have to agree.
- ✓ Don't skip from question to question. Read the entire passage as you go and pay close attention to it.
- ✓ Be sure to find a mistake before you decide to fix it.
- ✓ The answers will tell you what to focus on when doing the question.
- ✓ The only time you want to end one sentence and start another is when each of the two sentences being created is a complete idea.
- ✓ Questions about commas will have answers containing mostly commas and maybe a dash. To tell if they are placed properly, read the sentence and leave out the stuff between commas. If it sounds okay, then the commas are correct. If it doesn't, then they're not.
- ✓ To get verb questions correct you must match the underlined verb with the verbs in the non-underlined part of the passage.
- ✓ ACT believes that good writing uses contractions. Know the difference between its, it's, and its'.
- ✓ Subjects and verbs have to agree. If you have a plural subject you need a plural verb.
- ✓ OMIT is one of four answer choices, but it's correct FAR MORE than 25 percent of the time. When it's an option, assume it's right until you find a better choice.
- ✓ Cross out the answer choices you eliminate as you go or you will waste a lot of time rereading answer choices.
- ✓ ACT believes that good language is clear, concise, focused, and NOT redundant. Always consider the answer choice that is shorter, drier and dull, rather than the one that is full of colorful language.

MATH TEST TIPS

- ✓ Questions: 14 Pre-Algebra, 10 Elementary Algebra, 9 Intermediate Algebra, 9 Coordinate Geometry, 14 Plane Geometry, and 4 Trig.
- ✓ Geometry covers basic concepts that fall in 4 categories: angles, perimeter, area and coordinate geometry. No proofs will be on test.
- ✓ Two of the four Trig questions will deal with the way simple trig functions are related to a right triangle.
- ✓ Unlike the SAT, the math is not in a set order of difficulty. There are some easy problems at the beginning and the end of the test.
- ✓ Do the math test in two passes. On the first pass, do the questions you are sure of and guess on the ones that stump you. Circle everything else. On the second pass, work on the circled questions.
- ✓ When you have five minutes left in the test, stop and put an answer down for every question you haven't finished. GUESS.
- ✓ ACT has pretty much eliminated simple plug in questions. There are more long word questions with elaborate setups. ACT is also putting more useless information in the questions and asking more theoretical questions. All of this forces you to do more thinking about the mathematical concepts behind the problems and prevent you from tossing numbers into the calculator on every question.
- ✓ Plug In for algebra and geometry problems with variables in the answer choices. Start by picking a number for the variable in the problem. When you Plug In the answer choices, begin with choice "C", the middle number. By starting in the middle, you eliminate answer choices. If choice "C" is too small, try a larger number.
- ✓ There are certain types of Plugging In questions for which 0 and 1 are great and easy to use. Always check all answer choices.
- ✓ Ballparking is the name for the process of reading a question, figuring out roughly what the right answer will be (without actually working the problem), and then crossing out any answers that are too big or too small.
- ✓ Don't use Ballparking on questions that have variables in the answer choices. Use on questions that have numbers in answers.
- ✓ ACT comes up with the wrong answers by working the problem and making the sorts of mistakes that a student might make. The wrong answers they get are what they use as the wrong answers on the test. That's why when you screw up on a question, you frequently find your wrong answer listed.
- ✓ You will see plenty of percent questions on the ACT. Use the 10% rule: to get 10% of any number, move the decimal point one place to the left. To get 1% of any number, move the decimal point two places to the left.
- ✓ Know the following math definitions: integer, positive, product, sum, square, reciprocal, common factor, variables, coefficients, absolute value. Know the difference between an open circle and a closed circle in a number line. Know how to factor a simple quadratic equation.
- ✓ Know how to "solve for x". Remember that everything you do on one side of the equation must also be done on the other side.
- ✓ ACT is asking more questions that involve conceptualization instead of calculation.
- ✓ If you aren't good at seeing images in your head, draw as much as you can on the test booklet.
- ✓ Use the process of elimination to get rid of bad answer choices.

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READING TEST TIPS

- ✓ Reading test has four passages, each with 10 questions. Each passage is about 90 lines long. Each question has 4 answer choices and is in no particular order of difficulty.
- ✓ If you complete 3 of the 4 passages with 80% accuracy and then guess on the 10 questions you skip from the 4th passage, you should get about 26 raw points.
- ✓ First, read the short blurbs on each of the 4 passages. Decide which ones interest you the most and do those first. When you decide which passage you will do first, do NOT read the passage. Go right to the questions and then skim the passage for the answers. Don't waste time reading the entire passage.
- ✓ Read the question. Put it in your own words before going to the passage to find the answer. Find the answer in the passage. Put the answer in your own words BEFORE looking at the answer choices. Read the answers and cross off any that don't agree with your answer.
- ✓ Do all of the easy questions - the short questions, those with line or paragraph numbers in the question, and those with lots of proper nouns (capitalized words) in the question and answer choices (easier to find when you are scanning the passage for the answer).
- ✓ In a line or paragraph number question, always read the five lines before and the five lines after the indicated line or paragraph.
- ✓ The questions are written to mislead you and the wrong answers are there to confuse you.
- ✓ Save the EXCEPT questions for last as they involve finding 3 correct answers and one incorrect answer - much more work.

