

INTRODUCTION TO ADMISSIONS TESTS

WHAT'S CHANGING, WHAT'S STAYING THE
SAME, AND HOW TO SET YOUR STUDENT
UP FOR SUCCESS



marigold prep



Who is Marigold Prep?

- Virtual support for test prep, every major academic subject, and executive functioning
- Decades of tutoring & test prep experience
- Provided online instruction "before it was cool"



HI! I'M **CASSIE BROWN,** FOUNDER OF MARIGOLD PREP

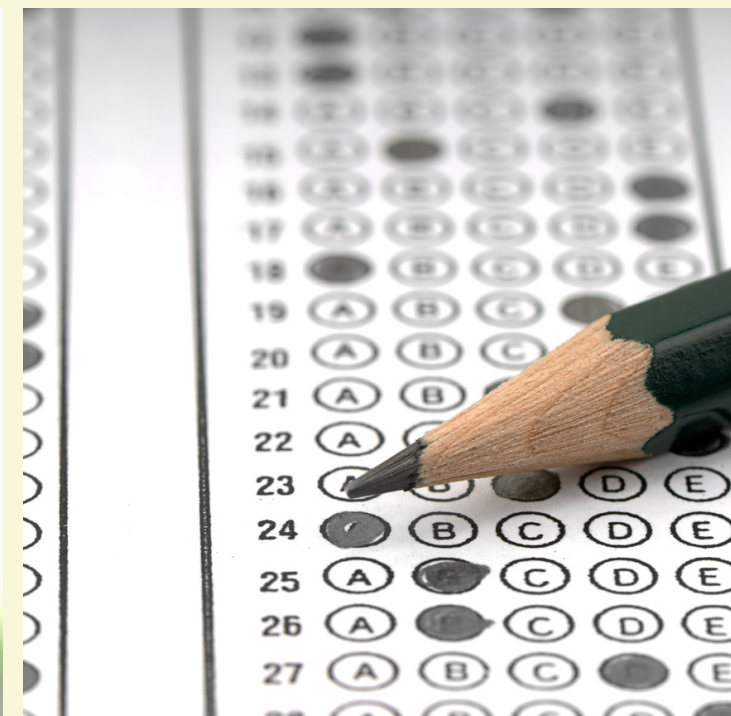
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Today we'll cover:

- **Overview** of the PSAT, SAT & ACT
- Introduction to the **Digital SAT**
- **Choosing** the right test
- **Testing optional** fluency
- Test **anxiety & accommodations**
- FAQ / Live Q&A



PSAT, SAT & ACT

Overview

What are the SAT & ACT, anyway?

- They are **not** necessarily testing student intelligence
- They **are** testing a student's ability to take a multi-hour test on a Saturday morning
- They assess **content knowledge of reading, language, and math**
- These are also tests of critical thinking and problem solving
- The SAT and ACT remain the primary college entrance exams for US universities
- Colleges **do not have a preference between the SAT & ACT**, nor do they need to see both tests
- Each official test is offered 7 times per year

What about the PSAT?

- **The PSAT is essentially a practice run at the SAT**, especially for freshmen and sophomores.
- For juniors, it's an **opportunity to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship**, depending on score.
- This year's PSAT will be **digital for all students**.
- The PSAT is **not a college admissions test**, like the SAT and ACT.
- The PSAT is **extremely similar to the SAT**, but is scored out of 1520 because it is slightly less difficult.
- Still, a PSAT score is universally considered an **accurate indicator of an SAT score**.
- The PSAT is offered in **mid-October every year**, typically through a student's school.

Testing Timeline

If in the winter of 2024 you are a...

Freshman

- Focus on getting GPA off to a good start
- Look to take challenging courses, if possible
- Take the PSAT if offered

Sophomore

- Continue to focus on GPA
- Take PSAT (Does NOT count for National Merit)
- Prep the summer for SAT/ACT, depending on a student's math class and goals

Junior

- Take the PSAT (NMSQT)
- Take SAT/ACT at least once, if not twice, depending on your math class
- Use the summer following junior year to do college visits and work on application essays

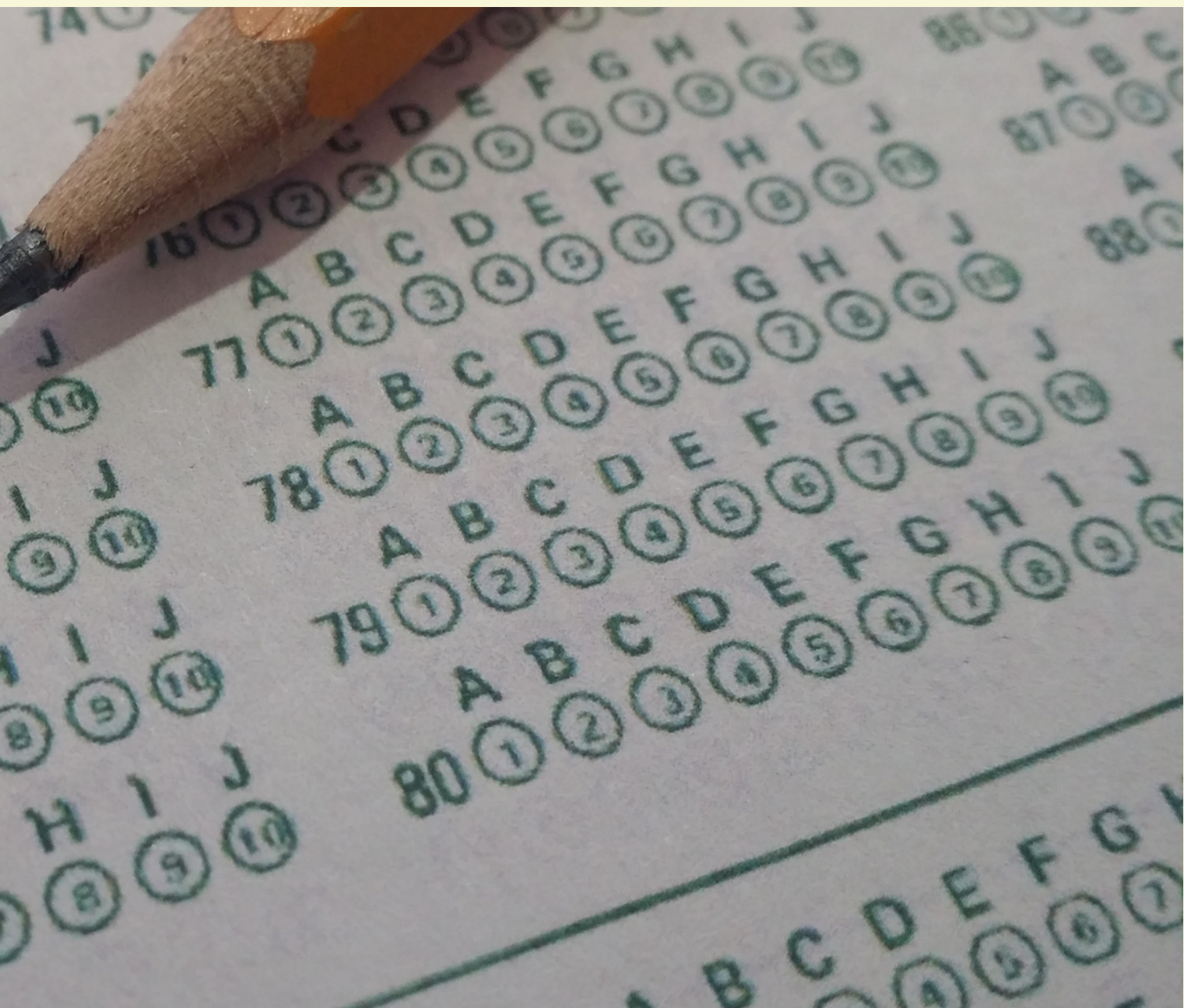
Senior

- Aim to take your last SAT/ACT by early Senior year
- Most early action and decisions deadlines hit in November
- Regular admission deadlines are from December to January

