

The New* Digital
*introduced in March 2024

The new, shortened version,
Coming in Sep 2025

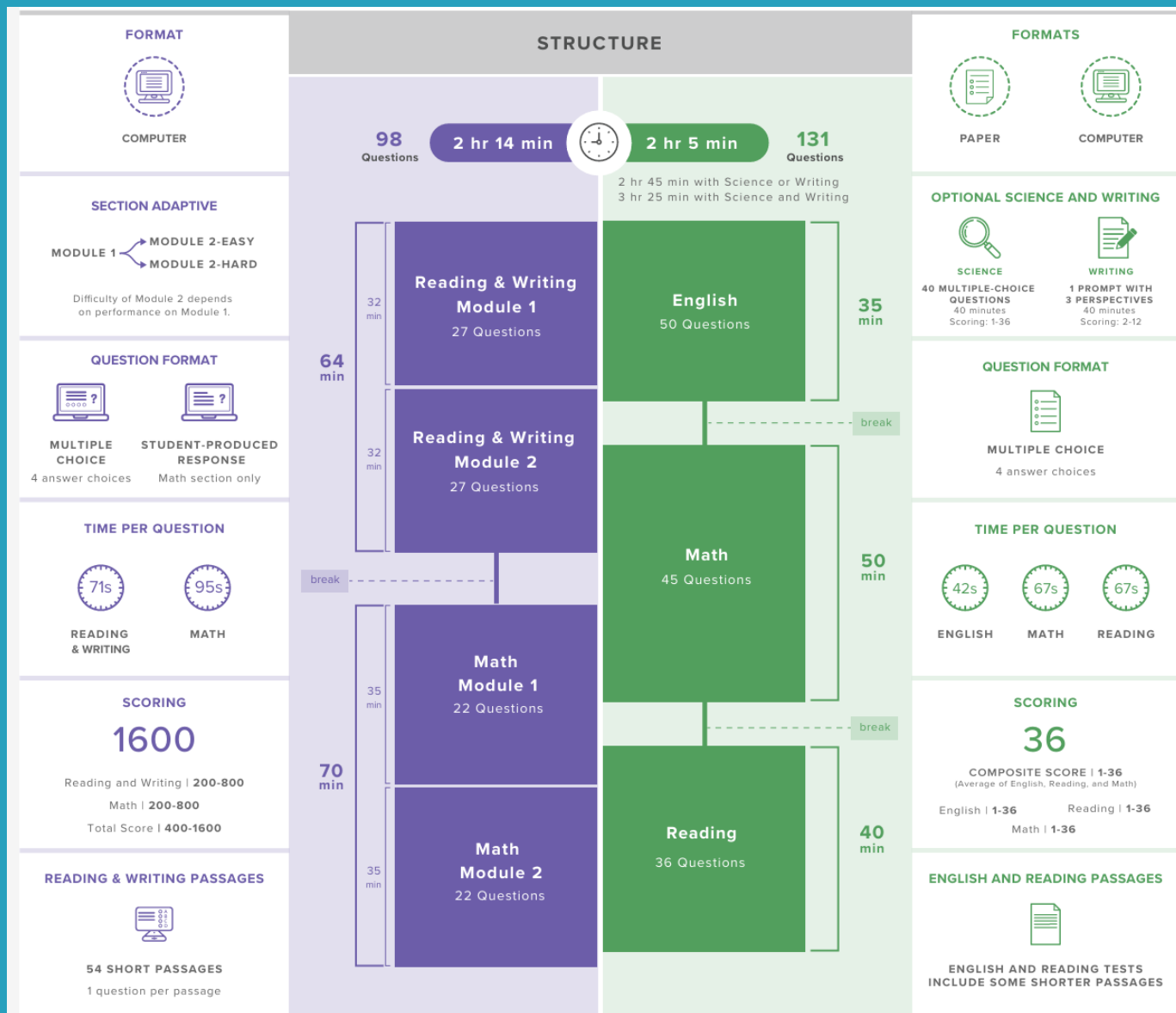
SAT vs ACT

SAT HIGHLIGHTS

Current digital format debuted in March 2024
Adaptive by section. Easier/ more difficult section 2
Reading/ English section combined
Shorter reading passages with one question
More difficult text complexity, more vocabulary
Fewer math topics, but more in-depth advanced algebra

