

PSAT/NMSQT®



CollegeBoard



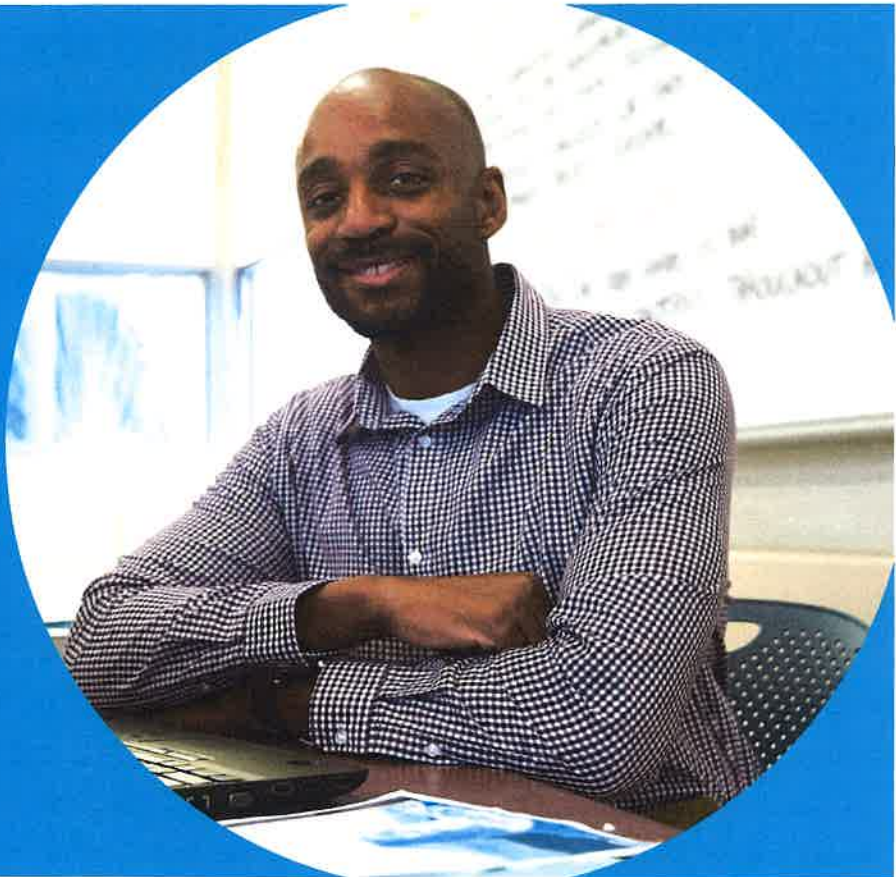
NATIONAL MERIT
SCHOLARSHIP CORPORATION

PSAT/NMSQT®

Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test

Understanding Scores

2020-21



Contact Us

About College Board

College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, College Board's membership is made up of over 6,000 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success—including the SAT[®] and the Advanced Placement[®] Program. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators, and schools. For further information, visit collegeboard.org.

About National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC)

NMSC is an independent, not-for-profit organization that operates without government assistance. NMSC conducts the National Merit[®] Scholarship Program, an annual academic competition for recognition and college scholarships.

The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT[®]) is the route of entry to the National Merit Scholarship Program. Requirements for participation, steps in the competition, and awards offered are explained in the *PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide* and on NMSC's website. Further information is provided in the *Guide to the National Merit Scholarship Program*.

Questions about the scholarship program not answered in the published materials should be directed to:

National Merit Scholarship Corporation
1560 Sherman Avenue, Suite 200
Evanston, IL 60201-4897
847-866-5100

www.nationalmerit.org

About the PSAT/NMSQT


The PSAT/NMSQT is cosponsored by College Board and National Merit Scholarship Corporation. It is administered for College Board and National Merit Scholarship Corporation by Educational Testing Service (ETS).

CONTACTS FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

 psathelp@info.collegeboard.org

- 866-433-7728
+1-212-713-8105 (International)
8 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET, Mon.–Fri.

