|  | **SAT vs** | **ACT** |
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| **Why Take It** | Colleges use SAT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships. | Colleges use ACT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships. |
| **Test Structure** | * Math * Reading * Writing and Language   Essay (Optional) | * Math * Reading * English * Science   Essay (Optional) |
| **Length** | * 3 hours (without essay) * 3 hours, 50 minutes (with essay) | * 2 hours, 55 minutes (without essay) * 3 hours, 40 minutes (with essay) |
| **Reading** | 5 reading passages | 4 reading passages |
| **Science** | None | 1 science section testing your critical thinking skills (not your specific science knowledge) |
| **Math** | Covers:   * Arithmetic * Algebra I & II * Geometry, Trigonometry and Data Analysis | Covers:   * Arithmetic * Algebra I & II * Geometry and Trigonometry |
| **Tools** | Some math questions don't allow you to use a calculator. | You can use a calculator on all math questions. |
| **Essays** | Optional. The essay will test your comprehension of a source text. | Optional. The essay will test how well you evaluate and analyze complex issues. |
| **How It's Scored** | Scored on a scale of 400–1600 | Scored on a scale of 1–36 |