The Digital SAT



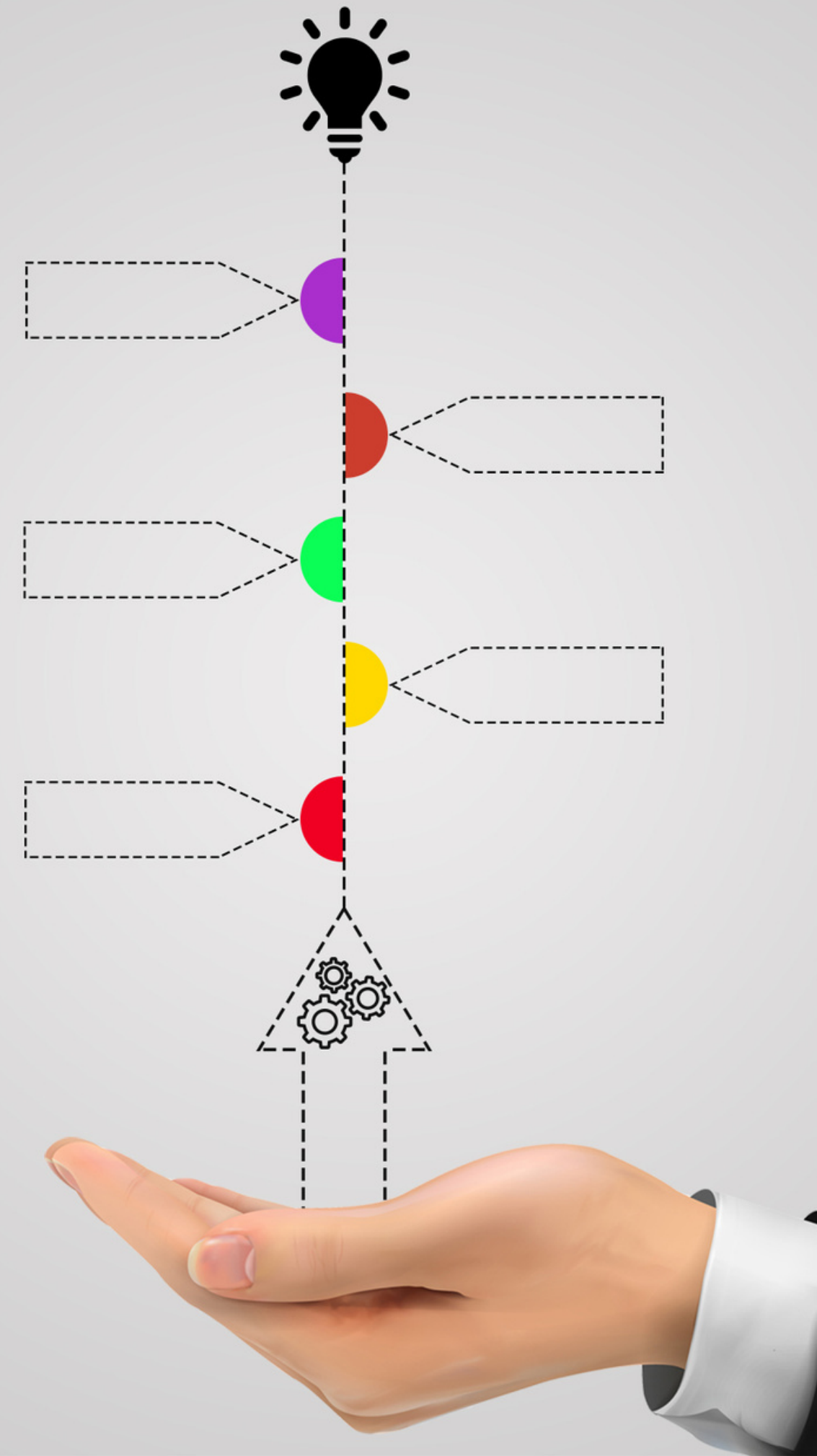
What's up with the digital SAT?



College Board is implementing
a **digital and adaptive** version
of the SAT.

The SAT goes digital!

- International SAT went fully digital **Spring 2023**.
- Digital PSAT 8/9 tests began in **early 2022**.
- PSAT went fully digital in **Fall 2023**.
- US SAT goes fully digital in **Spring 2024**.
Class of 2025 will be the first to take the fully digital SAT.



How the Test Adapts

Module 1

Students are given questions of mixed difficulty, with the **more difficult questions being weighted more heavily**, or worth more points.

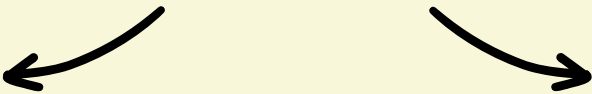
Less Difficult

Moderately Difficult

Most Difficult



Student
routed based
on
performance



Less Difficult Module 2

Students who do not answer as many difficult (or heavily weighted) questions correctly will be routed to a less difficult second module. Correct answers in this module are generally worth fewer points.



More Difficult Module 2

Students who answer more difficult (or more heavily weighted) questions correctly will be routed to a more difficult second module. Correct answers in this module are generally worth more points.



What this means for your score

Students routed to the **more difficult module** have access to questions that are **worth more points**. This means that they can **get fewer questions correct, but still get a higher score** than a student routed to the less difficult module.

On the flip-side, students who are routed to the **less difficult module** are essentially **locked out of higher potential scores**. This gives an added **importance to performing well at the beginning** of the test.

How difficult is difficult?

“Hard” vs “easy” is subjective, so they may not feel the same for each student. College Board will determine a question’s level based on how other students have performed on that question during pilots and the experimental sections of previous tests. **However, if a student consistently feels they’re encountering more challenging problems as they go through the test, that’s a good sign!**

