

ALL ABOUT THE SAT & ACT

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



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**

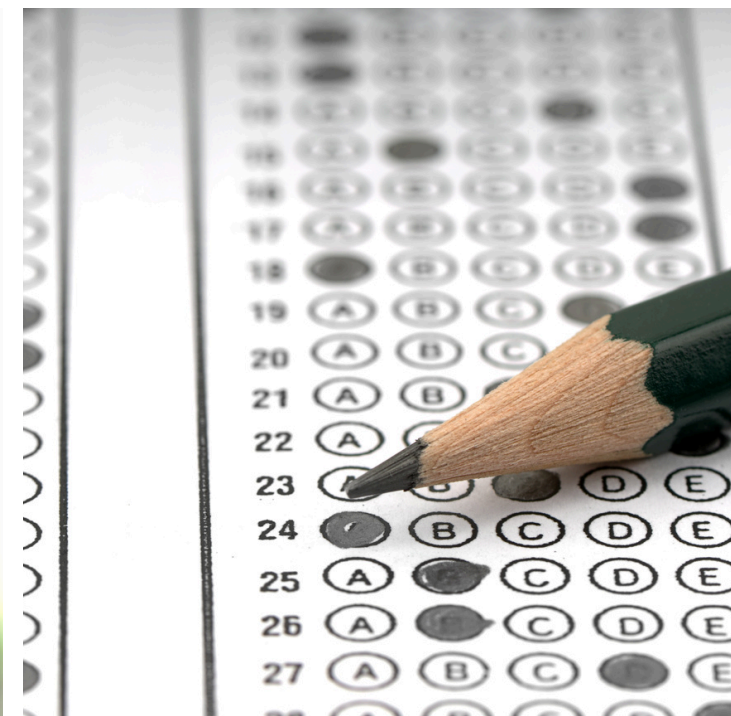
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Tonight we'll cover

- **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

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

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

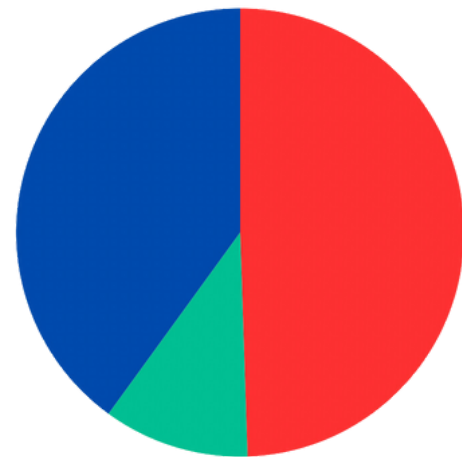
Moderately Difficult

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.

