

2011-2012
Standardized
Testing
for
College

Milton's advice about:
What tests to take...
When to take them...

by: **The College Office**

Standardized Testing for College

The Milton Academy College Office strongly encourages all students and parents to use this guide to help understand testing requirements for college admission and to plan ahead. Standardized testing is an important factor in admission decisions at most highly-selective colleges and universities. A few institutions have downplayed the importance of scores, and some have eliminated test requirements entirely, but those institutions are in the minority. At most colleges, standardized testing still matters.

At Milton Academy, we have found that students who plan carefully and familiarize themselves with the test format through use of practice materials are able to attain scores which accurately reflect their school performance. When difficulties with scores arise, the College Office is prepared to help individual students find appropriate resources for assistance.

We want our students to understand the testing requirements and, just as importantly, to keep testing in perspective. *Students' academic achievements are more important than test scores, both in terms of acquiring a first-rate education and in terms of enhancing their chances for admission to selective institutions.*

1. SAT's

The SAT Reasoning Test contains three sections:

CRITICAL READING

- Topics include reading comprehension, sentence completion, and paragraph-length critical reading

MATHEMATICS

- Topics include Number and Operations, Algebra I, Algebra II, Functions, Geometry, Statistics, Probability, and Data Analysis

WRITING

- Multiple choice questions (grammar and usage)
- Student-written essay

Each section is scored on a scale from 200 to 800, so the best possible total score is 2400. (Please be aware that many colleges do not give as much weight to the Writing section as to the Critical Reading and Mathematics sections. So, while there is a possible total score of 2400, many students will be evaluated on a 1600 [Critical Reading plus Mathematics] score.)

Students should take the SAT Reasoning Test at least once during the spring of their Class II year. Most students will repeat the SAT once during the fall of their Class I

year. The total number of times a student takes the test depends upon his/her level of satisfaction with the scores. In a typical Milton class, about 10% of the students will take this test only once, most will take it twice, and another 10-20% will take it three times. No one should take the test more than three times. (Studies show that the law of diminishing returns kicks in significantly after the second round of testing.) Most colleges will allow Score Choice and virtually all will focus on a student's best critical reading, math and writing scores, even if they are achieved on different testing days. Some colleges will require you to submit all your scores. So, it will be important to review the requirements for each individual college. (See the section on "Score Choice.")

In addition to the SAT, students may need to take Subject Tests by the time they apply to college. (See the section on the definition of Subject Tests in the glossary.) Not all colleges require Subject Tests, but many of the colleges Milton students applied to last year did require them. Decisions about which Subject Tests to take are the most complicated decisions for students to make because the tests are largely curriculum-driven and because circumstances will be different for each student. Further confusion arises because there are many different tests to choose from, and some of these tests are best taken early in one's high school career, long before most students are thinking about college plans. For example, a strong chemistry student should take the Chemistry Subject Test when he/she has just finished the course.

There are some colleges, especially public institutions, that have very specific Subject Test requirements; students are responsible for researching these requirements during their college search. A general rule of thumb: *if you are in a position to do well on a standardized test, take it*; that way, you cover yourself as colleges pick and choose scores. It is not common to take a Subject Test more than once. However, if you are thinking of doing so, please remember that some colleges will require you to submit all scores.

SCORE CHOICE

Beginning in March 2009, the College Board instituted a new policy, Score Choice, that gives students the freedom to send to colleges and universities the scores (by test date for the SAT and by individual test for Subject Tests) that they feel best represent their ability, at no additional cost.

This score-reporting feature will be optional to students. If a student chooses not to select his/her scores, all of his/her scores will be sent. Again, it is important to note the policy of each college to which you apply.

For the College Board's own FAQ statement about Score Choice go to the SAT link on the College Board website (collegeboard.org).

2. ACT

ACT stands for American College Testing, a battery which combines elements of aptitude and achievement tests in a single instrument. The ACT is preferred by

certain colleges in the Midwest and the South and by the military academies and ROTC programs. All colleges now accept the ACT in place of the SAT Reasoning Test.

