



## ACT and SAT: Major Differences

1. ACT includes basic **trigonometry**, SAT does not.
2. ACT includes "**science reasoning**", which is logical reasoning based on data, charts, graphs and scientific terms, but not based on classroom science.
3. SAT **deducts points for wrong answers** (1/4 mark per wrong answer).
4. ACT is entirely multiple choice. SAT has some "**grid-in**" answers for math
5. SAT is multiple choice with **5 options**. ACT is multiple choice with **4 options**.
6. SAT Math demands careful reading of the math questions as there are tricky **word problems**. ACT is more straightforward, but not necessarily easier math.
7. SAT math questions may contain up to 1/3 of questions that are **outside of typical high school curriculum**: reasoning, logic, data analysis/interpretation.
8. SAT math questions may require a **combination of skills within the same question** (e.g. both algebra and geometry in the same question).
9. SAT directly tests high level **vocabulary**. The ACT does not test vocabulary.
10. ACT places higher emphasis on **grammar** than the SAT
11. The SAT **reading section** is like analyzing a debate, while ACT reading is more like researching a term paper.
12. SAT is a **coachable** test and can be "outsmarted."
13. SAT questions go from **easy to difficult** in each section, ACT's are mixed up.
14. SAT Writing includes a written **essay**. The ACT essay is optional.
15. ACT **essay topics** tend to focus on specific issues: Should teenagers be required to maintain a C average in school before receiving a driver's license? Should high schools require students to complete a certain number of hours of community service? SAT essay topics tend to be more general: Is creativity needed more than ever in the world today? Is a person responsible, through the example he or she sets, for the behavior of other people?

### **OTHER SUBJECT-SPECIFIC TESTS TO CONSIDER**

**AP (Advanced Placement) Examinations:** 20 subject tests, equivalent to first year university final exams, administered in high schools each May. They may be used to qualify for university placement or credit, and/or may be used by Ontario home schoolers as a substitute for 12U credits.

**CLEP (College Level Examination Program):** 33 subject tests, administered year-round in order to "test-out" of university courses and receive credit. Not as widely recognized as AP, so check each school for their policies. Intended for adults but may be written by home schoolers.

**SAT SUBJECT TESTS:** 17 subject university admission tests, equivalent to high school exit examinations administered 6 times per year. Used as pre-requisites for university admission only (not for university credit) and may be used by Ontario home-schoolers as a substitute for 12U credits.

2008 Guide to Ontario University Admission for Non-Traditional Applicants  
Prepared by Sarah Rainsberger ~ [www.rainsberger.ca](http://www.rainsberger.ca)



## STANDARDIZED TESTS FOR UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE

### General Reasoning Tests for University Admission: SAT and ACT

These tests are used by universities to demonstrate general academic and reasoning skills and used in admission decisions to post-secondary schools. In the US, one of these tests is required for university admission.

#### **SAT – [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)**

1. **CRITICAL READING** (67 questions in 70 minutes broken into 3 parts)  
*Extended Reasoning      Literal Comprehension      Vocabulary*
2. **MATH** (54 questions in 70 minutes broken into 3 parts)  
*Number/Operations      Algebra and Functions  
Geometry and Measurement      Data Analysis, Statistics and Probability*
3. **WRITING** (40 Questions in 35 minutes and one 25 minute essay)  
*Improving Sentences/Paragraphs      Identifying Sentence Errors*

#### **ACT – [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)**

1. **ENGLISH** (75 questions in 45 minutes)  
*Punctuation      Grammar/ Usage      Sentence Structure  
Style      Organization      Editing/Revising Strategies*
2. **MATH** (60 questions in 60 minutes)  
*Pre-Algebra      Elementary Algebra      Intermediate Algebra  
Trigonometry      Plane Geometry      Coordinate Geometry*
3. **READING COMPREHENSION** (40 Questions in 35 minutes)  
*Social studies      Natural sciences      Prose fiction      Humanities*
4. **SCIENCE** (40 Questions in 35 minutes)  
*Data Representation      Research Summaries      Conflicting Viewpoints*
5. **ESSAY** (30 minutes - Optional)

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