

2008-09 PSAT/NMSQT® Fact Sheet

Overview

- 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 them.
- The PSAT/NMSQT program promotes earlier and more expansive inclusion of students to jump-start college-going aspirations while there is still time for students to effectively plan and prepare.
- 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. Typically, entrants are in their third year of high school.
- More than 3.4 million students worldwide took the test in 2007; 46 percent of test-takers were in eleventh grade; 53 percent were in tenth grade and younger.
- In 2007, 152 districts and 11 states took part in the Early Participation Program—a program that promotes inclusive testing in economically disadvantaged districts and supports the early involvement of all students in the college-going process.

Skills Assessed

The PSAT/NMSQT assesses academic skills that are important for success in college. Questions measure skills in three areas:

- **Critical Reading** (passage-based reading, sentence completions)
- **Mathematics** (numbers and operations; algebra and functions; geometry and measurement; data analysis, statistics, and probability)
- **Writing Skills** (sentence error identification, sentence and paragraph improvements)

Ensuring Test Fairness, Validity, and Reliability

- Concern for fairness is an integral part of PSAT/NMSQT development. All test questions are pretested within the SAT®. Comprehensive reviews and analyses ensure that test questions 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

First Step Toward College

The PSAT/NMSQT is often students' 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 planning process or, for some, introducing them to the concept of attending college.

Score Report Plus

The PSAT/NMSQT Score Report gives students personalized and comprehensive feedback on their test performance, including suggestions on how to improve specific academic skills.

My College QuickStart™

With the PSAT/NMSQT, students receive access to My College QuickStart™, a personalized college planning kit based on their test results.

SAT Preparation

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.

Scholarship Opportunities

Eleventh-graders who take the test 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® (SSS®)

PSAT/NMSQT participants have the option to receive free admissions and financial aid information from colleges, universities, and scholarship programs. Student information is strictly monitored and secure.

Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test
cosponsored by



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Benefits for Schools and Districts

AP Potential™

This online tool uses correlations between PSAT/NMSQT scores and Advanced Placement Program® Exam results to identify students who may be successful in specific AP® Program courses. This tool is designed to supplement, not replace, a school's current identification processes, and to increase inclusion in AP courses.

Summary of Answers and Skills (SOAS)

The SOAS report provides schools with an analysis of aggregate test question information and skills feedback, providing educators the opportunity to identify specific skill areas where their students are having difficulty. The SOAS report is provided free to all schools that test at least 25 students in one grade level.

Summary Reports

For tenth- and eleventh-grade students, School Summary Reports show the number of test-takers and the mean test scores 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.

Student Data File

The Student Data File 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. (Optional report: \$50)

ScoreWrite™ Essay Preparation

ScoreWrite™: A Guide to Preparing for the SAT Essay, complements the PSAT/NMSQT writing skills section and helps teachers prepare students for the SAT essay. It provides everything schools need to run a practice essay writing session, including an essay prompt similar to those on the SAT. *ScoreWrite* also trains teachers to score essays holistically using the SAT Scoring Guide.

PSAT/NMSQT School Coordinator Site

The PSAT/NMSQT Coordinator Site at www.collegeboard.com/school is where schools and districts manage the PSAT/NMSQT administration. Features include:

- Online school registration for the PSAT/NMSQT with immediate order confirmation;
- Ability to check order status and easily update orders;
- Fee Remittance Report and Fee-Waiver Roster generation after the test;
- Tracking information for shipments of preparation materials, test books, and score reports;
- E-mail notifications to confirm receipt of returned answer sheets; and
- E-mail communications from the College Board to assist with test administration and program management.

My College QuickStart

My College QuickStart is an easy-to-use, online, personalized college and career planning kit available free of charge to all students who take the PSAT/NMSQT. This useful tool incorporates the responses students provide when they take the test and presents personalized information back to them in four main parts:

- My Online Score Report—an enhanced score report that allows students to review each test question, their answers, and correct answers with answer explanations
- My SAT Study Plan—a customized SAT study plan based on students' PSAT/NMSQT test performance, highlighting skills for review and practice
- My College Matches—a starter list of colleges based on students' home states and selected majors
- My Major and Career Matches—a list of majors and careers based on the majors students choose when they take the test. Additionally, with access to MyRoad™, students can take a personality test to learn about their personality types and identify their strengths. They can also access descriptions of majors and careers, and, for each major, learn about steps to take in high school and what to expect in college.

Students may log in to My College QuickStart with the access code printed on their paper score report. The tool is available in mid-December and can be utilized throughout high school.

Log in or take a tour at www.collegeboard.com/quickstart.

Online Resources and Downloadable Publications

Schools and districts are encouraged to take advantage of the free PSAT/NMSQT resources, publications, and reports at www.collegeboard.com/psatdownloads to help educators, students, and families get the most out of the PSAT/NMSQT.

2008-09 Test Dates and Fees

The PSAT/NMSQT may be administered by schools on either Wednesday, October 15, 2008, or Saturday, October 18, 2008. The test fee is \$13. Fee waivers are available for eligible juniors. Looking ahead: 2009 test dates are October 14 and October 17.