

A Note From Our Founder

Dear Parent/Student,

At C2, we understand that receiving your SAT score can be a fraught experience. In addition to the perception that so very much is riding on this single number, an SAT score purports to measure a student in cold, quantitative terms.

At C2, we recognize that students are much more than a number – and that your SAT Score Report is as well. We've put together this guide to help you understand not just what the various numbers on the SAT Score report mean but also what you should do about them. Students following the advice in this guide can make solid, informed decisions not only about their testing schedules but also about the larger college application process.

Because in many ways, the SAT is just the first step in a larger process. Students – particularly students who are not yet seniors in high school – should view their SAT Scores as informative but not definitive. Too often, students assume that their SAT Score sets a ceiling on their potential accomplishments, ruling out schools whose admissions criteria they have not yet achieved.

This is entirely the wrong attitude. Instead, students should view their early attempts at the SAT as useful practice, helpful diagnostic, and a floor – the minimum they are capable of achieving should they stop improving but also a place from which they can continue to grow, develop, and improve. They should use their initial scores to inform, not determine, the list of schools to which they aspire not the list of schools to which they could gain admission right now.

Of course, students should not assume that they will make heroic improvements overnight. Improving on the SAT, as with any skill, takes time, effort, and practice, all factors that students should consider when attempting to project their future scores. Nonetheless, at C2 we know it's possible; every day we watch as our students push themselves to set and reach goals that they would have previously thought impossible.

David Kim
Founder - C2 Education



Understanding Your Score Report

Overall Scores



TOTAL SCORE: SCORES RANGE FROM 400-1600

Scores for English (Evidence-Based Reading and Writing) and Math each range from 200 - 800. Click “View Details” to see how a student’s scores measure up to both benchmarks for college readiness and national averages.



TEST SCORES

These scores provide further detail into how a student performed and help contextualize a student’s scores. Click “Show Details” to compare scores to national averages and see percentile rankings.

BENCHMARKS: BARE MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR COLLEGE READINESS

While Green (meets or exceeds benchmarks) is certainly better than Yellow or Red, a student meeting the Math benchmark has “a 75 percent chance of earning at least a C in first semester, credit-bearing college courses in algebra, statistics, pre-calculus, or calculus.” Thus, students who aim to excel in college will need to vastly exceed the benchmark scores.

What's a Good Score?

The College Board has modified the scale on which the SAT is scored. Therefore, intuitions about what makes for a good score may no longer be accurate. What constitutes a good score varies with the goals, abilities, and willingness to work of the student in question. The table below should help students contextualize New SAT scores, by enabling them to compare their scores to the (converted) scores* of admitted freshmen at a range of schools.

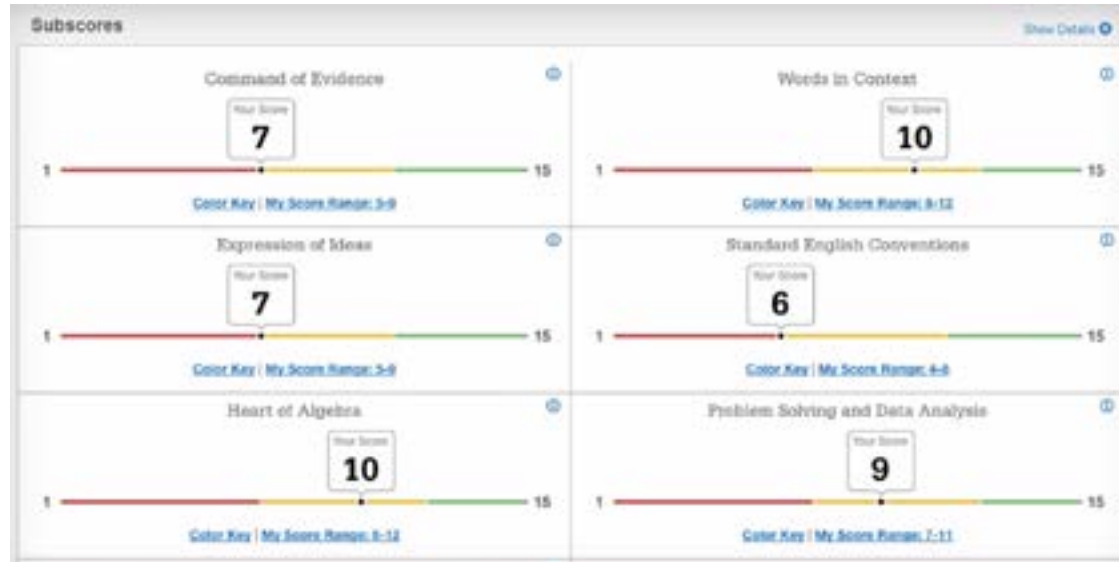
School	Avg. New SAT Score for Freshmen
Perfect Score	1600
Harvard	1530
UC Berkeley	1440
Georgia Tech	1440
UC San Diego	1430
University of Illinois (UC)	1390
UCLA	1400
UT Austin	1330
University of Georgia	1330
Penn. State	1260
University of Alabama	1210

