



# THE STANDARDISED TESTING LANDSCAPE

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# UES

EXPERT ADMISSIONS

Member of





# ABOUT UES

- Founded 2013; now work with c. 800 students per year
- We help students with all aspects of US applications including SAT/ACT testing and college counselling
- Run courses and in-school advising at c. 40 schools
- Over 200 schools within our wider network



# OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

- Context and background on testing
- Format of ACT and SAT
- Digital SAT– what’s changing?
- Advising students on testing
- Case studies



# WHAT ARE THE TRENDS IN TESTING?

- Widespread test cancellations in 2020 led to most colleges dropping SAT/ACT requirement - became “test optional” or “test blind”
- Testing policies led to huge spike in admissions at highly selective colleges
- Notable exceptions: Georgetown and Florida state system
- Since then: MIT, Purdue, Tennessee and Georgia state system all reverted to testing
- Jury is out: many colleges continue to stay test optional but Deans of Admission under pressure from faculty to reintroduce it
- Digital SAT – shorter format from March 2023



# WHY HAVE STANDARDISED TESTING AT ALL?

- US does not have a national curriculum
- Standardised testing gives colleges the tools to compare students across cohort and curricula
- Tests are designed to prove college readiness
- Scores prove students' persistence
- Provide evidence in absence of graded exams
- Predictor of success at college



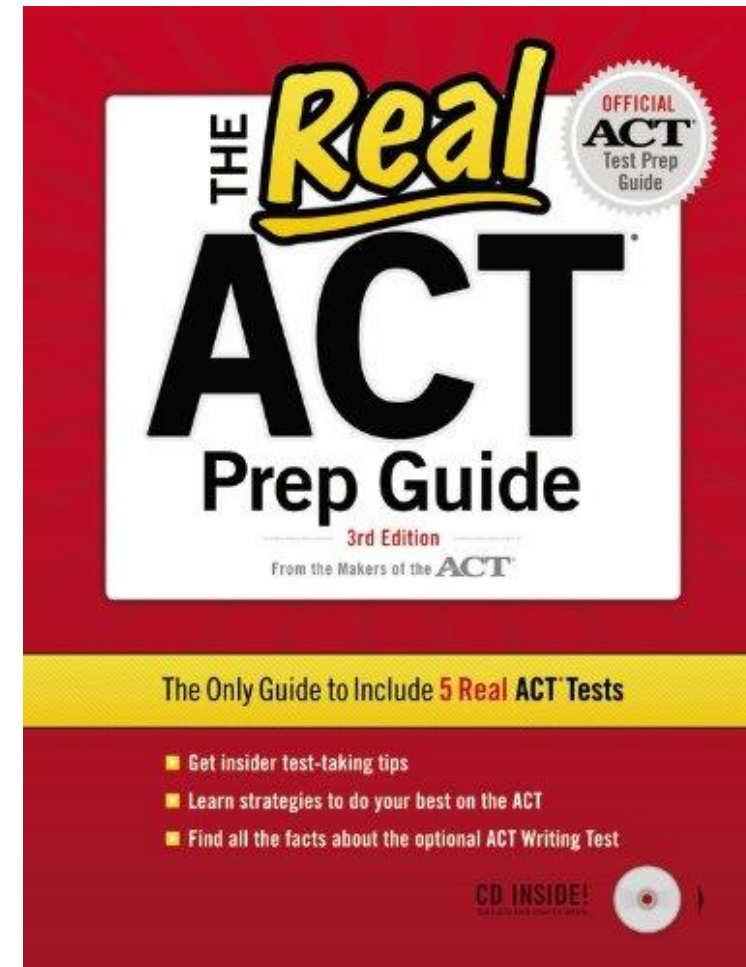
# DIGITAL SAT: CONTEXT

- ACT went digital in 2018
- College Board rolled out digital APs in 2020
- SAT is going digital internationally in March
- Backdrop is test-optional movement
- College Board has gradually released info and tests
- Digital Trials in November 2022 and January 2023



