

IN THIS EDITION

- Gain an understanding of college's standardized testing requirements
- Learn characteristics of standardized tests used in the college process
- Develop a testing plan that meets your admissions requirements
- Test optional schools

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Avon High School

Counseling Department Newsletter

Spring 2019

Dear Avon Families,

In this edition of the Avon School Counseling newsletter, we will focus on standardized testing and its role in college admissions.

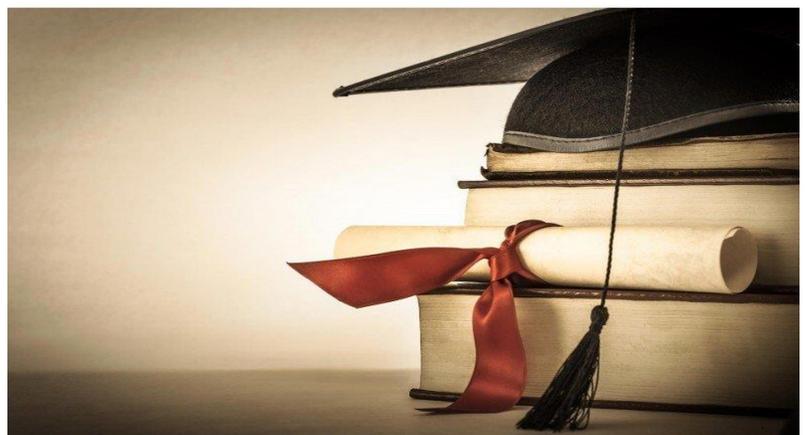
The college application process is multifaceted and dynamic. Admission criteria and requirements vary greatly, and each school places their own value on each application component. We encourage students and families to review each school's admission methodology as a part of their research. College websites provide ample information on school requirements.

Many colleges and universities require standardized testing as a means of evaluating applications. Since the rigor and programming at schools vary greatly, standardized testing provides colleges a means through which schools can assess students on a common standard.

We will provide insights about standardized tests, test structure, test preparation resources, and implications for college admissions.

Happy reading.

AHS School Counseling Department



ACT vs SAT

As you have been researching college admissions requirements, you have probably noticed that most schools require you to submit standardized tests along with your application. You may also be asking yourself, which test should I take? In this edition of the School Counseling Newsletter, we will provide you with an overview of the standardized tests that most schools utilize. Each test has its own unique features, pros, and cons. Deciding which test best suites you is an individual decision that requires research and experience.

In recent years, both the ACT and SAT have become universally accepted at post-secondary institutions. Admissions officers have told us that they will accept either test. As a result, there has been a rise in popularity among students taking both tests. Because the formatting and structure of the two tests differ, some students perform differently on each test. One of the best ways to see which test is a good fit for you is to take a practice test, which are available on each of the testing agencies websites. The revision of the SAT in 2016 made the two tests more similar, and has allowed students to prepare for both tests simultaneously.

The ACT

From the [Princeton Review](#):

“The ACT is an entrance exam used by most colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. It is a multiple-choice, pencil-and-paper test administered by ACT, Inc.

The purpose of the ACT test is to measure a high school student's readiness for college, and provide colleges with one common data point that can be used to compare all applicants. College admissions officers will review standardized test scores alongside your high school GPA, the classes you took in high school, letters of recommendation from teachers or mentors, extracurricular activities, admissions interviews, and personal essays. How important ACT scores are in the college application process varies from school to school.”

The ACT consists of four multiple-choice tests: English, reading, mathematics, and science. If your college requires a writing test, you can take the ACT Plus Writing, which includes a writing test in addition to the other four tests.

Check out detailed information about the ACT, including preparing to take the test, what to take with you on test day, and understanding your scores at [ACT.org](#).

UPCOMING 2018-2019 TEST DATES

ACT Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Reg. Deadline
June 8	May 3	May 4-20
July 13	June 14	June 15-24

The SAT

From the [Princeton Review](#):

“The SAT is an entrance exam used by most colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. The SAT is a multiple-choice, pencil-and-paper test created and administered by the College Board.

The purpose of the SAT is to measure a high school student's readiness for college, and provide colleges with one common data point that can be used to compare all applicants. College admissions officers will review standardized test scores alongside your high school GPA, the classes you took in high school, letters of recommendation from teachers or mentors, extracurricular activities, admissions interviews, and personal essays. How important SAT scores are in the college application process varies from school to school. There are two sections on the SAT.

- Math
- Evidence-Based Reading and Writing

The SAT also includes an optional Essay section. SAT Essay scores are reported separately from overall test scores. Some colleges may require that you complete the SAT Essay.

The SAT is 3 hours long. If you choose to take the SAT with Essay, the test will be 3 hours and 50 minutes.”

All juniors take the SAT during the SAT School Day at Avon in the spring. Many students at Avon opt to take the SAT multiple times.

[The College Board](#) provides detailed information about the SAT, including information about preparing to take the test, what to take with you on test day, and understanding your scores.