*Where available, mean SAT scores of admitted freshmen were converted to New SAT scores using concordance tables released by the College Board. Some schools release only 25th and 75th percentile scores as opposed to mean scores; in those cases, the 25th and 75th percentile scores were averaged prior to conversion.



Understanding Your Score Report

Subscores



SUBSCORES

Nearly every question on the exam is classified into one or more categories that describe the skill the question is testing:

- Students should use their subscores to build a study plan that targets specific weaknesses.
- Nearly every question contributes to at least one subscore.
- Some questions may count towards multiple subscores.
- Some questions may count towards both subscores and cross-test scores.

The chart below lays out visually which subscores are derived from questions on which sections of the exam.

Exam Section	Reading	Writing & Language	Math
Subscore	Command of Evidence		Heart of Algebra
	Words in Context		Problem Solving and Data Analysis
		Expression of Ideas	Passport to Advanced Math
		Standard English Conventions	

Understanding Your Score Report

Cross-Test Scores



While there is no Science section on the SAT, the SAT does test Science skills in two ways:

- One or more of the passages in the Reading section will be a “Natural Science” passage.
- Students are tested on their ability to understand, interpret, and synthesize information in a scientific context, along with quantitative data oft-presented in graphical form, throughout the exam. Such questions can and do appear in the Reading, Writing and Language, and Math sections.

Similarly, the History/Social Studies Cross-Test Score comes from Social Studies passage(s) in the Reading Section, some of the data/graphics questions, as well as potentially from a “Founding Documents/Great Global Conversation” passage.

For the vast majority of students, Cross-Test scores are much more important for self-diagnosis than for college admissions. Students should focus on designing a study plan to address their weaknesses, which Cross-Test scores help identify.

Students applying to selective undergraduate programs in the sciences (for example, the undergraduate engineering program at UC Berkeley), however, should have strong Analysis in Science cross-test scores to complement other strong indicators of scientific aptitude (strong grades, SAT Subject Test scores, and AP Test scores) and interest.



Understanding Your Score Report

The Essay



THERE IS NO “OVERALL” ESSAY SCORE; ESSAYS ARE SCORED ALONG THREE DIMENSIONS

Essay – Reading: The essay task requires students to read and analyze an included passage before writing an essay detailing the persuasive techniques employed by the author of the included passage. The Essay – Reading score quantifies how well a student understood the passage, as evidenced in their essay. High scoring essays will incorporate relevant evidence from the text, exhibit deep understanding of the source text, and be free of errors of understanding or interpretation.

Essay – Writing: This score quantifies the quality of the writing the student produced, from rhetorical, organizational, and mechanical perspectives. Essays receiving high scores in this category will have clearly stated theses, well-formed introductory and concluding paragraphs, exhibit purposeful syntactical variety, and demonstrate a command of language. They will have few to no errors of grammar or mechanics.

Essay – Analysis: This score quantifies the quality of the analysis included in the student’s essay. High scoring essays will include insightful, thorough, and nuanced analysis of the source text along with sufficient and well-chosen support for the claims the student makes. Throughout, high-scoring essays will feature analysis grounded in the elements of the essay most relevant to the student’s essay task.

While the essay is technically optional, a number of colleges and universities have already announced that applicants will be required to submit essay scores, while most college admissions officers recommend that all students write the essay. In other words, the essay is not *truly* optional.



How Do Scores Compare Across Exams?