GENERAL CONTACTS

 PSAT/NMSQT
P.O. Box 6720
Princeton, NJ 08541-6720

CONTACTS FOR EDUCATORS

 psat/nmsqt@info.collegeboard.org

- 888-477-PSAT (7728)
+1-212-237-1335 (International)
8 a.m.–8 p.m. ET, Mon.–Fri.

The **PSAT/NMSQT** and the **SAT** Suite of Assessments

The SAT Suite of Assessments

The SAT Suite of Assessments is an integrated system of tests that includes the SAT (for students in grades 11 and 12), the PSAT/NMSQT and the PSAT™ 10 (for grades 10 and 11), and the PSAT™ 8/9 (for grades 8 and 9).

The tests measure the same skills and knowledge in grade-appropriate ways. They work together to show college readiness over time so educators, students, and parents can monitor student progress. Their content reflects the kind of meaningful, engaging, and challenging work that students find in the best middle school and high school courses taught today.

What the PSAT/NMSQT Measures

The PSAT/NMSQT measures the skills and knowledge that research shows are the most important for success in college and career. The Reading Test measures comprehension and reasoning skills and focuses on close reading of passages in a wide array of subject areas. The Writing and Language Test measures a range of skills, including command of evidence, expression of ideas, and the use of standard English conventions in grammar and punctuation. The Math Test covers a range of math practices, with an emphasis on problem solving, modeling, using tools strategically, and using algebraic structure.

How the PSAT/NMSQT Is Scored

Students receive a total score that is the sum of their scores on the two sections (Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and Math).

To calculate section scores, we first compute the student's raw score—the number of questions correctly answered—for each section. Nothing is deducted for incorrect answers or for unanswered questions.

Next we convert each of the raw Math scores to a scaled section score of 160 to 760. We also convert each of the raw Reading scores and the raw Writing and Language scores to scaled test scores of 8 to 38, and then combine these to produce Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section scores of 160 to 760. This conversion process adjusts for slight differences in difficulty among versions of the test and provides a score that is consistent across different versions. The scaled scores are the scores provided on score reports.

How You Can Use the Student Score Report

The student score report clearly summarizes a student's current achievement levels and encourages next steps to increase college and career readiness. You can help students by going over their score reports and helping them understand what their scores mean. Here's how.

TALK WITH STUDENTS ABOUT COLLEGE READINESS

For each section, the score report includes an indicator that shows whether the student's score meets the grade-level benchmark. These benchmarks allow students and educators to understand how students are progressing toward college readiness.

- If a student is meeting the benchmark for a section, remind them to continue to take rigorous courses and work hard to stay on track for college success.
- If a student is not meeting the benchmark for a section, connect them to classroom work that is focused on areas that need improvement. Khan Academy® can help supplement this work.

USE STUDENT SCORES TO IDENTIFY STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Use test scores, as well as the cross-test scores and subscores online, to evaluate a student's relative strengths and weaknesses and to determine which skills need practice.
- Use the red/yellow/green coding on section scores to evaluate how your student is performing relative to other students who are meeting or exceeding the benchmark.
 - ◆ Highlight the areas in green as the student's strengths.
 - ◆ Prioritize areas in the red range for additional work and practice.

HELP STUDENTS DECIDE ON NEXT STEPS

- Work with your students to think of ways to develop each of the skills you have identified for focus and improvement.
- Encourage students to go online for more details and to link their College Board account to Khan Academy for a free, personalized study plan.

For further guidance on interpreting score reports, see the Professional Development modules for K–12 educators at sat.org/educators.

Score-Reporting Features

On pages 9–10 of this booklet, you'll find an annotated sample score report that includes detailed explanations of the information that students receive about their college readiness skills. Students can access their online reports to obtain more information and guidance, including free, personalized Khan Academy instruction and practice based on their results.

