FAQ’s about College Admissions Tests

**When should I take the SAT I Reasoning Test and how many times should I take it?** It has been recommended by the College Board that students take the SAT I **two to three times** in order to maximize improvement in their scores; at least one SAT I test in the spring of their Junior year, followed by at least one test in the fall of their senior year. Generally, colleges will use the highest scores on each of the three sections (critical reading, math and writing) over the different test days in their admissions decision. Junior year test scores are especially critical for applications to military academies, Penn State-main campus, schools which they may want to apply as “early decision”, and schools that require SAT II subject tests. In those scenarios, they should definitely take two SAT I tests in second semester of junior year.

**What is the difference between the SAT and the ACT, and should I take an ACT?** The ACT is a college entrance exam that includes four curriculum-based tests that measure students’ educational development in English, Mathematics, Reading and Science. The ACT combines certain aspects of both SAT I and SAT II into one test. There is also an optional writing component. It is accepted by every four year college in the United States in addition to or in place of the SAT I – whichever percentile score is higher. The ACT is a multiple-choice test and the scores range from 0 to 36. Unlike the SAT I scoring system, which reduces a student’s score for incorrect answers, the ACT score is based on the number of correct answers with no penalty for guessing incorrectly. The difference in scoring and the format of the questions can be an advantage for some students depending on the test.

**What are the SAT IIs and should I take them?** The SAT *Subject* Tests (also known as SAT II’s) cover special academic areas (e.g. Mathematics, English, and Chemistry). These tests are taken either at the end of the junior year or the beginning of the senior year. SAT II’s, like SAT I’s, are scored on the 200-800 scale. Some colleges use the SAT II’s for placement in various levels of freshman courses; some use them as an additional indicator in the admissions process. Check a college’s website to see if SAT II’s are required. The most common tests are English (writing), math and one of the student’s choice. A student can take up to 3 tests in one sitting.

**How do I register to take the college admissions tests?** Students should register online at <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/index.html?student> (SAT) and

<http://www.actstudent.org/> (ACT).

SAT I and SAT II tests are most often given at the same time and on the same dates. Students must register at least 5 weeks in advance to take either the SAT I or up to three SAT II tests on one date. Students must register for the ACT at least 5 weeks in advance as well. **SAT Scores are not printed on transcripts! Please take advantage of the opportunity to send *four* free score reports to colleges of your choice when filling out your SAT registration form, even if you are not sure you are applying to the four colleges you choose.**