



SAT® Understanding Scores



The **SAT** with Essay

What the SAT Measures

The SAT reinforces what students are learning in their classrooms while measuring the skills and knowledge that research shows are the most important for success in college and career. It includes the following sections.

EVIDENCE-BASED READING AND WRITING

This section is made up of a Reading Test and a Writing and Language Test, each composed of multiparagraph passages and multiple-choice questions.

The Reading Test measures comprehension and reasoning skills and focuses on close reading of passages in a wide array of subject areas. The Writing and Language Test measures a range of skills, including command of evidence, expression of ideas, and the use of standard English conventions in grammar and punctuation.

MATH

This section includes multiple-choice and student-produced response questions, and it is divided into two portions: one that allows calculator use and one that does not. It assesses skills in algebra, problem solving and data analysis, manipulation of complex equations, geometry, and trigonometry.

ESSAY

The Essay asks students to read a high-quality source text and write an effective analysis of that text using evidence drawn from the source. It measures a range of skills in reading, analysis, and writing.

How the SAT Is Scored

Students receive a total score that is the sum of their scores on the two sections (Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and Math). The SAT Essay is scored separately.

To calculate section scores, we first compute the student's raw score—the number of questions correctly answered—for each section. Nothing is deducted for incorrect answers or for unanswered questions.

Next, we convert each of the raw section scores to a scaled score of 200–800. This conversion process adjusts for slight differences in difficulty among versions of the test and provides a score that is consistent across different versions. The scaled scores are the scores provided on score reports.

SAT Scores

Total Scores

The total score is the sum of the two section scores; its range is 400–1600.

Section Scores

Students receive scores in the range of 200–800 for each of two sections. The Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section score combines the scores for the Reading Test and the Writing and Language Test. The Math section score is derived from the Math Test score, including the calculator and no-calculator portions.

Test Scores

The range for the following test scores is 10–40:

- Reading
- Writing and Language
- Math

Cross-Test Scores

The range for cross-test scores is also 10–40. These scores represent performance on select questions across the three tests and show a student's strengths in the following domains:

- Analysis in History/Social Studies
- Analysis in Science

Subscores

Subscores in the range of 1–15 offer feedback on student performance in the following skill areas:

- Command of Evidence
- Words in Context
- Expression of Ideas
- Standard English Conventions
- Heart of Algebra
- Problem Solving and Data Analysis
- Passport to Advanced Math

SAT Essay Scores

The following three scores for the SAT Essay are on a 2–8 scale:

- Reading
- Analysis
- Writing

These scores aren't added together or combined with any other test scores. The online score report shows the prompt the student responded to and the student's essay.

Score Ranges

A student's ability is better represented by score ranges than points. Score ranges are derived from the standard error of measurement and show how much your scores would likely vary if you took a different administration of the test under identical conditions.

Score ranges:

- Total: ± 40 points
- Section: ± 30 points
- Test scores, subscores, and cross-test scores: ± 2 points

Percentiles

A student's percentile rank represents the percentage of students whose score is equal to or lower than their score. For example, if a student's score is in the 75th percentile, 75% of a comparison group achieved scores at or below that student's score. Two types of percentile ranks, comparing student scores to two different reference populations, are provided in this publication for both total and section scores.

Nationally Representative Sample Percentiles are derived from a research study of U.S. students in grades 11 and 12 and are weighted to represent all U.S. students in those grades, regardless of whether they typically take the SAT.

SAT User Percentiles are based on the actual scores of students in the past three graduating classes who took the current SAT during high school. These user percentiles are reported on tests completed in August 2020 through June 2021.