



🏠 InHouse Test Prep

Taking the SAT or ACT isn't like it used to be. Back in our day, all most of us did was sign up for the test and show up on test day, pencil and calculator in hand. The overachievers among us may have spent a few hours flipping through a practice book a few days before the test or taken a practice test or two. But those days are long past, and preparing for the SAT or ACT has become serious business.

The process can be confusing, though, for both parents and students. There are so many things to consider: Should your child take the SAT or ACT, or maybe both? Do some schools prefer one test over the other? When's the right time to take the test? Can a test be taken more than once? It's easy to get lost in the confusion, and that lack of clarity can lead to procrastination and loss of valuable preparation time, or even worse, not taking action to help secure your child's future. It's tempting to put it off, but the test dates and application deadlines will be here before you know it.

And let's face it. Your child is busy. There's school and sports and volunteering, and who has time to fit in yet another thing? You might have even bought your child a test prep book, and they might have even promised to study it, but the real truth is: they're not going to do it. They simply won't. And then you will get locked in an endless cycle of asking them to study, they will promise they will, and then they won't. That's just the nature of being a child. At that age, they may not be able to see the bigger picture yet of what's really at stake.

But you know what's at stake here. There's all the obvious factors, of course. Lower scores may prevent your child from getting into their dream school, and there might always be that small lingering sense of doubt of what "could have been" with a different testing outcome. Or, your child might miss out on obtaining thousands of dollars in scholarships that are based solely on test scores.

The good news about all of this is that your family doesn't have to go through this process alone. Individual test prep tutoring can help set up your child for success. There are so many advantages that working with an individual tutor can provide over trying to muddle through things without guidance. Individual tutoring allows for a truly customized experience, where everything can be carefully crafted to provide the optimal learning experience for your child.

Something I firmly believe in as a test prep teacher is spending exactly the amount of time needed to do the things that need to be done, and then moving on to the next thing. The test prep process can drag on and on without focused guidance, but there's no reason for it to extend indefinitely. Not all students need to know all the things, because not every question is intended for every student. Beyond straight content, I help students laser-focus in on only the

things that they really need to know to maximize their scores. After two decades of teaching these tests, I know precisely what it is that students need to know to achieve the score of their dreams.

Which test should my child take?

At this point in time, all schools that accept test scores will accept either the SAT or the ACT without preference for one over the other. Since it doesn't matter which test your child takes, your child should prepare for and take the test that will likely yield the best results. The easiest way to determine that is to take a practice SAT and ACT test and compare the scores. If one is significantly better than the other, that is the test that should be pursued. If they are similar, your child can choose which test he or she prefers.

What is the difference between the SAT and ACT?

Starting in March 2024, students will take the SAT as a digital test on a laptop or tablet. The digital SAT has two sections: Reading and Writing, and Math. Within those two sections will be two different modules of each. The digital SAT is section-adapted, which means that performance on the first module influences the difficulty-level of the second model. It takes about 2 hours and 15 minutes to complete it. A calculator (handheld or an onscreen version of the Desmos calculator) are allowed on both math sections.

The ACT has four sections: English, Reading, Math, and Science. It takes approximately 3 hours to complete. A calculator is allowed on the math section.

There are pluses and minuses for both tests. The SAT generally allows more time per question, but the questions tend to be more "tricky". The ACT timing can be tight for many students, but the questions are generally more straight-forward.

Students who are very good test takers tend to do equally on both tests; students who struggle with testing may find the ACT easier to prepare for.

When should my child take the test?

Although scores are good for five years, colleges generally prefer to see scores from junior or senior year. Though your child can take the test earlier, he or she should plan to take it again later. Your child can generally take tests up until September or October of his or her senior year, depending on deadlines. It's common to need to take the test more than once, so your child should plan to have taken it at least once by the spring semester of junior year.

When should my child begin preparing for the test?

This is somewhat dependent on individual factors, including the math class your child is currently taking, as well as extracurricular activities that may need to be scheduled around. Some students start in the summer before junior year and take the first round of tests in early to mid-fall. Other students prefer to start around January of junior year and take the first round of tests closer to April. In general, it's helpful to have the bulk of test prep work done during junior year, if possible.

What can my freshman or sophomore child be working on now?

Younger students should make sure to stay on top of basic math skills, including knowing basic math facts such as formulas, times tables, and division facts. This is particularly important if your student takes the SAT, since it has a no calculator section on it.

Does my child qualify for extended time?

If your child has a 504 plan or an IEP, it is likely that he or she will qualify for extended time on the tests. A current psychoeducation report that has been written in the past three years is usually required. An application process is required to request extended time, and the paperwork generally must go through your child's school. The process can take some time to be completed, so it's important to initiate it early. If the request is denied, the decision can, and should, be appealed. The SAT and ACT have separate processes for applying for extended time.

Sometimes during the course of test preparation, parents find that their child is having unexpected difficulties with the materials or testing procedures. In these circumstances, parents sometimes choose to have their child complete psychoeducational testing to determine if there might be some type of learning difference that has gone undetected. If that's the case, it may be possible to apply for and be granted extended time.

What does your program entail?

The InHouse Test Prep Skills for Success program is an intensive test preparation program that is designed for rising or current juniors. Typical completion time for the program is between 3 to 6 months. Prior to the beginning of the course, your student will complete a practice SAT and ACT test at home to determine which test will be the best to prepare for. After the tests are taken, we will have a family meeting to develop a personalized studying strategy based on test dates, extracurriculars, school, and other factors.

We will generally meet for individual sessions once a week, though occasionally we might meet twice a week. Appointments are usually available in the afternoons and evenings on weekdays, and earlier in the day on weekends. Sessions can be scheduled through the online scheduling system. All appointments are currently being held over Zoom.

In addition to one-on-one lessons, the curriculum also has an online component, which includes digital course material and databases of practice problems. Your child will continue to have access to these materials after the course has ended.

Your child will also be assigned homework each week to reinforce the skills that have been learned during each lesson. It's critically important that these assignments be completed each week.

During the course, your child will also take several timed practice tests. This will allow your child to practice under simulated testing conditions, and provide us with information about which areas still need focus.

What is your background?

I've been teaching test prep since 2001. I originally started with The Princeton Review and then worked for several private companies in Florida. In 2007, I started my business, InHouse Test Prep in Austin, TX, and I now work with students all over the world. I have a BA in Psychology from Trinity University and a Ph.D. in Public Health from The University of Texas Health Science Center.

How can I contact you for more information?

You can reach me at info@inhousetestprep.com or schedule a free Strategy Call [here](#).