

# ALL ABOUT THE SAT & ACT

WHY THEY MATTER, WHAT COLLEGES  
WANT, & HOW TO SUCCEED



Scan to download slides



# 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

415 237 3377

[cassie@marigoldprep.com](mailto:cassie@marigoldprep.com)

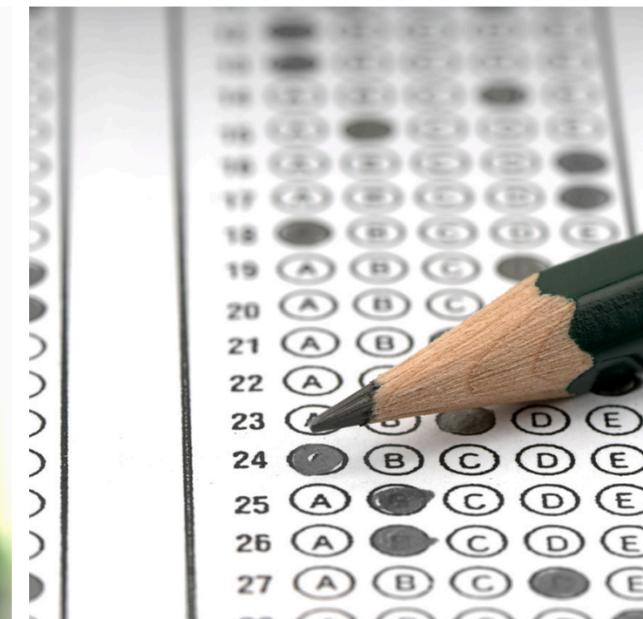


Add to contacts



# Tonight we'll cover

- **Overview** of the SAT & ACT
- SAT **vs** ACT
- What **colleges** want
- How to **succeed**
- Live Q&A



# 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.
- The SAT offers an official test 8 per year, while the ACT is offered 7 times per year.

# SAT Overview



<b>FORMAT</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
<p><b>1. Reading &amp; Writing Module 1</b> 32 minutes, 27 questions</p>	<p><b>800 possible points</b></p>
<p><b>2. Reading &amp; Writing Module 2 (adaptive)</b> 32 minutes, 27 questions</p>	
<p><b>3. Math Module 1</b> 35 minutes, 27 questions</p>	<p><b>800 possible points</b></p>
<p><b>4. Math Module 2 (adaptive)</b> 35 minutes, 27 questions</p>	
<p><b>Total Digital SAT Duration</b> <b>134 minutes</b> <b>98 questions</b></p>	<p><b>1600 possible points</b></p>

# How the SAT 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**

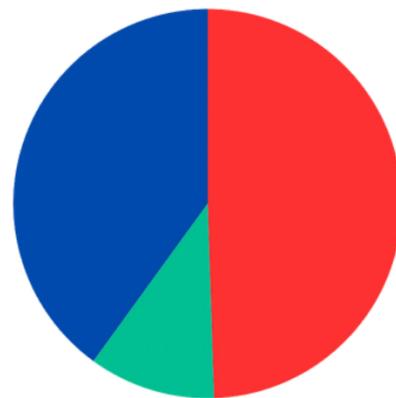
**Moderately Difficult**

**Most Difficult**



### 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.

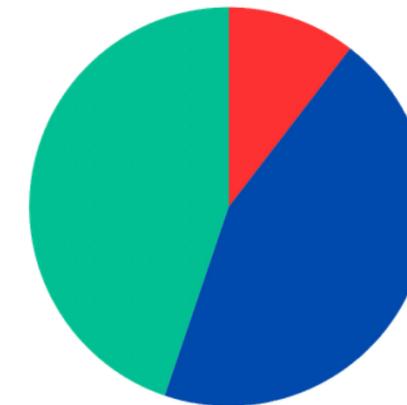


Student  
**routed** based  
on  
**performance**



### 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.



# SAT Sub-Categories or “Content Domains”

## READING & WRITING

### Information & Ideas

Locating, interpreting, and integrating information and ideas from texts and graphs

### Craft & Structure

Understanding words in context, synthesizing rhetorical texts, connecting ideas

### Expression of Ideas

Revising texts to improve effectiveness

### Standard Conventions of English

Editing text for grammar, usage, and punctuation

## MATH

### Algebra

Solving linear equations, functions, and inequalities

### Advance Math

Solving equivalent expressions, nonlinear equations, and nonlinear functions

### Problem Solving and Data Analysis

Applying quantitative reasoning to ratios, rates, and proportional relationships

### Geometry & Trigonometry

Solving problems focused on perimeter, area, volume, and angles

# ACT Overview



FORMAT	SCORE
<p><b>1. English</b> 35 minutes, 50 questions</p>	<p><b>36 possible points</b></p>
<p><b>2. Math</b> 50 minutes, 45 questions</p>	<p><b>36 possible points</b></p>
<p><b>3. Reading</b> 40 minutes, 36 questions</p>	<p><b>36 possible points</b></p>
<p><b>4. Science (Optional)</b> 40 minutes, 40 questions</p>	<p><b>36 possible points</b> (standalone score)</p>
<p><b>Total Digital Duration</b> <b>125 minutes, 131 questions (Core ACT)</b> 165 minutes, 171 questions (with science)</p>	<p><b>Average of the English, Math, and Reading section scores</b></p>

# What does the ACT **test**?

## ENGLISH

**Tests Knowledge of  
Written English**

Grammar, usage, &  
mechanics

Understanding a  
passage's purpose

Word choice,  
consistency, tone

## MATH

**Tests Math Skills  
Through 10/11th Grade**

Algebra 1, Geometry,  
Algebra 2

Fundamental  
Trigonometry & Statistics

Producing & interpreting  
models

## READING

**Tests Ability to Read &  
Reason Logically**

Determine main ideas &  
details

Make connections &  
comparisons

Analyze claims &  
arguments

## SCIENCE

**Tests *Problem Solving*  
*Skills* for Sciences**

Analyze & manipulate  
data

Identify controls &  
variables

Compare conflicting  
viewpoints & hypotheses

# A word about ACT Science...

- Taking the Science section on the ACT is **optional**. Many **colleges have yet to announce their policies for science**.
- While we expect it to be largely optional, we won't know how it will impact admissions decisions until we have **data from an admissions cycle with the Enhanced ACT**.
- Class of 2027 students are "guinea pigs", so the **safest choice is to take the Science section**. This is particularly true for students applying to schools with ACT averages above 32, where Science will be looked at as a differentiator.
- Improving test scores on the **mandatory parts of the test takes priority!** Consider skipping the science if it is taking significant time away from improving your score on the Core ACT.



