



US APPLICATIONS TESTING IN 2022 AND BEYOND

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TODAY'S PRESENTATION

- Overview of changes to testing landscape
- Impact of test optional admissions
- Definitions of “test optional” and “test blind”
- Changes to SAT in 2023
- Advising students on test preparation and submitting scores

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF STANDARDISED TESTING?

- Designed to allow colleges to focus on merit, not social background
- Allows colleges to compare students with different curricula across the whole cohort
- Used as a filter when dealing with large volumes of applications
- Another data point to check against transcript
- Prove “college readiness” – evidence that strong performance on the tests predicts academic success at college



WHY HAVE TESTS COME UNDER FIRE?

- Pandemic initially made testing difficult or impossible, particularly those from a disadvantaged socio-economic background
- Growing movement convinced that testing contributes to educational inequality
- Data that household income is best predictor of performance on SAT/ACT
- Some think that school transcript is a better (and fairer) predictor of success at college
- Colleges that are test optional have seen a more diverse pool of applicants and more first generation applicants

MORE TO THIS THAN MEETS THE EYE...



- Test-optional policies are a low-cost way of colleges showing that they are tackling educational inequality
- While applying to highly selective colleges is now easier, getting admitted is much more difficult
- Test-optional policies at highly selective colleges often lead to much greater application numbers, driving down the admit rate at those colleges and helping their rankings
- While the most selective private colleges have larger and more diverse applicant pools, excellent public colleges like SUNY system have seen big fall in numbers of applicants (-20% in 2021)

TESTING AND APPLICATION CHANGES: 2020-21

- 2020-21: >1,000 colleges introduced test-optional policies
- Huge spike in applications to highly selective colleges as a result
- Applications from the UK increased by 23%
- Admit rates at highly selective colleges hit an all-time low
- 49% of Common App applicants submitted test scores (down from 80%)
- UCs went test blind after legal ruling in August 2020
- Not all colleges went test optional eg Georgetown, Florida state universities
- College Board dropped Subject Tests and SAT essay in June 2020





IMPACT OF TEST OPTIONAL ON APPLICATIONS

College	Application numbers 2019-20	Application numbers 2020-21	Growth	Admit rate 2019-20	Admit rate 2020-21
MIT	20,075	33,240	66%	7.3%	4.0%
Columbia	40,084	60,551	51%	6.2%	3.7%
Harvard	40,248	57,435	43%	4.9%	3.4%
Penn	42,205	56,333	33%	8.1%	5.7%
Georgetown	21,318	27,650	30%	15.5%	11.7%
Duke	39,783	49,517	24%	7.7%	5.8%
UChicago	34,372	37,997	11%	7.3%	6.5%
Wake Forest	12,559	11,959	-5%	29.6%	32.0%



TESTING AND APPLICATION CHANGES 2021-22

- Slight dip in application numbers from 2021-22 but still well above 2019-20 cycle
- Harvard confirmed it will be test optional until at least 2026
- Most other highly selective colleges have already confirmed they will be test optional for 2022-23 applications (Yale, Penn)
- Dartmouth has become need blind for international students
- 53% of Common App applicants submitted test scores
- Georgetown, Florida state universities, Georgia state universities required testing
- College Board announced SAT will go digital in March 2023 for international students



THE NEW-NEW SAT

- March 2023 (UK and international)
 - March 2024 in the US
- Digital Test
- In a test centre (to start with)
- But students can use their own laptop
- Embedded calculator
- 2-hours long
- Adaptive-by-section

WHAT DO “TEST-OPTIONAL” AND “TEST BLIND” MEAN?