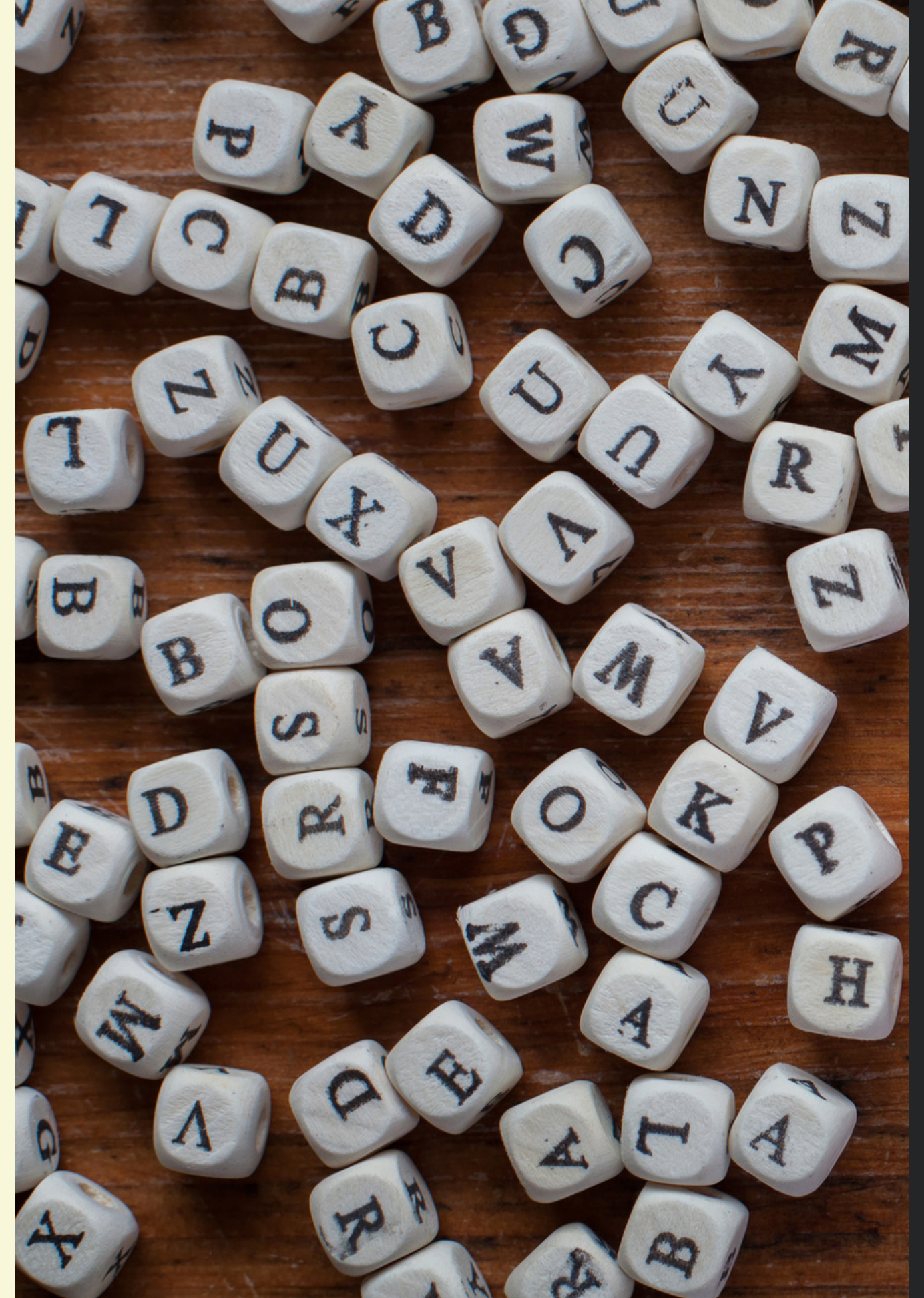
Timing

- Instead of 3+ hours, **the new test will take approximately 2 hours.**
- Since the test is adaptive, **it can collect more specific data in a shorter amount of time.** Students aren't wasting as much time on too-easy or too-hard questions.
- **The digital test will display a countdown timer at the top of the screen.** This will make it easier for students to manage their time and "do the math on the test, not on the clock."



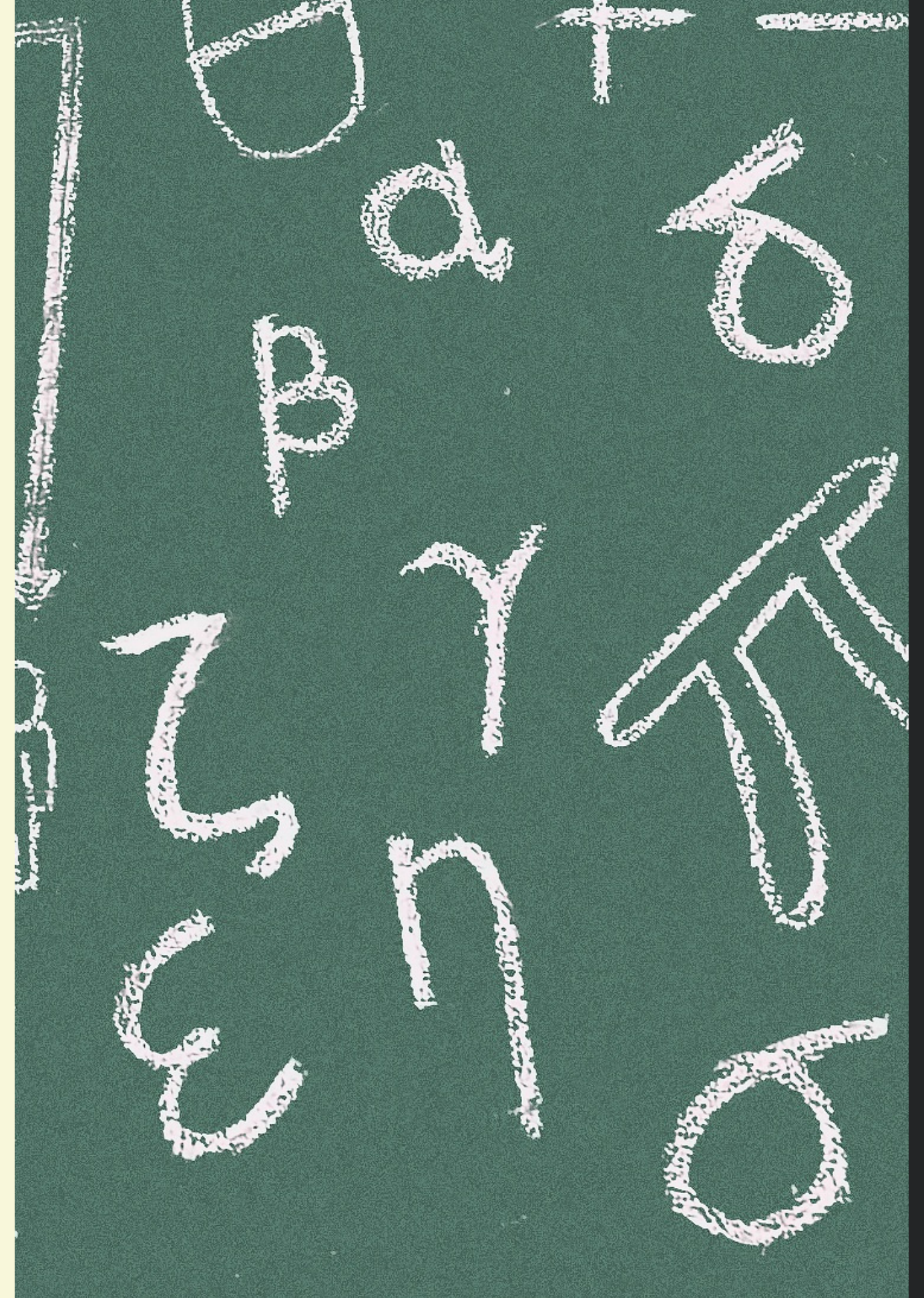
Changes in Reading & Writing

- **There will only be one section covering both Reading and Writing**, instead of splitting these skills into two separate sections.
- The Reading and Writing section will be structured around **shorter passages with one question each**, rather than long passages with 10–11 questions each.
- Unlike previous versions, the digital SAT will include passages dealing with **non-conventional writing**, like poetry or notes for a hypothetical essay.
- However, the questions on all passages will still address **the same concepts and skills** as the previous test: grammar, identifying main ideas, discussing the intent of the author, etc.



Changes in Math

- **There will only be one Math section**, instead of splitting the content between “Calculator” and “No Calculator” sections.
- **Calculators will be allowed on all math problems.**
Students can still use their favorite calculator, or use an on-screen graphing calculator (Desmos) built directly into the testing software. Students will also be provided with scratch paper to work problems out by hand.
- Otherwise, the content and style of math questions **will remain very similar** to previous versions of the test.



Choosing a Test



STANDARDIZED TEST FORMATS

ACT	SAT
1. English 45 minutes, 75 questions	1. Verbal Module 1 32 minutes, 27 questions
2. Math (Calculator) 60 minutes, 60 questions	2. Verbal Module 2 32 minutes, 27 questions
3. Reading 35 minutes, 40 questions	3. Math Module 1 (Calculator) 35 minutes, 22 questions
4. Science 35 minutes, 40 questions	4. Math Module 2 (Calculator) 35 minutes, 22 questions
Total ACT Duration 175 minutes 215 questions	Total Digital SAT Duration 134 minutes 98 questions

A word about ACT Science...

- The ACT Science section **does not test a student's prior knowledge of the science** they learn in school (bio, chem, physics, etc).
- Instead, it tests a student's ability to **interpret charts and graphs**.
- It is also testing a student's ability to do this the end of a fast paced, 3-hour exam.
- In some ways, it is more **similar to a reading comprehension exam** than a science test.
- For some students, the science section is a **deal-maker or deal-breaker** for the ACT.

Experiment 2

In each of Trials 4–6, Steps 1–4 in Experiment 1 were performed except that in Step 3, solid monohydrate was recovered by *vacuum filtration* (see Figure 2).