# SAT vs ACT



# STANDARDIZED TEST FORMATS

<h2>ACT</h2>	<h2>SAT</h2>
<p><b>1. English</b> 35 minutes, 50 questions</p>	<p><b>1. Reading &amp; Writing Module 1</b> 32 minutes, 27 questions</p>
<p><b>2. Math</b> 50 minutes, 45 questions</p>	<p><b>2. Reading &amp; Writing Module 2</b> 32 minutes, 27 questions</p>
<p><b>3. Reading</b> 40 minutes, 36 questions</p>	<p><b>3. Math Module 1 (Calculator)</b> 35 minutes, 22 questions</p>
<p><b>4. Science (Optional)</b> 40 minutes, 40 questions</p>	<p><b>4. Math Module 2 (Calculator)</b> 35 minutes, 22 questions</p>
<p><b>Total New ACT Duration</b> <b>125 minutes, 131 questions (Core ACT)</b> <b>165 minutes, 171 (with science)</b></p>	<p><b>Total Digital SAT Duration</b> <b>134 minutes</b> <b>98 questions</b></p>

# Major Differences

---

## Timing:

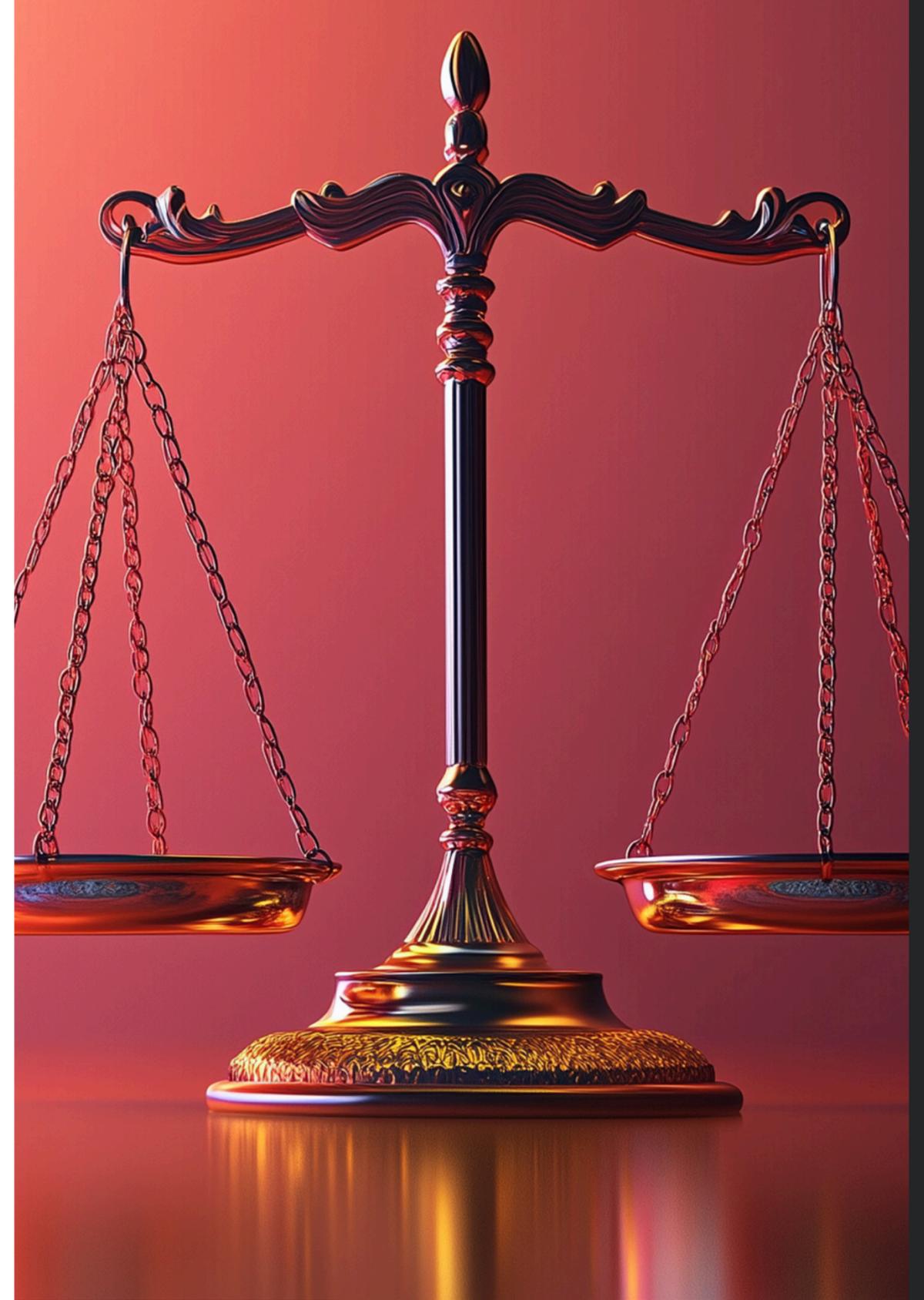
- On average, students have **more time per question** on the SAT than on the ACT.
- While the ACT moves more quickly than the SAT, its questions tend to be more **straightforward and take less time to answer**.