# THE ACT

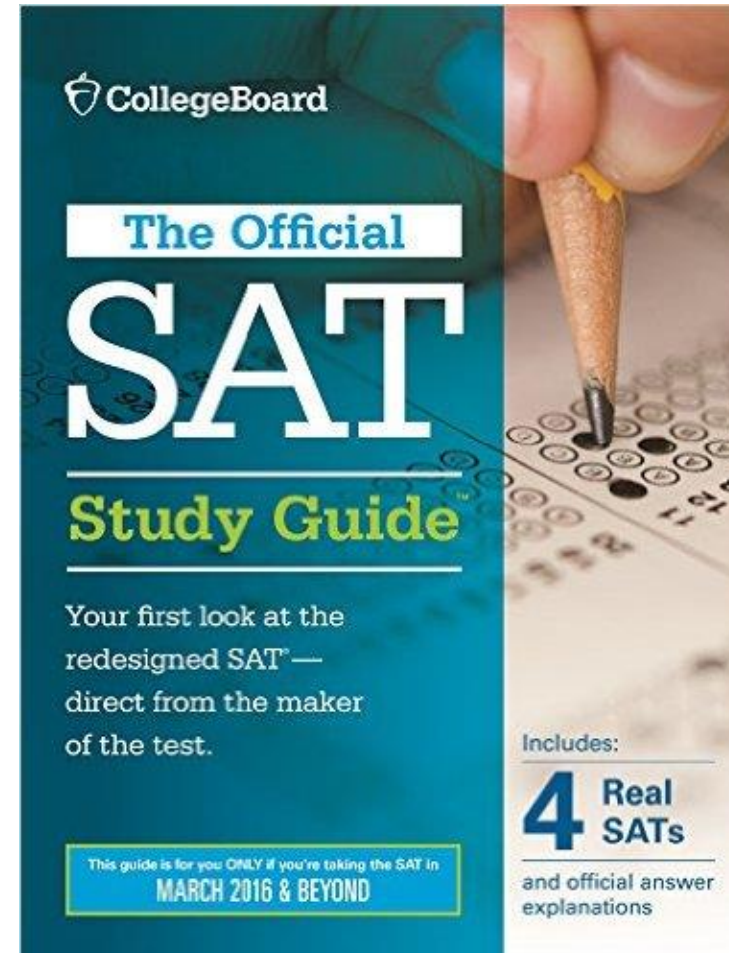
- Four sections: English, Math, Reading, 'Science'
  - Each scored between 1 and 36 points
- Overall score out of 36
  - 33+ is a very good score
- Essay is optional – not needed
- 3 hours (without essay)
- **Computer-based** (internationally)
- Held on Friday and Saturday mornings/afternoons





# THE OLD SAT

- Two sections scored out of 800:
  - Evidence-Based Reading and Writing
  - Math (calculator and non-calculator)
- Total is out of 1600
  - 1500+ is a very good score
- No essay
- 3 hours
- **Paper-based**
- Held on Saturday mornings





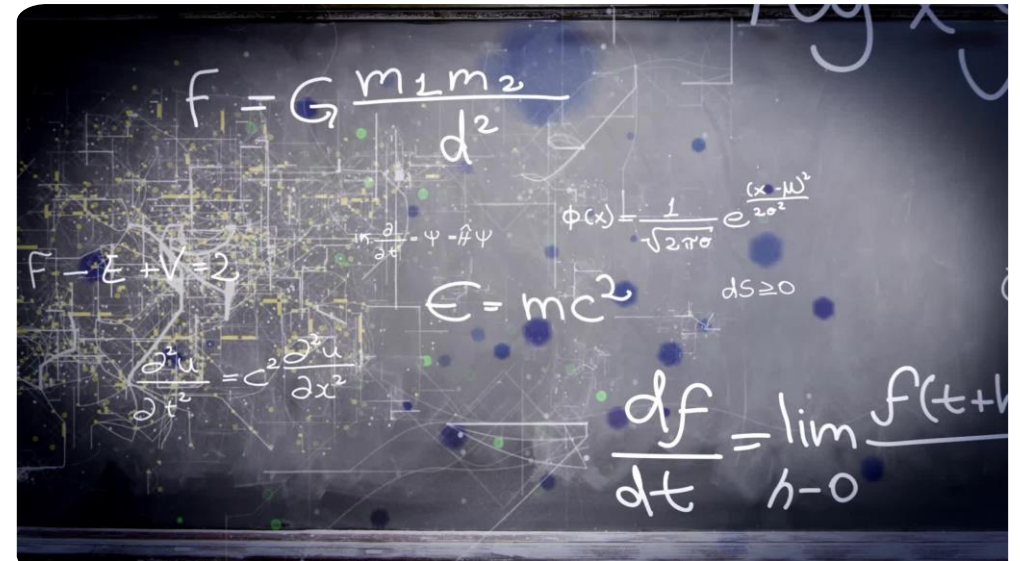
# NEW SAT FORMAT

- 4 sections:
  - 2 x Verbal (2 x 27 questions, 32 mins each)
  - 2 x Math (2 x 22 questions, 35 mins, all with calculator)
- Two scores: R&W and Math, each out of 800
  - Total out of 1600
- 2 hrs 15 mins
- Digital, on own laptop
- Adaptive by section
- First sitting March 2023 (outside USA)



