

Understanding Standardized Testing

Standardized testing policy has changed drastically over the last 5 years. The inequitable nature of these exams and complications with testing during the pandemic have led to many colleges choosing to be test optional, test flexible, or test blind. The exams themselves are also changing to meet the needs of students (ex. In 2026 the ACT will be making the science section optional and reducing the number of questions in other sections to shorten the exam). With all of the new changes around these exams, it can be difficult to know which one to take, and if you should even take it. Please use this page and additional links to help answer these questions.

Standardized Tests

Test	Description	Content Areas	Timing	Resources
ACCUPLACER Institutions may ask for a student to complete this exam AFTER being accepted. More common at 2-year institutions.	Helps colleges and workforce training providers gauge student readiness for required coursework and identify areas where students may need additional support to succeed. In summary, it helps institutions know which classes to place students in. Some schools have a GPA benchmark that determines if they will ask students to take the ACCUPLACER (ex. Saint Paul College will have students complete this if their GPA is below a 2.8)	Reading	No time limit	ACCUPLACER Explained Video Free Practice Resources Testing Locations
		Writing	No time limit	
		Math	No time limit	
		Essay	No time limit	
ACT **Offered to Juniors March 11, 2025 during school hours**	The ACT is a college entrance exam that “assesses the mastery of college readiness standards.”	English	45 minutes	About the ACT ACT Free Practice MCIS ACT Practice (“practice tests”) Testing Locations
		Math	60 minutes	
		Reading	35 minutes	
		Science	35 minutes	
		Optional Essay (30min)	30 minutes	
ASVAB Military Specific	The ASVAB is an aptitude test that helps measure students’ strengths and potential for success in military training.	General Science	8 minutes	What is the ASVAB? ASVAB Practice Test Set up test and get practice materials through your recruiter.
		Arithmetic Reasoning	36 minutes	
		Word Knowledge	11 minutes	
		Paragraph Comp	15 minutes	
		Mathematics Knowledge	24 minutes	
		Electronics Information	20 minutes	
		Auto and Shop Info	40 minutes	

		Mechanical Comp	30 minutes	
PSAT/NMSQT **Offered to Sophomores in the fall during school hours**	The Preliminary SAT / National Merit Scholar Qualifying Exam is well described through its title. It gives students the chance to practice for the SAT and can help them qualify to be a national merit scholar. Can be taken in the fall of a student's sophomore or junior year.	Reading & Writing	64 minutes	What is a National Merit Scholar? Free PSAT Practice Resources MCIS PSAT Practice ("practice tests") Only offered through the school. No additional testing locations.
		Math	70 minutes	
SAT	The SAT is a college entrance exam that "evaluates prospective students' math, reading, and writing skills."	Reading & Writing	2 modules, 32 minutes each. 64 min total	Khan Academy SAT Prep CollegeBoard Practice MCIS SAT Practice ("practice tests") Testing Locations
		Math	2 modules, 35 minutes each. 70 min total	
		Optional Essay	50 minutes	

Frequently Asked Questions

Should I take the ACT or SAT?

The ACT is offered by Lakeville during a school day in March. Therefore if timing and location are a factor, a student may lean towards the ACT. However, each test asks questions and is formatted slightly differently. It is hard to know which one will be the best fit until a student has had some experience with each exam. Therefore, it is recommended students take a practice test of both the ACT and SAT (with the appropriate time restrictions) and see which one played best to their strengths. Schools DO NOT have a preference for either exam, so it is truly up to the individual.

Should I take the PSAT/NMSQT?

The PSAT can be a good way to practice for the SAT and possibly qualify to be a Merit Scholar if you have one of the highest scores in the country. I want to emphasize that the PSAT is completely optional. Here are a few things I would take into consideration regarding the PSAT:

1. Most institutions value course rigor and grades more than test scores. Consider if studying and taking this test is going to impact your schoolwork.
2. We offer the ACT at Lakeville, so unless you plan to sign up for the SAT elsewhere, the practice is not needed

If my school is test optional, should I take an exam?

If you have the time and ability to take an exam, it is best to do so for several reasons

1. You may only be looking at test optional schools currently, but down the road you may become interested in a school that does require standardized tests. It is good to leave all options open.
2. If you score well on a standardized test, it can increase your chance of acceptance. *Submitting no score does not hurt your chances of acceptance, but submitting a score above the institution's average can help with acceptance.*
3. It is good practice to take standardized tests in high school, as a future graduate school or career path may require a standardized test for entry.
4. You do not need to submit your score if you are unhappy with it, taking the pressure off.

What does test optional vs test flexible vs test blind mean?

- Test Optional - Decide if your scores represent you as a student. If they don't, you do not need to submit them.
- Test Flexible - You may be able to take a test other than the SAT or ACT, such as AP Exams, to meet the school's requirements for admission.
- Test Blind - Colleges will not look at your test scores, even if submitted.

What if I cannot afford these exams? Does anyone else qualify for fee waivers?

These exams offer fee waivers for students who receive education benefits. Please [CLICK HERE](#) for more information on fee waivers and how to obtain them. American Indian students also qualify for fee waivers, regardless of socioeconomic status.

If you think you may qualify for educational benefits, please reach out to your school's administrative office.

