



High School Testing Timeline

Sensible Advice About Your Testing Timeline

For a glossary of terms, please see the last page

The optimal testing timeline for a given student needs to be individualized, taking into account the student's academic performance in school, college goals, schedule and test-taking ability. What works for one student may not be the optimal plan for another. Nevertheless, there are some generalizations that can be made.

THE FRESHMAN YEAR

The Princeton Review philosophy is to not take tests during the first year in high school. We don't even think it's a good idea to take a PSAT as a 9th grader, because the scores seem to create more, not less, stress for the freshmen and their families.

The one consistent exception to this is if a freshman is doing very well in her (or his) 9th grade Biology class, and is planning to take AP Biology before the end of the Junior year. If these two factors are in place, then we think it is a good idea for that student to take the Biology Subject Test (formerly known as the SAT II) in Ecology.

THE SOPHOMORE YEAR

October: Take the PSAT or the PLAN

These tests during the sophomore year are opportunities for risk free practice that should not be missed. We do not recommend intensive preparation but Princeton Review does offer a "PSAT Clinic" that is an inexpensive and relatively relaxed way to begin the ongoing process of becoming a skilled tester.

May: If you are in an AP class, then you will have the chance to take the AP in May.

Some students take an AP class, but then do not take the AP exam. You do not want to be one of these students. College admissions people tend to frown upon students from AP classes who duck out on taking the AP exam.

June: Take any appropriate Subject Test

Traditionally, if a Sophomore is going to take a Subject Test in the 10th grade, it will be in either World History or Chemistry. Please heed a few cautionary words. The World History test is an exam that focuses on non-European cultures. Thus, if you are in Honors or AP World, you are really ready for this test. However, if you are coming out of AP European History and plan to waltz in and take the World History Subject Test, you will be crushed if you do not prepare. For the Chemistry test, please be aware that it is time intensive and difficult. You will need to have taken Honors Chemistry to handle this exam.

SUMMER BETWEEN THE 10TH AND 11TH GRADE YEAR

If you have the time, the inclination and the resources, this is the time frame best suited for test preparation. The students have learned the vast majority of the material that will appear on the SAT (and if they've completed Algebra II, they've learned all of it), and it's a considerably less stressful time to be doing this work. The Princeton Review has courses, private tutoring, books and online tools to address this need for all people at all price points.



JUNIOR YEAR

While many different scheduling strategies can satisfy individual student's needs, the majority of students fall into two distinct categories: "Aggressive" and "Regulars".

AGGRESSIVE

(Includes high academic achievers, kids with proactive parents, students who had a lot of time to prepare during the previous summer but who anticipate being extremely busy in the spring, students who want to try to achieve some flavor of National Merit status, very weak testers who may need extended preparation to achieve acceptable scores, and students who will apply as Early Decision candidates).

October – SAT followed by PSAT (may not be appropriate for weaker testers)

November – Language listening subject tests for native speakers

Winter – Refresher preparation

Mar – The second crack at the SAT, if necessary

April – Try the ACT

May – AP's/Subject Tests

June – Subject Tests

****There are many possible combinations of Subject Tests, so please feel free to contact us if you have any specific questions about your testing plan.**

You can call us at 1-800 2REVIEW.

REGULARS

Sep/Oct – Light prep (PSAT Clinic)

October – PSAT

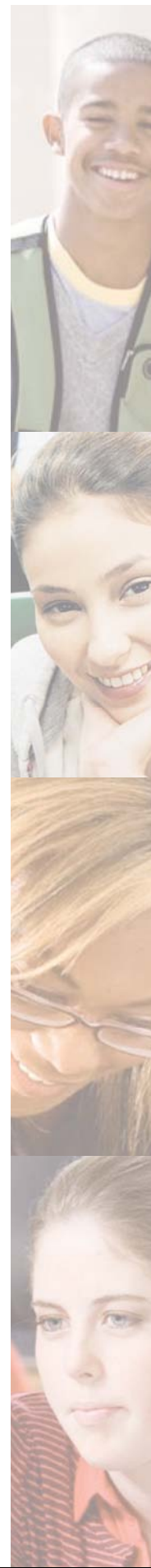
Fall/Winter – Intensive prep (can do extended prep starting in November or begin in January, both in preparation for the March/April test in either the SAT or the ACT)

May/June – Subject Tests (if needed) or a second attempt at the SAT

SENIOR YEAR

The Senior year can become complicated because it is so late in the cycle, and the permutations are very dependent upon the individual student. From the broadest perspective, if you're "Aggressive", then October should be your last ACT/SAT/Subject Test attempt. The "Regular" students may take these exams up to, and including, December of their senior year and still make it in time for most colleges' admission deadlines (including the UC schools).

For a glossary of terms, please see the last page



GLOSSARY OF TERMS



AP (Advanced Placement): End of year, college level exams that are used for admissions purposes at just a few competitive schools (the Ivies, Berkeley, UCLA, USC), and to give students college credit at virtually every college and university. The scoring grid goes from 1-5 (higher is better), with 3 representing a passing score. These tests are traditionally given at a student's high school during the second and third weeks of May.

ACT: An alternative to the SAT. This test tends to reward students who are better in reading and grammar than they are in math. The ACT is the dominant college entrance exam in the Midwest and the South, and is scored on a 1-36 basis (the average score is about 21 or 22). The best time to take this test is in February or April of the junior year and/or September of the senior year. The practice ACT is called the PLAN. To sign up for the actual ACT, go to www.act.org.

PSAT: An excellent practice test for the SAT that has absolutely nothing to do with college admissions. Rather it serves the following functions. It is a strong window into your testing soul — if you do well on the PSAT, you are likely to do equally well on the SAT. Very good testers can achieve National Merit stardom, a scholarship contest that is predominantly linked to PSAT scores from the junior year of PSAT testing. Finally, when you sign up for the PSAT, you will be given the chance to join the Student Search Service through which your name will be released to colleges and you will receive ridiculous amounts of junk mail from colleges that both interest and horrify you. The PSAT is offered at your school during the second week or the third Saturday of October and you must sign up for this test through your high school. There is no essay or Algebra II on the PSAT and it's about half the length of the SAT.

SAT: The grande dame of admissions tests and you know it all too well. The SAT is popular in the West and the East, and is scored from 600-2400. The average score is about a 1560, a good score is anything over 1800, and 2200+ is the number for the most ridiculously competitive schools. The SAT has Math, Reading and Writing sections, includes some Algebra II and an essay, and can be taken 2-3 times since colleges only count students' highest scores. To sign up to take the actual SAT, you go to www.collegeboard.com.

Subject Tests: The Subject Tests are one hour, multiple choice exams that focus on individual subjects. Until recently, these used to be called the SAT II exams. Subject Tests are offered in Biology (Ecology or Molecular), Chemistry, Physics, World History, US History, Math Level I (not accepted by the UC but is accepted by private colleges), Math Level 2, English Literature and a host of foreign languages. These are of some significance in elite private college admissions, and can be submitted to UC schools to show strength in a subject where perhaps your grade is a little soft. If you are fluent in a foreign language, then take the Language with Listening Subject Test on the first Saturday in November. The test is offered in French, Spanish, German, Japanese, Korean and Chinese. You will need to bring a portable CD player with headphones with you to the testing center. You may take up to three Subject Tests in one day (although we wouldn't recommend it — it's pretty tiring), and each Subject Test is scored on the 200-800 scale. A good score is 600+, and a great score is anything over 700. To sign up to take the actual Subject Tests, you go to www.collegeboard.com.

We hope that this helps, but you may always call us if you have any questions.