## Verbal/ ELA Sections:

- The SAT's Reading & Writing section contains reading comprehension questions structured around **shorter passages with one question each**.
- The ACT's Reading section contains **longer passages with 10 questions each**.

## Math:

- The ACT tests a **broader set of skills**, and tends to have more questions that assess higher-level math knowledge.
- The SAT uses **more word problems** and often gives the student unnecessary information.



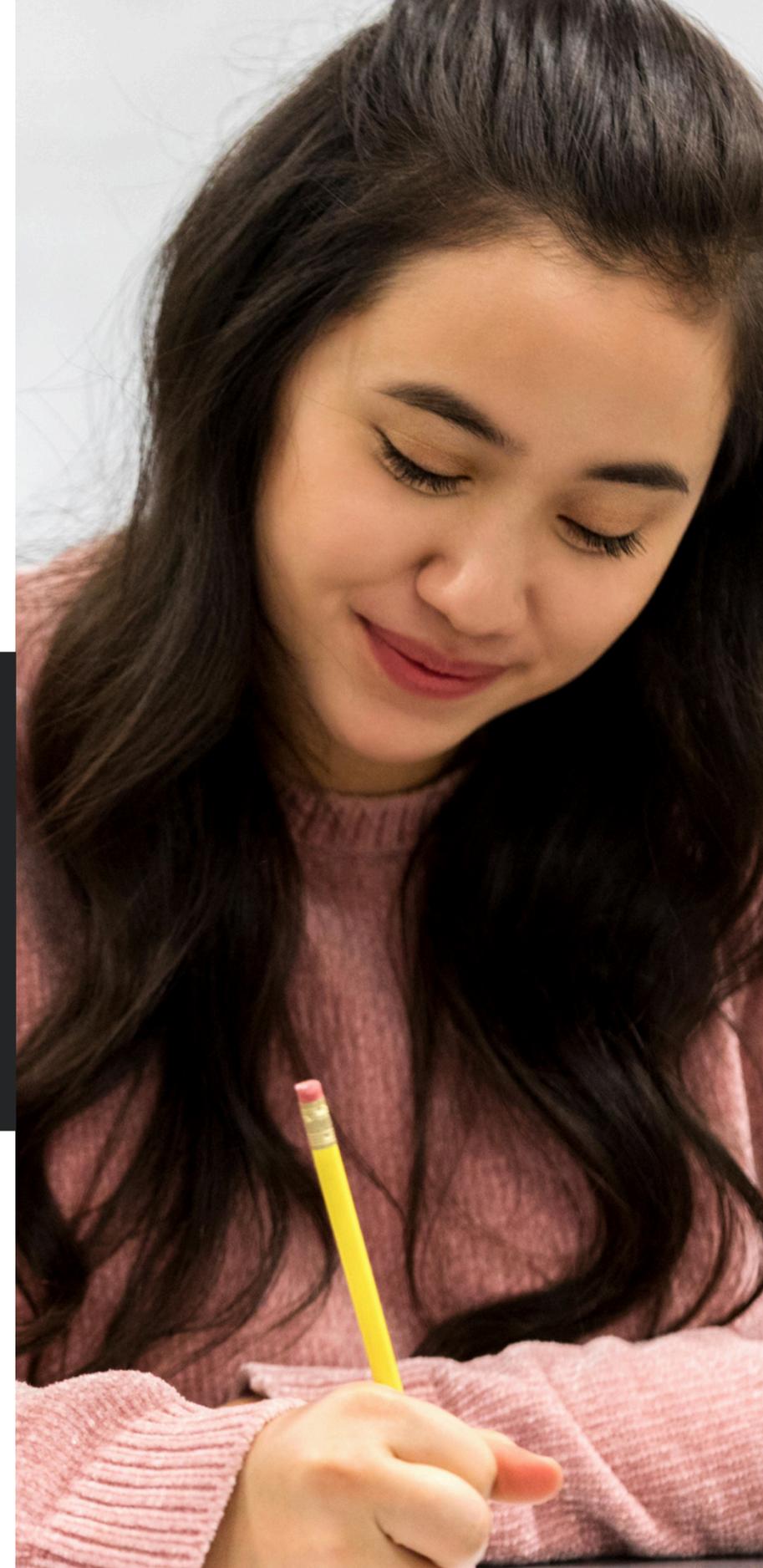
# Differences in Scoring

	New ACT	SAT
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>36</b> possible points	<b>1600</b> possible points
<b>How It's Calculated</b>	<b>Average</b> of English, Math, and Reading sections, each scored out of 36	<b>Total</b> of Reading/Writing and Math sections, each scored out of 800
<b>Math Weighting</b>	<b>33%</b> of total score	<b>50%</b> of total score

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

[Sign up for free diagnostics with Marigold Prep!](#)

Every family can review and compare their score analyses with an expert who will help determine which test is better for your student.



# What Colleges Want



# Testing Policy Fluency

Test Policy	What does it mean?	Should I submit SAT/ACT 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 score 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 score is above the average score for incoming freshman at the college and/or required for a certain program/scholarship.
Test Optional Based on GPA	Scores are required if students have below a certain GPA.	Yes, if your score is above average for incoming freshman at the college and/or you have below the minimum required GPA.
Test-Flexible	Sometimes used interchangeably with "test-optional", test-flexible also means schools require tests, but will take AP or IB exams instead of an SAT/ACT.	Yes, and you should aim for a competitive score. In the absence of a competitive SAT/ACT score, submit another test score that "shows off" your testing proficiency.
Required	There's no getting out of it.	Yes, and you should aim for a highly competitive score.

