

**2015-2016**  
*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 colleges and universities. A few institutions have downplayed the importance of scores, and some have eliminated test requirements entirely (for a list of test optional colleges, go to [fairtest.org](http://fairtest.org)), 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. *A student's academic performance is 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** (To be discontinued after January 2016)

The current SAT contains three sections:

#### CRITICAL READING

- Topics include sentence completion and passage-based reading

#### MATHEMATICS

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

#### WRITING

- Topics include improving sentences, improving paragraphs, identifying sentence errors, and a 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 scale (Critical Reading plus Mathematics sections). When assessing your own testing profile, it will be most helpful and accurate to think in terms of that 1600 scale.

## **Re-designed SAT**

College Board will launch a re-designed SAT in March 2016. As a way to help students and families think through testing options and develop a standardized testing plan that fits the individual student best, we thought an FAQ approach might be most instructive:

### **Will colleges require the “old” SAT or the redesigned, “new” SAT? Will they give greater weight to one or the other?**

Almost all of the colleges are saying that they will give equal weight to the two tests and that they will accept either. That being said, the most common answer in college admission is “It depends.” So, it will be important for students to double-check the specific standardized testing requirements for the colleges where they might apply: Some may require a redesigned SAT score, for instance. Last spring College Board reported that it would gather a list of colleges that would require the redesigned SAT. That list has not been gathered or made available, but we will share it as soon as it appears.

N.B. At this writing the only university that has announced that it will accept the new SAT exclusively is Virginia Tech; their research indicates that virtually all of their admission decisions depended on testing taken after March of the junior year.

### **Will colleges super-score between the old SAT and the redesigned SAT?**

Super-scoring is the now common practice of combining the best sub-scores from different testings to get the highest possible composite score. Right now colleges are saying that there will be no super-scoring between the old and the new SAT’s. However, College Board plans to publish a concordance table for the old and new tests, most likely after they score the first sets of the new test and are able to set a statistical baseline. With a concordance table, colleges might then begin super-scoring.

### **Is the redesigned SAT a harder test? Should a sophomore or junior push to take the old SAT, before it disappears in March, just in case it’s the better test?**

Not harder but certainly different. The redesigned SAT might seem like a more natural fit for Milton students since it assesses many of the habits of mind (conceptualization; contextual thinking; deeper analyses, for example) that the Milton curriculum develops. It taps more directly into the learning that Milton students do. On the other hand, a student might feel more at home with the aptitude-based questions of the old SAT, in which case taking the old SAT might make sense. Keep in mind that the SAT, old or redesigned, is geared to juniors, specifically second-semester juniors, so there will be assumed content areas, particularly in math, that the student may not yet have acquired by the last sitting of the old SAT in January, 2016. *Any students thinking of taking the old SAT would be well-advised to do some practice tests to make sure they are prepared.*

## **Should students who take both the old SAT and the redesigned SAT submit scores from both to the colleges?**

Writes the College Board: "Because the test and score scale are changing, we recommend that these students send in all scores, allowing colleges to use those that are most favorable to the student. Keep in mind that some colleges require students to send all scores."

## **Would it be better to take the redesigned SAT or the ACT?**

Again, it comes down to which style of test fits the individual student best. The redesigned SAT has moved closer to the ACT in terms of content and philosophy (it's now more achievement-based; there are no penalties for guessing), but it is still a different test.

## **Will there still be a writing section in the redesigned SAT?**

Yes, but it will now be a separate score. Composite scores will now run from 400 to 1600 (for those of us who never quite abandoned the 1600-point scale of our own youth, this change is being met with much relief), with both the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and the Math section being scored on a 200-800 scale. The Essay section, which runs 50 minutes, will be divided into three dimensions – Reading, Analysis, and Writing – with each scored on a 2 to 8 point scale.

(Complete, in-depth descriptions of the changes in the new SAT can be found at [deliveringopportunity.org](http://deliveringopportunity.org).)

Students should take the SAT 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.) Many colleges allow Score Choice, and all focus on a student's best Critical Reading, Math, and Writing scores, even if they are achieved on different testing days. Some colleges require students to submit all their scores. So, it will be important to review the requirements for each individual college. (See the section below 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 and engineering schools, 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.*

## **SCORE CHOICE**

The College Board has a policy, Score Choice, that gives students the freedom to send 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 is 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.

## **2. ACT**

ACT stands for American College Testing, a battery which combines elements of aptitude and achievement tests in a single instrument. All colleges accept the ACT in place of the SAT.

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 40-minute Writing Test is available as a component of the ACT. Students should take the optional writing component, as it is required by most colleges.)

## **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 students should consider taking Subject Tests in Latin, Spanish, French, or Math Level 1 in June 2016. (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 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 [student.collegeboard.org](http://student.collegeboard.org) as soon as possible so that they can secure their first-choice test site.

#### **4. Specific Advice for Class III**

- A number of Class III students will be prepared to take one or more Subject Tests in June 2016. 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 of 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 the Score Choice policy is 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 [student.collegeboard.org](http://student.collegeboard.org) as soon as possible so that they can secure their first-choice test site.
- Please note that on Thursday, March 10, the day before Spring Break, all Class III students will take a practice ACT.

#### **5. Specific Advice for Class II**

- All Class II students will take the PSAT on Wednesday, October 14, 2015. 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.

#### **PSAT for the Re-Designed SAT**

The primary function of the PSAT is to serve as a practice test for the SAT. So, not surprisingly, the PSAT that Class II students take on October 14, 2015 will mirror the redesigned SAT in format and content. Just as there were differences between the old SAT and the old PSAT (shorter test, modified scale), there will be differences

between the new SAT and the new PSAT, also around length and score scale. For a full description of the new PSAT go to [deliveringopportunity.org](http://deliveringopportunity.org).