# ADAPTIVE SECTIONS ON THE DIGITAL SAT

- Adaptive by Module
- Approx. 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s correct on first module gains access to the more difficult module.
- If second module is easier --> ceiling is about 650
- If second module is difficult --> floor is about 550
  - Fine tuning at the top with 1-3 very difficult math questions





# OLD VS NEW SAT: KEY DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

Feature	Old SAT	New SAT
Format	Paper-based	Computer-based
Length of test	3 hours 15 minutes	2 hours 15 minutes
Sections	EBRW and Math	EBRW and Math
Number of questions	154	96
Scaled score	1600 (800/800)	1600 (800/800)
Style of test	Linear	Adaptive by module
Use of calculator in math sections	Non-calculator and calculator math sections	DESMOS Calculator embedded and used in both sections
Verbal sections	Passage-based	Paragraph based



# ACCOMMODATIONS ON THE DIGITAL SAT

- Without accommodations: on own laptop, 2 hours, at a test centre (usually a school)
- Extra time available:
  - 50% (3 hours total)
  - All done on same day, at the same test centre
- Other accommodations options available:
  - Can choose to do it on paper or on computer (specify in advance when applying)
  - Braille, large print, answer sheet with no bubbles.
- Test centres for accommodations:
  - Lots available in UK. Very unlikely to be student's own school.



