

Activity #38: What is the PSAT/NMSQT?

Read over this material with your student and make certain he/she understands how the test is constructed and why it is so important.

What is the PSAT/NMSQT?

The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test is offered to all college-bound students. All sophomores and juniors planning to attend college are urged to take this test for the following reasons:

1. Any student who wants to be considered for a National Merit Scholarship, the National Hispanic Scholarship, or the National Negro Achievement Scholarship **must** take the PSAT during his/her junior year.
2. Students receive feedback on strengths and weaknesses of skills necessary for college study.
3. Students can use this feedback to prepare for the SAT in those areas.
4. Students will become familiar with the directions and types of questions used in the SAT.

The test includes five sections: two 25-minute verbal sections, two 25-minute math sections, and one 30-minute writing skills section.

Verbal Section: The Verbal section has 52 questions:

1. 13 Sentence Completions
2. 13 Analogies
3. 26 Critical Reading Questions

Math Section: The Math section has 40 questions:

1. 20 Regular Multiple-Choice
2. 12 Quantitative Comparisons
3. 8 Student-Produced Responses

Writing Section: There is one 30-minute writing section with 39 questions.

1. 19 Identifying Sentence Errors
2. 14 Improving Sentences
3. 6 Improving Paragraph Questions

Activity #39: How To Prepare for the PSAT/NMSQT

1. Read over the following guidelines with your student.
2. Focus on the important preparation steps and dates.

When and How to Register

You must sign up for the test at your high school; the test is administered by high schools, not through test centers. Online registration is not available. You can learn about test dates by checking the College Board web site: www.collegeboard.org. Test dates are usually scheduled in the middle of October.

Fees and Fee Waivers

The fee for the 2001 PSAT/NMSQT is \$9.50. Schools sometimes charge an additional fee to cover administrative costs. **The College Board makes fee waivers available to juniors from low-income families. See your counselor for more information.**

How to Prepare

1. If you plan to take the PSAT/NMSQT in the fall, pick up the Student Bulletin from your guidance office in September.
2. Review the section on scholarships with your parents.
3. Spend at least 30 minutes studying the hints, tips, and explanations of math, verbal, and writing skills questions.
4. Take a few minutes to learn how to fill in information on the answer sheet.
5. Take the practice test like it's the real thing!
6. Use the College Board web site to look at sample questions.

Long-Term Preparation

1. Take a good selection of solid academic courses, read widely, and develop your study skills.
2. Enroll in the most challenging courses you can handle in English, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign languages, and fine arts.
3. Get involved in problem-solving activities through clubs, sports, and part-time jobs.

Activity #40: 10 Test-Taking Tips for the PSAT

Review these ten test-taking tips with your student.

1. Take the practice test in the Student Bulletin (the preparation manual for the PSAT, available in most guidance offices).
2. Learn the directions for each type of question.
3. Remember that questions are generally arranged in a section from easier to harder.
4. Earn as many points as you can on easy questions.
5. Read all the answer choices you can before marking your answer sheet.
6. Do your scratchwork in the test book.
7. Don't feel you have to answer every question.
8. Work steadily—don't waste time on hard questions. You can always go back to them later.
9. Check your answer sheet regularly to make sure you're in the right place.
10. Take a calculator.

Will Guessing Hurt Me?

Educated guessing means guessing an answer whenever you are able to eliminate one or more of the choices as definitely wrong. Educated guessing may help you.

Random guessing probably won't help you because of the way the test is scored. You can earn an above-average score by getting only half the questions right and omitting the rest. **Because you lose a fraction of a point for questions you get wrong, you do not want to guess on questions if you can't eliminate at least one choice.**

Activity #4I: How to Register for the SAT

1. Read over the information on this page with your student.
2. Make sure he/she knows how to obtain registration information for the test.

About the SAT

Many colleges require the SAT I for admission because it is a standard way of measuring a student's ability to do college-level work. Because courses and grading standards vary widely from school to school, scores on standardized tests, like the SAT I, help colleges compare your academic achievements with those of students from different schools.