UPCOMING 2018-2019 TEST DATES

SAT Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Reg. Deadline
June 1	May 3	May 14 (mail) May 22 (online or phone)

SAT II Subject Test

A small percentage of colleges in the U.S. require the SAT II Subject Test. SAT II Subject Tests are very different from the SAT. SAT II tests focus on one subject at a time. Some colleges may require you to take one or more SAT II Subject Tests as part of their application process or when you apply to a specific major within the school. SAT Subject Tests measure your knowledge in specific subjects within five general categories: English, mathematics, history, science, and languages. There are twenty different subject tests. SAT Subject Tests are multiple-choice, and each lasts one hour. Students can take up to three subject tests on the same day. Scores range from 200 to 800. Subject tests are administered on the same dates as the SAT, so you will have to plan your testing dates ahead of time.

[The College Board](#) provides detailed information about the SAT Subject Tests, including information about preparing to take the test, what to take with you on test day, and understanding your scores.

AP Exams

Students take AP exams after they have completed an AP course in the relevant subject. Most AP exams last two to three hours and include essay and multiple-choice portions. Avon High School offers a number of AP Courses students can enroll in after meeting the required prerequisites. AP exams are scored on a five-point scale, with a five being the highest students can score. The benefits of taking AP Exams vary widely by institution. At some colleges, students who meet the score requirement are granted corresponding credits towards graduation. At other institutions, students with eligible scores are given a higher status in the course registration process. Some colleges allow students to progress in a course sequence with a qualifying AP score, and at some institutions, the scores on AP Exams assist in the application process.

Credit policies vary greatly by college and it is important that students and families review each school's policy around AP credit. The College Board has built a great resource to facilitate this process: [AP Credit](#).

While College Board's AP Credit Policy site is helpful, it does not provide all of the nuances of AP Policy at each institution. Therefore, it is beneficial for students and families to contact the admissions office of their school to gain an understanding of how AP credit will affect a student's academic progress.

Test Optional

Colleges use a variety of criteria when considering applicants. Standardized tests are just one facet of a student's profile, and the weight of the standardized test on the admissions decision varies by institution. Students and families are encouraged to review admissions policies and the factors that each school uses when reviewing candidates.

In some cases, standardized tests do not accurately reflect student's academic performance. Schools recognize this fact, and many have moved to providing a more holistic review process when considering applicants. We have found the website [FairTest.org](#) to be a valuable resource for students and their families.

Testing Prep

In recent years, there has been a rise in the popularity of test preparation services. There is a clear correlation between **preparation and success** on standardized tests. One of the best methods of preparation is to **be fully engaged in school**. Research shows that students who **read** outside of class and absorb classroom materials perform better on standardized tests. Additionally, students gain a large practice value from taking a test more than once. The practice value is also obtained by practicing the question format prior to taking the test. Many students also benefit from learning test taking strategies like time management, question elimination, relaxation, and pacing exercises.

There are a variety of resources students use when preparing for standardized tests. From tutoring and private test preparation companies to books and online resources, the choice of test preparation should fit each student's needs. Both [ACT](#) and [College](#)

[Board](#) provide a range of free test preparation services on their websites. Students are encouraged to visit the company’s websites and review available materials.

Researching Colleges Test Requirements

The internet is a great resource for researching college testing requirements. Students and families can also talk to admissions representatives or review printed materials. Each school lists their admissions criteria on their website. We encourage students to visit the websites of schools they are interested in to gain a clearer understanding of each school’s policy. See the example in the image below from the University of Richmond.



The resources available on College Board’s website provide a succinct way to review college’s requirements without having to search through each schools individual websites. See examples below from [https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges:](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges)

Very Important

- Academic GPA
- Class Rank
- Rigor of secondary school record
- Standardized Test Scores
- Talent/Ability

Important

- Application Essay
- Character/Personal Qualities
- Extracurricular Activities
- Recommendations

Required

SAT or ACT	
SAT	
ACT	
SAT & SAT Subject Tests; or ACT	■
SAT Subject Test(s)	

[Naviance](#) is another powerful tool in the research toolbox. Students can access scattergrams that provide admissions data based on students from Avon High School. The graph plots students relative to other acceptances.

Whichever tools students use, researching college admissions policies puts them in a great position to develop a standardized testing plan.

Planning Out Your Testing

Students, once you have done your research and know which tests are required for the schools you are applying to, you can develop your standardized testing plan. Planning in the college application process is essential. There is a finite amount of time and only so many weekends available to you in which you can take tests. Many students use a calendar when choosing which available test dates work best for their schedule. Leveraging the results of their first test, juniors can use the results to prepare for the May or June test dates. The scores from the spring tests may meet the admissions requirements of schools on your list. Some students will continue to prepare over the summer and sit for exams in the fall of their senior year.

Because there is strong alignment between AP course work and SAT II Subject tests, students will often take their SAT II tests around the same time that they sit for AP Exams. With those dates set on the calendar, students can work around the dates to decide which other weekends that work best for their commitments and family schedule. Knowing that preparation is key in standardized test success, students will choose dates that allow them with enough lead time to fit in the preparation they have planned.

Here is our **To-Do List** for students as they **prepare** for standardized tests.

- Discuss testing requirements and dates with your counselor
- Invest yourself in your current academic program
- Research college requirements
- Register for tests
- Study and prepare