

Prepare for the PSAT/NMSQT®:

A Step to the Future

- Skills Tested on the PSAT/NMSQT
- Sample PSAT/NMSQT Questions
- Scoring the PSAT/NMSQT
- Test Preparation Strategies





What is the PSAT/NMSQT?

- Measures academic skills you'll need for college
- Co-sponsored by the College Board and National Merit Scholarship Corporation
- Serves as an entry point to National Merit Scholarship Corporation competitions and practice for the SAT
- Approximately 3.5 million students participate each year (44% eleventh-graders and 56% tenth-graders or younger)



Benefits of the PSAT/NMSQT

- Preparation for the SAT®
- Scholarship and recognition opportunities (11th grade)
- College and career planning tools
- Admissions and financial aid information from colleges
- Feedback on academic skills



What Skills are tested on the PSAT/NMSQT?

The test assesses the academic skills that you've developed over the years, primarily through your course work.

These skills are considered essential for success in high school and college:

- Critical Reading
- Mathematics
- Writing Skills

Critical Reading Questions

Use content from:

- humanities
- social studies
- natural sciences
- literature

- 13 Sentence Completions
- 35 Passage-Based Reading Questions
(100- to 800-word passages)



Mathematics Questions

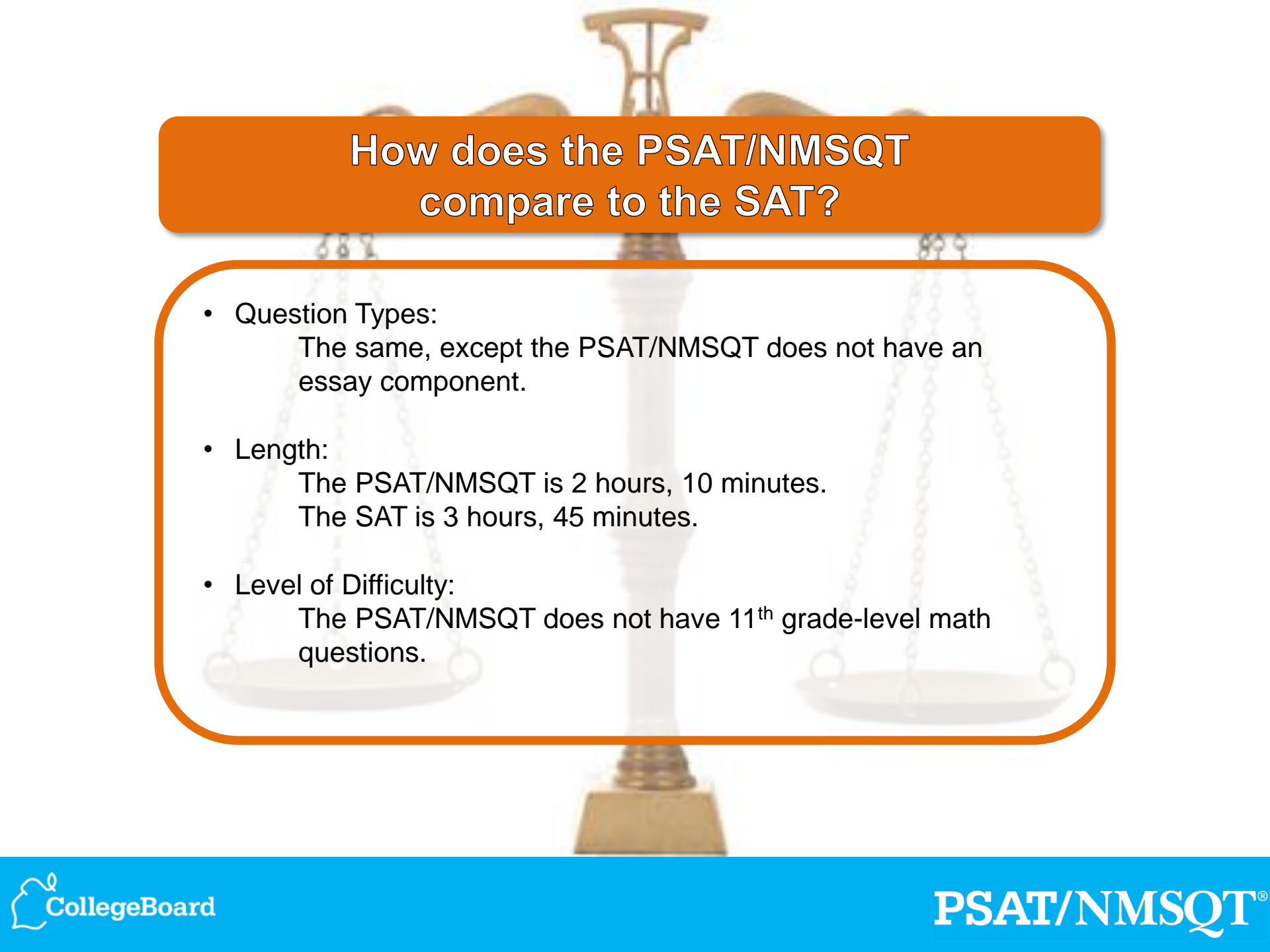
Use content from:

- number and operations
 - algebra and functions;
 - geometry and measurement
 - data analysis
 - statistics
 - probability
- 28 Multiple-Choice Questions
 - 10 Student-Produced Response Questions (“Grid-ins”)

Writings Skills Questions

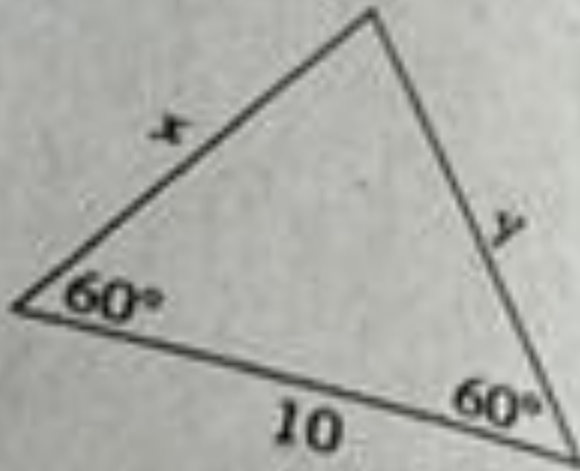
Focus on editing, grammar, usage, and organization.

- 20 Improving Sentences Questions
- 14 Identifying Sentence Error Questions
- 5 Improving Paragraph Questions



How does the PSAT/NMSQT compare to the SAT?

- Question Types:
The same, except the PSAT/NMSQT does not have an essay component.
- Length:
The PSAT/NMSQT is 2 hours, 10 minutes.
The SAT is 3 hours, 45 minutes.
- Level of Difficulty:
The PSAT/NMSQT does not have 11th grade-level math questions.



Sample Questions

In an isosceles triangle, the
congruent sides are congru
opposite congruent angle
figures below

Directions
correspond

Therefore, 36°
For question 1, the
favored blue

Critical Reading Section: Sentence Completions

Roger said the report was significant; Heather contradicted him, saying that all the information presented was _____ .

- (A) contemporary
- (B) scintillating
- (C) objective
- (D) irrevocable
- (E) immaterial

Because Heather is contradicting Roger, the correct response is the word that is most nearly the opposite of “significant.”

Choice (E) is correct.

“Immaterial” means inconsequential or irrelevant.

Information that is immaterial is by definition not significant.

Critical Reading Section: Passage-Based Questions

Passage Excerpt:

After I left the room, I began to sift my impressions. Only the day before, an acquaintance had warned me to watch carefully for sleight-of-hand tricks, especially as the man had earlier been a stage conjuror.

Question:

The “acquaintance” mentioned in line 2 can best be described as a

- (A) skeptic
- (B) hypocrite
- (C) hoaxer
- (D) confidant
- (E) mystic

The acquaintance mentioned in line 2 warns the author to “watch carefully for sleight-of-hand tricks.”

Choice (A) is correct.

In warning the author to watch out for tricks, the acquaintance is showing that he is skeptical about the telepathist's supposed powers.

Math Section: Multiple Choice

If $ax + bx = 36$, what is the value of x when $a + b = 12$?