SCIENCE TEST TIPS

- ✓ Science is the last multiple choice part of the ACT. It is 35 minutes long and contains 40 questions. There are 7 passages; 3 charts and graphs passages; 3 experiments passages; and one fighting scientists passage.
- ✓ All the information needed to do every question is provided in the passage. You don't need any scientific knowledge for the test.
- ✓ Don't feel that you have to do the passages in the order they are given to you. Do the ones you like the most and skip past the ones that seem tricky.
- ✓ With the exception of the fighting scientists passage, IGNORE THE INTRO. The intro is filled with junk to distract you and waste your time. Go directly to the passage, the charts, or the experiments.
- ✓ Except for the fighting scientists passage, there are 3 types of questions: Look it up; What if?; and Why?
- ✓ In the charts & graphs passages, go directly to the charts and read only enough of them to know what is being represented. Then go directly to the questions.
- ✓ Be very careful on the NOT questions to keep track of what they are looking for.
- ✓ In the experiments passages, an experiment has been conducted and the results are given to you. Then some aspect of the experiment is changed, the experiment is repeated and the results are given to you again. There may even be a 3rd and a 4th experiment. The key to the questions is determining which experiment they refer to. Each experiment is essentially the same with only a minor change, so focus on the changes.

- ✓ In the experiments section, again IGNORE THE INTRO, but do read the description of each of the 3 or 4 experiments. Decide what makes each one different and note that on the test booklet next to each experiment.
- ✓ Questions are chock-full of useless information to make the questions intimidating. Don't get trapped. Cut through the nonsense to find out what is important and then answer the question.
- ✓ In the fighting scientists passage, all the information they give you is important and MUST BE READ. The passage will feature scientists debating an issue. The topic is irrelevant. You need to know how each argument is put together and what each scientist's point is. Do this passage last as it will take the most time.

WRITING TEST TIPS

- ✓ This is a 30 minute section with one essay prompt.
- ✓ Write as much as you can in the time allotted.
- ✓ There is no "right" or "wrong" answer to the prompt. Express judgments by taking a position on the issue in the prompt. Don't argue for both sides of the issue.
- ✓ Make sure your essay has an introduction paragraph, two body paragraphs for the two examples, and a conclusion paragraph for a total of four paragraphs.
- ✓ Take time to write a brief outline on the test booklet to organize your thoughts before you begin.
- ✓ Introduction paragraph should include a definitive thesis – do you agree or disagree with the prompt; why you believe what you do, and finish the introduction by previewing the examples you're going to talk about.
- ✓ Body paragraphs should be specific, not general. Develop only one example per paragraph. Relate your example back to your thesis, showing the reader how the example supports your point of view.
- ✓ Begin body paragraphs with a transition word (however, while, moreover, despite, even though, although, in addition). Start with your strongest example first.
- ✓ Conclusion paragraph should refer back to your examples and original thesis. Sum up what you've said and answer the question, "Why do you see it this way?"
- ✓ Present a neatly written response. Neatness does count. Grammar and spelling is important.
- ✓ Appearance matters. Your essay must look well-structured. Indent your paragraphs, and keep your introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion separate from each other.

ACT SCORING

The test is scored 1-36 for the English, Math, Reading and Science sections. These section scores are averaged to create the composite score, which is also on a 1-36 scale. If you take the Writing test (which Texas universities require), it is not factored into the composite.

Preceding excerpts from Crash Course for the ACT, 3rd Edition (College Test Preparation) by Princeton Review (Paperback - Feb 20, 2007)

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ACT

ACT Test Date	Registration Deadline	
Dec 10, 2011	Nov 4, 2011	Test Information Release available for \$18 **
Feb 11, 2012	Jan 13, 2012	
Apr 14, 2012	Mar 9, 2012	Test Information Release available for \$18 **
Jun 9, 2012	May 4, 2012	Test Information Release available for \$18 **

Check the ACT website at www.actstudent.org for information on ACT test dates, test sites and registration information. Most universities require the ACT Writing Test even though it is optional.

Brazosport Christian School's Code is 443968.

Local ACT Test Centers are

- ❖ Brazoswood High School, center code 185450
- ❖ Angleton High School, center code 198330

***"Test Information Release" for \$18 includes a copy of the test questions used in determining your scores, a list of your answers, the answer key, and scoring instructions. If you take the Writing Test, you will also receive a copy of the writing prompt, the scoring rubric, and the scores assigned to your essay by two scorers. This is an invaluable tool if you intend to retake the test, as it allows you to see exactly where you need to focus your efforts.

SAT

SAT Test Date	Registration Deadline
Nov 5, 2011	Oct 7, 2011
Dec 3, 2011	Nov 8, 2011
Jan 28, 2012	Dec 30, 2011
Mar 10, 2012	Feb 10, 2012
May 5, 2012	Apr 6, 2012
Jun 2, 2012	May 8, 2012

Check the College Board website at www.collegeboard.org for information on SAT test dates, test sites and registration information.

Brazosport Christian School's Code is 443968.

Local SAT Test Centers are

- ❖ Brazosport High School in Freeport, center code 44420
- ❖ Angleton High School, center code 44133
- ❖ Columbia High School, center code 44902

Should I take the SAT or ACT?

All colleges, public and private, in state and out of state, accept either the SAT or ACT. Go to the BCS "College and Career" website for comparison information on the SAT vs the ACT. You may want to register your student for both tests to see which test they do better on.