



MODULE FOUR

Test Taking

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SAT Test To Be Revamped. Photographer. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015.
http://quest.eb.com/search/115_2671249/1/115_2671249/cite

Tests play a huge role in high school and college; take note of some of these tips to help students become better and smarter test takers.

Know the test

Students should also spend some time becoming familiar with the type of test they are taking. Testing strategies vary by the type of test, so it is important to be prepared for whichever type of test they will take. The ACT and SAT both have very different testing strategies; the Iowa Assessment tests used by the Seventh-day Adventist Church system also have different testing strategies that they are based on. Other tests as a student goes into college (like the MCAT, LSAT, GRE, etc.) all have different types of content and methods by which they test students' knowledge of a certain area. As you provide students with the help they need to prepare for these tests, consider the information listed below that can help students learn about the different testing strategies they should employ for each test.



Iowa Tests

Iowa tests are used in most Adventist classrooms as a way to see the development of their students over their time in elementary and early high school. These tests are given to ninth and tenth grade students in high school, and provide an early introduction to the art of test taking. While students cannot specifically study for this test, they can still learn to implement healthy testing and learn to plan ahead for tests. The Iowa tests at grades nine and ten look at several areas of content for each student: reading, written expression, mathematics, science, social studies, vocabulary, and computation. These scores can help administrators and teachers identify strengths and weaknesses, monitor growth and development over a period of time, determine college readiness, measure a student’s mastering of core educational standards, and make comparisons and forecasts. Students should be encouraged to use these tests as a tool to find their strengths and weaknesses so that they can prepare in the year or two before they start taking the ACT or SAT tests; this can help increase their scores.



Hispanic woman reading bible. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015. http://quest.eb.com/search/154_2891853/1/154_2891853/cite

PSAT

The Preliminary SAT (also sometimes referred to as the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) is a great tool for students who know they need to take the SAT. It is also a good resource for students preparing for any test as it shows students the areas in which they may need to focus their efforts as they prepare for their next test. The PSAT scoring report is particularly helpful as it provides a review of each question, the answer given by the student, whether or not the answer was correct, and the rating of how difficult the question was. In addition to that, the score report directs students to a free tool on their website that allows them to review particular questions that they got wrong and walks them through how to get the correct answer. This is a particularly great resource for those who will take the SAT, but ACT test takers can also benefit from this targeted study resource. The PSAT also can provide scholarship resources for students as they start to plan on how to pay for college.

SAT

The SAT test is popular on both the East and West coasts. Composed of ten sections, the SAT covers writing (a 25 minute essay); mathematics, critical reading, and writing in six 25 minute sections; mathematics, critical reading, and writing in two 20 minute sections; and a 10 minute multiple choice writing section. There is no science test included in the standard SAT test. The SAT test is more vocabulary driven, and has more sections, but shorter test times, than the ACT test. With a perfect score of 2400, the SAT also offers optional subjects tests for additional fees; these subject tests may be requested by certain colleges depending on the area in which a student wants to pursue a degree. When taking the SAT, the general idea is that students should never guess as there is a penalty built into guessing on the SAT test (each question has five possible answers). However, recent studies are starting to encourage students to adopt a new testing strategy: if students can eliminate even one possible answer on a question,



they should always guess (even if they still are not sure of the correct answer). The point values work out to be more in the student’s favor if they follow that general test strategy. If the student cannot eliminate one of the five possible answers for a question, they should leave it blank. As always, students should prepare themselves for the test by using the study resources available through SAT and PSAT, if they have taken it.

ACT

The ACT test is very popular in the Midwest. With a perfect score of 36, the test is composed of four sections: English (45 minutes, 75 questions), mathematics (60 minutes, 60 questions), reading (35 minutes, 40 questions), and science (35 minutes, 40 questions); the writing test is optional but gives the student a writing prompt and 30 minutes in which to compose an essay. Questions on the ACT test are generally more direct than the SAT, and the ACT test has a science portion and a trigonometry portion. The ACT also has longer but fewer test sections. Students taking the ACT should never leave an answer blank. Students should also spend time preparing for the ACT by using the resources available on the test website, which includes sample test questions and general testing tips from ACT.