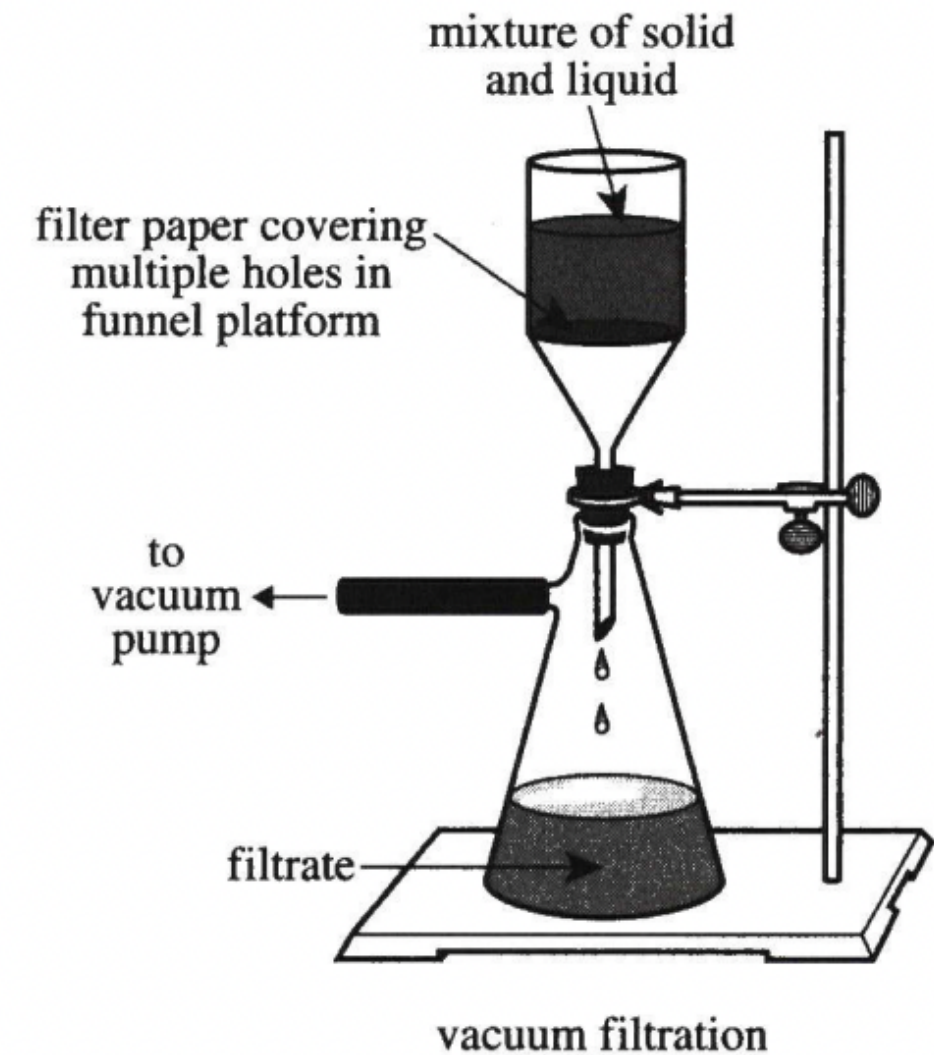


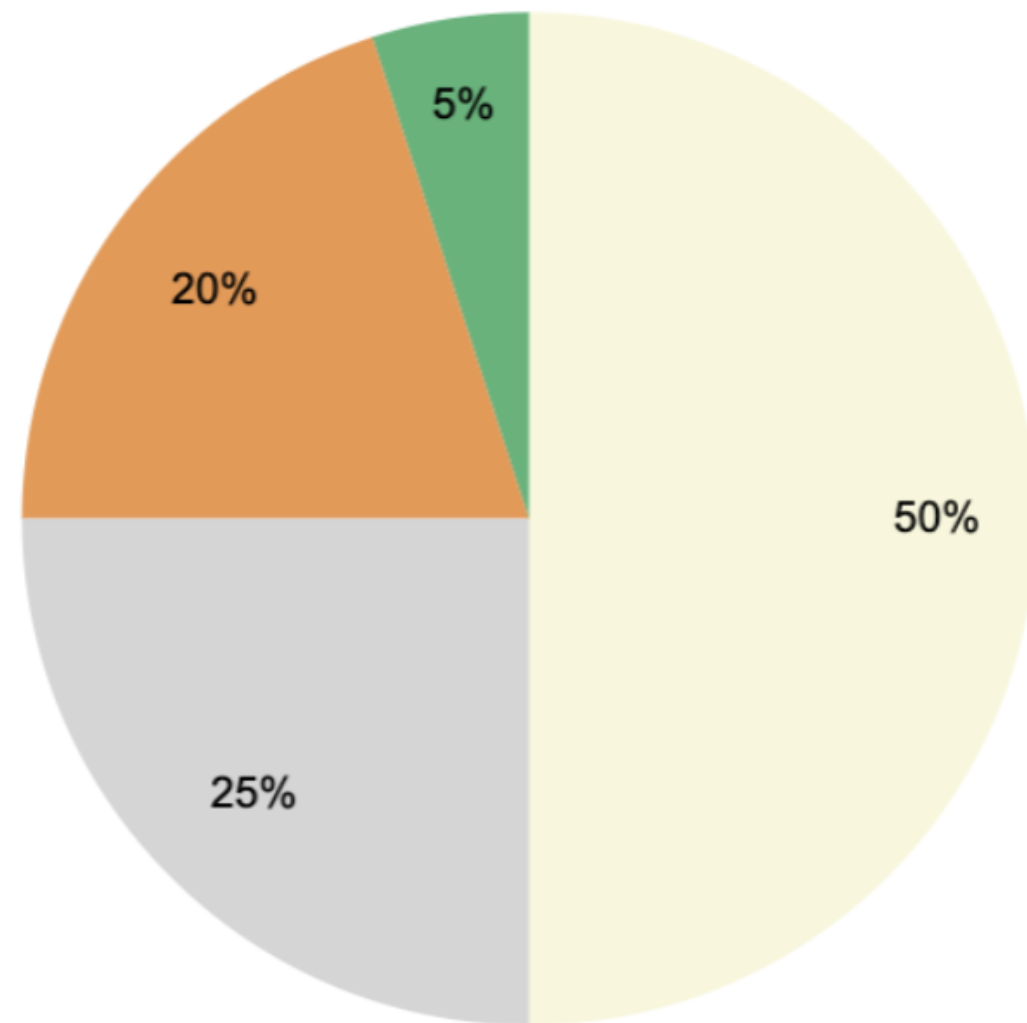
Figure 2

The results of Experiments 1 and 2 are shown in Table 1.

