

Understanding 2014 PSAT/NMSQT® Scores

My College QuickStart collegeboard.org/quickstart

My College QuickStart is an easy-to-use, online, personalized college and career planning kit for all students who take the PSAT/NMSQT. This useful tool incorporates responses students provided when they took the test and presents personalized information in six main parts: My Online Score Report, My SAT Study Plan, My Personality, My Major & Career Matches, My College Matches, and My AP Potential. Students can sign in to My College QuickStart starting in mid-December using the access code printed on their score reports. They can continue to use the tool throughout high school.

What does the PSAT/NMSQT measure?

The PSAT/NMSQT measures skills in three basic academic areas important for success in college. These section scores are on a scale of 20 to 80 and the student score reports include a score for each section of the test — Critical Reading, Mathematics, and Writing Skills.

- **Critical reading questions** assess students' abilities to draw inferences, synthesize information, distinguish between main and supporting ideas, and understand vocabulary as it is used in context.
- **Mathematics problem-solving questions** deal with numbers and operations; algebra and functions; geometry and measurement; and data analysis, statistics, and probability.
- **Writing skills questions** measure the ability to identify appropriate expressions in standard written English, detect faults in usage and structure, choose effective revisions to sentences and paragraphs, and recognize appropriate writing strategies.

Important to note –

- Points represent the total number of correct answers minus a quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) of a point for each incorrect answer to a multiple-choice question.
- Nothing is deducted for incorrect answers to student-produced response questions or for omitted answers of any type.
- Points are totaled, then converted to scores on the 20–80 PSAT/NMSQT scale.
- Converting points to scores adjusts for slight differences in difficulty between various forms. A statistical process called equating adjusts for these small differences. This ensures that a score of, say, 65 on one form of the test reflects a similar level of performance as does a 65 on another form of the test.
- There is no advantage or disadvantage in taking either the Wednesday or the Saturday test form.

How is the PSAT/NMSQT scored?

First, a raw score is computed. Students receive one point for each correct answer (regardless of difficulty). For incorrect answers to multiple-choice questions, a quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) of a point is deducted. Nothing is deducted for unanswered questions or for incorrect answers to student-produced response (grid-in) questions. Next, the raw score is adjusted for differences in difficulty between various forms, or editions, of the test. Finally, the raw score is converted to a score on the PSAT/NMSQT scale of 20 to 80. The statistical procedures used to arrive at these final scores, called equating and scaling, allow one to compare the scores of students who have taken different editions of the test, even if they were taken in different years. Student score reports show a numerical score for each area measured, as well as a range that extends from a few points below the student's score to a few points above. This range shows the extent to which a student's score might differ with repeated testing, assuming that the student's skill level remains constant.

Can PSAT/NMSQT scores be used to estimate SAT scores?

PSAT/NMSQT critical reading, mathematics, and writing skills questions are designed to be the same type as those on the SAT. This is deliberate, as the PSAT/NMSQT questions are intended to be reliable preparation for the same types of questions on the SAT. The PSAT/NMSQT scale of 20 to 80 is comparable to the SAT scale of 200 to 800. Students can see estimated SAT score ranges on their supplemental online score reports in My College QuickStart™. Two times out of three, students earn SAT scores within these ranges, but actual scores may be higher (or lower) than these estimates. (As SAT writing scores also include an essay, there will be more variability in the estimates of those scores.) Higher-than-estimated SAT scores may result from intervening activities, such as:

- developing skills through rigorous academic courses;
- extensive, quality reading and/or writing outside of school;
- following the personalized advice in My SAT Study Plan™ in My College QuickStart; and
- taking a practice test and becoming more familiar with test directions, types of questions, and pacing

Estimated SAT scores assume the SAT is taken within a year of the PSAT/NMSQT. Juniors frequently take the SAT six or seven months after taking the PSAT/NMSQT. Students who take the PSAT/NMSQT as sophomores may not take the SAT for another 18 months, providing a greater opportunity for intervening activities to influence their SAT scores.

Colleges Do Not Receive Scores

The College Board does **not** send PSAT/NMSQT scores to colleges. Scores are not intended for use by colleges in their admission decisions. For this reason, scores should not be included on student transcripts that will be reproduced and sent to colleges unless the student (if 18 or older) or parent/guardian has granted permission. Students have the right to withhold scores from college admission and athletic offices, even when colleges request them.

Improving Skills

PSAT/NMSQT score reports are intended to help students learn from their mistakes, improve their skills, and prepare for college. Students can see which skills need the most improvement and sign into My College QuickStart to review test questions and answer explanations related to those skills.

If You're NOT in 11th Grade

If the test seemed hard, remember — it's aimed at students in 11th grade. Look at your percentiles to see how your scores compare to the scores of 10th grade test-takers. Look at your skills to see where to focus your improvement efforts. Know that you're taking a critical early step for your future.

If You ARE in 11th Grade

National Merit Scholarship Corporation uses the PSAT scores to designate groups of students to receive recognition in the National Merit Scholarship Program (NMSQP).

Inquiries about any aspect of the NMSQP should be sent to: **National Merit Scholarship Program**
1560 Sherman Ave.,
Suite 200
Evanston, IL 60201-4897
Phone: 847-855-5100

Raw Scores

The scores included on score reports are based on raw scores. To arrive at a raw score, correct, incorrect, and unanswered questions are counted. Points are added or subtracted using the following rules:

Calculation of Raw PSAT/NMSQT Score	
Answer Type	Point Value
Correct answer	Plus 1 point
Wrong answer to multiple-choice questions	Minus 1/4 point
Wrong answer to math grid-ins	0 points deducted
Unanswered question	0 points deducted

Converting Raw Scores

Next, the raw score is converted to a score on a scale of 20 to 80. This process, called *equating*, adjusts for slight differences in difficulty between various versions of the test (such as the Wednesday form and the Saturday form). Equating ensures that a score of, say, 65 on one form reflects a similar level of performance as does a 65 on another form. There is no advantage or disadvantage in taking the test on a Wednesday or a Saturday or taking an alternate version.

Making Sense of the Numbers Scoring Data

View answer keys and conversion tables for each version of the test as well as percentiles and mean scores. PSAT/NMSQT mean (average) scores and percentiles can be used to gauge college readiness and compare a student's performance with that of other students.

Mean (Average) Scores

The table below shows the mean score for each section of the PSAT/NMSQT. Unless students earn scores that are much lower than average, they're probably developing the kinds of critical reading, math reasoning, and writing skills needed for academic success in college.

Mean Scores for the 2013 PSAT/NMSQT		
Test Section	11th-Grade Mean	10th-Grade Mean
Critical Reading	47.7	43.1
Mathematics	48.6	43.6
Writing Skills	46.5	41.8

Percentiles

In addition to scores, students receive percentiles for each test section. A student's percentile is a number between 0 and 100. It shows the percentage of students in a particular grade whose scores fall below the student's score. For example, an 11th-grade student whose Mathematics percentile is 57 scored higher than 57 percent of 11th-grade test-takers.

Percentiles are grade-specific:

- On both the paper score report and the online My College QuickStart™ score report, 11th graders and 10th graders see percentiles that compare their score to the scores of other test-takers in their grade.
- On the paper score report, all students in 9th grade or below see percentiles that compare their scores to the scores of 10th graders.
- The online score report shows 9th graders how their scores compares to those of other 9th grade test-takers