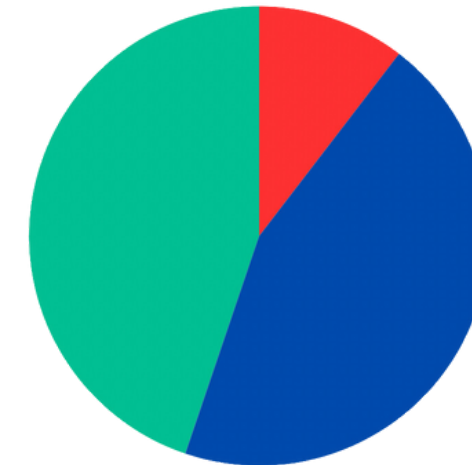


Student
routed based
on
performance



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

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

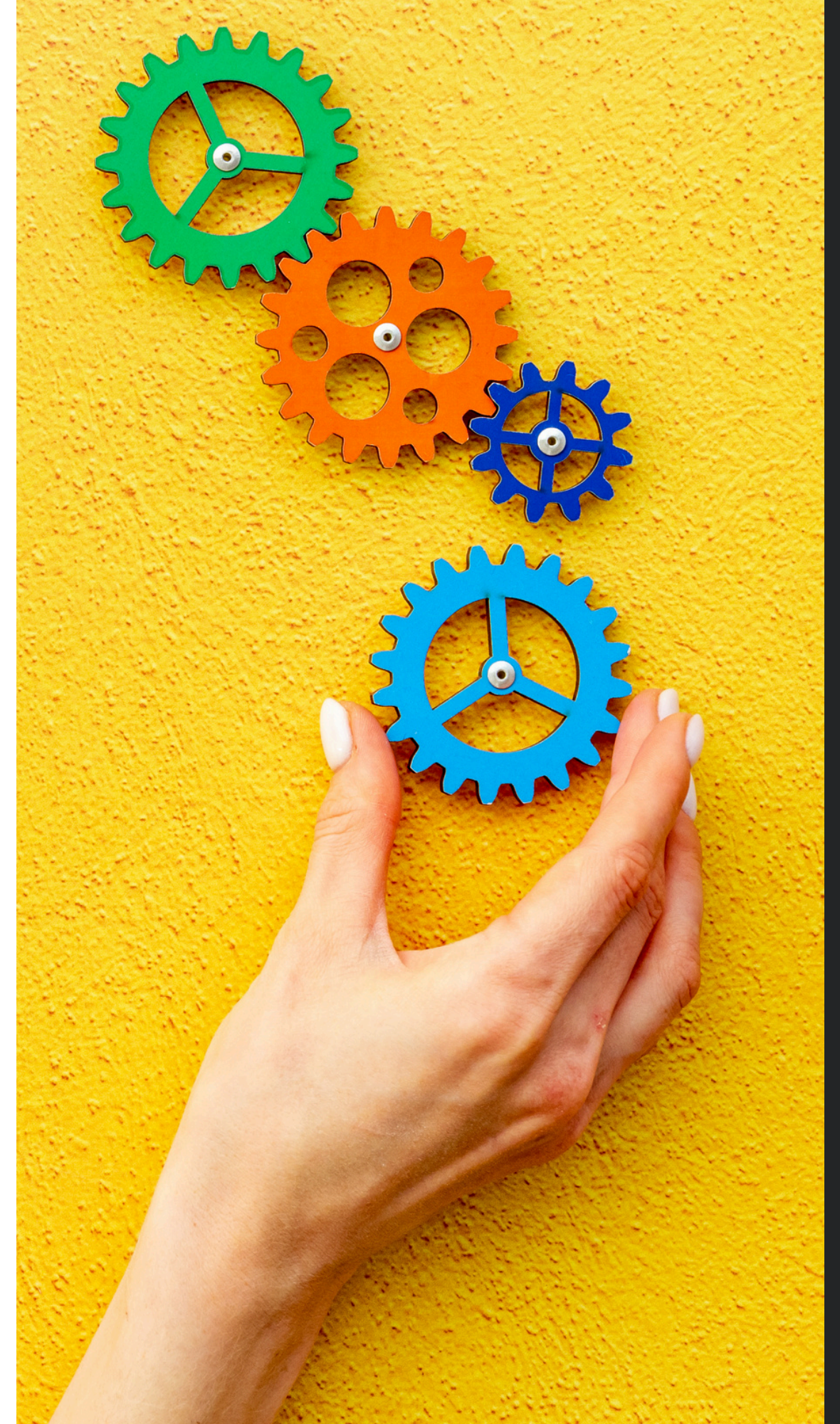
What's **Staying the Same?**

- The **composite score remains on a scale of 1 to 36** possible points and be the average of its mandatory sections.
- It remains a linear, **non-adaptive test**, even when students take it digitally.
- The **core competencies and content** tested in each section will remain largely the same.
- The **scores on the legacy ACT and Enhanced ACT will be comparable**, meaning if a student scores a 25 on the current ACT, they are expected to score a 25 on the Enhanced ACT.



What's Changed?

- The overall test and most of its sections will be **shorter**.
- Students will have **more time** per question.
- The **science section will be optional**, and the Composite score will be the average of the English, Reading, and Math sections.
 - The mandatory test portions (English, Math, Reading) will be collectively called the "**Core ACT.**"
 - If students take the Science, it will be a standalone score, but it **must be submitted with the Composite score from the same sitting.**
- Students will have the **option to test digitally** or with pencil and paper.