# How Optional is **Test-Optional**?

**Boston College has always said:** *Internal research has shown that test scores, when used alongside other factors such as grades, curriculum rigor, writing, co-curricular involvement, and recommendations, **add measurable value in predicting academic success.** For this reason, students who complete the SAT or ACT are encouraged to submit their scores.*

**They recently added:** *During the 2024-25 application cycle, **approximately 75% of admitted students submitted SAT and/or ACT test scores.***

**Last year, Oberlin said:** *Test-optional truly means test-optional: the **absence of scores will not count against a student's** application in any way.*

**Now they say:** *If you have taken the SAT or the ACT, we encourage you to submit your scores to **Oberlin.** While our holistic application review will weigh your four-year academic journey – including grades, strength of curriculum, and teacher recommendations – more heavily than the results of standardized tests, your standardized test score will provide an **additional data point that can help increase our confidence in your ability to succeed at Oberlin.***

# Submitting to Test Optional Schools

- Each year, every college publishes the **percentage of enrolled Freshmen who submitted scores and their averages.**
- Students should aim to submit scores **at or above the school's average.**
- Students should also consider **how much of their competition** will submit scores.
- A student is **never required to submit a score to a test-optional college**, even if they've tested.

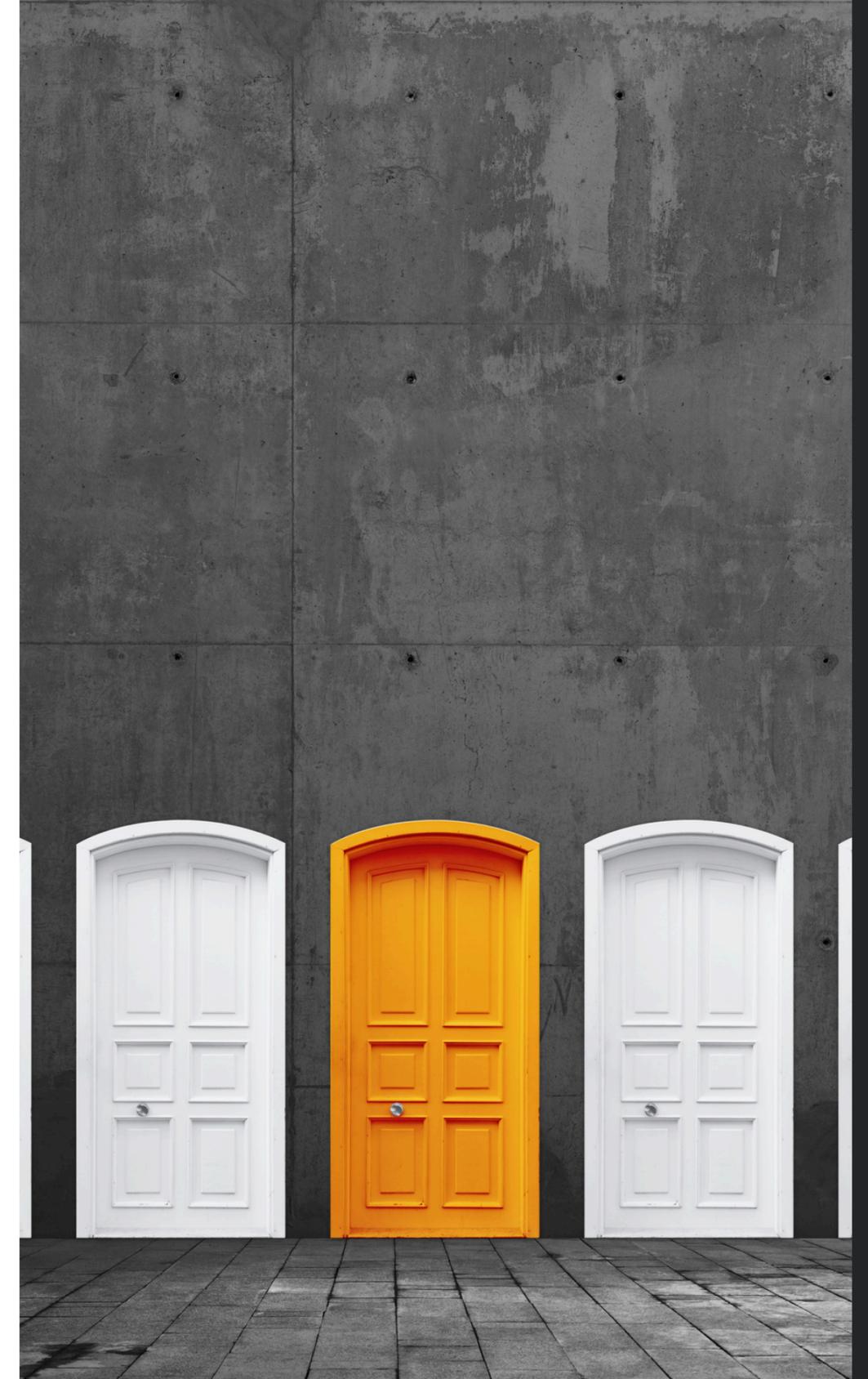
SCHOOL	STUDENTS W/ TEST SCORES	SAT AVERAGES	ACT AVERAGES
Ohio State	85%	1260 to 1420	26 to 32
Harvard	83%	1490 to 1580	34 to 36
Vanderbilt	61%	1490 to 1570	34 to 35
Carnegie Mellon	71%	1500 to 1570	34 to 35
USC	50%	1460 to 1540	32 to 35
NYU	37%	1470 to 1550	33 to 35

**Keep in Mind:** Admissions readers spend *5-15 minutes on each application*. The more concrete data you can give them to quickly see what you are capable of, the better!