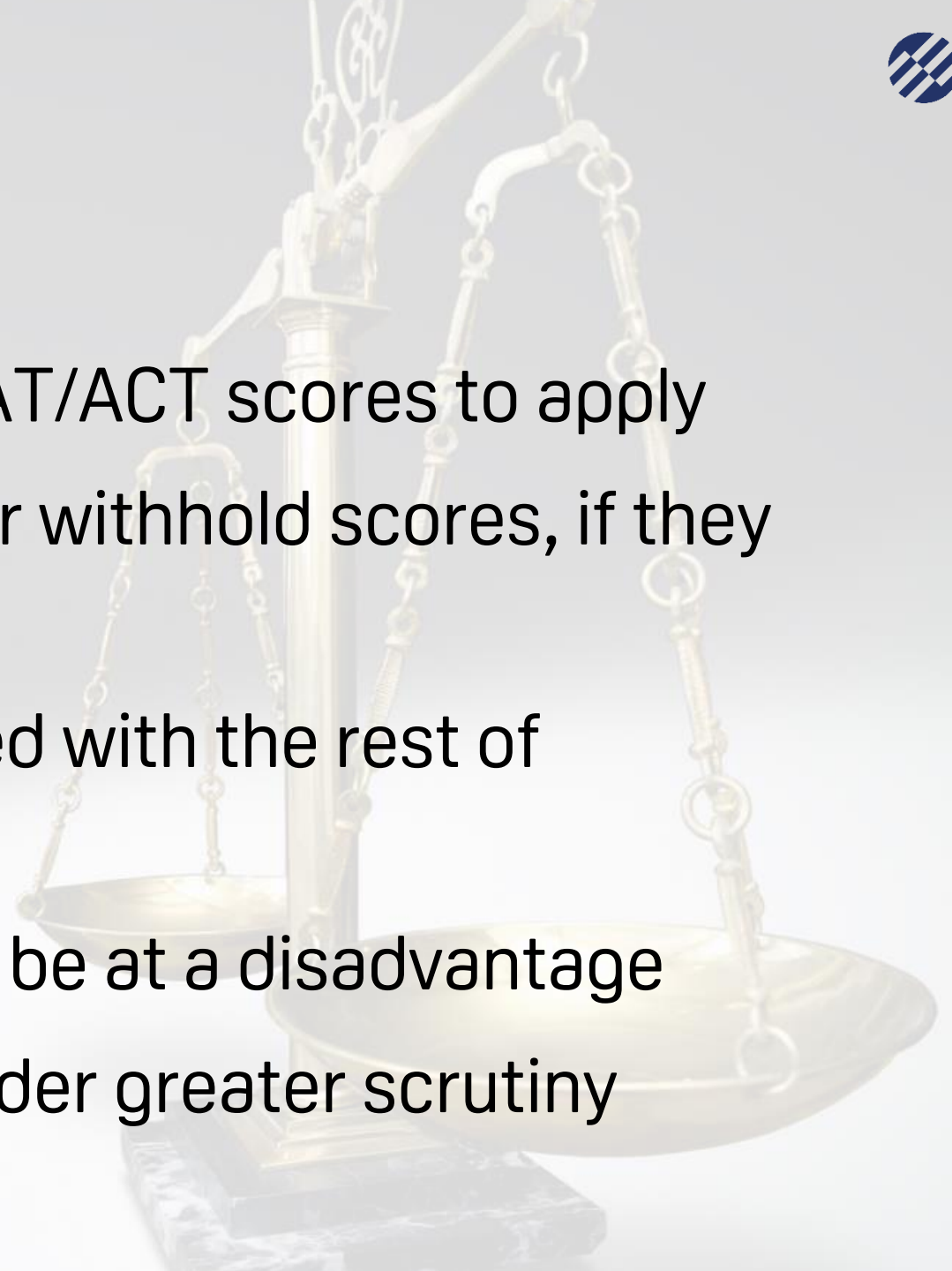
## SAT OR ACT? HELPING STUDENTS DECIDE

- Many students will prefer the Digital SAT
- Students good at STEM who are fast processors may find ACT straightforward
- ACT students will likely feel comfortable with the Digital SAT
- SAT Accommodations easier to arrange than ACT
- Encourage students to take our Diagnostic Test: [ueseducation.com/diagnostic](https://ueseducation.com/diagnostic)



# TEST OPTIONAL

- Students don't have to submit SAT/ACT scores to apply
- Students can choose to submit or withhold scores, if they have them
- Submitted scores will be assessed with the rest of students' applications
- Non-submitting students will not be at a disadvantage
- Rest of the application comes under greater scrutiny





# TEST BLIND

- Scores will not be considered as part of the admissions process
- University of California and Caltech have gone down this route
- Greater reliance on transcript for admissions decisions



# SAMPLE SAT AND ACT RANGES

College	SAT Mid-range	ACT Mid-range
MIT	1510-1580	34-36
WashU	1450-1560	33-35
Tulane	1430-1530	31-34
Haverford	1380-1540	32-34
Boulder (Eng.)	1330-1490	30-34

\*Based on class of 2024





# ADVISING STUDENTS WHETHER TO SUBMIT SCORES

- Colleges publish “**mid-range**” for incoming freshman class: 25<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentile
- Students should ideally be at or above the **mid-point of the mid-range** or higher
- NB: Mid-ranges generally **increase** when colleges go test-optional
- Between 25<sup>th</sup> percentile and mid-point: seek advice
- Below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile: probably better not to submit
- Some colleges are “**test flexible**” – ask advice before submission
- Nuances to this process in context of transcript, intended major, ED/EA



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# CASE STUDIES: WHAT WOULD YOU ADVISE?

## Student 1

- Applying to engineering schools
- List includes: Cornell, Georgia Tech, Virginia Tech, CU Boulder, Purdue, UMich
- 9s, 8s, 7s in GCSE
- A\*AA predictions

## Student 2

- Applying to liberal arts colleges
- List includes: Bowdoin, Wesleyan, Vassar, Bard, Dickinson, Bennington, Bates
- 7s and 8s GCSE
- 39 predicted in IB

## Student 3

- Applying to business schools
- List includes: Wharton, NYU Stern, Georgetown, UMich, Cornell, IU Bloomington, USC
- 8s and 9s GCSE
- A\*A\*A predictions



# CASE STUDIES: WHERE WOULD YOU ADVISE TO SUBMIT?

## Example Student: intended Classics major

- Five 9s, five 8s, one 7 GCSE
- A\*A\*A predictions for A Level
- 1480 on the test
- Applying to:

Yale	UVA EA
UPenn	UT Austin
Georgetown	UChicago EA
Dartmouth ED	William & Mary
- Where should the student submit?



## FINAL THOUGHTS

- Test optional admissions has made advising more complex, not less
- Important to stay in touch with trends
- Digital SAT will likely overtake ACT this year
- Students should assume they need a test, then pivot to test optional if required
- Advice needs to factor in early/regular, type of major, transcript, college list



## ABOUT UES – OTHER EVENTS

- **Teacher Training Day** in March and September
- **Mock Admissions** in March
- **Annual Conference** in June
- **SAT/ACT Diagnostic Test:**

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