

## College Entrance Exams/Standardized Tests

There are three different standardized tests to be aware of when preparing for college acceptance: the SAT Reasoning Test, the ACT and the SAT Subject Tests. There has been a lot of discussion over the years about how important these exams are in the admissions process. Whether or not you believe these tests are fair or important you need to know that the vast majority of schools use these test scores as a significant factor in rating your academic ability. It gives them an opportunity to compare students across the country who took the same exam. Each test and its importance is described below. It is important to start planning now for when you will take these exams, as there will be a limited number of opportunities before your applications are sent in the fall of your senior year.

Colleges will typically use the scores from whichever test you scored highest. This often includes (for the SAT) using your highest Critical Reading score from one test date and your highest Math test score from another date if that gives you the highest overall SAT score. If you do not score well enough on the standardized tests for a community college, they will ask that you come in for a placement test in English and math so they can appropriately place you into those courses when you attend.

### Registering

For each and every standardized test that you register for and take while in high school, it is critical that you include Mohonasen's school code, also called **The CEEB Code**. Mohonasen's CEEB Code is **335-103**. Including this code on your registration ensures that your score will be reported back to Mohonasen. Your score will then become part of your official record and something your colleges will receive with every transcript. You may register for these tests with either paper applications, which are available in the C&CC, or online at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) for the SAT Reasoning and SAT Subject Tests and [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) for the ACT. Mohonasen is not a test site for these tests so you will need to take them at another area high school.

**Fee waivers** are available from your counselor if you receive free or reduced lunch. See us several weeks before you will register for the waiver form. You can use a fee waiver for two sittings of the SAT, two ACT sittings and two sittings for subject tests (a maximum of three subject tests can be taken at each sitting). It will not cover late fees or additional score reports but can be used for some other features offered through college board.

**When you register, you will also have the opportunity to request that your scores automatically be sent to four colleges – for free.** Take advantage of this! It's ok if

you don't end up applying to that school but if you do apply and you haven't sent your scores, you may end up paying for your scores to be sent. Some colleges require that your SAT/ACT scores be sent directly from the testing center and will not accept them as part of your high school transcript. If you haven't already requested that the test center send your scores to those schools when you registered to take the test, then you will need to go online and pay to have them sent directly to those schools. Whenever you request test scores be sent directly from the test center, scores from all test dates will be sent. This process can take the test centers several weeks to complete, so plan ahead.

### **Versus Placement Tests**

Some colleges who do not require the SAT or ACT for admission (but use them for placement purposes) will have you go to campus to take placement tests in math and English if you do not take or do not score well enough on the ACT/SAT. These are tests that will assist the college in placing you into the correct level math and English courses. If you typically use accommodations from an IEP or 504 plan on tests, you can arrange to use your accommodations on these tests as well. Call the college when you receive the information about your placement test date and time.

### **Preparing for College Entrance Exams/Standardized Tests**

The best way to prepare is to take the practice tests. The PLAN, which is practice for the ACT, was offered in the fall of your sophomore year. The PSAT, which is practice for the SAT, was offered in the fall of your junior year. Not only are these great practice because the tests are timed the same way the SAT and ACT are, but research shows the more familiar you are with the type of test questions, the better you will do on the real thing. Another important reason to take these practice tests is because the results give you an idea of what areas you need to work on to improve your scores. Refer to the printed material given to you with your score sheet for ways to access personalized suggestions for improvement. When you begin to research schools during your junior year, you can use your PSAT and PLAN scores in place of the real tests since most of you don't take the SAT and ACT until toward the end of the year, usually in May and/or June of your junior year.

There are also additional practice tests available in the C&CC as well as on the websites. Some students also purchase College Board, Princeton Review or Barron's SAT/ACT Review Books with CDs for more in-depth test taking tips, vocabulary and practice tests.

## Types of College Entrance Exams/Standardized Tests

**SAT Reasoning Test:** Includes a Critical Reading, Math and Writing component; the score range for each area is 200-800. Not all colleges and universities use the Writing component in admissions decisions. Many schools will use the highest Critical Reading and Math scores over multiple test dates. Example: If you received a 550 in Critical Reading and 600 in Math in June, then received a 600 in Critical Reading and a 590 in Math in October, the college could view your score as a 1200 overall. When students are researching SAT admission scores from various publications it is important to take note of whether or not the Writing score is being included in the total score. **Points are taken off for wrong answers. You may be better off omitting a question and leaving it blank rather than guessing incorrectly.** However, leaving too many blank will not help your score either. If you can eliminate any of the answers, you may want to guess.

**ACT (with Writing):** Includes tests in English, Math, Science and Reading as well as an optional test in Writing. *We recommend that all students take the optional writing portion of the ACT, as colleges and universities will often require it.* The ACT measures knowledge and skills that you have acquired throughout high school. Your test results reflect individual scores in each of these areas as well as a composite score, which is the average of your scores on the four subject area tests. ACT test scores and the Composite score range from 1 to 36. Writing scores range from 2 to 12 and are not part of the Composite score. **Leave NO questions blank – guess if you do not know!**

**SAT Subject Tests:** These are one-hour multiple choice tests that measure how much you know about a specific academic subject and also how well you can apply that knowledge. You may take up to three Subject Tests at one time. There are 20 different SAT Subject Tests and these fall into the five core areas of: English, history, math, sciences and languages. The score range for the Subject Tests is 200-800.

Certain colleges and some specific majors may require SAT Subject tests. You can get a sense of the colleges who require these and how many they require by going to [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) and clicking on the *Download Forms* link on the top. Then go to the “Deadlines and Requirements Grid” to look at the required test scores column. Students majoring in engineering are often asked to report SAT Subject Test scores. Doing well on a Subject Test can help you place into higher-level courses in college. The appropriate time to take certain Subject Tests varies. For instance, for each of the science subject tests it is appropriate to take the test at the end of the school year during which you took that particular science. If you take chemistry during your junior year, the appropriate time to take the Chemistry Subject Test is in June of that year. It