# Score Choice

---

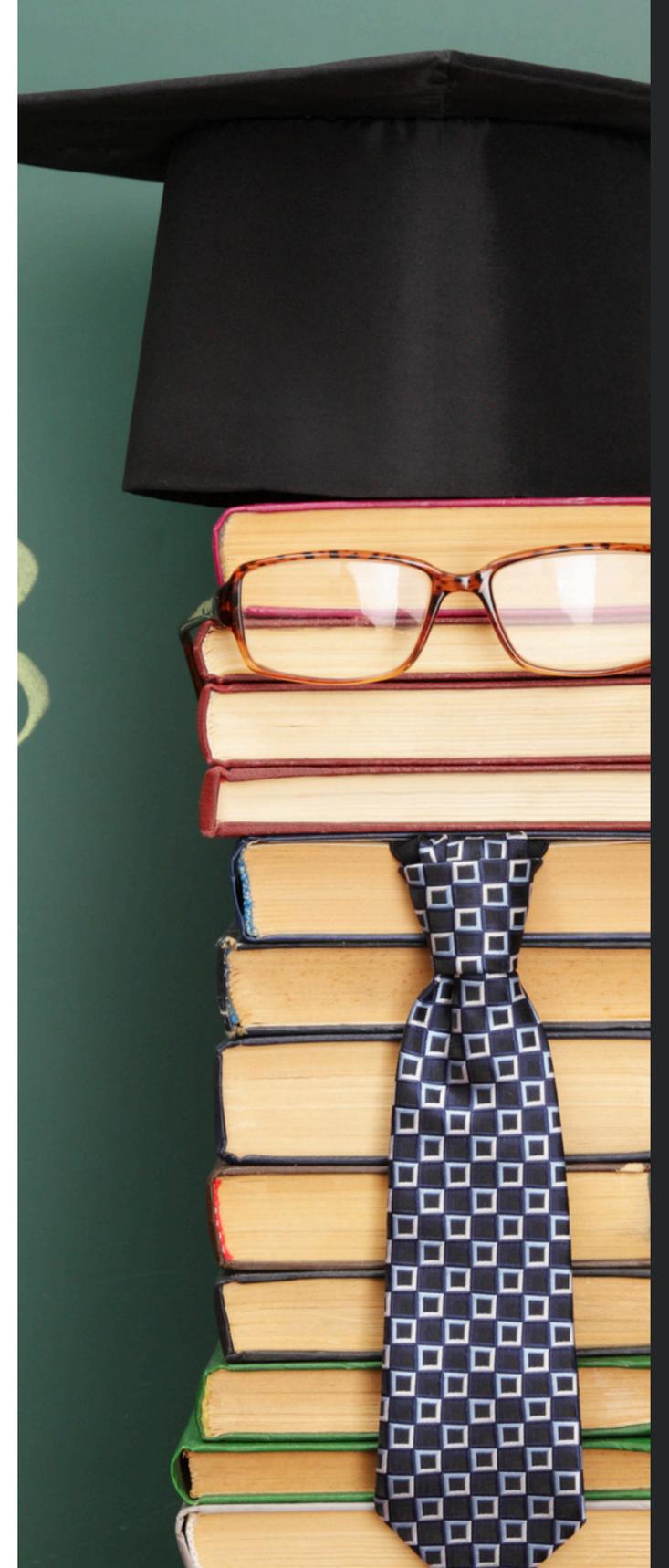
- The SAT & ACT both allow students to **register with “score choice,”** which means they can **select the scores they send to colleges** instead of sending all scores automatically.
- Most US Colleges only consider a student’s **highest score and do not care how many times they test.**
- Certain highly selective colleges, such as Georgetown and some Ivys, will still **require scores from all tests,** but the highest score is considered a reflection of a student’s potential.



# Superscoring

---

- About **75% of colleges** “Superscore,” meaning they combine a student’s best section scores from multiple test dates.
- An **SAT Superscore** totals a student’s best Reading & Writing section with a student’s best Math section. It does not take individual modules into account.
- An **ACT Superscore** averages a student’s best English, Math, and Reading (Core ACT) scores.
- Students must take a full-length test to earn scores eligible for a Superscore. **Single-section testing is not an option** with the SAT or ACT.



# How to Succeed



# Testing Timeline

When should my student **take the SAT/ACT?**



- **Take the PSAT** in October
- Consider taking their first SAT/ACT if they have **completed Alg 2**

- **Take the PSAT** (NMSQT) in October
- Take their first SAT/ACT if they've **completed Alg 2**

- Take their first SAT/ACT if they're currently in Alg 2
- **In our opinion**, every student should have tested **at least once (if not 2-3 times)** by the end of their Junior year

- If they are unable to wrap up testing within Junior year, **take their last test by fall of Senior year**
- **EA/ED deadlines are in November**; regular admissions deadlines are in December and January

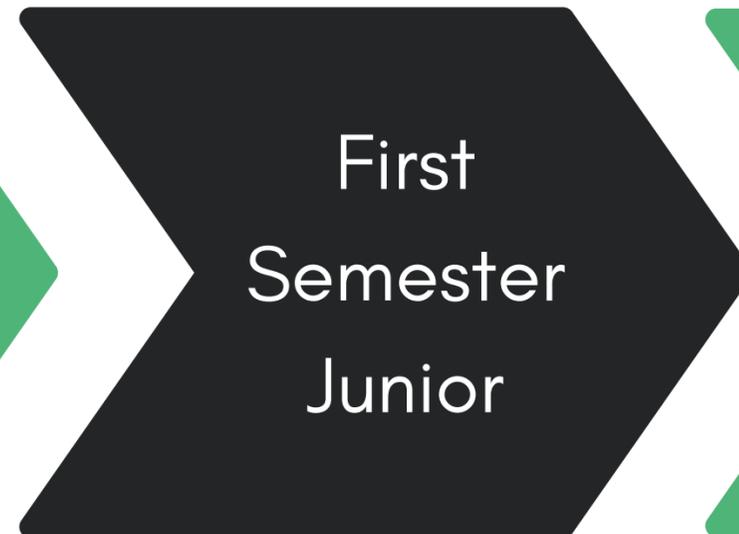
# Preparation Timeline

When should my student **start preparing** for the SAT/ACT?