Score Composition %

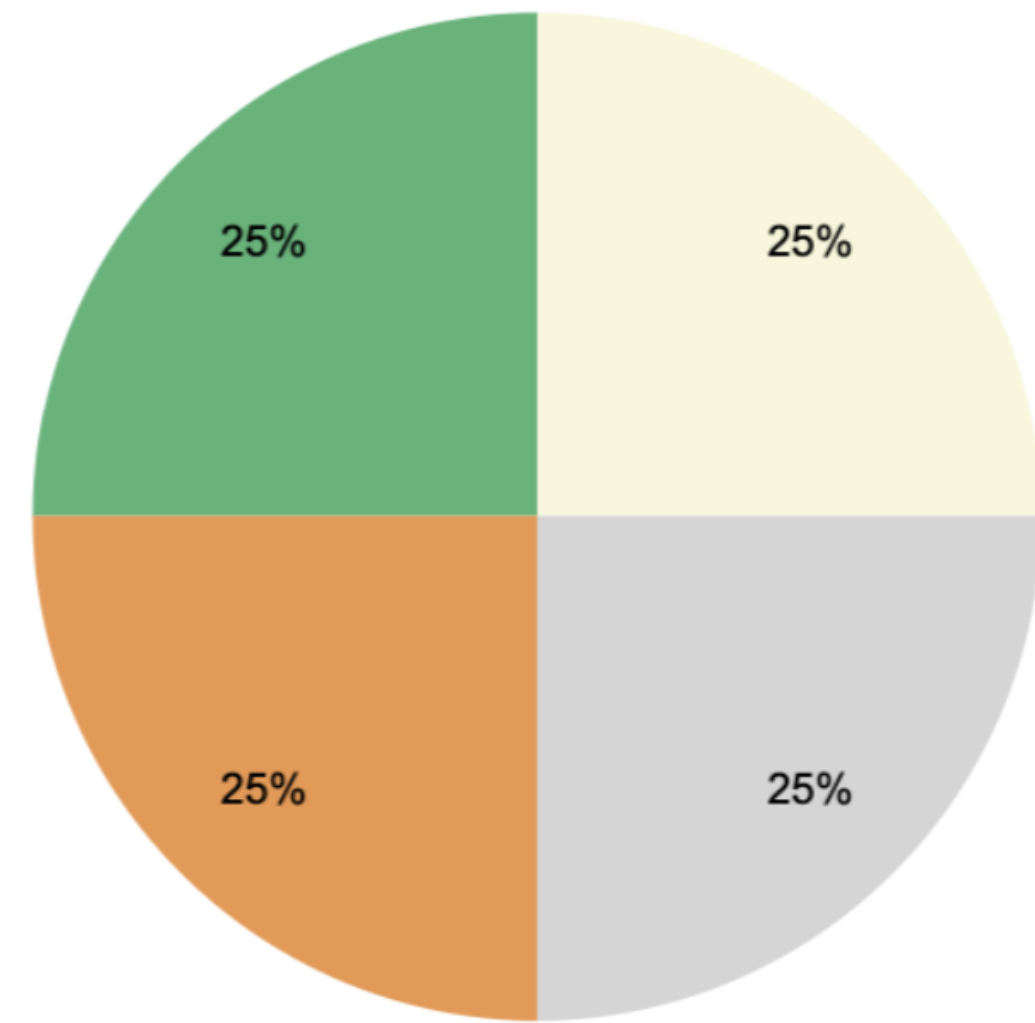
SAT

● Math ● English ● Reading ● Science



ACT

● Math ● English ● Reading ● Science



THE ACT VS SAT

	ACT	SAT
Timing & Duration	Full test duration is 3 hours	Full test duration is 2 hours and 14 minutes
	On average, students have less than one minute per question	On average, students have over one minute per question
	Student is responsible for knowing how much time is left	Countdown timer is displayed at the top of the screen
Calculator Use	Calculator can be used for the entire exam	Calculator can be used for the entire exam
	Students need to bring a calculator to the test	Digital calculator is provided , or students can bring their own
Content	Format/ Order: English, Math, Reading, Science	Format/ Order: Reading/Writing (Module 1), Reading Writing (Adaptive Module), Math (Module 1), Math (Adaptive Module)
	Reading is a dedicated section that features four long passages with 10 questions each	Reading and Writing are combined into one section featuring short passages with one question each
	Writing/Language focuses on nuts and bolts	Reading/Writing will feature passages with non-conventional writing like poetry and hypothetical essays
	Charts and graphs are featured in a dedicated Science section	Charts and graphs are mixed in with the Math and Verbal sections
Taking the Test	Every student takes the same material in each section	Will be adaptive , using the questions in Module 1 to adjust the difficulty of questions subsequent Adaptive Module
	Time spent at beginning of testing session to bubble in student's name, school, etc and answers submitted on bubble sheet.	App is linked to student's College Board account and automatically populates information and answers submitted digitally
	Test taken at designated testing centers on specific days	Test taken at designated testing centers on specific days
Scoring	Every question is weighted, or worth, the same	Difficult questions are weighted more heavily. This means correct answers on "harder" questions contribute to a higher score
	Scores take approximately two to three weeks to process	Scores currently take two to three weeks to process, but should eventually be available within hours or days
	Scored out of 36: Average of 4 sections out of 36	Scored out of 1600: Total of 2 sections out of 800

How do I know which test is best for **my student?**



Take the guess work out!
Students should **take a practice test** for each exam and **review the results with an expert.**

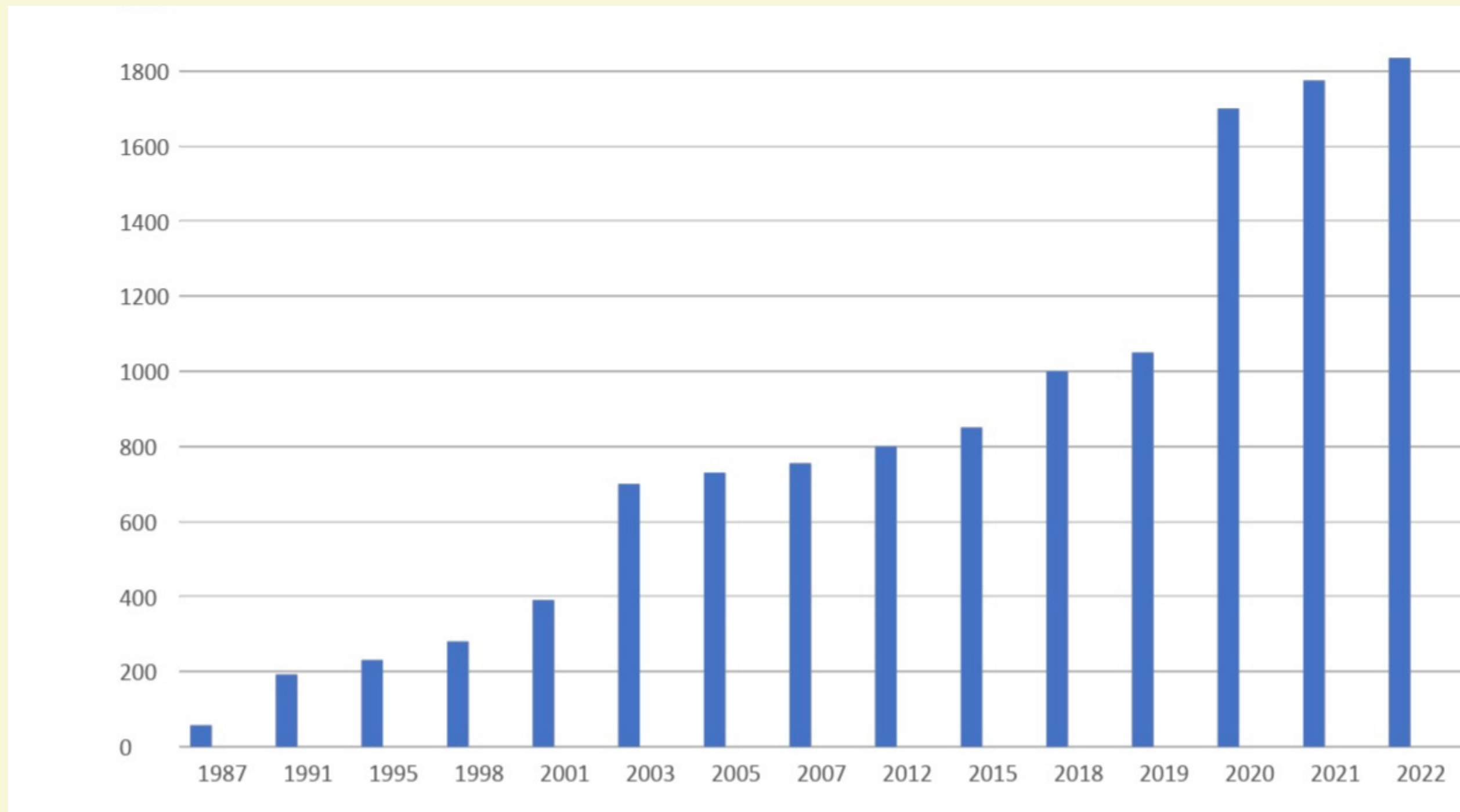
Testing Policy Fluency



Testing Policy Fluency

Test Policy	What does it mean?	Should I submit scores?
Test Blind	Test scores do not hold weight in admissions decisions, even if submitted.	You do not need to submit scores, but consult with your college counselor to make sure you won't need/want a test for certain program or financial aid considerations.
Test Optional	Schools will consider test scores if a student submits them, but will not penalize a student if they do not submit them	Yes, if your scores is above the average score for incoming freshman at the college. No, if your score is below the average, and be aware the other parts of your application might hold more weight.
Test Optional with Caveats	Scores are not required for a school in general, but are required for certain programs and scholarships	Yes, if your scores is above the average score for incoming freshman at the college and/ or required for a certain program/ scholarship.
Recommended	Highly selective colleges now say they "recommend" tests, but do not require them. Students who submit scores are generally more competitive.	Yes, and you should aim for a competitive score.
Required	There's no getting out of it.	Yes, and your should aim for a highly competitive score.