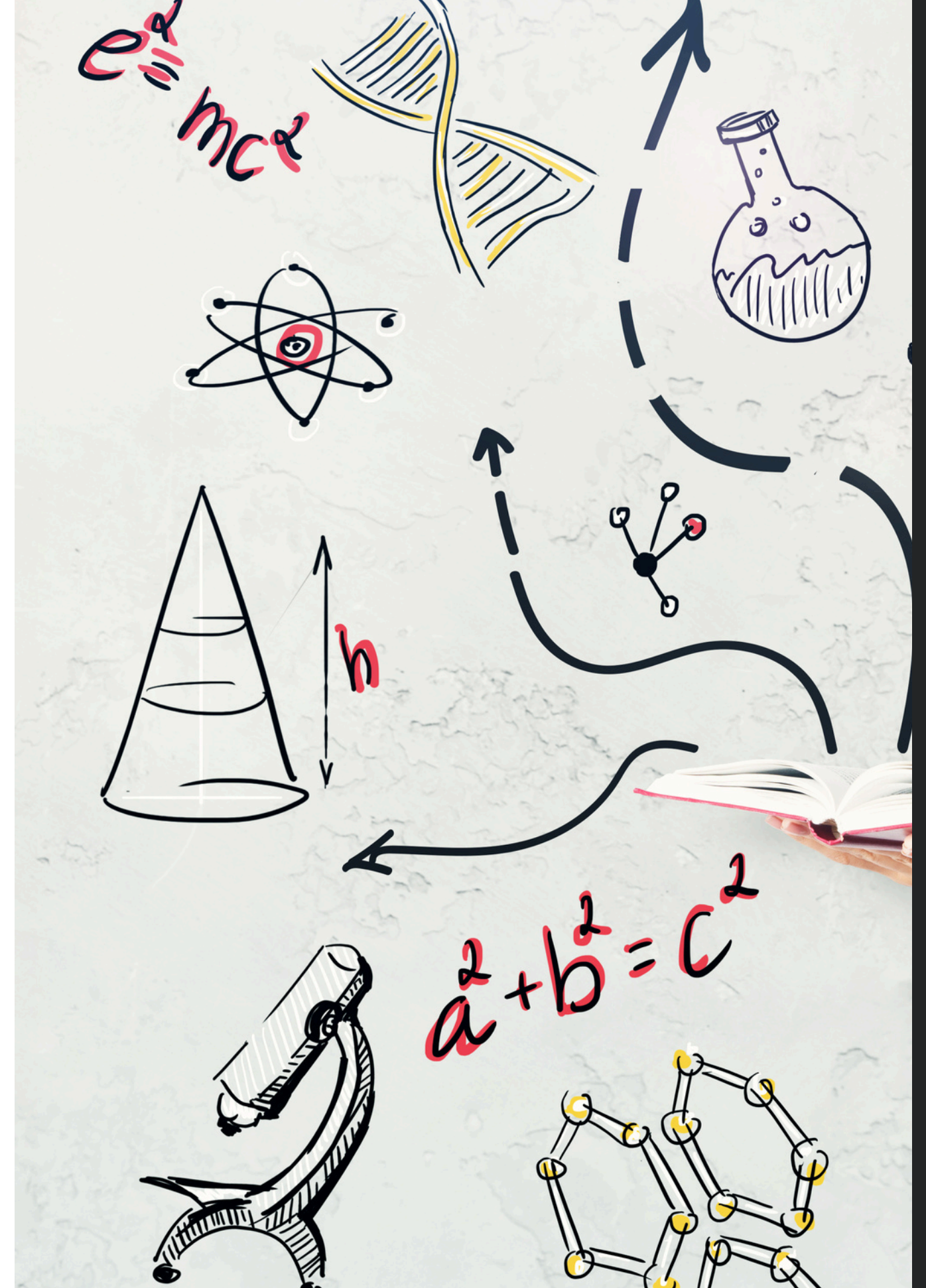
Digital or Paper?

- Initial data from the most recent administrations of the Enhanced ACT indicate that the scoring scale on the **digital test is harsher than the scoring scale for the paper test**
 - In other words, the digital and paper tests are scored on different “curves”, with the **digital curve being more punitive**
 - For example, if a student answered nine questions incorrectly on the Reading portion of the October **paper ACT**, they would **receive a 25. On the digital test, they would receive a 24.**
- Our tutors who have taken the test have reported **technical glitches on the digital testing platform**, including noticeable lag when transitioning from one question to the next.
 - This adds up on a test with 131-175 questions, and many **students already report not having enough time** on the ACT!
- For these reasons, Marigold Prep **recommends taking a paper test.**



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.
- On the **new ACT**, students may encounter **more questions that require scientific background knowledge**.
- But at its core, the ACT Science is still a test of **logic, pattern recognition, and data interpretation**.



SAT vs ACT



STANDARDIZED TEST FORMATS

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

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

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

Contact us to take free diagnostics!

Every family can review their score(s) with an expert who will help determine which test is better for your student.

If students have already taken a PSAT at school, consider starting with a practice ACT.