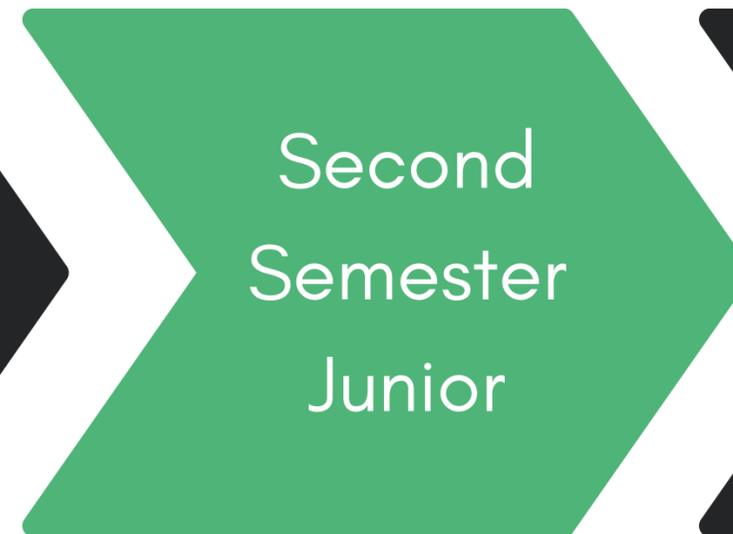
## START PREP IF:

- They have **completed Algebra 2**
- They have a **rigorous junior year**
- They want **200+ points/5+ points** of improvement
- They have **learning differences**, test **anxiety**, or known **gaps in academic fundamentals**



## START PREP IF:

- They meet the aforementioned criteria, but **cannot logistically fit in prep** over the summer
- Still, if possible, try to do *SOMETHING* over summer when they have **increased mental capacity**



## START PREP IF:

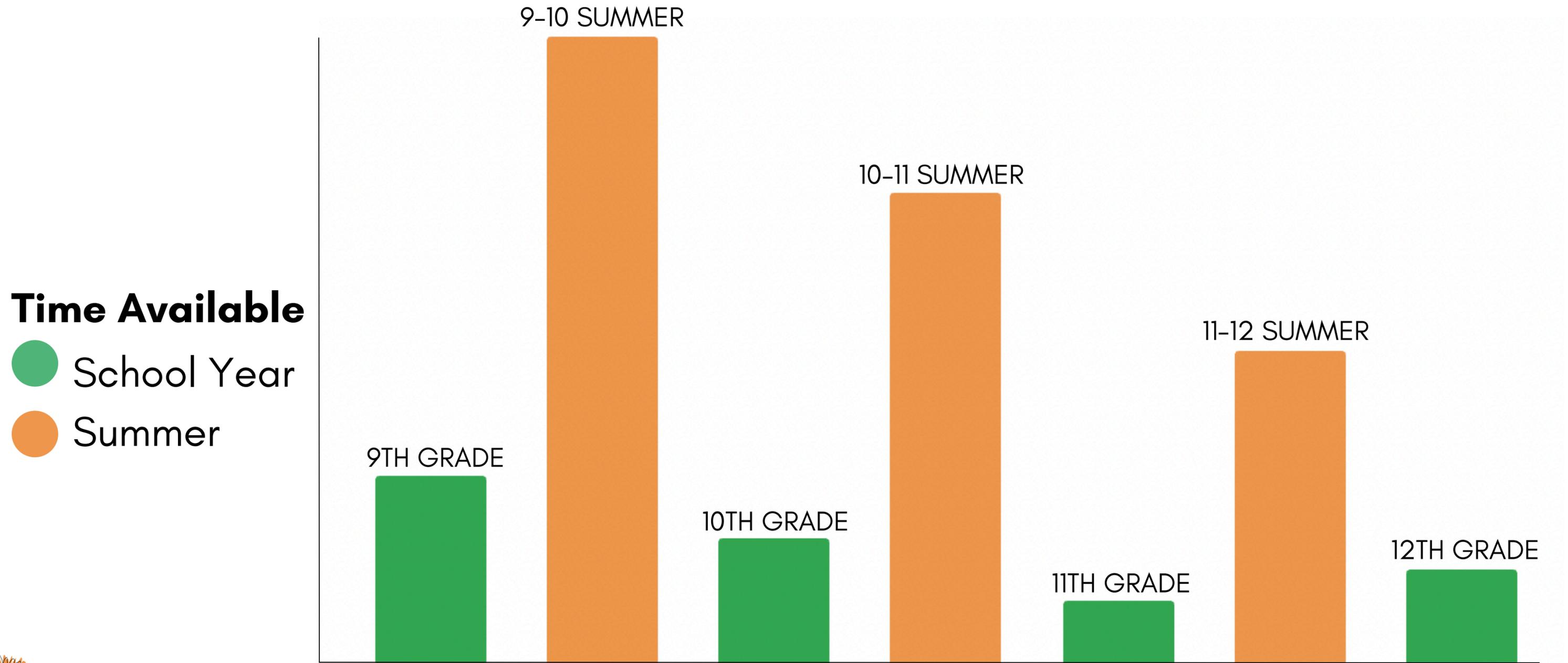
- They are **currently in Algebra 2**
- The demands of summer and/or junior year did not allow them to start prep earlier.



## START PREP IF:

- **In our opinion**, students should **start prep prior to Senior year**, but we understand that life happens.
- Regardless of where your student is, summer is a great time to **brush up on skills** for a final test