This chart uses the concordance tables released by the College Board in order to give a sense for how the scoring systems of the various exams match up. We see that a student scoring 25 on the ACT would likely score ~1220 on the New SAT. We also see that New SAT scores are to some degree “inflated.” That is, a student who scored 700 on each section of the Old SAT would score a 2100, but such a student would be expected to score 1470 on the New SAT – 70 points above the 1400-point score that might be expected for a student averaging 700 on each section.

Old SAT	New SAT	ACT
2400	1600	36
2300	1560	35
2200	1510	33
2100	1470	32
2000	1410	30
1900	1350	29
1800	1290	27
1700	1220	25
1600	1160	24
1500	1090	21
1400	1030	20
1300	960	18
1200	890	16



Understanding Your Score Report

Equivalent Scores

- The College Board has built a conversion calculator to help students, parents, and colleges compare New SAT, Old SAT, and ACT Scores.
- Download in the Google Play or iOS App Stores, or use the app on the collegeboard.org website.
- Since recent college admissions data is based on the 2400-point scale, this app, along with the charts in this document, should help students set realistic, achievable goals for the schools they'd like to attend, and thus the scores they'll need to earn.



What Next - *Retest or Switch Tests?*

Very few students earn the best score they are capable of earning on their very first attempt at the exam. Indeed, the College Board claims that “with additional practice, many students take the SAT again and improve their score.” Unless a student earns a great score* on her first try – the sort of score that places her comfortably within the range of scores that make admission to her dream school likely – the student should likely retest, either by signing up to take the SAT a second time, or by switching exams and preparing for the ACT

A STUDENT SHOULD TAKE THE NEW SAT AGAIN IF SHE:

- **Does not have enough time to switch and become acclimated to the ACT**

Most students will need at least a month, and many students will not find themselves earning better scores on their new exam until about 3 months in. Of course, these are simply estimates that depend crucially not just on how long the student spends studying, but on the quality of the studying itself.

- **Has shown ongoing improvement**

If the student’s recent practice exams show a positive trendline, with scores generally increasing over time, it’s unlikely the student should switch.

- **Scored below expectation on most recent exam**

While it’s difficult to say what score a student “should” earn, scores from multiple recent practice exams should provide reasonable guidance.

- **Remains comfortable with the SAT’s content, structure, and pacing**

A STUDENT SHOULD CONSIDER SWITCHING TO THE ACT IF SHE:

- **Has a strong preference for Geometry over Algebra**

Math content is one of the biggest differences between quite similar exams.

- **Prefers the ACT essay task**

The essay is the other major difference.

- **Prefers working at a fast pace**

ACT questions are generally more straightforward than SAT questions, but students are allowed less time/question to answer them.

- **Feels so negatively about the SAT that it’s affecting confidence and thus performance**

*Note that once a student has achieved a great score on either the ACT or the SAT, it makes little sense to spend time preparing for the other exam. Such a student’s time is much better spent on other academic or extracurricular activities, particularly preparing for additional standardized exams such as SAT Subject Tests and AP Exams.

Start Thinking About College

Of course, the SAT/ACT score is just one element of what will ultimately be a multifaceted college application. While the SAT is incredibly important, students should see it as the first step in a larger process, that of fleshing out resumés that will make them attractive candidates to their dream schools.

The most successful students tend to begin the active portion of the college application process at the start of the summer prior to their senior year – brainstorming and drafting essays and completing application materials. That’s because they’ve identified schools to which they’d like to apply long before and have been using those schools’ admissions standards as goals.

Once a student has achieved an SAT or ACT score she’s pleased with, she should not rest on her laurels. Consider that college applications contain multiple important elements, the top 5 of which are generally ranked by universities in the following order:

1. GPA in College Prep Courses

- GPA from Honors-level, AP, or IB classes

2. Rigor of Coursework

- Difficulty of the courses the student took relative to those offered at her school

3. Test Scores

- SAT and ACT results

4. Overall GPA

- GPA including non-college-prep classes

5. College Essay

- Essays submitted with the college application



Start Thinking About College

- Students should visit the Big Future website (found via collegeboard.org) to start identifying colleges to apply to.
- There they may run, save, and refine searches for colleges along a number of different parameters, allowing them to identify lesser-known schools that nonetheless may be a great fit.