Other Tests

Other tests that students may take before reaching their career destinations might include the GRE: Graduate Record Exam; TOEFL: Test for International Students; MCAT: Medical College Admission Test; LSAT: Law School Admission Test; NCLEX: Test for Nursing Licenses; PRAXIS: Test for Teacher Certification; and more. Students who learn effective testing strategies now can expect a huge payoff as they progress through the additional tests their future academic career might throw at them.

More Resources on Tests

- <https://itp.education.uiowa.edu/ia/documents/PlanningImplementationGuide.pdf>
- <http://www.investopedia.com/articles/personal-finance/031715/sat-vs-act-understanding-differences.asp?partner=YahooSA>
- <https://sat.collegeboard.org/home>
- <http://act.org>

Before testing

Before testing, a student should make every effort to ensure that they are ready for the test. In order to ease anxiety, they should provide themselves with the time to fully prepare. Many tests offer free study guides or practice questions online, especially the SAT and ACT.

There are also several published books that contain testing advice, strategies, and practice sections. In addition to practicing, students should consider asking



Personal organizer with alphabetical dividers open on 'Don't Forget' page. Photograph. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015. http://quest.eb.com/search/118_793294/1/118_793294/cite



teachers for tutoring in areas in which they struggle as well as focusing on following the basic NEWSTART health principles.

Basic 8 Principals for Good Test Takers

Even though the following principals apply to life in general, and should be encouraged for students to learn to live a healthy and balanced life, most students are more likely to listen to this advice before facing a hugely important test in their high school career. The ACT and SAT have a way of striking fear into the hearts of the first-time test taker. There are eight basic principals that can help students become more prepared mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally for taking tests and facing any kind of stress their life throws at them.



Asian woman holding bunch of green leaf vegetables. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015.
http://quest.eb.com/search/154_2877983/1/154_2877983/cite

The eight elements that can increase their test-taking abilities are represented by the acronym NEWSTART: nutrition, exercise, water, sunlight, temperance, air, rest, and trust in divine power. Most guidance counselors and test taking pros alike will tell you that these basic eight elements can make a huge difference in the testing success of a student. While they are important in general to following a healthful lifestyle, they also help prepare the student for testing. Eating the proper foods, especially avoiding those high in fats and sugars, can help provide mental clarity and decrease levels of stress. Exercise strengthens the body and provides additional mental clarity. Water provides the hydration the brain needs in order to remain focused and to think clearly. Sunlight energizes and helps increase the body's metabolism. Temperance avoids things like alcohol and drugs that are depressants and affect mental clarity and focus. Air is essential to the body and to sustaining life. Rest allows the body to rebuild and repair itself in preparation for a new day. Trusting in God should be another essential focus, and a distinguishing factor, in the counseling of students at Seventh-day Adventist schools. Prayer before a test helps calm the mind and prepare the body for focus. Trusting in God as a divine power to provide care and mental clarity is often very reassuring to students, especially when they are particularly nervous about these large tests that carry such weight when starting to get ready for college and beyond. Learning these skills in high school and at a young age can have huge payoffs and benefits as students get older, move on to college, and then settle into a career.

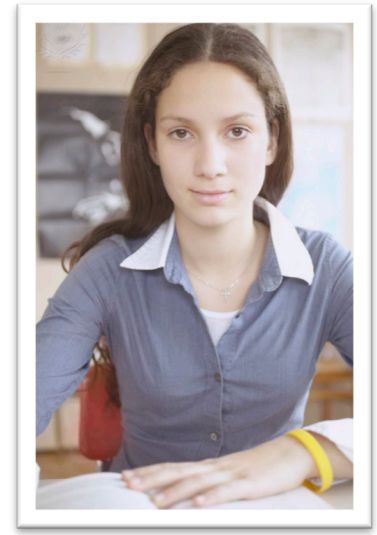
More Resources:

<http://newstart.com/what-is-newstart1/#sthash.AxncLs5Z.dpbs>)



Choosing and Signing up for Tests

Adventist schools take care of signing up their students for the Iowa Assessments. Students are responsible for signing up for the PSAT (some schools do pay for this test for students), ACT, and SAT. However, before signing up for the ACT or SAT, students should spend some time calling the colleges they are interested in attending and find out which of the two tests the college accepts when asking for test scores. Since the costs of the SAT and ACT are relatively similar, the deciding factor for which test to take should come down to what the college wants. If the college will accept either of the tests, then the student should think about the two tests and decide which one best plays into their strengths (i.e. if a student is particularly gifted with vocabulary, they might prefer to take the SAT over the ACT).



Portrait of a teenage girl smiling. Photography. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015. http://quest.eb.com/search/154_2891649/1/154_2891649/cite

Once students decide what test they will sign up for, they can expect to do the following in order to sign up for the tests. The SAT test, for students wanting non-Saturday testing, must be signed up for by paper. Students will need to know the school testing center code, and they will also want to follow the instructions provided in the information booklet that is included in the registration packet regarding non-Saturday testing as there are specific codes that must be entered on the registration form for the non-Saturday testing centers. If your school does not have the paper registration form, administration can contact SAT and find out how to get the paper forms sent to the school. The paper registration form must include a signed letter from clergy (school chaplain, Bible teacher, youth pastor, or pastor) that certifies that the student needs a non-Saturday testing center due to religious beliefs. Without the letter, the student will not be able to take the test at a non-Saturday testing center. Once the student has completed the paper application, they should place it, the payment for the test, and the letter from their clergy member in the included envelope and mail it to the address provided. SAT should respond once they have received and completed the application process for the student.

The ACT registration process can be completed online, and includes a fairly simple registration process that begins with the student creating an account. The automatic registration site walks the student through the questions that must be responded to in order to sign up for the test; this includes questions about family background, academic plans, career and college selections, and a free interest inventory (which is a great tool for students to use to guide them through choosing a college major and/or potential career). Students then must upload a photo, choose a test center (they should know the school testing code if their school offers ACT testing) by entering the zip code and then selected “non-Saturday test centers” near the bottom of the screen, and then selecting their appropriate non-Saturday test center. They will then be walked through the online payment system and will be able to print their admission ticket (which is a required document which they must bring with them on test day) and complete their registration.



As was mentioned earlier, practicing and studying for these larger tests is an important part of being prepared for the tests. The actual test sites provide the best information that students will need for doing their best on the specific tests; however, there are many other websites that offer free test taking tips and sample questions for students to review and prepare with. If a student struggles in a particular area, they should consider going to their teacher for help.

Scores & Free score reporting to colleges/interest inventories with ACT (great free resource!)

One great feature that both the ACT and SAT offer for free to students is the free score-reporting tool; the test companies will automatically submit the student’s scores to colleges of their choice (there is a limit to the number of colleges to which they will send scores). Students should typically expect to receive their scores within 6-8 weeks; some scores are returned faster than others, but students needing specific scoring times should check with the testing site to get the most accurate information for the specific test. Students should know what kind of test and scores are needed in order to get into the college in which they are interested. Scores may qualify or disqualify students for scholarships. If students have low scores (esp. on the SAT/ACT), they should consider re-taking tests before college to raise their chances for scholarships.

Timeline for Test-Taking

The following timeline can be used to provide students with basic testing goals they should plan to achieve by the time they graduate.

Freshman Year

IOWA Test

Sophomore Year

IOWA Test

Consider taking the ACT early to have more time to increase test scores.

Junior Year

PSAT - if offered at your school

ACT (plus additional retakes if you want to raise your score)

Senior Year

ACT retakes

SAT retakes/subject tests (if needed to get into college)



Terminal 4. Airport. Madrid. Spain.. Photo. Encyclopedia Britannica ImageQuest. Web. 1 Apr 2015.
http://quest.eb.com/search/164_3231050/1/164_3231050/cite