Test optional:

- You don't *have* to submit SAT/ACT scores to apply
- You can still submit scores for consideration
- This will help your application if they're reflective of your academic ability and in line with college's expectations

Test blind:

- Scores will not be considered even if submitted
- Some exceptions eg for competitive enrolment
- Subject Test scores were still considered at UCs in 2021-22

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TESTING AND ADMITTANCE



Data released indicate correlation between submitting test scores and being admitted to highly selective colleges:

Georgetown University Early Action, 2020-21

- Admit rate for test optional students: 7%
- Overall admit rate: 11%

University of Virginia Early Decision, 2021-22:

- Percent applying with SAT/ACT: 58%
- Percent admitted with SAT/ACT: 78%

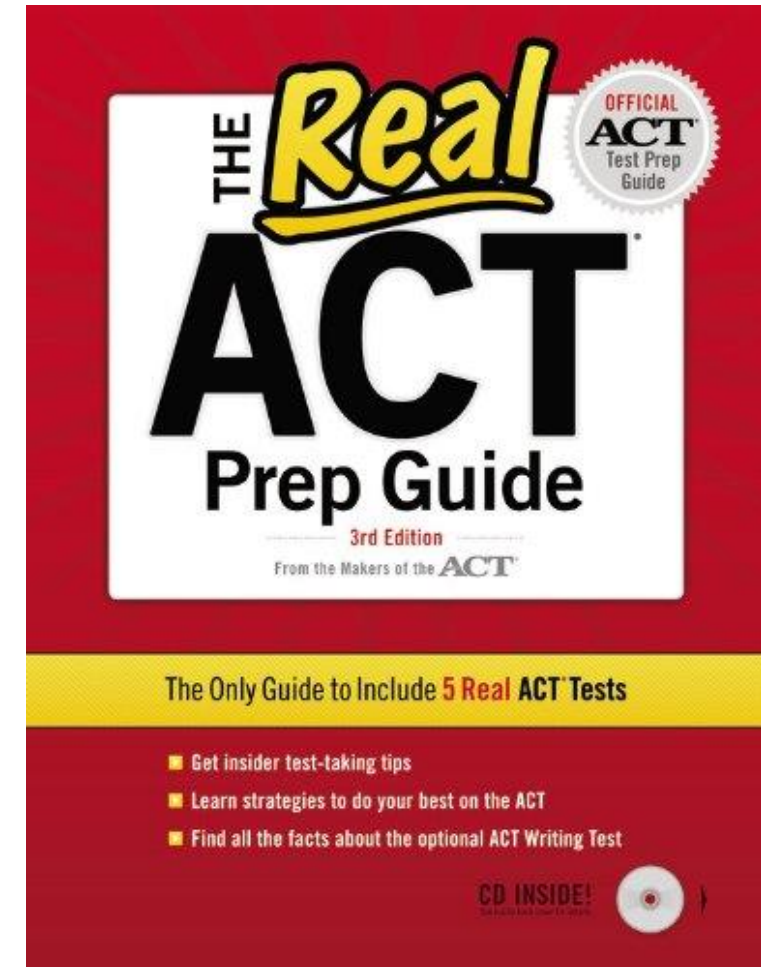
Notre Dame Restrictive Early Action, 2021-22:

- Percent applying with SAT/ACT: 56%
- Percent admitted with SAT/ACT: 70%



THE ACT

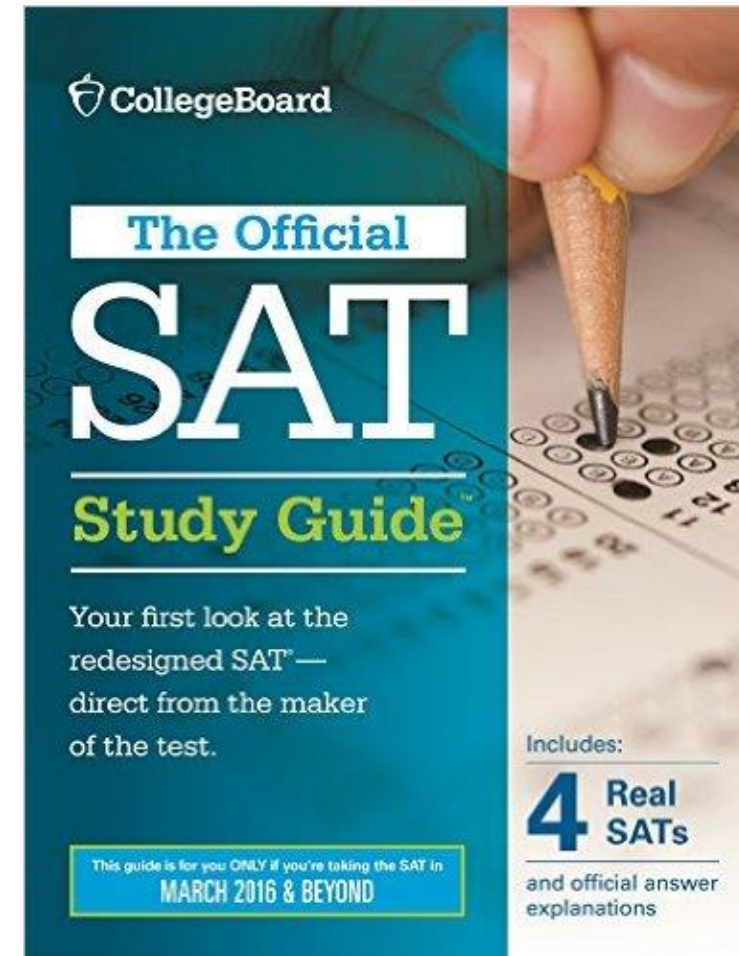
- Four sections: English, Math, Reading, Science
 - Each scored between 1 and 36 points
- Overall score out of 36
 - 32+ is a very good score
- Essay is optional – don't bother
- 3 hours (without essay)
- **Computer-based** (internationally)
- Held on Friday & Saturday mornings/afternoons





THE SAT

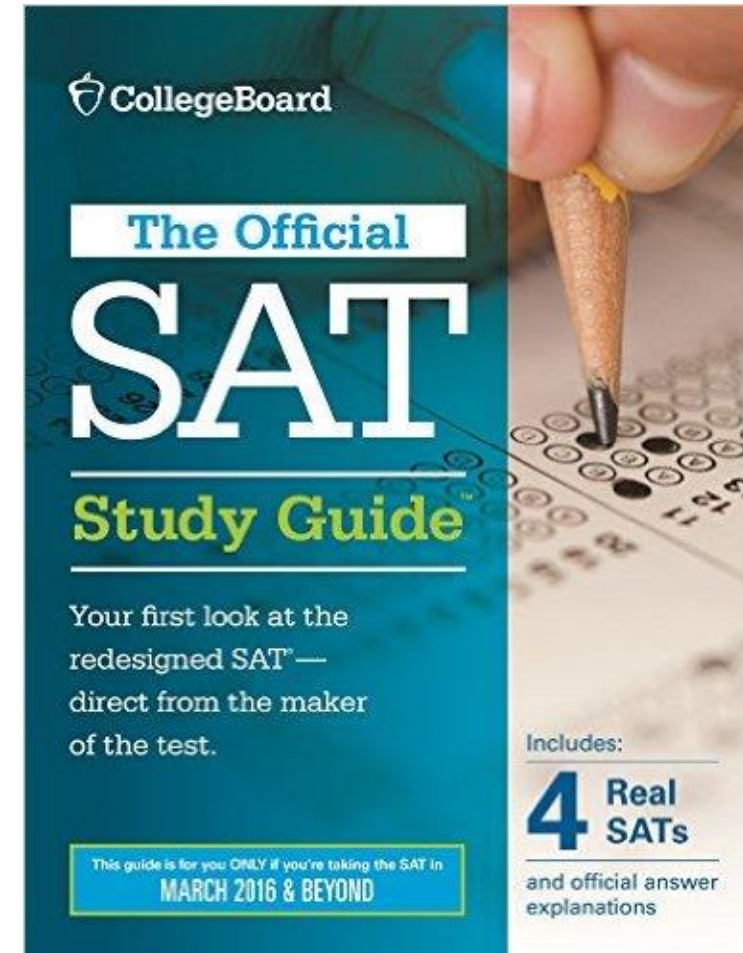
- Two sections scored out of 800:
 - Evidence-Based Reading and Writing
 - Math (calculator and non-calculator)
- Total is out of 1600
 - 1450+ is a very good score (720-730 on each Section)
- 3 hours
- **Paper-based** until 2023
- Held on Saturday mornings





SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO SAT IN 2023

- Will go digital in March 2023 for international students (March 2024 for US students)
- Test will be abbreviated to two hours
- Calculator available throughout math section
- Reading sections simplified and math sections made less wordy
- Adaptive sections based on student performance
- More testing windows
- Results available a few days after the test
- Format and content will be quite similar





WHO SHOULD DO THE TESTS?

- Year 12 students *might* still need the test – although many colleges have confirmed test optional for 2023 entry
- Student athletes – coaches still value scores
- Those seeking merit scholarships
- Students applying to colleges where it's required or recommended e.g. Georgetown, UF, Bocconi
- Students where a good test score would strengthen academic profile



ADVISING STUDENTS ON SAT AND ACT

- Recommend free UES SAT/ACT diagnostic:
ueseducation.com/diagnostic
- Year 12: no change to advice as change not affected
- Year 11: SAT will change format in March of their Year 12:
 - Recommend following diagnostic but preparing earlier
 - If preparing in autumn, only prepare for SAT if very good across the board
 - So they can make a good attempt in December
- Year 10: new SAT format will be established by the time they test

WHEN TO SUBMIT SCORES

- Check college websites for SAT/ACT “mid-range” – 25th & 75th percentile
- Definitely submit scores at or above the midway point
- Between 25th percentile and midway – seek advice
- Below 25th percentile – do not submit (usually)

MIXED MESSAGES?



Yale Instagram account:

“Applicants who have successfully completed one or more ACT or SAT exams should **consider including** scores, even if those scores are **below the middle 50% ranges** listed on our website. Yale’s internal research has consistently shown that ACT and SAT scores are a **significant predictor of a student’s undergraduate academic performance.**”

And:

Penn, Dartmouth, Georgetown all considered the SAT/ACT score “very important” for freshmen admissions in their Common Data Set for 2020-21.

PREDICTIONS FOR 2022-23 AND BEYOND



01

Test optional is here to stay, and so is digital testing.

Access to testing will become easier.

02

Most students will submit test scores, and there will continue to be a correlation between submitting scores being admitted to highly selective colleges

03

Application numbers will remain at or around the levels seen in the last two cycles for highly selective colleges

04

Early application and testing strategy will continue to be important factor in student success



SUMMARY

- US applications are increasingly **competitive and unpredictable**
- **Testing strategy** is more complex in age of test optional
- Test optional = **easier to apply, harder to get in**
- **Not all colleges** are test optional and students may still need scores
- There is a **correlation** between submitting scores and getting admitted to highly selective colleges
- For students applying test optional, **other application elements** will be scrutinised more closely
- **Testing** can strengthen a student's application if there are weaknesses elsewhere
- **Testing** is not fashionable at the moment, but could come back in vogue in future cycles



ABOUT UES – OTHER SERVICES

- **UES Annual Teachers' Conference** – 13th June, Marylebone, London
ueseducation.com/conference
- **US Applications Teacher Training** – 19th September, London & online
ueseducation.com/training-day
- **Free Webinars for all:** ueseducation.com/events
 - Next 31st May – Sports Scholarships
- **In-house and school courses** for the SAT and ACT
ueseducation.com/courses
- **Private Tuition** for SAT and ACT
- **SAT/ACT Diagnostic Test:** ueseducation.com/diagnostic
- **College counselling** – support for students on all aspects of US applications

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