



SAT Fact Sheet for Applicants from the UK

We have compiled this SAT fact sheet to give students in the UK information about the SAT process, a necessary part of applying to university in the US. You will need to know how to choose the right tests, how to register for and take the tests, and why US colleges want applicants to take them. You will need to register with the College Board (www.collegeboard.com), and open a personal account with password. Emails and updates can also be sent to your parents. The entire test cycle is managed through the website, including the receipt of test scores and having the scores sent automatically to the universities you have nominated. Your school may be registered with the College Board and have a school identification number, but this is not required in order for you to take the tests.

The SAT tests are available at regular intervals throughout the academic year, in order to make scheduling easier for applicants. Many students take their first SATS early on in the Lower Sixth (see below) and then have the opportunity to re-take individual tests as needed if they feel they can pull their scores up through further practice or exposure to the subject material. US universities will normally only take your top test scores into consideration, so you have a chance to get to grips with the SAT method as you progress.

What tests do I need to take?

- For Harvard, both the SAT Reasoning Test and *two* SAT Subject Tests are required as part of the admissions application.
- Other colleges may have other requirements, so check their application websites. You can also check with individual Admissions Offices to find out the ranges of scores that they expect from applicants.
- The SAT Reasoning Test and the SAT Subject Tests must be registered for separately and taken on two separate test dates.
- The January test date is the last date that will deliver your scores in time for the US admissions process.

What is on the tests?

The SAT Reasoning Test is composed of three sections:

- *Critical Reading*, with sentence completion and passage-based reading questions. *Mathematics*, with multiple-choice questions in arithmetic, algebra and functions, geometry, statistics and probability. *Writing*, with multiple choice questions and a 25 minute written essay.
- Some sample test questions can be found as the final page of this handout.

- Excellent explanations, tips, sample questions and a practice test can be found here: http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/prep_one/prep_one.html

The SAT Subject Tests measure how much you know about a particular academic subject and how well you can apply that knowledge. The different UK syllabus in most subjects should not be a problem in that most Admissions Offices are aware of the differences and can factor that in to their assessment.

- Excellent explanations, tips, sample questions and a practice test can be found here: http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/lc_two.html

When are the SAT tests given?

- SAT Reasoning and most subjects are given in October, November, December, January, May, and/or June. UK schedules vary from centre to centre.
- Some language subject tests are available on fewer dates, e.g. Italian may only be offered once a year. It is important to plan ahead!

When should I take the SAT tests?

- SAT Reasoning: You might want to take a “practice” test in the spring of your Lower Sixth year and then take it again in the autumn of Upper Sixth.
- SAT Subject Tests: You should take them in the spring of Lower Sixth or the autumn/winter of Upper Sixth. However, if you are taking a subject that you dropped after GCSE, it’s best to take that test sooner rather than later so that the material is freshest in your mind.

Where are the SAT tests given in the UK?

- The tests are given in the following locations, usually at local schools or universities, but not every test date is available at each location, and locations may change. Check online for details as these centres may change.
 - *England:* Castletown, Cobham, Devon, Hillingdon-Middlesex, London, Manchester, Oxford, Peterlee, Scarborough, Street, and Thorpe
 - *Scotland:* Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Elgin, and Glasgow
 - *Wales:* Colwyn Bay and Vale of Glamorgan

How long are the tests? What is the test day like?

- The SAT Reasoning Test is 3 hours long; each SAT Subject Tests is one hour long, with some language tests having an oral component. For each test date, you will be at the test center from about 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. with a break at the end of each hour’s testing. For some test combinations, clearly, the stay will be shorter.
- You need to bring with you the admission ticket, photo ID, two no. 2 pencils with erasers, and a calculator with fresh batteries. Some language listening tests require a CD player. A snack and a drink are also recommended. Please check when you register that these requirements have not changed, especially those which are subject-specific.

What happens after I take the test?