How to Register

You can register online using the College Board web site (credit card required) or you can register by mail. To register by mail, you need to get the Registration Bulletin from your school counselor's office. A registration form is included.

How Do I Find Out About Test Dates, Test Sites, and Deadlines?

The registration form contains test dates, registration deadlines, instructions, test center codes, and other related information.

Test Day

Plan to arrive at the test center between 8:00 and 8:15 a.m. on the day of the test. Testing starts about 8:30 a.m. and ends about 12:30 p.m. You will get a short break at the end of each hour of testing time. Bring the following items with you:

1. Your admission ticket
2. Two #2 pencils and a good eraser
3. Acceptable identification
4. An acceptable calculator only if you are taking the SAT I, SAT II: Math Level IC or IIC tests

Activity #42: What You Need to Know About the SAT

You can use this page to give your student a good overview of the SAT: how it is constructed and the types of questions it contains.

What Does the SAT Measure?

The SAT I measures your verbal and math reasoning abilities. These are abilities you develop over time through the work you do in school and on your own. Your SAT I scores can help you and colleges better understand how you compare with other students preparing for college.

Verbal Questions Test Your Ability to:

1. Understand and analyze what you read
2. Recognize relationships between parts of a sentence
3. Establish relationships between pairs of words

Math Questions Test Your Ability to Solve Problems Involving:

1. Arithmetic
2. Algebra
3. Geometry
4. Data Analysis

How is the SAT Constructed?

The SAT I is a three-hour test made up of seven sections:

1. Three verbal sections: two 30-minute sections and one 15-minute section
2. Three math sections: two 30-minute sections and one 15-minute section
3. One 30-minute equating section, verbal or math

The Types of Questions Used On the Test

Three types of verbal questions are used on the SAT I:

1. Analogies (19 questions)
2. Sentence completions (19 questions)
3. Critical reading (40 questions)

Analogy Questions Measure Your:

1. Knowledge of the meanings of words
2. Ability to see a relationship in a pair of words
3. Ability to recognize a similar or parallel relationship

Activity #42: What You Need to Know About the SAT (continued)**Sentence Completion Questions Measure Your:**

1. Knowledge of the meanings of words
2. Ability to understand how the different parts of a sentence logically fit together

Critical Reading Questions Measure Your:

Ability to read and think carefully about a single reading passage or a pair of related passages

Three Types of Math Questions are Used on the SAT I:

1. 35 five-choice multiple-choice
2. 15 four-choice quantitative comparisons that emphasize the concepts of equalities, inequalities, and estimation
3. 10 student-produced answers

Activity #43: How to Prepare for the SAT

1. Here are a few tips and resources that will help your student prepare for the SAT.
2. NOTE: there are many books that students can use for more extensive preparation; some of the better texts are produced by Kaplan, Barrons, and The Princeton Review.
3. Have your student ask a guidance counselor about resources offered through the school.
4. Read over this material with your student and try to help him/her formulate a reasonable preparation strategy.

How To Prepare for the SAT

1. Students can obtain [Taking the SAT I](#) or [Taking the SAT II](#) from their school counselors. This is an excellent way to get ready for the tests. (These tests are good preparatory manuals for high school students).
2. [10 Real SATs](#) is a best-selling book that offers test-taking tips, strategies, practice questions, and 10 full-length actual SATs.
3. [Real SAT](#) contains full-length practice tests for 20 subject tests.
4. Use the "Getting Ready" section of the College Board web site. The College Board web site contains many valuable resources that can help students prepare for the SAT I and II.

Test-Taking Tips

1. Know the test directions prior to taking the test.
2. Easy questions are at the beginning of sections. Do them first.
3. You get one point for every correct answer; you lose a fraction of a point for a wrong answer.
4. Use educated guessing.
5. Don't feel you have to answer every question.
6. Omit questions you have no idea how to answer.
7. Don't make extra marks on the answer sheet.