The screenshot shows the Big Future website homepage. At the top left is the logo "bigfuture by The College Board". To the right are social media sharing icons for ShareThis and Facebook, a search bar with the text "Find Colleges, Advice and More", and links for "Sign up" and "Sign in". Below the logo is a navigation menu with items: "Get Started", "Find Colleges", "Explore Careers", "Pay for College", "Get In", and "Make a Plan". The main content area features a large image of a smiling woman, Monica, with a "Meet Monica" label. Overlaid on the image are three circular callouts: a large green one with the text "It's okay to change your plans even if it means changing your major." and a subtext "Monica realized the major she started college with wasn't right for her. By staying flexible, she opened the door to new opportunities." with a "Watch" button; a pink one with "Not sure where to start? Go"; and a blue one with "Explore college majors." Below the image is a dark banner with three sections: "find colleges" with a search input "Look up a college by name" and a "Go" button; "pay for college" with the text "How much federal financial aid is out there to help students pay for college? Take a guess."; and "make a plan" with the text "Get a free step-by-step college plan. Just answer a few simple questions."



Your Next Steps

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TIMELINE

FOLLOW THE TIMELINE AND GET AHEAD

Maximize your chances for college admissions!
Take the right steps each year in high school.



FRESHMEN

25%

Early decision has been shown to increase one's chance of admission by as much as 25% over regular decision admission rates

1

Fall Freshman Year

- Start school activities and community service
- Meet your school counselor
- Develop a four-year academic plan
- Register for honors and AP classes
- Take the PSAT
- Don't fall behind with schoolwork

2

Spring Freshman Year

- Become an avid reader
- Sign up for sophomore honors and AP classes
- Prepare for finals and finish the year strong

3

Summer Freshman Year

- Volunteer 100 hours or more, work, or attend a summer program
- Visit two or more colleges
- Prepare for PSAT and upcoming AP classes

SOPHOMORES

When applying to college, admissions officers will look for these items on your application:

- GPA and rigor of coursework (regular, honors, gifted, AP, IB)
- Test scores (SAT®, ACT®, AP®, PSAT®, SAT Subject Tests, etc.)
- Activities (sports, clubs, internships, volunteer work, etc.)
- Recommendations
- College essays

4

Fall Sophomore Year

- Get to know your counselor better and update academic plan
- Take the PSAT
- Get more involved in school and community activities

5

Spring Sophomore Year

- Take SAT Subject Tests that correspond with your AP classes
- Sign up for the next year's honors and AP classes
- End with a strong GPA

6

Summer Sophomore Year

- Visit two or more colleges
- Do at least two of the following: Volunteer 100 hours or more, work, or attend a summer program
- Prepare for the SAT, ACT, PSAT, and upcoming AP classes

The average admissions officer reads between **75 to 100** applications a day



JUNIORS

23%

In 2014, it was reported that public high school college counselors spend 23% of their time on college advising

7

Fall Junior Year

- Your junior year grades **MUST** be strong
- Course selection is one of the most critical factors in college acceptance
- Obtain positions of leadership in your school and community activities
- Take the PSAT and compete for the National Merit Scholarship
- Meet with your school counselor to develop an initial list of colleges
- Prepare for the SAT and/or ACT

8

Spring Junior Year

- Meet college representatives who visit your school and community
- Take SAT, ACT, SAT Subject Tests, and AP Tests
- Visit your top college choices during spring break
- Get college applications for next year

9

Summer Junior Year

- Do at least two of the following: Volunteer 100 hours or more, work, or attend a summer program
- Visit two colleges
- Start writing your college application essays
- Finalize college list
- Start researching scholarship opportunities



Between 1980 and 2012, the overall college enrollment rates increased from 26% to 41%.

SENIORS

8.8%

AVERAGE ACCEPTANCE RATE
for all 8 Ivy League colleges
(Harvard the lowest at 5.9%)

10

Fall Senior Year

- Polish your college application essays
- Maintain good grades
- Obtain positions of leadership in your school and community activities
- Check dates for early and regular application deadlines
- Ask teachers, counselors, and others for recommendations two months before the deadlines
- Take SAT, ACT, and/or SAT Subject Tests
- Apply to colleges

11

Spring Senior Year

- Submit financial aid forms
- Visit the colleges where you have been accepted
- Choose a college and submit deposit
- Maintain good grades

Your Next Steps

