November 2025 Newsletter
collegeapp101.com

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What SAT (or ACT) Score Is Required for College Admission?

In the rearview mirror of life, the pandemic is getting smaller and smaller. For college admissions, this reality means many colleges again require an SAT or ACT score as part of a student's application. Given that many college bound students are extremely intelligent, academically successful, and ranked toward the top of their class, how does a parent know if her senior will be competitive for admission to a particular college? A college's middle 50% is a good guide.

The middle 50% is a score range within the SAT and ACT, two common college admissions tests. For example, the SAT is scored on a 400-1600 scale with higher scores being better than lower scores. The ACT is scored on a 1-36 scale, higher scores also being better. On its admissions website, a college might publish its middle 50% as 1500-1560 (SAT) and 32-35 (ACT). That means 25% of their enrolled freshman class scored below 1500 and/or 32, and 25% scored above 1560 and/or 35. The middle 50% is the SAT and ACT score range of one half (the middle half) of the enrolled freshman class.

Back to the question, how does a mom know if her daughter will be competitive for admission to a particular college? If her daughter scored below the middle 50% range, then the likelihood of admission is much, much lower. If her daughter scored within the middle 50% or the top 25%, then her chances of admission are much higher.

When should college bound students begin taking the SAT or ACT, so they have scores to compare to the middle 50% of their colleges? Regarding the SAT and related tests (known as the SAT Suite of Assessments), it is best to follow the timeline set forth below.

- 8th grade: PSAT 8/9 (fall)
- 9th grade: PSAT 8/9 (fall); SAT (late spring)
- 10th grade: PSAT/NMSQT (fall); SAT (late spring)
- 11th grade: PSAT/NMSQT (fall); SAT (late spring)

If a student is unhappy with her SAT scores after junior year, she can repeat the SAT during the fall of senior year. But, ideally, she is pleased with her scores and can devote senior year to applying to colleges, not taking college admissions exams. If students prefer the ACT, then the schedule above should be followed, except take the ACT in place of (or in addition to) the SAT each spring.

A college application is a pie with many pieces. SAT and/or ACT scores are a piece (an important one). And a college's middle 50% serves as a guide to applicants, so they have an idea about the competitiveness of their applications.

Career Planning Session

College App 101 is excited to announce a new career aptitude service: Career Planning Session. This service is for students, who do not know what college major to declare or career path to pursue. The Career Planning Session is a meeting to discuss a high school student's prospective career choices and the education that such career prospects require. A pre-meeting assessment is required. Connect with Dr. Riley at collegeapp101.com and request more information today.

College App 101 Podcasts

Designed for college bound high school students and their parents, these podcasts are brief, informational, and entertaining. They are available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and collegeapp101.com/podcasts/. Recent episodes:

- Foresight's Role in Academic Success
- Fall 2025 Financial Tips: FAFSA, Generosity, and More
- Admissions Advice from a College Student
- When to Prepare for Highly Selective Admissions

Dates to Remember

- Nov 1: an Early Decision application deadline for many colleges (check your deadlines!)
- Nov 7: regular registration deadline for the Dec 13 ACT
- Nov 8: SAT test day
- Nov 21: regular registration deadline for the Dec 6 SAT
- Nov 24: late registration deadline for the Dec 13 ACT (fee increase)
- Nov 25: late registration deadline for the Dec 6 SAT (fee increase)
- Dec 1: a Regular Decision application deadline for many colleges (check your deadlines!)
- Dec 6: SAT test day
- Dec 13: ACT test day

Click here for SAT registration and here for ACT registration

Past College App 101 Newsletters

Past editions of the College App 101 Newsletter can be found here.