At Milton, students have historically taken the ACT when they have found that their scores on the SAT do not fully or accurately reflect their abilities, particularly in the Critical Reading section where scores on the test are more likely to fall short of a student's performance in the classroom. Students generally take the ACT in April or June of their Class II year and/or in the fall of their Class I year after they have had a chance to evaluate their performance on the SAT they took during the preceding spring.

The ACT has become an increasingly popular alternative to the SAT for Milton students, at minimum providing a helpful basis of comparison and at best providing the scores the student will eventually submit. The ACT can also take the place of Subject Tests at a number of colleges. We strongly encourage students having difficulty with Subject Tests or with the Critical Reading section of the SAT to consider taking the ACT. One caveat: *Students should make sure to familiarize themselves with the Science Reasoning section of the ACT before taking the test.*

An optional 30-minute Writing Test is available as a component of the ACT. Students should take the optional writing component.

3. Specific Advice for Class IV

- Most Class IV students will take no standardized testing.
- The few who might be ready for standardized testing are those completing a level 4 language class (Spanish 4, Latin 4, etc.) and those advanced in math (having completed Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry by the end of Class IV). These groups of students should consider taking Subject Tests in Latin, Spanish, French or Math Level 1 in June 2012. (Keep in mind that the listening test for languages is offered only in November of each year.) Remember, too, that, although a Score Choice policy is now in place, some colleges may require you to submit all scores. *So, do not take a Subject Test unless you have a good chance of doing well.*
- Students are responsible for their own registration. We recommend that students register online at www.collegeboard.org as soon as possible so that they can secure their first-choice test site.

4. Specific Advice for Class III

- All Class III students will take the PLAN test at some point during the year. Milton will automatically register all sophomores for PLAN. PLAN is a preliminary or practice test for the ACT. Scores are for student and counselor use only; they will not be sent to colleges.
- A number of Class III students will be prepared to take one or more Subject Tests in June 2012. Up to three subject tests may be taken on any one test

date. Subject Tests most frequently taken by Class III students include: Math Level 1, Spanish, French, Latin, and Chemistry. (Keep in mind that the listening test for languages is offered only in November or each year.)

- Classroom teachers and advisors will help students make good decisions about which tests to take. Students seeking additional advice should contact one of the college counselors. Remember that, although a new Score Choice policy is now in place, some colleges may require you to submit all scores. *So, do not take a Subject Test unless you have a good chance of doing well.*
- Students are responsible for their own registration. We recommend that students register online at www.collegeboard.org as soon as possible so that they can secure their first-choice test site.

5. Specific Advice for Class II

- All Class II students will take the PSAT on Saturday, October 15, 2011. Milton will automatically register all juniors for the PSAT. The PSAT is a preliminary or practice test. The results of this test are not reported to colleges. The PSAT serves two purposes:
 - a) to allow students a practice experience before taking the SAT, and
 - b) to allow high scorers to compete in the National Merit Scholarship competition.
- All Class II students should take the SAT in January, March, or May, 2012. Each student should plan ahead to determine which date suits him/her best. (Remember that January 23-27 is exam week.) Some students will decide to take the SAT on two of these dates. Students are responsible for their own registration. We recommend that students register online at www.collegboard.org as soon possible so that they can secure their first-choice test site. Remember that, although a new Score Choice policy is now in place, some colleges may require you to submit all scores.
- Most Class II students will take several Subject Tests during the year. While some Class II students will be ready to take Subject Tests in the fall (Math Level 1 or a foreign language test), most students will take Subject Tests in the spring, most likely in May or June 2012. The tests most often taken include Spanish, French, Latin, Math Level 1, Math Level 2, and Literature. Students should seek advice from advisors, classroom teachers, and/or one of the college counselors about which tests to take. We recommend that students register online at www.collegboard.org as soon as possible so that they can secure their first-choice test site. Remember that, although a new Score Choice policy is now in place, some colleges may require you to submit all scores. *So, do not take a Subject Test unless you have a good chance of doing well.*
- Students interested in Subject Tests in foreign languages should be aware of two options. One is the listening test (in French, Spanish, Chinese, etc.)