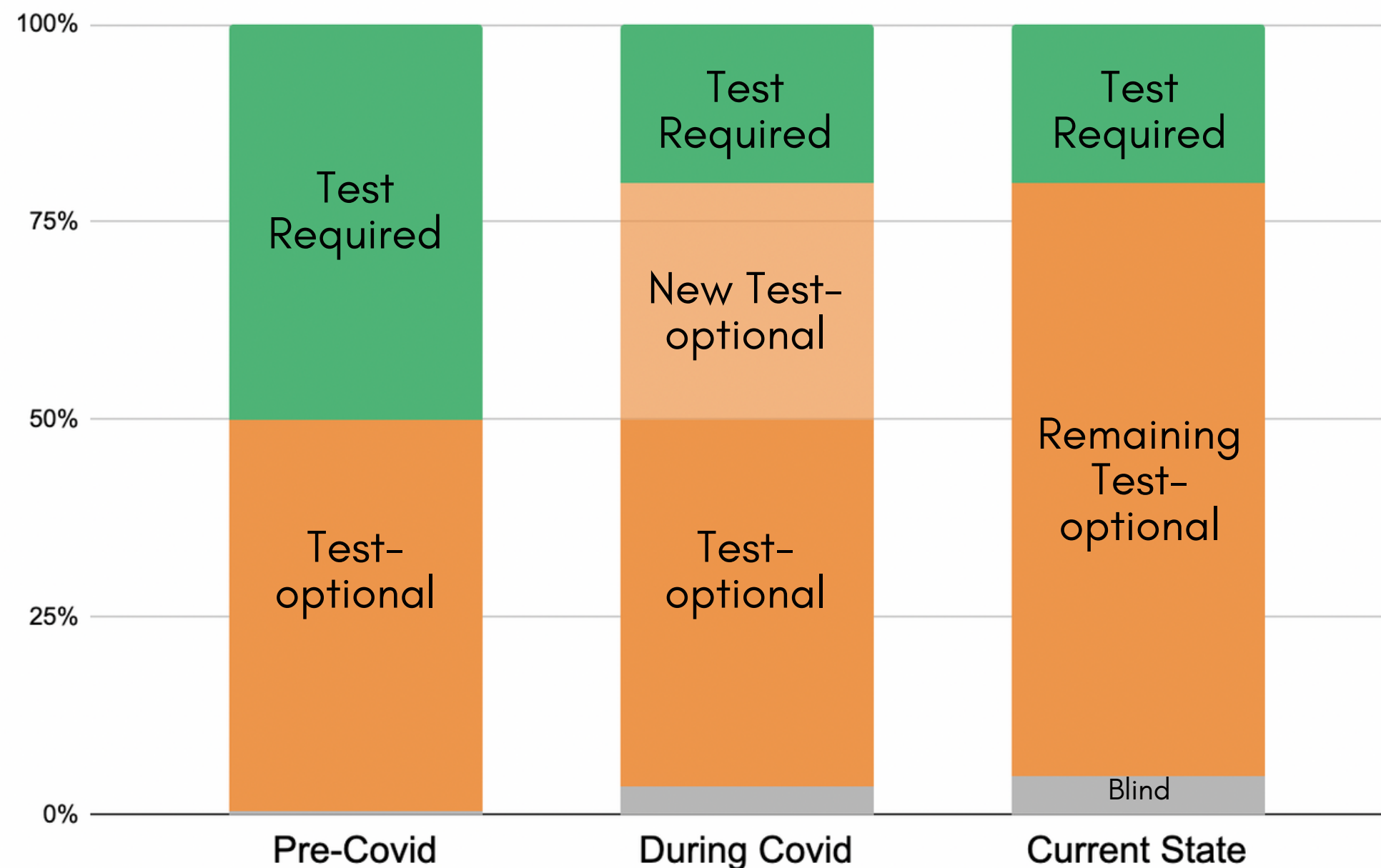
Test Optional History & Growth



● # of colleges test optional

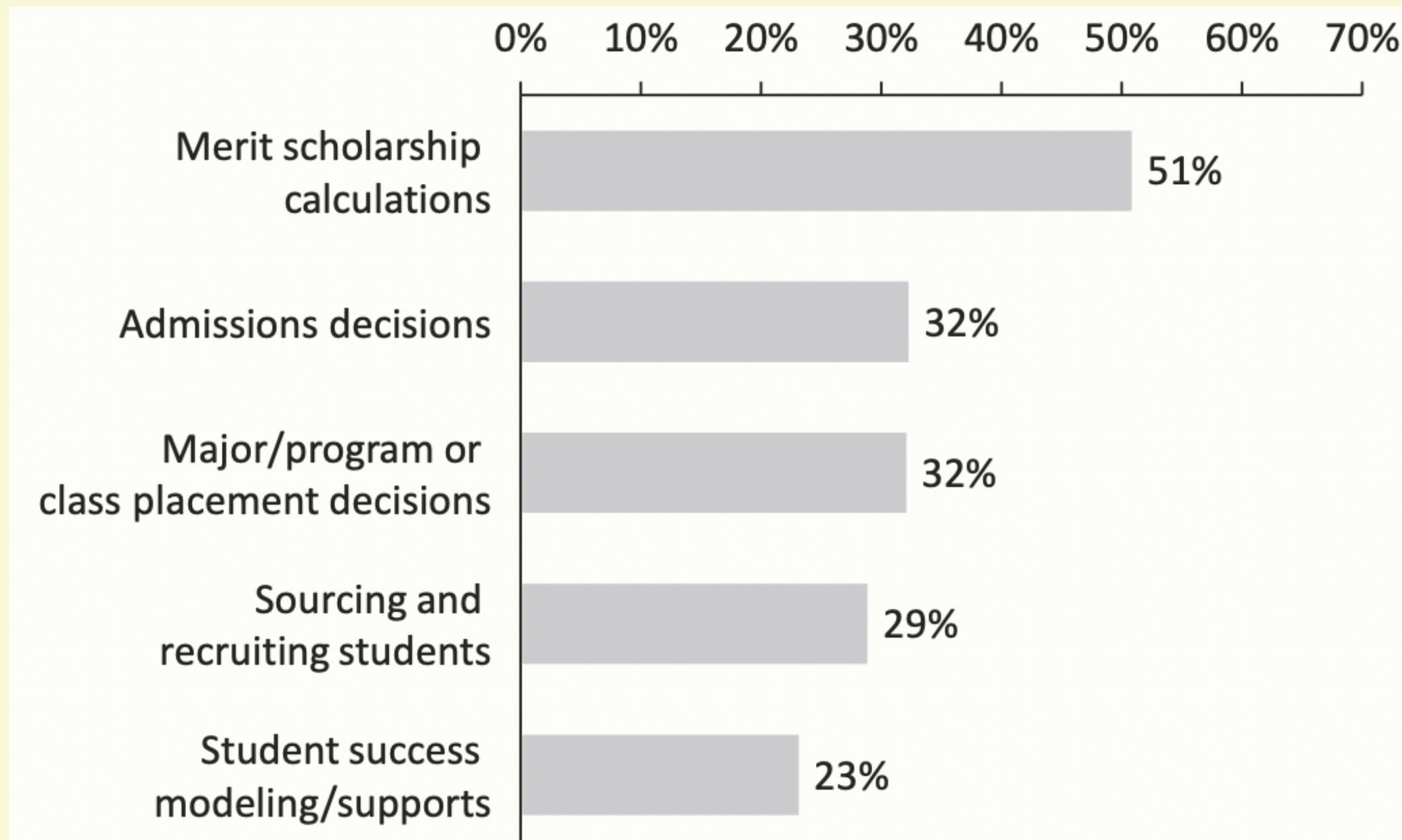
Test Optional COVID Impacts

Admissions Test Requirements by American Universities



- **About 50%** of colleges and universities adopted test-optional policies prior to COVID-19.
- An additional **30%** transitioned to test optional in 2020 and the vast majority will maintain that policy through fall 2024
- **~5% of colleges** have adopted test blind policies, including the UC's and Cal State Schools
- **Future policy decisions** will be determined by college's ability to recruit and retain **successful students** without testing data