# Student Capacity In High School

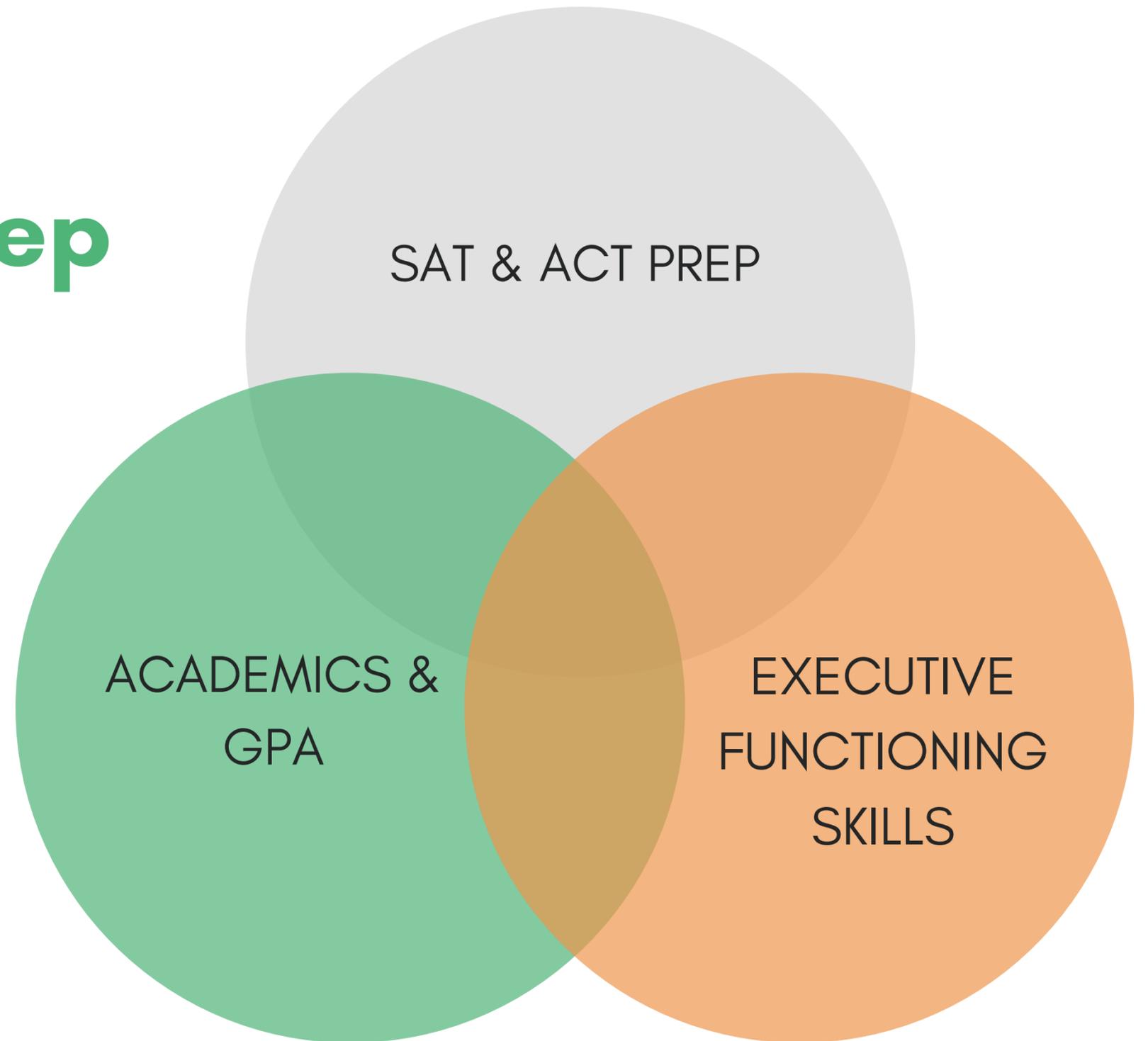


## Time Available

- School Year
- Summer

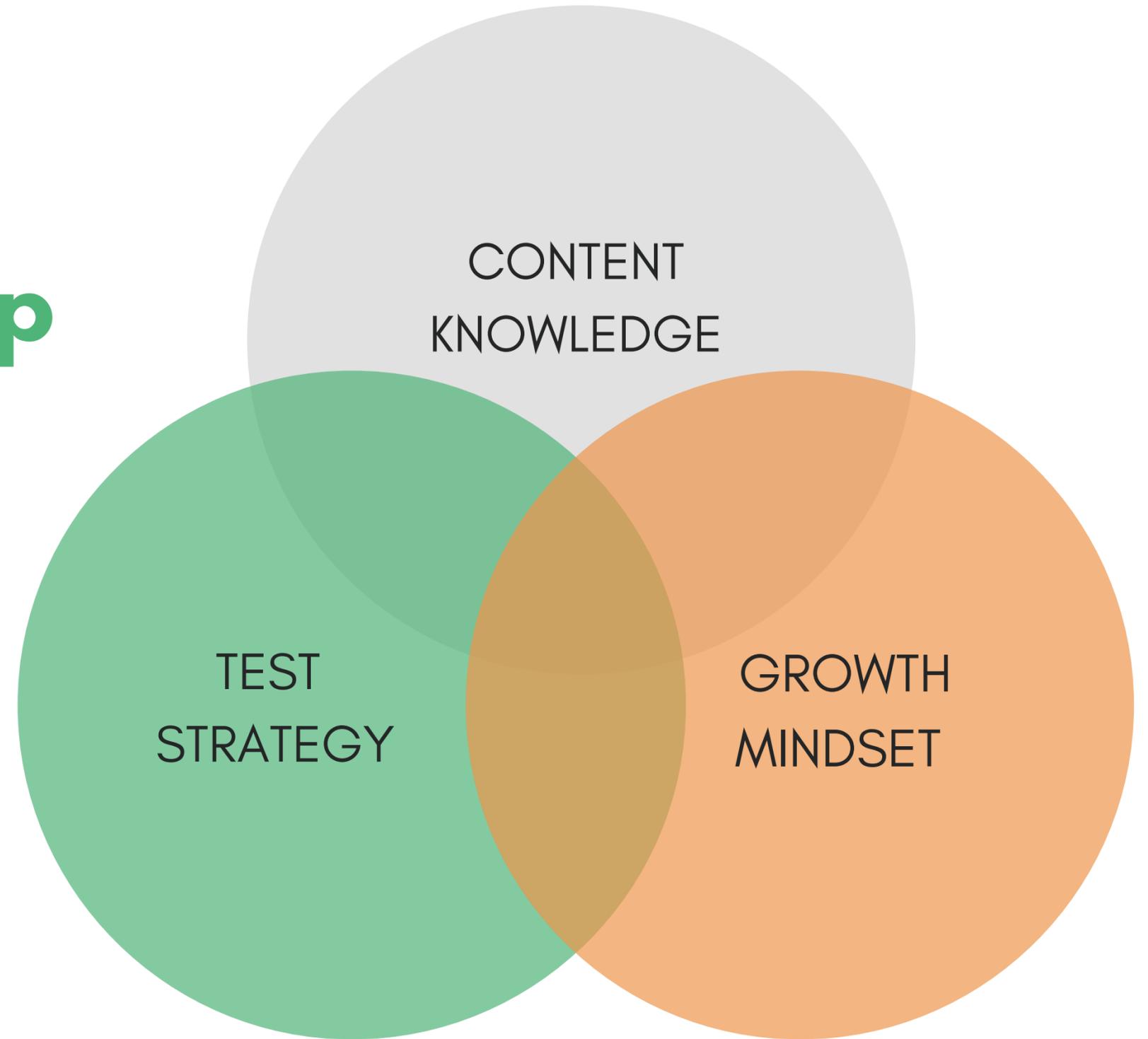
# Benefits of early prep

A successful test prep program will reinforce critical **academic concepts** and teach students strong **executive functioning skills**. Test prep should benefit students in **measurable** ways beyond the SAT/ACT.



# A well rounded prep program:

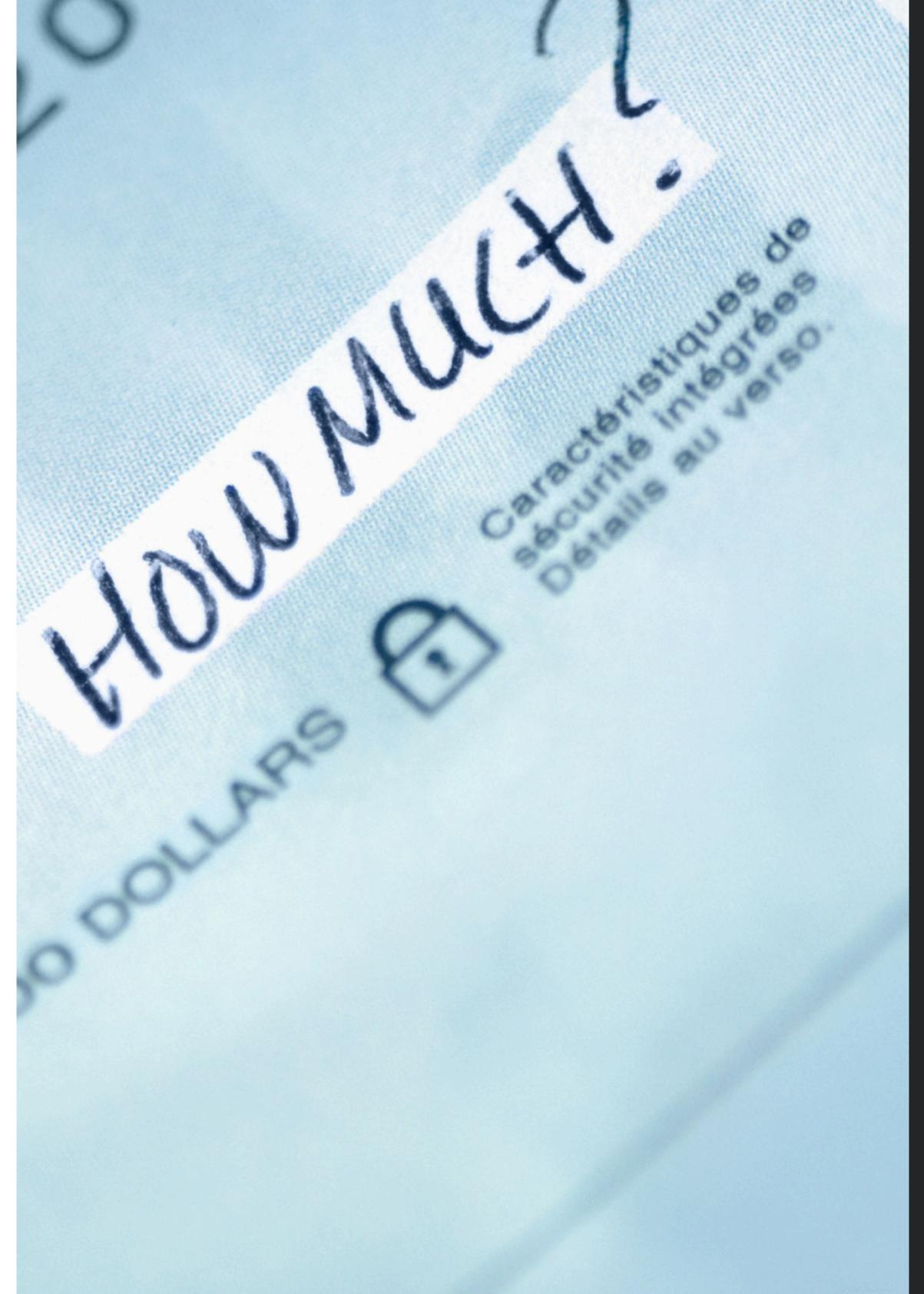
Most students must focus on a personalized combination of three things to adequately prepare for an exam.



# How much should my student prepare?

---

- This is **entirely based on the student**, their starting score, their goal score, and their learning style.
- **On average**, Marigold Prep students improve by 100/2-3 points with every 10-12 hours of tutoring.
- **Not all point increases are created equally.** For example, going from a 1000 to a 1200 is usually “easier” than going from a 1200 to 1400.
- Find a program that will **customize an approach** based on your **family’s needs, schedule, and budget.**
- **Avoid programs** that offer point increase guarantees or pitch “one size fits all” packages.
- Like anything in life, time and effort yield results. **Dramatic point increases (300/8+) are possible** but do not happen overnight.





marigold prep

# Additional questions?

Use [the link](#) in the chat to schedule a free consultation.

**415 237 3377**

**HELLO@MARIGOLDPREP.COM**