

Information about the PSAT

The PSAT is focused on measuring what you learn in high school as well as the skills you need to succeed in college, and is primarily used as practice for the more difficult SAT. There are two versions of the PSAT which differ only in the difficulty of the questions; the format for both is identical. The PSAT 10 is primarily for high school sophomores, and contains appropriate level questions for those in 10th grade. The PSAT/NMSQT is primarily for high school juniors, and contains slightly more difficult problems. The PSAT/NMSQT is also used to determine eligibility for National Merit Scholars. The new PSAT (both versions), which began in Fall 2015, has several key differences to its predecessor:

- Stronger focus on the knowledge, skills, and understandings that research has identified as most important for college and career readiness and success.
- Greater emphasis on the meaning of words in extended contexts and on how word choice shapes meaning, tone, and impact.
- Rights-only scoring (no penalty for guessing).
- Scores will be reported on a shared common score scale with the SAT: The scale ranges for the PSAT scores are 320–1520 for the total score, 160–760 for each of two section scores, and 8–38 for test scores.

What sections are on the PSAT?	What skills are being assessed?	How long is this section?
Reading Test	In the first part of the <i>Evidence-Based Reading and Writing</i> section, students must read several passages and infographics from historical literature, social science texts, and scientific papers and answer questions on their Command of Evidence (finding evidence that best supports a given conclusion or answer to a previous question, and identifying how the author uses evidence) as well as Words in Context (using context clues to determine the meaning of a word and deciding how the author's word choices shapes meaning, style, and tone).	47 questions in 60 minutes
Writing and Language Test	In the second part of the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section, students must again read several passages and infographics and make judgments based on their Command of Evidence as well as Words in Context. However, these questions will have students choose sentences, phrases, or words that would improve the passages through strengthening an argument, making a passage more precise or concise, or improving syntax, style, or tone.	44 questions in 35 minutes

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Math Test	Questions on the Math Test are designed to mirror the problem solving and modeling students will do in college math, science, and social science courses, as well as practical problems from real life situations. Students will be tested on their ability to identify and use the most efficient solutions to problems, their grasp of math concepts, operations, and relations, and their ability to analyze a situation, determine the essential elements required to solve the problem, represent the problem mathematically, and carry out the solution. Note that some “grid-in” questions will require the student to fill in an answer instead of selecting from multiple choices. Additionally, a portion of this test will disallow use of a calculator to better assess the student’s fluency in math and understanding of some math concepts.	48 questions in 70 minutes
Total Time		139 questions in 2 hours 45 minutes

How is the PSAT scored?

The two major sections of the SAT, *Evidence-Based Reading and Writing* and *Math*, are both scored on a scale of 160-760. In the *Evidence-Based Reading and Writing* section, the number of correct answers on the **Reading** and **Writing and Language** Tests are tallied to give a raw score, which is then converted to a score on a scale of 160-760 using a process called equating. Equating adjusts for slight differences in difficulty between various versions of the test (such as versions taken on different days). Because the score is based solely on the number of correct answers, there is no penalty for guessing. The *Math* section is scored in the same manner, tallying the number of correct answers from the **Math** Test. The scores of these two sections are added together to give a total score between 320-1520.