Those juniors contemplating taking the old SAT can use their experience with this fall's PSAT as a benchmark for that decision. After taking the new PSAT, they should then do a practice test of the old SAT either through Method Test Prep or through Khan Academy. They can then compare the two testing experiences and determine whether taking the old SAT would actually be beneficial.

As with the old PSAT, the new PSAT will be used to determine semifinalists for the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMQST). Since the new PSAT will be scored on a new scale and since College Board will not determine qualifying scores for semifinalist until it has scored this first round of the new PSAT, we cannot yet give you a sense of what score or even what range of scores might qualify a student for semifinalist status.

We hope that you find this information helpful. We will send updates as we receive them from College Board.

- All Class II students should take the SAT in March or May, 2016. Each student should plan ahead to determine which date suits him/her best. Some students will decide to take the SAT on both of these dates. Students are responsible for their own registration. We recommend that students register online at [student.collegeboard.org](http://student.collegeboard.org) as soon as possible so that they can secure their first-choice test site. Remember that, although a Score Choice policy is in place, some colleges may require students 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 2016. 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 [student.collegeboard.org](http://student.collegeboard.org) as soon as possible so that they can secure their first-choice test site. Remember that, although a Score Choice policy is 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 some of the language tests is given all other test days. Students interested in taking any Subject Tests in foreign languages should check the SAT website, [student.collegeboard.org](http://student.collegeboard.org). *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 March SAT date 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, which 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 section 8 on AP exams for more information about the tests.)
- If English is a student's second language, s/he may need to take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). It is the student's responsibility to research this requirement for the schools to which s/he is applying.
- Students are responsible for their own registration for the SAT and ACT. We recommend that students register online at [student.collegeboard.org](http://student.collegeboard.org) or [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.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 at all but a few colleges, notably state schools.
- 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 some of these tests will be given on other test dates; students interested in taking Subject Tests in foreign languages should check the SAT website, [student.collegeboard.org](http://student.collegeboard.org).
- A number of seniors will opt to take the 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 usually 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 Euclidean	18%-22%
Coordinate Geometry	8%-12%
Trigonometry	6%-8%
3 Dimensional Geometry	4%-6%
Statistics/Probability/Data Analysis	8%-12%

### Math Level 2

Numbers and Operations	10%-14%
Algebra and Functions	48%-52%
Trigonometry	12%-16%
Coordinate Geometry	10%-14%
3 Dimensional Geometry	4%-6%
Statistics/Probability/Data Analysis	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 Precalculus (Honors) 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 Calculus (Honors) or Calculus (Accelerated), and who have not yet taken the Math Level 2 test, should strongly consider taking 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 Biology (Honors) 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 teachers about getting help with this process.

### **CHEMISTRY**

Both Chemistry and Chemistry (Honors) 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 (for Classes III, II, or I) will prepare students for the Physics Subject Test. Students should speak with their physics teachers 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 calendar. 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. APs 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 APs 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 disability. 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 can take significant 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 a detailed test report. 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 study guides to Subject Tests, we recommend *The Official Study Guide for All SAT Subject Tests*, published by The College Board.

*Students trying to choose between the SAT and the ACT should do a practice of both in Method Test Prep, the online test prep site that Milton makes available to its students. Login for Method is a two-step process. The first step will involve going to the Method site at <http://app.methodtestprep.com/MiltonAcademy/signup>. Next you can set up your own account using a referral code which you can obtain from Mrs. Dunnington in the College Office. Students can also practice the redesigned SAT through Khan Academy. There is a link for that service on the College Board website.)*

Students who need additional help with test preparation should consult with the

College Office for a list of programs or tutors that previous students have found helpful.

### **11. Test Dates and Registration**

#### **THE TESTING SCHEDULE FOR 2015-2016 IS AS FOLLOWS:**

Test Date	Test Given	Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline
09/12/15	ACT	08/07/15	08/21/15
10/03/15	SAT & Subject Tests	09/03/15	09/22/15
10/24/15	ACT	09/18/15	10/02/15
11/07/15	SAT & Subject Tests	10/09/15	10/27/15
12/05/15	SAT & Subject Tests	11/05/15	11/23/15
12/12/15	ACT	11/06/15	11/20/15
01/23/16	SAT & Subject Tests	12/28/15	01/12/16
02/06/16	ACT	01/08/16	01/15/16
03/5/16	SAT Reasoning only	02/05/16	02/23/16
04/09/16	ACT	03/04/16	03/18/16
05/07/16	SAT & Subject Tests	04/08/16	04/26/16
06/04/16	SAT & Subject Tests	05/05/16	05/25/16
06/11/16	ACT	05/06/16	05/20/16

**Please note that January 25-29 is exam week and Spring vacation begins on March 10.**

### **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.

### **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, Subject Tests, or both, depending on the specific test requirements of specific colleges. All colleges accept the ACT.

**AP:** AP stands for 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.

**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 are for student and counselor use only; these scores are not sent to colleges. Milton will register all Class II students.

**SAT:** The SAT consists of Critical Reading, Math, and Writing sections and takes close to four hours to administer. College Board will no longer offer this test after the January 2016 test date. The College Board will introduce a redesigned SAT in March 2016. For a complete description of the new SAT, go to [deliveringopportunity.org](http://deliveringopportunity.org).

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

**Score Choice:** This College Board feature 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 is optional to students. If a student chooses not to select his/her scores, all of his/her scores will be sent. It is important to note the policy of each college.

**TOEFL:** TOEFL stands for 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.

9/25/15