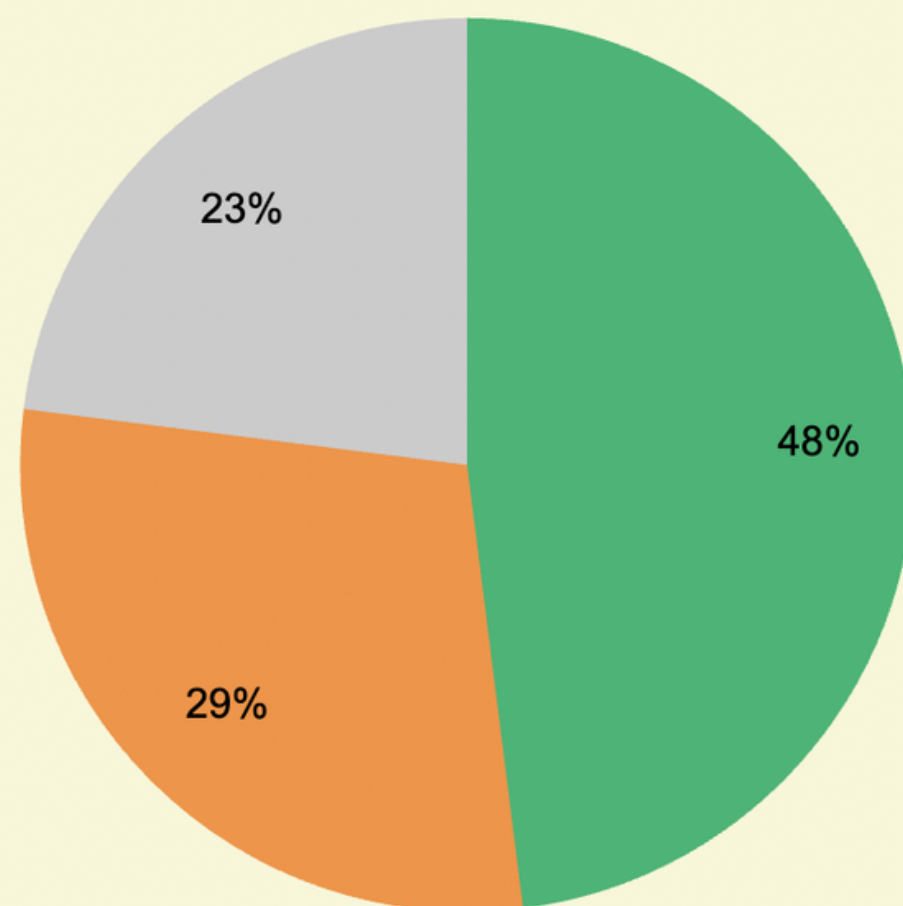
Test Optional & Admissions Decisions



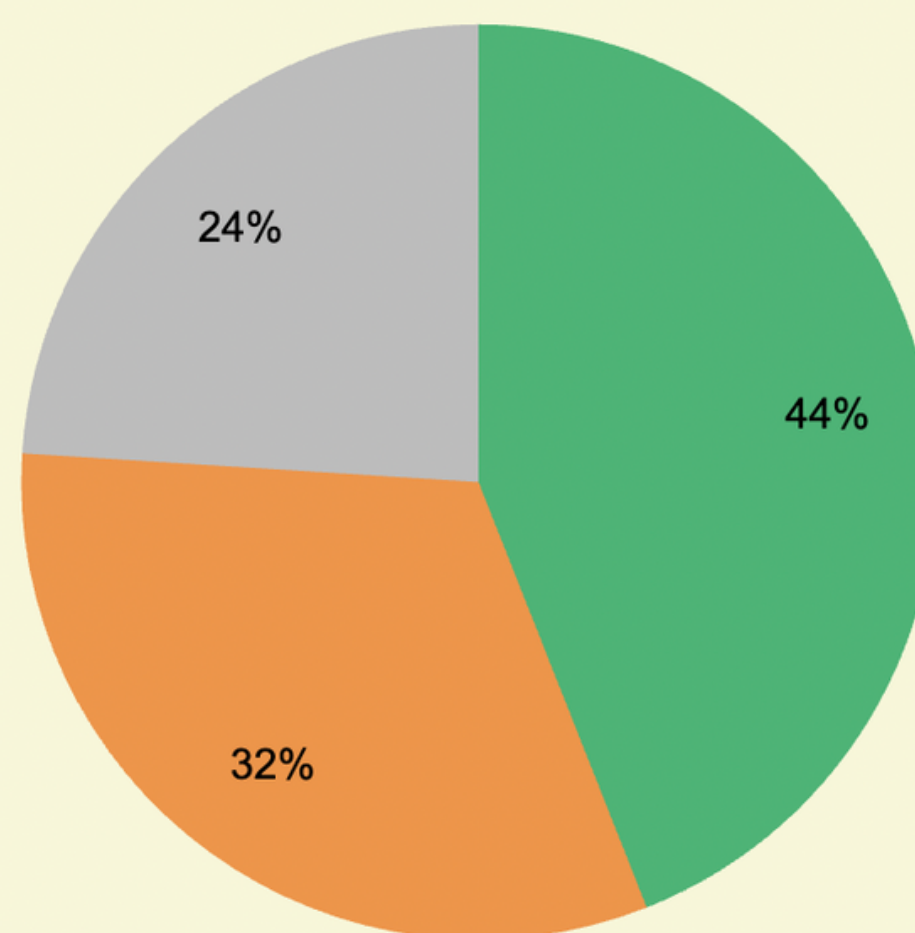
- Universities have reported difficulty adjusting certain **selection, support, and enrollment functions** as a result of test-optional policies
- The **most significant difficulty has been in awarding student merit-based scholarships**, which historically relied heavily on testing data