What Colleges Want



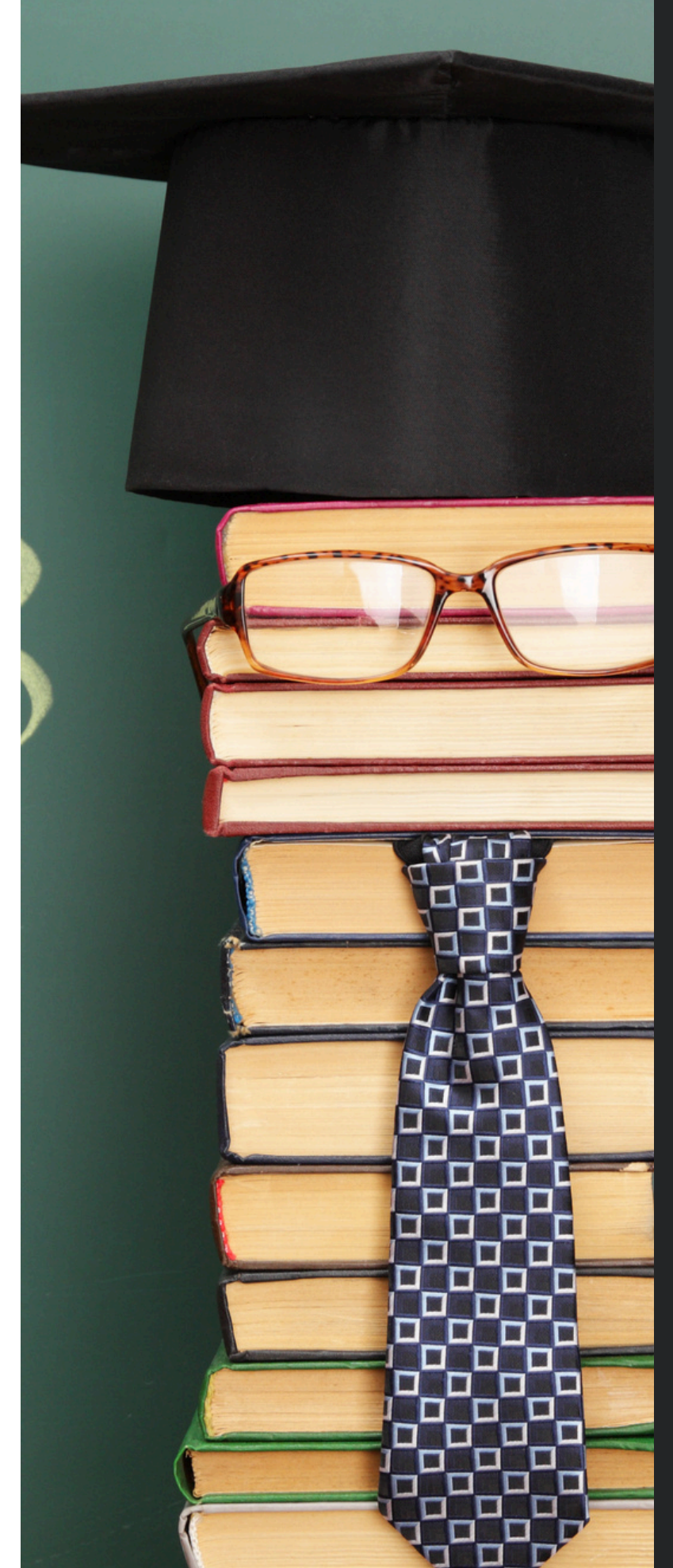
Score Choice

- 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.
- A **legacy ACT Superscore** averages a student’s best English, Math, Reading, and Science scores.
- An **Enhanced ACT Superscore** averages a student’s best English, Math, and Reading 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.



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!