NOTE: *Score reports for schools testing on Saturday, October 17, 2020, testing on Tuesday, January 26, 2021, or participating in the test administration study won't include question-level details.*

The online reporting portal at k12reports.collegeboard.org offers you an array of powerful tools to assess your students' progress and plan instruction that delivers what they need. The tools include:

- Flexible reports that can be sorted and filtered by key demographics.
- Instructional planning support using test subscores in specific content areas, benchmarks, information for cross-subject tasks, and data for prescribing interventions when students are behind or ahead.
- Question Analysis Report that helps educators connect subscores to state standards, analyze students' strengths and weaknesses, learn which mistakes were the most common, and look for opportunities to reinforce skills. (The Question Analysis Report won't be available to schools testing on Saturday, October 17, 2020, testing on Tuesday, January 26, 2021, or participating in the test administration study.)
- Access to the AP Potential™ tool to pinpoint students who are likely to succeed in more challenging courses.

PSAT/NMSQT Scores

Total Scores

ONLINE AND PAPER SCORE REPORTS

The total score is the sum of the two section scores; its range is 320–1520.

Section Scores

ONLINE AND PAPER SCORE REPORTS

Your students receive scores in the range of 160–760 for each of two sections. The Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section score combines the scores for the Reading Test and the Writing and Language Test. The Math section score is derived from the Math Test score, including the calculator and no-calculator portions.

Test Scores

ONLINE AND PAPER SCORE REPORTS

The range for the following test scores is 8–38:

- Reading
- Writing and Language
- Math

Cross-Test Scores

ONLINE SCORE REPORT ONLY

The range for cross-test scores is also 8–38. These scores represent student performance on select questions across the three tests and show a student's strengths in the following domains:

- Analysis in History/Social Studies
- Analysis in Science

Subscores

ONLINE SCORE REPORT ONLY

Subscores in the range of 1–15 offer feedback on student performance in the following skill areas:

- Command of Evidence
- Words in Context
- Expression of Ideas
- Standard English Conventions
- Heart of Algebra
- Problem Solving and Data Analysis
- Passport to Advanced Math

Score Ranges

ONLINE SCORE REPORT ONLY

A student's ability is better represented by score ranges than points. Score ranges are derived from the standard error of measurement and show how much a student's scores would likely vary if they took a different administration of the test under identical conditions.

From recent administrations of the PSAT/NMSQT, these ranges are approximately:

- Total: ± 40 points
- Section: ± 30 points
- Test scores, subscores, and cross-test scores: ± 2 points

Selection Index

ONLINE AND PAPER SCORE REPORTS

Reported on a scale ranging from 48 to 228, the Selection Index score is calculated by doubling the sum of the Reading, Writing and Language, and Math Test scores. See page 8 for more information.

Score Scales and Score Changes

Using PSAT/NMSQT Scores to Project SAT Scores

The SAT Suite—from the PSAT 8/9 through the SAT—uses a common score scale for the total, section, test, and cross-test scores. The ranges reported for each assessment reflect grade-level appropriateness within the common scale. Thus, while the total range for the SAT is 400–1600, the total range for the PSAT/NMSQT is 320–1520.

This common score scale means that a student who took the PSAT/NMSQT and received a Math section score of 500 would be expected to also get a 500 on the SAT or the PSAT 8/9 if they had taken either of those tests on that same day; a score of 500 represents the same level of academic achievement on all three assessments.

This also means that student growth across the SAT Suite is easy to determine. If a student takes the PSAT/NMSQT this year and receives a 500 Math section score, and then takes the SAT next year and earns a 550 Math section score, that student has shown a growth of 50 points, which likely resulted from hard work both in and out of school.

The total, section, test, and cross-test scores have been vertically scaled to allow the accurate measurement of growth from test to test. Encourage students to focus on the section scores if they are curious about the growth they can expect to see in their scores over the next year. They should look at the set of projected score ranges provided (only in online score reports) for students that reflect typical growth. Of course, a student's individual growth will be shaped by the courses taken and by the practice the student undertakes between assessments.

Subscores (available online only) aren't on a vertical scale, and therefore comparing performance year after year should be based on relative performance rather than by calculating student growth across tests.

Students who wish to improve their performance on the SAT should follow these guidelines:

- Develop academic skills through challenging coursework.
- Read extensively and develop strong writing skills.
- Engage in deliberate practice in the three math areas that are emphasized the most in the assessments.
- Take practice tests and upload their results to Khan Academy for free, personalized practice of the skills they need to improve. To learn more, go to psat.org/practice.