- (A) 3
- (B) 6
- (C) 12
- (D) 24
- (E) 48

The expression $ax + bx$ is equivalent to $(a + b)x$, so the equation $ax + bx = 36$ is equivalent to $(a + b)x = 36$.

When $a + b = 12$, the equation becomes $12x = 36$, which can be solved to get $x = 3$.

Math Section: Student-Produced Response

If $\frac{h}{4} + \frac{1}{3} = \frac{5h}{6}$, then what is the value of h ?

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9	9	9	9

- Multiply each member of the equation by 12 (the common denominator) to get $3h + 4 = 10h$
- Subtract $3h$ from both sides to get $7h = 4$
- Divide by 7
- $h = 4/7$.

Know the Student-Produced Response Directions!

The correct answer must be **gridded** correctly to receive credit.

What is written in the boxes cannot be scored.

Math Section: Student-Produced Response Sample Grids

\$1.75

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$2 \frac{1}{3}$

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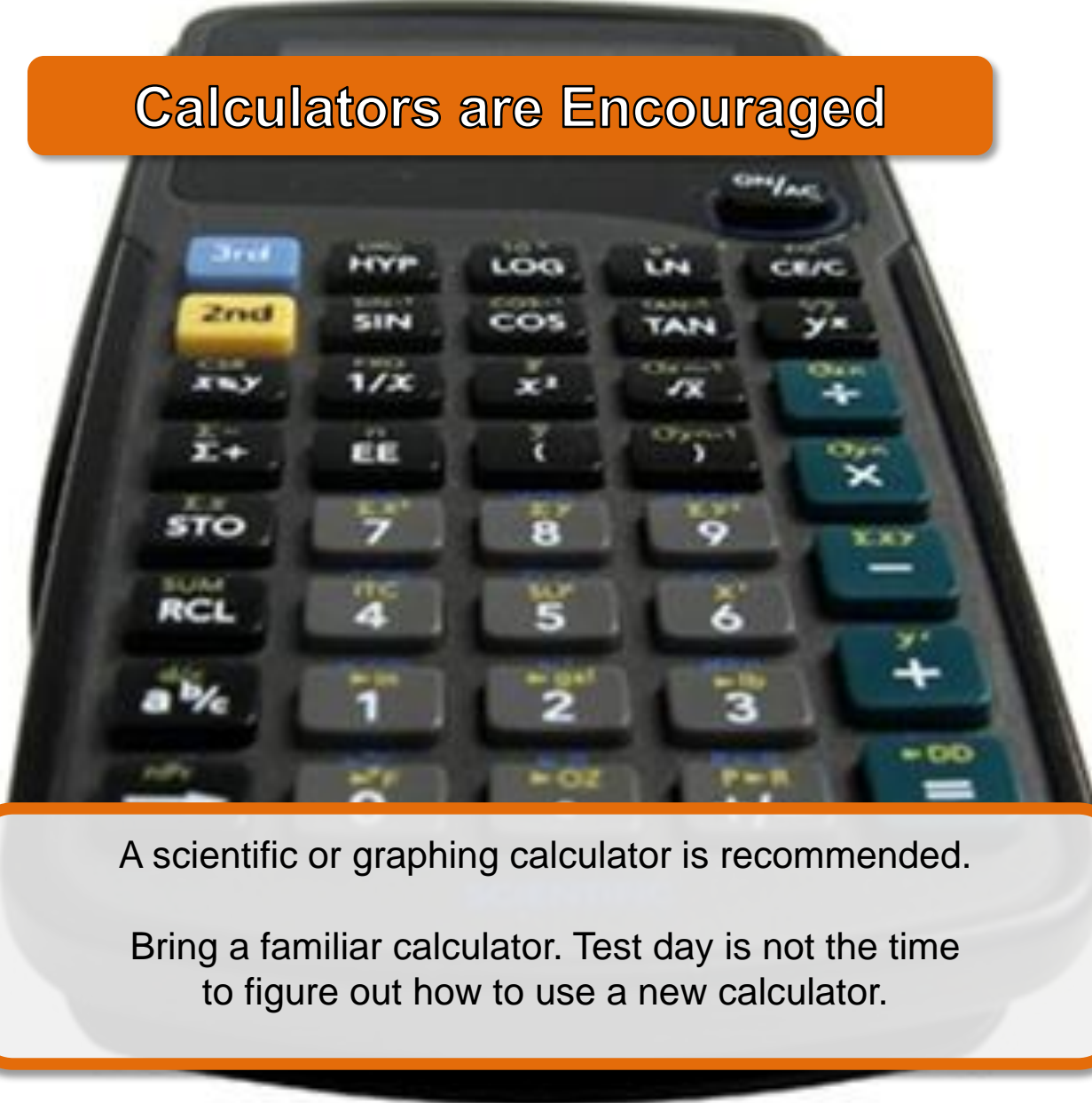
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4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

