

College Admission Tests & Practice Tests

Helpful things to know!

PSAT – 10th Grade

Preliminary SAT – In 10th grade this is a practice test which provides students with the opportunity to get a feel for the SAT and helps them identify potential strengths and weaknesses. Taking the PSAT early can increase your shot at getting a high PSAT/NMSQT score—and a coveted National Merit scholarship—later on.

LWSD pays for 10th graders to take this test, so it is free for students! This test is administered at LWHS during the school day.

PSAT/NMSQT – 11th Grade

Again, practice for SAT, but the big difference is that in 11th grade, it is the **National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test**. Each year about 1.6 million high school juniors enter the National Merit competition via the PSAT. Of these test takers 16,000 will become **Semifinalists**, which is determined by the score cut-off in the state you live. 15,000 will become **Finalists**. In the end, 7,500 entrants will each win a \$2,500 scholarship along with the extremely prestigious distinction of “National Merit Scholar.” Additionally, there are several universities that will offer full tuition scholarships to National Merit Scholars. This is an **optional** test, administered at LWHS during the school day, taken on the same day the 10th graders take the PSAT. Students pay a fee to take this test, approximately \$17.

Additional Scholarships

When you take the PSAT/NMSQT or the PSAT 10 and say "yes" to their free [Student Search Service](#), you can help scholarship providers find you. They'll also connect you to their scholarship partners, who offer over \$300 million annually in scholarships to qualified underserved students with financial need.

“Fear Free” SAT and ACT

LWHS PTSA partners with Princeton Review to offer practice SAT and/or ACT exams twice a year. The cost is \$10 per test. The tests are administered in the LWHS library under the same conditions as the real exams, but the scores are not reported to College Board. Exam and registration deadline dates are published in the Kang Crier and registration is available on the PTSA website, lwhsptsa.org. A couple of weeks following the exam, there is an optional review session with a rep from Princeton Review. They do promote their test prep services.

Note: This is a great way for students to see how they do on the ACT, since there is no ACT equivalent of the PSAT.

SAT or ACT?

See which test is required by the college(s) for which you are applying. Most schools accept either, some schools require neither! Some students take both tests in case they do better in one format over the other.

The tests are similar, but there are some differences. For example, the SAT test takes three hours, although with an optional 50-minute essay, the time adds up to almost four hours total. The ACT lasts two hours and 55 minutes, though a 40-minute optional writing test stretches it to a little more than three-and-a-half hours.

The SAT features 154 questions vs. 215 for the ACT. According to the College Board, which administers the SAT, **test-takers have more time on the SAT with 1 minute and 10 seconds per question, compared with 49 seconds on the ACT.**

The scoring for each test also differs. For the SAT, total scores range from 400-1600; for the ACT, the composite score runs from 1-36. Those ranges do not include the optional essays, which are scored separately from each exam.

The cost of the exams also varies. The SAT costs \$47.50 for the test only and \$64.50 if the optional essay is included. The ACT costs \$50.50 for only the exam and \$67 if the optional writing test is included. Additional fees may apply for other options, such as late registration. Students may also be able to take the SAT or ACT for free thanks to state support or fee waivers.

Scheduling to take the SAT & ACT exams is notoriously difficult! If not scheduled well in advance, students may have to travel a long distance to find an open testing seat. Be prepared for this!

Test Prep

You can spend a lot of money on prep courses for these exams. If this is something in which you want to invest, look for ones that have a format which fits your student's learning style and schedule. A couple of FREE ways for a self-motivated student to prep for the tests online...

Khan Academy

Khan Academy, which is free to use, has recently partnered with the College Board, the makers of the SAT, to produce free and official SAT prep materials. There is currently no official Khan Academy ACT prep; however, students can still use Khan Academy's resources to help them prepare for the ACT.

The great thing about Khan Academy is that it can link directly to a PSAT or SAT exam taken with College Board and create a customized study program based on the student's strengths

and weaknesses on the exam. They will set up a study regimen with daily email reminders and practice tests based on when a student is scheduled for the “real” SAT exam.

Xello - Method Test Prep

Method Test Prep is a **free, self-guided**, secure web-based program that **prepares students to take the ACT or SAT**. Students are provided anytime/anywhere access to a fully comprehensive, interactive, self-guided curriculum. Method Test Prep’s web-based SAT and ACT lessons are designed to help prepare students for either test by maximizing their test taking abilities through short five-to-fifteen-minute sessions. Students can access Method Test Prep by logging into their Xello account.

Testing Accommodations for Disabilities

To get approval of a student’s accommodations by College Board, they need to verify the student has a documented disability or condition that impairs their ability to take the SAT. The easiest way to do this is via an LWHS Counselor. They can use their online Services for Students with Disabilities program to enter the info.

For the SAT, students with disabilities like the following are often accommodated, although this is not an exhaustive list:

- ADHD
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Communication Disorders
- Head Injuries
- Hearing Impairments
- Learning Disorders
- Physical/Medical Disabilities
- Psychiatric Disorders
- Tic Disorders/Tourette’s
- Visual Impairments

ACT accommodations are also offered for the same disabilities, although the student must be registered for a test date before the counselor can confirm accommodations.