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.*

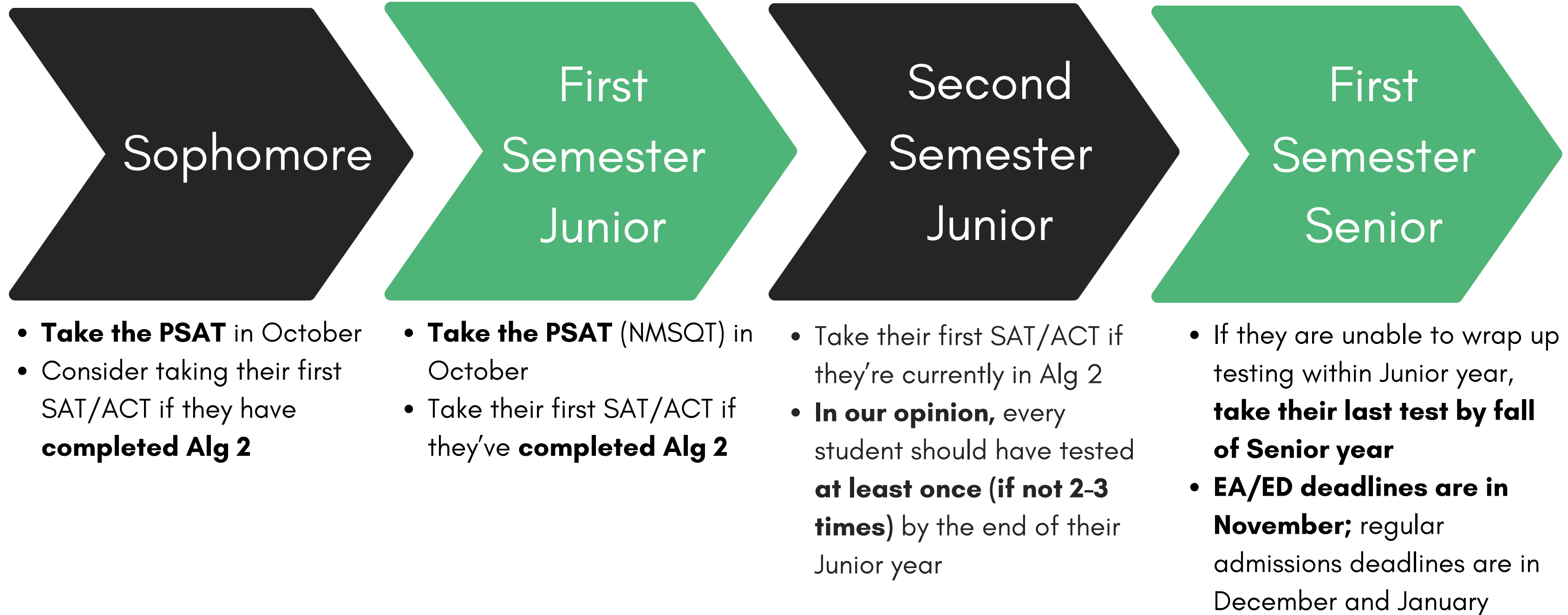
Now they say: *If you have taken the SAT or the ACT, we encourage you to submit your scores to **Oberlin.** While our holistic application review will weigh your four-year academic journey — including grades, strength of curriculum, and teacher recommendations — more heavily than the results of standardized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

How to Succeed



Testing Timeline

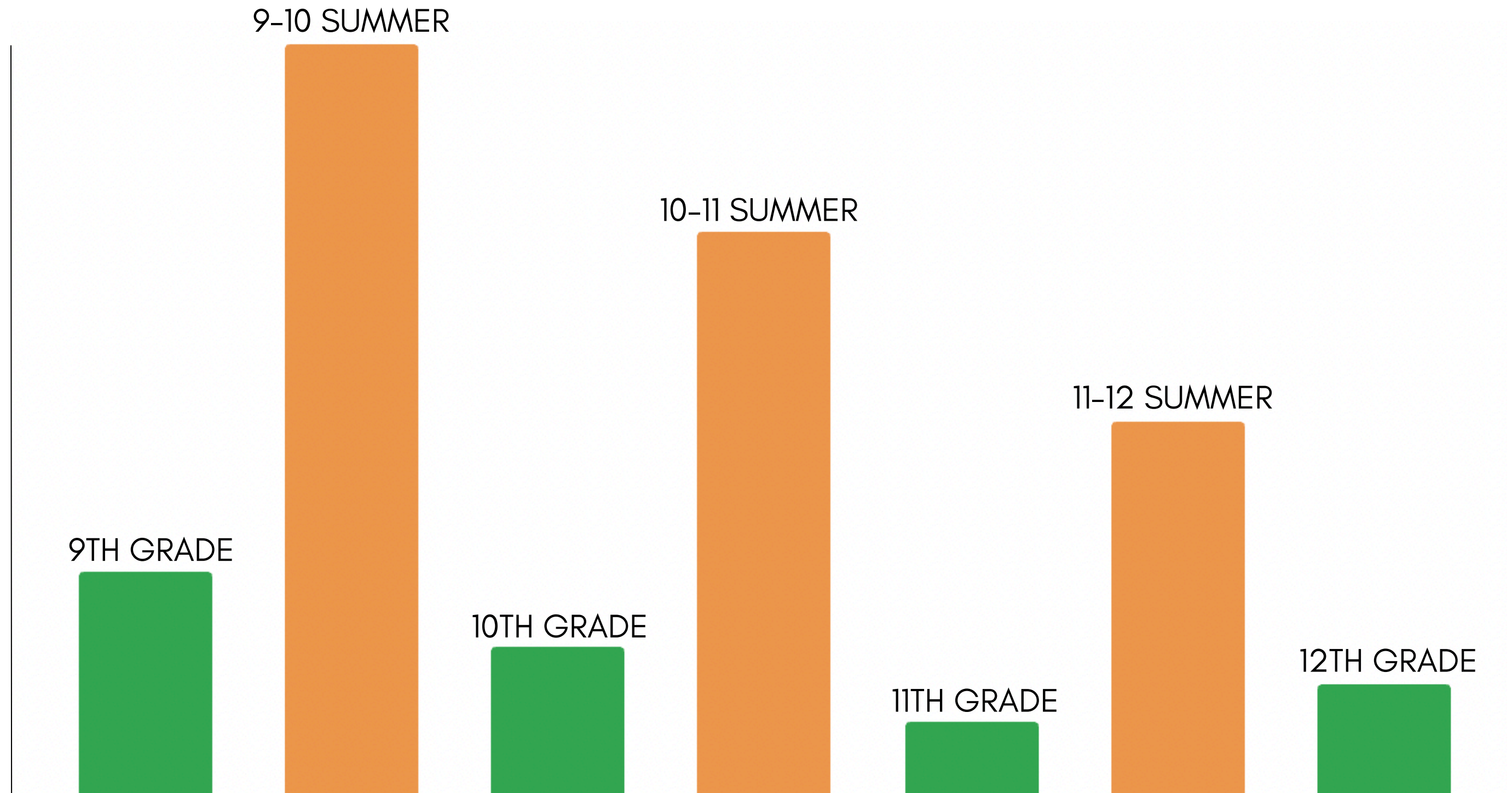
When should my student **take the SAT/ACT?**



