

The new SAT, PSAT and more

I think the SAT folks had a few too many espressos and got a bit carried away with their latest array of tests. In addition to the new SAT—ready for this—there will be three (but only one official) PSATs! Crazy, I know, but I don't make testing policy. I just try to help make sense of it and attempt to clarify it for students and parents.

OK, here goes!

Redesigned SAT

Stuff to Know

- Will begin March 2016
- 3 hours 50 minutes with the essay
- Four parts: Reading, Writing & Language, Math (two sections), and an optional essay
- The Reading and Writing & Language parts will be combined to form a student's Reading score from 200-800
- Two math sections, a non-calculator and a calculator section that will comprise a student's Math score from 200-800
- Overall SAT score will be from 400-1600 (sound familiar?)
- The essay, currently the first section and 25 minutes, will be moved to the end of the test, will be optional, and will be 50 minutes.
- All multiple choice questions will have four answer choices (a change from the current format of five answer choices for each multiple choice question).
- No points deducted for incorrect answers. Go ahead, guess away!
- No obscure vocabulary

What's Up With the Redesigned SAT?

Here's the Scoop:

Reading

52 questions 65 minutes

One section

- More of a focus on non-fiction passages from social science
- Some passages are excerpts from original text from hundreds of years ago
- Students will answer questions pertaining to graphs

Writing & Language

44 questions 35 minutes

One section

- Grammar and writing in context
- No isolated sentences as on the current SAT

Math

No Calculator section 20 questions
20 minutes

Calculator section 38 minutes
55 minutes

Good news and bad news

Good news first:

- There will be no more logic, esoteric, think-outside-the-box problems where students invariably state, "I never learned this in school."

Now the bad news:

- One section will be without the use of a calculator.
- There will be math concepts up through pre-calculus.
- There will be an emphasis on word problems, real-world situations, and analyzing charts and graphs.

Essay

- It will be scored from 2-12 (same as on the current SAT), but the score will be a separate reported score, similar to how it is on the ACT.
- On the current SAT, students are asked to take a stance on an issue. On the redesigned SAT, students will be asked to analyze an argument presented in a passage in order to explain how the author builds the argument to persuade his/her audience.

The Redesigned PSAT/NMSQT

When?

Beginning October 2015

Stuff to Know

Time: 2 hours 45 minutes

Evidence-Based Reading and Writing

- Reading section
- Writing & Language Arts section

Math

- Section with no calculator
- Section with calculator

Overall Score: 320 – 1520

Reading Score: 160 – 760

Math Score: 160 – 760

- Four answer choices on all multiple choice questions
- Points are not deducted for incorrect answers! Guess away, boys and girls!

PSAT 10

- Same as the PSAT and designed for 10th graders to take Spring semester.
- It's basically practice for the PSAT, which is essentially practice for the SAT.

When?

- February 22, 2016 – March 4, 2016
- Same time frame each year

My take (for what it's worth): This test is not necessary! Students take too many standardized tests as it is!

PSAT 8/9

When?

- Fall testing: September 28, 2015 to January 29, 2016
- Spring testing: February 22, 2016 to March 4, 2016
- Same time frame each year

From the College Board:

The PSAT 8/9 is a test that will help you and your teachers figure out what you need to work on most so that you're ready for college when you graduate from

high school. It tests the same skills and knowledge as the SAT, PSAT/NMSQT, and PSAT 10 – in a way that makes sense for your grade level.

My take (again): It's another revenue-generating stream for the College Board and not necessary. If you want to support the College Board, donate money but don't subject your kid to another test! Your call though!