Benchmarks and Red/Yellow/Green Performance

The PSAT/NMSQT Grade-Level Benchmarks

The SAT Suite offers grade-level benchmarks that can be used to gauge whether students are on track for becoming college ready each year in grades 8–12. Grade-level benchmarks represent the section scores on each assessment that students should meet or exceed to be considered on track to be college ready.

The PSAT/NMSQT reports separate benchmarks for 10th and 11th graders to help them understand their level of readiness for college and career training programs. The benchmarks help educators better understand how many students and also which students are on track to have the skills necessary for college-entry, credit-bearing courses. Equipped with this information, educators can support students who need extra help while there is still time for improvement. Teachers can also accelerate the progress of students who meet or exceed the benchmarks.

RECOMMENDED USES

Grade-level benchmarks can help educators:

- Identify students who are on track for success in college and career readiness.
- Identify students who may need extra support while there is still time for improvement.
- Find students who may be ready for more challenging coursework.

Grade-level benchmarks shouldn't be used to assign academic tracks, to discourage students from pursuing college, or to keep students from participating in challenging courses. Rather, the benchmarks are intended to help **all** students better prepare for life after high school.

What the Benchmarks Mean

The College and Career Readiness Benchmarks for the current SAT predict a 75% likelihood of achieving a C or higher in related first-semester, credit-bearing college courses. The benchmarks are set at the section level, so there is a benchmark for Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and a benchmark for Math.

Score reports for the PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT 10, and PSAT 8/9 include grade-level benchmarks based on how students grow from year to year toward the SAT benchmarks.

PSAT/NMSQT Grade-Level Benchmarks

	Evidence-Based Reading and Writing	Math
10th Grade PSAT/NMSQT	430	480
11th Grade PSAT/NMSQT	460	510

Additional Information Provided to Help You Understand Progress Toward College Readiness

The student score report provides further context for understanding scores by showing a color-coded bar chart for the section scores. Students who met or exceeded the benchmark will be in the green portion of the score band. If students didn't meet the benchmark but were close (within one year's growth), their scores will be in the yellow portion. Students who have a score indicating more than a year's growth below the grade-level benchmark will have a score in the red portion of the score band. Additionally, for each of the test scores and subscores, we have provided a color-coded guide to a student's relative strengths (green) and weaknesses (red).

NMSC Selection Index

The National Merit Scholarship Program is an annual academic competition among high school students for recognition and college scholarships. The program is conducted by National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC), a not-for-profit organization that operates without government assistance.

The NMSC Selection Index

Reported on a scale ranging from 48 to 228, the Selection Index score is calculated by doubling the sum of the Reading, Writing and Language, and Math Test scores. For example, a Reading score of 23, a Writing and Language score of 20, and a Math score of 26.5 would result in a Selection Index score of 139 [$2(23+20+26.5)$].

How NMSC Uses the Selection Index

NMSC uses the Selection Index score to designate groups of students to receive recognition in the National Merit Scholarship Program. Entry to NMSC's competition for scholarships to be offered in 2022 is determined by students' responses to program entry questions on the 2020 PSAT/NMSQT answer sheet. Both the printed PSAT/NMSQT student score report and the online report show the student's Selection Index, the student's responses to entry items, and whether the student meets participation requirements. Currently, about 1.5 million test takers meet requirements to enter NMSC's competition each year. Almost all entrants are in their third year (grade 11, junior year) of high school.


Of the 1.5 million NMSC program entrants, about 50,000 will earn 2020 PSAT/NMSQT scores high enough to qualify them for recognition. These students will be notified of their standing through their high schools in September 2021. Students who qualify to continue in the competition for scholarships to be offered in 2022 must then meet academic and other requirements specified by NMSC to be considered for awards.

A detailed description of the National Merit Scholarship Program is published in the *Guide to the National Merit Scholarship Program*, mailed to high school principals each fall. For students and parents, information about the competition is given in the *PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide* and at www.nationalmerit.org.

For inquiries about any aspect of the National Merit Program—including entry requirements, the selection process, and awards to be offered—contact NMSC directly:

 www.nationalmerit.org

- 847-866-5100

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