Student Capacity In High School

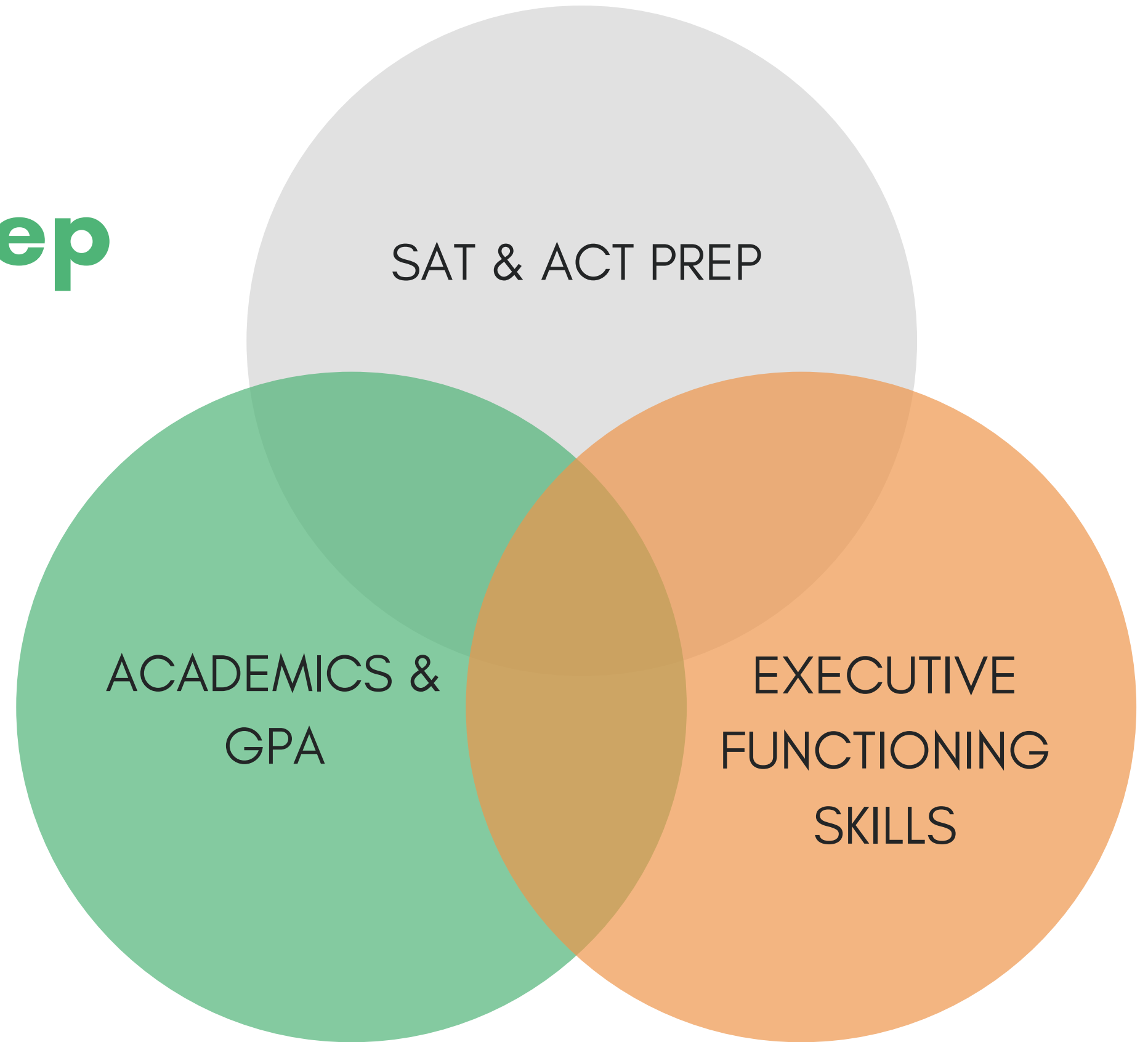
Time Available

- School Year
- Summer