ACT HIGHLIGHTS

New format debuts in Sep 2025
Will offer both a paper/ pencil and digital options
Longer reading passages; less vocabulary
Separate English and reading sections
Greater variety of math topics with simpler problem-solving
More trig and stats-oriented math problems



The Digital SAT vs. Paper/ Pencil ACT

This compares the current digital SAT with the anticipated new ACT, debuting with the national test date of Sept, 2025

The new SAT digital (dSAT) format provides new discussion around the differences and similarities between the dSAT and the ACT. Firstly, neither test penalizes for wrong answers, and both formats are equally accepted at all universities. Both tests are 'achievement-based,' meaning that they are testing what your student **actually learned** in high school (*as opposed to yesteryear's aptitude testing*). *Each the SAT and ACT have strong advantages, starting with the most obvious: Both tests NOW take a little over 2 hours. Slightly more for the ACT if your student opt to sit for the optional science section.*

Differences in content, timing, presentation, and scoring should be explored to ensure students select the format that best suits their strengths.

The administration

The ACT continues to be administered using the traditional paper/ pencil format, and students will fill out a scantron form. They will also be offering a digital option. The new dSAT primarily uses a digital format with the Blue Book app. (Some students may qualify for a paper/ pencil accommodations for the SAT)

The Timing of the Tests:

The ACT is administered in February, April, June, July, October, October and December. The dSAT is given in March, May, June, August, September (new in 2025!) October, November and December. Students should consider how the timing aligns with their busy sports season, extra-curriculars, AP testing, summer schedule, and other commitments. Students heavily involved in Spring sports often prefer the ACT given the mid-June and mid-July options (the last SAT of the academic year is the first weekend in June). *Some schools also provide in-school options.*

The Order

Both the SAT and the ACT test a student's endurance; many students report being fatigued by the end. With this in mind, a student should consider the order of the tests. If a student excels in math, they may lean towards the SAT, where the last two sections are both math. The ACT's last section is the reading and the optional science section.

The Test Packet

The ACT allows students to order the test packet three times a year (not yet announced for 2025-26) which provides a learning opportunity. The new Digital SAT platform does not allow for this.

Math Section:

SAT math questions focus more on real-world applications of algebra concepts and less on geometry. The questions are a mix of multiple choice and student-response questions. A Desmos calculator is built into the program. The SAT contains two modules and is "adaptive:" the first module contains a mix of easy to medium problems. Your student's performance will determine if their "module two" will progress to be more challenging. The ACT contains one math section, all multiple-choice questions arranged in ascending order of difficulty. A calculator is permitted. There are more geometry, trig, and statistics questions. Note that the SAT Math counts for 50% of a student's total composite but only 33% of a student's composite ACT score.

Reading Section:

The ACT reading questions focus more on literal comprehension and are thus more straightforward than the SAT. However, the ACT pacing is faster (although this has been adjusted for the new ACT); the section consists of a mix of short and long passages. The SAT reading/ English questions are intermixed in one section and are presented as short paragraphs. The section is also provided as two modules, with the student's performance on the first determining which level of difficulty is provided for the second. The SAT features more inference-type questions, which require more analysis and critical thinking skills.

English Section:

Both test similar rhetoric, punctuation, and grammar skills. However, the ACT has 50 questions, while the SAT provides the English questions intermixed with the reading questions.

Science Section:

Only the ACT has a science section, which tests students' comprehension of data and trends in charts, graphs, and tables. Only basic science knowledge is required. This section will be optional. The SAT does not have a science section, but science-oriented graphs and concepts are interwoven into the math and reading sections.

Pacing:

The SAT provides more time per question, while the ACT requires students to work more quickly in order to complete each section but the questions tend to be less complex. The ACT's new format should take the edge off the very fast pacing students have traditionally experienced.