which is offered only in November of each year. The regular reading version of the language tests is given on various other test days. Students interested in taking any Subject Tests in foreign languages should check the SAT website, www.collegeboard.org. An example of a Class II student who might take the November test is one who has just spent the summer in Spain and is now enrolled in Spanish 4 or one who is a native speaker. *Students who are considering taking a Subject Test in foreign language should discuss their decision with their language teachers.*

- Students who are unable to use the January and March SAT Reasoning Test dates but who wish to have an official set of test results in hand while formulating initial college lists with the College Office in the spring should consider taking the April ACT.
- Some courses at Milton follow the AP curriculum and prepare students well for AP exams. These exams occur in May. Teachers will discuss these with students in the appropriate courses. In recent years Class II students have taken AP exams primarily in English Literature, English Language, Spanish, French, Latin and Calculus. AP exams are offered in other subjects as well. These exams are optional for college admissions. Students must sign up in the Registrar's office before spring break. (See the section on AP exams for more information about the tests.)
- If English is a student's second language, he/she may need to take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language).
- Students are responsible for their own registration for the SAT and ACT. We recommend that students register online at www.collegeboard.org or www.act.org as soon as possible so that they can secure their first-choice test site.

6. Specific Advice for Class I

- Most Class I students will retake the SAT in October, November, or December (unless their previous scores are satisfactory or unless they have chosen to focus on the ACT). The October scores will be processed and available to the colleges in time for early applications. Historically, the November scores have also been available in time for the early deadlines.
- Students who are interested in taking a foreign language test in the fall should be aware that only the listening version of the language tests will be given in November. The listening tests are not given at all test centers. The reading version of these tests will be given on various other test dates; students interested in taking Subject Tests in foreign languages should check the SAT website, www.collegeboard.org.
- A number of seniors will opt to take an ACT in the fall, particularly if they are not satisfied with SAT results from junior spring. Students can take the ACT in September, October and/or December.

7. Departmental Guidelines for the SAT Subject Tests

CLASSICS

Students in Latin 3 or 2-3 are prepared to take the SAT Subject Test in Latin at the June test date of the year in which they complete level 3 or 2-3. Students continuing their study of Latin beyond level 3 may take the SAT Subject Test in Latin on any December or June test date that is convenient for them. Teachers in the Classics Department offer advice about taking the SAT Subject Test in Latin to individual students upon request.

ENGLISH

The Milton English curriculum emphasizes the richness, complexity, and ambiguity of literature. Students used to class discussion and essay writing may find the one-correct-answer format of the SAT Subject Test in Literature to be reductionistic. In addition, some of the literary terms used on the test may be unfamiliar. We suggest that you consult one of the many preparation books and take a couple of practice tests before undertaking the real thing.

MODERN LANGUAGES

Students who are doing well at the level 4 of a language are usually prepared to take the SAT Subject Test in that language. The department advises students to consult their teachers in order to decide which of the two Subject Tests (regular Subject Test or Subject Test with Listening) is appropriate.

N.B. Students should not take the Chinese or Korean SAT Subject Test unless they are native speakers or truly fluent. Because so many native speakers take these two tests, the curve is very high.

HISTORY

With its conceptual approach to history and its strong emphasis on analytical writing, the history department does not prepare students for the more fact-driven, multiple-choice format of the SAT Subject Tests in history. In the past, some students have taken a test in history and done well, but usually they have tended to be history buffs who have done significant extra work on their own. Students considering the SAT Subject Test in history should take a couple of practice tests to make sure they are comfortable with the format.

MATH

There are two different SAT Subject Tests in math: Math Level 1 and Math Level 2. The following general topics are covered on each exam are listed below.