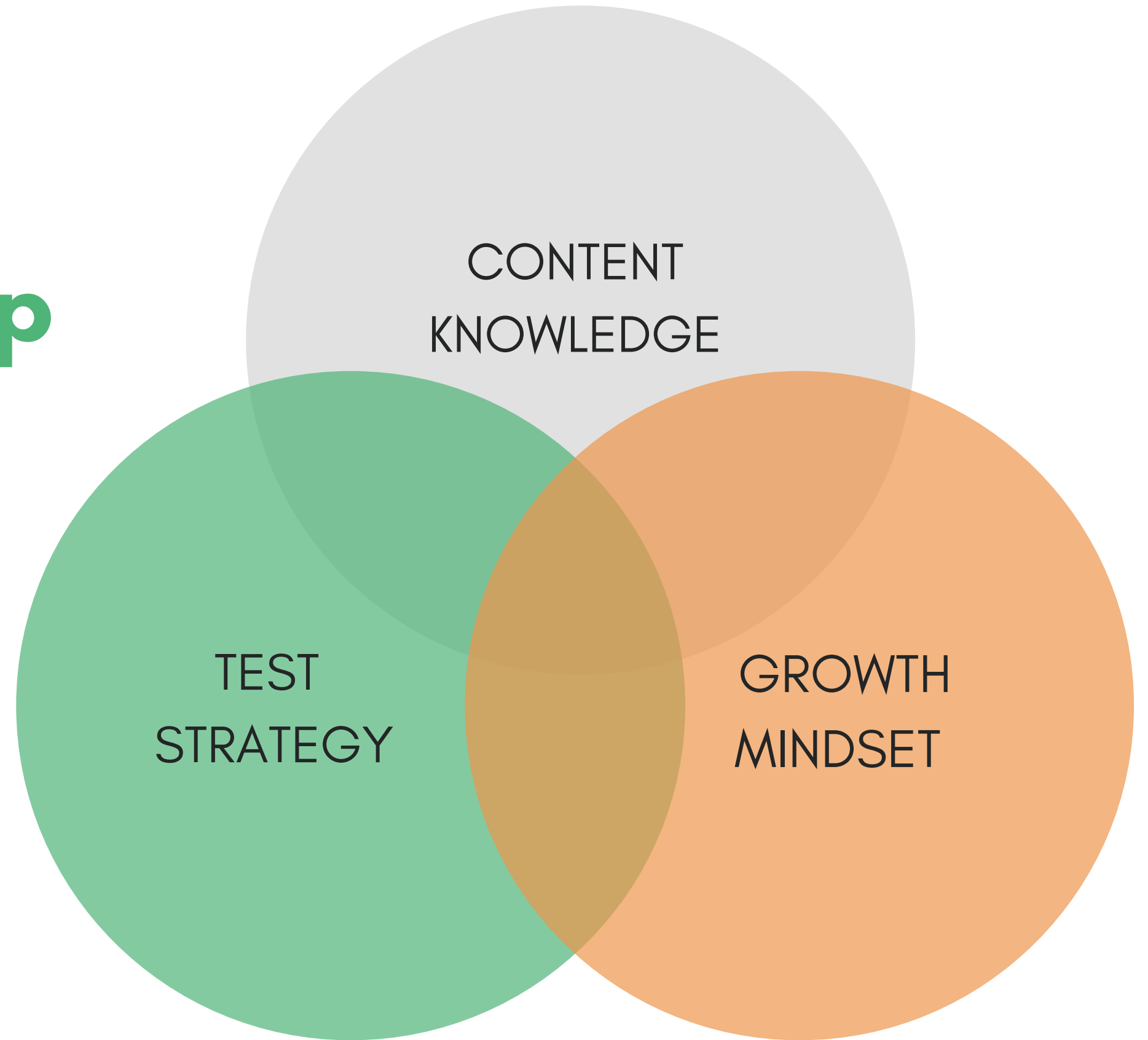
Benefits of early prep

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.



