

Overview

- The PSAT/NMSQT® assesses **critical reading** (passage-based reading, sentence completions), **math reasoning** (numbers and operations; algebra and functions; geometry and measurement; data analysis, statistics, probability), and **writing skills** (sentence error identification, sentence and paragraph improvements) that are important for success in college.
- The PSAT/NMSQT is used by National Merit Scholarship Corporation as an initial screen of entrants in its annual academic competitions for recognition and college scholarships.
- More than 2.9 million students worldwide took the PSAT/NMSQT in 2004; 49 percent of test-takers were high school juniors, 51 percent were sophomores or younger students.
- More than 80 percent of U.S. high schools administer the PSAT/NMSQT.
- In 2004, 112 districts and six states took part in the Early Participation Program to assist over 800,000 sophomores in preparing and planning for success in high school and college with the PSAT/NMSQT.
- The PSAT/NMSQT focuses on the critical-thinking skills students develop through years of study in a wide range of courses, as well as through experiences outside the classroom. The test assesses the ability to reason with facts and concepts rather than the ability to recall and recite them.

Ensuring Test Fairness, Validity, and Reliability

- Concern for fairness is an integral part of PSAT/NMSQT development. All test questions are pretested within SAT® exams. Comprehensive reviews and analyses ensure that questions and tests are fair for different groups of students.
- Scores are equated to adjust for possible differences in difficulty between test forms, or test years, making it possible to compare the scores of students who have taken different editions of the test.
- The PSAT/NMSQT is a reliable assessment. Research shows that if a student were to take different forms of the test under identical conditions, the student would earn scores within four points of one another.

Benefits for Students

- The PSAT/NMSQT is a student's first official step on the road to college. It encourages students to start planning for life after high school by either jump-starting their college search process or, for some, introducing them to the concept of attending college.
- On average, students who take the PSAT/NMSQT earn higher scores on the SAT® than those who do not. One reason: The tests have the same formats, directions, sample questions, and question types.
- The PSAT/NMSQT Score Report gives students personalized feedback on their test performance, including suggestions on how to improve specific academic skills.
- By taking the test, juniors may be eligible to enter National Merit Scholarship Corporation's scholarship competitions, as well as programs that give special recognition to high-achieving Hispanic and African American students.
- Student Search Service® offers PSAT/NMSQT test-takers the option to receive admissions and financial aid information from colleges, universities, and scholarship programs.
- With the PSAT/NMSQT, students get their first look at how their academic skills compare with those from a national group of college-bound students.

Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test

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Benefits for Schools and Districts

Multiple reports are available to help schools learn from their students' performances:

- For juniors and sophomores, Summary Reports show the number of test-takers and the mean test scores, with standard deviations, for the local group, the state, and the nation. They also provide group distributions for math, critical reading, and writing skills scores; ethnic background; college major interest; and more.
- The online Summary of Answers and Skills (SOAS) report gives an analysis of aggregate test question information and skills feedback, providing educators the opportunity to identify specific areas where their students are having difficulty. The SOAS report will be provided free to all schools that test at least 25 students in one grade level.
- The Electronic File of Student Data includes each student's scores, percentiles, answers to each test question, skills that need improvement, college major interest, and more. These data can help identify common strengths and weaknesses in student performance at the classroom level.
- The online AP Potential™ tool uses correlations between PSAT/NMSQT scores and Advanced Placement Program® Exam results to identify students who may be successful in specific Advanced Placement Program courses. This tool is designed to supplement, not replace, a school's current identification processes, and to increase inclusion in AP courses.
- *ScoreWrite™: A Guide to Preparing for the SAT Essay*, delivered free to all participating PSAT/NMSQT schools, is a publication to help teachers prepare students for the essay on the SAT. This manual provides everything schools need to run an essay practice session, including an essay prompt similar to those that will appear on the SAT and a professional development component.

PSAT/NMSQT Online Management Tool Features

- Online school registration for the PSAT/NMSQT with immediate order confirmation
- Ability to check order status and easily update orders
- Fee remittance report generation
- Tracking information for free preparation materials, test books, and score reports
- E-mail communication from the College Board to assist with test management

New Resources for Students and Schools

- **PSAT/NMSQT Extra**
Students who take the PSAT/NMSQT will be provided with free access to special online features at www.collegeboard.com/psatextra including:
 1. Explanations of answers to all test questions
 2. Practice for the SAT essay with a sample essay prompt and sample responses
 3. Practice on some higher-level math questions from the SAT
- **MyRoad™**
Beginning in 2005, students who take the PSAT/NMSQT will receive free online access to MyRoad™, a comprehensive and easy-to-use college and career planning tool. Students can:
 1. Take a validated personality assessment to get a detailed report on their personality type
 2. See a list of suggested careers and majors that fit their personality and strengths
 3. Search for colleges by location, major, cost, and much more
 4. Create an online portfolio for college and career planning
- **Destination College: Planning With the PSAT/NMSQT**
This video is provided free to schools and will help guide students through each section of their score report. It is also designed to help students plan effectively for the SAT and for college, and includes interviews with high school and college students as well as school counselors. *Available in English and Spanish.*