MATH Level 1

Numbers and Operations	10%-14%
Algebra and Functions	38%-42%
Plane Geometry	18%-22%
Coordinate Geometry	8%-12%
Trigonometry	6%-8%
3 Dimensional Geometry	4%-6%
Statistics/Probability	8%-12%

MATH Level 2

Numbers and Operations	10%-14%
Algebra and Functions	48%-52%
Coordinate Geometry	10%-14%
Trigonometry	12%-16%
3 Dimensional Geometry	4%-6%
Statistics/Probability	8%-12%

Some students will choose to take only one of these tests, and strong math students will often choose to take both tests. Since the SAT Subject Tests are curriculum-based, the mathematics department recommends that students review thoroughly before taking either of these exams. We suggest that all students read the free study materials published by The College Board. For further study we recommend purchasing *The Official SAT Subject Tests in Mathematics Levels 1 & 2 Study Guide* published by The College Board; other test prep books are widely available in bookstores and online.

To help students decide which test to take and when to take it, the mathematics department offers the following general advice.

1. Students should take the Math Level 1 test in June after completing Algebra II and Geometry.
2. Students who are currently taking AP Precalculus should take the Math Level 2 test in June.
3. Students who are currently taking Regular Precalculus should take one of the tests in June, and each student should talk with his or her teacher about which test would be more appropriate.
4. Students who are taking Honors Calculus, and who have not yet taken the Math Level 2 test, should take that test in the fall.
5. Students who are taking Regular Calculus, and who have not taken a Subject Test in math, could take either test in the fall. Each student should speak with his or her teacher to determine which test might be most appropriate.

SCIENCE

BIOLOGY

Biology and Honors Biology are typically junior year classes. These classes do not specifically prepare students for the Subject Test. However, much of the material covered on the Biology E/M Subject Test will be covered in class. If students are willing to do some work outside of the classroom, they could be prepared to take this test. Students should contact their Biology teacher about getting help with this process.

CHEMISTRY

Both Chemistry and Honors Chemistry prepare students for the majority of the material on the Chemistry Subject Test, but students will need to approach their

teachers to make sure they know what they need to review for the test. Teachers will do some review in the weeks right before the June test.

PHYSICS

Class IV Physics will not prepare students for the Subject Test. Physics (Classes III, II, or I) would prepare students for the Physics Subject Test. Students should speak with their physics teacher directly about taking this test.

8. AP Exams

Some of Milton Academy's courses prepare students to take Advanced Placement exams. These exams are given in May of each school year, according to a nationally-determined test schedule. The designated purpose of AP exams is to provide opportunities for students to gain college credit or advanced placement in college courses. AP exams are not required or necessary for college admissions purposes. High scores on these tests, however, do demonstrate excellence in particular subjects. AP's are scored on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest score.

Teachers will discuss with their classes whether taking the AP exam in their subjects is appropriate. Teachers will also guide individual students who seek advice in making a decision. Most AP exams at Milton are taken by Class II students. Students register for the AP exams in the Registrar's office before March break. Many teachers provide review sessions prior to the exams. The College Office will provide additional advice about AP's to any individual student who needs guidance.

9. Non-Standard Testing

Non-standard testing is helpful to those who have a diagnosed and properly documented learning disability or physical handicap. The College Board and ACT offer extended time or untimed testing for those who qualify. Students who believe they qualify for such testing should meet with the director of the Academic Skills Center for specific information about registration and testing plans. *(Please be aware that requests for testing accommodations take time to process. Do not wait until the last minute to make a request.)*

10. Test Preparation

Practice can improve scores. Students should become familiar with standardized testing by taking the PSAT. When students receive the results of their PSAT, they will also receive the test questions, a copy of their answers, and an answer key. Students who study this material thoroughly will be able to establish a firm understanding of areas of weakness. Next, students should read thoroughly the test preparation materials available on the College Board website. These materials are full of helpful information and advice. For additional practice materials, we recommend *The Official SAT Study Guide*, published by The College Board. This guide is comprehensive, helpful, and easy to read. It contains complete versions of the SAT Reasoning Test for practice. For study guides to Subject Tests, we recommend *The Official Study Guide for all SAT Subject Tests*, published by The

College Board. We hesitate to review the other guide books and computer programs available today since those resources are changing and growing at the speed of sound. Some are obviously better than others, but the effectiveness of any resource depends largely upon a student's learning style and his/her level of self-discipline. Students who need additional help with test preparation should consult with one of the college counselors for a list of programs or tutors that previous students have found helpful.

