

Prepped for Success

For most high school students, “test” is the ultimate four-letter word. And test anxiety can escalate even more as you approach the mother of all tests, the dreaded college entrance exam. But taking the ACT or SAT doesn’t have to be a stomach-turning, headache-inducing experience. Like most other things in school, if you give it enough effort, the pay-off can be great. In fact, pay-off is the operative word here: Do well enough and you can earn some significant money to put toward your college education.

Still, conquering the test takes more than knowledge about math, English, and science. You also need some facts about the tests themselves.

For instance, do you know which test, ACT or SAT, penalizes you for a wrong answer?

If you don’t know the answer on the ACT, no big deal – just fill in the bubble of

your best guess! The ACT gives you credit for only the answers that you get right – whether you guessed or not. The SAT, on the other hand, will subtract the wrong answers from your correct answers to get a final score.

On the SAT, don’t answer unless you think you really know the answer! Don’t panic if you can’t answer every question. You don’t have to answer every question correctly to get a good score. In fact, you can get an

average score by just answering about half of the questions correctly and leaving the others blank. And always remember that about half of the college-bound students taking the tests get about half the questions wrong, so don’t be freaked out by some of the more difficult questions.

How do you know which test should you take? Check to see which test is accepted at the college or university in which you’re interested. If both the ACT and SAT are accepted, take both tests, if possible. The tests reward different attributes, so how well you do may simply come down to what kind of test-taker you are.

More information – including practice questions – is available at www.act.org (ACT) or at www.collegeboard.com (SAT). 📖

A New SAT?

You may have heard talk about the “new SAT” versus the “old SAT.” The SAT test has, in fact, been revamped and the class of 2006 will be the first class to take the new SAT for college admissions. According to collegeboard.com, the official Web site for the SAT, the new test is designed to better coordinate with current curriculum being taught in high school.

So what’s different? Check out the chart below:

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| Writing
<i>(new section)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple-choice questions (grammar and usage) • Student-written essay |
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| Critical Reading
<i>(currently called Verbal)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analogies eliminated • Short reading passages added to existing long reading passages |
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| Math | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Math content expanded to include topics from third-year college preparatory math • Quantitative comparisons eliminated |
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