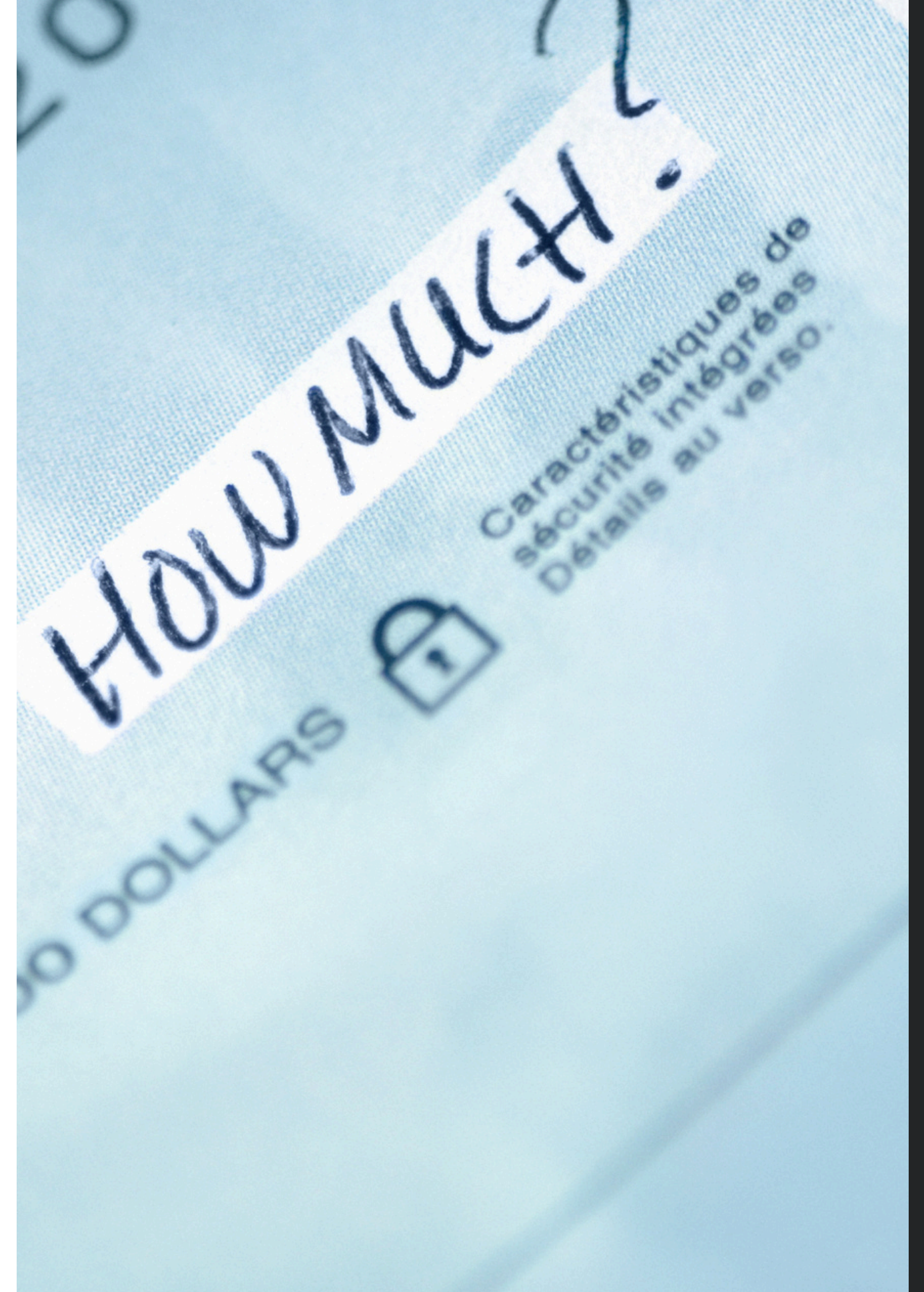
A well rounded prep program:

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.





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Additional questions?

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

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