



# Understanding Your Score Report

## *Overall Scores*

### **PSAT/NMSQT BACKGROUND**

The PSAT/NMSQT is open to both 10th and 11th grade students. While many 10th graders take the test, most test takers will be juniors because 11th grade students who take the PSAT/NMSQT compete for the coveted National Merit Scholarship (see below for info on that).

You may have heard of an alternative called the PSAT 10. The PSAT/NMSQT and the PSAT 10 are the same test but are offered at different times of the year. The PSAT/NMSQT is open to both 10th and 11th grade students and is used as a qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship. The PSAT 10 is open only to 10th grade students. Although some scholarship programs use the PSAT 10 to screen for qualified students, the test does NOT qualify students for the National Merit Scholarship.

### **UNDERSTANDING YOUR PSAT SCORES**

The PSAT is scored on a scale from 320 to 1520 – a possible 760 points on the math section and a possible 760 points on the reading and writing sections.

PSAT scores are valuable for two main reasons:

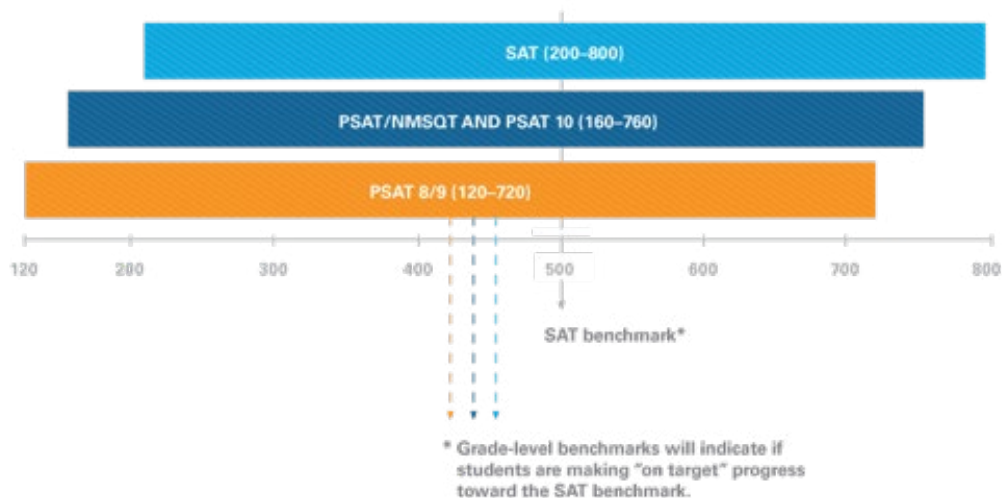
1. They provide insight into your potential performance on the SAT
2. They may qualify you to compete for the prestigious National Merit Scholarship



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## Overall Scores

### HOW DO PSAT SCORES RELATE TO SAT SCORES?



The PSAT's scale of 320 to 1520 might seem arbitrary but it's been carefully calculated to align with SAT scores. As you can see in the image above, the PSAT/NMSQT scale is 80 points lower than the SAT scale of 400 to 1600. This shift in scale allows for what is known as vertical alignment. This means that a 1210 on the PSAT/NMSQT is predictive of a 1210 on the SAT if the student took the SAT with absolutely no additional preparation.

This vertical alignment is true not only of overall scores, but also of the section scores, test scores, and cross-test scores that provide additional insight into student performance.

### WHAT ARE THE READINESS BENCHMARKS?

The College Board also includes college and career readiness benchmarks that can be used to determine whether students are on track to becoming college ready. These benchmarks predict a 75% likelihood that a student will receive at least a C in a set of introductory college-level courses for a given subject area.

# The National Merit Scholarship

## WHAT IS THE NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP?

The National Merit Scholarship program began in 1955. Since then, it has become known as one of the most prestigious academic awards a student can earn – and with good reason: Just a small percentage of test takers will become finalists in the competition.

The scholarship itself is worth \$2,500, a relatively small sum considering the annual tuition at many selective colleges and universities; however, it is the prestige of recognition in the program that carries the greatest value. Applicants who can boast National Merit Scholarship recognition, even if they didn't win the scholarship, gain an advantage in college admissions.

For more information on the scholarship program, visit the National Merit Scholarship organization's website [here](#).



# The National Merit Scholarship

## HOW DO YOU WIN THE NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP?

About 1.6 million high school juniors take the PSAT/NMSQT each year. These students are screened for qualification for the National Merit Scholarship. To participate in the scholarship program, students must take the PSAT/NMSQT in 11th grade, be enrolled as a high school student and plan to enroll in college the fall after graduation, and be a citizen or lawful permanent resident intending to become a citizen of the United States.

Of the 1.6 million who are screened for qualification, about 50,000 students will earn scores high enough to qualify for recognition in the National Merit Scholarship Program (about 3-4% of test takers). These high scorers will qualify as either Commended Students or Semifinalists.

Of the roughly 50,000 who qualify for recognition, about 16,000 will become Semifinalists. Semifinalists are chosen on a state-representational basis, meaning that they are the highest scoring students in each state. As a result, Semifinalists from one state may have higher or lower qualifying scores than Semifinalists from another state.

To qualify as Finalists, Semifinalists must maintain high grades in all classes throughout all years of high school; take the SAT and earn scores that confirm the students' PSAT/NMSQT scores; and submit an application, including an essay, by the designated deadline. About 15,000 of the 16,000 Semifinalists will qualify as Finalists.

About 7,500 Finalists will be selected to receive a National Merit Scholarship. Selection is based on a variety of factors, including grades, test scores, academic rigor, the student's essay, the school's recommendation, and the student's activities and leadership.

In addition, 1,200 non-finalists will win Special Scholarships.



## Next Steps

### WAITING FOR WORD ON THE NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP

National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists will not be notified until September, but you can make an educated guess as to whether or not you are likely to qualify. Remember that qualifying Selection Index scores differ from year to year and from state to state, so you can't do more than guess. It's generally a safe assumption that if you scored below 210, it would be very unlikely for you to qualify as a Semifinalist. If you scored within one to two points of 220, it is fairly likely (again, depending on your state) that you may have qualified as a Semifinalist.

If you think it is likely that you might have qualified as a Semifinalist, remember what the next steps of the competition will require: High grades and high SAT scores. While these are things that any college-bound student should be striving for, it is particularly important for those students hoping to earn the National Merit Scholarship.

### PREPARING FOR THE SAT

The PSAT and the SAT cover much of the same material, so your PSAT scores provide valuable insight into the strengths and weaknesses that you'll need to address in order to prepare for the SAT.

Your Reading, Writing and Language, and Math test scores can help you identify whether one or more of these subject areas might pose a particular weakness for you. If so, this should help direct your SAT preparation efforts.

Similarly, your sub-scores can help you identify specific question types that you might need additional help with. For example, if you scored particularly low on Words in Context, you may need to spend time reviewing vocabulary and strategies for defining words based on their contextual usage.

### EXTRA GUIDANCE

Contact your local C2 Education center to schedule a free consultation. Bring your PSAT score report with you, and one of our expert center directors will help you analyze your results.