Calculators are Encouraged



A scientific or graphing calculator is recommended.

Bring a familiar calculator. Test day is not the time to figure out how to use a new calculator.

Writing Skills Section: Improving Sentences

A few barges still move oil up to Hartford, but in the old days they had more traffic then.

- (A) but in the old days they had more traffic then
- (B) but in the old days traffic was heavier
- (C) but in the old days they had a lot more
- (D) whereas the traffic was a lot more in the old days
- (E) whereas then there was more traffic in the old days

(Note: In this question type, the first choice (A) always repeats the underlined phrase exactly, indicating that there should be no change.)

Choice (B) is correct. It avoids the errors of the original by eliminating both the unnecessary adverb, “then,” and the vague pronoun, “they.”

Writing Skills Section: Identifying Sentence Errors

The electronic computer is a technological triumph that scientists have developed, mastered, and then put it to constantly increasing use. No Error.

A B C D E

The error in this sentence occurs at (B), where an unnecessary pronoun is used.

The object of the verb “have . . . put” (like the object of the verbs “have developed” and “have . . . Mastered”) is the relative pronoun “that,” which refers to “technological triumph.”

The pronoun “it” is therefore unnecessarily inserted after “put.”

Writing Skills Section: Improving Paragraphs

(1) The last century was a time of great technological progress. (2) Life is more convenient, comfortable, and efficient today than ever before. (3) Yet this has created new concerns.

Which of the following versions of sentence 3 (reproduced below) is most effective?

Yet this has created new concerns.

- (A) Although this has created new concerns.
- (B) Yet this progress has created new concerns.
- (C) Yet these have created new concerns.
- (D) Yet this has created new concerns to worry about.
- (E) New concerns have been created.

Choice (B) is correct. The vague pronoun “this” is replaced by “this progress,” which clearly refers to the progress mentioned in sentence 1.

How is the PSAT/NMSQT Scored?

Multiple-choice questions:

- 1 point for each correct
- $\frac{1}{4}$ point deducted for each incorrect

Math grid-ins:

- 1 point for each correct
- 0 points for each incorrect

0 points for omitted questions

How is the PSAT/NMSQT Scored?

Scale:

- 20-80 for each test section

Averages:

- 11th Graders: 47-50
- 10th Graders: 43-46
- Younger Students: 38-42

Personalized Skills Information



The PSAT/NMSQT Score Report:

- contains information to help you improve your academic skills.
- lists skills that you have the best chance of improving with additional work.
- includes advice, written by teachers, on how to improve those skills.

Test Preparation: Long-Term

READ!

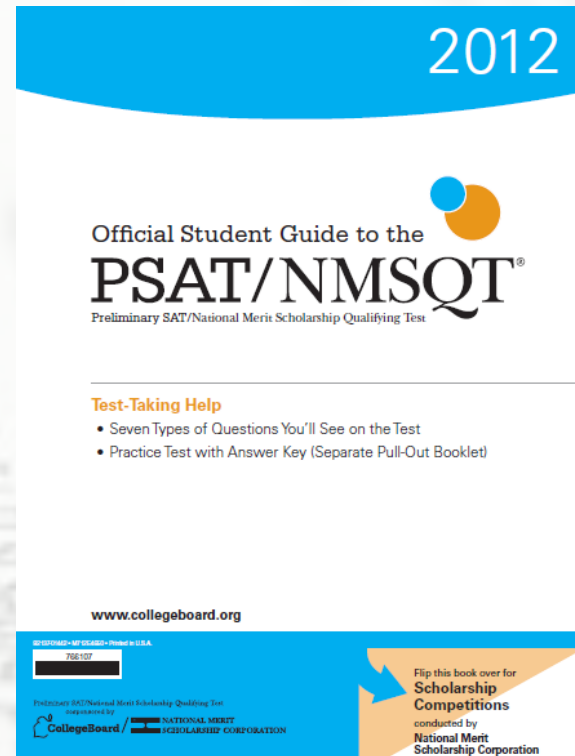
- Continuous reading improves vocabulary and develops essential skills.
- Read more books than just those required for class.

