

SAT or ACT? The Family Decision Guide

A structured way to choose a primary test, set a realistic preparation plan and avoid random test prep.

BEST FOR	Juniors and rising seniors who have not chosen a primary admissions test.
INSIDE	Diagnostic scorecard, preference questions, calendar planner, weekly study plan and decision worksheet.



Use this guide as a family planning tool. Students should complete their own writing and application work.

THE SENIOR YEAR CHECKLIST

Begin With Evidence

The best starting point is a timed, representative diagnostic for each test. Compare performance, pacing, fatigue and confidence - not just one total score.

A test date without a preparation plan is only a calendar entry.

Diagnostic Conditions

- ☐ Use official or high-quality full-length diagnostic materials.
- ☐ Use the current digital or online format when applicable.
- ☐ Complete each test under realistic timing conditions.
- ☐ Do not compare scores without also recording pacing and confidence.
- ☐ Leave enough recovery time between diagnostics.

Diagnostic Comparison Scorecard

Factor	SAT Notes	ACT Notes
Overall result		
Math comfort		
Reading comfort		
Pacing pressure		
Endurance		
Digital navigation		
Confidence after test		
Topics needing review		

Preference and Fit Questions

Which diagnostic felt more predictable?

Which test created less time pressure?

Which test showed the clearest path for improvement?

Which test format felt easier to navigate?

Which test better fits the available preparation time?

Which test dates fit the school, activity and application calendar?

What do the colleges on the current list say about testing?

Select a Test Date

Use official registration pages and verify time zones, late fees, accommodations and test-center availability.

Decision	Primary Choice	Backup Choice
Test		
Test date		
Registration deadline		
Late registration		
Score review date		
Retest decision date		

[Official SAT dates and deadlines](#)

[Official SAT registration page](#)

[Official ACT national test dates](#)

Build the Weekly Study Plan

Day	Minutes	Focus	Completed
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Recommended preparation mix

- ☐ Content review for known gaps.
- ☐ Timed sets for pacing.
- ☐ Error review that explains why each answer was missed.
- ☐ Full-length practice at planned intervals.
- ☐ Rest and schoolwork protection before the real test.

Final Decision

Our primary test is

We chose it because

The preparation plan begins on

The first full-length practice date is

We will reconsider this plan if

Testing policies vary by college and can change. Always verify each college's current testing policy directly.