11. Test Dates and Registration

THE TESTING SCHEDULE FOR 2011-2012 IS AS FOLLOWS:

Test Date	Test Given	Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline
09/10/11	ACT	08/12/11	08/26/11
10/01/11	SAT & Subject Tests	09/9/11	09/21/11
10/22/11	ACT	09/16/11	9/30/11
11/05/11	SAT & Subject Tests	10/07/11	10/21/11
12/03/11	SAT & Subject Tests	11/08/11	11/20/11
12/10/11	ACT	11/04/11	11/18/11
01/28/12	SAT & Subject Tests	12/30/11	1/13/12
02/11/12	ACT	01/13/12	01/20/12
03/10/12	SAT Reasoning only	02/10/12	02/24/12
04/14/12	ACT	03/09/12	03/23/12
05/05/12	SAT & Subject Tests	04/06/12	04/20/12
06/02/12	SAT & Subject Tests	05/08/12	05/22/12
06/09/12	ACT	05/04/12	05/22/12

Please note that January 23-27 is exam week and Spring vacation begins on March 8.

12. Fee Waivers

Fee waivers are available for financial aid students according to the standards set by The College Board. Students who believe they may qualify for fee waivers should check with the College Office. Each year Milton receives only a limited number of test fee waivers, so Class I and Class II students receive preference in distribution of fee waivers.

13. Glossary of Standardized Testing Terms

ACT: ACT stands for American College Testing. An achievement-based test, the ACT has become an increasingly popular alternative to the SAT for Milton students. Because the ACT provides a different format, some students do better on this test. If a student does score higher on the ACT, he/she can submit the ACT to the colleges instead of the SAT Reasoning Test, Subject Tests, or both, depending on the specific test requirements of specific colleges. All colleges accept the ACT.

AP: Advanced Placement exams. These exams are not required for college admission but are often used for college credit or for placement in an advanced course by colleges. Colleges will look favorably on strong results if available, but students are not penalized if they have not taken AP exams. They are optional.

PLAN: Given in the fall of the Class III year to the entire class, PLAN serves as a practice test for the ACT. Running almost two hours, it contains sections on English, Math, Reading, and Science Reasoning, just like the ACT. Scores are for student and counselor use only; scores are not sent to the colleges. Registration for all Class III students is handled by the school.

PSAT: Given in October of the Class II year to the entire class, the PSAT is a practice test for the SAT. Scores are used for National Merit Scholarship Qualification (referred to as NMSQT) and for student and counselor use only. These scores are not sent to colleges. Registration for all Class II students is handled by the school.

SAT: SAT is officially called the SAT: Reasoning Test. It consists of critical reading, math, and writing sections and takes close to four hours to administer.

SAT Subject Tests: These are one-hour tests measuring achievement in 20 subject areas such as languages, math, sciences, and history. Students choose which tests to take. Most selective colleges require two (sometimes three) SAT Subject Tests in addition to the SAT Reasoning Test. These can be taken at any time during one's high school career. Check publications of individual colleges for their specific requirements.

Score Choice: Beginning in March 2009, the College Board instituted a policy, Score Choice, that gives students the freedom to send the scores (by test date for the SAT and by individual test for Subject Tests) that they feel best represent their ability to colleges and universities, at no additional cost.

This score-reporting feature will be optional to students. If a student chooses not to select his/her scores, all of his/her scores will be sent. Again, it is important to note the policy of each college to which you apply.

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language. This test may be required for students for whom English is not a first language. Students should try to take this test over the summer in their home country.