Take Challenging Courses!

- This will help you to develop and strengthen your critical thinking skills.

Test Preparation: Short-Term

- Take the practice test in the *Official Student Guide to the PSAT/NMSQT*.
- Understand scoring and “educated guessing.”
- Familiarize yourself with the test’s format, questions types, and directions.



Test Preparation: Test Readiness Strategies

When you sit down to take the test:

- Read all of the directions.
- Read all of each question's answer choices.
- Do scratch work in the test book.
- Work at a steady pace.

If you skip a question:

- Note it in the test book.
- Leave it blank on the answer sheet.
- Return to it if there is time.
- Remember: you don't have to answer every question to score well.

Test Preparation: Test Readiness Strategies

In most sections, the questions are arranged from easy to more difficult (except for passage-based reading in the critical reading section and improving paragraphs in the writing skills section).

Wild guessing is discouraged, but students should make *educated* guesses when answer choices can be eliminated.

Wild Guessing is Discouraged

1. A B C D E
2. A B C D E
3. A B C D E
4. A B C D E
5. A B C D E
6. A B C D E
7. A B C D E
8. A B C D E
9. A B C D E
10. A B C D E

Educated Guessing...

1. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
2. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
3. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
4. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
5. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
6. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
7. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
8. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
9. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
10. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

should be used when answer choices can be eliminated

Wild vs. Educated Guessing Answer Key

1. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
2. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
3. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
4. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
5. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
6. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
7. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
8. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
9. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
10. (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Compare your wild and educated guessing scores to these correct answers

To learn more, visit www.collegeboard.org.

The screenshot shows the College Board website interface for students. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for SAT, AP, College Planning, College Search, Professional Development, Store, and More. The College Board logo is in the top right corner. Below the navigation bar, the main heading reads "For Students". To the right of the heading is a search bar with the placeholder text "Search by keyword" and a magnifying glass icon. A blue banner below the heading contains the text: "Welcome to the College Board. Get information on our tests, find colleges, learn about financial aid and get application help." Below the banner, there are three main content areas. On the left is a "My Organizer" section with a "Sign In" button and a link to "Create a free account". In the center is a "College Planning" section featuring the "bigfuture by The College Board" logo and a link to "See what's new in BigFuture". On the right is a "SAT & SAT Subject Tests" section with a table of "Upcoming SAT Tests" and a link to "Practice for the SAT".

SAT AP College Planning College Search Professional Development Store More ▾ CollegeBoard

For Students

Search by keyword

Welcome to the College Board. Get information on our tests, find colleges, learn about financial aid and get application help.

June SAT Scores

Most scores are now available for the June SAT and SAT Subject Tests.

My Organizer

Username

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Sign In Forgot username or password?

Create a free account. [Sign up](#)

College Planning

See [what's new](#) in BigFuture
Introducing BigFuture™: Step-by-step advice and interactive tools to help you [get started](#) navigating the college planning process, [explore majors and careers](#), [get in](#) to schools you like, and figure out how best to [pay](#) for it.

Find Colleges

Explore your interests to find your college fit, learn about academic life and explore college campuses.

SAT & SAT Subject Tests

Upcoming SAT Tests

Date	Deadline*	Status
Oct. 6	Sept. 7	Register Now
Nov. 3	Oct. 4	Register Now
Dec. 1	Nov. 1	Register Now

*Deadlines expire at Midnight, EDT [See more dates](#)

Practice for the SAT

Get ready for test day with free official SAT questions. Find tips on how to do your best, and take a free practice test so you can feel confident on test day.

SAT Subject Tests

Showcase your achievements in the college admission

Take the PSAT/NMSQT

How to Sign Up: _____

Test Day/Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Bring:

- Two #2 Pencils
- Calculator (optional)