- Shortly after the test, your scores will be available to you on your collegeboard.com account online. The College Board site will inform you of the date.
- Your scores will be sent electronically to the colleges you listed when you registered.
- You may request that scores be sent to additional colleges after you take the test, for an additional charge.

How do I sign up for the SAT tests?

- Go to www.collegeboard.com and create your own account to use each time you register for a test, print your admission ticket, or view your scores. Be sure to register using the exact same name as on your admissions application.
- At least six weeks before the test, register for the test you want on the date and in the location you want. Register early if possible since test centers do fill up.
- If you do not have access to a credit card, you can also register by paper and pay by cheque. See the website for more details.
- Harvard's code for the SAT is 3434.

What is the cost for the SAT tests?

- See <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/sat-subject/register/fees>
- Registration (2010) costs \$21, with Language tests an additional \$21, and all other subject tests \$10 each. Some other fees apply.
- Your scores are sent to four colleges for free when you register.

Why do US colleges need these tests? If I have A-level results, do I still need to take the SAT tests?

- Since all applicants, from all over the world, take the same tests, the results are a way to gain one more piece of academic knowledge about applicants using a common benchmark.
- All applicants need to take the SAT Reasoning Test and, for Harvard, two SAT Subject Tests, even if they have other academic credentials or tests.

How can I prepare for the SAT?

- It is known that the SATs are as much about test-taking technique as they are about content; timed multiple-choice tests are all about understanding the technique and making sure that you finish in good time. As this is a radically different way of testing from most UK tests, we strongly recommend that you practice taking the sample tests under timed conditions. In the end, the content will not match because of the different syllabus, but many UK students do very well in the SATs because they are veteran test-takers, and will have figured them out.
- Find sample questions (with answers and explanations) and a practice test at www.collegeboard.com/satprep (or www.collegeboard.com/subjecttests)
- Sign up for "Official SAT question of the day" to be e-mailed to you when you create your account on collegeboard.com

- Buy an SAT practice book (at a bookstore or via amazon.com) or use one for free at the US-UK Fulbright Commission (Fulbright House, 62 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2JZ. Tel: +44 (0)207-539-4411.

What are the choices for the SAT Subject Tests? How do I choose which tests to take if the subjects available do not match my A-level courses?

Subject Tests (check the Collegeboard website for updates) are given in these areas:

- Literature
- US History
- World History
- Mathematics Level 1
- Mathematics Level 2
- Ecological Biology
- Molecular Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Chinese with Listening
- Korean with Listening
- French
- French with Listening
- German
- German with Listening
- Spanish
- Spanish with Listening
- Modern Hebrew
- Italian
- Latin
- Japanese with Listening

All applicants need to take Subject Tests, even if they do not mesh well with your current courses of study. At Harvard, for example, the Admissions Committee is aware of the potential for mis-match with the UK curriculum and will look at the results sensitively with that knowledge in mind. You might choose one of the Mathematics or language tests, even if you dropped that area after GCSE, and spend some time refreshing your memory on the subject with help from the downloadable preparation book here:

www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/lc_two.html

What do the scores mean and how are they used in the admissions process?

- The scores range from 200-800 on each part of the test. Typically, students admitted to Harvard will have test scores in the 600-800 range. You can enquire from individual colleges in the US what their expectations are. The Harvard Admissions Office understands that students from educational systems abroad have different background preparation than applicants from the US and will view the results sensitively with that knowledge in mind.
- Test results are only one part of the application – your grades at GCSE, A-level (or IB or other academic credentials), your involvement in extracurricular activities, your essays, the letters of recommendation from your teachers and headmaster or careers advisor, and the alumni interview are all valuable parts of the admissions decision process.
- Personal qualities such as confidence, optimism, selflessness, open-mindedness, curiosity and energy are highly valued, and cannot be tested in a quantifiable manner. In contrast to the UK system, how you come through as a person in your application, in your personal essay, and through the teachers' recommendations, is just as important as the SAT test results.