

If you're not sure which course to take, here's the short answer:

The ACT places a premium on speed and rewards students who can size up a problem quickly, select an answer without too much deliberation and move on. In some sense the ACT is a track meet and is well-suited for "fast-processing" students who want to move straight down the track. It helps if these students are strong in math and science.

The SAT is a slower-paced test that rewards analysis and forethought. The SAT is more like a chess game; students who like to work through problems conceptually and are more deliberate in their approach to problem-solving are good candidates for the SAT. SAT problem sets are more conceptual in nature and require good analytical ability.

In a nutshell: on the ACT students focus on the "what", on the SAT students focus on the "why".

There are diagnostic tests on my website for both test. Students can take one or both, then use the answer keys to tabulate mistakes and send me the results.

SAT: <http://www.tctutoring.net/new-sat.html>

ACT: <http://www.tctutoring.net/act.html>

ACT				
main point	English (grammar)	Reading	Math	Science
you need to process data and information quickly -- the ACT is a test of both speed and endurance -- you need to make quick decisions and move on to the next problem without looking back -- the ACT is a track meet that rewards fast-processors	grammar and some sentence placement -- virtually the same as SAT 75 questions in 45 minutes	four types of passages: literature, social science, humanities, natural science 40 questions in 35 minutes -- you need to read FAST	pre-calculus and algebra II/trig -- you can use a calculator school-based math similar to what you do in class 60 questions 60 minutes --	6 passages involving tables, charts and graphs that students analyze for numeric correlations 40 questions in 35 minutes

SAT				
main point	Writing (grammar)	Reading	Math -- no calc	Math -- with calc
you need to see relationships between variables, analyze outcomes, and "connect the dots" -- the SAT is a slower-paced test that rewards conceptual thinking and deliberate analysis	grammar and some sentence placement -- virtually the same as ACT 44 questions in 35 minutes	five types of passages: literature, social science, history, natural science -- 52 questions in 65 minutes 50% more time on SAT readings than on ACT readings	pre-calculus and algebra II/trig -- some school-based math but no calculator so more conceptual -- you have to think your way through problems 20 questions 25 minutes	pre-calculus and algebra II/trig -- lot of problems with data that needs to be manipulated with a calculator some conceptual, some mechanical math 38 questions in 55 minutes