Test Optional & Student Submissions

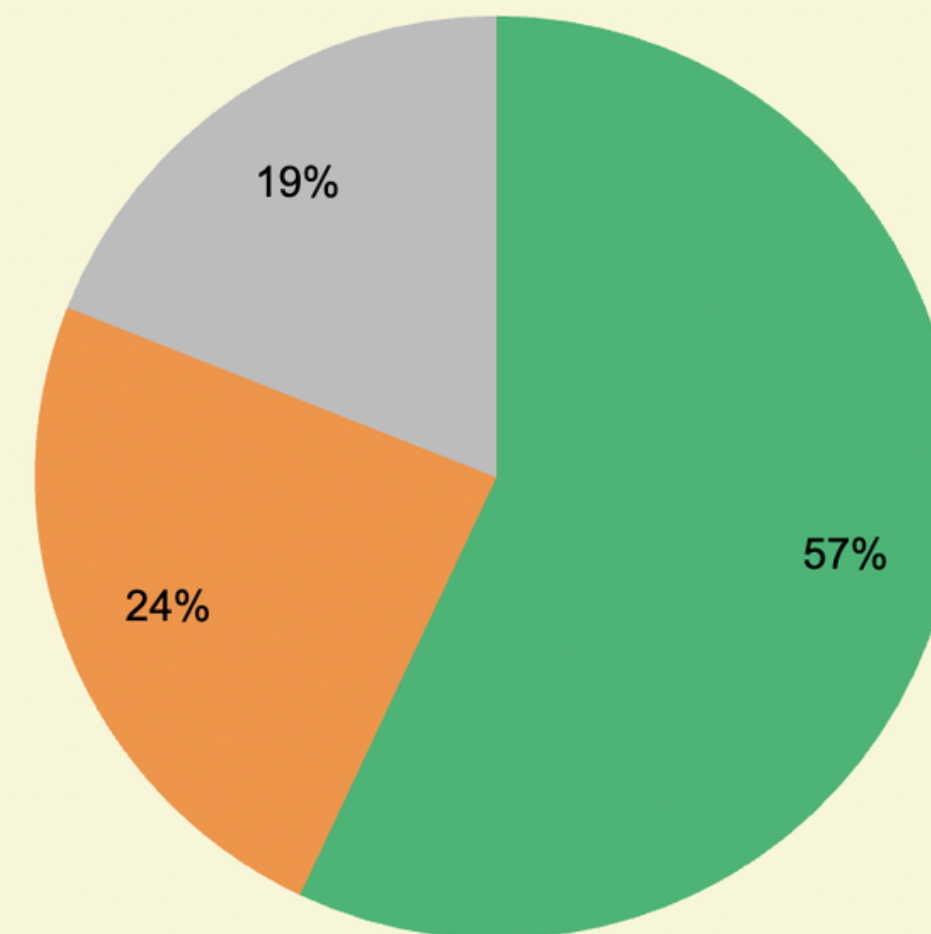
Test Optional Colleges



More Selective Privates



More Selective Publics



Submitted test Took test, did not submit score Did not take test

Test Optional & Admissions Impact

SCHOOL	ACCEPTANCE RATE (2021)	ACCEPTANCE RATE (2023)	SAT AVERAGES (2021)	SAT AVERAGES (2023)	ACT AVERAGES (2021)	ACT AVERAGES (2023)
Harvard	5%	4%	1460 to 1580	1480 to 1580	33 to 35	33 to 36
USC	16%	12%	1360 to 1510	1410 to 1540	30 to 35	32 to 35
NYU	21%	13%	1390 to 1510	1450 to 1570	31 to 34	32 to 35
University of Chicago	7%	6%	1510 to 1560	1510 to 1580	34 to 35	34 to 35
UC Berkeley	18%	14%	1420 to 1530	Test Blind	30 to 35	Test Blind

What does this tell us about test-optional admissions?

Test-optional admissions does not translate to "easier" admissions. In the absence of required tests many competitive schools have seen a record number of applicants, which contributes to a lower acceptance rate. Additionally, with lower scoring students choosing not to submit test results, the average SAT/ACT score of admitted students has increased.

Will schools **superscore** the Digital SAT?

The schools that **currently superscore** the sections of the SAT will, like MIT, **likely continue to do so** when the SAT switches to the digital format.

The **digital SAT and paper SAT can be superscored together**. Each college has their own policies on superscoring, so be sure to **check with all the colleges on your list** to ensure they accept superscoring across the digital and paper SAT.

Test Anxiety & Accommodations



Basics of Test Anxiety

What is it?

Test anxiety is a nervous feeling before or during a test, often related to fears of poor performance.

How common is it?

The available statistics vary widely depending on the study's methods and measurements, but we know test anxiety is fairly common:

- Up to 75% of students experience **some level** of test anxiety
- Up to 35% of students experience levels of test anxiety that **impair their functioning**.

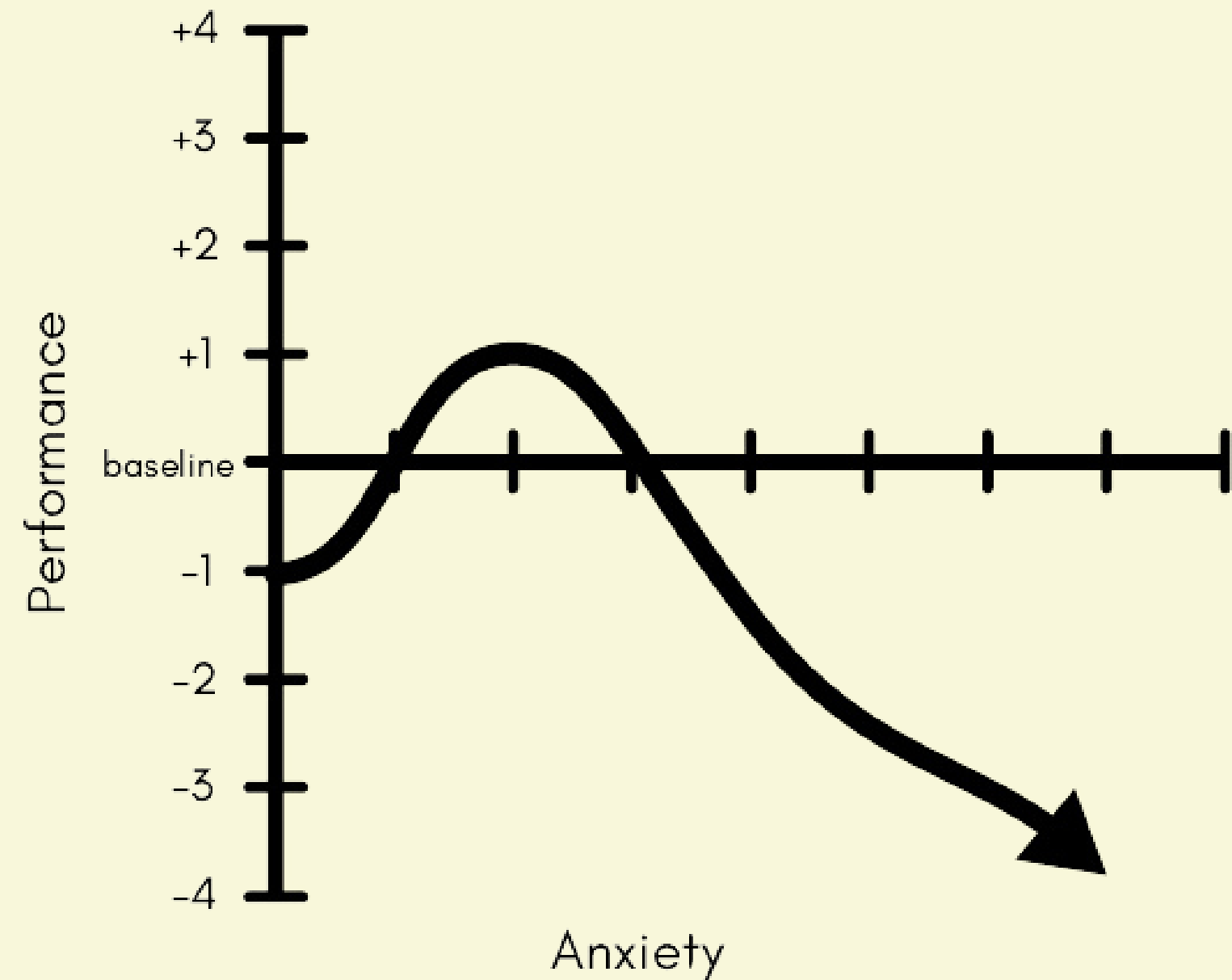


The Yerkes-Dodson Effect

A small amount of nervous energy can sharpen focus and improve performance, but high anxiety results in worse performance.

Like most forms of anxiety and psychological distress, a little bit is a perfectly normal response to stress – in fact, it can help put us “in the zone.”

But there is a threshold we can cross where anxiety hurts our performance.



Navigating Test Anxiety



In professional psychology, the current best practice counselors recommend for managing anxiety is:

1

Notice how you feel and how it is manifesting

2

Realize that your feelings **conflict with reality**

3

Self-soothe to clear out the adrenaline

4

Replace adrenaline-based reactions with **more helpful coping mechanisms**



Receiving & Using Accommodations

Being correctly accommodated can remove some major anxiety. A few examples:

- **Extended time** testing gives struggling students breathing room to self-soothe.
- **1-1 or small-group** testing removes some of the perceived social pressure of being surrounded by peers.
- **Screen-readers and large-print test booklets** make it possible to access the test material for students with certain disabilities

If your student qualifies for accommodations, then by definition they both **need and deserve** them. **Advocate early and often** for their accommodations at school and at their testing center.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **What is a "good" score** on the SAT/ACT?
- **How much prep** should I do for the SAT/ACT?
- **When should I take** my first SAT/ ACT?
- **How many times** should I take the SAT/ACT?
- How will **colleges** receive my scores?





Additional questions?

[Click here](#) to schedule a free consultation to discuss a customized test prep plan for your student. , ,m

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